

THE PULSE

November 2024

THE HEARTBEAT OF SYOSSET

Inspiring Students to Embrace Wellness

Syosset High School hosts a schoolwide health fair on October 24, featuring an assortment of venues for people to adopt practices for the practice of well-being.

By: Derek Chen

The annual Health Fair brought together students, faculty, and more than 45 local organizations to promote healthy living and engage the school community in wellness activities. Coordinated by the health education department with lead organizer, Mr. Christopher Gagstetter at the helm, the event has become a tradition since 2007.

Taking over the fair's organization in 2018, Mr. Gagstetter, with support from his colleagues and Mr. Shai Fisher, began planning last spring. "Health is not just a class; it's a lifelong pursuit. This fair allows us to dedicate a day to health awareness, while giving students a chance to see their teachers in a different light—many of whom are passionate about fitness and wellness," said Mr. Gagstetter.

This year's event was the largest since the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting the community's eagerness to reconnect through activities that promote well-being. Participants explored booths run by local health organizations, including Mind & Body: Nutrition and Therapy, the Maurer Foundation, Evolution PT and Fitness, NYU Langone Health, and the Long Island Crisis Center. Students had the opportunity to engage in mental health workshops, fitness challenges, and wellness screenings. Faculty members also got involved, offering sessions on mindfulness, exercise techniques, and healthy lifestyle habits. "Seeing our students enjoy the day and discover new interests is always my favorite part," said Mr. Gagstetter.

In addition to community organizations, the health fair was also a valuable opportunity for students to learn about extracurriculars at Syosset High School. The virtual enterprise classes used the event to showcase their initiatives, gaining attraction and support as they prepare to embark on their competition

Photo By: Christopher Gagstetter



Students engage with community health organizations, participating in various activities ranging from arts and crafts to physical exercise. A major attraction was the Kindness Rocks Project, where students had the opportunity to decorate rocks with kind messages for mental health.

season. Some of the largest health-related groups were present at the event, including the Pre-Medical Society and Global Health Club. Jaysukh Singh, co-president of the Pre-Medical Society said, "It was a lot of fun sharing my club's message to my peers. I look forward to seeing new faces at our upcoming meetings after the health fair."

The event's success was a team effort, with contributions from faculty, student volunteers, and administrators. With each year bringing more energy and participation, Mr. Gagstetter has big plans for the future. "We're thrilled to see the event grow, and we aim to make it even bigger next year. Thank you to everyone who made this year's health fair memorable," said Mr. Gagstetter.

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Each issue of the newspaper is posted online on the school website for the Syosset community.

National Merit Senior Sensations

Twenty one Syosset students score in the top one percent on the PSAT.

By: Winston Zhou

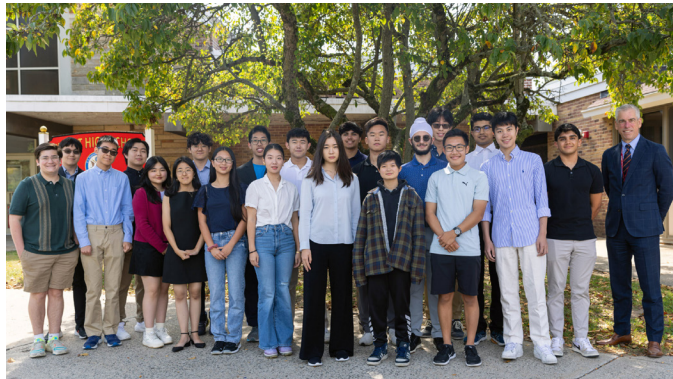


Photo Provided By: SCSD

In October 2023, over 3.5 million sophomores and juniors gathered across the U.S. to take part in the annual PSAT exam, serving both as a practice for the SAT and the qualification test for the National Merit Scholarship Award. Syosset's class of 2025 is home to 21 out of the 17,000 nationwide semifinalists, scoring at the top 1% of all test-takers.

Though difficult, many students found that their prior studies for the main SAT exam have greatly improved their chances of scoring well on the PSAT. Senior Jaysukh Singh said, "Having already studied for the SAT and taken numerous practice tests, I already had a lot of experience with the testing style, particularly the math section."

Many high-scoring students also advised future test takers to start studying for the SAT earlier. Senior Simonne Lim said, "It's highly recommended to start earlier - mostly because if you get everything done early, you don't have to deal with

school and clubs, especially since the PSAT is at the beginning of the school year when there's lots of pressure on you."

Those who scored at or exceeding the cutoff score for their state are granted the honor of becoming a National Merit Semifinalist - meaning that they have the chance to earn a scholarship worth up to \$2,500 off their college tuition. In February 2025, semifinalists will be notified of their acceptance as Finalists to receive the scholarship money. Senior Michael Ren said, "Colleges like USC (University of Southern California) offer good need-based aid, but they also offer merit scholarships for high-achieving students as well. The ability to receive additional financial support based on your PSAT performance is something that everybody should consider when applying to college."

Though scoring well is a great accomplishment, the PSAT offered both test practice and practical financial benefits beyond just recognition.

Latest SHS Admin Additions

Three new assistant principals join the Syosset administrative team.

By: Zoe Voulgaris



Dr. Kim



Ms. Kimyagarov



Dr. Parenteau

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For the new school year, Syosset welcomed three new assistant principals, Dr. Daniel Kim, Ms. Irina Kimyagarov, and Dr. Meghan Parenteau, each overseeing specific departments at the high school.

After graduating from Syosset High School in 2009, Dr. Kim is back as an assistant principal, involved in student management as well as professional development in the library. Working alongside the library staff, Dr. Kim helps run the program at the library and also oversees student life. When talking about students, he said that he loves "getting to see what kind of problems they're working on, what they're doing, or what kind of clubs they're trying to join and just get to know everyone." Dr. Kim is heavily involved in student life and says the office continues to be a "safe

space" for students if they have issues or need assistance.

Ms. Kimyagarov is the new Assistant Principal of Science and Technology, overseeing the classes and curriculum of these departments. When talking about the academic programming at Syosset, she said "The kind of coursework that the kids are involved in and what the tech department does is absolutely amazing. You will not find this anywhere else across Long Island."

Dr. Parenteau is the new Assistant Principal of Math and Business. When asked about her impressions on Syosset so far, she said that, "the students and the staff here have been so caring, supportive and friendly." She went on to say that she's excited about building a "new strong network filled with intellectuals and amazing, caring people" at Syosset.

Back and Better Than Ever

48 musicians are selected for NYSSMA All-State, with 28 musicians attending the Rochester All-State Festival.

By: Xihan Julie Zhang

For the 2024 All-State NYSSMA Festival, 48 Syosset musicians were selected over a variety of instruments ranging from band, orchestra, to voice. Some students qualified as "alternates" due to the highly-selective cross-state process where they remain "on call" until a spot opens up in the ensemble that their instruments are a part of, but all All-State students maintain a perfect score to be eligible. Out of the 48 musicians, 28 were selected to participate in the Rochester All-State Festival in December of 2024. These 28 musicians will go through a seating audition process and then proceed to Rochester on Thursday, December 5 and check in with their ensembles to prepare for the performance. Fine and Performing Arts Coordinator Dr. Christopher Hale said, "At that time they will be auditioned again for seating and then immediately begin rehearsing for a Saturday or Sunday concert."

Each year, students sign up for the All-State audition during the spring. Choosing repertoire from the NYSSMA Manual, students audition with their selected piece, three

scales and a sight reading chosen by their judge. They receive a score, a ranking along with the other musicians in their category, and a judge recommendation that is submitted to the NYSSMA organization for further evaluation.



Photo Provided By: SCSD

To be considered for the All-State audition in the first place, students must receive a recommendation letter from their school ensemble teacher, whether it's orchestra, band, or chorus. "Our music teachers play a large role in students' preparation. In order to be eligible for All-State, each student must be enrolled in an ensemble at school and recommended by that group's teacher," said Dr. Hale.

Looking back, the hard work and commitment to their instruments that all musicians put into repertoire practice for the All-State audition paid off with their All-State title achievements. All-State students are recognized by the school with their own individual portraits hung up on school walls along with the countless other Syosset musicians that have previously earned this title over the past decades.

Syosset Schools to Expand as Enrollment Booms

The district plans major renovations and expansions to tackle growing student enrollment.

By: Nikhil Shah

District enrollment is burgeoning, and with it, facilities across Syosset schools will be updated and expanded accordingly. The District's architects and engineers recently conducted an in-depth survey of school facilities and concluded that they require a number of improvements. The Facilities Improvement Bond put forth by district administration and the Board of Education was approved by the Syosset community. This Bond includes two propositions, the first addressing the "most immediate needs and space constraints that we're currently experiencing," and the second giving us "a jump start on the space constraints that we anticipate in our future," said Superintendent Dr. Thomas Rogers.

In the high school, our facilities were evaluated by "talking to administrators, high school principals, and high school leaders about what they see as future needs," said Ms. Philomena Hefferon, the district's Public Information Officer. The improvements in the high school include renovations and additions to our athletic spaces, expansion of the library, guidance suite, robotics space, and science research lab. Each of these facilities improvements were intentionally planned based on specific usage trends. For example, our Robotics Lab needs expansion because we "see a lot more kids signing up for robotics currently, which means we expect that trend to continue. There's a bunch of athletic teams that are being bussed off-site to practice, so it would help everyone if we had more athletic space," said Ms. Hefferon.

The library is also set to be expanded and relocated to just south of the cafeterias. "I think being

adjacent to the cafeteria will add to the collaboration that we want because it will be an easy flow from the cafeteria right into our space," said Ms. Trish Sergi. The library faculty have had extensive input on the modeling of the new building with the purpose of supporting students. Dr. Sarah Wasser said, "Some

Photos Provided By: SCSD



SHS New Library Rendering



SHS Gym Addition Rendering

students do conferences or college interviews here and they have a hard time finding a quiet area — so, we want to make sure that we have places where students can do individual work." This past June, the library was awarded the prestigious National School Library of the Year Award from the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). The new library space will allow faculty to continue this success and support students' ever changing needs.

The district's overall goals for the facilities improvements directly align with its mission- "to prepare students to thrive in both the future we imagine and one which may evolve in ways yet to be envisioned." "These updated spaces will allow us to improve our programs to meet the needs of the future and maintain that mission," said Ms. Hefferon.

The district recognizes that this process will be an arduous task. It will likely take years until both propositions have been realized, and will require tremendous work from faculty and community members. "It can be challenging to now take the vision that we have and make sure that all the paperwork is done, all the right contractors are hired, and that the schools are safe," said Ms. Hefferon. However, with the support of the community and the dedication of our staff, the future of this project appears promising.

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A Glimpse into Childhood

Syosset High School offers a unique opportunity for high school students to teach a group of preschoolers various activities that support their developmental growth and learning.

By: Elaine Liu

A child's early preschool years mark a pivotal time in a child's development, where they take their first official steps into the world of learning—exploring various letters, shapes, colors, and other essential skills that lay the foundation for their future growth. At Syosset High School, students have the unique opportunity to play an active role in this developmental stage by being teachers to these preschoolers. In creating this program, dedicated high schoolers gain and explore real-world experience in nurturing young minds and making a meaningful impact on children's lives.

Childhood Education has become a favorite class among students for various reasons, whether they're aspiring future teachers or simply looking for a fun and purposeful course. This relatively new course has drawn sizable interest within the high school, as it gives a one-of-a-kind, hands-on experience directly with preschoolers. Senior Ruoxi Lin said, "I am interested in teaching children, and wanted to gain experience in doing so. So far, I've helped create and teach numerous lessons, and I am ecstatic to be given the opportunity to take this class."

With preschool students attending the program from Tuesdays to Thursdays, Mondays and Fridays are dedicated planning days for high school students to create lessons for the upcoming weeks. Popular weekly themes have included Under the Sea, Rainbow, All About Me, Foods, People in My Community, and more. Within each unique theme, teachers work in small assigned groups to design hands-on activities that emphasize areas such as art, science, and kindergarten readiness. Senior Lorna Gao said, "One of my favorite activities we do with the children is Calendar Wall. Calendar wall is when we gather the students at the carpet and ask them questions

about the day while having students come up to help put up cards on the calendar."

In an art activity, preschoolers created their own "climbing rainbows" by coloring paper towels with rainbow colors and then dipping the paper towels into water to form a rainbow. Another activity was during the "Food" theme when children took part in a food scavenger hunt, "grocery shopping" for hidden items scattered in the classroom. Each special activity sparked creativity and curiosity while building upon foundational skills for the preschoolers. Ruoxi said, "Making lesson plans is actually pretty exciting since it is ultimately your job to create the activities preschoolers will do. Collaborating together with my peers to make these plans has also been fun."

Open to residents of Syosset, the Childhood Education program offers an enriching preschool experience at no cost. This is especially beneficial for parents with other obligations at home or those who work, ensuring their children acquire essential skills in a supportive and stimulating environment. The program is not only fun for preschoolers, as they play with their friends and learn from teachers, but also serves as an incredibly rewarding opportunity for high school students. As these students engage in teaching and mentoring young children, student teachers develop essential skills in leadership and creativity, all while fostering a love for learning. Kayla Lo, a freshman who is taking the course in the spring said, "I am looking forward to taking Childhood Education in the spring. My dream is to become an elementary school teacher who can make the same positive impact on young kids that my teachers have done for me throughout my years in school."



1. Junior Juliana Coscia helps a preschooler build essential skills as he carefully glues his name.
2. Senior Josephine Kang plays with the preschoolers during an activity where the children learned how to count apples.
3. Senior Amber Barjis and her preschool "twin" dress up for Spirit Week's "Country vs. Country Club" theme. Amber, a dedicated two-year participant in the Childhood Education program, has returned to the class multiple times, inspired by the rewarding experience it provides.

Photos by Marissa Maltz

Carnival: A Weekend of Rides, Food, and Spirit

The annual Syosset High School Carnival provides a weekend of thrills, treats, and school spirit.

By: Bhoomi Jobanputra



Swing Ride and Ferris Wheel at the Syosset High School Annual Carnival on Saturday morning. Carnival took place all weekend from Friday, October 25th to Sunday, October 27th at the Syosset High School field.
Photo by Bhoomi Jobanputra

Syosset High School's annual carnival brought the perfect mix of fun, food, and school spirit to the field. Running from Friday, October 25 through Sunday, October 27, the carnival had a broad selection of rides, snacks, and entertainment, all while celebrating the school's victorious Homecoming game.

The carnival started at 5 p.m. on Friday, slowly filling up as students, faculty, and others in the community celebrated the Homecoming win. With the football team pulling off a big victory, the carnival became a way to keep the Syosset spirit going into the night. Many club booths were there as well, where one could buy anything from hand-made jewelry, hand warmers, waffles, or even pay to pie their friend in the face (compliments of the Robotics club).

One of the biggest highlights of the weekend was the selection of rides. From the Ferris wheel for those who wanted a nice peaceful night to the Zipper, known to have a few passengers clutching their seats, the carnival had a big selection of rides for all ages to enjoy. "The Zipper is a Syosset classic. Half of my friends are too scared to go on it, and that's what makes it even more fun," said sophomore Zaina Ahmad. Other popular rides included the spinning Gravitron and the Polar Express, where everyone from freshmen to faculty was hanging on for dear life.

For those needing a break from the rides, the food scene was also a big hit. From fried Oreos to classic funnel cakes, cotton candy, ice cream, popcorn, and everything in between, there was a bite for everyone. When asked about her favorite part of the carnival, Diya Thomas said, "Oh, definitely the fried Oreos. Yes, I always look forward to the fried oreos."

Another feature of this year's carnival was the Bard-a-thon, a 12-hour Shakespearean performance marathon hosted by the Association of Creative Thespians club (ACT). With scenes from classics like Romeo and Juliet, the pop-up stage was popular for those looking to experience some culture between rides and give the ACT students a chance to showcase their talents. ACT member Laylah Parache said, "Shakespeare is such an amazing part of the carnival that I think everyone should come and listen to a few sonnets."

The carnival wrapped up on Sunday at 6 p.m., marking the end of a weekend filled with community spirit, laughter, and school pride. As the lights of the Ferris wheel faded and the booths packed up, students left with another year's worth of lasting memories.

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Behind-the-Scenes of National Competition

For the first time, the Syosset Chamber Orchestra prepares to compete at the 2025 ASTA National Orchestra Festival.

By: Xihan Julie Zhang

For the first time, the Syosset Chamber Orchestra applied to the 2025 American String Teacher Association National Orchestra Festival to engage in a competition among other high-leveled high school orchestras. Ensembles were required to submit a video of two contrasting musical works, concert programs, and recommendations. The Chamber Orchestra performance included forty minutes of repertoire, which included composers from the romantic period to contemporary period.

This national orchestral festival serves as an outstanding opportunity for students and educators to encourage work at the highest level. The practice put in before competition emphasizes the importance of teamwork and communication between students. The orchestral classroom is much like a sports team. Chamber Orchestra teacher Ms. Stephanie Merten said, "For the semester before the competition, each class day is laser focused. The students improve during this time just by being in such a rigorous class environment." The Syosset Chamber Orchestra consists of a total of 36 students, 20 being All-State recognized musicians. "We have the top string players in this high school in this group. The students are committed to their instruments, and it shows in the work they put in and in their performance level," said Ms. Merten.

The 3-day trip to Atlanta includes educational workshops, masterclasses, and world class performances like those from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Arkai Duo, Sphinx Organization, and top educators from around the country. They will also be visiting the Coca-Cola museum in Atlanta. "I'm really looking forward to ASTA because I don't think we've ever done something like this before," said third-year cellist Cody Cheng.

With senior musicians from the previous years leaving and new members joining, this impacts the ensemble differently each year. Ms. Merten said, "With the addition of new students to the group each year,

there is a transition period where the students have to get used to playing together. We have to rebuild the team. The struggles this year are the group's sense of pulse and the true collaboration of the orchestra as a cohesive team." Behind the scenes of a competition process, challenges will appear and push a musician in their practice. Therefore, it is important that students engage in skill-building activities on their instruments before starting to polish repertoire. Even at this level, the practice process remains rigorous, even for these students. "It's very exciting to have the opportunity to attend such a prestigious music conference. I am worried, however, regarding our chances at doing well—we have lots of high-level repertoire to go through and we will be up against the best high schools in the country," said third-year violinist Winston Zhou. Similarly, violist Valerie Liang said, "We've been putting in a lot of work and I really think that the



Photo By: Jessica Mayor

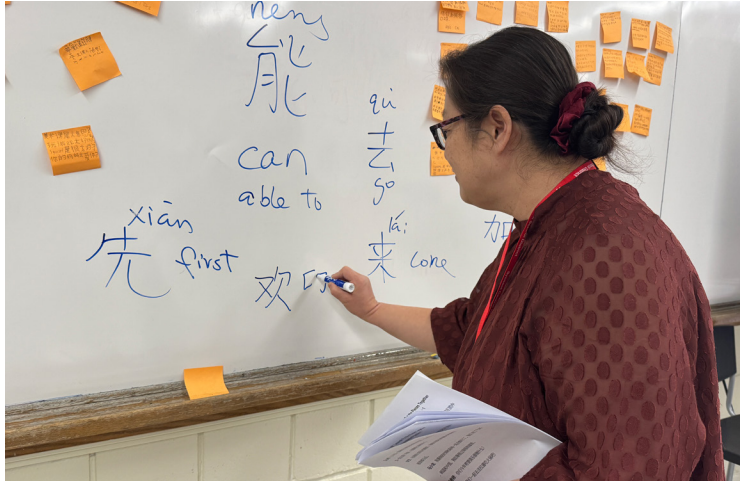
whole preparation process that we've been undergoing has really aided us in becoming more mature musicians and people. There's still a long way to go with the repertoire, and there are definitely many things that we have to dig deeper into, but I'm confident we can put the work in and make great music together."

Competitions of any sort come with hard work put into every practice, dedication to something you want to achieve, and the enjoyment of the process of doing what you love. In terms of music, this is nothing unfamiliar to these musicians. "It takes a certain level of student skill and team focus to even consider competing at this national level. However, I am proud to say that I have seen how our Chamber Orchestra has grown, and there's no doubt in my mind that we will be able to handle it. We are so lucky at Syosset to be at a level to allow us to take advantage of such an opportunity," said Ms. Merten.

Chinese Learning Experience

Syosset students share their different experiences in learning Chinese during the school year.

By: Suri Liu



Chinese teacher Ms. Matheus writes vocabulary on the board. She was going over the material on the next test.

Photo by Suri Liu

When people take language classes, what varieties of reasons lie behind it? Did their parents put them up to it? Did they genuinely want to learn a new language? With numerous students from different backgrounds and circumstances learning a new language, there will undoubtedly be a wide range of experiences. In language classes, there are usually 3 types of main backgrounds: The familiar and fluent, the familiar but not fluent, and the not familiar and not fluent. Knowing the language and being familiar with it will make learning easier for some compared to others, which is where different experiences start to arise.

This range of students occurs prominently in Chinese learning classes, where Chinese students largely dominate the classrooms. Many of them are students who previously spoke Chinese at home but are not fluent in reading and writing. However, students with previous knowledge of Chinese do not necessarily find Chinese classes, or more specifically, Chinese honors classes simple. Chloe Gao, a sophomore taking Chinese honors and Chinese class outside of school said, "Honestly, it's not bad. The teacher is nice and good at teaching. I like how we get to talk with partners. But geography is hard, so much memorization." Chloe learned Chinese while already knowing how to speak it, making many assignments and tests easier. Even so, sometimes simply speaking the language can't help you master certain aspects, and geography is one of them.

What if they came from a Chinese background, but have no previous knowledge of Chinese? Would they have the same experience as fluent Chinese students, or would they have a more difficult time in the class? Sophia Chen, a sophomore in Chinese regular said, "Chinese is difficult sometimes, especially the writing, but the teachers are super patient and understanding, so I never have a super hard time with it." Despite the difficulty, being able to enjoy and learn about a culture is the experience that brings everyone together, whether they have Chinese roots or not. "I really enjoy how I am able to feel closer to my roots, which motivates me, and I feel honored to learn it," said Sophia.

Nevertheless, students with Chinese heritage would still be relatively familiar with aspects of their language and culture. The fullest learning experience would come from foreign students who study Chinese with no background. Olivia Lebron, a sophomore who had no prior knowledge of Chinese other than in school said, "Learning Chinese is fun, with many stories behind the characters and pretty unique humor." Teachers also admitted to teaching foreign and fluent students differently. Ms. Ye Xue-Yi Matheus said, "Foreign students...I focus more on Chinese culture. But for AP, I focus more on writing and grammar." Ms. Matheus believes that Chinese culture, such as holidays and idioms, plays a huge part in enhancing the speed of learning Chinese.

The Heart and Hustle of the Syosset Cafeteria

A glance behind the scenes at the dedicated people and food safety practices that keep our school fueled.

By: Eliana Leder



Staff member Kyle serves breakfast in the cafeteria. Kyle helped serve over six different kinds of breakfast foods to Syosset students every morning.
Photo by Eliana Leder

During a busy and stressful day filled with classes and homework, it is easy to forget, or neglect, the team of kind and resolute people that give us the energy to fulfill our tasks. Whether it's baking hot meals, assembling sandwiches, or serving hundreds of students each period, the cafeteria workers navigate government guidelines and student preferences to bring the most high quality meals possible.

Syosset High School partners with Whitsons Culinary Group to follow strict guidelines set by the USDA's National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. These regulations cover aspects such as portion sizes, calorie limits, and the inclusion of key food groups like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat milk. Meals must also meet targets for calories, sodium, and saturated fats. While meals must adhere to the national guidelines, schools have some flexibility in choosing dishes from Whitsons' recipe database to best suit students. Syosset takes advantage of this opportunity by maintaining four food stations serving varying hot food, pizza, sandwiches, and burrito bowls.

However, some students' desires cannot be met under USDA's food guidelines. Chewing gum and sweetened sodas cannot be sold in school cafeterias. Some students experience frustration at not being able to purchase what they want and believe that school

meals could be significantly improved with new innovations. For example, there was an expressed interest in having a salad bar station where people would be able to choose vegetables, proteins, and dressings to their liking. Junior Max Goldstein said, "I personally feel as though there are a lot of needs of students that could be accommodated with new dishes."

Many students were generally unaware of the government guidelines that control the food they are being served. "I would definitely say that I'm completely uninformed. I'm sure that there are nutritional standards set by the state, but I'm...left out of the whole picture because they don't tell you this stuff, they just tell you what they're serving for the day," said Max. Perhaps more disclosure can increase student awareness of the USDA guidelines and boost appreciation for the hardworking cafeteria team.

The Syosset High School cafeteria staff truly cares about student preferences and health. Syosset cafeteria worker Chris Baldwin said, "Life's hard enough as a kid," and that he always tries to "bring a smile to their face, to make them forget about things for a while, even if it's for a few minutes." The staff feels a personal sense of reward from cooking for and serving students. "They brought my personality out. I'm probably around the best kids in the world," said Chris.

Surviving the High School Experience

Seasoned seniors answer freshmen questions about transitioning to high school.

By: Gabby Montejano

The transition from middle school to high school is not what most freshmen expect. It's a lot less *High School Musical* and a lot more like Saoirse Ronan's *Lady Bird*. From knowing most of the students at your middle school to being in a class full of strangers, high school contains many jump scares. Even seniors who have spent four years at SHS still struggle, but none struggle the first few months more than the freshmen. The freshmen here have a lot of questions about the transition and seniors can provide the answers. Here at Syosset, freshman whether new to the school or district, can always have the wisdom of upperclassmen to rely on.

Freshman Gabby Montejano

Q: "What makes this school so tight knit?"

Senior Dani Kaplan

A: "Honestly I think it's because there's something for everyone. You can find your community no matter how niche it is."

Freshman Isabella Surber

Q: "Is it hard to keep a friend group throughout high school?"

Senior Sophia Ceron

A: "For me and my group of friends, not really. We stayed friends because we are all in pretty much the same clubs and have the same interests. I think I've just been lucky though."

Freshman Sophia Staller

Q: "How can you destress from school without procrastinating work?"

Senior Arnav Logani

A: "I don't really de-stress. I just try to get all my work done and not procrastinate, and that helps me calm down."

Freshman Geetika Challa

Q: "What's the hardest AP and is it worth taking AP classes?"

Senior Jadon Lin

A: "AP Gov is hardest for me, but AP Physics is probably the hardest in general. It really depends on what you want to major in. APs generally help you develop a mindset that is beneficial for your major. It can also help develop critical skills even if you're not going into a field for your AP class."

Freshman Yash Tomar

Q: "Are extracurricular activities really important for college and are sports or clubs more important?"

Senior Aiden Saavedra

A: "Both are equally important but sports are harder to get into. Clubs are easier to do multiple at a time, however, leadership positions in either clubs or sports look great on college applications."



Photo Provided By: Gabby Montejano

The Next Chapter: Beyond Literature

Serving books, records and comfort to Long Islanders since 1977.

By: Audrey Chan

Despite the modern age of streaming services and the rise of digital book formats, bookstores like The Next Chapter continue to comfort the remaining readers of literature. While many today choose e-books through services like Kindle or audiobooks, the printed format, and subsequently bookshops, still manage a hold on readers.

The Next Chapter, an independent bookshop in Huntington, has been serving Long Islanders since December 2022. Owner Mallary Braun started the business as a successor to The Book Revue (being the former manager), which closed its doors in September 2021. Originally established in 1977 by the Klein brothers, The Book Revue closed after 44 years of operation. "Richard [Klein] offered me some of the books from Book Revue. We had an account that we used to sell books online, and he offered that to me, and I thought well, I don't just want to sell books online, I want to have a storefront as well," said Ms. Braun.

Today, the quiet shop continues in The Book Revue's legacy with a vast assortment of books for every need; such as in mystery, art, history, and cooking. Alongside their collection of secondhand books are an abundant new selection and rare first/signed editions, great as special gifts for readers. Going to the very back of the store, one can expect to find a comforting room with dim lights and sofas amongst rows of clearance bookshelves, perfect for the secondhand book lover who enjoys a cheap deal. Additionally, the shop sells vinyls, art prints, stationary and handmade goods. Art prints and general goods, displayed at the front of

the shop and cashier area, support local Long Island artists.

Perhaps the most exciting for many readers are the author signings. Notable authors like Karin Slaughter, author of the mystery series and TV show *Will Trent*, have visited The Next Chapter for author events. And that is not the end of the list; as a community center, the shop hosts a variety of literary and musical events throughout the year. TNC and Bent Pages Book club meet once a month in store, focusing on literary fiction and queer topics respectively. Both are free events that offer discounts on books discussed. Monthly literary nights are also great ways to share and engage with other writers, such as The Long Island Writers Guild that meets on the fourth Monday for individuals to share their works. Ms. Braun said, "I like to see a lot of people in the store. There's not that many places that people go to meet other people that's not home or work. And so I like the gathering aspect, I like to hear people enjoying themselves,

When reading is a declining hobby in the United States, bookshops and libraries have offered spaces to foster collegial ideas and artistic pursuits. Whether it's digging through clutter or strolling across neat shelves, sudden inspiration can be lurking behind pages, loose or bound. The Next Chapter is a treasure of Huntington, a small bookshop dedicated to literature as movement and community as essential to aligning great minds alike. "I obviously love to sell the books. It's cool to hear what people are thinking and what they're working on too," said Ms. Braun.



1. Fit with sofas and clearance books in every corner, the cozy backroom is not to be missed. Students and customers alike had a perfect spot to curl up with a good book.

2. At the heart of The Next Chapter, a display of books in both fiction and nonfiction line the shelves. Staff-written notes about each book provided a helpful recommendations.

Photos by Chad Hlaki

Club Spotlight

Animation Club

A look into Syosset's Animation Club and their goals for this upcoming year.

By: Morgan Shen



The animation club meets to show animations that they take inspiration from. Last year, they created their own fantasy story based on the animations they watched.
Photo by Nathalia Guzman

As you walk into the classroom, students are buzzing with creativity, the sounds of their stylus pens tapping their screens. Here lies the animation club, which will soon be celebrating its second anniversary.

Created on November 15, 2022, the animation club is held after school in ARI by the cafeteria. It was made for intertwining student creativity into beautiful animation arts. Over the years, the club has created animation works such as "The Space Ottersy" and even collaborated with The Melodies Across Organization to create "A Symphony of Colors." During their first carnival event last year, the animation club sold stickers and even took art commissions from carnival goers. An original animation club member, Gillian Kralstein said, "Last year at the carnival, it was so cool getting to see that we, as artists, had an audience to sell and commission for. For a lot of us, it was our first time drawing for commission and it was amazing to see that people appreciated our art within our own

community and school."

With new and old officers in hand, the plans for the club are still coming together. President Julia Rhee said, "I plan to finish the animation project we have been working on since last year. I want to encourage all of the members of our club to collaborate and contribute to this project since it's something that I believe everyone will enjoy doing. I also have plans on contacting other clubs/organizations and hosting fundraisers by either selling our club stickers or doing more art commissions."

Compared to other clubs, the animation club is quite new, but the club already has numerous club members. Members also shared their experiences with the club so far. Aidan Yao said, "The club is rather fun, not only do you get to hang out with friends and stuff, but you get to express a form of creativity via whatever animation you get assigned to do and stuff."



Tea Sparks Popularity with Teenagers

The recent opening of a new location of Yaaas Tea, a popular bubble tea brand, captures the interest of many teenagers across Syosset.

By: Mari Moustakakis

Yaaas Tea, a bubble tea chain that officially began in 2021, recently opened a new location in Syosset. The opening attracted many customers, specifically teenagers. This was because of its mainly digital way of operating, for example, its entirely electronic menu and ordering system.

The tea chain was brought to Syosset to familiarize the company among a younger audience. The store's owner, Jamie Jiang, wished to add locations to share good bubble tea with the Syosset community. Ms. Jiang said, "I want it to be popular because I want people to know how good we are."

Being a relatively new brand, Yaaas Tea continues to grow and expand its business with the intent of familiarizing itself among teenagers, as well as spreading its bubble tea and flavors to attract young customers. One such customer was freshman Saroop Surdhar. Saroop had an overall positive experience at the cafe. It wasn't just the design that made this café popular

though. Overall, the shop has been a success since its opening. Saroop said, "The store had such a nice vibe and the boba was high key amazing."



Bubble tea made shortly after the opening of Yaaas Tea. Drink flavors included one Iced Brown Sugar Milk Tea, two Iced Caramel Milk Teas, and one Dark chocolate milk Tea.

Photo by Sarah Chen

Frantastic Food

A student visits a local pizzeria in Woodbury to review three different items to see if it's worth trying.

By: Tyler Gany

Frantonis is a pizzeria restaurant right off Jericho turnpike in Woodbury, and it is a very popular restaurant in the Syosset community. Students at the high school often come here after school and after their sports. The question is what makes it so popular? I tried three different items on the Frantonis menu to answer this question: plain slice, BBQ chicken slice, and garlic knots.

The plain slice was exactly what anyone would want after a long day of school which was not too oily and just the right amount of cheese- classic and simple. The BBQ chicken slice featured tons of chicken and a tangy BBQ sauce that complemented the cheese well. I would recommend this slice also to newcomers as it is very filling and worth it. The last item was the garlic

knots, which were crispy and flavorful, with a perfect amount of garlic glaze that made them a tasty side. Overall, the food really helped explain why this place is so popular among locals.

But it wasn't just the food that made the restaurant so great, it was the atmosphere. It had a very casual vibe inside that made it feel very welcoming, which is perfect for high school students or anyone to have a quick bite and hang out with friends. The friendly staff also further enhanced the experience, greeting customers with genuine smiles and quick service. This added to the cozy, family-friendly vibe, making it an ideal spot for gatherings and great food.



Photo By: Tyler Gany

Spill the Feels: Better than Expected

Seventeen breaks the 'bad English collab' in their new hit album.

By: Suri Liu

With K-pop groups notorious for having that one English collab that "no one cares about," Seventeen was having a bad pre-comeback when it was revealed that the title track for their upcoming album was a collaboration with DJ Khaled.

Many people, mainly Seventeen's fans, criticized them for making the collaboration the title track, fearing that it might ruin the album's vibe. Additionally, since one of their members will be serving the military, it would be the last time in many years that we'd get to see the entire band together again, making fans believe that "1 to 13" should've been the title instead. However, to much surprise, the album was gained lots of love. Right now, this album is quickly growing in popularity and streams and is doing extremely well in the K-pop community.

This album is filled with upbeat and optimistic songs that showcase Seventeen's unique style. One thing that Seventeen is exceptionally good at is incorporating soothing vocals in their songs, but then also having amazing hip-hop raps and dance styles to give their music a unique visual theme. Their title track is rising in

the charts. With a catchy beat, melody, and rap, this song resonates with many Seventeen songs, making fans believe that this was a worthy title track for the last album that the entire group would release together for possibly five years.

Their team solo tracks: Rain, Candy, and Water all showcase the duality of Seventeen's music. Water incorporates a hip-hop style, starring the hip-hop subgroup of Seventeen. Candy, just like Water, has an overall genre of pop. The soft piano background and romantic lyrics make this song shine in addition to fully showcasing the vocal abilities of their group. The last

subgroup-focused song is Rain, performed by the performance subgroup. This group, as the name suggests, prioritizes dance.

Seventeen truly outdid themselves with this mini-album with the amazing collab with DJ Khaled and a self-written hip-hop song. Of course, opinions about this album could still be negative, but no matter what you think of this collab, the unending talents of Seventeen as a group cannot be denied.



Source: IMDB

Another Homerun by Dreamwork: The Wild Robot Doesn't Disappoint

An enchanting movie experience exceeds expectations for both viewers and critics.

By: Justin Yu

Age is not a factor when watching *The Wild Robot*! This film features breathtaking animation and a passionate connection between viewers and characters, resulting in a truly spectacular experience.

The *Wild Robot* elevates computer animation to a new level of depth. The stunning visuals, with their vibrant colors and detailed forest landscapes, beautifully capture the essence of nature. The artwork enhances the storytelling in powerful ways; for example, the use of light and shadow in the first half of the film showcases both the beauty and dangers of Roz's environment. The island's lush greenery and diverse wildlife immerse us in this enchanting world.

The film's poignant narrative centers on a child's growth over time, highlighting milestones achieved with the loving care of a mother figure. In the story, Brightbill, the duckling, initially rejects his mother after discovering that Roz was responsible for the death of his family. Despite Roz's efforts to prepare Brightbill for migration, she covers her guilt by continuing to get her child ready by studying how geese fly and swim to prepare Brightbill for his journey. Roz even hires a coach to help Brightbill learn to fly, much like a mother seeking a tutor for her child struggling in a subject. Eventually, Brightbill learns to fly and migrates away, mirroring

the emotional journey of a child leaving for college or going into society alone. This portrayal of watching your kid grow up tugs at the heartstrings, making the emotional journey worthwhile. The heart-racing sound design evokes a sense of hope, amplifying the intensity of both extraordinary accomplishments and moments of worry. The *Wild Robot* is a true masterpiece that resonates with universal human emotions. Whether you're a mother, a child, or a community supporter, this movie will touch your heart.

While the film excels in many areas, some moments felt rushed, particularly toward the end. The rapid resolution of conflicts and the final scene may leave viewers wondering about the events leading up to the conclusion. However, critical scenes' engaging pacing and emotional weight ultimately captivate audiences, even if they might need clarification about the outcomes of Roz's journey.

Overall, *The Wild Robot* is a beautifully animated film that captures the spirit of Peter Brown's story. The movie resonates with viewers of all ages with its stunning visuals, heartfelt performances, and inspiring narrative about connection and belonging. This film is a must-see for families and animation enthusiasts, and I eagerly anticipate future adaptations from DreamWorks.



Source: MS Stock



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Recent Rise of the Menendez Case Among Gen Z

The Menendez Brothers: A Case Revisited Through Gen Z's Lens

By: Joanna Kanellopoulos & Angelina Kumar

The new Netflix series, *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*, premiered on September 19, 2024 and quickly captured the attention of viewers. Within just four days of its release, the show gained 12.3 million views. By their second week, that number rose to 19.5 million. The show delves into the aspects of the Menendez case during the 1990s. Despite the time that has passed, the show and case itself have become increasingly popular among Gen Z.

Discussions surrounding the series and the Menendez case have unfolded on social media, making it a significant part of current pop culture. The series allows a fresh set of eyes on the case and with platforms like TikTok and Instagram, Gen Z has become engaged with the case, even starting their own "FreeTheMenendezBrothers movement." Countless Tiktoks have been created, with the hashtag #MenendezBrothers having over 100,000 posts.

The topics addressed in the case are now ap-



proached with far more sensitivity than during the 1990s, prompting a new generation to voice their opinions. Senior Kara Pan said, "My TikTok has been filled with videos of the show, and I never knew about the case until the show happened. It's interesting to

see how the topics discussed in the case are being portrayed now. There's definitely a greater sensitivity to what the brothers have endured." Senior Aminah Mohamed said, "When this case first came out in the '90s, people viewed the Menendez brothers as just murderers. Now, I feel that this generation better understands the impact of abuse."

Photo By: Larissa Mallen

With over 19 million views and a vibrant online movement, it's clear that the Menendez case resonates more than ever, offering a fresh perspective for a new generation, Gen Z. The release of the Netflix series *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* has shined a light on the complexities of the case and reflects a shift in societal attitudes toward sensitive issues.

Game of the Year: Baldur's Gate 3

Baldur's Gate 3 becomes first game to win game of the year at BAFTA, The Golden Joysticks, TGA, and GDC.

By: Jadon Lin

With many games being released in 2023 such as Marvel's Spider-Man 2 and Resident Evil 4, Baldur's Gate 3 stands atop all of them, being designated as Game of the Year. Baldur's Gate is a game series based on the tabletop role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons (D&D). Baldur's Gate 3 brings back many fans of D&D as well as new players who want to look for a new game experience.

Baldur's Gate is an extremely replayable game that has an amazing storyline with many different routes that could be taken leading to a variety of endings. Starting with character creation, players can decide between 12 classes and 46 subclasses along with 11 different races all of which can change the way you play the game. The game is also nonlinear, meaning players can enjoy the game however they want, which can create a whole different experience than previous playthroughs.

Along the way, players can enjoy the classic role-

play of D&D with high quality visuals, sound effects, and narration which all combine to create an experience that a board on a table can't replicate. Baldur's Gate also brings a completely unique combat system which relies on dice rolling as well as spell slots which can feel like a breath of fresh air to new players. With all the classic features, the game brings the entirety of D&D to you on the desktop without the hassles of finding a party or a dungeon master.

Baldur's Gate also allows for easy setup and completely eliminates the need for a dungeon master. Since it's a game that can be launched straight from a computer, players can easily schedule times to play the game together and even play campaigns with pre-set characters the game provides.

Baldur's Gate 3 is a unique game experience that strays away from the mainstream of first person shooters and multiplayer online battle arenas to bring back a gaming experience that many people will enjoy.

“Brotherhood” On and Off the Field

From victories on the field to team bonding off, Boys Varsity Soccer is a team fueled by success.

By: Jake Kuropatkin



Photo By: Abby Wechsler

Back: Coach Brett Waxer, Benny Meyerowitz, Cole Maguire, Raphael Daniele, Zach Kaufman, Anthony Rizzo, Jack Gubin, Miles Nevins, Josh Wiesenfeld, John Tsiakos, Jorge Rando, John Shaunnese, Chris Ancona, Chase Pendrick, Andrew Zammit, Thomas Rigowitz, Xavier Navarro, Alex Derosa, Coach Jamie Pedicini

Front: Xavier Pultz, Anthony Fiori, Owen Sackett, Aiden Kohlberg, Cameron Chan, Jack Pendrick Michael Marcos, Cody Lefkowitz, Danny Flynn, Jake Dapice

Led by Coaches Brett Waxer and Jamie Pedicini, senior captains Zach Kaufman, Jack Pendrick, and Cameron Chan, as well as top goal scorers Xavier Navarro and Cole Maguire, the Boys Varsity Soccer team finished their regular season with a record of 6-1-5 and clinched the number three seed in the Nassau County playoffs.

One of the reasons the team had another successful regular season was due to their chemistry. In fact, on the back of the boys' warm up shirts, it reads the word "brotherhood" with nothing else. This highlights the bond the boys have made and how they all wanted to win it for each other.

Benny Meyerowitz, a sophomore in his first year on the team said, "The team welcomed me with open arms." The boys' bond made Benny feel much more comfortable and gave him the confidence to perform in important matches. He said, "It felt like I had been there forever instantly. Anytime I made a mistake, my brothers just hyped me up and made me get over it instantly."

While the boys have been working all season,

they also made sure to have fun. Benny said, "We hang out all the time and I consider them as friends just as much as I consider them teammates. It's like we are friends who also hang out every day while playing the sport we love."

With their determination and "brotherhood," the boys clinched a thrilling 1-0 victory against Plainview in the Nassau County Championships, crowning them Nassau County Champs for the season. Cole Maguire netted the decisive goal, while Miles Nevins defended the win with 8 crucial saves. This victory held special significance as the team had fallen just short of a county title in recent years, motivating them to succeed this season. Despite a loss in the Long Island Championship at Farmingdale State College, the team had a highly successful season. With undeniable talent and a bond rooted in hard work and brotherhood, the boys are eager to go all the way next year.

Click the Play Button
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Serving Up Senior Day Victory

The Girls Varsity Tennis team ends the regular season by earning the top seed in their journey to the New York State Championships.

By: Elaine Liu



Photo By: Nellie Wong

Back: Coach Shai Fisher, Sophia Cheng, Zia Mukherjee, Stephanie Liang, Kayla Kim, Lumi Park, Sia Mehta, Elaine Liu, Kayla Lo, Callie Hatzis, Lulu Bi
Front: Hannah Wang, Selena Wang, Diya Varma, Shubu Pradhan, Manasi Pradhan, Julia Isham, Sanam Mehta, Stephanie Marcheret

Senior Day represents an exciting moment for varsity athletes of all sports, marking their final high school regular season match before the intensity of playoffs. For the Girls Varsity Tennis team, this year's Senior Day was no exception. But this wasn't just any Senior Day—Syosset's match against Cold Spring Harbor was also the girls' golden opportunity to secure the coveted number one seed in the Nassau County Division 1 playoffs. A decisive victory would commence Syosset's playoff journey, with the girls looking to break their streak of runner-up finishes and claim the New York State Division I State Championship title.

The team's most significant battles came against Port Washington and Roslyn, both schools known for their strong tennis programs, as they fought to secure the top seed in Nassau Division I. Among these matches, the girls' comeback victory against Port Washington stood out. Earlier in the season, they had narrowly lost to the Vikings with a score of 3-4. However, the girls were set on coming back stronger than ever and this time, propelled by their unyielding determination and competitive spirit, the girls broke Port Washington's 10-match winning streak with a decisive 4-3 victory. The win was clinched by Syosset's third singles and senior co-captain Sanam Mehta with a 4-6, 7-5, 6-2 match. Adding to the excitement of this victory was the return of Stephanie Marcheret, who had also won her first match back. They now dominated with an impressive 15-1 overall record.

On Senior Day, Syosset celebrated top players Manasi Pradhan, Zia Mukherjee, and Sanam Mehta as they competed in their final regular season matches. The team delivered an exciting 6-1 victory, building on the momentum of their earlier wins against Port Washington and Roslyn. Senior Zia Mukherjee's clinching

performance would seal the win, bringing the team one step closer to their goal of capturing their first ever State Championship title. When asked about this accomplishment, eighth grader Selena Wang said, "It's pretty exciting for our team to claim the number one seed for the playoffs. I think it really shows off our hard work and commitment paying off, and I'm sure that we're all looking forward to showcasing our skills during the coming matches."

This year, the girls' unity and collective excitement brought them together. Throughout the season, the team had been working hard and training almost every day. However, a defining aspect that helped drive these victories was the girls' bonds with each other and their love for the sport. For example, throughout the regular season, some of the varsity members helped volunteer by running an Harry B. Thompson Middle School tennis clinic for almost 50 girls. Moreover, the team dressed up in all pink for a Breast Cancer Awareness Match where the girls wore matching socks and braids, engaged in poster making, and hosted a Pasta Party night. Freshman Sophia Cheng, a two-year player on the varsity tennis team said, "This year our team has an amazing sense of team unity and bonding. I like how we work together. There's always encouragement from those around me during practices and we're almost like a big family. We all push each other to work harder and we are all working towards the same goal."

The Girls Varsity Tennis team clinched the Nassau County Championship with an impressive 6-1 victory, with junior Elaine Liu and 7th grader Hannah Wang securing the winning match. The team continued to train hard on the way to becoming Long Island and Regional champions.

Teamwork and Triumph

The Girls Varsity Soccer team prepares for playoffs, while making an impact on and off the field.

By: Lily Portnoy

The Girls Varsity Soccer team, led by Coach Arnone and first year Assistant Coach Austin, continue to embrace their "For the Team" mantra as they prepared for the program's return to the Nassau County Play-offs. As a key to their success this season, this year's team carried on the legacy of previous Syosset teams by playing smart and strategic, team-oriented soccer. The girls' collective efforts have resulted in a fourth place finish in the team's competitive Nassau conference and have produced a team total of 21 goals and 13 assists.

Coach Arnone said that their "For the Team" philosophy encouraged the players to remember that "everything we do is for the team, and we all make sacrifices to commit ourselves to this collective goal." With this philosophy, the girls had numerous victories in tough matches. For example, a significant season highlight can be traced back to September 16 where Syosset battled its school rival Massapequa. The ladies came home from the away game with a hard earned 3-1 win. That specific game featured three goals led by the team's goal and points leader Alexa Baek, who was also named a Newsday Athlete of the Week.

Following the Massapequa game, the girls struggled through some tough losses. However, with these losses, the team rededicated themselves to hard work in both practice and the gym. This effort would in turn catapult the girls to a key victory against Hicksville.

Hicksville would give the team some much needed momentum as the Class AAA playoffs approached. She said, "We were in a slump, but got out of it against Massapequa. With this recent win, this group feels confident and ready to compete."

In addition, the girls applied their unique team approach towards off the field activities and various social causes throughout the Syosset community. The team successfully raised over \$10,000 through its Breast Cancer fundraiser, which was donated to an organization called Pink Aid. Furthermore, the team continued to increase breast cancer awareness by showing off their stylish pink tattoos, ribbons, and customized pink jerseys while on the playing field. The team also helped raise \$20,000 by participating in Relay for Life, with proceeds going towards the American Cancer Society.

After losing thirteen seniors to graduation last year, Coach Arnone has been pleased by the opportunities that have arisen for younger players to contribute to and experience a varsity sports environment. With the playoffs looming, he said, "There are plenty of opportunities for growth, and I feel the motivation and excitement from our younger players. I've seen our new athletes maturing and learning quickly. We all feel like we have something to prove this year, and I'm excited to see how it all unfolds during our playoff run."



1. Senior Lily Brill makes a key save to help the team succeed. As a goalie, her quick reflexes have been essential to the team's strong defense this season.

2. Senior captain Alexa Baek skillfully controls the ball with her dribbling. Last season, Baek earned an All County Honorable Mention for her skills on the field.

Photos by Lifetouch Studio

JV Soccer Scores Big

The Boys JV Soccer team ends a successful season with a triumphant victory over Oceanside, one of the division's top-ranked teams.

By: Mira Narayan

At Syosset High School, there is a wide array of sports available. No matter what sport, these groups of dedicated athletes put their best foot forward and perform with talent and skill. The Boys JV Soccer team dominated the junior varsity rankings in their conference this season. Along the way, they faced some tough components, but ultimately achieved a successful season and won most of their games.

Notably, at their final match against Oceanside High School, the boys won with 2-0 score, with goals being scored in less than 20 seconds between each other. Christian Janiero said, "The mentality of the team is always good; we always try to be focused. During our last game, we scored two amazing goals in under a minute, which showed how we're a team that never gives up. Sometimes, the team would slow down, but in the end, we pushed through." Coach Christopher Romano said, "It was a great game...we played Oceanside, which is always top three within our division. We always expect competition, and it was tight to the end—but it was a great win because we scored two goals in the last 50 seconds. We were gelling well overall."

Coach Romano was formerly the Boys Varsity Soccer coach, meaning that he understood the mindset that his players needed and how they should be prepared before games. He further said, "As a previous varsity coach, I know what is expected of the varsity level, and I know that any of my players can be pulled up, at any time, and they need to be prepared for that. So, every day when training our whole mentality is just to out-work. We work harder than many other JV teams. That's guaranteed."

Alongside the upperclassmen who played on the team, much of the group dynamic and spirit

came from the freshmen, who are discovering the stark difference between middle school and high school sports. Leon Chen said, "It's focused mainly on winning. Of course, middle school was too, but in high school, the vibe is just—more serious. We're always trying to improve and work on our mistakes."

Overall, the boys moved through the season, working hard while meeting many milestones along the path to success. The boys ultimately reached second place in their conference and aim to reach first place next season.



The Boys JV Soccer team plays defense moments before their 2-0 win against Oceanside High School.
Photo by Zoe Li-Mazzeo

Ins and Outs of Oyster Bay Community Rowing

The Oyster Bay Rowing team has balanced charity and making an impact in their community with their competitive triumphs.

By: Kingsley Ngitngit



1. The OBCR high school girls' team rowing during one of their competitive events. The girls featured in this boat from were Madison Shum, Michaela McDermott, Evy Yeh, and Mayan Edwards.

2. The boys' team A boat is in the lead at the NYC Scholastic Championships held on May 12 in Saratoga, NY. The competition featured nine of the team's boats making it to the finals.

Photo provided by OBCR

As temperatures heighten and the first signs of spring begin to show, the Oyster Bay Community Rowing Team's 2024 fall season came to a close. However, the players were still hungry for competition, as they anticipate the upcoming spring season.

Oyster Bay Community Rowing (OBCR) is a non-profit public charity organization that is based in Oyster Bay, NY. It was founded in 2017 by a group of people who wanted to use their volunteering skills to share their love of rowing and help their community. Specifically, OBCR commits itself to educating the community about rowing, helping others find a new love for the sport. In the past, the OBCR team had their own stand at the annual Oyster Bay Festival, drawing in over 100,000 visitors per year, where team members volunteered their time to teach others the basics of rowing.

The OBCR team has engaged in numerous volunteering activities. Recently, OBCR athletes helped build a new home for a family on Long Island, in cooperation with another non-profit organization, Habitat for Humanity. The two organizations collaborated multiple times over the years giving back to the community. Outside of volunteering, the OBCR also has a more competitive side. The high school team has a very rigorous work ethic and frequently participated in competitions. Training and working hard together, the team has been able to achieve numerous successes, both individually and as a collective whole.

The team practiced every week from 3:45 to 6:30

p.m. in order to compete in the conference. Junior Madison Shum, a member of the girls' team who competed last spring said, "Training hard every day after school is very rewarding, especially after seeing your teammates hit personal bests. It is also heartwarming to watch your teammates cheer on you and others on the team." These dedicated athletes did numerous tests to achieve their skill level. Madison said, "We did the 2K Benchmark Test [where an athlete tries to row 2,000 meters as quickly as possible] and along the way, there was a lot of team spirit as everyone was looking out for each other due to the fact that we have to move in sync together when rowing on water."

The team was able to achieve excellent results at the NYC Scholastic Championships in Saratoga, NY. The Women's Varsity team was able to score a gold and the Men's U17 got a bronze. Both teams were off to Nationals because of their stellar achievements. Moreover, in last year's Spring season, one of the high school boats advanced to the national competition, featuring Syosset High School seniors Andrew Mene-shian, Dylan Geissler, and Marcus Hoshino.

These awards not only reflected the team's overall hard work and dedication, but also their coaches who motivated them with inspiration, energy, and discipline that gave them the strength necessary to get to the finish line. Madison said, "There was a collective effort that fueled every member of our team to do well at races and practices."

From the Impossible to the Possible

The New York Mets 2024 season went from the question of survival after poor early results to a most improbable surge into playoff positioning.

By: Ben Dwek

A discouraging 24-33 record at the end of May gave way to some key changes in personnel and approach that catapulted the Mets into an inspiring comeback, finishing with a record of 89-73 and snatching the final National League playoff spot on the last day of the regular season. This rally was led by outstanding individual performances, new strategy, and sheer determination of will from the team and its new management.

The early struggles for the Mets were huge, especially in the pitching rotation, as their consistency got much weaker due to a spate of injuries. Players such as Jose Quintana struggled to keep games closed down. But from June on, the Mets went 61-36 over the remainder of the season. A lot of that was the change brought by star contributors like shortstop Francisco Lindor, who brought leadership and a much-needed hot streak into the fold, and Pete Alonso, whose home runs made huge differences in critical games.

At the front of that attack, Lindor and Alonso led the charge as the year wore on, but young third baseman Brett Baty was replaced by fellow prospect Mark Vientos due to poor performance. In less than a month, Vientos became one of the highest-ranked in the MLB at the hot corner. Another strange yet vital player also joined the team in the early part of the season. After years of struggles with several different teams, longtime veteran Jose Iglesias was called up from his minor league contract. As soon as he got the opportunity, Iglesias became a fan favorite due to his electric performances, batting over .400 for his first month with the team. The rotation settled in, and the pen was improved with a dominant closer in Edwin Díaz. That combination allowed the Mets to perform in the biggest moments—including the NL Wild Card win over the Philadelphia Phillies that catapulted them into their first playoff series win in years. The magical journey in the playoffs continued as they fought in the NLCS against the Los Angeles Dodgers. Although the Mets lost to the Dodgers, it was a very

competitive series showing that the team has begun to embrace competitiveness against the flagship franchises of MLB.

The 2024 season was also quite noteworthy with regard to the mentoring provided by David Stearns, who became the new president of baseball operations for the Mets. In Stearns, the Mets had a more calculated strategy in which a mix of veterans and young prospects were signed to strengthen the depth of the team. The strong success that came together this year provides a solid foundation, and the franchise has been continuing with more strategic offseason moves,

possibly reinforcing their pitching depth after some early-season struggles in those areas. Stearns suggested that multiple free-agent decisions were planned, building off of the success in 2024 to make sure that the team's competitive window stays open for a number of years. Meanwhile, a rejuvenated fan base has high hopes for 2025.

The exciting comeback by the Mets and their playoff appearance re-energized a very frustrated fan base that seemed to have become worn out over the last couple of years. There were some very passionate crowds at Citi Field, and the ride that this team took into the postseason really captured the

imagination of the fans. The 2024 season hasn't only restored the Mets to good standing but has given reason to believe this franchise can continue to be highly competitive beyond this season.

While this past year's momentum should help the Mets heading into the 2025 campaign, fans are all-in anticipating much bigger accomplishments. One would expect Stearns and the front office to want a roster that can really contend for the National League title this coming season. The Mets have reset the bar in their franchise, showing that with the right adjustments, they can overcome early adversity and make a deep playoff push that could set the stage for a championship run in the near future.



Photo By: Hayden Sutter

First the DSAT, Now APs Too?

College Board transitions 28 AP exams to digital format for May 2025—what does that mean for us?

By: Alice Huang

True to their reputation, College Board has once again introduced a change that's been taking everyone by storm: AP exams are going digital. On the surface, this shift seems like a no-brainer. After all, we live in a tech-driven world where students already use computers for everything from homework to class projects. But is this digital leap really the optimal move? In light of ethical controversies surrounding the security of paper-based exams, College Board has actively taken precautions to mitigate concerns pertaining to its exam confidentiality. In that respect, College Board's decision to overhaul and digitalize its testing programs has its merits. However, such a sudden shift has its pitfalls. There's inequity of technology, let alone general disapproval for the digital format. We've all seen how the digital SAT has been going so far.

True, if you're considering convenience, there's no denying that digital AP exams will make everything considerably easier. No more filling in endless bubbles with a No. 2 pencil. No more flipping through thick test booklets. No more squinting at the clock on the wall, frantically trying to calculate how much time you still have remaining. Digital exams should promise faster grading, too, meaning that students could get their results sooner, sparing the stressful two month wait. Plus, let's face it: the world is increasingly paperless, so why not AP exams?

But here's where I pause. Not everyone has easy access to reliable technology. While some students have high-end laptops and stable Wi-Fi, others are lucky if they can find a quiet spot to take their test, let alone a working computer. This digital divide is real, and it's troubling. College Board supposedly offers the option to lend

devices to students who need them, but let's be honest—some students are already starting at a disadvantage. Not all computers are created equal, and not every student is equally comfortable with them. Are we setting up some students to fail before they even start? And then, there's the ever present risk of technology glitches. You could be halfway through your AP World History exam, typing furiously, and boom—the Wi-Fi drops, or worse—the system crashes. Now what? With a paper exam, you don't have to worry about your test vanishing into the ether, but now, technical failures are a very real possibility, and that's anxiety nobody needs in the middle of a high stakes test.

When considering the actual exam experience, many students, myself included, still prefer the feel of writing on paper, especially for essays or math problems that require calculations. Typing out an essay is vastly different from handwriting it, and annotating long reading passages via cursor highlighting sounds simply awful. For years, students have been conditioned to taking paper tests in a structured environment, and changing that to a digital format is quite jarring. Moreover, the added stress of navigating a new setup may potentially affect student performance, especially if the focus is on making the technology work rather than on the content of the test.

So, is the move to digital AP exams a step forward or a stumble? Currently, it feels like both. There are obvious drawbacks, but maybe it does make sense to some degree—digital exams are part of the future, and we can't cling to the past forever. But as it stands, I can't help but feel like we're diving into the deep end without fully knowing if everyone can swim.

A Voice for the Digital SAT

It's unpopular, but to me, all the hate for digital testing is undeserved.

By: Cody Cheng

I took the digital PSAT in my junior year. That was the first ever digital PSAT administered to high school students nationwide—the year before, I had taken the PSAT on paper. Lining up outside, everyone carrying a school-issued chromebook can be a weird sight. There are a lot of excuses to hate on the digital SAT and PSAT, but is it really such a bad thing?

First, the digital SATs and PSATs have less questions in all sections and have overall shorter exam lengths, providing more time per question, making the digital SAT much more approachable. Both the combined reading-and-writing section and math sections are shorter. In fact, the notoriously long passages on the reading section are now a distant past. Wouldn't that be a good thing? There's less pressure during the exam for students because they have more time per question, which is something students have collectively desired.

Digital SAT haters bring up that it's not standardized anymore; it's "adaptive," meaning that your performance on your first reading-and-writ-

ing module will determine the questions on your next module (as for the math modules too), leading students to believe that the scoring is inconsistent across different test-takers. However, this argument is flawed because by that logic, the paper SAT also wouldn't be standardized—every SAT form is different. In truth, the SAT is "standardized" because getting a 1400 on the October 2023 SAT is scaled to reflect the same difficulty as getting a 1400 on the November 2023 SAT. This is still the case with the digital SAT, as for many other standardized tests like the GRE or GMAT, which are adaptive exams for college students.

Lastly, it's simply convenient. You don't have to worry about bubbling in answers on an answer booklet, or waiting for your proctor to pass out their huge stack of paper packets—all you need is a computer. Also, it reduces usage of millions of pounds in test papers around the globe, which is always good for the environment. Who would want to waste all that paper? So next time you go in for your digital SAT, don't be sad that it used to be on paper, because the digital age is our future.



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No Need for New Smoked Brisket

Chipotle's decision to re-release smoked brisket raises some eyebrows.

By: Shane Mergentime

Chipotle Mexican Grill is always introducing new and exciting items. This year, Chipotle has decided to bring back the seasonal protein option of smoked brisket, which was originally released three years ago. Drawing a lot of media attention, the smoked brisket has caught the eyes of people recently. With many people deciding to make videos and create reviews for this product (tasting and comparing it to Chipotle's other offerings), I decided that I wanted to try it myself.

I had the opportunity to try the limited-time special, so here's a breakdown of my candid opinion. Ordering a simple burrito with just brisket, brown rice, and shredded cheese, I set out to isolate the taste of brisket, rather than mixing it with a myriad of overpowering flavors. The first bite was a wolf in sheep's clothing. I wasn't fazed by the flavors at first, but suddenly picked upon really strong tastes pouncing in my mouth. The brisket was mildly spicy, and had a kick to it that you would feel a little after you ate it. Your taste buds will definitely feel that it was smokey and had that rounded and palatable taste.



Photo By: Shange Mergentime

For my final evaluation, I took the new smoked brisket and compared it with the protein I frequent: chicken. Comparatively, I think that the smoked brisket had more flavor- a stronger taste. I didn't really enjoy the taste of the smoky spiciness. In my opinion, it was too overpowering to consume an entire Chipotle burrito. Importantly, most Chipotle orders rely on balance and harmony. I got basic toppings so they wouldn't overpower the brisket, but I realized that even with all those toppings on, the taste of the brisket still would have been very noticeable and strong. The burrito tastes better with chicken, and the taste of smoked brisket doesn't really match the other condiments that accompany it. Unsurprisingly, the brisket burrito costs more than the chicken burrito

by two or three dollars. Yet, the quality of the brisket does not match the price. Frankly, Chipotle made a mistake in adding smoked brisket as the new item, with no need to bring back such an unappetizing protein option. Chipotle should focus on enhancing the quality of its main items instead of offering limited time foods that aren't beneficial to the consumer.

The Pulse Staff Wishes Everyone

Happy

Thanksgiving!