

# THE SPRESS

March 21, 2025

\* RISE PERIODS

\* SWIMMING

\* READ ACROSS AMERICA

## Freezin' for a reason

Lily Oxford



Photo courtesy of Antonio Loukas

Each year South Park High School participates in raising money for the Special Olympics through the Unified Bocce team and Circle of Friends. Throughout the school year, members of the Circle of Friends come together to raise money and encourage each other to always be a friend wherever is needed. At the end of the fundraising road, the Unified Bocce Team and anyone else who wants to participate goes to Acrisure Stadium for the annual Polar Plunge.

The Polar Plunge comes with a lot of nerves and excitement as the bocce team and others make their way to take the plunge into freezing cold water. Jakob Dubich, senior, says he hypes himself up for the plunge by “[making] sure to keep active and think warm” as the weather was below freezing with snow. Of course, jumping into cold water comes with a deep and honest reason for doing it. The group all kept saying “freezin’ for a reason” and that comes true in a lot of ways.

Encouraging others and keeping a positive attitude was important in the long run. The support from some of the students came from personal connections. Elliott Giusti, senior, who says he lives with special needs everyday through his brother, “has [been] inspired not only to be a better brother,

but also to have a huge passion for supporting special needs.” The Special Olympics isn’t just about raising money or jumping into freezing cold water, it is also about spreading awareness and promoting inclusion in the community.

South Park High School has amazing Life Skills support and Special Education teachers who ground the students and spread kindness to every student. One of South Park’s Life Skills teachers, Mrs. Larner said that “the plunge is a literal showing of what we do as an organization to display inclusion and relatability to students with and without disabilities.” The action of taking the plunge is done with bravery and courage.

Along with the awareness shown throughout the day, the Circle of Friends focuses on community by coming up with a collective theme for all to participate. This year, the group decided on a superhero theme where students wore Batman masks, Spiderman t-shirts, and colorful capes. Mrs. Feth, Special Education teacher, says, “I love seeing the themes that all of the schools choose and how proud everyone is to wear their outfits.”

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## Freezin' for a reason (con't)

Lily Oxford

Members of the bocce team were asked if they had any regrets going and taking the plunge. Sydney Dubyak, junior, states that she regrets “not bringing slides and having to walk in socks” on the freezing cold, wet ground. The little things like forgetting slides or flip flops could never outweigh the true and honest answer to this question. Many other responses included how they do not regret going to the polar plunge and would do it over again and again for its impacting cause. Bailey Vitmeier, junior, says, “I have done the plunge four times and I have never regretted it for a second.”

## Fashion through the decades

Savannah Booth

Nothing screams fashion like a woman looking confident in an outfit she loves. Women’s History Month is celebrated every March in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Starting in 1909, the first National Women’s Day was in the U.S on February 28, organized by the Socialist Movement. However, in 1978, the idea was started to dedicate a whole month to women’s history. They aimed to promote the contributions of women in history and to encourage schools to include women’s history in their curriculum. The celebration was officially recognized by President Jimmy Carter in March of 1980, when he declared the week of March 8 as National Women’s History week. Over the years, it grew into a month-long and in 1987, Congress passed a law designating March as Women’s History Month.

Fashion over the years has served as a means for women to express themselves and show their styles, making women icons for not just their influences to society but how they present themselves. Over the decades, styles have continuously changed and evolved just like women.

The flappers of the 1920’s took on a new found

empowerment with their right to vote. With this change, they began to take on a new identity and began to wear loose-fitting dresses that fell just below the knee, usually with intricate beading, fringe, and bold patterns. Women embraced shorter hairstyles like the iconic “bob” and would accessorize with hats, long pearl necklaces, and statement headpieces. The look symbolized women’s liberation and independence by rejecting the restrictive clothing and would promote their carefree spirits. The flappers represented a break from tradition as women began to enjoy public life like dancing and jazz clubs.

The bikini was developed in 1946 by French designer Louis Réard, and it challenged the conventional norms of women’s swimwear at the time. The bikini faced criticism and was considered scandalous, but grew much popularity despite the hatred from others. Named after the Bikini Atoll, where atomic bomb testing was taking place, Réard aimed to capture the explosive reaction the swimsuit would generate in the fashion world. The bikini featured a midriff-baring top and a bottom that left the legs exposed, a stark departure from traditional swimwear where figures and legs were rarely shown.

During the 1970s, the hippie style became one of the most popular and recognizable styles. The hippie styles were rooted in the cultural and political side, with mainstream values of peace, love, and freedom. Hippie fashion was characterized by its relaxed and colorful aesthetic, which helped influence women to have a carefree spirited lifestyle. Clothing would have tie-dye patterns, bell bottoms, paisley prints, layering, and statement jewelry to make them stand out. Practical and comfortable footwear was always a must-have with sandals or being barefoot. The style also contributed to the larger feminist movement, as women began to embrace their bodies and reject the restrictive norms of previous decades.

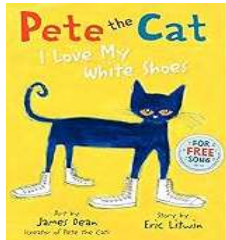
In the 1990s, women’s fashion was highly influenced by the rising popularity of hip hop and grunge culture, marking a change towards a more relaxed and unique style. One of the defining trends of the ‘90s was the grunge look, characterized by flannel shirts, oversized sweaters, and

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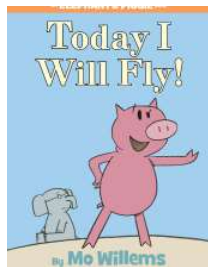
## Ox 'n' Koh's book corner: Childhood books edition

Autumn Kohnen and Lily Oxford

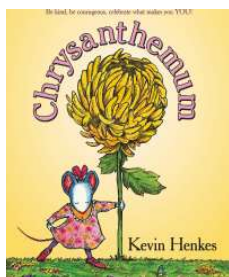
March is considered to be National Reading Month, which also encompasses Read Across America Day. Read Across America started in 1998 to promote a love for reading in children. The day is based on Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 2nd. Read Across America is the first Monday after his birthday. To celebrate Read Across America, these are a few books that students vividly remember from their childhood.



“Pete the Cat” by James and Kimberly Dean and Eric Litwin is a childhood book series that everyone has read one book of or heard of. The “Pete the Cat” series follows Pete through his life while he goes on his adventures, wearing his snazzy shoes. The original “Pete the Cat” book is “Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes”. In this story, Pete gets his white shoes dirty but never loses his cool. Noah Yoder, sophomore, remembers being read “Pete the Cat” in kindergarten, as many of us remember. Ava Webb, junior, says it is her favorite series because “[she] love[s] Pete”.



“Elephant & Piggie” by Mo Willems is a short story series about an elephant, Gerald, and a Pig, Piggie, and their friendship through life. Emily Eisenhower, junior, said the series is “very nostalgic [and she] enjoyed reading them very much,” which is why it’s her favorite series. The first “Elephant & Piggie” book is “Today I Will Fly!” Piggie believes she can fly, yet that’s obviously impossible. Gerald tries to be a voice of reason and explains she cannot fly. With the help of her friends, she ends up “flying” with a pelican, showing kids that if they put their minds to something, they can do it.



“Chrysanthemum” by Kevin Henkes is about a mouse named Chrysanthemum, who loves her name but gets teased for her long name. “Chrysanthemum” is junior Aubrey Levine’s favorite childhood book. She says, “[She] really enjoyed reading this book as a child because [she] thought it was a very sweet book about being able to love yourself, even after being bullied.” The story highlights a younger mouse loving her name, but when she goes to school, she gets teased for having the name of a flower. When revealed, the teacher says she also has a long flower name. All of the children now want to change their names to different flower names.



“Goodnight Moon” by Margeret Wise Brown is a well-known favorite as it has been around for a while now. Originally published in 1947, “Goodnight Moon” is a good book to read to kids as they go to sleep. The book follows a room and all of the items inside as night comes and everything falls asleep. This is one of “Ox’s” favorite books because it reminds her of all the evenings her mom would read it to her before bed.

## Fashion through the decades (con't)

Savannah Booth

combat boots. This style embodied a rebellious spirit, with icons like Courtney Love and the band Hole inspiring many young women to embrace a more self-inspired aesthetic. Hip hop styles usually consisted of some kind of denim, baggy graphic tees, and Timberlands. The styles were heavily influenced by TLC, rappers, and dancers.

Women's History month shows appreciation towards women for the things they do and for just being unapologetically themselves. Women's styles help them individualize themselves and show their true style. In past decades, it was not respectable to dress provocatively and women were told to dress traditionally and very modestly. Now a woman is well respected when they own up to their style and loves to express themselves.

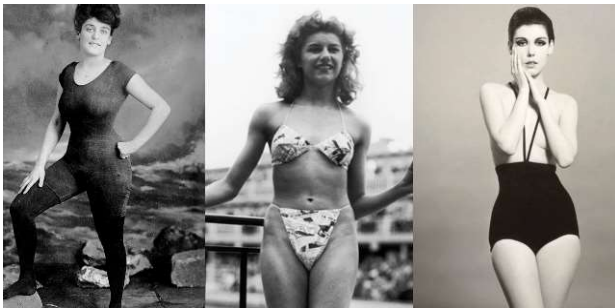


Photo of women's swimsuits over the decades courtesy of Fashion History Timeline

## Winter blues

Rhi Lord

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by seasonal depression. Seasonal depression is a phenomenon where someone enters an annual phase of depression at a specific part of the year, usually the winter months when sunlight is low. They may have distinct feelings of sadness, being uninterested in activities, or being unmotivated. People who especially suffer from this may be diagnosed with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and could be treated with light therapy or antidepressants.

In a survey of South Park students, 66.7% of the sample said they experience seasonal depression. Out of those students, the period of time fall or bleed into early spring. However, changes in mood aren't the entire story. A whopping 80.9% of students suffering from this depression have also said it affects their grades, with 70.6% saying it only affects grades a little, and 29.4% saying grades are affected much more.

With common seasonal depression, students can use methods and coping skills to counter the negative effects and get through the season. Students have identified sleeping, crying, music, physical activity, or simply "dealing with it" as ways to alleviate their seasonal depression. Alex Marshall, senior, says, "I try to find the good within the season. There are many things one can do regardless of the season to keep his or her spirits alive." Ace Underwood, sophomore, adds to this, "I focus on the good things in life even when I feel lonely, cause people are busy more and have less time for me. I focus on the time I have with those people and don't take it for granted."

In order to deal with the season, psychologists have recommended trying to get as much sunlight as possible. With snow thawing and flowers blooming, South Park students can now look forward to sunny days and higher moods, hopefully finishing the school year strong.



As the sun comes back for spring, students' moods will be lifted

## RISE up

Addi Yochum

OMG...the schedules are changing...again! At the scheduling meeting on Friday, February 14th, guidance counselors went over the different courses, electives, and a few changes for the schedules next year. One of the changes that stood out to students was the introduction of RISE periods.

Mr. Dellarose, the South Park High School principal, explains that RISE periods “stand for reaching, inspiring, supporting, and engaging during that activity.” He explains that RISE periods are based on an extension of a classroom period, meaning that if students need to take a test in a class or need something explained to them, they can go during those periods. When asked what his vision is for these periods, he said, “My vision for RISE periods looks like students will be able to choose different interests and activities that are important to them, activities that they want to be enriched in, activities that they want to be exposed to.”

Mr. Dellarose also explained that club meetings and activities that would usually be held after school can be held during these periods instead, which will motivate students to join clubs without needing transportation, or those who have to work after school. Mr. Dellarose explains this more when asked what his motivation was. He said, “My motivation was, at the beginning of this year we met with the entire teacher staff about looking at the schedule. I think listening to the teachers’ feedback, we felt that the students who didn’t have the opportunity to stay after school might be struggling.” Furthermore, these periods will encourage students to join more

clubs since they will meet during the school day.

Though this seems like a great idea to some students, most are against this. Bailey Rorison, a junior, claims she does not look forward to the RISE periods. When asked why, she explains “It takes away two periods for students who want to take educational classes.” She predicts that “students who should be benefiting from it by using it for tutoring won’t actually use it for that purpose.” She also says, “If they aren’t already getting tutored now, what is forced tutoring going to fix?” Alix Beaver, a junior, agrees, however she added “I feel like the motive of a RISE period is good hypothetically, but we tried to instigate a mandatory study hall last year and classes ended up scheduled then, so it was for nothing.” She also believes that it will be hard to make sure everyone is in the rooms they are meant to be in, and to ensure that it won’t be chaotic and disorganized.

On the brightside, there’s many opportunities to look forward to if these periods are implemented into our 2025-2026 school year. When asked what activities they would be interested in Alix Beaver said, “I will most likely either go down to the band room and practice, or I will go to the wood shop and work on a project if I am not finishing homework.” Bailey Rorison added “I am interested in the idea of learning life skills or more specific topics, instead of broad topics that are often the focus of core classes.” While the motivation behind RISE periods is positive, we’ll have to wait and see how this plays out.

## IMPORTANT DATES

**March 27: End of grading period**

**March 28: No school**

**April 11: ASVAB Test**

**April 17: Early dismissal**

**April 18: No school**

**April 20: Easter**

**April 21: No school**

## Flowing into the Oscars

Melia Petrello



This year at the Oscars, history was made within the animation industry. The film “Flow” won the Oscar for both Best Animated Feature Film and Best International Feature Film. The movie was produced by an independent animation studio, with a budget of only €3.5 million (under \$4 million U.S. dollars). The movie was up against major films by major studios, such as Disney’s “Inside Out 2”. The win suggests a huge turning point in the animation industry.

“Flow” follows an unnamed cat living in the woods. The cat explores the beautifully animated scenery and abandoned buildings. However, its peace is interrupted when a flood destroys its home. In order to survive, the cat must learn to work alongside the other cast of creatures. Alongside a ditzy dog, a sleepy capybara, a curious lemur, and a stoic secretary bird, the cat travels through the flood on a boat.

The film features no dialogue, and the animals only communicate through a series of meows, barks, and chirps. Although lacking dialogue, the film still captivates its audience with its nonverbal forms of emotional storytelling. The animals are expressive, the scenery is beautifully animated, and the sound design completely immerses the audience into the world.

“Flow” was produced by independent animation studio Dream Well, founded by 29-year-old Gints Zilbalodis. Zilbalodis also wrote, produced, directed, edited, and helped compose the score for the film. “Flow” stands out in its almost video-game-like art and directing style. Zilbalodis explains he wanted the art style to feel more “graphic and ab-

stract”. The camera follows the characters closely, making it “like an active participant” in the story. Some shots go on for five minutes, which is not common within animation. The scenery and lighting is incredibly designed, filling the audience with awe.

The film’s incredible scenery becomes even more impressive when taken into consideration that it was made in Blender, a free animation software that is easily accessible. The movie’s wins suggest that the Oscars are no longer reserved for major studios. Independent filmmakers can show off their creativity and unique perspectives that these major studios sometimes lack.



Alongside its breathtaking imagery, “Flow” also contains heartwarming themes. In an interview with Animation Scoop, Zilbalodis said he “wanted to tell a story about my experience of learning how to work together”. The cat, a typically solitary creature, is initially hesitant to work with the other creatures. However, the audience follows alongside the cat as it overcomes these fears. The film also says a lot about the balance of life and nature. When the flood comes in, all the animals in the forest struggle to survive, however, this struggle is contrasted with stunning shots of the aquatic life thriving. When the flood recedes at the end of the movie, the forest animals begin to thrive as the aquatic life struggles. This introduces a new conflict for the cat and its newfound friends. They realize the balance of life and death. Zilbalodis claims he didn’t want the traditional

## Splashing into WPIALs

Megan Beam

happy ending where everything is solved and happy because he “doesn’t feel like life’s like that”. He further explains, “I wanted to show how the cat does improve on its fears, but it still has these deep down, something that it has to learn how to live with. And I wanted to show how that’s okay, and we can accept these things, and maybe there’s others who can help support that.”

With its lack of dialogue, some of the film’s themes can be vague at times. The audience can be left to interpret parts of the story on their own. Some interpret the flood and the boat as a biblical allusion. Others may interpret it as a commentary on climate change. Even the film’s more explicit themes are meant to have the viewer apply their own experiences to create a deeper meaning. The film can be appreciated by anyone. Zilbalodis states, “it can work for different cultures, for different ages.” The film’s themes can be applied, interpreted, and appreciated by each individual who watches it.

Overall, “Flow” is phenomenal in many ways. The animation itself is breathtaking, the themes are inspiring, and the film can be interpreted and appreciated by just about anyone. The film’s Oscar wins completely changed the game for the animation industry. It opens the door for independent filmmakers. It will also likely be influential with its unique art style. “Flow” has made animation history and will likely be appreciated by many for years to come.



**Yume Nakayama, Megan Beam,  
Gabby Schneider, Paisley Malacki**

This year, four talented young ladies from the South Park High School swim team went to the 2025 WPIAL swimming and diving championship meet at the University of Pittsburgh on February 27th and 28th. They competed in a multitude of individuals, and two of the three relays.

Megan Beam, senior, swam the 100 butterfly with a time of 1:02.93 and the 500 freestyle with a time of 5:33.36, as well as two relays. One way she likes to get ready for a race is by listening to “Ridin’ Solo” by Jason Derulo because it reminds her that nothing can stop her shine. Two of Megan’s favorite pre-race snacks are tropical-flavored applesauce and dark chocolate keto clusters. She stated that her favorite part of WPIALs was swimming her favorite events with some of her best friends. Megan has no regrets for the season because she feels that she worked hard and gave it her all the whole time.

Paisley Malacki, sophomore, swam the 200 freestyle with a time of 2:08.10, the 100 freestyle with a time of 57.30, and the two relays. Paisley enjoys drinking a coke slushie from 7/11 and listening to “Peanut Butter Jelly” by DJ Chipman before she swims her races. Paisley stated “My favorite part of WPIALs was getting to experience competing against all different teams.” Over the course of the season, Paisley struggled with a shoulder injury and regrets not taking care of it sooner to prevent it from getting worse.

Yume Nakayama, senior, swam in the 200 medley relay and the 200 freestyle relay. She prefers silence and eating fuji apples when getting hype for her swims so she can focus on the race ahead.

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## Splashing into WPIALs (con't)

Megan Beam

Yume's favorite part of WPIALs is when her crush looked at her before he swam his event. Because Yume seems quiet around school, people might be surprised to learn that her regret for the season was being too shy to "talk to hot boys".

Gabby Schneider, junior, swam the 100 breast-stroke with a time of 1:12.39 and the two relays as well. Her hype song before her race is "Can't Hold Us" by Macklemore, "because it's just hype". Gabby opts for watermelon Sour Patch Kids for some quick energy before she swims. Her favorite part of WPIALs was swimming on the relay team with her friends. Gabby thought this season was "pretty good" and has no regrets.

The WPIAL team competed in two relays this year, the 200 medley relay and the 200 freestyle relay, finishing with great times and best times on splits. Although these ladies were just short of states, they did a great job representing South Park at WPIALs!

## Leprechaun lore and more

Callie Heynes

Between Christmas and Easter, there is a long lull of time, where snow falls and melts, the sun starts to shine again, and not many holidays or events are celebrated in Pittsburgh. However, one day in March, always the 17th, stands out as the bridge between these long months, St. Patrick's Day. More commonly known as St. Paddy's Day, this was a religious holiday originally celebrated in Ireland with feasts and services in honor of the Catholic patron saint of the land. When immigrants started to migrate to the United States, the day became more than just a religious holiday but a celebration of different aspects of Irish culture, such as their food, dancing, and humor. More importantly, St. Paddy's Day is also about the evolution of myths and legends that had once started in Ireland but transformed to become a day for Americans to express their pride in the culture that came before them. The question is: do you know your facts from fiction?

### Leprechauns are not Irish

Touring around the city on St. Paddy's Day, you might see people dressed up as leprechauns or even a quick look at decorations, it is clear that the little red-haired figure is a staple. However, the belief in leprechauns most likely stems from Scottish mythology of fairies, and does not only originate in Irish folklore. The myth started as tiny men or women who use magical powers for good or evil and were responsible for mending other fairies' shoes. The leprechaun gained his pot of gold when poor farmers were tricked by a leprechaun who stole their wealth and buried it out of their reach. So while the Irish took the myth and ran with it, the origins are not based in Ireland.

### St. Patrick wasn't Irish

Even though St. Patrick is the namesake of this Irish holiday and the patron saint of Ireland, his origins are undetermined. Most historians believe that he was born in Britain and didn't have any connection with Ireland until he was 16. In Ireland, he became interested in the teachings of Christianity. Even though he was not born there, it was the work and religion that he taught while he was in Ireland that secured him as the patron saint. St. Patrick is not only the namesake but also the reason that this holiday is celebrated on the 17th, the day that he supposedly died.

### St. Patrick hasn't always been Patrick

Saint Patrick's real name is not Patrick, but Maewyn Succat. When he was spreading Christianity in Europe and Ireland, he was renamed Patricus. He chose this name because in Latin it translates to "father figure". Not only was he not Irish but the holiday celebrated in his name is not really his name. However, the fact that he is still referred to as his chosen name to this date is symbolic of the work and dedication that he had to be seen as this father figure of Christianity.

**Ireland isn't all about being green**

Historically, Ireland is widely recognized for its rolling green hills and landscape, which is why it is referred to as the Emerald Isle. However, the color that many people originally associated with Ireland was blue. The reason is more political than cultural, as King Henry the VIII claimed to be king. Many flags feature this specific light blue. Irish nationalism reverted back to green, as green became more associated with Catholics, the dominant religion in Ireland.

**Read Across America**

Dalya Jabra



**Ace Underwood, sophomore, reads to kindergarten students**

Read Across America is a national holiday celebrated every year on Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 2. It is celebrated to promote literacy and encourage children to love reading. South Park High School students celebrated Read Across America by reading stories to students at the Elementary Center, with themes ranging from very deep and heartfelt to funny and bubbly ones.

The high school students' overall experience when reading to the kids was heartwarming as they enjoyed the engagement of the kids in the stories

they read. Sebastian Scanlon, junior, had a positive and memorable experience during Read Across America. One funny moment he had while reading with his friend, Ian Hannah, senior, was when the kids randomly voted Sebastian a better reader than Ian. Sebastian's favorite part about reading to the kids was putting a smile on their faces and how it felt nice "giving back to the community." Likewise, Amelia Yasher, freshman, also participated in this event. Some classes she read to were rowdy, while most classes listened to her and were well behaved.

As fun as it was reading to the kids, the high school students felt a wave of nostalgia while reading books they read as children. Kate Seitz, sophomore, read "Dragons Love Tacos", which her dad read to her as a child. The elementary students were very engaged listening to her read this book, which reminded her of how much she also loved the book when she was little.

Overall, the high school students had a wonderful time participating in Read Across America, and so did the kids. It is important to encourage younger readers to read more, expanding their imagination, vocabulary, and creativity, while also connecting with the community.



**Gavin Schwab, senior, reads to kindergarten students**

## March Students of the Month



**Creativity:** Sophia Nelson, senior, is being recognized for creativity. Sophia’s creativity shines through a multitude of ways from her clothing style, her writing skills, and her artistic abilities. She has taken a variety of art classes while at South Park and believes that her ability to express her passion through art is why she was chosen in this category. Sophia is known for wearing band shirts almost every day, so she clearly likes to exhibit coolness. This is probably why she stated if she could be any superhero it would be Batman because “he’s the coolest”.



**Academics:** Jessica Shaffer, senior, is being showcased for academics. Jessica dedicates a lot of time to studying and completing her assignments, so it’s no wonder that she was nominated for academics. She stated that she tries her best “to excel in academics”, especially with the backing of her parents. She stated, “My parents motivated me to succeed academically. They instilled those values in me when I was really young.” Not only does she value her own academics, but she reported that’s also why she would be Wonder Woman if she could. She stated, “Wonder Woman is a great role model and strong and smart.”



**Athletics:** Emily Milhelcic, senior, is being acknowledged for athletics. Not only does Emily do well, but she stated she always “strives to push others to do their best”. While she’s being recognized for athletics, Emily reported she “gives 100% in anything [she] does”. Her parents fostered this trait in her from an early age. She stated they “always taught me to work hard, even if it’s something I have little interest in.” This mindset helps Emily on the soccer field and a variety of other areas too.



**Leadership:** Reagan Baumgartel, junior, is being highlighted for her leadership. Not only is Reagan captain of the dance team, but she’s also part of the marching band. She reported that she’s been getting more involved in student council this year too, which also contributes to her leadership skills. Some students feel that people don’t pay attention or notice acts of leadership or kindness, but Reagan stated her role model in leadership is Jenna Ciora, her color guard captain when she was a freshman. This reminds us that we inspire others around us, even when we think what we do sometimes isn’t a big deal.



**Kindness:** Yume Nakayama, senior, is featured for her kindness. Yume stated that she always tries to be kind to everyone, no matter what. Yume also reported that her role models, plural, are all of her friends. She stated that her friends are “always kind, sweet, and polite to everyone in the world”. If you can be one thing in this world, it should be kind. Yume not only exemplifies kindness, but she surrounds herself with this mindset too.

## Simon the Savage

T.C. Holmes



### Play ball!

South Park School District had a ribbon-cutting ceremony and celebration for the new baseball and softball field located at the South Park Elementary Center. The ceremony and kick-off to the season took place on Monday, March 17, 2025. The festivities included face painting, an appearance by the “Pirate Parrot” and the Pirates Pierogies, South Park’s own Sparky the Eagle, music, and food. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony and celebration, the boys’ baseball team defeated Ringgold in their first game of the season with a score of 6-1.

