

FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

October 2007

Blind Brook Welcomes Principal Stark

By Jackie Mamorsky and Rachel Polonsky

After the resignation of third-year principal Anthony Baxter, the Blind Brook Board of Education looked to find a new administrator to take the reins. Instead of rushing the process, the Board thought it best to find an experienced and effective temporary principal, giving them time to look for a long-term candidate.

Blind Brook High School's new Interim Principal, William Stark, asserts that his foremost goals are to "find out what is good about Blind Brook and to find out what could be better."

Stark worked as a Social Studies teacher, college guidance counselor, and, eventually, as a principal at the Bronx High School of Science. He then served as Principal at Manhasset High School until he retired in June, 2006. Stark chose to return to academia when he was approached by Dr. Valenti, Blind Brook's Superintendent of Schools, because he missed the



Photo/ Stephanie Sherry

Seniors Andrew Benowich (left) and Cody McKinney (right) "hands in" with Principal Stark.

school environment. "Interacting with the students was very important to me and it was a very positive part of my life," Stark emphasized. "I spent almost my entire

career with students and I missed the interaction with teachers and parents." After initial conversations with Valenti, Stark quickly realized that Blind Brook would

be the perfect place for him.

Stark asserts that one of his primary roles is to set and carry out the educational goals of the community and assist the teachers and other administrators during his time at Blind Brook. He thinks of himself as the "principle teacher"; he plans to get to know students and maintain their educational success as a prominent goal.

Many of the Blind Brook students and faculty agree with Stark's strategy. "I hope that he will give students a voice in our school system," said junior Sonia Taneja. "Principal Stark should meet as many students as possible, especially the seniors, since this is our last year," concurred senior Rachel Fleishaker.

Sophomore Diksha Nagia had a couple of other goals in mind for Stark. "We could definitely use new bathrooms in the high school and maybe improved lockers for the sophomores, juniors, and seniors."

A few, however, have even loftier ambitions for Stark. "Fri-
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New Daily Schedule Shakes Up Blind Brook

By Sonia Taneja

"Change" has been a significant motif in the recent history of Blind Brook High School as the academic environment undergoes a constant nip and tuck. Most students have seen firsthand the physical construction of the school, the turnover of several faculty members and staff, and, most recently, the significant modifications in scheduling implemented at the start of this academic year. After countless meetings and disputes, the decision to change the format of the traditional Blind Brook school day was agreed upon and approved by the Board of Education and Teachers' Union.

Ideas for revamping the typical day arose last year as faculty, staff, and students began to question teacher availability during activity period, a timeslot originally reserved solely for additional instruction. "When students needed extra help, teachers were occupied with clubs or other activities," Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth said. "Extra help should be sacred." Since this seemed to not be the case last year, a class-based lunch system was created for the

2007-2008 school year. In order to be accessible, teachers share a lunch period with students in the grade that he/she mostly teaches.

When asked about the input of students in formulating this decision, Wermuth and Director of Guidance Christopher Griffin affirmed that Congress and Senate represented the voice of the students in meetings with Board of Education members. Superintendent Dr. Ronald Valenti noted, "It was the student voice that we heard to really keep Academic Help period... but, we didn't agree with having extracurriculars in this period, so the condition was that it would be only for academic assistance." Griffin remarked that the majority of the school system agreed that "there was some quality interaction going on between students and teachers," during activity period, and that it was, indeed, "dedicated to academic enrichment." Largely because of this assertion, the request to keep activity period was honored, giving students the opportunity to continue participating in both clubs and inter-school sports.

Teachers also played pivotal

roles in the deliberations. "It's a very substantial negotiation..." Valenti asserted. "[The teachers] were very professional about it." Upon entering the decision making process, the teachers, within a nine-period day, had two prep periods, and were debating on whether or not to use one of them for academic assistance. It was believed that it would be a very constructive use of time for the students. "The extra forty minutes opens up possibilities to link up students and teachers," Valenti continued.

At the commencement of this school year, the decisions to split the 2:20- 3:00 o'clock time slot into two separate periods, as well as to center students' schedules around an intra-grade combined lunch period, were instituted. "Students now do not have to toil with the dilemma of either going to their club or to extra help," Griffin said while discussing the benefits of the new schedule. Wermuth, in explaining the reason for separating the timeslot for clubs from that for academic aid, maintained that extracurricular

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News

News Editor: Aaron Wirshba

Big Brother is Watching You

By Benjamin Engle

"Thoughtcrime, they called it. Thoughtcrime was not a thing that could be concealed forever. You might dodge successfully for a while, even for years, but sooner or later they were bound to get you."

George Orwell's logic in his novel, *1984*, suddenly seems less implausible and more a reality. Whether we are talking on our phones, driving in our cars, Instant Messaging on AIM, or just having a wall-to-wall conversation on Facebook, they are watching.

They see your pictures, they see who you have called, and they might even know where you are spending your weekend nights. Who is this mysterious and infamous "they"? None other than the government, police, and school authorities.



Ever since the National Security Agency's warrant-less surveillance controversy, the government has been looked upon as *1984*'s "Big Brother," watching every move everyday citizens make. Some claim that these warrant-less wiretaps are necessary in protecting Americans during the current War on Terror.

In actuality, having the government involved is not always a negative thing for the citizens of Rye Brook. This type of influence keeps Internet predators behind bars and DWI offenders at bay by forcing convicted offenders to breathe into a breathalyzer before they can put their cars into gear. Sure, these various actions are helping us live safer lives, but has "Big Brother" gone too far?

Recently, President Bush asked Congress to renew and make permanent the "Protect America Act," an act that allows the government to listen in on all phone conversations between the United States and foreign nations. The FBI has even gained information about citizens through hotel, airline, and rental car records. Some people want to go a step further by tracking individuals through a microchip implanted under one's skin. These rice-sized chips can already be found in passports, subway passes, toll road collection booths, and as theft protection in car keys.

While Blind Brook students do not have to worry (at least not yet) about being tracked via microchips, there currently is a less complicated way for officials to track the activities and actions of students—Facebook.

Facebook, the social net-

working website that allows anybody to join a network, such as the Blind Brook MS/HS network or almost any college in the United States, has become one of the first places officials look when they are seeking out information. An increasing number of law enforcement officials and potential employers use Facebook as a tool to get a better understanding of the background and whereabouts of applicants or suspects. If there are incriminating pictures or posts, law enforcement officials are allowed to use them in their investigations.

The Facebook site says that they are increasing privacy controls to protect the information of

its users, but according to the website's user privacy policy, "We may be required to disclose user information pursuant to lawful requests, such as subpoenas or court orders, or in compliance with applicable laws... This may include sharing information with other companies, lawyers, agents or government agencies."

Facebook, however, is not a website that is in and of itself destructive and I am not advising that we all delete our accounts. What everyone can do, though, is make sure that those pictures from that recent "weekend get-together" are not available to just anyone, but only those with whom you wish to share them. Posting those pictures of drinking "apple juice" and wearing close to nothing might seem to be a good idea at the time. Chances are, though, you will eventually regret uploading them. If you post an image or text on the Internet, you might as well broadcast it to the entire world. The Internet is as private as your front lawn; everybody can see everything.

The Board of Education has recently created a new goal to keep students and community members safer. The aim is to, "Explore a High School pilot, grades 9, 10, 11 and 12, to expand district involvement through partnerships with the police, community agencies and parents that attempts to reduce the incidence of illegal drinking and drugging both on evenings school is in session, weekends, and vacation periods." Is Big Brother taking away the privacy of its citizens or just doing its job by trying to keep them safe?

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Seniors Adjust to Parking Buddy System



Photo/ Matt Gottlieb

The senior parking lot is filled to capacity each day.

By Adam Potter

One hundred two students comprise Blind Brook High School's class of 2008, almost all of whom can drive and have cars, but there are fewer than seventy parking spaces available for them at the school. One of the cornerstone privileges of past Blind Brook seniors, individual parking, is not realistic for this year's senior class. The administration asked the seniors this year to partner up and share a space with a "parking buddy" in order to help the school accommodate the seniors' cars.

With such a disparity between the number of student drivers and the number of available parking spaces, it is highly unlikely that any other solution will be found this school year. Last year, with only 85 seniors for the 70 spots, the administration was able to cram students into available parking spaces outside the student lot, but that is not realistic with the magnitude of this year's senior class. A proposal was made for the parking lot to be extended near the bus garage, but it was met with resistance, as recent construction already removed much of the greenery around the school and this would only continue to take away from the school's beauty. Additionally, since the current parking buddy system is working well and

the senior classes in the coming years are smaller, changes to the parking situation are unlikely to be made in the near future. However, with 150 students in the current fourth grade and comparable numbers coming up behind them, something will eventually have to be done.

Although it would be understandable for seniors to be upset by their inability to take advantage of a traditional privilege, Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth said she was pleasantly surprised that no students complained. "I found the students very adult about the situation," she said. "It reinforced my pride and respect for the student body." While students have not formally complained, they are still quite disappointed. "It's unfortunate that we have to carpool because we lose out on a privilege we have been waiting to gain for four years," said senior Jordan Silverman. Senior Harris Brett added adamantly, "I just can't stand carpooling."

Although these are valid points, the administration has few options to improve the parking situation. "It's tough for me to be the bad guy," Wermuth added. "Kids could have gone crazy, but didn't. If anything they were supportive and I felt very respected." Some

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Paul & Xiomy



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News Section

News Editor: Aaron Wirshba

New Daily Schedule Shakes Up Blind Brook *Continued from page 1*

activities, or any interests outside of academia, should be performed outside of the day's classes. Students' reactions to the changes, however, have been mixed.

Senior Shaili Das mentioned, "To open up one period for everyone was not worth it; [the teachers] don't have enough time because every student goes at once, so you can't get as much help." This opinion is consistent with that of many members of the student body. Junior Mori Einsidler summed up her opinion by stating, "It [the new scheduling system] definitely created more obstacles than opportunities."

Another drawback of this new schedule is that students have fewer periods available to schedule classes, particularly electives and advanced courses. Accordingly, sophomore Justin Starr stated, "The combined lunch periods actually caused students not to get many of the classes that they wanted in their schedules."

BB Welcomes Principal *Continued from page 1*

days off and Jacuzzis in the teachers' room," Biology teacher Mrs. Julie Hensley teased.

On a more serious note, Stark has already put several of his policies into action. He is assisting in the Middle States Evaluation, re-evaluating the Science program, and improving the Senior Options program. He has also established a new Effective Communication class for freshmen to replace the Composition class that was started three years ago. This new class is designed to improve the writing and public speaking abilities of the students and is currently being taught by Ms. Christine Colangelo. "I think [the class] is a complement to the students' writing across the disciplines," English teacher Ms. Robin Brizzi remarked.

Stark has also supported the implementation of a Research Literacy class for the 2008-2009 school year. The goal of the class will be to improve students' research skills, with an emphasis not only on Science, but on helping research capabilities throughout other subjects and in private lives as well.

"You really have to understand how to do research...It's going to be, I think, a great asset in Science, but we are also talking about having Mathematics components and Social Studies components," Stark explained in clarifying the importance of the class. Preparing for the new principal who will take over at the start of next year is another aspect of Stark's job. Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth said that it is vital

Nevertheless, the newly executed changes that have become part of Blind Brook High School have brought a wave of hope amongst many. Whether or not this revision will be permanently absorbed into the culture of Blind Brook is still an unanswered query. In order to gauge the new schedule's effectiveness, the school is developing an evaluation of the newly implemented system. This will include quantifying exactly how many students utilize these academic assistance periods, as well as examining the specific opinions of the student body using a survey.

Once Blind Brook's satisfaction with the new scheduling is determined, further steps will be taken to maintain or improve the new program.

While not everyone is optimistic, Griffin confidently remarked, "I think this community will adjust beautifully to the change."

"to have him set up some protocol in order to allow smooth traveling for a new principal who will enter this job in our school."

Stark looks to establish a solid framework that will provide students with the best possible program even after he is gone. "You want to provide the best performance that you can for that school from day one and it becomes difficult if you have got a whole set of things that are not set up," Stark remarked. "Part of my personal responsibility is to see to it that whoever is in that chair next year doesn't have to deal with the 'set-up stuff' and can devote time to the big picture."

Stark has only positive feelings about Blind Brook thus far. "I think it's a wonderful place in terms of hospitality and education," he emphasized. Stark has been enjoying his interaction with students, parents, teachers, and fellow administrators alike.

The Blind Brook community holds Stark in a similar regard. Nagia stated, "So far, I feel like he will make a lot of positive changes, and hopefully change our school for the better." Fellow sophomore Jonathan DiCano agrees. "He seems very responsible and he has previous experience," DiCano remarked. "I trust him to do what is best for the school." Hensley concurs as well. "From the interaction, he is well-educated and very supportive of this school. He supports the teachers, students, and other staff," she energetically shared. "He knows a lot about education."

Nine Student Scholars Honored

By Sonia Taneja

Nine Blind Brook seniors have achieved recognition from the National Merit Scholarship Program, which enrolls roughly 1.4 million students into its competition each year. Andrew Becker, Manuel Davila-Molina, Chloe Greenbaum, Adam Harris, Nicole Kelly, Kyle MacLean, Rachel Polonsky, Madeline Sims, and Aaron Wirshba were amongst the 50,000 students recognized on the basis of their Preliminary SAT scores.

Thirty-four thousand of these top scorers are commended students, as their scores were at or above the 96th percentile of those received by all college-bound seniors. The remaining 16,000, with even higher scores, advance to the semifinals. The Blind Brook community is extremely proud of Becker, Polonsky, and Sims who were all recognized as Semifinalists, an honor granted to less than 1 percent of high school seniors across the country.

According to the National Merit Scholarship Program, each state is allowed to pronounce a limited number of students Semifinalists based on the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors. The 2007 NMS Program Guide, which details the statistics for the current senior class that took the PSAT in October of 2006, stated that New York State had the fourth highest scoring index, preceded only by Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Maryland. As per 2007, students across the country who scored higher than 200 out of a pos-

sible 240 were commended, and those that scored higher than 219 in New York State were deemed semifinalists.

Blind Brook's three semifinalists now have the opportunity to advance to the next level of the competition, in which students must send an application, an essay, a guidance recommendation, SAT scores, and a compilation of other forms to apply to be a Finalist. While 90 percent of the Semifinalists will become Finalists, only half of those will be selected as Merit Scholarship winners. "I am grateful that I was recognized and I am eager to prepare for the next round of the competition," Polonsky commented.

"It feels great to be rewarded for anything—this included," Becker added. "It came as a pleasant surprise and I'm pretty proud of it." There is no doubt that Blind Brook is also proud of all its recognized students; their performance in the competition is truly a sign of distinction for the entire community.

"I think that [they are] outstanding students in the school and it's great to be recognized for such an accomplishment," Guidance Counselor Stephanie Jacobs remarked. "When you have the type of student who works this hard, you know they deserve it." Semifinalist and *Focus* Editor-in-Chief, Madeline Sims, emphasized, "Hopefully all three of us will be able to advance to the next round, but making it this far is definitely a huge honor in and of itself."



Photo/ Ashley Woychowski

Blind Brook High School seniors recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program (from left): Rachel Polonsky, Madeline Sims, Chloe Greenbaum, Andrew Becker, Aaron Wirshba, and Adam Harris.

Not pictured: Manuel Davila-Molina, Nicole Kelly, and Kyle MacLean.

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News Section

News Editor: Aaron Wirshba

BB Website Beta Debuts

By Matt Goldwater

Recently Blind Brook's website has undergone a significant overhaul. The website now boasts a completely revamped visual design as well as expanded content.

The new website provides visitors with a host of information not previously accessible. There are new letters from the principals of all three schools in the district, a photo gallery, and a Kindergarten video tour. In addition, there are new resource sections available to students, parents, teachers, and alumni. For students, these include study guides and links to the College Board and AP websites. Parents are able to access links that help find material for their children to learn while at home. Teacher resources range from curriculum maps to lesson plan guides to links to other websites. At the moment, the "Alumni Resources" page is still under construction.

After being aesthetically retooled, the website, which was predominantly white, is now a mix of blue and white colors. Furthermore, the previous links at the top of the page have been replaced by sidebars on both the left and right edges of the website. This design makes all of the informa-

tion much more accessible. According to Mr. Colin Byrne, the District Coordinator for Technology, "All information is no more than 3 clicks away."

The website has also received many technological enhancements. Most notable of these are the addition of flash animation, an integrated Google search sidebar, downloadable videos, and podcasts. Furthermore, Byrne promised more standard revisions as a staff member in each building will now update the content regularly. It is the district's hope that this will prove more efficient than the previous system, which required one person to update the content on the entire website.

A few years ago, Blind Brook integrated E-chalk, with the goal of giving every teacher his/her own individual page for each class. Unfortunately, many teachers did not know how to use the system and pages were rarely updated. As a result, E-chalk will be gone by Thanksgiving and teachers will use a new system for their Blind Brook email.

A new product titled Edline will be gradually introduced by spring 2008 as a replacement. Teachers will be trained to use these new pages, which in theory are much simpler. If all goes ac-

ording to plan, students will be able to check their homework online later this year.

The large task of improving the website was led by Christine Burton, Blind Brook's Director of Curriculum and Technology Integration. She was assisted by a committee made up of Blind Brook Middle & High School faculty members Alistair Burke, Byrne, and Jean Follansbee; Ridge Street teacher Betsy Murphy; BOE member Steve Kaplan; and community members Alan Oberrotman and Giorgio Rietti.

The students generally seem to approve of the new website. Junior Jonny Erner stated, "The new website is greatly improved over the old one. It's much easier to use." Nevertheless, he was slightly disappointed with the visual design of the new webpage.

Unfortunately, according to Byrne, there has not been sufficient student feedback. He recommended that students, along with parents and teachers, complete the survey located on the bottom of the webpage.

The changes are just about completed and readers can check them out by visiting the new website at www.blindbrook.org.

Big Brother is Watching You

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At first glance, the Board's goal may seem to be a complete invasion of privacy. What is really needed, though, is a healthy balance between district involvement and student and parent cooperation. After all, trying to keep students safe is certainly an applaudable goal, especially after the events that have taken place in Westchester County over the past few years.

In addition to the car accidents of last school year around the County, Mahopac senior and football player Justin Wagner was killed in a car accident on August 10th. Even the Blind Brook community dealt with an early summer accident on the Hutchinson River Parkway involving alcohol and a high rate of speed.

Obviously, Blind Brook has a problem. The question is: what is the cost of safety? Is it more police supervision of school-sponsored events? Is it harsher penalties imposed by school administration for offenses at non-school related events? Maybe it is even the loss of parental prerogative.

In the coming months, we are promised numerous community forums and meetings concerning the involvement of the school district in people's lives after the 2:40 bell and I urge everybody to participate. What is the cost of safety? This community of parents, students, and educators must decide. If students sit back and don't speak up, then in essence we are saying that our freedoms, specifically those included in the 1st amendment, are just not important.

Community Participates in Middle States Committee

By Melissa Prusky

The Middle States Committee, a body comprised of faculty members, administrators, parents, students, and members of the Board of Education, began a huge undertaking last year to evaluate all aspects of the Blind Brook School District over a two-year time frame. The process consisted of two phases, the first of which was successfully completed over the course of last year. The second, which involves the completion of the entire project, is scheduled to be finished this school year.

Although all of the research and effort is being done by members of the community on a voluntary basis, the eventual assessment of our school will be submitted to the Middle States Association, an independent group that helps schools undergo a process of self-reflection. This association allows for an independent, objective body to confirm that the school has, in fact, gone through this reflection process to the best of its abilities. In addition, it provides a basic structure off of which to base the organization of committees and sub-committees.

Last year, twelve committees, each evaluating one of the

twelve "Standards for Accreditation," researched and gathered information on what the Middle States Association deemed "every aspect of a school's education program, its services and activities, and all of the foundational elements necessary for a quality education program." Committees investigated standards such as "Governance and Leadership," "Student Services," and "Curriculum."

Christopher Griffin, the head of the Guidance Department who helped lead this project, described this first phase as a data gathering time, during which "volumes" of information were examined. "The process went beautifully," claimed Griffin. "There was participation from the community, and we were able to gather rich and detailed data in regard to the school district's mission and achievement." Karen Bronson, the Middle School Principal and leader of the "Governance and Leadership" committee, also sensed the success of last year's evaluation. "I think it's going wonderfully and that's because of the involvement of so many different members of our community and their willingness to give their time and effort to this worthwhile endeavor," she happily stated.

At the September 24th Board of Ed Meeting, a Middle States Planning Committee, made up of community member, students, and school personnel, was appointed for the 2007/2008 school year. In addition, an overall plan for the year has been determined, which includes developing a mission for the school district as well as identifying instructional and organizational goals for the next ten years. The strong effort put forth last year will help to achieve this somewhat daunting task. "I think we acquired a lot of great information last year, which will really make this year's goal easier to achieve," commented Rachel Fleishaker, a senior who was one of the students involved in the process last year.

There will be an April visitation by the Middle States Association, in which a team will come to review the school's process and documents, essentially providing the school with accreditation. The overall consensus seems to be that the Committee is going to be successful. "[The whole process] says a lot for our district and our high level of involvement," an impressed Bronson noted. "It is really a tribute to our community that as good as we are, we want to find a way to improve."

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Sports

Sports Editor: Lisa Ganz

A Little Thing Called Sportsmanship

By Max Linder

For any athlete who has cut his teeth playing in youth sporting leagues, the oft-repeated phrase, "It's just a game," constantly reverberates through his mind. Coaches, referees, and parents galore have all reminded us that having fun is more important than winning, and that sportsmanship and class carry greater weight than which team has the larger number flashing on the scoreboard at the end of the game. And yet, after persistent moral lectures, where is sportsmanship? News reports are filled with stories of athletes and fans who cannot distinguish between friendly and decidedly unfriendly, unsportsmanlike competition. What



has triumphed is the ill-conceived notion that winning is more significant than remembering how to win, and even more importantly, how to lose.

In conjunction with other problems in sports, the decline of sportsmanship was born on the professional level. Some of us may remember the embarrassing antics of Bobby Knight, the former head coach of the University of Indiana basketball team. In 2000, footage was leaked that showed Knight choking one of his players, Neil Reed. Knight is also known for hurling a chair onto the floor in the middle of a 1985 contest between Indiana and Purdue. The worst display of what professional sports have to offer came during a game in 2004 between the Detroit Pistons and the Indiana Pacers. Following a fight between Pacer star Ron Artest and Piston standout Ben Wallace, Artest had a cup of beer thrown at him by a spectator. He retaliated by leaping into the stands and engaging in a fist fight with fans. The altercation quickly evolved into a brawl, which led to players from both teams receiving suspensions and new rules regarding the interaction between players and spectators.

However, it would be erroneous to assume that the problem is limited to the athletes we watch on television. It is the role models much closer to home, our parents and coaches, who continue to disgrace themselves by forgetting what it means to be a young athlete.

In Kentucky, Roger

Bratcher, a father of young athletes, exemplified these incomprehensible actions perfectly. Bratcher was attending his child's sporting event when he walked onto the field and physically abused one of the umpires. One might presume, based on this decision, that Bratcher was watching a high-stakes contest for a championship of some sort, even though his actions still would not be rational. How-

ever, on the contrary, Bratcher was a dedicated fan of his child's t-ball team, a group of five- and six-year-old boys and girls. This reality goes from horrific to unimaginable when one learns that a five-year-old girl suffered an injury when she was struck in the face during the scuffle.

Following a baseball game in Oklahoma, the coach of the Varsity Yukon High School Baseball team, Larry McVay, attacked umpire Clendon Cannon in the umpires' room. After a tirade that included bruising the umpire's lip, leaving him with a black eye, and injuring the man's shoulder, McVay was forced to resign from his position. Apparently, he missed the lesson in which the coach tells his players to "leave it all on the field."

While these stories may seem distant and far-fetched, there is evidence of a decline in sportsmanship much closer to home. A majority of the members of Blind Brook's Boys' Varsity Soccer team plays during the spring in a travel league. During one of their games, the boys were treated to a front-row seat for what was a true debasing of the ideal of sportsmanship. In a game against Chappaqua, Rye Brook jumped out to an early lead, one which they would maintain easily throughout the game. Tension had been building throughout the contest, as trash talking abounded, and was repeated by members of both teams. However, the talking came to a head when a Chappaqua player attempted to choke a Rye Brook defenseman, earning him a red card and redefining the word "over-reaction." The episode was unfinished, as the aftermath of the game would reveal. The

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When School's Out Sports are Not

By Spencer Bernstein

When school let out this past June and academic pressures died down, the spirit of Blind Brook's athletes only became stronger. Preparing for the upcoming '07-'08 sports seasons, many Trojan athletes decided to continue practicing their respective sports, improving their athletic abilities during the summer months. Some played alongside fellow teammates, hoping to improve team chemistry for when the regular season rolls along, while others worked on individual skills.

Danny Fuchs, a senior and starter on the Varsity Soccer team, is one such student. He participated in a two-week soccer intensive camp called Vogel Singer in Boston at the end of July. Fuchs, along with the rest of the players there, woke up every morning at 6:30. After working on drills during the day, the 120 athletes were split up into teams to take part in scrimmages in the evenings. "It was very intense, but it was cool and fun to be a part of," said Fuchs.

Sophomore Megan Santasiero,

in preparation for her second year on the Girls' Varsity Tennis team, attended Nick Bolliteri, a renowned Floridian tennis program, which houses students all year round, giving players the option of signing up in weekly intervals. Santasiero played for one week at the camp, drilling day in and day out. "There were great instructors and coaches," she said, "and I was given the opportunity to play with many skilled players."

Following a relatively disappointing Varsity Baseball season, a handful of incoming sophomore and freshmen boys who will be trying out for the team in the spring decided to improve their level of play, joining the Rye Brook travel baseball team for its summer league. The team, playing home games on Blind Brook fields, participated under the Westchester Baseball Association, facing teams throughout Westchester.

Sophomores Camilo Davila-Molina, Jonathan DiCanio, Lance Freundlich, Kevin Goldberg, Kyle Hollander, Skylar Sack,

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Athlete of the Month: Brett Novick

By Melissa Kaliner

After just one game of the season, the Boys' Varsity Soccer Captain, senior Brett Novick, already stole the spotlight. Novick, appointed captain by Coach Joe Pomoryn, has worked tirelessly each fall since first making the team as a sophomore. He has certainly proved himself to be more than deserving of his starting role.

Every season, Novick continues to fuel the team with his offensive talent and leadership skills. "Brett is a natural leader who really leads by example," commented co-captain Harris Brett.

As the starting offensive center mid-field player, Novick's role is to transition the ball from the defensive side to the offensive side of the field. After gaining the offensive zone, he tries to set the forwards up for a shot or take one himself.

Novick scored one of the two goals in the Trojans' first game, as Blind Brook defeated Rye Neck, 2-0. The team thus far is 8-1-2, with seven goals and six assists coming from Novick. The senior has played

soccer continuously since kindergarten and is currently part of a Rye Brook travel team with most of his varsity teammates.

Last season, he helped lead the team to a sectional title with seven goals and five assists. There are high hopes for this Trojan team, which made it to the regional finals in 2006. Although many key players were

lost to graduation, there are fourteen talented seniors, in addition to many able juniors, on the team. Novick optimistically stated, "I believe that if the team continues to work hard and play together, there is no limit to how far we can go this season."

Novick never gives up and is ready to ensure that his team does not either. "Most of my success comes from great team play and the fact that every single guy out there really carries his own weight," Novick said humbly. With the team in Novick's hands, the 2007 Varsity Boys' Soccer season should be nothing short of success.



Photo/Thomas Ferrer

Sports Section

Sports Editor: Lisa Ganz

Sports Briefs

By Alyssa Chasanoff and
Amanda Gottlieb

Boys' Soccer

After a devastating season-ending loss last fall to Southold High School in the regional finals, the Boys' Varsity Soccer team is back and ready for another successful season. Led by Captains Harris Brett, Miles Fisher, and Brett Novick, the team is comprised of 23 juniors and seniors.

Photo/Thomas Ferrer
Ben Schultz gets aggressive against Keio.

The team thus far is 8-1-2, defeating Rye Neck, North Salem, Solomon Schechter, Dobbs Ferry, Pawling, Haldane, Tuckahoe, and Hamilton. Scott Kaufman, Brett Novick, Ben Schultz, Spencer Bernstein, and Andy Babat lead the team with 8, 7, 6, 4, and 3 goals, respectively. In addition, senior goalie Harris Brett has only allowed six goals on the season. "Our goal is to go as far as the team did last year and hopefully do even better," said junior Spencer Bernstein. "We have a really great team."

Senior Jordan Silverman concurred. "A lot of us have been playing together since we were young. I think this helps us know each other's strengths and gives us an advantage over many other schools."

Girls' Volleyball

Looking to add another banner to Blind Brook's gymnasium, the Girls' Varsity Volleyball team prepared tirelessly for the 2007 season. The team, which lost two key seniors to graduation, currently consists of 17 girls, 11 of whom are returning players. After falling just short of sectionals last year with a disappointing loss to Westlake, the team hopes to finish on top and regain its reputation as a powerful threat.

"Hopefully this year we will be able to get further than we did last year," said senior Amanda Wiener. "The team dynamic is very strong because we have all known each other for so long and get along really well."

The Trojans are 8-4, falling only to Pawling, Haldane, and Dover. Brooke Scelfo and Emily Howe lead the team in kills per game, with 2.2 and 2.0, respectively.

"The girls from last year have all done a great job, stepping up to fill the shoes of the seniors we lost, while the newer girls have really made a smooth transition to the varsity level," said senior Captain Ali Matthews. "As long as we keep a positive attitude, communicate, and stay tough in game situations, I have a feeling we will go far this year."

Girls' Tennis

At the end of last season, after finishing as league champions, the Blind Brook Girls' Tennis team was moved to a higher section. The transition from Section C to Section B meant that Blind Brook would be facing more talented and competitive players.

The team thus far, however, has an exceptionally strong record. Led by Coach Trudi Davis and senior captains Dana Silverstein, Michelle Caley, and Sam Levine, the girls are 9-2, falling to Byram Hills and their arch nemesis, Fox Lane. The girls defeated John Jay, Horace Greeley, and Scarsdale B twice each, and also won against Harrison and Byram Hills once.

The team still has to finish its second match against Fox Lane,

Photo/Taylor Fuller
Senior Captain Dana Silverstein.

which was called for darkness. "All the girls practiced and played hard throughout the summer to prepare for this season. We are mentally and physically stronger than last year and I hope that we can make a name for ourselves in this new league. We have the talent to win the league championship," explains Silverstein. The matches this season were all extremely competitive and close, but the Trojans brought their "A" game. According to Silverstein, "Every member of the team is important. No matter what position a person plays, whether they play doubles or singles, each and every player is contributing to the team's success."

Girls' Soccer

Although the Blind Brook Girls' Soccer team has gotten off to a rough start, with a record of 2-8-1, there is still potential for a successful season. The Trojans, led by senior Captains Rachel Fleishaker, Amanda Louis, and Nicole Safir, lost to Valhalla, North Salem, Solomon Schechter, Dobbs Ferry, Haldane, Rye Neck,

Photo/Matt Gottlieb
Sophomore Jillian Forbes takes a shot.

Bronxville, and Hastings, but defeated Keio, 5-0, and Tuckahoe, 4-0.

Danielle Treacy, a sophomore, who has scored three goals, is leading the team offensively, while senior Amanda Louis and sophomores Jenna Paterno, Jillian Forbes, and Chelsea Louis, have contributed

two goals each. In addition, 8th grade goalie Nora Fisher has been a significant asset to the team, with 76 saves on the season.

"We have been working really hard, and we so far have had a better season than we did last year," emphasized Safir. "We also know each other's strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled us to help each other out and play more like a team."

Cross Country

Blind Brook's Cross Country team this year is comprised of a group of dedicated seniors, helping to motivate a promising stock of underclassmen. The team is led by captains Adam Potter, Marc Finder, and Madeline Sims, and is coached by Global History teacher Judith Mella.

"Since we only lost one runner to graduation, the rest of the team has improved enough to pick up the slack," said Potter. "This year we have more seniors to provide leadership for the younger classmen; therefore, we should be just as good, if not better than, last season."

In its first meet this season, the team placed second out of four teams, including first place Keio, Vahalla, and Stepinac. For the full 2.5 mile course, senior captain Adam Potter completed it in 15:18, winning third-place overall.

At Van Cortland for their second meet this season, Blind Brook came in a close second be-

Photo/Blythe Duckett
Senior Rachel Aspis at the new track.

hind Dobbs Ferry. For their third meet, the Trojans won against Rye Neck. Potter came in first place overall.

When asked about his accomplishment and the validity of the rumor that it is the first time a Blind Brook runner has ever accomplished this feat, Potter said, "No idea. That's what I hear, but I find it hard to believe."

"Everyone is equally important in Cross Country because the team's score depends on the performances of all its runners, not just the best. Cross Country is not the kind of sport in which only the best players participate; the whole team runs and everyone tries their best to win their individual race. We do not have bench players or second strings like some other sports do," explained Potter. "I hope and expect that our team will win more meets than last year. I think we can be contenders in the league meet towards the end of the season."

A Little Thing
Called
Sportsmanship

Continued from page 5

Chappaqua player in question had still more to say to many of the Rye Brook athletes on the sideline, and in a most bizarre twist, had to be physically restrained by three fathers in attendance from charging at the mother of a Rye Brook player, all the while shouting profanities at her. Ironically, this game took place on no day other than Mothers' Day, a day dedicated to celebrating (and not cursing at) mothers.

On a less violent, but equally upsetting note, the lack of sportsmanship being displayed in high school sports is forcing the powers that be to change many of the rituals that are of intrinsic value to high school athletics. The tradition of lining up and shaking hands after a game is falling by the wayside, as soccer referees now decree that teams shake hands and wish opponents luck prior to the start of a game. This is due to a fear that squabbles which take place on the field during the game were leading to overly hostile handshakes afterward.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture where stiff punishments for unsportsmanlike behavior are looked down upon, at the high school and professional levels. On September 23, Atlanta Falcons cornerback DeAngelo Hall was involved in a series of disputes with Carolina Panthers wide receiver Steve Smith. Following a pass interference call, a personal foul call, and an unsportsmanlike conduct call, Hall had cost his team sixty-seven yards and had earned himself a \$100,000 fine. Hall, who is paid \$3.11 million per year, makes approximately \$183,000 every game. All in all, Hall still profited from this game, one in which he was remiss in his duties as a representative of the game of football and role model for children everywhere. I can assure you that the image of Hall shoving Smith in the facemask at the start of a play will not be eradicated from the minds of impressionable children anytime soon.

As a culture, we need to remember that amateur sports are not played to win, but played to learn. From sports, we learn teamwork, how to overcome obstacles, and of course, sportsmanship. However, by shifting the focus from learning how to win with class and dignity, to learning how to fully humiliate our opponents, we lose our perspective on sports, and the Roger Bratchers, Larry McVays, and DeAngelo Halls of the world lose all remnants of self-control. These are the kinds of people who need to be reminded that after all, it really is just a game.

Sports Section

Sports Editor: Lisa Ganz

Trojan Football: Celebrating Five Years

By Daniel Gold

This fall marks the five-year anniversary of the Blind Brook Football program. The team has overcome countless hurdles and after three tough seasons, even became a playoff presence last year.

In a hard-to-miss sign of team unity, a majority of the players recently shaved each other's hair into "Mohawks." Their spirit translated into their first win of the season, as they defeated Livingston Manor/Roscoe, 42-28, in front of a huge Homecoming crowd.

The team is feeling the effect, of a loss of key players from last year. Many graduated while leading rusher, Joe Denti, transferred, now playing for the Harrison Huskies. This year the team was looking to sophomore running back Kyle Hollander, to take Denti's spot but Hollander broke his hand during the fourth game and will be unable to return until the 2008 season.

Thus far, the injury plagued Trojans are 1-5. Last year, although the team lost in the semi-finals,

they finished the season with an overall record of 4-4. The players continue to carry the thrill of their playoff run with them this year. Sophomore Tyler Ketchabaw, a returning player, summarized last year's success with one word: Amazing. "We knew that we were coming into the playoffs as underdogs," he said. "When we found out that we were playing Bronxville in the first round, though, we knew that we could beat them."

The team did just that and faced off against Croton-Harmon in the next round. True to the team's usual luck, Denti got hurt early in the game. "We ended up losing that game, but we didn't leave the playoffs with our heads down," added Ketchabaw.

"The past few years, especially last season's playoff run, meant a lot to me and the program," emphasized senior Captain Jordan Zaslav. "We are relatively new to varsity football as a program, and although we reached the Sectional D finals, we hadn't been successful in Class C." The entire team is proud of past accomplishments.

"To be the underdog all season, continuously proving the paper wrong and getting the #2 seed in the section was pretty special," Zaslav remarked.

Also special is the brand-new turf field voters helped support in the school budget.

The fields have given the team a new-found sense of pride and confidence, as they now know that they no longer have to worry about games or practices being postponed due to terrible field conditions.

In addition, there is now more physical room to practice, the Trojans now have a true "home field," and there will be less time wasted as they no longer have to travel to the elementary school to practice. "The new fields give the football team enough room to



Photo/ Eddie Licitra

Michael Tomasula dodges an opposing player.

practice by ourselves for however long we want, not having to worry about the soccer team taking the field," Hollander emphatically said. "The new fields make Trojan lives so much easier now."

The team overall has come a long way since its 2002 start and it is satisfying to see the entire school behind the program. The team will really need some added spirit and support when they face powerhouse Dobbs Ferry on Saturday October 20th.

Buffalo Wings: A Sports Phenomenon

By Jeff Arvoy and
Rick Vavolizza

When many sports fans look toward a major upcoming sporting event, their minds immediately travel to something other than athletic statistics. The first thought in many avid sports fans' minds is an increasingly popular delicacy: Buffalo wings. In this current "sports age," it has become the norm to think of Buffalo wings and sporting events as inseparable from one another.

Sophomore Mike Tomasula said that, "Whenever I'm watching football games or other big sporting events, I almost always feel the need to eat some wings."

Freshman Justin Gluck said that at his Super Bowl party two years ago, the first entree that came to mind, prior to pizza or subs, was a delicious bucket of Buffalo wings. "What could better suit the occasion?" asked Gluck. "In my mind, there is nothing tastier than a spicy bowl of wings."

The pairing of sports and wings has not gone unnoticed in the restaurant world. Since its opening in Port Chester just a few years ago, Buffalo Wild Wings has, in fact, become one of the main attractions in Westchester for die-hard sports fans. The walls of the restaurant are plastered with televisions broadcasting all of the major sports games. For people who only have cable, the restaurant provides an opportunity to see a multitude of games on DirectTV that they would otherwise miss.

"It's a lot of fun to just hang out with friends and enthusiastically cheer on your favorite team," junior Becca Sweetbaum

remarked. "Buffalo wings just seem to complete the package and add to the fun!" Sophomore Ian Wilkin agreed and also gave the restaurant two thumbs up. The only predicament is deciding between twelve sauces, ranging from the classic medium spice to Caribbean Jerk.

Some Blind Brook teens go to Buffalo Wild Wings after a movie to catch the end of a game but others, such as freshman Sammy Steinberg, make the trip over to Port Chester just to hang out with fellow sports enthusiasts. "Buffalo Wild Wings is a great place to spend time with your family, especially if you are big sports fans like mine is," Steinberg articulated. "I love eating the wings, especially the extra spicy ones that make me want to cry. Sometimes I get so into the games that I don't even feel my mouth burning!"

Not surprisingly, the restaurant is busiest during the World Series, the Super Bowl, and, most notoriously, March Madness. It has become an unofficial Blind Brook tradition, in fact, for many seniors to take personal days on the first day of the college basketball tournament and head over to Buffalo Wild Wings to watch games all afternoon.

The layout of the restaurant makes it all the more appealing since no matter where one is sitting, the televisions are completely visible. "Buffalo Wild Wings is very quintessential and the bar adds to the effect," junior Vincent Bracesco declared. "The televisions all around the restaurant make you feel as if you are really there in the action."

When School's Out Sports are Not

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Mike Tomasula, Tom Triglia, and Rick Vavolizza, as well as freshmen Dylan Simonette, Sal Scappatura, and Mark Vavolizza comprised the team. Thanks to consistent practice and excellent coaching by Ron Freundlich and John DiCanio, the boys ended with a 12-7 record, a sign of hope for the Trojans' 2008 baseball season.

Trying to find the magic that led the team, just a few years ago, to the state championship, the Boys' Varsity Basketball team took a trip to Phil Martelli Basketball Camp at St. Josephs College in Pennsylvania. "Rooming and conversing with one another on and off the court really helped us bond and unite as a team," senior Miles Fisher said.

After tiring training and endless scrimmages between the senior, junior, and sophomore basketball players, the team headed home, riding upon new found confidence that will hopefully carry over to this year's season.

Since its first season five

years ago, the Trojans' Varsity Football team has become increasingly talented, largely due to the players' commitment and dedication to the team and the sport. Junior Rob Magliano, the starting quarterback, prepared intensely for this year's football season. Magliano worked out for three days a week at the Altheus training center in Rye; he also swam three times each week throughout the summer. Magliano also went to DeMatteo's quarterback and wide receiver camp in Somers for a week. After much practice, he hopes to be able to lead Blind Brook to an even more successful year than last season.

It is clear that student athletes of both genders and all sports have put in a lot of hard work during the off-season. Will this dedication lead to successful, winning seasons? Trojan fans of all ages are hoping the answer is yes as they look forward to a year of exciting Blind Brook athletic events!

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Features

Features Editor: Corinne Segal

Administration Tightens Reins on Clubs

By Corinne Segal

Negotiations between the Teachers' Union and Board of Education at the start of the school year have resulted in a complete reevaluation of Blind Brook's club system.

"Each club must have a relation to the mission of the school and school district," declared William Stark, Blind Brook High School's Interim Principal.

On October 15th, the Board of Education approved clubs, stipends, and club advisors for the 2007-08 school year. Following this procedure, both new and pre-existing clubs will be required to submit a complete list of members in order to obtain a one-year charter allowing them to operate.

A memo presented to faculty advisors on October 1st outlined the criteria necessary for the establishment of a new club. Proposals for new clubs will be approved by the Principal based on factors such as "uniqueness of the purpose," "suitability to the school program," and "benefit to the school community," as well as budgetary and health concerns.

After approval, members must draft a constitution: an official document which states the club's purpose, officers, activi-

ties, and the role of the advisor, which Stark emphasized as particularly important. These constitutions must be completed by the middle of November, at which time all clubs will be reevaluated and reapproved if everything is in order.

Students noted that as the end of the first month of school approached, clubs in Blind Brook remained virtually nonexistent. The delay can be attributed to continual discussions between the Teachers' Union and Board of Education regarding the new four-year contract, according to Thomas Glickman, Science teacher, faculty advisor to the student Senate, and BB/Rye Federation of Teachers Buidling Representative.

During the negotiations, teachers and administrators were able to reassess certain school policies, including those involving clubs.

"They got a lot pinned down before the start of school, but not everything. Clubs and extracurriculars were part of that," Glickman said.

As talks continued, Stark said, it became necessary to reassess the role of clubs in the Blind Brook community.

In order to operate in Blind Brook, Stark said, "[A club] must

serve the needs of students and be supported." In Stark's view, a "supported" club is one whose meetings are regularly attended by a substantial number of students.

Students hoping to begin new clubs are concerned that an emphasis on numbers will mean the demise of smaller clubs that have yet to gather sufficient student support.

"My view is that if there's student interest in a club, even if it's only a few people, they should be allowed to do it," said junior Sarah Taitz, who has plans to begin a club this year with a focus on the conflict in Darfur. "Say only five or six people want to do that. It's still five or six people, and in a school as small as ours, that makes a difference."

When asked about the necessity of the changes, Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth pointed out that clubs in Blind Brook have previously been fairly informal, due to the school's small size.

"As you grow, you have to start to formalize things," she said. Now, she emphasized, "[Clubs] are all going to have a seriousness of purpose."

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Wikipedia: Friend or Foe?

By Adam Harris

"Misleading," "understandable," "unreliable," and "useful." What can possibly warrant all of these titles? The answer is worth approximately 1.41 billion words: Wikipedia.

According to Wikipedia itself, "Wikipedia is a multilingual, web-based, free content encyclopedia project, operated by the Wikimedia Foundation, a non-profit organization. Wikipedia's name is a portmanteau of the words wiki (a type of collaborative website) and encyclopedia." Since much of Wikipedia's content is submitted voluntarily by users, the website has been criticized for its fallibility since its inception in January of 2001. Blind Brook faculty opinions regarding its suitability for school research vary from teacher to teacher.

"Wikipedia should not be used at all," American History teacher Shelley Jacobson stated emphatically. "There are too many good sources out there that provide a higher quality of information."

Other faculty members, such as freshman English teacher Mackenzie Gumpel, noted that much of Wikipedia's traffic comes through Google, which oftentimes displays its articles as top results when Internet users search for a word or phrase. "It provides a student with a watered down version of the topic they are researching," she added.

However, Judith Mella, a teacher in the History department, warned, "Just because it is high on Google's search results doesn't mean you should use it." The site "only gives you a basic understanding, so you shouldn't use it. Instead, find a documented source."

Jacobson completely agrees. "I think it is an interesting concept, but I don't think it's reliable," she said. "I don't like encyclopedias in general. Neither [Wikipedia nor encyclopedias] should be used for anything that requires scholarly or accurate information. I want the work of a scholar who knows his field [for academic papers]. Wikipedia is just the least common denominator of all knowledge."

Blind Brook's Library Media Specialist, Jean Follansbee has high standards for school research. "Wikipedia is fine for informal researching, particularly for more current topics," she commented. "It is not good, though, for formal research. When using Wikipedia, your source is always suspect."

John Latino, a teacher in the Chemistry department, pointed out that Wikipedia "provides helpful references for further research at the end." Following each Wikipedia article is a listing of citations in order to clarify which pieces of information in an article came from which particular sources.

Contrary to popular belief,

not all articles are vulnerable to public editing. Wikipedia has created a system to determine who can edit certain articles, and in order to reach the level of administrator, which allows the most freedom in changing articles, the user must be nominated by a system of peer administrators.

The most notable errors are often purposeful and added by users for the sake of a joke, an occurrence which has been termed "vandalism." For example, one user once edited thousands of article titles, adding the phrase "On Wheels" to the end of each one; for instance, this user may have renamed George W. Bush's article to George W. Bush On Wheels. To prevent vandalism such as this, new restrictions have been placed on who can rename article titles.

In the opinion of Biology teacher Julie Hensley, limited use of Wikipedia can be helpful to students. "I use it regularly, and I think it has incredible uses as long as you keep your bogus radar on," she said. In terms of accuracy, she said, it is "amazing for biological molecules and an easy to understand breakdown of technical scientific terms." She also stated, "In my own research I have never seen anything wrong."

A solution regarding whether students should utilize Wikipedia can most likely be reached by attempting to define realistic

guidelines for its use in school-related research. Hensley pointed out that a benefit of Wikipedia is its timely edge over most traditional encyclopedias, in which "you can't have topics remain up to date, or highly detailed popular culture articles."

Blind Brook Interim Principal William J. Stark said, "I used Wikipedia to look up Blind Brook High School in preparation before coming here, along with reading the school website and issues of *Focus*."

Stark expressed concern, though, that people tend to use it for convenience rather than accuracy. Overall, he remained relatively neutral. "I have seen errors on the site, but that's not to say I haven't seen errors on other websites too," he added. He also wished to stress that he is a "believer in academic integrity."

How, then, can academic integrity be maintained without compromising accuracy? The consensus among the majority of teachers seems to be that Wikipedia should be avoided for academic essays; however, by reading certain articles, a student may gain a better understanding of public perception towards certain events or better understand the basics of a complicated topic.

Instead of depending on it as a primary source, "Wikipedia can be used as a starting off point," Gumpel emphasized.

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Features Section

Features Editor: Corinne Segal

Who Would I Be Without Procrastination?

By David Levinson

It seems that life was remarkably simplistic back in the swinging 50s, the slamming 60s, and the majority of modern eras leading up to the Tech Age. Phone calls were directed to landlines without answering machines. Dinner was a family event, not an escape of Monday night football and instant messaging while writing an essay with your less dominant hand to gossip on the phone with the other. Today, there is always too much to do and too little time to do it in. Is it a prioritizing or time management fault that we have an addiction to procrastination?

"You are going to do your homework right after this song...fine, after this IM...fine, next commercial break," says the conventional modern day student to him or herself. The luxuries that the twenty-first century presents, particularly the endless abilities of the Internet, foster procrastination by capturing every student's spare minute. Day in and day out, I hear from fellow students that their accomplishments in school have been mitigated by the time they sacrifice simply procrastinating.

Perhaps it is a basic nature versus nurture debacle. This seems more likely after considering that restrictions have never been imposed upon us due to the older generation's lack of exposure to these nascent technologies. Or it can also be viewed logically in terms of the classical economic theory of opportunity cost.

A student has a timeslot from about 3 to 10 PM after school. Once you factor in sports, dinner, and other time-consuming daily activities, the average student is left with about five hours of free time to do work or more enjoy-

able activities. The typical "Rye Brookian" teenage bedroom contains a television, a computer with high-speed internet access, a gaming console, old yearbooks, and countless other distractions, giving students the ability to escape the mere thought of schoolwork. One can always rely, after all, on the ever popular rationalization, "I'll do it later --I've got time."



After forgoing priceless time for the sake of boosting one's "fun meter," it seems students are left struggling to get their work done before the birds begin to chirp. This cycle causes a ripple effect as teens develop abnormal sleeping and studying patterns due to procrastination. Time spent on a myriad of time-wasting activities could have been used for beneficial means, such as cleaning your room, completing SAT work, or starting a book that has sat on the shelves since second grade. A question arises: What can be done?

I believe it all boils down to the fundamentals of time management and self-control. If concentrating at home is an unfeasible task, than finish the work at school during free periods. If that is not a viable option, than do the work the second you get home before the dawdler inside of you hijacks your cerebrum. If every option fails, then you presumably have a severe case of Procrastinitis.

Nevertheless, time is of the essence, and we are only young once. So if playing a game of Madden or looking at recent photo albums on Facebook floats your seemingly unsinkable boat, then go ahead; just refrain from attacking your guidance counselor when she delivers the news of your plummeting GPA.

Class Sizes Rise: Cause for Concern?

By Kristina Creadore and Katie Ehrmann

Since the beginning of the fall term, many students have noticed that the number of students per class in several subject areas is significantly greater than the average class size in previous years. Evidence points to scheduling conflicts as a major cause of the problem, but many concerned community members have begun to question the effectiveness of learning in larger classes.

In spite of recent community growth, Blind Brook High School's population has remained within the range of 380 to 400 students over the past few years. Due to flexibility constraints when it comes to scheduling, though, different sections of the same subject are ending up unbalanced, as one often has significantly more students than the other.

Christopher Griffin, head of the Guidance Department, said that the cause of decreased scheduling maneuverability was the increased amount of "singletons," or classes that are only offered once a day. Singletons tend to be amongst the classes with the highest enrollment and the number of them has increased due to the rise of course selections available to students. For instance, Blind Brook's juniors and seniors have the option to enroll in any of six science courses: Applied Physics, Regents Phys-

ics, AP Physics, Forensics, AP Biology, and Science and Society.

When asked to address the issue of large class sizes, Griffin responded, "Are they really?" He explained that the guidance counselors work through the first week of school to adjust schedules before settling in for the year, and claimed that the problem of class sizes has, for the most part, been dealt with.

Assistant Principal Jane Wer-muth revealed that the general rule of thumb is to place 25 students or fewer in each section of a class, yet the number of students per class this year has reached as high as 29.

"The student body is getting larger, so the school is definitely going to change," Blind Brook Assistant Principal Jane Wer-muth noted. "Some parts of that will be good, like a larger course selection, and some will not be good, like losing the intimacy factor. Knowing that, we as a Blind Brook community should take this with a grain of salt."

"In general, it's good to have different experiences," said Griffin. "Some small classes and some large classes don't bother me all that much because it more accurately reflects the college environment and, ultimately, the work life."

Maggie Brennan-Juana, a teacher in the Spanish department, disagreed, pointing out

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Wikipedia: Friend or Foe

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Follansbee similarly said, "Without Wikipedia, you might not know all of the areas of a subject in which you should research further."

If Wikipedia is off limits in many cases, where should

students turn for information? Much to their relief, teachers have confirmed that there are plenty of equally accessible and more reliable online alternatives (not to mention print sources). The most obvious of these is the school's immense collection of databases. As for the non-subscription based internet sources, teachers recommend that students mainly use ".edu" and ".gov sites." Another reliable source is Metacrawler, which has a search engine that brings up educational websites that have been vetted for accuracy by scholars in various disciplines.

The bottom line seems to be this: Wikipedia has some valid information, but it cannot be trusted 100 percent of the time. Stephen Colbert, on a 2006 edition of "The Colbert Report," suggested changing the article for "reality" to be called "wikiality." To him, "wikiality" means that something is true if enough people believe it to be so. Despite Colbert's clever justification, teachers at Blind Brook expect their students to have slightly higher standards when it comes to their school work.

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Features Section

Features Editor: Corinne Segal

Blind Brook Courses Go Missing

By Sarah Sgro and Leigh Engle

As their summer of relaxation drew to a close, Blind Brook students anxiously awaited the day they would receive their schedules in the mail. They may have been hoping for a free period or a particular elective they prioritized in their minds; however, many were surprised upon realizing that the courses they had been anticipating were no longer available to them! Numerous returning students discovered this fall that certain favorite classes had been eliminated completely from the Blind Brook course catalogue.

One such class was Fitness Club, Ms. Flaherty's alternative to Physical Education. Last year, several periods of Fitness Club were in existence. Though students, such as sophomore Victoria Ferrer, were stunned to discover that this popular class was no longer a course option for the 2007-2008 academic year.

"I originally signed up for Fitness Club because I am not very athletic, and the summer prior to my freshman year, I had a slight knee injury. It was a much better option than sitting out of regular Phys Ed," said Ferrer.

Flaherty explained that although a sufficient number of students signed up for the class, it could not be offered due to scheduling conflicts. While she appre-

ciates the support of the administration, particularly Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth, she admits to feeling very disappointed, especially since she had ordered big exercise balls and body bars for the class that now have no use. "Kids who do not enjoy Physical Education are now being forced into taking the class," she commented.

Flaherty added that there may be hope for the course's continuation in upcoming years. "I am now beginning a Fitness elective for the seventh graders come spring in order to introduce them to Yoga and Pilates. Hopefully, PE will go down this path in the future," she concluded.

Students were also disappointed to discover that the number of classes offered by the Technology Department was scaled down for this school year. The Applications of Microsoft Office class, the Programming Languages class, and the Web Based Presentations and Communications course, all taught by Mr. Colin Byrne, were combined into one class called Computer Applications. Mrs. Charlene Decker has taken over this course since Byrne is no longer teaching in his new position as the head of the Computer Science Department.

According to Byrne, the recent removal of computer classes did not come as a surprise. "Since

computers are an elective, they usually come second to classes that students have to take," he commented. "Also, there are so few sections in each class, which makes it hard to sign up and get the classes that you [students] want."

Continuing, he reminisced, "When I started here five years ago, I was teaching five sections and within the past four years, the number of computer classes has been going down each year, partially due to various conflicts. It's very upsetting to me."

Long-time students of Byrne, such as junior Doug Melvin, are equally saddened. Melvin took several of Byrne's courses during previous years. "It's unfortunate that this year I am only able to take one computer class," he said.

"I think the school should bring back Mr. Byrne as a teacher," said junior Justin Penella, who attempted to schedule several of Byrne's courses in June. "We should have been informed about the change before signing up for computer courses. It is unfair to both the students and faculty."

Byrne, though disappointed, is hoping that the variety of computer classes once offered at the high school will return. "We put together a big proposal that will be presented to the Board of Education to build more classes, be-

cause the students miss out a lot on technology skills that colleges expect them to know," he remarked. "Because we're not offering these classes, we aren't doing our job to prepare these students for college."

Along with the abovementioned courses, Advanced Art and Applied Chemistry were cancelled because not enough students signed up. The English Department had been hoping to run a Literature of A Beat Generation and a Shakespeare and Cinema course, but they too were given the ax.

Wermuth compared the offering of classes to a market-based economy, in which the quantity of offered products depends upon the demand for them. "If there are enough kids to have a class, we have a class," she explained. "If twenty sign up, we have an AP, if fifteen sign up, we have a regular class, and if it is lower than that, we have to make individual decisions based on the class. We give suggestions to the Board of Education and they make the ultimate decision."

The administration currently urges students to come forward with any questions regarding the issue. "What the students have to say is important to me," Wermuth said. "If students have any concerns, I encourage them to come to me to discuss them."

Roving Reporter: "We've Got Spirit. Yes, We Do!"

By Christina Tempesta

While questioning students and other members of the Blind Brook community regarding the strength of school spirit, two distinct opinions emerged.

Junior Alana Pace remarked, "I think that in order to answer whether or not our school spirit as a whole has changed from year to year, it would imply that we have spirit in the first place, which is something Blind Brook needs to improve on."

Freshman Matt Lucarelli feels differently. "My first impression of Blind Brook school spirit is great! Almost everybody in Blind Brook shows spirit for the teams," he said.

School Nurse, Nancy Garret agreed. "Blind Brook school spirit and student involvement has always been strong," she said. "I feel that all students support their peers in all activities."

Freshman Amanda Tenenzapf chimed in, "Being a cheerleader here, I have seen that a lot of students have more school spirit than people think."

Scott Winston, a senior and President of the Student Senate, said, "I have definitely seen an improvement regarding school spirit in pep rallies, but I hope to see a better turnout at games this year. I have seen a great attendance at soccer games, which is awesome, however, I think it

is important that students go out and support their friends on other teams as well."

Teams and coaches hope that the new athletic fields, which were constructed last year, will help draw more fans to games. Regarding the question of whether they will have an impact on fan morale, Jim Spano, Director of Blind Brook Athletics, said, "It is a little too early to tell but people who do come are much more comfortable and have a great vantage point to watch the games." He also emphasized that the fields have had a tremendous impact on teams' ability to practice and play.

"I think that since Rye Brook is such a small town, people should be more supportive of the teams and come out to the home games," freshman Sage Klapper remarked. However, she feels that the general camaraderie between team members adds to Blind Brook's overall atmosphere of spirit. "Team members get along really well and it's nice to get a wave or a hello from someone in the halls that you know from your team," she added.

"If successful, Senate's new ideas will hopefully arouse energy amongst the entire student body," remarked senior Dana Silverstein, the co-chair of Senate's pep rally committee. "Over



Photo/ Eddie Licitra

Junior Becca Sweetbaum "pops up" from fellow cheerleaders at a recent Blind Brook home football game.

the last couple years, I think that Blind Brook's overall spirit has really grown. Senate, and more specifically, the pep rally committee, has and will continue to work diligently to improve

school spirit even more."

"Increasing the level of spirit in Blind Brook is a main goal of Senate this year, and we have a lot of new ideas planned to achieve this," Winston said.

Features Section

Features Editor: Corinne Segal



Photo/ Marnie Blum

New Computer Labs Promote Learning

By Allison Engle and Jenna Haber

Students arriving in September have noticed several technological additions at Blind Brook, particularly in the Library. "The new technology was installed in order to promote learning and improve the educational opportunities of students," said Jean Follansbee, BB Middle-High School Library Media Specialist.

Due to a shortage of computers in the IMC late last spring, Follansbee designed and proposed a plan that would not only allow for more students to utilize the library, but would also offer teachers a secluded instructional area.

Last year, there were 16 computers in the library, far too few for the growing number of Middle and High School students. Given the limited number available, more often than not there weren't enough computers for the students who wanted to use them.

In her effort to resolve this shortage, Follansbee approached Christine Burton, Director for Instruction, Curriculum, and Technology, and requested that alterations be made to the library so that it could accommodate 12 additional computers, bringing the total to 28.

"New computers will help accelerate the learning process," junior Michael Horowitz said. Now the library will be able to provide two full classes with computers, and still have machines left over for individual students who come to do work. In addition, 16 new laptops are available to meet student needs.

The library was also reconfigured to provide more seating for students because of Blind Brook's increasing population. Follansbee has submitted a plan to create a new instructional area on the right side of the library, rearranging library book shelves to create a new seating area with six tables. "To make the reconfiguration happen, Ms. Gorman and I had to pack up 300 boxes of books and then put them back up, so we're really dedicated to making the library better," Follansbee said.

The new instructional area accommodates a full class and will soon have a Smartboard. Although the instructional space will be reserved primarily for classes,

it will be open to all students whenever it is not being used.

Another notable addition is the new Mac Lab. Located in room H209, the room contains 12 new Apple computers that were installed over the summer. Art, photography, music, and video classes use the lab for class-based projects.

Though students are not permitted to use the lab unsupervised, staff members of *Focus*, *Altered Ego*, and *Spectrum* will be able to use the space to work on the various student publications with their advisers.

Junior Marnie Blum, Co-Editor of *Focus*' Design/Layout team along with fellow junior Phoebe Sherry, has used the computers in the lab at least once a week. "The new Mac computers are amazing," Blum said. "The program InDesign, which was installed on the machines, is great and is perfect for laying out the paper."

In previous years, the school newspaper was always designed professionally by the Westmore News. This year marks the first time Blind Brook students are laying out the paper on their own. To ease the transition, Karen Fecenko-Lyon, a consultant and former Creative Services Manager at GE Capital, has been brought in to help everyone learn the new program.

Furthermore, last year, Mr. Colin Byrne's position changed from Computer teacher to District Coordinator for Technology. He no longer teaches classes.

The OCL, his former classroom, due to its uncertain hours and lack of consistent staff supervision, was underutilized; therefore, using Follansbee's proposal, the computer lab was shut down and the space was converted into a French classroom.

Do Freshmen Have a Reason to Fear?

By Rachel Lumish and Justin Starr

In the hazing scenes of the 1993 movie *Dazed and Confused*, freshmen undergo humiliating rituals: girls are drenched in condiments and forced to propose to seniors on command, while the boys endure paddlings from upperclassmen.

Dramatizations such as these give freshmen the world over a natural reason to be apprehensive. However, at Blind Brook, the transition to high school does not seem to be so daunting. "I have not had a lot of students complain to me about how they are treated by upperclassmen," said Christopher Griffin, Director of Guidance.

From his past experiences, Griffin has observed that relations between upperclassmen and underclassmen are tenuous in schools with larger student bodies and those in which student activities are more difficult to monitor.

Jane Wermuth, BBHS Assistant Principal, said, "I don't see [seniority] as an issue. It's a small community; kids know each other, and I don't see seniors bullying younger kids."

Athletes, however, admit that a system of seniority commands the workings of many of Blind Brook's sports teams.

Amanda Louis, a senior Captain of the Girls' Varsity Soccer team, said, "I definitely think that the upperclassmen have a priority [over the underclassmen]." She added that when it comes to teams, seniority is more an issue of respect, rather than bullying or unfair advantages.

This respect, said sophomore Tyler Ketchabaw, shaped his experiences on the Varsity Football team during his freshman year. "When you're a freshman, or at least in your first year, you're pushed around a little bit more," he said. "You're on what's called 'scout team,' which is where the non-starters are made to try and simulate what the team will play like." During this process, he said, "...the older kids are hitting you but since you're younger, you're not really able to push back."

Inter-grade relations may change due to new schedules as the different grades are separated into various lunch periods. Since the grades are separated from one

another, students of different ages will have less opportunity to socialize with one another, potentially leading to feelings of estrangement.

Freshman Jaclyn Albalah said that because separate lunch periods divide grades, "you're just with friends you already know." Fellow freshman Taryn Spiegel agreed. "You don't get to meet anyone else."

Both voiced discontent that classes' separate lunch periods seem to discourage inter-grade mingling and make it more difficult to develop friendships with older students.

Megan Santasiero, a sophomore, favors integrated lunch periods. "[The old way], you feel less obligated to sit with the group of friends in your grade," she said. "You feel less pressure because the cliques aren't as in your face."

"The reasoning behind the lunch periods as they are currently designed is to allow students to have access to their teachers for academic enrichment," Griffin said. "Absent that reality," he conceded, "I'm inclined to favor integrated lunches."

In general, even if incoming freshmen feel apprehensive about future encounters with upperclassmen, their fears tend to diminish within the first few months of school. "For other students who are confronted and intimidated by upperclassmen, those fears can linger," Griffin said.

"Freshman year, I was scared of the seniors," said senior Shaili Das. "And this year, there's no seniority in anything. There is no respect level. And there should be, to a certain extent." According to Das, seniors should command respect from underclassmen, a tradition that she fears is quickly fading.

One tradition that seniors certainly relish is the senior lunch table, located in the middle of the Commons.

"To underclassmen, some people at the senior table can definitely be intimidating, senior Amelia Viner said. She added that the senior table does serve a positive purpose, though. "It's a good way to create a sense of community within the senior class since we're all leaving at the end of this year."

Class Sizes Rise *continued from page 9*

that she feels the need to move at a slower pace in her lessons to ensure that all students have an understanding of the material. She said, "There's no doubt that a larger class gets less done and students participate less." In language classes, participation can help shape the speaking skills necessary not only for language proficiency, but also for both

the Regents and AP exams.

Sophomore Jillian Forbes, a student in Juana's largest Spanish class, agreed. "Because our class is so big, it is much harder to learn," she said. "It's easy to get distracted with so much going on. I definitely think a smaller class would be better."

"In large classes, like my American class, it's harder to participate as much as you want

to and you don't get as much personal attention from your teacher," said junior Sarah Berk.

Although the administration prefers to avoid an excess of large classes, they are not overly worried about the current situation and feel confident that all students are continuing to receive the highest quality of education. "This [large classes] happens almost every year in every school I've ever worked at," Griffin noted.

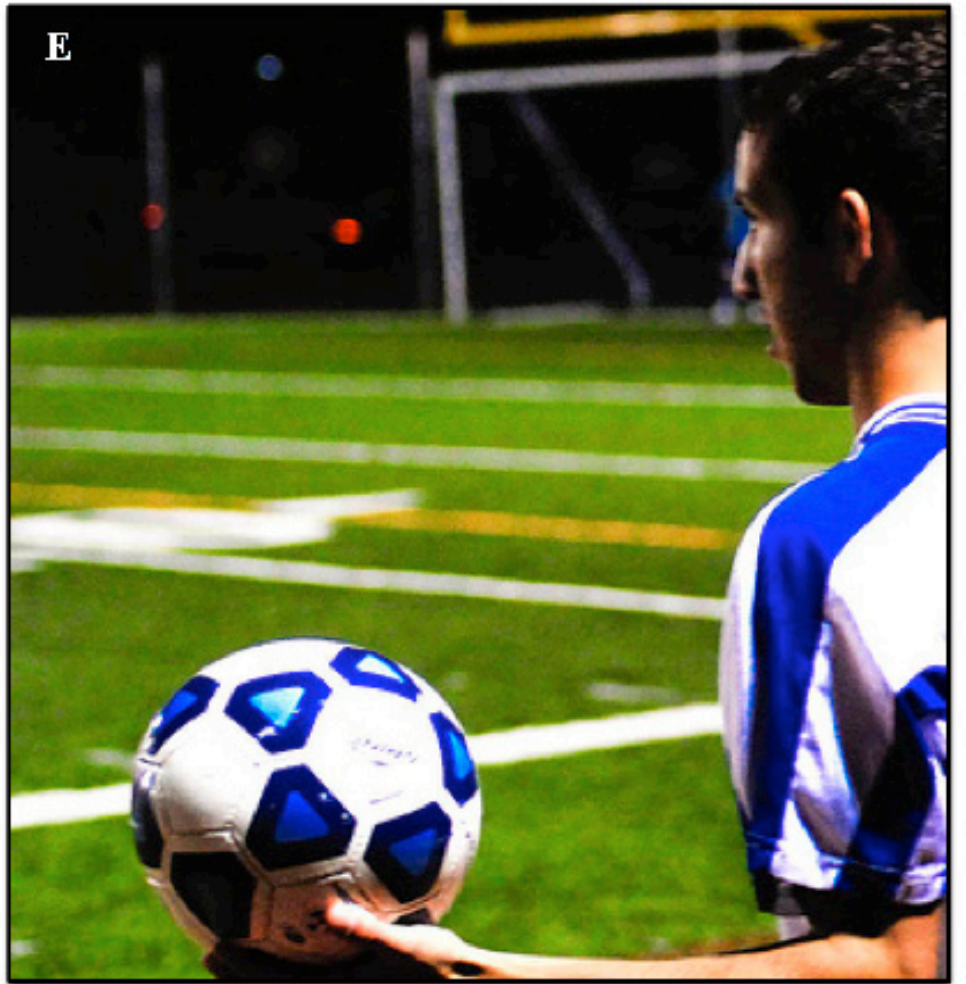
Homecoming



Blind Brook Spirit At The Pep Rally
Above Photo/ Nicole Jablon
Other Photos/ Ashley Woychowski



is a Huge Hit!



**Homecoming Weekend/
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 Photo E/ Eddie Licitra
 Photo F/ Thomas Ferrer

HOMECOMING GAMES	Score
BB Girls' Varsity Tennis vs. Fox Lane	Tied 3-3
BB Varsity Football vs. Livingston Manor/Roscoe	Win 42-28
BB Varsity Volleyball vs. North Salem	Win 3-0
BB Girls' Varsity Soccer vs. Hastings	Loss 1-5
BB Boys' Varsity Soccer vs. Rye Neck	Win 2-0

Politics

Politics Editor: Ben Lubkin

Introducing the Politics Section

When I was first approached to edit the new Politics Section of Focus this past spring, it was immediately apparent that the concept had great potential for both Focus and the entire Blind Brook School District.

By Ben Lubkin
Politics Section Editor

Essentially, this section will provide the entire Blind Brook community with an outlet to express their political views or concerns as well as stay informed about important current issues. Over the past several months, this exciting concept has become a reality, and it is with great pride that I present readers with the inaugural edition of the *Focus* Politics Section.

What exactly can one expect from this section? Articles will report on national and international news and political debates, using angles that relate to the Blind Brook community. In addition, updates on the Blind Brook Congress and Senate, as well as on politically oriented clubs within the school, will be juxtaposed with the external issues.

It is our hope that the Politics Section will allow *Focus* to become an even greater educational resource for students, teachers, and community members alike. If we achieve our goals as a section, articles will decipher complex political subjects, while presenting them in a comprehensible manner. In recent years, the political awareness and involvement of the nation's youth has

continuously come into question. Critics accuse teenagers of being more interested in their Facebook pages than in the socio-economic state of our country. In the Politics Section's Mission Statement, a declared goal is "to increase readers' understanding and awareness of student, local, national, and world governments." Through the execution of this ambition, the Politics Section will hopefully contribute to the reversal of this trend at Blind Brook.

This coming year is especially important in politics, as the United States heads into a Presidential election. Primary elections will begin this coming winter, and many seniors at Blind Brook will be eligible to vote. In the 2004 Presidential elections, the 18-24 year old age group had the lowest voter turnout. The nation's youth and young adults are quick to complain about the current President; however, if more had gone out and voted three years ago, the election results may have very well been different.

This year, one of the Politics Section's primary focuses will be election coverage. Quoting our mission statement, we wish "to help readers understand political



systems and prepare them as voters." This section will hopefully help Blind Brook students make better educated decisions when it comes time for them to cast their votes.

International news is another major topic that this section will be covering. This is extremely pertinent in today's world as the United States has been criticized for its arrogant attitude within the global community. By reporting on international matters, we will try to "promote global understanding and make readers better informed world citizens," according to the section's Mission Statement.

Perhaps what is most exciting about the section is that there are no limits to what can be covered. As the year progresses, we will continually explore our possibilities. Several weeks ago, we conducted a poll of the student

and teacher bodies to better understand the political environment of Blind Brook (see poll results on page 17). We asked respondents which issues most concern them in order to align our coverage with the readers' interests.

Focus is a student newspaper, and as the Politics Editor, I ask each and every reader to remain in touch with the section and the entire publication. I am optimistic that the Blind Brook community will seize the opportunity to become active contributors to the Politics Section by submitting ideas and suggestions. Politically oriented letters to the editor are welcome, and I invite any student that agrees with our section's philosophy to join as a staff writer. The new Politics Section is a great addition to *Focus*, and I hope that readers will enjoy and take advantage of the paper's expanded content.

High School Congress Update

By Nathan Marrow

On the morning of Friday, September 21st, the Blind Brook High School Congress met for the first time this school year. Congress is a forum for students, administrators, teachers, and representatives of the entire school community to come together to address issues deemed most pertinent to the student body. The topics discussed after initial introductions ranged from straightforward to controversial.

The first topic discussed was the planning of the annual breakfast for non-tenured teachers. Congress President, senior Andrew Becker, introduced the issue, and a motion to create a committee to organize the breakfast passed unanimously.

An update on the status of the Peer Leadership program was the second issue discussed. The program, intended to ease freshmen's

transitions into the High School through senior liaisons, will not be in place this year. According to Steve Kaplan, the Board of Education member attending the meeting, "The Board felt that Peer Leadership wasn't effective." However, he later advised Congress members to "keep the energy alive for the future."

Dr. Ronald Valenti, Superintendent of Schools, mentioned that he and Physics teacher Thomas Glickman, a former Peer Leadership advisor, were looking for other potential programs after which to model a new Peer Leadership program at Blind Brook. Spanish teacher Maggie Brennan-Juana suggested, "Peer Leadership seemed similar to the Human Relations Club...we could do it in the club." Parent Teacher Association representative Marlene Adler, though, said that there would not be an equal

number of freshmen and seniors in the club. "Freshmen wouldn't see the value in the experience," she added. A motion was passed unanimously creating a committee to study Peer Leadership.

A new BOE policy to discipline students in their out of school activities was also discussed. "Every year there seems to be behavior problems," Kaplan began. "A current proposal is to extend the current [discipline] policy to cover after school, weekends, and holiday breaks." Student opposition to the idea was extremely apparent. "Parents already discipline their children," senior Congress member Aaron Wirshba pointed out. "Are further consequences going to hurt students even more?"

"Extending the school's discipline policy to events and actions outside of the school's boundaries will deter students from seeking

guidance from the school's counseling staff," remarked freshman Congress member Jacob Kupin after the meeting. "This will lead to an unwanted increase in the bad behavior that this policy is trying to prevent." The advisor to Congress, US History teacher Shelly Jacobson, suggested that a committee be formed. However, Kaplan and Valenti pointed out that there will be a BOE presentation and a forum led by Interim High School Principal William Stark regarding the issue. The discussion was tabled.

Next on the agenda was the student parking issue, as questions were raised regarding the possibility of a new parking lot. "It was not put in the budget," Kaplan said in response. "At the end of the day, there will never be enough [student parking] spaces." Kaplan did acknowledge, however

Please turn to Page 16

Politics Section

Politics Editor: Ben Lubkin



Photo/Keren Mikva

Student Journal:

Our First Protest Rally

By Keren Mikva and Raz Nimrodi

On a warm fall day, September 24th, the two of us awoke, excited to be a part of history (and to miss a day of school!). After stocking up on snacks from the One Stop Shop in Port Chester, we voyaged on a one-way train to paradise, a place known by most as New York City. Upon arriving, we made the trek over to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, located across the street from the UN General Assembly. The occasion? Our first-ever protest rally.

Surrounded by Israeli flags and yarmulkes, we wandered around, taking in the inspiring magnitude of the crowd that had gathered. The protest had been organized in reaction to the speeches given by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the UN and Columbia University.

As novice protestors, we were concerned that we might be out of place. Luckily for us, this was not the case, and we immediately blended right in. We were joined by throngs of students, many from Jewish high schools around the area. Upon arrival we immediately joined in the group chant of "Stop him now!" The crowd at some points looked like a sea of signs. Several read, "Israel is on the map to stay," "On religious freedom Israel is right," "Christians united for Israel," and even "Hitler lives?" above a picture of Ahmadinejad with his limbs in the shape of a swastika.

It was thrilling to hear numerous speakers go up to the podium and passionately elaborate on their views. Many of them talked about the need to stop the Iranian president from abusing his own people and perpetuating racist and anti-Semitic ideas.

We were inspired to take a stand against this tyrant whose views are distorted and removed from reality. He claims that the Holocaust never happened and that Israel basically does not deserve to exist. While the United States may be obligated to let him speak at the UN (given that he is the Iranian President and Iran is a UN member), we and our fellow protesters could not understand why he was invited to speak at Columbia. The fact that the Dean gave a fifteen-minute introduction insulting Ahmadinejad was bizarre, and simply confirms that the decision to invite him to speak at the university was a misguided one.

Overall, our experience outside of the UN was certainly eye-opening, and it was great to see so many people united to fight against hateful speech. Are we planning on becoming full-time protesters? Probably not. But we would certainly consider taking part in another demonstration if we felt passionately about an issue in the future. Maybe we can even convince other Blind Brook students to exercise their rights as citizens and join us next time around.

Failing Debates

By Dan Levy

As I sat watching the Democratic presidential debate on the evening of Sunday, September 9th, I felt a bit of déjà-vu. I had watched the Republican debate the previous Wednesday, and the participants seemed to be repeating the same sort of statements. The candidates issued promise after promise detailing how they would improve the current system. A question immediately came to mind while I was watching both debates: Can these candidates really keep their wonderful sounding promises?

I tried to recall the debates preceding the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, as I became curious about what promises and declarations George W. Bush had made on his way to the presidency.

In 2004, Bush told America that we had won the War in Iraq, and that the fledgling Iraqi government was making significant progress. He also declared that a new Iraqi Army was being trained, and that they were assisting American forces in weeding out remaining pockets of insurgency. Fast-forward three years; additional American soldiers are dying in Iraq each day and the war is anything but won. I couldn't help but having a hard time trusting what was being said on my television screen this time around.

As I continued to watch the current debates, my frustration only increased. What especially irritated me was the fact that whenever a candidate spoke about a complicated issue such as gay rights or immigration, he/she always seemed to have a perfect-sounding answer. The problem was that none of the candidates were actually saying anything meaningful.

When Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter of California, for example, was asked for his take on the immigration problem, he simply replied, "I will build the wall." Or when Democrat John Edwards, former senator of North Carolina, was asked about his views on immigration, he criticized the current president for "using every tool available to divide the country." Edwards, though, failed to provide the ways in which he will fix this problem. Even if he had, would he really keep any of his promises, or will his words fall to the wayside as did the current president's prior statements?

It is a sad fact that these debates are solely ways for the candidates to promote their campaigns, rather than being a discussion of actual issues that matter to the American people.

In other words, the debates are simply a great struggle for position. The votes matter more to the candidates than the issues, and they all love to criticize one another whenever possible. I was astonished by how much dirt the candidates had on each other as well as on President Bush.

On the whole, however, we must look at these debates from a broader perspective. What one comes to realize is that since the debates are an offshoot

of the democratic system, it is not unreasonable to claim that their ineffectiveness is truly an indictment of democracy itself. Although we may think that we have the best form of government in the world, democracy in this instance proves to be quite weak.

Essentially, what characterizes a government as a democracy, a monarchy, or a tyranny is how its leaders are chosen. In our case, it is by election. But in order to win elections, candidates are forced to cater to voters as much as possible. This often causes politicians to flip flop their positions on issues, only saying what they think will make them more electable. This flip flopping has become increasingly evident recently, as demonstrated by the highly criticized change of Senator Hilary Clinton from war-supporter to war-critic. Many assert that she only changed her position to match the Democratic Party's general ideals of the time, an action she was forced to take to remain electable in an increasingly anti-war country.

Even after elections pass, this problem continues to intensify. Elected candidates, especially in the House of Representatives, often refuse to cross party lines. These politicians know that if they lose popular approval or the backing of their party, they will be voted out of office in two years. They are forced to be cautious with their votes, leaving little room for progress or change.

It would be unfair to blame this process on the candidates themselves; after all, they are only doing what they must in order to be elected. Any candidate these days who does not criticize, preach, and promise will not stand a chance come Election Day. Once elected, though, politicians often become so afraid that they will lose favor if they make one unpopular decision that they become overly cautious, indecisive, and most importantly, unable to accomplish the bold promises that they made during their campaigns.



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Politics Section

Politics Editor: Ben Lubkin



Reaching Out to the World



By Leigh Engle, Ben Lubkin, and Justin Starr

Blind Brook students are showing their concern for children affected by ongoing wars in Africa through two new clubs established this year. Both clubs, Invisible Children and STAND, are branches of national organizations.

On October 11, 2007, the Blind Brook Invisible Children Club screened the documentary "Invisible Children: Rough Cut" in the high school auditorium. The film explained the current crisis in Uganda, where a rebel militia called the Lord's Resistance Army has waged war with the government for the past 21 years. Ugandan children are surrounded by violence, and the LRA continuously abducts them and forces them to join the militia through the use of death threats. Each day, countless orphans are forced to walk great distances to sleep in mass groups for protection. Experts predict that many of these children will soon die.

Blind Brook students thought that the documentary was disheartening yet educational. After watching the video, many students gained added respect for the Invisible Children Movement. "The movie was very powerful," remarked senior Kyle MacLean.

Invisible Children is a national movement that raises aware-

ness and money for the children of Uganda. It began when three college students from California filmed the documentary on a trip to Africa. The students were deeply affected by the crisis, and upon their return, established this non-profit charity movement.

Juniors Zack Bodinger and Eddie Licitra are responsible for establishing a division of the movement here at Blind Brook. "Originally, we had heard about

this club from one of Zack's camp counselors who was running a similar club at Virginia

Tech," Licitra noted. "He sent us some info and the DVD, and [the club] just took off in Rye Brook."

Blind Brook is one of 537 American schools in the "School for Schools" program. The high school has been assigned a specific school in Uganda, and fundraised money goes directly toward improving this particular school. Once the Blind Brook club begins organizing fundraisers, students can track the progress of the corresponding Ugandan school online at invisiblechildren.org.

This school year, a chapter of STAND, a Student Anti-Genocide Coalition, has also been established at Blind Brook High School.

STAND is a national organization that targets students to help make a difference in the genocide afflicted Darfur region of Sudan, and in other regions around the world. STAND encourages students to raise awareness and funds within their schools and communities. To accomplish this goal, the Blind Brook chapter will hold small fundraisers, including bake sales, and will most likely sell t-shirts.

Darfur is a geographical region located within Sudan, a nation in

northeast Africa. Numerous African tribes live in small villages, while nomadic groups of Arabs roam the area. Although ethnically different, most of the Africans and Arabs are Muslim.

After two Darfurian tribes revolted against the government in February of 2003, the government enlisted an Arab militia, called the Janjaweed, to put down the rebels. Since 2003, these Arab militiamen have been destroying villages, raping women, starving communities, and carrying out mass murder campaigns. The current death toll is at over 400,000, and 2.5 million more have been displaced. Even in refugee camps, people are still in danger of at-

tacks, and numerous peacekeeping and aid vehicles have been hijacked, attacked, and looted. Consequently, caregivers must now travel in helicopters, which are less efficient and limit aid.

Over the past four years, the African Union has sent about 7,000 poorly funded and inexperienced troops in an attempt to end the conflict. In June, the Sudanese government accepted a joint force of 23,000 United Nations peacekeeping troops and African Union forces; however, deployment is not set to commence until 2008.

"[The conflict] doesn't affect our daily lives," said Global History teacher Patrick Mulvany, "[but] it changes our attitudes."

"Three American dollars can protect a woman in Darfur for a year," junior Sarah Taitz emphasized. Taitz, along with seniors Rachel Aspis and Chloe Greenbaum, is responsible for the establishment of Blind Brook's chapter of STAND. Junior Daniel Gelbard is optimistic about the new club. "I think students will definitely be interested in trying to help the cause, and I'm sure teachers would back them up on it." For more information, visit STAND's website at www.standnow.org.

Interested in what you are reading and want to join? The Invisible Children Club meets Mondays in portable two while STAND meets Wednesdays in room 215

"Three American dollars can protect a woman in Darfur for a year."

High School Congress Update

Continued from page 14

er, that plans for a new parking lot could be put in a future budget.

The final topic discussed was the restructuring of academic assistance and club meetings. Valenti began by stating that there is a new collective bargaining agreement with the teachers that requires them to be available for extra help during students' lunch periods. "[The BOE] listened to the Congress' position paper and kept the 2:20-2:40 activity period," Valenti stated. "We also created a new period for extra-curricular (clubs) activities from 2:40 to 3:10, with athletics beginning at 3:15." The issue was raised that students do not necessarily want to spend their lunch periods with a teacher, but Valenti responded by saying that students must make their own decisions. In regard to potential transportation conflicts, Valenti said, "We are currently looking at the possibility of an extra-curricular bus to take students home." Students also complained that many teachers are not available for assistance during their lunch periods.

As Congress continued its passionate discussions, the bell rang to signal the start of school, and the meeting was adjourned.

At Congress's October 5th meeting, a committee was established to discuss the future of Town Meetings, a tradition at Blind Brook that has come into question during recent years. Debate has been ongoing regarding the usefulness and effectiveness of these meetings, but many students view them as invaluable opportunities to share concerns with the entire school. Congress' committee hopes to schedule the year's first Town Meeting as soon as possible.

students have been able to find the silver lining in this situation and actually enjoy their carpools. One senior even went as far as to compare his carpool to a party bus. "We are lucky to be able to park at all and go out to lunch," senior Mike Yewdell chimed in. "Not all other schools have this privilege."

With all of the seniors sharing parking spaces, a few spots are left for visitors, tuition students, and other students with extenuating circumstances. Some students feel that these spots are

being taken advantage of. Additionally, the seniors were informed about the "buddy system" without an excess of time to put together the best and most convenient carpools. "I just wish they didn't tell us about the buddy system the day before school," senior Marc Finder commented.

Coincidentally, an assignment in Mr. Thomas's economics class dealt with a similar parking problem at Stanford University in which there were far too few parking spaces to satisfy the students and faculty who wanted to use them. The assignment outlined five possible solutions: leaving the parking situation as it had been, first-come first-serve, sell to the highest bidder, pick out of a hat, or choose a committee to decide who gets which spots.

While each system had its benefits and setbacks, no single system was deemed the best. When asked how he would apply these options to the Blind Brook parking situation, Thomas said he would opt to leave the system as it is now. Since this appears to be exactly what the administration is planning on doing, it seems the "parking buddy" system is here to stay.

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Politics Section

Politics Editor: Ben Lubkin

BBHS Polled: Blue Runs True

By Ben Lubkin

On Thursday, September 20th, the Focus Politics Section distributed surveys to all high school students and faculty. In order to better cater to the interests of the Blind Brook community, survey respondents were asked what political party they support; whether they consider themselves "political" people; how they obtain their news; and what they consider important news topics. In all, 270 student surveys and 25 faculty surveys were returned and evaluated.

Based on the results, the student population at the high school is 71% Democratic and 15% Republican (see chart for further data). The teacher population, 48% Democratic and 20% Republican, is slightly more balanced.

Only 18% of students consider themselves to be politically active, while 40% of teachers do. Amongst the students, males are relatively more politically active than females (22% vs. 14%).

Students average 2.7 news sources per person, while teachers average 3.4 sources. Teachers use all news media more than students except for TV news (48% of teachers vs. 68%

of students). In one drastic difference between the two groups, 68% of teachers listen to radio news, while only 14% of students do.

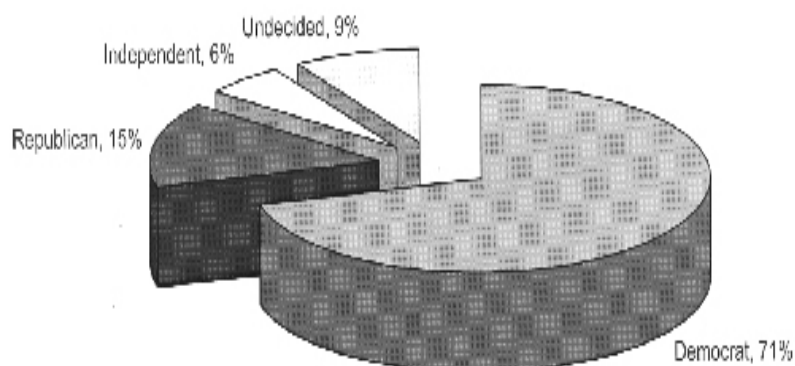
The male student body is significantly more likely to watch parody TV news, such as "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report," than the female student body (53% vs. 20%).

Amongst the news topics of interest, the Iraq War is the most pressing issue according to students. As students near the age for military service, they seem to be progressively more concerned with the war; 12% of freshmen, 17% of sophomores, 22% of juniors, and 25% of seniors consider the situation in Iraq to be the most important current world topic. Also worth noting, 29% of male students listed the Iraq War first, compared to only 10% of females.

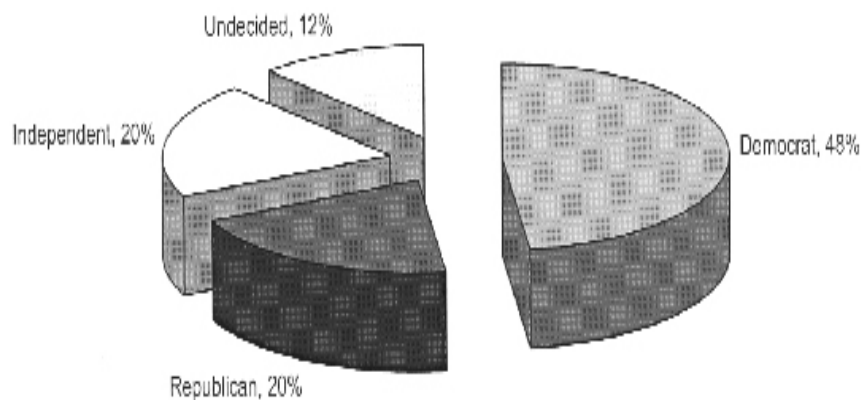
Other major topics of student interest, ranked in importance, include Global Warming, Poverty, Education, Darfur, and World Health.

Joey Goldstein, Shelley Jacobson, Dan Levy, Nathan Marrow, and Peter Thomas contributed to poll evaluation and presentation

Political Identification of Blind Brook Student Body



Political Identification of Blind Brook Faculty



Senate Update

By Lauren Freyberg

The Blind Brook Senate, which held its first meeting at 7AM on Friday, September 28, 2007, is hard at work accomplishing its primary goal: raising school spirit in the Blind Brook community. At the meeting, Senators discussed ideas for the upcoming year, including a Pep Rally, a blood drive, a school-wide bonfire, and Showtime.

Senior President Scott Winston and Senior Vice President Dana Silverstein opened discussion at the first gathering, asking their fellow Senate members to brainstorm potential activities for the pep rally, which occurred right before homecoming weekend. "This year, our goal for the Pep Rally is to include everyone there," Silverstein emphasized. "We do not just want team members to be involved, but rather we hope to get the rest

of the student body and faculty involved as well."

The Pep Rally, which took place on October 12, included a Coke n' Pepsi contest. Thanks to Senate's efforts to increase student involvement in Pep Rallies, captains introduced their own teams. There had been talk of a possible bonfire the night of the football game, but Senate was unable to get approval from the administration in time to address various safety concerns.

Senate members from all four grades, as well as their advisor, Physics teacher Thomas Glickman, are all extremely enthusiastic about the coming year, and encourage fellow students to come forward with any ideas of their own. "We're looking forward to a great year filled with social events, fundraisers, and most importantly, a whole lot of spirit," Silverstein commented.

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Arts & Entertainment

A&E Editor: Chloe Greenbaum

By Justin Cohn

tracks that are played in night-

The Overseas Scene: America Should Listen Up

While it can be argued that the United States has fallen swiftly from its high position in global power, American pop music has undeniably remained on top. Even when talent emerges in foreign countries, that talent scrambles to the US to achieve worldwide recognition, a trend that has been going on since the days of the Beatles. The "European Top 100," run by American music magazine, *Billboard*, is brimming with American names such as 50 Cent, Justin Timberlake, and the Plain White T's. All around the world, even in non-English speaking countries, American music continues to top the charts.

But what happened to the home-grown music in Europe? Asia? The lower Americas? Africa? Australia? The answer is that it is still there, but it is just being ignored.

Perhaps we have a greater number of aspiring musicians, more recording studios, and more record labels. Or maybe it is simply easier to get music heard in America. Hundreds of years ago, Germany dominated the classical music scene. Jamaica has long reigned over the genre of reggae music. Could it be that it is just our time to shine?

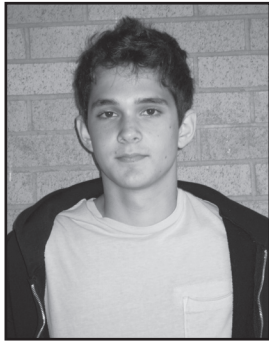
America's domination of the international music scene definitely does not arise from a dearth of good music in other countries. British musicians have been coming to America to get discovered for years. Norway is responsible for half of the

clubs around the United States. In Latin America, new fusion genres that blend beautiful instrumentation are created every day. Serge Gainsbourg, Buena Vista Social Club, ABBA, Julio Iglesias, and Kraftwerk are all world-renowned performers that have made it big internationally without initial support from the American music industry.

Yet, all around the world, people flock to buy music from American musicians, no matter the quality. Impressive international music has been springing up everywhere, from American movies to American television. Maybe we should just listen. It certainly has more depth than some of the garbage that piles up on the *Billboard*

charts. Are Americans too protective of our monopoly over the music industry?

It is up to the entire nation to fix this problem. We are the trendsetters; the world is listening to our music. Instead of being apathetic and just listening to FM radio stations or scrolling through the Top 10 songs on iTunes, we should make a conscious effort to expand our horizons. Think about going out to the local record store and purchasing a foreign album, or even just browsing through the iTunes World section. Give it a chance, you might be pleasantly surprised. The death of American supremacy over the music world would be far less detrimental than the death of an entire world of music.



Students Expand Artistic Horizons Over the Summer

By Daniel Polonsky

Many Blind Brook students had meaningful experiences this summer dabbling in various forms of art. Students from every grade pursued artistic passions, including fashion, photography, and theatre. They furthered their talents, made new friends, and some even received college credits.

Freshman Karen Rind-Siegel attended Camp Chinqueka in Litchfield, Connecticut, a traditional sleep-away camp, but with an excellent drama program. There she performed in the play *Back to the 80s*, and when asked about her character, Debbie, she described her as "the weird loser girl who invents her own boyfriends." Rind-Siegel became very close with her cast mates over the summer, while improving her singing and performing skills.

Sophomore Alexandra Blaiotta took a fashion design class at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City over the summer. Blaiotta was able to make a portfolio of designs of different styles ranging from casual clothes to gowns. FIT has produced countless famous alumni. Many of them can be seen on Bravo, including a judge, a winner, and five other contestants from "Project Runway," two contestants from "Top Design," and a contestant from "Top Chef." Perhaps Blaiotta will aspire to be among them one day!

Spending the summer in Florence, Italy, junior Julia Whalen took a fashion design

class through Musiker Summer Discovery. First, she learned the basics of how to draw fashion figures. Then, Whalen completed her own collection based on a shoe from the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, a museum dedicated to the custom-made shoes of Salvatore Ferragamo, "shoemaker to the stars." Whalen also went on a field trip to Palazzo Pitti, where she saw a costume gallery of styles through the ages dating back to the eighteenth century.

Senior Ashley Woychowski, the *Focus* photography editor, received three college credits this summer by taking a black-and-white photography course at Westchester Community College through the Westchester Art Workshop. The subjects of her photographs varied, but her favorite concentration was night photography. "The class was better than I expected," Woychowski remarked.

Athena Lo, a fellow senior, also participated in an art program at the College of New Rochelle,



Photo/ Jackie Mamorsky

Ashley Woychowski, Karen Rind-Siegel and Athena Lo spent their summer in art programs.

where she took a workshop to help build her portfolio to send to colleges as part of her application. Students in the program were able to choose themes for their portfolios, and Lo chose "flight" as hers. Other students chose themes ranging from nightmares to *Moulin Rouge*. Lo emphasized that one

of her favorite parts of the program was meeting new friends, claiming, "I liked being exposed to different types of people."

Art in the Area: An Insider's Guide

By Julia Whalen

Photography at the Met

September 25th – Ongoing
Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street
The exhibit explores the earliest attempts to make multiple versions of scenes etched with light. The paper negatives used by Henry Fox Talbot and his colleagues give their images a hazy surface.

ICP Fellowship Exhibition

September 7th – October 21st, 2007
International Center of Photography
1114 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street
This display showcases nine photographers who all investigated unfamiliar locations and social situations across the continents.

Dark Is the Room Where We Sleep

September 26th – January 1st, 2008
International Center of Photography

1114 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street
A series by Francesc Torres, based in Barcelona, documenting the uncovering of a gravesite from a 1936 mass murder in Villamayor de los Montes, Spain.

Miniaturizing

Modernism: Richard Pettibone
Now - January 6th, 2008
Neuberger Museum of Art
735 Anderson Hill Rd, Purchase
The exhibition houses paintings derived from original photographs on intricate canvases. Originals and miniatures are being displayed.

The Incomplete

October 2nd – January 12th, 2008
The Chelsea Art Museum
556 West 22nd Street
The Incomplete explores the open-ended nature of four generations of contemporary artists and the multiplicity of artistic language. The artworks in the exhibition constitute a re-

sistance to the forms of definition and closure represented by modernism.

Abstract

Impressionism and Other Modern Works
September 18th – February 12th, 2008
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street
Muriel Kallis Steinberg Newman's legendary collection is displayed here in its entirety. Other works include those of Claes Oldenburg and Mark Rothko.

The Age of Rembrandt

September 18th – January 6th, 2008
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street
The exhibit consists of 228 Dutch paintings, twenty of which are works of Rembrandt, in celebration of his 400th birthday.

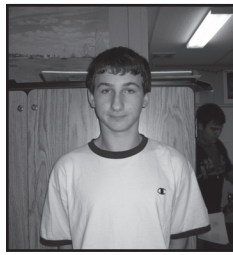
Arts & Entertainment Section

A&E Editor: Chloe Greenbaum

A Memorable Goodbye to Our Heroic Wizard

By Tal Ackerman —Photos by Stephen Santin

One would have to live under a rock to not know that the final Harry Potter book made its grand debut this summer! Culminating the magical series of ten years with a bang, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows had no problem hitting the best-sellers' list. On the night of its release, thousands of Harry Potter fanatics crammed into lines at bookstores in a whopping 93 countries! Eleven million copies were snatched off the shelves within the first 24 hours of its release, breaking the sales record previously held by author J.K. Rowling's sixth *Harry Potter* book. Despite its undeniable success, the final *Harry Potter* installment received somewhat mixed reviews in the Blind Brook community.



"Rowling was faced with the daunting task of closing a truly remarkable book series. It was a perfect tribute to the dynamic character: Harry Potter."

— Michael Horwitz
Junior



"It was a great last book to conclude the series."

— Alex Kellman
Freshman



"The book was truly amazing; I am curious to see how the movie will be in comparison."

— Marissa Fortino
Junior



"Although many are quite fond of the Harry Potter series, I feel that it is a bit over-rated and unrealistic for my taste."

— Karina Shaoul
Senior

HSM 2: Does it Measure Up?

By Melissa Rosenbaum and Danielle Treacy

The *High School Musical* phenomenon has taken the world by storm: movie-related CDs and DVDs, concert tickets, tickets for performances on ice, and numerous clothing and jewelry items are in high demand all over the world. Disney executives decided to capitalize on the widespread popularity of the first movie and created a sequel. Clearly they made a successful choice, considering the movie drew in an audience of 17.2 million on its premiere date of August 17th, to make it the most-watched basic cable program ever, according to Nielsen Media Research.

The second installment stars the same leading cast as the first movie: Zac Efron, Vanessa Hudgens, Ashley Tisdale, Lucas Grabeel, Corbin Bleu, and Monique Coleman. Additional cast members have been added, such as Chris Warren Jr., Kaycee Stroh, Ryne Sanborn, and Oleysa Rulin. The HSM gang begins the movie inside East High, and the hit song "What Time Is It?" officially ends the school year.

Sharpay (Tisdale) and her brother, Ryan (Grabeel), plan to spend their summer at Lava Springs, the country club owned by their parents. As loyal viewers know, Sharpay has been crushing on Troy (Efron) since the previous movie. Luckily for her, Troy scored a job working at Lava Springs. Unfortunately though, Gabriella (Hudgens), the girl who has won over Troy's heart, has also landed a job at the club.

Outraged, Sharpay devises a plan to get Troy all for herself. Troy becomes engrossed in his

new lifestyle, which consists of special treatment from Sharpay's parents, and he fails to realize that he is losing all of his friends, including Gabriella. He is faced with the wrenching decision of whether to forgo his friendships for "the good life" or to sacrifice his new luxuries for his old friends.

The only debate surrounding the movies is centered on the question of which film is better. *High School Musical* wowed fans and attracted many viewers not limited to just the "little ones." From "Start of Something New" to "We're all in this Together," the movie's catchy soundtrack is a favorite to which fans love to sing and dance. Does *High School Musical 2*'s music even compare to the first? Blind Brook students seem to have come to the consensus that HSM2 music is more amusing and enjoyable. The variety of the music surpasses that of *High School Musical*.

"I think that *High School Musical* in general is a fabulous movie, and although it is not your typical chick flick or romantic comedy, it is very enjoyable to watch," said sophomore Barrie Schneiderman. Many students agree and enjoy dancing and singing along with the movies in addition to sporting the gear out and about.

However, not all viewers felt *HSM2* was a success. Its plot was less universal than the original, which revolved around common struggles that students face in school and with friends. A tough Blind Brook critic, History teacher Mr. Patrick Mulvany, stated, "I saw the movie, but it doesn't mean that I actually paid attention. I did not find it very entertaining."

Featured CD of the Month:

The Con

By Mori Einsidler

By the time music fans have finished reading this article, Canada's best kept secret will finally be "oot." Calgary's own Tegan and Sara, 27-year-old twin indie rockers, have remained a proverbial blip on the popular music scene radar...until now. Their fifth record, *The Con*, released July 24th, 2007, may prove to be the sisters' United States breakthrough, and is arguably their edgiest and most mature album to date.

Tegan and Sara's 2004 release, *So Jealous*, first put the girls on the map after it was featured multiple times on the soundtrack of ABC's hit show "Grey's Anatomy." The Quin twins, living three thousand miles apart in Vancouver and Montreal, recorded demos of the seven songs they each wrote for their follow-up album, and decided to record the tracks in the U.S. with co-producer Christopher Walla (Death Cab for Cutie, Decembrists). A dream team was assembled to help record *The Con*—Death Cab's Jason McGerr played drums, AFI's Hunter Burgan played bass on Tegan's songs, Matt Sharp of The Rentals played bass on Sara's songs, and Kaki King played both lap steel and guitar on two of the album's fourteen tracks.

The first words heard on the album are those of Sara, as she childishly croons, "I married in the sun..." "I Was Married," as the track is dubbed, lyrically escalates from sweet nostalgia to what may be the most poignant political song of our generation. Sara does not condemn, but instead questions, the ban on gay marriage, comparing it to "trying to control the pull of one magnet to another."

Sara's lyrics also command attention on "Like O, Like H" and "Knife Going In," both of which unveil an inner darkness and musical prowess that bring the true indie-alternative vibe to Tegan & Sara's music. "Burn Your Life Down" offers a steady beat with a simple melody. It goes on to shock listeners, though, with one of the best musical moments on the record,

as Sara's voice rises over the synthesizers and bass, creating a dynamic and explosive ending to the song. However, Sara sheds her bizarre and unconventional songwriting style during "Back In Your Head," one of the simplest yet catchiest songs the album has to offer.

Tegan, the more prolific, "in your face" half of the duo, contributed many powerful gems to *The Con* as well. The title track itself hits like a stone in the chest, as the synthesizers soar and the cymbals crash for three-and-a-half minutes of alternative rock bliss. Two tracks later, "Are You Ten Years Ago" leaps into an entirely new territory. Tegan's circular lyrics are echoed by Sara, as their voices cast shadows across the song and a hip hop drum beat pulsates in the background. McGerr replaces the drum machine on "Hop a Plane" and "Nineteen," two songs with hooks that will work their way into listeners' heads and stay there.

The album's last track, "Call It Off," offers the perfect close to a near-perfect album. Tegan plucks her acoustic guitar, passionately singing the best lines the CD features: "Maybe I would have been something you'd be good at / Maybe you would have been something I'd be good at / But now we'll never know." Listen closely to the song to catch Jason McGerr tearing down his drum kit in the background, and another potential "Grey's Anatomy" hit. "Call It Off" marks the end of a relationship before it even begins, and closes one of this year's best albums.

Along with the standard CD, there is also a deluxe edition of *The Con* that comes with a 90-minute DVD in which the twins hilariously document the making of the album.

Tegan and Sara are the quintessential yin and yang of the music world; Tegan brings the alternative rock while Sara delivers the indie-pop punch. The result? A sound all their own that makes *The Con* so undeniably brilliant.



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Fall's Five Hottest TV Shows

By Justin Cohn

The three-letter networks (and rebel two-letter-and-two-number network, CW11) are putting it all out there this year as they offer viewers plenty of new, interesting storylines and fresh, talented actors and actresses. Primetime fanatics will be happy to know that along with the annual favorites, handfuls of promising new shows are popping up this fall.

Chuck (NBC Mondays 8 PM)

Probably the most advertised of the new shows, "Chuck" tells the story of a computer geek working at his local "Nerd Herd," who, after obtaining top secret government files, reluctantly becomes involved with the CIA/NSA. A cast full of no-name actors may hinder viewership slightly for what NBC believes will soon become the big fall hit. However, its experienced crew (with members involved in everything from "The O.C." to *Charlie's Angels*) and a workable storyline are sure to make for a few good laughs.

Gossip Girl (CW11 Wednesdays 9 PM)

"Gossip Girl" seems to be created for the pre-teen girl in everyone and has already become the obsession and guilty pleasure of countless viewers. The show follows three Paris Hilton-esque teenagers trying to stay on top at a New York City prep school.

The story is told through the eyes of the elusive "Gossip Girl," whose identity is unknown to everyone in the show. Filled with abnormally good-looking people having complicated relationships with other abnormally good-looking people, *Gossip Girl* is the perfect show for those who want to fill their craving for teenage reality shows.

Take "Laguna Beach," make the girls even wealthier, and have them gallivant around the city instead of beautiful California beaches; the result will be this new CW11 hit.

K-ville (FOX Mondays 9 PM)

It should not come as a surprise that FOX, which always strives to stand out, recently became the first network to jump on a storyline involving post-Katrina New Orleans. "K-ville" relays the story of the near-impossible job facing the police force just a couple of years after Hurricane Katrina.

The show gives an inside-angle on a newly formed partnership between two opposite policemen, played by Anthony Anderson (Kangaroo Jack) and Cole Hauser (a constant supporting actor in well-known movies such as *The Break-Up* and *Good Will Hunting*). The controversial nature of the show should bring in both viewers and mixed reviews.

Cavemen (ABC Tuesdays 8 PM)

Somehow, the star of the Geico commercials scored his own television show. No, it is not the talking gecko; rather, the afore-

mentioned star is the caveman. "Cavemen" is about, well, cave-men, living in our world and being normal people. Destined to be strange, and perhaps even beautiful, "Cavemen" seems to be the front-runner for new straight-up comedies. It stars Bill English, Sam Huntington, and Jon Heard.

The Big Bang Theory (CBS Mondays 8:30 PM)

This hot new show is about every nerdy 20-something-year-old's dream. Two best friends, living in a scientifically decked-out apartment come into contact with their new, beautiful, and single neighbor. She sets out to teach the two everything they have ever wanted to know about women but were too afraid to ask. The cast is made up of mostly commercial actors. Thanks to the entertaining storyline, the cast needs only to display a little bit of on-screen chemistry in order to turn this sitcom into a hilarious hit.

Behind the Screen: "Kid Nation" Controversy

By Scott Winston

Imagine William Golding's renowned allegorical novel, *Lord of the Flies*, recreated in the real world for millions of television viewers. Apparently the executives over at CBS did just that in coming up with the premise for the new reality show, "Kid Nation." This program seeks to show America what happens when forty children, ages 8 to 15, are deserted in a New Mexican ghost town and are forced to build a new, adult-free society in forty days.

The location is Bonanza City, a mining town that failed back in the 1880s. "Kid Nation" hopes to answer the question of whether children can succeed in establishing a settlement where adults have previously failed. These kids must cook their own food, wash their own laundry, and even use outhouses, and the show has been described as a "Child Survivor." The participants' motivation is fueled by a gold star worth \$20,000 that is rewarded to the most deserving contestant each week.

One might think that this

show, which airs Wednesdays at 8 pm, would be welcomed with open arms in a day and age when two of the most popular reality shows feature women vying for the love of Flavor Flav and the story of "seven strangers picked to live in a house..." However, "Kid Nation" has faced a great deal of controversy dating back to the months leading up to its September 19th premiere.

There have been reports that the children were rarely supervised as well as claims of child abuse. This national attention has prompted the New Mexico attorney general's office to look into whether CBS and the "Kid Nation" producers violated any child labor laws.

Case in point, one participant made the mistake of drinking what he thought was ginger ale. As it turns out, it was a water-and bleach solution, and after finding that this harmful mixture tasted funny, he asked three other kids to try it. All four participants are fine, but this is not the only incident that has caused uproar

amongst the children's parents. One twelve-year-old girl suffered minor grease burns while cooking on a wood-burning stove. In response to all this negative publicity, CBS released a statement that the kids were "under good care with...safety structures that arguably rival or surpass any school or camp in the country."

Based on the stipulations of the 22-page agreement that participants' parents had to sign, it is safe to assume that they knew their children would face potentially hazardous situations by participating in this show. Conditions include that the show is not responsible for children exposed to extremes of heat and cold, crime, falling rocks and objects, and encounters with wild or domesticated animals. Also, the program relinquishes responsibility for emotional distress, illness, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy.

Despite this plethora of possible dangers, those who have complained, are the minority, and most children and their par-

ents have expressed no regrets.

Some critics have accused CBS of initiating the publicity to bring attention to its show; however, Leslie Moonves, the President of CBS, denies these allegations in published reports. In reality, the controversy probably had little effect on the show's debut.

The initial airing drew an audience of 9.1 million viewers (for comparison, a repeat of "Two and Half Men" drew 9.5 million viewers the previous week). Moonves is pleased with the ratings and was quoted as saying, "It wasn't a blockbuster, but it did well." The true test will be in the upcoming weeks, to see if "Kid Nation" can build on its debut audience.

Even though the fate of the show remains unknown, casting for season two has already begun. After the trouble in New Mexico, though, CBS may have some difficulty finding another state to accommodate the show. It seems that "Kid Nation" has just as much drama as *Lord of the Flies* after all.

Movie Review: *3:10 to Yuma*

By Michelle Caley

The term "Western" is a foreign concept to most teenagers. These movies once dominated the film industry and were a favorite of our parents' (and even our grandparents') generation. Over time, though, car chases replaced shoot-outs and cowboy hats became baseball caps. All of that, however, is soon about to change.

With the release of *3:10 to Yuma*, a remake of a 1957 Western classic, a new wave of "modern Westerns" is approaching the forefront. *3:10 to Yuma* relays the story of legendary outlaw Ben Wade (played by Russell Crowe) on his train ride to the Yuma prison

where he will be executed. Dan Evans (Christian Bale), a crippled small-time rancher, agrees to escort Wade to the train in return for a large sum of money.

Chaos ensues as Wade's loyal gang, including Charlie Prince (Ben Foster), follows the men on their journey to Yuma in hopes of saving their beloved leader. However, Evans refuses to let anyone stand in his way, and he will not allow himself to fail. While Evans' original goal was to get enough money to save his failing ranch, his motivation soon changes as getting the notoriously unstoppable Wade onto the train becomes a way to prove his worth.

Crowe brilliantly captures the spirit of Wade, a ruthless killer with a twisted mind. His lines are delivered to perfection and his expressions are just as disturbing as they are intriguing. Foster, in what may be his biggest role yet, delivers a truly magnificent performance, thus proving that he can share the screen with stars as big as Crowe and Bale and still stand out. Foster plays the role of the psychotic Western bandit as well as, if not better, than Crowe does.

3:10 to Yuma is the perfect movie to usher in a new wave of modern Westerns; it meets all the criteria for classic Westerns while still introducing as-

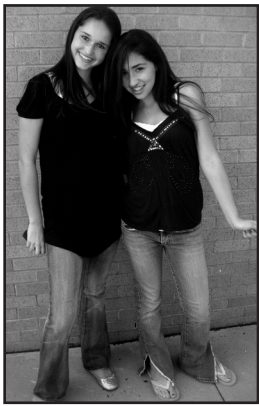
pects of modernity. It has its fair share of typical Western music, showdowns, saloons, and shootings, but amongst all of these features lies an intricate plot with a shocking ending. Prepare to be intrigued as this movie keeps viewers on the edges of their seats and serves as a fresh change of pace from what is normally playing in theatres these days. And who knows, moviegoers might even be inspired to rent some original Westerns on their way home!

Top Five Fashions for Girls

By Sharon Friedlander and Dana Silverstein

1. Sparkle Like a Gem

Looking for a way to stand out this fall? Don't be afraid to spice up any plain ensemble by adding bright jewel tones or sequins. Trendy boutiques are littered with purple satin, red leather, and green cashmere. These rich colors can also be spotted dangling from celebrities' necks and ears on the red carpet. Sequins are adorning a variety of fashion must-haves as well, from dresses to bags to shoes. This style was reinforced by the new hit TV show, "Gossip Girl," in which the character, Serena, ventures out in a gold sequin mini-dress paired with black tights and a black cashmere scarf. For more subtle sparkle, consider Miss Sixty's gold sequined ankle boots to glamorize a pair of jeans or a little black dress.



2. My Way or the High Way

Waistlines are inching up higher and higher this season as high-waist jeans make a come-

back in top designers' new collections. These silhouette-flattering cuts highlight trim waists. High-waist skinny jeans can be tucked into boots to effectively elongate the leg. They can be worn with either tucked-in flowy tops or fitted shirts. To create a different look, these versatile pants can also be paired with long tops or smocks to conceal the high waist.

3. The Midas Touch

Although style mavens claim that silver is not necessarily "out," gold is undoubtedly conquering the fashion world. The metallic phenomenon is evident in clothes, shoes, accessories, and even make-up this season. The trend was born last spring when fashionistas of all ages were clad in chunky gold bangles and heavy gold chain necklaces. In the recent fashion edition of *New York Magazine*, advertisements for gold jewelry boasted simpler designs with smoother cuts. When it comes to shoes, the Tori Burch ballet flats with the gold logo continue to be a bestseller. Gold is the perfect asset to any outfit; for a casual look one can wear a delicate gold pendant or a sweater with gold threadwork, and for a night on the town, a clutch purse with gold accents or a slew of gold bracelets are sure ways to grab everyone's attention!

4. Give Your Ankles Some

Breathing Room

As written in *The Book*, recently released by Neiman Marcus, "Designers put the squeeze on last year's narrow pants by offering up a flattering fuller cut." Last season's unfaltering skinny jean is now sharing the spotlight with the wide-leg cut. This look was largely popularized by the ever-stylish Kate Moss, who wore a pair of vintage wide-leg Chloe jeans at the TopShop fashion show. Wide-leg pants can be paired with either tight tops, peasant shirts, or airy smocks cinched at the waist with a belt. Add ballet flats for a casual look or stiletto heels for a formal night out.

5. Belt Bonanza

Belts are becoming increas-

ingly versatile as hot designers continue to integrate them into their new collections. Belt trends are moving away from the wide, waist-encompassing looks, and are becoming slimmer and more tailored. A belt is the perfect way to accentuate one's waist, and it is the ideal addition to any oversized shirt or dress.

As Sienna Miller and Emma Watson have proved, the "belt look" is here to stay!



Photo/Reisenfeld and Jablon

Don't Forget About the Guys... Fall Trends for Him

This season, designers are shifting away from the "grunge" look and are moving towards a cleaner, more sophisticated guise. In the past, jeans had been designed in lighter washes with baggier bottoms and wider cuts. This year, though, men's fashion houses are making their washes darker and their fits tighter.

The button down collared shirt, always a classic, seems to have more variations than ever. Pinstripes, mini-checks, and plaids are showing up at every price level.

The absolute must-have for boys this season, though, is the tailored jacket, which can be worn

for virtually any occasion.

For a casual look, the jacket looks great with a form-fitting t-shirt underneath coupled with jeans. If a more formal appearance is the goal, throw the jacket over a button-down shirt and wear it with khakis.

Many fashion magazines have showcased men adorned with colorful scarves. J Crew and GAP are showing scarves with vibrant colors and catchy designs and often pair them with simple sweaters or show them underneath tailored blazers.

Now guys can stay warm and up-to-date with the latest fashion.

— SF & DS



Photo/Biegleman

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Editorial

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

I am writing to you about the emotional effects brought upon Special Education students because of the transition from full time to part time aides, and the switching of aides in general. Some of you may not be aware of exactly what they do here at Blind Brook, but I know first hand having had an aide since kindergarten. An aide is an individual who helps students who usually have a mental or physical disability to participate on the same level as the general student population.

Aides assist with everything from taking notes during class to getting the student around school on time and safely to giving assistance to students when they have to use the bathroom. They even assure students can evacuate the building safely in case of a fire or other emergency. The qualifications for the aides are different for each child and are outlined in their IEP (Individualized Education Program). The idea is that each student will be able to perform in a regular classroom to the best of his or her ability. Aides are not only responsible for students' emotional and physical well being during school, but they also often become good friends.

That is why I believe the transition from one aide to another is NEVER easy. There are so many aspects of a student that need to be taken care of and gotten used to by the different aides.

This year, if a student's IEP did not specify a full time aide, they were assigned two part time aides. Getting through the day and learning a new schedule is hard enough for these special needs students; increasing this burden by having two different people in charge is just unfair. I believe that it was wrong to change a system that was working just to save money when individual people got hurt in the process.

Two years ago, I not only had major back surgery, but I had five different aides. All the aides turned out to have physical problems of their own that prevented them from performing the most important part of the job: lifting and handling me safely. This gave

me severe anxiety and left me constantly feeling disappointed.

Every two months I would have to begin all over again. Imagine trying to do well in school when you have to waste time worrying about things as simple as being able to go to the bathroom. I did not complain until I returned to school in severe physical pain after my back surgery. The Special Education director, Mr. Wolotsky, neglected to tell me that I was receiving an aide with her own back problems and that she would be unable to lift me!! This was a MAJOR requirement stated in my IEP and even more important now that I had become even more fragile. The district had to assign me two additional aides before the appropriate match was made, bringing the total to five for the year.

I trusted that Mr. Wolotsky, would be able to approve her to be my aide the following year since my aides in Elementary and Middle School had always been approved. I waited patiently throughout the 2006 summer, only to find out at the very end of August that the school was no longer hiring any full-time aids for that school year. Little did I know, that would happen the following year as well!

I fought for many months for a different aide who was hired as a substitute in 2006 since I knew that this aide would enable me to perform to the best of my abilities. I wrote a letter to the Board of Education expressing my concerns about losing my current aide; however, only one Board member, Larry Engle, responded.

Not only was I very disappointed, but I was truly hurt. It seemed to me that they were only interested in saving money. By not having full time aides, they were not obligated to pay for health insurance. By hiring part time aides, more hours would be covered, so this justified their cause in their opinion. Has anyone bothered to ask the students how they are dealing with having two aides instead of one? Is the savings at the expense of the students' needs really a savings in the end?

Sincerely, Phoebe Sherry

To the Editor:

It's not everyday that we get a new teacher at Blind Brook, even though it sometimes seems that way. But on a more serious note, it is not everyday that a new teacher comes to Blind Brook with the intention of using her imagination as a means to open the minds of her students.

When Erica Kolbrener came to Blind Brook, despite the fact that she had no previous knowledge of the various and contrasting personalities of her students, she trusted them. She opened up her mind to accept them as equals, and trusted them so that she could be herself. It is extremely rare for a teacher to reveal who he or

she really is to their students. But Mrs. Kolbrener didn't stop at just that. She furthered her methods, and relied on her personality and sense of humor to teach her classes - making her technique of teaching completely non-traditional.

Her non-traditional method of teaching, which included acting out difficult concepts, was the ideal for the visual learner. For instance, when Mrs. Kolbrener used a passage from "Hard Times," by Charles Dickens, to teach repetition to her ninth period class, she stomped her feet at the unchanging, dreary beat to effectively illustrate the monotony of Coketown and how it would,

To the Editor,

As a teacher at Blind Brook HS for the past five years, I have come to learn many things about the school, its students, and its culture. For instance, School Traditions seem to be very important, especially to students, and even more so to seniors. It makes sense - traditions are a way of expressing our identity. Some traditions express school pride (Midnight Madness), others our level of maturity (open campus privileges for seniors), and others our preoccupation with double-entendres (painting the rock).

Many of our school traditions are exclusive to seniors, which is probably why they are so important to seniors. Painting the Rock, parking permits, open campus, senior slideshow, morning announcements, the best locker location, prom, pajama day, etc... And why not? Seniors have struggled for many long years getting to this point. They waited their turn for those prime lockers. They have struggled through AP courses and SAT prep while Seniors have played DDR in the Commons on Beach Day. They have EARNED it, and are now the LEADERS of the school.

Well, one thing students will eventually learn about leadership is that you can't lead by exclusion. Younger students don't sit and admire seniors because they paint rocks or play DDR in the commons. They simply yearn for the day when THEY get to do it. True leadership comes from the inclusion of others, when you, as a leader, are forced to figure out how you're going to inspire younger students to join clubs, or join you in an activity, or fund-raise, or come out in support of a sporting event.

The reason I mention any of

this is to call your attention to a school tradition that has, frankly, troubled me for many years: Halloween. Don't get me wrong - I love dressing up for Halloween. So do many people. As conceived at our school, however, I feel the tradition needs serious overhauling. Every year, students are asked to sit on the bleachers and watch while groups of seniors in store-bought costumes (several often vying for the coveted 'Most Blatant Violation of School Dress Code' award) wander about in front of them. Why should I care about 15 identically dressed students in store-bought superhero costumes? Why should students care?

Ok, perhaps that was a little harsh. Every year we also see many students who have put time and effort and creativity into their costumes. But it appears to me that the majority of seniors are wasting this 'tradition'. If we really want to get people excited and to have fun with Halloween, I bet we'd see a LOT more creativity and enthusiasm for this event if we opened up the tradition to the entire school, and had some serious prizes for the best costumes. Just what is this senior monopoly on Halloween accomplishing?

Let's open the costumes to everyone, let's show students how much fun it can be to dress up, let's get everyone in the school involved. I know this may not be a popular position, but who knows? Maybe it'll make the school a more spirited and lively place, even if only for a day or two. And maybe seniors will lead by example, and earn younger students' respect and admiration.

Sincerely,
Tom Glickman
Science Teacher, BBHS



By Mori Einsidler

regretfully, never change.

Additionally, for many students, Kolbrener's class was the very first class in which they felt in control of what they gained in the classroom. When thinking about what one needed for her A.P. English Language and Composition course, it didn't come down to a 1" three-ring binder, loose-leaf paper and pens. All you needed was an open mind as well as the willingness to accept teachings from someone new.

Since the ways of human nature state that the unfamiliar is the aggregator of an individual's fear, the willingness for many to adopt these new concepts that would eventually make their writing

blossom seemed difficult. Accepting this, Kolbrener, often resorted to her quick sense of humor and made jokes to relieve the uneasiness of it being a college course and to remind her students not to take everything so seriously. She let us know that even in the classroom, it is healthy to laugh.

Because of her inspirational ways of teaching, many students who were eager to better their writing blossomed with her guidance. Even though she was only here for a short time, Mrs. Kolbrener certainly left her mark on Blind Brook.

Sincerely,
Ashley Woychowski

Editorial

Five Must-Dos for Trojan Fans

By Lisa Ganz

If you are at all like me, you pride yourself on Blind Brook's excellent academic reputation. However, after experiencing two years of high school, I have discovered that there is another aspect of Blind Brook I love that seems to sometimes go unnoticed. While this may come as a surprise, that facet is Trojan sports, and, as a completely unbiased, impartial member of the Mock Trial team, supporting school non-sports as well.

Everyone seems to complain about the lack of spirit at Blind Brook, but there are numerous times in the past two years when I was fortunate enough to witness the spunk and earnestness of the community. What I am asking each of you to do now is to turn off the television or put down the books, and help contribute to our growing sense of spirit. So before you graduate, aside from continuing the Blind Brook tradition of academic excellence, make sure you complete the following five activities:

#1

Attend a hockey game when the Titans—Blind Brook, Rye Neck, Harrison—face off against Rye High School. In my opinion, this sure-to-be thriller is the best sports rivalry Blind Brook has to offer. When you go, you might be surprised to see how many of your fellow peers have come out to cheer alongside of you. This game has been a victory in the books for the Titans the past two years and this winter Blind Brook players will contribute to the team goal of making it three in a row.

#2

Achieve at least a competent understanding of the game of football and, more specifically, the history of football here at Blind Brook. I may not know who plays every single position, but I do know that these boys work just as hard, if not harder, than players on any other team. They practice feverishly in the August heat for at least a full week longer than any other varsity team. This fall, we are celebrating the team's fifth year anniversary here at Blind Brook, but there can't be a party without people. So show up to a game with all your friends, scream alongside the cheerleaders, and hope that the Trojans will establish themselves as the play-off presence they were at this time last year.

#3

Carry over the spirit demonstrated late last season as the Girls' Basketball team became championship worthy into this winter. I must commend all the people who showed up to the girls' regional basketball game at New Paltz last year, and offer praise to all who trudged up to Troy to watch the Lady Trojans play in the states, despite the abundance of snow. However, is it too much to ask fans to demonstrate some of that same enthusiasm during the regular season? While the bleachers are often filled during boys' basketball games, it is extremely disheartening that if I wanted to, I could lie across ten rows during a girls' game and there would still be an abundance of empty seats. Here is my plea: continue to cheer on the boys, but share some of that same spirit with the Lady Trojans. As an added incentive, the dance team will be performing at girls'

home games this season, meaning half-time at each game is sure to be entertaining.

#4

Go out and support some of Blind Brook's traditionally "non-spectator" sports. To anyone who is on the baseball, tennis, or track team, I can definitely sympathize with you. As a two-year Varsity Tennis player, I can sadly say that aside from all the "tennis moms," no other community members venture out to our games. Of course, occasionally, the Dad in a suit, the supportive boyfriend, or the spirited teacher (thank you Mr. Glickman) will show up to a match, but most of the time, the grass surrounding the courts is desolate. I know how hard my teammates work during the season, as I am sure the baseball players and runners do as well. I can promise you that we are just as dedicated to our respective sports as players on the more "popular" teams are. So before you put on your cap and gown, make sure you can look back and remember a moment when you supported one of Blind Brook's teams that is often forgotten.

#5

Drive over to the Westchester County Courthouse to watch the Blind Brook Mock Trial team try to win a fifth consecutive county title. What other team can boast such an impressive dynasty? If you want to know the truth, the abundance of hours the kids on the team claim they spend practicing and working on the case is nothing short of reality. I can attest that there were weeks when many people on the team spent about twenty hours revising, tweaking,

and perfecting our team's theory, anticipating the upcoming Thursday trial. Honestly, I have never been a part of something that is this time consuming, yet so rewarding. Aside from our Westchester county championships, three straight regional championships, and second place finish in the state tournament last year, one of the most gratifying aspects about the experience is that Blind Brook's student body backs the team. At every trial this year, there were friends of the lawyers and witnesses present in the courtroom, a fact that no other team save Scarsdale (whom we beat every year anyways) is lucky enough to claim. We are a group of hard working, over-committed kids, and though sometimes we may forget to say it, the team is appreciative of all of our fans. So thank you to anyone who has sat through a three hour trial in a boiling courtroom to watch us dominate. Please continue to (silently) cheer us on and make sure to keep the dial-a-friend; who knows, you might need a lawyer someday.

Sure, when you are in college you will still be able to shout the names of your favorite players; however, what is the likelihood that you will know many of them personally—that the player you are shouting for is your best friend? Especially at big schools, those odds are highly unlikely. But here at Blind Brook, that closeness factor is a reality. So please do not disappoint me; take some time out of your busy schedules to support your friends and let them know that you are proud of them. I will be keeping a close eye on the (hopefully) increasing attendance at Trojan sporting events this year.

To the Editor,

As the school year ended at Blind Brook last year, a decision was made to have one lunch period for each grade (freshmen and sophomores) with the exception of the junior and senior classes who share a lunch period. Because of this change there has not been a way for the new freshmen to assimilate into the high school. When I first started out at Blind Brook, I immediately formed friendships with the upperclassmen. A huge part of it was because of the communal locker area and our joint lunch periods. Freshmen this year are being cheated out of this opportunity to form bonds with the older students at the school.

The high school experience is supposed to be about coming out of your shell or social circle and forming new ones with people different from you. During seventh period lunch (junior and senior lunch) you can see students talking to each other and sharing stories. You can also see

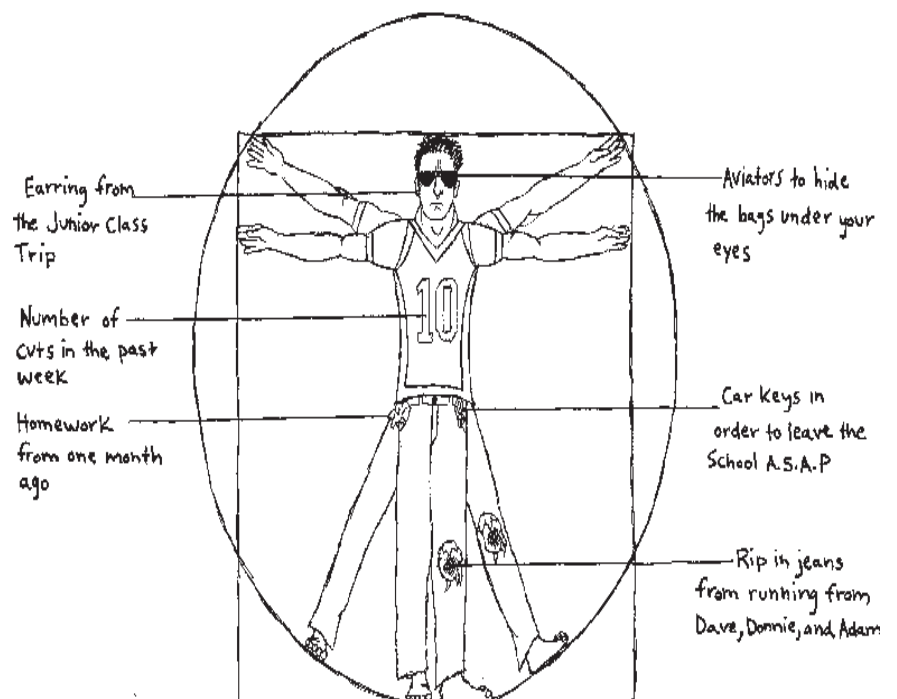
seniors offering the juniors to buy them lunch because one of their privileges is being allowed off campus during free periods. If you were to go and visit the freshmen lunch you would see that the tables are very separated and the same people are seated with each other everyday. Yes, there is an exception for some who are lucky enough to venture on into the Common area and talk to the upperclassmen, but that number is insignificant (I have maybe two freshmen friends).

I believe that in order for students to create relationships with each other, they must be exposed to one another in social situations. By creating separate lunch periods, the school is taking that away from the different grades, especially the ninth-graders. The school really needs to find a new way to make the freshmen feel welcome, now that the integrated lunch is gone.

Sincerely,
Taylor Fuller

Cartoon By Jon Amar

SENIORITIS



Editorial

It's Time to Make Some Noise

In years past, Blind Brook has been short on classroom space, short on athletic fields, and short on parking spots. However, anyone who has ever tried to institute a change at Blind Brook High School can attest that there has never been a shortage of opinions. This being the case, it is somewhat perplexing that everyone seems increasingly hesitant to speak up when it counts.

Focus is your newspaper. Its sole purpose is to serve you (the students, teachers, and community members). The staff wants to provide you with all the news and information you want to read about but we cannot do that without your input and feedback. In past years, we received a negligible number of letters to the editor (and by negligible I mean we were lucky if we received one a year). Is it possible that in a school of 400 plus students and a town of over 8,000 people, no one (not a single bitter member of the senior class, gossiping neighbor, or empty-nester angry about the late-night parties on his/her street) had anything they wanted to say?

In a recent *New York Times* Op-Ed piece, columnist Thomas L. Friedman branded college-aged students "Generation Q"—the Quiet Americans. This may be an accurate label. We are living

in an era that will be remembered for the Iraqi War, the huge deficit, and the fact that young people seem more than willing to simply ignore global warming and the impending social security crisis. Am I crying for a return to the hippie generation, a time of radicalism, sit-ins, and mass marches? No, although I am sure their philosophy of peace, love, and drugs would appeal to many of my classmates. But I do believe that students owe it to themselves to at least stay somewhat abreast of the major current political issues.

That leads me to the addition of the brand-new *Focus* Politics section. It seemed there was a gold-mine of issues yet to be tapped, and we jumped on the opportunity to do so. How often do students have such an accessible forum to express their political concerns and viewpoints as well as stay up-to-date on the issues that most concern teenagers? I could go on and on about all the benefits of this section (because I truly believe there are many) but there is an introduction within the Politics section that outlines some of these for you.

Along with writing in to the paper, there has always been another traditional outlet for students to speak out that some of you may have noticed has been

missing thus far. Seven weeks of school have elapsed yet we have not had a single class or town meeting. We even had club sign-up day before any of the club leaders had the opportunity to share with the rest of the school what their clubs are all about.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the concept of town meetings, they were traditionally a time for students to speak out about anything that was on their minds, whether it was a complaint, a question for the administration, a plea to fellow students, or even a funny story they just wanted to share. It was a time for students to say anything they wanted without fear of being told it was none of their business. It was an outlet for people who were not necessarily part of the student government, but who had strong opinions and wanted to be heard. I remember my first town meeting as a freshman; it was exciting to sit with everyone else and listen to an assembly (with apologies to President Abraham Lincoln) of the students, *by* the students, and *for* the students. It is unfortunate that the class of 2011 has yet to experience the "town meeting" and it is unclear when, or even if, they ever will.

Over the years, the effectiveness and usefulness of town meet-

ings were called into question by the administration. Students, in the past, were always eager to complain about the lack of meetings, but the truth may be that we, the student body, were simply not utilizing this invaluable outlet to its fullest extent. If we want town meetings back, we need to be willing to voice our opinions. We need to show the administration that we are not "Generation Q," but that we are a bunch of high school students who actually have questions and ideas about improving our school.

In a recent letter to High School parents, Principal Stark quotes an international educator studying American schools. The educator remarked that in American schools, "your students are taught to question and be suspect of 'truths.'" I am asking the student body at Blind Brook to do just that. Whether it is writing a letter to the newspaper, speaking up in front of the school, attending a protest rally, or even just educating a couple friends about one issue or another, don't let yourselves be labeled "Generation Q"—it is time to make some noise.

Madeline Sims

Madeline Sims
Editor-in-Chief

FOCUS Staff

Editor-in-Chief Madeline Sims

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DESIGN/LAYOUT

EditorsMarnie Blum and Phoebe Sherry
Joey Goldstein, Alana Pace, Carly Hoff, Nicole Jablon,
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Michelle Riensenfield, Ankita Satija, Kate Citron

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Staff Cartoonist..... Mori Einsidler
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In Our Best Interests?

By Aaron Wirshba

At a Board of Education meeting last year, dozens of students were present in a deliberate protest against the possible changes in the Blind Brook schedule and way of life. After Congress gave a well thought-out presentation, students were assured that our presence and message would not be taken lightly.

In a session of the Blind Brook Congress last year, students were also assured that grassy space between the parking lot and the town athletic field would be converted into a new fifty-space parking area for seniors. We were told that the process had already begun.

As we arrived back at school in September, many of us were taken aback by the changes that had been made (and other promised improvements that seemed to be missing). Activity period, for which we had fought so diligently, had been compromised, and the additional parking spaces were nowhere to be found. Instead, seniors were told that they would have to share spaces – something never before done at Blind Brook.

While the parking situation is more of an inconvenience than a major problem, the new schedule has resulted in major issues.

The common lunch period limits students' schedules to eight periods a day. Students no longer have the flexibility of working lunch around their individual schedules. Instead, we are forced to work our schedules around lunch. The reduced flexibility of scheduling has created numerous problems. There is a Spanish 4 class with thirty students in it, for instance, and there are some students who are enrolled in AP classes because they are the only ones that would fit in their schedules and allow them to satisfy curriculum requirements.

In theory, the idea of matching teach-

ers' academic assistance periods with the common lunches is practical, but what about the teachers who teach more than one grade? Also, there are teachers whose academic assistance periods do not even coincide with any grade's lunch period.

The most disconcerting scheduling change is that of activity period. Instead of the standard forty-minute period that could be used by students to seek extra help or attend club meetings, there are now two separate periods. The first one, from 2:17 to 2:40, is now an additional academic help period (granted, during this period of the day students and teachers are at least free at the same time).

The second period, which lasts from 2:40 to 3:10, is intended for club meetings; however, this change will seriously alter the way Blind Brook clubs work, and not necessarily for the better. While there is some legitimacy behind the argument that only dedicated students will stay at school later and that the new system will weed out clubs that do not have strong student backing, the truth is very few people can stay until 3:10. Sports practices often begin at 3:15, leaving students virtually no time to change or grab a snack before they have to be on the field. Even more problematic is the busing situation—if buses leave at 3:00, how can students who must take the bus participate in clubs?

It is the primary responsibility of those in charge to do what is best for the school and the students. If students do not believe this is being done, they have the right to speak up. However, it seems each time we make our viewpoints respectfully known, we are simply ignored. I sincerely hope that the people making these decisions will awaken to the fact that student voices deserve to be heard. After all, we are most affected by the changes. Shouldn't our opinions count?