

the Torch

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WHAT IS THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE)

- **Established in 1867:** Created to help states build effective school systems.
- **Core Commitments:** Focused on student achievement, global competitiveness, educational excellence, and equal access.
- **Financial Impact:** Provides over \$150 billion in new and consolidated loans annually.
- **Budget+Staffing:** Holds the third-largest discretionary budget among cabinet agencies despite having the smallest staff.
- **Mission:** Advance education through national discussions and administering programs from preschool to postdoctoral research.

by Alex Lieberman
Sci&Tech Editor

During President Donald Trump’s first term, he pledged to dissolve the Department of Education, something that he did not accomplish during his first four years. That begs the question: will he during his second term?

As of February 11, 2025, Trump has begun drawing up plans for an executive order that would dismantle the department. He would need congressional support and therefore would “urge Congress to pass a measure abolishing it,” AP wrote.

Trump could dismantle the Department of Education with the support of 60 out of 100 senators (some of which would have to be Democrats) and enough support from the House of Representatives, according to BBC.

Sarasota County School Board member Thomas Edwards is unsure of the fate of the department. “I can’t decide if this [promise] is a lot of distracting rhetoric that keeps our eye off ... what’s really important or if it’s a serious threat,” he said.

A Fox News headline from February 4 read that the President planned to “majorly revamp” the department as math and reading scores were at an all-time low.

The Department of Education was formally established in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter, although the original was created in 1867 to collect

information on schools. According to the department’s website, its intent is to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.”

“We had public education then [before 1979], but not at its best,” Edwards said. “So, our students with special needs did not have the kinds of services that they have now... Our Title I [low-income] population did not have the kind of services and protections that they have now and ... students in sports, whether they’re male or female, did not have the protections in sports that they have now.”

Currently, the department provides funding for programs catering to low-income students and students with disabilities. Its Office of Civil Rights (OCR) ensures that sex discrimination does not occur in schools and sports. The department also has responsibilities such as loan forgiveness and providing Pell Grants to support students with financial hardships attending college. In 2024, the Department of Education was allocated less than 2% of federal funding. On February 10, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) canceled \$881 million dollars worth of funding for the Department of Education that was previously being used for 89 contracts conducted by research on students and schools carried out by a branch of the department called the Institute of Education Sciences, according to DOGE’s X account and USA Today.

Elizabeth Ballard, a US his-

tory teacher and former civics teacher, affirmed that the dissolution of the department would not have a pronounced influence on most aspects of schools, as the state and county makes many of the school policies and funding choices. However, “it will probably have more of an effect on special ED,” and could impact student loans, she said.

“If there’s an argument to be made ... if there’s a way to do public education better by the dismantling of the Department of Education, I’m willing to hear it as long as those protections that ... were derived from the Department of Education remain in place,” Edwards said.

Although, if the dissolution of the department leads to cuts in funding, Edwards believes students would pay the price of that. He predicted that initiatives such as school sports and art programs would be stripped of resources before the basic components of school — reading, writing, and arithmetic.

eSchool News says that advocates for the dissolution of the department “argue that billions of dollars allocated to the department could be redirected to state education budgets, thereby allowing for more impactful initiatives at the forefront.”

So far, Trump has employed the Department of Education to carry out some of his recent executive orders. In January, it dismissed book ban investigations that were ongoing during Biden’s term. The department also archived or removed its “guidance documents, reports, and training materials” that mentioned DEI (diversity,

equity, and inclusion) as well as putting its DEI-related employees on leave. As of February 11, 2025, the president has not signed any executive orders relating to the dismantling of the department.

On February 4, Trump remarked at a press conference that he wanted his Secretary of Education pick, Linda McMahon, to “put herself out of a job.” While campaigning, he said, “We will drain the government education swamp and stop the abuse of your taxpayer dollars to indoctrinate America’s youth with all sorts of things that you don’t want to have our youth hearing,” according to CNN.

Along with the recent dismissal of investigations into book bans enacted under the Trump administration, there will no longer be a “book ban coordinator” position in the Department of Education. A press release by the Department of Education referred to book banning as a “hoax,” with the full title being “U.S. Department of Education Ends Biden’s Book Ban Hoax.”

Eleven claims relating to the removal of books from school libraries were dismissed. “The complaints alleged that local school districts’ removal of age-inappropriate, sexually

explicit, or obscene materials from their school libraries created a hostile environment for students — a meritless claim premised upon a dubious legal theory,” the Department of Education press release read.

Additionally, the department’s Officer for Civil Rights “rescinded all department guidance issued under the theory that a school district’s removal of age-inappropriate books from its libraries may violate civil rights laws.”

Edwards emphasized that he does not support sexually explicit content in children’s books. Instead, “I’m concerned that we’re taking controversial topics away from our students and that removes their ability to critically think,” he said.

He is also unsure of the cause of the fervent opposition against DEI, which led to the staff dismissals, but worries that it could increase bullying at schools if children see adults discriminating against others due to sexual orientation, gender, religion, or race.

In the near future, Edwards does not see any changes coming to Sarasota schools. Long-term, looking at what the federal government may do, “I’m trying to keep an open mind and hoping for the best,” he said. “I can’t live in a world without hope.”

“I’m concerned that we’re taking controversial topics away from our students and that it removes their ability to critically think.”

Tom Edwards
Sarasota County Schools

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Are Weapons Detectors the Solution?
The weapons detectors are here to stay. But, are they the best option?

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Friday, March 7, 2025

Climate on the Brink

The alarming rise of natural disasters

by Aly Zaleski and Katerina Mazzo
Asst. Editor-in-Chief and Asst. Web Editor-in-Chief

California is currently dealing with the aftermath of the most destructive wildfires in history. The fires started Jan. 7 in northern Los Angeles and were finally contained on Jan. 31. Rising temperatures are the basic cause of the increasing severity wildfires and hurricanes. In fact, 2024 was recorded as Earth's warmest year — it was the first year to exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The average global temperature in 2024 was 2.32°F above the 20th century average. This was 0.18°F warmer than 2023, which was the previous record holder. Anticipating that this trend will continue means that more damaging natural disasters are on the way.

The effects of neglecting the issue of global warming have been apparent for the last 200 years. There are various pieces of evidence that prove global warming is a big concern for our world, yet to this day people fail to realize what this means for them.

Take a look at California wildfires. From World Weather Attribution, it has been determined that rising heat significantly increases the risk of wildfires by drying out vegeta-

tion and soil and creating more flammable conditions, overall making it easier for fires to start and spread rapidly once ignited. This may explain why the Palisades wildfire is considered a record breaker for being the most destructive wildfire in Los Angeles history, with reports stating it destroyed at least 1,900 structures as of Jan. 8, 2025.

Pine View English and history teacher Maureen Condiotte knows through her son located in Pasadena that the recent fires brought a lot of chaos. She explained that the roads were so busy that unless you were in a mandatory evacuation zone you were advised to stay home. Her son stayed safe at home, but on his morning walks with his dog he could see the glow in the sky from the fires and ash on the ground below him.

Condiotte was in the area herself just a few days before the fires erupted, one day enjoying a hiking path that was in ash a few days later.

Indeed, California isn't the only place experiencing loss due to worsening of natural disasters. According to the National Climate Assessment, the intensity and the frequency of hurricanes in the Gulf have increased with warmer sea surface temperatures. As

global warming causes sea levels to rise, storm surges due to hurricanes are worse than ever.

Hurricanes Helene and Milton hit pretty close to home. Many can probably recall that the damage brought by these storms was pretty shocking.

"I've lived here for 40 years and I've never seen it flood off of Bahia Vista over by Pinecraft like it did and down Philippi Creek like it did," Sarasota County fire department lieutenant Jordan Mazur said.

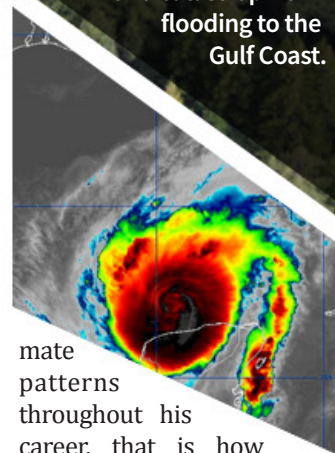
Mazur and his crew of firefighters do a lot to take care of the community on a daily basis and do everything to prepare for real life emergencies. Due to global warming's negative effects on natural disasters, it can make their jobs much more difficult.

According to Mazur, fighting fires in Florida is a lot different compared to out west because of the mountainous terrain that we lack. However, there is one thing that Florida and California, as well as the rest of the world, have to adapt to: climate change.

"The atmosphere is always trying to equal itself out... It's not normal for extra energy to be added in," Dan Henry, a meteorologist working with National Weather Forecast, Inc., said.

With a masters in applied meteorology and a focus on cli-

A satellite image captures the massive storm as it made landfall, bringing record-breaking winds and catastrophic flooding to the Gulf Coast.



mate patterns throughout his career, that is how Henry describes climate change. To balance out two back-to-back once-in-a-lifetime fires in California, cold fronts come down with a full swing punch to Florida's upper peninsula all the way from Canada, bringing snow to places that haven't seen freezing temperatures at almost any point in modern history.

Once more, as Henry implied, it will likely equal itself out a few months later during an increasingly intense hurricane season.

In the 2024 season, Florida was met with three of the nineteen tropical depressions that developed in the Atlantic Ocean — an extremely high number compared to the regular fourteen for a regular three to four month period, according to AccuWeather.com. As explained by Henry, while climate change may not necessarily increase the number of hurricanes in a season, as the pendulum of temperatures continues to swing in growing extremes, the intensity of these hurricanes have increased at an exponential rate.

According to USGS.gov, the warming waters across the globe is a major factor in what influences these natural disasters. Cyclones coming out of Hurricane Milton, the more frequent flow of tropical depressions into the Gulf of Mexico,

and low pressure areas in the Atlantic are just some of the devastating effects of that warmth.

In the Pacific, however, the waters have upheld that law of equality and remained cool, unfortunately creating a more arid draft into California's coastline. This, in turn, creates a better environment for fires to begin and thrive in, thus the Palisades and Eaton fires were born.

The question that's being asked now is "How?" How is it possible for record breaking fires, tornados, and hurricanes to all be happening in such a short amount of time?

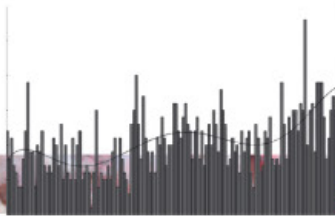
"The odds are that the die have to be loaded... and it's because of human influence," Henry says. "[This] encompasses every single person whose house got burned in the fires or were one inch out of a flood zone... [and] are now in one."

The good news, however, is that moves are being made globally to stop the path that climate change is taking. Although not always the most informed, governments across every continent are taking action and putting policies for change into the discussion, bringing light to this issue that continues to encroach on the coast of every nation and the heart of every home.

As we continue to move forward in fixing climate change, keep in mind the science and look for the positive difference being made.



Aerial image of a California wildfire taken by the satellite Landsat 8.



Source: Inside the Eye

Accumulated cyclone energy from the years 1878-2022 shows an upwards trend.



Mote Marine Relocates

by Ava Lenerz
Match Editor-in-Chief

Sarasota is lucky enough to have its very own aquarium, Mote Marine Laboratory (MML). This popular attraction has entertained and educated adults and kids alike for years with its aquatic creatures. Over the years, it has grown and developed, and now this iconic seaside landmark will be relocating.

The new location, named Mote Science Education Aquarium (Mote SEA), will be near the University Town Center (UTC), and is projected to open this summer.

The move will be bittersweet, as, according to senior and MML volunteer Erelle Levy, “there’s something very authentic and sentimental about the old location that I think a lot of people are going to miss.”

This feeling is shared by others, such as junior Mikayla Foss, who described the old location as “nostalgic.”

Though it’s hard for students to imagine MML being anywhere other than its current location on City Island, Sarasota, this isn’t the first time Mote has changed locations.

According to mote.org, MML first opened in 1955 on Siesta Key. In the late 1970s, it changed locations as the lease was ending and MML almost moved out of Sarasota. However, people banded together. With some fundraising efforts, they convinced the City of Sarasota to provide 6.7 acres and in 1978 it moved to its current location.

Today, Mote is known not just for its aquariums, but also its research laboratories. mote.org lists a variety of research topics including: “Biomedical & Technology Development; Conservation, Restoration & Monitoring; Coral Reef Ecosystems, Environmental Health; Fisheries & Aquaculture; and Marine Animal Rescue & Rehabilitation.”

MML also does outreach to the Florida Keys with a research campus for coral reefs in Summerland Key, and coral nurseries located in Key Largo and Islamorada.

Luckily, the old location isn’t being torn down, its focus is just being shifted. MML will be expanded into a center solely for research, while Mote SEA will be focused on education and entertainment.

Mote SEA plans to provide education “in its three K-12 STEM teaching labs to 70,000 students from Sarasota and Manatee County schools, and family day passes to 24,000 Title 1 schools each year, free of charge,” according to mote.org.

On the first floor of the new location, there will be three teaching labs: the Ocean Technology Lab, Marine Ecology Lab, and Biomedical/Immunology Lab. All of these will provide students access to state-of-the-art technology that will facilitate their connection to marine life and exploration of conservation.

On the second and third floor, there will also be four Workforce Development Labs aimed to “help bridge gaps be-



In November 2020, a ceremony was held to celebrate beginning construction of Mote Science Education Aquarium (SEA). Left is a design rendering of the new Mote Sea location at Nathan Benderson Park. This image is subject to change as of March 18, 2022. PHOTO PROVIDED BY MOTE MARINE

tween education and careers.” These include the Aquaculture Lab, Conservation Lab, Coral Lab and Veterinary Clinic & Diagnostic Center.

Mote unites the community with over 1,000 volunteers, interns, and staff members who help support Mote’s programs. Volunteer opportunities begin in high school with more available for adults of all ages.

The Mote SEA nearly doubles the size of the old location, going from 66,000 square feet



Pine View Senior Class of 2023 held Cobalt at the current Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium Apr. 15. Elijah Hurt (right) and Kaitlin Matthee (left) are seen at the “Contact Cove” touch tank. PHOTO BY ROBYN SCHOENBERG

to 110,000 square feet and hopes to double the number of visitors to approximately 700,000 people per year. Furthermore, it will hold over one million gallons of exhibits.

“It’s much bigger, and there’s a much greater variety of animals, like they’re bringing in penguins, for example, which isn’t something that they had at the old location,” Levy said.

Most of their current animals will be brought over, but it will take time to get the animals acclimated to their new exhibits before they can open.

However, a few will not be moving because “there’s a couple animals that have limitations, and they have habitats that have been specifically built for them,” Levy said, “So, they’re going to stay there [MML].”

Looking at the construction of Mote SEA one can see this was no small endeavor. They broke ground on the site five years ago in November 2020, and planning began years before then. They have raised millions of dollars to fund this project. Originally, they had hoped to open in 2023, but for many reasons, including multiple hurricanes, they have been continually delayed.

It is well worth it, as people are excited about the new location for a variety of reasons.

“I’m excited because UTC is a fun and awesome place, and I think it’s going to be really cool,” Foss said.

Sarasota is fortunate to have such a thriving locale in our small town, and hopefully this move will only change Mote for the better.



Image rendering is subject to change. PHOTO PROVIDED BY MOTE MARINE

Can alumni return to campus? *Explaining policy changes made for visiting campus*

by Jakob Roche
Opinion Editor

“Seven Years of Progress” is the slogan Florida’s Department of Education uses to publicize its safety and security campaign. Pine View alumni like Alyson Mizanin, despite not posing a threat, have felt its effects.

“It had always been a tradition, for as long as I can remember, at Pine View that seniors who graduated would come back [the week after graduation],” Mizanin said.

However, when she and other seniors in the Class of 2023 tried to return during school hours, they were turned away.

“I remembered being in sixth grade and having alumni with their visitor badges, visiting classrooms,” Mizanin said. “After that, in the second half of the 2022-2023 school year, alumni were no longer allowed in.”

So, why the sudden change?

This alumni ban started when House Bill 1421 was signed into law mid-2022, which updated Florida’s school safety statutes. This included tighter regulations on entry onto school campuses.

When the Sarasota County School Board convened, they interpreted this change to mean that “a student not enrolled in the school, an adult without a child enrolled in the school as a student... is prohibited from visiting a school unless otherwise approved by the principal.” They went ahead and updated their

rulebook (specifically Section 9.60) to include this text.

Despite Pine View’s long-standing traditions, this rule is now enforced countywide.

“We want alumni to come back, but we just have to make sure that they follow the process,”

“**[Alumni] want to reconnect with those teachers, they want to walk those halls again, and that is quintessentially Pine View.”**
Alyson Mizanin,
Pine View Alumna

said Melissa Abela, the Middle School Assistant Principal, who is in charge of safety and security.

For visiting teachers, this process is relatively straightforward: print an ID tag and go through OpenGate after classes end. However, if an alum wants to return and speak to the students the process is considerably more complex.

“There’s a process for guest

speaking,” Abela said. “They have to be vetted, and there has to be information sent out to families.”

When Mizanin wanted to speak about college, she experienced this process firsthand.

“I wanted to be able to share the opportunities that I have at Florida State,” Mizanin said. “I went to FSU, and I received a \$42,000 scholarship to be here as part of the Presidential Scholars Program.”

After preparing a lesson plan, worksheets, and an information sheet, as well as completing the necessary paperwork, Mizanin was able to return to campus and deliver two presentations in the College and Career Center.

Unless policy is changed at the county level, going after school or filling out guest speaker paperwork are the only two ways that alumni can return to campus.

“I’ve been here for six and a half years, and one of the first things I learned is how close and how bonded the alumni are at Pine View,” Abela said.

Mizanin expressed similar sentiments.

“[Alumni] want to reconnect with those teachers, they want to walk those halls again, and that is quintessentially Pine View,” she said. “To return, to reconnect, to re-engage.”



‘Your Favorite’ Fragrance *Student starts a fragrance business*

by Terry Shen
Managing Editor

To sophomore Henry Yemofio, opportunity smells enticing—literally. After sniffing out a potential market, he began Your Favorite (YF), his project to create and sell perfumes and colognes.

Driven by the belief that many scents are overpriced, Yemofio decided to create more affordable fragrances which are “more original... and more natural-smelling.”

To start his process, he begins by purchasing fragrance oils such as cedarwood, apple, and lemon. Then, he calculates percentages and self-created formulas to craft his product.

“I draft a recipe in my head, then I’ll try to make it parts per 15 parts, parts per 30... so I can actually get 100 milliliter, 200 milliliter batches,” Yemofio said.

Pipette droppers in hand, he combines the different oils together. After diluting with ethanol to ensure the product does not harm the user’s skin, Yemofio’s next step involves aging the fragrances in a dark, cool envi-

ronment. After a lengthy wait, the matured smells are finally ready to be bottled, labeled, and sold.

Just like with all start-ups, businesses, and ideas, Yemofio’s journey has come with its fair share of obstacles and difficulties. While Yemofio has already found a bottle manufacturer, he is still working through the process of obtaining a sole proprietorship and overcoming the challenges of bottle labeling. Eventually, he plans to begin selling his product through Etsy and social media.

Yemofio’s entrepreneurial spirit extends beyond aromas. As Founder and President of Pine View’s Tutoring Club, he leads a team of peers to tutor and support other students. With roughly 10 tutors—meeting every Thursday during seventh period in middle school science teacher Hali Flahavan’s room—the club mentors others in wide-ranging subjects.

Sophomore Andrew Ashby, who has known Yemofio since third grade and is currently Vice-President of Tutoring Club,



PHOTO BY TERRY SHEN

once joined Yemofio in the process of creating perfumes and colognes.

“It was awesome seeing Henry so into something that he likes,” Ashby said.

Ashby saw much of the fragrance-creating process and helped by moving and mixing ingredients. On his birthday, he was gifted a cologne by Yemofio.

“I’m rooting for him all the way. I hope that this business becomes as successful as it possibly can,” Ashby said.

As Yemofio prepares to move past the pre-revenue stage, generate his first sales, and further explore his entrepreneurial spirit, perhaps he will become “Your Favorite” Pine View entrepreneur.

Pictured are prototype product samples of Henry Yemofio’s fragrances. The product names and labelling are still under development. At the time of photography, product names were Prometheus, Aphrodite, Artemis, and Dionysus. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HENRY YEMOFIO



Most recently, the names have been changed to Amber Hearth, Cupid’s Arrow, Cinnamon Canopy, and Sunset Orchard, respectively. Amber Hearth has a smokey scent, Cupid’s Arrow is sweet, Cinnamon Canopy is a cinnamon and woody mix, and Sunset Orchard is a sweet apple and cinnamon scent.



The Five Year Anniversary of Coronavirus

by Jiayi Zhu
Editor-in-Chief

Five years ago, students and teachers were informed that they would not be returning to school. Thus began online classes, quarantining, social distancing, and the general onslaught of chaos ensued by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic is not a time that many of us look fondly upon, its impacts and remnants still permeate our everyday lives.

For Pine View alumna Ella Hechlik, COVID-19 turned her senior year of high school completely upside down. From missing her journalism class's spring break trip to attending a drive-by graduation, this was only the beginning of a very different way of life.

"Graduation was [at] Van Wezel, but it was all in the parking lot, and graduates had to arrive by themselves and then just park their car, and then our families would drive through and wave to us," Hechlik said. "So, definitely a different kind of odd experience, especially to wrap up high school and then going to college... I didn't go to an in-person class until my second semester of my freshman year. Even then, that was only one class, and it was already 2021, so I would say the real, like, college experience didn't start for a couple years."

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), more than 159 million in-person school days were lost for students in the United States during the 2020-2021 school year. A New York Times Analysis states that "at the state level, more time spent in remote or hybrid instruction in the 2020-21 school year was associated with larger drops in test scores." Education took its hit during the pandemic: students are still recovering from the impacts of interrupted and remote learning.

"There was a lot more grace that was given for deadlines and... suddenly returning to really strict deadlines or not having those extensions in the same way, I definitely saw a lot of students struggle with that," AP Research teacher Elizabeth Loyer said. "I think a lot of it is just, habits are almost easier to break than they are to form. My middle school students, I think, struggled a little bit more [than high school students] to try and come back, and they missed some critical in-class years to try and understand that the expectations were different than elementary school, things like that."

es, the inability to see many people in person contributed to a social and mental impact as well. Both Hechlik and Loyer note that having a period of time to oneself was beneficial in a way, and allowed newfound time for completing tasks and starting hobbies that couldn't be fit in before.

"[COVID] kind

of forced everybody to spend more time with themselves, which was kind of a good thing," Hechlik said. "But it made you realize that you have to be

masked heads and buzzing in the media, cases of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse increased. In addition, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, "people are more likely to develop mental illnesses or disorders in the

remotely proved to be a beneficial habit that has even carried forward to present.

"It was really the first time as an adult that I had an extended period of time to myself... I also actually ended up reconnecting with a lot of former

in contact and feel like we were still seeing people... So that's been really nice," Loyer said.

While the real world was shut down, digital platforms thrived. The prevalence today of online platforms like Zoom serves as a testament to their rising popularity during the pandemic. Additionally, many educational resources and platforms have remained digital and continue to move in such a direction.

"There definitely was an upside in general of people being more accepting of online work, like working from home, or flexible schedules and things like that," Hechlik said. "And I know that a lot of companies moved online and then stayed online, and it just works better for them."

COVID-19 changed the way we'll view and handle future pandemics. There has been discussion of how to better handle a future pandemic regarding politicization of public health, health inequities, and pandemic preparedness.

"As a result," Loyer said, "any future pandemics that might occur, like when you look at things like bird flu, or anything else that might come our way, people aren't approaching that fresh without any history, so it's going to change the way they perceive it, concerns, fears,"

For Loyer, she still uses the same amount of day-to-day caution as she did at the start of the pandemic. She notes that she still wears a mask because of her parents' vulnerability and knowing the consequences long COVID has had on her friends and neighbors, including heart attacks, strokes, disabilities, and mobility loss.

"Especially as a research teacher, I tend to follow a lot of ongoing research..." Loyer said, "everything I've read has said that it matters not only how much of the virus you're exposed to, but how many times, like each time you get exposed increases your risk of long COVID and increases your risk of things like developing other kinds of conditions and I would like to postpone that as long as possible."

For others, they were happy for life to return to "normal" as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the pandemic is something that has affected all of us one way or the other.

"I think there's a lot of signs that we've all really been through an event that is going to have left a mark in some way, and so there is no such thing as going back to the old normal. We can only ever have a new normal," Loyer said.



December 2019

Dr. Li Wenliang was a whistleblower doctor who warned about COVID-19 before it became a global crisis.

March 2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and Dr. Fauci emerges as the leading public health voice in America.

April 2020

The COVID-19 death toll surpassed 100,000 and the burden on medical workers increases.

May 2020

Essential workers were some of the individuals who kept society running during lockdown

January 2022

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on vaccine mandates, and protests over public health measures are ongoing

March 2022

Many companies like Twitter, Meta, and Airbnb go permanently remote.

Early 2023

Studies begin to show teen depression and anxiety hit record highs.

Mid 2023

Labor shortages lead to the rapid adoption of AI and robots in workplaces. Tech jobs boom, while service and retail workers struggle.

Late 2023

As restrictions lift, people rush to travel, and make up for lost time, which led to the birth of the term "revenge traveling"

2023

WHO declares the pandemic over, but Covid's effects on technology, travel and lifestyle influence society till present day.

comfortable with yourself before you can do all the amazing things that you want to do. So, I think it was positive in that aspect, but at the same time, those years of, like, end of high school, beginning of college, are very social, so it was difficult to find ways to still have that without being able to gather in person."

With the stress of health and safety looming over

months following COVID-19 infection." As a result, many people had to find ways to cope with the pandemic's overwhelming isolation. For Loyer, staying in touch with friends

friends who moved because everyone was getting new ways to communicate remotely, several different social circles moved online more, and I still have certain scheduled social calls, like my roommate from college and I now call on Mondays, which is something we started in 2020 just to stay

High Schoolers Take on the STEM Fair

by Lindsay Luberecki
Assistant Editor-in-Chief

An AI model to detect exoplanets. New insight into a brain-aneurysm-causing genetic mutation. Electrical properties of a strong-as-steel carbon-based material. These are just some of the STEM Fair projects Pine View high schoolers carried out this year.

Pine View's STEM Fair is open to elementary, middle, and high schoolers. This year, five high school students qualified for Round 2 of Counties and competed at Robarts Arena Feb. 11 for an opportunity to attend the State STEM Fair (SSEF) in March.

"[E]veryone who makes it to the second round has to make a display and then they will be judged face to face," said Hali Flahavan, middle school science teacher and STEM Fair coordinator for middle and high school.

Freshman Yatharth Kakkad:
Kakkad's project centered around a genetic mutation that plays a role in vascular stability (the strength and integrity of blood vessels) and intracranial aneurysm susceptibility. This mutation in the protein sequence of a type of collagen results in instability of blood vessels.

"We saw that this mutation causes vascular instability and that it affects the hemorrhaging incidents," Kakkad said. "An intracranial aneurysm is a bulge in a weakened part of a cerebral blood vessel."

A bulge can lead to a rup-

ture, which can cause internal bleeding, brain damage, and even death. Kakkad worked with researchers at the University of South Florida. To dive into the mutation and its effects, they used embryonic zebrafish.

His project involved a different system to express the gene than had been used in zebrafish aneurysm research in the past, which made changes to the project, like altering gene expression in the fish, easier. He expressed the normal protein and the mutated protein and compared their incidents of hemorrhage.

"We saw that there was over a two-fold [increase] of hemorrhage between the mutant and the normal control zebrafish," Kakkad said. "The implications are pretty massive... for healthcare professionals, [to encourage] screening for this mutation in people who have risk factors."

He and the team also investigated pericytes, cells that wrap around vessels. They hypothesized that the pericyte count would be increased in the mutant group.

"There was no significant difference," he said. "I'm really interested in the results for that because it contradicts the previous research... [it] could be helpful for developing target treatment."

Sophomore Aadi Bhensdadia:
Bhensdadia also worked on a project in the biomedical sphere. He developed a "heart-on-a-chip."

"I created a... platform to test the cardiotoxicity of medications," he said. "You take heart cells [cardiomyocytes] and grow them in a 3-D cell culture..."

Organs-on-a-chip are a novel pharmaceutical-testing technique, and due to their relative cost, safety, ethics, and accuracy, are promising for the future.

"When you're using [2-D petri dishes] there's a lot of inaccuracies associated with it [and] animal models are expensive," Bhensdadia said. "One big thing will be lowering the price of medicines and allowing them to be developed faster."

In addition to accurately responding to medications,

Bhensdadia's heart-on-a-chip provided further data, something that other models don't always do.

"My chip was able to quantify the contraction of the heart muscle cells and how a drug will affect the actual contraction of the heart," he said.

Freshman Felix Ratner:
Others took more of a physics approach to their projects. For his experiment, Ratner worked with a carbon-based material called graphene.

"I was studying electrical properties of the material graphene in pelletized form... [it's] effectively super fine single layers of carbon atoms," he said. "I was testing that material's electrical properties when it was mixed with a polymer."

Ratner had been inspired to work with this material since fourth grade when he read an article about it. He described graphene as "very interesting and very practical...[it has] high tensile strength, electrical properties, and semi-conductive properties."

He found that while too much polymer renders the material nonconductive, a specific ratio has promising results.

"That ratio effectively gave the results of a little bit of graphene can make a large difference," Ratner said.

He said that he is interested in continuing to experiment with graphene and in possibly engineering a product. It could potentially be used as a semiconductor in computer chips or in construction, he said.

Sophomore Jakob Roche:
Roche focused on astrophysics. His project centered around exoplanets and artificial intelligence.

"I developed a One-Class

SVM [Support Vector Machine] model to look for exoplanets... the star emits a certain amount of light. If something passes in front, there are dips in the light curve over time," he said.

Roche said that the model he developed was comparatively faster in detecting time than other AI exoplanet-detecting models, and that it proposes a potential future step toward better detection.

Junior Rohan Dash:
Finally, Dash also worked with artificial intelligence.

"Last year I did a project where I compared two AI networks in identifying citrus diseases," he said. "This year I expanded it by taking the AI network that performed better and installing it to a camera

said. A big challenge was working with the drone and engineering it to properly support the weight of the camera. However, his favorite moment was when the camera became successful.

"When the model started working... demonstrating it was a success and seeing [that the camera] would identify an orange was the biggest happiness part of it," he said.

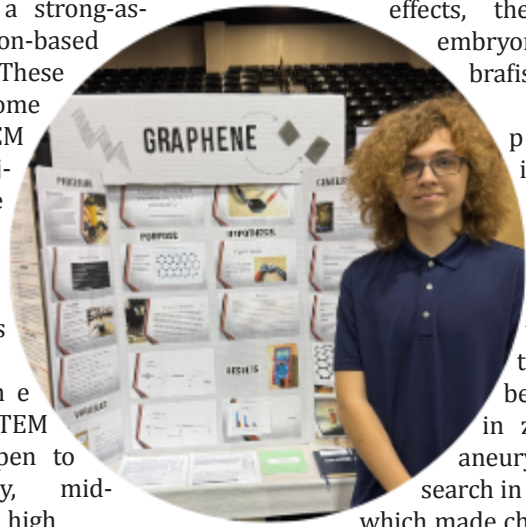
The Future:
At Round 2 of Counties, Bhensdadia, Roche, and Dash placed first in their categories and qualified for States. Kakkad placed second in his, and also qualified.

All five of these students and Flahavan agree that the STEM Fair is an incredibly beneficial and worthwhile experience.

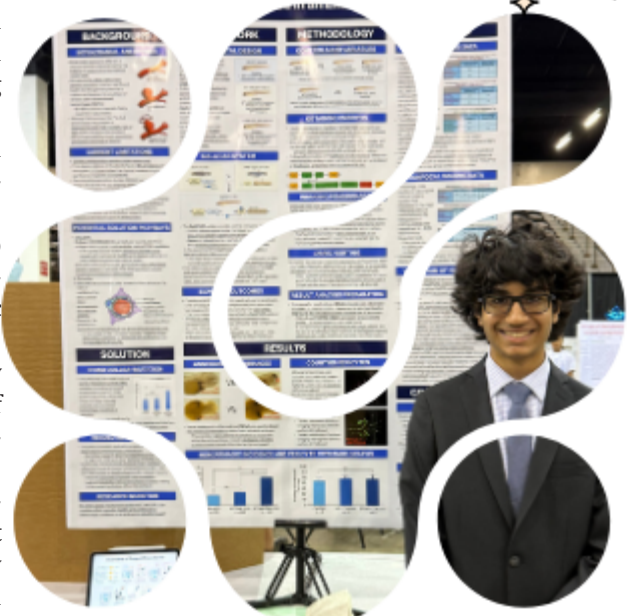
Flahavan provided some advice for future researchers.

"Start small. Figure out what it is you're interested in," she said. "For the ones who want to work hard, it's worth it."

GRAPHICS BY ALEX LIEBERMAN



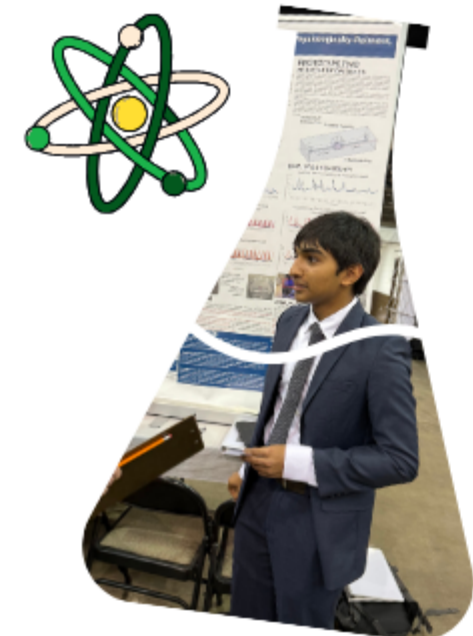
Freshman Felix Ratner poses with his poster at Robarts Arena. PHOTO COURTESY OF HALI FLAHAVAN



Freshman Yatharth Kakkad poses with his poster at Robarts Arena. PHOTO COURTESY OF HALI FLAHAVAN

and mounting the camera on a drone.

"[It's] practical and applicable to the community," Dash



Sophomore Aadi Bhensdadia is interviewed by judges at Robarts Arena. PHOTO COURTESY OF HALI FLAHAVAN

AI's Use of Resources

GRAPHIC BY MADELYN BAILEY

- Due to the immense amounts of energy AI consumes, water is needed to cool its data centers
- AI could be responsible for **4.2 – 6.6 billion cubic meters of water withdrawal** globally in 2027, equivalent to over half of the UK's total annual water consumption

Source: arXiv Archive of Cornell University

- With the rise of generative AI and cryptocurrency, the amount of energy used by data centers worldwide is expected to double by 2026
- It is believed that they will consume **over 1,000 terawatt-hours** — about the current electrical consumption of Japan

Source: International Energy Agency

- ChatGPT produces over **260,930 kg of CO2 each month**
- This is equivalent of 260 flights from New York City to London
- The website has over 164 million monthly users and produces 159 grams per page view

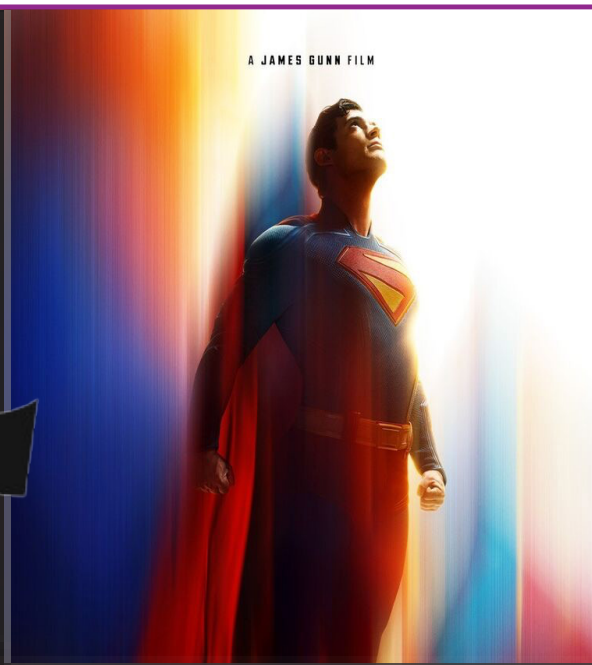
Source: KnownHost

- A 2024 OpenAI (creator of ChatGPT) study introduced plans to create new data centers in America
- They are expected to cost \$100 billion each and consume **five gigawatts of electricity** — about the energy produced by five nuclear reactors

Source: The New York Times



M O V I E S



by Anna Zhang
Match Layout Artist

As 2024 comes to an end and 2025 begins, Torch brings you movies coming out this year. Full of action, suspense, drama, horror, and more, these flicks will not disappoint.

Lilo and Stitch
Coming out May 23, 2025

If you enjoyed watching “Lilo and Stitch” throughout your childhood, this new movie is for you! “Lilo & Stitch” is an upcoming American science fiction comedy film. Produced by Walt Disney Pictures and Rideback, the film will be a live-action remake of the 2002 animated Disney classic.

The famous Stitch, will be computer-generated in this movie and Lilo is represented by rising child actor, Maia Kealoha, who also starred as a voice actor in the recent “Moana 2”.

Snow White
Coming out March 21, 2025

An old classic, “Snow White”, is a new live-action musical fantasy adaptation of the 1937 Disney animated film “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.”

There has been many previous adaptations in the past, however, this new show will break racial barriers and bring a unique twist to the original Snow White.

Superman
Coming out July 11, 2025

This upcoming installment of Superman will follow the superhero as he reconciles his heritage with his human upbringing. He is the embodiment of truth, justice and the human way in a world that views this as old-fashioned.

If you are a fan of superhero movies this is the show for you!

Avatar: Fire and Ash
Coming out December 19, 2025

An upcoming American epic science fiction film, it is a sequel to the Avatar series. Co-edited, co-written, and directed by James Cameron.

The first two movies in the franchise are both in the top ten highest grossing movies globally, so fans of Avatar should not miss out on the addition to this series!

Zootopia 2
Coming out November 26, 2025

“Zootopia 2” is an upcoming American animated comedy film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios. It is the second feature film in the Zootopia franchise, and follows Detective Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde as they find themselves with new mysteries to uncover.

If you were a fan of the first movie in the franchise, this animation could be for you!

Jurassic World Rebirth
Coming out July 2, 2025

“Jurassic World Rebirth” is an upcoming American science fiction action film directed by Gareth Edwards, who was the producer of the famous “Godzilla” (2014). A standalone to “Jurassic World Dominion” (2022), it is the fourth installment in the Jurassic World series and the seventh installment overall in the Jurassic Park film series.

Fans of the past Jurassic World franchise should look forward to this new installment.



Friday, March 7, 2025

Torch Tries: Pass the Painting



With snacks and paintbrushes in hand, Torch members took turns working on a collaborative painting Feb. 9. Each person had five minutes to paint each round.

PHOTOS BY LINDSAY LUBERECKI

by **Lindsay Luberecki**
Assistant Editor-in-Chief

Introduction:

“Pass the Painting.” It’s a popular online trend and bonding experience where a group passes around a single canvas. Each person has a certain amount of time to add to the painting before it’s given to the next person.

A group of Torch staffers met Feb. 9 at my (Lindsay Luberecki’s) house to participate in this activity ourselves. We came prepared with minimal to no painting experience, appetites for the Publix cookies and pink lemonade set out to accompany our artwork, and open minds for whatever masterpiece we were about to create. Participants were freshman Jenna Hinck, sophomore Andrew Ashby, juniors Ava Lenerz and Robyn Schoenberg, and senior Jiayi Zhu.

Pre-Painting:

While we were waiting for all the painters to arrive, we began a conversation about childhood movies, namely, “The Smurfs” and “Alvin and the Chipmunks”.

Trust me, this will be important later.

Each of the artists spoke about their expectations before we began the speed-painting experience.

“I think we’re going to do great,” Schoenberg said.

Ashby echoed a similar sentiment, saying that “we’re going to make a masterpiece.”

Others were less confident.

“I’m not very talented, so I would like to say I’m sorry,” Lenerz said. With that vote of confidence, it was time for the painting to begin!

The Process:

Zhu began the painting, with five minutes on the clock to add whatever she was inspired to.

“I’m scared. I don’t know what to do,” she said.

She ended up painting clouds and grass to turn the blank canvas to a nature scene.

Schoenberg followed, adding an ornate trellis with flowers.

Ashby received the canvas next, and he added the outline of Kirby, the beloved

video game character. Then, something surprising about Ashby came to light.

“What am I doing?” he said. Zhu asked, “Is this your first time painting?”

Ashby responded, “Yes... I didn’t realize it was hard to paint. Massive respect to painters.”

Then, the canvas ended up in Lenerz’ hands. There was tension in the air as the crowd waited to see what the person who asked five minutes earlier, “do we have to do something that matches the vibe?” would paint.

“Is it a Smurf?” Zhu asked hesitantly, while Schoenberg deeply sighed. Not only was it a Smurf, but it was a Smurf that took up at least a quarter of the canvas, including one of Zhu’s previous additions.

“Can I turn the cloud into him?” Lenerz asked. “I know you’re all wondering why I’m not in art.”

The last person to receive the painting was Hinck. Struggling to follow the masterpiece that was Lenerz’ addition, she stared at the can-

vas for a while.

“How do I approach this after what just happened?” Hinck said.

We made the decision to do a second round of passing the painting in order to fill in the rest of the space on our canvas, although that space was considerably smaller after Lenerz’ smurf. So, it was back to Zhu, who began doing some “worldbuilding,” in her own words.

“I’m making the chipmunks from Alvin and the Chipmunks getting married by a Smurf,” she announced, placing the wedding underneath the trellis Schoenberg had added previously.

Schoenberg and Ashby both worked on the small details for their five minutes, whether it was adding more flowers or finishing up Kirby. Lenerz largely did the same, beginning by adding the tail to her Smurf that she had previously forgotten.

Lastly, Hinck touched up the background, filling in gaps with hearts and stars. And, the painting was complete.

Concluding Thoughts:

All five painters agreed that the artwork was certainly chaotic and fun.

“I really like it,” Schoenberg said. “I think it’s surrealist... full of lots of love and joy, we put a lot into it.”

Schoenberg and Hinck both pointed out the chipmunk wedding as one of their favorite parts, with Hinck referring to it as a “statement piece.” Zhu struggled to explain exactly where her inspiration came from.

“My contribution? I don’t know what was going on, but I did what my heart told me to do,” she said. “All that Smurf talk and all that chipmunk talk really got into my head.”

Lenerz was a painter of few words when it came to her concluding thoughts: “I have no explanation. I just like Smurfs.”

All in all, Torch Tries Pass the Painting was definitely a success, and has created an artwork that will be hung in the Torch room for the rest of time.

“I was right. It is a masterpiece,” Ashby said.

Rise of RedNote

by **Jenna Hinck**
Match Layout Artist

With TikTok being one of the most popular apps for many years now, the sudden ban set for January 18, 2025, surprised many of its users. For multiple years, TikTok has been threatened with being banned, yet none of the bills have actually gone as far as this one.

Almost every teen has TikTok, and the temporary ban of the app begs the question: what app will be its replacement if the ban were to become permanent in the future? The answer seems to be RedNote, a Chinese social media app that shares many characteristics with TikTok.

TikTok was about to be banned due to safety and

security concerning China’s collection of Americans’ information. But ironically, RedNote could be more vulnerable to potentially dangerous data collection because it is run and regulated directly by the Chinese government.

The RedNote app is described as a combination of many popular US apps. In an article by Louisville Public Media, an interview with journalist Rachel Treisman dives into the story behind RedNote.

“It’s considered China’s answer to Instagram, with a layout similar to Pinterest. Users can post short videos, engage in live chats, call each other and even purchase products within the app,”

Treisman said.

If you are a TikTok user, you would know that many of RedNotes features such as short videos, live chats and purchasing products within the app are all attributes available on TikTok. RedNote isn’t very new to Chinese citizens since it was founded in 2013 and has been popular ever since.

TikTok has a creator platform of 1.5 billion users. Shortly after TikTok was banned, the RedNote user platform increased by 3 million users. These increased downloads

were likely out of fear TikTok would go dark or become unavailable permanently.

Maggie Higgins, Pine View seventh grade world



language teacher, has experience with both Rednote and TikTok.

“I heard about Rednote while I was still using TikTok, a bunch of the creators I followed on TikTok were talking about how that was the new platform to switch over to so I downloaded it for ‘just in case,’” Higgins said.

Now, you have a better background on the TikTok ban and why it was going to take place along with the Rednote app that is growing in popularity!

GRAPHIC BY ATHENA ERBE

Impact of Asian Entertainment

by Andrew Ashby
Webmaster

World language teacher and Pine View graduate Maggie Higgins has always been drawn to vibrant storytelling, but it

wasn't until high school that she fully immersed herself in Asian media. What started as a casual introduction to K-pop through a friend quickly turned into an obsession. The music's catchy melodies and intricate choreography captivated her, and soon, it was all she listened to.

Her love for Asian



entertainment didn't stop at music. A Taiwanese drama loaned by her Chinese teacher in high school opened the door to the world of soap operas. She found herself hooked, first watching for fun and then realizing that the exposure was improving her language skills.

As Korean dramas became more accessible, she naturally transitioned to them, fascinated by their high production quality and engaging narratives. Over time, she even picked up elements of the Korean language just from watching.

Taekwondo played another role in her growing interest. Her instructor, a native Korean, encouraged her enthusiasm for the culture. Conversations about Korean music and television became opportunities to practice speaking, strengthening her connection to the language and its people.

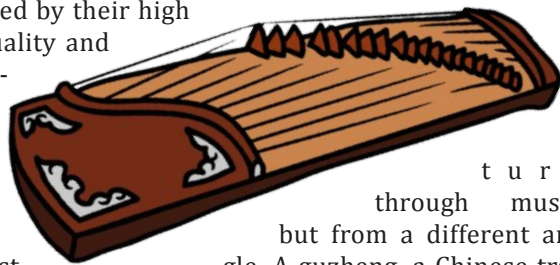
One of her most memorable experiences was traveling to Chicago to see BTS in concert. The trip was short — flying in on a Saturday and returning Sunday — but it was worth it.

"In 2019, I flew to Chica-

go to watch them perform. My students made so much fun of me, but I didn't care," she recalled.

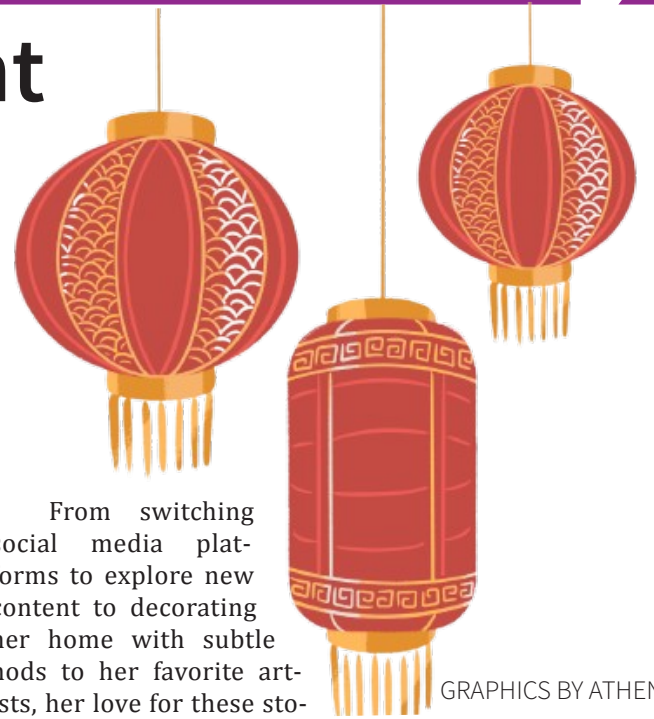
Years later, she discovered that one of her closest friends had been at the same concert, an unexpected twist that underscores the power of shared passions.

Nathan DeSouza also found his way into Asian cul-



ture through music but from a different angle. A guzheng, a Chinese traditional stringed instrument, gifted to him in middle school sparked a deep appreciation for traditional Asian instruments. His journey led him to explore a variety of musical styles and traditions, making his passion for Asian media unique from Higgins', but just as profound.

Their shared enthusiasm extends beyond music and television. Eager to learn about different cultures through literature and film, Higgins also found herself drawn to Indian and Middle Eastern stories. Whether reading about daily life in India or watching historical dramas, she appreciated the depth and richness of global storytelling.



From switching social media platforms to explore new content to decorating her home with subtle nods to her favorite artists, her love for these stories and sounds has been woven into her daily life.

For Higgins and DeSouza, Asian entertainment is more

than just a passing interest — it is a lifelong connection to a world that has shaped them in ways they never expected.

GRAPHICS BY ATHENA ERBE



Tale of the Butterfly Lovers

AN OPERA BY JUNIOR EVAN LIAN

by Elena Herman
Features Editor

It's not hard to build a list of star-crossed lovers: Romeo and Juliet, Katniss and Peeta, Daisy and Gatsby, etcetera. But have you ever heard of Zhu Yingtai and Liang Shanbo?

The brilliant Evan Lian has. Lian has been crafting a musical about Shanbo and Yingtai — otherwise known as "The Butterfly Lovers" — since August 2023.

The story of the lovers is a cultural explosion, having been named one of China's "Four Great Folktales" and represented in thousands of written, musical, and oral renditions.

"It's more of me paying homage to this beautiful thing," Lian said.

"The Butterfly Lovers" originated in the Tang Dynasty during the eighth century AD. It follows dutiful daughter Yingtai, who convinces her father to let her attend school

disguised as a boy. There she meets Shanbo, who becomes her sworn brother and study partner.

They fall in love, secrets and obstacles reveal themselves, and the pair ultimately metamorphize into two butterflies, forever united.

Lian lived in China until he was seven, where he discovered "The Butterfly Lovers"

through its famous concerto counterpart. The tune blends western harmonies with Chinese technique and inspired Lian's compositions.

"This thing has been in my childhood so long. This is what accompanied me my entire life. 'Butterfly Lovers' is this theme that evokes so much emotion, and it is just so beautiful. It's ineffably beautiful," Lian said.

Known in the Sarasota community for his theatrical aptitude — with recent roles including Ben in "Descendants: The Musical" and Chiron in "The Lightning Thief" — Lian is unveiling himself as a prolific writer. He is a cherished member of Pine View Poets' Society, and in seventh grade, he turned one English assignment into a novella.

"I mean, Evan's just a creative genius, doesn't know when to stop writing. He put together

a well-formatted script before even starting on most of the music," said Devin Gulliver, Lian's good friend and "The Butterfly Lovers" orchestrator.

Adding to his identity as an artist is Lian's Chinese heritage. While at Brookside Middle, Lian noticed a prevailing ignorance about Chinese culture and began giving free lectures on the topic. Now, Lian uses his craft as an extension of these lectures, hoping to enlighten the community on Chinese music and lore.

"This is my heritage calling to me. That is the reason why I want to write this musical... because what you have about Chinese culture is so little," Lian said. Lian hopes to incorporate as many Chinese influences as possible into his made-for-Americans retelling through costuming, props, and instrumentation. Helping with that task is Gulliver, who, as an orchestrator, adds more instrument parts and depth to Lian's compositions. Once Pine View's pro-

fessionally-featured arranger, Gulliver now attends Carleton College in Minnesota and adds to Lian's vision from afar. He seeks inspiration in classical and surprising places.

"I started listening to the soundtrack of Genshin impact. As crazy as that is, it actually has some banger tunes and it has a mix of Chinese folk instruments and normal symphony orchestra instruments," Gulliver said.

Lian plans to finish editing "The Butterfly Lovers" and begin recording the tracks soon. Eventually, he would like to put on the production at Pine View as the yearly musical, if administration allows.

Regardless of completion, Lian's heart, hard work, and intellect have added a glowing new wing to "The Butterfly Lovers" mythos.

GRAPHICS BY ATHENA ERBE



Gingers Try Protein Shakes

All protein shakes are vanilla-flavored for a fair ranking*



Madelyn's
Recommendation

Jocko Molk

30g protein, 180 Calories

"This [Jocko Molk]

is on top."

— Madelyn Bailey



Timothy's
Recommendation

Core Power

42g protein, 230 Calories

"I like this one. It's

really good for hitting

a protein goal."

— Timothy Nesanelis



"It's not bad... it's
really thick while
the other two
were like milk"

— Timothy Nesanelis

Rockin' Protein Builder

30g protein, 190 Calories



GRAPHIC BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS AND MADELYN BAILEY

Stuck in a Sport

[a column]

by Allie Chung
News Co-Editor

For many young athletes, the path to success seems clear: the earlier they start a sport, the higher their chances of excelling. Yet, the idea that specializing in a single sport at an early age maximizes an athlete's potential is misleading and harmful.

The Long Term Athletic Development (LTAD) model, formulated by the American Academy of Pediatrics and adopted by the US Olympic Committee, recommends that athletes aged 6-10 should not participate in competitive sports, with competition becoming a major focus only after the age of 13. This has been statistically proven to be the most effective approach for youth athletes.

Despite that, many parents still follow their own guidelines, pushing their children into early specialization with the goal of progress rather than enjoyment. Investing significant time and money into an athlete's success from a young age creates a level of expectation that they will continue the sport, and it becomes seen as a waste of resources if they quit.

Junior Sofia Yu's journey with Sarasota Crew was built on the foundation of personal fulfillment, motivated by her brother and her desire to broaden her experiences beyond her former primary focus on theater. When asked whether she would have changed any of her athletic decisions, Yu expressed gratitude for the autonomy she had in making her decision.

"I feel like the way I have grown as an athlete was the right way. I wouldn't have changed anything because it helped me become the person I am today," Yu said. "Being a rower not only influenced my physical condition, but it also influenced the kind of person I am and how others perceive me,"

Her contentment stems from her ability to choose her own path, and her self motivation has carried her throughout the years. However, many athletes

do not share the same satisfaction. As they invest more time and effort, the stakes of failure rise, and over time, this pressure can become overwhelming.

Junior Thomas McLaughlin, who had a healthy transition from recreational to competitive swimming, hypothesized what could have occurred had his parents rushed the process.

"I think it would have been worse if I had external pressure because swimming is a lot to manage alongside school," McLaughlin said. "If there was too much of a focus on swimming for me, like where it got to the point of if you didn't get a college offer you would be screwed in academics, that's not where I want to go with it [swimming]."

Later in an athlete's career, when academic responsibilities increase, it may be beneficial for them to prioritize their studies over practice time. Yet the long-standing dedication spent on a sport makes change hard to achieve and can sometimes act as a barrier to success.

Additionally, early specialization makes switching between different sports much more challenging. As children start playing sports at younger ages, the window for trying something new or switching sports becomes narrower. The pressure to develop a specific skill set early on leaves less room for experimentation and growth in other areas, making it harder to start fresh in a different sport.

To combat this pressure, it's important to set clear priorities and draw boundaries. If academics take precedence, the sport can still be part of your life, but it might become less visible. If you're considering starting a different sport, take time to evaluate how much it truly means to you and weigh the risk.

Though it's easier said than done, the key is prioritizing your own happiness. No matter what external pressures you face — whether it's a scholarship or recruitment — focus on the goals that matter most to you, not the goals you have been told to pursue.



PHOTO BY ALLIE CHUNG



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ALLIE CHUNG

Cheering for the Cheerleader

by Sivan Levy
Web Editor-in-Chief

Whether to get through tough times or watch on the sidelines of a sports game, everybody needs a cheerleader in their life. Lucky for us, Pine View has one.

Junior Becky Sipes has been cheering competitively as a member of the Brandon All-Stars team for the past four years and has since joined the team at Venice High school, quickly progressing to the varsity squad. Before beginning her cheerleading journey, Sipes had spent ten years as a competitive gymnast. While she loved the creative outlet and the companionship that gymnastics provided her with, she had wanted to try something new and expand her skill set.

In the years since the start of her cheerleading journey, the community she's found and the bonds she's formed with her teammates has proven to be one of her most valuable takeaways from the sport. While she plans to stop cheerleading after college, the lessons she's learned from being a member of the team are some she'll be able to carry with her throughout her life.

"It has taught me a lot about teamwork and collaboration," Sipes said. "It makes you realize how much things depend on each individual in a group, and how you can't just rely on one or a couple of people to do the whole thing."

Sipes' hard work, unwillingness to give up, and high skill level have not gone unnoticed by her peers, teammates, and mentors.

"Becky has brought immense talent to the program as she also actively competes at the All-Star level,"



Sipes' varsity cheer coach, Daniele Therrien, said via an email interview. "Becky has always been a quiet leader that steps up and shows the younger girls how to be hardworking members of the team."

While Sipes is known for helping others and putting members of her team before herself, cheerleading has also given her the opportunity for immense personal evolution.

"Becky has become ever more outgoing since joining the team," Therrien said. "Talent-wise, she improved every day with her role in All-Star cheer, but sideline cheer is more than just talent. It is being somebody the community looks to as a role model. Over the past three years, Becky has very naturally stepped into this role and embraced the leadership roles given."

To some, cheerleading is considered just another sport. To Sipes, cheerleading has given friendships that will last a lifetime, a place to full express herself, and lessons she'll never forget. Now that is something to cheer about!



Directly above: Sipes poses for a photo in her cheerleading uniform. PHOTO PROVIDED BY BECKY SIPES

Upper right corner: Sipes performs a gymnastics routine. PHOTO PROVIDED BY BECKY SIPES

New Hurdles for Trans Athletes

by Alex Lieberman
Sci-Tech Editor

January 20, newly inaugurated President Donald Trump signed an executive order titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government." February 5, he signed another order called "Keeping Men out of Women's Sports." These orders come after multiple discussions concerning transgender female athletes in the 2024 Olympic Games.

"The very first anti-LGBTQ law that was made in effect in Florida was in 2021... That [act] relies on biological sex at birth to determine whether a student can participate in sex-segregated sports," said Jules Rayne, a community organizer at Equality Florida, an organization that promotes LGBTQ rights. Dubbed the "Fairness in Women's Sports Act" and formally known as SB1028, the law aims to preserve "fair opportunities for female athletes to demonstrate their strength, skills, and abilities in athletic competition," according to a press release on the FLGov.com website.

Rayne, however, believes these actions are not necessary.

"Last year, the IOC, the International Olympic Committee, released a study which showed that transgender women do not have a biological advantage over cisgender [not transgender] women. In fact, they [transgender women] are at a biological disadvantage," she said.

According to the report, while transgender women have stronger handgrip, they tend to have "lower

relative jump height" and "lower relative $\dot{V}O_2$ max" than cisgender women. $\dot{V}O_2$ max is the maximum amount of oxygen that can be used during intense exercise, and it varies from person to person. Additionally, the study claimed that transgender women receiving gender affirming care in the form of testosterone suppression and estrogen supplementation had lower testosterone levels than cisgender female athletes.

The article, "Strength, power, and aerobic capacity of transgender athletes: a cross-sectional study," was published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine and concluded that "...these results should caution against precautionary bans and sport eligibility exclusions that are not based on sport-specific (or sport-relevant) research."

However, the lengthy titled report "The International Olympic Committee framework on fairness, inclusion and nondiscrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations does not protect fairness for female athletes," published in PubMed, made a contradictory claim, as evidenced by its title.

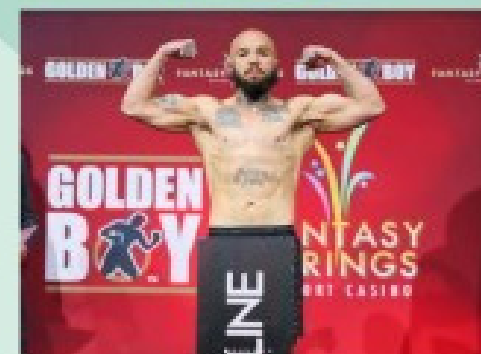
Junior Gabrielle McFarlane, a basketball player of five years who is currently on the North Port High School team, proposed a way to avoid complications related to transgender athletes.

"I think that it would be most fair for everyone if they had... a separate league for them [transgender women]... and I feel like everyone could, you know, thrive that way," she said.

Riley Gaines, an activist campaigning against trans women participating in women's sports, supported the executive order and was praised by the President before he signed it. After racing and losing to transgender swimmer Lia Thomas, Gaines became involved in the issue. February 6, the day after the signing of the executive order, she reflected on her loss to Thomas and said it left her feeling "cheated, betrayed, and violated" through a post on X.

In the meantime, Trump's executive order declared that the United States will be rescinding "all funds from educational programs that deprive women and girls of fair athletic opportunities" by allowing transgender women to compete. Refusal to comply with the order (i.e. letting a transgender girl compete in girls' sports) is deemed as a violation of Title IX.

"Sports is just a place where everyone needs to have fun and, you know, compete, and it builds a lot of life skills," McFarlane said. "I feel like we should just have fun."



Top: Transgender athlete Lia Thomas won the 2022 NCAA swimming championship. PHOTO FROM @UNDAUNTEDLIFE INSTAGRAM

Second down: Transgender athlete Mianne Bagger plays golf. PHOTO FROM @OURDADNOW ON INSTAGRAM

Third down: Transgender athlete Valentina Petrillo won two bronze medals in sprints for the visually impaired in the World Championship. PHOTO FROM @IACOPEMELIO ON INSTAGRAM

Fourth down: Transgender athlete Patricio Manuel won the Golden Boy June 2023. PHOTO FROM @THEPATMANUEL INSTAGRAM

FREE FITNESS IN SARASOTA

BEST PARKS

URFER PARK

Urfer Park, located in Central Sarasota, is a nature preserve with free workout equipment scattered around the trails.

POTTER PARK

Potter Park is nestled between South Sarasota's YMCA and the Selby Aquatic Center. There are also sport courts and beautiful trails to explore.

LEGACY TRAIL

The legacy trail has multiple parks and courts located at their trailheads. The trail runs from the Venice train depot to Payne Park.



FREE CLASSES AT BAY PARK

Some popular choices include Nokomis, Siesta, and Englewood beach.

Visit your local beach's website or look up "yoga

on _____ beach" to find out about the classes offered near you.

BEACH YOGA GRAPHIC BY ELENA HERMAN

Divas in STEM

by Jiayi Zhu

Editor-In-Chief
Divas in STEM is a worldwide television sensation in which STEM students compete in a series of pageants for one of Dr. Skipper's penguin stickers, which is even more coveted than the mole dollar.

Although the show is open to all interested applicants, for some reason, most of its contestants are concentrated near 1 Python Path. This is why the competition will take place in Pine View's very own auditorium.

On this season of Divas in STEM, we are joined by Contestant #6.02*10²³, Contestants #i², and Contestant #3.14.

We are also joined by an honorable judge who understands that "the limit of diva is infinity." Who knows STEM and style better than calculus teacher and Divas in STEM judge Jacquelyn Cetola? (Good respecting contestants would do their due diligence in research and know that a dashing bird-inspired look is the secret to winning her over).

Here is what we've

learned from intensive preliminary interviews with this season's contestants:

Contestant #6.02*10²³:

"I broke into the science building to borrow the cutest lab coats. Tonight I'm wearing Dr. Skipper's tie-dye lab coat. First impressions are everything — if you're wondering why my hands are sweaty and have the slightest smell of E. coli, it's because I just took my lab gloves off, not because I'm nervous, just so you know."

Contestants #i²:

"We are child prodigies. Our mommy is PTO

President and packs our lunch with organic food every day. She says I can be negative sometimes, though," one of them said.

"No, I'm the negative one! Maybe we both are. If we were separated, who knows what would happen to us? We're practically attached at the hip," the other chimed in.

Contestant #3.14:

"I feel like a pretty well-rounded contestant. I know my stuff, and I've got my curves. Snappy and sassy."

Our sources reveal that contestant #6.02*10²³ was seen chugging juice be-

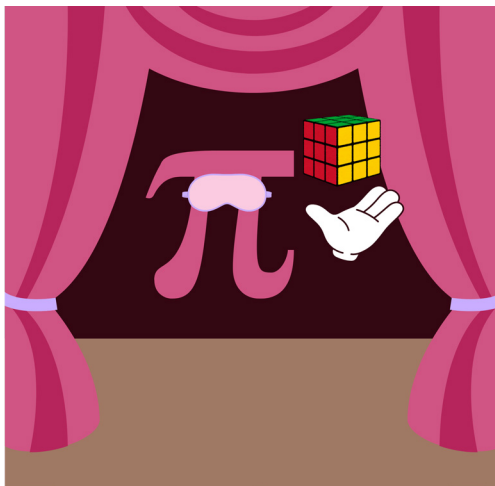
fore going on stage. The exact contents are unknown, but a quick chemical analysis would reveal it to contain ingredients similar to those in the caffeinated drinks Dr. Covert chugs before speaking at graduation.

The Pageant (AP Diva Exam):

Contestant 6.02*10²³ scuttled to the spotlight, looking like he was ready to start making Khan Academy videos. Turns out only Dr. Skipper can pull off the tie-dye lab coat. He then proceeded to perform stand-up rizz to a random audience member.

"I've got my ion you. I think we've got chemistry," he said before tripping off the stage.

Contestant #3.14 then waltzed onto stage and solved a Rubik's cube blindfolded. Who would've thought Con-



GRAPHIC BY MADELYN BAILEY

testant #3.14 would know so much about cubes? She must be well-rounded after all. Cetola was impressed, but at the same time, every other second grader could probably do the same thing.

What happened next, though, was unprecedented. As Contestants i² flocked on stage, they launched themselves into the air and flew around with handmade rocket launchers.

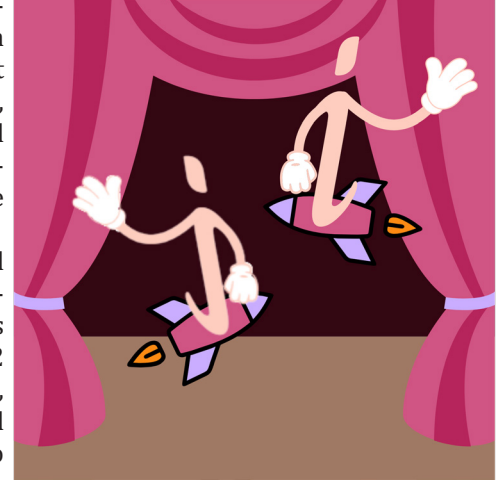
Cetola was clearly pleased, since her reversible octopus plush was flipped to the happy side. It was looking as though there was a clear winner, until Contestant #3.14 jumped on stage and dragged Contestant i off by

the feathers. As soon as Contestants i² became a mere i, they both disappeared into thin air.

Suddenly, it was as if Cetola was pulled out of a trance and lost all memory of Contestants i². She also lost all memory of Contestant 6.02*10²³'s performance, but that's just because she didn't want to remember it.

"Huh, they must've been imaginary," she said. "In that case, I declare Contestant #3.14 as the winner!"

"Yes! I'm gonna put this on my resumé," Contestant #3.14 said.



GRAPHIC BY MADELYN BAILEY

*In a follow up interview with the winner, it was revealed that Contestant #3.14 was admitted into MIT, but not UF. Turns out STEM kids have quite a bit of diva in them after all.

Mattia's Mumblings

by Terry Shen
Managing Editor

"Have you ever noticed..." that Dr. Mark Mattia constantly uses this phrase in class?

For students who sit in his AP Statistics or Statistics II classes — and sometimes omit the learning of the actual statistical material — it is easy to see that Mattia is a natural-born comedian.

Right when the PowerPoint presentations and videos on p-values and normal distributions begin to blend together, Mattia begins his classic shift in cadence. It's comedy time.

Referring back to the fundamental axioms of statis-

tics (which probably only apply in his own classroom) like "DMKE," the PhD golfer injects levity into his class.

Of course, it would be remiss for him to exclude a few disses at other subjects.

"When I'm retired, I want you all to come to me in five years and tell me if you've ever used organic chemistry or Physics C again," he said. "You'll possibly use physics, but I already know many of you will eventually come crawling back to statistics."

Chris Pauling, after hearing about Mattia's humor, asked to sit in on one of Mattia's lectures to understand his "teaching style." Realis-

tically, it was to see how he could win the (non-existent) "funniest teacher award" after Mattia's departure.

Indeed, since so many faculty members recognize Mattia as one of the most quick-witted teachers, it begs the question of who can step into his shoes? There are a few teacher-contenders from Skipper's mole jokes to Schweig's quick quips, but Pauling was the only one who had the foresight to learn from the best.

After starting class with a video (in true Mattia fashion) throwback to a band from the 1980's, Mattia noticed the observer's presence. "Pauling, here to learn a subject that's actually useful?"

"Oh yeah, because the last time I used statistics was... never!" fired back Pauling.

Mattia, noticing Pauling's naivety, decided to provide the humorous teacher with some advice.

"You have to see the funny in everything... even if all you get in return is blank stares from the listeners. I don't know, just use observational comedy. Or, maybe your students will like you if you



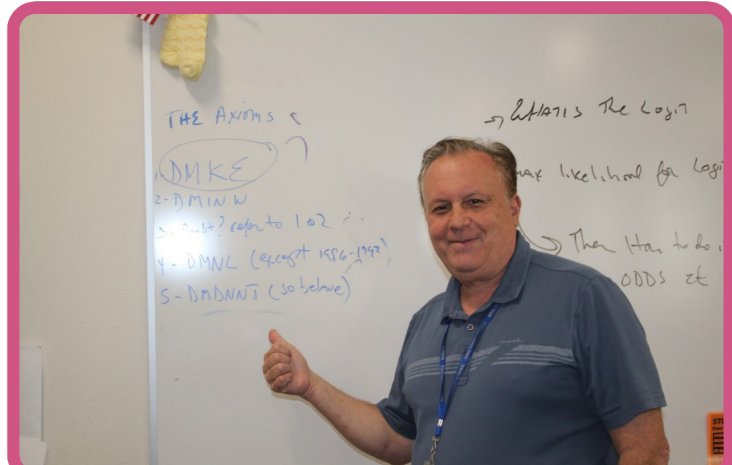
PHOTO BY TERRY SHEN

eliminate 'Follow the Columnist' assignments."

After a legacy of Math Modeling championships and tight-knit relationships with each graduating class, Mattia

will perhaps be most fondly remembered for his jokes. We'll miss you dearly when you retire this year (even though you've said you'd retire for the past four — or more — years!)

PHOTO BY TERRY SHEN



Check PVTorch.com

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE TORCH STAFF COMPETE IN TORCH TRIES: CHOPPED

Job Jokers: The True Tales

by Allie Chung
Co-News Editor

Rent is high, inflation is real, and students need cash. With college tuition fees lurking around the corner and that daily coffee addiction, students will take pretty much anything that pays — even if it means dealing with some bizarre experiences.

Senior Mackenzie Haas works for Aqua-Tots as a swim instructor.

In her one year of working she has been thrown up on, swam in poop, and turned into a walking FDA violation. And

she didn't even sue.

"Me and Ava Wasilewski were working together, and I'm minding my own business teaching my own class. Then I hear Coach Ava panic,

so I look and there's cloudy water. Our big boss runs over, and he's like, 'We've had an in-water incident. Everybody needs to get out of the

pool.'

So we all get out of the pool," Haas said.

As for this cloudy mystery, I think we can all guess what happened.

"Coach Ava told me that one of her little tots had pooped in the pool. By the

time we went back over there, the chlorine was so strong that it had, like, disintegrated the fecal matter that was in the pool," Haas said.

Unfortunately for Haas and Wasilewski, their shift had not ended.

"But then we had to stick around and we had to get back in the water to take the chemicals and make sure it was all okay. It was really disgusting but then everything was fine. And the little boy, he was so upset," Haas said.

While Haas' work experience was certainly memorable, she's not alone in facing the oddities of student jobs. Take senior David Gagliardo, for example. His time working at Chipotle came with its own set of interesting moments; however, his were more self imposed.

One of his favorite ways to have fun at work is to sabotage his manager.

"One of my managers had a really big crush on this girl that we worked with. And this was back in, like, April

around Cobalt. So I told him that I'm going to ask her to go to Cobalt with me. He's like 22, and she was 19 or 20. I had the form and I told him that I was going to get her to sign it. I didn't go with her; I literally just did it just to torture him," Gagliardo said.

But his antics didn't stop there. In fact, Gagliardo once found himself working a shift at a Chipotle he wasn't even supposed to be at.

"I went to the Chipotle in Sarasota, because the band was doing a fundraiser there. I walk in there and I was like, 'I'm Julio's guy.' My boss's name is Julio. It was a completely different store. I was in uniform and I worked a whole shift. I went behind the counter and I got paid," Gagliardo said.

These stories are just a glimpse into the world of student jobs. Whether it's dodging poop in the pool or causing chaos with a manager, students know how to make their 1:01-5:00 more interesting. And while these jobs may be far from glamorous, they leave behind memories that will last long after the paychecks have been spent.



PHOTO BY ALLIE CHUNG



PHOTO BY ALLIE CHUNG

Che-mole-stry Chronicles

by Robyn Schoenberg
Co-News Editor

*The following is a fictitious account of Dr. Skipper's adventures.

"Good-mole-ning students," said AP Chemistry teacher Dr. Jay Skipper. "I hope your weekend went well, let's get started with che-mole-stry."

The students let out a laugh at his mole puns. Mole is a word of many definitions, like a burrowing mammal, an inside spy, or a skin blemish, but in chemistry, it has an en-

countless mole memorabilia and his infamous mole jokes, made at minimum once a day.

He started class with equilibrium constant practice under the doc camera and wrote out the chemical equation, " $C_3H_6O_3 + 3 O_2 \rightarrow 3 CO_2 + 3 H_2O$ ".

"What is the name of the chemical formula $C_3H_6O_3$?" Dr. Skipper asked the class.

The class replied in unison, "Lactic acid!"

"Correct, it's involved in the process of breaking down lactose, a sugar found

France — but one student got it, the United States.

"Yes! In the 70s and 80s the national dairy shortage was so bad that a budget to subsidize dairy production was put in place, leading to a dramatic overproduction of dairy," Skipper said. "It's actually quite interesting. As a result, much of this dairy was made into cheese because it lasts longer. Now hundreds of thousands of pounds are stored in underground converted limestone caves."

Students were in disbelief, some murmured of these cheese caves and others took to researching this for themselves. For one student in particular, junior Mark Molar, this sparked an idea.

Skipper has concocted mole pun after mole pun, day after day, in his 19 years as a chemistry teacher. He brings comedy to a subject that is not so light-hearted for some and has even inspired whimsical witticisms in his students.

He provides space on his whiteboard for students who want to share wordplays and jests themselves. It is filled with mole puns, chemistry jokes, homophones, and words of the day — all of which are updated daily and admired by every class.

Now, Molar wanted to give back.

As the master of cheesy jokes, this student thought Skipper deserved a reward almost as cheesy as him. For Mole Day next year, he would



PHOTO ART BY MADELYN BAILEY AND ROBYN SCHOENBERG

be gifted an all expenses paid vacation to the cheese tunnels of Missouri!

Molar started raising support among students. The plan spread like wildfire, students and faculty across the school began to scheme and fundraise. They even involved local journalism and moleday.org.

For the rest of the school year and well into the next, this was the only mole stunt that Skipper didn't know about.

As Mole Day approached, anticipation heightened.

On the day of the celebration, the mole cake competitions progressed as usual until the last period. There was one cake revealed at the final moment: a cake resembling a block of cheese with a mole poking out was presented to Skipper.

The students excitedly explained the trip and Skipper was shocked and grateful. He was off to Missouri that night!

He was dressed in his finest periodic table of elements T-shirt and arrived at the cheese hotel. For the next few days he was immersed in the world of cheese, with cheese sampling, cheese making, and cheese cave tours. Skipper fit right into the rich cheesy culture.

When he came back to Pine View School he told his students his tales of travel: afternoons spent learning about the town's history and frequent cheesy exchanges with the townspeople.

"They even had mole-za-rella!" he exclaimed.

The students laughed once again at his characteristic mole pun. In his time in Missouri, Skipper decided to implement a cheese tasting along with the cakes and snacks on Mole Day. This way cheesy mole jokes will be honored for years to come.



PHOTO ART BY ROBYN SCHOENBERG AND MADELYN BAILEY

tirely different significance. The mole is the standard scientific unit for great amounts of small substances such as atoms or molecules. It is so significant in the chemistry community that there is an entire day set aside to celebrate it: October 23.

Skipper takes his appreciation to the extreme with

in cheese," he said. "Oh! For a penguin sticker question..."

The class attentively listened. Penguin stickers are his coveted reward for trivia questions.

"Which country is the largest cheese producer in the world?" he asked.

There were various guesses — Italy, Germany,

Is AP What it Used to Be?

by Robyn Schoenberg
Co-News Editor

Every student at Pine View takes AP classes. So do 34.7% of all U.S. public high school graduates, according to College Board. The prevalence of AP exams is increasing, but are their benefits what they once were?

With such a large percentage of students going into college with an AP background, the hope is that these students continue to be well-prepared for rigorous college classes. But, what happens when the College Board changes curriculum?

According to the College Board, “AP periodically updates or revises courses to reflect current developments in each discipline, ensure alignment with introductory college courses, and more clearly communicate the required course content and skills.”

For example, AP Psychology has recently undergone changes as the American Psychological Association (APA) updated its standards for Introductory Psychology. Topics such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral

Development, and Sigmund Freud’s theories have been pulled from the curriculum. These are all ideas that form the basis of modern psychology.

“[College Board is] making sure that students are getting content that is still

Section 1 of the AP Psychology exam has also been changed to have 25 less multiple-choice questions, 40 more minutes, and four answer choices rather than five.

today, accurate, and is being studied, and isn’t some theory that was relevant hundreds of years ago, but with society changing, is no longer relevant,” said AP Psychology teacher Robin Melton.

Section 1 of the AP Psychology exam has also been changed to have 25 less multiple-choice questions, 40 more minutes, and four answer choices rather than five. Additionally, there are two new free-response questions (FRQ) that feature research studies from the field, rather than previous FRQs that fo-

cused on defining terms.

“Now, with the research base, it can be applied across multiple disciplines, and I think that it will be easier for kids to attain higher scores,” Melton said. “It also is just helpful in being able to read scholarly research that they’ll do in college anyway.”

A similar shift in exam grading can also be seen in other AP social studies classes. In recent years, the qualifications for the DBQ and LEQ complexity points were changed.

“Speaking with Mr. Wolfinger, who does the AP reading for AP U.S. [History], it does make it more attainable for students to earn those points and therefore score higher on the exam,” Melton said. “...what used to be a ‘unicorn point’ is now obtainable.”

While keeping courses current is important, it is also essential that AP classes are maintaining the standards that prepare students for college.

Over the years, AP Chemistry has undergone changes as well, which include various concepts being removed from the curriculum.

For example, in the 2024-25 school year, AP Chemistry is “removing big ideas and enduring understandings from the framework,” according to College Board. These changes may not be as beneficial as they let on.

“I attend AP Chemistry workshops and am a member of several online AP Chemistry forums,” AP Chemistry teacher Dr. Jay Skipper said. “Veteran AP Chemistry teachers all over the country will tell you that the understanding has actually decreased... I feel that students are less prepared for the rigor of college chemistry.”

College preparation is one of the central reasons students take AP classes. Many students gain credits for the AP classes they take and advance quicker as a result, so their knowledge base from AP is critical to their future success.

In 2021, AP English Literature and Composition had a national pass rate (scores of 3 or higher) of 43.9% and in 2022 jumped to 77.9% and has maintained percents in the 70s since then. AP Chemistry saw national pass rates increase from 54.0% to

75.1% from 2022 to 2023.

In 2023 to 2024 AP U.S. History, AP U.S. Government and Politics, and AP European History also saw notable jumps in pass rates: 47.5% to 72.0%, 49.2% to 73%, 59.4% to 72%, respectively. It is not likely that student performance and understanding increased so much in such short periods of time, which suggests that passing scores are now easier than ever to attain.

A student that scored a 1 or 2 on an exam five years ago could conceivably score a 3 or even 4 under today’s standards. Passing scores could potentially give students false confidence going into college that could hinder their performance. Poor scores don’t mean that a student can’t be successful in college, but they can be an indicator as to which classes are the best fit.

While AP classes provide irrefutable benefits to students, they should also uphold the rigor they are known for and properly prepare students for college.

Are Weapons Detectors the Solution?

by Ava Lenerz
Match Editor-in-Chief

Walking up to the school entrance, an insurmountable crowd of kids swarmed at the gate, with a line all the way back to Old Venice Road. Students were trying to unload everything from their bags as quickly as possible to get to class on time, but the 7:21 bell rang.

40 minutes later, some kids are just arriving to first period. Although faculty worked to improve the delays, this stressful experience was shared by all Pine View students in our first few weeks of having the weapons detectors installed, which begs the question: were weapons detectors the best solution?

With the rise in school shootings every year, it was obvious that something needed to be done.

According to Sarasota County Schools, OpenGate Weapons Detection System was chosen “to provide a quick, unobtrusive way to bring an additional layer of safety and security to our schools.”

The reasoning as to why these were implemented makes a lot of sense, es-

pecially considering that nearly two-thirds of school shooters are under the age of 17, a study by the Journal of the American College of Surgeons (JACS) found.

However, it feels like there should be a more efficient way to prevent shootings than clustering all students outside the gates.

Everytown for Gun Safety included a statement from a 2018 Department of Homeland Security Report that said, “preventing violence by detecting and addressing these [behavioral] red flags is more effective than any physical security measure.”

In essence, if more and/or better crisis intervention programs existed, that would be the most effective tool against shootings.

I’m not saying the weapons detectors are unnecessary or bad or that they should be taken away; I just want it to be known there are other solutions that should be tried, whether that’s at the school or state level.

For instance, according to Everytown, 76% of the guns used by school shooters under the age of 18 are from their home or a close relative’s home. This shows how

crucial secure storage of firearms is to preventing school shootings. That is why passing Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws to hold gun owners responsible if they do not safely secure their weapons would be a good measure to try.

Other potential solutions include raising the legal age to own a gun from 18 to 21 years old or making background checks for all gun sales mandatory, thus preventing loopholes that many teens exploit.

But in the end, it all really comes back to mental health support. Most school shooters are not doing well emotionally. If more intervention initiatives were added to schools, it could stop a drastic number of shootings.

But it can’t all depend on initiatives and guidance counselors; it also depends on us, the students.

According to Sandy Hook Promise, 93% of shooters plan their attacks prior. In 4 out of 5 shootings, at least one other person knew of the plan and didn’t report it, and 75% of mass shooters raised concern from others, with bystanders seeing warning signs in most

documented cases.

But that’s the exact problem—they stood by.

As a student, I know it is cheesy every time I hear an adult or an advisory video say, “If you see something, say something.” It gets annoying how often we hear it, but we keep hearing it because it’s important, and yet most people still do nothing.

Even if you are concerned that a friend will get mad at you, finding them someone who can help will only have positive effects in the long run.

Not everyone who exhibits warning signs plans to hurt themselves or others, but helping anyone get the

support they need is part of being human and, more importantly, part of being a friend.

So, yes, weapons detectors are a useful tool to stop last-minute attacks, but there are other ways to prevent an attack before it escalates to that level, and it begins with us making a conscious decision to speak up when we see someone in need.



The first day the OpenGate Weapons Detection System was implemented, students waiting to enter the campus stood in a line that stretched to Old Venice Road.

PHOTOS BY ALEX LIEBERMAN

The Cost of Clubs

by Athena Erbe
Entertainment Editor

At Pine View, school clubs are a significant part of students' lives. They are not only enjoyable and great learning experiences, but they also open doors for higher education and future careers. However, behind all the exciting events, monthly meetings, and thrilling competitions lies a major problem: the financial costs of participation.

Though clubs are undeniably valuable, the price of success is becoming too high for some students to afford. Pine View offers a wide variety of clubs, the most popular ones being competition-based such as Speech and Debate.

Speech and Debate is a highly attended club that attracts students from both middle and high school. The costs of this club vary; however, some typical expenses include entry fees, membership dues, transportation, hiring judges, meals, and lodging which can easily add up to a few hundred dollars per competition. Speech and Debate is especially costly due to its frequent competitions.

Beyond the mandatory costs, other necessities include new suits, outfits, and accessories. Some participants even hire private coaches to further prepare themselves for competitions.

James Froelich, sponsor of Speech and Debate, gives many insights on how the school helps students financially in their extracurricular pursuits.

"From my experience, PVA ensures inclusivity by offering various financial funding and assistance that aim to alleviate the financial burden on students who wish to participate in extracurricular activities but may face economic constraints," Froelich said in an email response.

Other than the help of PVA, clubs are given many opportunities to fundraise at Pine View. Junior Niranjana Jayendran, involved in clubs including DECA, BPA, and Speech and Debate notes how much fundraising has helped.

"For BPA specifically, we really capitalized on the Pine View Fair and made almost 500 bucks for it, and our next fundraiser is through Pinnacle. PVA plays a huge part into it, because it gives us a

lot of the funding that we need so we can reduce that really high cost and allow these students to compete," Jayendran said.

Despite these efforts, the financial burden is still an issue for many. Jayendran founded the Pine View chapter of DECA, a business competition club. She feels that especially being a new club, it was quite difficult to raise funds. However, the supportive community at Pine View tries to give everyone a chance to succeed.

"Thankfully, the support and compassion our students extend to one another," Froelich said, "coupled with tactfulness and respect for each other's dignity, have enabled me to take seemingly bleak situations and turn them around for students with untapped debate and speaking talents."

Ultimately, while schools do what they can to lift the financial strain of clubs on students and their families, the rising cost of participation still is a concern that continues to need to be addressed.

ONE IN FOUR

STUDENTS FROM LOWER INCOME FAMILIES DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN A SINGLE SPORT, CLUB OR ART PROGRAM LAST SCHOOL YEAR.

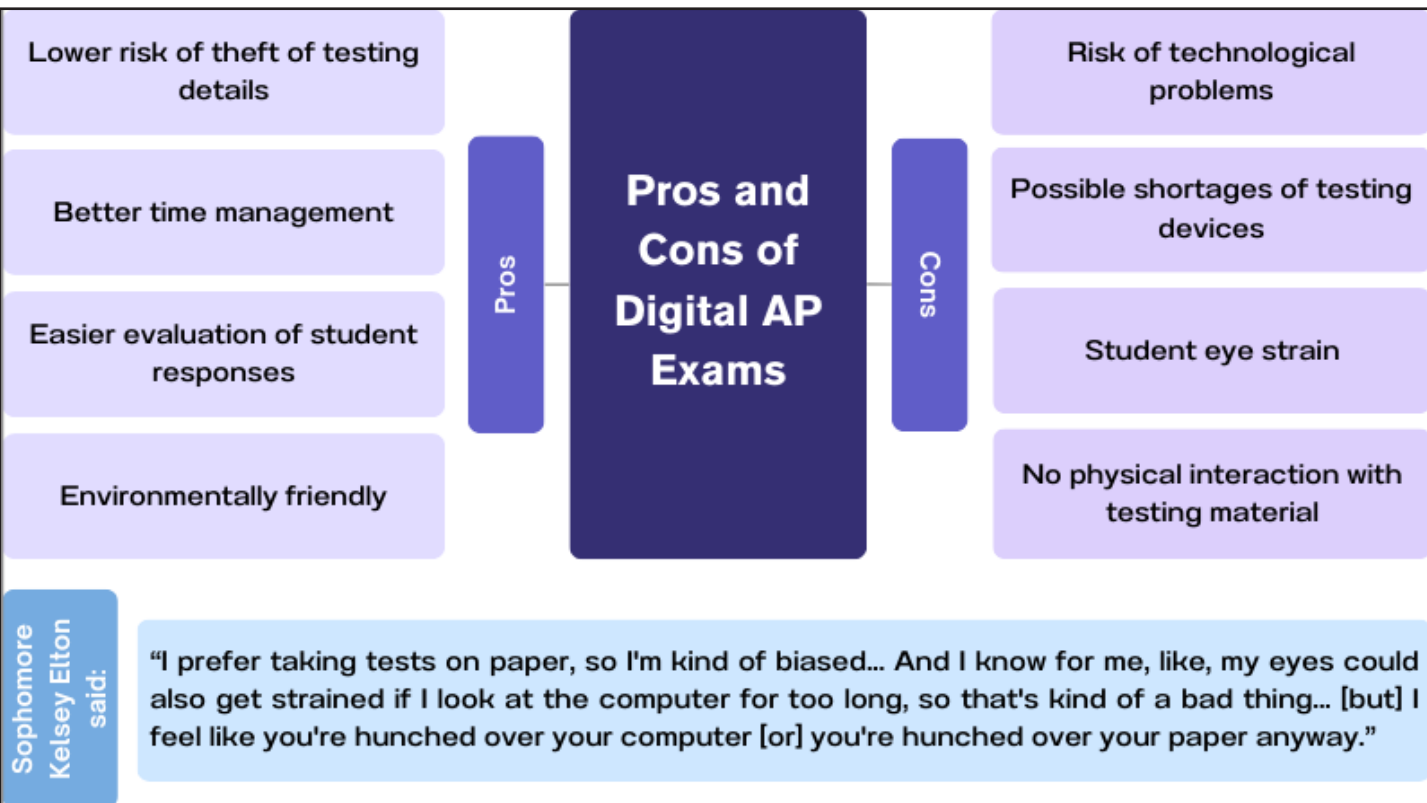
AMONG PARENTS FROM HOUSEHOLDS EARNING LESS THAN \$60,000 A YEAR 27% SAY THEIR CHILD WAS LESS INVOLVED WITH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES BECAUSE OF COST.

ONE IN TEN

1/10 PARENTS MAKING MORE THAN \$60,000 ALSO CITE PRICE AS THE REASON FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S DECLINE IN ACTIVITIES.

124 DOLLARS THE AVERAGE ANNUAL COST PER STUDENT IS \$124 FOR CLUBS THAT INCLUDES SCHOOL-MANDATED PARTICIPATION FEES AND OTHER EXPENSES SUCH AS EQUIPMENT AND TRAVEL

Data from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health
GRAPHIC BY ALLIE CHUNG



Dr. Lori Wiley wrote:

"The move to digital AP Exams will naturally have a significant impact on students and schools, not just here at Pine View, but across the state, the country, and honestly, globally... As a former AP teacher, I recognize that AP teachers are also impacted by the move to Digital AP Exams from a curricular perspective... As a school, I am confident we will adjust as needed as we continue to work our way through the process of incorporating this new digital aspect of AP Exams."

GRAPHIC BY DASHA SHABUNINA

the Torch

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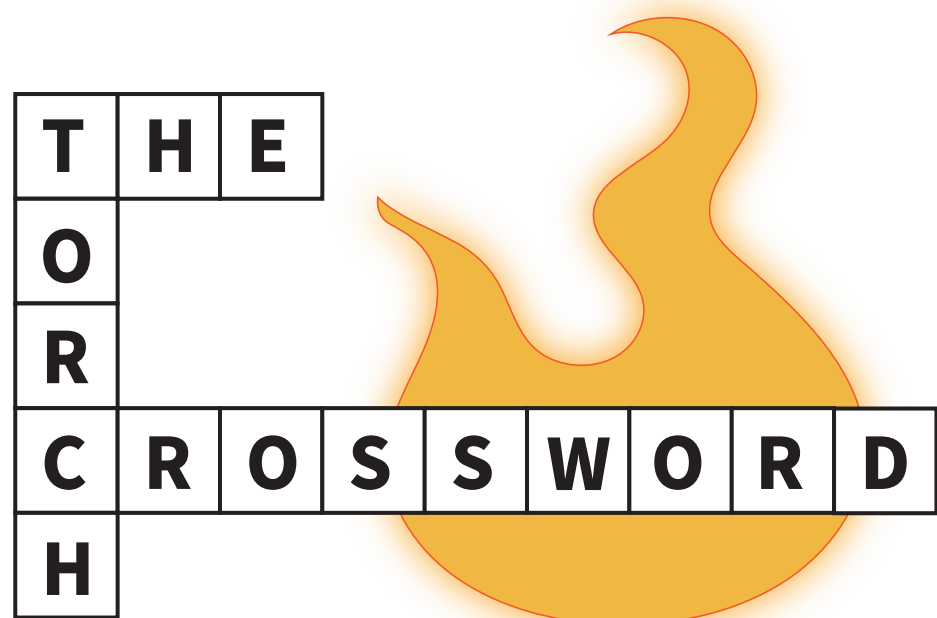
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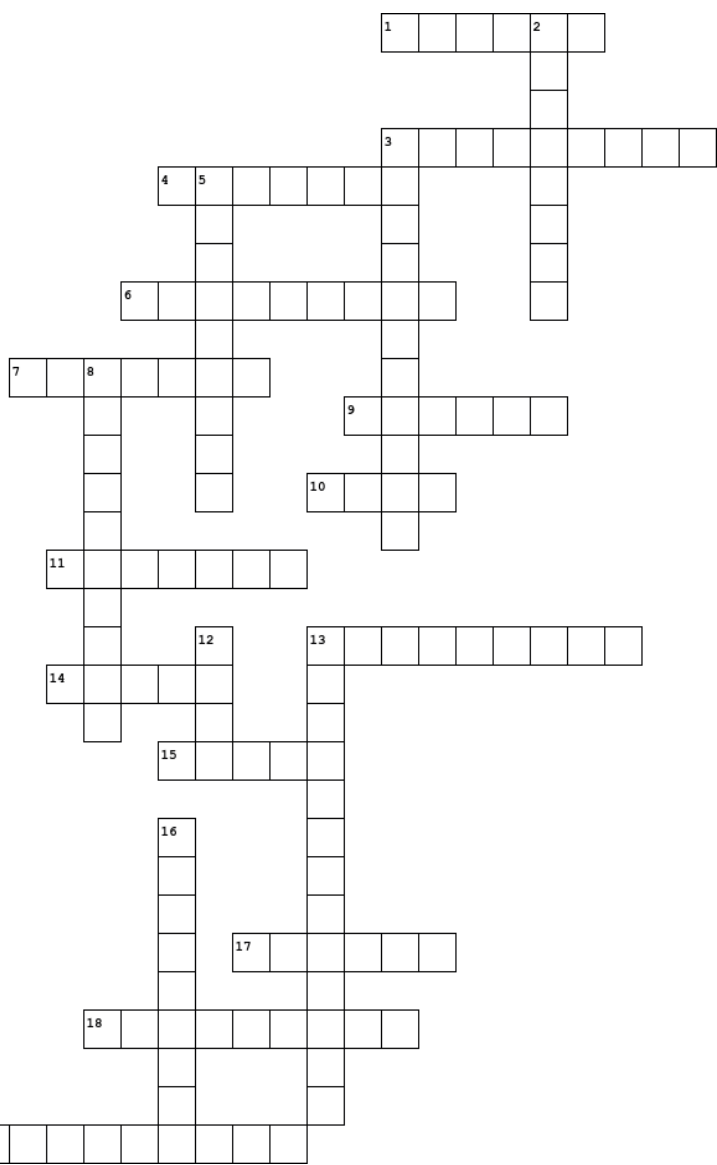
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Hints correspond to information shared in the stories throughout this issue, including through QR codes. The first person to bring their completed version in Room 117 in Building 17 will win a \$5 gift card. Good luck!



across

1. What freshman got second place in their STEM Fair category?
3. Mote SEA stands for: Mote Science ___ Aquarium
4. Who did Trump pick as the head of the Department of Education?
6. Which AP class saw national pass rates increase from 54.0% to 75.1% from 2022-2023?
7. Becky Sipes participates in ___ All-Stars cheerleading team
9. Besides Alvin and the Chipmunks, what other franchise was mentioned during Torch Tries: Pass the Painting?
10. What dynasty did the tale of the Butterfly Lovers originate in?
11. What teacher wanted to learn from Dr. Mattia's humor?
13. Which Pine View teacher visited California during the wild fires?
14. Legacy Trail runs from the Venice Train Depot to ___ Park.
15. Who is the community organizer at Equality Florida? (hint: check Sports)

17. Who's access to Pine View got restricted when House Bill 1421 was signed into law?
18. What movie is coming out March 21, 2025?
19. What is the name of the fragrance business Henry Yemofio started?

down

2. Where does Mackenzie Haas work? (hint: check Humor)
3. The fourth pro of digital AP Exams says they are better for the ___.
5. What protein shake did Timothy Nensanelis vote for?
8. What is the name of the pageant in Divas in STEM?
12. What club did Niranjana Jayendran start? (hint: check Opinion)
13. What AP class did Pine View just get approval to offer? (hint: check Features)
16. Which fictional student sent Dr. Skipper to the cheese tunnels? (hint: first and last name)

The Conversation Pit

Holding on to what matters

I still remember the girl who offered for people to sit with her at lunch on the first day of school. I remember the bright lights of the auditorium stage while playing the sticks game before rehearsing "Three is a Magic Number" in Third Grade Rocks. I remember the nickname, 'Jiayu,' people constantly called me after my fifth grade teacher accidentally mispronounced my name on the first day of school.

I cherish the memories and friends I've made during my time at Pine View. Honestly, though, senioritis is hitting me hard this year. I can't wait to graduate, meet people, and start life anew in college. When I tell people I've been going to Pine View since second grade, they're usually not jealous of the idea of attending the same school for 11 years. But still, being able to have grown up with some of my classmates is a special thing.

As the end of senior year nears closer and closer to an end, I find myself wondering who I'll stay friends with past high school.

My old best friend (who I still keep in touch with) wrote me something in a letter that I'll always remember. She told me that even though we don't talk as much anymore, nothing will change the time we spent growing up together. Nothing will change what we meant to each other.

People change, and most things come and go. But loving somebody is

People change, and most things come and go. But loving somebody is never a waste.



Jiayi Zhu
Editor-in-Chief

never a waste.

So, even if you still have one, two, or even three more years of high school left — think about who would be there for you if you needed it and remember

who you would want to stay in touch with. Act on that. Tell that person how much you appreciate them. Spend time with that person before you run out of time to do so.

Eventually, we'll all leave something behind. For me, it's the smiles from the lunch ladies,

laughter in my favorite classes, the people I've grown close to, and those I have yet to meet.

In the final stretch of the year, leave room for your heart and mind to open up to new things in the future while remembering to hold on to the things that matter.

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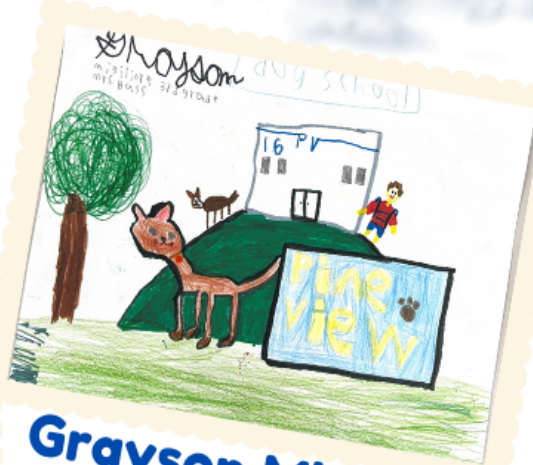
The Majorsky Family

ENVISIONING A DREAM

PINE VIEW



Sammy Wagner



Grayson Migliore



Navy Griffith



Elim Zhou



Charlotte Tjong

Third graders from Sarah Bass's class were asked to draw what they envision their "dream" Pine View to look like.



Raphael Gad

"It would be made of jelly and have gummy bears for teachers that taught you any subjects that you wanted."
Second grader Sloane Hernandez

"I would say that the first thing that comes to mind is bringing back the trees in the quad."
Junior Hana Mullen

"Probably a bigger lunch room with free snacks and more flower gardens."
Sixth grader Nina Machado



OUR CAMPUS PAST

by Anna Zhang
Match Layout Artist

No covered walkways, no structural buildings, no cafeteria, no gym, and no real parking lot, the old Pine View campus has gone through many changes. Jenna Molinaro, a sixth grade world history teacher and a graduate of the class of 1992, shares memories of Pine View over the years.

Back then, Pine View started in fourth grade, not second. There was no direct busing, and students had to take complicated routes to get to Pine View.

"I had to have a high school bus pick me up, bring me to Riverview, switch buses and then take me to the PV campus. They divided you up into three teams: four red, four blue, four white," Molinaro said.

In Building 17, there is a replica of the old campus. Molinaro explained that it was a class gift constructed from her sister's class of 1993 as they were the last graduating class from the old campus. Compared to the current campus, the old campus was much smaller.

"I was in the class of 1992 and there were only 65 of us. We were a few blocks away from Arlington Park and, once a year, the school would walk to the park to eat and hangout," Molinaro said.

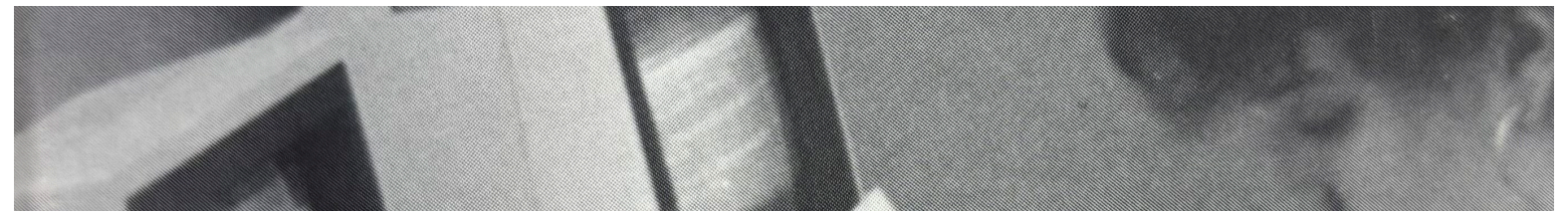
Some changes include going from portables to buildings, having lockers to not having lockers, and having locker pods that had payphones in them to not having locker pods at all. However, time brings back memories.

"There is a special place in my heart for the old campus that will never be replaced. I miss the openness, freedom, and the trees. I remember being sad when I first came to teach at the new campus as a teacher. It was a vast campus that wasn't as intimate," Molinaro said.

As the campus has changed, Molinaro explains how even though the new campus has benefits, she misses her portable, the lake, the fauna, and the fresh air.

"There are many days where I have no idea what it is like outside, being on the first floor, there really are no windows and we are no longer allowed to open doors, windows, it feels penitentiary," Molinaro said.

Molinaro explained how everyone had big personalities and interacted daily, which included administration, staff, teachers, and students. Even though the old campus was not as developed as the current one, they brought it together with each other.



AND FUTURE

by Timothy Nesanelis
Assistant Match Editor-in-Chief

Since 2013, Pine View's principal, Dr. Stephen Covert, has watched thousands of students walk through the ever-changing Pine View campus, and Pine View's administration is always looking for new ways to elevate Pine View's campus even further.

The Torch spoke with Dr. Covert about the future of our campus, and what our administration hopes to achieve in the foreseeable future.

SHELL LOT RENOVATIONS

After a particularly harsh few hurricane seasons, Dr. Covert has confirmed Pine View's plans to add a containment system underneath the shell lot.

The system is made of small honeycomb-shaped frameworks and is laid down as the foundation. Then, the honeycombs are placed inside the hexagonal framework and completely on top of it, allowing water to soak through.

"This is going to be huge," Covert said. "No more potholes, no more runoff, no more standing in deep water, it's just an absolutely amazing project and I was finally able to get district approval for us to begin fundraising and make this happen."

Due to high costs, there is no exact date for the completion of the renovations, but the school and the district are working with vendors to hopefully have it completed in the timeframe of fall 2025-2026.

LOCKER POD FOOD COURTS

Standing between the gym and the blue world language building, the gray locker pod stands as a relic of Pine View's history, but ideas have been put forward to turn it into a food court.

"The idea to change the locker pod into a food court really began at the beginning of COVID, so that was spring break of 2020," Covert said. "Eventually, they said 'if you want to use those lockers again, you can,' but nobody did."

After brainstorming with the Principal's Council group, they finally came up with an idea after the opening of Building 17.

"So, for high school students especially, they said 'couldn't we have snacks or food closer to Building 17?'" Covert said.

In the meantime, food carts have been set up by the Office of Food and Nutrition Services, but Dr. Covert admits this is only a band-aid solution. However, the Sarasota County Schools district has approved an architectural study, the first step towards finding out if this idea could be feasible.

BUILDING TEN REPLACEMENT

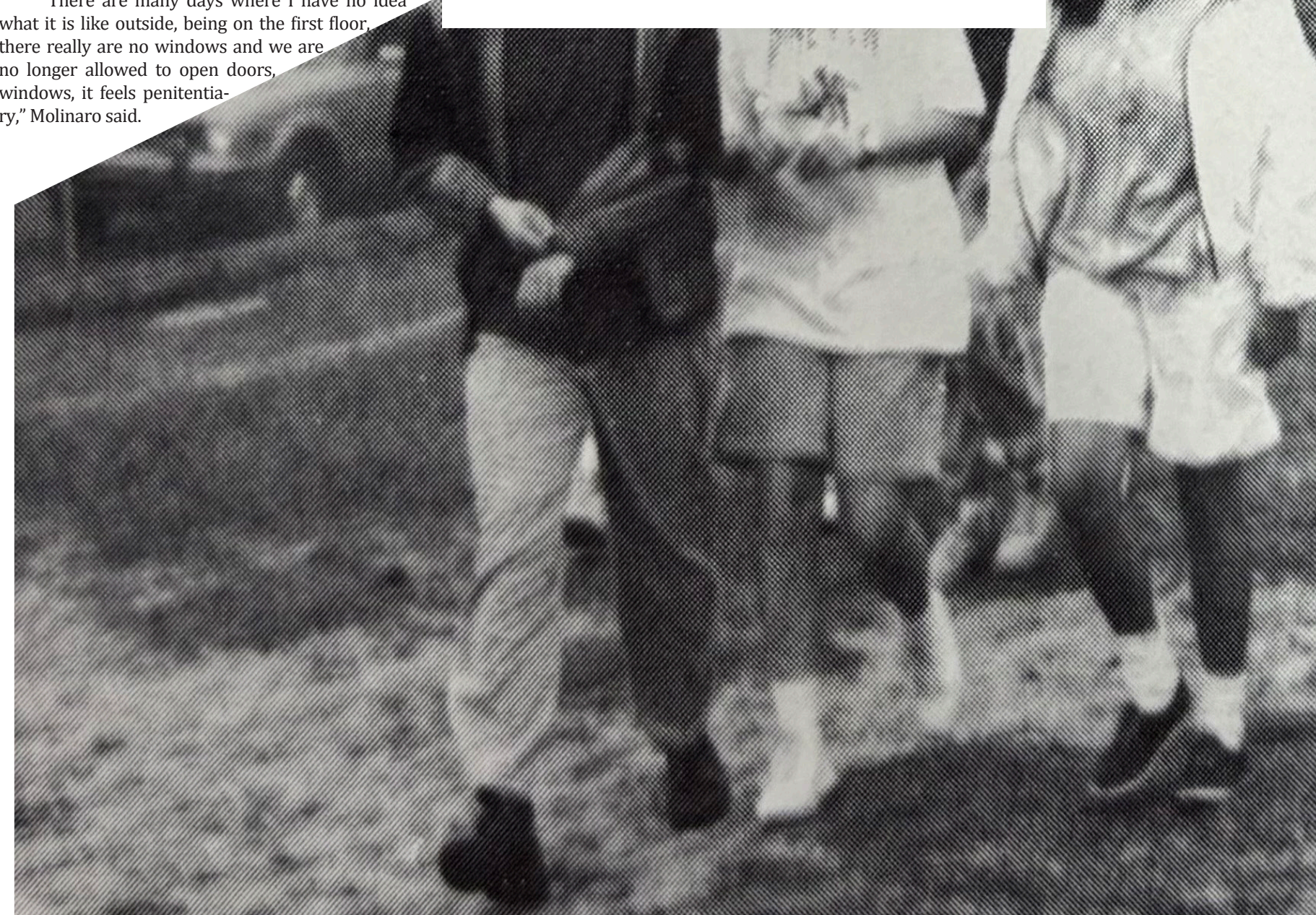
Pine View has also received approval for an architectural study to replace Building 10, which houses the engineering, digital media, robotics, and computer/technology programs.

"Our district has an amazing career and technical education (CTE) division. Dr. DiPillo and Trip Jennings are the ones in charge of CTE programs; they help support what that is," Covert said. "But our space isn't sufficient, and so we're doing the best with what we have — Mr. Wormington is a fantastic teacher — we just need more."

The plan comes with news of approval for Pine View to offer AP Cyber Security, a new course, and Covert said a new building would be a perfect place to begin offering it within the next two years.

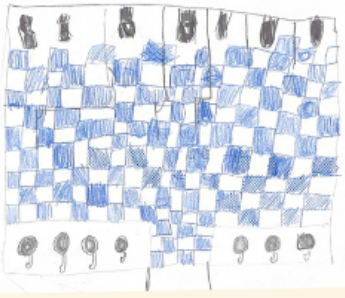
The future of Pine View looks bright, but with so many potential changes to Pine View's campus, Dr. Covert said that they must be heard and weighed in on from all angles.

"[We] get input from students, because it's your campus, [we] get input from parents, [we] get input from alumni, and obviously the district, because the school belongs to our community," he said.



DREAM PINE VIEW

Cleaner and bigger bathrooms



Evan Krause



Janeli Griffith



Emily Blehm



Troy Urbanczyk



Khushi Patel



Tejas Doddapaneni

“There would be a gymnastics club, and a fencing club, a tennis club, and all types of clubs. There would also be a surfing place near the ocean and you can hang out with the dolphins.”

Second grader Diana Logvinova

“Building 16 would look like it’s a mansion and we could fit more classes in there. The playground would be much bigger and would have more equipment. And for Pine View School to be the most popular school in the whole world.”

Second grader Alan Kovalyk

