

# FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

October 2005

## New Year, New Faculty

By Tal Ackerman and Ben Lubkin

In addition to Blind Brook's completely new guidance department, there are many other additions to this year's faculty. These newcomers include Robert Greshes and Michael Mazzola of the English Department; Nicole Herman of the Foreign Language Department; Stacey Goldstein and Michelle Sugantino of the Science Department; Steven Brunnlehrman of the Math Department; Teri Kincade, Ryan Collins, and Usa Freund of the Special Education Department; and high school secretary Joanne Connor.

Goldstein, a ninth and tenth grade Regents Biology and eleventh grade Topics in Chemistry teacher, attended graduate school at Columbia University. She enjoys running, yoga, traveling, and reading. Goldstein is extremely enthusiastic about her new job.

She said, "I am enjoying it here so far, and look forward to the year ahead."

Students are also satisfied with Goldstein. "Ms. Goldstein is a great educator, and I hope to learn a lot in her class," commented freshman Ali Goldstein.

Brunnlehrman, the math 2/9, 3/10, and 3a/11 teacher has a diverse background in many occupations, including a bond analyst,



Blind Brook's new faculty has been welcomed with open arms. From left: Ms. Stacey Goldstein, Mrs. Michelle Sugantino, Mr. Robert Greshes, Mr. Michael Mazzola, and Mr. Steven Brunnlehrman. Photo by Amanda Park

a tax attorney, an actor, and a conference planner. He started teaching eight years ago and was certified to teach math grades seven through twelve in 2002. After teaching in New York City, he most recently taught at Alexander Hamilton High School in

Elmsford. Brunnlehrman enjoys the Blind Brook environment, and believes that there are motivated and energetic students as well as a good staff. He has very high goals for his math students. He said, "I hope to infuse an enthusiasm for mathematics, that



More of Blind Brook's new staff. From left: Ms. Joanne Connor, Dr. Lisa Freund, and Mr. Ryan Collins.

Photos by Samantha Park and Jaclyn Azia

students are going to want to pursue math at higher levels."

Joey Goldstein thinks that "Mr. Brunnlehrman has a unique, positive teaching style."

In addition to teaching math, Brunnlehrman is also the new advisor for the Model United Nations Club. In his free time, Brunnlehrman enjoys watching films and being with his family.

Connor, the new high school school secretary, has worked as a library clerk, attendance and main office assistant at Horace Greeley High School, secretary to the Vice President of Financial Operations in Direct Media Incorporated, and owner of a day care center. Some of her pastimes include being with her three children and dogs and competitive Irish dancing. Connor feels at home when she's at Blind Brook. She commented, "I love Blind Brook. Everyone made me feel very welcome; the parents, staff, and faculty."

Likewise, many students who have gotten the opportunity to walk into the main office and receive assistance from Connor appreciate her contributions to the school. "I believe Mrs. Connor is not only a really nice person, but will become a great asset to our school," summarized freshman Lisa Ganz.

## AP Obsession

By Adam Potter

Advanced Placement courses have grown in popularity and importance throughout high schools in the United States. Advanced Placement, more commonly referred to as AP courses, are college-level classes designed to give excellent high school students a chance to experience college-level work during high school. Blind Brook High School is a prime example of the growing emphasis on AP's (see attached chart).

In the 1999-2000 school year, only seven AP courses were offered at Blind Brook and only 80 AP exams

were administered to the juniors and seniors. In contrast, last year there were 256 AP exams administered with 14 courses offered. This year, there are an astounding 16 AP classes being offered and, assuming all of the Blind Brook students currently enrolled in AP classes take the exams in their respective subjects, there will be a total of 284 Advanced Placement exams given. That is a 255% increase in the number of AP exams being taken over the course of just six years.

With the increased emphasis on Advanced Placement classes comes

a greater interest in the grades that students are receiving on AP exams. A student who scores a 4 or 5 on an AP exam can certainly use the score to his or her benefit on a college application and may also be able to use the score to fulfill a college requirement.

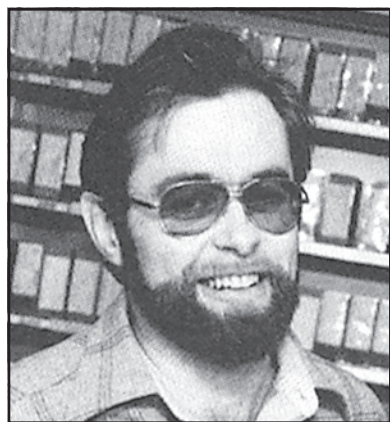
Mr. Christopher Griffin, Director of Guidance at Blind Brook, remarked, "My intuition is that... the trend in scores is that they are not as high as they used to be... The trend in the nation has changed, so that different levels of students sit for courses because they

Please turn to page 3

## 5 Seniors Honored in National Merit Competition

By Scott Statman

Blind Brook High School is honored to acknowledge three seniors who have been



It is with deep sadness that we inform you of Michael Dockwiller's sudden demise on October 14, 2005. Mr. Dockwiller taught English and psychology at Blind Brook from September 1979 to June 2002. The Blind Brook community will be holding a memorial service at the school in the near future.

named Commended Students in this year's National Merit Scholarship competition and two seniors who have been named Semi-Finalists. The Commended seniors are Heidi Lumish, Jeff Wiener, and Julie Ganz, while the Semi-Finalists are Melissa Lumish and Harrison Foster.

These students qualified for the National Merit Scholarship competition by taking the PSATs last October, along with 1.3 million other high school juniors. The top 50,000 scorers of the 1.3 million students who sat for the test qualified for the National Merit Scholarship Program. One-third of these 50,000 students, those who scored above a 218 out of a possible 240, were named Semi-Finalists and advanced in the competition, while the remaining two-thirds, those who scored above 200, became Commended students. The grandeur of these five Blind Brook seniors' accomplishments cannot truly be understood without acknowledging how few students in the world qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program every year.

As Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ron-

ald Valenti said, "This means a great deal. It speaks to the hard work of the students, and also to the excellence of the teachers and the school district. It should be our goal annually."

Heidi Lumish recognized her own accomplishment by stating, "It was so exciting when I found out because it is something special to be recognized for. It feels really good to be recognized for doing well." Melissa Lumish added, "When I went into the PSAT I only wanted to get prepared for the SATs, but I wasn't thinking of what could become of my scores."

The two Semi-Finalists, however, will now advance in the competition by submitting an essay, their transcripts, and their SAT scores, along with teacher recommendations and a list of extracurricular activities. Of the Semi-Finalists, 15,000 students will advance to a Finalist standing, and 8,200 of these students will be selected as National Merit Scholarship winners. Everyone at Blind Brook wishes Semi-Finalists Harrison Foster and Melissa Lumish good luck in the following rounds of the competition.

### Inside

#### NEWS

- Blind Brook Supports Katrina Victims .....2
- After Months of Delay, Construction Bids Awarded .....2
- New Guidance Counselors Help Shape Department .....3

#### SPORTS

- Cheer-Dance Team: A Blind Brook First .....4
- An Athletic Effort for a National Cause .....4
- Construction to Deter Athletics at Blind Brook .....4

#### FEATURES

- Peer leadership Gets the Ball Rolling .....7
- Scheduling Difficulties Plague BB Students .....7
- The Summer Reading Controversy .....8

#### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

- Facebook Open to High Schools: Are You Invited? .....10
- Feasting with Foster .....10
- Fall TV Guide .....11

#### OPINION

- I Pledge Allegiance... Under What? .....12
- The Way You Sing it, I Can't Believe It .....12

News Editor: Julie Ganz

## News Section

## Katrina: The Humbling Hurricane

By Adam Fischer

Several weeks ago, I was driving down Betsy Brown Road, just a few minutes away from my house. Out of nowhere, something caught my attention from the corner of my eye. Two young girls were on the sidewalk with their mother, holding a sign which read "Hurricane Aid Lemonade!"

I was intrigued and fascinated by the selflessness of the girls' fundraiser. I found it remarkable how these two girls, ten years old at most, had found such an altruistic way

to help the victims of the hurricane. I pulled over, got out of my car and bought two cups of their lemonade. I felt good about what I had done and felt even better knowing that the girls most definitely recognized the magnitude of their actions.

As I watched two other cars pull up behind me, I began to think: the girls were charging 50¢ per cup. Considering how many people drive by on any given sweltering summer afternoon, I figured the girls must have made hefty revenue from their customers' purchases. On top of that, additional donations must have at least doubled their income. I was genuinely mesmerized by how much money the girls must have made for hurricane relief in that one single afternoon and by how many thousands of others across the country were doing the same exact thing.

Fast forward a few weeks or so, and I'm sitting at home. It's mid-September and, despite a bulky flood of homework, I turn to the TV, an often popular avenue for afternoon distraction. While apathetically channel-surfing, I came across the news. As with any catastrophe, the media had pounced upon the opportunity to broadcast the horrific consequences of Hurricane Katrina, which had fittingly been deemed the "most devastating natural disaster in our history."

In the preceding weeks, I had become accustomed to hearing the same tragic news about the inhabitability of New Orleans and the desolation which had become the remains of the Gulf Coast. That night's news, however, brought a surprising twist.

The boisterously advertised "From the Big Apple to the Big Easy" concert, hosted on Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup> in both Madison Square Garden and Radio City Music Hall, had brought an optimistic glare to a seemingly endless tragedy. The enormous fundraiser, broadcasted on Pay-Per-View, boasted illustrious musicians including Elton John, Dave Matthews, Jimmy Buffett, and Bette Midler. Profits from both the concert and the Pay-Per-View showings were donated in their entirety to hurricane relief efforts.

The concerts celebrated the carefree effervescence and flamboyance of the city popularly known as the musical hub of the United States. The "Big Easy," the birthplace of jazz, epitomizes American culture and tradition; the cosmopolitan city, notorious for its flashy street shows and bubbly nightlife, had set the foundation for a musical identity in the United States.

It seemed incredible that two girls on a sidewalk in microcosmic Rye Brook had been such profound contributors to the same cause that Jimmy Buffett and Elton John had. While their donations may have differed largely in size, the notion fascinated me.

Parallel to these monetary donors are the efforts of firefighters. Only

four years ago, after the earth-shattering attacks on the World Trade Center, Louisiana (amongst other Southern states) had benevolently dispatched its firefighters to New York City. Now, in their time of despair, this national bond has proven its potency. New York firefighters, as well as policemen, have willingly traveled to the devastated wreckage that has become the Gulf Coast in order to relieve the exhausted men and women of the area. If this does not exemplify a sense of community, I don't know what does.



When I turn on the TV or open the newspaper, I constantly hear of the racial tensions, poverty concerns, and political finger-pointing that exist in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The press, in all of its vanity and grandeur, incessantly tends to sensationalize the dismal details of the hurricane; amongst these particulars are the troubling tales of looting and public acts of violence. These exacerbating nuisances have become the parasites feeding on the Gulf Coast calamity. I find it distressing that after such a devastating catastrophe, all these press members can do is create unnecessary controversy.

Nonetheless, there exist forms of goodness (that do not stem from monetary help) that arise from these tragedies as well. After 9/11, the United States pulled together and demonstrated that no acts of terrorism could shatter the dignity of our nation. Security was heightened, defense was tightened, and national unity was consequently bolstered. This time, Katrina reinforced the unbearable truth that we, as a nation and humanity, are vulnerable to any of nature's wickedly indiscriminate deeds. It is only after sobering events such as the hurricane that we appreciate the importance of cooperation and unity.

Living the comparatively affluent lives that we do here in Westchester, we are often blinded by the sense of security and safety to which we have grown accustomed. I could not imagine what it feels like to be a New Orleans resident, whose once peaceful life was deracinated and shattered in one fell swoop.

I also could not help but think about the students: the jovial preschoolers looking forward to recess, the overwrought juniors dreading their upcoming school year, and the cultured seniors readying themselves for their final year in college. Where would they go? Their schools and universities had fallen victim to Katrina's butchery. As a result, an educational diaspora has been underway. Eager students began their migration to schools and colleges across the country in hopes to continue with their education.

While we cannot all be Elton John or we might underestimate the benefits to opening a lemonade stand, there is no excuse why we, as a community, should not work together to help those in need. Hurricane Katrina has proven to be an overwhelming incident; it has become a hardship for the survivors and a tragedy for the deceased. I cannot help but recognize, however, its humbling sentiment. It puts life into perspective and simultaneously reiterates the importance of charity and donation.

It is said that from all bad things comes something good. If one thing can be learned from this awful blow to our country, it is that life will continue and that we will recuperate. Until then, however, it is up to us to keep the lemonade flowing.

## Blind Brook Supports Katrina Victims

By Jason Freyberg and Sarah Taitz

The day Hurricane Katrina made landfall was a day of tremendous misfortune for the people living in the Louisiana and Mississippi gulf region, but it was also a day that brought United States residents together to help out their countrymen. Included in the astronomical number of fundraisers that have developed in the aftermath of the hurricane are the efforts going on at Blind Brook High School.

Susan Turkell, mother of a Blind Brook senior and an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, has brought to Blind Brook's attention a program called the Pajama Program. The program started four years ago when Genevieve Piturro, a Wall Street veteran, visited the St. Andrus children's home, a Yonkers orphanage, to read a child a bedtime story. With her that day, she brought along a pair of pajamas to give the child. When she finished reading the story, she said to the child "Okay, now it's time to get ready to go to sleep; go put these on." The child responded with a question that broke Piturro's heart. "What are these?" the child questioned. This led Piturro to start the Pajama Program, which was established to donate pajamas to the less fortunate.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the United States, Piturro wanted to get pajamas, along with books, to the young victims. RD Weis, a commercial flooring company based in Port Chester that had been involved in helping the Pajama Program deliver pajamas, offered help when the Hurricane hit and sent a truck full of donated supplies to Houston, where a number of displaced Louisianans were temporarily residing. For the second shipment, which was sent to Louisiana, the Britton family of Rye Brook supplied a 30-foot moving truck

to make the trip. Seventy-five percent of the truck was filled up with an array of items, such as toiletries, books, and pajamas, and it took 500 movers to load up the truck. This collaborative effort received nationwide attention through newspapers and school districts all over the area picked up on the story and idea, including people within Blind Brook High School.

Along with the parents and students, Blind Brook faculty members, especially Principal Anthony Baxter and Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth, have been incredibly supportive of the program. According to Turkell, "Charlene Decker, high school business teacher, and Marlene Adler, co-head of the PTA, have been very helpful with this cause." The latest van went out on September 26, but items are still being donated and will be shipped.

The popularity of the Pajama Program has many other people and organizations within the school thinking of ways to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The Blind Brook Senate is currently planning an event to benefit the thousands affected by the tragedy. It has not been approved yet, but Senate has been talking about hosting a big Showtime-like concert with several bands. "All profits would go to a Katrina-related cause," said Senate advisor and Science teacher Thomas Glickman. Shelly Jacobson, advisor to Congress and Blind Brook Social Studies teacher, said, "Congress will work alongside the PTA" in support of their efforts. Gabriel DeAngelo, vocal music teacher, planned a benefit for Sunday, October 16, 2005. The event featured many students in different theatrical performances, including a few tap numbers from the New York Dance Performing Company, the Blind Brook Faculty Band, and DeAngelo's singing New York Vagabonds.

## After Months of Delay, Construction Bids Awarded

By Matthew Goldwater

After what felt like a never-ending delay, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti announced at the October 3rd Board of Education meeting that construc-

tion bids for the expansion of the Blind Brook schools were awarded to multiple construction companies. According to Valenti, the construction is now planned to start on October 15th and should be completed in September 2006.

The total cost for this construction is \$11,250,072. This does not include the \$3,325,700, which will be used to build new sports fields for the Middle and High School.

The construction was originally supposed to begin in July, but the architect did not send plans with enough detail to the New York State Education Department, causing them to delay their approval until late August. According to Valenti, the Board has moved very quickly since the plans were approved.

The Middle and High School will receive ten new and/or renovated rooms, and Ridge Street Elementary School will receive three new classrooms. There will also be new lockers and a new cafeteria in the High School. Valenti believes that "the construction is absolutely necessary due to increasing enrollment, (and) an exciting moment in Blind Brook history!" He also says it is vital in order to accommodate "new courses such as Latin." Valenti expects the school to have 1700 students in a few years and, therefore, construction is

imperative in order to hold this growing Blind Brook population. He also promised "there will be no more construction in the next decade."

Valenti believes that the construction will not cause classes to be interrupted by noise, since the major drilling will take place where people in classrooms cannot hear it. There will be no excessive drilling inside the school. Valenti also promises that the amount of noise will be monitored over time, and that the plan calls for most major drilling to be done after the school day is over.

The construction companies, Fourmen Construction, LJ Coppola, Beneway Inc., and Anderson Electrics were awarded separate construction bids for the Middle and High School, along with the Ridge Street Elementary School project. As the general contractor, Fourmen Construction will receive \$7,416,522. LJ Coppola will receive \$1,342,000 for the HVAC. Beneway Inc. will receive \$417,900 for plumbing work and Anderson Electrics will receive \$500,700 for the electric system.

An additional four companies were awarded bids for Ridge Street School. KMK Construction will be the general contractor and will receive \$848,000. ACS Systems was awarded the bid to construct the heating and ventilation systems and will be paid \$379,000 for their work. Beneway Inc. will receive \$23,900 for the plumbing and Anderson Electrics will receive \$281,000 for the electric work.

*"The construction is absolutely necessary due to increasing enrollment, (and) an exciting moment in Blind Brook history!"*

--Dr. Ronald Valenti, Superintendent of Schools

News Editor: Julie Ganz

## News Section

## Brian Kelleher Resigns, Eliot Scher Replaces

By Eric Taitz and Joey Goldstein

First-year history teacher Brian Kelleher resigned on September 28, citing personal reasons, leaving a void in the history department. Kelleher taught three AP Macroeconomics classes, one Economics class, and one AP Government and Politics class.

While Kelleher did not provide a specific reason for his departure, there is much speculation as to why he left so abruptly. According to Blind Brook High School Principal Anthony Baxter, "Mr. Kelleher was a first time teacher who had trouble overcoming the obstacles of teaching at the high school level." Before teaching, Kelleher worked as a corporate lawyer.

Kelleher had many positive interactions with both his colleagues and students. Junior David Fries said, "I think that his presence will be greatly missed and his cheerful, yet modest approach to teaching will be remembered by all."

As soon as Kelleher notified administrators of his decision, the replacement process began. When asked about a timetable regarding a new Advanced Placement Macroeconomics and Advanced Placement Government and Politics teacher, Judith Mella, Social Studies Department Coordinator and personal mentor to Kelleher, simply responded, "As soon as possible." On Sunday, October 2nd, Blind Brook administrators placed an ad in the *New York Times* seeking an Advanced Placement teacher. The ad provided requirements for the teacher including a New York State [Teaching] Certification, teaching experience, a proven track record at the high school level, and evidence of academic course work in Economics (Macro/Micro) and Political Science. Baxter was confident that the right person for the job would be chosen quickly. As of October 5th, many people contacted Blind Brook in response to the ad. The administration set up multiple interviews and demonstrative lessons. This time, Baxter wanted to ensure that the teacher selected was in for the long haul. "I can go out and get any body on the street, but I want to make sure that we attain the most qualified person for the job," said Baxter.

To temporarily fill the vacancy, the administration had assigned Mr. John

Romanello to take over all four of Kelleher's classes. Romanello, a retired English teacher, has no background in economics or politics; however, he tried to make the best of the situation. "I don't want to see the students get cheated out of their education," said Romanello. Essentially, Romanello served as what he calls a "stop-gap" until a permanent teacher, Eliot Scher, was found.

Ironically, Romanello filled a similar role two years ago when ninth and tenth grade social studies teacher Joseph Immergut, resigned. Eventually after a few weeks, Romanello was replaced by Christopher Ward for the remainder of the year.

Kelleher and Immergut are two prime examples of the teacher retention problem that has plagued Blind Brook over the course of the past few years. Since the 2003-04 school year, Blind Brook has lost nearly a dozen teachers. Last year, the English department introduced three new teachers, two of whom are no longer with the district. Dr. Cathleen Hannigan, appointed coordinator of the English department in the summer of 2004, left the district with her fiancé in December, and Dr. Julie Kenyon, a ninth and tenth grade English teacher, left in April due to the demands of her pregnancy. In addition, Ms. Jessica Reap, a twelfth grade English teacher, left mid-year to pursue a job at Harrison High School.

Students have mixed feelings when it comes to teachers leaving. Junior Jon Gold commented, "No school can maintain all its teachers on a year-to-year basis. Some people cannot comprehend the difficulties of teaching until they actually experience them firsthand. I think that the administration has handled the situation well." Senior Scott Statman cited a different reason for teacher departures, "Students are unbearable for the faculty. Blind Brook is an extremely harsh environment for new teachers."

"Because Blind Brook is such a small school, if one or two teachers leave, the community examines the situation under a microscope," remarked Baxter. "Ideally, we would like to make Blind Brook an appealing place to work for our new teachers," he added.

## New Guidance Counselors Help Shape Department

By Amy DeLynn

Amongst the numerous faculty acquisitions that Blind Brook made for the new school year are three new faces in the guidance department: Mrs. Susan Binney, Ms. Stephanie Jacobs and Mr. Christopher Griffin.

Binney and Jacobs were hired to replace last year's retiring guidance counselors, Jean Nugent and Judy Wacht. In addition, for the first time, along with the new guidance counselors, Blind Brook also has a Director of Guidance with Griffin. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti is impressed at how well all three new additions complement each other.

Prior to working at Blind Brook, Binney held several jobs, one of which included her six-year tenure as a guidance counselor at New Rochelle High School. Thus far, Binney is really enjoying working at Blind Brook. She stated, "I love being at Blind Brook. My enjoyment has always been in working with students and their families, and I have both to extend a welcoming hand to me."

Jacobs worked as a school counselor at Midwood High School in Brooklyn for four years prior to accepting her position at Blind Brook. Similarly to Binney, Jacobs has found the transition to Blind Brook pleasurable. Jacobs said, "While Blind Brook High School is a much smaller school than Midwood, I am enjoying working here very much. I think the students are really terrific and everyone has been very welcoming." She also said that she has been, "trying to get to know as many of my students as possible, so that they are aware that my door is always open, regardless of the issue at hand."

Griffin has also had tremendous experience working with high school students. Before coming to Blind Brook, Griffin was

a teacher and a guidance counselor. While he has never been the head of a guidance department before, Griffin is more than ready to take on the task at Blind Brook. Griffin said, "Although the role of (guidance counselor) director is new

for me, I have extensive experience working with students on issues related to adolescence and post-secondary school planning." His job has been made easier by the welcoming, friendly, eager, and curious attitudes of Blind Brook students and families alike.

Since August, the new guidance department has spent a lot of time working with the seniors and their families in preparation for college. Their plan is to begin working with freshmen, starting in the last week of October, to talk about the guidance program and their plans for high school. Furthermore, throughout the year, the guidance department is going to be working with the sophomores and juniors to help them prepare for the upcoming years.

To supplement the hard work and deeply rooted experience of the department, a new college counseling program, Naviance, was instituted. This internet college information database allows seniors to review information regarding admissions, academics, and extracurricular activities at the different universities. Each senior was given his or her own access code over the summer to allow for free navigation of the program. Naviance also allows students to insert personal information and search for colleges that match their specific interests. A student can put in his/her name, SAT scores, and other data for a particular college; this will allow them to see how they compete with other students applying to the same college. As Valenti said, "(Naviance is) a measure of reality and a true analysis of where a student stands."



**New guidance counselor  
Mrs. Susan Binney.**

Photo by Marnie Blum



**New Director of Guidance  
Mr. Christopher Griffin**

Photo by Marnie Blum



**New guidance counselor  
Ms. Stephanie Jacobs.**

Photo by Marnie Blum

## AP Obsession Continued from page 1

benefit from the rigor and demand of the college level work, but this reality may have resulted in a broader range of scores."

Nevertheless, last year at Blind Brook, 9 of the AP classes had at least 82% of their students score a 3 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best) on the AP exam. In fact, all of the students in AP French Language and AP Calculus AB received a score of a 3 or higher on the AP exam. On the contrary, the other 5 AP classes ranged from having 18%-77% of the students receiving a 3 or higher. While one would assume that this overwhelming trend might put teachers under pressure to do whatever it takes to have their students excel on the exam, Biology teacher Ms. Julie Hensley (who had 92% of her students score a 3 or better on the AP Biology exam last year) said that she does not feel pressured to teach to the test.

It is not only Blind Brook that is emphasizing AP classes. *Newsweek Magazine* ranks public high schools across the country based on the ratio of the number of AP exams taken divided by the number of graduating seniors.

"This analysis is extremely simplistic when considering the quality of public high schools," said Griffin. "There are many variables other than advanced placement that contribute to the overall quality of a school."

In the last rankings by *Newsweek*, Edgemont High School received the highest ranking in Westchester County at 26<sup>th</sup>. In those rankings, Blind Brook was ranked 200<sup>th</sup> (with a ratio of 2.286), up from 274<sup>th</sup> (with a ratio of 1.700) the previous year. In *Newsweek Magazine's* next rankings, Blind Brook's projected ratio should be 3.368, which should boost Blind Brook's ranking significantly.

## Blind Brook High School's Growth in AP Courses

Year	Students Taking AP's	AP Exams Taken	Number of AP Courses Offered
2005-2006	126	284	16
2004-2005	117	256	14
2003-2004	91	176	10
2002-2003	56	103	10
2001-2002	60	102	7
2000-2001	43	83	7
1999-2000	41	80	7

# Sports

Sports Editor: Jared Hoffman



Members of both of Blind Brook's Cheerleading and Dance teams are now less competitive with one another. From left: Dance team Captain Kerri Dunigan, Cheerleading Captain Taryn Klein, dancer Jessie Komitor, dancer Rebecca Baccioni, cheerleader Lauren Gelbard, and dancer Madeleine Sims.

Photo by Jenna Kaplowitz

## Cheer-Dance Team: A Blind Brook First

By Alana Burns

A new mandate installed by Ms. Cher Treacy, the head coach of Blind Brook's Cheerleading team, states that any student who wants to try out for the school's Dance Team must first cheer in the fall for the Varsity Football team. "This was something that Mr. Spano, Ms. Keegan and I spoke about last year to end the so-called 'rivalry' between the two groups during basketball season," Treacy explained. It was determined that requiring potential dancers to be members of the cheerleading team would leave less room for future competition for the half-time spots during basketball games in the winter.

There are many nuances to this deal, however. For example, who on the Dance Team has to cheer? As per the policy, only students who have not already been on the dance team; girls who have been on the team do not have to cheer. There are examples of past dancers, who have chosen to cheer to set good examples for the underclassmen anyway. Senior dance captain Kerri Dunigan and junior dancer Danielle Fortino have cheered at every football game this year.

"It's important that the people trying out for the Dance Team see that there isn't any tension between us and the cheerleading squad," stated Fortino, who will be in her third year on the dance team.

Moreover, there is one more exception to the mandate: if you participate in a fall team, either volleyball, swimming, or tennis, you are exempt from cheering as well.

Initially, the new concept of a Cheer-Dance team was not greeted peacefully among the Blind Brook student body. The potential dancers were in absolute disfavor. These students did not wish to take part in cheerleading because they only really wanted to dance. In addition, the cheerleaders wondered why they would have to take on members who did not want to cheer or be part of their team.

Although skeptical at first, the unified team has now become a "cheer family," as they like to call themselves. "Any animosity between the two teams has disappeared completely," said junior Cheerleading Captain Taryn Klein. "You have to give a lot of credit to Ms. Treacy for thinking of this idea because it's been extremely effective."

## An Athletic Effort for a National Cause

By Lisa Ganz

Across the country, professional athletes and organizations are donating millions of dollars and services to aid the victims of Hurricane Katrina. In the aftermath of Katrina, the devastating hurricane that destroyed the Gulf Coast, these altruistic entities have instilled a sense of hope and optimism in the United States.

The National Basketball Association and Women's National Basketball Association, National Football League, Major League Baseball, and U.S. Tennis Association have each announced that they will donate between \$500,000 and \$1 million towards the hurricane relief efforts.

While the organizations' financial support has been essential to the recovering process, it is the individual athletes' efforts that have been truly awe-inspiring. Warrick Dunn, the Atlanta Falcons running back and a Louisiana native, challenged all of the NFL players to donate five thousand dollars towards the relief effort. Furthermore, the Baltimore Ravens' cornerback Deion Sanders has asked fans, as well as other athletes, to donate supplies and money to the ravaged Gulf Coast. Sanders, along with teammates Ed Reed and Alan Ricard, pleaded athletes all throughout the sports' realm, to reach a goal of two million dollars for the cause. In a recent *Sports Illustrated* article, Sanders said, "Through unity, we can touch thousands. This is in our own backyard. We feel this. Ed, Alan, feel this. I have friends, relatives that feel this pain. Help in any way you can." Reed, another Louisiana native, has also set up a web site where people can donate funds which will go to the American Red Cross.

Sanders and his teammates have certainly obtained their goal by inspiring athletes and organizations to rally behind the Katrina effort. Peyton Manning, the Indianapolis Colt's quarterback, and his younger brother Eli Manning, the New

York Giants' quarterback, both from Louisiana, flew to Baton Rouge with supplies for the victims, including thousands of pounds of nonperishable items. NBA superstar and former New Orleans' Hornet Baron Davis donated \$110,000 for the relief effort. Serena Williams has pledged to give one-hundred dollars for every ace she serves for the rest of the year. Naming every professional athlete and organization who has given a donation would be impossible; there are simply too many that have shared their fortune with the Katrina victims.

One of the hardest challenges Louisiana athletes have faced since the hurricane is leaving their own stadiums, eliminating all home field advantage. The New Orleans Saints, despite their agony and helplessness, defeated the Carolina Panthers in their season opener which they attribute to all of their devastated fans. It was less than two weeks after the disaster and many players felt that their team's victories would help the healing process down south. The Saints' halfback, Fred McAfee, said in the same *Sports Illustrated* article, "We're wondering who's trying to pull one over on us, and we're sifting through all the rumors: They're tearing down the Superdome; they're building a new one; we're playing in San Antonio or Baton Rouge; we're playing all our games on the road. We don't know what's fake and what's real, and all we have is each other." The team is trying hard to invoke a feeling of hope in each person who has lost something in the maelstrom of the hurricane.

MLB players concluded the season wearing Red Cross patches on their helmets and played on bases donning the logo and a telephone number to call to contribute to the relief effort. And what a picture it was for the fans; selfless professional athletes playing the American pastime this nation has come to love while honoring, remembering, and helping the Katrina victims.

## Construction to Deter Athletics at Blind Brook

By Ben Levine and Alex Weissman

The construction of the new sports facilities via the state-approved bond referendum at Blind Brook High was tentatively set to begin on October 18th. When the project is completed during the spring, the construction will be beneficial to the Blind Brook community; however, from the end of the fall sports season through the beginning of the spring season, it will pose a variety of distractions and interruptions.

Included in the project is a six-lane track and new track equipment, a turf field suitable for both soccer and football, a turf baseball field that can also be used for soccer during the fall, new gym lockers, and a new weight room.

One drawback of the construction is the temporary loss of having a home field that the athletes are comfortable and familiar with. In the spring, the renovations of the fields will affect the baseball teams drastically. "The baseball teams will need to practice at SUNY, but we should be

able to use the Ridge Street Elementary School for home games," explained Athletic Director Jim Spano. "However, it may come down to needing to play a few extra away games during the course of the season if necessary." Junior and Varsity catcher and pitcher Shinsuke Kawano said, "It is going to be sort of hard to make a transition to the new

field, but we played at Ridge Street a couple of times last year, so it should not be a big issue. One disadvantage, however, is that the field doesn't have fences around the outfield. The infield, on the other hand, is actually better than Blind Brook's infield." The Trojans might have to play a game at SUNY Purchase during the sectional play-offs despite their efforts all season to play that game on their familiar Blind Brook soccer field.

"SUNY will be a new environment for us because we are not accustomed to larger fields, and playing there almost takes

away our home-field advantage," stated senior Varsity Baseball player Josh Metz.

Although these problems are onerous, they are merely temporary; the eventual rewards the construction will bring to Blind

Brook's athletic facilities will be tremendous and everlasting.

"The new construction will enable us to have several home games going on at the same time and at the same location," said Spano. The construction will also make practicing and competing more convenient for students. Sophomore Alyssa Futterman, a member of Blind Brook Varsity Track, stated, "I think it will really help because we always had

to travel so far to practice on a track. This would waste time that could have been spent practicing. By building this new track, it will make things much easier and give us more of a challenging practice."

As Blind Brook's athletic program continues to expand proportionately with its total population boom, this construction project was the perfect solution to continue the athletic growth. There are, however, many students who will not get to participate on the new athletic facilities. Metz, also senior co-captain of the Varsity Football team, said, "It's a shame that the seniors couldn't play on a true home field during their varsity football careers, but I know that the future Blind Brook teams will take full advantage of the great new resource."

The fields are expected to be finished by the end of the spring. Hopefully, these new additions to Blind Brook will give students the resources necessary to furnish the gym walls with new championship banners.

*"It's a shame that the seniors couldn't play on a true home field during their varsity football careers."*

--Josh Metz, senior

Sports Editor: Jared Hoffman

## Sports Section

## Sports Briefs

By Jonny Sonkin  
and Amanda Gottlieb

## Volleyball

Although the Varsity Volleyball team got off to a slow start, losing their first three games, they bounced back to finish the season 7-7. The Trojans are currently 2nd in their league because they only lost three league games and have secured a spot in Sectionals. "Despite losing games early on in the season, we played well and never gave up," said junior Danni Kaufman. Kaufman led the team in kills with 77 and was 4th in the league. Sophomore Ali Matthews leads the team in assists with 140 and is 3rd in the league. Senior Allison Bergman leads the Trojans with 14 blocks and 19 aces. Coach Justin Goldstein was happy with the team's chemistry as the season came to a close. Sectionals begin on Saturday, October 28. Even if the Trojans don't advance, the team has high hopes for next year as only two seniors will be graduating.

## Swimming

The varsity swim team is back in action after a very successful 2004 season. With the new season came a new division for the Trojan swimmers, as they moved up from Division three into Division two, a much more competitive group of teams. The team is represented by three swimmers, seniors Allie Stein and Allie Kulik, and junior Halley Feldman. Although being low on swimmers, the team has managed to start off the season on a high note, with a 2-1 record. "We expect to do really well again this season," said senior Allie Stein. "We are going against bigger schools and possibly tougher competitors, but our goal is to do what we did last year in divisional: win." The team has home meets at the Durland Scout Center in Rye and would love to have a larger fan base.

## Tennis



First singles player Dana Silverstein runs for a backhand.  
Photo by Matthew Michelli

Led by senior captains Jen Flaxman and Alison Genova, the Girls' Varsity Tennis team went undefeated with four wins and zero losses. "We had such a strong lineup from first singles to fourth doubles," commented Flaxman. "Everyone tried so hard and gave their best effort." The team was coached by Mrs. Trudi Davis. Flaxman, Genova, sophomore Dana Silverstein and junior Abby Citrin advanced from the League round, but all were defeated in Sectionals to end their season. "It was a great season," said Flaxman. "I know these girls are ready to lead the team next year and be just as successful."

## Soccer

With a record of 11-4-1 this season, the Varsity Boys' Soccer team earned the number two seed in this year's Sectionals in Class C soccer. Despite the loss of several skilled graduated seniors, the team has still managed to rebuild their aggressive style of play. "The team is young," said senior co-captain Ben Levine, "but they are a very important part of our success and I can't praise them enough for the way they've played all season." It has been Blind Brook's defense that has become a staple in their success. Explained Levine, "We try to come out every game and play aggressive and place constant pressure on the opposing



Soccer Captain Ben Levine is on the move.  
Photo by Tobin Kovoor

team." The soccer team's other captain is senior Evan Alper, who returned to the lineup after missing five games due to an ankle injury to propel the Trojans to a 1-0 Homecoming victory over Hamilton. "I'm glad I could return for the rest of the season and Sectionals," concluded Alper. A tie to Keio, the number one seed, has been a highlight in their season because Keio usually defeats B.B. with ease. Explained Levine, "Now we have the confidence that we can beat any team if we play well enough."

## Football



The Varsity Football team in action.  
Photo by Stephanie Sherry

With a win over the Valhalla Vikings in the final regular season game of the season, the Trojans secured a spot in this year's Sectionals. "Despite losing our first five games, we've never given up on our goal, and that was to play in Sectionals," said senior co-captain Josh Metz. In their Sectional game against Pleasantville, a 5-1 team over the course of the season, the Trojans could not muster a victory and lost by a score of 6-20. Over the course of the season, the Trojans played three of the better teams in the state, Tuckahoe, Dobbs Ferry, and Rye Neck, as well as Pawling, Haldane, and Valhalla. The three senior captains, Metz, Alex Weissman, and Rob Marino believe they're graduating from a team with a lot of future for next year. "Although we didn't make a run in Sectionals like we wanted to, this team has a ton of heart and promise," said Weissman.

## Cross Country



The Varsity Cross Country team during an intense practice.

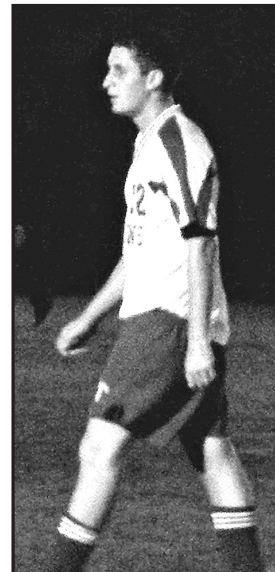
Despite their hard work and devotion to cross-country running, Blind Brook's team has lost all five of their matches this year. "The team has had a challenging time beating other teams because other schools are stronger and practice more throughout the year as a team," said Mrs. Judith Mella, the head coach. Leading the way this year are seniors Jon Tenenzapf, Shinsuke Kawano, Jon Simon, Alex Frost, junior Ethan Klapper, and sophomores Adam Potter and Andrea Green. "Although we score as a team, it's up to the individual winners to finish well in the races," Mrs. Mella explained. "We want people to consider cross country for the future and to improve as much as they can."

## SPORTECH ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

## Ben Levine

By Greg Millar

This year's Boys' Varsity Soccer team boasts an impressive record of 11 wins, four losses, and one tie, which can partly be attributed to this year's senior co-captain and center midfielder Ben Levine. Levine's outstanding play has continually led the team to victory time and time again, providing constant hustle and valuable senior leadership. He is currently the Trojans' top scorer, with seven key goals and six assists, giving Levine personal third place in total scoring in Conference IV League



B. Junior teammate Jesse Sedler commented, "As one of our captains, Ben holds us together when we need it most. He's always there to make the big play, and is like having another coach out on the field with us." Levine

not only provided stellar leadership, but also two crucial goals to lead the Trojans in a come-from-behind victory at Solomon Schechter—this win proved essential to their record and is a triumph that the team is extremely proud of. "Ben has been an enormous part of our team this year, not only when it comes to scoring goals, but setting the tempo of the game and keeping us all on the same page," remarked senior teammate Jason Calman.

Levine looks to propel his team deep into Sectionals this year. "We've had a great start to our season and we're hoping to reach our goal of winning the Sectional championship." Levine looks to maintain his high level of play as the season moves on, inspiring his team to play with his enthusiasm.

## JV Girls' Tennis Unbeatable: 36-0

By Nicole Haber

Over the past three seasons, the Junior Varsity Girls' Tennis team has gone undefeated, accumulating an outstanding 36-0 record. Alan Striar, who also coaches the Boys' Varsity Tennis team and Junior Varsity Girls' Softball team as well, has led the girls to this astonishing record since he took over the team three years ago.

"The girls worked very hard to get to the point they are at," said Striar, "they are a pleasure to coach."

The team was led by all freshmen including number one singles player Melissa Kaliner, who was followed closely by number two singles player Mori Einsidler, and alternating number three singles players Lisa Ganz and Kimberly Parker.

The girls really enjoyed their winning streak, but constantly worked hard to improve their tennis abilities and strategies. Mori Einsidler exclaimed, "It's fun to play my favorite sport with my favorite people." Echoed Lisa Ganz, "JV tennis is a rewarding experience, which

helps not only our tennis game but we strengthen our friendships."

Striar has fulfilled his job in getting several of his girls prepared for the more competitive Varsity level. He believes the girls who worked the hardest during this season will receive the many vacant spots left by this year's departing seniors. He knows that the reason that the Varsity team is so successful is because of the outstanding work they did during their Junior Varsity days.

Coach Striar has instilled the right values into the girls; not only are they selfless teammates, but they recognize the need to work as hard as they can while having as much fun as possible. Jenna Haber added, "Coach has really pushed us to reach our full potential."

The 36-0 record is just the beginning of a successful girls' tennis program. The girls take pride in knowing that they have contributed to something very special and look forward to be as dominant on the Varsity level as they have been this year on JV.

## Sports Challenge

Questions compiled by Michael Tramontelli and Jon Gold

1. Who was the infamous kicker who kicked the almost game winning field goal wide right allowing the Giants to beat the Bills 20-19 in the 1990 Super Bowl?
2. Who was the first baseball player to be featured on a videogame? (Hint, think of Nintendo 64.)
3. Who is the youngest poker player to win the World Series of Poker?
4. What team was Kobe Bryant drafted to?
5. Who is the only player ever to have led the NBA, ABA and NCAA in scoring?
6. Which NFL team's stadium has a section called the "Dawg Pound"?
7. Which sport has the highest referee to player ratio?

## Answers

1. Scott Norwood
2. Ken Griffey Jr.
3. Phil Hellmuth
4. Charlotte Hornets
5. Rick Barry
6. Cleveland Browns
7. Tennis 13:2 (10 linesmen, 1 net, 1 foot fault, and 1 umpire)



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# Features

Features Editor: Melissa Lumish



The Senior Class Officers and their advisor stand proudly in front of the newly painted rock. From left: Mrs. Charlene Decker, Jeff Wiener, Kimera Rosen, Steph Zverin, Kerri Dunigan, and Melissa Lumish. Photo contributed by Jolene Gordon

## It's Better on Top

By FOCUS Staff

Covered in paint and energized by the thrill of continuing one of Blind Brook's favorite traditions, Blind Brook's senior class gathered behind the high school on Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, to put its finishing touches on "the rock." Each year, the seniors paint the rock a different color and label it with a slogan that represents the benefits, privileges, and relief that they enjoy as seniors.

While the rock is usually completed prior to the beginning of school, there was difficulty scheduling a date to paint this year due to conflicts. Although many of the seniors were disappointed by this breach of tradition, one student anonymously commented, "I think that painting the rock after school started wasn't such a bad thing, and even

though we all wished it could have been painted for the first day, it was more the 'broken tradition' that upset some people." Asuka Fukamachi agreed that this was "going against the tradition," but she said, "It is one of the traditions that is still going on since we've been here," and she is happy that it was successfully continued.

Some students were also let down by the lack of organization in planning the event. Senior Lee Arvoy said that "the whole chaos of choosing the slogan made things worse," but, as Fukamachi said, "The overall result was good."

The rock, now a bright yellow, stands as the mark left by the senior class of 2006. It boasts, along with the names and initials of every Blind Brook Senior, the slogan, in deep blue letters, "It's better on top."

## Peer Leadership Gets the Ball Rolling

By Rachel Polonsky

Just four meetings into the school year, the new Peer Leadership Program at Blind Brook High School, led by sixteen of Blind Brook's seniors and two faculty advisors, already appears to be a success. The program was established to provide a liaison between the oldest and youngest high school grades. The seniors, chosen last spring from an interviewing pool of thirty-three applicants, are expected to act both as friends and as role models for the freshmen.

The sixteen seniors attend a Peer Leadership class every day, taught by the program's faculty

advisors, Rita Gianfrancesco and Thomas Glickman. Every E-day of the high school's six-day schedule, however, the eight pairs of seniors meet with their groups of ten to sixteen freshmen.

The goals of the program, intended to benefit both the seniors and the freshmen, are two-fold. In the everyday class, the seniors discuss leadership techniques and ways to overcome obstacles that high school students may encounter. They also prepare a plan for their meetings with the freshmen, known as Outreach Sessions, based on the information discussed during the week. Glickman believes, "Learning to be an effective leader is an incredibly effective life skill," and he hopes the program will help its older participants prepare both for college and their future jobs. At the same time, the seniors use the E-day meetings to help the freshmen adjust to the transition of entering high school, improve communication across age and social barriers, and act as approachable role models who are willing to answer questions. Allison

Bergman, a senior peer leader noted, "When I was a freshman, I wished I had seniors who were there to help me."

The Peer Leadership Program, first introduced last year and implemented this year by Blind Brook mothers Marlene Adler and Andrea Forbes, was intended to improve communication among the students at Blind Brook. While the program has been considered both popular and beneficial at some of the larger schools in Westchester County, it has also found its place in Blind Brook's growing community. Although it is still early in the school

*"When I was a freshman, I wished I had seniors who were there to help me."*

--Allison Bergman, senior peer leader

year, many participants believe in the program's success and feel that it should be judged by the little improvements that can already be recognized. After an all-day trip to Crawford Park, spent experimenting with bonding activities between the ninth grade class and the senior leaders, the participants had overall positive reactions. Senior peer leader Kerri Dunigan said, "I do think [the program] will be successful because, judging from the Crawford Trip, the seniors have bonded with the freshmen already."

Glickman agreed, "I have to say I'm really happy with how it is doing so far," and believes that the program has a promising future. Similarly, freshman Tiffani Troilo remarked, "The Peer Leadership Program is a lot of fun and really good for our school because, as freshmen, we are really intimidated coming into high school for the first time. Having seniors there to guide you and teach you about the school is great for the freshmen because it makes us feel much more comfortable and welcome."

## Vacation or Exploration?

By David Fries and Akshay Nagia

While many Blind Brook students participated in typical summer activities, working as counselors or attending college study programs, a surprising number of students took advantage of the two-month vacation to engage in more exotic pursuits.

Junior Ian Dubrowsky, fascinated by the Chinese culture, applied for a Chinese study program and was thrilled to be accepted. "I had never been to China before, and I was very excited to be able to take courses and also learn about a different way of life," said Dubrowsky. Dubrowsky also learned that not all countries share the same types of liberties that we enjoy in the United States. "I learned to be much more grateful for what we have here in America. There are so many simple freedoms that we take for granted," he remarked. Though Dubrowsky had a great experience in China, he cautions that it is not for everyone. "You need to have a real curiosity in what's going on in that part of the world."

Although he spent part of his summer relaxing at his summer house in the 1000 Islands region of upstate New York, junior George Levine traveled to Africa to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest freestanding mountain in the world. He was accompanied by juniors Greg Goldstein and Matt Sadownick, and the three had an unforgettable experience. "Mountain climbing and being in nature encourages happiness and builds friendships. You learn how to get through a lot of tough situations together. It strengthens brotherhood. I would recommend it to everyone," Levine explained.

Although he was not as adventurous as the climbers of Mount Kilimanjaro, senior Scott Statman spent his summer in the small village of Anrabi, Ecuador. There, along with twenty other students participating in the PUTNEY teen travel program, he opened his eyes to a culture that he had only previously read about in books. He says, "It was a great experience to be in another country, experiencing a new culture, trying foods I have never tasted, and interacting with a different group of people." The goal of this trip was to build a wall surrounding the community center, and to help educate and interact with the school children. When he was not working on the wall, Statman helped teach English in the local school

and ran a camp to maximize interaction and exposure between the American and Ecuadorian cultures. Every weekend, the PUTNEY students took a trip to another part of Ecuador. According to Statman, the most interesting of them all was the final trip, when they traveled to the Amazon Rainforest, the largest rainforest in the world. Statman added, "Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience, and would definitely recommend it to anyone else interested in doing community service abroad."

Seniors Jolene Gordon and Jeff Wiener participated in the Tennis: Europe program, during which they traveled around Europe, both sight-seeing and playing in competitive tennis tournaments. Gordon reminisced on her summer, "It was a great experience. I had a lot of fun and met a lot of great people. I improved my tennis game, while getting a taste of European culture."

Junior Nicole Barreto spent part of her summer as a counselor. But, instead of dealing with campers, she cared for dogs at a dog day care center. While dogs can be a lot of fun, like children, they require a lot of supervision and they "are hard to care for." Barreto acknowledged that this activity may only be suitable for the most avid dog lover. "It was a lot of work, but I learned responsibility," she said.

Senior Michelle Simon, who spent the majority of the summer as a working student at the barn where she rides, also did a community service program at the Mount, which used to be Edith Burton's home. She and twelve other high school students spent two weeks clearing invasive species and restoring the grounds to the condition that they were in when Burton lived there. The students also spent three or four days at the Berkshires Scenic Railway. When asked why she wanted to participate in the program, Simon explained, "I've gone to summer camp, I've gone to specialty camps, and I've worked at home, but I've never gone away to do community service and I never worked with so few people for so long." Although it was hard work, Simon said, "It was a very different kind of atmosphere than I've ever experienced before, and it was fun... The invasive species will grow back, but it's cool to see your effect in places... it can be as small as clearing invasive species or [as broad as] going abroad and doing something."

## Scheduling Difficulties Plague BB Students

By Corinne Segal

Blind Brook High School Guidance Department Coordinator Christopher Griffin summed it up: "Taking APs is an individual choice."

In the spring of 2003, the Board of Education decided to expand Blind Brook's Advanced Placement offerings instead of introducing the International Baccalaureate program. In the IB curriculum, students are required to fulfill a distinct series of courses instead of having the freedom to select individual subjects.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti, explained, "The Board decided that Blind Brook had not fully tested our interest in the Advanced Placement program."

Now, several years later, the number of AP classes offered is rapidly increasing as is the pressure on high school juniors and seniors to take advantage of these options. "Fifteen to twenty years ago," Blind Brook High School Social Studies teacher Martine Curto remarked, "taking three or four AP courses was unheard of. Now, it has become the norm." Curto added that the reason for this high enrollment is most likely the demanding atmosphere of high performance at Blind Brook and the huge emphasis on transcripts and college applications in the lives of upperclassmen.

The high quality of academics at Blind Brook is a driving force in the school system's changes, but it comes with a price to pay. Many AP classes are only offered at one time, making it difficult for students to fit all of the courses that they want into their nine-period schedules. For example, there is only one section of AP European History, AP Spanish Language, French 5, AP Psychology, and Spanish 5, and all of these classes are offered during fourth period, making it almost impossible for students to take more than one of these courses. Senior

Harrison Foster remarked, "I had some problems scheduling AP Psychology. I had to do a great deal of work in the beginning of the school year to work everything out." Similarly, senior Rebecca Bacchioni added, "I only have lunch every other day and was unable to take band or French, classes that I've been in since 7th grade."

Some students have chosen to either give up their lunch period or take classes independently in order to avoid sacrificing classes that overlap with each other. Students who take classes independently must meet with a teacher in their free time, without attending a class, and complete all necessary work for the subject. Foster further commented, "Because of my course selections and the way the scheduling is arranged, I am unable to have a lunch period for the second half of the school year."

The inclusion of so many new courses also means the sacrifice of several electives, such as poetry or playwriting – classes that used to be offered at Blind Brook to help students to explore specific interests but can no longer be fit into the school day.

According to Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth, "Scheduling new classes is a matter of what students are interested in." She maintains that there is a long process involved in deciding which classes to add to or take away from course offerings, and most of the classes are offered because parents and students have expressed interest in them.

Despite the scheduling issues that arise, AP courses are valuable for students who want to concentrate on certain areas of academic interest. "It's important to be able to take APs in subjects that you're interested in and want to focus on, since that's what they were originally designed for," senior Heidi Lumish pointed out.

Features Editor: Melissa Lumish

Features Section

## Cafeteria Changeover

By Melissa Prusky

As students poured out of their classes for lunch on the first day of school and joined the line for the customary school lunch, they discovered a change in the food selection. Last year, the school's contract with Aramark, a lunch company that Blind Brook has used for years, ended, causing Blind Brook to consider a new company with slightly different food choices. A contract was signed with Whitsons, a company that would provide a greater, possibly healthier, selection of food.

Although some freshmen feel that the choice and healthiness of the food have not made a big leap since last year, they do feel that some minor changes, such as offering more vegetables, are making a difference. "I feel the food this year is more health-conscious than it was last year," said freshman Christina Tempesta.

Sophomore Lisa Zingman feels differently, that, although there is a better selection, there is an absence of a few consistent choices available every day to meet the needs of students who are not open to trying new foods. Last year, options such as pasta with tomato sauce were offered every day, guaranteeing the presence of a regular choice that most students enjoyed.

Students have also complained that another "down side" of the new food plan is the decline in the "tastiness" of the desserts. The cookies, which have traditionally been a favorite of Blind Brook's, "are definitely not as soft as they used to



Middle school students seem to be pleased with the new cafeteria food.

Photo by Ashley Woychowski

be," according to freshman Nicole Accurso. Based on conversations throughout the lunchroom and commons, it is also evident that students are displeased with the quality of some of the other, less nutritious, choices, such as the french fries.

Although the quality and popularity of the school lunch food seems to have declined slightly, there may be healthier choices and a larger variety. Students acknowledge that change may be beneficial and, although they are hoping for some improvements, they have variety and healthy options to look forward to in the coming school year.

## Straight and Gay Alliance Is Up and Running

By Aaron Wirshba

When Blind Brook students read the posters at Club Sign-Up Day on September 28, they saw many old and familiar clubs being advertised, including Mock Trial, Math Team, and Community Service Club, to name a few. Yet, one poster stood out above the rest—that for the Straight and Gay Alliance Club (commonly known as SAGA)—which is first being instituted at Blind Brook this year. The club, which will meet on Mondays during activity period with the club's senior co-founders Kimera Rosen and Jen Flaxman, along with their faculty advisor, Mr. Jon Ambrosio, aims to encourage student tolerance of different sexual orientations.

"I think it will create a more open environment for the future of Blind Brook. People will be more tolerant of others and their preferences," said Rosen, who hopes that SAGA will help strengthen relationships among all Blind Brook students.

One of the ways that the club aims to raise awareness is to organize a board of speakers to come and discuss their experiences as teenag-

ers and the prejudice they faced in high school. The club also plans to show movies and documentaries such as the *Laramie Project*, which relates the story of a hate-crime committed against a homosexual student in the small town of Laramie, Wisconsin. Moreover, SAGA will be implementing the "Day of Silence," which is an awareness-raising activity that requires those who participate to remain silent all day to simulate what it is like to be gay in an intolerant community. SAGA will also be coordinating a "No Name-Calling Week" and a "Straight Ally Week," among other events.

To further illustrate the intolerance that occurs in Blind Brook, Rosen told of a student who attended Blind Brook for less than two weeks. "He felt so uncomfortable and unhappy because everyone was intolerant and there were no openly gay people. He decided to go to Port Chester High School instead, where he ended up being much happier." These are exactly the conditions the co-founders of SAGA are hoping the club will prevent by creating a more tolerant atmosphere at Blind Brook.

## The Summer Reading Controversy

By Celine McBride

Just when Blind Brook students thought that they were off the hook for two months, the dreaded package arrived in the mail—the summer reading assignment.

This year's summer task was comprised of an assigned book for each grade with an accompanying specific project, as well as a list of books, which the Blind Brook faculty compiled, from which students would have to choose a book and construct a creative project. Each department recommended about five books; however, many students felt that the list was not sufficiently extensive to cover their interests. Senior Alex Frost expressed, "All the books on the list were classics or old novels. It did not include any current books that most people [at Blind Brook] like."

Additionally, there was a lack of student motivation because the assignments were worth only a small percentage of students' first quarter grades. The simplicity of the project assignments also caused the tasks to lack educational value or rigor and many students waited until the night before the due date to complete the project. Sophomore Benjamin Engle commented, "Our choices for the projects for the second book were very general and a little confusing. They also weren't exactly challenging, being that almost everyone either made a crossword puzzle or a t-shirt."

Many underclassmen, however, including some middle school students, had other com-

plaints. Some were unable to present their creative projects due to a lack of time, and little effort has been made to reschedule the presentations. These students regret that they spent the time working on assignments that were not acknowledged or graded.

Junior Sarah Rosenberg refuted the idea of a summer reading assignment, explaining, "It was pointless because all students are stressed out over work and we are even given work over vacations...so we never really have 'off' from school... Plus, people read at different levels, and by forcing them to read certain books it could actually turn kids away from books, which is something the administration definitely does not want."

Yet, there were students who felt that they benefited from this summer reading experience. Junior Michael Tramontelli described his contrasting view, "The creative project was educational. I liked seeing other presentations. It was interesting to see the other books, and if someone wanted to read one of them, they would have gotten a great summary [from his or her classmate's presentation]."

Likewise, the general consensus among parents and teachers is that summer reading is important to encourage students to read over the vacation. Students, parents, and faculty are optimistic that next summer's reading requirements will satisfy both the interests of the student body and the requirements of the Board of Education.

## Blind Brook at Its Best

By Sarah Rosenberg

We lost the privilege of parking in the IBM lot years ago. The senior slave, I mean service, auction is hardly worth holding anymore. We lost the junior off-campus policy—another tradition gone by the wayside. Freshmen are no longer intimidated by the upperclassmen. Even worse, we walk into school in silence instead of to the music that once lightened our morning blues. And our town meetings are held on WEDNESDAYS?

Yet, despite the unfortunate relegation of these traditions to Blind Brook's past, we still have clung to the one tradition that will never die, no matter what: we, as Blind Brookians, have mastered the art of complaining.

Now, I'm sure that in some forms this "tradition" exists at other schools; but no other school has perfected the art quite like we have at Blind Brook. Maybe it has to do with the size of our school and the closeness that we feel to our peers after having grown up together—maybe John Locke was right that the environment shapes our personalities. Nonetheless, this tradition unites us both as a school and a community.

It seems to be an almost regular occurrence to see a student arguing with a teacher over a grade because, obviously, getting an 89 on one quiz will completely wreck his or her chance to get into Harvard. Even outside of school, there have been too many weekends when I have gone over to a friend's house, only to sit there and complain about there being nothing to do in Rye Brook.

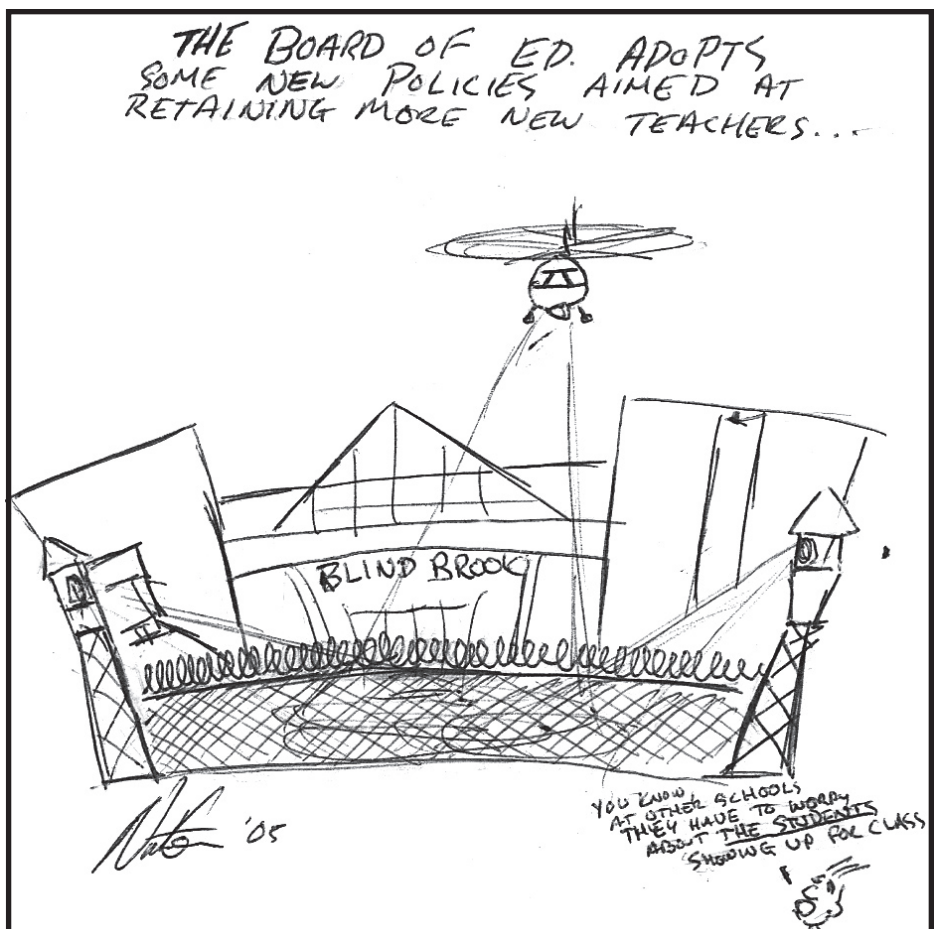
But, the most frequent grievance of all is complaining about complaining itself. I know that I am often a perpetrator of this type of tirade; I exclaim to my friends that I cannot stand to hear another person whine about the horrendous quality of food this year

or the fact that, surprise, surprise, we actually have a substantial amount of homework as juniors this year.

Yet, for all of the ridiculous and petty things that we complain about, our outspokenness has actually been advantageous. Many positive changes have come about at Blind Brook because students feel that they are in a place where their opinions are greatly valued, rather than in a typically stifling high school environment.

Perhaps the most revolutionary ideas have come about at our town meetings. For many years, school spirit was the focus of many a Blind Brookian's grievance. Despite all of the great teams at Blind Brook, people just have not shown their support for the Blind Brook Trojans. However, this lack of enthusiasm was terminated last year when the Senate, responding to what a student had said at a town meeting, decided to enact a School Spirit week. Each day, students in college apparel, sophomores parading around in their bikinis and boarder shorts, or students dressed in the school colors could be seen throughout the high school. And let's not forget the hallways, completely covered from ceiling to floor in red, white, and blue decorations. Everyone agreed that this week was a tremendous success. Why, you might ask? Because we complained.

Other traditions may come and go, but in fifty years, a new batch of students will still be voicing their concerns during open-mike sessions and they will learn to listen to the opinions of their peers. Hopefully the wise words of senior Arthur Ferrer, from that infamous first town meeting, will still be echoing in their heads, telling them to always, always remember to wear shoes in school.



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



# TODAY'S LESSON:

Good  
Neighbors  
are Hard  
to Find!

Thanks for welcoming us to Rye Brook.  
From your new friends at Cadbury Schweppes

AMERICAS BEVERAGES



# Arts & Entertainment

A &amp; E Editor: Marissa Barbaro

## Facebook Open to High Schools: Are You Invited?

By Scott Winston and Dan Levy

As of September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, Facebook, an online directory that has linked thousands of college students across the nation since its creation in early 2004, is now available to high school students. Not only does Facebook allow students to locate classmates at one's own educational facility, but it can also be used to acquaint oneself with peers from additional schools.

Students can set up a Facebook account via the Facebook website, [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). However, in order to do so, one must receive an

electronic invitation from an attendee or graduate of his/her school who has already established an account.

Students are attracted to Facebook by the variety of intriguing features it harbors, including two phenomena known as "the wall" and "poking." "The wall," an electronic message board that allows fellow Facebook users to post comments and insights, acts as a communication device among students similar to those provided by online journals such as Xanga and LiveJournal. "Poking," on the other hand, allows Facebook

users to indicate other directory members with whom they are interested in conversing.

Until September 2<sup>nd</sup>, the highly popular, highly public MySpace was the sole online directory available to high schools students. As of now, the quantity of Blind Brook students belonging exclusively to Facebook pales in comparison that of MySpace, which is accessible by people of all ages and does not require an invitation for the establishment of an account. Sophomore Karina Shaoul thoroughly enjoys utilizing MySpace as a means of online communication. "It's a nice way to talk to people you haven't talked to in a while and that you don't know that well. I love talking to my camp friends because I don't get to see them every day, and on MySpace I can see their pictures and everything," commented Shaoul.

The high school version of Facebook, however, now serves as an alternative to MySpace and acts as a viable source of competition, particularly due to its augmented security and selectivity. The fact that Facebook solely admits invited high school or college students rather than any person with access to a computer prevents undesired soliciting by strangers, making Facebook a much more secure method of online communication. Sophomore Rachel Weiner stated, "I like Facebook better [than MySpace] because you can befriend people you actually

know rather than possible pedophiles and people that you don't know.

Despite the increased security characteristic of Facebook, numerous Blind Brook students are reluctant to detach themselves from MySpace and do not feel threatened by its widespread accessibility. "I would never meet anyone I knew nothing about on MySpace," said junior Danni Kaufman. Senior Serena Lo echoed, "MySpace is safe to use, as long as you are careful about how much personal information you put onto it."

Additionally, various Blind Brook students are displeased by their inability to customize Facebook. On MySpace, users are able to post myriad pictures and alter the background color of their particular page. Conversely, Facebook allows students to post only one picture, and they are unable to change background colors and text layouts. "MySpace allows for more creativity to be shown by each user," commented sophomore Emily Howe, who has both a Facebook and a MySpace account.

Although the majority of Blind Brook students prefer MySpace over the newly available Facebook, Facebook is rapidly gaining momentum and has the potential to be the next major Blind Brook phenomenon. Said sophomore Benjamin Engle, "Facebook will play a key role in linking the Blind Brook community in the present and future."

## Celebrities Aid in Katrina Relief Effort

By Victoria Introcaso

When a national disaster strikes, not only do the American people provide support for relief efforts, but so do celebrities through the performance of such activities as benefit concerts and auctions. In the wake of the Hurricane Katrina crisis, it is no surprise that multitudinous efforts have been contrived by musicians as well and television and movie personalities to aid in the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast, the area most severely ravaged by the hurricane.

As of recent, celebrity-related activities have consisted largely of various telethons, concerts, and auctions designed to raise money for the people whose lives have been devastated by Hurricane Katrina. On Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, MSNBC and CNBC aired an event titled "Shelter from the Storm: A Concert for the Gulf Coast" consisting of performances by Sheryl Crow, the Dixie Chicks, Alicia Keys, and Neil Young as well as appearances by Jennifer Aniston, Jack Nicholson, Cameron Diaz, and Ellen DeGeneres.

Additionally, both BET and MTV have organized relief efforts for the national disaster. BET broadcasted a relief telethon entitled "S.O.S." ("Saving OurSelves"), which also aired on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The telethon included

musicians such as Jay-Z, P. Diddy, Stevie Wonder, Master P, and Chris Rock. MTV's "ReAct Now: Music and Relief Concert" was held on Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, and its participants included Green Day, Rob Thomas, the Dave Matthews Band, and Usher as well as many other musical artists. All proceeds obtained from these relief concerts and telethons will be used to help rebuild the lives of Hurricane Katrina victims.

Individual celebrities have also contributed significantly to the hurricane relief effort. Steven Spielberg and his family donated a total of \$1,500,000 to both the Red Cross and the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund while Barry Manilow has matched every dollar donated through the Manilow Fund for Health and Hope.

Blind Brook students seem to view celebrity participation in the hurricane relief effort positively. "I think [having celebrities perform in concerts to help those in need] is a great idea. People love music. What better way is there to raise money than by doing something and watching something you love?" commented junior Matt Seiden. Echoed junior Gabby Leigh, "It is great that celebrities are helping people in times of need. It shows that they are aware of the world around them and want to help out."

## Concert Craze Sweeps Blind Brook

By Andrew Creadore  
and Madeline Sims

As you pull up to the packed parking lot of the stadium, you see hundreds of teens piling out of nearby cars or just walking in groups, some wearing T-shirts with the name of a particular band printed across the front. Each and every adolescent seems eager to hear some awesome music, go crazy, and just have a great time. Where are you? You must be at one of the numerous killer concerts that, in the past few months, have attracted many Blind Brook students. How

*"It's awesome getting to see a band live and meeting other people who listen to them. It makes the music feel more real."*

--Jen Flaxman, senior

could you have been unsure after seeing the date and band on everyone's online profiles for months in advance?

Blind Brook High School has recently been struck by a "concert craze" in which a myriad of students have attended various concerts both on weekends and, at times, during the school week. Students largely attribute this sudden increase in concert attendance to the simple adoration of music. "When you see bands live, it's one of those experiences you never forget. You are surrounded by others who are singing along and having a great time, just really being able to relax," commented junior Matt Sadownick. A number of Blind Brook teens admire the featured band so much that they are willing to stand in the general admission section for the entire duration of the concert just to be able to catch a glimpse of their idols.

One of the most popular venues for recent concerts has been the Summer Stage at Central Park. "The concerts I've been to at Summer Stage have definitely been some of the best. Being surrounded by the beauty of Central Park while being immersed in the lyrics of your favorite song makes the experience that much better," stated Sadownick. Popular musical groups that have recently appeared at Summer Stage include Death Cab for Cutie, Jack Johnson, and the Killers. "I saw Jack Johnson in Central Park in early September, which was amazing," said junior Adam Fischer. "I've probably never had so much fun in my life."

Many Blind Brook students also jumped at the chance to view the free concert held by rock-and-roll bands Lifehouse and Bowling for Soup this past August at Rye Playland. This rare occasion allowed students who are normally unable to attend concerts in New York City to see some of their favorite musical artists without

having to pay extravagant ticket prices or seek extensive transportation.

In the upcoming months, Madison Square Garden will host a variety of musical artists that are sure to attract the attention of Blind Brook's growing concert fanatic population, including Kanye West, Bon Jovi, Audioslave, Dave Matthews Band, and Cream. Numerous Blind Brook students are attracted to the MSG concert location because even those who are currently unable to drive can arrive at the desired destination via train and/or subway without the added burden of parental supervision.

In addition, a brand new venue known as the Nokia Theatre has recently opened in Times Square, which will undoubtedly add to the immense number of bands (and, as a result, concert crazed Blind Brookians) appearing in the metropolitan area. Within the next few months, such musicians as O.A.R., Blues Traveler, Switchfoot, Ryan Cabrera, Simple Plan, Guster, and Hawthorne Heights will be performing at the Nokia Theatre. Tickets cost approximately \$30.00 per person.

Frequent concertgoers continue to attend various performances because they enjoy the excitement produced by the concert atmosphere. "It's awesome getting to see a band live and meeting other people who listen to them," noted senior Jen Flaxman. "It makes the music feel more real." Sophomore Megan Mansfield, who attended the Vans Warped Tour this summer, agreed, stating that, "Part of what makes the experience so [much] fun is just seeing all the crazy people who have come to watch the show." Indeed, innumerable concert attendees consider the entertaining actions performed by stage divers, mud wrestlers, and crowd surfers virtually equivocal in enjoyment to the music itself.

Additionally, many students consider concerts excellent bonding experiences that allow them to strengthen existing friendships, which is indicated by the fact that concert-bound students are usually accompanied by a large group of friends. "It's really great going to concerts with a group of friends," affirmed Fischer. "Going to concerts brings together people who share the same taste in music, but might not always hang out regularly. Seeing the bands you love is an awesome opportunity from the start, but being with a lot of people makes it much more enjoyable."

### Feasting with Foster:

## A'Mangiare

By Michelle Caley and Chloe Greenbaum

"I feel as if I am instantly transported back to Italy," Mr. Foster remarked as he pressed his nose to the fresh piece of pizza.

"When were you in Italy?" we asked.

"Never," he replied just before taking an enormous bite of his slice."

At this point, you may be wondering, "Who is this Mr. Foster, and is he a real food critic?" One of Blind Brook's seniors, the effervescent Harrison Foster is a school-renowned restaurant connoisseur who occasionally finds time in his busy schedule to scope out the best of Westchester's culturally refined dining facilities while comparing the cuisine at local restaurants to that of our own gourmet selection here at Blind Brook's stylish cafeteria.

On the brisk evening of September 29<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Foster's impeccable culinary instincts led us to the Italian paradise, A'Mangiare, centrally located in the town that never sleeps (more commonly known as Rye). "Wow, [A'Mangiare] provides the style and comfort of an Italian restaurant with the convenience of a pizza parlor," Mr. Foster noted, as we entered the restaurant.

As the three of us prepared to order, Mr. Foster was severely devastated by the absence of salad pizza from the menu; however, he soon recovered and settled with a slice of chicken parmigiana pizza and a bruschetta-like Sicilian slice, which he affectionately referred to as "an iceberg overflowing with fresh tomato, basil, and mozzarella." While commenting on the impressive quality of his pizza, Mr. Foster exclaimed, "It has just the

right amount of chicken and just the right amount of cheese!" We, being much more unfamiliar with the subtle intricacies of Italian cuisine, opted for less complex choices: a plain cheese slice and a piece of Sicilian, both of which proved tantalizingly delicious.

While gazing out of the restaurant's open entryway, Mr. Foster commented on its physical environment. "Although the passing cars and trucks can sometimes be noisy, they provide a serene and peaceful background for pleasant conversation." Overall, A'Mangiare's agreeable milieu delivered Mr. Foster numerous positive vibes.

Moments later, Mr. Foster suddenly dropped his fork with a clatter, interrupting our rousing conversation about his soccer team and causing three other restaurant attendees to stare intently as he struggled to retrieve his utensil from under the table.

Upon finishing our meal, we were tempted to visit Longford's Ice Cream Parlor, which is conveniently located directly across the street; however, we noticed that it was closed and decided to ask for the check. "Sorry, Sir, but we don't accept Discover cards," the waitress said kindly as she handed back Mr. Foster's credit card. "Well, I guess we'll be washing a few dishes tonight," Mr. Foster joked as he reached for his wallet.

Offering a plethora of Italian delicacies from pizza to shrimp scampi, A'Mangiare undoubtedly provides the perfect balance of simple and elegant dishes for any casual dining experience. As a result of its savory cuisine, attentive waiters, and pleasant atmosphere, Mr. Foster gives this restaurant a high rating, and he vows to return soon.

# Fall T.V. Guide

By Sam Levine and Rachel Weiner

## Family Guy

Not many people would think that cartoons appeal to teenagers; however, *Family Guy*, an animated comedy saturated with adult humor, has seized the adoration of many Blind Brook students. Entering its fourth season, *Family Guy* illustrates the trials and tribulations of the dysfunctional Griffin family, consisting of eccentric parents, Peter (Sean McFarlane) and Lois (Alex Borstein) as well as their quirky offspring, Meg, (Mila Kunis), Chris (Seth Green), and Stewie (also played by McFarlane). If you're looking for a late-night laugh, *Family Guy* is definitely the show for you. For all new episodes, tune in to Fox 5 on Sunday nights at 9:00 P.M. You can also catch reruns on Channel 32 or Channel 39 throughout the week.

## One Tree Hill

The WB's hit primetime drama is entering its third season, much to the enjoyment of a myriad of Blind Brook students. In the small town of Tree Hill, North Carolina, half-brothers Lucas (Chad Michael Murray) and Nathan (James Lafferty) live on opposite sides of the social spectrum, Lucas being the son of a widowed mother and Nathan, a wealthy businessman's prodigal child. However, their worlds are turned upside down when they discover that they share the same father. Throughout the first two seasons, Lucas and Nathan attempt to cope with numerous familial and romantic hardships along with female counterparts Hayley (Bethany Joy Lenz), Peyton (Hilarie Burton), and Brooke (Sophia Bush). Expect a significant increase in dramatic tension as divorces, secret children, and fatal accidents continue to plague the residents of Tree Hill during the third season, which premiered on Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. Check out *One Tree Hill* every Wednesday at 9:00 P.M.

## Reunion

This new action-packed thriller chronicles the lives of former high school friends, Will (Will Estes), Samantha (Alexa Davalos), Carla (Chyler Leigh), Aaron (Dave Annable), Craig (Sean Faris), and Jenna (Amanda Righetti) over the course of twenty years. In high school, the six of them were the best of friends; now, 20 years after their high school graduation, one of them has been murdered, and the rest are suspects. Each episode consists of one full year in which the exposure of every new secret brings the characters one step closer to uncovering the truth about the past. Throughout this twenty-year time period, each character faces numerous conflicts, such as secret love affairs, fatal car accidents,

and pregnancies, all of which will culminate in the final revelation of both the murderer and his/her victim. Catch *Reunion* on Thursdays at 9:00 P.M. on Fox 5.

## Curb Your Enthusiasm

This HBO series, which differs greatly from the soap opera-esque dramas so highly revered by modern adolescents, is a comedy that you won't want to miss. The cast members, including Larry David (as himself), Cheryl David (Cheryl Hines), Richard Lewis (as himself), Jeff Greene (Jeff Garlin), and Susie (Susie Essman), do not read from scripts. Instead, characters improvise based on outlines they are given of each scene, which gives the show a fresh, funny twist. Each week, you can watch Larry David enter into funny predicaments with other cast members at home, at work, or just around town. If you want to see what dilemma Larry David will encounter next, tune in to HBO on Sundays at 10:00 P.M.

## Supernatural

If you're into such otherworldly occurrences as exorcisms and demonic murders, then *Supernatural* is the show for you. This new WB thriller documents the lives of brothers Sam and Dean Winchester (Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles, respectively), who, as children, witnessed the murder of their mother by an unknown supernatural entity. As the years passed, Sam slowly drifted away from realm of the supernatural while Dean continued to pursue the potential causes of his mother's death. However, when their father mysteriously disappears, Sam decides to join Dean in an unpredictable battle against the supernatural forces responsible for the loss of their parents. You can catch *Supernatural* on Tuesday nights at 9:00 P.M. on the WB 11.

## Entourage

*Entourage*, the hit comedy series that peers into the day-to-day lives of successful Hollywood actor, Vince Chase (Adrian Grenier) and his posse, has returned to HBO for a second season. The show depicts the excessively luxurious lifestyles harbored by modern celebrities as well as a search for love, success, and happiness in Hollywood. Be sure to watch Season Two on Sundays at 9:00 P.M.

## The Real World

Currently in its sixteenth season, MTV's *The Real World* is the story of seven strangers whose daily activities are videotaped as they attempt to endure living with one another. Every season, the roommates are charged with a task that they must perform in a given period of time, this

season's job being the creation of a documentary on the South for the Southwest Film and Music Festival. The current set of roommates includes Danny (a sensitive and understanding man from Massachusetts), Melinda (an attractive woman who broke up with her boyfriend in order to pursue a relationship with Danny), Johanna (a stubborn, fiery Peruvian woman), Wes (an egotistical jock), Rachel (an Iraq war veteran), Lacey (a highly opinionated young woman from a devoutly religious family), and Nehemiah (an intelligent, quiet film student). Catch the *Real World* cast on Tuesdays at 10:00 P.M.

## Desperate Housewives

ABC's hit program, *Desperate Housewives* views the private lives of stereotypical suburban homemakers in a comedic light. The series began with suburban housewife, Mary Alice Young (Brenda Strong), mysteriously committing suicide. She now narrates the show and draws us into the lives of her family, friends and neighbors. Mary Alice's social clique, referred to as the "desperate housewives," includes Susan Mayer (Teri Hatcher), Bree Van De Kamp (Marcia Cross), Lynette Scavo (Felicity Huffman), Gabrielle Solis (Eva Longoria), and Edie Britt (Nicollette Sheridan). Every Sunday at 9:00 on ABC, *Desperate Housewives* reveals new surprises and delicious secrets about each housewife residing in this seemingly perfect American suburb.

## The O.C.

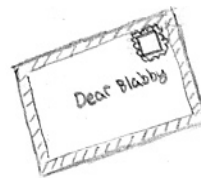
Currently in its third season, *The O.C.* is one of the most popularly viewed television

programs in the nation. The epitome of an adolescent drama, *The O.C.* depicts the opulent, yet abusive, lifestyles of the residents of Orange County, California, whose principle values consist of such superfluous concepts as unparalleled wealth and extravagant physical appearances. After being freed from prison by Sandy Cohen (Peter Gallagher), juvenile delinquent, Ryan Atwood (Benjamin McKenzie), is brought to Orange County in hopes of starting life anew. Throughout the first two seasons, viewers have witnessed the various social and romantic hardships endured by Atwood and his social circle, consisting of step-brother, Seth Cohen (Adam Brody), unsteady girlfriend, Marisa Cooper (Mischa Barton), and female friend, Summer Roberts (Rachel Bilson). You can catch new episodes of *The O.C.* Thursday nights at 8:00 P.M. on Fox 5.

## Laguna Beach

This MTV reality show, now in its second season, depicts the actual lives of wealthy, spoiled high school seniors residing in Orange County, California. Kristin, one of the primary "cast members," always searches for fun, constantly avoids drama, and enjoys being the lust of every Laguna boy. *Laguna Beach* focuses primarily on the lives of teenage drama queens, Kristen, Jessica, Alex M., and Taylor as well as their male counterparts, Talan and Jason in their social and romantic endeavors. Tune in to *Laguna Beach* Mondays at 10:00 P.M.

## Advice for the Unsound



# Dear Blabby

By Jamie Florindi and Dana Silverstein

Dear Blabby,

I'm currently a sophomore and have been locked out of school several times this year. I've tried waving frantically to attract the attention of the security guards, but they just haven't noticed me. I feel as though the secretaries are laughing at me in the office as they watch me on camera suffering outside. I then begin to have flashbacks from kindergarten of when my teacher used to lock her classroom door, and I wasn't able to enter. I am often late for my first period class, and I usually have to make a speech in front of all of my classmates explaining why I am constantly late. Talk about embarrassing, right? My teacher also does not seem amused that I make the same excuse every time I am tardy. She doesn't seem to believe me! I have received dozens of detentions, and I feel that the detention room will be my second home for the next two years. Blabby, what should I do?

Seeking Help,  
Tardy Terry

Dear Tardy Terry,

I am sorry to hear about your unfortunate lock-out situation. A similar incident happened to me, but instead of being totally locked out, only one door was open, and I was trampled by hundreds of crazed middle school students. And let me tell you, it is not a great way to start off the day!

Don't stress out and wake up at five o'clock in the morning just so you're not late to class. Just make sure that you are efficient in the morning. Maybe try to pick out your clothes the night before. That way, all you have to do is brush your teeth, comb your hair, and dart out the door. Being early to class or school is a lot better than being tardy, embarrassed, and known by all your classmates as "the late girl."

A good idea would be speaking to the administration or approaching the Student Congress about this issue. It always helps to *speak up, and speak out!*

When in doubt, if you cannot get in, try using another door, or go to the portables. There is always a teacher there to lend a helping hand and a good doughnut!

Sincerely,  
Blabby

Dear Blabby,

My parents go to work early in the morning and often don't have time to make my lunch. Though I try to wake up early, I often put my alarm on snooze and try to get in those five extra minutes. Time never seems to be on my side, and I am consistently late for the bus. I have to use my cross-country skills to chase the bus down my street. I often get to school with an empty stomach and no lunch. The cafeteria food prices have skyrocketed since last year, and the food just isn't the same. I miss the soft baked chocolate chip cookies and the greasy, but delicious, French fries. When I go down for a snack before cross-country practice, the vending machines eat five dollars of my hard-earned money. Then I am left with no water or snack before I have to run anywhere between three and six miles. I am often left with an empty wallet and stomach by the end of the day. I don't get to eat a full meal until dinner. Blabby, please help me!

Regards,  
Famished Francesca

Dear Famished Francesca,

My stomach goes out to you and your wallet. I understand that the prices of food in the cafeteria are high, but it is your responsibility to get yourself ready in the morning. Try making your lunch the night before so that, when the bus goes by your house, you only have to grab the bag out of the refrigerator.

If all else fails, ask a senior to go out once or twice a week and buy you a bagel from Lenny's or a nice cool mocha Frappuccino from Starbucks.

Maybe a midnight snack may also do the trick. It might hold you over through the night and into the morning. Big dinners are also a great help. Not being so hungry during second period may help you raise your grade to a B in Biology.

About the vending machines, there is not much that can be done. Speak to the principal and see if he can refund your money. Hope that helps!

Sincerely,  
Blabby

## Featured CD of the Month:

# From Under the Cork Tree

By Madeline Sims

Fall Out Boy's latest album, *From Under the Cork Tree*, hit stores way back in June, but sales have continued riding strong through the summer and into the fall. "We would never have thought we would have made it this far," confessed bassist Pete Wentz in a recent interview. What makes their newest CD such a favorite amongst Blind Brook students? Perhaps it's the energetic, tongue-in-cheek lyrics or the catchy tunes that fill all of their songs. They aren't afraid to have a sense of humor and relentlessly make fun of themselves through their lyrics. (Sounds like a typical high school student, right?) The album touches on a variety of themes from love and reconciliation to thinking about what you used to have versus what you have now.

No one quite knows what genre of music to place these boys into. Some consider them to be pop/punk while others refer to them as being "emotional" or even light metal,

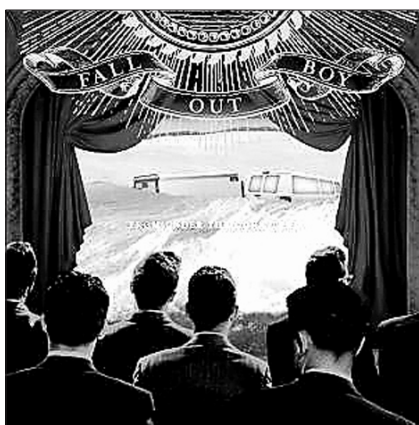
although that may be stretching it a bit.

There is certainly no doubt that this band is unique. Who else would title a song "Our Lawyer Made Us Change The Name Of This Song So We Wouldn't Get Sued," or "I Slept With Someone In Fall Out Boy And All I Got Was This Stupid Song Written About Me"?

Their break-out single, entitled "Sugar, We're Going Down," has been a huge-hit and has earned the group airplay on all major radio stations. A brand new video for the song "Dance Dance," also off this album, premiered on

October 11<sup>th</sup> on MTV.

While the meaning of some of Fall Out Boy's lyrics is hard to decipher, their fans don't seem to mind. Don't expect the craze about *From Under the Cork Tree* to die out any time soon--Fall Out Boy isn't going anywhere. If you have not given them a chance because you mistakenly think they're just like every other band out there nowadays, you have certainly been missing out.



# Opinion

## I Pledge Allegiance...Under What?

Last year, Blind Brook encountered yet another implementation of tradition—the Pledge of Allegiance. Once again, we, the students, were encouraged to rise at the beginning of second period to recite an oath to our country. Some welcomed the renewed ritual with patriotism and others viewed it as a nuisance, but most did not think about what they were actually saying.

Last year, an atheist in California, Michael Newdow, lost in the Supreme Court when he fought to remove the phrase “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance because it was determined that he could not challenge anything on behalf of his daughter of whom he did not

have custody. But Newdow fought back and filed on behalf of his daughter and two other families, and on Wednesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, Judge Lawrence Karlton concluded, “...The school district’s policy with regard to the pledge is an unconstitutional violation of the children’s right to be free from a coercive requirement to affirm God.” A U.S. District Court refused to dismiss the case, and Newdow’s challenge will be taken to a higher authority.

The fact is that no one has any objection reciting an oath to his/her country to demonstrate loyalty and respect; however, how can a school or anyone at all insist that students pledge under a God that they may or may not even believe

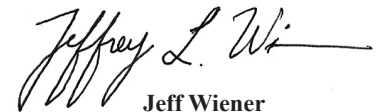
in? It is simply unfair.

When Newdow was interviewed by AP Radio, he suggested that we consider the reversal of the situation and, “Imagine every morning if the teachers had the children stand up, place their hands over their hearts, and say, ‘We are one nation that denies God exists.’” He raises an excellent point: how can the United States revolve their pledge around monotheists, regardless of whether or not they make up a majority of the United States?

Some citizens are distraught by this case, not because they have a strong opinion either way on the issue but because they feel that the United States is wasting its time discussing

issues such as this. But isn’t this exactly what the American judicial system is there for—to make sure our Constitutional rights are being upheld? I can not imagine a more worthy issue to be discussed in a court of law.

So the question at hand remains: is Blind Brook violating students’ rights? We can each create our own opinion, but the Supreme Court will have to make the final decision.



Jeff Wiener  
Editor-in-Chief

## Keeping Our Windows of Opportunity Open

By Julie Ganz

Many people shuddered in fear after the attacks on the World Trade Center four years ago, remarking that “No place is safe in the world anymore; no place is safe to travel to.” Then, with a large degree of certainty, they’d proclaim, “Well, except maybe England. At least the English are still our allies.” Yet, this past July, those same people who looked to London as one of the only European cities in which they could feel welcome watched CNN with eyes of terror as the London subway system and busses were being consumed by flames; people were being rushed to the hospital, many dead, and hundreds upon hun-

dreds plagued by injury. As some Americans became absorbed in fear, they vowed that their international travel would now be severely limited to the North American continent. But as much as it is fun to enjoy the Mexican sun, the Montreal night life, and the natural wonders of the Midwestern United States, why should our fear of the unknown bar us from the cultural wonders of the six other continents (okay, so I’m not here to advocate for a trip to Antarctica, so let’s say five other continents) that exist on this planet?

Attacks like the London bombings should not prevent us from exploring a country so deeply-rooted in history that it would be a

mistake not to travel to it. Instead, violence such as this should *encourage* us to learn about the unfamiliar and visit all that we can, for one day, it might not be there anymore. History’s most precious artifacts could be wiped out before you know it, or before you get a chance to see them. What the best history teacher can teach in a Blind Brook classroom (or any other classroom) cannot compare to a first-hand view of those precious objects that have become artifacts with the passage of time. Although I had learned in history class about the Berlin Wall, it was not until I actually ventured to Berlin in August of 2001 that I got to take a tour around the city and visualize *exactly* where the wall was erected and for what purpose. Even though I studied ancient Rome in ninth grade until I never wanted to hear Caesar’s name ever again, it wasn’t until I traveled to Rome in December that I was able to appreciate the magnificent architecture and incredible history behind the city. And it wasn’t until I traveled to England for the second time last summer that I realized that England was not just our foe in the American Revolution, or

the naughty mother country that made life difficult by imposing hefty taxes, but a nation with a unique system of government and meaningful traditions.

We must not let a few dangerous people instill fear in us and prevent us from exploring the complex and exhilarating world that we live in. Why should that emotion that we call fear prevent us from living life to the fullest? For as much as we can try to learn about Italian cuisine by studying the chef at a NY pizzeria, whom are we trying to fool? And as eager as we are to study the Spanish language in an attempt to expand our horizons, how can we do this when we’re not practicing the language with real, native speakers in Spain? In order to *accept* other cultures, it is imperative that we attempt to *assimilate* into these cultures. No longer should we immediately cross off England from our list of destinations as soon as we are notified of London’s terrorist attacks. For when you close yourself off from a country out of fear and paranoia, you close another window of opportunity that could lead to the acceptance of a unique nation and an intricate culture.

## The Way You Sing It, I Can’t Believe It

By Marissa Barbaro

Over the summer, while accompanying my great aunt on a short road trip, the sweltering heat and excruciating bumper-to-bumper traffic prompted me to beg, “Can I *please* turn on the radio?” “Okay,” she replied, a grimace inching across her face as Ludacris’s “Pimpin’ All Over The World” resonated through the car. However, the same revolted scowl was plastered just as noticeably on mine.

Recently, such infamous rap artists as Ludacris and The Game have contributed to a problem that has plagued civilization since the dawn of time: the degradation of women. Although we’ve (finally) been bequeathed with suffrage and the ability to choose our own occupation without being scoffed at by our male co-workers, the genre of music known as “gangsta rap” has undoubtedly kept complete respect for females at bay. In fact, this specific musical category is so demeaning that its condemnation of women is mentioned specifically in its definition, according to *Webster’s Dictionary*.

After hearing the word “pimp” mentioned more times in the same song than there are diamond rings on Ludacris’s fingers, even the most avid rap fanatic cannot argue that some form of feminine degradation is present in modern music. For example, as its title indicates, not one line of “Pimpin’ All Over The World” is devoted to a topic other than the singer’s sexual attraction for the entire global population of women, to whom he refers with a multitude of profane labels that would have me summarily ejected from the newspaper if I proceeded to list them.

The fact that Ludacris considers women nothing more than backsides that can rhythmically jiggle themselves on command is absolutely atrocious. Not only does he debase women as a whole, he overtly broadcasts his desire to engage in some form of sexually stimulating activity with women from sundry nations. At least we know he isn’t racist.

Additionally, there is not a single song in existence more demeaning or grotesque than 50 Cent’s “Candy Shop.” Without exaggeration, every single lyric is an indecorous sexual reference that vividly, though

indirectly, reflects upon his rated-X opinion of women. One would think that in the midst of being involved in an overseas war and harboring a president with an intellectual capacity comparable to that of a squirrel, 50 Cent, among other rap artists, would have more to sing about than the various alluring portions of the female anatomy. I’m sure I speak for most women in stating that virtually no one even remotely cares about the methods by which 50 Cent uses females to satiate his sensual urges; that is what diaries are for, not public media forums. It’s time to wake up, Fifty. Women are living, breathing, capable human beings, not something you buy at Spencer’s.

The notorious Eminem, however, truly epitomizes the music industry’s deprecation of women. Since his first appearance on the musical scene in 1998, Eminem has released CDs saturated with multitudinous demeaning tracks that refer to women, particularly his wife/ex-wife/wife again, by every derogatory slang term present on urbandictionary.com. In his most recent work of slander, blatantly titled “Ass Like That,” Eminem sings for a full five minutes and fifteen seconds about his attraction for females’ rear ends. Such a grotesque compilation of vile slang terms and “four-letter words” can barely be considered a song and is comparable in baseness solely to the cacophonous racket played at bachelor parties while the female mud wrestlers grapple with one another.

We all know that between being sued by his mother multiple times and engaging in a grueling battle with his wife over the custody of his daughter, Eminem has experienced his fair share of female-related problems. His personal experiences, however, do not, under any circumstances, invest him with the right to make degrading generalizations about all women. Maybe next time he’ll try some family counseling; I’m sure it would be greatly appreciated.

Musical degradation of females is absolutely unacceptable, particularly in a nation of such high social standards as America. After two thousand plus years of subordination, the last thing we want to hear is “shake your body like a belly dancer” twenty times in the same song.

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