Tiger Prints

December 2025

The Official Newspaper of Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School

Vol. 2

2026



Fun Facts, Exciting Events, and More to Look Forward to in the New Year!

by Lily

Milano Cortina Winter Olympics

Figure skating, cross country skiing, snowboarding, curling… February of 2026 marks an exciting month with the long-awaited XXV (25th) annual Winter Olympics and Paralympics, hosted in Italy from the 6th to the 22nd. The country's fourth time sporting the Games, the 116 medal events will take place in the cities of Milan, the nation's second largest city, and Cortina d'Ampezzo. Some of the top athletes that the world, and history, has ever seen will compete across 16 different sports, including alpine skiing, bobsleigh, ski jumping, and more, a true display of sportsmanship and atleticism. After the five billion people that tuned in online or in person to watch the 2024 Paris Games, the number of viewers for Milano Cortina 2026 is projected to be in the high millions. Will you be one of them?



Planetary Parade

If you've ever been lucky enough to look out into the sky during sunrise or sunset and seen more than just the moon, sun, and stars in the sky, then you might have experienced what scientists like to call a planetary parade: when two or more planets in our solar system align together. 2026 brings some extra astronomical excitement. During the last week of February, we will experience an extremely rare six-planet alignment in the evening sky. Right after sunset, watch for Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

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As 2026 draws even closer, it's sometimes hard to believe that 2025 is coming to a close. Although for many, it's sad to say goodbye to what has been an enjoyable past 11 and a three-quarters months, there are many bright spots to look forward to in the coming calendar year. Let's dive in!

Exposing Pierre Van Cortlandt

by Alice, Sebastian, Flora, and Lily

What do skeletons, governors, and our school's namesake have in common? If you've ever walked through the halls of Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School, you've probably seen the old portrait of Pierre that stares down at you from the slideshow in the lobby, or if you're unlucky enough to not do your homework, you've felt the presence of his ghost haunting you as it flies through the classrooms on the fourth floor, in search of its next unsuspecting victim. But who really was this medieval being that dwells in the hallways of our school?

Family History

Pierre Van Cortlandt was born in New York City in the year 1721, the son of Philip Van Cortlandt (1683-1748) and Catherine DePeyster. His mother was a direct descendant of the original Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam, the Dutch colony that would later be turned over to the British, and finally, become New York. Today, the Van Cortlandts are recognized as one of the oldest Dutch families in the state.

Politics ran in his family blood: His grandfather, Stephanus Van Cortlandt (1643-1700), served as the first native mayor of New York City, in office for two terms, and his uncle, Johannes DePeyster Jr, was mayor of New York City from 1698-1699. Not much is known about Pierre's childhood, but we do know that he carried on this family tradition, later becoming one of the founding fathers of New York State, as well as its first Lieutenant Governor.

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Exposing Pierre Van Cortlandt





continued

Van Cortlandt Manor

So where do the skeletons come in? Pierre Van Cortlandt and his family lived in their family estate, Van Cortlandt Manor, a plot of land in our little town of Croton-on-Hudson. Chances are, you've probably been there without realizing it. Bordering the Hudson River and sitting next to ShopRite, Pierre's old home is used for The Blaze each year, turning into the magical sanctuary for all things Halloween, spooky, or autumn every October through November.

Disturbing Drama

Pierre Van Cortlandt owned a large population of enslaved people. As stated by People Not Property.org, "After the war, additional names of the enslaved appear in the family's letters: Ishmael, Sib, Abbey and Phillis."

So what does this say about our school?

Our school is named after a long-dead governor and founding father that owned many slaves. However, we can also argue that George Washington owned many slaves, which was common at the time. While this is completely wrong and horrible, Washington is still respected as a good man and founding father of the United States, so why should Pierre be any different?

Myths

- Pierre Van Cortlandt died in this very school. He is buried on the first floor, and if you remove his painting in the Main Office Conference room, his coffin can be found down a long chute descending into the wall.
- Pierre Van Cortlandt's ghost still haunts this school, tormenting kids who utter words of brainrot. If you've ever forgotten a homework assignment on the fourth floor, you've probably felt the presence of Pierre's ghost, which wanders the classrooms there in search of misbehaving students.

So, do you think our school should be named after Pierre Van Cortlandt, or is he undeserving of this title?

Orange or Orange?

by Lily

Which came first: the word for the color orange or the name of the fruit? If you guessed color, believe it or not, you're wrong. Contrary to popular belief, the name for the orange fruit came centuries before it was ever used to describe a shade. Well, not exactly…

The ancestor to the word that is today known as "orange" was actually used to describe the orange tree. The roots of this complicated name stem from the language Sanskrit, in which *nāranga* was known as "orange tree." Nāranga became *nārang* in Persian, and later *nāranj* in Arabic. This might look familiar for Spanish speakers, whose language has strong Arabic roots, since the Spanish word for orange is *naranja*. As this word evolved across time and languages, it became a reference to the orange itself, instead of the original fruit tree that it grew on.

Old French adopted the Arabic word *nāranj* and changed it to the phrase *pomme d'orenge*, meaning "the fruit from the orange tree." Later, speakers of Middle English would adopt this, and in their language it became known as the "pume orange." This word, however, didn't come to connote a color until nearly two centuries later in 1512. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the use of the word orange to denote the hue first appeared in a will, where it described a color using the word "orange". Up until then, Old English speakers had used the word *geolurēad*, meaning "yellow-red" to describe the shade, but thanks to Old French, the color orange now has a name of its own. And unique one at that—orange is only one of about ten words in the whole modern English language that does not have any rhymes.

The End of the World 2026

Fictional Story by Polina

Walking down the road, Mia thought about the raffle ticket she had won, and about the presentation she had to do about it. Mia hated speaking in front of her class, but speaking in front of the entire school was terrifying. Suddenly, Mia was at school. She went to her locker as usual, then to class, then the school speakers rang out saying, "Mia Sherman, please meet Mr. Hills at the stage." Mia broke into cold sweat as she walked to the stage. Mr. Hills was waiting for her at the stage door. "Hello Ms. Sherman" he said. Mia could only answer "hi" in a tiny whisper.

The bell rang and all the students at her high school poured in; this was Mia's time to shine, but she didn't feel like shining. She couldn't shine! She opened her mouth but no words came out. She tried to scan the crowd for familiar faces but could only concentrate on one thing at a time. She opened her mouth a second time to remember her speech, but her breath was sucked out of her mouth. Then she saw Lia, her friend. No, her best friend since second grade. They even had matching names. Seeing Lia smiling at her gave her courage.

Mia was walking home crying. She had finished her speech, but now she couldn't remember any of it, just that as she had been walking out she thought she had seen a lot of angry faces. Maybe it was just her imagination. But she still was crying. She cried all the way home, then she ran through the door up the stairs and to the room she shared with her brother. He was there at the desk with what looked like a pile of homework. "What happened?" he asked. "I failed my presentation. Now everyone hates me!"she sobbed. "Presentation about what?", her brother Brandon asked. "Nothing!" Mia snapped back. She didn't know why she had become so overly protective. It just felt right. There was a knock on the door. "Maybe it's Mr. Hills here to tell me how horrible my presentation was," Mia thought. She opened the door anyway. It was Lia. The friends hugged, then went to Mia and Brandon's room and talked. Lia said that Mia's speech had been amazing and everyone had loved it. Mia felt good when she went to bed that night. But not for long...

To be continued in the next issue

continued

FIFA World Cup

Football or soccer? In addition to the Winter Olympics, 2026 marks the 23rd FIFA World Cup, which will take place across sixteen host cities throughout Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Occurring every four years since 1930, with a hiatus during World War II, this tournament is the next one after the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. It is also the first to feature 104 matches, with 48 teams, a number that was expanded from the limit of 32 in previous years. The competition starts on June 11th, and will commence with the final which takes place in New Jersey on July 19th, 2026.



Happy Birthday!

We all know about the Declaration of Independence, ratified on July 4th of 1776, which established the thirteen colonies as an independent nation from Great Britain. But did you know that Independence Day next year marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States? So on July Fourth, 2026, if you pop out those firecrackers, barbecue grills, and popsicles, remember to say Happy Birthday to our country!

Here Comes the Sun...not

On August 12th, 2026, Europe will see a total solar eclipse, its first since 1999. The phenomenon will be visible from parts of Russia, Greenland, Spain, Iceland, and Antarctica.

So this holiday break, as you enjoy some of the last days of 2025, reflect on what a year it's been. It might not have been your favorite 365 days, but you survived! You made it to the finish line! You deserve this well-earned break! Congratulations on an amazing 2025, and remember: the best is yet to come.

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Fun Facts

by Lily and Flora

- The liver can regenerate from 10% of itself
- No number before 1000 has the letter “a”
- In Japan, there is one vending machine for every 40 people
- Rats laugh when tickled
- There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on Earth
- If you microwave two grapes they create plasma
- Octopuses have three hearts
- Bananas are berries
- A group of owls is called a “parliament”
- Sloths can hold their breath longer than dolphins
- There were active volcanoes on the moon when the dinosaurs were alive
- The Mona Lisa has no eyebrows
- The human circulatory system is more than 60,000 miles long
- Africa is the only continent in all four hemispheres of the globe

- Squirrels won’t eat acorns touched by human hands because the oils on our skin which contaminate the food are unappetizing
- Saturn is composed of hydrogen and helium gas which is so light in density that it could float in water
- A day on Venus (one spin on its axis) is longer than a year (how long it takes to complete one orbit around the sun)
- 4 is the only number that when spelled out has the same number of letters as digits
- Around the world, 4 babies are born and 2 people die every second

Share a fun fact you would like featured in the next issue here



by Willa

The Joys of Winter

Winter is filled with joy, and there are plenty of examples! So that got me and the newspaper club thinking “what are the joys of winter here in Croton?” Here are all the ones we could think of:



1. Christmas because of setting up the tree and singing Christmas songs.
2. Hot cocoa because it warms you up when it gets too cold.
3. Ice skating at the Duck Pond because you speed around the pond.
4. Hannukah because of all the kindness and light.
5. Sitting in a blanket by the fire because it is so warm and cozy.
6. Building a snowman because you can be really creative.
7. Opening presents by the Christmas tree because you can just enjoy the warmth and pleasure.
8. Putting up the ornaments on the Christmas tree because you can become very nostalgic.
9. Sledding because you can go at full speed down a hill.
10. Building an igloo because you can hide in it and make snow furniture.
11. Watching the snowflakes fall because it is really satisfying.
12. Relaxing in a hot tub in winter because it is really comfy.
13. Hearing the “CRUNCH!” from the snow in every footstep you take because it sounds really cool.
14. Looking at the glistening snow because it looks really cool.
15. Hearing the winter birds chirping in the morning because it sounds calming.

And there it is. Every single one (that we could think of at least!) I hope you enjoyed or maybe even relate to just some of the many these joys of winter–from the sounds, to the sights, and even the smells and tastes!

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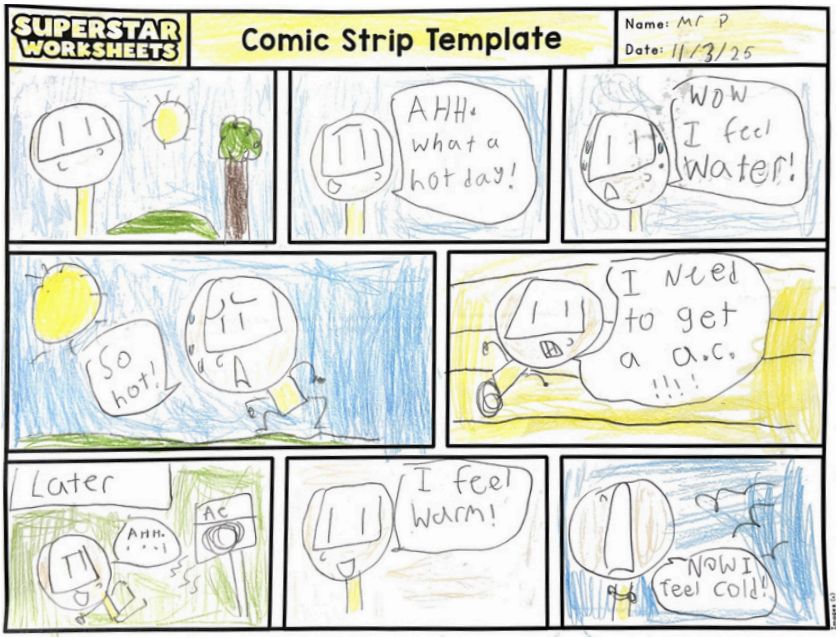
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Comics

Submitted by Mateo





Spill the Tea



Exposing Thomas Jefferson: Dark Secrets You Probably Don't Know About Our Founding Father

by Alice and Ally

You have definitely heard of Thomas Jefferson, the so-called amazing founding father who wrote that "all men are treated equal." Well, he isn't as heroic as he seems. Welcome to the first issue of *Spill the Tea*, a newspaper column dedicated to uncovering the juicy drama of United States history. Here are the dark secrets of Thomas Jefferson...

Throughout his life, Jefferson owned around six hundred slaves. Yes, the same man who said that "all men are created equal" in the Declaration of Independence owned 600 slaves himself, whom he beat and abused. The enslaved people lived on his Virginia estate named Monticello. So when he wrote that "all men are created equal" did he really mean all men, or just white men? You might now assume that he deeply regretted enslaving people and freed them, but this unfortunately is not the case.

Throughout his life, Jefferson only freed about ten slaves, primarily from the Hemings family. It is rumored that he had an affair with a woman, Sally Hemings, with whom he had six children. Of the six, only four: Beverly, Harriet, Madison, and Eston survived past childhood. Two he freed during his lifetime and five others he freed in his will. The rest were sold after his death to pay off debt. How was this founding father in so much debt that he had to sell around 600 slaves after death? Well, as was regular during this time, he inherited his father-in-law's debt. His father-in-law lived a lavish lifestyle, made bad investments, and had an inconsistent income rate from his plantation. This left Thomas Jefferson with over $100,000 in debt, which is worth millions today.

Thomas Jefferson claimed that he couldn't free his slaves, although loving liberty for all because it would be like "freeing children." He expressed his opinion in his book *Notes on the State of Virginia* that he had a "suspicion that white men were superior to black men in the body and mind." This of course is not true, but it makes us wonder the true motives of our "admirable" founding father.

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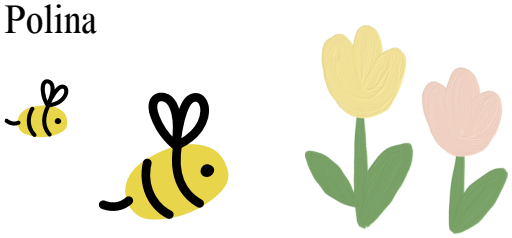
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Fictional Story

by Polina



I rode out into the plain, my father at my side. The minute we left the village goblins started pouring out of caves under boulders lying around. The battle had begun.

A goblin came running at me hitting my horse, which whinnied, and dropped me. I opened my eyes to find myself sprawled on the ground, my helm shattered, my shield dented, my sword broken in two. And worst of all seven goblins running at me, swords raised.

To be continued in the next issue

Croton Pollinators

Check out the Pollinators of Our Town article from last issue



Word Search by Willa

F U I U H L U U X D X Y P P M Z B O X O
B L R R D F L O W E R S X G U E V Z W T
I H T Y I Y L C C S M Y A W M D J P W S
T N D C H U F S U H K N H E U N D T T Z
H B O T A N I C A L U V I O Y L R G N O
X J F Q Q I J B U L N K E T N N I E A K
O V P T J Z N E D R A G E N I K B V H Q
P O T P J B D M N X G T S D T M G Z P F
L N I W R A C Z D N E L L O P Z N C E Y
P W W I N P O S P D G J X L G A I R L K
O I L F R R N Q F R Z D F U E A M O E V
L P H J H D E E O Y K X Q W W I M T K K
L D G R A X F Z C W W P P D Y F U O H S
I R R M Y B L O B V H N I M L J H N C Q
N C H B F R O W H S T L L D V L Y K R A
A L W E D E W C E K H M R Y Z O A J Y R
T V Y S K V E L T H Z G O D K L C M O X
O R J Y T A R U N Z J V H K N W W E P R
R G C Z X Q V B X A Q Y C E R D L M Y H
S N P Z A E B U M B L E B E E J G R A H

1. A furry type of bee
2. Ruby throated...
3. Area behind your house filled with flowers
4. A flower in Croton that supports pollinators
5. An animal that's terrified of bees...
6. The name of our town!
7. It's in the title
8. Pollinators need it to live
9. A special type of garden often used for different veggies

Why We Feel Awful When We're Sick

by Lily

It's that time of year again… The holidays are a time of spreading joy and love, since after all, "sharing is caring." But presents aren't the only things being exchanged. For many years, winter has been known as not just the season of giving, but of the flu, cold, germs, viruses, etc. With everyone around you seeming to get sick, and the rising amount of students, staff, and faculty alike absent from school due to the unfortunate ails of winter, it's hard not to worry sometimes about who's next to catch that stomach bug, and then you're home sick and feel like you're dying.

Most people blame germs or viruses that invade your body to be the cause of the uncomfortable symptoms you experience when you're sick, but the fever, chills, runny nose, body aches, and sleepiness are actually your body's defense mechanisms. So why would your immune system make you feel so bad on purpose?

You first get ill when a pathogen, like a virus, invades your cell, taking over it and making copies of new viruses that will spread across the body, infecting and killing other cells. As soon as it becomes aware of the invasion, your body launches a counterattack. Cells called macrophages search for and destroy the viruses and infected cells. Afterwards, they release protein molecules called cytokines, which alert other parts of your body to the threat and gather more help fighting the invasion. If you're lucky, your immune system's first line of attack will wipe out the threat before you even feel it. But in many cases, however, the viruses spread further—into the blood and vital organs. To save you from this dangerous threat, your immune system launches a stronger attack, coordinating with your brain, which is when you start to feel those uncomfortable symptoms.

When the immune system is under attack, it releases more cytokines, which triggers two responses: first, the cytokines travel through the vagus nerve, which runs through the body to the brain, and transmits the information to the brain stem. During its journey, these protein molecules pass by an important part of the brain responsible for pain processing. Secondly, more cytokines travel through the body to the part of the brain responsible for regulating temperature, thirst, hunger, and sleep—the hypothalamus. When it receives this message, the hypothalamus produces another molecule called prostaglandin E2, sending a signal that tells your muscles to contract, leading to a rise in body temperature, or fever. It also makes you sleepy, and you lose your appetite and thirst.

But these unpleasant symptoms are all part of your immune system's master plan to keep you up and on your feet. Scientists aren't one hundred percent sure, but they do know that these symptoms are supposed to assist in recovery. The rise in temperature, or fever, can slow bacteria, and help your immune system destroy them faster. Sleep lets your body use more energy towards fighting infection, and when you stop eating, your liver can remove most of the iron, which bacteria need to survive, from your bloodstream, starving the invaders. You become mildly dehydrated due to your reduced thirst and all the coughing and sneezing you do, which is a way to expel germs from the body. In addition to physical symptoms, illness can make you sad, irritable, and/or confused. This is because cytokines and prostaglandin can reach higher parts of the brain, obstructing the activity of neurotransmitters like glutamate, endorphins, serotonin, and dopamine, which give you positive feelings. They additionally affect areas like the limbic system, which oversees emotions, and your cerebral cortex, which is involved in reason, risk, and consequence.

In summary, it's actually your body's own immune response that causes most of the discomfort you feel when you're sick! So this holiday season, just remember to be careful about what you share, since not all of it is covered in wrapping paper and tied up in a nice little bow.

Tips and Tricks to Stay Sick-Free

- Wash your hands often with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds
- Wash your hands after sneezing, blowing your nose, before and after eating
- Drink lots of water and stay hydrated
- Try gargling to kill of germs: mix hot water with salt and gargle it in the back of your throat before spitting it out
- Get an adequate amount of sleep each night

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Editorial

I know I can speak for just about everyone when I say that 2025 *flew* by. In one second, it felt like January, then the next, summer break had already come and zipped by. In the blink of an eye, December, the holiday season, and winter break are upon us, and 2026 looms in a little over a week. Everyone says that every year just seems to go faster, but why is this true, and what's the science behind this phenomenon?

Fractions: Picture a pie, with the whole being your entire life, and each slice of the pie being a year. When you're two, a single year is half, or 50% of the pie and all your life experiences. But when you're fifty, a year is only 1/50th of the whole pie, or 2%. As we age, each year becomes a smaller fraction of your life, a smaller slice of your total experience, making time seem to pass quicker.

"Firsts" and Routines: The majority of our most memorable memories occur in childhood. The first day of school, your first graduation, or first music concert… As we age, we experience more of these events, so they become normal, standard, and routine, whereas when we were younger, this was our first time, so these "firsts" stick with us. We remember the most from these early years because they taught us valuable lessons that we carry with us throughout our life. But when life is routine, and events become repeated so many times that they are considered standard, commonplace, or normal for you, fewer unique memories are made, leading to "chunking" of time and the blurring of years.

Memory: As we age, our memories start to decline, and our brains discard or simply forget unimportant information. Building off the idea of firsts and routines, the memories and experiences we have in childhood stick with us because they were unique and special, but as we age and we experience these events more and more, our brain considers them commonplace, and as such the significance of these events is less, so we forget them.

With all this going on–school, sports, extracurriculars, instruments, and the fact that it seems like time is getting shorter and running out, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, especially during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. So what can we do about this?

Try being mindful. As cliche as it sounds, practicing mindfulness and keeping yourself grounded is proven to have great benefits for your mental, social, emotional, and even physical wellbeing. Keep a gratitude journal of things you're grateful for, or start an blog or diary cataloging each day's happenings. In the New Year, try making resolutions that give yourself time to enjoy the time you have. Most of all, remember to enjoy the moment. Because unlike your other presents, time is a gift that can't be wrapped in paper and a bow. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift. That's why we call it the present."

Editor Lily
All pieces edited by Lily
Newspaper designed by Lily

Thank you for reading this issue of *Tiger Prints*, PVC's official school newspaper! If you enjoyed this issue, stay tuned for our next one, or check out some of our ***past volumes***.
As always, we're looking for new writers. If you'd like to practice and improve your writing and editing skills in a fun way, join Newspaper today! You don't have to come to all the meetings or write just nonfiction—you can do puzzles, stories, etc.

Congratulations on an amazing 2025! Wishing you and your families a happy and healthy holiday break and new year!