

The High Times

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The Era of Hassle-Free Parking

A Glimpse Into What's to Come

By SOPHIE HOWARD & KEVIN COLLIER
STAFF WRITERS

The Village of Ridgewood has recently dealt with a lot of backlash regarding the limited parking and congested streets in the center of town. With more restaurants and stores moving in, locals and visitors are struggling to find a place to park with ease. Should Ridgewood charge more for the parking spots already available or should they build a multi-million dollar parking garage to combat this problem?

The Hudson Street parking lot closed last August to accommodate for the construction of a municipal parking garage downtown. The four-level, 240-space garage will be built at the corner of Hudson and South Broad streets and is expected to open around June 2020. Three years ago, voters overwhelmingly rejected an 11.5 million dollar bond ordinance to fund a larger municipal garage, which would have included 325 parking spaces. The citizens of Ridgewood are split over whether or not the garage will improve access to parking spaces in town or cause an increase in daytrippers, shutting residents out of the parking spaces that they paid for via taxes.

With the new parking garage being built, Ridgewood locals are facing the economic consequences. Eighty-five new smart parking kiosks will replace the village's traditional meters this. . .

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A rendering of the downtown parking garage. The garage, built on the corner of Hudson and South Broad street, is currently under construction. With 4 floors and 240 spaces, it is expected to open in June 2020.

PATCH.COM

School Store Revamp

By KAYLIN MARSHALL
STAFF WRITER

Have you ever heard of the RHS School Store? Chances are, you haven't. The unassuming space sits next to the security desk in the main entrance, and was officially opened in September 2019. Three RHS DECA chapter members have made it their mission to revitalize this space and draw more students and parents to purchase snacks and merchandise. The store raises funds for the chapter that are used to support projects and allow students to attend DECA competitions with financial help from the chapter. Previously, the store offered merchandise, snacks, and beverages before falling into a slump during the 2018-2019 school year. The only items for sale after school were cookies, and students rarely visited.

In their quest to improve the conditions of the storefront, Emily Truszkowski, Laura Gessmann, and Kaylin

Marshall asked RHS students if they had ever visited the School Store. The overwhelming consensus of students claimed they never even heard that the School Store existed. Sofia Lee, a junior at RHS, explained that she "knew the store existed, but never visited because it didn't look like anything was being sold in there". Many underclassmen expressed that they had no clue that such a space existed within our school. Sophomore Sasha Golden claimed, "I walked past that room every day on my way into school, but had no idea what it was".

RHS DECA knew that action needed to be taken if they were going to make more sales in the Store. For one, more food and drink options needed to be offered. Chapter members were polled. . .

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SOFIA LEE, RIDGEWOOD HIGH TIMES

Emily Truszkowski, Laura Gessmann, and Kaylin Marshall stand in the renovated RHS School Store after-school to sell various treats and merch.

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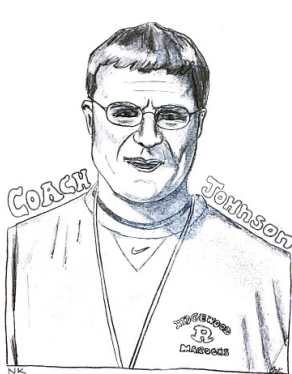
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ArtBeat Fall Fusion

BY AARON FRIEDMAN
NEWS COLUMNIST

Three things made this year’s ArtBeat Fall Fusion a truly special event: great decorations, talented performers, and, most importantly, tasty waffles. Although ArtBeat was founded a few years ago, the success of the 2019 Fall Fusion solidified the group as a prominent fixture of RHS for years to come and signaled that the organization prospered even after last year’s crop of leaders graduated. The most recent event marked a tremendous turning point towards the larger

goal of improving school spirit and making RHS “cool again” after a few years of poorly attended spirit weeks, pep rallies, and Junior-Senior dances. So what made Fall Fusion so “cool” and in-touch with what students wanted? The performances spanned across multiple student groups, providing a variety of entertainment for attendees to enjoy, and the entire event was planned and orchestrated by a student committee that understands what RHS students enjoy. The three student presidents of the ArtBeat committee, Jake Rubenstein, Tammi David, and Saori Takahashi,

worked hard to coordinate this event, as did the rest of the club’s members. Fall Fusion was the first event they planned as new leaders. Rubenstein commented that “coordinating Fall Fusion was an exciting but exhausting task.” Since the courtyard was rained out, the event was moved to the Campus Center; despite this sudden change, the lighting and overall setup was spot on. Takahashi added that although “this year was the first time that Fall Fusion was held inside because of the rain, it lent well to the welcoming atmosphere [Artbeat was] going for.” There were tables surrounding the main performance area and concert-goers sitting around the room in different configurations. The overhead spot lights were dimmed considerably, and Christmas lights were adorned all over the room. There was also a decorative display of pumpkins that helped tie the theme of the event together, each painted with one letter of “A-R-T-B-E-A-T.” Finally, there was a station with ArtBeat members serving waffles. The event was a great success for Ridgewood High School and ArtBeat, as all of the attendees enjoyed the carefully curated atmosphere that accompanied the music. Another aspect that made the night so exceptional was the ability to watch students perform in an intimate environment, not a formal band playing in a packed campus center with harsh lighting. For an observer, it was refreshing to see RHS musicians perform alternative genres of

music at a school event. From rock to folk to jazz, the 2019 Fall Fusion had music for all different tastes. Takahashi remarked that the “focus on creating a more friendly and casual environment where the performers, band and especially solo acoustic acts could connect with the audience” made this year’s event truly unique. The efforts of the ArtBeat committee were successful. The audience was into the music and people were clapping and dancing along. For Rubenstein, serving as both a drummer and a leader, “performing was a blast and it was amazing to watch the other acts.” Everyone was smiling, happy to see their fellow students performing. There was a long list of musicians that performed over the entire two hour period, and each of them showed immense talent and appreciation for their craft. Some of the performers even put up hilarious backdrops on the projector screen, like a 24-hour loop of Ron Swanson sitting in front of a cozy fireplace. Rubenstein noted that while “it was difficult to accommodate everyone’s needs for instruments, amplifiers, and other equipment, it all paid off during the event.” The ArtBeat committee was rightfully satisfied with how the event turned out, as were the musicians and attendees. Takahashi remarks: “We saw kids dancing and having fun, which is exactly what we wanted!” Be sure to keep your eyes out for announcements of upcoming Artbeat events.



JAKE RUBENSTEIN, Ridgewood High Times

The Corduroy Boys performing at Fall Fusion.

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winter, and residents will bear the tax burden as the village evaluates ways to fund the kiosks in addition to the Hudson Street parking garage. Parking fees are likely to increase with the kiosks, raising from \$0.75 to \$1.25 at the beginning of the year. The village council continues to debate the appropriate charge for parking, and the \$0.50 increase is not fully agreed upon but deemed necessary by many Ridgewood officials. While many argue that raising fees will hurt local business, it may be the only feasible way to pay for the Hudson Street garage. In an interview with NorthJersey.com, Deputy Mayor Susan Knudsen said “Everybody went into this eyes wide open, every business knew this going in. Somebody’s got to pay for this garage. We can’t put that genie back in the bottle.” This fee has not been implemented yet, but some Ridgewood residents are not completely supportive of the increase. RHS senior Andrea Cubrovic argues, “Parking in Ridgewood is already expensive and raising the price may make people less likely to go into town and spend money at local businesses. Restaurants, stores, coffee shops, and more could lose revenue because of this.” Although the expense of the Hudson Street garage must be paid off, many Ridgewood residents are not in favor of having to spend more for the same parking spaces. Parking in Ridgewood has never been a simple issue. With the limited number of spaces and growing popularity of Ridgewood businesses, it can be challenging to find convenient parking at any time on any given day. Senior Kate Maxwell states, “As a new driver, trying to find a spot to park when I’m going to get food or have to go to town is awful. I sometimes spend more time circling around looking for a spot and walking from my car than actually eating! Grabbing food has become a hassle” Although whether the implementation of a garage will fully solve this problem is uncertain, it is assured that the town has been working diligently to solve this ongoing issue.

School Store Revamp

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on which food items would sell best among the students at RHS. Cliff Bars, Airhead Extremes, and Gatorade were among some of the additions made to the ‘menu’ in the store. If you have walked in the band hallway after school, you would notice the sweet smell that fills the halls. Freshly-baked cookies remain a best-seller, but the aforementioned added snacks and drinks act as a necessary supplement to the profits and popularity of the store. As for merchandise, the store completely lacked offerings. There were a few belts and lanyards lingering in the back of the store. To remedy this issue, Ms. Mendez’s Advanced Marketing class was tasked with the design of a variety of apparel and merchandise possibilities. After the design process, many of the classes in the RHS Business Department were polled on their favorite designs. Lanyards, tshirts, phone wallets, and quarter-zip sweatshirts came out on top, so the chapter members in charge of the School Store revitalization completed orders for this merchandise. All these items feature the maroon “R”. These items are modeled in the window and available for purchase. Now that merchandise and snacks are fully-stocked, the store has seen a significant increase in profits compared to last year, and the chapter hopes that profits will only continue to increase with the introduction of different merchandise in the future. Make sure to look out for future surveys to have a say in what Ridgewood merch you want to see. Ridgewood High School’s DECA will continue to increase their marketing efforts on behalf of the store, and gain more information regarding the wishes of RHS students when it comes to the offerings in the School Store. The chapter even plans to rename the store soon, so a school-wide poll will be distributed so that RHS students can play part in rebranding the enterprise. They

have started an Instagram page to promote the store and their sales. Smaller actions such as holiday decorating and possible cosmetic improvements are also in the works to create a more appealing environment within the store. Currently, there are DECA diamonds with the school store worker’s names and leaves. The store plans on putting up Christmas decorations soon. In terms of the impact that the changes in the School Store have on the RHS student body, a few students had a lot to say. Junior Caroline Loscalzo referenced how “the new energy in the store has made it a much more welcoming and happy environment”. Senior Katherine Hu expressed a similar sentiment, stating that “getting to stop by for a quick snack is a lifesaver on very busy days. I stop by on a weekly basis to see what is going on and if there are any new items.” She was also delighted to see the progress the store has made. “I remember the seniors last year who worked the store, and they were concerned about getting business. It is amazing to see underclassmen continuing this project.” Other students who have never heard about the school store are excited to see what’s to come in the future. They all expressed excitement of future merchandise and food products. Senior Maddy Ewell explained that she “discovered the school store last May and has enjoyed seeing the new selections this year as it differs from the stand by the gyms.” The leaders of this project, Kaylin Marshall, Laura Gessman, and Emily Truzkowski, have described this endeavor as a large commitment, but well worth the efforts. Their overall goal — to revamp the store and thus improve even a small part of Ridgewood High School — is certainly being accomplished so far. With the hardest part of the job in the past, DECA and RHS students can look forward to seeing the school store well-stocked



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Dump Trump?:

A Look Inside at RHS Student Opinions

BY MASON ZAMBOLDI
STAFF WRITER

Imagine the CEO of one of the largest companies in the world. This individual has potentially used illegal methods to rise to his position, fired the person responsible for calling out his wrongdoings, and, most recently, called on allies to ensure that others are unable to take his position in the future. The many examples of his hypocrisy and opposition to anyone who opposes him highlight his record of unsettling actions. Is it also notable to mention that the CEO is only popular among 41% of the workers in the company?

If you haven't realized already, the company isn't really a company, it is the United States of America. And the CEO is not actually a CEO, although he famously was earlier in his career; this mysterious individual is none other than President Donald Trump. Accusations of Trump-endorsed Russian meddling in the 2016 election, government interference in the Robert Mueller Investigation, and asking Ukrainian officials for incriminating information on the former vice president and top 2020 Democratic candidate, Joe Biden, all highlight the reprehensible behavior of the most powerful man in the country.

With numerous allegations and evidence stacking against Trump, Congress opened its doors to a possible impeachment. The Democrats jumped on this opportunity, starting a lengthy process that, if successful, would remove Trump from office or tarnish his reputation enough to prevent a reelection. July 26th, 2019 marked the start of formal impeachment hearings. The House Judiciary Committee deemed it necessary to proceed with their efforts in a more systematic manner, calling to hold hearings for witnesses with crucial information. Once this was accomplished, a formal request to start the investigation was submitted, voted on, and passed.

On September 24th, 2019, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi initiated the fight by announcing the three charges President Trump is accused of, as well as the committees that are leading the impeachment investigation. Pelosi and the committees claim that Donald Trump betrayed his oath of office, US national security, and the integrity of the country's elections. To many, these crimes mandate Trump be removed from office. The main question is: can Congress garner enough evidence and

reason to impeach the president? In the wake of the whistleblower scandal, one of Trump's many antics that has plastered headlines for the past month, the support for an impeachment inquiry is on the rise. In retaliation, President Trump has claimed that this impeachment trial may turn out to be "a positive" to his 2020 reelection campaign. In the public eye, some believe it may be too late to remove Trump from the presidency, with one student saying that, "the election is next year so even if he were to be impeached, the process would take too long to remove him prior to the election." There is some truth to this statement. The approaching election creates a sense of urgency in the Democrats and limits the time window of the investigation. If the process fails, the next general election could look very similar to 2016.

Students at RHS have different perspectives on the current state of our nation. Caroline Loscalzo, a junior at Ridgewood, believes President Trump should be impeached. "Donald Trump has committed many offenses during his time in the oval office that are worth prosecuting. Removing Trump from the presidency would restore people's faith in our nation's democracy." However, an anonymous freshman doesn't see the practicality of impeaching Trump this late into his term. "There's less than a year before the 2020 election. Democrats need to focus their efforts on a candidate that can beat Trump instead of trying to take him down."

No matter the amount of evidence, the fact that President Trump is even facing impeachment shows a common dissatisfaction among politicians with him. Combining the growing number of those who are unhappy with the president's job thus far with this progressing impeachment process shows the reality of this presidency: division. Many claim that Trump fights for them, while others feel that all his fighting is doing nothing but cause hate and divisiveness. With Republicans and Democrats as divided as they are today, bipartisan politics are more relevant than ever. Voting has become more based on party rather than policy. In George Washington's farewell address, he encouraged Americans to avert a bipartisan country, warning of the destruction it would bring to the US. Despite his truthful words, the rivalry between Republicans and Democrats is the indefinite future of this country's political atmosphere.



RYAN RHEW, Ridgewood High Times

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

BY JASON THEISEN
STAFF WRITER

On Saturday October 26, 2019, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the now former leader of ISIS, was killed in a raid on his compound by an American task force acting upon information provided by the Syrian Kurds.

President Trump's boastful announcement of the news the following morning was unprecedented in its level of detail. He claimed that "U.S. personnel were incredible" and that al-Baghdadi "died like a dog. He died like a coward." Trump continued, stressing the number of ISIS members that were killed and thanking Russia, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Syrian Kurds, government intelligence and military professionals, and the involved soldiers.

"He died after running into a dead end tunnel, whimpering and crying and screaming all the way."

-DONALD TRUMP ON THE DEATH OF ABU BAKR AL -BAGHDADI

On Wednesday October 30th, the head of US Central Command, General Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., held a press release in which he detailed the nature of the assault. He stressed the humanity with which the soldiers treated civilians in the compound and the danger that ISIS still poses.

The following day ISIS acknowledged the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and designated their new spokesman as Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi. The name is believed to be a nom de guerre—an assumed name. On Friday November 1st, Trump claimed to already know the new leader's identity.

The attack was generally explained by President Trump on Sunday and specifically detailed on Wednesday by General McKenzie. Baghdadi's compound was located 4 miles from the Turkish border in Syria in a province mostly unoccupied by American forces. According to General McKenzie, troops repeatedly urged those inside the compound to come out peacefully. The noncombatants, including eleven children, who did so were humanely treated, detained, and released. Five members of ISIS inside the compound refused to surrender and were killed after threats of force. Baghdadi was discovered inside a tunnel later after he killed himself and two children. Originally the report stated three children—President Trump's account also

stated three children—but it has since been updated to two. General McKenzie also notes that "Baghdadi's remains were buried at sea in accordance with the laws of armed conflict."

After gathering information and using DNA sampling to confirm that the target was in fact Baghdadi, the compound was cleared and destroyed with U.S. standoff munitions. While no American soldiers were injured during the process, a military dog was harmed by exposed electrical wires in the tunnel al-Baghdadi fled into.

Under Baghdadi's leadership, ISIS committed horrific atrocities. In his initial announcement, President Trump specifically cited the murder of four American citizens: James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Peter Kassig, and Kayla Mueller. He also cited the public murder of the Jordanian Air Force Pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh and more generally, "the execution of Christians in Libya and Egypt, [and] the mass murder of the Yazidis," a minority group in the Middle East.

The death of al-Baghdadi made waves in Washington D.C. and international press junkets, but how did this news register with Ridgewood High School students? Senior Sara Ellighaus says, "I didn't even know who Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was! When I saw the announcement of his death on TV, I was so confused. I would have thought that the leader of ISIS would be a well-known, infamous name, but most people I know had never heard of him." James Ellinghaus, also a senior at RHS, believes the former terrorist's murder will bring a sense of unity to international affairs. "Although Trump is obviously exaggerating how great the assassination is," he exclaimed, "I think al-Baghdadi's death will strengthen America's relations with other countries. ISIS is a common enemy for many nations across the world. Killing its leader is something worth celebrating, and this event could possibly bring everyone a little closer together." RHS, like the rest of the world, clearly has a wide range of political knowledge and opinions.

While the assassination of the ISIS leader is a subject of celebration for many senior officials in the US, its actual impact on the operational capacity of the terrorist organization is unclear. In talks with The New York Times, counterterrorism experts voiced their expectations of fealty pledges to the new leader from international ISIS affiliates. Days before the announcement of his death, Jenna Jordan, Associate Professor of International Affairs at Georgia Institute of Technology and author of a book on targeting leadership in terrorist organizations, told TIME that the assassination would not likely result in the demise, debilitation, or decline of the terrorist cell.



AVA HABERMAN, Ridgewood High Times

Singing Through the Holidays

By SOPHIE HARTSTEIN
STAFF WRITER

One of the luxuries students at RHS get to enjoy is an extensive and enriching arts program. From diverse art classes to a professional recording studio, RHS provides seemingly limitless artistic opportunities. Particularly notable is our award-winning music program which includes sections of band, orchestra, and choir classes.

Mr. Bourque, the choral director, teaches five classes: two sections of Chorale, Concert Choir, Treble Choir and Chamber Choir. The program itself is unique because of how communal it is. Mr. Bourque creates an environment where students “really care for each other and want the best for each other,” as stated by senior Chloe McCandless. Outside of class, enthusiastic musicians also have the opportunity to audition for an acapella group, as well as join the RHS Carollers.

The Trebles, East 627, the Acabellas, and the Maroon Men are the four acapella groups at RHS. The Trebles and the Acabellas are all female, while East 627 and the Maroon Men are all male. Each group meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:00 to 7:40 before school. With only 80 minutes of rehearsal a week, and waking up far earlier than normal, this group of about 60 yearly participants are widely regarded as an outstanding display of RHS talent.

RHS’ four acapella groups also give students the opportunity to serve in leadership roles. Each group has a non-student director (Anna O’Keefe for the Trebles, Mr. Chen for East 627, and Mr. Bourque for both the Aca-



The RHS Acabellas during one of their morning rehearsals

bellas and the Maroon Men), as well as a student president and at least one student music director. During rehearsals, the music director’s job is to “make sure rehearsals run smoothly” and to ensure efficient use of time so that “we can get the most out of every rehearsal” according to John Mondy, the Maroon Men’s music director. On the other hand, the president’s job is to “organize events and make sure that everyone is on the same page,” says Acabella President Ashley Orr.

In order to be a part of an acapella

group, students must be involved in a music program at RHS (band, choir, orchestra) and go through a highly competitive audition and callback process. However, the choir program offers another group that anyone in a music program can participate in: RHS Carollers.

Founded in 2010, the Carollers are a group of students dedicated to making the holiday season a little brighter for Ridgewood residents. Rehearsals start in September and end in November so the group is prepared to share holiday spirit all through December. Four-year

Caroller, Lauren McCandless, says that Carollers is her “favorite part of the holiday season because [she loves] to brighten people’s days.” The Carollers sing a range of songs from traditional Christmas carols, to Hannukah songs, to a modern gospel rendition of “Deck the Halls.” They also perform at the annual Tree Lighting, Valley Hospital, the First Presbyterian Church, and the Ridgewood Center nursing home.

Similar to choir class, Carollers promotes a unique group dynamic. Since the set list of songs is roughly the same every year, returning carollers are encouraged to assist their younger counterparts in learning their music and memorizing their parts, which is a way for upperclassmen to make new friends and for underclassmen to feel included and important in the group. “I appreciate the appeal of a musical group that anyone can be a part of,” notes Mr. Bourque.

“It’s nice to have members of band and orchestra that want to sing and be part of this group.”

-MR. BOURQUE

As the holiday season rolls around, the Carollers will be performing at their usual locations listed above. On top of this, all four acapella groups will perform at the winter Choir Concert, along with the five choir classes. If you are interested in seeing the performances, you are welcome to watch the groups in the Campus Center on Dec. 18 at 7:30 p.m.

Upcoming Movies

By JULIA ZAMBITO
OPINION EDITOR

The holiday season has always had some of the most anticipated movies of the year. This year is no exception. From “Cats” to a new adaptation of “Star Wars” and “Little Women,” the movie round up for this holiday season is looking good.

Here are some of the most noteworthy films you should be looking out for.

A Million Little Pieces (Dec. 6)-Based on James Frey’s best-selling controversial novel published in 2003, A Million Little Pieces follows a young and declining drug-addict who has recently submitted himself into a treatment center. The film displays the ups and downs of rehabilitation, and the array of people he meets along the way.

Jumanji: The Next Level (Dec. 13)-The sequel to the epic adventure comedy starring Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Jack Black and Karen Gillan, is set to come to theaters in mid-December. This time, the characters are set to endure new challenges, and find that they are actually no more prepared than they were the first time.

Black Christmas (Dec. 13)-Just in time for the holidays comes a seasonal take on a cult horror classic. A campus killer strikes a group of formidable sorority girls, who refuse to let their assailant win.

Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (Dec. 20)-The final battle commences in the last film of the current Star Wars trilogy—it also finishes off the 42-year Skywalker saga. The surviving Resistance faces the First Order once more as Rey (Daisy Ridley), Finn (John Boyega) and Poe Dameron’s (Oscar Isaac) journey continues. This time, director J.J. Abrams focuses on Boyega’s character, Finn, who Abrams felt needed to “find

his place and have a team to fight for.”

Bombshell (Dec. 20)-Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman and Margot Robbie star in the true-story film about the 2016 Fox News Scandal in which several women anchors set out to expose CEO Roger Ailes for sexual harassment. In the midst of the “Me Too” Movement, the film takes on the question of whether or not women will stand up for one another against an abuser if their jobs and reputation are on the line.

Cats (Dec. 20)-Based on the legendary Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical, Cats has a new movie adaptation set to come to theaters just before Christmas. The storyline centers on a group of cats, named the Jellicles, who have to choose which feline persona will be reborn into a new life. From Academy Award winner Tom Hooper, also the director of Les Misérables and The King’s Speech, Cats features a star-studded cast from Taylor Swift to Idris Elba and countless other cameos.

Little Women (Dec. 25)-Greta Gerwig directs the latest Little Women adaptation with a star-studded cast including Saoirse Ronan, Timothee Chalamet, Florence Pugh, Meryl Streep, and Emma Watson. Gerwig decided to take on the project as a tribute to her childhood obsession with Louisa May Alcott’s coming-of-age classic. Set in the aftermath of the Civil War, the film follows the lives of four sisters, Amy, Jo, Beth, and Meg, as they navigate tough and changing times. Gerwig’s version shows the March sisters as adults, with flashbacks to their younger selves. She felt that the film’s themes of financial inequality of women are still a part of conversation today, she adds, “that felt urgent to me.”

1917 (Dec. 25)-Director Sam Mendes pays tribute to his grandfa-

ther’s recounts of World War I, but this war movie has a twist, it was filmed in only one shot. The film follows two young British soldiers who have to deliver a message to a neighboring militia before 1600 men walk into a deadly trap against the Germans. The drama shows the tragedy of war, but solely from the perspective of these two men, as the camera is never turned away from them. Mendes hopes this idea will depict the size and destruction of World War I better than if they shot entire groups at once. Dean-Charles Chapman and George MacKay star as the two young men, along with Benedict Cumberbatch, Colin Firth, and Game Of Thrones star Richard Madden.

Just Mercy (Dec. 25)-Michael B.



KARIS HAN, Ridgewood High Times

Jordan plays Bryan Stevenson, an eager lawyer, who in the 1990s defended Walter McMillian (Jamie Foxx), an Alabama man who was sentenced to death on improbable terms. McMillian believes he will never get out, until Stevenson shows him that he is going to do everything in his power to annul his sentencing. Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton and written by the lawyer himself, Stevenson exploits injustices of the judicial and prison systems in the United States, which have become the forefront of political and reform discussion today.

Evidently, the rest of 2019 will be filled with great movies. As 2020 rolls around, keep your eyes open for new movies coming out.

An Inside Look at Jingle Strings

BY CHLOE CHO
STAFF WRITER

Nobody said it was too early for holiday music! For Jingle Strings, that meant learning how to play songs like Pat a Pan and Chanukah as early as October. An extracurricular for orchestra, Jingle Strings provides an opportunity for students to develop their passion and skills for orchestra, while spreading festive spirit through music. The environment is fun, comfortable, and lively, with a relaxed atmosphere. Anyone in Orchestra is qualified to join, regardless of whether you are in Symphonic, Concert, or Chamber. The music is fairly difficult; it is never boring, but can be easily learned by anyone given some practice.

For the past couple of weeks, Jingle Strings, under the guidance of RHS orchestra teacher Ms. Geronimo, had been preparing to play at Downtown Ridgewood and Valley Hospital. After a couple of after-school rehearsals, they were ready to perform! In Downtown Ridgewood on December 6th, students will spread festive cheer by playing their holiday music in town, performing in small ensembles at select locations. Two days after, on December 8th, they will go to Valley Hospital and spread festive cheer to those who need it. This program is the perfect opportunity to do good for others, interact with the Ridgewood community, and gain volunteer service hours, all while having fun playing an instrument!



JIAH LEE, Ridgewood High Times

If you're an orchestra student, consider joining this amazing program! It provides a welcoming atmosphere to all who wish to enjoy the holiday season, through the art of music. Jingle Strings is not a pressing or "overly serious" ensemble. Attendance to every practice is not mandatory, and the environment is comfortable and casual; Mrs. Geronimo occasionally brings food for the orchestra players to enjoy. As someone who is a member of Jingle

Strings, my original intent was to have some holiday music in my repertoire, as well as meet new people since I was new to RHS. However, Jingle Strings has exceeded my expectations, and I learned how to play my favorite Christmas songs and make new friends. With the opportunities this program has provided me with, I was able to learn many crucial skills that have helped me in my orchestral endeavors. I asked a few students who partake

in Jingle Strings about how they felt about the extracurricular. One of them said, "Jingle Strings is what I look forward to everyday on Tuesday. It feels so nice to just be there after a school day, to relax, to laugh with friends, and to decompress and just forget about all the stress and pressure of school." Another student added, "Jingle Strings is my favorite club, and it is my only club. It's fun to not have to stress about Duffy's Cut and fail at Vibrato. I love Jingle Strings, and it changed my life forever!" We have fun and laugh as a group, and rather than having a school-like rigid schedule, it is more comparable to a fun orchestral session with your friends. For me, Jingle Strings was an opportunity I took to grow, not only as an orchestra player, but also as a person in a community, and an environment that cared and loved the holiday season.

Music and winter have always gone hand in hand. It has also been shown that music has been clinically proven to boost happiness and stimulate memories. The holiday season is a perfect time for joy and to reflect on fond memories of the year. For many it is a truly reflecting time where happiness and joy are many people's first priorities. Holiday music truly encapsulates everything the season reflects - a time of happiness, a time of thankfulness, and a time for joy. Music is the quintessential medium for connecting with others, and it has the capacity to make someone's holiday just that much better.

Top Five Holiday Songs

BY ARIYA PATEL
STAFF WRITER

It's that time of year! Holiday cheer is spreading, snow is falling, and the fireplace crackling. It's time to wear our favorite fluffy socks, sit by the fireplace and drink loads and loads of hot chocolate. Post-Thanksgiving calls for listening to our tried and true Christmas songs! Don't know which songs to listen to? Don't worry, this list gives you the rundown on all the best songs of the season.

"It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" - Michael Bublé

Michael Bublé's It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas, is an essential song to any Christmas playlist. It's a song many of us have always listened to. With its catchy tune and Michael Bublé's amazing voice, it can't help but get stuck in your head the entire season. It paints an image of a picture-perfect holiday we all wish for. It reached number ten on the Billboard US Holiday 100. This is a song that I can always count on to get me excited for the holidays.

"Sleigh Ride" - The Ronettes

Let's throw it back a little, to Sleigh Ride by The Ronettes. This song is known for its compilation of "rings" and "dings" at the start making it a fun and festive song. Sleigh Ride is a song that is always getting made into new covers from various artists adding their personal touch to this song, but personally, the Ronettes do it the best. It describes the fluffy white snow, perfect for a sleigh ride. It emphasizes the romantic and joyous aspect that is always evident during the holidays.

"Mistletoe" - Justin Bieber

In 2011, Justin Bieber released one of the best holiday songs of the 2000's, and he set the expectation of a mod-

ern Christmas song. He talks about the dreams of adolescent love, especially after it's heightened during the holiday season. It has R&B influences, which sets it apart from traditional Christmas songs. The music video showing the picture perfect expectation of young love. This song hit number one on the US Holiday 100 Billboard Charts and is YouTube's most viewed holiday song, with over 262 million views.

"All I Want for Christmas Is You" - Mariah Carey

This next song is considered one of the most iconic Christmas songs. All I Want For Christmas Is You was released in 1994, but old is gold and this song proves just that. This hit song has sold more than 16 million copies worldwide and is always listened to during the holiday season. This song is on its way to becoming a holiday classic.

"Last Christmas" - Wham!

Another iconic Christmas song released in 1984 is "Last Christmas" by the British pop duo Wham!. This song is the tenth-best-selling Christmas single in the US by digital downloads. Although it is sadder in tone than other holiday songs, it still manages to get everyone in the holiday spirit. The holidays are some of the most joyous times of the entire year, where families unite and spend time thinking about why being together is so important. Everybody loves the holidays because of the family, friends, and gifts. But the holiday's would not be complete without the iconic music to accompany it.

Gingerbread is Overrated

BY ALLISON HONG
ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

Recently, I went to Trader Joe's. It's one of my favorite places to grocery shop, and their food usually never disappoints. While browsing the produce section, an employee offered me a cookie to taste. One bite in and probably for the first time at Trader Joe's, I was thoroughly disappointed. I realized that the container said gingerbread cookies. That's when I knew that gingerbread should be reserved for building houses. It's weirdly spicy for a dessert, it kind of tastes like a cough drop, and the texture is akin to an extremely dry and stale shortbread cookie. But for some reason, every holiday season, the dessert we end up seeing is gingerbread. It's like the winter version of pumpkin, except that people actually eat pumpkin.

Starbucks, of course, loves to capitalize on this seasonal flavor. Their holiday menu includes a gingerbread latte and gingerbread loaf. But these items only seem to take a few characteristics of ginger flavored items and turn them into a watered down version. They only taste mildly of ginger, and the spice makes you wish for a PSL instead. Ginger feels like the delinquent younger sibling that won't ever measure up to Pumpkin, their perfect older sibling.

When food strongly tastes of ginger it's overwhelming, and when it's watered down it doesn't offer much. It's a lose-lose situation. Compared to the fall months, the holidays can't seem to hold their own in the food department. If someone doesn't like pumpkin, there are tons of delicious apple products to enjoy. On the other hand, during the holidays, if you don't like gingerbread, there's not much to fall back on. Maybe peppermint or eggnog, but then again those two aren't particularly outstanding either. Although, the lackluster nature of gingerbread can't be blamed entirely on the food itself. The most popular use of gingerbread is as a construction material. The stuff that companies try to pass off as "edible" is meant to be stand up on its own, so it doesn't make for a great dessert.

The poor quality of the gingerbread found in kits have probably contributed to the bad reputation that it has. And maybe if more people had access to homemade gingerbread, it would have a bigger fan base. But even well made gingerbread ranks pretty low on my list of preferred desserts. There are so many options that are far better than gingerbread, which feels stale even when fresh out of the oven. Wouldn't you want a rich chocolate chip cookie or a chewy, cinnamon snicker-doodle? Maybe I've yet to have great gingerbread, but for now it will be staying off my Christmas dinner table.



AMEILA CHEN, Ridgewood High Times

TEACHERS VS STUDENTS

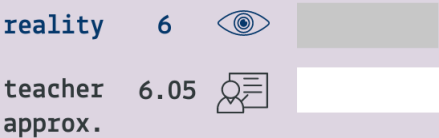
Students and Teachers: Do We Really Know Each Other?

Students

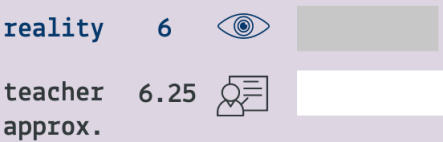
Average Hours of Work Per Night



Average Hours of Sleep Per Night



Average # of Days Per Week Listen to Music

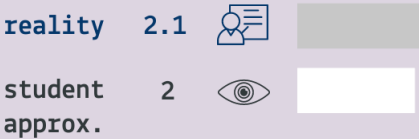


Favorite Music Genres

reality	teacher guess
1. Pop (29%)	1. Hip Hop/Rap /Trap (45%)
2. Alternative (24%)	2. Pop (30%)
3. Hip Hop/Rap /Trap (12%)	3. Rock (15%)
4. Country (9%)	4. Alternative (5%)
5. Rock (9%)	5. Other (5%)
6. Other (8%)	
7. Classical (5%)	
8. Jazz (3%)	
9. Electronic (1%)	

Teachers

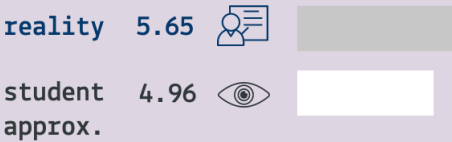
Average Hours of Work Per Night



Hours of Sleep Per Night



Average # of Days Per Week Listen to Music



Favorite Music Genres

reality	student guess
1. Country (35%)	1. Rock (48%)
2. Alternative (15%)	2. Pop (17%)
3. Pop (15%)	3. Alternative (15%)
4. Rock (15%)	4. Other (8%)
5. Other (10%)	5. Classical (5%)
6. Electronic (5%)	6. Jazz (5%)
7. Hip Hop/Rap /Trap (5%)	7. Hip Hop/Rap /Trap (1%)
	8. Metal (1%)

IS HOMEWORK NECESSARY?

When students spend all day in class, is it really beneficial upon their departure from school? Does it make sense to have the given class time?

In my opinion, when it is distributed within reasonable limits, homework is beneficial. There have been several times when it has been necessary.

“The key idea for me is that homework is something, to read something, to do something, to learn something, to grow something, to be something, to be your best self.”

“I think that homework can be a waste of time. So if the student is not able to do it, they should be able to do it.”

Both students and teachers should be more involved in the opinions of two very reasonable teachers.



THIS POLL IS TAKEN FROM A SAMPLE OF 100 STUDENTS AND 23 TEACHERS.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS: DO WE REALLY KNOW EACH OTHER?

WRITTEN BY EMILY ERTLE, STAFF WRITER
GRAPHIC AND POLLING BY EMILY ERTLE, STAFF WRITER

IS HOMEWORK NECESSARY?

WRITTEN BY ALANA KERNER, STAFF WRITER
GRAPHIC BY NICOLE KYE, GRAPHICS EDITOR

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS REACT: CHANGES AT RHS

WRITTEN BY TESS CUNDIFF, SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL CONTENT EDITOR
GRAPHIC BY NICOLE KYE, GRAPHICS EDITOR

Teachers:

Students:

MENTS

WORK NECESSARY?

Is it fair to give them hours worth of homework to do? Does it make sense for a teacher to make their students go beyond their limits in order to learn a topic?

With respect and care for the student's time, homework is necessary. I felt bombarded with homework which was not worth my time.



What I like when homework is an opportunity. It's an opportunity to try something, to draft something and then try to build on that instead of it being 'if you don't do this homework tonight your grade and your understanding are going to be completely lost.'"

- Mr. Cheplic

Homework can be good when it's used in an effective way. I think homework for the sake of homework. Students understand that they're getting something meaningful out of the work, then they will do it. But, they should also not need to take their whole night to get it done."

- Mr. Haas

Both groups are more open to the intentions and perspectives of each other. A very reasonable compromise can be made between the two groups as seen by the teachers: homework should be given as long as it is meaningful, presents an opportunity to practice, and does not consume too much time.



TEACHERS AND STUDENTS REACT: CHANGES AT RHS

In just the past couple of years, Ridgewood High School has gone through major changes due to an influx of students. Some are obvious - like the switch to a 50-80-50 schedule or the drop of double lab periods. But there is a lot more going on behind the scenes, and both students and teachers have a lot to say.

Ridgewood High School will continue to evolve as problems arise, the student population fluctuates, and technology becomes more advanced. Only time will tell how much more our school will change.

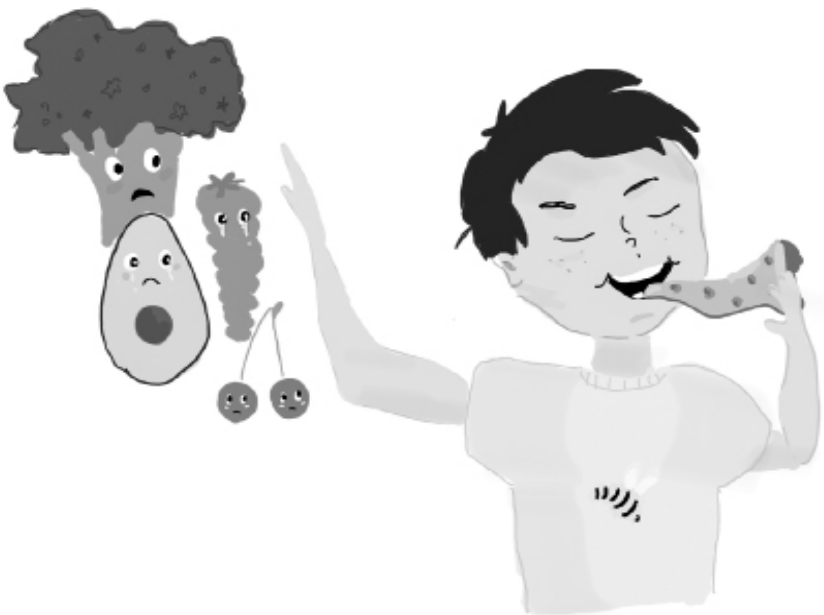
New Signage	Course Sizes	New Schedule
Many may have noticed the maroon signs that Dr. Gorman designed which hang from the ceiling and label the rooms in the main hallway. Mrs. O'Brien commented on this update, saying, "they both look nice and make it so much easier for visitors and new students to navigate the school".	The amount of courses and classes that RHS offers has also changed over the years. Music classes, for instance, are now being split. This year, there are two small Symphonic Orchestra classes instead of one large group, which has led to a very different learning atmosphere. The orchestra teacher, Mrs. Geronimo, says it has been a game changer since it is much easier for her to retain control and give more personal instruction.	The most obvious change to RHS over the past few years has been the schedule change. Regarding this topic, Mr. Kay says, "In a Wellness setting, we have had to make some accommodations and adapted our program, but it hasn't really affected us in a negative way... in the 80 minutes in a classroom setting, students attention and focus level can be diminished somewhat throughout, but it's our job as teachers to ensure they are engaged the whole time and to have some sort of brain breaks"
An anonymous freshman had an issue with finding her classes and was able to depend on the hallway signs to help resolve it. Anna, a junior, says that she wishes those signs were there when she was a freshman to save her a lot of confusion.	Not all of the students feel the same way. One student in the orchestra commented that he wishes the class was bigger because if he plays a wrong note, it's easier for others to notice. He was also split up from one of his friends and isn't too thrilled about missing out on a shared experience.	"At first I thought it was going to be bad but it's really not" said Jules, a junior who has experienced both the old and new schedule. "Having a free during an 80 minute allows me to get food or get a ton of work done, but sometimes 50 minute periods feel too short".

Is Healthy Food a Lost Cause?

BY MATTHEW PETERS
STAFF WRITER

Mountain Dew Kickstarts, endless muffins, and buffalo chicken pizza are just some of the food choices in the RHS cafeteria. All of these items are accessible for students at anytime in the day making it so much easier for eating problems to arise. Eating this type of food everyday is extremely unhealthy and should not be tolerated by the school. And, there are no prices on any of the snack choices or home baked items, making it easier for students to become more addicted to the food. This creates an endless supply of junk food at seemingly no cost. The RHS cafeteria options create horrible eating habits instead of providing healthy alternatives for the students.

The cafeteria is open for the entire day, and students are able to buy almost anything they want at anytime. Students are expected to be able to monitor themselves and what they are eating; however, when it is available as soon as your brain wants it, that makes it very hard for students to override their impulses. With these cravings being met instantly, students are more susceptible to buying more and more of these snacks. Some students begin their school day with a Mountain Dew Kickstart or a Diet



Ava Haberman, Ridgewood High Times

Coke, simply because they are displayed right next to all of the breakfast options such as muffins, hash browns, and bagels. If the cafeteria was only open at breakfast and lunch and served food designated for those times, students would have a much better chance of making smarter choices.

The tiny fruit basket jammed in between the Snapples and the cookies is practically invisible to a teenager's eyes. The choices that students make

are based on impulsive decisions, which is also part of the problem about the cafeteria being accessible all day. If there were more healthy options for students such as vegetables and dip or oatmeal, students would be less likely to choose the red velvet muffins. While we do not serve fast food chains like other schools do, there is definitely still room for improvement.

Another problem is that the school pays big name brands such as Nesquik,

Mountain Dew, and Coke lots of money in order to sell their products in the cafeteria. This raises the price to ridiculous amounts such as four dollars for a bottle of chocolate milk. On top of that, the prices are not listed on the items, so most students do not know how much they are spending for a snack in between periods. The pin number is also a huge problem because the students are not physically handing them six dollars for a muffin and a chocolate milk. Instead, they put in a number that magically pays for their food. Most of the times, students have no idea how much they are spending on food and that needs to change.

The cafeteria has an array of sweet and salty food with absolutely no limits. The only thing students need to do is put in a pin number, which automatically drains invisible money from their accounts. Cookies, muffins, chips, pizza, soda and coffee are just some of the daily options RHS students have to choose from. The RHS cafeteria should take better care of students' health by providing healthier alternatives alongside the current options and should put prices on the individual items or read out the balance after a student has paid. These are just some of the strides that RHS could take in becoming a healthier school altogether.

Fighting Climate Change

BY SANJNA RAJAGOPALAN
STAFF WRITER

The sustainability of societal norms such as cars, planes, and plastic, have been called into question for quite some time, and now more than ever the question of how to address this is becoming increasingly prevalent. However, our man-made destructive mechanisms are no match for the root of the climate change problems and the reason why it is proving so difficult to remedy it comes down to one fact: money. Why don't we use composted materials, green energy, recycled straws, or electric cars instead if we know exactly why not utilizing them is proving to be catastrophic for our climate?

There are many prominent green companies but they pale in comparison to the influence of massive corporations. No matter how many metal straws you drink from or the number of reusable grocery bags you lug around, plastic and coal production isn't slowing down any time soon. Industries and even countries that rely on factory made goods and fossil fuels shy away from the glaringly obvious truth: they are the problem. What difference would it make to a family ordering fast food if they got sustainable straws and take-out boxes instead of plastic and cardboard? It wouldn't, but to the corporations that mass produce using demand predictions, it makes all the difference.

For some, it's hard to realize

why species extinction, rising water levels, acid rain, smog, climate disasters, disease, and death isn't reason enough to sponsor a change. On the other hand, overturning billion dollar industries to sustain millions of people worldwide overnight is naive. The solution to the problem has to be sustainable. The production habits of corporations and people should be changing drastically. Climate change is the fight our generation has inherited from centuries of ignorance. Remedying climate change is not about living green and expecting the world to change, but rather a gradual universal effort everyone must make until it becomes the new societal norm. The lucrative green industry has yet to be taken full advantage of by leading corporations or the people and it is up to one of them to lead the way towards a sustainable economy.

This leaves us with the question: how? All industries survive or fall according to supply and demand. While these businesses control and regulate the supply, the people are the demand. Thus, people hold a significant amount of power in determining what businesses manufacture. If demand is turned towards green energy and goods, corporations will follow those trends and meet the demand. The fight against climate change is not a war in which there is a clear winner, a loser, or opposing sides to be taken; it will take a worldwide effort to make a dent of progress in the right direction.

The Holiday Rush



Nicole Kye, Ridgewood High Times

BY ANDREAS PELEKIS
STAFF WRITER

This problem exists at pretty much every given point of the year. For instance, just this past August, I was at the beach for a week, and on our way to pick up food for a family dinner, front and center in a store were big and bold Halloween signs, decorations, and candy. This made us flash back to the nightmares of the approaching school-year. But the issue can be even worse as the holidays draw near. We feel like we're finally adapting to fall, and then Christmas suddenly takes over. The weather is still nice out, and yet the shelves of stores become filled with snow globes. It is a reminder of the tireless upcoming preparations for the holiday season, and the cold, snowy weather.

Some in the past have referred to putting up holiday decorations before Thanksgiving as "bad luck." It was previously tradition for people to put up their Christmas tree on Christmas Eve and take it down on the "Twelfth Night," or January 5th. In general, holiday decorations are put up according to a family's traditions, or with whatever free time they have. But what becomes unmethodical is even before the holiday season starts, some families begin to put up holiday decorations, which enrages others as they realize that they have to get moving with their holiday shopping.

In our bustling and technology induced world, people feel immense

pressure to prepare for coming events months in advance. This is the case with corporations, especially ones that are found in the Tri-State area. People are excited about what comes in the short-term, for instance, they're counting down the days until Halloween night, yet in the back of people's minds, they know that the holiday season is on its way. From an economical standpoint, businesses compete to be the first ones to sell their products as early Christmas presents. The peak of Christmas shopping usually begins weeks before the anticipated day and businesses often begin advertising products in November or even in late October. But, many are more bothered seeing holiday decorations during Teachers' Convention, or even before Thanksgiving. It puts many under pressure and makes them anticipate Christmas earlier than they want to. While Christmas brings fun and happiness, these holiday decorations compel people to rush and buy a tree, set up the blow-up Santa, and get into the Christmas spirit.

Thus, it seems a bit ridiculous that people should put up holiday decorations before Thanksgiving. If we all want to enjoy the other holidays of the year, it's better that we do so without upcoming holiday stress in the back of our heads. Rather, people should be relaxing. Let Thanksgiving be the benchmark, and after our big feast, we can put our full-focus into preparing for arguably the best time of the year.



Sofia Lee, Kaylin Marshall, Sara Wong, Ridgewood High Times

Dems Brings Politics to Students

By ALEXANDRA JERDEE
OPINION COLUMNIST

Chances are if you live in Ridgewood, you’ve received a knock on your door this October or November. If you weren’t home, you probably found some literature wedged in your doorway. These weren’t some random ghosters, but instead some of your fellow students volunteering with RHS Democrats. In fact, RHS students came out to canvas in unprecedented numbers. As election season approached, tens of students knocked on thousands of doors. The Saturday before the election, over 40 students from Bergen County knocked on over 2,000 doors in Emerson and Ridgewood. Although it was an off-year election, the race for state assembly in the 39th and 40th districts was predicted to be a close race, with canvassers promoting Democrats Cordonnier and O’Brien in District 40 and Birkner and Falotico in District 39. They hoped to flip the traditionally Republican districts to elect Democratic candidates. So how did this many students get involved in such a local election beyond getting paid? I talked to the three leaders of RHS Dems, Laurence Fine, Aaron Friedman, and Logan Richman for the answer. Friedman described the club as a “hyper-local activist or-



ganization,” and Richman postulated that it gives students the opportunity to get an inside look at politics. As young adults finding our place in the world, these institutions feel distant from us, but talking to local candidates and campaign managers puts faces — not just names — on our ballots. RHS Dems strove to establish this connection beyond canvassing by hav-

ing Maria Cordonnier, a Democrat running for state assembly from Little Falls, talk to the club. She spoke on her experiences with Anti-Vietnam War protests when she was our age. In the partisan political climate of today, it can be difficult to look beyond political affiliation, but hearing the stories of our representatives in a non-debate setting is refreshing. Cordonnier and

the RHS Democrats club as a whole are inspiring students to care about politics on a local scale. It’s about time we looked a little closer at government than just the presidential and midterm elections, given the impact of state policy on our day-to-day lives. Just as the intimate connections made in campaign offices may motivate students to stay engaged with politics, the hope was that the connections made on doorsteps get voters to the polls. Fine furthered this idea, emphasizing the face-to-face interactions that occur when knocking on doors, suggesting that the act of speaking to the voters reduces extremism and polarization. I agree with Laurence to some extent, but to me the most important impact of all this is the formation of a new, informed generation of voters. Even those who canvassed purely for the money gained a valuable appreciation for the amount of work that goes into local government, as well as how low interest in the general community is regarding such elections. As much as the chaos of presidential debates and the public spectacle of it all draws us in, it is important not to forget about the locals. It’s a wonderful thing that this ideological change is starting here at RHS, and maybe we are living up to the classic “tradition of excellence” after all.

A Tradition of Perfection

By JADE DOBSON
STAFF WRITER

Studying past midnight, overwhelming to-do lists, and a looming voice contemplating whether your academic efforts are “good enough” is a lifestyle that many RHS students have found themselves accustomed to. RHS is composed of a school of perfectionists. Whether or not a student is trying to be the fastest on the track team, the strongest debater in their class, or the best musician in their section, they all have one common goal: to be as close to “perfect” as they can. So how has this school’s reputable “tradition of perfection” shaped the lives of our student body? The high standards that a majority of students at RHS have set for themselves has shaped the environment of our school to be extremely competitive. The struggle for academic perfection in a school of perfectionists has turned

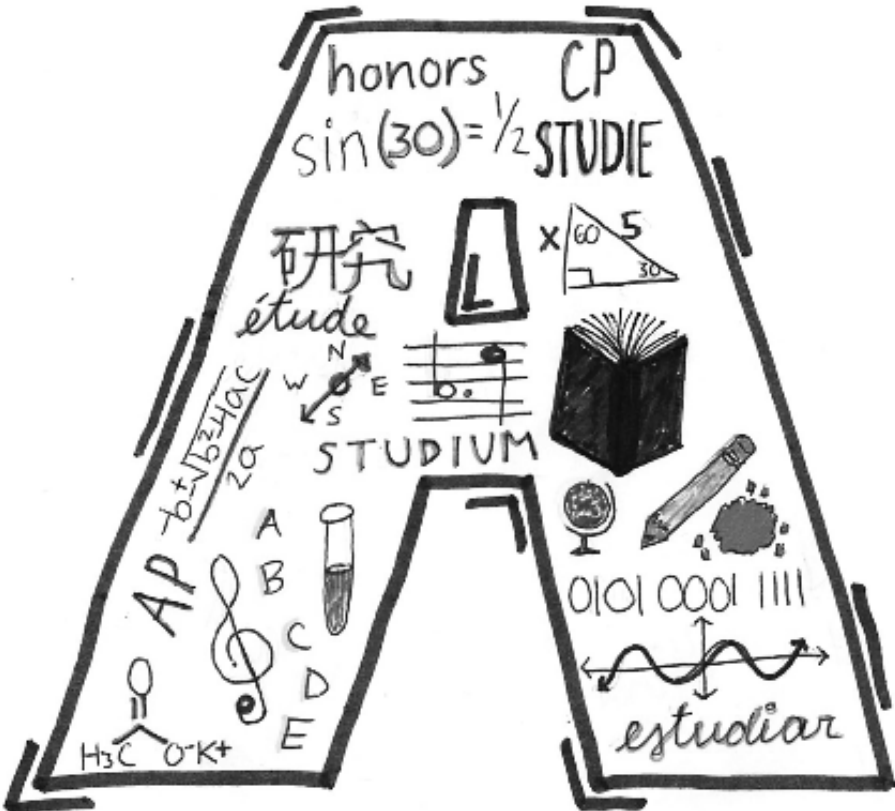
into a battle for constant validation. Everybody has their own standard for themselves, yet we always find ourselves looking to others to validate those standards and impose a sense of superiority (or inferiority) compared to others. You would think that confidential class ranks would prevent such a competitive academic environment, yet the strive for academic perfection has more or less become a mere sport in some student’s minds, wanting to rise to the top and doing whatever it takes to bring others down. I often wonder why the characterization for a student that has obtained academic “perfection” typically consists of a 4.0 GPA or 1500+ SAT score. These numbers are measuring the amount of money and resources that a student’s background consists of rather than actual intellectual level. If you have two students who are struggling in math, one of whom is actively receiving paid tutoring after school twice a week

and the other is having to go to work right after school because their family cannot sustain themselves without the combined income of their child, the student who is receiving tutoring has an advantage in securing a good grade. As much as we like to characterize the struggle for “perfection” as an issue only concerning students, colleges strive for the same thing in considering their applicants. It’s clear that attaining academic perfection in the eyes of a college is not something that everybody has an equal shot at. Your background and upbringing matter. However, if that’s the case, why do colleges try to promote themselves as a mediator, an institution that gives equal opportunity for anybody interested in further pursuing their academic career with them? The answer is simple: they don’t. Universities are undeniably inconsistent with admitting those who are underprivileged, often times ignoring those with a lower socioeconomic status. More specifically, the point of affirmative action mostly benefiting black students is defeated when only a small number of them will be considered for admission due to the amount of the black population in America inevitably being segregated into areas that are not high in its socioeconomic status over the course of history. As much as I believe that the struggle for academic perfection at RHS has become corrupted by unnecessary competition and strive for constant validation contributing to the elitist complex which universities quietly try to maintain, I do think it has brought some good. Students, now more than ever, will not settle for mediocrity when it comes to determining their life path, but rather with a career they are genuinely passionate about and have the ability to succeed in. If RHS students are taught principles such as self-compassion while maintaining our strive for excellence, I have great faith that the struggle for academic perfection will no longer be a struggle, but an endeavor.

Op-Ed Corner

By DANIEL SON
OPINION EDITOR

Ridgewood High School has a very diverse group of students. Some choose to focus more academically, some more musically, some more in athletics, etc. Although I do believe that students are competitive at RHS, that does not mean students are always striving for “perfection.” In effect, the idea of perfection is not attainable, and encouraging students to be perfectionists is just destructive to student health. I would say that for RHS students, there may be some groups who consider themselves as perfectionists, but the great majority of students just try their best — yet understand their limits. Even though it is true that RHS students obtain high averages on standardized test scores, this is merely because Ridgewood’s public schools are considerably better than most public schools. I agree that colleges do not take socioeconomic status into consideration as much as they should; however, even at RHS, not everyone has a perfect SAT or ACT score. Those standardized test scores do not always represent how much money you spend on test preparation but more often represents how much time you spend studying. The public library is available to any resident in Ridgewood, and it has a vast collection of SAT and ACT prep books that can be checked out for free — and can be just as helpful — as hiring a personal tutor. In Ridgewood, most students do not have to work solely to support their family income and it would be unjustified to claim that students lack the time to study on their own. Regardless of how many extracurricular activities a student may participate in, it is his or her job to manage time properly. In most scenarios, it is not a lack of time but how we manage time that is problematic for students. We cannot claim that students are solely motivated by competition or advantageous through wealth. It is more fair to say that students are motivated by their own goals.



Theresa Cundiff, Ridgewood High Times

High School Football Instant Replay

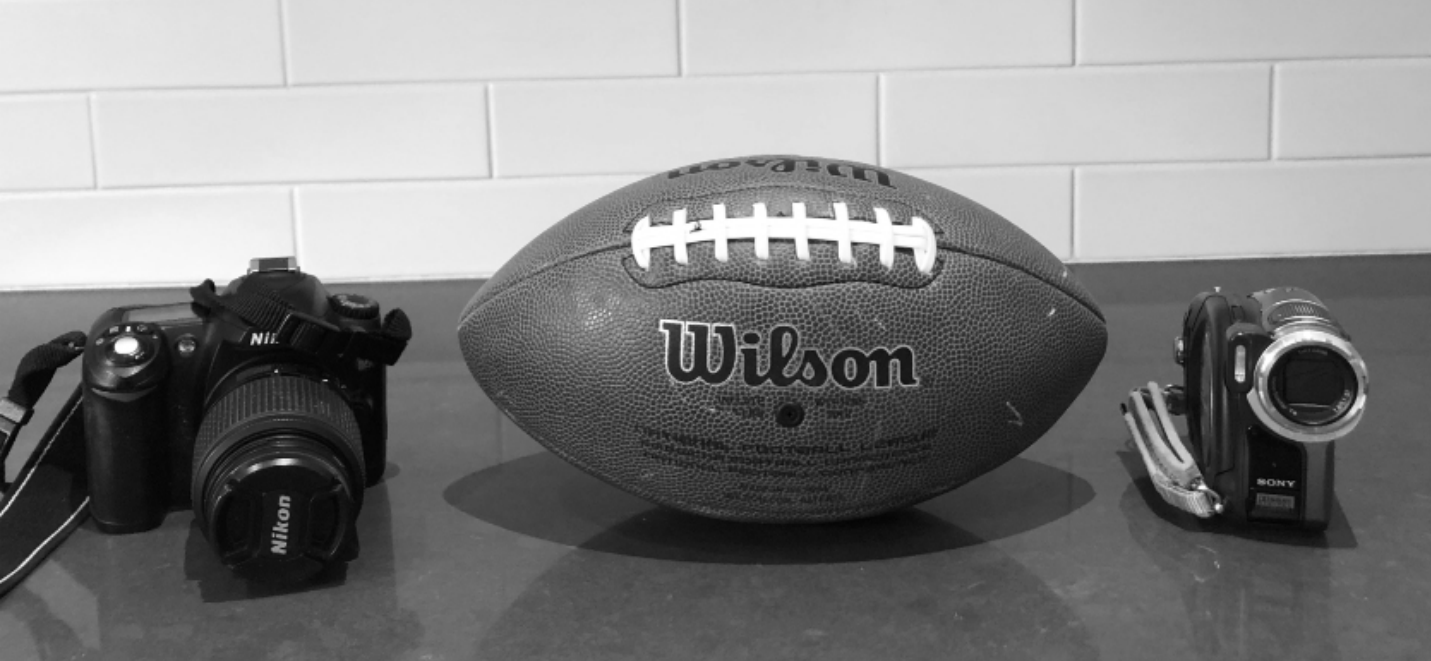
BY MATT GLUCKOW
SPORTS EDITOR

Instant replay is the process by which individual plays can be reviewed using video footage. It is most commonly used in NFL and college football and can be requested via a coach’s challenge or booth review. The tool has been used by the NFL since 1986, and has changed games as a result. It is uncommon to

see the use of instant replay at the high school level, but should this change? First, the effect of the replay system must be assessed in the NFL and at college levels. Replay has been perfect for sideline catches, assessing whether the player has full control of the ball and if it is two feet in bounds for the NFL, or one foot in bounds for college. The replay system has also helped when

evaluating whether a runner is down on fumbles and figuring out if a QB was strip sacked or attempting a throw. These pivotal plays can greatly impact the outcome of a game, so replay has shown tremendous importance. Replay has also had negative impacts on both levels, however. For example, many football fans aren’t entirely sure what a catch truly is now.

Controversial calls, such as one on a touchdown catch by Calvin Johnson in 2010 and a massive catch in a playoff game by Dez Bryant in 2015, are the reason for this. Both were called non-catches, while the majority of fans thought they were. Even the NFL said Dez’s catch was in fact one; it just took them three years to figure that out. In addition, replay creates large breaks during games making the viewing experience less enjoyable. For instant replay to be implemented in high school football, the refs would have to be trained to use it correctly, money would need to be spent for the proper equipment, and they would need to provide multiple video angles in order for the system to function properly. As a result, calls would be correct more often, making the game fair and ensuring that the team that plays better wins. Eliminating human error and luck from the game is important, but the cost would be high. The fans would have to suffer through controversial calls on replay along with grueling waits. Whether replay will be fully implemented at most high school football games remains to be seen, but, if it is, it is important to note that there are both positives and negatives that may come with it.



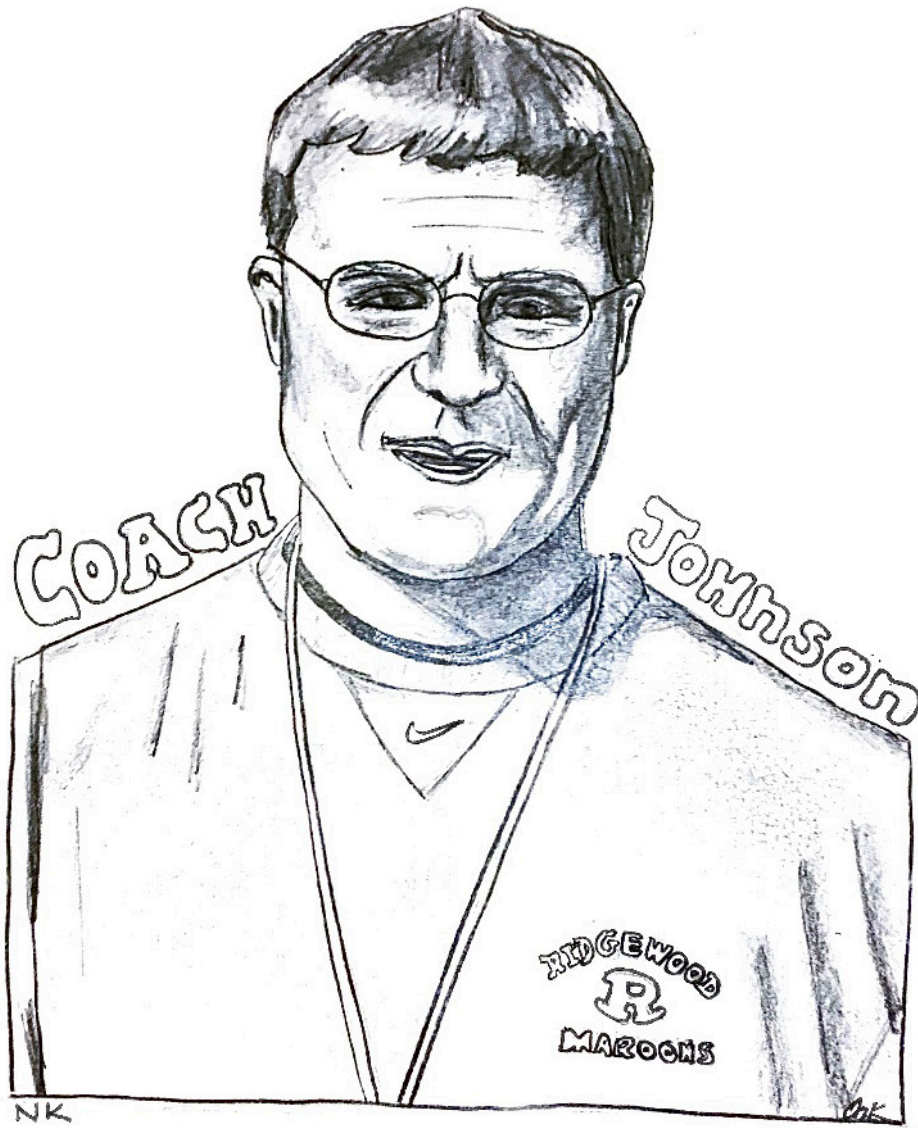
SOFIA LEE, Ridgewood High Times

Checking in on Coach Johnson

BY PJ MCKENNA
STAFF WRITER

The Ridgewood Football team had a successful season, but not without facing significant challenges. One of the team’s biggest obstacles in recent games was the absence of Coach Johnson, who has had a series of medical complications related to an ankle stress fracture. Coach Johnson is an instrumental leader of the team, and many attribute their success to his coaching. AJ Johnson, Coach Johnson’s brother, one of the assistant coaches for the varsity football team, and a faculty member at RHS, shared, “[I am] very happy to report my brother is pro-

gressing. He is out of the hospital now at Kessler for rehab.” His health is continuing to improve as time progresses and as he gets more rest, so the Ridgewood community is looking forward to his full recovery when he finally returns to his normal, healthy condition. The team qualified for their final game in MetLife Stadium after a crucial win over PCTI, which took place on November 22nd. Many players have stated that they worked even harder than before to make Coach Johnson proud, as they knew he was watching and rooting for his athletes. “We did it for Coach J,” Gabe Santiago said, speaking on behalf of his own experience and that of the rest of the team.



Athletic Edge for Private Schools?



SOFIA LEE, Ridgewood High Times
MONTCLAIR KIMERBLY ACADEMY SOCCER DURING A HOME GAME

BY GRACE GLUCKOW
STAFF WRITER

When eighth grade athletes prepare to go to high school, they often wonder, “Should I go to a public school or private?” It is a tough life-altering decision and many make the choice based on athletics. Those who consider going to private schools may end up going because private school athletics have advantages. These advantages include the fact that private schools can have players come from a variety of towns or even other athletic states. In addition, private schools often receive more revenue since the students pay tuition, not tax money. Finally, athletes may choose to go to private schools because often times, it is easier to get recruited at a private school for college athletics. A main advantage of private schools is that they can have kids from all over come to their school. For many public schools it is only the one town that they have go to their schools. But for private schools, athletes from many different towns and even surrounding states go to that school. This is so important because then the best athletes from all over are able to go to any private school if they get accepted, but public schools have a much more limited amount of athletes to fill teams with. To go to these private schools, students must apply and pay to attend. Public schools are free to go to and receive funding through taxes. Private schools can use the money they receive to build

up their sports program and continue to make it better, thereby giving them an edge in training and equipment. Many athletes dream to play a sport in college. In order to do so, they have to be recruited. This means they need college scouts to recognize them. The connections private schools have to colleges are often much stronger and make it easier for athletes to get recruited. For instance, for the class of 2020 basketball five star recruits, 21 of them attend private schools while 6 of them are from public schools. Additionally, colleges often will make connections with these private schools and each year will recruit people from the school. Locally, Don Bosco has football connections with Michigan as their coaches have a solid relationship. This does not happen with public schools as often. Overall, private schools do have a competitive edge when it comes to athletics. Although they have this advantage, Ridgewood should still play private schools in games. The games are often fun for fans to watch. For example, the Saint Anthony’s vs Ridgewood basketball game always drew large crowds, even though Saint Anthony’s usually won by a large margin. The game generated money for cancer research in the Coaches vs. Cancer fund-raiser. Although Saint Anthony’s was shut down and the game is no longer played, it was a perfect example of the positives of playing against private schools, even if they may be more talented.

Are AM Lifts Needed to Use the Weight Room?

Cut Sleep or Spend Time After School?

EMILY SUE
STAFF WRITER

For many students, weight lifting is an essential part of working out and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Ridgewood High School emphasizes the importance of a well rounded workout among areas such as weight lifting, cardiovascular endurance training, and agility. To meet all three areas, our school offers a diverse weight room that includes a variety of machines that allow athletes to get a fulfilling exercise. However, having time to workout in the gym is a challenge in itself, as many students and teams want to take advantage of its facilities. In the afternoon, students normally have around two and a half hours to workout, which includes sharing the room with many other people. After 5:30, the weight room is typically booked by coaches who promise around ninety minutes of lifting time to their athletes. Although some teams offer lifting sessions in the morning, that means students must alter their entire routine in order to fit it in. Consequently, coaches and athletes must consider whether it is better to lift in the mornings or sometime after school, and the answer to this depends almost entirely on the student.

It is common for teams of a great size, such as Football or Track & Field, to offer morning lifting sessions since the large number of athletes may make it difficult to utilize all the equipment and get a good workout in. The swim program also offers this opportunity since their athletes spend a majority of the afternoon at the pool or working



MATT LEPIK, RIDGEWOOD HIGH TIMES

Ridgewood Crew members at their 5 A.M. morning practices.

out in other areas. Despite the helpfulness of these sessions, it can be hard for students to attend because they usually start practices around 6:45-7:00 AM. “I would love to be able to workout in the morning, but because of my schedule it’s impossible for me to get to the school that early,” said junior Max Gluck. Most students can agree that it can be difficult to manage homework and after-school sports, which can be further complicated by waking up early to attend morning sessions. Another junior Emma Morino adds, “I like working out and lifting in the morning because it’s a great way to start my day and makes

me feel better throughout the day knowing that I already worked out.”

After asking students at which time they prefer to work out, a majority of the individuals I spoke to shared that they would like to lift in the morning. However, I conducted another poll where I asked when each individual would most likely be able to workout, and the majority said during the afternoon or at night. This simple response can be connected to the overwhelming amount of athletes in the weight room at one time that prevent students from getting a decent workout.

Adjustments to its usage have been made in the past; on most days,

the weight room is dominated by the boys, making it challenging for girls to feel comfortable in finding a space in crowded gym. Last year, Mr. Cook allotted Tuesdays and Thursdays to a girls only lifting days but due to the lack of attendees, the set times were disbanded. It is possible for lifting sessions to be offered in the morning but it is likely that they would be overrun once again.

Despite the valiant efforts of Mr. Cook and other devoted faculty members, students are still struggling to find time to workout that does not disrupt their entire schedule. Morning practices may have low attendance due to students’ unreliable sleep schedules and the possibility that not all students would be able to find a ride at that time. Light-weight varsity crew member, senior Lexi Liu stated, “As a sophomore, I felt too guilty waking up my parents to drive me to the high school before sunrise.” Lexi added, “Even when I had my license, I felt like I was not getting anything out of my workout due to my lack of energy, and getting less sleep made it harder to focus and put in my best effort during the school day.” Crew members also have two to three hour practices after school that, with weightlifting, give Ridgewood rowers a competitive advantage over other the crew teams.

With the weightlifting room being the only resource for many Ridgewood high schoolers to lift, it is important to strike a balance between these debated options, ensuring that student-athletes maintain a healthy lifestyle and receive the most benefits from their fulfilling workout.

Club Sports as a Compromise

DONOVAN JOSEPH
STAFF WRITER

Most students at RHS would agree that our school has a large athletic focus. The majority of students participate in at least one high school sport and also enjoy spectating their peers’ games. Not only are sports such a big part of our school’s culture because students are passionate about them, but also due to the many benefits that these extracurriculars have to offer. In addition to serving as a source of unity for individual teams, athletics also bring our school together when standing on the sidelines representing the maroon and white. Sports also provide students the opportunity to branch out socially and enjoy their teenage years, as our four years of high school are meant to be fun.

However, due to the competitiveness of high school sports, a large number of students do not take advantage of the value that comes from participating in an athletic program. And, even when students are able to enjoy a season, the high school season for each sport is very brief. Therefore, we should take initiative and create more club sports. Doing so lets students enjoy being part of a team without as much of a competitive edge, the intense pressure, or the hefty demands. These casual programs would be purely leisure and great experiences for students that do not consider themselves devoted athletes yet are interested in sports. For example, there are many sports not offered at the high school, like ultimate Frisbee or field hockey, that have the potential to be very popular amongst students.

They are also a great way for athletes to enjoy their sport further than that which the high school season lasts. There are many sports offered at the high school that are too competitive for some students to join, like lacrosse, which would be very popular if a club league was organized. RHS

winter and spring track member, Junior Ryan Mckenna stated, “Choosing between track and lacrosse was one of the hardest decisions I’ve had to make.” Mckenna added, “Since I loved both equally, having the thought of losing one seemed terrible. In the end, I chose track because of the potential it held for me, but I still continue to play lacrosse on my own.”

“Since I loved both [sports] equally, having the thought of losing one seemed terrible.”

-RYAN MCKENNA

Not only should we create more club sports, but students should also consider taking part in several recreational athletic programs that Ridgewood already offers, like biddy basketball, rec baseball, and rec soccer. It is very easy to join and organize teams for these recreational sports. For some of them, students coach their peers themselves, create their own team names, and form their own rosters, thus granting students the liberty to try something new on their own terms. Senior Will Maasarani, member of biddy basketball, stated “I like how I can play with my friends and it is taken seriously.” He added, “I think a lot of kids stress about school and sports, so biddy is a nice way to escape all that. Students have a ton of fun in these programs and always look forward to the next season.

So, if you find that you are not involved in enough activities or that you do not have enough to do, find one of the many recreational sports teams to join which welcome all, regardless of skill. If there is not one already, do not be afraid to organize one. Even if you have never considered playing a specific sport before, give it a try. It never hurts to try something new.



EDDIE O'KEEFE, Ridgewood High Times

RHS players on opposing Ridgewood RSA soccer teams interacting on the field



CALEB WALSH, Ridgewood High Times

RHS senior boys pose after winning the final OLMC game in February 2019

HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD



Every winter, Canada exports about 3,750 Christmas trees to the rest of the world. These trees that are bought by families are then beautifully decorated with ornaments and presents underneath, in preparation for Christmas day.

Since it gets dark very quickly in most parts of Finland during the winter time, it has now become a tradition to honor family members with glowing lanterns on their graves during Christmas time.

On January 6th, Venezuela celebrates “El Día de los Reyes Magos” (The Day of The Three Kings). In the morning, children wake up looking for treats left by the Three Wise Men.

Kwanza, which means “first fruits of the harvest”, is celebrated around the world but originates from Africa. It begins on December 26th and celebrates Pan-African philosophy through stories, dancing, and a feast.

In Japan, the winter holiday break starts on the 23rd of December -- which is the Emperor’s birthday -- and lasts until the 26th. During this week, people eat strawberry sponge cake and KFC, and visit Disneyland in Tokyo.

Like other countries in the Southern Hemisphere, South Africa has Christmas in the summer. Many people celebrate the holidays by going camping, singing carols, and participating in candlelight services.

Since it is summer in Australia, most people have barbeques at the beach on Boxing Day (December 26th). Many people also watch or follow famous yacht races from Sydney, Australia to Hobart, Tasmania on that day.

Hanukkah (Festival of Lights) is one of the most celebrated winter holidays around the world and lasts for 8 days. During this time of the year, many people look forward to gifts, dreidel games, menorah lighting, and delicious food.