

# THE PULSE

February 2025

THE HEARTBEAT OF SYOSSET

## Young Minds, Bold Discoveries

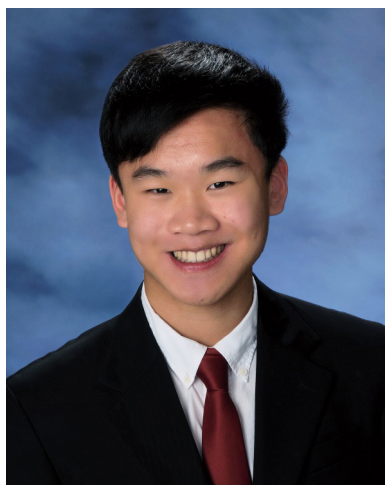
Seniors Michael Ren and Winston Zhou are named 2025 Regeneron STS Scholars.

By: Alice Huang

The next big scientific breakthrough might not come from a high-tech lab — it could come from a high school student. Or two: Syosset seniors Michael Ren and Winston Zhou have been named 2025 Regeneron Science Talent Search (STS) Scholars, earning a place among the top 300 high school researchers worldwide. Selected from nearly 2,500 applicants, their groundbreaking research projects tackle global scientific challenges: Michael with a machine learning framework to predict antibiotic resistance, and Winston with a novel algorithm to improve El Niño forecasting. Their recognition in this prestigious national competition reflects not only technical ingenuity, but also a drive to create real-world impact through science.

Michael trained machine learning models to predict antibiotic resistance in bacteria based on protein mass spectrometry data. "My framework potentially provides a much more rapid and cost-efficient method to screen for antibiotics and give the patient the right treatment. I was inspired by my sister's previous experience and hospitalization with pneumonia," said Michael. On the challenges faced during this research journey, he said, "I inevitably encountered multiple issues while analyzing the data and spent many hours debugging at a time. There were also inconsistencies in some of the resistance labels. But reaching out to the original compilers of the dataset helped solve these issues." Given the recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, Michael plans on exploring other new ways in which AI can be applied to different fields like biology. In the future, he will likely be moving on from his current work to pursue different disciplines of research.

Meanwhile, Winston's project also used machine learning to develop an algorithm that created more accurate forecasts of the El Niño weather phenome-



Michael Ren



Winston Zhou

non, inventing a methodology that could be applied to improve the quality of noisy data. Winston said, "I was inspired to pursue climate science research when one day I visited a Weather Center in Oklahoma. I remember thinking, oh, that's really cool what they're doing here. Disasters like the California wildfires this year or Hurricanes Helene and Milton last year are related to teleconnections, so having accurate prediction measures for answers is really important for long-term forecasts." Winston would like to continue his future research exploration within the broader, widely applicable field of machine learning, and he hopes to keep pursuing research in his undergraduate and graduate studies in the future.

Both science scholars agreed that this recognition was a culmination of their high school research. "For me, this experience in high school was not just dipping my feet into the water with research and all that, but also learning to understand how it enhances both problem-solving skills and general knowledge of the topic, to help me become a more adept future researcher. For students pursuing research, I would say really just find something you're interested in doing first. Because when you do that, the other steps... all just fall into place," said Winston.

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The Pulse is published by the newspaper staff of Syosset High School, located at 70 Southwoods Road, Syosset, NY 11791. The Pulse has been established as an open forum for student expression. The opinions expressed in editorials and columns represent the views of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Pulse editorial board.

**Distribution**

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

## 2024 Election: A Rundown

The United States inaugurates a returning president back to the Oval Office.

By: Kingsley Ngitngit

On January 20, 2025, Donald J. Trump was inaugurated as the 47th president of the United States of America. This was the result from Election Day dating back to November 5, 2024. Donald Trump, the former 45th president of the United States of America, and J.D. Vance, the junior US senator from Ohio, defeated Kamala Harris and Tim Waltz in the presidential election.

American politics mainly runs on the electoral college system. "So in the 48 states, there's an all or nothing system where the popular vote in that state will make all votes go to the candidate, so it definitely makes a difference, but it usually boils down to seven battleground states. That's where all the money and attention is focused," said Ms. Jennifer Lamond, an AP history teacher.

Donald Trump and Kamala Harris are as different as the two parties they represent. Both have taken their fair amount of criticism. Trump is a person every American is likely familiar with, for better or for worse. With Joe Biden out of the race, Harris had to use what she was given and her own ingenuity to win over voters. "I think they both tried to appeal to the problems of the nation now with vastly different ways of

doing it. So, Kamala Harris tried to show joy and hope. People criticized her for not focusing on the bread and butter issues people wanted to hear about. And then, Donald Trump tapped into a bit more of the fear that people have of things like immigration and economic decline. People criticized him for not being positive enough about the country. So, the campaigns were really different," said Ms. Lamond.

While there were some slim margins across the country, such as Nebraska and Maine which split their votes, the Republican candidate ended up winning both the electoral and popular vote. Harris, despite her efforts, was not able to appeal to enough voters to beat out Trump, leaving many liberals in doubt. "It seems that the working class in the U.S. felt abandoned by the Democratic Party, despite the fact that they have been pro-union and in favor of increasing the minimum wage," said Ms. Lamond.

No matter what your stance on politics is or who you voted for, one thing's for certain. With Trump as president, the American people will undoubtedly work for their ideals by supporting the right people and organizations in order to create a better future for this country.

# New Year of the Snake

A peek inside how the Syosset community celebrates the Lunar New Year holiday.

By: Xihan Julie Zhang



The Wushu team presents choreography spanning a variety of different styles. Wushu was a part of Chinese culture and is performed on traditional occasions. Photo by Lynn X. Lin

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As Lunar New Year approached, families in Syosset prepared for days of celebration filled with food, tradition, and togetherness. Whether through family gatherings, special meals, or performances, the holiday remains a cherished time for many.

For Trinity Woo, a Syosset senior, celebrating Chinese Lunar New Year means surrounding herself with festive decorations and traditional foods. "We like to eat Nian Gao, eat Mian Tiao, watch fireworks, and wear red. We put up Fu Zi, which are the two long red Chun Lian, some pictures of the animal of the year, and plushies around the house that are designed for Chinese New Year," said Trinity. The red and gold decorations fill homes with an air of festivity. She said, "We get Hong Bao," referring to the red envelopes filled with money that elders give to younger family members for good fortune. Fireworks are another key part of the celebration. Trinity said, "They're so loud, but so fun. We light them outside, and it feels like the whole neighborhood is celebrating together."

Syosset junior Samuel Han and his family celebrate Korean Lunar New Year, or Seollal, by gathering together for traditional customs and food. "Koreans celebrate Lunar New Year in a multitude of different ways such as Sebae, Elders' Blessings, Hanbok, Go-Stop, and eating Tteokguk or Jeon," said Samuel. Sebae, a deep bow performed by younger family members, is an important tradition. He said, "You bow to your elders, and in return, they give you money and their blessings. It's a way of showing respect, and it makes the whole family feel

connected." Traditional Korean clothing also plays a role. "Some people wear Hanbok, but in my family, we're more casual about it," Samuel said. The holiday wouldn't be complete without Tteokguk, a warm rice cake soup, and Jeon, pan fried vegetable pancakes. "Some of my personal favorites would be my mom's homemade Tteokguk and playing Go-Stop with my siblings and grandma. A lot of this not only brings our family closer together, but because we spend most of our lives separated, it's a great time to really just talk," said Samuel.

Beyond family traditions, Syosset High School hosts an annual Lunar New Year Show, bringing together students to celebrate through performances. "There are many different performances, such as C-Pop and K-pop dance, guzheng, taekwondo, Chinese traditional dance, and Chinese martial arts (wushu)," said Katie Yan, who performed in this year's event. She is part of the Wushu performance, a traditional Chinese martial art with deep cultural roots. For Katie, Wushu is more than just a performance. "Wushu is an art with thousands of years of history, dating back to the Bronze Age. It is heavily influenced by Chinese philosophy and reflects Chinese values, making it a significant part of Chinese culture as a whole," she said.

Through the show, students hoped to share their culture with others. Lunar New Year is a time of joy, reflection, and family time. Katie said, "I hope to share the beautiful arts of Chinese culture with people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I also hope to inspire people in the Syosset community to embrace their heritage and participate in the celebration of their culture."



Photo By: Julie Zhang





## A Window into Other Cultures

With over 2,000 students taking a glimpse, Syosset's 2024 Multicultural Fair is another success.

By: Sarah Chen

One of the best things about Syosset High School is its rich cultural diversity. To showcase that, Syosset's Multicultural Fair returned again and reflected the ever growing diversity in the community. Organized by the PTSA, it has grown from a luncheon for faculty and staff to a major event for the entire school. With over 20 countries represented, each stand provided something new for everyone to try.

With parents coming in to volunteer and donations from the community, this whole event was a team effort. Angela Wan, a parent volunteer, described this experience as "a small window to the entire world at once!" Sushi from Japan, Naan from India, Pelmeni from Russia, and many more foods on an international range only prove how this event can promote so many cultures all at once.

Students were able to explore the different food stands and learn much more about the cultural backgrounds of their peers. With so much to learn and discover, senior Isabella Diep said, "Many of my teachers

allowed us to go to the festival, so I went about three times. Each time I was able to learn something new." The food served also had ingredient lists with the recipes to cater to allergy safety. This way, everyone could have both a fun and safe time.

The festival wasn't just food, however, there were also cultural performances that had musical and dancing elements, making the room a vibrant and lively space to enjoy. With much celebration, discussion, education, and even a small component of exercise, the Multicultural Fair was without a doubt a highlight of the school year so far. Thanks to the efforts of PTSA presidents Linda DiGeronimo and Tina Ng along with event chairpeople Sarika Shah and Ashima Ghosh, it allowed the students and faculty of Syosset to recognize and celebrate the diversity of the community. Starting only in 2016 with eight countries represented, the fair has come a long way, and hopefully, it will only continue to grow with years to come.



1. A cultural performance is displayed while students and faculty immerse themselves in the experience.
2. Students leisurely explore the gym and look around at new cultures and foods. As one large community, students and faculty took a break from classes to enjoy learning the rich cultural diversity of their population.

Photos by Sarah Chen



# A Physics Phenomenon

Syosset's physics classes hold their annual Pumpkin Drop to prove real-world physics concepts.

By: Zoe Voulgaris



The fire truck and pumpkins for the Pumpkin Drop are set up outside. Students watched as the pumpkins were dropped from the fire truck and observed the physics concept of acceleration due to gravity.

Photo by Michael Lomonaco

For over 15 years, Syosset's physics classes have held an annual tradition around Halloween—the Pumpkin Drop. Students and teachers gather around outside the school to watch physics concepts come to life.

The Pumpkin Drop is held annually every November. During the drop, the fire department came to the high school, extended their ladder, and dropped different items from the ladder to the ground, such as ping pong balls, tennis balls, and of course, pumpkins. Physics teacher Mr. Michael Lomonaco explained the planning that goes into the event, from contacting the fire department and purchasing the pumpkins. He said that he goes out east to a farm and buys "two of the biggest pumpkins" he can see. "It's a big process that goes into it but it's worth it — the students really enjoy it," said Mr. Lomonaco.

The physics concept being demonstrated during the Pumpkin Drop is the number of acceleration due to gravity. Mr. Lomonaco said, "It's like a mythical number that nobody really knows where it came from. We take objects that are very aerodynamic and drop them from a certain height, so we can actually verify that number and see that it's a real thing."

For students, the event was an opportunity to see science concepts extend beyond the classroom and applied to real life. Junior Victoria Lee said, "I thought the Pumpkin Drop tradition was so much fun. It was so cool seeing all the physics students gathering around, recording, and just anticipating the drop."

The Pumpkin Drop continues to excite both physics students and teachers, and is a staple event in the physics department.

# Greenbyte Initiatives: E-Waste Disposal

Syosset non-profit organization begins to educate the community on the importance of proper disposal of electronic waste.

By: Mari Moustakakis

Recently, a non profit organization was created by Sophomore Eileen Liang, focusing on the disposal of electronic waste (E-Waste). This organization will begin to incorporate good disposal habits and a cleaner environment in our community.

Alongside helping the environment, one of their main goals is to educate others in the community. Starting as an Instagram account, the organization creates posts educating others about the topic. They posted their first regarding the dangers of improper E-Waste disposal and how it was impacting Syosset. Eileen said, "We have started an Instagram Account: @greenbyte\_initiativez to spread awareness about the consequences of improper disposal of E-Wastes."

Electronic wastes are an important issue, especially for the environment. When E-Waste is disposed of through typical garbage disposal, it is put in the ocean and can cause additional water contamination. This harms the animals living in the ocean. "I was motivated to start this nonprofit as it has a detrimental effect on our environment. E-Wastes have been known to cause water pollution and other environmental impacts," said Eileen.

However, it's not just the environment that can be harmed. Greenbyte Initiatives states that by improperly disposing your electronics, your information is at risk of being stolen. By dropping off your electronics in a safer, more specific place, it not only helps the environment, but you too. Eileen said, "I believe in protecting people's information. It is important to dispose of E-Wastes in a private manner."

The group of students continues their journey through helping the environment, as well as educating others about the dangers of not prop-



**greenbyte\_initiativez**

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## INTRODUCTION OF WHO WE ARE AND OUR GOALS

Introducing, Greenbyte Initiativez, a community-driven organization committed to tackling the pressing issue of electronic-waste mismanagement. With the rapid advancement of technology, the improper disposal of electronic devices has become a significant environmental concern, affecting our health and ecosystems. At our organization, we not only raise awareness about proper e-waste recycling, but to work together with our community to work towards a "greener future, one byte at a time". With your help, this global goal can become a trouble of the past.



An image of Greenbyte Initiates' first Instagram post. They spread lots of information about the dangers of electronic waste through their slideshow, and will continue to do so.

erly disposing of electronic devices. Greenbyte Initiatives will answer any questions people may have, whether it is about the organization, or the environment in general.



# Leaving a Legacy

Junior Day, an honored tradition at SHS, will continue even after its founder retires.

By: Emerson Schaefer



Students run across the gym to find new seats during a Junior Day icebreaker activity. In years prior, there were Junior Day t-shirts for all participants to wear.

Photo by Richard Faber

Before you experience it for yourself, you may have no idea what Junior Day entails. Syosset High School has been holding Junior Days every year since 2006, all thanks to Mr. Richard Faber. After seeing Oprah highlight the benefits of a program called Challenge Day, Mr. Faber was inspired to bring this eye-opening day to Syosset.

When Mr. Faber first experienced Challenge Day for himself at Oyster Bay High School, he loved it. "We thought it was great, but we're so big we'd need to do it four times," said Mr. Faber. It would be too expensive to bring the organizers of Challenge Day to Syosset so many times throughout each year, so he and Mr. Brett Waxer teamed up to create Syosset's very own Junior Day.

Junior Day consists of a variety of activities to help students open up about their struggles and find comfort in their own community. Towards the end of the day, students are given an opportunity to write cards to people that they want to recognize for making an impact in their lives. Mr. Faber said, "I think the Junior Day cards are very, very powerful. Watching people exchange cards and showing compassion towards each other hits home the most with me."

Organizing Junior Day is much more of a process than many people would expect, and Mr. Faber has been behind it all. From ordering a special lunch for the students, to making Junior Day bracelets, Mr. Faber truly brings the day together. "He brings a level of consistency to everything we do. He is so locked in on everything leading up to that day, that the day itself is just amazing. Mr. Faber is the backbone of Junior Day," said Mr. Waxer.



Photo By: Terri Tozer

At the high school, everyone has a memorable Junior Day experience. For many students, it is their first time ever sharing their personal story with their peers. Junior Day helps students remember that they are never alone and they can always ask for help from their peers or even the administrators. "After Junior Day I realized how many people have similar experiences and can relate to each other," said Aarav Walia.

This school year will be Mr. Faber's last year before he retires. As he leaves, one thing is for certain- Junior Day will remain an honored tradition at Syosset High School.

# Behind the Wheels: Heroes of Syosset

Two Syosset bus drivers make a difference in the lives of countless students.

By: Xihan Julie Zhang

Every school day, millions of students across the country rely on school bus drivers to get them safely to and from school. These drivers play a critical role in the education system, ensuring not just transportation but also the safety and well-being of students on the road. With early mornings and tight schedules, the job requires focus, patience, and a strong sense of duty. Drivers must navigate different road situations while carrying the safety of their students in their hands with the trust of their passenger's parents and the safety of these passengers in their hands.

For 27 years, Margaret "Peggy" Monitto dedicated herself to safely transporting students in the Syosset district. From 1991 to 2016, she drove with passion, care, and love for generations of kids, whom she watched grow up



before her eyes. "The biggest thing was getting students to and from school safely," Ms. Monitto said, emphasizing the trust parents placed in her. "Your mother trusts me with your life. That's important." Ms. Monitto went above and beyond the role of driver, creating a welcoming environment on her bus, celebrating birthdays, decorating for holidays, and even adorning the bus ceilings with student artwork. She said, "We'd sing Christmas carols and celebrate all the holidays. One of my kids drew me a groundhog, and I still have it to this day."

These relationships she built extended beyond the bus ride. Ms. Monitto is a huge attendee of the school's concerts and plays, cheering on her students while providing a listening ear for their struggles. "These kids tell you everything — divorces, deaths — you just have to listen because they need you," she said. From navigating snowy roads to ensuring student safety at busy stops, she remembers once grabbing a student to prevent a near-miss with a speeding jeep. "It's a challenge when students cross the road and don't look," she said. Though retired from driving, Ms. Monitto continues to work part-time as a monitor in the cafeteria, and enjoys activities at the senior center. Reflecting on her career, she said, "I

couldn't have had more fun. I worked every day, kept my bus clean, and made sure it was safe. I think I did a good job." For Ms. Monitto, the role wasn't just a job; it was a journey of love, care, and connection. "I truly loved my kids. I watched them grow, and that's something I'll always treasure," said Ms. Monitto.

Jane Strub's journey began over 32 years ago when her husband, an employee of Huntington Coach, encouraged her to apply for the position. For her, the role was more than just a job and rather a way to give back to her community. Mrs. Strub said, "I love being a smiling face to all my students." Starting each workday at 6:15 a.m., she ensures children arrive at school ready to learn, come rain, shine, or snow. Her afternoons are equally as busy, with driving extending into the evening for students participating in after-school activities. The job, Mrs. Strub noted, has evolved a significant amount over the decades. "When I started, there was a lot less traffic, and we drove manual transmissions with no power steering. It was tough, but I loved it," she said. Despite modern challenges, her dedication remained unwavering.

Beyond the road, she helps organize a donation table for her fellow drivers, raising money for charities like St. Jude Children's Hospital and Wounded Warriors. "I'm responsible for adding items daily and mailing the donations monthly. It feels good to make a difference," said Mrs. Strub. She cherishes the friendships she has built through her career and takes pride in being a reassuring presence for the children she transports. For her, the simple act of greeting students with a smile was a meaningful way to start and end their school day.

As the women looked back on their remarkable careers, they showed gratefulness for the opportunities and experiences work offered, each filled with purpose and personal growth.



Photos Provided By: Jane Strub



# Rocking the School and Bringing Music to Life

The rock program unites students through a common passion for music, promoting creativity and collaboration both on and off the stage.

By Eliana Leder

Every other day, students in the Rock History and Performance class come together to create something extraordinary. This unique class offers more than just an opportunity to play music— it offers the opportunity for endless creativity, lasting friendships, and a love for performing. The rock program is filled with original songs, diverse music styles, and fun energy, and has become an exceptional experience for everyone involved.

The Rock History and Performance class has existed at Syosset for seven years, and is led by Mr. Paul Caputo and Mr. Thomas Larocca. Founded by Mr. Caputo, the rock class was meant to be a great opportunity for students, who wouldn't play in a traditional music program, to engage in a music elective. "Getting to work with students I wouldn't normally work with is always fun," said Mr. Caputo. By joining the rock program, students gain an outlet to be fully creative, involved, and immersed in the music experience. "It should be fun, and it should be something where we're learning to make music and working as a group, becoming a tight-knit community. It's a place where you can come during the day and have 40 minutes of just making fun music and having a good time with people," said Mr. Caputo.

Students that are involved in the rock program find that it has had immensely rewarding effects. Josh Vitale, a junior who drums in the Rock History and Performance class, said, "I decided to put myself first, and I think that has had more of an impact on me and my mindset — getting to enjoy the process of making music with other people rather than just slaving away at a research project." "I was so scared to perform in front of my peers at first, but it got so much easier with this program," said Sara Dubrow, a senior who has been singing in the class for three years. The participants in this class have found that the program has transformed them, both musically and personally. "It made me work better with other people

and expanded my music taste. I started really appreciating older music and different genres," said Sara.

Rehearsals in the rock band program are energetic, creative, and lively, with a relaxed yet focused atmosphere. The band room is a place where mistakes are part of the process and where every class feels like a shared celebration of creativity. Differences in music taste are respected in the rock program, and even serve to expand the musical repertoires of others. "A lot of people have different genres of music that they like, which I think creates a very diverse catalog that we're able to play, because we all accept each other and what we play," said Josh. Students greatly appreciate the opportunity to get involved and feel that it comes with many benefits. Mr. Caputo said, "Students are very involved. For the most part, I try to leave it up to the students to pick all the songs that we play."

Outside of the Rock History and Performance class, some students have come together to form additional individual groups that, in addition to recreating songs they love, create original music. The process of collaborating to generate authentic new music is enriching and fulfilling for band members. Josh said, "It feels really good to make something that you know is your own and that you think actually sounds cool." Similarly, Sara said, "I'm excited for people to hear what we have to say, hear our music, and just appreciate us." Excitement runs high when the bands look ahead to upcoming performances.

For students considering making or performing music, the rock band is a perfect place to start. Mr. Caputo said, "You're not gonna know if it's for you until you actually come in and have some fun and try doing it. Give it a shot." The Rock History and Performance program provides a welcoming opportunity for all students looking to improve their musical skills, make friends, and experience a purely creative atmosphere.



1. Students rehearse during Rock History and Performance class.



2. Eliana Leder, Jaden Pedro, Sara Dubrow, Josh Vitale, Charles Freeman form an individual rock group.

Photos provided by Eliana Leder

# Circle of Education: From Student to Staff

Dr. Daniel Kim reflects on his journey from former Syosset student to assistant principal.

By: Xihan Julie Zhang

From being one of the many students at Syosset High School back in the 2000s to becoming an assistant principal of the school in 2024, Dr. Daniel Sahn Kim has been engaged in the Syosset education program both as a student and staff member. Despite the many years since his graduation, the foundation of Syosset education has made a tremendous impact on his journey as a student and educator.

Dr. Kim moved to Syosset with his family at the age of two and attended Village Elementary School, South Woods Middle School, and Syosset Senior High School. During high school, he was involved in a number of extracurricular activities ranging from music to the sciences to the student government. He was a part of Chamber Orchestra, Pit Orchestra, Jazz Band, and Tri-M. Further enhancing his passion for music, he created a string quartet, the L'amour String Quartet, and performed at weddings and school functions. "Having Chamber Orchestra and the opportunity to practice, perform and build camaraderie amongst my peers was definitely a pivotal moment in my high school experience. Even the friendly competitions for concertmaster and having opportunities to be creative in different outlets...left lasting impressions on how I view and deeply appreciate the arts," said Dr. Kim. He was also an honorable sports commitment in volleyball and was the senior senate vice president, as well as student of the Advanced Research Program involved in science research at Hofstra University.

With the many activities that came his way, he remembers that handling his school activities and personal life was most challenging. "Some of us may relate, but balancing academics with extracurricular activities, on top of the complexities that come with grappling with where we fit in the big picture of the world, is a humbling journey to say the least. Despite this, the exceptional staff and faculty, in addition to the peers I surrounded myself with, gave me the invaluable resources and encouragement I needed to take intellectual risks and prepare myself for the unpredictable post-secondary part of my journey," said Dr. Kim. He described these challenges as a drive to becoming an improved student eager to learn more. "All of my science courses made a lasting impression

on me only because they first modeled for me what it looked like to have joy when learning about complex biological processes," said Dr. Kim. His experiences in high school science courses not only fueled his passion for learning, but also taught him how to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications.

Besides observing student life from a science point of view, navigating through the rigorous mathematical field was also a challenge for Dr. Kim. "Navigating Math Theory and AP Calc BC was rigorous and definitely challenging. Because of my math coursework, I eagerly started my professional journey as an educator and special education math teacher before becoming an administrator," said Dr. Kim. Though to these challenging math courses, his ultimate way of using these experiences was a way to learn, improve, grow, and achieve.

Over the past fifteen years since Dr. Kim graduated, the school's growing diversity has reshaped the social and academic landscape, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic environment. "The biggest change I noticed is how diverse our community has become over the years, which is so exciting! This diversity challenges all of us to listen with understanding and empathy and to work collectively to benefit all school stakeholders. Our building has truly become a place where we can learn from different perspectives, cultures, and ways of thinking," said Dr. Kim. The eyes of a former student and current educator can tell a huge story for the upcoming generations of students. Whether it's about learning from uncertainties, doing what you love, preserving what you gain and from taking on tasks for an unpredictable outcome, the growth of Dr. Kim's career can inspire how future students approach their own academic journeys.

Dr. Kim's story serves as a reminder that the path to success isn't always linear, and isn't what we always expect. Growth comes from stepping outside one's comfort zone and embracing everything the community has to offer. By overcoming challenges and remaining open to new opportunities, all students can forge their own meaningful experiences both in school and beyond. "The path to finding your true passion is a messy one. What is important is that we stand on the solid foundation that comes from our experiences here at Syosset High School," said Dr. Kim.



Photo Provided By: Dan Kim



# How to School: A Guide for High School Life

Create a plan, study over a period of time, and repeat.

By: Ridyansh Agrawal

A 2016 study in Psychological Science suggests that spreading your learning over an extended period of time helps with content understanding and application. It's needless to say that one should start studying when the topics are first assigned. Making a plan to study all of the material in small chunks — focussing on different small sized chunks or topics each day — helps maintain balance, especially before long, cumulative tests. Using a planner or calendar to schedule study times will help you stay organized and ensure that you don't run out of time. Give at least two weeks before an exam to review what you've studied, and you'll be in good shape.

## Mix it up

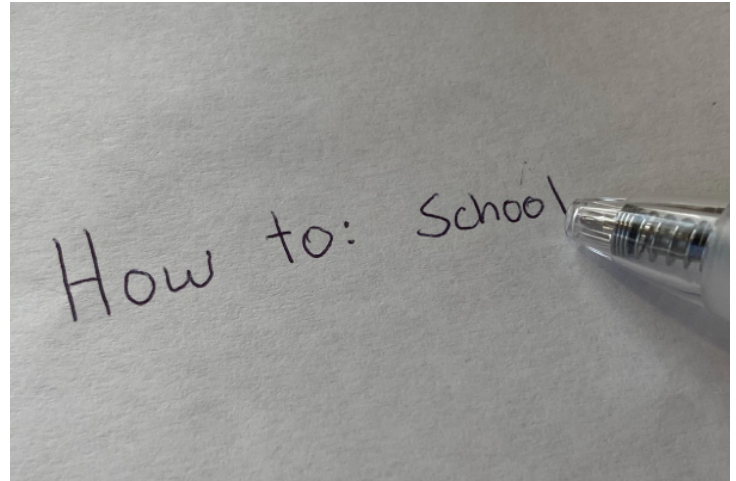
Instead of studying one subject for hours on end, mix it up. Research suggests that interleaving— mixing topics, such as doing math problems for some time and then switching to learning your vocabulary, will help you process the similarities and differences of what you're trying to achieve, giving a better, deeper understanding of the material. A 2008 study published in Psychological Science found that students who conducted a different learning task in between what they were to be tested on performed significantly better, highlighting the advantages of interleaved learning over blocked learning.

## Quiz yourself

We know tests aren't fun, but testing oneself helps reinforce information and strengthen the ability to recall, as opposed to just passively reviewing information. Even brief quizzes can significantly boost performance. Research shows that students who took regular quizzes did better than those who didn't. Create flashcards as you're first learning the topic, and reuse them to quiz yourself before the test, or try tools like quizlet to generate questions in a random order.

## Make a study group

Having a supportive study group that engages in a positive outlook, when combined with other techniques, can help foster a sense of community and reduce fear of exams. Study groups also help with seeing diverse perspectives on the subject, helping with deeper understanding of topics discussed amongst peers, while also growing motivation and accountabil-



ity. Smaller groups of 4-6 tend to be more effective than bigger ones.

## Take your much needed breaks

Exercise and relaxation can significantly reduce stress and increase overall performance academically. Try studying in intervals, such as 30-60 minutes with short breaks in between. Go for a short walk, stretch, listen to music, chat with a friend or try a mindfulness app like Headspace. Breaks and relaxation techniques help improve focus and reduce burn out. Don't be afraid to take your well-deserved breaks; they help the brain synthesize information better and decompress.

## Get your Z's

Getting at least seven to nine hours of sleep on a daily basis, not just during exam time is key. According to research published in Neuron, a scientific journal, good sleep enhances cementing of concepts, recall of materials, and overall problem solving and cognitive performance. Poor sleep is linked to chronic and mental health problems, so make sure to get your rest.

## Maintain a positive outlook

Engaging in positive self talk, confidence, and imagining success goes a long way. A study showed that expressive writing of positive emotions helps reduce test anxiety. You've worked hard preparing for your tests, now think positive and feel confident and imagine yourself doing well on them.

# Study Hard, Stress Less

There are many techniques that help balance out stress with school exams.

By: Mari Moustakakis

Stressful situations are a part of a student's everyday lives, such as tests, homework, or extracurricular activities. With midterm week at Syosset High School, many students found themselves in these situations. However, with lots of stress already, it can be hard to manage it all.

The *Pulse* conducted a student poll before midterms about how many hours of sleep students got during weeknights. The two most common answers were extremely similar, with 47.2% of students getting 6-7 hours of sleep, and 41.7% of students getting 4-5 hours of sleep. 8.3% of students got the recommended 8-9 hours of sleep and 2.8% answered 1-3 hours. Another poll asked how many hours of homework students received per night. The majority of students received 2-3 hours, with 19 responses, 14 responded 4 or more hours, and 3 responded 0-1 hours.

With additional workloads following midterms, there is more stress that will be added onto students' lives. However, there are key ways to manage stress better and also get more sleep in the process.

## Focused Study Sessions

In times where constant stimulation is at our fingertips, it can be extremely difficult to catch ourselves when we are doomscrolling. Most of the time, students do not have to spend as much time on assignments, however, with time spent on their phone for "breaks" it takes away actual time from finishing assignments quicker.

One simple way to make your device less appealing is to set the colors to black and white, which can be done in the settings app. This allows the brain to catch itself easier and make your device less appealing altogether. Another way that could eliminate procrastina-

tion is to set timers. Popularly, the Pomodoro method helps students take breaks to recharge. Opposed to doomscrolling on your phone, having timed breaks allows students to actually recharge, rather than procrastinating.

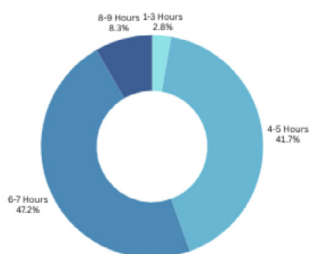
Now with assignments being done quicker, there is more time left for sleep, which helps the brain retain more information. For teenagers, 7 to 8 hours of sleep is ideal for one's health.

## Studying Earlier

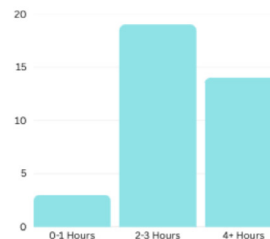
It is easy to fall into the monotonous cycle of doomscrolling for hours after school or extracurriculars, which is one of the main causes of not getting enough sleep. A simple way to counter this could be to start earlier, but many find it difficult or exhausting to do this. The Zombie method, however, allows the brain to slowly get into the habit of working, allowing it to work towards harder tasks. This technique includes setting a timer for 20 minutes and beginning with simple tasks, progressively moving up to harder ones. When the timer is up, you take a short break and repeat the process.

Studies suggest that by studying earlier in the day, the brain is able to retain information better, resulting in better performance on exams. And, with having time left in the day for yourself or sleeping earlier, rest helps remember what you have just learned as well, resulting in better grades overall.

Although starting is one of the most difficult things to do while studying, it actually helps to study earlier and more efficiently, not only for better grades, but better health overall. With that being said, by following these simple hacks, you can easily have a more stress free school year for 2025.



A graph displaying the poll results from the question, How many hours of sleep you get per school night. Nearly 90% of students get less than the recommended



A bar graph indicating the hours of homework students receive on average per night. Majority of students spend more than two hours per night completing assignments.



## Club Spotlight

# Poli-Sci in Action: Political Science

Registering voices and sparking change: The club leads the charge in voter education and engagement.

By: Ridyansh Agrawal

After realizing that the school's Political Science club had died out, Gabriella and Ethan Schwarz thought that the school should definitely have one, so they decided to start it up because politics are so prevalent in today's day and age. Gabriella, the president of the Political Science Club, said, "Education is one of our main goals, but also it's nice to have a space where... you know about politics." For the members of the Political Science Club, it is a place to share and learn, whether you are a master of politics or just testing the waters.

With the recent elections, a voter registration drive was an obvious choice for Gabriella and Ethan. Gabriella said, "We did it for two days in school, and two days at the Carnival." Interested individuals who were 16 or older received voter registration forms, which they either filled out at the table, or brought home to fill out. Some 18 year-olds who registered to vote at Syosset High School were actually able to vote in this election. "Voting was super successful; they gave out over 200 forms," said Gabriella.

However, it wasn't all smooth sailing. Many students felt that their vote didn't matter, or said that they would do it



The Political Science Club poses for a photo in their meeting room.

Photo by Gabriella Schwarz

later, or that they didn't care at all. Gabriella said, "When they turn 18, so many people don't realize that they have to register to vote. With the busy lives of people nowadays, if people don't register to vote with the school, the reality is that they might end up not voting entirely."

On the theme of education, the club has set its focus on discussing the election. As a final message from the Political Science Club, "Knowledge is power, and getting politically informed is so much easier than you think, because many people think that it is hard," said Gabriella.

## Crochet Club

An insider look at the Crochet Club.

By: Morgan Shen

When you pass by the classroom, you hear the sounds of students laughing and talking. What are they doing you ask? They are crocheting to their heart's desire. Here they can create items of their choice or teach others the art of crochet. The Crochet Club meets every Monday in CDI. In the club, many students are welcome- from fresh beginners to advanced crocheters. While it is mostly about crocheting, here you can talk with others with similar interests, or have more experienced crocheters teach you.

During this year's Carnival, the Crochet Club set up a stand to sell their own handcrafted plushies, such as adorable little animals. Many students and Carnival-goers bought these plushies, depicting their cuteness. Nabih Zahan, a student who bought a plushie said, "10/10! I loved the whale. They held up

pretty well  
pretty  
are really  
the weeks

them they're still holding up well." Oiyng Li complimented their cuteness and durability. She said, "When I passed by, they crocheted a lot and sold some plushies. Really cute plushies." Although she didn't buy any plushies, she saw how interesting and adorable the crafts were.

The Crochet Club has multiple positive factors. Club member Lauren Chen said, "At the Crochet Club, you can create little projects and talk to your friends. It's relaxing after a long day of school." The Crochet Club would love for more people to join, so feel free to check it out.



Photo By: Nabih Zhan

and were  
cheap. They  
cute. Also,  
after I bought

# Club Spotlight

## KEN: Creativity In a New Lens

The literary and art magazine club aims to spark creativity within the student body.

By: Audrey Chan

Within Syosset High School's many clubs lies an unassuming treasure: the award winning KEN literary and art magazine club. The club aims to spark creativity within the students through literature and art. At every meeting, members and newcomers can expect to find a comforting environment to chat with friends and share one's work on a given theme, and students are encouraged to present any form of art to the club.

With a prompt and a literary device on the board every Tuesday, writers and artists use it as a kickstarter to creative ideas. All forms of literature are encouraged in KEN, including poetry and prose. Examples of prompts include sailor and frustration following elements such as repetition and flashback. Current senior presidents Isabella Chvasta and Sara Dubrow both joined the club in their freshman year. Of what they love about KEN, Isabella said, "My favorite part of coming to the club every Tuesday is seeing everyone's different responses to the prompt and different interpretations." Sara said, "My favorite part of coming to the club is hanging out with my friends and writing my opinions."

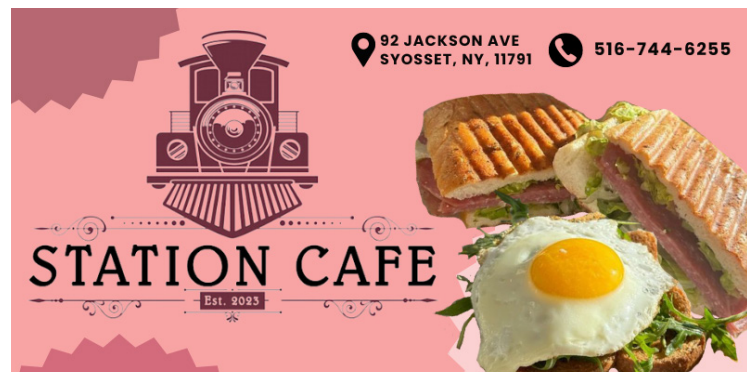
Advised by English teacher Ms. Tracey Brice, KEN celebrated its 63rd annual magazine under the theme of reverie. It was distributed to club members during the first meeting in September. 2023-2024 editors in chief, Nicole Christy, Isabella Chvasta, and Sara Dubrow, managed the arrangement and organization of this magazine, pairing each literary work with a piece of art from a Syosset student. Assisted by literary edi-



KEN members gather for their 2024-2025 club photo. The club provides a close-knit community where new ideas and friendships developed.  
Photo by Ms. Brice

tors Danielle Kaplan and Karman Yan, president Alee-na Alladin and Raina Yu, vice president Zoe Vogel, and treasurer & secretary Sophia Akmal, the magazine came to a 52-page booklet with cover art by Kaitlin Melling. The magazine is filled with mirages of nature, fantasies, and reminiscences of reflection. Sara said, "I like actually holding the magazine in my hands, like when Ms. Brice finally gives it to us, when it's finally printed out. It just shows all the work that we put into it was paid off and worth it, because it looks so good in the end." "We love seeing the final product. I love the colors, I love the page numbers, I like doing the little table of contents. We love picking which works to include, especially the art. We really like seeing how people respond to the theme," said Isabella.

Alongside the cookies Ms. Brice frequently brings, the KEN club is a treasure for students interested in a tight-knit creative community. Held every Tuesday in room D2, the club awaits more innovative students to share their works and meet new friends.





# Behind-the-Scenes Chaos Arrives

Syosset High School brings the thrilling British play, *Noises Off*, live on stage for its annual autumn production.

By: Claire Li

As the school year commenced, Syosset High School's fall drama took off in November to portray the comedic theatrical play, *Noises Off*. The setting took place at the Grand Theatre located in Great Britain, showing moments before the show takes place. However, the play was at its peak of disaster and the cast was visibly unprepared for their show. Fantastically shown through the multiple perspectives, frustration and disorder build up over time within the context behind relationships, as well as the backstage chaos. Remarkably, the use of a fourth wall allows the audience to analyze the performance inside of a performance, and ultimately view the comedic structure of the play.

When Lloyd Dallas, the director of the show *Nothing On*, attempts to confront the disorder between the cast and the show, it brings everyone into mayhem. Although he is known to be a perfectionist, he failed to bring everyone together, causing the agitation and tensions between members to rise. Following Act II, relationships further deteriorated as lovers, rivalries, and arguments filled up the performance backstage. By Act III, the days leading up to the show finally came and the permanent damage between the cast's relationships intensified.

One of the leading stars, Jenna Kurmemaj, who plays Blinda, described her experience in the play as a "big choreography with so many characters with different things connected together." Blinda is known as the voice of reason and optimism amongst the other characters and attempts to organize the cast together despite intertwined tensions and chaos. Jenna illustrated how a highlight of the show was the diverse "British accents, innuendos," which made the "play enjoyable and funny." She commended the cast and crew members, saying that she was "privileged to see character involvement and crew honing their craft to a T, [who all did a] great job to mastering everything."

At the end of the performance for all three days, the actors, stage crew, and directors gathered by the stage to take a bow and were given a standing ovation by the audience. With upbeat music in the background, the audience, amused by both the comedic and marvelous show that Syosset High School was able to embark on once again, clapped and cheered for the cast and their performance. Needless to say, this won't be Syosset High School's only show of the year as the annual musical and Shakespeare play are yet to come.

Watch the trailers! Press on the play buttons to access video content.



*Noises Off*  
Trailer #1



*Noises Off*  
Trailer #2



*Noises Off*  
Trailer #3



1. In Act I, the cast discusses their performance, but it soon unfolds into tumult as disagreements and chaos between the actors and actresses releases.



2. The main stage design demonstrates the primary setting in which the show takes place in the living room of Philip and Flavia Brent's English country house.

Photo 1 by Rayne Chiang, photo 2 by Kathy Eliassof

# The Cookie Craze Takes Over

Freshly baked cookies have become Syosset High School's hottest commodity in the school cafeteria, attracting numerous frequent buyers.

By: Elaine Liu

The general popularity of cookies has surely skyrocketed in recent years, with the rise of now prominent stores, like Insomnia Cookies and Crumbl. This phenomenon didn't just take place in chain stores, however; there has been a sudden rise in cookie sales in none other than the high school cafeteria. The cookie sales now parallel those of a small bakery. Each morning, bright and early, before students start trickling into the cafeteria, the school's lunch staff diligently prepares fresh batches of these cookies, ensuring that they're perfectly baked and ready to delight a crowd of hungry high schoolers.

For instance, freshman Sophia Cheng, who had originally lined up in the mornings for the school's breakfast, began seeing how almost everybody was in line for a cookie. "The school cafeteria's cookies actually taste good. I've recommended them to my friends, and they've also been pleasantly surprised by their taste. I've so far only tried the chocolate chip and rainbow cookies, but I hope to try more in the future," said Sophia.

Varying in flavor, from the normal chocolate chip cookie to rainbow M&M cookies, the school cookies have taken Syosset's student body by storm. Typically, by the end of the day, there are no cookies left to buy. These delectable treats have only grown in popularity since the start of the school year, with more and more cookies being baked daily to meet the increasing demand from students. Along with the rise in quantity comes a wider variety of cookies, as flavors are occasionally added to allow stu-

dents to "mix-match" and try different cookie flavors. Senior Amanda Weng said, "They [the rainbow cookies] are nice and chewy and the edges are very crispy, a little too sweet, but I'm still eating it."

The spread of the cookies' popularity stems from word of mouth, with students sharing their positive experiences, leading to an increase in demand. Among the school's favorite flavors are the M&M cookie and the chocolate chip cookie. Cookie connoisseur and junior Cindy You said, "My favorite type of cookie at the school is the M&M cookie because it is very colorful and unique from the other cookies."

Despite their widespread prominence within the school, opinions on the cookies among the student body vary, with some students noting inconsistencies in quality. Others argue that due to the high volume of batches the lunch staff must prepare within a limited time frame, there can also arise texture and taste differences. Junior Kai Tsui, "Sometimes there are ones that I don't think passed the quality check, especially since the cookies are a hit for many. Occasional missteps leave some students craving more consistency."

Even with occasional fluctuations in quality, one thing is certain: these cookies have become a staple at Syosset High School and continue to gain popularity, now rivaling other beloved food items like Gatorade and pizza.



Seniors Danielle Kaplan (left) and Amanda Weng (right) pose with their cookies. Their favorite cookies were chocolate and rainbow M&M.



Students line up at the cafeteria in the morning. When asking students on line, many said they were there solely to get cookies.



A multitude of flavor options are currently offered. Flavors ranged from Chocolate, Rainbow M&M, Chocolate Chip, to Sugar Cookie.

Photos by Elaine Liu



# School Food: Gourmet or Not?

Students share what they think now that the high school has updated food menus.

By: Winston Zhou



Chris Kim, Andrew Abelman, Ethan Wang, Robert Liu Meng enjoy spicy beef pasta and mac and cheese with a side of tater tots.

Photo by Winston Zhou

School food has always been a topic of talk for many students; memes and YouTube videos are just a few of the outlets students and adults alike use to discuss their feelings about school food. Syosset, as many students would agree with, is not an exception. However, this past year, Syosset High School's cafeteria upgraded their lunch and breakfast items. With the new food service Whitson's, an immense variety of choices are now available: french toast, loaded fries, tacos, calzones, you name it. Let's see what some of the students have to say.

There is now a trend among students who find themselves more inclined to purchase lunch at the school cafeterias. Freshman Justin Lee said, "It definitely got better from middle school. I actually eat lunch now from school. The sandwiches are pretty good." Oscar Jiang also noticed the changes, and he said, "I would definitely say food improved over last year; the spicy chicken tastes better this year." Many students note an improvement in both taste and preparation, echoed by junior Jamie Eaek. "It got much better than last year. Some of the meat last year was kinda raw. This year it's definitely better, particularly the lettuce,

which is somewhat crispy now," said Jamie.

Beyond flavor, students like junior Robert Liu Meng appreciate the nutritional value of the meals. "What school food means to me today is higher protein and better tasting vegetables. I think fiber is necessary for everyone," Robert said, expressing gratitude for the "decent catering options" now available.

It's clear that there's a positive shift in the school's approach to lunch offerings, reflecting not only a focus on quality and variety, but also attention to nutrition and ensuring a healthy dining experience for these students. Food Services Director Karen Ball said, "There's always room to grow and improve in every school lunchroom, and we're committed to making continuous enhancements. By rotating our menu offerings each month, we aim to provide greater variety while sparking excitement and boosting customer satisfaction. We value students' feedback and ideas about the meals they want to see, ensuring their voices help us to shape our program together." The cafeteria has transformed from an ordinary service to a key part of the school experience, with students embracing this new positive change.



# Serving Up More Success

The Girls' Varsity Tennis team ends their successful season as Long Island Champions and secures second place among over 400 high school tennis programs statewide.

By Elaine Liu

The Girls' Varsity Tennis season wrapped up another successful season with an outstanding overall record of 21 wins and only two losses. Earlier this season, the girls secured the number one seed in their Division I conference at the start of playoffs, and eventually went on to clinch the County title with a 6-1 victory over Port Washington. The girls' success carried over into the Long Island Championships, where they won with another decisive 6-1 score against Suffolk County's Half Hollow Hills East. The girls' win against Half Hollow Hills East earned them a spot in the New York State Championships.

Freshman Sophia Cheng, a two-year member of the girls' varsity tennis team, said, "The series of playoff victories gave us a renewed sense of energy after playing more than 20 matches. Knowing that we had come so far and that we made it all the way to the State Championships was incredibly exciting." On Friday, November 8, the girls went to the Division I New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Championships, a symbol of their hard work and determination throughout the season. "I found it incredibly exciting to be part of a team that made it to States, especially in my first year. Winning Long Island with them was such a fun and unforgettable experience," eighth grader Lulu Bi said.

The girls' efforts all culminated in their final stop of the season: the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing, New York. Numerous spectators, including parents, high school staff, and members of the boys' team, took time out of their busy schedules

to support the girls as they competed throughout the day. First, the girls competed in their semifinal match against Brighton High School with a final score of 5-2. The girls, alongside spectators, were ecstatic after this win as their victory had given them a spot in the State Championship finals. Sophia said, "Being able to win in the semi-finals to get into the finals for another year in a row was definitely very exciting. I think that this season was definitely a success and our entire team never once lost hope in our abilities, which I think is key."

Anticipation and excitement heightened as the girls awaited their last match of the season. The girls gave their all against top-seeded Horace Greeley High School, ultimately ending the match with a hard-fought score of 2-5. Despite the outcome, every player on the court displayed unwavering dedication and grit, battling fiercely until the very last point. Lulu said, "It's really sad that our three seniors are leaving. The New York State Championships was definitely an emotional day, but it was also so much fun".

Although the girls fell short in the finals, their season was marked by a number of hard earned victories. With numerous injuries, including of first singles player Stephanie Marcheret, as well as many pressure matches, the girls were ultimately able to end their season with a happy and determined ending. "I believe that next year, we can get to the finals, and hopefully, win the whole thing. Third time's a charm!", said Sophia.



**Back:** Coach Allen, Lulu Bi, Siya Mehta, Kayla Lo, Selena Wang, Shubu Pradhan, Elaine Liu, Sophia Cheng, Stephanie Liang, Kayla Kim, Kalliopi Hatzis, Coach Fisher

**Front:** Julia Isham, Manasi Pradhan, Diya Varma, Sanam Mehta, Zia Mukherjee, Lumi Park, Hannah Wang  
Photo by Mickie Ma



The girls huddle together before their championship final match against Horace Greeley. In this moment, the girls shared a pep talk, while motivating each other and chanting their school name.

Photo by Nellie Wong



Seniors Zia Mukherjee, Sanam Mehta, and Manasi Pradhan pose with their championship trophy after their win over Port Washington in the County Championships. The win propelled them to the Long Island Championships, and later, the State Championships.  
Photo by Nellie Wong



# Racing Toward the State Championship Meet

The Girls' Cross Country team races in the NY State Championship Meet and proudly represents Section 8 in the Class A race.

By: Sanskriti Rathore



Members of the Girls' Cross Country team: Rin Furukawa, Linda Lin, Julianna Macaskill, Melissa Tanyeri, Arianna Sadrarhami, Gianna Lavacca, Juliana Raigosa  
Photo provided by Julianna Macaskill

The Girls' Cross Country team ran a winning season this past fall, remaining undefeated in the regular season, and again earning the coveted County Championship title. After this successful outcome of the County Championship meet, the girls were excited to take on the State Qualifier meet at Queensbury High School on November 9. The girls ran their best race and won the meet with a 53-point lead against rival team East Meadow.

The girls had been training for this exact competition, the State Championship, for the entire season. After last year's ninth place, they were looking to improve. The main goal of the team was to cut down on their compression time, the time between all the runners in a group, and that is exactly what they did. The girls successfully brought down their compression to 22 seconds between their first and fifth girl during the state qualifier meet. Hoping to do the same at the championship meet, the girls excitedly began their

race preparation.

On November 16, the girls raced, taking on a variety of other schools and individuals from all across New York State, and they did not disappoint. They came in 6th in their race and were 13 out of 41 on the merge. Going up by three places, this was a huge accomplishment for the girls and would only set bigger ambitions. "This team did a great job of learning lessons from both of those races and taking it with them into the championship season", said team captain Melissa Tanyeri.

The Syosset cross country program continues to inspire, proving its resilience, drive and incredible sportsmanship are the true heart of its legacy. Three-year athlete on the team, junior Julianna Macaskill said, "It helps to push yourself more in a race when you know your teammates are doing the same for you. This team ran with gratitude and love for each other."

The Girls' Cross Country team huddles up before running the state qualifier meet. The girls spent all season preparing for the State Championship meet in upstate New York.

2. Senior Jessica Alessi competes during an indoor meet. Jessica ran multiple events, and set numerous school records in the past as a four year varsity member.

Photo 1 by Julianna Macaskill, Photo 2 by Lifetouch Studio





# Running a Journey That is it's Own Reward

The Boys' Cross Country season is marked by a number of successes through the boys' collective hard work and talent.

By: Mira Narayan

At Syosset High School, a wide array of sports are available to students. These groups of dedicated athletes put their best foot forward, performing at high levels of talent and skill. One of these successful teams is the undefeated Boys' Cross Country team. As Conference Champions, the boys have dominated across the board, even qualifying for the New York State Cross Country Championships and the Federation Championships.

Succeeding at such a high level does not come with ease, which freshman Jayden Robotham confirmed. Jayden ran the 400-meter race and will start the 800-meter race in spring. "The team is doing great this year. Cross country had a tough loss at the county championship, but our varsity lineup pulled us back together," said Jayden. Freshman Joseph Zollo, who is primarily a mile runner and an occasional 800 meter runner, said, "We had a tough loss at the country championships getting third. But we bounced back at state qualifiers, making it to states. The team as a whole is doing great. The majority of us are where we want to be in terms of fitness."

In order to succeed at such a high level, hard work is required. Coach Rich Cafiero has been coaching cross country for many years and he has developed an efficient mindset to use when training the runners on the team. He said, "My mindset is two-fold to develop a good person who respects themselves, their competition, their teammates, and the environment around them. It's very hard to be a good runner...if you aren't disciplined. We don't ever hit the fast-forward button when developing our athletes. We do our best to stress not fearing failure and that long-term progress is our main goal over results. After all, the 'journey is the reward!' This motto signified that being part of the team and the collective experiences gained from it were what mattered most.

Once assembled all together, the boys represented a union of effort and talent. Coach Cafiero said, "We've had All-Americans say they joined the team looking to make friends, get in shape, or because someone convinced them to. Sometimes the best choices you make in life are when you take a chance and try something new."



Members of the Syosset Boys' Cross Country are featured at the State competition representing Section 8 Class A Boys. The boys came in ninth place in all of New York State.  
Photo by Jayden Robotham



The Boys' Cross Country team takes home medals at the Manhattan College Invitational in Van Cortlandt park. Between three races, the boys won 13 medals.  
Photos by Rich Cafiero

# Killing it on the Volleyball Court

Through teamwork and resilience, the Girls' Varsity Volleyball team has another successful season.

By: Lily Portnoy

The Syosset Girls' Varsity Volleyball team recently completed an inspiring and successful season. The girls advanced to the Nassau County Class AAA Semifinals and had an overall 9-7 regular season record in a challenging conference.

With the dynamic leadership of Coach Christiansen and Coach Lertora, the girls battled through some tough injuries as they continued to set an example of true teamwork. During the season and in creating the lineup, the team had to make some adjustments to the unexpected number of girls being hurt by strategically switching roles. Junior Claudia Cusa identified these line up changes as "one of the team's biggest challenges." Claudia said, "Through good coaching and playing, the team tried their best to make it work."

According to a proud Coach Christiansen, the team was consistent all year by "playing great volleyball and having so much fun together as a group." The team's strong camaraderie was also evident off the court where the girls held Syosset's Annual Dig Pink game, raising 1,500 dollars to be donated to PinkAid LI, an organization that provides critical financial assistance to women with breast cancer.

Throughout the season, the varsity team provided some noteworthy team and individual highlights. The team defeated perennial rival Massapequa in three sets for the first time in ten years in regular season Conference I play. Coach Christiansen went out of her way to describe this as "a big win for the program." On the individual side, seniors Emma Bowie, Kate Nemes, and Amanda Axelrod along with junior Claudia Cusa each had over 100 kills this season. In addition, libero Michela Daniels had a memorable season with 275 digs.

The team was fortunate to have a number of award winners including All County honors for seniors Kate Nemes, Amanda Axelrod, and Michaela Daniels. There were also two players who received Honorable All County recognition- senior Emma Bowie and junior Claudia Cusa.

Despite losing 8 incredible seniors this year, Coach Christiansen is "excited for the returning players in [the] program to step into their roles" next year. Claudia Cusa said, "All the team's focus, hopes, and expectations for 2025 are to win counties and continue to have fun together as one team."



1. Senior Kate Nemes spikes another winning shot. Kate was a valuable member of the Girls' Varsity Volleyball team and received All County honors this season.

2. Senior Michela Daniels prepares to defend an incoming spike. Michela earned All County honors this season with 275 digs.

Photos by Lifetouch Studio



# Diving Into Record-Breaking Waters

The Girls' Varsity Swim and Dive team's season can be defined by nothing short of a success with its record-shattering achievements, unwavering team spirit, and the pursuit of excellence both in and out of the pool.

By: Eliana Leder

The Girls' Varsity Swim and Dive team has had an incredible season, shattering a dozen school records and establishing their position as one of the most outstanding teams in Syosset High School history. Their accomplishments reflect not only their exceptional athleticism, but also their team spirit and dedication.

This season, the team set new standards for excellence

in the world of swim and dive. "It definitely means that our school is progressing and getting better as a swim team," said Madison Lin, a junior on the team who impressively broke eight records, including the 200 individual medley record. She said, "It's amazing that I was able to be part of...making school history." Rachel Liu, a senior who broke the eleven 1 meter dive school records that have been up since 2016, attributed her achievement in part to the program itself. "I think it just speaks to the program and how successful it can be, especially in such a short amount of time, because I couldn't have done it without my coaches and everyone else supporting me," said Rachel.

Moreover, others described the experience as something their younger selves could hardly imagine. "It means so much to me. If you asked my freshman year self, she would not believe you," said junior Jacquelyn Liu, a three-year member of the team who has broken two school records in the 200 Medley Relay and 200 Freestyle Relay.

A defining trait of the Syosset Swim and Dive team was its camaraderie. Caroline Hu, a senior captain who contributed to breaking two school records, said that the overall success of the team was due to "[their] team spirit, how motivated we are, and how closely bonded we are." The friendship on the team can be attributed to bonding activities outside of the water, such as pasta parties and other group gatherings. "We hang out outside of swim and outside of school, and I think that helps create a support system," said Jacquelyn. These bonding activities, as well as team traditions and mutual encouragement, contribute to the positive atmosphere that every member of the team describes. Joelle Lee, a senior who contributed to breaking the 200 Freestyle Relay record said, "My team is really supportive. They just inspire me to work as hard as they do every day."

Although it is incredibly rewarding, the world of swim and dive presents various challenges. For student athletes, balancing rigorous swim and dive schedules with academics and personal responsibilities can be extremely stressful. Many athletes speak about mental obstacles, such as the frustration of failing and getting injuries. "I feel like the hardest to overcome is definitely failure and plateauing,"

said Madison. Despite the persistence and dedication of each person on the swim and dive team, lack of improvement is still a possibility. Joelle said, "There's definitely times when people plateau even though they've been working very, very hard."

Yet, the girls have learned to overcome these difficulties through resilience and support from teammates. Rachel said, "Just taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture...and trying to make the most of every day- even on the hard days- is definitely how I get through those tough times."

This season's achievements were about more than just the records- they inspire the next generation of swimmers and divers. The athletes encouraged younger team members to remain consistent and trust the process. "I know this sounds very cliché, but hard work does pay off, even when you think it's not," said Joelle. With the same spirit, Amanda said, "Keep going. Consistency is key."

The team's victories highlight the growth of the swim and dive program as a whole. Coaches and athletes

alike have expressed pride in how far the program has come from its early stages to its current place of talent and teamwork. Coach Marc Occhiuto said, "Swimming sometimes doesn't get the pomp and circumstance that other things might get, yet we have one of the most successful teams." Rachel said, "Just being able to see how our program has grown over the years in recognition and success is something that I feel so lucky to be a part of and to witness."

The Swim and Dive team's record-shattering season is a testament to their hard work, talent, and unity. With this, the girls were able to win the Nassau County Championship title for the third year in a row, crowning them defending champions. The athletes' achievements this season set a high standard for future generations and ensure that the legacy of this team will only grow stronger over time.

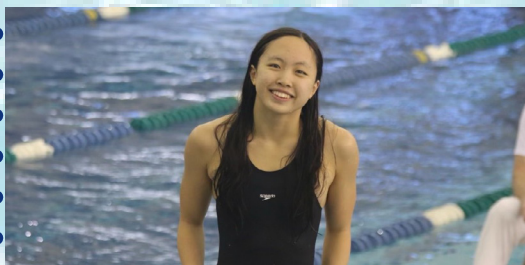


Photo of junior swimmer Madison Lin, who has broken eight school records: 50 freestyle, 100 freestyle, 200 freestyle, 200 individual medley, 100 backstroke, 200 medley relay, 200 freestyle relay, and 400 freestyle relay.

Photo by Veronica Wu



Rachel Liu poses with the County Championship title plaque for her very last year on the team. She broke a total of eleven 1 meter dive record for Syosset High School.

Photo by Isabella Young



# Syosset Boys Show Their Strength

The Boys' Varsity Basketball team wins another game to go up in the standings.

By: Gabby Montejano



1. Cole Kassinove dribbles down the court while evading a Great Neck North defender. Cole passed the ball down the court to set up a play that scored for the Syosset boys.
  2. The boys' team stands together on the court. Before the start of games, the Syosset boys always stood together for the pledge of allegiance.
  3. Jumping into the air, Sammy Etra starts the game by winning the tip-off and hitting the ball to a teammate.
- Photos by Lifetouch Studio

The Boys' Varsity Basketball team had a successful win against Great Neck North on December 5. The game increased their standings to 3-0 early in the season. The team maintained a 20 point lead throughout the first two quarters. The boys won the game 64 to 51.

The boys started off the first quarter with an early lead that they managed to maintain throughout the game. Anthony Ku started the game off with a long distance shot within the first 5 minutes of play. Anthony then followed up with another three pointer within the first quarter which helped set the foundation for the rest of the game. The first quarter ended with a 18-5 lead for Syosset.

The second quarter proved no different than the first with Syosset leading by 21 points at the end of the half. Coach Greg Cardona said, "I think we were able to get off to a good start by

running crisp sets and getting good looks. We were able to build a 20+ point lead and play from ahead the entire game." All in all, the boys ended the half with a 43-22 lead.

The third period started with Tomas Martelli with a quick steal. Sam Etra made a fast break that upped the score for the Syosset boys. "I think our team made too many mistakes in the second half. I tried to let them play through their struggles, but I would've used more time outs to settle our players down. We have a lot of new players with little or no varsity experience," said Coach Cardona. The third ended in a close 52-49 score.

The end of the fourth quarter had multiple game making shots. Sam Etra had multiple steals that helped up the score for the Syosset boys and Anthony Ku made the last shot of the game making the end score 64-51.

# The New Digital SAT - Good or Bad?

A voice for the digital SAT.

By Cody Cheng

I took the digital PSAT my junior year. That was the first ever digital PSAT administered to high school students nationwide. Lining up outside, everyone carrying a school-issued chromebook can be a weird sight. There are a lot of reasons to hate on the digital exams, 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 asked for.

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

first reading-and-writing module will determine the questions on your next module, 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.

Lastly, it's simply convenient. You don't have to worry about bubbling in answers on an answer booklet, or wait 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. 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.

Downsides of the digital SAT.

By Elaine Liu

You've probably heard of the SATs before. The SAT has grown to become a key measure for colleges to assess how a student matches up with other students' academic potential. Although it isn't a definitive measure of intelligence, it's often a major source of stress for students, who feel compelled to achieve high scores. The shift from paper to digital testing introduces significant inequities affecting scores.

By March of 2023, a 97-year tradition of paper based SAT testing came to an end with the digital SAT. The abrupt change caused widespread confusion and panic, especially for the graduating class of that year who hadn't yet taken the test. Students, already accustomed to doing practice problems and tests solely on paper, had their established preparation routines disrupted.

After the test, students were panicking and expressing how they'd never faced such a challenging exam. Students found the exam difficult because, unlike the paper SAT, it is adaptive, with questions becoming harder as they answer correctly. With adaptive testing, many mentioned how they came into the testing room oblivious to the test's difficulty and walked out knowing that they had left many questions unanswered.

A major issue is the loss of paper-based tactility that comes with tests on computer screens. Constantly shifting between

the computer screen to check questions is incredibly tedious. On the paper test, a key strategy for high scores was marking up questions directly on the test for problem-solving. Now there are hardly any options for annotations, and the limited few often lag and pose technical challenges, failing to mimic the ease and efficiency of the paper SAT.

Moreover, screen time has been known for being dangerous to students' health, causing eye strain and fatigue. Students towards the end of the test, during the most important modules, can struggle to pay attention and focus due to being tired from staring at a screen for more than two hours.

The SAT claims to promote equity across socio-economic backgrounds, especially since SAT scores are significant for college admissions. However, for students with unequal access to digital practice tools or digital testing experience, it can be extremely difficult to study for the new exam.

Being dependent upon technologies that constantly face issues directly impacts the outcome for a test-taker. It requires reliable devices, and a stable Internet connection, which may impede students, especially in low-income areas. The digital SAT raises significant concerns and dissatisfaction, making it appear inferior to the traditional paper-based version.



**Get Ready for the Digital SAT®  
on a School Day**



# NCAA's Biggest Fumble Yet

The NCAA's recent decision to modify rosters for football teams will clearly end up hurting the sport.

By: Ben Dwek

Another roster cut means fewer players competing at the collegiate level, primarily those walk-ons. Walk-ons support college teams as a vital core group that provides depth, enthusiasm, and, in many cases, success due mainly to sheer determination and hard work. Research has shown that nearly 46% of Division-I football rosters included walk-ons, with much of the highlight coming from those who still play significant roles on the field or, as in other situations, off of it. Simply their presence adds to the culture of competition and, in many cases, those turns into success stories for teammates and fans alike. For many student-athletes, walking onto a football team is a critical first step to earning a scholarship, getting that education, and even getting the first introduction to the professional level. Walk-ons also make contributions to a practice squad by providing their specific skill in the preparation of the starters for real game action yet go unnoticed again in many cases, although their contributions are pivotal to the overall performance of the team. Especially for the less privileged, these opportunities mean a lot, as, after all, athletics is indeed the only option for getting into college and upwards towards prosperity. By enforcing roster size limits, it is, to the extent of the NCAA itself, closing a door for this type of other dimension for countless young athletes, especially walk-ons, whose opportunities may never come again, to show themselves and to take their place in the squad.

Football is a physically demanding sport with a high risk of injury, with studies indicating that the average college football team experiences 8-9 injuries per 1,000 athlete exposures in a season. Larger rosters provide essential depth, allowing teams to rotate players and maintain competitive balance throughout a grueling season. Programs with larger rosters report fewer injury-related disruptions, with one study showing that teams with more backups can reduce starting player fatigue by 20% over the course of a season. Downsizing rosters puts undue strain on players, who may face increased playing time and heightened injury risk due to insufficient backups. For a sport that prides itself on safety advancements in recent years, this ruling feels like a step backward.

The downsizing rule strikes with even greater impact at lower tier football programs, which do not recruit big names. A bigger program with an established pipeline might escape the cuts relatively unscathed, while limited and mid-range programs depend upon larger rosters to unearth hidden gems over the years. With limiting roster sizes, the NCAA is tilting the game in this case, thus separating the men from the boys with greater motivation for the top teams and leaving behind all other teams.

College football is more than just a game; for many,

it serves as a cornerstone of culture in that community. The Knight Commission contributes to the realization that over 70% of Division I football programs find value in participating in their communities through events that foster local pride and support. Involving a larger roster brings a greater chance for representation for their respective schools, a higher number of families traveling to games, and more connections between the university and its alumni base. It's knocking the cultural richness one notch down, merit-wise, since lesser players will, following downsized rosters, get to wear the jersey and attest to the institution's legacy. Further roster restrictions mean fewer students on a given program's recruiting lists and, therefore, fewer players creating sustainable fan bases. The NCAA fires back that it is a matter of developing the parity — it's over \$4 billion in revenue generated each year across Division I football programs — reducing the roster size not only affects small schools' ability to remain competitive, but also slows down the interests of several fans and alternative sponsors. College football is still the largest revenue generator of athletic departments and regularly sponsors different programs in sports such as swimming, gymnastics, and track — any roster size reduction will bring interest and support in the football programs crashing down on its feet, and this could undoubtedly threaten the very lives of athletic departments.

While the NCAA would characterize this ruling as an effort to promote parity, the opposite is relatively close to happening. Though deeper programs would still find their way to attracting and developing top talent, the smaller programs will quickly lose depth, rendering them unable to compete. Instead of leveling a playing field, this shoudering of the size risk solidifies the very hierarchies that exist in college football. If the NCAA's ultimate goal is to promote the safety and parity of players on the field, the answer to their problems will not be to condense rosters. Increased funding for player health programs, broadened scholarship opportunities, and strict guidelines and enforcement on practice intensity would address safety problems while not annihilating the opportunities of student-athletes. It would be another means to do things such that capping coaching salaries or raising shared revenues would enable better competition.

The NCAA's move to reduce each team's football roster is an ill-mannered call to fix the systemic issues slowly ruining NCAA football. Further reductions in the roster would only cripple the game of college football in terms of player safety, reduce opportunities for college athletes, and widen the gulf between the haves and have-nots in college football.