

# FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

May 2003

News Editor: Brian Rosenberg

News Section



## Sophomore Circus Successful

Weeks of planning came together as the traditional 10<sup>th</sup> grade fundraiser boasted one of the larger attendances in recent memory. Held at Blind Brook on the evening of Friday, April 25, the circus, which featured the classic jumping castle, haunted house, and gold fish giveaway as its main attractions, raised more than \$5,000 for the sophomore class. Photo by Mark Harris

## Principal Leaving

Blind Brook Loses Yet Another Administrator

By Carrie Schmelkin

While still reeling from Assistant Principal Michael Mitchell's resignation, the Blind Brook community was informed through a personal letter sent over April vacation that it would also be losing Principal Robert Chlebicki. After serving as Blind Brook's high school principal for past six years, Chlebicki will be joining the North Shore School District in Long Island this September. His departure, he explains, is "simply a career move."



Principal Robert Chlebicki

I have to leave behind all the students, faculty, and parents, which is sad because I won't get to continue to interact with them.

I have become so involved in this community and leaving them is as if I am a family moving away from my neighborhood."

Many faculty members also expressed regret over Chlebicki's resignation. Veteran English teacher Del Shortliffe stated, "I'm very sorry to see Mr. Chlebicki go. He's a principal who sets high educational standards while still caring deeply about individual students. I've also never known a principal who

As an assistant superintendent for instruction in the North Shore School District, Chlebicki will work on curriculum development for grades K-12. His chief job will be to focus on researching the ways in which teachers teach and how and what they should teach. "I have always wanted a career within education, and North Shore School provides me the opportunity to do what I love," explained Chlebicki. He added, "The job of being a principal should encompass the above, yet there are other outside competing demands which sometimes make it difficult to work on instructional teaching methods."

works harder than he does. I can't always match his energy level, but I always like - and always benefit - from working with him." Shortliffe went on to say that he believes that although Chlebicki will be successful and will feel fulfilled with his new position, his absence will be a true loss for Blind Brook. Sharing a similar sentiment, earth science teacher Leigh Novak commented, "I think that it will be hard to find a principal with such energy and dedication as he has." English teacher Barbara Jackson also feels that Chlebicki has been a

## School Board Adopts Budget Despite Uncertainties

Community Vote Will Have to Wait

By Ben Levine

On Monday, April 30, the Blind Brook Board of Education adopted a budget of \$26,035,284 for the 2003-4 school year. The budget, if approved by the community on June 3, will result in a tax rate increase of approximately 9.79%, which correlates to the average tax rate increase of 10% in Westchester and Putnam Counties. Taxes represent 90 percent of the revenue needed to support the budget for the upcoming year.

The School Board faced many challenges in formulating this budget, including a 10.5% reduction in State aid (\$195,000), as forecast by Governor George Pataki in his proposed 2003-4 Executive budget, and a 900% increase in Employee Retirement System contribution costs. Other cost increases are the result of rising K-12 enrollments, as well as escalating health insurance and special services costs. Before the Board of Education unanimously voted to adopt the budget, many of the members spoke of their frustrations with this year's state budget process.

Board Member Dr. Richard Buzin said, "Frankly, this year has been anything but routine. I personally think that this was the trickiest of all, because there was no set of hard numbers to work with."

School Board Vice President Monroe Haas added, "We have tried with reasonable success to continue to expand academic offerings and maintain quality. We have delayed certain things that are wanted and, in the long-run, needed. I will vote for it, as it represents a satisfactory product in an uncertain, unsatisfactory environment."

Two days after the Board adopted the

Blind Brook budget, school districts across New York State were allowed to delay community budget referendums by two weeks, moving them from May 20 to June 3. This unprecedented delay occurred because the state legislature overrode Governor Pataki's veto of legislation mandating the postponement. The legislature put the extension in place so that it would have time to work to restore the state aid cuts to the school budgets. Explained Blind Brook School Business Official Jonathan Ross, "We expect the restoration of a good portion of the \$195,000 aid loss to Blind Brook, and we are awaiting legislative relief of about \$140,000 on the Employee Retirement System's (ERS) increased cost to the district."

Under the new budget, there will be no increases in class size and no program cuts. Additionally, the budget provides for replacement of selected textbooks, enhancements in technology (new labs), expanded athletic program offerings at the middle school level, safe, secure, and clean facilities, two new school vehicles (one bus and one van) and a limited number of new teaching positions to handle the anticipated increase in enrollment.

Blind Brook High School principal Robert Chlebicki is confident that the community will support the proposed budget despite the tax increase. He explained, "Throughout the years, I have never heard the parents say to cut back. If anything, they have criticized the Board for not supporting more of the principal's requests. Even in the building project, parents wanted more, but the Board would not budge over what they

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News Editor: Brian Rosenberg

## News Section

## Where has the Administration Gone?

By Kyle Wirshba

At the beginning of the 2001 school year, Blind Brook went through an administrative revolution. The middle school and high school were separated, and a new high school assistant principal and middle school principal were hired to make the administration complete. For the first time, Blind Brook schools were beginning to look like an average school system—one that even had walls in its high school. But things would not stay this way. By the spring of 2002, people began to see this apparently stable system, which they had almost become used to, starting to fall apart.



It began with the retirement of many teachers, ones who had been in the district for years and who had helped Blind Brook gain its great academic reputation. Beloved teachers, like Mr. Tibbs, Mr. Dockwiler, Ms. Lobdell, Mrs. Arest, and many more were suddenly gone. Then the 2002-2003 school year came, and just like the last one, more teachers, such as Mrs. Pejkoivic, Mr. Citron, Ms. Bedell, and Mr. Grachan, were leaving. But all along, one thing remained constant: the leadership of the high school remained intact. Mr. Chlebicki would always be there, and Mr. Mitchell, his new-found partner, would be at his side. Clearly, this was not always to be. Now, we find ourselves with even the administration changing, leaving Blind Brook with little administrative experience to depend on.

These circumstances are unfortunate, and not only for the students. Teachers will need to form new relationships with administrators. Dr. Miles, Superintendent of Blind Brook schools, will need to deal with an administrative catastrophe in only his third year in the district. Next year, Blind Brook High School will be run by an interim principal and, hopefully, an assistant principal, who will be in a position to be promoted in the future. This would be the ideal case, but, of course, the ideal can't always be expected. Dr. Miles told me that a good administrative applicant is hard to come by and that finding one with experience is nearly impossible.

Only one thing is for sure: next year will not be easy. These new members of the Blind Brook community will be hard pressed to "find their way." We are a very small, tight-knit community, and we tend to have very high standards, particularly with regard to academics, which both students and parents tend to take very seriously. Having high standards and scholastic intensity is great; it allows Blind Brook to be as successful as it is. But sometimes new people have a hard time meeting such standards early on in their career.

In order for a new administrator to have a successful stay in Rye Brook and to not end up leaving after a year and a half, the Blind Brook community might have to do one thing it is not accustomed to doing. We may have to open up to new faculty and cut them some slack, allow them to make a few mistakes. If we're going to get someone to stay, and we need someone to stay, then it is imperative that we at least try, as a community, to be accepting and understanding. It can be done (yes, even in Rye Brook), and I think that everyone will benefit from it.

# Police Presentation Outlines Underage Drinking Policies

By Mark Harris with Leah Citron and Melissa Gentile

"An officer doesn't have the right to enter or search a house without a warrant or permission if there is no visible underage alcohol consumption or other law breaking," clarified Rye Brook Police Officer John Hawkins at the Blind Brook High School town meeting on April 4. "However, he can search the outside of a private property based solely on a tip."

Invited to attend the meeting by student Senate, Hawkins, along with Rye Brook Youth Officer William Esainko, made a presentation to the assembled student body about current laws regarding the control of underage alcohol consumption. After the presentation, a brief question and answer session was held, during which Hawkins and Esainko responded to a list of questions submitted by students to Senate.

According to Hawkins, the laws concerning the termination by police of any illegal underage drinking party are, for the most part, cut and dry. All those underage kids present at a location where alcohol is being illegally consumed are legally presumed to have been drinking and subject to detainment or even arrest. The announcement of this statute drew a largely averse reaction from the students, many of whom expressed dismay that those who are sober at parties will nevertheless be lumped in with the drinkers. "It's a tough one," said senior Craig Bergman. "I definitely understand that the police can't take chances and therefore have to assume that *everyone's* been drinking. But I'm also left wondering whether we'll see a lot fewer kids willing to act as designated drivers out of fear of getting into trouble. I don't think that anyone, the cops, the school, the parents, the

students, wants to see a reduction in the number of safe drivers."

Much more comforting to most students was Hawkins's assertion that a sober driver stopped on the road with intoxicated passengers in the vehicle will be allowed to go free. According to the police department's Zero Tolerance policy, however, all those

*"We are not your enemy."*

—Officer John Hawkins,  
Rye Brook Police Department

intoxicated passengers will be taken to the station to have their parents called. "Police are trained to spot glassy eyes, alcoholic smells, and beer bottles," explained Hawkins. "Even if you are in the car intoxicated, yet no alcohol is present, you can still be brought to the station, and your parents will be notified, but you will not receive a summons."

Also delineated, both in the presentation and in the accompanying pamphlets distributed to students, were several sections of the NYS Alcoholic Beverage Control Law and general NYS Penal Law dedicated exclusively to the underage sale, possession, and consumption of alcohol. Section 100.1 of the former deals with the sale without an appropriate license, section 65 prohibits sales of alcohol to anyone under the age of twenty-one, and section 65-c bans "the unlawful possession of an alcoholic beverage with the intent to consume by persons under the age of twenty-one years."

The use of false identification cards, or "fake IDs," was also discussed. According

to Hawkins, manufacturing or altering a driver's license can be charged as forgery in the second degree, false impersonation, or possession of a forged instrument.

Civil liability was also discussed, particularly as it relates to parents who host or allow underage drinking parties. Those adults are liable if someone is injured, dies as a result of drinking, or is sexually assaulted on their property. In the situation in which an underage person is involved in a fatal accident after drinking on the property of an adult, the adult may be held liable. All adults have the obligation to protect the safety of underage individuals while on their property.

Hawkins stressed that the police department, in its efforts to crack down on underage drinking, is not looking to harass or to embarrass but rather to do its job by protecting citizens and preventing dangerous situations. It was noted, however, that the name of any person brought into the station for questioning is public record and can indeed be given out upon request, as long as the person is over the age of 16. Hawkins went on to say, "People have lost their lives because of these issues. A line needs to be drawn in the sand... you have to decide for yourself if it is worth it. Still, we are not your enemy."

The full school assembly was held in hopes of informing the students as to their rights, the current drinking and driving laws by which they must abide, and the consequences of breaking those laws. According to senior Senate President Loren Fishkind, the ultimate objective of the meeting was to better educate the community's youth and, in doing so, to prevent any future catastrophes. Many students understood and appreciated the message. One high school stu-

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## Four Young Teachers to Join Exodus from BBHS

By Emily Redmerski

With the school year winding down, the Blind Brook faculty, which has already experienced significant turnover during the last two years, faces even more change. With four high school teachers not returning to the district next year, Blind Brook's largely youthful crop of teachers may end up welcoming more green faculty members this September. Those departing at the culmination of this semester—science teacher Jerry Citron, physical education teacher Chris Orphanides, social studies teacher Bart Grachan, and Betsy Bedell of the English department—mostly agree that their experiences at Blind Brook were valuable and rewarding.

During his three years in Blind Brook, Citron has taught biology and AP biology and has also been largely responsible for revitalizing the school's Science Research program, which has sent two national finalists to Washington DC since his arrival. Looking back on his time spent at Blind Brook, Citron definitely considers it to be a positive experience. He said, "We've had a lot of students in the science research class win major competitions." On a more personal note, he added, "I've become very close with the students I've taught." Specifically, Citron enjoyed the individual attention he could give to students. "Working with small classes is beneficial for both



Betsy Bedell



Jerry Citron



Bart Grachan



Chris Orphanides

students and teachers, because you get a lot more accomplished," Citron explained. Additionally, he feels working at Blind Brook has improved his teaching skills because he's "learned to switch intellectual gears" based on the different levels of the classes he's instructed.

Of his three years teaching physical education at Blind Brook, Orphanides said that it was a "great experience, especially in the relationships [he] formed with students and faculty." He found it easy to assimilate into Blind Brook and also to get along with parents, teachers, and students. Orphanides remarked that outstanding support from parents and faculty has been vital to his success. "Although Blind Brook is a much different environment than what I'm accustomed to," Orphanides commented, "I found, with the support of faculty and parents, the transition was much smoother than I anticipated."

Although this year marked her first in the district, Bedell took on the challenge of teaching many upper-level English courses, including pilot IB English, AP English, and journalism. According to Bedell, her Blind Brook experience was "absolutely a positive one." She added, "I was able to grow professionally and enjoyed working with the students here." Bedell said that she learned a great deal "working alongside other caring and effective teachers and being able to use their experience as a model for [her] own teaching."

Grachan has been a faculty member at Blind Brook for the last three years and has taught both 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade global studies, a course which includes looks at the history and current events of a variety of regions throughout the world. Grachan could not be reached for comment in time for publication.

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## Principal Leaving Continued from page 1

great principal over the past six years. "He's extremely focused on the students, has made important changes in the school, knows about effective teaching methods, and has tried to make more AP courses available to students," explained Jackson. First year biology teacher Margaret Mackay thinks that Chlebicki has been a "wonderful asset to this school," and feels saddened that Blind Brook is losing such a caring principal. However, she added, "It's comforting to know that ...[his] being an assistant superintendent[guarantees that] many more people will benefit from his expertise. I am really happy for him!" Another first year teacher, Spanish instructor Margaret Brennan-Juana, is also sad to see a good friend and colleague go. She remarked, "I appreciate his professional advice, and I hope that the next person who fills his position will be as available and helpful to Blind Brook as Mr. Chlebicki has been."

Students have also shared their apprehensions concerning Chlebicki's resignation. Junior Lisa Hamilton commented, "He is a great guy, and I was very upset upon hearing about his resignation. He has really taken the time to get to know all of the students. We have been fortunate to have had him, and he will definitely be missed in the years to come." Senior David Erner added, "I have really appreciated Mr. Chlebicki's support in all of my endeavors." In addition, sophomore Natasha Treacy said, "Mr. Chlebicki has made the Blind Brook atmosphere a comfortable and invit-

ing one. The friendly "hello's" in the morning are always a nice start to a hectic day. I will really miss him." Sharing a different concern, Senior Adam Chwick feels happy that the graduating seniors can graduate with Chlebicki present but expressed regret that other classes won't be as fortunate. Freshman Jen Flaxman mentioned, "I understand that Mr. Chlebicki wants a change and is on to new things, but I am nervous for what the new administrator will bring."

Chlebicki hopes that the new person to fill his position will always put the students first. He also wishes that the new principal will be a good listener so that he or she can hear what people have to say. Chlebicki stated, "The new principal also has to be courageous enough so that after hearing what people have to say, he or she will be able to make decisions in the best interest of the kids."

Because it is too late in the year to conduct a full-scale search, an interim principal will be appointed for the upcoming school year. Larry Mayer, former principal of Ardsley High School and interim principal at Blind Brook the year before Chlebicki's arrival, will take the helm next year while a permanent replacement is found. According to junior Congress representative Keith Hanauer, Superintendent Dr. William Miles attended the most recent Congressional meeting and assured the members that when the search for a permanent replacement begins, students will be involved.

## School Board Adopts Budget Continued from page 1

spent, even though parents begged." However, Chlebicki acknowledged that the Board needs to consider the feelings of others in the community, such as retired people and those who do not have children in the schools.

Marie Magliano, currently a candidate for a position on the Blind Brook School Board, believes that the Board has presented a fair and reasonable budget to the community under very difficult economic times. Magliano stated, "I believe that the community will support the budget at its current level of tax increase." She further explained, "A large percent of our expenditure increases come from a small number of items that are out of the district's control."

Commented fellow School Board candidate Caryn Furst, "I support the budget. Of course, we're still not really getting hard numbers from the state, but it's my hope that if we get additional funding, and it looks like we might, then more money could go for further curriculum development, with money also put into reserve and used to help lower taxes."

Susan Gordon, a parent of a ninth grader and a seventh grader at Blind Brook, always supports the budget and plans to continue this year. Gordon explained, "Even before I had children in the schools, I supported the budget because education is a very important aspect of a community."

Ross noted that with additional funding made available, the Blind Brook Board of Education would be able to reformulate its 2003-2004 budget by adding money for enhancing programs for students, by increasing its tax certiorari reserve (to cover reduction in tax assessments), and by reducing the tax burden to the community. Superintendent Dr. William Miles concurred with Ross's thoughts concerning the

potential use of additional state funding.

Chlebicki provided the Board of Education with a list of proposals for new and enhanced programs that he would like to see added to the existing curricula. These additions include individual writing coaches for all students for three to four years, required Theory of Knowledge classes for all students, required study skills classes for all freshmen, additional electives in the English and social studies departments, and the opportunity to build a performing arts program centered around theatre and dance. "All of these programs require additional personnel," admitted Chlebicki. "Unfortunately, personnel is one of the biggest items on a school district's budget. So in fairness to the Board, these programs are 'high ticket' items that would have a big impact on the budget."



## Blind Brook Juniors Take D.C.

On April 22, American history teacher Shelley Jacobson took her 11<sup>th</sup> grade Advanced Placement class to Washington, D.C. for an all-day field trip that included visits to the Cold War International History Project and the National Spy Museum and a presentation by renowned historian Hope Harrison. Pictured above in front of the Lincoln Memorial is this year's contingent of AP US History students.

Photo courtesy of Shelley Jacobson

## Congratulations

FOCUS would like to congratulate Blind Brook sophomore Mark Harris for his ninth place finish in *Le Grand Concours*, a national French student contest sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of French.

## Underage Drinking Policies Continued from page 2

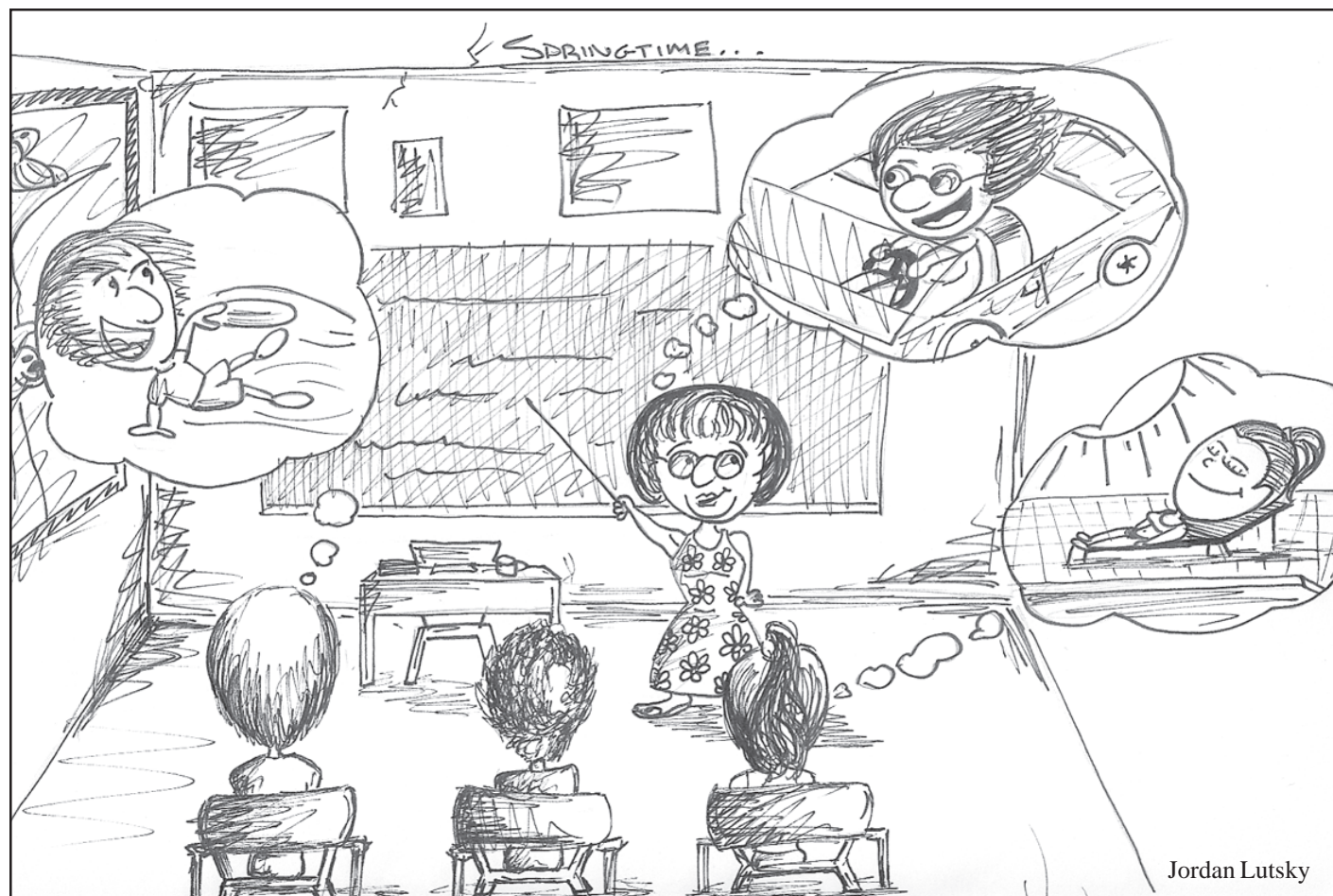
dent, who spoke under condition of anonymity, pointed to the obvious relevance and worth that such an assembly has in light of recent tragedies across Westchester. Commented this student, "Just this past year, our whole community has been affected by alcohol, from the Scarsdale and Harrison incidents, to some celebrations that got out of hand."

"[Underage drinking] is an epidemic that's costing people their lives," said Hawkins. "It's a serious issue; people can get hurt. Our hopes are that by clarifying this information, people under the age of twenty-one will rethink their decision about attending a party where alcohol is present."

Some may not be quite so optimistic. Sophomore Ken Diamond agreed that the

meeting "was very beneficial and informative...[as] the officers clarified all questions that students were wondering about." But he also did not believe the assembly would cause any lasting differences in student behavior. "Everyone was aware of the consequences before the meeting," said Diamond. "Now, they have just learned the details."

Fellow sophomore Teresa Florindi, however, disagreed about the presentation's impact. Commented Florindi, "I thought it was an awesome thing to do, and I was surprised at the [positive response]. Probably a few people will now change their thinking or actions in the future. As long as one person's mind is changed, I think it was a success."



Jordan Lutsky

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# Sports

Sports Editor: Keith Hanauer

## Baseball, Softball Teams Overcome Slow Starts, Keep Sectional Hopes Alive

By Eric Strauss

As spring moves ever closer to summer, the Blind Brook varsity baseball and softball teams close out their regular season schedules and prepare for the postseason Sectional tournaments. Though both squads' performances have been riddled with the inconsistency that tends to go hand-in-hand with youth and inexperience, both will most likely claim a Sectional berth.

Despite a 6-9 start, the baseball team, under third year coach Greg DiPaoli, is showing signs of improvement, coming off impressive victories over league powerhouses Rye Neck and Tuckahoe. Having lost valuable starting pitchers David Stockel and Spencer Howard to graduation last year, the pitching rotation struggled to get into gear but has improved its collective ERA dramatically as of late, with veteran senior Matt Gordon and juniors captain Tom Wethington and Joe Bucci leading the charge. Particularly impressive has been the poise of freshman John Grossman, who has now firmly established

himself as one of the squad's premier starting pitchers. Sophomores Steve Gross, and Eric Flaxman have made appearances as well, with junior captain and third baseman Frank Santoro working effectively in scattered relief jobs.

With Gross, Gordon, Wethington, and Santoro leading a resurgent batting order, the squad has begun to send more runners across the plate, keeping it competitive with high-scoring teams across Section One. Currently, Wethington leads the team with three home runs, while Santoro ranks highest in RBIs.

The Trojans' defense has started to show signs of life as well. Led in the field by All-Section hopeful Gross at shortstop and by senior captain Kevin Aughavin filling a new role as catcher, the team has worked to minimize the errors that plagued it early in the season. "As long as we play smart and get the job done in the field, we can play with almost anybody," said Aughavin, whose strong arm and canniness behind the plate have garnered attention as of late. DiPaoli concurred, stat-



Blind Brook's Loren Fishkind swings hard at a Haldane fastball.

Photo by Keith Hanauer

ing, "As in any sport, defense is the key to winning baseball games. At times this season, our inexperience has been reflected in mistakes we've made in the field, but the

guys are working hard and coming along." The recent addition of first baseman Ryan Matthews, a standout at the junior varsity level, is a positive sign. **Please turn to page 10**

## Spring Sports Post Mixed Scores

By Ken Diamond

### Boys' Varsity Tennis

With senior captain Chris Otness leading a wealth of underclass talent, the boys' varsity tennis squad is off to an auspicious start, having posted a 2-1 record as of May 5. "We're very youthful, and despite that, we are doing extremely well," commented junior Lee Waldman. The team has also displayed signs of a bright future. "We are doing well now, and with a returning core of juniors and underclassmen next year, we should be competitive for several years," explained sophomore Kory Zverin, one of seven returning varsity players. Otness is very happy that the younger players have stepped up this year. One in particular is freshman John Magliano, who is enjoying a great start in his varsity debut. Commented Otness, "John has really stepped up. He's playing first singles right now." Part of the team's surprising success may be attributed to solid coaching from Jesse Levin. Noted sophomore Kyle Wirshba, "For the first time in years, Blind Brook varsity tennis is able to boast a coach knowledgeable in tennis and just an all around great guy."

### Girls' Varsity Soccer

Despite being moved into a more difficult division this year, the girls' varsity soccer team, led by veteran coach Josef Pomeryn, has come onto the field enthusiastic and optimistic about the season. "Our biggest challenge is doing well despite having a very tough schedule," explained sophomore Blair Fisher. The team is well led by senior captain Jessica Stein and junior captain Lauren Piccolo. "The leadership brought by Jessica and Lauren has been very important to the team," commented sophomore Laura Willig. The team has also shown promising signs of success for the remainder of the season. "Although we're 3-4, all of our losses have been hard-fought battles," explained Fisher. "The scores have been like 2-1 or 1-0." The team has thus far played an imposing schedule, taking on schools with



Blind Brook senior forward Sandy Schnur, center, fights off Valhalla defender in hot pursuit.

Photo by Craig Bergman

strong soccer programs, like Pawling, Valhalla, and Westlake. Despite the team's early struggles, freshman Jennifer Flaxman said, "We play well together, and I'm having a lot of fun this year."

### Varsity Golf

The varsity golf team presently holds

a respectable 4-4 record. Senior captain Adam Rosensweig, who represented Blind Brook in the Sectional tournament last season, leads the team. Despite the squad's .500 record, coach Marcello Marcoccia is a bit flustered by the performance of his players so far. "Not one player has really distinguished himself

this season," said Marcoccia. "I'm still waiting for everyone to reach a level of consistency." Despite the disappointment, some players admit that their coach's assessment is valid. Sophomore Justin Gottlieb agreed, "Marcoccia has been doing a great job, but we haven't been playing to our potential." Marcoccia, however, believes that the team may have finally reached a comfort zone after a strong outing against a 10-4 Westlake team. "As long as we can keep shooting in the mid-forties, we will be fine," affirmed Marcoccia. Everyone anticipates a strong finish for the team that has put together a nice string of consecutive winning seasons in the past.

### Track Team

The track team has attracted more students this year than any other season. Led by captains senior Mike DiBona and junior Katy Lynch, both the boys' and girls' teams have been much more competitive than expected in the three meets thus far. Blind Brook physical education teacher and coach Chris Orphanides is excited about the progress from last year. "We're doing very well this year," commented Orphanides. "I couldn't have really asked for more." In the **Please turn to page 5**

## Rye Board Approves Swimming, Wrestling Merger

By Justin Gottlieb

On Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the Rye High School Board of Education held a vote regarding whether or not Rye High School should form merged wrestling and swim teams with Blind Brook High School. The vote passed at Rye, and Blind Brook athletic director Jim Spano has expressed optimism that the vote will pass at Blind Brook as well.

Although a few Blind Brook girls have had the opportunity to practice with the Rye

swimming squad over the past few years, they have been forced to compete separately in the meets with their own tiny team. But, according to Spano, "this merger will make the girls on the swim team feel like part of the team, rather than just being on the side during practice in their own lanes. This will give all the girls the opportunity to compete against other schools." So far there have been about seven Blind Brook girls who have shown interest in the joint swim team.

Since a merged wrestling team between Blind Brook and Rye Neck High Schools failed due to lack of interest about ten years ago, Blind Brook has been unable to field a squad. This new merger with Rye, if approved by Blind Brook, will give students the opportunity to try what, for many of them, will be a brand new sport. Interest in the team has already been shown, and Spano hopes that many students will attend a sign-up meeting that should occur in just a few weeks.

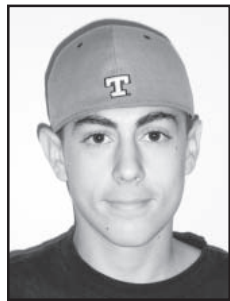
Sports Editor: Keith Hanauer

## Sports Section

# Great American Pastime?

By Ben Solarz

As Americans, we cherish many sacred institutions: Democracy, Major League Baseball, and sporks (those crazy spoon/fork things at KFC). Inasmuch as



this is the Sports Section, I must concentrate on item two: the Great American Pastime (second only to criticizing the French). But, alas, as one walks around, the sights of spring—clearly defined as obese men wearing shirts way too tight and 40-year olds cruising along in convertibles (sorry, Dad)—saturating their senses, one can only wish to be at the ballpark again.

The NFL is simply a taste, March Madness a mere warm-up; baseball is the epitome of American sports, and it's once again time to turn our collective attention to it. Pointed out junior Keith Hanauer, "It's the only place where a man with four balls can walk." It's also one of the few professional sports in which Westchester is represented (Baltimore Orioles' outfielder B.J. Surhoff). It's baseball. And the stadium is the absolute pinnacle of baseball righteousness—sort of.

A word to the wise: when taking the required pilgrimage to the ball park each year, never let your mother drive, unless you *want* to end up in Rhode Island that is. And to those of you who don't know what a thrill it is to experience a live game, I highly advise a trip. To whet the appetite, allow me to explain the standard eating procedure. First, you get up and yell for a hot dog. The vendor will then explain that one hot dog will cost exactly \$526.75. You then sit down, refuse to acknowledge that you ordered anything, and blame the order on the obnoxious guy sitting behind you. This saves a lot of money.

Further ingenious logic is put into place after arriving at the stadium. Thank God for the saving grace: "Stadium Parking Garages." It just strikes me as strange that from the garage to the stadium is a walk that—assuming you do not stop to buy "100% authentic" souvenirs, such as "Yankey" hats and "Geoff Weaver" jerseys—takes roughly until the end of tomorrow's game.

Additionally, concession stand lines, considered by many to be unspeakable, are really not as bad as advertised; one truly gets his money worth at the ballpark in watching four innings on a TV screen while waiting on a painfully long line for peanuts. Of course, if the concession stands happen to have run out of peanuts, the workers, realizing that we paying customers have already waited in line and are in dire need of fattening suste-

nance, will attempt to alleviate our pain and brighten our mood by politely laughing in our faces.

But beyond all this, not many knocks can be made against the pure elation found in watching a ball game from five miles high in the loge level (besides, of course, the dingy atmosphere, amoeba-infested bathrooms, inability to discern where the ball actually is, old-timers who leave much to be desired in the aroma department, food vendors who—if you ask me—are just a little too enthusiastic, cup holders that are absolutely perfect for holding souvenir shot glasses but not much else, and ushers whose apparent job is to make sure that under no circumstances is anyone allowed to have fun).

As the frenetic atmosphere settles and the blitzkrieg of useless pregame ceremonies ebbs, it is finally time to watch the game. It is extremely gratifying, however, when the marquee player steps up to bat. Alfonso Soriano swings. It's going, going, *gone* (gone solely in the sense that the drunk fan in front of you jumps out of his seat only to obstruct your view of the ball).

Perhaps a trip to the ballpark isn't the greatest way to enjoy the game of baseball. But that's not to say that watching a game from the comforts of home isn't great. In fact, it's exhilarating (assuming, of course, that you have roughly 8-9 hours on your hands to waste). It's not terribly boring to see Boston Red Sox shortstop Nomar Garciaparra go through a five-hour routine before every pitch. I just liked it better the first time when it was called the Nutcracker. In fact, it would be quite entertaining had I not tuned in to watch a baseball game.

Equally entertaining, radio is yet another great medium for baseball. Not many spectator sports fill me with the excitement that I get from listening to a baseball game on the radio. One such sport, for example, is watching grass grow. So too, coincidentally, is catching a re-run Geraldo Rivera commentary.

Listening to a baseball game on the radio is like being at the ballpark; only instead of actually watching the game, you have someone—in his most boring and monotonous voice—telling you what is happening and spontaneously endorsing products you never knew existed.

Hence, my struggle: how to enjoy a baseball game? Perhaps, there is no way to guarantee baseball the excitement it deserves. My suggestion: stick to watching curling.

But some still embark on the admirable excursion to a ball game, and there is not much I would change about the traditional glory of a game at the stadium. Well, maybe one thing; but *you* try adding a spork dispenser to Yankee Stadium.

## Trojan Fan of the Month:

# Barry Fishkind

By Victor Paterno

Whether the game is five minutes away or an hour away, the Blind Brook varsity softball team can count on its number one

fan, Barry Fishkind, father of senior captain and All-Section pitcher Loren Fishkind. According to Fishkind's co-captain and fellow senior, first baseman Rachel Fischer, Mr. Fishkind provides the Trojans with an incredible amount of crucial support. He helps to develop a comforting atmosphere by always

being up in the stands watching over the game and rooting the girls on.

Mr. Fishkind is a self-proclaimed huge sports fan, and baseball/softball is his special passion. He has been attending elementary, middle, and high school games for almost 25 years, having cheered two sons around the Blind Brook diamond long before Loren. He says that he wants, however, to show Loren and her team that his level of support and commitment has not diminished.

And all of this year's players certainly

seem to feel his presence at the games. When the team is down, the girls know he is there encouraging them to pick up the slack and fight back. By keeping the spectators in-



involved in the action, he often helps the Trojans to do just that. Loren commented, "It is good knowing he's there. It takes off some pressure." When asked if he believes the team plays better when he's present, Mr. Fishkind responded, "Yes, I think that my presence, as well as that of the other fans, shows support and that can

only help to encourage them."

Fishkind and her teammates also believe Mr. Fishkind to be a great role model, not only for them, but for other Blind Brook sports fans as well. Explained junior Jessica Novick, "He comes to every single game, whether it is home or away, and he always cheers us on." Added junior Lauren Redmerski, "I don't know what we'd do without Barry. He's the source of so much of our team and fan spirit, and he's one of the most loyal and committed followers we've got."

## Athlete of the Month:

# Stevie Gross

By Hillary Berkowitz

"Stevie has probably played hundreds of baseball games, and it really shows," praised Blind Brook athletic director Jim Spano. Alternating between shortstop, catcher, and pitcher for the boys' varsity baseball team, sophomore Stevie Gross has a lot on his plate. In this situation, some players might find it hard to learn the dynamics of each position and to become proficient at all of them. Not Gross. "Whatever position he plays, he really excels at," Spano observed.

Gross's teammates know him to be a hard worker who, according to senior captain Kevin Aughavin, "never slacks off." "Stevie is really motivated and very consistent," added fellow sophomore pitcher Eric Flaxman.

Gross is truly committed to baseball, having played for as long as he can remember, and his knowledge and experience are readily apparent to any spectator. According to teammates, he always knows what to do when the ball comes to him—a skill rarely seen quite so developed in such a young high school athlete. "Stevie's knowledge is the product of experience and commitment," noted head coach Greg DiPaoli. "It's great having a fielder, hitter, and base runner who's so aware and on top of the situation. He really leads by example."

Hitting is one of the strongest aspects of Gross's game, as reflected by his consistent claim of the leadoff spot in the batting order. Batting .426 with a total of twenty hits, ten RBIs, and two home runs

as of May 5, Gross ranks among the team leaders in all four categories. His success at the plate is further evidenced by his slugging percentage of .681. Aughavin described Gross as a "solid hitter and a good leadoff man." Spano believes that Gross's strong hitting could be attributed to an increase in size and strength since last year, which was



Gross's first on the varsity squad.

According to Aughavin, stealing bases is another of Gross's major strengths—a skill augmented by Gross's natural speed and intense focus.

Gross's hard work, determination, and attitude provide an example for the other players, and his achievements raise the bar for his teammates. Said senior team manager Craig Bergman, "You need a player like Steve on any successful squad. He's not loud or overbearing, but there's a lot of quiet force there. And sometimes people respond to that kind of leadership the best, especially if it's backed up by on-field performance like Steve's." Agreed sophomore teammate JP Zendman, "Stevie is the kind of player who makes everyone around him play better."

## Spring Sports Continued from page 4

most recent meet, the boys came in second place and the girls came in fourth place. These results are vastly better than any others in the past seasons. "The performances have been great so far," enthused Lynch. "I think we'll improve even more from now to the end of the season." Particularly standout in their performances have been Lynch and DiBona. Lynch, who had

an impressive season last year as a sophomore, decisively won the 800 meter at a meet at Rye Neck on May 6. DiBona, who placed first in the long jump, the 100 meter, and the 200 meter in the squad's first meet at Rye Neck, said, "It feels good to come out and have some early success, especially because we're looking to attract more attention and fans."

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# Features

Features Editor: Rachel Barbarisi

## Teenage 'Tanomania' Takes Blind Brook

By Rachel Sherman

The hottest trend among teenagers this year seems to be self-tanning. Even with an estimated 1.3 million new cases of skin cancer every year, self-tanning in the form of creams, sprays or going to the local tanning salon has become the newest rage among suburban students.

What is so appealing about the tanned look? Some think it gives you an appealing glow, while others agree that it generally makes them feel better about their appearance. One student commented, "I love looking darker, because it makes you look healthier and it enhances your features. You can still get color and not worry about being in the sun."

An increasingly popular and troubling form of self-tanning is the tanning salon, of which there are approximately 20,000 in the United States that are visited by more than one million people a day. Although many tanning salons promote themselves as being safer because their booths only emit certain wavelengths of ultraviolet radiation, Dr. Shelley Sekula Rodriguez, Clinical Assistant Professor of dermatology at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas noted on the American Academy of Dermatology's website, "Studies have found that indoor tanning may be just as harmful to the skin as outdoor sun exposure. Most salon bulbs provide a significant amount of UVB and UVA radiation; both types... cause various types of damage to the skin that may

lead to skin cancer and should be avoided."

Said senior Lauren Levinson, "Tanning salons are the new craze at Blind Brook and maybe at a lot of other schools too. I think people don't really want to accept (or maybe they just don't know) how dangerous tanning booths can be." Substantiating Levinson's concern, Rodriguez noted, "Dermatologists across the country are alarmed with the number of teenagers and young adults who continue to patronize tanning salons regardless of the studies that have reported on the link between sun exposure [and] a wide variety of skin lesions." She also stressed that young people are in particular danger, because human skin cells are especially susceptible to injury in people below the age of eighteen.

Often, it seems as though the practice of going to tanning salons is defended by the notion that a tan acquired in a booth is somehow a "safe" tan, but, according to Rodriguez, "There is no such thing as a safe tan." She goes on to explain that any form of tanning speeds up the aging process and increases the risk of skin cancer, which is the most common form of cancer in the United States. In addition to these dangers, tanning in salons may result in severe skin burns as well as possible burns to the eyes if they are not properly shielded. In fact, the records of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that there are an estimated 700 emergency room visits per year associated with visits to tanning salons.



Sun Quest Tanning Salon, located on North Main Street in Port Chester, is just one of several area tanning centers frequented by Blind Brook students.

Photo by Craig Bergman

While many may people think that tanning products are an easy fix, there are also some possible costs of using these products incorrectly. Freshman Allison Stein said that she got "streaked and orange" after using a self-tanner. Another student said she got caught in the rain and watched her tan roll down onto her socks. Allergic reactions to tanning products may also occur.

Another potential hazard is that people believe they are playing it safe using these pour-on and spray-on tans. Although the

skin will darken from all of these products, they provide little, if any, sun protection and may thus give a false sense of security when sunbathing. Blind Brook science teacher Leigh Novak commented that she "would never use products with unknown effects on one's skin."

The best products are made from colorless sugar (the label says DHA in the ingredients), and these products darken the skin by staining it. Tanning pills, tanning pro-

Please turn to page 7

## Jackson Hammers Home S.A.D.D.'s Message

By Shreya Prasad and Hadass Blank

As Spring Break drew near, Blind Brook students, teachers and faculty members attended a school assembly sponsored by the S.A.D.D. Club. Organized to take place during Alcohol Awareness Month, the assembly was designed to raise the general cognizance of destructive decisions and featured a poignant speech by Blind Brook English teacher Barbara Jackson based on her personal experience with teenage tragedy.

The program began with a graphic movie entitled "Dying High," which portrayed simulated, yet realistic, emergency room scenes, commentaries from actual doctors and nurses, and remarks from the victims of substance abuse-related tragedies. "[The movie takes] place at White Plains Hospital," said senior S.A.D.D. Club President Kevin Aughavin. "It is very close to home and shows students that certain things that they've seen in movies actually do happen here." Added S.A.D.D. Club adviser and student assistance counselor Terry Frank, "Westchester County made an endeavor to promote this film in order to raise awareness and to combat drinking."

Even though the movie, which originally premiered on *The Today Show*, managed to hit home with some students, possibly altering their behavior, others regarded it as just another attempt to convey well-known information to the public. "I don't think it will alter my behavior very much," remarked freshman Hilary Mosner, "because I have already formed my decisions on whether [to]...drink or not." Speaking about the effect the movie had on his peers, senior Andrew Berman explained, "Some will respond well, some will blow it off, and others will stop and think before they do something."

Said assistant principal Michael Mitchell, "I think it was extremely important for the



The executive board of the S.A.D.D. Club, from left: senior vice president Chris Otness, junior secretary Leslie Steinberg, sophomore treasurer Lauren DiMaggio, senior president Kevin Aughavin, and faculty adviser Terry Frank.

student body to have this assembly, because the movie offered many stories and different points of view. The film clearly depicted the results of destructive decisions..."

Yet, some teachers questioned the movie's long-term impact on student behavior. Math teacher Pat Zottoli commented, "I felt the movie was tremendously powerful but mostly wasted, because kids think nothing is going to happen to them."

Although the movie drew varying responses, the next event of the assembly, Jackson's speech, "left every parent and most students in the audience sobbing," said Zottoli.

Jackson bravely spoke about her own son's tragic death in a car accident and about the effect destructive decisions have on those left behind. After initially turning down the request to speak at the assembly, Jackson finally agreed, when she "started writing the speech in [her] mind and knew that [she] really needed to do this." "Even if one person was affected by my words," said

Photo by Mark Harris  
Jackson, "then it was worth the risk that I took: the risk being, not having people feel sorry for me, but just to remind them of the dangers [they face]."

Jackson felt that the overall idea of the assembly was extremely important, as was its timing. Although there was no particular reason why the assembly was scheduled during the week before Spring Break, Jackson stated, "Spring Break is a really dangerous time in teenagers' lives, and they must be reminded of the risks they're taking."

Many students found Jackson's story to be powerful. Freshman Julie Ganz commented, "It was beneficial to the students, because it showed them that someone in the Blind Brook community, so close to them, was affected by the tragedies mentioned in the movie."

Remarked junior Stephanie Yewdell, "I had no idea that [Mrs. Jackson] had suffered from a tragedy like this. I mean, a live person, especially one whom we see every day, has more of an effect on students than

a movie, regardless of where it takes place."

Added senior Weston Nakamura, "Mrs. Jackson's speech was effective, because she isn't a drug counselor or a cop, she is a teacher, so you know that she's speaking from her heart and not because it's her job to inform us of anything."

After sharing her story with so many people, Jackson was "touched" and "deeply appreciative" of the responses she received from students and faculty members. "It is very validating and means a lot to me," she explained, "and I hope students learn to be more careful."

Said Mitchell, "When the assembly was over, and the students were leaving the auditorium...I don't think I've ever heard the student body so quiet; it was completely silent."

Concluding the assembly, students and faculty broke into smaller, grade-based groups and returned to the classrooms for a discussion period. Faculty members acted as moderators as students answered questions and expressed their personal opinions about the assembly. Explained Aughavin, "We picked the teachers we thought would conduct the discussion groups best and prepared them with discussion questions." Allowing time for students to reflect on what they had just seen and heard, the discussion period "was a good way for the true meaning of the assembly to sink in," said Ganz.

Science teacher Thomas Glickman felt the same way but was "disgusted" at the fact that almost half of the seniors in his discussion group didn't bother to show up. "It was terrible, considering how it was intended for their well-being," stated Glickman.

"In the world that we live in now," commented Jackson, "if we're concerned about SARS or terrorists, kids must realize that the real danger is behind the wheel. Unfortunately, that is how most teenagers die."

# A.B.C...Vani?

By Vani Nambudiri

Most of you know me as Vani. Yet, generally speaking, I am an A.B.C.D. No, I am not referring to the alphabet but rather to a commonly used Indian-American acronym:



American-Born Confused Desi. Now, you are probably wondering what a Desi is. Technically, the direct Hindi translation of the word "desi" is "native," yet

the word has picked up a more slang use throughout the Indian community, and it is now used to describe anyone of direct Indian descent. Therefore, this self-given label of American-Born Confused Desi means that I am calling myself an American-born Indian that is somewhat bewildered by my life in the States.

As an A.B.C.D., there are many reasons for me to often doubt what my role in life should be and how I should carry it out. Of course, all people, regardless of nationality or generation, do have doubts and uncertainties about how to live and approach their goals, but there is an even greater amount of hesitation for all first-generation American-born people. This hesitation—especially for those of Indian nationality—

is due to the fact that our parents' lives were so different from ours. Therefore, to make comparisons between our lives and those of our parents' is virtually useless in guiding us through life, even if we desire to some day achieve exactly the same things as our parents have. As a result, we must experiment and assimilate in a culture in which our parents may be less able to guide us with their own experiences.

Through each stage of growth and development—childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and even adulthood—there have been and will be so many variances between the way my parents lived and the way I carry on. For example, the setting in which my parents grew up through their young adult years is in no way comparable to Rye Brook, by any stretch of the imagination. My mother and father grew up in a tropical area of a Third World Nation, while I have lived in a quiet Westchester suburb of New York City my whole life. Growing up in India, my parents always regarded money and food as things to be valued greatly, as there were often nights when there was not enough money to feed all of the children in the house. Here, as I live in one of the most socio-economically developed areas of a First World Nation, I cannot even imagine not having enough money to feed the family. Clearly, I have grown up in a completely different setting and under completely opposite economic circumstances than my parents, and this already makes it hard for me to look to their lives for examples that will

help me direct my own life.

Another reason that being an American-Born Confused Desi is indeed so confusing is that the social conditions and behaviors with which our parents grew up are in direct contrast to the ones we face in America. Of course, any person that compares the society their parents lived in to the society he or she lives in now will inevitably note differences due to time that has elapsed between the two. Yet, the variances that first generation American-born Indians see is even more pronounced. For example, here in Rye Brook, many teenagers attend parties, go to the mall, or take a trip into the city to enjoy themselves. When I asked my parents what they did in their free time as teens, they told me that they would take boat rides on the backwater canals near their home, or practice for school dance, music, and drama competitions. Parties and malls were nonexistent, and going to the movie theater to view a film was considered an ultimate luxury.

Another major difference is that girls, socially, were regarded as defenseless and somewhat less capable than men were. In this country, females are usually looked upon as socially equal to men and as capable of participating, with males, in the same social activities. Although in my household these conflicting viewpoints on the role of women have not been an issue, many American-born Desi girls have to constantly dissuade their parents from continuing to live with the Indian opinion on females in society. Glaring social differences such as these often lead to the confusion with which American-Born Confused Desis are met when considering what our roles are and how we are supposed to act in this country.

Another area where there are extreme variances between my life and the lives my parents have led deals with major lifetime events, such as marriage and the college search. Now, as the time for my college search quickly approaches, I am once again noticing differences about the milestone of college. While other students may be able to look at and learn from the steps their parents took to get into the colleges of their choice, I cannot compare my plan with the college plans my parents followed. The system used in India is totally different from the one used here. Although my parents can give me their priceless advice and unending support, their lives once again fail to aid me in what steps I should take to reach the college goals I will shortly set. Another example of contrasting major events is marriage. In any culture, any generation,

any country, marriage is a milestone, and this was obviously the case in India during the time when my parents grew up. Yet, when you compare the marriages in India during my parents' years and the marriages today in America, you might notice one miniscule difference: the Indian marriages were all arranged, no questions asked. My mother and father met only twice before they got married.

Now, let us analyze this. Yes, I am Indian. Yes, my parents had an arranged marriage. Yes, I am growing up in America. And, yes, this definitely leaves me a very, very confused A.B.C.D! Do I follow the customs that the people of my family have followed for generations, or am I allowed to be an exception to this rule or tradition, as I have grown up in a foreign country with a completely different culture?

I have only introduced you to a few of the many extreme differences between the lives of an A.B.C.D. and those of his/her parents. Yet, the great contrasts can still be seen and will continue to have an effect on how Desis learn to live in this country. In no way do I regret having parents that were born and brought up in a foreign country that is so clearly unlike the United States. In fact, quite the opposite is true; I am extremely grateful that I have the invaluable opportunity to experience two different, yet nevertheless beautiful and unique cultures. However, by having this incredible background, I must also live with the consequences. The lives my parents led have been so incredibly far removed from mine that it is often impossible to look to their lives and their actions for guidance. Therefore, we first-generation American-born Indians, or more generally speaking, we first-generation of American-born children of almost any nationality, must follow our own paths. We must create our own strategies and often experiment in order to find that certain perfect niche needed to achieve the goals we have set. Though it may be harder for us to extract advice or ideas from our parents' experiences and though this may often leave us confused, we are also given the opportunity to explore as we try to assimilate. Perhaps in the future, generations of American-born Indians will no longer have the nickname of "American-Born Confused Desis." Rather, we'll be referred to as "American-Born Exploring Desis," as we explore ourselves and create a path to follow that is based less on the lives of our parents and more on our own ambitions and strengths.

## Teenage 'Tanomania' Continued from page 6

motors, and some bronzers are not as effective and may cause harmful side effects, ranging from itching to a possible link to hepatitis, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Although serious consequences exist from all kinds of artificial tanning, it seems as though many teenagers are either unaware of them or choose to ignore them, and many still prefer to be tanned all year round. One senior admitted, "Well, yeah, there could be an eventual risk to using these products, like increasing your risk of a certain type of cancer, but at this point I think it's a safer alternative than being in the sun."

Another, if somewhat less serious, drawback associated with artificial tanning is that it may be quite obvious to others. Walking around the halls of Blind Brook in the winter, it usually isn't hard to spot an overnight tan. Freshman Gerry Sherman mused, "It would be great if you could do it gradually."

Even though self-tanning is such a big

trend, most of those taking part are girls. Wonder why? One male Blind Brook student responded, "Girls look good tanned." English teacher Ashleigh White said, "Girls are used to spending their money on beauty products; it doesn't seem like that much of an inconvenience to them... Boys look good tanned too."

When do students start using the self-tanning products? Some say they start using them in the fall, so that their summer tan lasts. Other people say that they start tanning in spring so that they can go into the summer with a head start on a natural tan.

There seems to be a general consensus that looking tanned all year is a definite confidence booster and is a recent trend in suburban schools, like Blind Brook. However, whether using spray-on or foam, remember to check the ingredients and don't rely on any of these products to protect you from harmful UV rays. Senior Lauren Levinson emphasized, "Burning in the sun brings on freckles, which turn to blotches and later wrinkles!"

# VOTE

FOCUS urges all those of voting age to cast their ballots in the School Budget/School Board election on Tuesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> at BMP-Ridge Street School from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm.

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# Arts & Entertainment

A &amp; E Editor: Lauren Levinson

## Interview with a Former Bachelorette

By Jonathan Simon

Anindita Dutta, a 27-year-old New York lawyer of Indian descent, gained national recognition as a contestant in the second season of ABC's

### FOCUS Exclusive

*The Bachelor*, a widely-followed reality series in which a group of women compete for the love of one man. Despite initial success in the romantic competition, a minor conflict with one of the show's other female participants helped lead to Dutta's eventual rejection of the Bachelor at one of his touted Rose Ceremonies—a move that garnered considerable attention because it marked the first occasion on which one of the women on the show turned down the man being pursued.

In an exclusive interview, Dutta gave FOCUS the inside scoop on her personal background and opinions and, of course, a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the inner workings of this ABC hit.

**FOCUS:** Where did you go to law school?

**Anindita Dutta:** "I went to Boalt Law School at UC Berkeley in California."

**FOCUS:** What is your current occupation?

**Dutta:** "I am an attorney for the Financial Guarantee Insurance Company, the municipal bond insurance section of General Electric."

**FOCUS:** Do you think these interesting facts about you had anything to do with how you were picked to be on the show? Is that a factor in how they pick people to be on reality television?

**DUTTA:** "People often think that, but it really isn't a factor! I have a very diverse and interesting job, which did capture the show's attention a little bit. Since in reality television, the audience watching gets very attached to the characters, my job as a lawyer may have been a factor to consider, because it is very amusing to the audience. But many of the other girls don't have this kind of job. Many of the girls don't have the same background as me. Because of this, I think the producers of the show may have expected me to be a bit more aggressive or tough, because I am a lawyer living in New York."

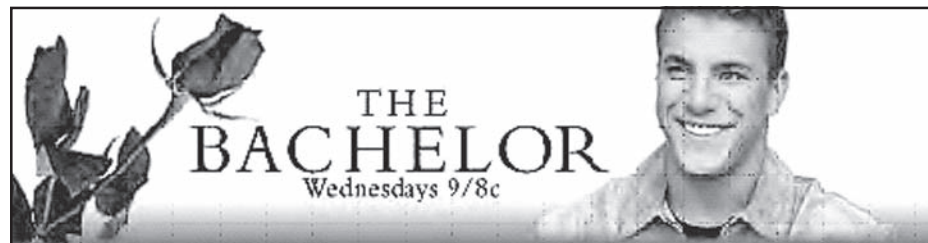
**F:** How were you recruited for the show?

What methods does the show use to recruit women in general?

**D:** "I sent in a written application, and the show officials liked it. I then sent in a video about myself, and they liked that too! I was then given a series of interviews for awhile, until I got word I would be on the show. The recruiting methods the show used to gain contestants who wanted to be on the show varies. They often go all over the place from cafes, restaurants, to nightclubs, looking for anyone who'd fit the compatible criteria for the show. There are also open casting calls, which work a lot of the time."

**F:** What kind of legal documents had to be signed before you were actually on the show?

**D:** "Right before you go on the show, you have to sign a very big contract about forty to fifty pages long! Included in it is a series of agreements. One of them, of course, says that you agree to be filmed on camera at almost whenever you are needed or present to be filmed. But one very important agree-



ment is a pledge that when, or if, you get booted off the show, you don't tell anyone, whether it be former contestants or just family or friends about what happened while you were there. This is because the whole show was filmed about five weeks beforehand. If someone was kicked off the second week and then she saw someone who got kicked off the third week, that girl from the third week can't tell the girl from the second week (or anybody else) what happened after she was kicked off during the show's start! If you are caught to have revealed this information vital to the suspense and secrets of the show, you can be sued for as much as four to five million dollars!"

**F:** Do you think when all the bachelorettes signed up for the show, they had feelings of "Most likely it won't



Anindita Dutta

work out?" Before you got onto the show, did you have the feeling of "If I win Aaron, is it true love or just publicity? Is publicity a big factor why many contestants sign up for the show?"

**D:** "I think in the end it is all about it just being cool to do it. Many of these women also join up to do it because they

thought it would be an amazing opportunity. No matter what end there is for each woman, either way they experience excitement in their lives."

**F:** Is anything on the show set up beforehand? Are you ever ordered to do something, or is everything spontaneous?

**D:** "The audience doesn't ever realize that there is a lot of editing that goes on behind the scenes. Although nothing is set up beforehand, sometimes we are asked to explain something to set up a particular situation. Also, because of the editing, the producers can make something that is not a big deal, like a small tiff between two girls, into a huge ordeal."

**F:** How does it make you feel being on camera all the time? Does this factor get

into the people on the show and make them really uncomfortable?

**D:** "Yeah, the pressure of the cameras can get to you. Often times, it gets very annoying. But I, myself, was very comfortable. At times, you forget you are there and away from real life, such as friends and family. But once you get into the mood of things, you believe you are there for a reason: to win Aaron. Once you accept that fact, you forget you are on camera. It is a new way of life. When you get crammed into groups, the pressure of the camera being on you almost goes away, because you are focusing only on Aaron. But yes, there is a natural emotional pressure from the cameras. If you are ever feeling sad and want to cry, the camera catches it, and it will be used on television. The cameras add to the pressure of controlling your emotions, because there is nothing you can do to stop it. The best way to calm things is to get back into the idea that your life is *not* all about Aaron. You may see that we are kept pretty occupied because of this factor. Even where we slept, there was only a bed and some other things. There wasn't a radio or anything. A war could be going on, and you wouldn't know about it!"

**F:** Were the bachelorettes' relationships with one another considered to be those of enemies or just fellow competitors? How did you like the girls?

**D:** "I really liked the girls. Sometimes on television, they portrayed the conflict differently. But when we were together, we had a great time hanging out. They are all very nice girls. All eighteen of us are still very good friends. I even met with some of them a short time ago."

**F:** You are remembered for having had the experience of portraying a really significant role on the show—one that exists in every form of reality television. Without this, this form of television would not be as attractive. How do you feel about being the one with this really significant role?

**D:** "I left early, and I'm very happy to have been the first one to turn him down. I think the people who watched the show may have portrayed it a lot worse than it should be, but other than that, I am very happy to have won this amazing role on the show."

## Hearing the Roar: A Look at Women in the Film Industry

By Melissa Rosen

The mother, the girlfriend, the mistress, the daughter, the secretary...the list of clichéd roles portrayed by women on screen these days goes on and on. What about the female secret agent or the female action star? They are certainly rarities. It is often said that it's "a man's world," but must this also be true in the film business? Who really owns the spotlights in Hollywood? Certainly not women.

Don't get me wrong, this isn't a vent fest for women's lib or anything like that. It just seems that in this day and age, the only female 007 is more like 36DD.

Ever since Rosie the Riveter flexed her arm and stated, "We can do it!" women everywhere have been vying for equality in the work force. Whether we are actually there in society today is a different issue, but it is quite clear that Hollywood and the film business make it very difficult for a

woman to take control of her career. For women

in film today, there are certain requirements that must be filled. Sadly, most of these, if not all, regard appearance. It seems that society just likes to go watch a movie with only pretty people in it. Hmmm, suspension of disbelief indeed! It is no wonder that plastic surgery today seems as dramatic as a haircut. All the so-called "powerhouses" in Hollywood today have to be drop dead gorgeous, worry about the perfect hairstyle, dress, shoes, accessories, etc. (A similar problem faces the senior girls for prom as we speak.) Sure, it is great to see fabulous people doing fabulous things in fabulous clothes, but does that tear audiences away from reality? I think it does.

There was the case of Renee Zellweger's gaining twenty pounds to play

### COMMENTARY

the title role in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and magazines refused to take her picture. Luckily for Renee, after the film shoot wrapped up, she lost that weight and more. Of course, sadly, she also lost her breasts in the process. It is okay though; she is now riding the success of her latest film *Chicago*.

As if the fear of not being perfect isn't horrifying enough, women in film have the added delight of having to be seen naked on camera. The horror! For some strange reason that escapes me at present, it is women, not men, who tend to bare it all in films. Sex scene or not, off the shirt goes and on with the show. Who could forget the enormous amount of added publicity the film *Swordfish* received for finally exposing Halle Berry's ample twins? Any blemish or insecurity that a woman

may have concerning her body has the honor of being amplified a thousand times and put on display for millions of viewers to enjoy. So one wonders: where are all the naked men? And I don't just ask this as a woman; I ask this as a truly concerned and caring writer. Luckily, there have been the few bold enough to show it all, such as Kevin Bacon in *Wild Things* and Ewan McGregor in, well, just about all his films.

Then, of course, there is the added pressure for women not only of having to look good but also of having to compete financially in an industry dominated by some of the most highly-paid men in the economy. Tom Hanks, Jim Carrey, Tom Cruise and many other male stars make millions upon millions of dollars per film and hold extreme power within the business. Where are the ladies amongst these great figures? Of course, there is always

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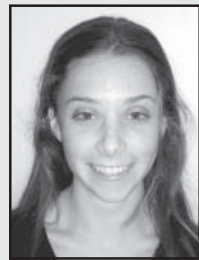
A &amp; E Editor: Lauren Levinson

## Arts &amp; Entertainment

## College Shop till you Drop

By Diana Landes

Junior year is coming to an excruciatingly slow close. And I, like so many other juniors before me, have had to suffer through a year's worth



of endless conversation about college. No, I don't know what my SAT scores are (mainly because the college board actually lost my test), where I want to go to school, what I want to major in, or what I plan on doing with the rest of my life. But I do appreciate everyone's making sure to ask me every other millisecond. And while I smile and politely answer this perpetual barrage of questions, I can rest easy knowing that my mother, the master college-planner, has thought of everything.

This began with "the list." The list contains every potential dream school in the nation. Once twenty or thirty schools were eliminated for whatever minute reason I could muster, I was informed that the time had come to visit different campuses, or "shop," if you will. As I began my shopping spree, I began to gather some tips for everyone who will be going through the college process in the future. (Have fun with that by the way.)

First and foremost, make plans in advance. Call the college you'll be looking at, sign up for a guided tour of the campus, and make hotel reservations if you'll be staying overnight.

Most schools that people visit aren't around the corner. Be prepared for a multiple-hour car ride with a parent or, if you're really lucky, with the entire family. This will require bringing along a book, magazine, or discman—anything to make it seem that you're too busy to talk. Because as much as you love your family, by hour three in the car, topics for conversation tend to dry up.

Comfortable walking shoes are the key to an enjoyable college tour. Even if your most collegiate-looking outfit only looks complete with three inch heels, *don't wear them!* After five minutes on an hour-long walking tour, you (and your feet)

will understand. Function should come before fashion just this once.

When lunch-time rolls around and your tour has ended, find the cafeteria and eat there. By doing so, you should get a pretty good sense of the kind of kids attending that school. If you see masses of clones with matching Prada bags and you aren't into the whole cloning thing, that particular school might not be a fit for you. On the other hand, you might see a whole bunch of kids you could potentially see yourself hanging out with, so you feel more confident about going there. So what I'm basically saying is: judge a book by its cover.

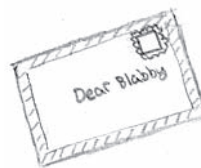
The other benefit of eating lunch in the cafeteria is that you'll get to taste the food that you could potentially be eating every day for four years. Bad food may not always qualify as grounds for elimination of a school, but for me, it's a deciding factor.

It's important to ask questions at each school when they come up. Of course, your tour guide might not always give you the most honest answer, so you might want to approach a friendly-looking student. Try not to be embarrassed, because chances are that you'll never see this person again. For example, on a recent tour of a school, I found out that there was a six-semester foreign language requirement. For someone who enjoys the study of foreign language and excels at it, this could be seen as a positive aspect, but for me—not so much.

It might also be a good idea to explore the area outside the college you're visiting. Just drive or walk around for a while and make some observations. Are you stuck in gridlock and surrounded by tall buildings? Or do you find yourself the only person aside from a few toothless men named Jed in a sea of grassland and barnyard animals? Whichever you prefer, the area around your school is important and will probably affect your life at college.

My final bit of advice is not to over college-shop. After awhile, every school will begin to look the same, and you won't be able to remember which was which. Take a break. Don't let the college hunt consume you.

## Advice for the Unsound



## Dear Blabby

By Sarah Powell

Dear Blabby,

I was wondering if you could help me make a decision regarding senior Options. I just don't know what I should do. It would be nice not to be in class for the last month of school, but I also feel like I should make the most of the time I have left in Blind Brook. If you can offer any advice, that would be great.

Option-Obsessed Gal

Dear Option-Obsessed Gal,

The fact that you want to make the most of the last bit of time you have in Blind Brook is both nostalgic and commendable. However, I would be doing you a disservice if I told you that you should not do Senior Options because of it. The truth is that, by the time May 13<sup>th</sup> rolls around, you will probably be more than ready and willing to leave that building behind. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with Blind Brook; there certainly is not. But after a while, you run out of funny things to say about the

commons; it seems more likely that you will be launched into space with Lance Bass than get to class on time; and you discover that fighting the middle schoolers for a lunch table becomes less than thrilling. These slacker ideals are not the only reason to do Senior Options. Don't forget the incredible educational and professional opportunities that await you at that internship. By the end of it, you will be making copies like a pro and delivering inter-office mail in record time, and I bet you will even have figured out how to use the espresso maker (you go girl). In conclusion, Senior Options is a great opportunity but only if it's the right choice for you. Unfortunately I can't tell you what the right choice is, but if you think that it is right for you, why not give it a shot? You've been getting up and going to classes for four years now. Change might not be such a bad thing.

Sincerely,  
Blabby

## Top Ten Places to Find Prom Attire

By Meredith Brown

Beads! Bright colors! Boutonnieres! Believe it or not, prom season has finally arrived. For anyone who is attending the June 2003 prom and has not already bought a dress or rented a tux, it's time to get busy.

This year's prom fashions for the girls range from princess ball gowns to retro chic. Whether the dress is black and white, brightly colored, or pale in pastels, glitter and jewels seem to adorn every one. As for the guys, three and four-button notch lapel jackets are this year's rage, with accents coming from distinctive matching ties and vests.

Having trouble deciding on the best place to shop? Listed below are great stores with fabulous selection of prom dresses and tuxedos.

## 1. Ridge Squire

Ask any young man who has rented a tuxedo for the prom, and you are sure to hear *Ridge Squire* at the top of the list. Located in the Rye Ridge Shopping Center, *Ridge Squire* is convenient, has a broad selection, and will not burn a hole in your wallet, especially with discounts of over 50% available to prom shoppers. "Our most popular prom tuxedos are Christian Dior and Pierre Cardin. This season most prom shoppers are interested in the three-button, higher cut jacket," stated a representative from *Ridge Squire*, which boasts the largest inventory in the tri-state area.

## 2. Lord and Taylor

*Lord and Taylor*, although a traditional department store, remains one of the most popular places to shop for a prom dress. Junior Jessica Novick, recognized in the June 2002 issue of FOCUS as the winner of "most creative prom outfit," purchased her simple yet elegant, black and white dress at *Lord and Taylor* because, she tells us, "My mom heard there was a great selection of dresses at low prices. She knew of someone who found six perfect dresses there, so I



All Dressed Up, located in the Rye Ridge Shopping Center, stocks some of the finest prom dresses available this year.

Photo by Hillary Berkowitz decided to check it out." *Lord and Taylor* is again at the top of the list in 2003, with a wide selection of all the latest styles.

## 3. Bloomingdale's

*Bloomingdale's* has always been a popular place to shop for prom dresses, and this year's selection at the White Plains store includes latest trends and hottest colors. Senior Loren Fishkind noted *Bloomingdale's*'s "huge selection" and "variety of bright colors," adding that she saw a "mixture of poofy dresses and simple, straight dresses" at the store. *Bloomie's* in NYC is also a fantastic place to find an even more impressive selection.

## 4. Neiman Marcus

Want to stand out as proud wearer of the most sophisticated ensemble at this year's prom? Head to *Neiman Marcus* for a large selection of slinky, sexy dresses with upscale prices to match. With dresses varying

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Castle View Deli & Catering, Inc.

2 Morgan Avenue  
Greenwich, Connecticut 06831  
203-531-5353

## EDITORIAL



From left, Blind Brook Senior spring breakers Jon Winter, Eric Winter, and Jordan Lutsky lounge comfortably on a Bahamian beach.

Photo by Lauren Levinson

## Confessions of a Spring Breaker:

# Why We Should All Take a Spring Break

By Lauren Levinson,  
Arts and Entertainment Editor

I do not deny it. Senior spring break in the Bahamas (or any tropical paradise for that matter) is not the classiest or cleanest week one can spend. Senior spring break in the Bahamas (or any tropical paradise for that matter) is, however, one of the most enjoyable and valuable weeks one can spend. Although they say, "What happens in the Bahamas, stays in the Bahamas," as a true spring breaker I feel it is my duty to share this information and explain the merits of participating or allowing one's son or daughter to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

I'll admit, as an eighteen year-old who had the time of her life on spring break, I am biased to believe that everyone should go on this trip. I will also admit that as a teenager, I have the tendency to exaggerate (just a tad). Nevertheless, adults and administrators who oppose spring break have these biases and tendencies too. The negative aspects of spring break were discussed at a meeting held at Blind Brook High School on Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup> sponsored by the PTA's Project Prevention committee and featuring Ellen Morehouse. Morehouse is the executive director of student assistance services (she employs Terry Frank as well as seventy other counselors around the county), and she explained her views to sophomore and junior parents as to why they should be cautious about letting their children attend spring break. While Morehouse did have valid points, no real counterpoint was presented as to why seniors should take their spring break. Being that I was actually on spring break, unlike Morehouse, I feel it is necessary explain why this trip is worth braving all of the traumas and horror stories that are associated with it. Clearly, there is a discrepancy between how Morehouse and I perceive spring break (especially given the aforementioned tendencies toward embellishment); in fact, one might even say that we are on opposite ends of the spectrum. As in most cases, the truth lies not at either extreme but somewhere in the middle. So, from the eyes and observations of this spring breaker, here is the true story behind the myths of spring.

**Myth One:** Spring Break and the

Media—What You See is What You Get.

What we see on MTV and in movies about spring break is not necessarily what spring breakers experience. For example, Morehouse used the media during her presentation to the parents to "show" them what went on during spring break. She used a clip from the movie *She's All That*, which features a short scene of high school students on a spring break trip, as well as a piece from the television show *20/20* about the movie *The Real Cancun*, which is based on college spring break. These two movies are in no way a valid representation of spring break. Because the movies are staged and based around a script that is meant to entertain viewers, spring break is incredibly over dramatized. What the movies fail to show the public is the downtime and the relaxing parts of the vacation, like when we rested on the beach, went swimming, played volleyball, took an all-day trip to a beautiful deserted island, went shopping in town, went out to dinner, bonded in the hotel rooms, etc. What these movies do show are the clubs and rowdy parties that make up only a portion of the time spent on the trip. Furthermore, the use of cameras, lighting, music, and actors makes any party scene seem crazier than it really is.

**Myth Two:** The "Mob Mentality" Makes "Good Kids" Go "Bad."

Morehouse described the "mob mentality" as an attitude common to many spring breakers, who feel, that "this is spring break and this is what we are supposed to do." She believes that spring breakers, especially girls, are likely to do things that they normally would not do (sexually and in terms of alcohol), because promiscuous behaviors are expected and accepted. Realistically, we teenagers are more aware of this "set up" than one would think. We know more than most about spring break, because we've had the opportunity to listen first-hand to the unfiltered stories of past spring breakers, who are perhaps more likely to give fellow teenagers the brutal truth than to admit their cavorting to adults. We fear trauma just as much, if not more, than our parents do! Because we know that we will be the ones to have to deal with dangerous situa-

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## Top Ten Places to Find Prom Attire

Continued from page 9

from off-the-shoulders, to uneven hems, to short and strapless, you're sure to make heads turn with a smashing choice from this Westchester and NYC department store.

### 5. After Hours

Can't find the perfect tux at Ridge Squire? Try *After Hours*, at the Westchester Mall in White Plains. This store is not as well-known but is nevertheless a convenient alternative for the rental or purchase of a tuxedo. "Our tuxedos range from \$50 to \$100, and our Tommy Hilfiger tux is most popular this season," offered a store employee.

### 6. Wishlist

If you're tired of the traditional department stores in Westchester, check out Connecticut's *Wishlist*, a new specialty shop with branches in Greenwich and Westport. A store representative described *Wishlist's* hottest prom dresses as "brightly colored, made of flowy chiffon, with angled hemlines, and lots of beads or sequins." The prices range from \$150 to \$400, although many custom-made dresses are priced as high as \$1000. As a special bonus, you can get assistance from Blind Brook junior Leslie Steinberg, winner of FOCUS's coveted "best dressed underclassman" award at the 2002 prom, who works at *Wishlist* after school and on weekends.

### 7. Variazoni

Another hot specialty store is *Variazoni* in the Westchester Mall. "They have a large

selection of pastel-colored tube dresses with lots of beadwork, ranging from \$100 to \$300," stated sophomore Alix Weiner, who added, "Along with many other girls who were also shopping there, I bought my dress for the prom at Variazoni."

### 8. Men's Wearhouse

Don't want to risk seeing someone else in your tuxedo choice? *Men's Wearhouse* is another great option for tuxedo rentals at reasonable prices. In fact, if you can't find time to get to the store, you can make your selection online at [www.menswearhouseprom2003.com](http://www.menswearhouseprom2003.com). Whether you choose a classic black three-button jacket or a white shawl dinner jacket, a 10% discount coupon for tuxedos and accessories is just a point and click away.

### 9. All Dressed Up

Last, but certainly not least, is Rye Brook's new specialty dress shop. Originally focused on the pre-teen Bat Mitzvah circuit, *All Dressed Up* has expanded to break into the prom scene. The convenience of the store, the trendiness of the dresses, and the quality of the service make this location a great shopping option.

**10.** Still stuck on where to go for the perfect prom outfit? According to other Blind Brook shoppers and Rye Brook resident, Lisa Winston, Senior Editor at *Women's Wear Daily*, other hot stores for prom shopping are Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, A.B.S, Bergdorf Goodman and Henri Bendel in New York City.

## A Look at Women in the Film Industry

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Julia Roberts, who is the most highly paid actress today, but the ratio of men to women who earn the big bucks brings a tear to my eye. Well, not really, but it could. The point is that the film industry is a difficult one in which to make a personal mark, but being a woman makes it that much harder.

There are some women, however, who are fighting the stereotypes, generalizations, and restrictions placed upon them. Unlike most actresses who wait for clichéd roles to come to them, some actresses, like Winona Ryder, go out and make their own interesting roles. Winona is responsible for bringing about the brilliant film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (also starring The Gary Oldman). She just waltzed into Francis Ford Coppola's office and placed the script on his desk and told him to make the film. Not to mention that she produced and starred in the extreme *Girl Interrupted*, which helped to transform Angelina Jolie into the butt-kicking Lara Croft goddess she is today. Hooray! But then again, Miss Ryder also thought that shoplifting was a wise publicity stunt. Tut tut. There are, thank God, actresses who

don't even care to look the part. And there are actresses that give Hollywood the finger and still manage to reap the benefits. Actresses like Kathy Bates or Kathy Burke. These two Kathys look nothing like the stereotypical film actress. Short, overweight, and extremely feisty, these two ladies have taken their careers by the horns and told the industry who is boss! They don't follow the dull life of always playing the same part. Their chameleon-like qualities extend far beyond changes in hair color (which most actresses tend to believe do the trick in changing their image...Naïve?).

There are also the women behind the cameras who tend to be forgotten. For example, Sherry Lancing, an ex-actress, now heads up Paramount Pictures. Not too shabby. Michelle Wright, also an ex-actress, is head of production at Working Title. Without women like this, there wouldn't be a film industry!

To sum up, it is a man's world, but women in film are starting to take charge. It is about bloody time! In the words of the brilliant minds that were the Spice Girls, "Girl Power!"

## Baseball, Softball Teams

level, has been a major reason for the tightening up of the Trojan infield, while the outfield is patrolled by the capable rotation of Bucci, Wethington, and seniors Brett Zuckerman and Alex Sedler.

Despite the team's tough start, Aughavin feels that the team has a good chance at finishing strong and achieving a reasonably high Sectional seed. Noted Aughavin optimistically, "The team is getting better every game."

The varsity softball team reached the midpoint in its season with a respectable 5-5 record. Though the squad is largely inexperienced, returning senior captains pitcher Loren Fishkind and first baseman Rachel Fischer have helped to provide continuity and leadership.

Coached by Bob Wynn, the Trojans have worked hard to overcome the problems typically associated with a youthful

Continued from page 4

team and have made rapid strides both at the plate and in the field. With All-Section hurler Fishkind having yet another standout year, the team has stepped up behind her and, led by juniors Lauren Redmerski, Lisa Hamilton, and Ariel Fredman and sophomore Amanda Goldstein, has greatly improved its fielding performance. "It's very confidence-inspiring to know that you count on your teammates behind you when you're on the mound," commented Fishkind, who currently ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in Section One with 37 strikeouts. The batting charge has been spearheaded by Fredman, Hamilton, and sophomore Leah Citrin. Citrin leads the team in RBIs, while Fredman boasts a team-leading .433 batting average.

Remarked Fischer, "We're hitting and fielding a lot better now. I think that if we continue to play up to our full potential, we can make a Sectional run."

# Editorials

## FOCUS Mailbox

### Alumnus Salutes Science Mentor

Dear Editor,

I write this letter in honor of a special teacher. Although I'm now far away and removed from Blind Brook, parts of Blind Brook will never be removed from me. I know that the knowledge and wisdom that I gained from the entire faculty in my four years of high school goes into every decision I make, every reaction I have, and every answer I give. I can list a number of teachers to whom I will be forever indebted. But I'd especially like to use this letter to honor a certain individual, Jerry Citron, my friend, my teacher, and one whom I like to consider my mentor. Unfortunately, Mr. Citron will not be returning to Blind Brook in the fall of 2003. But the indelible mark he has left on the Blind Brook community and in my life will never be erased.

When Mr. Citron came to Blind Brook, the science research program was in its embryonic stages. It had about eight students, two of whom were working in a lab setting. The school was filled with banners for sports and mock trial accomplishments, but science accolades were hard to find.

Three years later, there is a new banner hanging. It flew in from Washington D.C., home of the Intel Science Competition, AKA the Junior Nobel Prize. Under Mr. Citron's guidance, Blind Brook has seen two national finalists. In a competition where thousands of students enter all across the country yearly, Mr. Citron has taken two students in three years to the top forty, and one to the top ten. And he has students lined up next year and the year after for more potential recognition if the school can find someone with half the talent that Mr. Citron has to help finish what he has started. But Mr. Citron's gift to Blind Brook spans far beyond this palpable achievement.

I think Mr. Citron's gift to Blind Brook can in many respects be mirrored in his gifts to me. As a person, I grew just from knowing the man. Mr. Citron made it possible for

me to intern at Albert Einstein College of Medicine several days a week and helped with the logistics of getting me there so that I could get real world hands-on experience in a stem cell laboratory. This was my dream. So Mr. Citron made it his.

It was always Mr. Citron's goal to help his students learn from the best, to let his students, both his science research and his biology students, gain a real world perspective on the topics at hand. He loved science. He stayed up-to-date, always reading scientific journals. It was his dream to help his students achieve that same love. He knew that textbook learning could only take someone so far. Therefore, he went out of his way to make sure his students could get the chance to learn through real hands-on experience.

This is just one example of Mr. Citron's unselfish devotion to learning. I remember one day after school watching him tutor, free of charge, a former Blind Brook student who he had never had in class, simply because that student needed help with a college exam. The list goes on, but the theme remains the same. To identify a person who cares more about learning and about passing this passion on to his students than Mr. Citron does would be virtually impossible.

Gifts come in all kinds of packages. It's what we do with them, and how we take advantage of them, that ultimately gives them their worth. In this case, the gift to Blind Brook lasted three years. But I know that we, as Blind Brook students, will take with us the values that Mr. Citron exuded of inquisitiveness, unselfishness, and creativity, and use them as a paradigm for the rest of our lives. Thank you, Mr. Citron. Your gift will last me a lifetime.

Sincerely,  
Matt Stolzar  
Blind Brook '02  
Mstolzar@Stanford.edu

### April Fool's No Joke

Dear Editor,

This letter was prompted by a recent "April Fool's" article in the BBHS FOCUS newspaper. The article was a satirical feature concerning a false merger of Port Chester High School and Blind Brook High School.

I am a student at Port Chester High School, and my peers and I were shocked at the distasteful, negative tone of the article. Though you claim it was not meant to be offensive, many students, teachers, and community members took it as such. The article was clearly written by ignorant students who consider themselves superior to the neighboring residents of Port Chester.

Though the article most likely does not represent the ideas of all Blind Brook students, the elitist tone with which it was written was clearly expressed. To

also claim that BBHS students do not already act in the way many Port Chester students do is absurd. Many BBHS students shop at the Galleria, eat at Hubbas, and own Nextels. By the way, it's Sean John, not Sean Jean.

Finally, it is not only on the students who wrote the article that the blame must be placed. The editors of FOCUS and especially the principal and administration of Blind Brook are at fault. The fact that the article was allowed to go to print sends a horrible message to the students of Blind Brook and Port Chester.

Hopefully, the writers of the article and the staff of FOCUS have realized their mistake and have not (although this is unlikely) contributed to animosity between the two schools.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Lupo

### Our Apology Was Real

By Del Shortliffe,  
faculty advisor to FOCUS

On Thursday, April 10, the April issue of FOCUS reached our community, distributed through *The Westmore News*. Even before Blind Brook students had received copies of the paper in school, many people in Port Chester were upset with one of our articles – an April Fool's parody meant to make fun of fashion, music, and style stereotypes in Rye Brook and Port Chester. It didn't feel like fun to many students at Port Chester High. People phoned in complaints, the principal at Port Chester called Mr. Chlebicki, and some Port Chester students came to us in person to express their concern. That afternoon, an apology from FOCUS was read over the p.a. systems at Port Chester and Blind Brook high schools.

Many people at Blind Brook clearly understand that our apology was sincere, but some seem to believe it was merely a gesture designed to deal with a political problem. A few readers have even told me that the humor in the column was harmless and that its critics are uptight victims of political correctness. I don't agree. Every thoughtful writer must deal with two essential questions: What is my task? and Who is my audience? To achieve a given task with particular readers, a writer adjusts style, tone, and examples. A humorist aims to make people laugh. A satirist hopes to raise readers' awareness while making them laugh. And an angry satirist may intentionally offend, hoping to stir controversy. FOCUS wasn't aiming at angry satire; we were just going for humor. It was poor editing and failed faculty advising not to recognize that we wouldn't accomplish our task with a large, important audience – the people of Port Chester.

There has been a long history of tension between Port Chester and Rye Brook. Tangible outbreaks of that tension occurred a long time ago, so that

serious hostility between our towns may seem a distant memory to most of us. But in order to avoid bringing back such painful memories, each side must still avoid mocking the other. No matter how it is intended, the mockery won't feel like affectionate teasing; it will seem like the latest sign of hostility or condescension.

Mocking ourselves is much more appropriate, and I thought the funniest part of our article was a joke aimed at Blind Brook culture: "When word of ... [our two school's merging] leaked, a freshman girl gasped, 'I don't understand how this can happen to people like me... Why should I have to change? Things are perfect the way they are!'" Here Blind Brook writers take aim at one Blind Brook stereotype: the spoiled and over-protected child. I thought it was funny – but then, I also know that most Blind Brook students are not absurdly superficial. More importantly, I know the joke would have a very different feeling coming from someone outside the Blind Brook community – a Port Chester journalist, for instance – because I'd be worried that the outsider really believed in the insulting characterization. That would feel hostile. That would feel condescending.

And that's how our "jokes" must have felt to many Port Chester students. FOCUS is responsible for that. It was poor judgment not to understand that we would likely offend. Now I wonder how I considered the offense anything but inevitable.

Poor judgment about an historically sensitive issue certainly deserves more than a merely political response. Editor-in-Chief Craig Bergman and I were upset over our error and meant our apology very sincerely. I hope our Port Chester readers have accepted the apology. I hope our Blind Brook readers appreciate the standards of journalism – and of good community relations – that we failed to meet.



Young patrons enjoy a game of Twister run by sophomore ringmasters.

### Sophomore Circus Draws Folks of All Ages

Sophomores Nicole Introcaso and Kyle Wirshba slave over the cotton candy machine to feed hungry circus-goers.

Photos by Mark Harris



# Editorials

## Walk the Walk

It's been a tough year for Westchester teens and for those looking to save them. Despite notable efforts by Westchester DA Jeanine Pirro and local police departments to minimize the dangerous aspects of adolescent behavior, the continued bad press regarding the Friday night activities of the county's youth just doesn't seem to want to go away. Punitive measures have correctly been taken, police party patrollers aren't taking any more crap, and yet, new shockwave stories come out all the time. Kids are still drinking, kids are still dying, and nothing that is being done seems to be overly effective.

So, what's going on here? What's the problem? Now, no clear-cut answer to these questions has been forthcoming, and I don't claim to be any great social or behavioral guru. But I do think it might be time to expand our investigation beyond the borders of our microcosmic county and to probe the larger society for insight into what's been billed as the moral breakdown of the adolescent generation.

It's age-old knowledge that kids need role models. And it's tough to argue that the behavioral morals of kids are not in some way reflective of the society bringing them up, and particularly reflective of those in positions of authority or renown. So, it's to those authority figures we turn first.

Alabama football coach Mike Price was fired two weeks ago for a host of infractions, including buying beer for underage

college students and blowing more than \$1,000 on strippers while at a golf tournament in Florida.

Iowa State basketball coach Larry Eustachy was forced out after decades of alcoholism were revealed in connection with the coach's drunken cavorting at a series of college parties.

Most recently, it came out that Bill Bennett, former Secretary of Education, drug czar, and author of such puritanical bestsellers as *The Book of Virtues*, has dropped more than \$8 million dollars in casinos across the country over the last ten years.

Ironically, most of these actions are not technically illegal and could indeed be viewed as nothing more than extreme indulgence in popular social vices. But when publicized, the stories effect America's youth in a way that may be subtle at the time but is probably ultimately a good deal more far-reaching and serious.

What we have here are two widely-respected, highly-successful coaches engaging in the very same behaviors for which area teens are being hotly pursued. What we have here is the self-proclaimed arbiter of self-restraint, goodness, and virtue proving to be no less self-indulgent or unrestrained than those he axes in his moral scriptures.

These are the men from whom America's youth can derive firm and meaningful guidance. These are the leaders whose stirring

lectures and locker room pep talks inspire self-control, discipline, and utter avoidance of those vices eating away at much of society. *These are the role models.*

Thus, you have your tough situation: Kids are expected to go off to school and resist all that is addictive and destructive and adhere to the virtues of self-respect and social morality. But they are expected to do so after having flipped on *SportCenter* during breakfast to hear that two of the country's most respected "socioathletic" mentors spent their nights pounding beer, partying with kids half their age, and whispering sweet nothings into strippers' ears. It seems tough to deny that that's a tall order for anyone. But those who don't meet it, may and should face trouble.

So, can we then conclude that teenage

social pathology may derive, at least on some level, from a more general breakdown of morality and virtue? Maybe, maybe not. But it does seem worthwhile, at a time when kids can pick up the headlines to see that a moral crusader is an infamous high-roller and that a college sports icon is a sloppy drunk in his spare time, to at least consider the lack of solid moral guidance and role modeling available to young people.

So, do we need to throw out the oft repeated cliché, "Do as I say, not as I do?" Maybe we do, because the actions sure seem to be speaking a lot louder than the words.

*Craig Bergman*  
Editor-in-Chief



Senior girls share a spring break moment. *Top row from left:* Lauren Tillem, Carter Niles, Sarah Powell, Lauren Levinson, Sandy Schnur, and Sarah Wolff. *Bottom row from left:* Rachel Fischer, Ali Blazer, Jessica Stein, Rachele Tratt, and Janine Bucci.

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## Why We Should All Take a Spring Break

Continued from page 10

tions, we are obsessive and cautious about how to prevent them. Girls, especially, watch each other with great caution, because we are educated about the vulnerability of girls on spring break. The main "mob mentality" that I observed was a group of friends uniting to take care of each other. The realization that we are down there and really on our own, without our parents to bail us out or catch us when we fall, forces us to step up and act responsibly. And we did take care of each other and ourselves. As hard as it is to believe, there is more to spring break than sex and alcohol. It is one final chance to enjoy each other and celebrate friendship. And it works. I felt that spring break broke down more social barriers than the junior class trip and four years of high school could.

As for the theory of straight kids going wild, the reality is that how one behaves on spring break is a reflection of how he or she behaves at home. Spring break may be an atmosphere that entices kids to act more outlandishly than usual, but people do not all of a sudden undergo personality changes—good girls do not just become corrupt because they are in a different area code. If parents teach their kids how to behave leading up to spring break, the odds are that their kids will do fine on spring break. The truth is, anything we can do there, we can do at home and will especially be able to do next year at college. Spring break is an excellent way to expose ourselves to the independence (and, yes, the rowdiness) of college so that we are

prepared and know how to deal with it when we all go off on our own next year. Summed up senior spring breaker Sarah Powell, "I bonded with my friends so much on spring break, and it really teaches you responsibility. If you can't be responsible there, then you won't ever be." Added fellow senior Randall Ehrenpreis, "I got to spend a lot of quality time with people I don't normally spend time with on the most beautiful island in the world."

**Myth Three:** Spring Break is a Week-Long Trip

Although we only spent seven days in the Bahamas, we were affected by it in the time leading up to it and will be affected by it for years to come. Spring break takes a tremendous amount of planning. Spring break was my motivation to stay home the summer before senior year and work for the money to go on the trip. Spring break taught me initiative and responsibility, because I had to pay for it myself. It also causes the group going to come together and to organize meetings and due dates for payments. And, of course, there is the vital personal planning, such as going to the gym to get a "hot bod" for the beach and shopping for "clubbing clothes." Spring break is an exciting event to look forward to, and it keeps seniors preparing for it all year. This anticipation only makes the year better, because we knew that something good was coming in the future. Walking away from spring break, I emerged with incredible memories with my high school friends that I will carry with me throughout the rest of my life. It was an unforgettable, irreplaceable week.