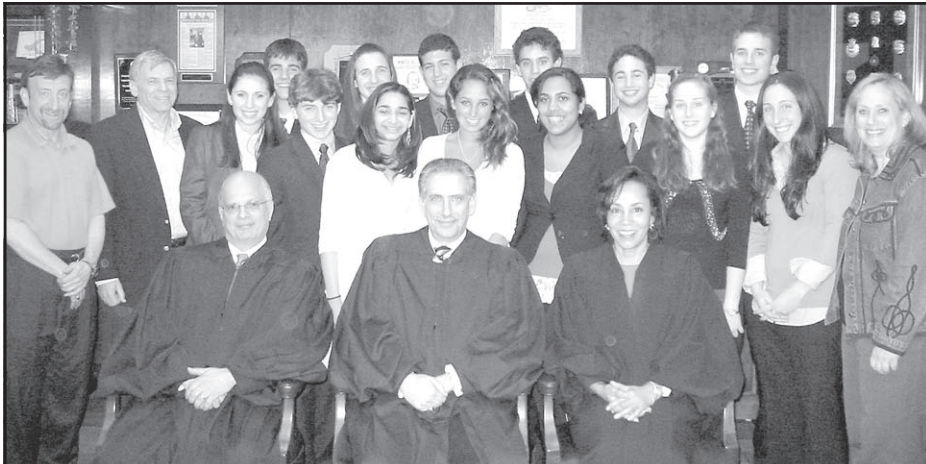


FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

April 2007



The Blind Brook High School Mock Trial team won its fourth consecutive county championship on April 12th in White Plains. The members of the winning team are pictured here with their coaches and the judges. Back row, from left: Robert Greshes, Joel Hecker, freshman Rick Vavolizza, junior Madeline Sims, sophomore Max Linder, junior captain Aaron Wirshba, junior captain Andrew Becker, senior captain Jared Hoffman. Middle row, from left: sophomore Mori Einsidler, junior Benjamin Engle, freshman Diksha Nagia, sophomore Lisa Ganz, sophomore Sonia Taneja, freshman Sharon Freidlander, junior Michelle Caley, Barbara Bernstein. Front row: Judges with The Honorable Anthony Scarpino in the center. Blind Brook advances to the regional competition May 12th in Rockland County.

Blind Brook Mock Trial: Keeping the Tradition Alive

By Amy DeLynn

On Thursday, April 12th, the Blind Brook High School Mock Trial team faced off against arch-rival Scarsdale Senior High School in the Westchester County Mock Trial Championship at the Westchester County Surrogate Court House in downtown White Plains. The courtroom was packed with over one hundred spectators from both sides, including parents, siblings, students and teachers, and the

trial lasted for over three hours. Blind Brook was successful in defending a college student accused of cyber stalking and, for the fourth year in a row, the Lawyer Trojans captured the Westchester County Championship by a score of 155-153.

“Unbelievable,” rendered a speechless senior captain Jared Hoffman, who has been a Westchester County Champion since his freshman year.

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Teacher Aide Restructuring Supported by BOE

By Ben Lubkin

Ending weeks of debate, the Board of Education voted in favor of a proposed teacher aide restructuring at their April 17th meeting. The School Related Employees Union had led protests against the plan, which called for the replacement of ten full-time teacher aide positions with twenty part-time jobs. The proposed plan will have financial benefits, saving the district \$200,823 in the 2007-2008 school year.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald D. Valenti stressed that economics were not the primary motivation for the aforementioned proposal. According to the Board, the main advantage of this restructuring within the special education department will be the resulting additional twenty-seven hours of student-aide “contact time” per week. “If each part-time aide can work up to four hours a day, you can receive eight hours of coverage instead of the usual six. It allows for more supervision of students,” Valenti explained.

The restructuring will cut seven aide positions from the Ridge Street Elementary School, as well as three in the Blind Brook Middle/High Schools. Aides who have worked in the district for nine years or fewer will have their jobs replaced by part-time positions but will have first pick for such positions. According to Pat Elgouhary, President of the School Related Employees Union, all cut aides have been working at the district for at least six years. “The district loses some really qualified aides who have relationships with the students and the teachers,” she expressed.

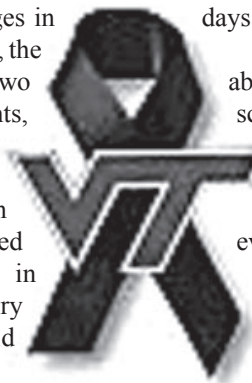
Each special education student’s individual education plan, known as an IEP, will be used to determine whether or not he/she receives a full-time aide or several part-time aides. The students with IEPs requiring full-time assistance will have one of the remaining nine full-time aides, which include three licensed nurses and three teaching assistants.

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Virginia Tech Shooting Impacts B.B. Community

By Ben Lubkin

On April 16th, an overcast and seemingly placid Monday morning, Virginia Tech student Cho-Seung-Hui went on one of the deadliest shooting rampages in recent U.S. history. By midday, the English major had killed thirty-two innocent teachers and students, ultimately taking his own life when police intervened. The massacre shocked the nation and news of the event evoked America’s saddest emotions in every state, every city and every community, including Blind Brook.



High School Principal Anthony Baxter and the Blind Brook community honored the victims in a moment of silence at noon on Friday, April 20th. The Friday following the shooting was declared a day of mourning in the Commonwealth of Virginia; New York Governor Eliot Spitzer expanded the observance to the Empire State.

“Any time a school is attacked, there is a tendency for everybody to step back and say, ‘Wow, it could have been us,’” Baxter noted. “For young people, it shatters the notion of invincibility. When you are young, you don’t think anything can happen to you. You don’t connect the possibility of tragedy and loss with people your age.”

The massacre was not officially noted at Blind Brook before the moment of silence, as Baxter didn’t want to “force students into feeling a certain way.” Though they “didn’t promote [guidance and counseling],” Baxter believes that Blind Brook “is a small enough school district that students know where to go if they need help.”

School psychologist Carrie Merlo said that students did not discuss the shootings with her specifically, though other discussion groups have taken place. As a psychologist, Merlo stated that she has “trained in assessing student safety” and follows a process to “identify if a student is in need of treatment.” She added, “It is very difficult to accurately predict people’s behavior and to ensure that they remain compliant with treatment programs.”

Blind Brook sophomore Zachary Bodinger coincidentally visited his summer camp counselor, Mike Newman, at Virginia Tech over spring break. Newman, unharmed during the massacre, wrote an emotional response provided by Bodinger. “I find myself in a state of shock, and so many emotions are coming to the surface that I can’t distinguish one from another,” he wrote. “What has happened to Virginia Tech is an unprecedented tragedy. We as a school will never be the same. However, in our time of need we must accept the love around us.”

Bodinger was excited and impressed when he visited Virginia Tech. “There was a lot more diversity [than at Blind Brook], and an outstandingly large number of people,” he expressed. On the morning of the shootings, Bodinger had instant messaged with his counselor when Newman typed “I’m

alive,” which Bodinger originally thought to be a joke. After turning on the news he was “appalled and awestruck.” Bodinger recalls that Newman “was very upset. For a few days he didn’t talk very much.”

“Nobody really seemed to talk about [the shooting] that much [at school],” Bodinger remarked. “It didn’t come up that often in school until we had the moment of silence. That’s when I think everyone was hit by it.”

Though there was little formal mention of the Virginia Tech shooting, school shootings have been discussed at Blind Brook several times this year. This past fall, Blind Brook High School students took part in an emotional assembly called Rachael’s Challenge that involved a discussion of the shooting at Columbine High School. The massacre, eight years ago to the week, was an inspiration for Hui, who had sent a videotape to NBC news before the second round of shootings.

Additionally, in the November 2006 issue of *FOCUS*, a front cover story interviewed Blind Brook community members on a recent string of smaller school shootings. Students were quoted as saying, “I don’t think students here would go to such extremes” and “I can’t see [a shooting] happening here.”

After any major shooting crisis, school security becomes a central focus. “[Our]

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'Racing' to Judgment

By Benjamin Engle

If the hallmark of the American judicial system is "innocent until proven guilty," why do we make a virtual sport out of "racing" to judgment?

For Don Imus and Duke Lacrosse players David Evans, Reade Seligmann and Collin Finnerty, America didn't play by the rules. No, for them it was "guilty until proven innocent"—no right to be heard, no right to confront the witnesses, no right to deliberations—instead, they were instantly guilty as charged.

Don Imus, a legendary radio talk show host, made a horrible and disgraceful remark towards the African-American women of the Rutgers University basketball team, which at first was overlooked by almost everybody (including the basketball players), though his comments ultimately prompted MSNBC and CBS Radio to fire him.

David Evans, Reade Seligmann and Collin Finnerty were accused of raping Crystal Gail Mangum, an African American student. She told authorities in March of 2006 that she had been raped by these Duke students, all of whom were white. Before charges were dropped over a year later on April 11th, 2007, these three young men were suspended from playing lacrosse and were thrown into the national spotlight of disgrace.

Ultimately, Imus and the Duke students succumbed to America's race to judgment.

The Durham District Attorney, Mike Nifong, negligently and unprofessionally jumped to conclusions about the Duke students. The facts were not gathered properly; DNA tests did not match those of the Duke students, nor was Mangum consistent in her delivery of the story. Because these students were rich white men, the media and people investigating the case incorrectly assumed that these men were guilty, and in doing so, they ruined the lives of three innocent young men.

Don Imus, however, was wrong in numerous ways. He was wrong in what he said about the Rutgers students; he was wrong in not apologizing quickly enough; and he was wrong in jumping to conclusions about a group of people. While Imus may have done wrong, the "leaders" of our nation acted worse in both the Imus situation and the Duke Lacrosse scandal.

These "leaders" include Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, who immediately called for Imus to be fired and advocated for the conviction of the Duke students. Sharpton and Jackson fundamentally turned these four people into evil, disgusting racists without hearing their story or seeking accurate facts. These Duke students were portrayed

as "typical" spoiled rich kids who party and drink whenever possible, all on their parents' tab. Both Sharpton and Jackson fought constantly until they got their way. Throughout both situations, Sharpton and Jackson did nothing but



criticize these people, and at no point in time did either of them ever stop yelling and come up with a solution to the problems they brought to the public. They raced to judgment, but are slow to encourage increased public dialogue on issues such as race and sexism.

Unfortunately, Sharpton and Jackson sought victory in Imus's firing rather than seeking the opportunity to encourage him to use his soapbox for public debate.

If Sharpton and Jackson, along with the media, had taken a moment before ruining people's lives and recognized the good that could come from bad, maybe they wouldn't have come to such rash conclusions.

Yes, the sad fact is that racism still exists in our world. But where do we draw the line as a nation? Do we attack the music industry for the racist lyrics African American rappers put out into society? Do we attack young college students and radio comedians?

There is just too much hypocrisy surrounding the people who called for Imus to be fired and for the Duke students to be found guilty, especially on Sharpton and Jackson's behalves, as they made themselves the centers of both incidents. Sharpton and Jackson have been quick to denounce policemen when they shoot an African American man but ignore the increasing violence among African Americans themselves. They seem to only appear when white people have done wrong. Shouldn't everybody be accountable for their wrongdoings, no matter what color they are?

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

I am sure that if he were alive to see our society today, he would be proud of how far we have come but still greatly disappointed in the way people treat each other, how we treat ourselves and our lack of good judgment.

Some people believe that of everybody involved in the Imus incident, the most respectable people were the basketball players from Rutgers. They never jumped to conclusions nor did they call for Imus to be punished; rather, they just wanted a simple apology.

Instead of criticizing people and falsely accusing them of crimes, our society needs to learn from our mistakes. In order to alleviate the amount of racism and sexism in our culture, let's have an open discussion to fix the problems.

Criticism accomplishes nothing; actions do.

New Budget Approved

By Corinne Segal

On April 19th the Board of Education voted on a resolution to grant Blind Brook schools a budget of \$36,166,617 for the 2007-2008 school year. Opening speeches at the meeting reflected the Board's awareness of the controversy that has been generated by certain items in the budget, particularly the decision to supplant ten full-time special education teacher aides with twenty part-time aides. The funds saved from this action amount to \$200,823 total, or approximately 0.66% of Blind Brook's total budget.

"No budget is perfect, and in this one, there are certainly areas you may find disagreement in, but I'm supporting this budget," expressed Board member Lawrence Engle. His support was echoed in a unanimous vote to approve the budget.

According to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald D. Valenti, new teacher aides will be able to supervise students for eight more hours per week than the current full-time aides; however, they will not be provided with many benefits, such as health insurance. "More than half the tax payers in the community don't have children in the school, and they are residents who are watching their taxes go up, and they have said to us, 'We'll support your school, but we want you to be as responsible as possible,'" said Valenti of the need to economize.

In an emotional speech, Pat El Gouhary, a teacher aide, thanked the community, fellow teachers, and students for their support as well as Board member Steven Kaplan, who voted against the plan at a BOE meeting on April 17th. "Thank you for taking the time to ask questions, especially 'Why?'" she said, addressing Kaplan. "Thank you for qualifying the answers. You are a fine representative of this community."

The Board plans to provide for growing student enrollment, expected to increase by 2.8% next year, using a balance of "the two E's: education and economics" within the budget, according to Board member Monroe Haas.

"I think this is a year where we attempted to make a few more changes than perhaps we normally make," Valenti noted. "But I

think those were purposeful changes, and I think a lot of our changes have to do with timing."

One change that the Board deemed currently unnecessary for Blind Brook is the addition of Mandarin classes to the school curriculum. A resolution to provide \$100,000 for a Mandarin program was rejected by the Board at the April 17th meeting. Members of the Board cited insufficient interest in the community as the reason for the rejection, which was proven by surveys that showed only about twelve students interested in taking the course.

For the elementary school, a multi-year plan was created that allows for the renovation of the primary library and the updating of bathrooms, the kitchen and a science classroom. Its total proposed funding, to be spent over a period of four years, amounts to \$2.7 million dollars. In the Middle School, funds will be used to support extracurricular activities and expand Academic Intervention Services (AIS) programs for math and science.

As for the High School, classes such as Forensics, Fairy Tale Literature, Gothic Literature and Pre-Engineering have been added to course catalog. The guidance department's budget has been increased by 2.6%, which will allow guidance counselors to visit colleges and provide students with firsthand information. In addition, new athletic teams such as Varsity Girls' Lacrosse, Modified Boys' Lacrosse and Junior Varsity Golf will be created.

Kaplan expressed the importance of communication during the construction of the budget. "Next year it would be healthy if the Board established a protocol for having things presented, specific information that we'd like to see, information that the public would like to see," he explained.

Trudi Davis, a Middle School Spanish teacher and president of the Blind Brook teacher's union, agreed. "[It would be a great] opportunity to enhance the communication that already exists," she remarked.

The public vote for the budget will take place on Tuesday, May 15th, at Ridge Street School.

Senate Update

By Allison Engle

During the Senate meeting held on April 4th, the representatives discussed several key issues. Among the topics discussed were spring fundraising, end-of-year festivities and an upcoming blood drive.

When exploring spring fundraising ideas, the senators conversed about throwing a new spin on to last year's Blind Brook sandal. Last year, Senate attempted to sell Blind Brook flip-flops; however, the majority of the student population failed to purchase them. Senate has since constructed a sandal whose strap will say "BBHS," and they will be sold to both Middle and High School students.

Senators are also in the midst of organizing end-of-year festivities and are excited to utilize the new athletic fields in a student vs. faculty Ultimate frisbee game that they will sponsor. As in previous years, Senate will serve sandwiches and carnival-esque snacks.

In addition, Senate has started planning Showtime, which is scheduled for June 1st. Senior Senate president Adam Fischer affirmed, "As always, we're looking for anyone who is interested in performing their talents at the show. Whether you play in a band, love to dance, or have any other talent, everyone is welcome to perform." Fischer later went on to note how entertaining an event like Showtime is. "Just like it always has been, Showtime is going to be a great night for everyone who comes out to support their friends and classmates."

Lastly, the Senators are organizing Blind Brook's second annual blood drive. With the evident success of last year's blood drive, it seemed that a second one would be just as effective, if not more so. The blood drive will be held on May 4th and it will be open to all members of the community.

Come Support the Blind Brook Mock Trial Team!

On Saturday, May 12th at Clarkstown Justice Court. After winning the Westchester County Championship for the fourth year in a row, the Lawyer Trojans look to capture the Regional Championship for the third year in a row.

All trial, no error.

B.B. Observes Alcohol Awareness Month

By Matt Goldwater

To observe Alcohol Awareness Month, Blind Brook planned an assembly for grades seven through eleven on April 17th; unfortunately, guest speaker Bobby Pecetrelli was unable to make it due to inclement weather. Nonetheless, on Thursday, April 19th, Blind Brook hosted a drunk driving simulator and displayed a crashed car from a drunk driving accident as part of its annual recognition of Alcohol Awareness Month.

The drunk driving simulator and crash car are used every year to educate students about the grave consequences of driving while intoxicated. Blind Brook social worker Terry Frank was in charge of overseeing these activities. Frank feels that alcohol awareness is very important and believes that the activities help her to inform students about alcohol awareness.

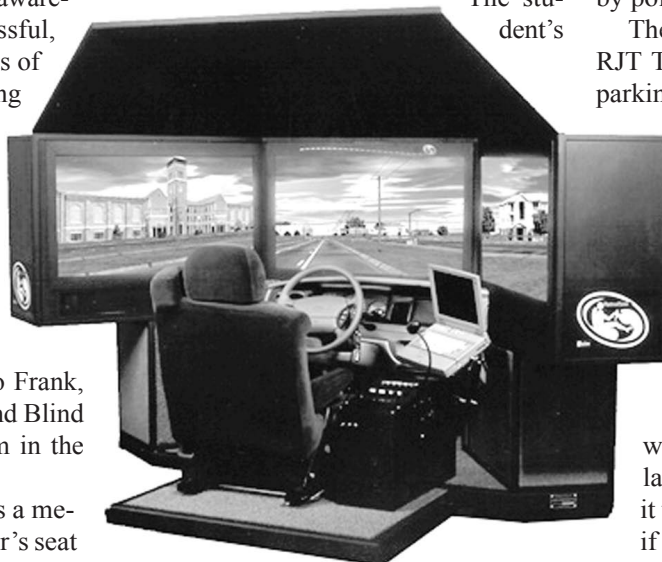
"Kids tell me stories about their high-risk decisions every day. Hopefully, these

activities will allow for kids to think twice about risky decisions in the future," Frank noted. Frank also feels that alcohol awareness education has been successful, but she worries about other effects of alcohol such as alcohol poisoning and sexual activity while under the influence. She also added that the organization MADD (Mothers Against Destructive Driving) has done a great job to raise awareness and that people should realize that alcohol could get them into trouble when they are not on the road. According to Frank, both activities were successful, and Blind Brook will continue to host them in the future.

The drunk driving simulator is a mechanical box that contains a driver's seat and a passenger's seat. As part of the activity, Blind Brook juniors drove a virtual car on a screen. Initially, students would drive

around a racetrack as if they were sober and were subsequently placed on a virtual road.

The student's



blood alcohol level in the simulator was then raised to .04 and,

later, .08. Most of the participants in the event crashed their cars or were stopped by police.

The crash car, provided for free by RJT Towing, was situated in the senior parking lot, and numerous students took note of the extensive damage to the automobile as a result of a drunk driving accident.

"I found the simulator to be amusing, but at the same time educational," commented junior Athena Lo. "While the drivers felt confident behind the wheel, it became apparent that they were not fully ready for what came at them. While onlookers laughed at the crashes and swerving, it was important to keep in mind that if this had been real, we would've died, which is what I think the simulator was trying to prove. I suppose it got its point across."

Spring Break 2008: Italy

By Corinne Segal

A proposal for a student trip to Italy during the 2008 spring vacation was recently submitted to the Board of Education and approval is currently pending. If authorized, it will be the first trip to a foreign country sponsored by Blind Brook in almost seven years.

The ban on foreign trips, which was established by the Board of Ed following the tragedy of September 11th, has been reconsidered due to "a lot of interest in the community," according to Middle and High School Latin teacher Christine Blyler. "We had discussed in department meetings that parents had come to the department head asking if there was an [international] trip," Blyler expressed.

Meanwhile, the possibility of establishing an activity for students during spring vacation, which, next year, would be scheduled from April 18th-26th, had been mentioned to Superintendent Dr. Ronald Valenti by Community Coalition and Project Prevention. Both local organizations aim to prevent destructive behavior by scheduling educational programs and events for students.

"They said, 'Can you come up with an alternative during spring recess?'" Valenti stated. He called the idea to reinstate foreign trips "a good thought that both parties [teachers and administration] thought simultaneously."

Their ideas will likely become a reality with the help of ACIS (American Council for International Study), a division of the American Institute for Foreign Study. Founded in 1978, ACIS is committed to promoting educational travel and offers a number of exchange programs and school trips with pre-planned itineraries. If necessary, one of their Tour Consultants can customize a schedule to comply with a school's requests. The cost per student "could fall anywhere between \$2500 and \$3000," Valenti predicted.

In addition to facilitating the planning of the trip, ACIS will send a "tour manager who will be with us twenty-four hours a day," said Middle and High School Italian teacher Madeleine Salvatore. The ACIS website asserts, "All [tour managers] share a love of teaching and an irresistible enthusiasm about the regions they'll show you."

Out of the many choices available, Blind Brook will most likely use ACIS's

Florence and Rome schedule. In addition to students visiting these two Italian cities, one day will be devoted to viewing the ancient city of Pompeii, which was perfectly preserved under the volcanic ash of nearby Mt. Vesuvius two millennia ago. A tentative itinerary includes visits to historic sites such as the Vatican, the Accademia (where Michelangelo's David is located) and the Piazza della Signorina in Florence. Students will also be given periods of free time to split up and explore the cities in smaller groups with chaperones.

ACIS explained, "To fully engage [students], we focus on authentic experiences you can only have in the places you're traveling." Both Salvatore and Blyler believe that a foreign experience challenges students to look beyond the classroom to use the lessons they have learned in an interactive way.

Salvatore pointed out, "There are only so many things you can tell your students in class. When you experience it yourself, it's different." Blyler added, "There are only so many pictures you can look at. I was awestruck the first time I saw the juxtaposition of the old and new."

Kelley Cano, a sophomore currently enrolled in Latin 2, is "pumped" for the possibility to participate. Sophomore and Italian 2 student Mori Einsidler shared similar sentiments, stating, "I'm excited because it's a great opportunity to be exposed to a different culture, and it combines education and fun."

"The Italian trip will be a great learning experience since I can apply what I've learned in class," affirmed sophomore Alana Pace, also an Italian 2 student.

In case of emergency, ACIS's European offices are "positioned to help you solve problems where and when you need them," according to their website. One such office is located in Rome. Student safety is a major concern, and teachers are "hoping that students would take this seriously," Blyler remarked. "You're a representative of your country in Europe, and we're hoping students would take the responsibility to act accordingly."

Valenti believes that the time has come to revive the tradition of traveling abroad, and is "getting the feeling [the Board] would be supportive of a sound trip that students are interested in. This is a wonderful trip we should support."



Blind Brook's teen substance panel, consisting of (from left) Judge John B. Colangelo, District Attorney Janet DiFiore, Chief Greg Austin of the Rye Brook Police Department and Dr. Jeffrey Brown, raised awareness in the community about drugs and alcohol.

Students Attend Teen Substance Panel

By Adam Potter

On Thursday, March 29th, Blind Brook students attended a panel on drugs and alcohol sponsored by the High School, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD Club) and Project Prevention. No homework was assigned to students on the night of the panel, and no tests or quizzes were given the following day to encourage students to attend.

Hosted in the Blind Brook High School auditorium, the panel was open to all High School students and their parents as well as the parents of Middle School students. The assembly began with a short introduction from High School Principal Anthony Baxter, after which David Pease, a Connecticut resident, informed the audience that he had lost his two sons in drug/alcohol-related accidents. "Almost three-hundred people attended," said school social worker Terry Frank. "After Mr. Pease's story, there was not a dry eye in the house."

The next part of the assembly was mediated by the executive director of the Student Assistance Services Corporation, Ellen Morehouse. During this portion of the assembly, the panel, composed of Westchester County District Attorney Janet DiFiore, Chief Greg Austin of the Rye Brook Police Department, Judge John B. Colangelo and Dr. Jeffrey Brown, addressed three hypothetical scenarios that dealt with realistic situations in which students might find themselves should they be-

come involved with drugs/alcohol.

The panel focused on the legal aspects of such scenarios with a less, but still present, emphasis on health. They also answered questions from the audience with the help of Rye Brook Police Department detective/youth officer John Arnold.

The purpose of the panel was to raise awareness in the community about drugs and alcohol. Panel members hoped to influence students to make smarter and healthier decisions in the future. Frank stressed the importance of conveying the idea that "students are not invincible," and begged them to "please make healthy choices."

"I think that the panel gave valuable advice, but it was aimed more towards the parents than the kids," remarked sophomore Hallie Seiden.

The March panel was the first of its type to be open to High School students at Blind Brook, though the school sponsored two similar panels three and five years ago that were successful but exclusively for parents. Furthermore, the most recent panel was held as the result of interest expressed by the community; Rye Brook residents were interested in hosting another panel because of the presence of a new police chief and the recent enactment of new laws.

Blind Brook is already planning another panel for the 2007-2008 school year, which will be more focused on the health aspects of drugs and alcohol.

News Editor: Marissa Barbaro

News Section

Middle States Evaluation Running Smoothly

By Sonia Taneja

Blind Brook High School prides itself in being an exceptional educational institution; one of the main reasons for its reputation of excellence is its participation in the Middle States Evaluation. At certain time intervals, school districts must go through an accreditation process, or official authorization, including the assignment of credits to certain courses. To do this at a professional level, an outside organization such as Middle States analyzes the school to ensure that it is meeting universal standards and that the opinions of every group are represented in the school system.

"It is important for [the school] to examine itself. It's a very healthy process," commented High School Principal Anthony Baxter.

Middle States is known to have two basic components. First, the Content Area Committees are comprised of teachers at Blind Brook and deal with the specific subject departments in the school. The second component is composed of the Standards Committees. There are twelve standards that are discussed in these Middle States committees, including topics such as governance and leadership in the school, student life, finances and the primary philosophy

of Blind Brook. Along with teachers, both prominent members of the Blind Brook community and high school students meet and discuss opinions related to their specific committees. The goals of these various committees are to achieve a consensus on what improvements Blind Brook should make as well as the school's accomplishments.

Director of Guidance Christopher Griffin is a member of the Middle States Data Gathering Committee and has been working closely with Middle States to analyze Blind Brook community surveys. These surveys consist of a series of questions that address different aspects of the school district. They were given to Blind Brook community members, including students, parents, and employees, to recognize the various opinions of different people within the Blind Brook community.

"Our service to the students is what this is all about," Griffin affirmed, illuminating the purpose of Middle States and the role of students in the process.

Student participation in the various committees is also an integral part of the Middle States program because it gives administrators and leaders a unique perspective on the situation at hand from the people who are most directly affected by it. "If we did

this without student input...it would be evaluating our school without contribution from our consumer," reflected Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth, also the internal coordinator of the Middle States program at Blind Brook.

The Tri-State program, the accreditation system used by Blind Brook before this year, was also brought to Blind Brook's attention by those individuals closely involved with Middle States. Tri-State is used throughout New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, but it only focuses on one department per appraisal period instead of the comprehensive review that comes with Middle States. Thus, after twenty years, Middle States is

once again being utilized as the school's main evaluation process.

As of now, Griffin has "no criticisms on how the process has been." In addition, Baxter recognizes that the process is continuing right on schedule, and Phase one, known as "data gathering," will come to an end by June 2007. Beginning in fall of 2007, Phase two will mark initiation of the analysis of the data, and by April 2008, the Middle States officials will pay a visit to Blind Brook to deliver an assessment report. So far, the Middle States program has been successful in guiding those associated with it in the identification of problem areas as well as areas of strength.

"It is important for [the school] to examine itself. It's a very healthy process."

—Anthony Baxter
High School Principal

Teacher Aide Restructuring Supported by BOE

Continued from page 1

Valenti emphasized the success of a pilot program in the elementary school where six part-time aides have replaced three full-time aides this year. "The special education director [Eugene Wolotsky] started this program on a pilot basis this year, finding it very successful educationally, and would like to expand what we started this year," Valenti remarked.

High School Principal Anthony Baxter acknowledged the functional benefits of the plan as well. "I think from a supervisory standpoint, we would have people for longer periods of time. We could deploy them differently and use them for supervisory activities. I think it allows for more flexibility as a building principal," Baxter explained. Valenti also recognized the potential for additional student supervision, especially before and after school and at lunch times at the elementary school.

Critics of the plan, which included large sections of the student body and faculty, raised philosophical and functional concerns. Senior Jared Hoffman, Editor-In-Chief of *FOCUS*, questioned the Board's "price of loyalty" in his March editorial. "In a school district that is just now beginning to stabilize its teacher return rate, there can be no 'price' for the loyalty and dedication that these teachers aides bring to Blind Brook," Hoffman wrote, referring to the district's recent teacher retention issues.

Senior Congress president Tom Licitra added that it will be difficult for the special education students "to form two new relationships and adjust to two different personalities."

Additional concerns arose over the need to hire twenty qualified part-time teacher aides before the beginning of the next school year. Licitra believes that "it will be very difficult for the board to find the amount of quality aides that they're looking for." Board member Richard Buzin, who is in favor of the plan, expressed similar concerns at the April 17th Board meeting. "I do have concerns about the difficulty of hiring these aides, but this does not change my opinion," he stated.

Valenti said the most successful strategy in hiring highly qualified aides would be through increasing the maximum aide compensation from \$18.50 to \$20.00 per hour during negotiations with the unions. "I think that if we pay \$20.00 per hour, we can attract some really high quality people, including retired teachers and parents who

are certified teachers that only want to work mornings or afternoons."

The potential quality of part-time employees, however, sparked concern throughout the community. "Full-time aides are more responsible and tend to be with the district for more time," Elgouhary said. School Board member Lawrence Engle, though, believes that part-time workers can be as professional as their full-time counterparts. "In our society, we have a lot of part-time workers—part-time doctors, part-time nurses, part-time lawyers, and others—because of either choice or circumstance," he affirmed. "They are as dedicated and responsible as anyone who works full-time. To suggest any less, I think it could be offensive to them." Engle also noted that other districts employ very few full-time aides, mainly relying on part-time positions.

The teacher aide restructuring plan will save the taxpayers \$70,880 annually in salary as well as an additional \$129,943 in benefits. Health insurance, which costs the district around \$14,500 per full-time employee, with a 5-10% increase annually, represents a large portion of the savings. Additional benefits not given to part-time workers include pensions as well as sick days and vacation days.

Steven Kaplan was the only Board member who voted against the proposal. "[The plan] eats up the core of what defines Blind Brook. I would prefer we look at personnel savings that do not directly affect students," he commented. "The contralateral issues are problems." While most of the Board members feel that the pilot program has been a success, Kaplan argued that "the track record is unimpressive."

The same proposal was presented by Wolotsky during budget season last year. The Board agreed with member Monroe Haas, however, who raised moral concerns over firing committed employees on such short notice. This year, with time to discuss the proposal's benefits and drawbacks, the Board was able to notify aides well in advance. "Employees would have justified concerns last year that don't apply this year," Haas said at the Board meeting.

Though the Board ultimately decided to pass the restructuring proposal, Elgouhary acknowledged a student body that is very supportive of its full-time aides. "I think [their support] is absolutely outstanding. It's a true measure of who these people are, and it's nice that the students recognize the importance of the full-time aides," she noted.

Virginia Tech Shooting Impacts B.B. Community

Continued from page 1

awareness has increased. We are being a little more cautious of vehicles that don't belong on the campus," stated Blind Brook security officer Adam Libertella. Libertella, a retired Mamaroneck police officer of twenty-seven years, wants "to get the students to feel comfortable to come to [the security staff]. They are our eyes and our ears. They know who belongs here better than us."

In the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings, a large portion of the event's media coverage insinuated that better crisis management could have prevented all but two of the innocent deaths. After Hui fatally shot two students in a dormitory, there was a several-hour time gap before he resurfaced and killed another thirty. During the time the killer was loose, classes and other aspects of student life continued unabated.

At Blind Brook, Baxter explained that the school has an emergency response team that "is specifically designed to deal with crises as they come up." The Middle and High School teams undergo annual training with a consulting group. The procedure followed in the event of an emergency could help prevent the same mistake from occurring at Blind Brook.

The Blind Brook administration is preparing to hire an additional part-time security guard for next year. The changes, however, are not a result of the Virginia Tech massacre. "[We] are looking to hire an additional security guard for the Middle and High Schools during the lunch periods. We have about 30,000

new square feet between the schools, and we felt that we need another body," Baxter confirmed.

Baxter also believes that Blind Brook's small size aids in the prevention of a security breach. "When you walk around, you know everybody, so anybody that doesn't belong here will stand out like a sore thumb," he explained. "[There are] professionals here whose antennae are always up. If a student were to write something in English class that was very disturbing and raised concerns, the teacher knows that he or she has a psychologist, a social worker and a counseling department that he or she can go to."

Though Blind Brook's trained security staff and observant faculty make the district safer from internal school shootings, the student body greatly outnumbers both. Students interact with their peers more than any other group in the district, especially when other students are most likely to show signs of mental instability and anger. Therefore, it is also the student body's responsibility to identify threats to the school's safety. Merlo hopes that "students recognize the importance of seeking mental health professionals and other adults when they have concerns about their peers."

Even if a student is not positive that another individual is a threat, his or her tip will be anonymous and confidential. Awareness is the most important tool in preventing Virginia Tech-style shootings, and awareness is how a small school such as Blind Brook must respond.

Sports

Sports Editor: Aaron Wirshba

The Bottom Line

By Julia Whalen
and Aaron Wirshba

Sophomore Joe Magliano, a Varsity Tennis player, approaches the net for a volley.

Tennis

The Boys' Varsity Tennis team is off to an excellent start. Led by first year head coach Adam Libertella and senior captains Eric Taitz and Jon Gold, the team is currently 2-0. Taitz stated, "It was a big loss losing [Blind Brook alumnus and first singles player] John Magliano, but we have the ability to become a strong team."

The team has won the league championships for the past three years and Libertella hopes to continue the success, stating, "The team will be able to take the challenge and get to league championships this year as well. This year's team is very young but many people are excelling." Two notable sophomores playing this year are Max Linder and Joe Magliano, who play first doubles together.

Golf

Blind Brook's Varsity Golf team has great potential this season. Head coach Marcello Marcoccia has high hopes for the team. According to him, the 8-0 record is all due to "the large number of returning members." He continued, "We have a pool of talented golfers and we hope to win the league championships as well as have one of the best seasons in Blind Brook history." Seniors Sean Latella and David Yawitz have shown great leadership this season. Remarkably, Yawitz has even hit a hole-in-one this season, an accomplishment that few golfers can boast.

Marcoccia hopes that "at least three of our golfers reach the sectional tournament." Even with this season's tough weather conditions, the team has been able to play well. Junior Michael Yewdell said, "Hopefully we'll win the title this year because we're full of potential. It has been a rough start, but we should see great success with our team."

Track

For the first time in Blind Brook history, the Varsity Track team placed first in a meet, defeating Clark Academy and Lincoln Hall. "After being on the team for three years, it feels good to finally win one," said junior Andrew Becker. Coached by Matthew Beatty, the team hopes to use this win as a building block to future success.

Softball

The Girls' Varsity Softball team is looking to repeat last year's performance by winning the sectional championship again. The team is led by senior captains Sabrina Stockel, Danni Kaufman, Alana Burns and Abby Citrin.

After crushing Dover 12-0 in its first game of the season, the Lady Trojans have lost their last two games to North Salem, 2-0, and Valhalla, 15-6. At the home opener against Valhalla, the Lady Trojans were tied 5-5 at the end of regulation, but gave up eleven runs, mostly unearned, in the top of the ninth. Blind Brook could only muster one run during last licks, falling short for their second loss of the season.

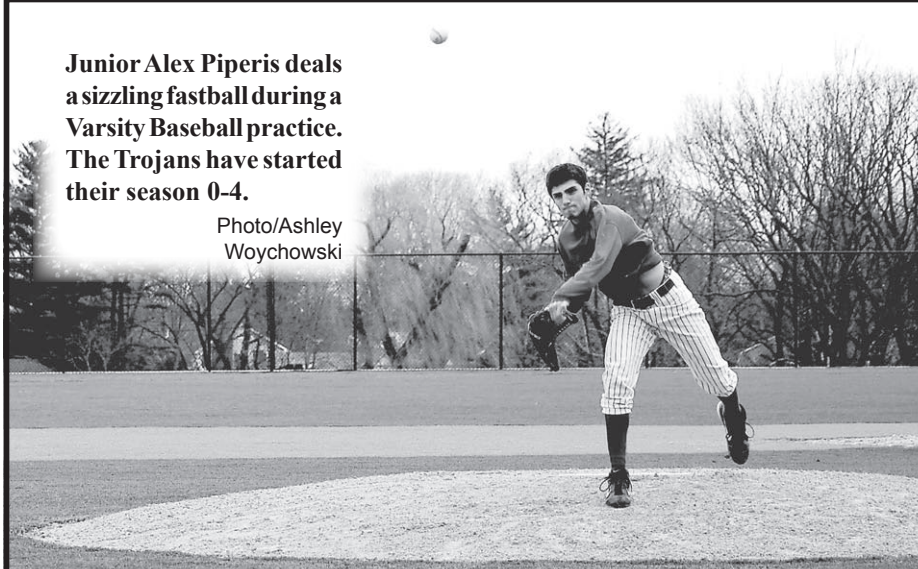
"We were in it the whole time," said junior Dana Silverstein. "We made some errors and it cost us, but we won't give up and I believe we can have a successful season."



Photo/Ashley Woychowski

The Varsity Softball team is looking to win the sectional championship for the second year in a row. Clockwise from back left: senior Alana Burns, senior Danni Kaufman, senior Sabrina Stockel, junior Justine Matthews, junior Christina DiBerardino, sophomore Tiffani Troilo; sophomore Nikki Accurso, junior Jamie Florindi, senior Abby Citrin and junior Dana Silverstein. Not pictured: junior Chloe Richards.

Junior Alex Piperis deals a sizzling fastball during a Varsity Baseball practice. The Trojans have started their season 0-4.

Photo/Ashley
Woychowski

Baseball

Trojans Drop First Four Games of the Season

By Jared Hoffman

Plagued by poor glove work, listless bats and inexperienced pitching, the Trojans—who have been outscored 18-6 after their first three games—have not started the 2006-2007 Varsity Baseball season as planned. Blind Brook has lost its first three games of the season to Rye and Rye Neck on April 14th and to North Salem on April 18th.

Senior pitcher and third baseman Josh Adelsberg explained, "Our pitching has been solid so far, we just need to make a few extra plays here and there and start putting the ball in play. We're not being aggressive enough at the plate."

Senior shortstop Jesse Sedler added, "We've been playing much better defensively, and I think we will continue to improve as the season goes on. Our hitting has also gotten more consistent as we face more live pitching."

The season kicked off with the Anthony Foust Memorial Baseball Tournament. The Trojans squared off against Rye in the first game, falling behind early. Rye was able to score at least one run in every inning of the game sans the sixth for a total of eight runs. Adelsberg pitched seven solid innings, allowing six earned runs and eight hits while striking out one. Although Blind Brook was able to muster four runs, including two RBIs from junior Michael Santoro and one Sedler, the Trojans opened the new season with a disappointing loss.

Blind Brook, still shaken from the first loss of the day, was unable to win the second game of their double header against Rye Neck, leading to two losses

in one day. The Trojan bats were silenced as Rye Neck pitching didn't allow a single run over seven innings. Sedler led the team with two hits but was unable to produce much more without a man behind him to bat him home.

Ultimately, Port Chester defeated Rye to win the Anthony Foust Memorial Baseball Tournament. Sedler and Adelsberg were awarded All Tournament Honors for their stellar play at the plate and in the field.

On April 18th, the Trojans hosted North Salem for the first home game on Blind Brook's new baseball field. Despite high expectations for the new field, the Trojans were unable to deliver a momentous opening game, suffering their third loss of the season, 5-2.

"Playing on the new field is great," said Adelsberg. "When you're in the field the bounces are perfect which eliminates some fielding mistakes. It also allows us to play games and practice regardless of bad weather because it takes the water really well."

On April 24th, the Trojans defeated the Solomon Schechter Lions 5-4, thanks to dominating pitching by Alex Piperis, who gave up no earned runs, three hits and struck out nine batters in seven innings.

The team remains optimistic for the rest of the season, however. Adelsberg affirmed, "We're waiting for some of the guys' bats to get hot, and try and get our pitching staff some run support. For us seniors this is our last chance at a league or section title, and we're doing everything we can to get it."

Girls' Lacrosse Team Comes to Blind Brook

By Lisa Ganz

With the addition of Blind Brook's new fields came the opportunity to foster new teams. The new turf field complex has made it possible to have Blind Brook's first ever Girls' Lacrosse team. For the spring 2007 and spring 2008 seasons, Blind Brook will have a Junior Varsity and Modified Girls' Lacrosse teams. The school projects that after two years of experience and games, the players, will be able to compete at the Varsity level.

This year, the Junior Varsity Lacrosse team is comprised of twenty-five girls, a combination of sophomores and freshmen. Because most of the girls are new to the sport, the coach, Steve Forzaglia, rotates the girls between positions. In a game of lacrosse, twelve people normally start, but Blind Brook's twelve starters have yet to

be determined. Instead, Forzaglia rotates the starting lineup, giving every player time on the field.

This past Tuesday, April 24th, the girls, after grueling practices, clinics and scrimmages, competed in their first game against Irvington. The girls put up a good fight but were defeated, 11-7. "We still have a lot to work on, but we've improved a lot since the first day," sophomore Melissa Kaliner said after the loss. Sophomore Hallie Seiden added, "We did really well as a team for our first game."

By the end of the season, the girls are hoping to win Blind Brook's first ever Lacrosse game against Irvington, Ardsley or Hastings. "I'm so excited and since most of us have never played before, it should be really fun learning together!" exclaimed Seiden.

Should Major League Baseball Move Early Season Games to Warm Cities or Domes?

By Lisa Ganz

Like a true fan, I eagerly awaited the arrival of baseball season. The stretch from October to April seemed to have been never ending. I found myself trying to become immersed in another sport, but, to me, nothing compares to baseball. Don't get me wrong, I'm an avid New York Giants' fan, and can even be found cheering on the New York Rangers as well; but no other sport gets me like baseball does.

Spring and baseball just go together. When the sun comes out, the air is crisp, and there is nothing I would rather hear than the crack of a bat making contact with a ball. Most years, the weather in April is chilly. But for real baseball fans, the weather will not stop us from going to support our team. There is almost no discussion upon whether or not baseball games during the colder months of the year should be moved to warmer cities. The answer to that question is simple—of course not! Genuine fans like me have just survived six long months without baseball. Is it really fair for us, the fans living in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Boston and New York, to have to wait another month? I don't see how Major League Baseball can tell fans in these cities that opening day games will be played in May because of what happened during the 2007 season. Fans will scream at the commissioner and question what he was thinking.

In addition, no baseball player wants to have to wait a whole month to play a home game. Everyone knows that home games are advantageous. Players are better rested prior to home games because they don't have to sleep in hotels or take long flights. The fans are rowdy, and the players are psyched up.

Having fifty-thousand people cheering them on gives the players the motivation to go out and play their best. Any team that plays an entire month of baseball without their fan base is at a clear disadvantage.

Teams who play in colder cities, would have a majority of their home games at the end of the season. This unfair advantage would allow these teams to build momentum heading into the playoffs and may influence the playoff races. While all teams will play eighty-one home games and eighty-one away games, most teams would prefer to close out the season with a long streak of home games than with a lengthy road trip.

Lastly, though the cold weather may increase the likelihood of injury, baseball players who are experienced and in-shape will be able to perform under the circumstances. In any sport, one has to deal with challenges. There will always be injury and illness, no matter what the weather. Preventing cold weather injuries is as simple as getting to the stadium a little earlier to be properly stretched, or taking longer to warm-up.

Even if it is thirty degrees out, I'll throw on a second pair of socks, I'll get out my winter jacket, I'll go cheer on my team, and I know many others who are just as dedicated. Simply put, Major League Baseball cannot afford to move home games away from the dedicated fans from cold climates.

NO



YES



By Max Linder

Recent cancellations in Cleveland due to inclement weather have sparked outcries from fans and players alike, who are calling for these early season games to be moved to

warmer climates, or stadiums with domes. This is a solution that must be closely considered by Major League Baseball.

Take a look at Cleveland following the postponements of the games between the hometown Indians and Los Angeles Angels. City officials have estimated the fiscal loss of these cancellations to be in the ballpark (no pun intended) of \$300,000 – and that is just from the taxes on parking and tickets. That figure does not even begin to account for the loss of business that is experienced by bars and restaurants that are frequented by baseball fans during home stretches. Had the series between the Angels and Indians been played in Los Angeles, the opener at Jacobs Field could have been played just a week later under much more ideal conditions. Instead, the four-game series that featured the Indians' home opener consisted of five innings of baseball and zero games completed.

Furthermore, some fans may bemoan the loss of a "true" home opener if the early season games were played in warm-weather cities. For every fan that would be disappointed by this scenario, however,

another would be overjoyed by the possibility of seeing teams that they normally would be unable to see play. For example, fans in Cleveland may have missed out on another home series, but fans in Milwaukee experienced a rare opportunity – an Angels vs. Indians game in their backyard. In addition, while many diehard fans would be more than willing to brave the elements and watch a baseball game played under Arctic conditions, consider the taxing effect this game would most certainly have on the players. According to Indians outfielder David Dellucci, "Unless you want this situation to happen again, you have to really look at this and schedule around the weather. Baseball is not meant to be played in the snow and cold temperatures. I think it's unfair to put players in those conditions." A prime example of this is Indians' catcher Victor Martinez, who pulled his hamstring before the first game of the series. Injuries like that just don't happen when it's warm out. Throughout the course of a grueling, 162-game season, injuries are inevitable, yet there is no reason to compound this reality by forcing teams to play early season games in cold-weather cities.

Moreover, other weather-related incidents could be avoided by this early-season shuffle. For example, this proposal would potentially move games to Florida, where teams like the Marlins and the Devil Rays host northern teams early in the season. As a result, during Florida's hurricane season of June-September, many of their games would be played away from home, avoiding the potential clash of inclement weather

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ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

Jesse Sedler

By Jon Gold

With the Varsity Baseball season underway, Blind Brook's shaky start has not affected one player's performance. Senior shortstop Jesse Sedler has been the Trojans' bright spot so far in this young season.

Sedler is the engine that has fueled Blind Brook's offense, constantly getting on base and creating havoc on the basepaths. Sedler's stats are impressive; he has a .365 batting average, six stolen bases, three runs and a .590 on base percentage. As the team's shortstop, Sedler is the leader of the infield and his fielding has been exceptional. Prior to the start of this season, head coach Naz Flory asked Sedler to make the switch from centerfield to shortstop. As a natural athlete and dedicated team player, Sedler was able to learn how to play one of the most difficult positions in no time. Sedler is his own highlight

reel, constantly making one great play after another.

Junior teammate Brett Novick explained, "It's really amazing how great Jesse is playing. With the team struggling as it is, we need a veteran leader to keep our spirits up and Jesse's performance is doing just that."

Although the team currently is 1-4, the team and Sedler have high hopes for the remainder of the season. Sedler stated, "Just because we are winless doesn't mean that we have quit. Everyone on the team still has his mind set on returning to the sectional tournament."

Blind Brook won its most recent game against Solomon Schechter on April 24th, 5-4.

With games against league rivals Rye Neck and Tuckahoe still ahead, look for Blind Brook to finish strong and carry the momentum into the sectional tournament.



Sports Editor: Aaron Wirshba

Sports Section

Major League Baseball Should Move Early Season Games

Continued from page 6

and baseball. Take, for instance, Hurricane Francis in September of 2004. Crashing through the coastline of Florida, the hurricane cost the Marlins three home games. Had this proposal been in effect, these three games would already have been played at home, albeit earlier in the season.

Now, that is not to say that moving early-season baseball games to warmer cities would be an easy task to accomplish. In fact, there may be instances where it would be impossible to do so. If this is the case, however, then these early-season games should be played between teams from the same division. That way, if weather conditions did interfere with the game, there would be many more opportunities down the road to reschedule that game, as opposed to

playing a doubleheader the following day. Doubleheaders are unnecessarily demanding on a roster, especially on the pitching staff, and as seen in Cleveland, even these doubleheaders can be cancelled.

There is no doubt that moving early-season games would inconvenience many fans who do not want to wait to wait a week or two to see their team play. Regardless, Major League Baseball must put its responsibility to protect the welfare of its players before its responsibility to the fans of baseball. Inclement weather must be taken into account when the baseball season's schedule is created. Moving early-season games to a warmer city is a viable solution to this dilemma, and therefore must be closely examined by the MLB.

Blind Brook Mock Trial: Keeping the Tradition Alive

Continued from page 1

"The expectations are always set so high, but I'm happy we were able to pull through." He continued, "This is our house and our team philosophy is that no one takes us in our house."

When it comes to Mock Trial, a lot of the required skills come naturally to the students on the team; however, Blind Brook could have never made it this far without all of the time, effort, energy and dedication that each team member and coach put into preparing for each trial. Students meet every Sunday night to practice the case and during the week of trials.

This year's team was led by Hoffman as well as junior captains Andrew Becker and Aaron Wirshba. The witnesses for Blind Brook include juniors Madeline Sims and Michelle Caley and sophomores Max Linder and Mori Einsidler. Coaches include Joel Hecker, who has

been the coach since 1989, and Barbara Bernstein, who started four years ago and currently remains undefeated in the Westchester County tournament. The team advisor is High School English teacher Robert Greshes.

Becker stated, "We don't have rebuilding years at Blind Brook, so we were definitely expecting to win the county again. It feels great to know that our hard work paid off in the end."

The team will compete in the Regional competition for the third year in a row on Saturday, May 12th, in Rockland County. If the team wins the Regional tournament as they have for the last two years, they will move on to the state tournament, the only tournament Blind Brook has never captured.

"That's the goal," said Hoffman. "This is the last shot I have to win the whole state and we're going to give it our best."

Sports for Equality

By Eric Taitz

On Wednesday, April 4th, Don Imus, a nationally syndicated shock jock and member of the Broadcasting Hall of Fame, made some remarks that would prove fatal to his storied career at CBS Radio. He referred to members of the Rutgers' Women's Basketball Team as "nappy-headed hoes" and "rough girls." Now, clearly, the comments were ignorant, outlandish and untenable; yet nevertheless, I do not feel that CBS and MSNBC (Imus' television affiliate) were justified in firing him. Imus' career, however, is a topic for another time. What I would like to address, is the national fall out of these hateful statements.

In the weeks following the infamous "joke" that crossed the line, many Americans called up radio shows, much like Imus', to express their disdain for his character. It is easy for everyone to take a holier than thou approach, denounce Imus, and act appalled at his seemingly unfathomable remarks, but the fact of the matter is that women and minorities are still discriminated against even in our modern society. Unfortunately, Imus is not alone. I am not ashamed to admit that I find it a bit peculiar that Imus was essentially shunned from the radio community for comments that aren't half as bad as those found in rap lyrics. Instead of pretending that Imus is one rotten apple in a million, we must be realistic. Rappers and the general public alike continue to use (what are supposed to be) hurtful words routinely. While I would like to think that the number of racists and chauvinists in our country is declining every day, there are still a significant number of them out there. Instead of making one man a scapegoat for entire ideologies, we must continue to challenge ourselves to embrace equality and fight discrimination. What better way is there to do that than through sports?



This April marked the 60th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's first major league baseball game. Robinson's accomplishments inspired and transformed America. He proved to be the necessary stepping stone for the 1954 Supreme Court ruling on *Brown v. the BOE* as well as the rest of integration and the civil rights movement. Now, sixty years later, race is not the primary issue at hand in the major leagues. Barry Bonds is on the verge of breaking the most sacred record in sports, and people are upset not because of the color of his skin but because he is a cheater.

The members of the Rutgers Women's Basketball team are perfect example of just how far we have come as a society. Imus insinuated that because the Rutgers' girls are girls, and because they are black, they are a lesser caliber of people. Well, he really did pick the wrong women to mess with. The players have handled the entire situation beautifully and have demonstrated themselves as intelligent and articulate, not to mention extremely talented basketball players. Man or woman, black or white, it does not matter. Through the game of basketball, the Rutgers' women have now stolen the spotlight away from Imus for all the right reasons. Just like them, women in other sports have and are taking great strides towards that indefinite goal of equality. Nobody will ever forget all that Billy Jean King did for tennis and for women. Over the past few years Danica Patrick has taken NASCAR by storm. Michelle Wie is probably the top prospect on the men's PGA tour, and she is a woman!

Robinson and King started a process for women and African Americans that has continued in the 21st century. Imus sparked debate and controversy. We mustn't let his comments inhibit the great progress we've already made. The only stance to be taken is a proactive one.



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Features

Features Editor: Adam Fischer

Spring Break 2007:

One to Remember

By Leigh Engle and Sarah Sgro

To many Blind Brook seniors, Spring Break is often the cherry on top of their final year of high school – a last hurrah before Senior Options and graduation. Whether vacationing in an exotic locale or spending the ten-day period sleeping late at home, seniors know how to get the most out of their Spring Break.

The Blind Brook senior class of 2007, just like its predecessors, took full advantage of their Spring Break. Traditionally, groups of high school seniors flock to the Bahamas where they enjoy all-inclusive vacationing in the heart of the Caribbean. This year's seniors, however, spread their wings beyond the Bahamas. In addition to the group of seniors who traveled to the Bahamas for their Spring Break, several others ventured to Puerto Rico, Aruba and even right into New York City.

The majority of Blind Brook seniors who went away with friends were split between the Bahamas and Puerto Rico (with groups of twenty-two and twenty-four, respectively). Smaller groups migrated to other areas, such as Aruba, Florida and New York City. Still, many others opted to stay home for a pleasant week of pure relaxation. As senior George Levine remarked, "I don't do well in the sun."

Following in the tradition of many seniors who came before them, one group of Blind Brook seniors flew south to the Bahamas. The students stayed at the Paradise

Island Harbor Resort, where they enjoyed the all-inclusive benefits arranged by the student travel group GradCity.

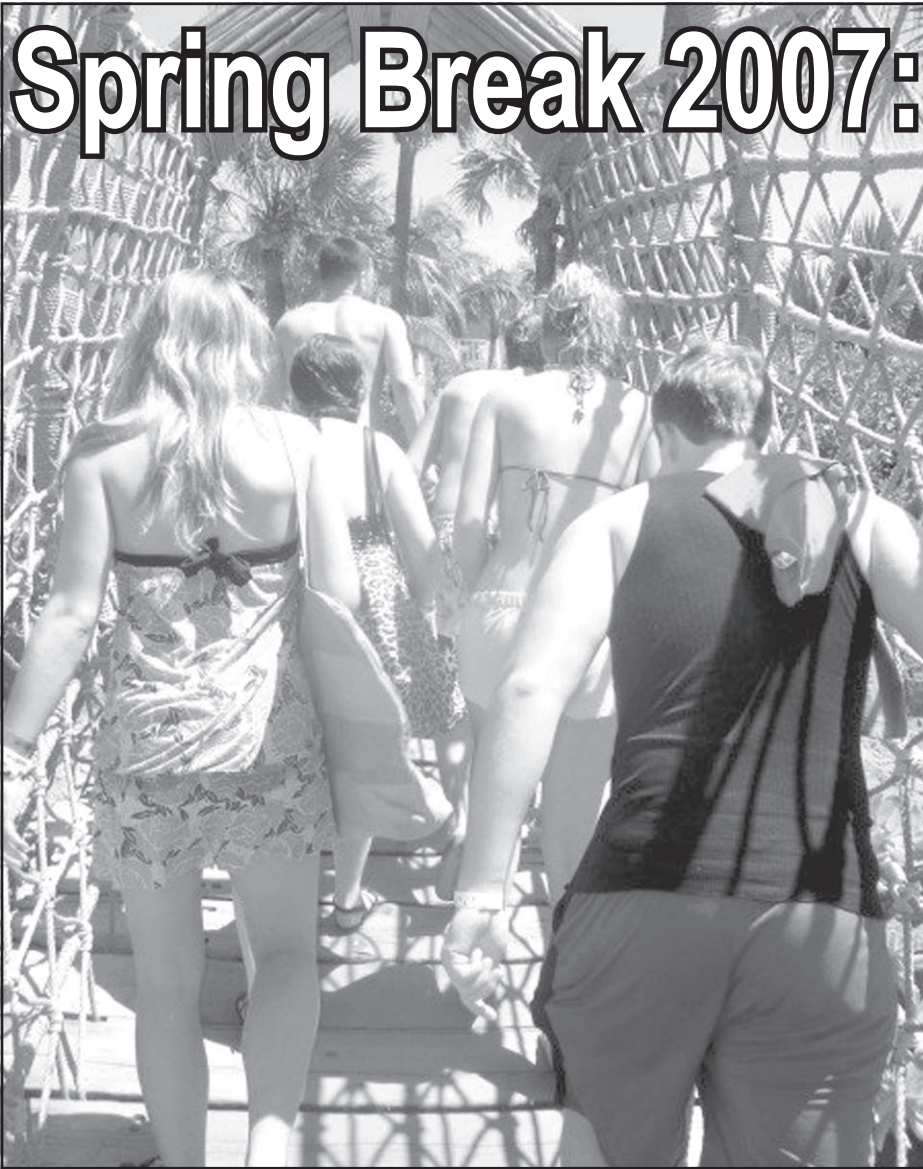
Senior Juliana Argentino, glowing with happiness as she reflected on her trip, described Spring Break as nothing short of "perfect." She commented, "We went to a Fat Joe Concert, which was definitely a lot of fun." Argentino and her friends also caught the attention of several celebrities during her trip. She added, "We hung out with Colie and Paula from the Real World."

Another large group of Blind Brook seniors enjoyed their Spring Break vacation in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The group stayed at the Intercontinental San Juan Resort & Casino, where they spent five days basking in the Puerto Rican sun and enjoying the carefree tranquility of the beach.

Amongst the many activities in which he participated in while in Puerto Rico, senior Tom Licitra enjoyed playing a rousing game of football with the locals on the beach while simultaneously making use of his education. "Going on Spring Break made me realize just how valuable my Spanish lessons are at Blind Brook," noted Licitra. "It was an amazing five days."

Senior Andrew Creadore had similar thoughts on his time spent in San Juan. He explained, "In all seriousness, it was a great learning experience to have to live somewhat independently for five days in a place where they did not speak my native

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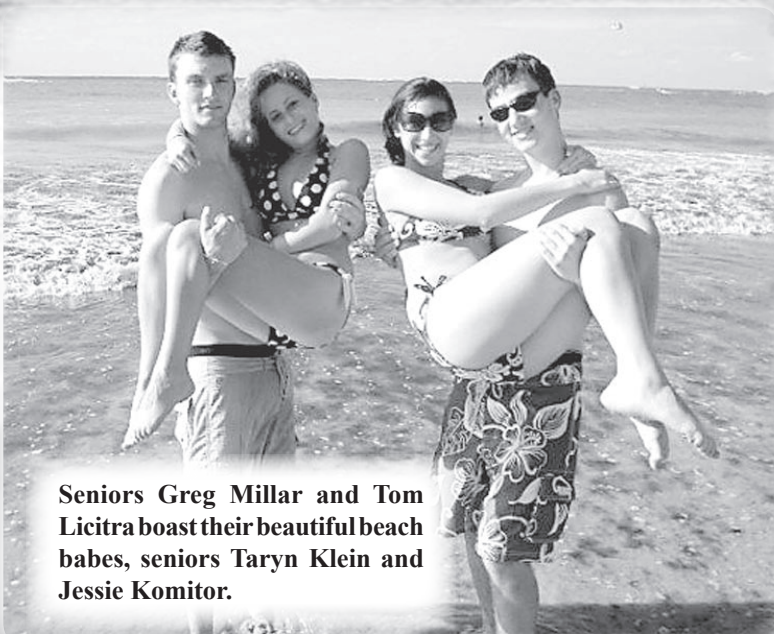


Photo/Juliana Argentino

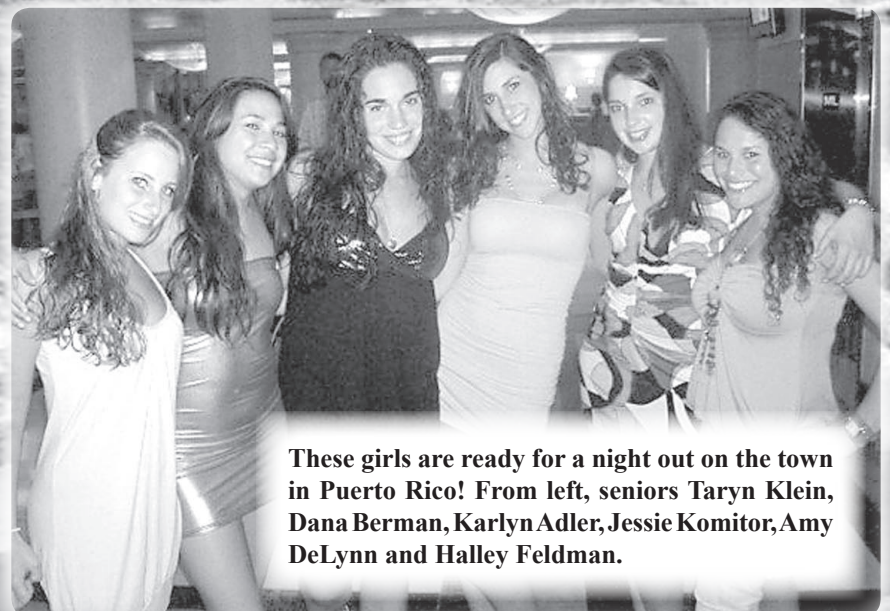
Seniors Danni Kaufman and Jason Giaimo walk through a tropical tunnel in the Bahamas on their way to the beach.



Seniors Laura Marcoccia, Daria Contegiacomo, David Yawitz and Jacob Mikva lounge on a raft in the Bahamas.



Seniors Greg Millar and Tom Licitra boast their beautiful beach babes, seniors Taryn Klein and Jessie Komitor.



These girls are ready for a night out on the town in Puerto Rico! From left, seniors Taryn Klein, Dana Berman, Karlyn Adler, Jessie Komitor, Amy DeLynn and Halley Feldman.

Blind Brook Speaks Out

Quotes and photos compiled by Adam Fischer

How do you feel about the possibility of losing Activity Period?



"I don't think Activity Period should be taken away because, truthfully, every student uses it in one way or another. Without Activity Period, we wouldn't be able to meet for different activities, and nobody would want to stay after school for clubs."

—Freshman Danielle Treacy



"I think that losing activity period would affect many of the students negatively. Some students learn much better one-on-one with the teachers and need the extra-time to understand the material."

—Ian Priven, Sophomore



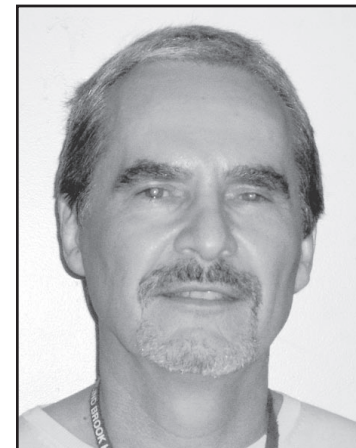
"I'm 100% against getting rid of Activity Period. Not only because of the people who need and use it, but because it's one of those last few things that Blind Brook has that makes us unique. Activity Period allows kids to be both athletes and club members, and it is a valuable time to see a teacher, finish a test or go home before sports. Taking away Activity Period would be like taking away a piece of Blind Brook."

—Junior Andrew Becker



"I think Activity Period is invaluable to Blind Brook students and teachers. It gives students who need extra help time to meet with their teachers on a one-on-one basis, and helps ensure their understanding of classroom lessons. Activity Period also gives students time to get involved in clubs and other extracurricular activities. Beyond that, Activity Period allows students and teachers to form personal relationships, which helps make the Blind Brook community what it is."

—Senior Sami Christal



"Throughout my thirty-four year career, I, as well as the rest of the math department, have found Activity Period to be vital for students who need extra help, have to make up tests or even wish to participate in Math Team competitions."

—Math teacher John Mills

Getting to Know:

Rita Gianfrancesco

By Christina Tempesta

Rita Gianfrancesco, more commonly known as Mrs. G, has been part of the Blind Brook community for almost nine years. Gianfrancesco has walked side-by-side with the senior class since the fifth grade. Since then, she has played an integral role in their maturation, on both educational and emotional levels. Since elementary school, the current senior class has always turned to Mrs. G when in need of advice or a helping hand.

Last year, Gianfrancesco became co-advisor of the Peer Leadership program, alongside Physics teacher Thomas Glickman.

"Having worked with [Mrs. G] close-

ly over the past two years in Peer Leadership, I've seen countless instances of her professionalism, her dedication and commitment to students and the impact she has on the students," said Glickman. "Following her for a single day would lead you to the same conclusion."

Seniors, both inside and outside of the Peer Leadership program, have always been able to find a friend in Mrs. G and have nothing but respect for her. When asked for her feelings on Gianfrancesco, senior peer leader Daria Contegiacomo explained, "I don't even know where to start. There is no way the Peer Leadership Program could exist without her."

Having taught Peer Leadership for the past two years, Gianfrancesco has been able to meet many new faces and get to know the freshmen classes. "Peer Leadership means a lot to me," she expressed. "I really take it to heart."

Mrs. G has found her time at Blind Brook to be exceptionally rewarding. "The unique part is that I have been with the seniors since they were in fifth grade. I have gotten to watch them go from little kids to young adults," explained Gianfrancesco.

"[Mrs. G] is our grade's second mother

—she's always there if we need someone," explained Contegiacomo. She continued, "Mrs. G is an all-around amazing person."

Senior Taryn Klein stated, "The entire class loves Mrs. G. She's been a part of our grade for as long as I can remember and I don't think it would be possible to imagine high school without her guidance, support

and friendship." Gianfrancesco expressed similar sentiments regarding the seniors, commenting, "I have become part of their lives in and outside of school."

Mrs. G has always had a unique appreciation for the teachers at Blind Brook, as well. "I enjoy the teaching staff being open and letting me push into their classrooms," she commented. Such involvement has become an important part of many students' classroom experiences. Said Glickman, "Rita's impact on the students goes far beyond helping one individual student. Her presence in a classroom helps all students."

Gianfrancesco has also been an active fan at Blind Brook sporting events, where she enjoys coming out to support her students. Furthermore, she has always showed her enthusiasm and involvement at school plays, homecomings and other

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Look Out For Us

By Sarah Rosenberg

Around April every year, the hallway leading into the commons is never empty. There are always people, whether they be teachers, students or parents, ogling over the Senior Wall.

The wall, which displays seniors' pictures and the colleges they will be attending in the fall, really isn't just a mindless tradition that has been kept around for years. It's a symbol of the hard work seniors have put in for the past four years of their lives, the shining light at the end of a tunnel filled with a multitude of tests and stressful applications. It's something that should be celebrated by everyone in the community, but apparently not everyone thinks so.

Recently, there has been an influx of complaints to the administration concerning the wall, prompting the guidance office to hand out a survey to all members of the senior class. The survey asked students to answer yes or no to two questions. First, should the tradition continue as it has for years? And second, would it be a better idea if the senior pictures were posted separately from a complete list of the colleges Blind Brook students were attending? The results came back overwhelmingly in favor of the traditional senior wall.

What I find hard to comprehend, however, is the fact that these parents were hoping to call in and to simply persuade the Administration that the wall

should not go up, and that would be the end of the matter. Yes, I can understand that certain students for various reasons may not want their picture up on the wall

and that their parents were only trying to look out for their child's best interests, but putting your picture up on that wall is entirely optional. The letter sent home to parents and students concerning the wall clearly stipulated that if you want your picture to be put up, it will be there

for the community to view, and if not, that's perfectly acceptable too. No one is going to sit staring at the wall for hours to see whose face doesn't appear on the wall. After all, some students don't end up putting their picture because they forget or are too lazy to bring in their senior photograph to the guidance department. Who's to know the reason why someone's picture isn't on the wall, assuming someone actually does notice?

Is it really fair to crush the excitement of a group of seniors and underclassmen who look forward to seeing their faces on that wall after a grueling four years of High School? Shouldn't we, the students have a say in this matter?

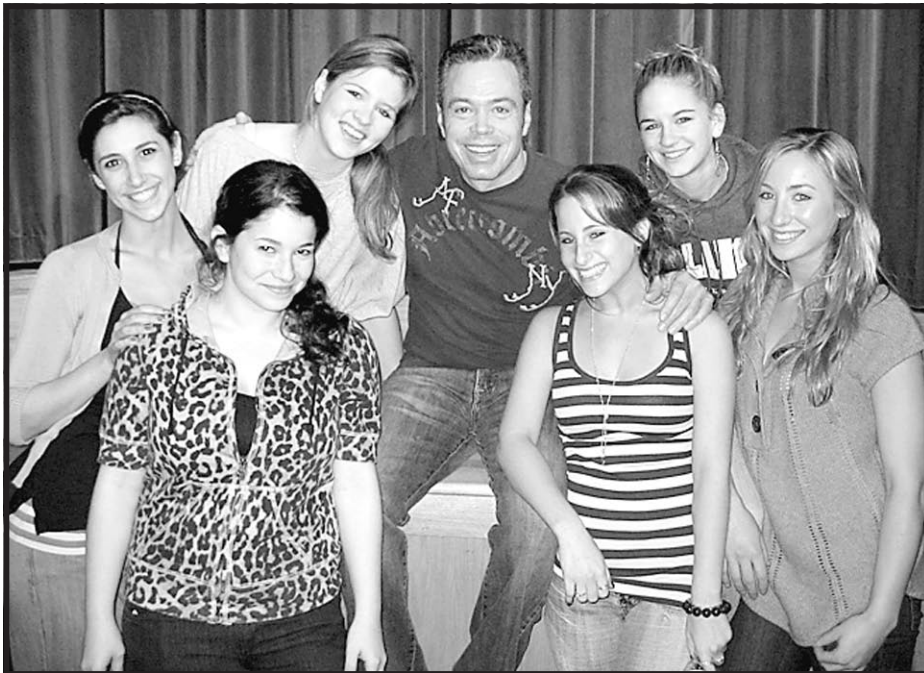
Well at least someone took that into consideration. Thanks to the Administration and guidance office, the senior wall is now up in the entrance to the commons. And students can rest assured that someone is looking after our best interests.



Sophomore Circus on May 4th!

Blind Brook H.S. Gym, 4-8 p.m.

Food, Raffles, Games... What Could Be Better?



Bernie McGrenahan, pictured here with (from left) seniors Jessie Komitor, Emily Brackman, Juliana Argentino, Taryn Klein, Sabrina Stockel and Danni Kaufman, performed a comedic and informative presentation for Blind Brook seniors.

Comedian Teaches Seniors Important Life Lessons

By Tal Ackerman and Kristina Creadore

Several days before spring break, comedian Bernie McGrenahan came to Blind Brook to talk to the senior class about substance abuse. Prior to the assembly, seniors knew very little about the show they were about to attend, and expected nothing more than a lecture on the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Little did they know, however, that they were in for a treat unlike any they had previously witnessed within the confines of Blind Brook.

McGrenahan, famous for his "Happy Hour Comedy Tour," travels the country visiting colleges and high schools throughout the school year. His approach towards communicating with students is a far cry from what most people would envision. Typical assemblies which focus on the dangers of risky behavior often fail at appealing to students on level to which they can relate. McGrenahan's show, however, managed to strike a perfect balance between humor and sincerity.

To start his program, McGrenahan used comedy to gain the attention of his audience. "He kept a very light atmosphere with his message," expressed senior Celine McBride. Seniors were nearly falling out of their seats listening to McGrenahan, who persistently kept them laughing.

After approximately half an hour of comedy, McGrenahan became more personal as he shared the emotional story of his life under the influence of drugs and alcohol. He described his brother's suicide and the ways in which such a tragedy allowed him to turn his life around and salvage his relationship with his other brother.

As a high school student, McGrenahan led a stable life as a straight 'A' student involved in various activities and sports teams. Once he began using drugs and drinking frequently, McGrenahan watched his life drastically spiral down the drain.

McGrenahan was eventually arrested and forced to spend time in prison. Embarrassed by his actions and heartbroken by his brother's death, McGrenahan looked for a way to make up for his poor decisions. Recogniz-

ing his propensity towards humor and the solemnity of his experiences, he decided to use take his comedy on tour in order to help raise awareness by approaching students in a unique manner.

"It was refreshing to not be preached to, and [the show] was hysterical," commented senior Eric Hamilton.

Senior Jacob Mikva felt similarly. "In comparison to other here-is-what-NOT-to-do-in-high-school lectures and assemblies, Bernie was a lot more relatable, making his message much more pertinent to our lives," Mikva explained. "[Bernie] knew what it took to come across to teenagers, and that there are certain realities we're bound to deal with whether or not we're told to avoid them."

McGrenahan's visit to Blind Brook was an enormous success. Seniors felt that his message was well-delivered and genuinely meaningful. "On top of the fact that Bernie's comedy was hilarious, his assembly also held a very powerful message that I feel was successfully conveyed to a majority of the senior class," expressed senior Andrew Creadore. "I think that a lot of the seniors greatly respected what Bernie had to say."

The Community Coalition, who planned the event with the help of school social worker Terry Frank, intentionally planned the program for the week before spring break in order to leave the seniors with one last impression of the dangers of binge drinking and drug use.

With prom and college in their near future, seniors will have more responsibility than ever before. "Hopefully some granule of what [McGrenahan] said will resonate with our seniors and will make them think twice before making high-risk decisions," remarked Frank in response to the outcome of the program.

McGrenahan certainly came across to the senior class in a way that no one has before. His clever blend of comedy and poignancy made his show one that seniors will not forget for a long time. Hopefully next year's seniors and those who follow afterwards will be able to share the same experience.

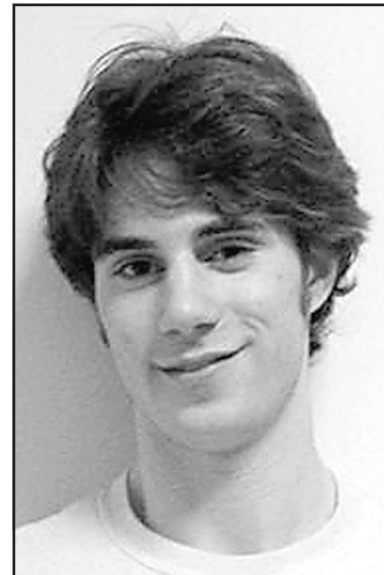
Student Spotlight:

George Levine

By Adam Fischer

Students are often quick to recognize the strength of Blind Brook's science department. Between its exceptional teachers and courses, the department has always been one of Blind Brook's greatest assets. The real measure of such success, however, lies in the students who are able to take something from what they learn.

For the past two years, senior George Levine has displayed nonstop commitment to his passion for the sciences. As a junior, he took AP Biology with high school science teacher Julie Hensley. Levine thrived in the course, which supported his interest in biology. As a senior,



however, his opportunities in biology were limited. While he chose to preserve his academic curiosity by taking AP Physics, Levine managed to find a more creative way to explore the sciences.

At least once a day (typically during his free periods or Activity Period), Levine pays a visit to Hensley's biology room where he works on a project unlike any that has been done at Blind Brook before. Using resources from the lab, Levine constructed an environmental chamber in which he planted various types of seeds and has been watching them develop into plants.

The project, inspired by Levine's own motivation and interest, began early in the school year. Although several environmental chambers had been allocated to the science department, all but one were being used. "When I noticed that one of [the chambers] hadn't been constructed or used, I asked [sophomore] Eddie Licitra to build it for me," explained Levine. "After he worked his magic, we had a brand new environmental chamber to take advantage of."

It was not long until the ambitious Levine planted his first seeds. Initially, he planted radishes, dandelions, bananas, various kinds of beans, basil, orchids and other seedlings. Amongst the many inhabitants of his miniature arboretum, Levine was quickly able to pick out his favorite. "My personal pride and joy is the passion fruit. Despite its 'slow and erratic growth' (according to the seed package), I have nurtured that bad boy literally from the ground up."

Since the start of his project, Levine has steadfastly devoted his time and effort to growing his plants. By consistently misting the chamber and taking care of each individual organism, he has been able to maintain the living environment and well-

being of the plants on a daily basis.

"I always knew that George was passionate about science," said Hensley, "but I underestimated how responsible and nurturing he could be, especially towards our chlorophyll driven cousins."

One of the most impressive aspects of Levine's plant-growing project is the way which he has fused his knowledge of the sciences and collaboratively worked with his science teachers. "Mrs. Hensley helped me install the lights and Mr. Latino made suggestions about how to use the daylight timer and maintain a favorable humidity level," noted Levine. "Dr. Sugentino was even

kind enough to donate an avocado plant to the collection."

In addition, Levine has been able to include underclassmen in his endeavor. "Quite often during Activity Period, I manage to recruit some over-eager biology students to assist me in the pruning and watering that is so pivotal to proper plant development."

"I'm a common visitor of George and his mad scientist plants," remarked Licitra. "I'll wander into Mrs. Hensley's room and get asked to muck around in soil or help him carry something. You just can't say no to a nice guy like George."

Students seldom take on projects as unique and time-consuming as the one that Levine chose. His initiative sheds light on how important it is to apply what is learned in the classroom to matters outside of the textbook.

"Mrs. Hensley consistently encourages her students to apply what they learn in her classes beyond simply tests and quizzes," commented Levine. "Growing plants seemed like a perfect place to start. The whole experience has been very stimulating and fun for me and I can't thank the science department enough for its continued and unyielding support."

"I think [George] has the makings of a great scientist," said Hensley, "because he's curious, he's an excellent problem solver and he's methodical."

She continued, "It's been great having George work on this project. I think his dedication and enthusiasm has been an inspiration to many students. I've had a lot of fun working with George on a daily basis and trying to figure out what works and what doesn't. That's what science is all about."

Rita Gianfrancesco Continued from page 9

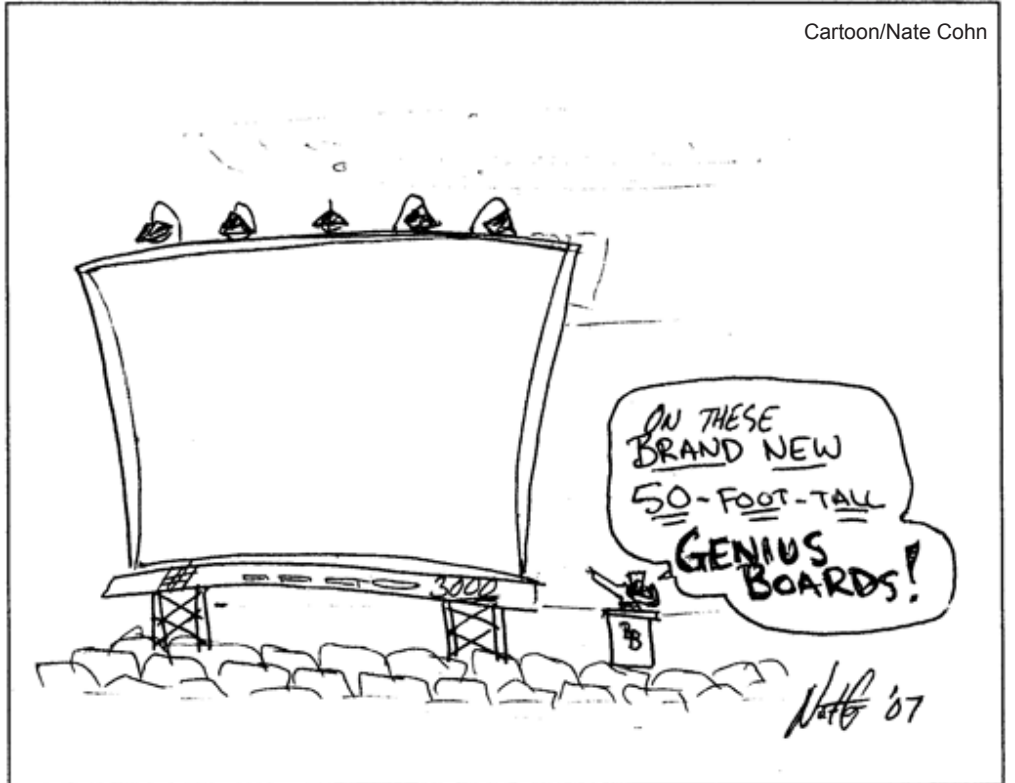
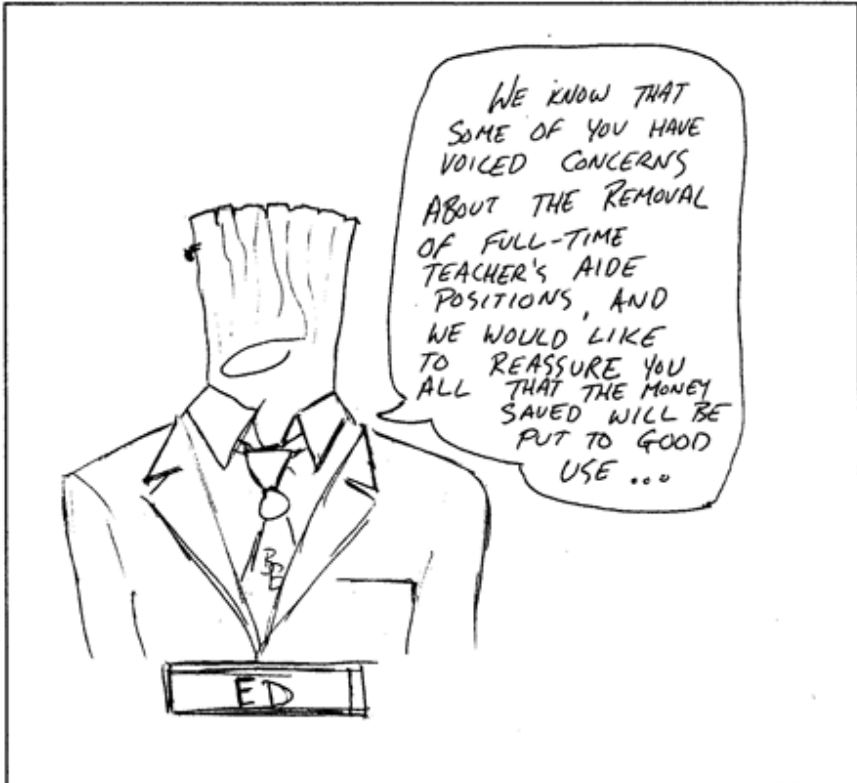
functions. "You can see [Mrs. G] out supporting students at sports events; she runs and assists with fundraisers, Congress and more," asserted Glickman. "She's reliable – the students know that they can count on her for help with personal issues in addition to their academics." Outside of school, Mrs. G loves spending time with her two daughters (one of whom is currently working at BOCES, following in her mother's footsteps).

When asked how she felt about watching the senior class finish their final weeks of high school, Gianfrancesco explained, "I am so close with all of the seniors. Gradu-

ation is going to be hard."

"[Mrs. G] is more than a teacher and more than an aide to most of us – she is also a friend," expressed senior peer leader Ross Burack. "She has meant so much to our entire grade."

Blind Brook has been lucky to have Mrs. G as part of its community for so many years. Almost every member of the senior class has been touched by her dedication in one way or another – whether by a "hello" in the halls or guidance in the classroom. The effect she has had on both students and fellow faculty members is one which will not be forgotten.



Cartoon/Nate Cohn

Spring Break 2007: One to Remember Continued from page 8

language.” Creadore went on to voice his appreciation for the lack of a curfew during the break. “It was nice getting away for a few days and being able to make our own rules.”

Several other smaller groups of seniors had equally as much fun on their Spring Breaks, yet in destinations which are less common at Blind Brook. “I had an awesome time,” expressed senior Sami Christal, who traveled with two of her closest friends to Aruba. “The best part was just being able to relax and not worry about anything. It wasn’t like the trips

that most Blind Brook students take to the Bahamas or Puerto Rico – it was very low-key and I loved it.”

Senior Lauren Pavelle had a similar experience. Pavelle, along with two of her best friends, spent part of her Spring Break in New York City. The three seniors explored the city and met up with friends from various locations who they do not see on an ordinary basis. “I had a really good time because I was with the people I’m closest to,” shared Pavelle. “For me, that counts more than something like going to the Ba-

hamas.” She continued, “I got to spend time with my best friends, which is important to me, and it was still so much fun partying in the city.”

Spring Break 2007 was an unforgettable experience for everyone involved. Seniors who traveled, whether to distant locations or to the Big Apple, enjoyed the sleepless nights, the countless hours spent laughing with friends, and some well-deserved partying here and there.

As many seniors might say, “What happens on Spring Break stays on Spring Break!”

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Arts & Entertainment

A & E Editor: Madeline Sims



Photo/Marnie Blum

Juniors Athena Lo, Shaili Das and Ashley Woychowski were selected to have their artwork displayed in the Rye Art Center's exhibit called Student Studio 2007. Not pictured: senior Shira Novack.

Student Artwork Showcased at Rye Art Center

By Madeline Sims

When the Rye Art Center recently displayed the work of High School artists from throughout Westchester, four Blind Brook students – juniors Shaili Das, Athena Lo and Ashley Woychowski, and senior Shira Novack – were among those featured. The annual exhibit, called Student Studio 2007 this year, ran from March 8th to March 24th. It showcased works ranging from self-portraits to sculptures to photography. Since four students per school were allowed to submit work, art teacher Meghan Petras and photography teacher Paige Buonocore each selected two exhibitors.

On being selected, Woychowski stated, "It was an honor to have my work regarded as 'show-worthy.'" Her chosen photo was of a sculpture from the Chihuly exhibit at the Botanical Gardens. Focusing on the sculpture's reflection in a pool of water, she then turned the picture upside down, so the sculpture resembled a UFO.

Novack also submitted a piece to the photography division of the exhibit. She chose a black and white hand-painted print of a cherry blossom tree located in her backyard. First introduced to hand-painting photographs with ink by Buonocore, Novack emphasized the important role her teacher has played in her interests in photography. "She has been great in helping me to explore and learn about different aspects of photography as well as teaching me new techniques in shooting and printing," Novack explained.

Woychowski echoed her classmate's positive sentiment regarding Buonocore. In addition, she cited former Blind Brook tenth grade English teacher Michael Mazzola as another strong influence. "He really encouraged me to pursue my photography more seriously and gave me many ideas about what would make an interesting photograph," she stated. Evidence of how important photography has become to her: Woychowski usually brings a camera everywhere (sometimes even three different types) and often does an hour of editing every day.

Das and Lo, both members of Petras' AP studio art class, each contributed drawings to the exhibit. Das' was of an early-model VW Beetle. As she had never before had her work professionally dis-

played, she was extremely flattered when Petras approached her about the exhibit. Das feels she has benefited greatly from studying art at Blind Brook, as she has been able to learn from Petras' style while adding her own individual twist to it.

Lo exhibited a charcoal piece, part of her AP art portfolio, depicting a man she had seen standing on a city corner in the middle of winter, holding a sign telling others to believe and have faith. Lo, who also said that she has been impacted greatly by Petras, is constantly inspired by other artists' use of colors and other techniques. "Different artists have different styles, and they kind of dare me to try something new," she explained.

While Novack does not plan on pursuing photography professionally, she emphasized that it will always be a part of her life. On the other hand, the three juniors all have the intention of pursuing a career in the arts. Das hopes to enter the field of industrial design, Lo is considering architecture or other occupations that require design skills, and Woychowski can see herself doing anything from designing ads to graphic design for clothing to media studies.

One thing all four certainly have in common, though, is that their lives and perceptions of their surroundings have been greatly influenced by their artistic passion. "I've always liked creating art because it's a lot like life. You start with a clean slate or a blank canvas and try to make something out of it. It usually won't go as planned and there will be a lot of tedious and frustrating parts, but you have to work past those." Lo continued, "You just hope that in the end, you've created something beautiful."

This concept of beauty is different for each artist. "I don't find the beauty as depicted in intensely edited photographs nearly as appealing as a picture that captures the beauty of imperfection," Woychowski commented. "In my photography, I try to capture the essence of everyday life and provide an alternative view of looking at the world. I want people to look at my photography and realize that there are so many ways to interpret not only the viewed picture, but more so, the world that the picture depicts."

Theatre Review:

Broadway Has Been Awakened

By Scott Winston

Rent has finally found its successor. The new musical *Spring Awakening*, which opened last fall at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre, is taking Broadway by storm.

Spring Awakening, based on the controversial Frank Wedekind play of the same name, is set in Germany circa 1891. The story follows the lives of a group of young teenagers as they try to get through school while exploring the mysteries of their bodies and their relationships with one another. The characters are so sheltered from the realities of love and sex that one character, Wendla, does not even know where babies come from. Other integral members of the story include Melchior, the rebellious teen, and Moritz, a teen traumatized by the idea of puberty.

Like the original play, the musical has caused quite a bit of controversy. It is fraught with references to sex and ultimately climaxes with Wendla and Melchior simulating the deed on stage, giving the audience a clean view of a pair of breasts and the latter's rear end. In addition to the

sex, this musical does not leave out any teen cliché. Throughout the course of the show, the audience is introduced to teen suicide, pregnancy, rape, homosexuality and abandonment.

Despite the story's hackneyed nature, the show more than compensates with outstanding music. The writers, Steven Sater (book and lyrics) and Duncan Sheik (music), believed that it was unrealistic for characters to break out into song in the middle of dialogue. Instead, most of the characters' songs are inner monologues. In addition, the actors either use handheld microphones that they keep inside their shirts or standing microphones at the edge of the stage when they sing. Interestingly, the band that plays the songs is located on the actual stage, and the actors play their own instruments at numerous points during the show. In fact, Sheik had a smash hit a number of years ago called "Barely Breathing." Standouts include "Touch Me," "The Dark I Know Well" and "Don't Do Sadness / Blue Wind."

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Munching with Matt:

Sonora

By Michelle Caley and Chloe Greenbaum

Though we were in the center of the Port Chester business district, we felt as if we were entering an ancient cave as we strolled through the doors of Sonora. The terracotta-colored walls, carved with intricate designs, successfully complimented the "Nuevo Latino" cuisine for which Sonora is renowned. As we were extremely eager to dine at this unique eatery, we arrived promptly at its opening hour of 5:00 pm. Since we had our choice of seats, we chose the table with a picturesque view of the raging storm that had cancelled school and flooded many a Rye Brook basement.

The crisp white linens adorning both the tables and the waiters suggested that we might face a few problems getting reimbursed for this meal. In any case,

we were ushered to our table where the waiter proceeded to pull out our chairs for us. We were thoroughly impressed by the restaurant's distinct ambiance, emphasized by the Spanish music emanating from the clay walls.

Our polite waiter brought over menus, which were filled with "Nuevo Latino" dishes we had never heard of before. After a long look at the menus, we decided it wouldn't be worth it to try to decipher what each dish entailed. Instead we bravely, and with horrible accents, ordered dishes we

didn't understand. Matt ordered asparagus ravioli surrounded by shrimp, while we asked for an order of red snapper with arugula enchiladas and also an order of skirt steak accompanied by lobster-filled fried rice. Additionally, we ordered yucca

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Three 'Three-quals' Hit Theaters

By Jamie Florindi and Sam Levine

What do *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Spiderman*, and *Shrek* all have in common? Not only is one movie from each series among the top ten highest grossing films of all time, but all three are set to come out with a third installment this May. These "three-quals" are highly anticipated by critics and fans alike. Here, a sneak-peek at what is causing all the excitement...



Spiderman 3

On May 4th, the final chapter of the *Spiderman* trilogy will hit theatres. Since the release of the first *Spiderman* in 2002, the series has grossed over \$777 million dollars and the films have been hailed as the greatest comic book movies of all time. They all capitalize on the use of special effects, which bring stories that once appeared on flat pieces of paper to life.

In *Spiderman 3*, Tobey Maguire once again stars as Peter Parker alongside Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane Watson. Other main characters include James Franco as Harry Osborn, Parker's best friend, and Thomas Haden Church as Flint Marko, or Sandman, the new villain in this *Spiderman* film.

When we last left off with Parker, he had revealed his true identity to Mary Jane and had saved New York City from Dr. Otto Octavius. Now, he is faced with a brand new arch nemesis: Sandman. The hero runs into even more problems when his normal Spiderman suit is turned black by an eerie substance, thus bringing out a dark side of Spiderman and his human-self. Will Parker be able to conquer his evil side and defeat the wicked Sandman? Fans will soon be able to find out as the release date for this thriller approaches.

Junior Jason Hymowitz cannot wait for the upcoming film. "If this movie is better than the first two *Spiderman* movies, which all the critics are predicting, viewers are in for a real treat."

Shrek the Third

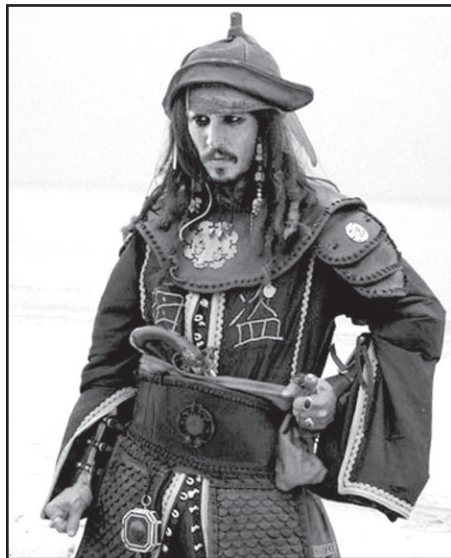
Shrek, the lovable, green ogre, is at it again with the opening of *Shrek the Third* on May 18th. Along with a few new extras, the movie stars the original comedic cast: Mike Meyers as Shrek, Eddie Murphy as Donkey, Cameron Diaz as Princess Fiona, Antonio Banderas as Puss in Boots and Julie Andrews as Queen Lillian.

Shrek and *Shrek 2* grossed about \$713.4 million combined. In the upcoming three-quel, Shrek inherits the land of Far, Far Away. He is unwilling, though, to give up his beloved swamp so he recruits his old friends, Donkey and Puss in Boots, to find the proper heir for the Far, Far Away throne. Meanwhile, Fiona and her girlfriends join in to stop the evil Prince Charming from



taking the throne himself.

Will Shrek be able to save his swamp? The answer awaits in this fun-filled comedy, set to open in just a few weeks. With a combination of animation and humor, Shrek has traditionally been able to attract children, teens, and adults alike. "I'd definitely see it," junior Harris Brett enthusiastically stated. "It seems like it's going to be an awesome movie."



Pirates of the Caribbean 3: At the World's End

Who doesn't love watching Jonny Depp playing Jack Sparrow? Fans will get to see Depp back in action on May 25th, when *Pirates of the Caribbean 3: At the World's End* is released. Along with Depp, Orlando Bloom (Will Turner), Keira Knightly (Elizabeth Swann) and Geoffrey Rush (Captain Barbossa) will also return. A new face on the waters, Keith Richards, will make an appearance as Sparrow's father. Considering that the first two films took in over \$738 million, expectations are sky-high.

In the third installment, Barbossa, Turner and Swann must sail off the edge of the map. They will be forced to navigate through betrayal as they head toward Davey Jones' locker to attempt to save Sparrow. Characters must choose their final alliances carefully as not only their lives and fortunes, but also the entire future of the Pirate way, is put into jeopardy.

"I can't wait to see what happens with all of the different characters," sophomore Sarah Taitz commented. "Hopefully, the movie will pick up right where the last one left off."

What is Art?

By Chloe Greenbaum

Confection, art, or sacrilege? Just in time for Easter, a new exhibit opened at the Roger Smith Hotel Lab Gallery in Manhattan, entitled "My Sweet Lord." Never has a name been so apt. This exhibit showcased a six-foot-tall, anatomically correct sculpture of Jesus...made of over two-hundred pounds of milk chocolate. Bizarre as it may seem, the shock value diminishes when one considers artist Cosimo Cavallaro's past art projects: spraying five tons of pepper jack cheese onto a Wyoming house and festooning a four-poster bed with 312 pounds of processed ham!

In any case, Cavallaro's Sweet Lord was not received too sweetly. The gallery was inundated with angry calls and even death threats coming from many devout Christians. Fearing its safety, the gallery was forced to shut down the exhibit. If the sculpture had been made out of a commonly used medium, such as clay or bronze, would it have been considered acceptable? If so, should the artist be punished for choosing an unconventional, yet nonetheless creative (and delicious), medium? Furthermore, what defines Cavallaro's spectacles of wastefulness as art?

This all comes down to one deceptively simple question: What is art? How best to define "art" is a subject of much contention. Art is an abstract notion, like freedom or existence. Therefore, people's perceptions and definitions of the term vary greatly. There is no erroneous perception of it, no counterfactual definition, just personal ideologies shaped by culture, personal experience, and the environment.

In the quest to discover what art is and is not, let's look at a few "artists." There is Andy Warhol, who stunned audiences with his paintings and sculptures of seemingly mundane objects such as Campbell's soup cans, Mott's apple juice boxes and Brillo soap pads. There is Marcel Duchamp, whose museum exhibitions consisted of urinals and toilets affixed to the walls. There is Jackson Pollock, who seemed to never want to leave his kindergarten days of paint splattering. Is this art?!

On the surface, it may seem as if these are mere cries for attention or gimmicks to obtain publicity. When one considers the artists' intentions behind their pieces, however, whether they are art or not becomes debatable.

Andy Warhol's goal was to bring light to the art that surrounds us. People rarely stop to admire the vibrant colors or the attention grabbing packaging of consumer products. Warhol's works show that art is in fact present in everyday life.

It adorns the aisles of supermarkets and decorates pantries. He transformed grocery stores into museums and cleaning cabinets into galleries. I believe that because Warhol's work has succeeded in exposing people to art in everyday life that might otherwise have remained unnoticed, his pieces can indeed be considered art.

During the Renaissance, the artist was viewed as an exalted authoritative figure. A few hundred years later,

artist Marcel Duchamp sought to mock this notion by declaring that anything an artist created was art. He proceeded to ridicule the Renaissance idea of the all-powerful artist by taking ordinary objects he found and presenting them as art in museums. These items ranged from bicycle wheels to rusty sinks to dirty urinals. Duchamp's works expressed his personal beliefs and thoughts, so who is to say that they are not art? No matter how eccentric or just plain weird his work is, it is still a means of creative expression.

The last of these three controversial artists is Jackson Pollock, a man who revolutionized the art scene by inventing the method of "action painting," in which he would drip, splash and hurl paint onto a huge blank canvas. While some people view his work as elementary and childlike, there is actually meaning behind every picture. He thoughtfully chose the colors and designs of his splattered canvases depending on the story he wanted to convey. For instance, Pollock suffered from alcoholism and often channeled his feelings of depression and addiction through the use of jet-black paint and severe designs.

Look in a stodgy dictionary and you might find a generic definition of art such as "the quality and production of what is beautiful and appealing." This oversimplified definition fails to acknowledge a few components that I believe are integral to defining art. First of all, it leaves out the artist; the artist's intentions and reasoning behind his works are necessary to determine whether something is art or not. It also leaves out the important concept of truth; art can portray truth without being either beautiful or appealing. Some of the most influential and significant art ever created has neither of these two sugarcoated qualities.

When it comes down to it, though, it is really up to the individual to decide what is art and what isn't; what is good art and what is bad art; and just what the confectionary Jesus actually is: a mouth-wateringly big chunk of chocolate or a meaningful and thought-provoking work of art.



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Featured CD of the Month:

Cassadaga

By Mori Einsidler

Though still thin and wide eyed, Conor Oberst is no longer the "boy wonder" he was once dubbed when he entered the music scene at the age of thirteen. Now a 27-year-old veteran of the alternative rock genre, and one of the biggest names at Omaha-based indie label Saddle Creek Records, Oberst "doesn't feel like a kid anymore." His sixteenth album, *Cassadaga*, which features songs written and recorded under the name

Bright Eyes, emanates the same maturity as do his long hair and broken voice.

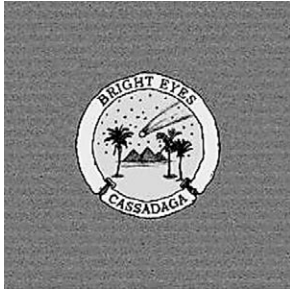
His album is named after a village of psychics in Florida, one of the many stops on Oberst's quest for self cleansing and understanding. The first song, "Clairaudients (Kill or Be Killed)," is a weak start to an otherwise strong album. A woman's narrative voice rambles on about Oberst's inspirational journey, while a sea of nauseating synthesizers wails in the background. Mid-song, Oberst's voice enters softly with an acoustic guitar – a breath of fresh air – until he is once again drowned out by a pounding ruckus similar to that criticized on his last album, *Digital Ash in a Digital Urn*.

This first track, however, is the only disappointment on the entire album. Much like the troubadours Oberst has drawn comparisons to in the past, such as Dylan and Springsteen, his romantic, nostalgic and self-reflective stories are veiled in melody throughout *Cassadaga*. Oberst demonstrates his disdain for organized religion and social hierarchy on the album's first single,

"Four Winds." As Oberst advocates, "The Bible is blind, the Torah is deaf, the Qu'ran is mute/ If you burned them all together, you'd get close to the truth"; violins soar in the background. The song is actually a step back in time for Oberst, and its country vibe is something one may have expected to hear on his prior album, *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning*. This song proves to be one of the best this record has to offer.

Cassadaga also includes Oberst's only piano ballad, "If the Brakeman Turns My Way." More melodic than much of Oberst's work, this song is blindingly beautiful. Rising and falling at the beginning and end of the choruses, his trembling voice carries with it a burden of painful experience that makes his crescendos all the more inspiring. The perfectly syncopated backup vocals add a whole new dynamic to the song, much like they do on the song "Classic Cars." In this Dylan-esque track, Oberst sheds light on his past relationship with actress Winona Ryder. He reminisces, his mind "turning circles in a memory maze," while folk artist Gillian Welch harmonizes beautifully with the sound of a love gone wrong.

Oberst, revered for his poignant verse and tremendous musical arrangements, has once again delivered an album that confirms his legacy of musical prowess. It is clear that he has found his place in the music world as Bright Eyes and that he knows he belongs. "Everything must belong somewhere," he shouts, "I know that now, and that's why I'm staying here."

**Sonora** Continued from page 12

fries and sweet plantains for the table, both of which ended up having unique and interesting tastes.

A waiter summarily brought to our table a basket of warm bread, which he served to us with tongs. A delectable red sauce accompanied the bread and served as a healthy and delicious alternative to the commonplace butter. A mere ten minutes later, three waiters came out with what seemed to be three works of art, but which were actually our meals. Five pieces of shrimp surrounded the asparagus ravioli, which was adorned with colorful herbs and spices. The red snapper was sitting atop two wraps containing vegetables and the meal was bathing in a vibrant orange sauce. The skirt steak, which had been contrived into a spiral shape, was served next to a perfectly cylindrical mound of rice fried with lobster and herbs. Although we were reluctant to mar this beautiful presentation, the meals looked too inviting to turn down.

While our taste buds were unaccustomed to this unique blend of flavors, we realized why so many others had raved about Sonora's South American cuisine influenced by a French-Asian infusion. The food was

utterly delicious and was only augmented by the dimly lit setting and exotic tunes. We were all extremely impressed and satisfied with our meals, but that by no means meant that we didn't intend to spring for dessert.

We decided on the *dolce de leche* cheesecake and the chocolate cake. A few minutes later, a waiter presented us with a dazzling array of exotic teas, and then another attentive waiter arrived with our desserts. Each dessert was presented on a white porcelain plate and looked even more beautiful than our meals. The slice of cheesecake was adorned with a sprig of mint and there was a perfectly spherical dollop of *dolce de leche* sorbet adjacent to it. The chocolate cake was round and was beautified by a dollop of magenta-colored sorbet. Both dishes were served with a spoon and each dish proved to be as delicious as it looked.

After we finished every last morsel of our scrumptious desserts and sipped down the last drops of our fruity teas, we motioned to the waiter for the check and waited in nervous anticipation. Although the bill was pricier than usual, we unanimously decided that the fantastic food, service and setting were definitely worth the splurge.

Broadway Has Been Awakened Continued from page 12

The production also features a very interesting set-up. The stage is small and bare. There are no major set pieces besides a couple of chairs and other small props. Seats are even available to the public on the actual stage, which means that it is possible at some points during the show to be sitting next to one of the actors.

John Gallagher Jr., who plays Moritz, truly steals the show. He brings an amazing amount of energy to his character, making him a stuttering, nervous wreck. He was in a rock band prior to his part in the show, which is obvious by the way he commands the stage during all of his numbers. The CD does not do him justice since it lacks

the excitement that can only be exuded from the stage.

One problem is that two actors (one male and one female) play all of the adult roles. This means that the same actor could play the teacher in one scene and a student's father in the next, which can get pretty confusing at times.

The entire show is reminiscent of *Rent*. Both explore taboo subject matter through exceptionally well-written rock songs and neither is your typical Broadway show. It was nice to see a production without the flashy lights, the glittery dresses and the huge dance numbers. Expect this outstanding musical to be around for a while.

Dear Blabby,

I recently heard that the school is seriously considering taking away Activity Period and I'm extremely upset. I'm not the only one who feels this way – my friends have constantly been whining about it too. I go to see teachers for extra help during Activity Period numerous times a week since I have absolutely no free periods. If Activity Period gets the ax, I might as well kiss my hard-earned grades goodbye!

Also, what will happen to clubs? My guidance counselor says that I need to belong to at least twenty to get into a top college, but how will I manage this if they end right before or interfere with sports? It is pretty annoying that the school is concentrating so much time and effort on trying to take Activity Period away just so two minutes can be added to each class. Does the administration truly think that those extra two minutes will make a difference?

I don't understand why the students don't get a greater say in the matter.

Sincerely,

Frustrated Fran

Dear Frustrated Fran,

I completely understand your complaint. I can't imagine that teachers are particularly happy about this proposition either. When are they going to provide extra help to those who need it? I guess students will just have to learn the material on their own. I'm sure it's no big deal to teach yourself the biology lesson about trophoblast secretions or the his-

Advice for the Unsound

Dear Blabby

By Sharon Friedlander and Dana Silverstein

tory lesson about the rise and fall of the Roman Empire.

I recently heard some rumors that they're considering giving each grade a separate lunch period and making all of their teachers available at that time. First of all, who wants to go back to the days of shoving food down their throats in twenty minutes? Certainly not me! Also, lunch should be a time when students can talk to people they don't normally see in their classes. I can't imagine students will be eager to give this up in order to do *more* schoolwork!

In terms of clubs, they are just way too important to be left in the dust. If I were in your shoes, I would be mad too. Get some of your friends together. Maybe students could try using their big mouths for good!

Sincerely,

Blabby

Dear Blabby,

When I walked into school after April vacation, I was immediately surrounded by newly bronzed seniors with neon-colored wristbands. They were discussing what happened each night in the Bahamas, how nice the weather was,

and how beautiful the beach was. This island has become the "it" spot for high school seniors to go on Spring Break to have their one last "hoo-rah" together.

Ever since I knew about the concept of Spring Break, I have always envisioned going to the Bahamas with my friends. The first time I ever brought the idea up to my parents, I vividly remember them saying, "You will NEVER go on spring break." Discouraged, I did not bring up the topic again until a week ago, when I found out that the forms for next year's Bahamas trip had been handed out. I took the forms home, skeptically handed them to my parents, and then slowly left the room, fearing the worst.

They called me back in a few minutes and gave me the response I had been dreading. I complained that all of my friends were going and that this trip was truly part of the "High School experience," but they refused to budge. I went on to explain that spring break is essential to any teenager's senior year; it's educational, it's instrumental in building character, it helps teach responsibility...ok, fine, maybe it doesn't do all of those things but it's still an excuse to have fun and sip tropical drinks

(non-alcoholic of course) with your best friends! Why should I be denied that opportunity?

Blabby, what should I do?

Sincerely,

Seeking-Spring-Break Susan

Dear Seeking-Spring-Break Susan,

No need to fret! Not going on Spring Break is not the end of the world, even though it might feel like it is now.

First of all, there is nothing wrong with going away with your family. They will probably take you somewhere a lot nicer than the hotels that the people in the Bahamas are staying at. From what I hear, some of the places that the kids stay at are dumps! You will have other opportunities to go away with friends in the future. Once you are in college, there will be plenty of time to experience the "free-for-all Spring Break fiesta."

Even though it might seem dorky to go away with your parents, when will you have another opportunity to go on a family vacation since college is right around the corner? As annoying as your younger siblings may be, this could be your last chance to bury them in the sand and throw them into the pool when they're least expecting it.

You can try to find an alternative location with a couple of friends if the family vacation deal doesn't appeal to you. Even if you end up staying home, I'm sure you will be able to find something interesting to keep you busy.

Hope this helps,

Blabby

Editorial

Hypochondriac Nation

By Marissa Barbaro

Picture this: You're watching an episode of your favorite medical drama. As the beginning credits fade into the background, you see a well-toned doctor in a stunningly white lab coat march up to one of his associates, a stern grimace plastered on his stubbled face. Almost immediately, the two practitioners launch into a heated discussion about their new patient—a nineteen-year-old female college student exhibiting a slew of psychological symptoms. This grave yet entertaining discourse builds until the tension becomes unbearable, ending with the ever-climactic, "What's your diagnosis, doctor?" The answer? "She spends too much time on the Internet."

Internet addiction? Talk about melodramatic, and not just in the cheesy T.V. sense.

As far as America's hypochondriac tendencies go, Internet addiction definitely takes the cake. Medical associations around the world acknowledge the existence of numerous symptoms linked to addictive behavior from twitches to tiredness to tachycardia, many of which are psychological in nature. Yet the entirety of these adverse bodily reactions is caused by a biological and mental dependence on a particular substance, the most well-known of which include cocaine, heroin, oxycontin and other highly dangerous drugs. While not every addiction is as severe as heroin dependence, all forms thereof have an actual biological foundation linked to the effects of a particular substance on the nervous system. Can we really lump the Internet in with crack and ecstasy?

The American Psychological Association has gone so far as to recognize "Internet

Addiction Disorder" as an actual sickness. Maybe I'm just old-fashioned, but the last time I checked, the Internet wasn't Vicodin; there is simply no possible way that preoccupation with the Internet produces the same physical and psychological symptoms as actual substance addiction. Members of the Internet addiction camp claim that people (usually teenagers or college students) who are, in fact, Internet addicts display behaviors similar to those that define criteria for substance dependence, including lack of control, spending more time engaging in the activity than planned and giving up other activities and problems.

Give me a break. Since when does spending an extra hour or two on Facebook carry the same weight as killing people for crack money? I don't know what fantasy world the APA is living in, but checking your e-mail multiple times every day doesn't constitute an addiction. People who truly suffer from substance dependence display tangible biological and mental signs, including alterations in the chemical pathways of the brain visible with MRI and other imaging techniques, physical illness, and personality changes. Perhaps I'm being close-minded, but until I see some concrete scientific evidence, I refuse to believe that Internet addiction is a bonafide psychological disorder.

Claims that young adults, particularly college students, are becoming addicted to the Internet are rooted in rapidly evolving social mannerisms. Today, adolescents rely on such media as AOL Instant Messenger and Facebook to satisfy their social needs and often fulfill academic and extracur-

ricular responsibilities via e-mail (without the Internet, being an editor on *FOCUS* would be much more difficult). Many college students admit to checking their e-mail accounts religiously or using the Internet as a distraction from their schoolwork, but there is absolutely no evidence that they are genuinely "addicted." The reality of the matter is that our world is becoming

tion disorder" and you've got a legitimate psychological condition on which to blame your bad behavior.

Not only are many psychological conditions over-diagnosed, but constantly attributing bad behavior to such conditions often prevents people who actually have them from getting the help and attention they need. Case in point: ADD. Many people think ADD is just an inability to pay attention in class, and every other kid gets diagnosed and treated. Yet there are actually children with a true attention deficit disorder who do not receive proper attention because the definition of the disorder has been distorted so extensively. People need to learn that psychological conditions are serious; they're not just an excuse for behaving poorly.

The solution? Own up. Take responsibility for your behavior instead of using the psych disorder cop-out so we can give all this hypochondria the axe. If we don't, it'll just keep getting worse, and the next thing you know, the DSM-IV will list senioritis as a valid psych disorder right along with IAD.

It's undoubtedly true that some people, myself included, spend too much time surfing the web, but overcoming these Internet barriers is a matter of time management, not psych therapy. The Internet is a lot of things, including a distraction, an attention absorber, a tool for procrastination, an annoyance and a fascinating source of entertainment; but it is not, by any means, an addiction. The APA should do us all a favor and get rid of Internet Addiction Disorder; at the very least, it'll save us from having to see it on *Grey's Anatomy*.

People need to learn that psychological conditions are serious; they're not just an excuse for behaving poorly.

increasingly centered on the Internet in both a social and a professional sense, but I'm pretty sure we can handle the changing societal norms without making the Internet a disease.

Perhaps the most apparent reason for the addition of Internet Addiction Disorder to our already long list of psychological disorders is the fact that we live in a hypochondriac nation where absolutely every adverse behavior can be excused for by some type of loosely defined condition. Kid stares out the window in class? He must have Attention Deficit Disorder; forget the fact that maybe, just maybe, he's *bored*. Student constantly gets into fights with his peers? It must be the beginnings of Anti-social Personality Disorder. Teenagers are spending too much time on the Internet? No problem; just slap on the words "addic-

Monday: Rehab; Tuesday: Back to Work

By Madeline Sims

The latest celebrity trend isn't a designer handbag or a new glistening sports car. Instead, it's a brief stay at one of the numerous high-priced private rehab centers, whether it be for alcohol, drugs, or depression. Britney Spears is one of the most recent celebs to have made headlines when she checked into Promises Rehab Center in Malibu, California, but she's certainly not alone. Among the endless list of high-profile entertainers and fashion figures to have taken a similar path are model Kate Moss, designer Marc Jacobs, actor Mel Gibson and singer Keith Urban. How can I forget Lindsay Lohan, who apparently received nighttime treatment at the Wonderland Center in LA while continuing to work during daytime hours?

Although it would be unfair to accuse the abovementioned celebrities of pursuing treatment purely as a publicity stunt, the recent upsurge in celebrities checking in and out of rehab centers does call into question their true commitments to changing their lives. Many high-profile celebs seem to view rehab as solely one of the many ways to restore their images, rather than a way to get serious help.

Unfortunately, these short trips to treatment centers, though seemingly just a waste of time for the celebrities, have extensive ramifications. They send a loud and clear message to the millions of Americans, including teenagers suffering from drug

and alcohol addiction or depression, that the recovery process can be quick and simple. By doing so, these celebrities are minimizing the consequences of abusing illegal substances and are making it seem as if addiction is effortlessly combatable.

Nothing could be further from reality. Research has shown that the only way to ensure a lasting recovery is to have the patient remain in treatment for several months, if not longer. Poorly designed programs, such as those intended to work in a shortened period of time, fail more often than not, and can leave the patient worse off than when he/she arrived.

I find myself wondering who is to blame for these celebrities' actions. Is it the celebrities themselves? Is it the treatment centers that admit and release them as if they were hotel guests? Or is it the media that continuously commends this type of behavior as not only acceptable but also fashionable and newsworthy?

The media, from tabloids to magazines to television news programs, constantly features stories broadcasting celebs' latest treatment center stays. Instead of providing the public with accurate reporting, they romanticize the entire rehabilitation process to the point that it no longer seems serious in the least.

Well, here is the truth: Alcoholism and drug abuse are major medical problems that ruin the lives of those affected and those close to them. A huge percentage of people who go to rehab relapse numerous

times and the recovery process is a long term one, not to be taken lightly. These facts might seem obvious but apparently Americans, specifically these celebrities, have forgotten them.

The fact that the media has so trivialized the issue is unfortunate for the future of rehab centers and those suffering from addiction and depression. Whether we like it or not, celebrities serve as role models for millions of Americans. When people find themselves in situations similar to those faced by their favorite singer or actor, they'll expect to handle it with the same simplicity.

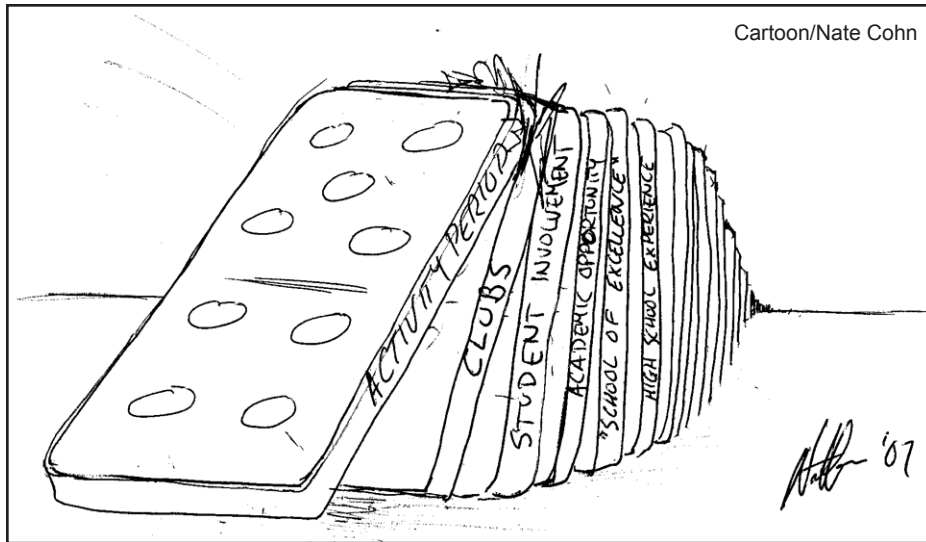
Take Spears, for example. It seems the facility she was staying at was willing to turn the other cheek to the fact that she was engaging in various behaviors specifically

frowned upon and even forbidden, such as using a cell phone and leaving to go shopping. Yes, people at the recovery facility apparently thought it was acceptable for her, because she is such a high-profile celebrity and all that jazz, to interrupt her treatment process to go for some "clothing and shoe therapy." Does something seem wrong with this picture? For more and more celebs, rehab centers have become like spa vacations. They're a chance to get away from reporters, sit back, relax and most importantly, come and go whenever they please.

It is sad enough that so many people spend months, and even years, denying they have a problem. Now, they are being encouraged by what they see in the media to deny what is truly needed for their recovery.

If you would like to respond to an article in FOCUS, please write to us at focus@blindbrook.org. We welcome all of your comments, critiques and opinions. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Editorial



Official Position:

Activity Period

Congress of Blind Brook High School

April 20, 2007

It is the official position of Congress that the elimination of Activity Period will have a detrimental effect on students and the school community.

The proposed reasons to support this position are as follows:

1. Many students use Activity Period to receive extra help from teachers because it is a time commonly available to all members of the school community. Unfortunately, students do not always have the same frees as their teachers and if Activity Period were eliminated, receiving extra-help would become more difficult, particularly for those students who have full schedules.
2. We understand that a plan has been developed to ensure that students receive extra-help, but we maintain that this idea (to work extra-help into a student's lunch period) can only succeed if the *specific* teacher is free during that *specific* period. Because of classes that span grade levels, teachers that teach several different grades and the inherent difficulty of scheduling, we contend that this solution will prove to be impractical.
3. Students who are entitled to double-time and time-and-a-half currently utilize Activity Period to complete their exams. Eliminating Activity Period would force these students to finish exams after ninth period and likely cause conflicts with after school activities.
4. The elimination of Activity Period would force club meetings to be held after school, negatively impacting both the number of students who participate in clubs and the number of clubs within the school. Clubs at Blind Brook were started for a reason and have been continued by current members for the same reason – passion. To suggest that some clubs are “fake” would not only be a fallacy, but an *insult* to those students who dedicate their time to that club. Furthermore, in a world where the college admissions process is becoming increasingly competitive, there is no reason to eliminate opportunities for students to build their extracurricular résumés.
5. While it has been said that sports will not be affected, we argue that this would only hold true in a perfect world. In reality, club meetings run long, practices start early and many students need time to prepare for both games and practices. Being a student athlete and a club president should never be mutually exclusive. Moreover, if all practice and game times were arbitrarily moved back, it would cause considerably later running times, particularly for away games and sports that already involve long practices.
6. Many students use Activity Period as a time to meet with their guidance counselors to discuss both scheduling and college issues. Because the guidance department often has mid-day meetings with parents, Activity Period offers a convenient time for students to get in touch with their counselors.
7. Many students hold after-school jobs (most of which begin at 3 PM); Activity Period allows these students to get to work on time.
8. Activity period offers science students an optimal amount of time to complete or make up labs that, for whatever reason, they need to complete outside of class.
9. Finally, the redistribution of the twenty minutes that currently comprise Activity Period among the nine periods would only result in two- and three-minute additions to actual class time. Twenty minutes of individual or small group instruction for students who really need help are more beneficial than the two or three minutes added for the entire class.

We believe that Activity Period is a necessary staple of the Blind Brook day. It allows Blind Brook students to broaden their educational and social opportunities while simultaneously keeping their academic performance the top priority.

The elimination of Activity Period would bring very few benefits and lead to a variety of new and unnecessary problems for our school. Simply put, we believe that the loss of Activity Period would be a serious detriment to our collective pursuit of academic excellence.

—This was written and revised during several Activity Periods—

It's In Your Hands, Blind Brook

Members of the Blind Brook community – the future of Activity Period is in your hands.

It's no secret that Activity Period – the twenty-three minute period at the end of the school day – has been put in jeopardy by the Board of Education. While they would have you believe that reallocating the time from Activity Period amongst the nine periods of the day would benefit the students and teachers, the Blind Brook Congress – comprised of students, teachers, administrators and parents – have come out against the proposal.

I'm not going to sit here and reiterate what you've either gathered from general grumbings or from the Congress' Official Position Paper juxtaposed to this editorial. I would be forced to fire myself as Editor-In-Chief for no other reason than being plain irritating.

But if you believe everything you have heard or read about eliminating Activity Period from Blind Brook's daily schedule, I have a very simple request that I must make of you. On May 7th, there will be a Board of Education meeting.

The request? Be there, and be heard.

Too often, Blind Brook students sit back and let events unravel uncontested when faced with unfavorable predicaments. For example, when the Administration came to all of the AP classes to

tell us that we were required to sign an AP Agreement contract, hysteria ensued. Students whined until we were blue in the face. And just how many people showed up to the subsequent Board of Education meeting to oppose this outrage?

A whopping five students – not exactly what I would call a formidable presence.

Simply put, it's one thing to mindlessly blabber on about how unfair removing such a beloved tradition is while walking in the halls with your friends; it's another thing to stand up and say it where it counts.

If you don't agree with what our Blind Brook Congress has put forth, naturally you have no obligation to attend the Board of Education meeting. However, if you truly care about Blind Brook and want to save Activity Period – one of the few vestiges remaining of our unique Blind Brook culture – then you must attend the Board of Education meeting on May 7th.

If enough students show up, this unified force might just be enough to save Activity Period.

Jared Hoffman
Editor-In-Chief

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