

FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

May 2006

Kaplan and Buzin Elected to the Board of Education; New Budget Approved

By Scott Statman

On Tuesday, May 16th, Rye Brook residents elected Steve Kaplan and Richard Buzin to the Board of Education. There were three candidates—in-



Richard Buzin



Steve Kaplan

cumbent Caryn Furst, Buzin, and Kaplan—running for two seats.

The two openings on the board were created when the three-year terms of Vice President Caryn Furst and Marie Magliano came to an end. Magliano decided not to run for re-election after her first term on the board, while Furst decided to run for a second term.

A total of 967 Rye Brook residents came out to vote in the elections, which also included a vote for the approval of next year's school budget.

In the Board of Education elections, the veteran Furst received 426 votes, allowing her to be easily defeated by Kaplan, with 634 votes, and Buzin, with 638 votes. The results of the election show that Rye Brook residents are apparently eager for change.

Furst, Vice President of Communications at Acappella Software, Inc. and 13-year Rye Brook resident, has

twin daughters in sixth grade at Blind Brook Middle School. During her three-year tenure on the Board of Education, Furst was instrumental in expanding the district's technology, introducing new human resource concepts, and fighting for greater transparency on all Board issues. In this election, she ran under the motto: "A leader with a positive message, a voice of reason and progress."

Buzin, a Mamaroneck dentist and 19-year resident of Rye Brook with two children who have graduated Blind Brook, served on the Blind Brook Board of Education for two consecutive terms between 1997 and 2003 (He was president of the board in 2001-2002), after which he spent two years as a Village of Rye Brook Trustee.

Kaplan, a CPA and forensic accountant, has been a Rye Brook resident for 11 years and has a fourth-grade son and a third-grade son in the district. This was Kaplan's third attempt at election to the board, and this time he ran under the election motto: "Positive Change for Positive Results."

Both Buzin and Kaplan ran for election with very similar platforms, aimed at attacking the actions of the current Board of Education, particularly Furst. In particular, both candidates have addressed the current board with respect to the increase in Advanced Placement courses and the decrease in elective offerings. In fact, in a speech

Please turn to page 4

After Announcing Retirement, Valenti Asked to Serve Another Term

By Aaron Wirshba

After recently announcing his retirement, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti was offered another three-year contract by the Board of Education to be the superintendent of the Blind Brook School District.

Originally, Valenti was planning on retiring this coming June. However, after Valenti announced his retirement, the Board of Education asked him to stay. In order to do so, they offered him a new contract.

Dr. Valenti, who currently makes \$211,000 per year, will receive a \$5,000 per year raise in his contract. Not only will he be receiving more money from this agree-

ment, he will also be collecting a retirement pension. A recently passed New York State law allows superintendents to have this flexibility.



Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti.

Photo by Emily Brackman

All but one of the Board of Education members supported this move, the only one opposed being Monroe Haas.

"I just feel that such a contract is inappropriate as stated presently," said Haas. He, along with many others, would rather see state funding go to up-and-coming school administrators. Some community members who also do not support

this move feel that the extra money that is going to Valenti could be put towards the

Please turn to page 15



Pictured above is the Mock Trial Team at the Westchester County Finals. From left are attorney-advisor Joel Hecker, freshman Max Linder, sophomores Andrew Becker and Aaron Wirshba, junior Jared Hoffman, senior Marisa Berman, Judge Anthony Scarpino, senior Jeff Wiener, sophomore Madeline Sims, junior Ian Dubrowsky, freshman Mori Einsidler, sophomores Michelle Caley and Ben Engle, senior Harrison Foster, faculty-advisor Robert Greshes, and attorney-advisor Barbara Bernstein. Seated below are senior Kimera Rosen and freshman Lisa Ganz.

A Crushing End to a Wondrous Ride: Mock Trial Season Comes to a Close

By Eric Taitz and FOCUS Staff

Although the Blind Brook Mock Trial team was able to capture its third consecutive Westchester County title and second consecutive Region IV title this year, it was unable to capture the elusive State Championship title—an accomplishment no team in the history of B.B. has ever achieved.

After losing five seniors to graduation last year, expectations for this year's team were set low. In past years, Mock Trial had rebuilding seasons in which younger members took on bigger roles, effectively sacrificing a season for the betterment of future seasons; though projected to be one of those seasons, the Lawyer Trojans proved that they had what it took to compete and win. "My expectations were truthfully not very high," said senior captain Jeff Wiener. "I was unsure of myself being able to lead a team that had just lost five key and superior members."

Against all odds and in true Blind Brook fashion, the team cruised through the Westchester and Regional tournaments that brought them back to the State tournament in Albany on May 18. The format of the tournament is set up so that the six different teams—one from each region of New York State—compete in one trial as the Prosecution team and one trial as the Defense team; the team that scores the most total points between the two trials advances to the finals. Scores are not revealed to either team until after both trials are completed at a ceremonial dinner.

Blind Brook squared off against the defending State Champions, William Floyd High School, in the morning as the Prosecution team. Wiener, along with junior captain Jared Hoffman and senior Harry Foster, took on the roles of the attorneys, with Wiener delivering the opening statement and Hoffman, the closing; seniors Marisa Berman and Kimera Rosen, along with sophomore Madeline Sims, took on the roles of the witnesses. Interestingly, Blind Brook defeated William Floyd last year in the Regional tournament, but did not advance to the finals because they did not have enough points; William Floyd, on the other hand, had accumulated enough points between the two trials to advance and, to Blind Brook's disbelief, eventually won the State title.

Clearly, vengeance was a factor in this trial. In all of the nine trials that B.B. performed in the Westchester and Regional tournaments, six out of nine trials were done by the Prosecution; therefore, after butting heads with the defending champs for three hours, the Blind Brook team felt frustrated because it was not up to the team's usual standard of play for that side of the case.

Nonetheless, another trial, this time as the Defense against Leeman Alternative School, was to be played. Wiener, Hoffman, and Foster took on the attorney roles again, this time with Hoffman delivering the opening and Wiener, the closing; Berman, Rosen, and sophomore Aaron Wirshba were the

Please turn to page 15

Inside

NEWS

- IMC Director
- Steven Jones Retires.....2
- Global Language Task Force
- Up and Running3

SPORTS

- Latella Moves FORE!-ward
- in Sectional Tournament.....5
- Dominant Pitching Drives Lady
- Trojan Softball to Success.....6
- Boys' Varsity Tennis Captures
- League Title Again7

FEATURES

- Three Year Advanced
- Placement Plan8
- Diversity in the Face
- of Adversity8
- High School Band
- Proves Excellence9

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

- Two Alumni
- Have Literature Published... 11
- Summer Sequels..... 13

EDITORIAL

- Sun Burned and Schooled-Out...15
- A Response to the New Blind
- Brook Peanut Gallery: "If it
- Ain't Broke, Don't Fix it" ... 16

(Not So) Bored of Education

By Adam Fischer

What is it that makes a class “good”? Is it how seldom homework is assigned? How cohesively teachers and their students get along? How many students ultimately receive 5’s on the AP exam?

I can safely say that the possible answers to this broad question will differ depending on who is asked. Stereotypically speaking, one would assume that students (if anyone) will most readily voice opinion number one, teachers: opinion number two, and administrators: opinion number three. However, everyone is bound to have a different perspective on what qualifies a class as genuinely “good.”

For me, however, some innate qualities exist that make one class stand out from the others. Of the three initial questions, I would be most likely to respond to question two. While breaks from the homework surplus are overly appreciated and a 5 on any of my AP exams would be incredible, such nuances become marginal when students and teachers do not share a mutual relationship.

The complexities of the student-teacher relationship have paved the way for what has become a rather taboo subject in Blind Brook. Congress and individual clubs have attempted to tackle the issue of how to enhance a sense of solidarity within our halls. The word “morale” has popped up in such conversations numerous times, in regards to whether or not a genuinely positive attitude exists amongst the Blind Brook community.

In all honesty, the issue has become trite, to say the least. Throwing words back and forth about how to “boost morale” will not accomplish anything. Instead, we all simply need to respect each other (as cliché as that may sound). Yes, that may be a truly outrageous assertion to some, but in the end the whole concern comes down to the lack of respect that unfortunately exists in the high school.

In order to accomplish anything in the classroom, be it a meaningful discussion or a sense of preparation for an exam, students and teachers must be able to not only coexist but also benefit from each other’s offerings. Believe it or not, much more can come out of a classroom than how to solve an equation or most effectively structure an essay. Of course these are the obvious and foremost reasons why we go to school; but when a student can enter a classroom and open up to, share insights with, and personally benefit from a teacher, *that* is when you know you are in a “good” class.

While this image may be somewhat idealistic, I think most students would be remiss in saying that it has never happened in one way or another. Throughout one’s high school term, I would imagine (and hope) that any given student would be able to readily name one class or teacher that personally affected him or her. Of course not everyone will agree with this claim, but something tells

me that many students, at one time or another, had the opportunity to benefit from a class or teacher.

Fairness is another feature of a class that intuitively would make it a “good” one. When I say “fairness,” I do not necessarily mean whether a test was too hard or too easy (although I have yet to hear anyone complain of an unfairly easy test) or if some teacher is unfair in giving too much homework when he or she knows students have three exams coming up the next day; instead, I mean the degree to which teachers listen to and respond to their students’ opinions.

As bizarre as it may sound, students are *not* teachers, and accordingly we are in no position to act as if we know the best ways to teach. However, there comes a time when teachers seem to lose sight of their students’ abilities to maintain stress.

I can remember several times in particular during this school year when I simply could not understand how certain teachers assigned us more work than we already had. It seemed as though these unbearable excesses came in waves; for example, the week before the SATs it seemed like the workload tripled, as though the ensuing exam was not draining us enough. The groaning and complaining that we dished out proved to be in vain as teachers adamantly stood by their original assignments. While complaining is widespread and unstoppable, it sometimes is sincerely heartfelt.

Although a class may be a “college-level” class, we are not in college. In college, individual classes are taken two or three times a week without having spent six and a half hours per day in school. College work is split between only a few classes, while in high school we have maybe six or seven classes’ worth of work to balance. There have been several occasions this year where it seemed like the work just kept coming regardless of our minimal time to complete it; and despite students’ attempts to gain their sympathy, teachers have remained unflinching.

Once again, I reaffirm that I obviously do not have the slightest idea of how a class should be taught. Nonetheless, I think that a “good” class possesses a mutual understanding between students and teachers that connotes a degree of flexibility. Such a class has a balance between its demands and its benefits. While we, as students, admittedly may often be unreasonable and whiny, there comes a point once in a while when we propose a legitimate argument. In such a case, I think that it is a teacher’s duty to be fair and be open-minded to students’ concerns.

Unfortunately, it is when this fairness is forfeited that students stop trying as hard as they can. When students feel that they are not getting something out of a class, whether it is fairness or instruction, stubbornness begins to replace understanding. At that point,

Please turn to page 4



IMC Director Steven Jones Retires

By FOCUS staff

Steven Jones, who first started at Blind Brook in 1973, is retiring in June. Jones initially taught high school English and was transferred to Instructional Media Center Director and instructor in Research Strategies in 2000, after the current librarian resigned.

“When I became director of the IMC, my life changed here in many ways—and I missed the coaching and teaching I did daily then, where I developed relationships with ‘my’ students or ‘my’ players over a season or a school year. Now, it is someone else’s students that I work with when their classes come into the IMC for a project.” Jones stated. “I lost,

also, the collegiality with fellow classroom teachers involved in the day-to-day rhythm of teaching classes. My relationship was more as a specialist that is invited in occasionally, a visitor. That’s a difference I felt for a while.”

When Jones first began his tenure at Blind Brook, he was part of the initial group of teachers in the new high school, since the district only used to have a kindergarten-9 school. He actually first started teaching his English 10 class, which he taught until 2000, at Ridge Street School, until the high school building was complete. Jones also taught English 7, Sociology, Social Studies 7, and Drama during his teaching tenure. He was influential in creating courses such as *Mysteries*, *Science Fiction*, *Comedy*, *“Death and Literature,”* *“Literary New York City,”* *“Alice in Wonderland”* and *“A Place Called School.”*

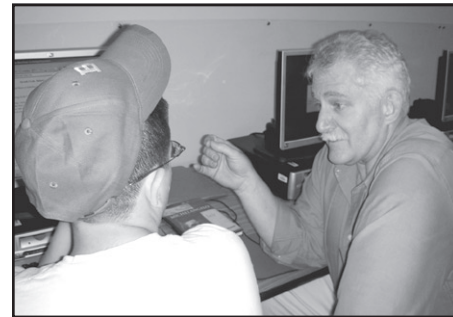
Jones was also active in extracurricular life. He was a cable TV news broadcast producer, and his 7th graders partook in creating a news show Tuesday through Thursday after school for channel 36. Jones also served twice as senior class advisor, was the first and only lacrosse coach, and coached varsity volleyball from 1991 to 2000.

Perhaps what Jones is most recently

known for is his participation in redesigning the IMC.

“I was also involved in the redesign of what I then hoped would become the true ‘center’ of activities for both schools, the IMC. The colors and layout and even the couches were my choices,” he explained.

Although Jones admits that he’ll miss many of the aspects at Blind Brook, including “opening a new shipment of books,” “greeting returning alumni at Christmas time,” and “the satisfaction when a student returns a book he/she has really enjoyed,” he is also ready to “add—or explore—some other dimensions of (his) life now: (his) writing and photog-



IMC Director Steven Jones helping a student.

Photo by Emily Brackman

raphy, do some traveling and get involved in service/volunteerism—perhaps, rather than in education (and), to devote time to trying to help address basic human needs like hunger by working at a food bank or providing shelter through Habitat for Humanity.”

Jones feels he has defined his whole adult life, since age 22, around Blind Brook, and finally, it’s time for a change.

“Even weekends, vacations, and holidays always were ‘flavored’ by what was going on here and what I was involved with, whether creating curriculum or grading papers or writing recommendations or thinking about committee work,” he explained.

“I think the skills I have learned and used as an educator can be applied in these and other areas, and I also want to keep learning—about myself and about the world around me,” said Jones. “I have always been in a school cycle, of September to June schedules, since I was 5 years old, so this will be another type of adventure.”

Summarized High School Principal Anthony Baxter, “Mr. Jones has dedicated more than 30 years of his life to the Blind Brook community. He’s shown himself to be a tremendous asset to all of us. And while we’ll miss him, we wish him the best of luck.”

Global Language Task Force Up and Running

By Jason Freyberg

The Board of Education, based on the recommendation of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti, has appointed a task force to study four items regarding its foreign language offerings. Firstly, it will examine the current educational trends in teaching global language from the national, state and regional perspectives. Secondly, it will conduct a survey in the community to determine the value that residents place on global languages. Also, the task force will ensure that the teachings of each global language are consistent with the requirements of the New York State Education Departments. Lastly, it will assess the financial, staffing, and scheduling needs of the languages.

The task force will run from April 3, 2006 through December 22, 2006. Among the languages being considered to be included in the curriculum are Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese and Hindu.

The task force is co-chaired by Jane Wermuth, Assistant Principal of Blind Brook High School, and Kimmerly Nieves,

Assistant Vice Principal at the Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School. Monroe Haas will represent the Board of Education on the task force. Representing the teachers will be foreign language teachers Joan Mele, Trudi Davis, Marcello Marcoccia, and Director of Curriculum Christine Burton. The parents working on the task force will represent the perspectives of parents of students from all grades. These parents include Jody Brackman, Lisa Delafontaine, Luciana DiGiacomo, Annamaria DiBerardino, Rani Henry, Noone Janjigian, Millena Leiningen, Lailina Nadell, Kevin O’Neill, Jennifer Schlactus and Sheri Zarkower. Roz Carvin and Richard Hubert will represent the community on the task force. Finally, the students on the task force, all of whom are current juniors, include Emily Brackman, Lauren Benson, Juliana Argentino, Scott Berman, Laura Marcoccia and Jessie Komitor. Valenti and Lawrence Engle, President of the Board of Education, will be ex officio members of the task force. Sophomore Athena Lo will be the liaison for the task force.

Trailblazing Economists

By Adam Potter

Blind Brook's first-ever Fed Challenge team excelled in the first round of competition and moved on to round two, where they were not as successful. The team is composed of senior Shinsuke Kawano and juniors Eric Taitz, Marissa Barbaro, Nathan Cohn, Jon Gold, and Akshay Nagia, all of whom worked diligently for months leading up to the Fed Challenge competition.

The Fed Challenge is a "multilevel national competition... designed to bring real-world economics into the classroom" and to "promote interest in economics," according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York website. The

competition also aims to create a stronger bond between high schools and the New York Federal Reserve. In each round of the competition, each team must make a fifteen-minute presentation. A panel of judges then asks the team questions during a grueling ten-minute question-and-answer period. The judges then score the teams based on five criteria, with a maximum score of ten points for each category. Consequently, the best overall score that a team can receive is fifty points. They are scored according to their knowledge of the Federal Reserve's role in developing and implementing monetary policy, the responses to the judges' questions, the quality of the presentation, the quality of the research and analysis, and the



Akshay Nagia
Photo by Jenna Kaplowitz

evidence of teamwork and cooperation.

The first round of the 2nd District was held from March 27-30 at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Of the 125 teams that competed, one hundred were eliminated. Blind Brook performed exquisitely, receiving a score of 48 out of 50 and, thus, advanced. With only 25 teams in the district remaining, the semi-final round was much tougher than the first, and Blind Brook earned a score of 39. Although 39 is a respectable score, the team needed a better one to move on to the district finals.

There were numerous factors that contributed to Blind Brook's elimination in the district semi-finals. Senior Shinsuke Kawano speculated, "We tried to cram too much information into our presentation and ran out of time. Some members spoke for too long, so other essential information was cut out." He later added that they did not answer the judges' questions as a team.

With only one team member graduating, Blind Brook's Fed Challenge team is looking good for next year's competition. The team's advisor, economics teacher Eliot Scher, hopes that Blind Brook will continue to show interest in the Fed Challenge, but warns that it is a "super-intense" and "academically oriented" competition. Furthermore, he stressed that it is "for motivated students who are interested in learning."

Community Service Club to the Bronx Zoo

By Ben Lubkin

It was a sunny morning on Wednesday, April 26th, when the 48 Blind Brook High School students and their pen pals traveled by bus to the Bronx Zoo. The members of the Community Service Club had been writing to their pen pals, first and third graders from the Edison Elementary School in Port Chester, since October. This was the third year that the pen pals have been going to the Bronx Zoo together.

Home and Careers teacher Mrs. Jane Romm, who has been the club advisor for eight years, recalls how cheerful the Blind Brook students and their pen pals were when they met. "When the younger kids warm up and take their pen pal's hand," she said, "they are clearly excited." Romm praised her students because "the younger pen pals had a lot of energy. Keeping track of them and answering their questions was a difficult task that required a large amount of patience."

Mrs. Romm and several students smiled while sharing stories about the younger children running all over the zoo and needing to be carried on their pen pals' backs, a request that they themselves used to make when they were in elementary school.

"It was funny to watch the high school students do what the teachers did for them not so long ago," Romm said.

The trip was chaperoned by Blind Brook teachers Romm, Charlene Decker, Nelcy Lange, Christine Blyler, Nicole Herman, Melissa Daly, and Jaclyn Barrett as well as board member Monroe Haas. Mrs. Santiago and Ms. Armaral from the Edison School also chaperoned.

Romm says that the Edison School chaperones commented that "for many of the children, this was their only opportunity

to go to the zoo, and they were very appreciative." They said that "the Blind Brook students were role models to the children, and they were very proud of them."

Seniors Heidi Lumish, Alex Markowitz, and Gavin Romm, and junior Amy Delynn chair the Community Service Club.

Delynn said, "It was wonderful to see her enthusiasm about meeting me and going to the zoo together. Paola's comments made me feel good about myself because she showed me that I truly affected her and gave her a wonderful day."

"My favorite part of the trip was simply hanging out with my pen pal and his friends," Gavin Romm said. When he was talking with his pen pal, he recognized that there are many opportunities that Blind Brook High School students take for granted growing up. Gavin added, "It might not seem like a big deal to high schoolers, but to these kids, having an older friend is an exciting experience."

Romm believes that "this kind of education teaches the kids to use what they learned not only to help others, but to see how lucky they are for what they have."

Former Blind Brook Spanish teacher Marsha Arest first started the pen pal relationship. Her students wrote to their pen pals in Spanish as an assignment. Several years ago, Edison School Principal Dr. Ilene Santiago asked that the pen pals write in English in order to practice the language. Since then, the Community Service Club has coordinated the pen pal program.

In order to graduate, Blind Brook High School students are required to record at least 80 hours of community service. The ultimate goal is to participate in activities that are redeeming as well as enjoyable. When the Community Service Club went

Please turn to page 4

Congratulations

FOCUS would like to congratulate the following students on their accomplishments:

For participation in the National Latin Exam:

Jake Azia	Melissa Cook	Melissa Kaliner
Kevin Becker	Joe Esposito	Robert Magliano
Spencer Bernstein	Michael Goldberg	Ali Matthews
Kelley Cano	Jenna Haber	Gregory Millar
Samantha Christal	Emily Howe	Melissa Prusky
Benjamin Chwick	Jason Hymowitz	Anna Sabia

For receiving the distinction of Cum Laude on the National Latin Exam:

Alyssa Chasanoff	Benjamin Engle	Daniel Shassian
Rusell Dulman	Michael Horwitz	

For receiving the distinction of Silver-Maximum Cum Laude on the National Latin Exam:

Sarah Berk	Sarah Rosenberg	Aaron Wirshba
Adam Potter		

For receiving the distinction of Magna Cum Laude on the National Latin Exam:

Steven Fisher

For receiving the distinction of Gold-Summa Cum Laude on the National Latin Exam:

Max Linder

For Qualifying for the 2007 National Merit Scholarship Program:

Marissa Barbaro	Jacob Mikva-Rosenberg	Sarah Rosenberg
Nate Cohn	Akshay Nagia	Eric Taitz

For their accomplishments on the National French Examination:

Alex Cohen	Andrea Green	Keren Mikva-Rosenberg
Manuel Davila-Molina	Heidi Lumish	Madeleine Sims
Jordan Glazer	Melissa Lumish	

Honorable Mention for Outstanding Performance as Canada at Model United Nations:

Dana Silverstein

FOCUS would like to congratulate the following teachers on receiving tenure:

Geri Fisher	Christine Keegan	Elizabeth Connolly
Stephanie McGill	Carrie Pierce	Colin Byrne
Matthew Beatty	Jane Romm	Julie Hensley

The Circus Comes to BB

By Amy DeLynn

On Friday, May 5, the sophomores hosted the annual Sophomore Circus, which they themselves had attended since elementary school. The Class of 2008 put a lot of time and effort into preparing for the circus and thinking of how they were going to decorate the school to fit this year's theme: the circus. Sophomore Amanda Wiener was very proud of all the hard work her class put into making their circus a success. She said, "We worked really hard and it came together really well and it's nice to see that all of our hard work finally paid off. It was the best sophomore circus ever!"

When the guests first walked into the school, two friendly clowns, Ali Matthews and Rebecca Somers, greeted them. The entire commons was filled with a variety of

raffle baskets, whose contents ranged from iPods to gift certificates. The raffle tickets were \$4 for one ticket or \$20 for six tickets. On top of the raffles, the commons was filled with an assortment of food, a tattoo station and a face-painting station. The high school gym was set up and decorated like an animal cage. The class hung balloon animals from the ceiling, had a jumping castle, a marriage booth, and many other fun games that everyone enjoyed playing.

The money that the sophomores raised will go toward their Junior Class Trip and prom expenses. Class officer Andrew Benowich was also proud of his class and the circus they planned. Benowich said, "The planning was rough, but we pulled through. Everyone came together and did a great job participating."

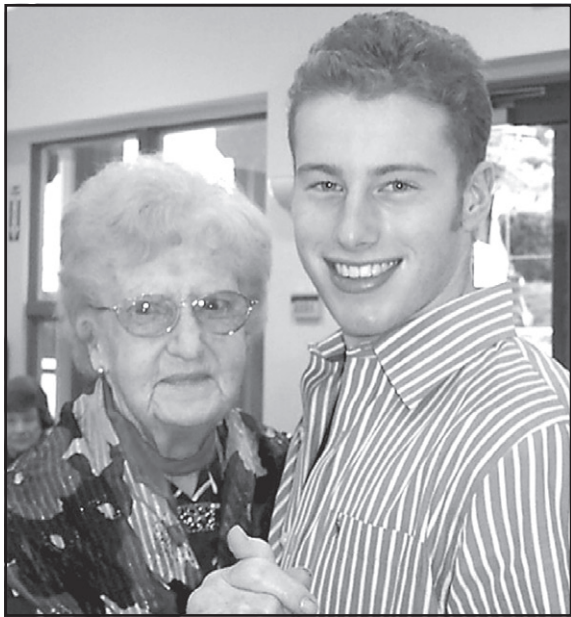
FOCUS - A Winner

FOCUS would like to congratulate its entire staff for winning first place for best newspaper from the American Scholastic Press Association. FOCUS would also like to congratulate Lisa Ganz and Jared Hoffman who were individually recognized for their exemplary writing in the sports section.

Spring Fling With the Seniors

By FOCUS Staff

On Monday, April 24th, the Blind Brook High School community service club joined Rye Brook and Port Chester's senior citizens at a Spring Fling Dance held at the senior center at the Posillopo Center in Port Chester. Following the cancellation of its annual Valentine's Day Dance at Blind Brook High School due to a snowstorm, the community service club delighted the senior citizens by organizing an alternative dance for the spring. Although spring sports and other obligations caused the club to fall short of its usual 150-student turnout, the dance was a success in the eyes of both the school



and the seniors.

"It is an intergenerational activity," pointed out community service club advisor and home and careers teacher Jane Romm, "It shows the senior citizens that high school students really care [and] it involves them in our community." This, in turn, encourages the seniors to support our schools both emotionally and financially. Romm continued, "The students feel really good about doing something nice and caring about people and the seniors love being around young people and receiving attention, knowing that someone cares about them enough to give up their time to be with them."

Many students gave up their time to provide baked goods in addition to participating in the dance. One student even missed practice for a spring sport and, as a result, sacrificed playing time in order to attend the dance, which demonstrates the "kind of commitment" that Romm and the other teachers value so highly in Blind Brook students.

The dance is also significant from a historical point of view because it allows students to interact with the senior members of the community, such as Rose Posillopo herself, who have lived here for years and have much to share.

Romm also commented that the seniors "can dance... better than us!" The music was provided by juniors Brett Parker and Steve Garofalo and by high school band director Howard Levy. "He showed up and surprised us," Romm noted about Levy, "which was really nice."



Romm plans to hold the Valentine's Day Dance again next year, assuming that the weather holds out. She explained, "I always think it's a wonderful thing when you can get two generations together."

Pictured above are junior Steven Berman and senior Danny Hertz dancing at this community service club sponsored event.

(Not So) Bored of Education

Continued from page 5

students stop putting in all of their effort and, to some degree, lose interest in the class.

A few days before I wrote this column, an unspoken holiday was celebrated by many Blind Brook upperclassmen. It was May 11th and students were giddy with joy for one of two reasons.

First, a group of smiling seniors pranced out of the library after finishing the AP Macroeconomics exam, officially ending their high school career. The following Monday would mark the seniors' first week of Senior Options as well as their first experience leaving Blind Brook once and for all. Mixed emotions of joy and sentimentalism, paired with the bliss emptying lockers, inundated the commons.

Second, juniors felt an enormous burden lifted from their shoulders as their AP exams officially ended. While the seniors were happy with finishing school, juniors were perfectly content with completing one of the major hurdles of their school year. AP craziness had ended once and for all and a widespread sigh of relief was heard down the halls.

Post-AP junior year has been different, to say the least. Prior to my AP exams, stress had reached its boiling point. Everyone was studying (cramming) as much as they could for the exams in hopes of doing their very best and making a year's worth of work pay off. Yet now that it is all over, classroom dynamics have been turned upside down. The first day back to each of my three AP classes, we began watching a movie.

To make matters even better, they were *real* movies rather than tedious documentaries. The movies that we were shown in English, American, and

Psychology were *The Color Purple*, *Goodbye Lenin*, and *A Beautiful Mind*, respectively. I personally thought that the movies were both entertaining and meaningful (in the sense that it applied to lessons being taught).

Is that what makes a "good" class? Is the ability to instill knowledge in a way that is memorable and intriguing the feature that gives one class an edge over another? I suppose it certainly helps (although classes obviously cannot revolve around showing movies). But more importantly, another question is raised by this example: are AP classes too heavily focused on exam preparation rather than giving students a higher-level education and experience?

The question has become a divisive one. However, as a school, we sometimes lose track of the mindset that an AP course is much more than just preparation for the exam. While it is a significant aspect of the course, the challenging exam should not be what dictates how a class is or is not conducted. Believe it or not, some students take AP courses due to genuine interest rather than the possibility of attaining college credit.

As anyone can see, the question of what makes a class "good" is multifaceted and expansive. There is not one single answer that can be unanimously agreed upon and there exists no way to simply overhaul how courses be run in the future. Everyone (students, teachers, and administrators) has a unique concept of what a "good" class really is. However, we often tend to see things solely from our own points of view without acknowledging the opinions of others. Sometimes, when we are more open-minded, we end up seeing things from a perspective unlike that which we have ever seen before.

Senate Update

By Lee Arvoy

Senate was honored to have three special guests attend their most recent early-morning meeting—Board of Education nominees Steve Kaplan, Rick Buzin and incumbent Board of Education member Caryn Furst.

Before the conversation with the Board candidates took place, the Senate's annual Showtime was discussed. Showtime is rapidly approaching! Senators are beginning their preparation for one of their biggest fundraisers of the year. Senate was still awaiting submissions for the first annual Film Festival; the winner(s) will have their film shown during Showtime's intermission.

Senate prepared for its final pep rally of the year. The April 28 pep rally honored all

spring sports and the Mock Trial team that has been performing superbly this year (see "Mock Trial" on page 1).

The rapid approach of the end of the school year indicates that it's time for Senate elections! Sign-ups for elections for next year's Senate took place from May 1 to May 12. As in previous years, petition sheets were signed by fellow classmates to ensure a chance to be on the Senate ballot.

Following the completion of the agenda, the Senators and Board of Education nominees had a Q & A session on topics such as APs and other school issues. (For more information please turn to "Kaplan and Buzin Elected to the Board of Education; New Budget Approved" on page 1.)

Kaplan and Buzin Elected; New Budget Approved

Continued from page 1

at the April 19th candidates' forum, Buzin stated, "While I, as a past board member fully supported the notion of bringing new challenges and rigor to our program, I never said nor believed that we could accomplish that goal solely by increasing the number of AP course offerings. In fact, in my opinion, the incredible number of APs we now have actually stifles our elective program and cannot possibly increase rigor for ALL of our students."

Furst defended the current Board of Education and their attempts at increasing the rigor of Blind Brook's curriculum, citing the newly implemented three-AP restriction placed on Blind Brook students.

Another pressing issue in this election was the incredibly low teacher retention rate over the past few years, a problem that was agreed upon by all three candidates. Buzin alluded to this problem in his April 19th statement by saying, "For the first time in my memory, there has been a large turnover of teachers in a very short period of time, which has caused dire consequences for the students."

While Buzin and Kaplan have attributed this to hiring problems and the overall culture of the school, Furst believes that the Board of Education's newly improved mentoring programs can provide a solution.

Both Kaplan and Buzin have promised to change the direction of education at Blind Brook. As Kaplan stated at the April 19th candidates' forum, "I advocate for a focus based on achievement, individual achievement, rather than performance."

Another component of the May 16th vote was the passage of the new budget. Of the 856 votes cast, an overwhelming 67%, or 577 people, approved the budget, which included an array of new educational goals.

Bronx Zoo

Continued from page 3

to the Bronx Zoo with their pen pals, they took part in this ideal experience.

As Romm summed up, "This project only goes to show that, despite the fact that we live in different towns, we can still have a great time together and create meaningful, lasting memories."

Sports

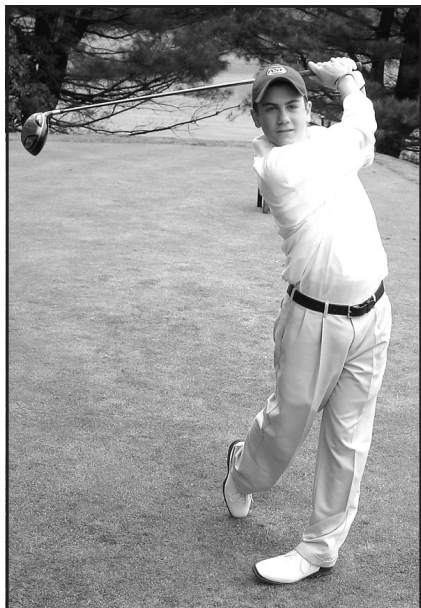
Sports Editor: Jared Hoffman

Latella Moves FORE!-ward in Sectional Tournament

By Jon Gold

The Blind Brook varsity golf team had another great year out on the courses. The team was led by senior captains Danny Hertz and Jason Calman, both of whom worked tirelessly to instill a sense of passion in their team, in addition to junior star Sean Latella, the only member of the team to make it to Sectionals this season.

Although only one team member made it to the sectional competition, the team experienced great success this season, compiling a 10-5 record, with a record of 6-3 in the league. Blind Brook had two close losses, one to Westlake by 2 strokes, and one to Pelham by 4 strokes. Blind Brook



Sophomore Michael Yewdell

also won a crucial tri-match in which they beat Rye Neck and Keio.

Although B.B. teams usually encourage a large fan base, golf is the only sport which actually discourages fan support; in fact, it is strictly prohibited. Although Latella will battle through Sectionals alone, junior David Yawitz believes, "Sean's been great for us all season, and I am confident that he will do great in the next round."

With both Latella and Yawitz returning to next year's team, the future of Blind Brook golf looks promising. Latella adds, "I am expecting big things from the team next year because it looks like we will have our best team yet."



Golf Team members (pictured from left) sophomore Ben Schults, junior Greg Millar, seniors Danny Hertz and Jason Calman, junior Eric Hamilton, and sophomore Michael Yewdell ready to compete.

Photos by Halley Feldman

Will the New York Mets actually fare better this season than the New York Yankees?

By Lisa Ganz

As coined by the media and Met fans nationwide, "It's our year." By beginning the season with an eye-opening 8-1 record through their first nine games, and by currently holding an impressive 25-17 record, the New York Mets finally stole the spotlight from their cross-town rivals, the New York Yankees.

Since their loss to the Yanks in the 2000 World Series, the Mets have slowly but surely reassembled the roster with only one thing in mind — the 2006 World Series trophy. As an avid Met fan, I am tired of being mocked for the prospect of another year of futile efforts and pathetic results. This year, however, I am more than certain that the powerful lineup, improved bullpen, and robust, spirited young rookies, will drive the Mets past their aging rivals, the New York Yankees.

They have gained confidence in a newly reconstructed bullpen, which includes Billy Wagner, who has saved at least 30 games in one season six times, and Duaner Sanchez, who in 26.1 innings of relief this season has struck out 18 men and kept his E.R.A. at a little over 1.00. In addition, the Mets have added young power from Carlos Delgado, Carlos Beltran, David Wright, and Xavier Nady, plus speed from José Reyes to their lineup. These new players benefit from their older teammates. For example, the experience pitcher Tom Glavine, 42, can provide for a young pitcher like Brian Bannister, 25, is invaluable. Wright, in his blog "Getting it Wright," said about the veterans on the Mets, "Those guys keep reinforcing — as clichéd as this sounds — that we have to play for the team on the front of our jerseys rather than the name on the back. We have to pull for one another, play for one another and pick each other up."

Though older players prove vital to a team's success, an excessive number can prove detrimental; the New York Yankees' clubhouse, whose roster is comprised of 76% of players thirty years or older, is beginning to resemble a nursing home. On the other hand, the New York Mets' active roster consists of 48% of players over thirty years of age. Although age may appear to be a belabored point at times, one has to remember that baseball is nothing more than a marathon. Youth drives a team through September and into the playoffs — not aching knees and creaky shoulders.

Although the Mets have had promising starts in past years, they have finally proven that they are a force to be reckoned with this year. According to another blog by Wright, this time about the team's early success, "It shows we have a good team on the field, not just on paper. All spring, we knew we had good personnel in the clubhouse — the kind of guys we need in order to win. But you're never certain until you go out on the field and prove it, and that's what we've been able to do so far."

Can big names and lots of money buy you the World Series? As the MasterCard slogan goes, "There are some things money can't buy"; success is one of them. While the Yankees continually put out the most costly roster and offer the most lavish contracts, it has become clear that their purchases are fraught with failure.

It's our year, and no one — especially pretty boy, Derek Jeter — can stop us.

By Jonathan Tenenzapf

I'm going to get right to the point here: even with an outfield depleted of All-Stars Hideki Matsui and Gary Sheffield, a bullpen filling a daily run quota, and Randy Johnson pitching like an elderly woman, the Bronx Bombers still have an edge on those "Amazin' Mets."

Sure, the Mets have been hot so far this year. But let's get real here — the Mets do this every year. Annually, each April and May, the New York Mets try to convince the metropolitan area that "this might be the year"; but in the end, the Braves continue their dominance in the division.

Now I know the Yankees have been playing sub-par baseball; as a die-hard fan, I am disappointed with their play as of late, especially that of future Hall-of-Famer Randy Johnson. The Big Unit is still 6'10", and his 5.13 ERA (as of May 16th) is following the nickname just as closely. Last year's heroes of Tanyon Sturtze and Aaron Small have fallen back to Earth, and then some. Without Matsui and Sheffield (who may be back in the next two weeks), the outfield and lineup is going to have to be stretched a bit. I understand that. But what critics of the Yankees fail to recognize is that Mike Mussina is 6-1 with a 2.56 ERA and, with the exception of Johnson, the Yankees' starters are a combined 14-5. Not too bad, huh? Not to mention that Scott Proctor and Mike Myers have respective ERAs of 1.48 and 1.04. Jason Giambi, almost written off to AAA Columbus last year, is among the elite members of the team, adding to the volatile lineup including Derek Jeter, reigning AL MVP Alex Rodriguez, and surprising newcomer 2B Robinson Cano. The fact is, despite all the hoopla surrounding the team, the Yankees aren't all that awful after all.

The Mets, on the other hand, are playing well — for now. Pedro can't go undefeated forever, and Tom Glavine's age will eventually pay its toll. Closers Mariano Rivera and Kyle Farnsworth are struggling for the Yanks, but they're seasoned veterans who will fight their way back into domination. As will the Mets' Wagner; but who is Jorge Julio? José Lima? Last year, the Jorge-José duo had a combined 8-21 record with an average ERA of over 6.00. Mets' pitchers Pedro Feliciano and Duaner Sanchez haven't done much in the past and are bound to fade despite present success. Now, with starting pitchers Victor Zambrano, Brian Bannister, and John Maine out for an undisclosed period of time, the Mets will have to resort to players of Lima's quality. It's a failure waiting to happen, and the Metropolitan area are already beginning to unfold, losing their last two series to the Phillies and Brewers. Sadly, the Brewers haven't finished at .500 since 1992, let alone made the playoffs in 26 years (which is, by the way, the number of World Series Championships the New York Yankees have won).

Finally, history over the past few years proves the Yankees to be a "comeback" team, fighting through all of their struggles in a fierce battle for the AL East, while the Mets seem to, well, just flop. Somehow, whether it is through the vivaciousness of the lineup or wily efforts of GM Brian Cashman, the Yankees discover a way to make it to the playoffs, usually and ironically through the arm or bat of a player paid a double-digit fraction of A-Rod's salary. On the other hand, when I open the newspaper to the sports section in mid-August, the headings for the Mets are often dismal, and somehow the team manages to put itself in an uncanny losing streak, without any preconceived warnings, giving way to the seemingly invincible Atlanta Braves.

The Yanks are 21-15 and just beginning to get into the groove, already taking action in filling in for their key loss of Matsui; the Mets, 23-14, are running into a greater multitude of jams, with a number of players

Please turn to page 7

YES



NO



The Blind Brook Way

By Benjamin Engle

"What Makes a High School Great?" was the recent title of *Newsweek* magazine's annual ranking of "America's top schools." According to the article, Blind Brook ranked 88th, a fantastic mark for such a small school like ours, but after reading the article I felt misled. The rankings were based on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams offered and taken at each school. If you think about Blind Brook and high schools around the nation, you begin to realize that a high school is made up of more than exams and tough courses. What *Newsweek* missed was the importance athletics play in a student's high school experience.

Athletics are a huge component of the culture of a high school. Teamwork, playing for your community, cheering each other on, and staying in shape, are all facets that make a high school great. Could you imagine Blind Brook without both athletic and academic teams? That means no wearing of the Blind Brook blue and white, no pep rallies, no sectionals, and no sense of community. And no need for a sports columnist. Clearly, this component of our B.B. lifestyle, and those of other high schools, is absent in the *Newsweek*'s article.

There is frequent mention of the ongoing series of public forums intended to create the "Blind Brook Way" or a "Strategic Education Plan," the first of which was held several weeks ago. These strategic plans are most commonly associated with academics, the APs versus electives debate, mission statements, and a wide variety of other educational areas. While the Board of Education and the community should spend time on such plans for the future, why isn't the future of athletics a component of the strategic education plan? If the Board of Education is serious about "educating the entire student," then both athletic and non-athletic competitive teams must be considered and incorporated in the "Blind Brook Way."

The future of Blind Brook athletics may look promising at the moment, but a closer look at recent demographic projections suggests that our current athletic program will not be able to accommodate a growing student body. Blind Brook, currently with a student population of around 400, fields a varsity, junior varsity, and a modified team for each sport. Our present program fails to provide any extra-curricular athletic opportunities for the majority of our student body who are not athletically gifted and are unable to participate on these elite teams. While a Varsity team or a Junior Varsity team carries a set number of players regardless of school size, for an increasing student population more and more athletes are either (A) turned away or (B) put on the bench hoping for that one at bat or one single play in "garbage time." The difference between the traditional high school athletic program and intramural sports is that the latter allows anybody to play and get involved, no matter their level of skill or amount of experience.

Do athletics and team competition offer no benefit to those in the "middle-

of-the-athletic-spectrum" student-athletes? At Blind Brook most students are shut out of their choice of sports before they even get a chance. Without question, this situation occurs more frequently, and student frustration and disappointment will increase as Blind Brook soon exceeds 500 students. More and more athletes will be shut out from the sport they want to play because, simply put, there is a lack of available spots on the current teams. If athletics are not recognized as an important part of the bigger plan, the term "student-athlete" will



shrink to an elite group.

A Blind Brook strategic athletic plan should build on and take advantage of our soon to be completed, state-of-the-art, athletic facilities. Instead of having would-be student-athletes get turned away from sports they enjoy playing, our athletic department must consider a comprehensive intramural sports program. Intramural sports programs are growing in popularity in colleges across the nation and are slowly entering high schools. Intramural sports would be made up of multiple teams within the student body and would compete in a semi-competitive environment. Most importantly, it would give the "middle" student-athlete an opportunity to be involved in a team sport, a very significant part of a student's high school experience.

I could see it now. Speedball teams competing on a regular basis, basketball teams made up of the average ball handlers, or even students on the baseball or softball diamond playing in a relaxed environment. And while we look at the future of Blind Brook athletics, whether it is interscholastic or intramural, we should also see how we can build, create and support more team sports, both athletic and non-athletic.

Stevie Wonder once said, "We all have ability. The difference is how we use it." A student athlete shouldn't have to be the best to play a sport. Everybody deserves and has the right to play and compete on a team, even if one's ability is not as great as the likes of Lebron "King" James or David Wright, both of whom entered the professional sports world upon their graduation from high school. The last time I checked, Blind Brook was not a school with a reputation for producing professional caliber athletes. Rather, Blind Brook has historically been known for its great educational programs and an active athletic program.

People are always talking about how both the number and size of obese Americans are getting larger each day. It is not a *stretch* that those statistics will continue to *grow* as more students are being shut out of playing on a team. An intramural program is feasible -- no transportation costs, no uniforms to purchase. Only eagerness and enthusiasm are required. This will help students become team players and obtain exercise they would not get by watching professional sports on TV. That's if you don't count the exercise you get from lifting your hand to your mouth to shove in the chips.

Please turn to page 7

Unrefined Fielding Mechanics Plague Trojan Baseball

By Amanda Gottlieb

Despite being outscored 1-18 in their first two games, the Trojans have fought back with vigor; they currently hold a 6-6 record and are in sixth place in their league.

With impressive victories against Hamilton, Tuckahoe, Martin Luther King Jr., and Haldane, the Trojans' season has had its fair share of bright moments. However, as junior pitcher Josh Adelsberg stresses, there is work to be done. "We're hitting the ball pretty well, our pitching has been good, but we need to tighten up the defense. We're giving our opponents too many second chance opportunities by giving them extra at bats."

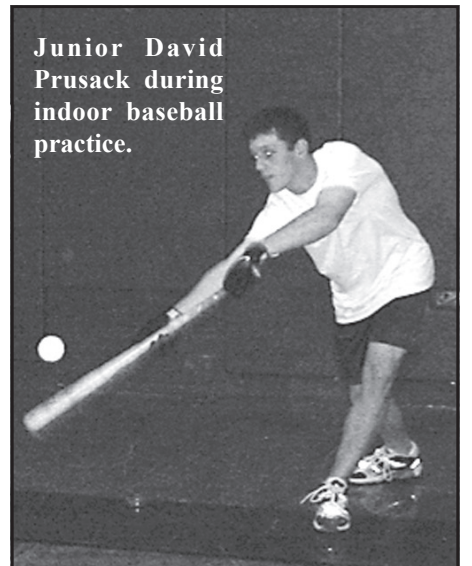
Sophomore outfielder Alex Piperis, a returning starter from last season's team, leads the team with a .526 batting average. Senior Josh Grossman leads the Trojans with an impressive 4.92 ERA and Adelsberg has an ERA of 5.96.

"This team has a lot of promise, but a lot of areas we need to improve upon," says senior outfielder Josh Metz. "It all goes back to the fundamentals of the game. Once we can harness those skills, winning just comes with time. The pitching has been great, but we have to make the plays because we're helping out the other team too much by bobbling basic grounders or dropping easy pop-ups. Everything comes with practice."

"There have been many times in games where the errors that we have made are what cost us the game," mentions junior Jesse Sedler.

As the season draws to a close with two games yet to be played against Rye Neck, B.B.'s sight is directed on sectionals. "I think we can make it to sectionals at the end of the season if we can play well and

Junior David Prusack during indoor baseball practice.



if we can play consistently," explained Sedler.

A majority of the Trojans' success can be attributed to new head coach Naz Flory. "Coach Flory has done lots of hitting to get us ready for our games and good conditioning drills to get us all in shape. He is also helping us to improve greatly and he helps us to surpass our expectations for each game," explains Sedler.

"We want to take one game at a time and push ourselves to play to the best of our ability. We are constantly encouraging each other and we all have one goal in mind. We want to win the league championship and we won't stop until we achieve that goal," adds Sedler.

The Trojans play their home games at Ridge Street School due to the construction currently taking place at the High School. The team's schedule is on the school webpage in addition to the *Journal News* web page.

"We could use some fans," added Metz. "That would really help. actually."

Junior Josh Adelsberg practicing his pitching.



Sports Editor: Jared Hoffman

Sports Section

Boys' Varsity Tennis Captures League Title Again

By Nicole Haber

The Boys' Varsity tennis team, led by Alan Striar, who also coaches the B.B. JV Girls' softball team, finished another impressive season with a record of 9-2, including an 8-1 record in league matches. The team's season culminated in its second consecutive league title.

Senior captain John Magliano, slated to play for Villanova next year, said, "I

think the team could improve by probably playing more in the off-season."

The team will lose many of its seniors next year including Magliano, Marc Desmond, Jeff Wiener, Ben Levine, and Scott Statman. The future looks bright, however. The hard work and dedication of juniors Eric Taitz, David Fries, Jon Gold, Jason Freyberg, David Tavitian, Chris Weiss, and Scott Byrne, sophomore Harris Brett, and freshmen

Joe Magliano and Max Linder will foster success for the tennis program in upcoming seasons.

"The seniors were huge for us this

season," explained Gold. "But we're sure that with the talent we have returning next year that we'll be able to repeat our success."

Dominant Pitching Drives Lady Trojans' Softball to Success

By Jonny Sonkin

As the regular season winds down, the B.B. Varsity Girls' softball team has established itself as a Conference IV, League A powerhouse. With an overall record of 8-6, including a league record of 8-1, the Lady Trojans are closing in on clinching second place in League A, trailing only Rye Neck. B.B. will get to square off against Rye Neck in two of the team's final four games.

The team's success has been propelled by defense and pitching. The infield consists of senior captain Allie Bergman at third base, junior Danni Kaufman at shortstop, junior Sabrina Stockel at second base, junior Abby Citrin at first base, and sophomore Jamie Florindi behind the plate as the catcher. Senior captain Allie Stein anchors the outfield as the team's right fielder, along with sophomore Dana Silverstein in center and Chloe Richards in left.

Starting junior pitcher Alana Burns

(see: *Athlete of the Month*), in her fourth year on the Varsity team, is having another impressive season. Sitting in third place in League A for her 2.95 ERA, Burns has pitched every inning of every game in addition to recording 125 strikeouts.

Offensively, Burns also leads the team with eighteen hits, followed by Bergman and Kaufman each with sixteen hits, followed by Stockel, Florindi, and Stein, each with fifteen. Burns also leads the team with a .439 batting average, good for sixth place in League A.

After a long season, the Lady Trojans now have their eyes set on the Sectional tournament. With veteran head coach Bob Wynn in charge, B.B. understands what it needs to do in order to win. "If we play well and don't make unforced errors, we can play with any team in the league," said junior Danni Kaufman. "Good fielding will decide how we do in sectionals."

Will the New York Mets actually fare better

Continued from page 5

out for significant periods of time, and a GM who appears to be less keen on acquiring talent to fill in the gaps than Cashman. The two teams are so close in the standings yet so far apart with regards to criticism from

the press.

If gravity and history have any effect on baseball, the Mets will come crashing back to earth, while the Yanks soar on their way to conquer a 27th World Series Championship Trophy.

The Blind Brook Way

Continued from page 6

If you look in the gym, you will see numerous blue banners marking the accomplishments of Blind Brook athletics. In *Newsweek*, you see numbers rewarding Blind Brook students for their success in the classroom. Blind Brook's foundation, as is with the other top 100 schools on the magazine's list, is built primarily on educational values. Then you see the students who are not skilled enough to play on a Varsity or Junior Varsity team; it's there where Blind Brook needs to make a plan for the future. What makes Blind Brook great is its tradition of encouraging everybody to do

their best at a desk and on the field, not the number of AP exams taken. Blind Brook will continue to lose a piece of its culture and its students will be deprived of a well-rounded high school experience if each of its students is not given an opportunity to play the sport he/she loves.

Let's make an expanded athletic program an integral, signature part of the "Blind Brook Way." Why should we as a high school feel compelled to follow the lead of other top performing schools? Blind Brook's a team of trend setters.

Now -- who wants to play some ball?

Sports Challenge

Questions Compiled by Mike Tramontelli

1. What sport causes the most eye injuries in the US?
2. Which historical leader can be credited for creating the rules of bowling?
3. What pitch is Tim Wakefield renowned for?
4. What is Roger Clemens's nickname?
5. Who was the last USC Running Back selected in the First round of the NFL draft before Reggie Bush?
6. Where was the first club of golfers in the United States?
7. How many different types of Olympic Freestyle skiing are there?

Answers
1. Baseball
2. Martin Luther
3. The Knuckleball
4. The Rocket
5. Marcus Allen
6. South Carolina
7. 3

Sectionals in Sight as Final Spring Soccer Season Comes to a Close

By Ben Levine, Alex Weissman and FOCUS staff

Led by senior captains Steph Zverin and Rebecca Bacchioni, the Lady Trojan Soccer team has put together an impressive season. As of May 22, senior goalie Dana Fleishaker was averaging a 1.49 GAA and Rachel Silverman led the team in goals with 10.

There have only been two games during which the Trojans lost by more than three goals. Similarly, there have only been two games during which the Trojans have won by three or more goals. If they can win the tight games, they are sure to prove successful in Sectionals.

"For the most part, everyone on the team contributes. Even if it's not actually on the field, everyone is really supportive no matter the outcome," said Zverin.

"We have a strong core, but

everybody works hard because we do have a sense of camaraderie and we don't like letting our teammates down; every player has contributed to every win and every game," said Bacchioni.

With the sectional playoffs coming up, the team is looking to gear itself up for making a title run. "Depending on which teams we play, we have a decent chance of winning sectionals," explained Zverin. After this season, the team will play in the fall with most of the other schools in Section 1; therefore, the team knows that this is the best chance to win a sectional title.

Concluded Bacchioni, "We plan on going into Sectionals strong. We're not going to concentrate on any of our past losses. We're going to go in with everything we've got and leave everything out on the field."

SPORTECH ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

Alana Burns

By Greg Millar

Having delivered every pitch of every inning of every game this season for the Blind Brook Lady Trojans' softball team, junior Alana Burns has proven herself to be the heart of the team. Explained junior teammate Danni Kaufman, "Alana's pitching is incredible. She's the driving force behind our team's wins as well as a constant source of leadership."

Although Burns is the lone pitcher on the B.B. squad, she has established herself as a star not only on her team, but has raised her level of play to a completely different level of performance within her conference. Burns' impressive stats speak for themselves, including 117 strikeouts in only fifteen games, which puts her on top of the conference in total strikeouts by a substantial margin of 42 and an unbelievably low 2.45 ERA which

ranks third best in the conference.

More recently, Burns set a Blind Brook record against Haldane, racking up a stellar 19 strikeouts, including four in one inning made possible by a dropped third strike.

Burns is more than just a force on the mound; she is also a slugger at the plate, contributing to the team's offensive efforts with a .447 average, the highest on her team and the seventh highest in the league. She has helped the team offensively with 17 hits, 6 RBIs, and 8 runs.

Burns' love of softball and voracious eagerness to win keeps the team going during tough games. The Lady Trojans can always count on their pitcher for a key strikeout, a play in the field, and even a clutch hit. Sophomore teammate Christina Di Bernardino rendered, "Alana's amazing. She shows up to every game enthusiastic and ready to play."

The Best in Sports Stores Salutes the Best in Blind Brook

SPORTECH
Rye Ridge Shopping Center
124 South Ridge Street
Rye Brook
914-934-0001

Features

Features Editor: Melissa Lumish

The Three-Year Advanced Placement Plan:

A Goal Successfully Realized or Too Much of A Good Thing?

By David Fries

"Can one desire too much of a good thing?" Shakespeare's query can be easily applied to Blind Brook High School's Advanced Placement Program.

The goals for strengthening Blind Brook High School's Advanced Placement offerings, set forth by the administration in 2003, will come to fruition in September 2006. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti explained, "Next year will be the third year of our three-year plan." The three-year plan represents the administration's commitment to providing more Advanced Placement courses in the high school. Valenti described his vision for creating a stronger Advanced Placement program by addressing the weak-

nesses of specific departments. "When I looked at the AP classes, they were lacking in certain areas, like science," Valenti recalled. "To strengthen the program, we added AP Chemistry, AP Environmental Science and AP Physics. AP Physics will be given for the first time in the next school year. Physics teacher Thomas Glickman will be teaching AP Physics and 16 students are enrolled," Valenti added.

Valenti noted the need for AP courses in other departments as well. "The Arts and Music had no APs. Now there is AP Music Theory and AP Studio Art. In September we will be introducing AP Photography." This course will be taught by Paige Buonocore, who presently teaches Photography I and II.

New electives will also be offered in September. A half-credit Pre-Engineering course will be taught by Technology teacher Steven Giglio. A half-credit Nutrition course will be taught by Home and Careers teacher Jane Romm. Latin I, which was offered for the first time this year, will be expanded to include a new course, Latin II, in September.

Many students are enthusiastic about and supportive of the new course offerings. Junior Jared Hoffman expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of college-level courses. "The more, the better!" Hoffman exclaimed. "There should be enough Advanced Placement classes to engage many students in many fields of interest."

The new high-school level electives being offered in September provide more choices without the academic rigor and demands of the Advanced Placement courses. "Adding the new electives says to me that this administration is really interested in fulfilling the needs and interests of all kinds of students," Hoffman commented. "These new classes are not APs, but they are specific fields that students might like to pursue. So students who aren't able to handle APs can still learn a field of interest."

Some students and faculty have mixed feelings about the increase in AP classes. Spanish teacher Margaret Brennan-Juana sees the advantages of adding these courses but is concerned that too many options will create problems with the size of classes. "I am in favor of students having ample choices, but I'm worried that classes will become too small," said Brennan-Juana. Anticipating this possibility, Valenti recognized the need for flexibility in the Advanced Placement program explaining, "There's an option to run these APs on alternating years."

Junior Brett Parker expressed approval for the fulfillment of the three-year plan but, like many members of the Blind Brook community, he maintains that APs are not for everyone. "The school has put more emphasis on APs, and I think it's great to offer more choices. But students should only take an AP course if they really care about the subject," Parker cautioned.

Junior Samantha Crystal's concerns reflect the attitude of many members of the Blind Brook community who are opposed to the increase in Advanced Placement offerings. "I think that offering so many AP classes puts a lot of pressure on students who feel that they must take AP classes if so many are available. Students who can't handle it end up taking too many because they are worried about how it looks for college applications. They end up being overwhelmed."

Though Hoffman welcomes the addition of more Advanced Placement courses, he recognizes the competitive nature of the program and the resulting dissatisfaction felt by many students and parents. "People in Rye Brook feel hostile toward the APs because we've turned them into a competition," Hoffman conceded.

Junior Greg Millar sees the competitive edge as an asset in helping qualified students gain entry into top colleges. "The more APs offered, the more options we have to take AP subjects we are interested in." However, like so many other members of the Blind Brook community, Millar recognizes the pressures involved. "APs are great classes for those fit to take them, but I think a lot of students who may not be up to the challenge feel pressured to enroll and may regret it later on. I still think more APs should continue to be offered, but something has to be done to serve the needs of students who can't meet the challenge, such as honors courses," Millar commented.

Advanced Placement courses continue to be a controversial subject. For now, Valenti is satisfied that the three-year plan will fulfill its goals in the coming school year with so many students successfully meeting the challenges of the Advanced Placement classes.

Diversity in the Face of Adversity: It's Rye Brook...what diversity?

By Adam Harris

In Blind Brook High School classrooms, students were recently faced with the question of where diversity exists in Rye Brook and within society as a whole. It is a common misconception among high school students that we must be of different ethnicities and skin colors to be diverse. School Social Worker Ms. Terry Frank and guidance department chair Christopher Griffin were equally determined to educate students about the increasingly rampant issue of both racism and stereotypes, which Griffin believes to be "just as important as anything else you learn in school."

This idea started at the end of last semester, following a problem with inappropriate topics posted on Facebook. High school principal Anthony Baxter approached Frank and Griffin to see if it was possible to raise awareness about racism and stereotypes. Frank felt that there were two options. The first was to bring in a speaker who would address the school as a whole. Yet Frank believed that such a speaker would "provide shock value, but then be quickly forgotten" and would thus not be a beneficial choice. A second option was to have someone from within the school address the issue in a smaller setting. "An insider who [students] can connect with will have a far longer-lasting impact," Frank explained.

Griffin had seen the Academy award-winning movie *Crash* and was immediately impressed with the dramatic and direct approach of the movie which displays common situations in which stereotypes occur. He felt that it made strong points about the importance of avoiding stereotypes and of looking beyond superficial characteristics. He contended, "You need to learn who the people are," before making judgments.

Once Griffin showed the film to Frank, who was equally impressed, they purchased the movie for the school and began selecting scenes that they could use to demonstrate various racial or stereotyped

issues. Together they selected the scenes that best illustrated several stereotypes and the successive events that revealed the deceptiveness of the stereotypes.

In one scene, Sandra Bullock, a worried wife whose house has just been broken into, accuses a Latino door-lock repairman of selling a spare key to one of his friends so they could break into the house.

"We all have feelings and impulses that we are not particularly proud of, but that is okay. It doesn't make us bad people. We just need to remember to talk ourselves down and be rational."

—Ms. Terry Frank

This portrays one of the negative Latino stereotypes that are often used. A later clip goes on to show that the Latino man is intelligent, married, and has a young daughter to whom he is a great father.

Following the film clips, Frank and Griffin initiated discussions about students' reactions to the film and about common misconceptions. "It was somewhat startling and interesting that some people didn't know what the word bigot means," Frank recalls.

Griffin discussed ways that adolescent boys are stereotyped by automobile insurance companies. Questions surfaced about whether it was fair to penalize all teenage males solely because the number of accidents in that age group is the highest. Other points were made about the fact that a thirty-five-year-old male, such as Griffin, is not necessarily a safer driver than a teenager.

The goal, according to Griffin, "was to ask people to reflect on their prejudices and biases, which we all have, and then to challenge them to go beyond that way of thinking." Frank adds, "We all have

feelings and impulses that we are not particularly proud of, but that is okay. It doesn't make us bad people. We just need to remember to talk ourselves down and be rational. That is what distinguishes a learned tolerant person from a bigot."

Many of the students had a positive reaction to the exercise. Senior Lee Arvoy commented, "It is good to bring this subject up and have conversations. From what I saw, everyone was very open and engaged with the topic." Sophomore Daniel Levy agreed, saying, "It was a unique, stimulating, and captivating way of teaching how to deal with racism and stereotypes that we have."

The general consensus of the students was that they valued the lessons taught. "We live in such a closed community and it is not like that in the real world. You are going to face racism, and you need to learn how to deal with it," senior Anne Gusmano pointed out.

As for the future, Gabby Leigh stressed, "I think we should continue to do more things, but be given more time to discuss. It felt rushed trying to fit such a large and important subject into forty minutes."

Luckily, the diversity committee has quite a few events planned for next year. The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) has an ongoing training program for students, parents, faculty, and staff to learn how to deal with certain situations by doing various exercises. Another possibility is that a Superintendent Conference day will include everyone in the entire district, from grades K-12. Another, more advanced two-day training session for forty people, which is organized through clubs such as peer leadership, human relations, and SAGA (Straight and Gay Alliance) and is currently awaiting approval, may take place next year. A final possibility is a joint venture between Blind Brook and another school that is involved in the program.

Frank concluded, "Clearly this is a subject near and dear to me, and there is so much more that can be done."

What do you think the purpose of a town meeting should be?

Quotes collected by Celine McBride



"The purpose of town meetings is to get people's opinions of what's going on and new ideas from the students that might improve our school. [I feel that the last town meeting about developing more respect for our school] was effective and the use of props was a powerful element of the congress's statement."

—Mori Einsidler
(Freshman)



"The point of town meetings is to express concerns of the school through a group discussion. I believe that, on a whole, [the latest town meeting in terms of increasing respect for our school] was unsuccessful, but it sparked conversation among the student community."

—Marco Vasile
(Sophomore)



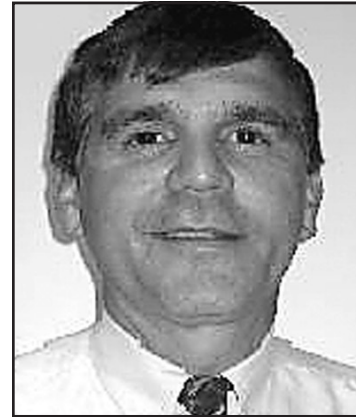
"The purpose of town meetings is to allow the students to voice concerns if need be and to create a sense of community through issues that affect the whole school. During the last town meeting, as hard as they tried, the message was not received by the entire student body."

—Samantha Christal
(Junior)



"[I believe that during town meetings] instead of pretending to listen, the administration should actually hear what the students have to say and try to appreciate where we're coming from. (On the subject of the effect of the last town meeting about respect for our school), people will listen and agree with what you're saying, but it doesn't exactly mean that they're going to change."

—Hilary Mosner
(Senior)



"Town meetings are for people to discuss issues that are important to the whole school community. As for the effectiveness of the latest town meeting, only time will tell if we as a community decide to gradually change our ways to better the school."

—John Latino
(Chemistry teacher)

High School Band Proves Its Excellence

By Rachel Polonsky and Rebecca Raider

On April 20, the high school band took a trip to Virginia Beach, Virginia, to compete and take classes as part of "The Festivals of Music." Both the band and the jazz ensemble were given the chance to perform, participate in workshops, and take part in a competition in front of a panel of judges. This particular festival is affiliated with the "Music in the Parks" festival at Six Flags New England, where the Middle School Band will be performing later this year.

Howard Levy, the high school band director, chose to go to Virginia Beach because "The Festivals

of Music' have the reputation of doing a great job. Their festivals are really organized, their adjudicators are first rate and they provide a wonderful educational experience." Although the band was confronted with the initial obstacle of members being unable to attend due to personal obligations and upcoming exams, Levy was extremely enthusiastic about this opportunity.

This amazing experience for the band was enhanced by their receipt of a considerably high rating of four out of five, which represents an "excellent." Sophomore trombone player Athena Lo expressed her enthusiasm, commenting, "I was surprised that we got an excellent rating because we did not perform our best, but I was very excited." Additionally, junior Brett Parker was recognized for having an outstanding solo in the jazz ensemble. Unfortunately, the awards ceremony that was scheduled to take place on the final day of the trip was

rained out. Regardless, the performers were extremely proud of their accomplishments.

In addition to the performance, the students had time for recreation and bonding with each other. They enjoyed excursions to Colonial Williamsburg, Busch

Gardens, and the Purple Cow Restaurant, and spent additional time at the Howard Johnson Hotel. The purple milkshakes and pleasant environment provided by the Purple Cow Restaurant were undoubtedly highlights of the trip. Although the rain did interfere with some of the planned activities, the musicians made the best of their time together as a band, away from Blind Brook.

As to whether or not this trip will become a new Blind Brook band tradition, Levy explains that it depends on the performance level of future bands and on scheduling conflicts. If subsequent trips are planned, however, Levy would prefer them to be at a closer venue or for a longer period of time. An eight-hour bus ride in each direction seemed excessive for a mere three-day sojourn in Virginia.

Yet, despite some setbacks, freshman flutist Amy Holm commented, "We learned how to be a better band and perform together by listening to each other, not just ourselves," proving that the trip's main goal was met. Levy reiterated, "The band members who went put in extra time and were examples of how students should behave on field trips. Not only did they perform well but they portrayed our school district in the best possible way as fine young men and women."

"Not only did they perform well but they portrayed our school district in the best possible way as fine young men and women."

—Mr. Howard Levy

Getting to Know

Mr. Whitman

By Sonia Taneja and Corinne Segal

Whether he is known at Blind Brook as a teacher, a colleague, a mentor, or simply a friend, Donald Whitman interacts with the student body and staff as though he has been here for

of pursuing music because, he admitted, "I was concerned about making my hobby my career." However, influenced by his band director, as well as by his aunt and grandmother (both of whom were band teachers), he decided to apply to the Crane School of Music,

from which many New York music teachers have graduated. It is an understatement to say that Blind Brook students are pleased with his choice. "He's the man!" freshman Paul Micheli praises.

After college, Whitman began his first job teaching music courses at Yorktown High School. He then decided to apply to Blind Brook which, he reveals, has an entirely different working environment due to its small



Mr. Whitman helping one of his students assemble her clarinet.

years. Yet he first brought his charm and musical insight to Blind Brook's music department just three years ago. "He is helpful and interesting, but he's also like one of us, the kids, so he's comfortable to talk to," says freshman Amy Holm about Whitman.

As amiable as Whitman is toward his students, he is equally familiar with his coworkers. "He's a great teacher, and a great person, and we see eye to eye in things [especially] musically," explains Howard Levy, the high school band instructor who has worked with Whitman in the Blind Brook Music Department since Whitman's arrival.

Now that he is settled as a Blind Brook middle and high school music teacher, Whitman reveals that the fortunate turning point in his career outlook came during his senior year at John Jay High School. He was leaning toward becoming a math major instead

size. While he feels that this gives the school an encouraging atmosphere, he points out that it can also restrict music elective choices. "Academics are a very strong force here. I would like to see [the music department] expand."

He also mentions that the music department is given a large amount of freedom in planning lessons, which may cause difficulty. "For the music program, where there's not a defined curriculum, [the challenge is] balancing innovation with organization and persistence." Though, at the same time, he is glad that this allows him, as a music teacher, to be inventive without the restraint of teaching towards a standardized test.

Whitman is extremely appreciative of his fellow teachers and administrators, who he says are "very supportive. They let us try new things all the time."

Please turn to page 10

A Paperless Newspaper

By: Heidi Lumish

Picture *Focus* distribution day; I was walking into school and, as I approached the door, I could see the stacks of newspapers flooding the front entrance. Before I knew it, the editor-in-chief himself had placed a copy of the fresh, professional-looking school newspaper, with its attractive new logo, in my hands. I must say: that is personal service. A glimpse of the front-page photo and the heading guiding me to page 6 for a featured article encouraged me to save a few minutes to thumb through the paper's as yet untouched pages before the first bell. When I reached the locker area, I found that I was not the only one with this ingenious idea. Several people had already buried themselves behind an open copy of *Focus*, while others were searching eagerly for the photo from which they would obtain their moment of fame.

Now picture distribution day again but, this time, the paper copies of *Focus* have disappeared. The "paper," rather, is posted on the Internet, far from the locker areas, lunchrooms, and classrooms where it has made its home for as long as I can remember. Perhaps my photo is in the newspaper, or perhaps my friend has written an especially original article, but the paper is now so far detached from the Blind Brook community that, honestly, I don't know. It is not in my hands, nor is it scattered about the school, but it has, rather, become a part of the electronic sphere that has already consumed so much of our lives.

Focus is a newspaper, one of little prominence beyond the Blind Brook community, but a "paper" nonetheless. Taking *Focus* out of print and distributing it solely through the Internet would not only detract from its significance amidst the students at Blind Brook, it would also lessen its importance within this community. *Focus* is currently circulated throughout the town as an insert in the *Westmore News*. It seems, therefore, that the decision to cease the printing of the newspaper in its present form would result in an immense decrease in the number of readers. Adults in the community who do not have high school students are a frequent source of praise for the newspaper and its numerous staff members. Yet how many of these readers will go out of their way to find *Focus* in its new home on the Internet? And of those who choose to read the newspaper online, how many will not be turned off by a slow connection or a faulty link, the electronic hurdles that will result in the paper's loss of its instant gratification?

While having *Focus* formatted and printed by a professional is appealing, it is admittedly an expensive production. To have the newspaper on the Internet, or in a cheaper print version, would minimize the financial burden posed by this growing publication. However, the school apportions its funds to various activities and items based simply upon the belief that these pursuits will benefit the students. Why, then, must

the funding be cut on this largely student-run publication, one that has not only proved to benefit the students but also the community at large?



The newspaper staff, left on their own to produce from start to finish a publication of quality and renown, is also left with an issue unknown to many. The printer, though paid a hefty sum of money, is paid not only to supply his ink and paper but also to aid in the layout of the paper. Were the printer to be eliminated from this production process, the editors would be pressed to spend more time on layout and formatting and less time on the quality of the writing and the articles, which are an essential component of this paper. Our editorial staff was recognized both this year with a first place award by the 36th Annual Scholastic Press Association and last year by the *Journal News*. It is rewarding for the students and faculty alike when a school organization is acknowledged for its hard work and consequent success, and it would be unfortunate for the paper to lose its distinction on account of this Internet push.

In order to maintain the quality of the newspaper, both in its literary content and its physical appearance, I would suggest that a sudden switch to an Internet version of *Focus* be reconsidered. However, in light of the cost of this endeavor, it seems appropriate to reconsider some aspects of the production process. For instance, a decrease in the number of times per year that *Focus* is distributed would aid in reducing the amount of money spent per year on the paper. Also, *Focus* has clearly grown from its original length of eight or twelve pages to nearly twenty in some of its more recent issues. Perhaps a reversion to a twelve- or sixteen-page issue would serve both to preserve the quality of the writing and also to monitor the paper's cost. And while there is a business staff responsible for selling ads in *Focus*, the continued expansion of this department would compensate for the newspaper's mounting expenses.

In this technological age, it is inevitable that this newspaper will eventually be seen only on a computer screen, as will the more prominent newspapers that circulate the nation daily. However, it is important that there be an appropriate transition from the print version of *Focus* that its readers have come to know and love to the Internet version that has only recently emerged. A year or two during which both forms are promoted and read will prevent this predictable decline in the quantity of readers, a reduction that could undoubtedly hinder the progress of a growing publication. Therefore, I hope that Blind Brook will continue to support the printing of *Focus* in its current form, despite its cost, to at least sustain this transition. I hope that when I return to Blind Brook, in one or two or five years, I will not be dating myself when I inquire about the tangible, appreciable *Focus* that you, too, find within your grasp.

A Harsh Reality Crashes In

By FOCUS staff

The annual crashed-car event in April has become a new Blind Brook tradition. For one day in April, Alcohol Awareness Month, a severely damaged car displayed in the Blind Brook Middle and High School parking lot causes students to confront the horrific consequences of a drunk-driving accident. Student Assistance Counselor Terry Frank, the SADD club, and the rest of the Blind Brook faculty use this to shock students with reality, hoping it will have a more lasting effect on students' decisions than that of the educational videos and lectures commonly presented to middle and high school classes.

On a global perspective, drunk driving has recently become a hot topic as everyone recognizes the devastation caused by driving under the influence of certain substances. In an effort to detract young prospective

and incumbent drivers from making such a disastrous mistake, the RJ towing company has offered a public service to Westchester County by loaning the car to various schools in the county. In order to encourage participation in the program, the county pays the company and allows schools to display the car free of charge.

Students in the Blind Brook community have commented on the car as both moving and convincing. Senior Harrison Foster stated, "It was a peaceful demonstration of the destructive nature of drunk driving." But junior Jessica Komitor added that, "It could have been more effective if the kids were taken out to see the car and told its horrific story." Both students agree that the first-hand sight of the wreck was moving but that more emphasis could be placed on it to increase its influence on the entire student body.

Mr. Whitman Continued from page 9

One upcoming change to the high school band program will be the requirement of a student audition, which will be put into effect beginning next school year.

This past winter, Whitman took on a new responsibility as the musical director and producer of Blind Brook's production of *The Wizard of Oz*. He had directed other plays at Yorktown High School, such as *The Good Doctor* by Anton Chekhov, but "I had never before appreciated how much a producer does and how much goes into

a play," he revealed. "It's an incredible amount of work. I have a new appreciation for musicals, and I'm so much more respectful of them."

Right now, in addition to teaching at Blind Brook, Whitman plays the trumpet for the Hudson Valley Brass Quartet and Westchester Wind Symphony. On top of these commitments, Whitman's hard work will continue to be put into the music department, making him an undoubted essential to Blind Brook.



VISIT
www.sunywcc.edu
or CALL
914-606-6735

More local high school graduates choose Westchester Community College than any other college or university. That's one of the reasons we're the largest college in Westchester. With his excellent grades, James Garrad could have chosen a four-year university. But he's pleased with the attentive, award-winning instructors at Westchester Community College, where he earned a full scholarship. High school seniors, keep us in mind as you plan for this fall!

 Westchester
Community College
State University of New York

Arts & Entertainment

A & E Editor: Marissa Barbaro

Two Alumni have Literature Published

By Madeline Sims
and Ashley Woychowski

High school students often dream of becoming famous writers when they grow up. While they may not be famous yet, two Blind Brook alumni, Anne Garofalo and Jason Stein, recently had their work professionally published, which constitutes an immense accomplishment. Garofalo authored a powerful and emotional poetry anthology entitled *So Many Monsters* while Stein wrote a humorous novel, *Hello Friend. My Name is Melvany*. These young, motivated writers have undoubtedly made tremendous achievements in the field of literature since their departure from Blind Brook.

Last year, as the members of Class of 2005 embarked on their senior options projects, former *Alter[ed] Ego* Editor-in-Chief, Anne Garofalo chose to comprise all of her most meaningful poetry into a single anthology. "I realized that I had all these poems and I shouldn't keep them to myself, but rather I should see if I can share them with others so that they could enjoy and learn from them," she recalled. "It dawned on me that this was my opportunity to take the time to sit down and become serious about publication."

Determined to get her work published, Garofalo spent many hours at Barnes and Noble exploring various guides for publication and looking for a company interested in accepting her book. However, she discovered her biggest break via the Internet, where she wrote a query letter to PublishAmerica, a publishing company that showed interest in her work.

On March 6th, 2006, Garofalo, an English major at the University of Delaware, released her book, *So Many Monsters: A Poetry Anthology*, which embodies the most personal and complex emotions she has experienced in the last five years. Her poetry, enhanced by her ability to write from personal experience and insightful guidance, acts as a mirror reflecting the nature of everyday life. "My inspiration for writing this didn't come from the want to publish, it came from the need to write," she commented.

Garofalo's poetry encompasses a wide variety of topics (including love, lust, death, haste, and peace), and each of her stories is crafted uniquely for a specific purpose. Every poem rehashes her personal experiences and fantasies while painting vivid yet dark pictures in the mind of the reader, thereby reminding readers that her poems are truly a part of her. *Our Island by the Sea* is one of her favorite pieces and contains such deep expressions as "When the nights were not too rainy, we would lay blankets in the beach and sleep, the stars as our cover." She is also particularly fond of *Isn't it Ironic*, which explains how people react and make decisions when they are in uncomfortable situations and how these reactions ultimately determine whether people get by and survive or lose their willpower and die.

Though her poems are extremely personal, Garofalo feels that the majority of readers will be able to relate to them and comprehend the messages they contain.

Please turn to page 14



Pictured above is one of the stages, and its crowd, at Bamboozle.

Photo by Taylor Fuller

Bamboozled

By Sam Levine

In the parking lots of Giant Stadium, lots 9 through 11 to be more exact, thousands of rock, punk, emo, and alternative music fans gathered for the biggest music festival of the year: The Bamboozle. On May 6th and 7th, well over one hundred bands performed on various stages assembled throughout these lots. Along with these bands were numerous vendors selling items ranging from band memorabilia to CDs to expensive T-shirts and hoodies. Alternative rock has become increasingly popular among Blind Brook students, so the Bamboozle was a great opportunity for them to see many of their favorite

bands in a single time frame. A combined total of twenty to twenty-five Blind Brook students attended the concert on Saturday and Sunday.

I attended the Bamboozle on Saturday, May 6th with six of my friends. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining, and there were virtually no clouds in the sky; however, the warm weather eventually led to a substantial amount of discomfort during the performances, as being squeezed into a relatively small space in eighty-five-degree weather with thousands of other people who are moshing and crowd surfing is not exactly my idea of perfection.

Please turn to page 12

Blind Brook Graduate Honored with Emmy Award

By FOCUS staff

Blind Brook alumna Peggy Tachdijan, a graduate of the Class of 1995, was presented with an Emmy award at the 33rd Annual Daytime Emmys on April 28th, 2006, for her work as an editor on the reality program *Starting Over*, the first reality show to be nominated for this highly prestigious award. Tachdijan was nominated with ten other members of the *Starting Over* editing team, and each editor received his/her own award in the category titled "Outstanding Achievement in Single Camera Editing."

Receiving an Emmy is a significant accomplishment for any editing team, especially if opponents include editors for such popular television shows as *The View*, *Dr. Phil*, and *Inside this Old House*. In fact, *Starting Over* is the first reality program to be nominated for a Daytime Emmy Award. "We were nominated last year as well but lost to the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, so we were shocked when we won this year," Tachdijan exclaimed. "I'm very excited to have won, especially after three seasons of hard work."

Starting Over is a reality show produced by Bunim-Murray Productions (the production company responsible for the creation of *The Real World*, *Road Rules*, and *The Simple Life*) and syndicated by NBC Universal Television. The show chronicles the attempts made by women in difficult situations to improve their lives by obtaining and accepting guidance from life coaches. The program's first season, which lasted from 2003 to 2004, was set in Chicago

and featured life coaches Rhonda Britten and Rana Walker. The show was relocated to Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles, in 2004 for the second season in which Iyanla Vanzant replaced Walker as the second life coach and Dr. Stan Katz joined the cast

However, after her first freshman seminar at the Boston University College of Communications, Tachdijan decided that she wanted to pursue both a college major and a career in film. She spent her junior year in London where she obtained an internship at

ing Over (which, as of now, is not returning for a fourth season) and is finishing a show for the Style network called *Modern Girl's Guide to Life*. Her next job will be for an ABC primetime show but, as of now, she is unsure of its title.

Tachdijan is currently a freelance editor, working at a variety of production companies and editing different television shows. "As an editor, my duties are to make a story out of an unbelievable amount of footage. I don't do it alone; there are story editors and producers who all put their two cents in, but for the most part I have a lot of creative freedom to figure out what is working and what isn't in a particular storyline," Tachdijan commented. She added, "In Los Angeles, I mostly work in reality television, but I try to take time off from job to job to work on documentaries."

In addition, Tachdijan is extremely passionate about her work and feels that the most enjoyable aspect of her job is "the collaborative process that you go through in order to put a show/film together," despite the various challenges she faces while functioning as part of a team. She also feels that her background in writing ultimately prepared her for her career as a television editor, especially with regard to reality programs. "Reality shows have a pretty bad reputation, but my part of the process can be very challenging and quite rewarding," she affirmed. "In the editing bay is really where the story comes together, and I don't think I could do this type of work if that element wasn't involved."

"Reality shows have a pretty bad reputation, but my part of the process can be very challenging and quite rewarding."

—Peggy Tachdijan

as a psychologist. The third season, also filmed in Los Angeles, focuses heavily on the improvement of relationships between men and women on the show.

In high school, Tachdijan did not anticipate her profession as a television editor, as photography and journalism were her foremost interests. Her extracurricular activities included an editorship of the news section on *FOCUS*, a position as *FOCUS* photographer, and a member of the yearbook photography staff, all of which geared her towards a career in journalism. "I used to say that I wanted to end up in journalism or photo journalism, but I think that was only because I didn't know all my options at the time," Tachdijan remarked.

a production company that was working on a documentary for the Discovery Channel. "There, I got my first taste of documentaries and editing, and I was hooked," she stated fondly.

Tachdijan became involved with *Starting Over* when she moved to Los Angeles after graduating from college. "I had just moved to L.A. when I first interviewed for *Starting Over*, but because I didn't have any reality experience under my belt, they didn't hire me." However, a few months later, executives affiliated with *Starting Over* contacted her and offered her a position after she edited a pilot for *Forty Deuce*, a reality show on Bravo.

After three seasons, Tachdijan left *Start-*

Fatal Attraction

By Sarah Rosenberg

Have you ever skipped out on studying for a test because your favorite television show was about to start, then later thought that the D you received on your chemistry midterm was worth it because you were able to see Ryan save Marisa for the millionth time on *The O.C.*? I can assure you that a lot of people have.

It seems that every day of the week there are shows on television geared specifically towards middle and high school students. Whether they are dramas about teenagers who manage to

mess up their lives despite the fact that they have everything going for them or reality shows depicting the downfall of American society, television shows appear to have some sort of magnetic effect on teenagers.

Whether teachers want to admit it or not, everyone knows that high school students tend to leave their weekend homework for Sunday night. After dinner and a little time online catching up on all the Rye Brook gossip that has unraveled over the weekend, it's 8:59 P.M. and time for *Desperate Housewives*. After a race to the television, one settles down for an hour-long display of bickering among the ladies of Wisteria Lane. When the show ends, one would think that homework should be the next item on the to-do list, but not with *Grey's Anatomy* running on Sunday nights at ten. At the end of the show, it's time to hit the sack; after all, everyone knows that teenagers need at least eight hours of sleep to stay awake in five of their nine class periods. That global history homework will just have to wait until 7:35 A.M. to be completed in the locker area.

Monday night doesn't prove any better. The hit drama *24* lasts from 9:00 to 10:00 P.M., and what fun would the show be without discussing it online with fellow watchers for at least an hour after it ends? Tuesday night is television's

version of the triple threat: *American Idol*, *Gilmore Girls*, and *The Real World*. Homework just doesn't stand a chance. Furthermore, with the advent of TiVo, it has now become extremely easy to watch *American Idol* and *Gilmore Girls*, both of which air at 8:00 on the same night.



Coincidentally, the hour-long break between these two shows and *Real World* at ten provides a perfect opportunity to watch the TiVo-ed show. Could this be fate?

Wednesday night also necessitates TiVo as former husband and wife Chad Michael Murray and Sophia Bush on *One Tree*

Hill and the beautiful ladies of *America's Next Top Model* compete for viewers. Then at nine, who could resist a half-hour of Simon Cowell bashing contestants, forcing them to see therapists to reassemble the fragments of their shattered self-esteem? Thursday nights lead to the world of the wealthy in fictional Newport, California, on *The O.C.* With sexual promiscuity, drug abuse, and broken hearts, the tagline for this show should be the age-old adage: "Money can't buy happiness."

On Friday nights there seems to be a strange dearth of palatable television shows, a seemingly great opportunity to finally get some work done. But really, name one 17-year-old who is going to stay home on a Friday night to finish a math problem set. Over the weekend, by the time the thought of homework even begins to cross a teenager's mind, it's dinnertime on Sunday, and *Desperate Housewives* is about to air in half an hour. The vicious cycle continues.

Add sports, tutors, and clubs to the mix, and that leaves about twenty minutes per night for homework. The bottom line is that T.V. simply can't be avoided; no matter how hard we try to focus on our work, there's always a program that will tear us away from our books and suck us straight into virtual reality. Now, if I could just get my teachers to understand this.

Feasting With Foster:

Highstreet Roadhouse

By Michelle Caley and Chloe Greenbaum

"We're taking the circuitous route," exclaimed Mr. Foster as we drove around in circles desperately attempting to find the restaurant. Though Mr. Foster undoubtedly harbors an unfathomable quantity of culinary wisdom, his directional skills are clearly not up to par.

We finally arrived after a grueling ten minutes and stepped eagerly through the doors of Highstreet Roadhouse, an establishment that is not extremely familiar to the Blind Brook

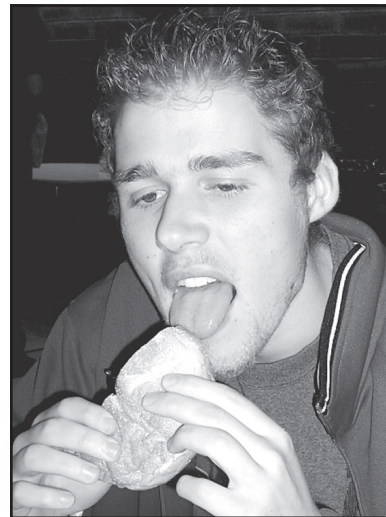
population despite its longevity. As we approached the entrance, we began to panic at the sight of a sign that prohibited the admittance of customers under the age of twenty-one; however, we soon realized that it only pertained to the bar located on the other side of a wall that separates it from the actual restaurant. We didn't think our corporate sponsor (a.k.a. Blind Brook High School) would approve of a critique of the bar, so we decided to head for the legal side of the establishment (by that point Mr. Foster was nearly faint with hunger).

As we entered the building, we were amazed by the homey décor and pleasant atmosphere, which consisted of "an excellent musical selection," as stated by Mr. Foster. We were then seated by a genial waiter who summarily handed us our menus. While perusing the various menu items, we noticed a large selection of Cajun, New Orleans-inspired dishes that seemed absolutely decadent, thereby prompting Mr. Foster's impeccable epicurean instincts to tingle with delight. The bread arrived a few minutes later in the form of two large, delectable, piping-hot biscuits. "The unusual bread really adds to the Cajun feel of the restaurant," an-

nounced Mr. Foster as he inhaled one of the five-inch-long pieces of fluffy goodness.

Our appetizers and entrees also arrived

relatively quickly. We started with a classic dish, fried calamari, garnished with spicy dipping sauce, a Highstreet twist that added pizzazz to this seemingly commonplace appetizer. We then received our main courses; Mr. Foster settled on a grilled chicken sandwich with extra bacon (for no extra charge, may we add), while we opted for the blackened chicken salad and fajitas. Our



meal was nothing short of delightful; every morsel of food was saturated with mouth-watering Cajun spices that sent our taste buds on a journey to paradise and back. As our dining experience approached its conclusion, we noticed Mr. Foster glancing at his plate with a look of distress plastered on his face. When we inquired about the problem, Mr. Foster responded, with a quizzical expression, "I just can't decide whether to wrap up the second half of the sandwich or not." Needless to say, he wrapped it and took it home, as usual.

Prior to our departure, however, we decided to try dessert, so we ordered slices of the tollhouse cookie pie and the Reeses peanut butter cake, both of which were just as spectacular as our entrees. We finished about a minute later and asked for the check. "Excuse me," Mr. Foster yelled to the waitress, "do you take Discover?" "Anything but Discover," she replied. What a shocker. Luckily, we were well-prepared this time around and remembered to bring some extra cash in case we once again ventured into an anti-Discover establishment. All in all, Highstreet Roadhouse receives a solid 9.5 out of 10.

Bamboozled Continued from page 11

Six different stages were set up, but the most popular bands performed on the two largest ones. The day started slowly with performances by Bayside, The Spill Canvas, Halifax, and The Hush Sound. However, things started to pick up around mid-afternoon when Hellogoodbye came on, and Armor for Sleep, Mae, and This Day and Age followed. The aforementioned acts all led up to an excellent performance by Relient K, one of the concert's most popular bands. Numerous people gathered at one of the main stages to see the alternative rock band perform some of its most well-known songs, including "High of 75" and "Be My Escape," accompanied by pushing, shoving, and crowd surfing.

As Relient K finished, we decided to grab some lunch. A plethora of foodstuffs, including Carvel, Ms. Field's cookies, burritos, chicken fingers, and sausage (all the major food groups, of course) were sold at stands scattered around the parking lot. While there was a wide range of food selections, space was pretty scarce. The only solution we could think of was to find a clean slab of pavement and eat our lunch off the ground.

After our lunch break, it was time to buy a band t-shirt. At one particular T-shirt stand, I must have waited on line for forty-five minutes while one salesperson served fifty people. I also observed five other salespeople lounging around the back of the stand casually watching the chaos unfold before their eyes. After finally purchasing our T-shirts, the Rocket Summer came on, and they performed many popular songs such as "Cross My Heart," "Never Knew," and "Brat Pack"; this was definitely one of the concert's more mellow acts.

Motion City Soundtrack and Hawthorne Heights then made an appearance. Both of these bands put on incredible performances and played such well-known singles as "Everything is Alright" (Motion City Soundtrack) and "Ohio is for Lovers" (Hawthorne Heights). Before we knew it, it was time to stake out good standing spots for the final and principal performances by the All-American Rejects, Thursday, and Fall Out Boy. As restless fans grew anxious for the appearance of their favorite bands, people began throwing empty and full water bottles, CDs, shoes, and articles of clothing around the audience. Although getting hit in the head with a full

bottle of Pepsi wasn't all that fun, watching the fans' frenzied behavior proved to be an amusing way to pass the time.

After a few more minutes of unabated havoc, the renowned and, might I add, good-looking, lead singer and guitarist Tyson Ritter appeared with his band, the All-American Rejects. The crowd broke out into fits of chaotic cheering, and crowd surfers and moshers resumed their antics. However, crowd surfing is definitely not all it's cracked up to be; people appeared out of nowhere and kicked nearby fans in the head, most often resulting in many falling dizzily on the pavement.

The All-American Rejects performed hits from both of their albums, including "Move Along," "Swing, Swing," "Dirty Little Secret," and "My Paper Heart." Soon after the termination of their phenomenal performance, fans rushed over to the other main stage to view Thursday's performance. I didn't actually witness their act from up close, but from afar their show seemed unbelievable. Then, after much anticipation and excitement, Fall Out Boy appeared on stage to the tune of "We Will Rock You" for the final act of the evening, which catered

to approximately 30,000 fans. Fall Out Boy performed some of their most popular hits, such as "A Little Less 16 Candles, A Little More Touch Me," "Grand Theft Autumn," "Saturday," and "Nobody Puts Baby in the Corner." Since I was standing towards the back of the parking lot, I couldn't see Fall Out Boy that well, but I was still able to hear Panic! At The Disco perform their song "I Write Sins Not Tragedies," which then led to Fall Out Boy's performance of "Sugar, We're Going Down." After an hour of great music, the band performed its final song, "Dance, Dance," after which the musicians encouraged us to tell our friends at home that "I 'danced, danced' with Fall Out Boy last night."

The concert was an overwhelming success. Although twelve hours of standing and listening to loud music might seem like a burden to some, Bamboozle was surely a great show to see. Though I did not attend Sunday's event, I was informed that performances were made by such well-known bands as AFI, Taking Back Sunday, Acceptance, Say Anything, and Senses Fail. Hopefully, we can look forward to Bamboozle Festival 2007.

Summer Sequels

By Scott Winston
and Rachel Weiner

Producing movie sequels is a risky business. People love to see their favorite character a second or third time, but only if there is still a story to tell. Characters who once seemed fresh and intriguing can easily become dull and cartoon-like. No matter how many great *Austin Powers* sequels are released, there will always be another mediocre *Legally Blonde* movie right behind it, metaphorically speaking. Many studios are currently gambling hundreds of millions of dollars on whether or not audiences are still interested in the characters who made the original movies so successful. The summer of 2006 marks the release of several sequels that may or may not butcher the initial storyline, so here is a list to help you plan your summer movie schedule accordingly.



Scary Movie 4

One would think that the Scary Movie franchise had spoofed nearly every film in existence, but Hollywood just keeps cranking them out. Released in April, Scary Movie 4 travesties such recent horror flicks as *The Grudge*, *The Village*, and *Saw II*. The inclusion of spoofs of movies that clearly aren't part of the horror genre, like *Million Dollar Baby* and *War of the Worlds*, proves that the well is running dry. Most Blind Brook students, anticipating a bad sequel, did not even bother seeing the movie. Sophomore Alyssa Futterman reasoned, "I did not think that the last one was funny, so I was not looking forward to this one. When you make too many sequels, it gets to the point where it is just plain ridiculous and butchers the original movie." Furthermore, the few students who expected Scary Movie 4 to be enjoyable and humorous were disappointed by its nonsensical gags and ninety-minute running time. If you plan to see a sequel this summer season, it is clear that Scary Movie 4 should not be your first choice.

Mission Impossible III

Mission Impossible III, the sequel of two very successful preceding movies, returned to the big screen on May 4th after a six-year hiatus. In this action-packed thriller, Tom Cruise is back as secret agent Ethan Hunt who confronts the toughest villain he has ever faced: Owen Davian (recent Academy Award winner Philip Seymour Hoffman), an international weapons and information provider with no remorse and no conscience. In this installment of the *Mission Impossible* series, things get personal for Hunt when Davian puts



his girlfriend in danger.

Students at Blind Brook seem to be attracted to this movie. Sophomore Alex Godoy remarked, "I want to see *Mission Impossible III* because the first and second ones were classics. I want to see the last part of a great trilogy. Plus, it looks like there is some sweet action, and I find Philip Seymour Hoffman to



be really funny." *Mission Impossible III* is said to have the most exciting action stunts imaginable and elaborate twists and turns that will keep you on the edge of your seat; it is the action movie that Blind Brook students and audiences everywhere have been waiting for.

X-Men: The Last Stand

The third film in the immensely popular *X-Men* franchise (released on May 26th) features the return of many familiar faces as the members of the *X-Men* crew; Halle Berry, Hugh Jackman, and Famke Janssen all reprise their roles from the previous two films. In this movie, a cure is found that can remove the mutants' powers, and a conflict among mutants ensues between those who want to retain their isolating powers and those who want to be "normal." New mutants such as Beast (Kelsey Grammar) and Angel (Ben Frost) will be included in the action as well. It seems as though the movie will be quite successful, considering the second film was able to out-gross its predecessor. *X-Men* also has a diehard fan base whose constituents would see the movie no matter what. "Of course I want to see *X-Men: The Last Stand*," commented sophomore Jason Hymowitz. "It's got everything. It's an action-packed thrill ride and it's the best comedy of all time."

The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift

The Fast and the Furious made its debut in 2001 and became one of the summer's most riveting films. In 2003, 2

Fast 2 Furious was released without the return of Vin Diesel and, although this movie still generated enormous interest, it had notable flaws and proved to be much less enthralling than the first film. Now, a third installment titled *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* is hitting theaters on June 16th. The most recent installment features new actors and characters like Bow Wow, but of course the most important component of the first two movies has returned: the cars.



This new film gives evidence of a promising and entertaining sequel. As stated in the movie trailer, "On the other side of the world and on the wrong side of the law, a new style of racing rules the Tokyo underground and all the best drivers want in. But when you live on the edge, anything can happen." Junior Jonny Sonkin is assured that *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* will be a box office hit that will not reflect poorly on the original movies. "I am both happy and excited that a new Fast and the Furious is coming out. These movies are filled with sweet cars and entertaining action that are appealing to many teenagers," he said.

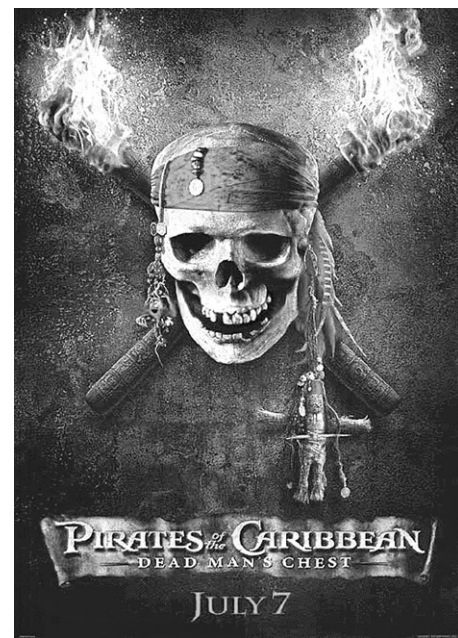


Superman Returns

After being absent from the movie scene for nineteen years (since the release of *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* in 1987), Superman is finally making his return to the big screen on June 30th. This time, "the man of steel" is played by newcomer Brandon Routh, who will star alongside of Kate Bosworth as Lois Lane and Kevin Spacey as the villainous Lex Luthor. This movie picks up where the second movie left off, ignoring the third and fourth less successful installments. The plot of the movie has been kept under wraps, but here are the basics: Superman/Clark Kent returns to earth

after five years in space and discovers that Lois Lane is a single mother and that Lex Luthor is once again up to no good. The nearly twenty-year lapse between this film and the last *Superman* movie may be too vast, thereby alienating younger audiences and reducing the film's attractiveness. Freshman Taylor Fuller stated, "I don't think I will see *Superman Returns*. I have no interest in it. I forgot it was even coming out."

However, this movie definitely has the potential to be a blockbuster. The studio has invested \$180 million in its production, so the special effects should be nothing short of spectacular. Also, *Superman Returns* will be directed by Brian Singer, the director of the first two *X-Men* movies, who clearly knows how to adapt a comic book into film.



Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest

Johnny Depp returns to his Oscar-nominated role as Jack Sparrow from the original movie *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*. Keira Knightley and Orlando Bloom also reprise their roles as Elizabeth Swan and Will Turner, respectively. This movie finds Turner and his future bride, Swan, teaming up again with Sparrow to defeat Davy Jones (played by Bill Nighy) and his army of undead soldiers. Sophomore Andrew Benowich is psyched for the new movie, stating "I am a big *Pirates of the Caribbean* fan and have been looking forward to the sequel for a long time because the first one was genius." Some people are nervous that Depp's stammer and swagger, which were so inventive and funny in the first installment, may be a bit stale the second time around, but Benowich is not one of these people. "I could watch [*Pirates of the Caribbean*] billions of times throughout my life and still enjoy it," he exclaimed.

Whether the sequel tanks or soars is yet to be determined, but true *Pirates* fans have nothing to worry about when it comes to the production of a third movie. In a move to avoid scheduling conflicts and save money, a third sequel has already been produced. *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* was gargantuan in 2003, so it should still have enough steam left to propel *Dead Man's Chest* to the top of the charts. The movie will premiere on July 7th.

Dear Blabby,

School is absolutely killing me. Even though it's the end of the year, my teachers are bombarding me with pointless homework, tests, and essays, and there just aren't enough hours in the day to complete everything on my to-do list. I am simultaneously studying for the SAT II in Biology and preparing for the three Regents exams that I have to take at the end of the year while juggling all my other work and playing on the Varsity softball team! I thought I'd be able to fill up my social calendar for the next two months, but I guess that isn't happening anytime soon.

I'm running on like five hours of sleep every night which, I know, is not enough for me, considering I'm the kind of person who really needs my beauty rest. School has just completely overtaken my life! Since softball started, I haven't been able to take my usual afternoon nap, I can't sit down and eat a normal dinner, and I've missed *The O.C.* for three weeks straight, not to mention the fact that I have to study for four major exams in the few waking hours I have after I get home from games. Seriously, how cruel is *that*?

I just don't know what to do anymore. I mean, I thought school would pretty much be over by May. All of the seniors are gone and done with high school! It is empty and the teachers still won't stop! How can I be expected to work at this time of year? Blabby, I need your help; summer feels like it's years away.

Sincerely Yours,
Frantic Francine

Dear Frantic Francine,
My advice in a nutshell: suck it up.

Advice for the Unsound



Dear Blabby

By Jamie Florindi and Dana Silverstein

I understand that you're stressed about exams and overwhelmed by your busy schedule, but it's entirely your fault for not expecting it. I don't know what kind of fantasy world you've been living in, but back here on Earth, the last two months of the school year mean nothing but work. Criticisms aside, though, you'll get through it. Finals are still a month away, so you have plenty of time to prepare. I suggest you make a schedule so you can manage your time more efficiently and clear some space in your day for minor things like eating and sleeping. Sleep will definitely enhance your performance in both school and sports. If you don't believe me, see how well you do on the Bio SAT II with a concussion from a fatigue-induced encounter with a rogue softball.

Also, study for your exams on the weekends instead of going out with your friends. I'm sure you'll survive a couple of weekends sans partying and, if you get enough work done, you'll actually have time to eat, sleep, and shower during the week. As for your *O.C.* dilemma, just ask a friend to TiVo it for you; missing Adam Brody for a few weeks won't be *too* detrimental to your health. Hope this helps.

Sincerely,
Blabby

Dear Blabby,

Can you believe a whole school year has passed since last summer? It feels like yesterday I was having a blast at the local day camp I worked at and whiffing the sweet smell of freshly baked goods at Jamie's Bakery. I also went on vacation with my family to California for an entire week, and I got the most amazing tan without having to pay fifty dollars at the tanning salon.

This summer, though, I'm stuck with a major problem. I've been working at a local day camp for as long as I can remember, and I made so many great friends and memories these past few years. However, I was offered a job at a sleep-away camp that pays more than both of my summer jobs combined, and I really need the money if I'm going to hit the mall for my back-to-school shopping in August. As much as I want a new wardrobe, though, I can't help thinking that working at sleep-away camp would ruin my summer and make me really upset, especially because I don't know anyone there. Summer is supposed to be fun, but I'm definitely not looking forward to it this year. Blabby, what should I do?

Needing advice desperately,
Summer-Stressed Susan

Dear Summer-Stressed Susan,
It sounds like you have quite a dilemma on your hands. There's definitely nothing

worse than a bad summer, especially if you lose out on an opportunity to have a great time. That would most definitely suck (not to put pressure on you or anything). Honestly, though, just do whatever makes you happy. I mean, does money really matter so much that you're willing to sacrifice two months of solace and happiness for some new clothes? That doesn't seem too realistic to me.

In my humble opinion, it's better to look forward to your job every day and maintain positive relationships with your co-workers than spend a miserable summer dealing with people who you may hate. Personally, I have an extremely low tolerance for annoyances so, if I were you, I'd opt for the day camp; at least you know you won't end up working with some irksome slob. And what happens if you can't stand the kids at the sleep-away camp? If you attend the local camp, you'll already be familiar with the campers, and if you end up having to baby-sit a brat, you'll still be able to go home every day. At sleep-away camp, you're stuck with those kids for eight full weeks; if you choose that option, you had better start praying.

I can tell from your letter that you really want to stick with your original job, and I can assure you there's nothing wrong with that. Once you're surrounded by good friends and (hopefully) friendly campers, you'll forget about sleep-away camp in a second. Just do what makes you happy; I'm sure you'll make the right decision. And if you're not satisfied with your monetary situation by the end of the summer, there's always mommy and daddy.

Best of luck,
Blabby

Two Alumni have Literature Published Continued from page 11

"I would just like to say that this is a dark poetry book, but that doesn't mean that it isn't good for everyone to read," she remarked. "These poems were written during a turbulent time in my life, and to get through it, I wrote." She added, "There is always something that will allow you to vent your emotions no matter how dark or pointless you think they may be."

In addition, Blind Brook alumnus Jason Stein has also made a significant literary accomplishment. When most Blind Brook students hear the name "Jason Stein," they probably think of the young man who helped lead the Varsity basketball team to the state championship four years ago. What many people probably do not realize is that Stein, a New York University graduate, had his novel *Hello Friend. My Name is Melvany* published this past February. The novel's main character is Melvany Lee, an NYU senior whose unique name was created by combining the names of both of Stein's grandfathers. Stein summarizes the plot as a story about "a loony college student [who] locks himself in his dorm room with his unhygienic roommate and writes a book about high school and college."

The book has been called semi-autobiographical. "It was based on smidgens of truth fused with fiction—I function daily in an imaginatively goofy reality," Stein commented. In the novel, Melvany describes in detail his daily routine, his memories of the past eight years, and his deepest thoughts and fears. These include everything from recalling the absurd nature of high school (the highlight of which was helping his friends lie to their parents) to describing his compulsive fear of Band-Aids to the difficulty he has dealing with his extremely attractive Spanish teacher.

The reaction from readers has been extremely positive so far. Online reviewers have called the book "hilarious, refreshing, and fun to read." The novel has been described as slightly "off-color," which makes it amusing to young readers. Blind Brook senior and Stein's close friend, Jillian Bennett, said, "The book is really amazing. Stein is a very talented writer and keeps the reader's attention throughout

the students at BB, read, read, read. Seriously. Read." Stein created profiles on the popular online directories MySpace and Facebook. The book cover was used as the profile picture, and the profile itself contained information about the novel. Many people began to and are still currently adding the character as their friend. "This promotional concept created a strong brand affinity, and it continues to become increasingly

***"To all the students at BB,
read, read, read.
Seriously. Read."***

—Jason Stein

the whole story. I never got bored while reading it." She also added, "*Hello Friend. My Name is Melvany* is definitely perfect for high school and college students because they can really relate to the events going on in the story. Some parts, which I found very entertaining, really remind me of life at Blind Brook."

Stein began writing the book as a college sophomore and handed it in as his final piece to be critiqued in a creative writing class as a junior. The comments he received were predominantly positive, and they encouraged him to pursue the piece of writing further. The book was sent to five agents, and in August 2005, he decided on Dorrance Publishing, a small subsidy publisher based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

To promote the book and introduce the

popular among companies and businesses that appeal to the 18-24 [year-old] demographic," Stein remarked.

As a high school student, Stein wrote for *FOCUS* but wasn't particularly passionate about journalism or exceptionally strong at writing. "I wish I'd written poems and short stories for that art house booklet the Blind Brook students compose," he said regretfully in reference to *Alter[ed] Ego*. However, he does not believe that he became a truly strong writer until approximately six months ago. "And, a little secret I can now divulge: I never read an assigned reading for school, never read a school book. Sorry, Mr. Jones. I'm an avid reader of books and magazines, just not when the reading is assigned or boring," he disclosed. Stein also has some advice for current high school students. "To all

the students at BB, read, read, read. Seriously. Read."

Stein definitely plans to make writing his future career, and he has already commenced writing another book, *Holes*, the story of a superstar golfer and openly gay pop-culture icon. He also wrote a movie recently, a romantic comedy titled *Miss Matched*, and this summer he is planning to write another film, *Dikembek Sjareef of Dikembek Moves to Great Neck*. Writing books is more time-consuming than writing screenplays, but Stein enjoys doing both. He also hopes to write for the small screen in the future. "Anything from *The Colbert Report* to *The O.C.* to *House*," he stated. Stein is heading to graduate school this coming school year to obtain a Masters in Communications as he continues to write and pursue his career.

Every author faces obstacles and periods of self-doubt when writing a piece of literature, whether it is a novel, a short story, or a screenplay. Was this true for Stein? "Doubt and confidence are forever battling, [but] confidence always coming out on top with an extra cup of coffee and a bagel," he expressed. "The obstacle that stood in the way was the line at the coffee shop beneath my building," he joked with a smile. "Having to go to class was also an obstacle, but I hurdled it by writing during class."

In terms of inspirational people in his life, Stein immediately thinks of the late Michael Dockwiler, a former Blind Brook English teacher. Dockwiler was always extremely supportive and helpful in Stein's development not only as a writer but as a person as well. His parents are also extremely supportive. Lastly, Stein feels that he owes a lot to his friends because they always make him laugh. "Laughter is a lovely luxury," he affirmed.

Editorial

Sun-Burned and Schooled-Out

By Melissa Lumish

I walked in the door following my AP Euro exam on Friday, basking in the relief so long anticipated throughout a week jam-packed with exams. I continued up the stairs, looking forward to my homework- and stress-free weekend to find my sister, who had not taken an exam that day, lounging comfortably in the kitchen. As I began to inquire about what I had missed in school, I noticed that her cheeks and nose were bronzed, alluding to several hours spent in the sun. Upon further investigation, I discovered that, finding only three or four students in each of their classes, she and a friend had taken a spontaneous, yet justifiable, excursion to the beach for the afternoon.

For those who are unfamiliar with the scheduling of senior classes, we have AP exams during the weeks of May 1st and May 8th, after which we begin our internships or independent projects for the senior options program. Seniors are

required to come to school when they do not have exams. However, if a student has an AP exam in the morning, he or she is not required to come to school in the afternoon and vice versa.

This plan initially seems logical—teachers are able to maximize the use of the remaining days of school for what are intended to be educational purposes. This scheme fails to point out, however, that all AP curriculums are finished before May 1st in preparation for the exams. Also, most teachers of non-AP senior classes administer finals before May 1st, knowing that students will be too overwhelmed with AP exams to give adequate consideration to other classes beyond that date.

The plan is also remiss in acknowledging the fact that seniors are allotted four personal business days for the year. Many seniors, myself included, chose not to use these days earlier in the year in order to avoid absences while new material was still being covered. Therefore, we still have all four personal

days available by the last week and a half of school.

What should be expected of teachers who finish their curriculums and are confronted with classes of seniors with little incentive to attend school and minds that are already on summer plans and college orientation? Faced with unpredictable attendance, many teachers chose to show movies or to discuss the AP exams that had already been taken.

Although I enjoyed the opportunity to see several films that were relevant to my courses but could not be squeezed into the stringent and time-pressured curriculum of the AP classes, I could not help but think about those four personal days waiting impatiently to be used. Even if teachers had further lessons planned, I thought, as I looked around, the number of students in each of my classes was dwindling. It is hardly reasonable to expect teachers to continue teaching while students are taking off days to enjoy themselves.

The conclusion and solution to my experiences could go in one of two directions. On one hand, I do not think that seniors should be required to come to a class after its AP exam or final has been administered. No further material is covered and attendance grows lenient as a result of diminishing class sizes.

On the other hand, the personal days could be allotted more effectively. Seniors could be required to use some personal days earlier in the year, rather than keeping them on reserve, so that classes would not be empty. This is not to say that I do not like the idea of having excused absences for three or four of the last, seemingly useless, days of school. However, it seems somewhat contradictory to require students to come to school and to then allow the majority of the grade to take personal days.

Otherwise, we are bound to continue to observe a steady departure of seniors who have decided that their time would be better spent outside of school...basking in the sun at the beach, perhaps.

Congratulations

FOCUS would like to congratulate Jared Hoffman on his achievements with *School Sports Magazine*, a nationwide magazine comprised of student writers. After being accepted as a representative correspondent writer for Blind Brook High School, Jared won a content award for his first entry into the magazine, despite competition from other students all over the country from eight different markets

Valenti Asked to Serve Another Term

Continued from page 1

contracts of new teachers or other funds that will help students more directly.

President of the Board of Education Larry Engle was one of the Board members who supported the new contract and represented what the majority of the Board members felt, saying, "We value Dr. Valenti as the leader of our district.

He's taken us to higher standards in education." Valenti is credited for introducing Smart Boards to Blind Brook and is also the man behind the new bond. Valenti showed his commitment to the Blind Brook schools when he stated, "Blind Brook's students and schools continue to remain both my top priority and my top love."

Correction

It was called to our attention that in the April 2006 issue of FOCUS, the "Inside Habitat" story read that this was Habitat's first year as a club at Blind Brook. However, John-Michael Grzan started the Habitat for Humanity Club at Blind Brook in 2001. The club received approval from the Habitat for Humanity Headquarters that year, as well as a federal ID number and tax exemption status. FOCUS apologizes for any confusion we may have caused.

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

A Crushing End to a Wondrous Ride: Mock Trial Season Comes to a Close

Continued from page 1

witnesses. Said Wiener, "I began thinking about how well we had done this season in order to give myself a boost of energy for the next trial. I remember thinking 'We know our stuff. We know our material, we are confident, and we handle ourselves well. Everyone remains calm and we are a cohesive group.' From there, the next trial was drastically easier."

Although B.B. felt that they had won this trial, Leeman Alternative must have scored enough points against them because they advanced to the finals against Maramount High School from New York City; Maramount went on to win the state

championship the following morning.

"We are a very aggressive team, which some judges like and some do not," Wiener stated. "This is why I think we did not advance to the finals. Some judges just do not appreciate an aggressive team."

Last year was the only other time in Blind Brook history that the team was able to make it to the state level. With graduated members from that team on hand in Albany this year, this year's team felt more proud of their accomplishments than they ever had; the simple fact that the team was in competition this late in the year was enough to show the graduated seniors that they were no longer relied upon. Explained Wiener, "A lot of our

success came from our ability to not only get along with each other, but we also love spending time together. We put in so many hours that have become enjoyable because this team, as trite as it sounds, is a 'family.' We have a nice flow when we ask and answer questions and the lawyers trust each other, which is critical. Obviously, we also would

not have gotten this far without our coaches -- and our talent."

The end of the season signifies not only the four seniors' departure from Blind Brook Mock Trial, but also the beginning to a new run. In addition to returning junior captain Hoffman and Wirshba and Sims, junior Ian Dubrowsky, sophomores Andrew

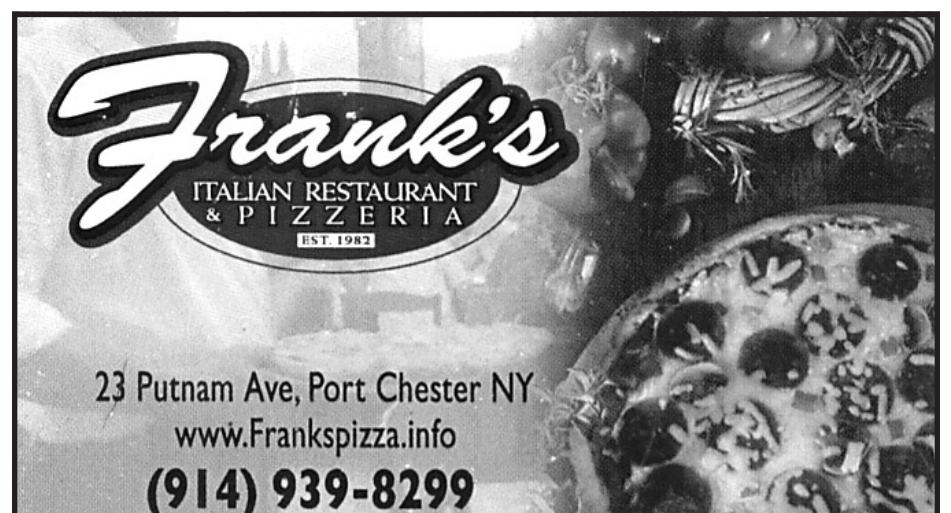
Becker, Michelle Caley, Benjamin Engle, and freshmen Max Linder, Lisa Ganz, and Mori Einsidler, will all look to maintain the high level of performance next year that Blind Brook Mock Trial has seen in recent years.

Concluded Wiener, "I could not be more proud of my team and myself this year. We all overcame what I thought would be a tremendous obstacle. We outdid ourselves time and time again and we developed skills and talent that I truthfully did not think we possessed. I feel badly for ever having doubted this team; every member has been truly incredible. I am definitely going to miss these guys next year."

Nothing further, Your Honor.

"We outdid ourselves time and time again and we developed skills and talent that I truthfully did not think we possessed. I feel badly for ever having doubted this team; every member has been truly incredible."

—Senior Mock Trial Captain Jeff Wiener



Frank's
ITALIAN RESTAURANT
& PIZZERIA
EST. 1982

23 Putnam Ave, Port Chester NY
www.Frankspizza.info
(914) 939-8299

Editorial

A Response to the New Blind Brook Peanut Gallery:

'If it Ain't Broke, Don't Fix it'

By Jeff Wiener and Jared Hoffman

For the first time ever (or at least as far back as we know), your current editor-in-chief and your future editor-in-chief (yes, this is our formal announcement) have felt passionately enough about the same issue to jointly write about it.

So, here we go.

Although Blind Brook High School has watched the mold of its character metamorphose into a whole new image, both physically and internally, one trait the students have managed to maintain is their persistent complaining and whining about perceived injustices in the school; no more commons, no more traditions, no more close student-teacher relationships, no school spirit, no more candy in vending machines – blah, blah, blah. The sounds in the halls of B.B. can be compared to a burly, carnivorous caveman trying to understand the delicacy of a tofu salad – loud, obnoxious, and disconcerted.

However, there has been a change in the wind, if you excuse the poor metaphor. Now it is the adults who are whining to the students. Recently, *FOCUS* has faced accusations directly from the mouths of adult community members pertaining to two issues: our credibility as a student-run newspaper and our budget. We have been effectively running the same way for years with the same budget, and all of a sudden now we have a problem.

Before we address the issues at hand, we would first like to address the manner

by which these accusations were brought. If certain individuals would have liked to express their suggestions politely to the executive board of this staff directly -- via e-mail, telephone, a personal meeting-- these suggestions would have been taken to heart and been discussed as constructive criticism.

We have worked hard and it is simply discouraging to know that there are adults in the world who wish to take credit away from students – students who pour hours of their lives and offer their hearts and souls into making FOCUS something this community is, for the most part, proud of and, let us not forget, something this community, in many ways, relies on.

By writing a letter to the *Westmore News* without first talking to our editorial staff was infantilizing, and taking the time of the Board of Education, whose efforts, in our opinion, should be focused on much larger issues and should not be spent “micromanaging” (to quote the brilliant words of Board of Education President Lawrence Engle), is unacceptable, unwarranted, and most of all, downright disrespectful. You have put this entire organization on the defensive.

Let us begin our response to the first issue at hand by declaring that we make no apology to those who have a problem with the inner workings of our newspaper, and by stating

that by no way are we embarrassed that we rely on a professional, publisher Richard Abel of the *Westmore News*, to aid us with our layout. We are an award-winning organization year after year. We boast a roster of students of at least sixty to seventy students each school year. We take pride in the fact

that each member of the paper learns new things every year, both as a journalist and as a member of a team. We have a traditional layout and a traditional organization, and they have fostered our tremendous success both by our standards and the standards of prestigious organizations.

Alternative suggestions to having our layout done by Abel have proven futile. While ideas of journalism classes and new programs have been tossed around, the bottom line is that no student has the resources – both time and technology – to complete the layout on their own. Abel spends hours and hours a week prior to deadline working tirelessly, with the aid of our own senior layout editor Marisa Berman, to make sure *FOCUS* is as appealing to the eye as it can be. How can students, loaded with other extra curriculars, APs, jobs, and homework, be expected to be as skilled and to commit as much time to a task as a professional does to his own vocation? They simply cannot. As Abel himself said in a *Westmore News* article, “Just because you give a monkey a wrench, that doesn't make him a plumber.” He's absolutely right – he's got the wrench, and we want to keep him as our plumber. This “wrench” in the hands of a novice Blind Brook student would be a “monkey wrench” and the results would most probably end up disastrously, with fewer issues of *FOCUS* each school year, and that is not a risk we are willing to take. We want *FOCUS* to continue to be a source of information within the community, a source of learning for our students, and a means of communication for all—reducing the number of publications would be extremely detrimental in so many respects, and all just to be able to say we do our own layout, not to mention the extraordinary amount of frustration that Blind Brook students would have to endure if they took on such a burden.

As if attacking our method of publication were not enough, this “peanut gallery” has started attacking the credibility of our awards by citing a flaw in a track record of a member of the *American Scholastic Press Association*, the organization we received our “best newspaper” award from. We think we can speak for most of this community when we say that we are proud of our accomplishments, especially of winning a first place award for best newspaper nationwide. So what if one member of this award organization does not have a perfect record? That does not, and we say this emphatically, make our award any less credible. We have worked hard and it is simply discouraging to know that there are

adults in the world who wish to take credit away from students—students who pour hours of their lives and offer their hearts and souls into making *FOCUS* something this community is, for the most part, proud of and, let us not forget, something this community, in many ways, relies on.

Secondly, the fact that certain individuals are penny-pushing a school's student newspaper instead of the sports program shows how naïve people can be. Although we will not include any specific prices for our sports teams in this editorial, we can reasonably say that all of our sports teams pay egregious amounts for uniforms, equipment, coaches, buses, drinks, practice time, and other miscellaneous expenditures. The bottom line is that our budget measures up to be a lower dollar-to-student ratio than our sports teams. And let's be honest about one thing – given the demographic population that Blind Brook has, are we more likely to yield professional hockey and football players or writers, poets, and journalists? In no way do we mean to belittle the efforts of our sports program; in fact, we fully support and have participated in our successful athletics program, but the reality is that, for the most part, writing skills obtained while working on *FOCUS* are more applicable to the real world than those physical skills gained on our football team. Our money goes to a great cause, a cause that allows students to take part in a learning process that teaches them lifelong skills such as working on a team, meeting deadlines, expressing thought and opinion, and leading a team.

If you turn to our Arts and Entertainment section, we have just had two Blind Brook alumni publish literature; clearly, their skills were honed while working on Blind Brook student publications. In fact, the closest thing to an athletic superstar that Blind Brook has had (basketball player Jason Stein) actually published a book of his own! Clearly, the experience and skills he gained on *FOCUS* led to more opportunities than the basketball team did. Why take away or depreciate a tool that could lead to future success and talent?

There are some things that no matter how hard you try, you will just never understand. Girls will never understand why farts are so funny. The French will never understand militaristic strategy. No one will understand what the first guy to milk a cow was thinking. Unfortunately, one thing the entire organization of *FOCUS* will now understand through this experience is that they are not completely supported by their community. By attempting to blemish our credit, our system, and our awards, the accusers have done nothing more than draw attention to themselves, stir controversy within the Board of Education, and belittle the hard work of students.

The two of us would like to end this editorial by announcing, once and for all, that once next year's editorial staff is elected, you can expect us to assert that in no way, shape, or form do we intend on altering our current relationship with Richard Abel in terms of both layout and cost.

In other words, sorry peanut gallery: we are going to pass on the wrench; it is too big of a risk for us to take.

Jeffrey L. Wiener
Jared Hoffman

FOCUS Staff

Editor-in-Chief Jeff Wiener
Faculty Advisor Ms. Doris Patrão
Layout editor Marisa Berman
Webmaster Ethan Klapper

NEWS

Editor Julie Ganz
Columnist Adam Fischer

Writers: Tal Ackerman, Lee Arvoy, Amy DeLynn, Steve Frazer, Wanika Fisher, Jason Freyberg, Joey Goldstein, Matt Goldwater, Ben Lubkin, Adam Potter, Scott Statman, Eric Taitz, Aaron Wirshba

SPORTS

Editor Jared Hoffman
Columnist Ben Engle

Writers: Matt Adler, Ross Burack, Alana Burns, Lisa Ganz, Jon Gold, Amanda Gottlieb, Nicole Haber, Ben Levine, Daniel Levy, Greg Millar, Jonny Sonkin, Jonathan Tenenzapf, Michael Tramontelli, Alex Weissman

FEATURES

Editor Melissa Lumish
Columnist Heidi Lumish

Writers: David Fries, Alison Genova, Adam Harris, Celine McBride, Akshay Nagia, Rachel Polonsky, Melissa Prusky, Rebecca Raider, Sarah Rish, Corinne Segal, Sonia Taneja

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Marissa Barbaro
Columnist Sarah Rosenberg

Writers: Michelle Caley, Andrew Creadore, Chloe Greenbaum, Ian Dubrowsky, Kerri Dunigan, Jen Flaxman, Jamie Florindi, Harrison Foster, Victoria Introcaso, Samantha Levine, Daniel Levy, Kimera Rosen, Dana Silverstein, Madeleine Sims, Rachel Weiner, Scott Winston

PHOTOGRAPHY

Editor Emily Brackman

Photographers: Karlyn Adler, Jaclyn Azia, Marnie Blum, Halley Feldman, Mikey Goldberg, Joey Goldstein, Jenna Haber, Jenna Kaplowitz, Tobin Kovoov, Matthew Micheli, Amanda Park, Samantha Park, Stephanie Sherry, Ashley Woychowski

BUSINESS

Editor Shinsuke Kawano
Matt Held, Garrett Zendman

MAN ABOUT TOWN

Jon Simon