

The



Signal

The Official Newspaper of Fenton High School

Friday, January 28, 2022

Agyemang's Work Honored, Receives College Board Recognition

By Abby Niehoff (she/her)

Fenton's very own Michelle Agyemang has been recognized by College Board through the African-American Recognition Program. This program recognizes students in underrepresented students across the country who excel in the classroom and in tests like the PSAT, SAT, and AP testing.

"It wasn't until I started really investing time into studying that I realized that doing well could open a lot of doors for me, like gaining the National African American recognition," says Agyemang.

To qualify, students must have a GPA of at least 3.5 and score in the top 1% of test-takers in the state on the PSAT.

Counselor Nancy Connor says, "Michelle is a model of what a student should be. She works diligently to achieve her success but is one of the most generous and kind students at Fenton. She is humble in her accomplishments, and I can't wait to see how she changes the world in the future."

Agyemang said, "There were definitely days where the last thing I wanted to do was study- one thing that kept me motivated was thinking about the sense of accomplishment I would feel."

Michelle also says being validated for her hard work made her feel overjoyed: "I feel like being a student of color, especially a Black student, there have been a lot of times where I've felt like my hard work has been overlooked. Knowing that there was an award that supported and recognized the hard work and dedication of Black and African-American students was something that I was really glad to see."



Photo courtesy of Michelle Agyemang

Fenton Implements Blended Learning Program, Provides Independence

By Julissa Velazquez

This year, Fenton has begun allowing for teachers to use the blended learning model in their classes. Blended learning is a form of personalized learning that can be completed anywhere. The goal is for teachers to meet students where they are needed and provide a better understanding of the student's strengths and areas for improvement.

A group of teachers and administrators first learned about blended learning as one way to approach personalized learning

for students. "In the fall of 2018, we visited Huntley High School in Illinois to see what blended learning looked like at their school," explained Berago. "Huntley has been doing it for many years so we thought they would be a great school to learn from. Teachers were excited to learn how it worked and were eager to pilot it in their own classes."

The benefit to personalizing learning for students is that they get what they need individually, but the benefits of blended learning are numerous. Berago explains,

"Depending on the teacher's criteria, while students are out of the classroom working on other requirements, teachers can focus on those that are in the classroom and help them with whatever they need."

With students meeting with teachers in smaller groups and one-on-one more often, the teacher gets to know more about the students and even potentially build better relationships with them. Berago explains another added benefit, "Blended learning isn't just for students who need help. For students who are advancing at a faster rate, they are no longer held back. Instead, they have the ability to blend out of the classroom where they can advance their learning, work on assignments/projects for other classes, or simply relax and take a breather."

Blended learning is also a way of giving students the responsibility of managing their own time. In blended learning, "students are given ownership of their time and how they want to spend that time--decisions you, as students, will be making in college. Of course, there are some limitations but if we can improve on preparing our students for college

life--we are going to do that," says Berago.

Students can gain important skills from this such as time management and gain a college-like experience. Fenton believes students should not be held back, therefore allowing them to learn at an individual level. Teachers apply blended learning in different ways such as the use of grades, groupings, or any other way they choose who is eligible. One teacher who uses blended learning with her English classes, Ms. Rebecca Norris, stated, "Blended Learning makes students more accountable and gives me more time to work in class with students who need extra help."

Ms. Stephanie Jackson, another English teacher, believes "students are highly motivated to get to blended status through good grades or maintain blended status through good grades, so it works incredibly well as an incentive." Jackson also says she believes it promotes positive relationships with students because of the trust involved."

All students always have the option to remain in their blended classrooms on any given day.



Photo courtesy of Stephanie Jackson

Girls Basketball Breaks School Record, Celebrates 15-2 Performance

By Jady Golz (she/her)

The girls basketball team started the season strong by winning the Rich Township Thanksgiving Tournament in November of last year. Coach David Mello states, "It was our first year in the tournament and the girls put together three outstanding games."

Since then, the team has sustained an overall record of 15 wins to 2 losses.

Team captain senior Elizabeth Aguirre notes, "It's the best we've ever been record-wise and it's really cool to be a part of!"

Furthermore, the team has tied two school records: Sophomore Gracen Haska tied the rebounding record when she had twenty-three in their win against Bartlett. Likewise, Kaitlyn Hoffing tied the school record for assists when she had thirteen in their Pack The Place win against Streamwood. Hoffing also broke the school record by scoring eight three in their win at Westmont.

According to Mello, the girls have operated under the mantra of "No Excuses."

He comments, "We have dealt with a Covid pause, injuries, and other forms of adversity. However, at

no point do the girls make excuses. If there is a practice to be had or a game to be played, it doesn't matter who or how many girls are there, they are getting the job done."

Aguirre explains that she wants to contribute in every way possible in every game. "As long as I know that I have done my job in one way or another, I'm happy with my performance if it helps the team win."

When asked about their goals for the season Mello comments, "Our goals for this season are to have as much fun and success as possible. We want to be able to finish this season and not have any regrets. What we hope to accomplish is that the girls will look back at this season and be able to have nothing but great memories of their basketball season. We have a special group of girls that really enjoy playing together and want them to remember this experience when they are older."

Aguirre also notes, "[The team is] so much closer than any other team I've been on. A lot of us have been playing together for a while now and it really shows in a game because we trust each other to be there both on and off the court."



Photo courtesy of Dave Mello

New Fenton Film Club Invites Students to View, Analyze, Discuss Movies

By Julissa Velazquez

Do you love watching movies? Then Film Club might be right for you! Led by English teacher Ms. Rebecca Norris, it is a club where students can come together to watch movies and then discuss them.

According to junior, Mia Silva, "Normally in Film Club we watch a movie that we voted for the previous week. We then dissect the movie looking at themes to famous actors in the movie. Something that I enjoyed during film club was making a stop motion book after watching some Tim Burton Movies. Another fun thing we do is go on field trips! If interested please email me, Emily Worwa, or Ms. Norris."

Recently, Mr. Simon Sanchez has begun helping take the students to the Bensenville movie theater every other Friday to see a show. The bus ride and movie ticket will be provided.

According to Ms. Norris, "I taught film study before but since it's gone now I thought this would be a cool way to still discuss movies. We try to show the aspects of the filmmaking process, editing, music, and soundtracks."

If you're interested, film club meets in the community room at 3:15 on Wednesdays. Google Classroom code: k3zi3od.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Norris.



Cartoon by Samantha Lang

Contest Drama Prepares *A Piece of My Heart*, Showcase on March 17

By Jenny Aguilar

The long-awaited return of live theater continues at Fenton with the performance of this year's Contest Drama show, *A Piece of My Heart* by Shirley Lauro. The show centers around the lives of six women who were nurses during the Vietnam War.

Last year's Contest Drama *Good Kids* was all done completely remotely. As director Dr. Mike Mitchell notes, "It was completely different than it had been before. It was really weird, but we did well, taking fourth at state and having three cast members made all-state."

Despite the strange circumstances, the success of last year's contest drama has garnered a stronger interest in this year's performance, which will hopefully be live.

Senior Joan Hitt, who was involved in last year's production as well as this year's, states, "I was involved in Contest Drama last year, and it was completely different this year ranging from the show to being in person. I can't wait to perform this in competitions!"

Inspired by a book published under the same title, Shirley Lauro's play *A Piece of My Heart* takes audience members into the perspective of six women, five nurses and one singer, and their experiences before, during, and after the Vietnam War.

Hitt, who plays the character of Maryjo, describes the show as "sentimental story about the women that were involved in Vietnam. It is a heart wrenching story of the heroes [of] the heroes."

The cast includes, in order of appearance, Karissa Lara, Joan Hitt, Lita Aguilar, Evelyn Perez, Delilah Johnson, Nathaniel Herrera, and Adam Millard, with Erica Ayala being the student director. The array of incredible female talent in the Fenton theater department greatly influenced the choice of this year's production. In addition, many of the cast members also have musical talents which will be showcased in the show.

Junior Delilah Johnson points out, "Music is involved in many ways, but don't be fooled, this play is *not* a musical. It's a play with music IN it. The songs incorporated in the play are from the general time period, and amplify moments in the play. Plus, it highlights the cast's musical skills!"

Cast members will be both singing and playing the accompanying instruments. Some of the featured songs, all of which come from the show's time period, include "Leaning on a Jet Plane" by John Denver, "(You Make Me Feel Like a) Natural Woman" by Aretha Franklin, and "America the Beautiful".

Mitchell emphasizes that "It's going to have the feel of a musical but it's not. The songs are for entertainment."

Part of the requisites for a production to qualify for Contest Drama is that a full-length show needs to be cut down to only 40 minutes. Naturally, this poses a challenge for the production to still express the story's original message while still staying in the allotted time frame.

As Mitchell states, "We are giving the audiences the cliff notes version of the cliff notes. Staying true to the story in that limited amount of time is going to be our biggest challenge."

Johnson also sheds light on the obstacles actor's face in preparing for their roles: "The biggest challenge with this show is developing your character. The characters in this show are very complex, and you have to do a lot of thinking and analyzing to be able to feel like you are the character. This is a show that revolves around the many parts of being human, and as actors we need to harness the aspects of life that make us think and act the way we do."

The Fenton showcase will be on March 17 at 7:00 pm in the auditorium with the Sectional Contest being held on March 19. The cast also hopes to invite some members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to attend the March 17 showcase.

As theater companies all around the world begin to return to live shows, Mitchell comments on his thoughts about this year's production: "I am more excited about this show partly because of the pandemic. It's nice to be able to do something in person, I hope. That would be nice."

Johnson, as well as theater fans all over the world, agrees with this sentiment, saying, "I'm most excited about being able to run the show back to back. I wish I could watch the finished product from the audience because I know this play is going to be amazing."



Photo courtesy of Mike Mitchell

Senior Open Lunch Program Extended to End of Semester

By Jenny Aguilar

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and workplaces have had to implement new procedures to limit the spread of the virus. On November 24, 2021, Fenton High School announced it would be piloting a new senior open lunch program beginning the following semester on January 4, 2022. The program allows seniors who turn in the necessary application to exit the building via Door 1 during their lunch period and then return in time for their following class period.

As stated in the announcement email sent by Fenton, "[Our] goal and objective is to create additional social distance and space within the lunchroom while allowing seniors the privilege to head off campus for lunch." Prior to the pandemic, there were no plans to implement an open lunch program; the extent had been eating lunch outside in the courtyard for seniors.

Assistant Principal Mrs.

Eileen Roberts says, "I don't think there was a need or request for [an open lunch program] before." However, she does agree in implementing it in part because "[she] had it when [she] was in high school."

So far, there are approximately 50 to 60 seniors participating in the pilot program per lunch period. Roberts shares that, so far, there have not been any glaring issues surrounding the program, "We are knocking on wood, but one day there may be a train crossing that causes delays."

Senior Izabela Weglarz says she has not had any issues returning to class on time: "Thankfully it hasn't happened to me, yet, but I could see there being a possible problem if there's traffic. Otherwise I think it's all been fine."

Roberts would also like to point out important procedural details for participating seniors: "I think the biggest thing is they must have their ID-- they can't type it in.

And they must be patient."

The sign out process is set up to show a green flash for participating students and a red flash for non-participating students, ensuring that only those who have completed the required application may leave the building.

The open lunch program has received great reviews from both staff members and students.

Dr. Sam Bentsen, the principal at Fenton, notes, "I have talked to students who are utilizing open lunch and they appreciate it. Some students go home and others go to local fast food establishments."

Senior Max Koziarski describes his own experience with the program, stating, "My experience has been great. I have work after school, so if I have to run a small errand then I can just go do it during lunch."

On January 13, 2022, due to the program's success, Fenton announced that it would extend the open lunch program to the end of

the semester. Students who signed up for the January pilot will retain their privilege and interested seniors are still able to sign up by returning the application to the front office. However, no decisions have been made on whether the program will remain in the future.

Roberts states, "Post pandemic-- I think right now we are going to see how it works. If [the students] can be responsible, then we will continue to reevaluate."

Koziarski shares his opinion on the matter, saying, "I believe Fenton should continue open lunch after the pandemic because it really shows you how life will be after high school, where you're responsible to get back to class on time on your own."

Weglarz reiterates this sentiment, noting, "Yeah, it's a really nice privilege and as long as it remains unabused I don't see why it would be a problem to continue to run it."

Agyemang Shares Experience Visiting the African Nation of Ghana

By Michelle Agyemang

Ever since my last trip to Ghana in 2013, I've desperately wanted to return and relive some of the best experiences in my life. Starting winter break, I finally started living out what seemed to be like a dream.

Landing in Ghana and walking through the Kotoka International Airport, I felt nothing but joy. That feeling quickly went away after dealing with the chaos known as customs. However, three grueling hours later, I finally left the airport with one covid test and the rest of my trip awaiting me.

Determined not to let my negative experience in the airport dampen my excitement, I took a deep breath and walked out into the Ghana heat. I found my father, who was driving us back to our home, and I was excited to be immersed into the real country—finally. As we drove down the highway, I found that Ghana was no different than the US, other than a few palm trees and some scattered dust. However, moving away from the national roads and getting closer to the local towns, I started to see authentic Ghanaian life. There were people throughout the streets selling drinks, snacks, and almost everything else. The last thing I felt when I was looking out at the busy road was a long-awaited sense of comfort that there were people who looked like me everywhere I glanced.

During my one-month stay in Ghana, I primarily stayed in three cities: Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi. First Kumasi, once called the “Garden City,” had lush greenery and beautiful nature. Then I took a trip to Takoradi, a small but cozy coastal town. I finally spent the rest of my trip discovering Accra: the bustling city that is most well known to tourists coming into Ghana.

One word to describe my time in the town Takoradi would be “ideal.” I ended up spending my New Year’s Eve and New Years Day there, and that’s one of the first times I saw



Maaha Beach Resort, Western Region

the differences in traditions and values between the US and Ghana. Instead of parties and parades, on new years eve, you'll find most Ghanaians in church praying for the New Year. You'll also find that all people from toddlers to seniors are dancing and singing worship songs. Although there are a lot of differences, the one universal tradition of fireworks lighting up the sky at 12 am stayed true.

In Takoradi, it seemed like almost every house partook in lighting up fireworks, and looking up in the sky was a magical experience. On New Year's Day, the people who live in the Sekondi-Takoradi area gather together and parade the streets for an event called the Ankos

Masquerade festival. During the festival, people dressed up in colorful costumes and wore masks of all types. They then paraded the street, playing live music and yelling phrases that celebrate the new year. The rest of my stay in Takoradi was filled with time at the Africa Beach and Maaha Beach resorts. Each of the beaches were filled with many infrequently detailed shells and rocks.

Being in Takoradi showed me the beauty of Ghanaian towns' culture and community. I was also able to see the beautiful nature and peace that Ghana can provide.

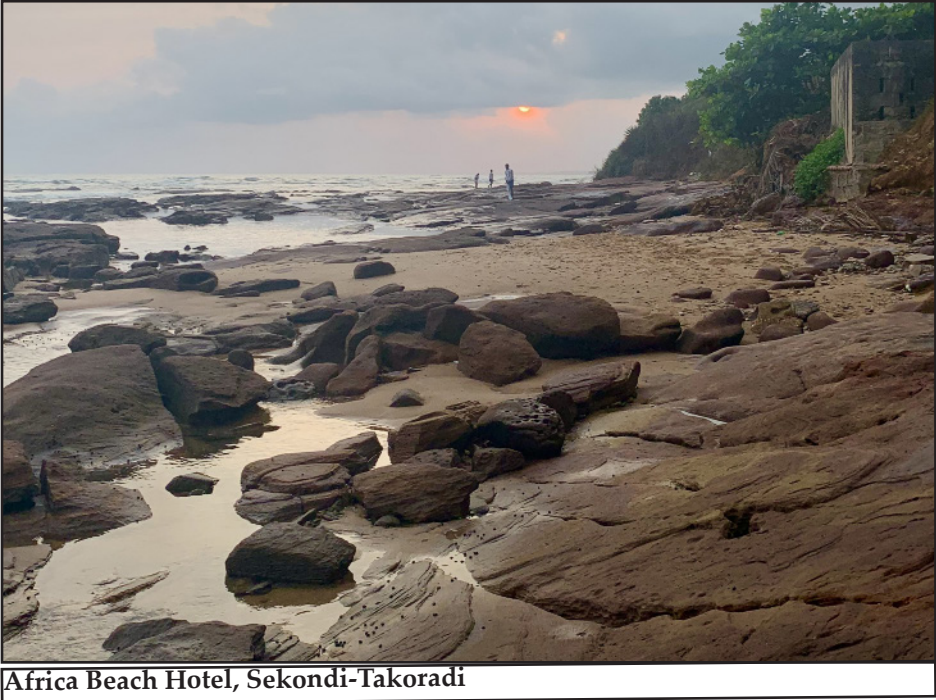
Despite the seemingly chaotic nature of the city, Accra holds some of the most historic and influential

buildings in all of Ghana. I visited landmarks such as the Kwame Nkrumah Park, Art Center, and Independence Square. Even though all the landmarks I visited were impactful, visiting almost 400-year-old Osu Castle was one of the most memorable parts of my trip. The castle was built by the Danes in the 1600s during the start of colonialism in Ghana. Most of the castle was originally used as a market for goods like sugar and guns. I then learned that the castle was later handed off to multiple countries like Portugal and Britain, where it was used as a place to sell enslaved people. Our tour guide showed us multiple tiny rooms that were intended to be storage rooms for goods but later turned into dungeons for 50-100 enslaved people. Seeing the dungeons, I sadly was reminded of the depressing history of Ghana.

After visiting the slave dungeons in the courtyard, our guide brought us upstairs into the rooms that were later turned into offices for the country's leaders. Even though the castle held the pain and sorrow of thousands of Ghanaians, the castle became a symbol of reclaiming and resilience when the country finally gained independence.

Going to Ghana was one of the best experiences of my life. None of the stigmas and stereotypes of African countries held true. Ghana is a country full of culture and tradition and has a fantastic history of dedication and strength. The beautiful nature and landmarks make it a place that is ideal for a relaxing vacation.

Being a person from Ghana, I was surprised that I found new things that were meaningful and impactful to me as a person. My trip to Ghana makes us curious and eager to explore other countries that might be held back by negative stereotypes. I encourage anyone who desires to travel and make new memories to visit Ghana and other countries with a much deeper story than what is showcased.



Africa Beach Hotel, Sekondi-Takoradi



Independence Square, Accra

Wrestling Season Comes to an End After Much Success, Wrestling Bison Share Thoughts

By Jenny Aguilar

Despite the array of new challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Fenton's wrestling team has had an outstanding season so far. Senior Varsity Captains Noelia Vazquez, who is also the first female captain in Fenton history, Viktor Klimczyk, and Kon Papadopoulos have led the team to a 10-4 and 5-3 conference record.

On July 14, 2021, the IHSA released the final preparations for the first-ever Individual Girls Wrestling State Finals, set to take place on February 25-26, 2022. The Individual Girls Finals will run alongside the Dual Team Wrestling State Finals.

Coach Brian Hastings describes how successful Fenton's women's team has been so far: "The Lady Bison have had much success at tournaments and expect to have a strong end to their season. Noelia is 9-0 and has tournament championships at Fenton's Weiss Invite and at Batavia and hopes to win another state championship in the inaugural year of IHSA girls wrestling."

Sophomore Sophia Sosa, who placed 6th at the IWCOA State Tournament, has an 8-3 record and leads the team with 6 pins. Other accomplishments include Zoe Campos winning the Weis invite, and Yamile Penaloza and Yannel Perez both with championships at Batavia. Mia Nepomuceno placed third at Weis and Amelia Quinn has wrestled incredibly well throughout the season.

At Fenton's first women's dual meet against West Chicago, "the Bison won 4 of the 7 matches with Sophia pinning two opponents, Noelia getting a fall, and Zoe winning her match," according to Hastings.

He also says, "The ladies are excited as they look to improve heading into the IHSA state series."

On the men's team, Papadopoulos and Klimczyk lead with a 16-0 and 16-1 record respectively.

Hastings comments on the team's exceptional performance so far: "The Fenton wrestling team has had a relatively successful season thus far despite many obstacles and much inexperience."

Hastings also comments on the successes of the rest of the men's team stating, "Many Bison have shown continued improvement and have stepped up at key times to contribute for the squad. Sophomore Jovany Zuniga is 12-3 at 160 lbs, senior Justin Dickeson is 10-6 at 138lbs, Alberto Bracamontes is 10-5 at 132lbs, and Josh Dickeson is 9-5 at 126 lbs. Anthony Bigham, Dorian Vazquez, and Austin Platta all have 7 victories."

Freshman Artur Zawitkowski describes his experience on the team, saying, "As a first-year wrestler, I wasn't expecting anything great for myself, but wrestling higher-level wrestlers like Varsity and JV really gave me the feeling to work harder so I can counter their moves, and turn it back on them. There have been so many great memories with the freshmen and seniors."

The Bison wrestling team has a great future on the horizon. Hastings highlights, "The freshman/sophomore teams have experienced a really strong start to the season with an 8-4 record. Freshmen Artur Zawitkowski and Thomas Klos have been consistent leaders throughout the season."

While wrestling is an individual sport, the Fenton team has still garnered a sense of camaraderie.

Zawitkowski rehashes some

of the season's most memorable moments, saying, "[There were] definitely some funny moments and some proud moments over at practice and the tournaments. During the Weiss Tournament, it was amazing to see three of our wrestlers get first place. With our freshman wrestlers, one of our highlights is when Joshua scored the entire team Wendy's by winning his match."

Hastings also points out the immense effort all of the wrestlers have put in order to overcome challenges associated with the pandemic.

He states, "The entire team has been outstandingly resilient this season given all of the challenges with Covid... Wrestling in itself is the most courageous and most

physically and mentally challenging activity that a high school student athlete can participate in, let alone when Covid has become so intrusive. All of the credit in the world is given to the wrestlers for their flexibility, understanding, commitment and effort in this most difficult time."

In the past few years, Fenton's wrestling team has prospered to heights never reached before, most notably the success of the women's team as well as the continued improvement of the women's team. No matter their level of experience, all members feel like they belong on Fenton's wrestling team.

As Zawitkowski says, "Wrestling can be for everyone. If you are confident, you can wrestle!"



Noelia Vazquez. Photo courtesy of Brian Hastings

Food Prices Continue to Surge Nationally Despite the Start of New Year

By Michelle Agyemang

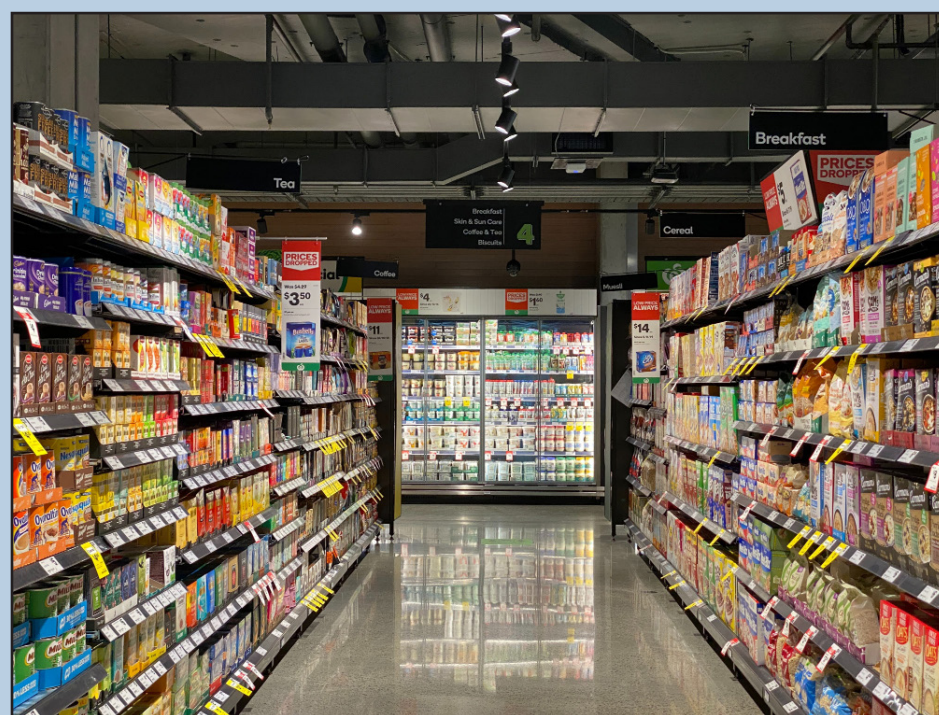
Walking up and down the aisles of your favorite grocery store, you might have noticed the change in the prices of your household foods. From snacks to perishable staples like milk and eggs, there has been a national cost increase throughout 2021, and researchers predict that the prices will continue to increase going into 2022.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "The food-away-from-home (restaurant purchases) consumer price index increased 0.6 percent in November 2021 and was 5.8 percent higher than November 2020." The USDA also states, "the food-at-home (grocery store or supermarket food purchases) consumer price index increased 0.3 percent from October 2021 to November 2021 and was 6.4 percent higher than November 2020."

One factor for the cause of

the price increase boils all the way down to the people at the source. Last year, producers had to struggle with "shortages, bottlenecks, and transportation, weather and labor woes, all of which have caused food prices to rise," says The Washington Post. Producers also have to deal with increased prices for all of their necessary supplies, transportation, and other business expenses. Two other very important factors contributing to the price increase are the Covid-19 pandemic and the extraordinarily high inflation rate we're facing as a country.

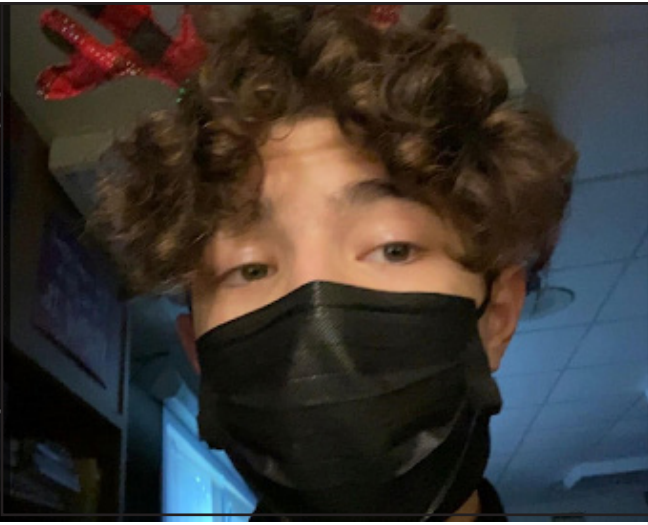
Going into the new year, we hope to put an end to the increase in price. Experts say that the rise in prices will continue into 2022 and possibly worsen despite our hopes. The Wall Street Journal predicts that food prices will increase an additional 5% during the first half of 2022.



Stock photo from Unsplash.com

Photo Op: What are your New Years resolutions?

By Abby Niehoff (she/her)



Mateo Corona, '24
My New Years Resolution is to study more to be prepared for my classes next year since all of them will be AP classes!



Dalila Perez, '22
I'd say my New Years Resolution is to have a more productive year. I've lost motivation during the pandemic, and especially since it's senior year, I really want to push through and finish strong.



Mr. Dan Gregerman, music teacher
This year, I'd like to find time to invest in being a better "me". This includes being there for my family, working out, losing weight, and having a better work/life balance.



Mckenzie Taylor, '22
I want to be more kind to myself in 2022! Self care is going to be a big priority for me.

Tales From
~~SUBURB?~~

by Ethan Diaz

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Fenton's school newspaper needs you!
If you are interested in joining a flexible activity and meeting new people, join our group and help us spread the word.

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