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THE COURIER

THE LONGEST RUNNING MIDDLE SCHOOLS NEWSPAPER IN THE UNITED STATES

EXTRA EXTRA: THE NEWSIES CAST SEIZE THE DAY!

by Salvatore Bonaiuto



Every March, Highlands puts on a musical, and every year it's great. But this year's show was definitely something special.

If you didn't get a chance to see it, the musical is about young kids who sell newspapers, just managing to get by, when Joseph Pulitzer, the owner of *The World*, the newspaper that they sell, raises the price of papers. Jack Kelly rallies the Newsies to go on strike and demand better pay.

This show was a lot of fun and it was truly an honor to be a part of it. And anyone else will tell you the same thing, but don't just take it from me! Below are some exclusive interviews with some of the cast, crew and teachers involved with making this spectacular show happen!

<u>Cast Interviews:</u>

Tell us a bit about your character!

Jane Mitschele/Jack: "Jack Kelly is a charismatic union leader, who always has the newsies best interest in mind."

Makenzie Mercer/Crutchie: "I was Crutchie, he has a crutch, is Jack Kelly's best friend, is very loyal to jack, the newsies, and strike"

Ian Liu-Silverstein/Davey: "Davey is a new newsie who helps the protagonist, Jack, lead the strike with his younger brother, Les."

Alon Greenberg/Les: "Les is a very confident little kid who isn't afraid of stepping up to a challenge."

Vivienne Mittenzwei/Katherine: "An aspiring journalist who is just busting out of the social pages. Helps the newsies on their journey to take down the kingmakers of New York by writing a front-page story."

Arthur Pollak/Pulitzer: "Pulitzer is the selfish rich owner of the New York World"

Safi Burke/Medda Larkin: "She is the lead singer at a theater that she owns, and she also helps Jack to organize the strike and meet Theodore Roosevelt at the end."

Matthew Panos/Race: "Race is a newsie and while he may not be very important to the plot of the story, he makes himself known to the audience through his comedy and fun lifestyle."

What was your favorite part of the show?

Jane Mitschele/Jack: "My favorite scene/song in the show is definitely Just a Pretty Face. Jack gets a really cool view of the number, and my scene inside the song is really fun."

Makenzie Mercer/Crutchie: "My favorite song was Seize the Day"

Ian Liu-Silverstein/Davey: "My favorite part of the show is when we do the song 'Seize The Day Part 2' where we do a really fun dance! But 'King of New York' is a close second."

Alon Greenberg/Les: "My favorite part of the show was part 1 and 2 of Seize the Day."

Vivienne Mittenzwei/Katherine: "My favorite part of the show was the number King of New York because I was given the opportunity to tap and have so much fun in a huge dancing number!"

Arthur Pollak/Pulitzer: "King of New York, even though I'm not in it"

Safi Burke/Medda Larkin: "My favorite part of the show is kind of New York because it's catchy and has good dancing!"

Matthew Panos/Race: "My favorite part of the show was King of New York because that was the most fun dance number, and I had fun doing my egotistic solos throughout the song."

What is your favorite memory from being in the musical?

Jane Mitschele/Jack: My favorite memory of rehearsal would have to our first time watching King of New York. Jack isn't in that song, but seeing my friends do it so well was truly special.

Makenzie Mercer/Crutchie: My favorite memory was hanging out in the cafeteria with my friends eating dinner at 5:30 when staying till 7:00

Ian Liu-Silverstein/Davey: My favorite memory from being in Newsies is probably having fun with all the friends that I made!

Alon Greenberg/Les: One of my favorite memories from being in Newsies was all of the late rehearsals before tech that went to 7:30 or 8 because I thought it brought the whole cast closer together.

Vivienne Mittenzwei/Katherine: My favorite memory from being in newsies was tech week when I really connected with people and got to do what I love for hours.

Arthur Pollak/Pulitzer: The cast party was super fun, because we were all really proud of ourselves and each other, and we got to relax after doing 2 shows and have fun

Safi Burke/Medda Larkin: My favorite memories are making friends and having with them backstage and during tech week, I'm glad I had that opportunity.

Matthew Panos/Race: My favorite memory of Newsies was the fun we had along the way with each other. SHOUTOUT TO GOVNA (Sophia Miller).

(Article Continued on page 2)

EXTRA EXTRA: THE NEWSIES CAST SEIZE THE DAY! *(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)*

What was the hardest part of being in the cast?

Jane Mitschele/Jack: I would say the hardest part of being a newsie is remembering to keep up the accent.

Makenzie Mercer/Crutchie: The hardest part of being in Newsies was learning lines/creating my own version of Crutchie

Ian Liu-Silverstein/Davey: The hardest part of being in Newsies was probably memorizing the lines and choreography! I had to practice a lot before the show to get it all down.

Alon Greenberg/Les: The hardest part of being in Newsies for me was working with the scaffolding and trying to figure out the best way to get up or down depending on the scene or song is going to be on it for.

Vivienne Mittenzwei/Katherine: The hardest part of being in Newsies was learning all of my lines, mic changes, and huge numbers. Also, my song, Watch What Happens, required a lot of hard work and concentration which challenged me.

Arthur Pollak/Pulitzer: Acting as a character so different from me

Safi Burke/Medda Larkin: The hardest part of being in newsies was getting into character, because I act very differently in real life than how I do in the show. It took me a while to start acting, but during tech week I got the hand of it and it was super fun!

Matthew Panos/Race: The hardest part of being in newsies was knowing that it would all eventually end.



Is there anything else you would like to say?

Ian Liu-Silverstein/Davey: Newsies Jr. was an amazing production with so many talented people! If I could do it again, I would!

Alon Greenberg/Les: I'm just glad that I had the chance and opportunity to do this. It was so fun, and I made so many new friends.

Vivienne Mittenzwei/Katherine: This was one of the best shows I have ever been in, and I enjoyed every second!

Matthew Panos/Race: NEWSIES FOREVER!!!!!!!

<u>An Interview with Mrs. Irlen:</u>

How long did it take you prepare for the show?

"I started preparing for the show over the summer. Looking at several possibilities. Then, in late October, flyers went up, November was the interest meeting and auditions, and we Cast the show by Thanksgiving. We started rehearsals on January 6th and had rehearsals every day after school through the performance on March 15th. The full cast wasn't present every day, it depended on what scene/song or choreography we were doing."

How do you think the show went this year?

"I think the show was a tremendous success this year. This was a really special and talented cast who were really dedicated to making the show amazing."

How many years have you been in charge of the musical?

"I have been in charge of the musical for the past 18 years. We've done 17 shows because we couldn't do one in 2021 due to Covid."

How is the musical selected?

"Typically, over the summer I start formulating a list of possibilities and then in the fall I continue the search and listen to what ideas the students have and then ultimately along with the choreographer decide on what might be the best show for the current year."

What was your favorite musical to direct?

"I have many favorites over the past years. It's a tie between "Seussical", "13", "Matilda" and "Newsies". If I had to pick one, it would be "13"- as it was a very special show, and we had a live pit which was fun."

Is there anything else you want to say?

"I feel very lucky to have had tremendous young people to work with over the past 18 years to create these awesome productions. I look forward to future shows."

<u>Interview with Right Stage Manager: Teresa Damato</u>

How long did it take to prepare for the show?

It didn't actually take that long for us to prepare for the show. We spent a few meetings making props, one spiking the set, and then we ran through the show during tech week.

What does the stage manager do?

Stage manager goes through the script during the show and reminds everyone of their cues to bring out props or do something else backstage. They also generally make sure that everything is running smoothly backstage.

What was your favorite part of being in stage crew?

My favorite part of being in stage crew is being able to be part of the show without being seen. We all become friends backstage, and we have a lot of fun, and it's a really good feeling to contribute to the illusion that the set changes all by itself.

How do you think the show went this year?

I think the show went really well this year. Everyone in the cast was really talented and the show looked and sounded so good. Everyone in the crew got their set pieces and props out at the right time, and the actors put on an amazing performance.

<u>Interview with Mr. Lupia:</u>

What does Stage crew do?

"Our job is to stay hidden as much as possible and make sure all of the set pieces and some of the props are in the right place at the right time! We also have some students that help with spotlights to highlight certain cast members."

How long does it take for it all to come together?

"I hold an interest meeting following the holiday break. After I get about 20 interested students, we have about 5-6 afterschool meetings in the weeks leading up to tech week to get to know each other, discuss what needs to happen in the show, and even make some of the needed props. Then tech week happens. We are here running through the show with the cast every day of the week after school leading up to the performances. We usually do not leave Highlands until after 7PM!"

How long have you been in charge of stage crew?

"This was my fourth year that I have been in charge of stage crew."

What is your favorite part of running the stage crew?

"My favorite part of leading stage crew is seeing all of our talented students in the cast and crew pull off a great show! Seeing the excitement in all our students after we have pulled off the first of the two shows on Friday night is the best!"

Is there anything else you want to say?

"If you are interested in musical stage crew, keep your ears open for announcements about an interest meeting next year!

I would like to give a shoutout to everyone that makes these performances possible, but then this article would be far too long. There is so much work, from so many people that makes amazing shows like this one happen every year. Thank you!

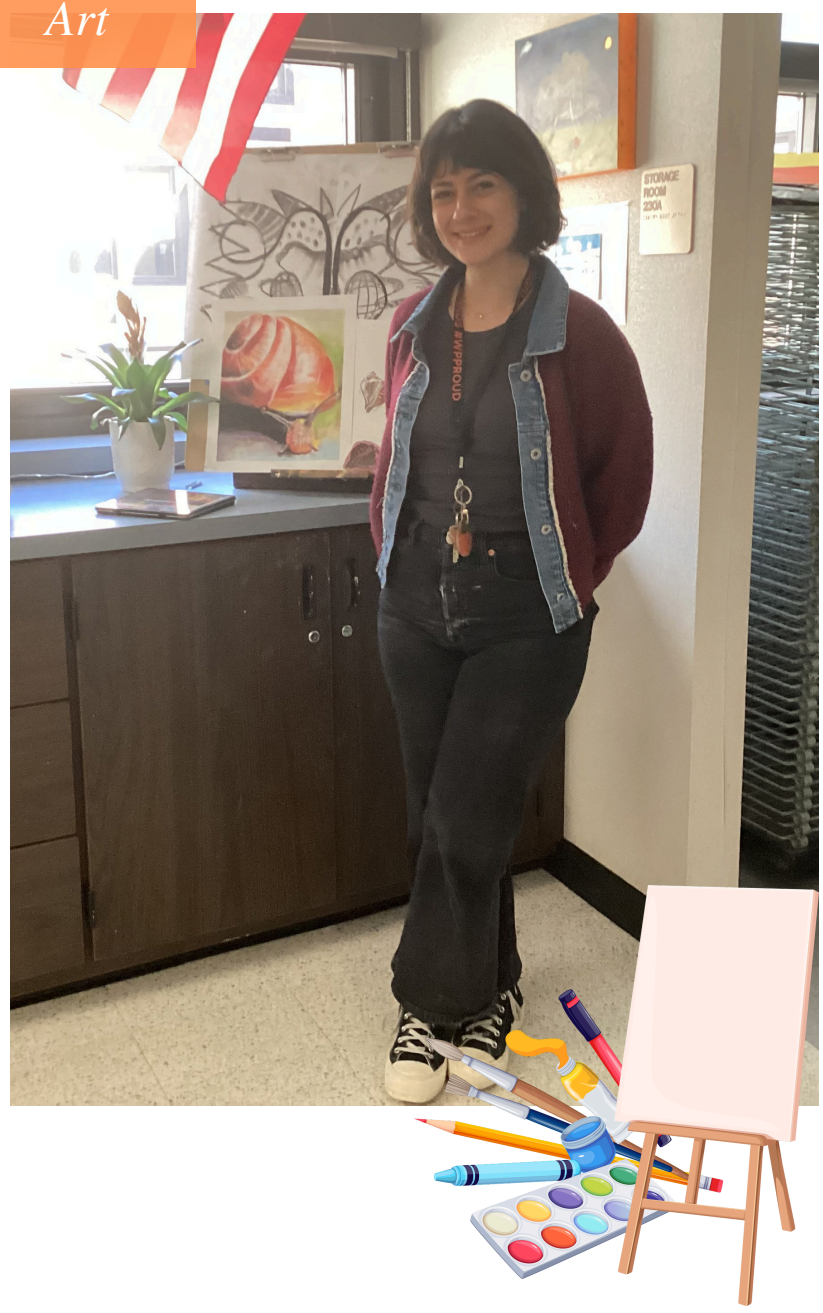
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ENCORE TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

By Charlotte Pizzirusso

Ms. Farella teaches Art to 7th and 8th graders at Highlands. This was her first job at Highlands and she used to teach Art at some of the Elemetary Schools. Here are some things to know about her.

Ms. Farella Art



Childhood and School Education

She grew up in Mount Pleasant and went to a school called Westley for kindergarten through 12th grade. Her role models growing up were her parents and her high school art teachers. She knew she wanted to go into art around 6th grade and it was only renforced in high school. She loved her art teachers and they were there for her during hard times and encouraged her. They also seemed like they really enjoyed their jobs which was one of the things that made her want to be an art teacher. Other than art her favorite school subjects were math and english. For her the hardest part of Middle School was balancing all the different parts of her life school, estracurriculars and friendships. After, she went to SUNY Newplalts College where she majored in art education as well as painting and drawing. She then got her Masters in art education.

Coming to teach at Highlands

She was very exited to start at Highlands this year because middle school was when she realized she wanted to go into art and was very exited to hopefully inspire students. She also knows how hard middle school can be and hopes that art can be a calming relief for students. She was expecting teaching middle school to be really hectic but it actually wasn't.

Her advice for students is to trust the process and everything can feel very fast and rushed, but there is a lot of beauty in going slow and taking your time, and not letting what others say get to you. "I really hope that students this age know that there are many ways of expressing yourself whether it's art, music, theater, sports or anything else it is very important to express yourself and know who you are".

7TH GRADE TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

By Julia Anselmo

Mr. Lupia Team 7B



1. ***Where did you go to school/grow up?***

I grew up in Syracuse New York and I went to school at Cicero Syracuse and it is a very big school district actually more students than White Plains."

2. ***What made you want to go into Education?***

"Just wanting to create the next generation of critical thinkers and a generation that will change the world."

3. ***How many years have you been teaching?***

"This is my seventh year all together I taught 5 years in Rochester, and this is my second year in white plains."

4. ***Who are your role models? Why?***

"Probably my parents just because times weren't always easy and they did what they could to get through."

5. ***What are your hobbies/What do you do for fun on your free time?***

"I try to go on a run every single day and I like to go to the gym too I think that exercise is a great way to handle stress at least for me."

6. ***What is your favorite book that you've ever read?***

"I think *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini because it really opened my eyes to how other people live."

7. ***What subject was your favorite when you were a student? Why?***

"Oh, definitely science, and that's why I teach it. I just liked how we could learn about the world around us."

8. ***What advice do you have for students today?***

"It's ok to make mistakes, as long as you try your best."

9. ***What else would you like our readers to know about you?***

"I Have run two marathons and that took a lot of training."

8TH GRADE TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

By Maya Amir

The Courier's 8th Grade Teacher Spotlight is Mr. Mascia. See his exclusive interview below:



Mr. Mascia
Team 8A

Where did you go to school/grow up?
"I grew up in the Bronx; Fulham prep for high school, and Fulham university for college."

What made you want to go into education?
"I like a job that I know is going to be challenging and won't everyone get boring. And, I also like working with kids."

How many years have you been on this job?
"It's been 21 years."

Woah, that's allot! Any role models?
"Role models, hmm…Growing up, I was really close with my uncles…They were my role models, yep!"

Is there anything you like to do in your free time?
"I like to read, as well as outside activities, like gardening."

On that note, what is the best book you've read?
"Hmm… Probably Catcher in the Rye."

What subject was your favorite as a student?
"I always loved social studies. I liked history and learning about it; every day was a new story."

Is there anything you're looking forward to most this year at Highlands?
"I always look forward to the eight grade dance. 'Coming up before you know it!"

What else would you like our dear readers to know?
"We have a great community in highlands. The kids here are respectful, and fun to teach. In the end, I enjoy working here, allot."

A r*ound of applause for Mr. Mascia!*



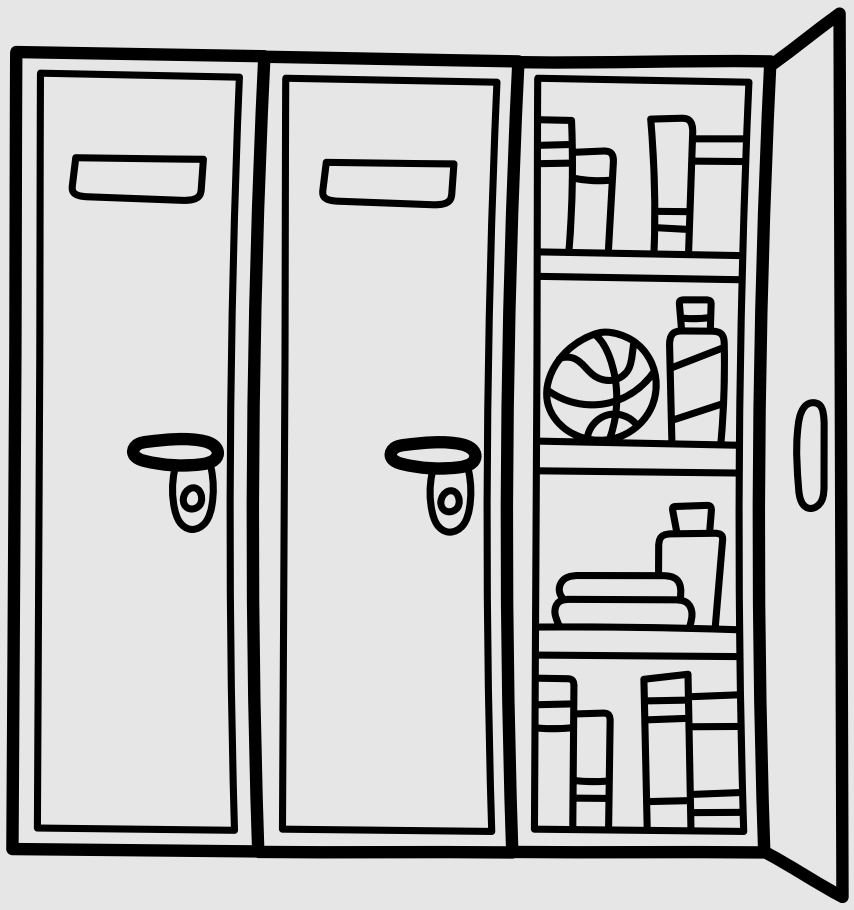
AN 8TH GRADERS GUIDE ON HOW TO SURVIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL

by Salvatore Bonaiuto

Staying organized:
Most paper handouts should be safely stored into your binder. Only need to have a divider and section for classes that you regularly get papers from. Clean out your blinder at least once per quarter, throw out papers you don't need, or put them in a folder to keep at home.

Time management:
You have schoolwork, clubs, sports, chores, activities outside of school, and hanging out with friends. It can be difficult to balance all of that. One good tip is to prioritize assignments. A project due in a week can wait until you finish an assignment due tomorrow (just don't put it off too long). Another big thing is taking breaks. It may sound counterintuitive, but taking regular short breaks can give you the energy to keep working longer. The best way to avoid stress from clubs and sports is to stop it at the source. Don't over commit. Unfortunately, you can't be a part of every club and sport, its ok to say no to going to a club.

Enjoy it while you can:
However, do as much as you can. If you skip things that you might enjoy just cause they're "uncool." You will definitely regret it! Just try to have fun. It's like a saying I heard once, "sleep more than you study, study more than you party, and party as much as you can."



7th Grade "Unbreakable Boy" Movie Review

BY LIZZIE O. S

Do you remember the 7th grade move trip? It was quite interesting, and me personally I liked it! The popcorn was nice, and I do have to say, majority of us got hooked in the middle of the movie! 7th grader Charlotte P from 7B said "It was a good movie in general and I was pleasantly surprised kids weren't making fun of it too much." Here is a review of what happened, from the start to the finish!
First, most 7th graders left their binders and had brought their lunch (if they had one), water bottle, and their orange (or black) bag. After bag check, we went on the bus. There people could on their phones, chill with their friends or listen to music. The movie itself was about two teenagers Scott LeRette (with his imaginary best friend named Joe.) and Teresa LeRette who accidentally have a child. Unbeknownst to Scott, Teresa has osteogenesis imperfecta which is when the person has fragile or brittle bones. This allows them to unfortunately, break bones much easier then normal people. Teresa and Scott decide to keep the baby, and Teresa tells Scott her disorder. She was concerned but Scott insisted they'd get through this together.

Once Austin was born, he indeed inherited the brittle bone trait. As Teresa and Scott went through the hardships of having a infant, Scott severely underestimates how fragile Austin's bones are, as we see multiple times Austin falling off in small heights like a small coffee table, a few steps of stairs but those cases ended up breaking some of Austin's bones. As Scott learns to keep Austin safe, he starts to worry when he notices how different Austin acted. He would have random fits, and in a particular scene we see Austin insisting on organize his planes in a specific way and when his father urges him to hurry, he counts louder and eventually throws his planes all over, before organizing and counting all over again. Scott, now worried insists to Teresa that and she eventually caves in. After a few tests it's confirmed that Austin has autism.

Once Austin is a bit older, he seems to manage his fits better and enjoys talking to many people. Around the same time, Teresa had another child named Logan. He however, didn't get the brittle bones trait. Once in a while there'd be an issue, but they were able to fix it. Scott was able to get a well-paying job, and they all moved to a fancier house just in time for Austin and Logan to enter middle school. During that time, Logan tries to keep an eye on Austin, but is unable to since they don't have much classes together. (Excluding lunch) this, unfortunately allows people to tease and bully Austin one in particular being Tyler. Austin friends Tyler without realizing he's mocking him. He starts to also pick on Logan while defending his brother. Although Austin's parents love him a lot, they struggle to pay the bills for his autism which reflects as they are slowly unable to pay the bills. They eventually have to move out, and go closer to Scott's parents while staying in the same school.

As they continue to struggle to pay for the bills, Scott starts looking down a darker route to forget (albeit temporarily) about his issues: alcohol. Soon he unknowingly becomes alcoholic. Although Joe expresses concern, Scott brushes it off every time Joe brings it up. One day, for a work party Scott decides to bring Logan and Austin to the late work party. Near the end, he drinks too much and is unable to walk. Joe urgently tells him to call a taxi since he can't drive in this state, and Scott starts to argue saying he's just a figment of his imagination and that he can't tell him what to do. To Joe's protests, Scott drives and the next day he wakes up on a bed, with Teresa ordering him to get out. Turns out, Scott crashed right into the tree, with Logan and Austin inside. Thankfully, they didn't get hurt but Teresa is furious he'd drink then drive. Defeated, he goes to his parent's house to consult with. His mom tells him to throw a mug to the floor, saying the mug is broken like him. However, piece by piece, he can fix himself back together.

After many days of alcohol rehabilitation, Scott eventually talks to Teresa and they're able to fix their lives. After working hard, through all of life's struggles, Scott was able to find himself (and Joe!). Scott then takes Austin to a camping trip, where Scott realizes that sometimes, being unbreakable isn't about being physically unbreakable, but being able to have unbreakable spirit.

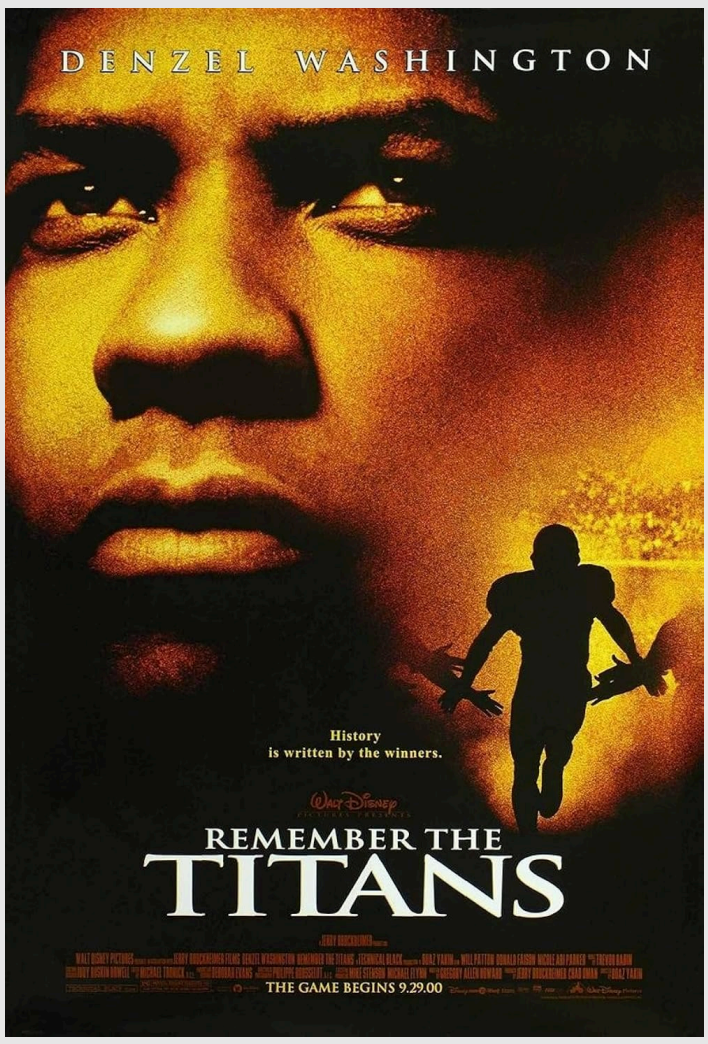


LOCAL NEWS

8th Grade “Remember the Titans” Movie Review

by Jahnavi Jahnavi

A good movie I would recommend is “Remember the Titans” by Jerry Bruckheimer and Chad Oman. This true story movie was set in the 1970s about a high school football team called The Titans. The movie starts out by saying that the head coach, Bill Yoast, has to move down and have someone else (a black coach) named Coach Herman Bonne take his place. Coach Yoast announces this at a bar to his student's parents along with the information that he had been thinking about moving. Over this all the white parents get angry and convince Bill to coach the students. While this is happening, many black boys decide to try out for the football team. Coach Bonne says that everybody that goes to the mandatory camp will become a part of the team if they can survive it.



At the start of camp, both races were criticizing and fighting each other. They could not get along but after a few days at camp the Coach told everyone to learn something about someone from the opposite race tell them something about themselves. After a few days of doing this they all started to get along and have less fights. As a new student comes, nicknamed Sunshine, he becomes a new source of conversation after he kisses one of the other straight boys Gerry. After camp ended, none of them saw each other until school had started and everyone was going back to their normal lives only as segregated footballer players. At the first game every one was really nervous, but Coach Bonne had their back and after a quick pep talk everyone was back on track.

In my opinion the movie was both inspiring and sad knowing the history of a high school football team and how they made it to where they are now. One of my favorite parts of the movie was when all the students were getting along and were happy like brothers and even with the hardships they went through, they came out stronger one after another and I think that is one of the reasons students and adults should watch this movie because it is really amazing as how they portrayed the story with a visual concept of how life and it’s challenges are what keeps us going. Overall I would give 7 footballs out of 10 because not only it is a documentary of something in the past, it is also a reminder to people at this age and adults to never give up on your dreams and how to be a team player.

Jazz Band St. Patrick’s Day Concert Review

by Lizzie O. S and Mina Auletta

The Jazz Band played in the St. Patrick’s Day parade on March 8th. They played the song “Celebration”. In the opinion of someone who played it, me, it was really fun to play and during the rests we tried to dance. Lizzie, a jazz band member, said, “It was very fun, but it was ICE COLD. Majority of us could NOT feel our fingers. The best part was when it was it started late, so most of us just chilled. Literally. We froze to death. Now I need food to revive me.” The parade started at 12:00 pm, but the jazz band float started much after, at about 1:00 pm. Like Lizzie said, us Jazz Band members were chilling in the cold. Not all Jazz Band members could make it, but make sure to say congratulations to the people who played! The jazz band will be playing at the 8th grade moving up ceremony on 6/26 and the talent show on 4/11.







CURRENT EVENTS

April is National Volunteer Month -

Where Students Can Volunteer

By Mina Auletta

There are many ways that you can volunteer in our community this April. Volunteering is a valuable experience for you and helps our community. You might think its boring, but it's actually very fun! Volunteering opportunities are plentiful in Westchester, but only if you know where to find them. Many places need an adult helper, and some require you to be thirteen, but I tried to find the best opportunities for students 12 and over. Here are some ideas to start volunteering!

<u>Creative heARTS at White Plains Hospital</u>

Creative heARTS program allows teens 12 and older to engage with hospital patients in a meaningful way. You can create handmade items- like origami, jewelry, small pictures and paintings, poetry, knitted or crocheted items, and greeting cards- to give to cancer patients, staff, and the hospital's gift shop. 12-year-olds must be accompanied by an adult. To contact them, you can go to <u>www.volunteernewyork.org</u>, click on the 3 lines, press youth, and whatever age you are. Note: School-issued email addresses do not allow communications from outside of the school's network. Please avoid using your school email address.



<u>SPCA Westchester</u>

SPCA Westchester rising volunteers is a program for those 10-17 years old. Rising volunteer days are held once a month on Saturday mornings. There are a variety of things to do that do not require orientation, such as Camp Critter, Birthday Parties, and Pup Art. To start volunteering, go to <u>www.volgistics.com</u> and submit the application. You will have to put an email or phone number, so your parents might have to help you. Click the registration link in your confirmation message to register for a general orientation zoom.

<u>Do Gooders at White Plains Library</u>

If you do not have an email to sign up or do not want an adult to help you, this is the program for you. You can just go to the library and say you are there for Do Gooders. They might ask you for your grade. Then, you can sit down somewhere and make cards for the elderly. Once you are finished you can drop your cards in the bin. It is easy, fun, and helps other people in your community. Also, there are meetings that count as service hours that will benefint local organizations. The next date will be <u>Monday 4/14 at 1:45 p.m.</u>

I hope you consider volunteering this Spring. Hopefully these places can get you started, but there are many more activities and programs. You can search online yourself, with your parents, or with a friend for more ways to help our community. Have a great spring!



TRAVEL

Where to go over Spring Break

by Andy Jimenez



After a full few months of school, its important to take a break once in a while. That goes for any type of job whether it would be an office job or a job that requires you to do many physical tasks. And whats a better way to relax then a weeklong holiday break. Who doesn't want to have some time off for yourself to do whatever you want? But some people usually don't have things to do during the break. So why binge watch 11 seasons of a show inside your home when you could binge watch the same 11 seasons of a show in Mexico? Traveling to a place that isn't near your own home is highly recommended when on a weeklong break. With the right timing, think of what you could be doing on the beaches of Puerto Rico.



Unless you want to go exploring out of the country then I must suggest the vibrant city of none other than Mexico City. Which is known for its live Mexican culture and amazing art anywhere you go. If that's not your alley, maybe you can visit the great Niagara Falls which also borders New York from Ontario. There're also the beautiful places in Europe. Cities like Paris in France or Venice in Italy or London in England which all have very rich cultures (and amazing food or so I've been told). In Paris you have places like the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre Museum. In Venice you have the gondola rides and many history tours of the city's past. And in london you have places like Buckingham Palace or the London eye that seem to capture the minds of tourists. And that is my preferred picks for how to spend your spring break. But of course, how ever you want to spend it is your choice. I will definitely be spending mine binging those 11 seasons in the comfort of my own home.



For the people who visit family over the break already have their plans but for the people who love to visit beautiful places, you can go to the famous beaches here in North America. Places like; Glacier National Park in Montana, which is great for hiking and camping, or Great Smokey Moutain National Park in the southern parts of the us which is also great for the nature lovers and campers. For the people who have a wild taste for thrill and adventure, there are many amusement parks and other thrilling attractions to go to this break. Places such as six flags (one of the 27 theme parks), to amusement parks like Hershey Park which can satisfy the sweet tooth and the soul for wild rides.

SPRING COURIER BOOK REVIEW

By Eleanor Ingram

If you like the books *The Light in Hidden Places* by Sharon Cameron, and *Animal Farm* by George Orwell then you will definitely enjoy this historical fiction novel! This book takes place in Romania during the Romanian Revolution. It is a very visual example how bad communism is for societies and how hard it is on people. *I Must Betray You* is based on the main character, Cristian Florescu, and his life during the rebellion against the corrupt Romania leader Nicolae Ceaușescu.

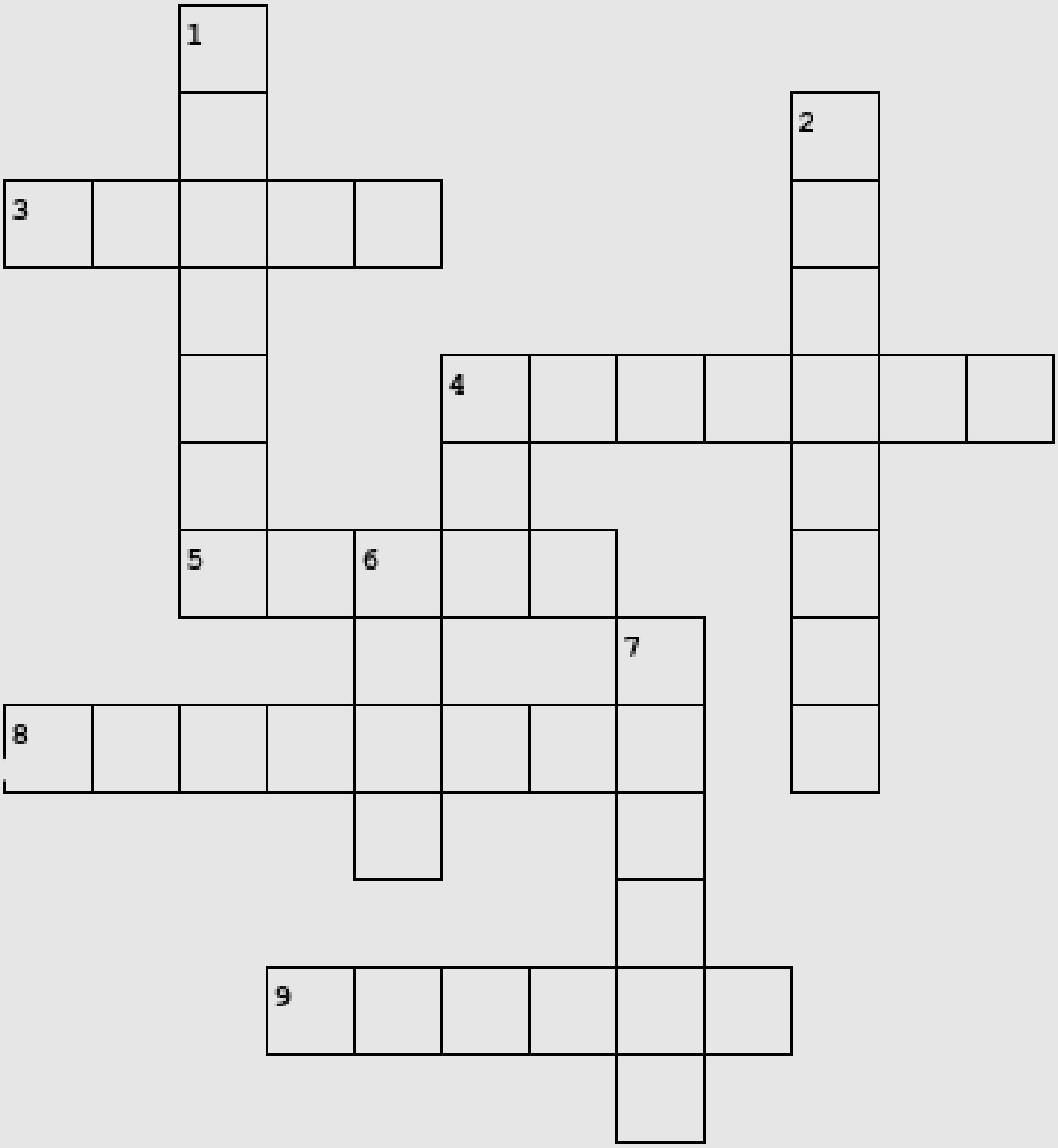
Cristian lives in a small apartment the same size as everyone else's around him with his mom, dad, sister, and grandfather. Cristian's grandfathers' health is slowly decreasing from old age and cancer as it's believed to be. The government uses this fact of his decreasing health as blackmail for him to become a reporter for the secret police, or the Securitate. This makes everything so much more complicated for him because he now has to report on everything. This means everything his family and friends do is now being reported on. Cristian does not follow every single rule that he should, but no one really does in this overly strict society. He slowly gets involved more and more in the rebellion and as he does so he begins to realize how corrupt his government really is. As he gets split between his family, his life, and his country, Cristian must choose a side.

This book is incredibly well written and the detail in it is truly phenomenal. As The Wall Street Journal puts it, it is "A historical heart-pounder...Ms. Sepetys, across her body of work, has become a tribune of the unsung historical moment and a humane voice of moral clarity." There is always something exciting happening in this book, and you never know what will happen next. This book makes you feels like you are Cristian, trying to find a way out of the terrible rule of communism. Additionally, Kirkus Reviews says, "Sepetys brilliantly blends a staggering amount of research with heart, craft, and insight in a way very few writers can. Compulsively readable and brilliant" and that could not be truer.

If you have already read this book and are looking for other options, some great books that are similar are *A Night Divided* by Jennifer A. Nielson and *Salt to The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys. *A Night Divided* is about a girl whose family gets divided by the Berlin Wall. As she and her family members make contact with her brother and father, a plan forms to get them out of East Berlin. This book is very exciting, and is well known. *Salt to The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys is told from four perspectives of people, who are all trying to escape WWII and the affects it will have on their lives.

LIFE & LEISURE

SPRING CROSSWORD 2025



Across

3. Baby chicken

4. When a flower starts to grow

5. Liquid vital to humans

8. Used to protect from rain

9. Pretty plant

Down

1. Circular multicolor phenomenon

2. What the sun gives you

4. Buzzing yellow animal

6. Large green thing with trunk

7. Place to plant things

Answers posted on the last page

Created by Wyatt Gonzalez

New York Mets and Yankees Team Previews

By Kellen Doherty

It's finally a new baseball season. The crack of the bat, the pop of the ball hitting a glove, the scent of popcorn and freshly cut outfield grass inside of your favorite stadium, and the feeling of watching your favorite team close out a game, it'll all soon be here. And this season, us New Yorkers will be lucky enough to have some of baseball's best talent located just a short drive away, between the Bronx Bombers New York Yankees, and the Kings of Queens New York Mets. Each will be fighting for a chance to win their respective divisions and will fight to win the commissioner's trophy. In this article, I'm going to breakdown the Mets and Yankees in the Courier's New York baseball preview.

New York Yankees

Projected Record: 85-77, 3rd in AL East, Miss Playoffs

Key Additions: Goldschmidt (1B) Bellinger (CF) Fried (LHP) Williams (RHP) Cruz (RHP)

Key Losses: Soto (RF) Torres (2B) Holmes (RHP)

Following the disastrous 5th inning in game 5 of the World Series in which the Yankees blew a 5- run lead to the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Bronx Bombers are back with a whole new look. They spent millions of dollars investing in pitching and offense alike, while trying to take advantage of an unusually weak American League. Alas, the usual injury plague that sweeps through the Bronx has already started, taking down key pieces of the rotation **Gerrit Cole** and **Luis Gil**, who amounted to a combined 5.0 WAR last season. Cole was announced to need Tommy John surgery and will be on the mend until well into 2026, and Gil isn't expected to be back until the summer of 2025. The Yanks will have to rely heavily on new ace **Max Fried**, a perennial Cy Young candidate from the Atlanta Braves, if he can stay healthy. Fried is going to be a workhorse, expect to keep his ERA under 3.50 and have over 180 innings. The Yankees rotation is rounded out by **Carlos Rodon**, who has flashed ace potential in his day with the San Francisco Giants and Chicago White Sox, but as a Yankee, has struggled to keep his ERA below 4, and struggled to stay on the mound. **Clarke Schmidt** is my pick for comeback player of the year thanks to his devastating knuckle curve and youth, however he's dealing with his own injuries as well. The rotation is rounded out by prospect **Will Warren** and veteran **Carlos Carrasco.** I have more faith in Carrasco, due to his track record and the excellent spring he had, however, Carrasco's ERA has been ballooned well above 5.00 in 2022, 2023 and 2024. As of now, this Yankees rotation has more questions than answers due to the injuries to the key pieces Cole and Gil, but expect strong seasons from Max Fried and Clarke Schmidt.

The bullpen is a different story. This year, the Yankees will yet again rely on strong seasons from unproven journeymen relivers, with the exception of new addition **Devin Williams**. Coming off only pitching 21.2 innings in 2024 due to a back injury, Williams posted his usual numbers, posting a 1.25 ERA and a 0.98 WHIP. Williams has a stellar changeup, and when he's healthy, very few pitchers in baseball are better. The Yanks setup crew is thin, and will be led by journeyman **Luke Weaver**, and includes new addition **Fernando Cruz**, and returning players **Tim Hill** and **Mark Leiter Jr..** Despite Weaver having a breakout season last year, pitching to a sub 3 ERA in 84 innings, Cruz looking like a solid reliever from the Reds, and Hill and Lieter Jr. bouncing back from prior seasons, the rest of the bullpen is weak. All of the bullpen is counting on either bounce backs from journeymen or continued consistency from young, inexperienced pitchers. Although it isn't a horrible bullpen, it could be better, and I want to see a few more veteran arms with better track records.



Devin Williams, the Yankees new closer.



2024 AL MVP and Yankees RF, Aaron Judge

Offensively, the Yankees will be carried by **Aaron Judge** who's coming off his 2nd AL MVP award. Judge has been one of the best hitters in baseball history, with a career OPS of above 1.000, and consistantly averaging over 50 homers and 100 RBIs. Judge is yet again a favorite to win the MVP, but questions surround whether he'll be able to match his usual production following the departure of generational talent Juan Soto. The Yankees hope **Cody Bellinger** will be able to match his production, since he's a lefty playing at Yankee Stadium, and is projected to have a huge power uptick, and will hope to get another productive season of aging superstar slugger **Giancarlo Stanton**, who's already injured for 2025.One player to watch for this season on the Yankees will be **Jazz Chisholm Jr.**, who returns with the potential to become the Yankees next great infielder, after posting strong stats after his trade from Miami last summer. He was strong in the playoffs, but was a questionable fielder, and will need to work on fundamental fielding, especially since the Yankees have a huge hole at third base. **D.J. Lemahue** was slated to be the starter at third, despite having a sub- .600 OPS last season, so the Bombers will rely on **Oswaldo Cabrera** and **Oswald Perazza**, two former top prospects who haven't played the way they were expected to. Both occasionally show flashes of greatness, but haven't hit like they were promised to hit, which I think they can achieve. My favorite piece on this offense is catcher **Austin Wells**, who is often compared to Kyle Schwarber. Wells had a solid rookie season, in which he posted a .229/.322/.395 slash line with 13 homers. I expect that homer total to go up, and for Wells to have a total breakout season behind the plate, but don't expect the same for another fan favorite **Anthony Volpe**. The shortstop once dubbed as "The Next Jeter" hasn't played anywhere close the Jeter level and is beginning to raise questions about whether he really is the future of Yankees baseball, and the same goes for injury prone outfield prospect **Jasson Dominguez**. The offense is rounded out by new addition **Paul Goldschmidt**, who should fix the Yankees first base woes.

(Article Continued on page 12)

New York Mets and Yankees Team Previews *(Continued)*

I also expect the Yankees to be very active at the deadline, specifically in trading for pitchers. All in all, this Yankees team is relying way too much on Aaron Judge to carry the offense, and counting on bounce backs from veterans or the outside chance a former top prospect will finally break out in 2025. The Cole and Gil injuries will rock the Yankees way too much, and I think they'll miss the playoffs, and finish third in the AL East.

Best Case Scenario: Prospects like Wells, Volpe, Dominguez and the Oswaldos finally show signs of life, Stanton plays consistent all season, and Judge and Belling post MVP worthy seasons. Rodon and Freid carry the rotation enough until Gil returns, and the bullpen figures their stuff out again. The Yankees win the AL pennant again but fall to the powerhouse NL.

Worst Case Scenario: The departure of Soto causes Judge's numbers to slump drastically, and the prospects continue to struggle at the big leagues. The Yankees struggle missing Col and Gil, and their weak bullpen is exposed. The bullpen falls apart, and the Yankees finish in the basement of the east for the 2nd time in 3 years.

New York Mets

Projected Record: 90-72, 3rd NL East, Make 2nd Wildcard

Key Additions: Soto (RF) Siri (CF) Holmes (RHP) Montas (RHP) Minter (RHP)

Key Losses: Severino (RHP) Quintana (RHP) Bader (CF) Maton (RHP)

The story of the offseason all around baseball was centered in Flushing, Queens, New York City, and sent a message to the baseball world that the New York Mets are here to play in 2025. Mets owner Stephen Cohen's $751 million man, **Juan Soto**, joins the team fresh off of their deep postseason run in which they came within 2 wins of the NL pennant, before losing to the eventual champion Dodgers. Soto joins the Mets after finishing top- 3 in AL MVP voting and protecting Aaron Judge in the Yankees lineup. Soto's finished with 41 homers, (a career high), 109 RBI, a .288/.419/.569 slash line and a 7.9 WAR (also a career high). With him only being 26 years old, many can assume the best is yet to come, and he may only be entering his athletic prime. His concern is fielding, and since Citi Field is a deep ballpark, he may eventually be forced into a DH role. However, since he's so young, the Mets have reason to believe he can change his fielding for the better. In front of Soto, **Francisco Lindor** will bat. Lindor had a legendary season with the Mets, finishing with a 33/29 season and a WAR of 6 and stellar defense at shortstop. Lindor has quickly become a fan favorite in New York and turns Citi Field into a huge karaoke party when he walks up to the plate blasting the Temptations "My Girl". **Pete Alonso** and **Brandon Nimmo** both return following seasons that were a little disappointing by their standards, but Nimmo was one of the best hitters in baseball before the All-Star break, and Alonso still projects to be a 40+ homer guy in a good season. **Mark Vientos** will man third following an incredible breakout season in which he cemented himself as one of the best third baseman in the game but still can improve on defense. Youngsters **Luisangel Acuna**, and **Ronny Mauricio** will start the season on the bench, but since both have superstar potential, very well could have starting jobs come August. Catcher **Francisco Alvarez** will begin the season in the injured list, but when he comes back, is an excellent defensive catcher, and is projecting to have a breakout season. Speaking of injuries, former batting champion **Jeff McNeil** will also start the season on the IL, but will be back around mid April, however, he was electric down the stretch for the Mets and expect a return to his original form this season when he comes back. In the outfield, **Jesse Winker**, **Starling Marte**, **Jose Siri** and **Tyrone Taylor** will fight for time in the lineup. Winker and Marte are both veterans who are stronger hitters than fielders, with Winker being a power hitting lefty, and Marte being a contact hitting righty. Siri and Taylor are defensive- first center fielders. Taylor won the starting center job late in the season from Harrison Bader and turned his hitting around. However, Siri had a good spring and will fit in perfectly with the Mets clubhouse. One big question for the Mets will be the future of **Brett Baty**, who once again made the opening day roster after mashing during training, but every year struggles in the pros. This is the former top prospect's last chance to prove himself. All in all, this is one of the best lineups in baseball and expect a lot of homers and runs scored. This offense alone will likely be enough to push them into the postseason.



Mets shortsop and 2nd place NL MVP, Franciso Lindor

One aspect of the Mets that could use work is the starting pitching. The Mets will be led on opening day by former Yankees closer **Clay Holmes**. Holmes struggled last season in the closer role and eventually was moved to a set up role late in the season. Holmes dominated during the spring training, limiting walks and striking out many hitters, however, Holmes struggled last season with walks, and many wonder if he'll be able to escape the walks. **Kodai Senga** will return fully healthy in 2025 after a season in which he only pitched 6 innings during the regular season and made a few select appearances during the postseason. Senga finished top- 5 in ROY voting and got Cy Young votes in 2023 during his first season over from Japan, and the the Mets hope he'll be able to replicate that success, despite his injury troubles. Senga's "ghost forkball" is almost unhittable when Senga's on point, and the Mets will need him to be on point. The rotation will be co-aced by Senga and Mets revelation **Sean Manaea**, returning after a strong 2025. Manaea previously had been a top prospect for the then Oakland A's, but struggled to keep his ERA below 4.00, and bounced around before landing in New York. After watching eventual 2024 NL Cy Young winner Chris Sale pitch in New York for the Atlanta Braves last summer, Manaea lowered his arm slot to replecate Sale's, and became a whole new pitcher in the 2nd half of 2024, and eventually got Cy Young votes. Manaea will open 2025 on the IL but should be back around mid to late April. **David Peterson** and **Frankie Montas** will look to build off of strong performances in 2024, especially Peterson, who became crucial to the Mets in the postseason. Be warned, Peterson, who now is in his 5th MLB season, has never had back-to-back good seasons. Montas will also open the season on the IL, and won't be back until mid-summer, but will look to return to his best days in Oakland, before injuries began to derail his career. Montas had solid numbers with Milwaukee and Cincinnati last season but didn't even come close to matching his peak numbers. The rotation will be rounded out by **Griffin Canning** who was picked up from the Los Angeles Angels, and was the worst pitcher in baseball last year, but showed promise after adjusting his repertoire and throwing more fastballs in the spring, **Tylor Megill**, another former top prospect who hasn't pitched as promised yet, and **Paul Blackburn**, who came over from Oakland a trade last season, and struggled as a Met down the stretch and in spring training. **Brandon Sproat**, **Blade Tidewell**, **Christian Scott** and **Jonah Tong** are all on the rise in the Mets system and are highly rated pitching prospects. Expect to see at least one make an impact in the majors this season (with the exception of Scott, who made his MLB debut in May of 2024 and underwent UCL surgery last summer). The rotation is the Mets' kryptonite, and if they flounder this season, it will be because of a weak pitching staff, not a weak offense.



Mets ace, Sean Manaea

(Article Continued on page 13)

New York Mets and Yankees Team Previews *(Continued)*

Moving on to the bullpen, this year's crew actually isn't horrible. **Edwin Diaz** will resume his role as closer, after having an on and off season in 2024. On some days, you got peak Diaz, with a 4 seam- slider combo that will shut down any hitter in the game. But on some nights, Diaz had no control over his stuff and gave up walks and homers like he was getting paid to lose. As Diaz continues to age, he'll get more inconsistent, however, the Mets should be able to get another season or two with at least some form of peak Diaz. **Ryne Stanek** returns to the club after being a crucial part of the team down the stretch. Stanek closed out several games in the postseason and was a lockdown reliever when the Mets needed him to be. **Reed Garrett**, **Dedinel Nunez**, **Jose Butto**, **Danny Young** and **Huascar Brazoban** will man the set-up roles, but the biggest question will be around new addition **A.J. Minter**, a creation of the Braves farm system, and former Met killer. Minter's coming off an injury, and if he can return to his Atlanta form, that would be huge for the Mets. **Max Kranick** and **Paul Blackburn** will likely be dual- use pitchers, throwing either long innings from the 'pen, or spot- starting if needed. The Mets also have **Tyler Zuber** and **Justin Hagenman** waiting in AAA as depth. This bullpen will be hit or miss in 2025. Similarly to the Yanks, it'll rely on bounce back seasons and continued excellence, but I like this bullpen better than the Bronx Bombers.

The Mets have an extraordinary offense paired with a pitching that'll have Mets fans on the edge of their seats for every game they play. The bullpen may not be horrible, but the rotation may be. At the trading deadline, expect MLB-MLB trades, like Starling Marte being traded for a reliever, or Brett Baty going for a starter. The Mets will need another starter down the stretch, and likely another reliever or two. I have faith in this team, although they still may not have their winning window fully open yet.

Best Case Scenario: Soto and Lindor both finish top- 3 in NL MVP voting, Alonso hits 45+ homers, McNeil returns to batting champ form, Nimmo stays consistent, role players hit like starters, and the young guys like Acuna, Mauricio, Alvarez and Baty step up to form a legendary offense. The pitching is enough to push the Mets past the NL competition and into the World Series, where they win the whole shebang after a 39-year drought.

Worst Case Scenario: The rotation and bullpen routinely cost the Mets offense games, and they fail to keep up with more complete teams like the Dodgers, Diamondbacks, Phillies and Braves. Their offense is good, but is missing pieces as Baty, Alonso, Alvarez and others continue to play cyclically, and the Mets limp into the playoffs as the 6-seed before getting destroyed by the 3-seed.

Modified '24-'25 Winter Sports Wrap-Up

By Kellen Doherty

The winter sports season has come and gone, and we're now only one more sports season away from the summer! The weather is warming up, the days are getting longer, spring workouts have started, and it's technically not winter anymore, even though it may feel like it. But before we fully transition into springtime, lets take a moment to remember the Highlands modified winter sports season.

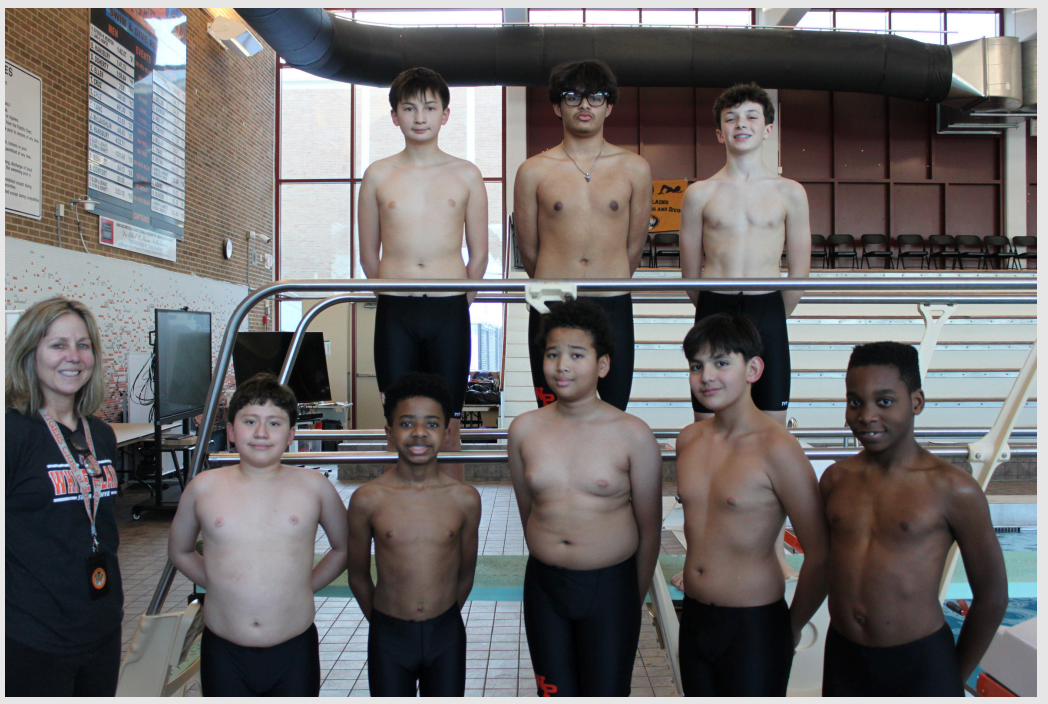
Wrestling

The modified wrestling team had a very successful season, with a variety of experienced veterans dominating the opposing wrestling competition and newcomers looking to try a new sport. Every wrestler showed growth and progression throughout the season.

"The wrestlers were tough, physical, technical and never gave up," says wrestling Coach Taino. "Jackson Amenedo went undefeated against Section 1 opponents, and Stephen Mayers had only one loss against Section 1 opponents in overtime. First year wrestler Gonzalo Florez showed a ton a heart and skill and had a great season, as did Aaron Sanchez."

Team captain Jackson Amenedo said that the highlight of his season was "Going undefeated against Section one opponents." When asked about the wrestling team's community, Amenedo says "The team's community was great! Everyone got along nicely and always encouraged each other." Stephen Mayer was the other 8th grade captain, along with Amenedo. The wrestling team had a great season of growth on the floor and off it!





Men's Swimming and Diving

The modified men's swim team had a strong season and showed strong potential for the future of White Plains swimming.

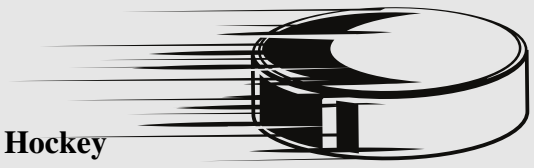
Although swim meets in modified aren't scored, the Tigers had strong times and showings at the 4 meets they attended. This season, Brayden Silverman was a standout swimmer, often placing top 3 in his events, especially the 50-yard butterfly, and was a valuable addition to the relay team, especially the 200-yard individual medley team, where he ran the butterfly. Samuel Mejia and Oliver Chow rounded out the 8th grade team, both swimming with consistency and providing leadership through the season.

On the 7th grade team, Jonah Cohen, Jake Bambace, Kyle Kolawole, Tyrell Prophile and Massimo Soliz all built up strength and endurance throughout the season, and by the end of January, all had a favorite stroke. Next year, they'll be the returning 8th graders and leaders of the team, projects swimming Coach Fahey.

"Swimmers became comfortable in performing all of the strokes competently. They also found the stroke they were best at and had to work on improving that stroke throughout the season." Coach Fahey says, showing how each member of the team grew throughout the winter, and how each will look to come back next season in both modified and varsity ready to dominate their meets.

(Article Continued on page 14)

Modified ‘24-’25 Winter Sports Wrap-Up *(Continued)*



Ice Hockey

“I believe we sent a message to our opponents that White Plains ice hockey has a solid future and will be a tough opponent in the years to come,” says hockey Coach Hauser, following a successful hockey season.

“Our team came together and played some solid hockey,” says Jackson Shaver, an 8th grader. “I credit that to our coach.” When he was asked about the highlight of his season, Shaver chose to highlight the excellent coaching of Coach Hauser, saying “the highlight of my modified season was the unwavering dedication and encouragement from Coach Hauser. He led us through troubled losses and kept us humble after exhilarating wins.” He also agrees with Coach Hauser that the future of White Plains ice hockey is looking bright, telling me that “Going into this season, I hadn’t expected such a large team as we had this season. The many 7th graders on the team stepped up more than expected and played a key role in our teams' success. Looking into the future, White Plains hockey is looking at a competitive team that has many players that are willing to work towards the goals of the team. Coach Hauser will continue to mentor many young hockey players, while the coaches over at the high school will continue to nurture the Dubset hockey talent.”

Coach Hauser guided the Tigers to a winning 8-6 record, thanks in part to an incredible season from 8th grader Ian Molloy, who led the team in goals and assists, and was a “beast” on the ice, as described by Coach Hauser. 7th grade goalie Ava Johnson also had a tremendous season, keeping the net free from opposing pucks.

“The goal of any modified team is to introduce more advanced levels of the game, build camaraderie and develop a strong team culture.” Says Coach Hauser. “We certainly did that on the Modified Ice Hockey team this season.”



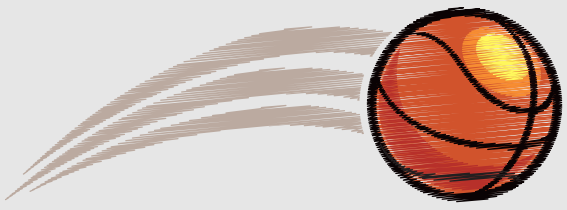


Men’s Basketball

The modified basketball teams had a season of growth and improvement on the court. While they didn’t have the best record, sitting only a game below .500 for one team, the record didn’t reflect all of the improvements made by players over the season.

“The season had its ups and downs. There were definitely games where we could have put together a better offensive performance, but we were constant with working hard and fighting to the end. It is very difficult to play man to man defense at the modified level, but this year's team did a great job. We enjoyed the season, and it was evident that we improved as a team and as individuals by the end of the season” Coach Salley says about the season. This season, Cory Drysdale led in points followed by Gabe Hadi, and Matteos Schtscherbyna and Miles Willis led in rebounds for Coach Salley’s squad, and Aiden Locke and Hudson Salley were team leaders. Coach Salley says the highlight of his season was

“Our tie game versus Harrison. I chose that because it was a team effort. We didn't play well for most of the game but finally got our act together late by playing disciplined and aggressive on both ends. We definitely had the momentum and would have won the game if modified rules allowed more time.” Overall, it was a great season for Tigers men’s basketball!



Women’s Basketball

This winter, there were two women’s basketball teams, the orange team and black team, coached by Coach Suman and Coach Roessler, respectively. Although the teams didn’t end the season with a winning record, they had a good time and gained some valuable knowledge along the way.

“We had a very fun season and everyone on the team tremendously improved their basketball skill, knowledge and basketball IQ,” Coach Roessler says about the black team.

“We had some very strong leadership and skill players (on the team),” Coach Suman said about the orange team.

The teams played with grit and heart, which showed for the black team against Harrison. Despite being down 24-12 at halftime, the team worked together and only allowed 1 point in the 2nd half, bringing the final score to 25-23.

When asked about the highlight of her season, 8th grader Alexis Booker says “Our win against Rye Neck, because it was a very tight game, and we all worked very hard to pull out the win. That was one of our last games and it felt good for all of us to win.” When asked about the community, Booker says “We all got along on the team, and we had really great teamwork. Everyone was comfortable with each other, and it showed during our games. Coach Roessler helped to propel our team by always staying positive. Even when we were losing, she didn’t yell or get angry with us.” It was a great season of learning and team building for the Tigers.



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Spring Crossword Puzzle Answers

Across

3. Chick
4. Bloom
5. Water
8. Umbrella
9. Flower



Down

1. Rainbow
2. Sunshine
4. Bee
6. Tree
7. Garden