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# RHS Diabetes Walk is a Success

Students helps raise funds for diabetes research.

#### **Charlotte Pillow** staff writer

On Sunday, November 23, 2014, the RHS National Honor Society and American Diabetes Association hosted an important event, one that is dedicated to diabetes research. In the span of only two hours, over 60 walkers (including three juvenile diabetics) made their way around the RHS track, as part of the RHS Diabetes Walk.

At the walk's conclusion, more than \$1,030 was raised towards research including the Bionic Pancreas study.

Type One Diabetes is an autoimmune disease in which the pancreas halts its production of insulin, the hormone that unlocks energy from consumed foods. Without insulin, the body burns fat and muscle as its energy source instead of food.

Left untreated, diabetes can lead to complications including increased risk of heart disease and loss of other organ functions. Type One diabetics must receive artificial insulin into the bloodstream through injection or through insulin pump site.

In addition, diabetics must watch their blood glucose levels with finger pricks to check the accuracy of the insulin injections. Proper management of diabetes is a constant job; diabetics are forced to compensate for a malfunctioning pancreas.

Too much insulin, and blood glucose levels will drop too low. Too little insulin, and blood glu-



Charlotte Pillow is the organizer of the Ridgewood High School Diabetes Walk

cose levels will spike too high. Fortunately, innovative research offers more freedom to those who deal with this life-altering disease every day.

One notable example of upcoming research is the Bionic Pancreas study, conducted by Boston University. A set of three external devices has the ability to monitor a diabetic's blood glucose readings twenty-four hours per day. Two of the devices are pumps: one with insulin to lower blood glucose, one

supporters from coming out to sup-

port the troops and show their respect

and dedication to the cause. The pa-

rade honored all branches and areas of

service, with the Marine Corps as the

featured branch. It started at Madison

Square Park and went to W42nd Street.

Veterans Day not only honors the valor

of soldiers, but also plays a key role in raising awareness of challenges veter-

ans face Many are informed about the

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the

current issues that the U.S. army faces.

with glucagon to raise blood glucose. The third device is an iPhone and a Dexcom Continuous Glucose Monitor melded together, to display and manually respond to the blood glucose readings. This is an example of how diabetic medication is being administered though more user-friendly devices.

The Bionic Pancreas alleviates the stress associated with sudden plunges or peaks in blood glucose readings, because the graphs of the readings

Doug Collier who represented the

State of New Jersey's Attorney Gen-

eral's office, and Ellen Elias, Sr. Vice

President at Children's Aid and Fam-

ily Services, made a two part presen-

tation on the heroin epidemic to mem-

bers of the Ridgewood community on

November 18th. The presentation was

sponsored by the Ridgewood Board of

Education's Community Outreach Pro-

gram and held at the BFMS Audito-

rium. The program was well attended

by district and high school administra-

tors, members of the Board of Educa-

tion, high school counselors, health

and wellness staff, local physicians and

members of local police departments.

Collier drew from his twenty-seven

years of experience as a special agent

for the DEA for his presentation tar-

geted at parents and caregivers of

Ridgewood students during which he

emphasized that the 18-25 population

is the new face of heroin. In his current

position as the drug initiative coordina-

tor and law enforcement liaison for the

Elizabeth O'Keefe

news editor

The Growing Heroin Problem

provide predictable trends. The Bionic Pancreas study was conducted the past two years at the Barton Center for children with diabetes, and is predictto be passed by the FDA in 2017. Each dollar raised is one step clos-

er to a cure that would affect the 26 million diabetics in the world. Special thanks to Stephanie Gigante and Marlene Whittemore for organizing the event, and to the many walkers and volunteers who made the walk possible.

## What is Veterans' Day?

#### Shania Arora news editor

News

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Veterans Day is celebrated on November 11 and is a day to honor American veterans and victims of all wars. It originated as "Armistice Day" on Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. The Treaty of Versailles officially ended World War I, but fighting had stopped 7 months earlier on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of "the war to end all wars." Festivities kick-off as families visit their loved ones. Ceremonies and parades are held annually to honor the service, commitment, and bravery of all soldiers. New York City hosts a parade each year. There has been a parade every year since 1929 and over 25,000 people attend each year, making it one of the biggest events this year. This year, the theme was "Land of the Free and Home of the Brave" in honor of the 200th Anniversary of the writing of the "Star Spangled Banner." It was a cloudy day, but that didn't stop

Learn about The History

Bowl Tournament.

Veterans Day allows for the recognition of many heroes across the nation and equips citizens to support organizations that work relentlessly to serve people.

Season.

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#### **Features**

A new look at the Holiday

A&E

Read all about the movie Interstellar.

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state Attorney General's Office, Collier brings his education program "The Perfect Storm: Battling the Prescription Drug and Heroin Epidemic" to communities throughout the state. Elias presented on behalf of the Bergen County Prevention Coalition emphasizing the scope of community collaboration needed to address the escalating substance abuse issue in Bergen County.

Heroin abuse killed 27 people in Bergen County in 2013 and caused 47 deaths so far this year. State and County concerns are shared by Ridgewood Board of Education administration. In his October 31, 2014 letter to the Ridgewood News, Ridge wood School Superintendent, Daniel Fishbein, Ed.D. encouraged parents to attend this program and emphasized that this is an issue of concern for all community members noting that "Recent news articles point to heroin's widespread availability, a reality that is putting the safety of Ridgewood children, here -to- fore considered a low-risk profile for street-drug addiction issues, at risk." He clearly

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#### News

#### Heroin

#### **Continued from page 1**

stated in his letter to the Ridgewood News that "heroin addiction can and does happen in Ridgewood.' Collier emphasized that a large part of the problem is the prescription drug industry in the United States and cautioned that the cycle of abuse generally begins in the medicine cabinet with pills like Hydrocodone, Oxycodone, Xanax, Adderall and others.

addiceroin can and does happen in Ridgewood.

specifically addressed the issue of adolescent athletes that are prescribed opioids for injury pain management, citing examples of many young people who became addicted. He cautioned the audience on how pain management was approached for adolescents and encouraged vigilant monitoring for legitimate prescriptions. He explained that the opioids are highly addictive and that users quickly turn to heroin for a cheaper version of the same high. Collier estimates the street cost of a heroin fix at approximately \$10. He also highlighted that the onset of addiction is swift with the highly pure version of heroin sold in New Jersey. This heroin is 45 - 76% pure, compared to the 30% national average for heroin purity. According to Collier, heroin was 5-10% pure in the 1970s.

Elias joined Collier in emphasizing the importance of education and reiterated his remarks that Bergen County could not arrest its way out of this crisis. Elias emphasized the changing profile of the heroin addict. explaining that heroin is no longer a back alley drug. The stereotype that people who abuse heroin are typically deviants with bad upbringings or high school drop-outs is no longer relevant. The reality she explained is that the majority of substance abusers are just like everyone else. Elias directly addressed the culture of drug use in high school and middle school communities. While she was clear to say that alcohol and marijuana use do not always lead to heroin use she also stated that all heroin addicts began their drug experience as abusers of alcohol and marijuana. Her prevention message was aimed at stopping kids from moving on the continuum of using from experimentation to addiction by stop-

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### Administrators

#### **Desiree Bottigliero** staff writer

Administrators play a significant role in the way a school functions. They are crucial to maintaining balance and organizing educational objectives. Although school is only in session for less than 10 months, administrators work for approximately 12 months. Dr. Gorman stated that as principal, of Ridgewood High School his obligations vary every day. He has meetings every hour consisting of budgeting, expenses, field trips, technology, as well as meeting with teachers and personnel. In order to stay connected with what is happening in classrooms, he conducts observations at least three times a week, speaking to the teacher before and after. He consistently sends and receives emails, calls parents, meets with teachers and the administrators, and deals with both day to day and long term problems.

Dr. Gorman stated that he enjoys staying connected to the students and forming relationships with them. He tries to greet students at different doors every morning, pop into a classroom, sparking conversations with the students while he walks through the hallways.

Mr. Nyhuis is Vice-Principal at Ridgewood High School. As an administrator, he conducts about seventy observations throughout the year (a large jump from a previous total of forty in past years) to get a better view of what is happening in the classrooms. He is the Instructor of the Guidance, Curriculum, and Instruction Department. He oversees student scheduling, college counseling and admissions counseling, questions about college credits, state education and graduation requirements, as well as exchange students. Mr. Nyhuis is also the head of Curriculum and Instruction, meaning that he oversees the entire course catalog and goes over new courses that are presented. Along with this, he also looks over the Intervention and Referral Service which means that any teacher can refer a student for intervention if they see fit to help the student.

Mr. Nyhuis' favorite thing about his job is the students. He stated that the ability to form relationships with student is an important part of his job. He utilizes his position as advisor for multiple clubs to connect with students. He is the advisor for the Ping Pong Club and the Young Republicans. Mr. Nyhuis also conducts the Principal Advisors group which vigorously searches for solutions to problems students deal with and develop superior techniques to benefit students. Another aspect of his job that relates to students involves his position as Freshman Focus Advisor. It is very important to him that he makes time in his day for the students.

Mr. Pizzuto is also a Vice-Princi pal. He is the head of Student Services which consists of the services outside of academics and regular administration. He oversees clubs, school safety, fire drills, and lockdowns. Like the other administrators, Mr. Pizzuto performs observations, his totalling up to 50 observations a year. He assists in policy creation and adherence to those policies. His primary focus is school environment and he oversees all disciplinary actions. Mr. Pizzuto is in charge of Student Government with assistance from Mrs. Yannone. Student Government provides input on making school improvements, school functions, dances, and prom. He meets with the Home School Association often, listening to ideas and trying to make them happen. Along with this, Mr. Pizzuto is available for parents who are having troubles with their child(ren). As a Grade Advisor (for class of 2016),

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#### **RHS Honors Veterans**

#### Victoria Seremetis staff writer

The halls of RHS were donned with red, white, and blue as students and faculty welcomed U.S. Military veterans to the school on November 14. This event allows veterans to share their experiences with students and faculty. The program included a breakfast in the Campus Center, a musical performance in the Little Theater, and a video montage. The veterans who attended included Sean Kober, Jack Byrne, Bob Paoli, Jack Bartley, Jack Geraghly, Matt Bombace, Jim Leonard, Sean Flanagan, Bill Carbone, Chris Stout, Jamal Braithwaite, and Jessica Bombace.

The idea for the Veteran's Day breakfast, as well as other activities, formed two years ago as a way for RHS to better acknowledge this national holiday. The objective was to unify a wide range of students and faculty as well as reach out into the Ridgewood community. As a result, RHS reached out to the local VFW and American Legion to invite veterans, the Foods Club was assigned to cook the breakfast, the RHS choirs to give a musical performance, RHS TV to film the event, and Project Interact club to supervise fundraising. Veterans shared war experiences, and explained why

they served in the military. A local amateur historian was contacted, and he then researched what students from RHS served. There was such a positive reaction from the first breakfast that it became an annual event. As said by Mr. Domville, "first and foremost it's about the veterans and there are so many staff behind the scenes it is by no means one person making this happen. It's the least we can do."

As a way to give to the Veteran community, students and faculty gave donations to a fundraiser for Homes for Troops. This organization's purpose is to build or modify homes for veterans, specifically those who have disabilities. The fundraiser was conducted by Project Interact Community Service club. The idea for donating to this organization was suggested three years ago, when a Mahwah high school student put forth an effort to the organization, which then spread to Pascack Valley and later Ridgewood.

The event was said to be an informative and fulfilling event. According to US Veteran's Administration figures, approximately 555 World War II veterans are passing away each day, and in 2010 the last World War I veteran passed away. The Veteran's Day Breakfast and fundraising are just some ways to recognize these heroes.



Veterans share their experiences at the annual RHS event held in their honor.

## **RHS Drug Testing Policies**

#### Joseph O'Keefe staff writer

The Ridgewood Board of Education is taking a proactive approach to drug concerns. The District wellness curriculum provides comprehensive student education on the issue, as do frequent speakers to the high school community. Counselors are available to students at both the middle school and high school level. Dr. Fishbein explained in his letter to the Ridgewood News that Ridgewood does send students out for drug testing if their behavior raises the suspicion of substance abuse. Furthermore he explained that Ridgewood was joining many other local communities that bring in the local K-9 unit to inspect school facilities, specifically high school student lockers. In a separate letter to the RHS community Drs. Fishbein and Gorman explained the protocol for lockdown emergency drills and announced their request for the Bergen County Canine Unit to conduct a K-9 police searches for drugs as well as explosives during an unannounced drill. Any positive findings will be handled by RHS administration and the Ridgewood police in accordance with New Jersey statute. RHS experienced a lockdown drill and canine search of this nature on November 12.

Dr. Fishbein specifically indi-

cated that Ridgewood was not taking the approach of monitoring students through the use of random drug testing. While many local communities have adopted a random drug testing policy, the adoption of such strategies has proven to be extremely controversial throughout the nation. About 14 percent of school districts nationwide have drug testing policies, according to a July 2010 U.S. Department of Education Report "The Effectiveness of Mandatory – Random Student Drug Testing." Locally, in 2013, the Northern Valley district was embroiled in a lengthy and divisive community debate on this subject that grew so intense that it was covered by the national media. Ultimately the Northern Valley Board of Education defeated the proposal. Certain Supreme Court decisions in do allow public schools to randomly test students participating in athletics and other activities.



Hypodermic needles are used to inject some drugs.

#### News

#### Administrators

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he is also available for students regarding guidance or just to talk. Additionally, Mr. Pizzuto is the supervisor for the GA's (Grade Advisors). He attends Freshman Focus classes as another way to form relationships with students. Mr. Pizzuto's reason for being an assistant to the Principal is the ability to help students and interact with them. Even if he can not specifically help a student with their needs, he can guide them to the right place. This is what makes Mr. Pizzuto want to come to work everyday.

Dr. Fishbein was asked about what his job consists of and how he connects with students. He said, "As superintendent, students are further away, mak-

In a nutshell, the Board of Education is responsible for writing and approving policies providing guidance on how the district operates and is managed...

ing it difficult to connect with them." He does connect with students through various committees. Listening to students on the committees allows him to examine what is occurring and discover problems burdening them. He is then able to attain solutions to those student problems. Dr. Fishbein tries to orchestrate classroom observations and reach out to students on a regular basis. He oversees business, human resources, tech report, and training department.

Ms. Brogan was asked about the Board of Education's obligations and responsibilities. Ms. Brogan responded, "In a nutshell, the Board of Education is responsible for writing and approving policies providing guidance on how the district operates and is managed; provide for a high quality instructional program by establishing policy, allocating funds, approving staff appointments, and approving curriculum; provide oversight to make sure that the district is run well; and provide for effective two-way communication between the Board and administration as well as between the Board and the community. These responsibilities require us to monitor student achievement, develop annual district goals, oversee the district budget, and serve on a wide array of committees to foster open communication with all of our stakeholders.

Ms. Brogan also said that "being a member of the Board of Education and serving the Ridgewood community is an honor. My favorite part of this volunteer position is interacting with our students and celebrating their many accomplishments, whether it be through academics or through extracurricular activities. The Ridgewood Public Schools system have an amazingly school district with supportive parents, a talented staff, students excited to learn, and a community that values education. A win-win formula that upholds our tradition of excellence."

Every administrator shares the same common interest in their occupations, the students. Over and over again, each administrator stressed how important the students were to them. They emphasized that the most meaningful and fulfilling part of their job consists of assisting and guiding the students as well as forming a relationship with them.

#### Teen Leads

#### David Caiafa staff writer

Last year, the Ridgewood Board of Education started a pilot program to involve Ridgewood High School students in local government.

After the successes of the first year of the program, the board decided to run the Teen Leads program for a second year under the advisory of the history teacher Mr. Yannone. This year, however, the program is being done a little bit differently. Last year a project was given to members of the club by the Mayor Aronsohn. The group was asked to conduct research to try and figure out why voter participation in local election was so low, and propose some solutions for the issue. Members of the club conducted surveys and went through decades of tow election report before eventually making a presentation about the conclusions they made.

This year, the students of Teen Leads will come up with their own area of study and recommend ways to make progress and change things within that subject. The students have also been asked to use this research to figure out how Ridgewood should change in order to keep up with the constantly advancing nature of society.

The goal of the program is for students to get a sense of what it is like to work in local government. The group recently went on their government day trip, where the students met the leaders of local government, and then went to the education centers to speak to the superintendent as well as Ridgewood Education Association representative Mr. Yannone. The Teen Leads program will also visit Valley Hospital to learn about the medical field and the challenges they face due to recent major changes in health care involving the Affordable Care Act.

After that, the Teen Leads students will look at Ridgewood arts and culture to understand the aesthetic side of the Ridgewood community as well as its community culture. Students will then look at environmental, planning, and economic development to learn about how the town has to budget itself and organize its space. This is all to help guide students to pick a problem that the town government has, research it, and propose a solution.

The visits the Teen Leads program takes are also a key difference from last year's program. Last year, students went on the hospital and government day trips, but also went to the police station and Bergen County Jail on another day. Another trip the Students made last year was to the Ridgewood Education Center and an Englewood pre-school to learn about education.

To contrast, this year's program is more streamlined than last year's because the trips are designed specifically to help students come up with ideas for their mayor's challenge.

Whereas last year's were designed to give students a full outlook of local government, the Teen Leads group is currently split into four groups, a youth culture group to investigate the programs that the town offers for teens in the community, demographics and diversity to see the different types of people that live in Ridgewood and how they can be helped by the town, a group that investigates the impact of technology on the Ridgewood and how the town can adapt, and a group focusing on fiscal responsibility to see how the town can most cost effectively help their population.

These groups will all work together to propose a solution on how to change the town of Ridgewood for the better. The group will propose its solution in front of the town sometime this coming May.

#### **DECA Conference**

#### Jamie Inlander staff writer

This year, Ridgewood DECA has become involved in a myriad of events. They attended a field trip to Picatinny, NJ called COLT, where a speaker talked about the importance of good leadership. A member from The Seeing Eye Foundation came and spoke about the jobs of a dog in the profession. This year DECA chapters, including the Ridgewood chapter, are raising money for The Seeing Eye. Ridgewood DECA is selling ceramic and acrylic customized dog bowls, and the money goes towards training the dogs.

The next upcoming event for the RHS DECA chapter is the Washington DC Power Trip from November 21-23. At this conference, speakers will cover areas on curriculum and instructional content that support-preparing students for college and careers, and connects the conference content to the classroom. This conference is mainly designed to prepare students for different aspects of the business world, and get them comfortable with networking.

After this, DECA will attend the Regional conference on January 7 at Ramapo College. This is the first competitive event for the DECA chapters, and students will be given ten minutes to prepare a strategy to solve the issue they are presented with in their respective categories. The events at Regionals range from first year DECA members' "principals" events, to singular events, partner events, and pre-prepared events with posters. These events are compet-

itive, and each person in an individual events has ten minutes to prepare a solution to a problem relevant to his or her category, and ten minutes to present his or her solution to a judge. Once the Regional conference is completed, the top seventeen students from individual events, and the top seven from partner events will move onto the state conference in Cherry Hill, NJ. In addition to the students who advanced in their categories, students who wrote either eleven or thirty page papers present them. The papers vary from entrepreneurship papers, research papers, and papers involving fundraising and assisted by the entire school chapter. The amount of students who move on from each event varies for each category, but the ones who move on will end up at the International Career Development Conference in Orlando, Florida. At this conference, the final students who have made it all the way through work strenuously to earn a place as national DECA champions.

Last year's national competition was held in Atlanta, Georgia. Over 17,000 members of the DECA community attended, and it was an overall excellent experience for everyone. Ridgewood took around thirty people, which is considered an impressive amount among DECA chapters. Ridgewood DECA has recently become even more active, bringing even more students on each field trip than previous years. With the preparation and dedication students are showing, we hope Ridgewood DECA experiences even more success than it has in the past.



Ridgewood students at COLT conference

### History Bowl Tournament

### Shayna Jennings staff writer

On Saturday November 15, Seton Hall held a high school history bee and bowl tournament. Nine students from Ridgewood High School competed in the tournament: senior Ben Bechtold, juniors Minha An, Thria Bernabe, Albert Chiu, Shayna Jennings, Regina Park, Anthony Tokarz, and freshmen Gunwoo Kong and Kumail Raza.

History bowl, similar to Jeopardy, requires players to buzz in to win points for the team. Two teams play against each other at one time and both teams have at most four players. Each round has four different quarters. Toss-up questions are the most common questions and each are worth ten points. Generally, tossup questions start with obscure clues and get easier throughout the paragraph which an orator reads allowed. All the rounds have questions similar to tossup questions with slight variations.

Ridgewood sent two teams to the tournament to play in the varsity competition, and over thrity teams participated in the varsity tournament. In the five preliminary rounds, the A team went 5-0 which qualified them for Nationals, and the B team went 2-3. Both teams went into the playoffs. Although the B team got knocked out the first round of the playoffs, the A team got into the Semifinals.

In addition, Ben competed in the history bee, in which players play individually and listen to tossup questions. Ben competed well and made it into the top ten.

Mrs. Fleming, the advisor of the history bowl club, came to the tournament to cheer on the teams. She is dedicated to the club and never misses a practice. Practices are held on Tuesdays during unit lunch in room 398 and in room 204 on Thursdays after school for an hour and a half. If you are interested in joining just talk to Mrs. Fleming because, as Ben said, "[history bowl] is pretty fun!

#### **Arts & Entertainment**



# Interstellar is Absolutely "STELLAR"



#### **Spencer Muhlstock** entertainment editor

It is hard to avoid hearing about the movie Interstellar, the new epic film written and directed by Christopher Nolan that was recently released in theaters. Being a fan of Nolan's past works, which include Inception and The Dark Knight, I had very high expectations for his sci-fi journey about interstellar space travel.

When the film begins, it is revealed that planet Earth is near extinction. We are introduced to the main character, Cooper (played by Matthew McConaughey), an ex-scientist and pilot, who has two children and lives in the Midwest. Cooper stumbles upon a NASA base and is asked to go on a top-secret mission with some other scientists in order to find a new habitable planet. A newly discovered wormhole in the far reaches of the solar system allows this team of astronauts to go where no man has ever gone before, into the unknown, in search of this planet and an ultimate way of saving humanity.

As ridiculous as this idea may seem, the film is absolutely extraordinary, and as the title suggests, quite "stellar." Because of the mysterious, actionpacked and emotional plot, Interstellar made me cry, cringe, laugh and most importantly, think. My eyes were glued to the screen the entire time and to this day I have been thinking hard about the ending and the meaning behind it.



A poster for the film "Interstellar" depicting the beautiful visuals in the film.

Without spoiling anything, I will say that this movie is one of the most thought-provoking and riveting films I have ever had the honor of viewing.

Between the extravagant sets and visuals and the on-point acting skills of an incredible cast including Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hathaway, Michael Caine, and Jessica Chastain, I can easily say that I am absolutely in love with this movie. If you have not seen it yet, then you are missing out on a film that will forever be considered a "classic."

I am not the only one who has been raving about this exceptional film. In

fact, buzz has been circling around Ridgewood High School ever since it was released. I asked some fellow students what they thought of Interstellar.

"The movie was incredible," said senior Matthew Caflun. "I felt like I was there every step of the way."

Senior Cameron Hoo had an especially strong opinion on the film. "Interstellar is revolutionary. A perfect combination of thrill, drama, action, humor and love that liberates the limitations we put on human discovery and achievement. Without a doubt, the most stimulating film I've ever seen." Hoo also states that he has seen the film three times already.

"Interstellar was literally out of this world," says senior Seamus McCooe. "McConaughey's personality shines through his performance and brings you on an emotional rollercoaster that ends all too soon. It blows your mind."

Interstellar is available to view in IMAX, an advanced motion picture film format that was made for movies like this one. IMAX has the capacity to record and display films of a greater size and resolution than normal. In IMAX theaters, the viewers' experience is enhanced by better projection, a bigger screen and significantly better surround sound.

Speaking of sound, one of Interstellar's strongest aspects is its score and sound design. Hans Zimmer was

the composer, a frequent collaborator of Christopher Nolan, and his original soundtrack is phenomenal and gives the film emotion that it might have otherwise lacked. Interstellar is a perfect example of how important a film's soundtrack truly is. Aside from the soundtrack, the sound design is also something to remember.

Another special aspect about this film is the amazing sets and visuals that Christopher Nolan used. I spoke with a friend and fellow movie-lover, senior Hayes Walsh, about how Nolan pulled this off in Interstellar.

"Because Christopher Nolan uses practical effects rather than modern luxuries like CGI, he creates more realistic environments. All of the spaceship interiors and exteriors are 100% real sets for the actors to interact with. Nolan eliminated the use of green screens on this film, so even the stunning images of space were created before shooting and projected around the sets so that the actors could react to the actual effects that would be in the final cut." This is such an unusual procedure for present day film production, yet Walsh feels that it gave the film more realism and overall enhanced his viewing experience. "If something is real, it will look real, and that's why I was blown away with the visuals in the film. It's the modern day 2001: A Space Odyssey, and a must-see."

Overall, *Interstellar* is a film for the ages. It is honestly one of the greatest movie experiences that I have ever had, and I am definitely going to see it again and again until I understand the plot and meaning just as the writers do. It is a movie that says so much in such a beautiful and memorable way. Now, what are you all waiting for? Go see it. Now.



Director Christopher Nolan.



A still of Cooper (Matthew McConaughey) as he pilots the spaceship.

# First Annual New Players Cabaret at Raymond's

#### **Cathy Campo** staff writer

The New Players Cabaret night on November 16, held at Raymond's restaurant in Ridgewood was a smashing hit. Thirty acts from the New Players, all singing tunes from their musical theatre repertoires, along with a few very special performances from Raymond's staff members, filled the night with heaps of fun. This was the first ever Cabaret, and after such a success, it is sure to become an annual event.

The night was MC'd by New Players alum, Elaine Thoman, and organized by Mrs. Bohan and Mrs. Knight.

Performers ranged from brave freshman to experienced seniors who had an opportunity to show their true talent through solos, duets, and even bigger vocal groups. Highlights included the unex-

pected Vaccaro belting I Miss the Mountains from Next to Normal.

Also, the quintet, Cormac Bohan, Michael Crowe, Nina Farley, Patricia Joseph, and Kieran Power sang the hilarious My Junk from Spring Awakening with superb harmonies.

Amirah Thomas sang the haunting song Out Here on My Own from Fame.

Abby McKenna sang the comedic Shy from Once Upon a Mat-

tress, proving her talent for acting is just as amazing as her voice.

The RHS AcaBellas opened Act II with a fantastic Pat Benatar medley, whooping out all of Benatar's greatest hits, featuring the wildly talented soloists Katy Feldhahn, Julia Goodgold, Nina Farley, and Katie VanBuskirk.

Patricia Joseph busted out Summer

in Ohio from The Last Five Years, showing off her true knack for musical theatre.

Daniel Brennan, Spencer Gonzalez, Patrick Meyer, and Hayes Walsh sang and danced Walk Like a Man from Jersey Boys, almost completely replicating Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons' unique sound.

Finally Cormac and Michael



Patrick Meyer, Michael Hayes Walsh, Daniel Brennan, and Spencer Gonzalez sing the Jersey Boys' classic, "Walk Like A Man".

closed the night with an unforgettable, performance of You're Nothing Without Me from City of Angels. The performance got lots of laughs and ended the night with a bang.

Each and every performance was truly wonderful, and really put into perspective how much talent so many of the students at RHS really have

Raymond's restaurant was extremely supportive in allowing this to happen. Some of their own staff even performed a number, proving that the workers at Raymond's have talent too.

All in all, the night was extremely successful and raised a generous amount

of money for the New Players Company. Here is the long list of students who blew away the crowd with their talent:

Seniors Daniel Brennan, Hayes Walsh, Kayla Kirk, Samantha Mc-Carthy, Cormac Bohan, Nina Farley, Seamus McCooe, Katy Feldhahn, Julia Goodgold, and Erin Meyer. Juniors Amirah Thomas, Abby McKenna, and Sofia Gambardella. Sophomores Spencer Gonzalez, Patrick Meyer, Molly McCarthy, Kathryn Kearney, Maeve Montague, Hayley Tyrell, Michael Crowe, Patricia Joseph, Kieran Power, Anna Kunz, and Katie VanBuskirk. And freshmen Emily McCarthy, Catherine Marra, Ireland Horan, Julia Caltavuturo, and Sydney Herman. The RHS Acabellas performed as well.

#### **Arts & Entertainment**

# RPAC Dancers Twirl into the Holiday Spirit

#### Olivia Szymanski entertainment editor

The Ridgewood Performing Arts Center was founded in 2006 by Alexia Hess-Sheehan and Amy Armbruster, and since then the studio has put on their annual "Holiday Celebration" each December. The holiday show consists of two acts and three different sections: *The Nutcracker, Hanukkah*, and *The Night Before Christmas*. As the holiday season approaches, the RPAC Holiday Celebration is the perfect way to get into the festive spirit.

The show opens with the studio's original and iconic dance "Illuminations", which features seniors and the studio's most talented dancers. Many of the younger dancers aspire to one day be in this opening number, and are often found backstage during rehearsals, watching from behind the curtains and stumbling over themselves trying to follow the intricate moves that the older girls execute.

The first section of the show includes scenes from *The Nutcracker*, during which the famous score composed by Tchaikovsky fills the theatre and dances such as the Festival of Sweets, Spanish, Arabian, Chinese, Waltz of the Flowers are performed. *The Nutcracker* scene is always a favorite of many audience members, and it is the only scene that includes dances that are not original numbers, but rather renditions of the famous ballet which was first performed in Russia. *The Nutcracker* is now performed all



Ridgewood Performing Arts Center ballet dancers perform "Mazel tov" as part of their annual Holiday Celebration.

over the world, and the New York City Ballet is known for their production of it every year around Christmas time.

After *The Nutcracker*, the show shifts into a number of dances with a Hanukkah theme. While the majority of the show is choreographed in a typical balletic style, these dances are usually more upbeat and athletic. "Shalom" and "Sevivon" are two crowd favorites, along with "Mazel tov." Mazel tov begins as a group number, but as it progresses, each dancer gets her own solo on stage. While the dance is pre-choreographed, the dancers do have some flexibility to make the dance their own.

After intermission, the curtain opens to a narration of "Twas Night Before Christmas." The entire second act is based on the poem written by Clement Clarke Moore, and the dances are visual representations of the verses. Highlights of the second act include "Winter", which is danced to Carol of the Bells and features electric guitars in the background, which is juxtaposed by the graceful movements onstage. "Reindeer", "Santa Ballet", and "Soldiers" are also favorites, as well as many candy-themed, toy-themed, and festive numbers. The clever narration, fun music, and

talented dancers make for a great show, enjoyable by all audiences.

Not only is the show gratifying for audiences, but it is also considered one of the best times of the year by many of the dancers. Although some may think that having rehearsal every Saturday and Sunday from October to December for the same two to four dances would become tedious, the students have a very different opinion. "It's great to be able to work and improve on something that I genuinely love to do," says one RPAC dancer from Ridgewood High School. "By the time performances come around, you know you're the best you can be at your part."

The main reason students participate in the holiday show is due to their love for dance, but the performance is also a great experience of community as well. During performances, the dancers tend to spend a lot of time with each other. "My favorite part of the holiday show is rehearsals that last all day, because I get to spend the whole weekend with my friends. Cheering for people performing from backstage is also one of the best parts, because it's great to watch and support your friends while they are dancing," says Hennessy Sheehan, a junior at Ridgewood High School.

The Ridgewood Performing Arts Center Holiday Celebration will be held at Bergen Academies on Saturday, December 13. To get in the festive mood and to enjoy a variety of different types of dance, the RPAC holiday show is a definitely a great way to kick off the winter season.

# A Cappella Concert

#### Brianna Patek staff writer

A cappella fans and music lovers alike gathered at the Little Theater on Friday, November 21 at seven p.m. to experience an a cappella concert featuring a variety of singing groups, ranging in age from middle school students to college students. Ridgewood High School's very own AcaBellas and Maroon Men, which placed 4th and 5th, respectively, in the International Championships of High School a capella Mid-Atlantic (ICHSA Mid-Atlantic), performed an eclectic selection of tunes such as works by Pat Benatar, Clean Bandit, Michael Buble, and Bastille, to name a few. The George Washington Middle School Jazz Choir also made an appearance, showing the immense talent of some Ridgewood's younger students.

The main attraction of the evening was the guest group, the Boston College Bostonians. They are one of

the best co-ed collegiate a cappella groups in the country, having toured all over the US. The Bostonians have also performed on national television multiple times. Their wide-ranging repertoire has something for everyone, and therefore is always sure to please audiences of all ages and music tastes. Not only that, but one of the Bostonians' very own members is a Ridgewood High School and Aca-Bellas alumni, Meghan McCarthy.

Even those who are not familiar with the world of a cappella were still able to join the celebration on Friday night and experienced the talent of many Ridgewood High School alumni, students, and future students, who like Meghan McCarthy, may one day be singing in an elite collegiate a cappella group.

For an incredible evening of music performed by some of Ridgewood's best a capella singers, the Little Theater on November 21 at seven p.m. was definitely the place to be.



The AcaBellas, one of RHS's award winning acapella groups



The Sharing the Arts club at RHS performs The Little Mermaid.

# STA: A "Roaring" Success

#### Sofia Gambardella staff writer

Sharing the Arts at Ridgewood High School is at it again. This year, Sharing the Arts put on *The Lion King*, starring the students of Sharing the Arts and their friends at RHS.

Sharing the Arts is a non-profit program aiming to enhance the lives of people with special needs through the performing arts. It offers voice, acting, and dance classes as well as musical theatre programs at Ridgewood High School and Glen Rock High School. Volunteer programs are also offered through George Washington Middle School's community service program. Sharing the Arts students also performs at Access Ridgewood, an event to raise awareness of disabilities and celebrate the talents of individuals with disabilities. This event is so widely known that even U.S. Senator Corv Booker made an appearance last year.

Each year, students from every grade at RHS come together to share their love and knowledge of the theatre with kids of all ages with special needs. "It's really great how we can incorporate something that we all love doing and share it with others," says STA Leader Amelia Fogg. The organization has put up numerous family-

friendly productions over the years, some of the more recent ones including *Charlotte's Web*, *The Little Mermaid*, and, this year, *The Lion King*.

RHS students involved in this program are able to make a real connection with the kids they work with. Junior and STA Leader Abby McKenna says, "Seeing the faces of the kids when they walk in the door is one of the best parts of my week. Even after a long day at school, their genuine happiness causes everyone around them to be happy, too."

Senior and STA Leader Samantha McCarthy describes the effect volunteer programs have on high school students, and says, "Programs like this are great for everyone involved. While it may seem like we are helping special needs kids, they are really helping us by reminding us that we can all be excited by the same things."

This year's production of *The Lion King* was held in the Little Theatre on Tuesday, November 25 at five p.m. and seven p.m. To learn more about Sharing the Arts, and to be informed about upcoming performances and events, go to www.sharingthearts.com, or like Sharing the Arts' Facebook page. Those interested in joining Sharing the Arts should look out for the start of the four week long spring session in May, which will culminate in a performance for the RHS Celebration of the Arts event.

#### Features





# Grandma was Hit by a 694 MPH Reindeer





Poyani Bavishi features editor



The largest gingerbread man in the world is a dieter's nightmare, weighing in at a whopping 466 lbs, 6 ozs. The Gingerbread House, in Rochester, Minnesota, baked the giant cookie in February 2006

Is Santa Claus coming to town? When talking about Father Christmas, many myths come to mind. It is well known that Santa travels around the world in one single magical night in which he delivers presents to all the children of the world, eats plenty of cookies, and uses his trusty reindeer to get back home. But if Santa were a real person, what would he have to do to travel the length of the world?

Santa has approximately thirty six hours to deliver his presents, starting at the International Date Line and heading west. In that time, he must deliver something to every child in the worldwhether coal or present- that celebrates Christmas, totaling almost 526 million house visits within the night.

However, we cannot forget the amount of milk and cookies Santa supposedly stomachs on Christmas Eve. Assuming a glass of milk is on average eight fluid ounces, Santa must drink approximately 137 million gallons of milk during the night, or about 4 million gallons of milk every hour. While Santa's stomach is admittedly larger than the norm (an average human stomach holds anywhere from two to five liters), this theory is instantly shattered. And, in the U.K., where the tradition is to leave out a glass of sherry, Santa would be destined

Speaking of Santa's stomach, is it possible he can stomach the food he inhales? All signs point to no; supposedly, Santa would stack up 170 calories, fourteen grams of sugar, and eightgrams of fat for every household he visited. That eventually would add up to 374 billion calories, 33,000 tons of sugar, and 151,000 tons of fat- a sure case of late onset diabetes- by the third hour. To run off those calories, Santa would have to run for 109 centuries straight at an eight minute mile without eating, a highly unlikely pace for a man who dedicates his year to making naughty or nice lists in the North Pole.

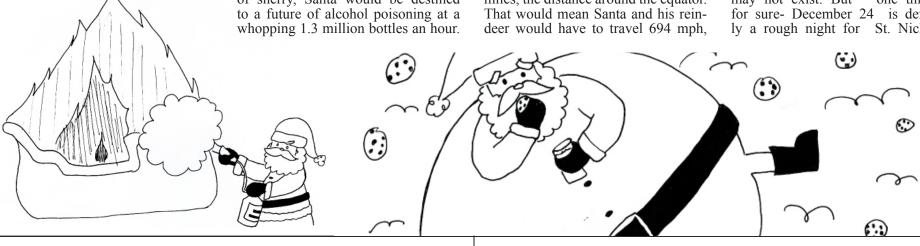
Furthermore, according to Einstein's theory of relativity, in which measurements are relative to the velocities of observers, even Earth's gravity could not help Santa in his quest. Even doubling the amount of delivery time that Santa has would require the Earth to grow to a size a thousand times more massive than the Sun, making its weight so great that it would take much longer to complete a day. At this size Earth would collapse into a black hole ... putting a significant damper on Christmas spirit.

And this is not to mention the distance that Santa covers. In thirty six hours he must cover at least 25,000 miles, the distance around the equator. getting hit with over 17,000 Gs, or over 4 million pounds of force. To put this in perspective, the average person could take 100 Gs at the very most before dying. Not to mention the incredible friction that would accompany that speed, which would make Santa and his crew combust almost immediately.

Yet another problem has to do with Santa's bag o' gifts, depicted as a simple sack in every cartoon of the mysterious man. Realisticallly, however, that bag would last Santa for around ten minutes maximum, leaving sad children around the world. Assuming there are 2.2 billion kids in the world that have been "nice" and all their presents weigh at least one ounce, that is already 2.2 billion ounces of toys to carry. Take the weight of an average Batman figure (7.2 ounces), and Santa is now hauling 500,000 tons of toys around the world. And if they have an extreme Christmas haul, Santa could have almost a million tons flying through the air.

Last but not least, Santa also must travel through several extremes of temperatures depending on where he is in the world, from the negative fifty degree Russian winters to the seventy degree night in Dubai.

On the whole, Santa may or may not exist. But one thing is for sure- December 24 is definitely a rough night for St. Nicholas.



# The Gift of Giving

#### Caroline Choi staff writer

Psychologists have proven that it is the giver, rather than the recipient, who reaps the bigger psychological gain from a gift. In a 2006 study, the National Institutes of Health found that when people give to charities, it activates regions of the brain associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust. Scientists also believe that altruistic behavior releases endorphins in the brain, producing the positive feeling known as the "helper's high."

Giving is an important part of human interaction, and it strengthens bonds with family and friends. Researchers say that people who stop giving gifts miss out on important social cues. Giving gifts also provokes humbleness and reminds people of the support and affection they have received from their peers.

Giving is contagious. It does not only help the immediate recipient of the gift, but it also spurs a ripple effect of gen-

erosity throughout one's community. Physically, giving releases oxytocin, a hormone that induces feelings of warmth, euphoria, and sociability. The Center for Neuroeconomics Studies at Claremont Graduate University found that a dose of oxytocin will cause people to give more generously and to feel more empathy towards others, with "symptoms" lasting up to two hours. Those people on an "oxytocin high" can potentially jumpstart a circle, where one person's generous behavior triggers another's. As a result each person can influence dozens or even hundreds of people, some of whom he

or she does not know and has not met.

A wide range of research has linked different forms of generosity to better health, even among the sick and elderly. Stephen Post, a professor of preventative medicine at Stony Brook University, reports that giving to others has been shown to increase health benefits in people with chronic illness, including HIV and multiple sclerosis. Stephanie Brown of the University of Michigan found that elders who provided help to friends, relatives, or neighbors, or gave emotional support to their spouses, had a lower risk of dying over a five-year period than those who did not. Researchers suggest that one reason giving may improve physical health and longevity is that it helps decrease stress, which is associated with a variety of health problems.

Giving is much more than just a chore one must partake in around the holidays. It may help someone build stronger social connections and even cause a cascade of generosity through that person's community. One will find him or herself benefiting from a big dose of happiness in the process. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.'



# The Economics of Holidays

#### **Ester Choi** staff writer

The holiday season can be the best time for buyers and sellers - or the worst. Long lines, crowded malls, and delayed shipping are a just a few inconveniences that we all face during the holidays. Holiday shopping season is critical for retailers, because twenty percent of the year's goods are sold in this short window of time. Consumers like to buy goods at discounted prices and benefit from sales.

A student taking AP Economics will learn a full theory in terms of supply and demand, however in simple terms here are two basic principles: as demand increases customers are willing to pay higher prices for scarce goods, but at the same time a seller who cuts prices will increase volume and bring in a higher profit. So how is it that we see price discounts and sales during the holiday season at the same time when consumers are buying an exorbitant amount of goods?

The main reason is the increased elasticity among consumers during the season, where buyers are more responsive to prices. Therefore, retailers with many sales and discounts will attract more customers. Additionally, retail is a very competitive industry. Companies compete with not only their brand, but also with everyone who offers substitute goods. If one toy company reduces prices, another will try to compete against the low price. What is the end result? Despite the state of the economy, shoppers in the U.S. will spend significant amounts of money on gifts and will sometimes

splurge. Not only will crowding be a problem at the malls, but the shipping and handling of online shopping has the potential to collapse with the overwhelming numbers of people.

As seen in last year's late season shipping fail, increased holiday e -retail sales might not meet expectations this year due to a surge in purchases and bad weather. Most retailers are planning ahead; that's why they urge consumers to buy presents in advance not the last Saturday before Christmas.



Youjin Park

# \*\*\* Christmas Throughout the Cen-trees \*\*\*

#### Jamie Lim staff writer

With Christmas just around the corner, holiday decorations are already on display. The radio plays the alltoo familiar tunes, window decorations are changed from pumpkins to Santa Claus, and, of course, Christmas trees are decorated and put on display for all to see. Perhaps the most popular symbols of Christmas are the beautiful evergreens that are strewn with lights and ornaments each year.

For many, the tradition of Christmas tree decorating is one that comes naturally and without thought. However, why and how did this event become a tradition? Why did someone suddenly decide to cut down a tree and garnish it to celebrate Christmas?

Today, the first modern Christmas trees are said to have surfaced in sixteenth century Germany. Simi-

Christmas was not declared an official holiday in the United States until June 26, 1870. Oklahoma was the last state to declare it official in 1907. lar to what is now done in the twenty first century, trees in public buildings and guild houses were decorated with fruits and sweets. Then, children gathered around these trees and picked off the goodies on Christmas day.

The first Christmas tree lot in the country was not opened until 1851. The custom had caught on slowly, and legend has it that in 1777, a Hessian made a prison cell in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, the site of the nation's first indoor Christmas tree. Even as late as 1851, a Cleveland minister nearly lost his job because he allowed a tree in his church.

In fact, many nineteenth century Americans found Christmas trees an oddity. The first record of one being on display was in the 1830s by the German settlers of Pennsylvania, although trees had been a tradition in many German homes much earlier. The Pennsylvania German settlements had community trees as early as 1747. But, as late as the 1840s, Christmas trees were seen as pagan symbols and not accepted by most Americans.

The Christmas tree market was born in 1851, when Catskill farmer Mark Carr hauled two ox sleds of evergreens into New York City and sold them all. This event marked the opening of the first tree lot in Manhattan at the old Washington Market in present day TriBeCa. By 1900, one in five American families had a Christmas tree. In twenty years, the custom was nearly universal.

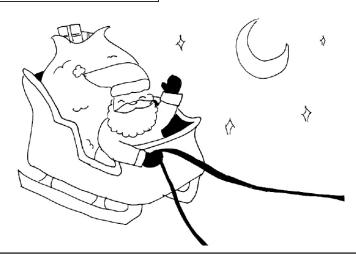
Later, Christmas trees sprung up during the Depression. Since nurserymen, or workers in a plant or tree industry, could not sell their trees for landscaping, they cut them for Christmas trees instead. Cultivated trees were preferred because they had a more symmetrical shape than wild ones.

As for decorating the trees, Protestant reformer Martin Luther is credited for being the first to decorate a tree with burning candles. One Christmas Eve, he was walking through snow-covered woods and was struck by the beauty of a group of small evergreens. When he got home, he set up a little fir tree indoors so he could share this story with his children. He decorated it with candles, which he lighted in honor of Christ's birth.

Globally, decorating and putting up Christmas trees has long since been an event that is eagerly looked forward to. Interestingly enough, different regions of the world have their own way of celebrating this tradition. In Spain, a tree trunk is filled with goodies, and children hit the trunk trying to knock out hazelnuts, almonds, toffee, and other treats. In the Philippines, handmade trees in an array of colors and sizes are used, one in every window.

Although Christmas trees have not always symbolized joy and festivities, the tradition has evolved to become a worldwide symbol of celebration. The tradition remains a staple of the holiday in America, and with its long winded history, the Christmas tree represents much more than the presents and lights around it; it now stands for celebration and love within.

Spinnning the dreidel was originally done by students illegally studying the Torah. When Greek soldiers would make a surprise raid, students would whip out a dreidel, pretending to play a gambling game.



# Nguza Saba: The History of Kwanzaa

Anthony Tokarz opinion editor

Kwanzaa, the first holiday created specifically for African-Americans, is a week long celebration with the stated aim of offering Africans a chance to celebrate themselves and their history. It begins on December 26 and ends on January 1. It was created in 1965 by Maulana Karenga, who was determined to "give Blacks an alternative to the existing holidays and to give Blacks an opportunity to celebrate themselves and their history, rather than simply imitate the practice of the dominant society." The holiday's festive activities conclude with a celebrative feast with gift-giving and other community activities.

The name is derived from a Swahili phrase meaning "first fruits of the harvest." This corresponds with the Pan-African flavor of the holiday. Swahili is the African language that was most prevalent in East Africa during the time of the Atlantic Slave Trade. At this time, millions of Africans were brought to the United States.

Statistics reveal that the popularity of the holiday can be attributed to the basis of this history. In 2011, two million citizens of the United States celebrated Kwanzaa. Many of those who celebrate Kwanzaa also celebrate Christmas. This demonstrates that Kwanza is not an alternative holiday for many people. Kwanzaa grew out of the fledgling Black Civil Rights

Movements that took place in the 1960s.

Kwanzaa creator, Karenga participated in Civil Rights organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The early supporters of Kwanzaa saw it as more than just a holiday. They saw the potential in Kwanzaa to reimagine the African identity and to bring the members of the African diaspora together within a framework of peace and equality. To evoke pride and unity, Kwanzaa is an attempt to provide persons of African lineage with the tools to reconnect with their historical and cultural heritage.

Kwanzaa supports the African communitarian philosophy known as *Nguza Saba*. Here is a list of its principles: Umoja: To build unity in the fam-

ily, community, nation, and race. Kujichagulia: To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.

Ujima - To make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems, and to solve them together.

Ujamaa: To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia: To restore our peo-

Nia: To restore our people to their traditional greatness. Kuumba: To leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani: To believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.



# RECIPE FOR AUSTRIAN CHOCOLATE BALLS

Ingredients

Glaze:

1 oz. unsweetened chocolate 1 Tbs. butter 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract 1 cup powdered sugar 11/2-2 Tbs. milk

Cookies:

2 oz. unsweetened chocolate 1/2 cup butter 1 cup sugar 1 egg (white and yolk) 1/2 teaspoon vanilla 1 1/3 cup flour 1 cup walnuts

Recipe courtesy of Haley Driscoll



Directions

For the Glaze:

Melt the chocolate and the butter. Remove mixture from heat. Mix together vanilla, sugar, and milk together in a medium sized bowl. Add the chocolate and butter to the mixture.

#### For the Cookies:

Melt the chocolate and butter together. Remove from heat once fully melted. In a separate bowl, combine sugar, the egg, and vanilla extract. Add the melted mixture to the bowl. Stir together and add the flour and walnuts. Roll the dough into 3/4 inch balls and place them onto an ungreased baking sheet. Make sure to keep them each one inch apart. Bake at 350 degrees (F) for 8 to 12 minutes, until they are done. Set the cookies out to cool, and then dip the tops into the glaze and let the finished cookies dry completely be-fore eating.

#### **Opinion**

# Learning Commons: A Common Blessing or Curse?

Desiree Bottigliero staff writer

The Learning Commons finally opened last month. The facility permits students to openly discuss group projects, allows more students to utilize the space, and benefits students in many other ways.

In the former library, occupants were constantly shushed for speaking. This caused major problems for high school students who needed to work on collaborative projects since ideas must be discussed. The Learning Commons resolved this issue by creating conference rooms to allow students to speak to one another and share ideas freely without any concern for disturbing others. One might say that group projects can be done somewhere else after school lets out, but many Ridgewood High School students participate in one or more extracurricular activity. Since these activities have different schedules, students more likely have conflicting schedules, barring after-school work times. Fortunately the Learning Commons also has extended hours, opening at 7:15 a.m. and closing at 4:15 p.m., whereas it closed at 3:15 in the past. This extra hour provides extra time in a study-friendly environment for students who need it.

The former library consisted of a seating capacity for about 100 students, however, students often could not find seating. This problem prohibited a large amount of students from utilizing the facility during lunch hours, since the space would always be full once they reached the doors. The Learning Commons doubled the seating capacity as well as allowed for the furniture to be used flexibly, for any type of use. This frees more students to utilize the Learning Commons during lunch or free periods, which is the optimal time to complete research, homework, or just find a good book and relax.

Finally, the design of the Learning Commons is beneficial in various ways. More study cubicles are provided for those who need solitude and quiet to concentrate,

complete work or study. When planning the design and purpose of the Learning Commons, technology became a major element. Outlets are available in every wall for charging personal devices, especially the new Chromebooks for the 1:1 initiative. Television monitors are positioned on the walls to provide news stations for students to watch. Also, the conference rooms contain whiteboards for different uses in which students can map out projects or show a presentation to a group of teachers. The Learning Commons is also environmentally friendly because the grey chairs positioned throughout the facility are made from recycled coke bottles. In this way, the Learning Commons places emphasis on functionality, benefitting students in many more ways than providing a place to study.

One can only be amazed at everything the new Learning Commons offers. The facility provides a space for students to share ideas and work on group projects, grants more students with the ability to utilize the space with doubled seating capacity, which benefits the student body in various ways.

Minha Lee opinion editor

With the ribbon cut to the newly opened Learning Commons, the newest addition to Ridgewood High School is having to manage with a high volume of student traffic everyday and is continuing the school's evolution into a more technologically-acute institute. But past the good publicity and the new, "new-age" image the school can boast, do students truly find the grand investment towards the new Learning Commons worth the trouble? Student responses, however varied, mostly lean toward a "no."

New furniture, spaces, and an eerily quiet atmosphere that now hangs about the Learning Commons is undeniably a facelift from the crowded and noisy library the school has managed with over the years, but some changes a strike negative tone with students. One student points out that despite the addition of new conference rooms, collaborative tendencies have dropped, due to suboptimal furniture for group work. While perhaps

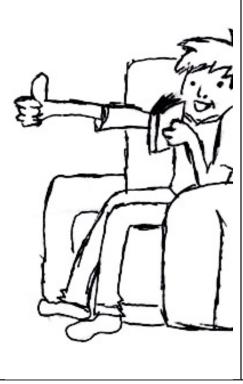
a scheme against densely populated tables, which as any library-goer knows is where the loudest, most shush-inducing chatter originates, it is a detractor for students who utilize the space for group work, because according to some students, "anywhere else just feels weird."

With the students' interests in mind, the school added more individual study cubicles, allowing for greater concentration by placing them facing the wall, but some students who do not want to be isolated question the placement of television monitors that seem to "display nothing but pictures of the new Commons." Though its purpose has been loosely related to that of the equally questionable television monitors in the cafeteria which play news on mute, some students did not hesitate to call it "annoying."

The biggest nuisance about the new Commons, students claim, is its complete lack of printers. Despite massive efforts to jump into the digital era, there is nothing quite like writing physical notes and reading ink on paper, which is why some students still use the school library as their number-one source for printing for lack of a better option. Though upgraded to a much more silent and manageable model, one printer simply cannot satiate the entire student body's daily printing needs and with its single printer reputation, more students are looking for alternative printers all over the school building, scrambling for teacher permission to access it from their rooms and offices.

When asked the seemingly obvious question "What changed about the library?", a surprising majority replied with "Nothing" or "Just aesthetics," elaborating there was never anything wrong with the old library. But that did not stop students from chiming in their own opinions about where else the money should have gone, from a 1:1 Macbook initiative to investments towards a renewed and rebuilt auditorium.

Though the new Learning Commons provides added conveniences, the change is akin to getting escalators: for many of the students at RHS, stairs are just fine.





# The Trans-Pacific Partnership - Is It Really Free Trade?

**Anthony Tokarz opinion editor** 

President Obama attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Convention on November 12, 2014, at which the United States and its regional allies in the Asia-Pacific discussed policies that will shape the course of history. The media has, as of late , fixated on climate issues, specifically the United States and China's joint pledge to reduce carbon emissions. However, the media excluded from mention the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed free-trade agreement which will upend free-trade as America knows it by altering US domestic policy for political expediency abroad. The TPP opposes America's best

The TPP opposes America's best interests. This free-trade agreement has been termed the "cornerstone of the Obama Administration's economic policy in the Asia Pacific," but flaws discovered in its drafts, which were leaked to WikiLeaks, have turned public opinion against it. President Obama touts the TPP as the key to Pacific Rim nations' economic and social dominance of the technology-driven future. It calls

for the abolition of tariffs between the US and its allies in the Asia-Pacific, at the cost of bigger government and high costs for Americans.

Democrats and Republicans alike take chief interest in the secrecy with which President Obama has shrouded the agreement and its terms. Many public policy groups, such as Public Citizen and the Electronic Frontier Foundation, find suspicious the lack of congressional and public oversight regarding the proposition, and claim that private interest groups- especially those dealing in commodities such as rice, wheat, meat, dairy, and sugar- play too major a part in the agreement's drafting. In fact, corporations based in the nations falling under the TPP's jurisdiction have access to the text of the agreement and will surely use this to assert their own best interests.

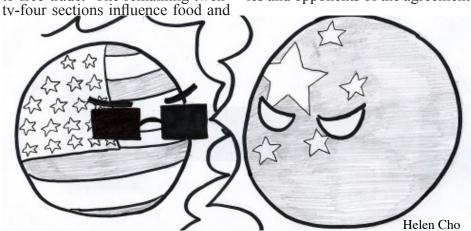
The controversy has been exacerbated by President Obama's vocal calls for Congress to grant him Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), which puts a completed proposition on a so-called "fast track" to Congress, where it will await acceptance or rejection without any change to its contents or the ad-

dition of any amendments. Critics say that Obama's insistence on claiming the TPA belies the tradeagreements detrimental effects on the United States economy. However, only Congress itself can grant President Obama that authority. Given the recent Republican takeover of Congress, this does not seem likely. In fact, Democratic senators have spurned granting Obama that power, going so far as to describe the Obama Administration as less transparent than the much-vilified Bush Administration.

The TPP contains twenty-nine sections, only five of which pertain to free-trade. The remaining twenty-four sections influence food and

environmental standards, transform intellectual property and patent rights, and make pharmaceutical drugs more expensive. The Electronic Frontier Foundation takes particular issue with the TPP's transforming Internet Service Providers into enforcement agents of intellectual property rights.

Nonetheless, the TPP still has a long way to go. The United States and China cannot agree on key issues, while nations such as Australia and Japan toe the middle ground. President Obama's chances of passing the agreement grow slimmer each day, to the delight of his critics and opponents of the agreement.



#### **Opinion**

## Why Teachers Should Wear the Students' Shoes for a Day

#### **Emily Stern staff writer**

"I waited fourteen years to do something that I should have done my first year of teaching: shadow a student for a day. It was so eye-opening that I wish I could go back to every class of students I ever had right now and change a minimum of ten things – the layout, the lesson plan, the checks for understanding. Most of it!" This is how veteran teacher Alexis Wiggins began her report, which she posted to an education-oriented blog in October.

Wiggins shadowed students as an introduction to her new advisory position at the school. She spent her first day with a sophomore and her second with a senior. She followed the students' exact schedules, sat through their teachers' lectures, took notes, and did her nightly homework. Wiggins also conducted follow-up interviews with the students, who confirmed that her experience was reflective of a typical school day.

What were her biggest takeaways? First of all, that "students sit all day, and sitting is exhausting." It may not seem as though teachers would need an experiment like Wiggins' to come to that conclusion. Most teachers are probably aware that students sit for much of the day. They may not realize, however, how draining this proves to students. Teachers wonder why they often meet with disengaged and disinterested classes and why they fail to engage such classes. Wiggins writes that she was so exhausted upon getting home after school that instead of doing her homework, all she could do was eat on the couch and watch TV.

Also, Wiggins learned that "high school students are sitting passively and listening during approximately 90% of their classes." Ask a random student in the hallway about the last time he or she spent a class walking around, involved in a simulation or activity. One might respond, "Does my lab count?" or "Last quarter, I think." When teachers do implement such activities, students may be enthused. They may also be too tired to put in enough effort to inspire the teacher to schedule more 'fun' activities. Surely, the best teachers work to make their class one to which students can look forward to. Unfortunately, students cannot always live up to the expectations of their teachers, or vice versa.

Furthermore, Wiggins remarked that students feel like a

nuisance all day long", when they are told to sit down to be quiet, or to pay attention. Everyone who has gone to school can attest to this. Whether the teacher is having a frustrating day, or the students are smothering under the weight of their stress, high school cultivates an environment that often puts people at odds with one another. Is it a teacher's job, Wiggins asked herself, to be patient and understanding? Or are students obligated to "suck it up" and stay focused?

Students may smirk bitterly in response to these realizations. Ridgewood High School students would most likely respond with exasperated nods or sarcastic praise. Should students rejoice and exclaim, "At last our complaints have been acknowledged!" or should they ask, "Why are our teachers only realizing this now?"

Students must remember that teachers were also once high school students. Most have not forgotten what it feels like. Those who have should learn from Wiggins and reimmerse themselves in the feeling. It is hard for teenagers to sympathize with their teachers, so they vilify and blame them for their own shortcomings. Conversely, teachers cannot expect to under-

stand their students without comprehending their points of view.

Perhaps the rift in understanding between teenagers and adults in high school is not worth anyone's concern. Students need to realize that, for the most part, their teachers are adults who know what they are doing. They may not all be good at their jobs, but students cannot hold their teachers to a standard that they themselves do not meet. Teachers, on the other hand, may be adults, but that does not guarantee their perfection. Most educators would probably admit that they could learn something from shadowing a student for a day.

There is no clear solution to the issues on which Wiggins reports. She suggests classroom reforms, including stretch breaks and more patience for students with questions. Wiggins concludes her article, which has been reprinted by the Washington Post, by saying that "Teachers work hard, but I now think that conscientious students work harder." This simple shift in mindset can improve daily life at school by leading each party to understand the other's perspective. Wiggins has set a goal toward which Ridgewood High School, its faculty and students, must work.



# It's Not About You. Really: A Feminism Misconception

### Ana McDade staff writer

The Oxford English Dictionary simply defines the word "feminist" as, "An advocate or supporter of the rights and equality of women." Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian writer who has won countless awards for her publications, refines the definition of "feminist" in her "We Should All Be Feminists" speech, to "A person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes." These ideas have worked themselves into popular culture to wide appeal. Part of Adichie's speech was even featured in Beyoncé's hit song Flawless.

In the last issue of this publication, there was an article titled "Feminism: A Phenomenon of First-World Privilege?" The male author took the viewpoint that has popularly been labeled 'not all men'. He finds issue in that many American feminists are generalizing men, and vilifying them for causing the oppression women face worldwide every single day. He also found it unfair of American women to 'complain', considering there are women around the world that face much more unjust treatments everyday. This article was received negatively in my peer group, and I am unable to let it go by without expressing my own view.

The first step is to not generalize feminists, as the author himself does. The article's author used the generalization made by men about feminists to define "feminist" as "...the label given to women who believe there is an oppres-

sive inequality between the genders, which places men in a higher social standing than women and in that thus prevents women from rising in rank."

But there *is* an inequality between the genders. According to the Department of Labor, women on average make seventy seven cents to every dollar a man makes. The number of women in Congress has only just reached hundred last month. The United States continues to rank eighty-fifth among the world's nations with the most women in government. Rwanda, a thirdworld Sub-Saharan nation, ranks first.

The writer accepts as fact a major misconception about feminists. He assumed that women feminists are trying to 'rise in rank' above men. Feminism is not a competition. The goal is not to rise above men. A feminist stands for the equality of both genders. The objective of feminists – who by the way, are not just women - is to grant all people equal rights, regardless of one's gender, race, sexuality, economic class, etc. Feminists argue that all people should be considered equal, and that being born with two X chromosomes should not disqualify a person from fair and equal access their human rights. Yet it too often does.

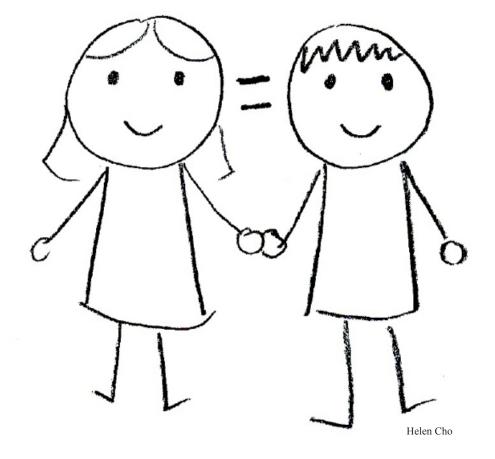
Feminism is not a luxury, as the author of the article suggested. Nothing about it is luxurious; the stigma behind the word prevents it from being so. It is a universal movement, a movement against the system that allows white men to reap undeserved benefits, granted only by the fact of their appearance.

This is clearly an example of white male privilege. Feminism does not try to vilify or threaten a specific man.

A goal of feminism is to eradicate the inequality of the sexes worldwide. Whether that is in Ridgewood, New Jersey or in Pakistan, as the author suggested, oppression should not exist. It is unfair to discount the problems American women face. While the extremes of how women are treated

depend on their culture and other factors, the oppression of women, just because they are women, is universal.

Throughout history, women have been considered the weaker sex, and everyone – regardless of gender – should support the movement of equal opportunity for all. So why are we still making feminism about men? Hate to break the news, but it's not about you. Really.



#### **Sports**

# Ridgewood Wrestlers Expect Success This Season

#### Jamie Inlander staff writer

This year's wrestling season is set to begin on November 24. Recovering from the loss of nine seniors, all of whom were starters, there were an abundance of spots to fill on the lineup. Luckily for Ridgewood, there are multiple key wrestlers expected to benefit the team. Nick Saglimbeni, Julian Bangash, Robby Tarvin, and Kyle Inlander will be leading the team this season, and will hopefully help the team in its victories. The team is also looking forward to the talent of freshman Jack Trevisan, wrestling in the 106-pound weight class.

With the preseason preparation and hard work, the team should achieve the titles of District Six champions, North One champions, Group Four champions, and Mount Olive tournament champions. These are four of the major tournaments that Ridgewood intends to win over the course of the season. The upcoming schedule is "decent; a normal Group Four schedule, but since the groups got realigned there

might be some new teams," according to varsity captain Kyle Inlander. The new opponents Ridgewood could potentially wrestle include Morris Knolls and Passaic Valley. The toughest matches this season will be against Northern Highlands, Watchung Hills, Hackensack, North Bergen, and Clifton. These matches have been difficult in previous years and are expected to remain tough competitors throughout this season. There are no new tournaments that Ridgewood is wrestling in this season, but counties and regionals "will be a struggle," Kyle predicts. If all goes well, Nick and Kyle hope to place in states. Nick intends on breaking the 100 wins mark this season.

Jamie stated that his personal favorite tournament was the Districts tournament, because the competition is not as intense. Personally, he hopes to win the Mount Olive Tournament, Counties, Districts, Regions, all of his dual matches, as well as place in States. Ridgewood High School wishes the best of luck to the wrestling team this season.

We are excited to excel this season and set the bar higher for Ridgewood Wrestling -Kyle Inlander, Varsity Captain



Members of the wrestling team pose in the halls of RHS (Vincenzo Vaccarella, Julian Bangash, Kyle Inlander, and Robbie Tarvin).

# Sports RHS Students Want to See 14 12 10 8 6 4 2 Ultimate Badminton Synchronized Rock Climbing Quidditch Frisbee Swimming

Rock climbing is the most popular sport that Ridgewood students want to see.

Badminton and Quidditch come behind as second and third.

# Five Sports that Should Exist at RHS

#### Helen Cho media specialist

Although Ridgewood High School offers many, many sports to its students, there are a few sports that perhaps the school has overlooked. These are not the most mainstream sports, but they are just as fun and engaging.

Ultimate frisbee is as energetic and gripping as any sport can get. Sure, this sport is often associated with middle school gym class, but there is a certain thrill in snapping a frisbee so hard that it is almost as if your wrist got whiplash. And, since ultimate frisbee is fairly simple and easy to play (the reason why its a popular sport among middle school gym students), it would be ideal for people looking for an athletic outlet without knowing how to play other sports.

Badminton is a bit like tennis, except all of the equipment is smaller, lighter and, most importantly, cuter. It takes a little while to get used to hitting and serving an almost weightless birdie as opposed to a heftier ball. However, once that is mastered, badminton can be an incredibly fun game.

This one might seem a little ridiculous, but synchronized swimming is like a hardcore version of underwater dancing! The choreography as well as the physical elements in synchronized swimming are very demanding. Additionally, only synchronized swimmers get to wear specially decorated swim caps.

The rock climbing walls outside of the school do not see much action after school, which could be helped with RHS's own rock climbing team. As Project Adventure students know, rock climbing is definitely not an individual effort.

So, why not make it an official team? Rock climbing is an intense physical and mental experience. It pushes comfort zones and tests bodily limits, yet the exhilaration of making it to the top and feeling safe all the while with a trustwor-

thy team belaying below is worth it.

Anyone who has read the *Harry* Potter series has secretly been waiting for their letter from Hogwarts. Well, that day may never come, but here is the next best thing: Quidditch for muggles (humans). In the Harry Potter series, Quidditch is a complex team sport played on flying brooms. Since flying brooms are not in the school budget, RHS will have to settle for normal ones. For us humans, Quidditch is a mixture of rugby, dodgeball, and tag. Each team has seven players and must play the entire game with a broom between their legs. There is a Keeper who guards the goal hoops from three Chasers, who try and score goals with a volleyball. Two Beaters (like defenders) use dodgeballs to knock out other players and create a bit of chaos for the Chasers. Finally, there is a Seeker on each team whose goal is to catch the snitch, a small ball attached to a neutral player who can run around and use any means necessary to get away from the seeker. While this may seem a little complicated, Quidditch is a fun and magical game.

After conducting a survey among the students at Ridgewood High School, it was found that the most popular sport that does not currently exist is a rock climbing team. Surprisingly, the least popular team desired at Ridgewood High School is ultimate frisbee, followed by synchronized swimming and Quidditch. The second most wanted sport at the high school before rock climbing is badminton. The bar graph can be referenced to the left of this article.

There are quite a bit of logistics that go along with creating a new sports team at RHS and starting up any of these sports with be unlikely. However, if anyone has an extra school bus and some funding money lying around, do the students here a favor and consider making a Quidditch, ultimate frisbee, badminton, synchronized swimming, or rock climbing team at Ridgewood High School.

#### **Sports**

# Winter Brings Anticipation for Ski and Snowboard Club



Members of the Ski and Snowboard Club gather on the top of the mountain.



View of the sunset from the top of one of the slopes at Mountain Creek.

#### Jessi Schlicht staff writer

It is that time of the year again. The annual Ski and Snowboard club will be going into full action starting January 6, so sign up as soon as possible. Gym teachers Mr. Quirk and Mr. Bunzey are in charge of ski club. This club gives anyone at Ridgewood High School an opportunity to go skiing or snowboarding with their school friends during the school week. The club offers five trips to Mountain Creek in Vernon, New Jersey throughout the winter season. The annual trips take place every Tuesday starting on January 6 and ending on February 3. The club leaves after school via charter bus and arrives back at the high school by 10:15 p.m. Anyone with any ski or snowboard interest or experience is welcome to join. Some members rent equipment from Mountain Creek, while others bring their own.

"Ski club is a great break from the routine of school! I love skiing and it's cool to be able to do this during the week," Ski club member Sara Schmidt explains. She continued to talk about the unique experience that these trips exposed her to. "On one of my first trips last year I accidently bought two left gloves, and Mr. Quirk was kind enough to let me borrow his extra pair. I really love all the people who go on the trips with us. The mountain is cool as well. It's nothing like the weekends; there are no lines for the chair lifts or any in the lodge. Night skiing is a whole different experience from skiing in the daytime. It feels like we rented out the place to ourselves!"

On occasion, cross country and track and field coach Mr. Brown joins the Ski and Snowboard Club for the trip. He claims that he is too good to ski the slopes of Mountain Creek, so he snowboards alongside the ski club members instead! "It's hilarious to see my coach next to me snowboarding down the mountain. It makes the trip even more fun than it already is," Anya Sherman confesses. "I feel like everyone involved grows a bond with each other about the crazy things we experience on these trips."

Do not hesitate to walk by Mr. Quirk's or Mr. Bunzey's office to grab a form to sign up before the 60 available spots run out. The club offers memorable experiences, great deals, and an opportunity for fun.

# Ski club is a great way to break from the routine of school! -Sarah Schmidt

# A Glimpse into Harriman

#### Robert Schablik staff writer

During the teachers' convention this November, the RHS ALPS club took its annual camping trip to Harriman State Park in upstate New York. The ALPS club, which stands for Adventure Leadership and Peer Support, focuses on building social skills and leadership through group challenges. Arguably the most rugged of the trips that the club offers is this hiking trip, which involves three days of intense mileage, sleeping in tents and shelters along the way. Teamwork and cooperation is an absolute necessity in order to complete the hike and is also an essential part of the ALPS program. Building camp, creating fire, and cooking are all things that are not common back home for students. These skills suddenly combine to create a team effort in the woods. Surprisingly, every person welcomed the challenge, making the trip as amazing as it is said to be.

Throughout the trip, many students learned new things about nature, the forest, conservation, and the importance of respecting themselves and others. Along the trip, one group of Ridgewood students met an Appalachian Trail thru-hiker. A thru-hiker is someone who attempts a trail in its entirety. In this case, the thru-hiker the ALPS members met was hiking from Maine to Georgia. It was the hiker's third time thru-hiking the Appalachian trail. He previously hiked from Vancouver to Mexico, along the Pacific Coast Trail. He shared with them his stories and the RHS students shared their experiences with him.. They all gained a greater understanding of life and nature outside of Ridgewood.

On the trail, everybody is equal. There is no hierarchy, no bullies, and no drama. It reveals students as they really are, and each person must rely on one another to complete each task. The thru-hiker, nicknamed "Cherokee Spirit" taught the ALPS members about this as they roasted marshmallows over the fire.

One of the main goals of ALPS is to teach students to get out of their comfort zones and try something new, even if they aren't sure about gaining success. Many who went on the trip had never hiked like this before, and one climb in particular caught the attention of everyone. Standing at the bottom, they wanted to give up. But as the ALPS club likes to say, "That's not the ALPS way." Each person made it to the top, carrying upwards of forty pounds of weight on their backs. With a meal and a great view of New York awaiting them, the completion of this hike was extremely rewarding.

Beside the beautiful weather and views, the leadership skills and confidence that each member gained throughout the trip are immeasurable and are the best part of the trip. It gives all grades of the high schoolers the opportunity to teach, go outside of their comfort zone, and learn from others. It is interesting what thirty-two totally different kids can accomplish when there is a common goal. The members of the ALPS club try their best to apply what is learned on trips to Ridgewood High School and the community. By talking to these ALPS students, it is clear that each of them has a solid grasp of what it means to be a trustworthy and confident leader.



Members of the ALPS Club gather around the fire to keep warm in the forest.



After completing their hike, ALPS members pose on the top of the mountain.



ALPS members carry 40 pounds on their backs as they embark on their hike.



Students build a fire to help stay warm.

#### Art and Photography

# Maroon & White

### **November 20, 2014**



Nancy Huang



Erin Man

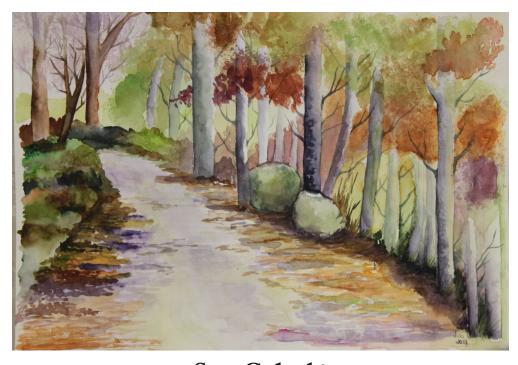


Caitlin Hensley

Poyani Bavishi Sara Golnabi Caitlin Hensley Nancy Huang Erin Man



Poyani Bavishi



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