April 2024 Vol. 33, No. 3

The Cougar Chronicle

The Student Newspaper of Haddam-Killingworth High School

Covid-19's Lingering Emotional Toll on Students

By Chloe Oboma

The SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus was first discovered in Wuhan, China, in 2019. Afterwards, the virus rapidly spread to other countries of the world. The World Health Organization declared this virus a pandemic in 2020, forcing communities around the world to shut down and isolate themselves from the rest of society.

During this isolation, students and teachers were unable to attend the school buildings. Many schools – including all in Connecticut – looked to



online learning as a way to communicate with the students in the spring of 2020. Many hands-on lessons were replaced with videos, and many kinesthetic learners had difficulty understanding the lessons. Online schooling also made cheating easier for students, and lessons hosted through Google meetings enabled students to turn off cameras and turn to their phones.

HK Freshman Audrey Larosa said, “I think that Covid was more of a negative influence on the overall learning of kids because it put more stress on them to work from home. It de-socialized kids and made them less motivated to work."

After the pandemic subsided, mental health issues in teens increased, with many teens feeling anxious and depressed. Some older teens experienced post-pandemic anxiety attacks. One student who asked not be named, said COVID-19 was a terrible time for maturing teens who didn't have a chance to have in-person social interactions.

“At the time, it was when I was in 7th grade, and that period was the worst time of my life," said this student. "Many people have been affected by COVID-19, and I was part of that group."

Many teens found comfort in online platforms such as TikTok, as millions of teens across America participated in trends and often spent numerous hours scrolling through videos. Unfortunately, TikTok negatively affected many users, as studies show social media's addictive nature hurts academic achievement. Although spending an excessive amount on social media can significantly diminish study time, not all students are affected.

HK sophomore Chloe Engler believes social media does not have a negative impact on students who use it correctly. She said people must set aside their phones and take time to study: “I've never personally experienced any setbacks from using social media. I think having social media is fine as long as you are willing to discipline yourself and make an effort to get good grades.”

What most students can agree on is that Covid was an experience they never want to go through again.

Mr. HK Competition Does Not Disappoint

By Caitlin Kukta

The annual talent show event, Mr. HK, returned to the school on Mar. 6, allowing students to showcase their talents in hopes of earning the coveted crown.

The event, organized by Event Broadcasting and other media classes, was open to any students interested in competing, not just male students. Historically, it has been majority male students who participate. All participants auditioned to demonstrate their talents.

Students from TV classes created introduction videos for each contestant. These videos were formatted however the contestant wanted; some were very informative while others were comical.



Mr. HK hosts Lindsay Blade and Damen Ridgeway introduce Joe Jacobs, Ryan Ruggiero, David Sargent (winner of the crown), and Alex Battistoni.

This year, senior Leeha Reddy and junior Lindsay Blade choreographed the dance that contestants performed to start the competition. Each contestant had much energy, and the crowd displayed enthusiasm for the performers.

The show was hosted by two Event Broadcasting students, senior Damen Ridgeway and Blade. The contestants' talents included stand-up comedy, Dj-ing, dance, and slam poetry. The top three contestants were Paul B___with his rendition of the song “Can’t Take my Eyes Off You" by Frankie Valli; Alec Sicarella with his stand-up comedy bit; and David Sargent with his band's rendition of “Until I Found You” by Stephen Sanchez

Sargent, a yearly contestant with hopes of gaining the crown growing each year, finally did just that this year. “I had a lot of fun with all the guys who did the show and I’m really happy I got to be in the show for all four years of high school," said Sargent.

Once the talent portion of the show concluded, the contestants returned to stage for the formal wear competition. Each contestant was provided a tux from Modern Formals in Middletown, and they had the opportunity to choose someone to walk with them onto stage. Each contestant was then asked final questions by the judges before the winner was announced.

Math and Language Teachers Join Faculty

By John Moyher

Mr. Jovan Marrero and Ms. Katherine Bagnoli are among HK's new faculty members this year.

Mr. Marrero taught Spanish in Puerto Rico for four years. He says that teaching Spanish here is immensely different from teaching in Puerto Rico, explaining how teaching Spanish there is very similar to teaching English class here.

Mr. Marrero said adjusting to the new environment was challenging for him at first but he said with the help of his colleagues he was able to feel comfortable

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)
shortly after the school year started. In addition, he mentioned how some of his students helped him settle in.



Mr. Marrero and Ms. Bagnoli

Mrs. Katherine Bagnoli is a new math teacher at HK this year. She expressed how welcomed she felt by the students and staff from day one of working at HK.

“I love this school," she said. "There is a very nice community with many very kind people.” She went on to explain how many of her colleagues and students helped her transition in the new environment.

Ms. Bagnoli also mentioned that adjusting to the school’s schedule and fully understanding the technology was challenging in the beginning of the year. But now, she added, she is fully settled in.

***Opinion*:**

Why Do People Freak Out Over Taylor Swift?

Fifty-four seconds. That's how long Taylor Swift was shown on the CBS broadcast at the Super Bowl in February. That means Swift was on the screen for about 0.0035% of the time. Why does it upset so many NFL fans?

Most enraged fans don't understand that Swift's appearance at just 12 games has made the NFL approximately $330 million. Taylor Swift's appearance reached a demographic that hadn't watched the NFL before: teenage girls. Her appearance has caused a 53% increase in such viewers, according to Anthony Amey, a Virginia Tech University professor for sports media.

The hate the Kansas City Chiefs received should surprise no football fan. After Tom Brady left the Patriots in 2020, there was a huge void in the NFL. Football fans love their team, but need someone to hate. When we reflect on why so many male NFL fans hate “her" Kansas City Chiefs, we see this is simply out of anger and jealousy. They hate the Chiefs because they're winning, proving time and again that they come through as a team and just simply win.

Taylor Swift is the common enemy. Mina Kimes, a Seattle Seahawks fan, said in her interview with *Sports Illustrated*, "For me, a lot of the misogyny or resistance that I've encountered over the years has been men feeling suspicious of 'Why is she here? What credibility does she have? I must know more, etc.' I think with the Taylor Swift backlash ... the impression I get is that people are annoyed with other fans being allowed into their space.”

The hate for Taylor Swift has gone so far that many people say she scripted the games. These accusations are truly crazy. Many believe Swift spends her days scripting out who wins and loses. Now ask yourselves, is it worth hating someone who was on the screen for 54 seconds out of a 3-hour and 12-minute game?

- Chloe Oboma



Taylor Swift celebrates with boyfriend Travis Kelce.

Recap:

Winter Sports Season

By Reagan Aronson

Here's a rundown of HK's winter sports season:

Indoor Track

Indoor track had a successful season, competing in various events which include sprints, hurdles, relays, long distance, long jump, pole vault, and shot put.

The boys' team placed second overall, only points behind first, in the Shoreline Conference where many individuals and groups qualified for States. At States, Luke Hedges, Jack Cozean, Daniel McCourt, and Matthew Lara placed first in the 4x800 relay.

The girl's team, though small, placed seventh in the Shoreline Conference with top scorers and personal records made by Amelia Riggs, Caley Napolitano, Kayla Rodriguez, and Mikayla Ruggiero.

Girls' Basketball

HK girls' basketball had a breakout season, competing against a variety of teams ranging from easy to challenging competition. The team finished with a 12-8 record and qualified for States where they won a first-round game against Montville.

Sophomore Payton Kaplowitz said, “The team is like a second family and it has helped us all improve our play, bringing us to where we are today.”

Boys' Basketball

HK boys' basketball had a fantastic season with a record of 14-6, finished fourth in Division V, and qualified for States for the first time in a number of years. After a first round bye, the team lost a hard-fought contest to Stafford, 61-49. With a core of returning players, the Cougars already look forward to next season.

Winter Cheer

The girls had a successful winter cheer season this year. Through their positive attitudes they worked hard cheering on HK basketball and planning routines for Shoreline and State competitions.

Shorelines was Feb. 10 at Westbrook High School where the girls competed with their routine full of tricks and flips. Lindsay Blade said, “This season was definitely something special and I have ro give a huge thanks to Coach Babjak for always pushing us to do our best.”

Wrestling

The wrestling team placed 6th at states on Feb. 18. Top wrestlers at the meet were Noah McCarthy (3rd), Gunnar Howes (4th), Brian Nyguen (5th), and Mathias Schweitzer (6th).

In the girls' division, the state meet took place at Hillhouse High School in New Haven on Feb. 24. Amelia Peterson finished 4th and Peyton Dixon placed 5th.



Coach Josh Cofield and captain Cooper Pitts.

Next Issue: Boys' Swim, Boys' & Girls' Hockey, Gymnastics

The Cougar Chronicle

The H-K High School Student Newspaper
Higganum, CT 06441
Staff Members: Sami Pach, Caitlin Kukta, Caroline Ignatuk, Chloe Oboma, Reagan Aronson, John Moyher, Owen Staskelunas.
Advisors: Mr. Keck and Mr. Kish.