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THE COURIER

THE LONGEST RUNNING MIDDLE SCHOOLS NEWSPAPER IN THE UNITED STATES

THE SUN WILL COME OUT ON OUR STAGE: HIGHLANDS BRINGS ANNIE TO LIFE!

by Josephine Engelmann



Highlands put on Annie jr. on March 13 and 14 and the auditorium was full both nights. Annie jr. is a show about an orphan named Annie, who get's invited to stay with the billionaire Oliver Warbucks and Grace Farell. There were many people who came to see the entire cast perform, which made the hard work worth it. The director, Ms. Irlen, helped the cast and the stage crew get things ready after they a couple months practicing, and many people were working to make sure the show stayed on track so it didn't turn into a mess. One of the best parts of the show was having a real dog named Bailey who played the role of Sandy. Having a dog was very exiting and made the show a lot more interesting. As a member of the stage crew, I can say, it was a bit of work. Being behind the curtains an d moving heavy sets around in the black trying not to hit anyone. For 8th graders, it was the last middle school play. Some of the hard songs such as "Hard Knock Life" or "Tomorrow" and the dance numbers, stage crew and the teachers everyone worked really hard to make sure it was an amazing show.



Maya Mar-Chaim, orphan/ Kate

What is your favorite part?

"Learning scenes with friends and bonding"

Would you recommend doing the show?

"Yes, definitely"

What was your least favorite part?

"The tiring late rehearsals"

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Doing the show is challenging and a big commitment but if you like theater it's great and you can meet a lot of people.



Adrika Das / Grace Farell

What was your favorite part?

"My favorite part about being in the show was getting the chance to meet new people, and it was an amazing experience for a last middle school play."

Would you recommend doing the show?

"Yes, it's an amazing experience especially if you like theater and the teachers are nice and you get free food"

What was your least favorite part?

"Learning all the lines, which took some time, but it was not that bad."







Behind the Curtain of the Talent Show

By Leah Villeneuve-Vedete

The audience sees a polished 90-minute show, but as an MC, I see the months of sweat, missed lyrics, and "back-to-the-drawing-board" moments that happen long before the house lights dim. Everyone sees the final product; I want to take you behind the scenes to show you the effort it takes to get there.

It all begins with the "First Meetings." This is the rawest part of the journey. You have singers still choosing their tracks and dancers stumbling through very rough choreography. For those of us going for the biggest job in the show, the pressure is just as high. Becoming an MC isn't just about showing up; it’s about writing skits, perfecting the lines, and proving you can command a room of middle schoolers before you’ve even stepped onto the big stage.

Once the MCs are selected, the real writing begins. We aren't just reading names; we’re crafting the energy of the show. From the opening speech to the finale, we spent hours scripting every transition. We owe a huge shout-out to Ms. Melendez and Ms. Davila, whose guidance turned our scattered ideas into a cohesive show.

The magic really starts to happen when the musical ends and the stage crew joins the party. This is personally my favorite phase. For two weeks, the full run-throughs transform individual acts into a final product . You see the singers, the dancers, the instrumentalists, and even our ventriloquist finally perfecting their act. It’s a beautiful kind of chaos where the stage crew works their magic to make sure every lighting cue and prop move is seamless.
By the time opening night rolls around, the nerves are electric. Standing in the wings, you feel the adrenaline of a dozen different people waiting to have a incredible. When that first spotlight hits, all those weeks of "at-home practice" finally pay off. The audience sees a smooth show, but we know the truth: it wasn't just luck—it was a mountain of hard work.












7TH GRADE TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Ms. Wissmann
Team 7B

By Josie Robins



What got you into teaching?

I thought I wanted to be a professor, so I started teaching at a collage. I realized that kids were loosing their joy for writing, so I decided to teach younger grades that still loved reading and writing instead!

How long have you been teaching for?

I've been teaching for 19 years. I started teaching at USF as a professor when i was 23.

What are some things you like to do in your free time?

Playing D & D and building Legos.

What was your favorite subject when you were in school?

English class was always my favorite class

What is your favorite advice you have heard?

Two of my favorite pieces of advice I've heard is " As you figure out what kind of person you want to be, practice being that person every day."
And " Try hard things even when you're not sure you can do them. In fact, especially when you're not sure you can do them."



What advice do you have for the 7th and 8th graders in this school?

Try to get off of your phones more and bond with you friends and enjoy the world! Also read and write as much as possible, it is a powerful skill in many places in life.

What clubs do you run?

I run Quest Club! It's our Dungeons and Dragons tabletop roleplaying game club.

Have you ever played an instrument?

I used to play the guitar, but I gave up because it was hard. I wish I could tell my younger self not to quit.

Who is your inspiration or role model?

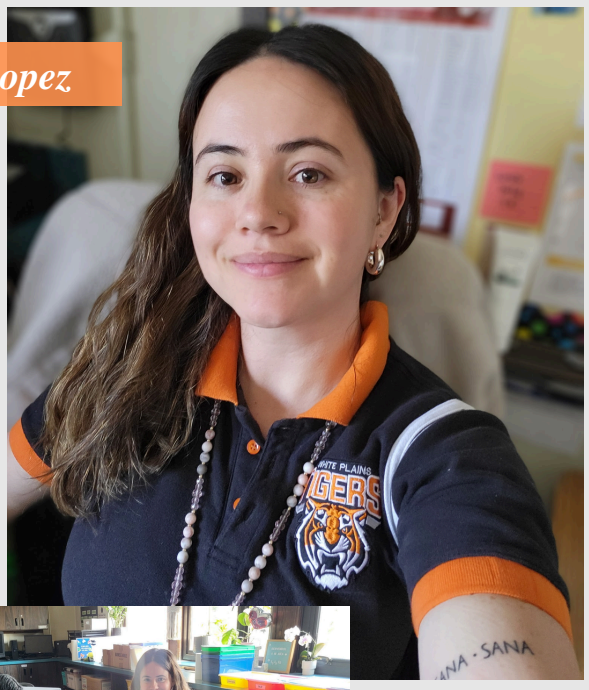
My first role model was a collage professor named Dr.deets, because before I got to her class, I though I was an amazing writer, but Dr deets pushed me to become better. She also taught me holding your students to high standards and holding them accountable helps them grow.
My second role model is my mom, because when I was born, she only had her high school diploma, but wanted to be a good role model so went back to school for her bachelors and masters degrees.

What do you wish you could tell your younger self?

Don't worry so much about fitting in, because you will find others who have similar interests if you just be yourself.

ENCORE TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

By Mathew Cuenca Serrano



Ms. Lopez



Where did you go to school/grow up?

I grew up in Medellín, Colombia, a beautiful city in Latin America surrounded by mountains and lush nature. I moved to the United States when I was 15 years old, which was a big transition in my life. I attended Ossining High School and later continued my education at Lehman College in the Bronx.

What made you want to go into Education?

When I moved to the United States, I struggled with leaving my country, my family, and my friends behind. It was not an easy adjustment, but one of my high school teachers supported me during that time and made a lasting impact on my life. That experience inspired me to become a teacher so I could be there for students who may be going through similar challenges and help them feel seen, supported, and capable of succeeding.

How many years have you been teaching?

I have been teaching for about 15 years, and it continues to be a rewarding and meaningful journey.

Who are your role models? Why?

I am inspired by people who stand up for others, especially those who may not have a voice or the ability to advocate for themselves. I admire individuals who lead with kindness, stay true to their values, and pursue their passions despite challenges. Those qualities are what I strive to bring into my own life and classroom.

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

In my free time, I enjoy spending quality time with my family, which is very important to me. I also love gardening, as it helps me relax and teaches patience. Reading is one of my favorite hobbies, and I especially enjoy literature. I also love traveling because it allows me to experience different cultures and perspectives.

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

Some of my favorite books are written by Gabriel García Márquez. I love his storytelling and the way he blends reality with imagination through magical realism. His works have deeply influenced my love for Spanish literature.

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

My favorite subject as a student was Spanish, especially literature. I enjoyed exploring stories, analyzing characters, and understanding deeper meanings within texts. It allowed me to connect with culture, history, and creativity in a meaningful way.

What advice do you have for students today?

My advice to students is to be patient with yourselves and trust your own journey. Everyone learns and grows at a different pace, and that is okay. Don't be afraid to ask for help, make mistakes, and keep trying even when things feel difficult. Focus on building good habits, staying curious, and being kind to others. Those qualities will take you far beyond the classroom.

What are you most looking forward to this year at Highlands?

I am most looking forward to building strong relationships with my students and helping them grow both academically and personally. I am excited to create a positive and supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable learning, expressing themselves, and taking risks.

What else would you like our readers to know about you?

Outside of the classroom, I love adventure and exploring new places. I've had the opportunity to travel to many countries, and I really enjoy learning about different cultures and trying new things. I love music, learning new languages, and anything that helps me keep growing. At home, I stay busy with my two sons and my two dogs, who keep life fun and interesting!

8TH GRADE TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

By Lukas Villar &
Josh Kokiasmenos



Mr. Mulcahy
Team 8A





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

My favorite subject was U.S. History. I had some really great teachers when I was in middle and high school, and they made learning about history fun. I also enjoyed learning about our nation.

What advice do you have for students today?

My advice to students today is, don't believe everything you see or hear. It is important that young people today go out and find the truth about every subject. Just listening to the media or especially social media and taking that as the truth is lazy. Do your research and find out if what is being said and reported is in fact the truth.

What are you most looking forward to this year at Highlands?

I love the 8th Grade picnic at FDR. It is a long-standing tradition here at Highlands that goes back many decades. It is the best day of the year in my opinion.

What else would you like our readers to know about you?

That I absolute love being a teacher and working with young people. Being a teacher is one of the most important jobs a person can have. Outside of my brief time in the military all I have ever done is teach. I have been at Highlands so long that now I have former students that work here

Where did you go to school/grow up?

I grew up in Northern Westchester in Cortlandt Manor, NY, which is about 30 minutes from White Plains. I graduated from Walter Panas High School in 1991. In college I went to SUNY Oneonta for my bachelor's degree and attended SUNY New Paltz for my master's degree

What made you want to go into Education?

I knew that I wanted to be a teacher since I was 15 years old and it's because of my father. When I was a kid, I was in 4-H, which is a club for boys and girls. One night I was helping a group of kids that were younger than me learn how to be news reporters for their own 4-H Club. I didn't know it at the time, but my father was watching me work with them. He asked me later if I had ever thought of being a teacher, and that was the moment I knew what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

How many years have you been teaching?

This is my 28th year teaching at Highlands Middle School, but my 30th year in education. I taught in North Carolina for two years before coming to Highlands.

Who are your role models? Why?

My father is my biggest role model. He was the greatest man that I ever knew, and he taught me so many things about life. There isn't a day that goes by I don't think about him and miss him.

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

I love to spend time with my wife and two sons whenever I can. I enjoy reading. I really love to travel. After I retire, I plan on traveling across the country. I want to visit all 50 states.

What is your favorite book that you've ever read:

My favorite book of all time is "Last of the Breed" by Louis L'Amour and highly recommend it. I read it for the first time in 8th grade.

Highlands Quest Club

By Charlotte Pizzirusso and Daniel Pizzirusso

What is Quest Club?

Quest Club is basically the Highlands D&D (Dungeons and Dragons) club, a tabletop role playing game. In the game, you create your own character, get a group, and fight evil …unless you are the evil. In Quest Club we have three different campaigns going on right now. You are going to hear about two of them, “Spelljammer” from the DM or game master’s point of view and “Ozmopolitan” from a player’s point of view. It’s definitely a different experience depending on your role. But if you ask anyone who has played or DM’d you’ll definitely hear some slightly insane and entertaining stories.

A Players POV

As a player, there’s lots of chaos. My party started our first session by falling out of the sky. My group is a mix of new and experienced players, so a lot of decisions are…questionable but really fun. Our campaign is Wizard of Oz/Wicked inspired which is very different from anything I’ve ever played before. While falling our most sensible party members aimed to land in a fountain, but one person opted to land on the ground, and took over 100 fall damage. We had to bring him back from the dead by using a phoenix feather that we’d found earlier (and had to beg our DM to let us keep). Overall, we were not very successful in our first session, but we did manage to get to Oz. My DM said “I’m done with all of you” so he clearly had a great time too. I’m looking forward to what happens in the next session and the rest of our campaign.

A DMs POV

I am the DM of our “Spelljammer” campaign that is basically Dungeons and Dragons in space. The party I’m running consists of a sorcerer, artificer and two druids. After sending multiple people to a “better place” the party destroyed the black market with fire, blocked the exits, and opened a store selling questionable things. They also tried many, many times to convince a store owner to give them an expensive spell jammer for free. A spell jammer is a ship that flies into space. That’s a LOT of chaos in one session.

How to Join

We hope this glimpse of D&D gave you a good laugh. If you want to join in on the chaos email Ms. Wissman about joining Quest Club. If you don’t want to play, you can just sit in to watch what happens next. The chaos may be too much to resist.





Collective Punishment And Why It Doesn’t Work

By Charlotte Pizzirusso

Introduction

Collective punishment. A form of discipline that happens in pretty much every classroom. It’s something almost everyone experiences at a point in their lives. A few students misbehave and the whole class gets punished. No one likes it. Especially the innocent students who have to deal with a punishment they did not deserve.

Why do teachers use collective punishment?

Well, there are three main reasons. For one it is much easier than singling out the students causing the problem and dealing with them separately. Teachers are trying to preserve as much class time as possible, so they don’t want to interrupt and talk to individual students. Second, teachers hope that students will feel guilty for making everyone else suffer with them, or that innocent students will be upset enough to pressure others to not break rules. Third, teachers are human and get frustrated. When the class doesn’t listen it’s easy for a teacher to punish everyone in a moment of anger, even if they might come to regret it later on.

Why doesn’t it work?

Collective Punishment may sound good in theory, but it does not work out. In one school a 9th grade student wrote a letter to their teacher saying “I always do as I am told and rarely talk in class. And yet, I still get punished for other people’s bad behavior every day. Therefore, I feel that there is no point in behaving well because I am going to be punished no matter what I do. This attitude or mindset I have developed has been brought on by teachers like you, who insist on punishing the whole group/class for one or two people’s unruly behavior”.

This student is not the only one who feels that way. Many good students will begin to misbehave after collective punishments, either out of spite or simply because they no longer see a point to doing the right thing. Furthermore, collective punishment can destroy a student's confidence in their teachers. Angela Watson’s Teacherwire said, “she was terrified to face me in school that day and couldn’t figure out what she had done wrong”. This referred to a phone call she got from an elementary school parent whose child couldn’t sleep because she did not know why she had been punished in school. While older students might not be afraid or cry, they will lose trust in their teachers. If you were a student, would you feel comfortable asking a teacher who punishes you when you didn’t do anything wrong for help? I know I would not.

Also, collective punishment fails to teach accountability. The point of a punishment is supposed to be to teach people that what they did is wrong and actions have consequences. But when guilty and innocent students are punished, that meaning is lost and it becomes pointless. The “End Collective Punishment in Schools” website says “When educators engage directly with the student who has caused harm—through guided reflection, restitution, and dialogue—they model emotional intelligence, fairness, and accountability. In contrast, when an entire class or team is penalized for the actions of one or a few, students are denied both clarity and closure. They learn that power may be exercised arbitrarily, and that guilt is collective rather than specific.” In other words, collective punishment teaches the wrong lesson. Students are supposed to be learning that when you do the wrong thing your actions have negative consequences and when you do the right thing your actions have positive consequences, that’s how you help them grow into functioning members of society. Instead, schools teach them that if one person messes up, everyone is wrong and that is just not true.

Collective Punishment in the World

Collective Punishment exists outside of schools too. One example of this is war. During World War II the Germans invaded many towns. Local residents often worked secretly with the allies and the Germans would threaten the townspeople with death if they refused to give up their neighbors. Of course, they wouldn’t give up one of their own if they even knew who it was so the German troops would burn down the town or just start shooting people. After the war group punishment was put in the Geneva convention as a war crime. Article 33 says “no protected person may be punished for an offense he or she has not committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited.”

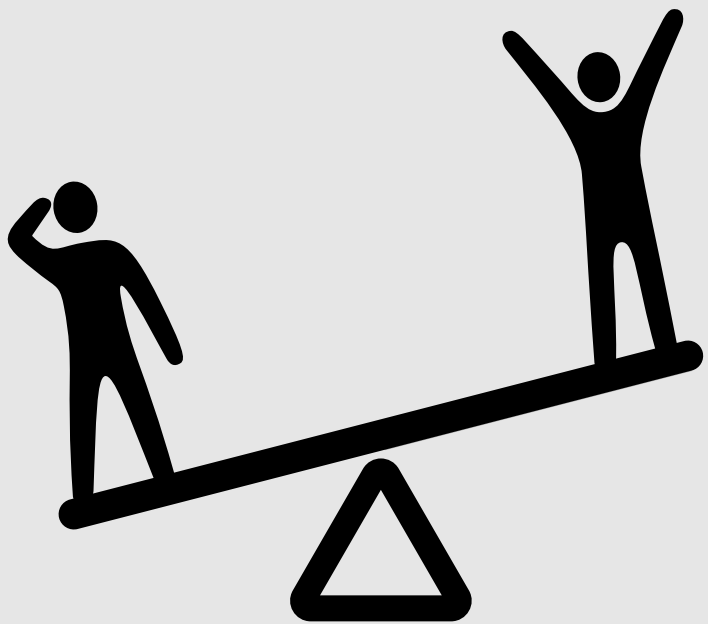
While this is not quite the same thing as collective punishment in schools, the principle is the same. If we don’t allow collective punishment during war, then why should children in school be any different. Students are people too, and they should be treated fairly.

Conclusion

This all proves that collective punishment doesn’t work and in fact has the opposite effect of the intended one. Behaving students are less likely to behave if they know they’ll be punished anyway, and the rule breakers won’t feel guilty either. While I can understand why teachers use it, collective punishment is not effective, and it should be stopped in favor of teaching personal accountability.







Earth Month

By Mina Auletta



April is one of the first months of spring, as it officially starts on March 20th. Life starts to grow after a long time of snow and cold. When you walk outside, the Earth amazes you with its beauty and life. This is why it is a time to honor our planet. But we have not been doing a very good job. "Things we do, such as burning fuel to power factories, cars, and buses are changing the natural greenhouse." (NOAA) This happens because carbon dioxide, (CO2), is produced by those things and is not good to have too much in our atmosphere. You may think, why is this bad for our earth? It disrupts our ecosystem by rising the temperature, sea level rises drought, flooding, and more. There is still hope though. There are many ways to start supporting the Earth.

The most direct solution is to use less carbon dioxide. This comes from cars, busses, trains, and others. You can arrange a carpool to school, take the bus when you can, and ride your bike or walk to somewhere close instead of driving.

More ways to save the environment is to do work like plant more trees, support building solar panels, use less paper, turn off lights when you don't need them, and plant your own vegetables. Some are easier to do than others, as right now you probably don't have the money to buy solar panels. But you can definitely turn off the lights in your house. How does this connect to the environment, you may ask? Well, power comes from different power plants, which release carbon emissions into the air by burning fossil fuels. Those are not everything you can do, but you can ask anyone for other ways to help. Next time you step outside, just think about how you could preserve our beautiful earth.

Combatting Seasonal Allergies

By Mason Coronel



Spring is finally here, which is nice for the weather, but for many people, it mainly means allergy season has begun. It's tough to focus in class when your eyes feel scratchy and your head feels heavy. This happens because your immune system overreacts to pollen. It sees a tiny speck of tree dust and treats it like a threat. In response, your body releases a chemical called histamine to fight it off. This is what causes the runny nose and itchy eyes. You're not sick; your body is just reacting strangely to plant dust.

There are some surprising facts about allergies. A sneeze can travel at 100 mph, which is faster than a professional baseball pitch. Pollen is light enough to float across entire oceans, so you might be sneezing because of a tree from three states away. People have described these same symptoms for thousands of years, so it's a long-standing issue.

To get through the day without using countless tissues, some solutions actually work. Wash your hands and face as soon as you get inside, since pollen is sticky. If you don't wash it off, it stays on your skin and gets rubbed into your eyes throughout the afternoon. Keeping windows closed at night also helps, as open windows let all that dust in while you sleep. Drinking more water can help a lot with that scratchy throat. Spring doesn't have to be a disaster; you just need to manage the pollen for a few weeks.





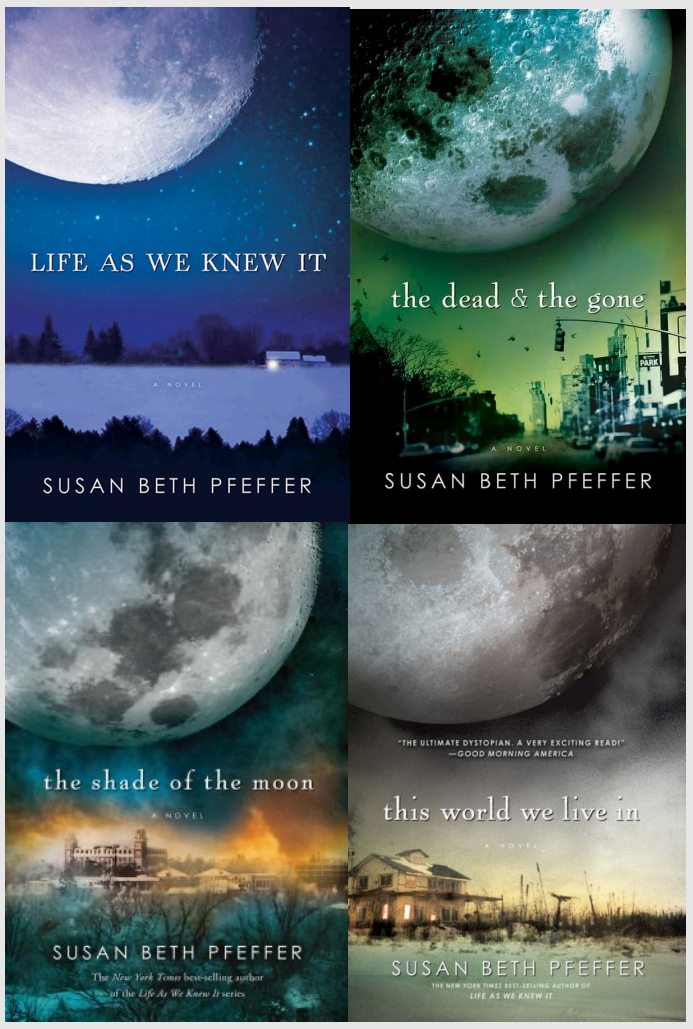


Book Review:

Life as We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer

By Mina Auletta

Do you like dystopian stories like *The Hunger Games* but it has too much action and war? Then *Life as We Knew It*, by Susan Beth Pfeffer is perfect for you. The basic premise of the book is that the moon is hit by an asteroid and is knocked closer to earth. It takes place in Atlanta, Georgia. The main character, Miranda, with her two brothers and mom, is one of the lucky ones. As soon as they hear the news of destruction, they stockpile necessities. This is the story of how they tried to survive the first few years. They go through blizzards, storms, power outages, and more. Miranda is jealous of her younger brother, Johnny, because he gets to go to camp and eat all the food he wants. She is jealous of anybody, really, who has comfort and food. This book is good because it is suspenseful and you can relate to the characters (for most of it). This will keep you engaged for a while, because it has two other companions from different views and a fourth book where all of them clash. This one is said to be the best book to read first, but to be honest, the other companions can be read first too, except for the sequel. There are so many reasons to read *Life as We Knew It*, and I hope you like it as much as I did!



Quarterly Book Review 3

Keeper of The Lost Cities by Shannon Messenger

By Charlotte Pizzirusso

Are you looking for a new fantasy book? Are you ready for a LONG series? Are you looking for a mature story, but not YA? Well, I definitely have a series for you.

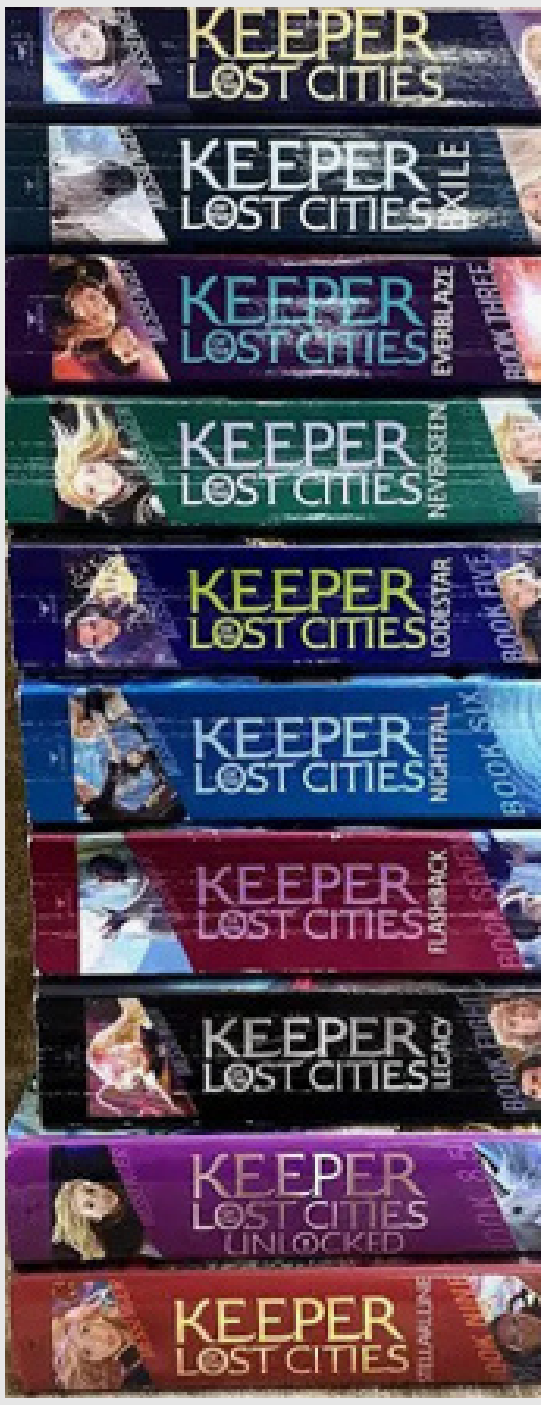
Keeper of the Lost Cities by Shannon Messenger is a high fantasy series on the mature end of middle grade. The story starts with twelve-year-old Sophie Foster in San Diego, California. She is on a field trip with her class at a museum. She is a genius, which is why she is a high school senior right now. It seems great, but Sophie struggles to make friends because she cannot connect with kids her age or the older kids in her class. She is just too different.

To make matters worse she's hiding a huge secret. Sophie can hear people's thoughts. Just imagine being in a crowded room with a lot of people talking at once, except that's all the time and you can't stop it. Looking around the museum, she notices a boy with starling teal eyes and reading a newspaper, glancing up at her. She does not think anything of it since she made the local paper for rejecting Yale University because her parents want her to have a more normal life. She certainly does not expect him to approach her, but he does, pointing at the newspaper picture and asking, "is this you?" She nods, covering her ears a bit, and he says, "I can hear them too".

Sophie is shocked! She's never known anyone else who could hear thoughts. The boy, Fitz, tells her that she is an elf and that he was sent to find her secretly hidden among humans. Eventually she ends up having to leave her whole life behind to go to the Elvin world called the Lost Cities.

Over eleven books, Sophie solves mysteries, fights evil, and makes friends for the first time. She manages to be relatable despite her extraordinary circumstances. There are so many plot twists in this series and what you expect will almost never be the truth. It's one of the few series I've read where characters don't know who the real villain is from the beginning and that was one of the things I really loved about it.

My favorite part of the story has to be the characters. Sophie makes friends with a lot of very interesting and talented elves, so by the later books we have a very unique and diverse group of heroes. The villains are also compelling and a lot of the time they win. That's one of the best parts of a longer series. The heroes lose a lot before they win, so every victory feels hard fought for and deserved. If any of this story sounds interesting I hope you'll check the series out. Just try the first book and you will be hooked.



RED CROSS AWARENESS MONTH

By Lizzie Orzuna Santiago

March is known for many things. Being the start of spring, Saint Patrick's Day, Pi Day, and a lot more. However, only about 5% – 15% of people on average know that March is American Red Cross Awareness Month. What is the American Red Cross? Well, the American Red Cross is a nonprofit humanitarian organization – in other words it is an organization that gives aid to people who are in danger and need help by giving food, safety, and first aid to people who suffering during conflicts, disasters, and crisis.

The American Red Cross was founded by Cara Barton in Washington, D.C. on May 21, 1881. She first heard of a "Red Cross" while she was visiting Europe after the Civil War. After she returned home, Barton started a campaign for an American Red Cross. She led the Red Cross for 23 years during which the organization had their first domestic and overseas relief effort. (They helped with immediate aid overseas for the first time). Over the years, more people were volunteering in the Red Cross, especially after World War II. They saw a major jump from 17,000 to around 20 million and 11 million Junior Red Cross. The Red Cross does not get funding for day-to-day operations, but during times of disasters, the Red Cross gets materials and funds. Some disasters are earthquakes, fires, misplacement of warfare etc. The Red Cross also hosts blood drives that could save lives.

It also does not earn themselves money, any money they make it put into resources like food, equipment and needs to travel. The Red Cross has helped out with many disasters like the San Francisco Earthquake during 1906 where President Theodore Roosevelt asked the Red Cross to 'lead a major relief effort'. The Titanic during 1912 where the Red Cross gave aid to the survivors of the Titanic, 9/11 where they gave aid to the survivors and Hurricane Katrina, which was 'its largest, single disaster relief effort to date.' How does someone help volunteer for the Red Cross? Well after interviewing someone in the Red Cross, this and many other questions are answered.

1) How did you join as a volunteer/official member?

After searching for volunteering opportunities with a humanitarian organization, I found listings of local opportunities with the American Red Cross. I decided what was most interesting to me, filled out an application for the role, had a couple of interviews, had a background check, and once accepted, started with an orientation. I took courses (in-person and online) to learn the role(s). My experience was positive! Distinct roles have different time-commitments and learning requirements. I stay updated and practice the skills via monthly meetings, tabletop exercises, and full-scale exercises (among other activities). The Red Cross also has volunteer opportunities for teens! https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer/youth-opportunities.html

2) How does RC pick who to help?

[Most] people [aided] by the Red Cross have been displaced from their homes due to a disaster (e.g., hurricane shelter, apartment building fire). For larger disasters (e.g., floods, wildfires, hurricanes) that require temporary evacuation, shelter and food is made available to people (and pets). Red Cross help can include health services or mental health services - to help displaced people work through issues they face [because of] the disaster. The Red Cross also works with partners (other organizations) to identify long-term, permanent solutions for anyone displaced (e.g., local Department of Social Services or United Way). Disaster Cycle Services also includes prevention and preparation. The Home Fire Campaign helps to install free smoke alarms nationwide and provide information about home fire safety (link to learn more and request a smoke alarm: https://arcg.is/Hnzi90). Sound the Alarm events are part of the Home Fire Campaigns: https://www.redcross.org/sound-the-alarm.html.

Service to the Armed Forces supports military members, veterans, and their families globally. Blood Services provides blood donations to hospitals and medical facilities. Many people take Red Cross training to learn skills and become certified to help in an emergency. Classes include swimming/water safety, lifeguarding, CPR, AED, first aid, babysitting, and instructor training.

3) What does the RC normally do daily?

Every day there are activities occurring across every sector. Staff and volunteers often work side-by-side to fulfill the mission.

In Disaster Cycle Services, there are often two roles a person plays depending on what is happening locally. Known as blue sky (normal operations) or gray sky (disaster/emergency or threat of disaster). For example:

- During blue sky, a staff member/volunteer may be working on planning, taking a course, doing administrative paperwork, building new partnerships, orienting new volunteers, instructing a course, reviewing responses (after action).
- During gray sky, a staff member/volunteer may be on-site with responders and clients, ensuring support is in place, and managing priorities depending on the outlook of the disaster. They may be responsible for operations management, planning, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting support.

Blood Services regularly runs blood drives, manages blood product supply/storage, and transports blood products to hospital/medical partners.

Training Services regularly runs a variety of training. Instructors set schedules/locations, prepare programming, teach classes, and ensure certifications are properly processed. Red Cross also runs like other non-profit organizations, and daily work includes building maintenance, communications (PR), finance, IT, HR, public affairs, development (fundraising) to keep the mission going) Both paid staff and volunteers may work in these roles. About 90% of the Red Cross workforce are volunteers. In Westchester, more than 95% of the disaster response team are volunteers.

4) Does the RC have sections? (As in, groups that specialize in a certain disaster)?

The two biggest areas of service are blood services and disaster services. In each line of service, there are different roles. The Red Cross provides about 40% of the nation's blood and blood components. People volunteer to donate their blood, and staff/volunteers support the entire blood collection process. For example, blood donor ambassadors help donors have a wonderful experience from start to finish. The size of a disaster (as opposed to the type of disaster) typically informs what is needed to fulfill the mission. Holistically, assisting displaced people includes helping them with their emotional needs, physical needs, and informational needs. Disaster Cycle Services volunteers may train with a primary focus but may then expand training to be able to help in different ways. For example, someone may initially train in Sheltering but may expand their training to include Feeding. Sheltering focuses on providing a safe place for people, while Feeding ensures people have access to nourishment (and may occur at a shelter or be provided via a mobile response route). Volunteers in Disaster Mental Health, Disaster Health Services, and Disaster Spiritual Care are also professionals who perform certain tasks with clients to help support them during disasters.

5) What does RC do if there's a false alarm?

If it's a "false alarm" (e.g., there was an apartment building fire, but no one is displaced), it's OK; consider it's more important that no one is displaced. The phrase "hope for the best & plan for the worst" comes to mind.

6) What do the higher ups (like the president) do?

Lead the teams to fulfill the organization's mission. Make sure that the Red Cross is efficiently using technology and other available resources to the fullest extent possible. It's important to maximize the amount of donations going directly to the clients. The Red Cross must stay up to date, manage all of their protocols, and be able to pivot quickly and efficiently. This efficiency ensures volunteers can focus on providing the in-person compassion and care needed to assist clients.

7) What does the RC do if communication (like electronics) is down?

The Red Cross anticipates there may be communication interruption or failure, and plans in advance. The Red Cross uses a number of platforms (e.g., client record systems, professional dispatch software) and backup systems are integral to their work. The Red Cross even has backups for backups. During a response, Red Cross responders work to get communications up as soon as possible. During the Hurricane Maria response, the Red Cross brought mini satellite dishes into communities. During the Hurricane Helene response in Asheville, NC, Starlink was used to help with internet connectivity. Some alternative systems include handheld radios, CB radios, hot spots (internet), pen & paper. The Red Cross maintains relationships with organizations/partner agencies who also have alternative resources.

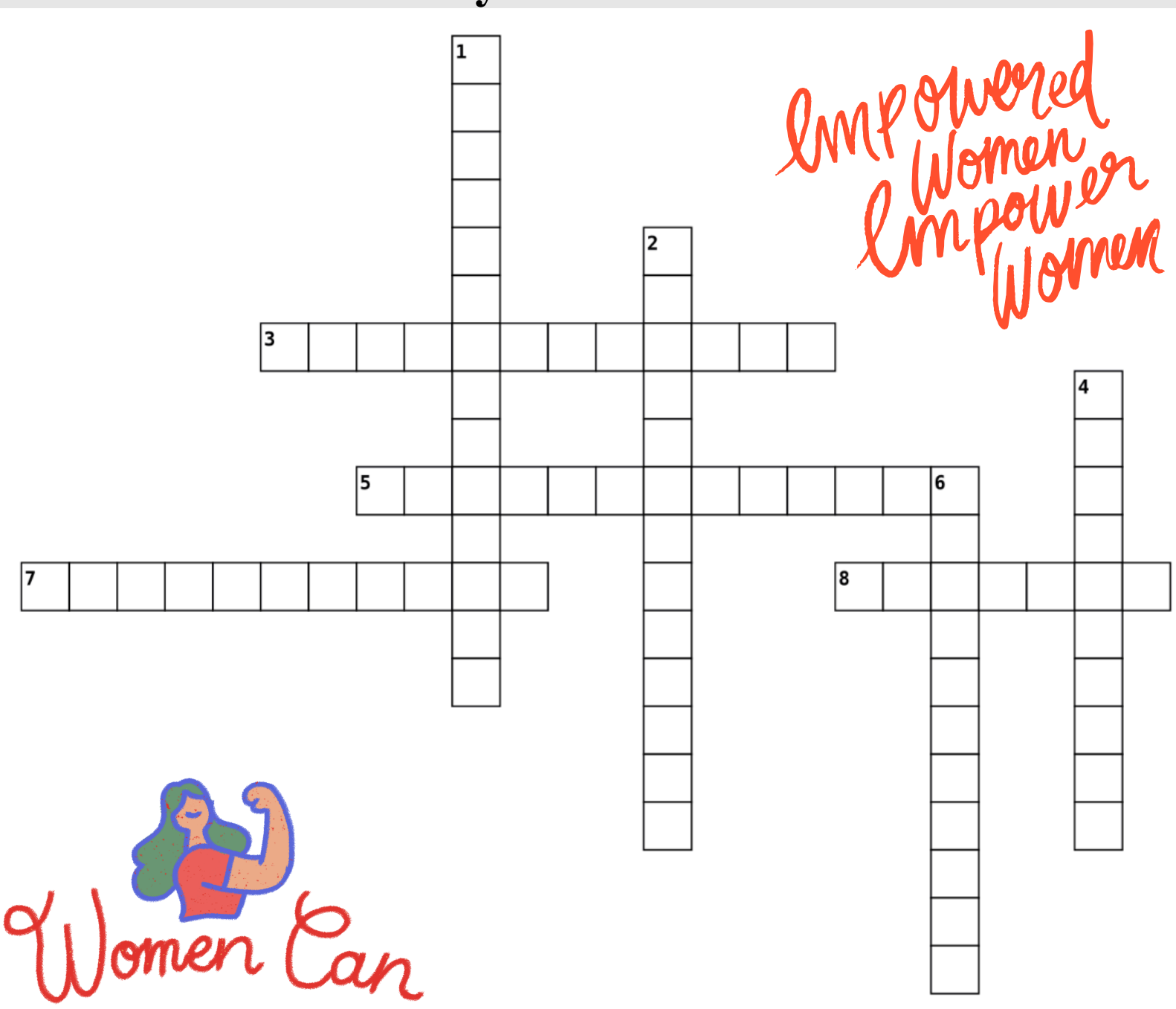
8) How does the RC pick leaders?

For volunteers, leadership opportunities vary, and includes volunteer interest, coursework completion, experience in the roles, observation of success in the current role, and ability to commit the time. Paid staff follow a typical hiring process (similar to any organization): postings include a job description and position requirements. Candidates apply for a role and go through an interview process.

This is just a bit of what the American Red Cross does. Many people don't know much about the Red Cross. Red Cross doesn't just help with disasters, but every day. Thanks to the American Red Cross, lives are saved everyday. Not just the organization itself, but the volunteers who dedicate time and effort into the Organization.

LIFE & LEISURE

Crossword: Woman's History Month!



Across

3. first female vice president

5. first woman to try to fly all the way around the world

7. famous gymnast

8. singer songwriter whose name starts with b

Down

1. was Queen of England last

2. conductor on the Underground Railroad

4. a fashion designer and made the brand Chanel

6. sings "shake it off"

Covid-19

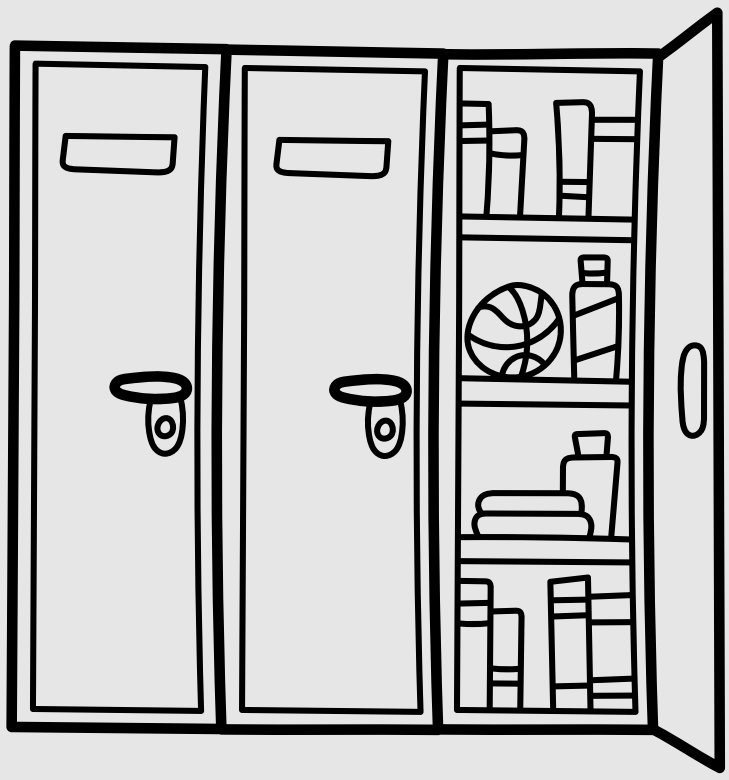
by Daniel Pizzirusso



COURIER'S CREATIVE CORNER

AN 8TH GRADERS GUIDE ON HOW TO SURVIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL

by Daniel Pizzirusso



- On stairwells if it is easier go in the middle if you are stuck at the sides it is faster but make sure to keep your balance.
- For the electives that switched this quarter plan routes for getting their quick. And on time
- Remember you have 4 minutes to get to class before the bell rings 9th period don't lolly gag you need the time to get there.
- Some teachers keep seating charts for subs so make sure you "sit in your correct seat" or they may mark you absent even if your there
- You should make sure that you keep up with all your work and finish missing work if you have any try and also do extra credit assignments so you know that you can get a better grade

STICK WITH CREATIVITY: D.A.C. BRINGS STUDENT DESIGNS TO LIFE!

Members of Ms. Thornton's Digital Arts Club turned creativity into something you can actually stick with! Students designed their own original sticker artwork, then brought their ideas to life by printing them on specialty sticker paper and cutting them out with a Cricut machine. From bold graphics to playful designs, the finished stickers showcase both artistic talent and hands-on tech skills. Great work Tigers!



AT 80, KNICKS PROVE THEIR STRENGTH—BUT CAN THEY GO THE DISTANCE?

By Josh Kokiasmenos



The 2025-26 season for the New York Knicks marks the franchise's 80th year in the NBA. Under new head coach Mike Brown, the Knicks recorded a strong regular-season performance. The Knicks shattered not only records this year but expectations. While the team is prominent in the eastern conference, they still have many problems to work through as well, like choking, team cohesion, and a lack of adequate defense. The Knicks are not only dominating they make some mistakes that could be exterminating their chances at a championship.

The Knicks record as of 2/12/26; is 35-20 Ranking 3rd in the Eastern Conference. Tailing the Detroit pistons with a similar 35-19 record. In the 2026 season, the New York Knicks set major league records. On January 21st, the Knicks won 120 – 66, the largest margin of victory, a record that has not been broken in 80 years! Additionally, they also set a record for assists in a half (2 Quarters) with 24 total assists and recorded the largest margin of victory against the 76ers (a difference of 49 points). Despite the extensive résumé, there are criticisms of their performance as well. While many critics have pointed out their lack of bench depth and wide variety of player vitality, on the contrary, Jose Alvarado (27 years old) has only been with Knicks two weeks and has already been making considerable strides, "Jose Alvarado scored a season-high 26 points 'Alvarado, acquired last week from New Orleans, shot 8 for 13 from 3-point range and finished with five steals." (ESPN) with regards to other teams and coaches in the NBA not many have a player that fit in so quickly, while I don't deny they don't always display the best team chemistry it is clear that their coach is able to cause cohesion and allow success stories such as these to happen.

I not only came to praise the Knicks but highlight some of their weaknesses as well. For example their weak variety of bench players, they can definitely shine when it comes to a wide selection of players with strong performances on the court such as Jose Alvarados however Mikel Bridges is averaging 34.2 minutes a games, for those who don't understand a NBA game is 48 minutes not including stoppages and ads, showing their struggles at maintaining a balanced team. Perhaps they're doing well in the regular season however, if they want a chance to succeed in the playoffs they must make key changes to their game. Firstly, they rely a lot on flopping and calling fouls, it almost seems like their the refs. I'm not trying to accuse the Knicks of bribing the referee's however, a majority of their play-style revolves around the free-throw line which annoys me and a lot of other fans, because we didn't come to see a match of all around the world. This could be a huge drawback when they make it to the playoffs, and these aren't just empty statements, the numbers prove them, with the Knicks attempting 22.0 field goal per game (ESPN) in comparison OKC makes 24.0 per game (ESPN), OKC mind you is a league team notorious for foul-baiting; this should demonstrate a crucial flaw considering the refs have been known to not call as many fouls on play off games, Steve Kerr(the Warrior's coach) said relating to this, "They [The Timberwolves] were bear-hugging Steph and they could have called six fouls, but the league has established the physicality in the playoffs, [Finch] talked about it last week, just the overall physicality. To me, it's crazy out there what's happening." Either way you look at it, in the long term the Knicks will not get very far if their games rely on getting fouled, not only are they playing against the best teams that won't silly mistakes fouling players, and refs will likely allow higher levels of physicality to engage viewers.



In conclusion, the Knicks are dominant presence in the Eastern Conference, they shatter records, their player depth is somewhat diverse, and they have reasonable team cohesion. Their number 3 spot in the conference shows their strength however, talking about their accomplishments can sometimes be bitter-sweet, while they have team has cohesion, occasionally they struggle to pull it together, while they have good bench depth, some players are being handled with Negligence. What we can take away from this is that the Knicks have made huge strides in developing a cohesive team and should keep working to grow as a team, and that the individual player can grow themselves as well.



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*Answers for **Woman's history month** crossword*

3:KamalaHarris
5: AmeliaEarhart
7: SimoneBiles
8: Beyoncé
1: QueenElizebeth
2: HarrietTubman
4: CocoChanel
6: TaylorSwift