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The High Times

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DECA in California

RHS DECA Competes in Anaheim at the International Conference

**Demi Kontos and
Rebecca Tomilchick**
staff writers

On April 23, 2013, thirty-five members of the Ridgewood High School DECA Chapter set out to Anaheim, California to compete in the 2013 DECA International Career Development Conference (ICDC). DECA is a business competition where students compete in different categories in role-play, written papers, and presentation events to prove that they have what it takes to be a successful salesperson and entrepreneur.

This year happened to be an exciting one for DECA students because of the location of the conference. For many students, Anaheim was enticing because it is the home of Disneyland. Furthermore, DECA students who placed in the top three at the State Competition were rewarded with the experience of flying to California. Once there, they competed against students from across the country and got to experience West Coast living.

Before the competition began, on Wednesday, April 24 the students took a six-mile hike through the streets of Los Angeles and onto the Hollywood Ridge Trail to get an up-close view of the Hollywood sign. Later that evening,



courtesy of RHS DECA

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Members of the RHS DECA team competed in several different areas at the ICDC 2013 Conference in Anaheim, California.

RHS Students Confirmed by Pope

Katie Shea
staff writer

Two Ridgewood High School students, Brigid Miniter and Anthony Merejo, boarded a plane bound for Rome on April 24 to be confirmed by the newly inducted Pope Francis. Along with Brigid and Anthony, their families, confirmation sponsors, and Glen McCall, their Youth Minister traveled to Rome. The students are both parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, and were chosen randomly by current Archbishop of Newark John J. Myers.

Brigid and Anthony, the only two teens selected from North America, were confirmed along with a group of

thirty-eight other students from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. They serve to represent all North Americans who have been or will be confirmed during this Year of Faith, which denotes the time between October 11, 2012 and November 24, 2013.

The forty selected candidates partook in a pilgrimage to the Tomb of Peter on Saturday, April 27. On the way, they stopped in St. Peter's Square, Michelangelo's Piety, and the tomb of Pope John Paul II.

On Sunday, April 28, Pope Francis confirmed Brigid, Anthony, and the other thirty-eight teens in St. Peter's square. The ceremony was public, and it is estimated that over 350,000 people were in attendance at this historic event.



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

Brigid Miniter and Anthony Merejo were both given the Kiss of Peace.

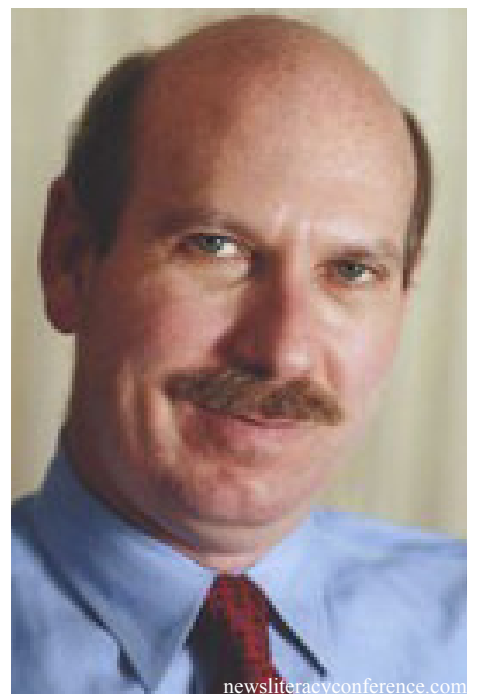
From RHS to Pulitzer Prize

Joyce Kwon
editor-in-chief

The Pulitzer Prize is one of the greatest literary awards given to only a selective few each year. Of this small handful of individuals, Alan C. Miller, a graduate of Ridgewood High School Class of 1972, received the prize for National Reporting in 2003 for his series of articles written on the Marine Corps Harrier attack jet. Miller fostered his interest in journalism at RHS as a member *The High Times* staff.

He commenced his journalistic career as the sports editor of the newspaper at Willard Elementary School in the sixth grade. He furthered his experience as a reporter at Camp Paradox, a summer camp in the Adirondacks, writing for the *Paradoxian*. Miller eventually founded the newspaper at George Washington Junior High School. As a member of *The High Times*, he wrote a column entitled, "Little Al's Big Mouth" during his junior year, and in his senior year was promoted to co-editor-in-chief. "Throughout these experiences, I learned how to report and write well, and began to develop the journalism skills that would later serve me well as a professional," says Miller of his time as a student journalist.

One of his biggest influences at



newsliteracyconference.com

Alan Miller, Class of 1972.

RHS was Stuart Postle, who taught Psychology and Literature. "Mr. Postle remained an inspiration to me throughout the rest of my education and as a life-long learner," says Miller, and upon Postle's passing, Miller wrote a tribute to the educator that was published in *The Bergen County Record*.

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News

Music in Florida

Daniel Park
staff writer

Recently, the Ridgewood High School music program returned from a trip to Florida. It provided them with a taste of a professional music life and sunny weather as they toured theme parks such as EPCOT, Universal Studios, Hollywood Studios and Magic Kingdom. Choir member Jeff Lampiasi commented that his experience involved “...watching a college choir concert, performing at Disney, and going to a workshop with Disney performers. When we weren’t doing those things we spent our free time in the various parks at Disney and Universal.” The orchestra recorded a soundtrack to a scene from the Disney film *Beauty and the Beast*, and later, according to orchestra-member Sara Canilang, “...both the orchestra and the choir performed it in EPCOT.” The orchestra played through the piece three times, recording the last run. The musicians had to exercise their sight-reading skills and play to the best of their abilities on the spot, as their recording was dubbed into the film. Although the audience often came and left during the performance, the musicians drew a large crowd, which responded well.

“Everyone interviewed said that Florida was a ‘unique experience they would always remember’.”

According to piano accompanist, Victoria Seremetis, the younger choir learned selections from *The Lion King*. The performances and recordings were “interesting...because they gave [the musicians] a taste of how professional musicians work.” Everyone interviewed said that Florida was a “unique experience” they would always remember. The performances and recordings were “interesting...because it gave us a taste of how professional musicians work.”

Of course, the young musicians were also given the opportunity to explore the park. They went on some of the rides surrounding them between performances and workshops. Choir member Daniel Brennan remembered going on “mainly the intense ones,” such as Mission Space, Rockin’ Rollercoaster, and Splash Mountain. He said that “it was a thoroughly enjoyable experience” for everyone who was able to go on the trip.

627 E. Ridgewood Ave. Ridgewood, NJ 07450	
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Et Tu, Ridgewood: Latin Club Competes

Elizabeth O’Keefe
staff writer

On Saturday April 27, the Ridgewood High School Latin Club traveled down to Gateway Regional High School in Woodbury Heights, New Jersey, for the 2013 New Jersey Junior Classical League Convention. Ridgewood sent a group of 14 students, from the freshman to senior classes, to participate in a day of classically themed events. The day started off with a bang with the spirit competition. Schools sang their “cheers” that are affectionately known as undeniably dorky, but also, “hilariously intricate,” as senior Zoe Blecher-Cohen said. Of course no one who went to the event could forget the moment when the entire auditorium of students recited the creed of the NJ Classical League in unison. According to many students, “the JCL experience develops responsibility, fosters brotherhood, [and] promotes enthusiasm,” there was an undeniable feeling of camaraderie among all.

Participants could choose from a variety of different activities to compete in. For those interested in athletics, there were relays, basketball games, and even a chariot race. The more artistically minded could pre-submit works for judgment, create one on-site project, or submit a work on the day of the event. RHS freshman Sophie Simpson submitted a digitally enhanced photo that was awarded a first place ribbon. Students could also submit original myths, poems, or power points on any classically related subject. Zoe Blecher-Cohen submitted a power point entitled, “The Year of Four Emperors”, which won her first place. And of course the day was mostly centered on the academic aspects such as “Name that Deity” (an event in which seniors Megan Felder and Zoe Blecher-Cohentook first and second place respectively), and oratory, an extremely difficult event in which students recite a passage in Latin, using proper pronunciation and emphasis.



Members of the RHS Latin Club pose with their awards at the NJ Junior Classical League Competition in April.

sis. RHS freshman Anthony Tokarz won first place in the event for his level, and afterwards described the feeling as one of “overcoming any obstacles [he] had faced beforehand”. One of the integral parts of the day was the opportunity students had to take tests. The tests were offered in five subjects, Mythology, Roman history, Roman life, Latin grammar, and Latin derivatives/vocabulary. Students are given an hour in which they can choose to take a single test, or all five. Based upon the level of Latin they have reached by this point, students are given an award within that level, out of every single student who took the test. The upper level students were extremely successful with Ms. Felder winning first place in Mythology, Roman history, and Roman civilization. Zoe Blecher-Cohen won second place in both Roman history and Roman life. Junior Britta Potter also earned a third place ribbon in Roman life. Students who tested in the lower levels also did well. Senior Abdul-

lah Sarfraz placed first in Level ½ Roman life, and third in Level ½ vocabulary and derivatives. In Level 2 Roman life, RHS took both first and second with Charlotte Khan taking first and Sophie Simpson and Liz O’Keefe tying for second. Anthony won a second place ribbon in Level 2 Latin grammar. Vera Mudry took third in Level 2 Roman history. Whether students won 10 ribbons or are hoping to just get one, all of the students were extremely grateful for their fearless leader Magistra Venturini. The dedicated teacher led the trip to the State Convention just weeks after organizing and executing a trip to Italy without any problems. The efforts of the Magistra certainly do not go unnoticed with students commenting on “how amazing Mags is.” The seniors who went on the trip were extremely successful, but with a large group of enthusiastic underclassmen participants and such a great leader, this is certain not to be the last time Ridgewood High School journeys

Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Nationals

Victoria Seremetis
staff writer

From April 26 to 28, the Ridgewood High School History Bowl team went to Washington D.C. for the annual National History Bee and Bowl Championships. The RHS team was one of many teams around the country who attended the tournament in Washington D.C. The participants from Ridgewood included Sanjana Rajagopal, Abbas Raza, Mark Chung, Jacqueline Schimmel, Ben Bechtold, Thomas Cleary, Krishna Rao, and Elizabeth Gaidimas. The trip advisor was Mrs. Fleming. In the tournament, the Junior Varsity team participated in twelve games and won ten of them. They won all of their morning games, and won the first round of the playoffs. However, they lost one afternoon game and the second round of the playoffs. Junior Varsity placed 7 out of 60 teams overall. The Varsity team played eleven games total and placed 21st out of 132 teams overall. The RHS History Bowl team was successful at the tournament, and according to junior Sanjana Rajagopal, “The tournament was very memorable because we did much better than we expected. The varsity team worked really well together this year, considering we really only rounded up a varsity team a few weeks before the

tournament. I’d only played with one of the people on the team before and one of our players was totally new to History Bowl itself, so we did pretty well considering the circumstances!” Aside from the NHBB Championships, the students also explored other areas of D.C. on their trip. They visited the Smithsonian’s Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood art exhibi-

tion, and the National Gallery and Sculpture Garden. The Junior Varsity team also participated in their morning games in the Cadwalader Law Firm. The team enjoyed working together in the competition, as well as hanging out in down time, during lunch and bus rides. All of the students involved in the History Bowl felt that it was an unforgettable and successful trip.



The RHS History Bowl team was able to visit sites around the capital during their visit to Washington D.C. for NHBB Nationals.

News

Interview: Alan Miller, Pulitzer Prize Winning RHS Graduate

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In part to the educator's influence, Miller founded the News Literacy Project, a national education program dedicated to teaching students critical thinking skills and spreading news literacy. "[Postle's] devotion to critical thinking infuses everything we do in the News Literacy Project."

After high school, Miller attended Wesleyan University and later received a Master's degree in political science from the University of Hawaii. He interned at the *Middletown Press* and the *Ridgewood News* among others. Miller was hired for his first full-time job at *The Times Union* as a reporter, followed by a job at *The Record*, and eventually the *Los Angeles Times*.

"I always viewed journalism as a calling rather than just as a career. I had a front-row seat to history in the making and got to influence some of it," says Miller. While at the Washington bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*, his work prompted several congressional hearings, reforms, and even criminal convictions, due to his award win-

ning journalistic investigations. Miller stated, "I had the chance to work with some of the most gifted reporters and editors of my generation and a truly outstanding newspaper, the *LA Times*, at the height of its greatness."

His distinguished career is demonstrated by more than a dozen national reporting honors including the George Polk Award, the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting, and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Medal. Miller reflects on his journalistic career as "enormously challenging and incredibly gratifying." He added, "I worked extremely hard and was highly competitive but found the rewards more than compensated for the effort."

Currently, Miller's focus is mainly on the News Literacy Project, where he gets to continuously incorporate his journalism skills in a new and different context. Leaving advice for aspiring journalist, Miller states, "In the digital age, one needs to learn how to present information through various media and on numerous platforms.... I believe there will still be a demand for journalists who can re-

Senior Cooper Nidds attended the Senior Management Institute to learn about preparing for the next stage in his life and how to thrive in college.

Three students attended the Thrive Academy, where they learned how to organize chapter-wide initiatives and challenge peers to succeed in academic environments. One student attending the academy noted that they hardly ever sat down.

Four others attended the Leadership Development Academy to become future leaders in DECA. Many were ninth or tenth graders, and the time at the academy will al-

DECA Nationals

from page 1

the students put on their business attire and entered the Anaheim Convention Center for the opening session. Students watched the parade of nations, listened to the CEO of Postnet, and danced.

On Thursday morning students participated in a variety of activities. Nine students attended academies, which each have a different focus, based on the different roles in DECA.



Hannah Farrell, Jennifer Martin, Kelly Skettini, Megan Lucky, Olivia Burdack, and Emily Burnside take a picture with Goofy.



Alan C. Miller (center) accepts his Pulitzer Prize with Kevin Sack from Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger (left).

port accurately and deeply, tell stories in new and compelling ways, and approach their work with integrity and a sense of serving the public."

After reviewing Miller's successes, one can truly appreciate ev-

low them to hold leadership positions next year and potentially become executive board members senior year.

Fifteen other students turned in written papers and ensured that their visuals met standards and guidelines. Additionally, they had to compile a survey to ensure that DECA could collect proper primary research on its target audience. Eleven students sat for a 100-question exam as the first component of their competition. Later that evening, students were able to enjoy the magic and marketing of Disneyland.

On Friday, twenty-six students entered the second day of competition. Each category/event was separated into flights. To ensure fairness, each student competed against the students in their flight for the opening round, reducing the possibility of judges grading presentations differently. After all exams, preliminary role plays, and presentations, the top two from each flight were recognized as finalists on Saturday morning. Additionally, any student who had the top role play/presentation or test score in their flight was recognized.


On Saturday, April 27, RHS DECA learned the fate of its twenty-six competitors. First to place top two in his flight and move on to finals was senior Paul Seamus Creedon in the Human Resources Management event. In Entrepreneurship Participating Independent Business, Mickey McGin-

everything that he has accomplished throughout his life. His career is a true example of how small starts and pursuits can develop into a decorated career when they are accompanied with enough ambition and dedication.

ley had also advanced. After Mickey found out he was a finalist, he said that he was "ecstatic," but "I had no idea that I would make it." Finally, in the Professional Selling Event Ryan Ardelle received the top presentation score in his flight and, Justin Shin was in the top two in his flight overall and would compete in finals later that day.

All the finalists completed another role play/presentation and would find out later that evening whether they had placed in the top 20 in their category. RHS DECA was very happy to have had three students qualify as finalists. At the grand awards ceremony the team learned that Paul Seamus Creedon placed in the top 20, an excellent achievement. After much hard work, Mickey achieved a spot in the top 10. The last finalist from RHS was senior Justin Shin, who placed in the top 10 for his outstanding performance in the Personal Selling Event.

The next day, students packed up and came back home. However, the excitement of competition and the skills learned immediately created discussion about what's ahead for RHS DECA. Students on the trip agreed to stay competitive and build on this year's success at ICDC, and the planning for next year began shortly upon their return. Students have used their momentum and already began forming chapter projects and groups that hope to succeed.



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Opinion

Marketplace Fairness Act

Anthony Tokarz
staff writer

Senators passed the latest iteration of the Marketplace Fairness Act (MFA) last Friday, May 5, in a sweeping 6927 vote. Masquerading as an attack against the sales tax loophole by which internet retail giants evade imposing tax on their customers and thereby standing head and shoulders over their competitors, the act opened the newest front on the government's campaign against the free market.

Let's backtrack for a moment. The year is 2008, and internet commerce has exploded. As an ever increasing number of vendors rush to posit their wares in the online marketplace, jobs and prosperity in their wake, the United States prepares to reap the full rewards of the free market's purest manifestation since the days of the colonies.

2009: the global community plunges into the Great Recession. As unemployment grows, Americans scrambling for jobs find that the job market had been taken over by businesses profiting off of immaterial capital, i.e. software, stocks, etc.

Back in 2013, those versatile, or just plain lucky, enough to have relocated their labor to the world wide web face the most potent threat yet. For years, the government, both at the state and national level, has eyed the untapped flow of capital over the internet, unfettered to material, instate locations, and thus out of the reach of federal sales tax. Now, governments wants to bring everything under its control.

To many, MFA seems rational, even necessary. Such an opinion is flawed, as one must only see this new Market Fairness Act as the latest in a long chain of attempts by the government to contain capital flow and maximize its own revenue as a result.

In 2011, SOPA/PIPA came onto the House floor. Should it have passed, the entire Internet would have been placed under the government's jurisdiction, granting the latter power over all activity in that domain. But how could we, the American people, ever allow such a menace to restrict our rights?



The answer is, that we just did. In 2012, the House passed the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA), granting the government rights to any data collected about us by any big data corporation. This means that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter could be obligated to hand over private information to the government when asked. Considering that Facebook has more data than the government anyway, we should definitely be worried. And now, to top it off, we're facing the Marketplace Fairness Act.

In a nutshell, MFA forces any and all Internet vendors to file tax statements to any state where their goods have been purchased. To many, the low startup and operating costs of an Internet business, coupled with an unlimited market, offers an escape from the recession. However, under the act's provisions, even EBay might soon die under the weight of its own versatility. If you've ever dreamed of building a startup, selling your art online, or becoming a freelancer, you'd better build fast, because the government is coming to take the opportunity away.

Angelina Jolie's Medical Announcement

Sarah Sandler
opinion editor

On May 14, Angelina Jolie went public with the announcement that she intends to get a double mastectomy surgery. The surprising thing about this is that she does not actually have breast cancer. Jolie is taking this measure preventatively, because she was recently informed by her physician that tests have revealed she has an 87% chance of acquiring breast cancer.

Such a shocking announcement sparked a slew of media responses, which was heard on everything from National Public Radio to CNN's Anderson Cooper 360. Among the things being discussed excitedly were the effects this very personal and life changing announcement will have on Jolie's fans and their medical decisions. Jolie made this decision in order to prolong her life and have a chance at survival, so as to be around for her children as long as possible. Others might follow the example for the wrong reasons.

Many worry that Jolie's overwhelming popularity and fame will induce a following of women wishing to receive drastic surgeries as well. While I have no control over the situation, I hope that Angelina Jolie's public reveal of her decision to get a double mastectomy will serve only as an example for women to be smart and wary about their health. Instead of creating an instance of many unnecessary surgeries, it would be best if women began to get genetic testing for breast and other cancers in order to thwart these diseases before they can prematurely end a life.

Scouts' Homosexuality Policy

Margot Kaiser
staff writer

Since its foundation in 1910, the Boy Scouts of America have made it their mission to, "prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law." Number 4 of the 12 Boy Scout laws requires a scout to be, "Friendly. A Scout is a friend to all. He seeks to understand others. He respects those with ideas and customs other than his own." However, most ambivalently, the Boy Scouts of America have actively enforced a ban on gay Scouts and Scout Leaders for the past 103 years.

Recently, the Boy Scouts of America have been challenged by the Youth Equality Act which entails that youth groups who discriminate on the basis of gender identity, race, sexual orientation, nationality, religion or religious affiliation will no longer be exempt from taxes. The publicity the Boy Scouts' membership policies has placed them under righteous scrutiny for their blatant discrimination. The culmination of a push for change, a huge loss of sponsors, and the threat of imposed taxes, has resulted in an adverse compromise that states "No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America



on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone," but the organization, "will maintain the current membership policy for all adult leaders."

The resolution fails to make either side happy. Conservative Christians, some of which believe homosexuality is a sin, argue that the Boy Scouts caved into political pressure. In fact, many of these churches are generous patrons to BSA. On the other hand, gay rights groups argue that the resolution was still terribly discriminatory.

Although the ban on gay scouts was lifted, the remaining prohibition of gay scout leaders only further affirms BSA's prejudice against homosexuals. It is a hypocritical act of bigotry coming from an organization that claims to, "be a friend to all," "[seeks] to understand others," and respect differing beliefs. Although homosexuality may not be approved of by the conservative executives of BSA, or religious sponsors, an appeal to their membership policies such as the Youth Equality Act was inevitable in this day and age. As society becomes increasingly accepting of homosexuality, an objection to BSA's injustice is imperative.

In order to appease their religious patrons and views, BSA has discriminated against homosexual children and teens for over a century. Clearly, BSA only agreed to accept gay Scouts in order to comply with the provisions of the Youth Equality Act and avoid paying taxes.

The BSA's stubborn intolerance missed them "an opportunity to exercise leadership and usher the organization back to relevancy," said Richard Ferraro, the vice president of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Discrimination. "What this resolution appears to be doing is reinforcing the idea that gay people somehow pose a threat to kids, which experts like the American Psychological Association have dismissed for more than a decade."

The Credibility of AP Exams: Are They Worth it?

Karen Noh
staff writer

The AP program was introduced by the Educational Testing Service in the early 1950s and was soon taken over by College Board. Its original purpose was to offer a more "challenging" course to ambitious students, and give them a taste of college-level courses.

Dartmouth College announced in January 2013 that it would no longer give college credit to students who score well on AP exams. Dartmouth's decision is based on an experiment that Dartmouth's Committee on Instruction conducted in response to the growing suspicion of the Psychology Department of whether the AP exams are truly a good indicator of college-level achievement. Shockingly, of the more than 100 students who had scored a 5 on the AP exam, 90% failed a condensed version of Dartmouth's Psych 1 final exam. The remaining 10% who actually passed Dartmouth's final were given credit, and the other 90% were not.

While conducted as an experiment, giving the Psych 1 final exam to incoming students and the subsequent giving of credit to students who passed it seems to be a good solution to the growing complaints that AP exams are not a good indicator of college-level performance. Why? Although the majority of students were not qualified, a small percentage did in fact pass the exam. Refusing to give credit to all students is unfair to students who are actually qualified for the next-level course, but giving credit to students who are clearly not qualified is also unfair.

Of course, there are flaws to administering a test to determine a student's



Greg Maslak and Jackson Stone take the AP English exam.

competence in taking a certain course. For example if a student took the AP exam as a junior year, there is a year-long gap between when the student last reviewed the material and when the student must take the exam. The theory is that a student should remember the material learned in the course, but especially in a course such as psychology, which requires memorizing several names, theories and approaches, that year-long gap most likely diminished the student's knowledge in psychology.

Still, if a student plans on receiving college credit for a course, it is their responsibility for knowing the material. Whether the student took the AP exam as a sophomore, junior or a senior, the

fact is that they are at a new school and must prove their knowledge to that school. After all, colleges are essentially giving up a chance to receive potential course fees when a student submits AP scores and moves onto the next level of a course. Furthermore, if a student expects to move onto the next course within the subject, then he or she must know the material of the course they supposedly mastered in high school.

Administering a test to students claiming mastery over an AP exam is not only justified, but perhaps even necessary to distinguish students who have truly mastered the material and students who have not.

Opinion

Separate Proms Show Segregation in Wilcox County

Madeline Morsch
staff writer

Slavery was abolished in the 1800s. The Jim Crow laws that segregated African Americans and white Americans were outlawed in 1965 during the Civil Rights movement. In 2008, the first black president, Barack Obama, was elected into office. With all of these amazing feats, you would think inequality between races no longer existed in this country. You would be wrong. At one school in Georgia, racial segregation still exists despite the end of the Jim Crow laws. Throughout the years, Wilcox County High School does not hold a prom for its students each year. Instead, the students and their parents organize private proms for the 400 students, but there are two proms, a “White Prom” and a “Black Prom.” It is horrible that segregation is still alive in this day and

age despite the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the segregation of public schools was unconstitutional in 1954. As this story gained attention on both television and social media, Wilcox County became a symbol of racial relations trapped in the past. When asked why the segregated proms still exist, one student said, “It’s just an old habit that’s hard to break.” Another student argued that people “self-segregate” and that the kids can’t agree on country or hip-hop, “white music” or “black music.” Recently, two white students and two black students sought to change the tradition of racism by raising enough money to hold an integrated prom, with about as many white students as black students. They gained a massive amount of attention through media and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. When asked about the integrated prom, the

school board mentioned that they would support the students. Yet, they did not sponsor or provide the funds needed for them, making it difficult for the event to actually happen. In Wilcox County, it is obvious that racial discrimination still exists despite this new integrated prom. The parents who organize these events are partially to blame because not one of them even questioned the moral issues raised with hosting segregated proms. The fact that Wilcox County High School allowed these segregated events to continue is equally disgraceful on their part. The end of the tradition of segregated proms in this small town was long overdue. The attention given to such an occurrence made Americans more aware of the racism that still pervades society today. Thanks to the courage and action of those four students, America is one step closer to the end of racism.

White Media

Curran McSwigan
editor in chief

From every media outlet we are bombarded with the perilous tales of white women turned bad: Amanda Knox, Casey Anthony and most recently Jodi Arias. The media jumps at the chance to illuminate the lives of these young women and their high profile crimes. Even when white women are the victims, the spotlight is on them, for an example look to the three Cleveland women whose horrifying story was covered on the news when they were found more than ten years after their abduction. As important and newsworthy as these stories are, our fascination with “white news” is only aggravating the issues of racism in our country. Barely do we see coverage on missing children of color, or crimes against non-whites. Our media, unintentional as it may be, is drawn to the lives of the Caucasian.

As we heard over and over the horrific details of the murder of Travis Alexander by ex-girlfriend Jodi Arias this week, and later her conviction, an African-American man in Mississippi was set to be executed after being denied access to DNA testing. Willie Manning maintains his innocence on his conviction of a double homicide, but the Mississippi Supreme Court denied his request and ordered his execution. Despite the fact that at the last moment the U.S. Justice Department gave him a reprieve, the Mississippi justice system’s unwillingness to provide DNA testing before putting him to death is alarming. The lack of news attention to such a constitutional issue even more so. Such a reaction brings into question: what as Americans do we really care about?

The media outlets cater to what the public wants; only if we watch their shows, read their newspapers or check their websites do they have anything worth talking about. The public interest is what drives the media to choose to discuss certain cases for weeks. Maybe it is intentional for some, unconscious for others, but the American aversion to minorities in the news is something to be alarmed at.

Missing children websites are filled with many African-American and Latino children, whose stories are rarely featured in major news outlets. Their families wish for media coverage that could energize law enforcement and help find their children.

This sort of racism pervades today’s society through the media. We cannot pride ourselves on being a nation where “all men are created equal” until we recognize, regardless of race, the victims and stories in the criminal system that are worthy of our attention.

Death Toll Rises after Bangladesh Factory Collapse

Amanda Muccio
staff writer

The cheap clothes that Americans buy from retailers every day come at a very high price. One week ago, the true cost of these shirts was found in the deaths of Indians in Rana Plaza, a building housing garment factories.

The eight-story factory collapsed in Savar, Bangladesh with horrific losses. More than 600 people were killed in the accident, with many more still unaccounted for. As bodies continue to be found throughout the wreckage, the event has already been addressed as “one of the worst industrial accidents in world history,” according to Scott Nova, the executive director of the Worker Rights Consortium.

This accident was worse than the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City, which led to better conditions for workers in American sweatshops. It was worse than the 1993 Bangkok toy factory fire, which killed 188 workers, mostly women and teenage girls, after stairwells collapsed and fire exits were blocked. It was worse than the terrible Ali Enterprises factory fire in Pakistan last September where 289 people died, and it was worse than the Tasreen Fashions factory fire in November, which killed at least 112 people.

Did these poor workers die so Westerners can wear cheap t-shirts? Tragically, we as consumers of their products, must answer yes, but do we even care? Judging by the lack of reporting of the latest Bangladesh disaster, it seems not.

The workers who died produc-



The aftermath of the Bangladesh factory collapse.

ing clothing for American buyers were only earning \$38 a month, according to the Associated Press. Now, because of this terrible accident, the clothing brands and retailers that profited from the cheap labor are struggling to restore their reputations. They claim they are making a real effort to “wash the blood” from their hands.

Western companies should be feeling the pressure to change their practices. They are fully aware that the only way to prevent the death toll from mounting is to stop their presence in Bangladesh altogether, and to rid the country of sweatshops. The problem is, with the collapse of this factory, and the reaction of leading companies to pull production out of

the country, instead of dealing with the underlying social issues, they are indirectly putting thousands of poor Bangladeshi people out of work.

Earlier this month, officials from Walmart, Gap, and about two dozen other retailers and apparel companies met in Germany to begin developing a plan to increase safety in Bangladesh’s garment factories, according to *The New York Times*. Disney Corporation, whose goods had previously been tied to accidents in Bangladesh, decided it would stop all production of branded merchandise in the country by March 31, 2014, according to the *Times*. Honestly, most brands need to rethink their role in Bangladesh as a whole.

The Moral Dilemma of Syria: Civil Turmoil Continues

Michael Antosiewicz
staff writer

We in this country have always demonstrated a certain propensity for holding ourselves up as the light of the world, or some kind of beacon of hope, and certainly, this assertion is written within the American Narrative. From John Winthrop’s “City Upon a Hill” philosophy to Roosevelt’s “Arsenal for Democracy” vision for America, our country has repeatedly presumed the responsibility of regulating the world. Political rhetoric today is pervaded by notions of this presumption, and has usually succeeded in inciting emotion among a crowd. Just in the last decade we have toppled a dictator in Iraq and have fought a War On Terror that holds salutary benefits for each individual in the world. Therefore, I find it very hard to believe that after all that has



Civil turmoil in Syria.

occurred before, the United States government cannot more actively support the Syrian “rebels” who only wish to live out the same normative vision of freedom that we currently do. It is at least the time to rid ourselves of the moral dilemma of involvement in Syria.

The question arising from this situation is not “Has the moral compass inside each American corroded to the

extent where one can no longer distinguish between right and wrong?” The question at hand is “Why has everything in today’s society fallen within the prerogative of political action?” Unfortunately, due to the tremendous instability of the Middle East, our relationship with the Arab world has always followed the lines of superficiality and support for cruel men. One must not look further than our support for the Shah of Iran in the 1970s to see that this fact is true. However, when does political tentativeness exceed the necessary limits for stability in the world? In other words, when does the urge to respect political interests cause us as supposedly freedom-loving citizens of the United States to become hypocrites?

Moreover, we really do not realize how similar our circumstances are with those of the Syrian rebels. John Adams once stated in his eternal *No-vanlgus* that, “*Obsta principiis- nip the*

shoots of arbitrary power in the bud, is the only maxim which can ever preserve the liberties of any people.” This maxim, exemplifying the resolve that the people of the American Revolutionary period demonstrated in their endeavor to subvert attempted subjugation, applies directly to the people of Syria. They have taken into resolve this same philosophy, and go so far as to sacrifice their lives in their effort to diminish their “arbitrary power.” This struggle, this antagonism between the forces of righteousness and of inhumanity, is something that we democracy-loving Americans should cherish. The toppling of dictators in the Middle East should be encouragement to Americans, and sweep us into at least some active involvement. I ask, therefore, why we, the people of the United States, do not join together with the people of Syria in a comradeship of spirit, striving, and of triumph.



Election of 2013

What it Means to Be School President



Izzy Sandoval
School President '13-'14

I truly do think that Ridgewood High School is a school of opportunity. Unfortunately, I believe that this ideal is only truly embraced by certain individuals in the student community.

When I announced that I was running for President, people kept asking me why I had such determination to win this election, and why I aspired for such a position. In actuality, I wanted the position not only for myself but also for those around me who have felt the same way I have for years as a student here.

First and foremost, one of the main reasons I decided to run was due to the lack of confidence that is so common



among too many RHS students. I felt like I knew exactly how they feel. No matter how cliché it may sound, I ran in order to show everyone that the fear of failure cannot and should not stop you from doing things that other people may deem “out of your league.” I cannot stress enough the number of times I have heard competent, intellectual, and bright high school students complaining about how “dumb” they are, when in reality the truth is just the opposite.

The point I am trying to get across is that you are the one that chooses which league that you will play in. Running for president was not a choice for me; it was something I felt had to be done. I had this feeling like I had wasted two years as a student here and I was sick and tired of it. I made a prom-

ise to myself this year that I would start my life up again as the person I should have been since I was a freshman.

“I ran in order to show everyone that fear of failure cannot and should not stop you.”

The best advice I can offer to students is to never let anyone set your expectations for you. That is your job. Thank you so much, Ridgewood High School, for electing me as your President. I’m not promising I will be perfect, but I will try my very best to be the best and not let you down.

Izzy Sandoval: A Revolutionary President

Madeline Morsch
staff writer

The 2013 election for Student Congress President marked an upset of a tradition which has been in existence at Ridgewood High School for as long as we have all been students here. For the past three years, the incumbent Junior Class President has been elected as the next Student Body President. This year, however, Izzy Sandoval was elected with not only having never served as Junior Class President, but having never served in Student Government at all. Her lack of experience did not stop her, nor did it stop those that voted for her. Instead, she found an unprecedented amount of support within the student body due to her “of the people” mind set that so heavily influenced her presentation and her speech to the Ridgewood High School community.

With such an dynamic, original candidate as President, Ridgewood High School is sure to have an exciting 2013-2014 school year.

Why did you decide to run for Student Congress?

I feel like in the past the student body has not been able to have a lot of influence in what goes on in the Student Congress, and I think it’s important that everyone’s voice be heard. I wanted to represent the average student, and not just the ones who are in all honors or AP classes. I really want to unify all the students at Ridgewood so we can all cooperate to make the high school a better place to spend four years of our lives.

Why did you choose the position of President?

The president of the school is the most prestigious position, and I really wanted to make a statement that a average students can rise to the top and achieve anything they want. As long as you are determined and willing to work hard to get want you want, you can do it. You don’t need to be a star student, or have a 4.0 GPA, to be the president of the school.

What are your plans for the upcoming school year?

I really need to see what the students want. I am definitely going to take the initiative to increase fundraising and make it a fun activity for our school rather than a chore. I want our school to contribute to charity associations more, in a fun and effective way.

What were your thoughts after you heard that you won?

I could not believe it. I still do not believe it. When Mr. Pizzuto told me I won, I literally fell to the ground in shock. I was speechless. I am incredibly honored.

How was the campaign process?

Considering the fact that I decided to run for president the day before the petition was due, my campaign process was extremely hectic. I had to get one-hundred and seventy five signatures in about two hours, but I was driven and I did it. People said I would never be able to get enough signatures, or win the presidency, but that just gave me

even more motivation. I strived to prove them wrong, and I succeeded.

What was it like running for president and giving your speech?

At first running was really cool and I got a lot of support from people I barely even knew. Running against extremely intelligent and outgoing candidates made me super nervous, especially for the speeches. I had a really unique speech and I know it sounds cliché but I just poured my heart out to the students. I did not want to lie to them and tell them I am abolishing homework or getting a pool in our school, or some other ridiculous thing just so they would vote for me.

Anything else you want to say to the student body?

I want them to see me as an example that you cannot let anyone tell that you cannot do something. You set your own limits.

Congratulations to Izzy Sandoval on her historic victory.

Characteristics of the Candidates’ Speeches

Zion Chang
staff writer

Regardless of the results of the 2013-2014 Student Congress Body Election, the factor that contributed to those results was most certainly the candidate’s speeches. At Ridgewood High School, each candidate running for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer is required to speak in front of hundreds of students for a for a few minutes on the day before the election.

Every candidate did a great job grabbing the audience’s attention and earning the people’s fa-

vor in their own unique ways.

The candidates for president and Vice President laid out their plans for the future of Ridgewood High School. Overall, the candidates promised more enjoyment with tri-grade dances, more exciting spirit weeks, and more support to each and every group and team in the school. They also promised a better everyday school experience, with the candidates declaring their devotion, responsibility, and “open ears” to all the students of the school.

An appreciable characteristic in this year’s speeches was the lack of unrealistic promises. However, there

was also an aspect that could have been considered a drawback in the speeches. It seemed that the candidates spent too much time trying to appeal and relate to every single student. The audience can grow tired of long lists of groups that the candidates know about and are willing to support.

As for the candidates for Secretary and Treasurer, they made sure to assure al those who were assembled in the gym of their capability for the position. As an example, the, now, Treasurer-Elect for the 2013-2014 school year, Theo Hong, made sure to highlight his experience overseeing some financial

activities for his family. Each candidate’s effort for his or her positions and unique different approaches to the style of speeches deserve commemoration.

One speech that requires special attention is Izzy Sandoval’s. Her approach was to paint herself as simply an average student. It was definitely a change of pace from the common speech, in which candidates try to make themselves seem as flawless as possible. Izzy’s strategy worked, and she was elected to be next year’s Student Body President. Maybe next year’s candidates should look to Izzy’s tactics for guidance.



Candidates sit side-by-side in preparation to deliver their speeches.

Features

Your 2013-2014 Student Congress Leaders

Vice President: Robert Fischer

Kyla MacLennan
staff writer

I had a chance to sit down with newly elected Vice President of Ridgewood High School, Robert Fischer, and ask him a few questions about himself, the campaign process, student government, and his thoughts for next year. What follows is our conversation on those issues and others.

How did you campaign for the election?

I actually didn't campaign (laughs). I thought that campaigning would detract from my ability to win. I feel that people don't really like when they are bombarded by other candidates' posters, so I went with the idea that I would tell people by word of mouth, spread the word, and see where it went from there.

What was the hardest part of writing your speech?

Probably the fact that I put it off until the last minute. I had a rough idea of what I wanted to say; I knew what I



wanted to tell people, and what I wanted to accomplish. So the actual writing process went really quickly, but the idea of having to write it slowed me down a bit.

Why did you choose to run for the position of Vice President?

I liked the position of Vice President because I feel like it is the kind of assisting position through which I can help people. I really like working with a group. I don't really know how I would feel about being President, so for me, I thought Vice President was a very good position to run for.

How did you feel when you found out that you had won?

I was pretty pumped. I felt quite suave, which was a very good feeling.

What are some changes you're planning on making for next year, and what are looking forward to?

Tri-grade dances, and a really nice spirit week. It's going to be a lot of fun next year!

How long have you been participating in Student Government?

I started my sophomore year. So junior year has been my second year, and next year will be my third year in student government.

What has been your favorite part of Student Government so far?

Definitely getting to work with the people and working together for the betterment of the whole student body.

What activities do you participate in at Ridgewood High School?

I do track, cross country, I'm part of Ridgewood's JSA chapter, I'm a peer counselor, and of course I'm on student government.

It looks like RHS has elected a very capable and qualified person for the position of Vice President next year. While Robert is quite a busy guy, he is dedicated to the school and to student government, he has proved that he is definitely the right person for such a leadership position, and is ready to take on the challenges of next year.

Secretary: Melanie Taylor

Emily Rizzo
staff writer

Melanie Taylor, a Junior, is going to be Secretary of Student Council for Ridgewood High School next year. She was more than willing to sit down with me for an interview. The following is our conversation about Student Council and Melanie's position.

What is the secretary's most important job?

To keep the conversations organized and to write down everything that happens during the student council meetings.

How do you feel about not having had an opponent running against you for secretary?

A huge relief! I loved every second of it! It made the campaign experience much more enjoyable.

What are you most looking forward to change in the high school next year?

I want to make spirit weeks and pep rallies a lot more fun and have students be a lot more involved in them. Right now the school spirit and morale are very low and I would like to change that. Also I would like to plan more

fun events for students to attend. Making RHS the best it can be!

Why have you become so involved in Student Council? What do you like about it?

I like being involved in the school decisions. I like to plan spirit week and rallies especially. I love "Go team!"

What do you hope student council will achieve as a whole?

Over the past few years we have gotten progressively more and more efficient and I would like to continue on that path, also just getting the students more involved in school activities.



Treasurer: Theo Hong

Betty Chen
staff writer

As the school year is about to end, elections have been held at RHS to determine the winners for next year's student council! Treasurer is a very important position, as it is the elected position most responsible for managing the Student Government budget. Without the treasurer, our school would be really boring, as Student Government funds all of our fun events! Junior Theo Hong was elected as Treasurer for next year, and here are some of his thoughts:

Why did you run for Treasurer?

I wanted to run for Treasurer since it would be a good experience, as I want to go into finance. I was also interested on what it was like to run the school behind the scenes and see what I can

do better than the previous student administrations.

How did you feel after finding out that you were elected as upcoming Treasurer?

I felt great, and I was excited about winning. I put a decent amount of effort into my campaign, and it is comforting to know that I have the support of RHS' students. However, it was a bit of a bummer beating my good friend Luke Dublirer, who also ran and was a solid and friendly competitor.

How was the campaigning process?

It was fun, a little low key, but I enjoyed using my photoshop abilities to make posters.

Was it difficult to get your ideas across?

It was difficult to get my ideas across, as we only had the speech to really do



so, but I think I will be able to execute them well.

What are some of your plans for next year?

I plan to act as a more effective medium between the administration and the students. This can be done by letting them know how money is being spent. I also want to streamline the financial system by raising more money and spending it more effectively for better events like dances and pep rallies.

Anything else you want to add?

I am excited to assume the responsibilities as Treasurer and to improve school events through financial competency. Lastly, I want to thank everyone for their support.

Congratulations and good luck to Theo Hong. He will serve the school with dedication and commitment.



"I want our school to contribute to charity associations more, in a fun and effective way."



"Tri-grade dances, and a really nice spirit week. It's going to be a lot of fun next year!"



"I plan to act as a more effective medium between the administration and the students."



"I want to make spirit weeks and pep rallies a lot more fun and have students be a lot more involved in them."

Arts and Entertainment

Luhrmann's Gatsby Doesn't Seem So Great After All

Ethan Sapienza
entertainment editor

On Friday, May 10, most of the Junior class took a field trip to the Ridgewood Movie Theater to see Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby*, as F. Scott Fitzgerald's famed novel is taught in every eleventh grade English class. Only the morning and afternoon American Studies classes did not go on the field trip.

Fortunately enough, I am among the few who did not attend the film. As of writing this, I have not yet seen the movie, but I have heavy doubts in my mind that the film will be unfulfilling in its attempts to properly translate the novel onto the silver screen. This is also not to mention that the movie seems to have the perfect ingredients to be rather terrible.

The film, based purely on its trailers and what clips have been released, looks almost entirely like a computer generated movie. It could very well be passed off as the next Pixar picture. Considering that it is supposed to be a live action film, the fact that almost all of the scenery and characters look computer animated is absurd. *Gatsby* appears almost identical in style to *300* (2006), Zach Snyder's Spartan war epic, which came under much criticism after its release due to the fact that it looked like it had been created entirely using CGI. Though there is nothing wrong with computer generated imagery, it looks out of place both stylistically and symbolically in a film based on a novel that is famous for capturing the 1920s. I find it puzzling that a time piece with a \$127 Million budget



Leonardo Dicaprio as Gatsby with his love interest Daisy, portrayed by actress Carey Mulligan.

could not translate the proper spirit and imagery of its specified era without relying heavily on such computer based tactics. HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* takes place entirely in the 1920s and depicts the period in an unbelievably realistic fashion without using any noticeable CGI. Why *Gatsby* must be portrayed in such a way is beyond me and simply detracts from the film's overall feeling and appeal.

On top of this stylistic choice, the film simple looks over the top in the worst of ways. Appearances and settings seem so dedicated to the stereotypes of the time period that it has lost its historical accuracy and instead become something rather silly. Parties are grandiose and explosive to the point where they become unrealistic. The acting is overly dramatized that the film fails in

its attempts to be serious and comes off as being comical. Such characteristics are horrible to have considering the genuineness of Fitzgerald's work, and will only act to take away from the film as an adaptation and as a movie.

One of the most peculiar aspects of the film, which almost completely destroys the 1920s image that the picture so desperately wishes to capture, is its use of hip-hop and rap. Though I have nothing against the artists that are featured in the film, their music is completely out of place in such a movie. I understand that rap is the modern day equivalent to what jazz was in the 1920s, yet that does not mean it has a place in *The Great Gatsby*. Instead of giving it an edgy and modern feel, it takes away from the film's attempts at accurately depicting and translating

ing the novel. The use of such music in this movie is purely idiotic and an extremely poor choice, stylistically.

Finally, I simply do not trust Baz Luhrmann. Mr. Luhrmann has gained a reputation for obsessing over excess, to the point where his movies are comedic in a non intentional way. Likewise, Mr. Luhrmann's past attempt at a modern adaptation of a classic piece of literature failed immensely in this writer's opinion. The film, *Romeo + Juliet*, is an adaptation of Shakespeare's most well known work set in a mid '90s California-esque beach town. Despite its modern location, the film still preserved the Shakespearean dialogue. The choice of retaining the dialogue completely ruined the film, as it rendered it ridiculous. Actors wielding guns and wearing modern clothing while spewing out Shakespeare's writing seemed extraordinarily absurd, even while the film tried its hardest to be taken seriously. On top of this, the acting and style of the film were over the top. Party scenes, characters' costumes and the artsy style of the movie were so preposterous and extraordinary that the film could not be taken sincerely.

All of the qualities listed above match up with aspects of *The Great Gatsby*, where modern twists are inappropriately put on classic features of the novel. To put it bluntly, that is an astonishingly bad sign. Not to mention both films feature Leonardo DiCaprio, whose typically phenomenal acting was not enough to save the doomed *Romeo + Juliet*. Unfortunately, it looks like Mr. DiCaprio may not be able to save *Gatsby* either.

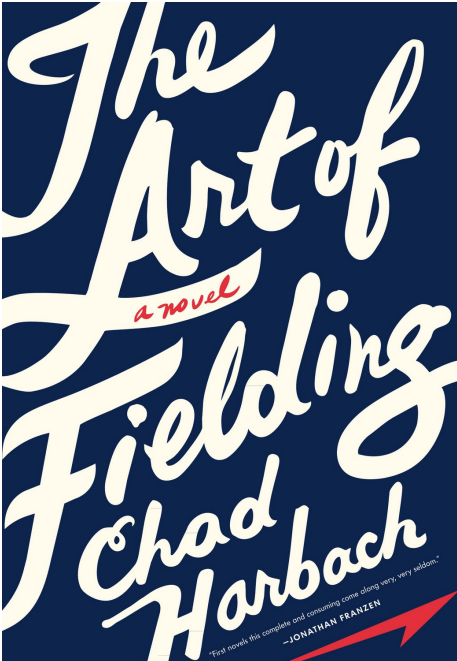
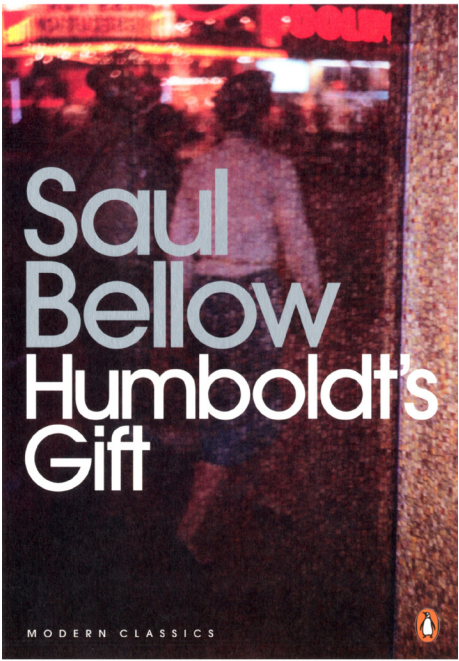
The Fruition of Fictional Worlds in Literature

Bradley Alsop
entertainment editor

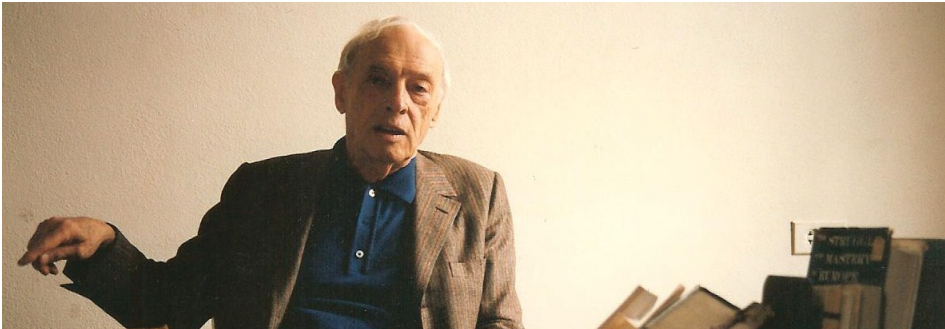
Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift*, like most literary classics, is peerless in its execution and unique in its style of writing. The 1975 Nobel Prize winning book details the life of playwright Charlie Citrine. Citrine, a Chicago native, explains his tumultuous but often rewarding relationship with the firebrand personality that was poet Von Humboldt Fleischer. Bellow perfectly depicts, in his esoteric and incisive fashion, the inner psyche of Humboldt through approximately the first one hundred pages, as seen through the eyes of Charlie. The roots of their friendship, the key moments in their lives together, and, finally, the ashes of their ruined friendship as Humboldt's career regressed and Charlie's started to thrive. Charlie's realizations and reminiscences all come about shortly after Humboldt's death, where he was found face-up in a seedy hotel room. Though dead, Humboldt becomes the centerpiece of the novel.

Charlie gets involved in numerous altercations with Rinaldo Cantabile, an Italian Mafioso of the inner Chicago underbelly. He is involved in a divorce with a woman he once loved, and cannot possibly comprehend why she would try to exact revenge upon him. Throughout the entire novel, Charlie is in a desperate need to find himself, so as to put his career and his life back into forward motion. And, with Humboldt's help, he is able to do so.

I offer a synopsis of the novel to help the reader understand that Bellow is able to weave an intricate plot with truly interesting content, but the story line does not merely scratch the surface of what the esteemed author is letting on. *Humboldt's Gift*, fundamentally, is about human relationship, and how one life, from even beyond the grave, can have a monumental impact on someone's future. Charlie



Cover artwork for Bellow's "Humboldt's Gift" and Harbach's "The Art of Fielding."



The Nobel Prize Laureate author Saul Bellow.

goes through a myriad of unlucky occurrences, and for every misstep he experiences, he is able to reminisce on the times he had with Humboldt. This often helps him get a better understanding of his situation from thinking about what his hero and fallen contemporary would do, had he found himself in the same circumstances.

But what Bellow truly excels at is his ability to create a world. So few times in literature are there novels

that truly make it seem as if there are people outside the realm of the main characters, with some notice given to the peripheral players. Bellow does not conform to clichés at all. Everyone has a reason for entering the book, and very well may return in the next hundred pages, if only for a brief instance. The reason this can occur is due to the concept that no matter how minor these characters are, they all have a reason, and they all matter. Their stories are

not trivialized. Their lineage, their family life, their trials and tribulations, all have some cardinal importance to Bellow, no matter how diminutive the characters are to the overarching theme and idea of the novel. Bellow holds a view on the world that runs parallel to his view on literature. In his writing, he always attempts to answer the question: "If literature can be seen as a microcosm of the world at large, how can we not account for the people's lives who cross the protagonist by every waking moment of the novel?"

Bellow's writing style, in its allusions to literature and other fields of study, is not at all similar to that of the Chad Harbach's, but *The Art of Fielding* (2011), Harbach's heart-breaking and wistful tale of the life and times of a liberal arts college in Wisconsin, shares many of the same characteristics and motivations that Bellow executes in all of his writings.

Harbach and Bellow make writing look simple, as they create worlds and landscapes around their central characters. Each player has a story to tell, has things they love, and even things they fear. They are not simply two-dimensional stand-ins meant to serve a single-minded purpose before being eliminated altogether from the collective psyche of the author and the reader, but living vibrant people who live and interact with the book's world, no matter their importance to theme or story.

So despite their differences and thirty six year separation, it is truly inspiring to see, a such similar sprawling worlds emerge from the pages of both Harbach's and Bellow's works. I will not give too much away of the plot to *The Art of Fielding*, as it is a masterpiece and I strongly recommend it to anyone. However, he, like Bellow, has the remarkable ability to not only create worlds but foster an adept ability to conjure up human nature, and to truly examine the human condition through the art of writing.

Arts and Entertainment

The Great Gatsby Shines, But Doesn't Dazzle

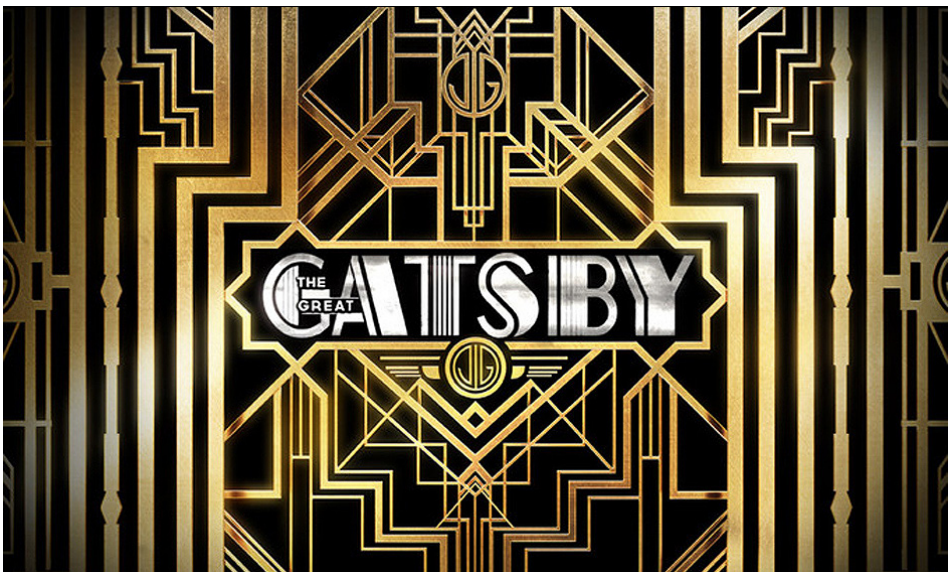
John Ricatto
staff writer

Adapting classic literature to film is always a difficult process. As a director, one feels a duty to stay true to the source material, but also a desire to put one's own artistic spin on the piece. The ideal film adaptation stays true to the principles and themes of its source material, while offering some new perspective on a well-known story line. The new film adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* succeeds and fails in different respects because of director Baz Luhrmann's creative alterations to the tone and plot of the story. Luhrman's experimentation at its best adds excitement and energy to the film and at its worst takes away the novel's overriding tone and message. Fitzgerald's novel focuses on America in the 1920s, a time characterized by the rise of Wall Street, the popularity of jazz music, and an emphasis on large scale alcohol consumption. Luhrmann effectively captures the excitement and energy of the era through the use of music. Modern hip-hop and dance music provide the background for the extravagant parties depicted in the film. The choice of modern music over a Jazz soundtrack allows filmgoers to be a part of the pulsing energy of 1920s America, as hip hop is the equivalent to jazz in our modern times. Visually, the film achieves a similar affect. The film bursts with colorful costumes and sets that bring to life the lavishness and materialism that defined post World War I America.

Although the film's stylistic risks pay off, changes made to the story's plot hold it back. The film presents narrator Nick Carraway as a recovering alcoholic writing the story from a sanatorium. This presentation of Carraway's character serves no purpose to the plot, and in many ways makes him a less reliable narrator. In the novel Carraway is presented as being

“The choice of modern music over a Jazz soundtrack allows filmgoers to be a part of the pulsing energy of 1920's America.”

trustworthy and honest in his presentation of the story. His depiction as a recovering alcoholic in the film alters that view. Luhrmann would have been better off sticking to the original text when it came to Carraway's character. Despite this creative mistake, the film, for the most part, succeeds in staying true to capturing the essence of the novel. This is mostly because of Leonardo DiCaprio's excellent portrayal of Jay Gatsby. *The Great Gatsby* is the type of story that depends on the leading man's performance to be effective



Theatrical poster for Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby*.

in delivering its message. Luckily, DiCaprio masterfully falls into his role as the film's tragic hero, and provides the best film portrayal yet of the character. Without this anchoring performance, the film would certainly have less emotional resonance. Notwithstanding the successes of the film, this adaptation still falls short of being worthy of the novel that inspired it. It is as a good a movie as it could have been, as in many ways the novel's greatness can never be transferred to film. The possible interpretations of the novel are infinite, and because of that no single director's personal take on the book could encompass its powerful message. Even the most visionary of directors, both

old and new, could not be capable of properly adapting the novel for theaters. People must accept the fact that the great American novel cannot become the great American film. With this film one gets to see what *The Great Gatsby* means to director Baz Luhrmann. Some may find it suitable, others may not, as Luhrmann's style is rather excessive. Ironically, one would think that Luhrmann would be perfect to direct such an adaptation, as the 1920s has become famous for its excess, yet the film is far from perfect. Although the extravagance of the scenes fits the time period, this style takes away from the importance of the plot. Hopefully it will inspire a great deal of people to read the book, and interpret for

Comic Potential: Resounding Success with Love, Comedy and Drama



Artwork for a professional production of *Comic Potential*.



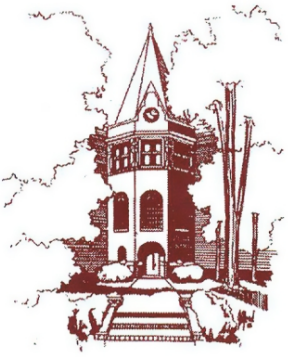
Hayes Walsh and Cathy Campo sing and act together as the unlikely lovers of the scriptwriter Adam Trainsmith and the actoid Jacie.



Mickey McGinley
staff writer

Ridgewood High School's New Players completed their main stage season on the weekend of May 10 with their production of Alan Ayckbourn's *Comic Potential*. The play lived up to its name, as it was truly hilarious. Being the New Players' only comedy this season, it received a great reaction from the audience both Friday and Saturday night. The play is a romantic comedy set somewhere in the "not-so-distant future," when the heads of low-budget daytime television programs strive to save time and money by replacing actors with "actoids," androids programmed to act. *Comic Potential* was one of Alan Ayckbourn's first experiences writing science fiction. Ayckbourn wrote the play from the idea that the ability to love and the ability to laugh are the two characteristics that separate humans from artificial intelligence. The play follows the story of Adam Trainsmith (played by Hayes Walsh), a young aspiring scriptwriter. Adam is introduced to his idol, Chandler Tate (Sam Flynn), a retired comedy director who is finishing his dying career working on set of an unsuccessful soap opera featuring only actoids. Adam notes that one of the androids, JC-F31-333, or "Jacie" is different from the others. Jacie (Cathy Campo) has a sense of humor and a high level of intelligence. While Jacie believes these features are faults in her programming, Adam sees them as an advantage and persuades Chandler to make a comedy centered around her. When Carla Pepperbloom (Marcy Moran), one of the executives at the television station responsible for the show, threatens to stop the project, Adam runs away with Jacie. This leaves Chandler and his assistants, Prim and Trudi (Riley Clark and Emilie Turgeon), to create a new episode without their leading actoid. The show was directed by Kelly Van Zile, director of last year's sum-

mer productions of "The Outsiders" and "Rehearsal for Murder." "It was a really rewarding experience to be able to watch everybody develop their characters and really make the show a true comedy" said Dana Martinez, who served as a stage manager of the production along with Meghan Ryan. "Kelly is a great director and knows how to change a shallow script into a truly entertaining piece for the audience to escape in. It's always an honor to be in a show like this, with an out of this world cast and fantastic directing. This was unlike any new players show I've had the privilege of being in," stated Hayes Walsh. *Comic Potential* features a variety of characters that challenged each of the actors in their own ways. For freshman Sam Flynn, *Comic Potential* was his first experience in a leading role in New Players. He described his experience by saying "It pushed me as an actor and really made me work hard. The cast was absolutely amazing and worked hard on their characters whether they were big or small. I wouldn't have wanted to miss any of it. *Comic Potential* was definitely the highlight of my freshman year, and I will never forget it." When asked about her experience working on the show, sophomore leading actress Cathy Campo, said "Portraying a robot was indubitably the most challenging thing. After I had mastered Jacie's speech and movement, I began to decipher her character. Jacie is an extremely complex character, not just for a robot, but for anyone." She reflected on her overall experience with the production commenting "it had everything one could hope for in a show: comedy, romance, a dramatic flair, a totally random dance number, and an important message about acceptance. I loved each and every moment working on *Comic Potential* and I will continue to look back on it as my favorite New Players experience."



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Sports

Girls Crew Update

Sophie Noel
staff writer

Saturday April 27th, Ridgewood Crew headed down to Cooper River in Cherry Hill, New Jersey to participate in the Garden States Scholastic Championships Regatta. As a qualifier for the Scholastic Nationals Regatta, the team anxiously departed at the crack of dawn ready to race a total of 15 boats down the 1500 meter course.

Ridgewood Crew raced two singles, four doubles, six quads, one four, and two eights. Out of those, the varsity double with John Sluis and Trevor Wilkinson came in first, beating Don Bosco's Aaron McAvey and Albert Wunsch. The girls Varsity double of Kat Francis and CJ Chiaramonte, and the lightweight double of Sophie Noel and Maeve Cannon also got gold. Anthony Criscitiello, rowing in the varsity single as well as Joe Criscitiello who rowed in the JV single, received gold. The JV quad made up of Amanda Criscitiello, Emma Brickfield, Kathleen Simon, and Bridget Callaghan also came in first. Finally, the boys novice quad swooped in for a final gold.

"There was this one moment when for five races in a row, Ridgewood just came down the river claiming gold, one after the other. It was the best feel-

ing to watch our team achieve this record" said head coach Boris Roque who had previously told the team that his goal was to win five gold medals. The outcome: twelve medals in total, seven of which were gold. In total, the team was one gold medal short of Montclair, Coach Boris's old stomping grounds. Being so close to beating such a good team made the Ridgewood coaches and rowers very happy and even more determined to work harder and eventually surpass them. "They have worked so hard this season, and it's so incredible to watch all the hard work pay off," continued Mr. Roque. Needless to say, the bus ride home was a happy one.

On May 5, the team travelled to Philadelphia for the City Championships. The lightweight double of juniors Noel and Cannon places first, and the varsity double of seniors Sluis and Wilkinson won as well. Seniors Francis and Chiaramonte placed second in the varsity double, losing by only one second. Senior Anthony Criscitiello won in the varsity single, along with his brother junior Joe Criscitiello, who placed first in the junior varsity single. The novice boys, JV girls quad, and novice girls placed as well. The team set a record for Ridgewood crew for receiving medals at the City Championships.



Senior duo Kat Francis and CJ Chiaramonte after a win.

Lax Day: A Ridgewood Tradition

Katie Conklin
staff writer

Only in Ridgewood will one find an entire day of sport and celebration in honor of the game of lacrosse. Every year, face paint and ribbons of all colors decorate the smiling faces of hundreds of boys and girls throughout the community. This year, Ridgewood's Annual 'Lax Day' was held on Maple, Stevens, and the RHS Stadium fields. Top caliber teams from New Canaan, Bridgewater, and Moorestown traveled to compete. The 3 and 4 grade house league, 5 and 6 grade travel teams and varsity level teams all participated in the festivities.

The day started off with the Ridgewood Lacrosse Parade around the high school field, during which all participants appeared ready for a day of fun and competition. First, the boy's varsity lacrosse team played the first big game of the day against New Canaan. Unfortunately, they came up short in a well-fought 6-5 battle. The girl's lacrosse team followed, playing national powerhouse Moorestown. Although losing, with a score of 15-8, the girls showed much promise for the future county and state tournaments. As Ridgewood graduated some of its top players last year, it was reassuring to see this young team put up a good fight against Moorestown.

Not only does Lax Day offer plenty of competition on the field, but it offers some games and activities off the field too. This Lax Day, the fields were covered with bouncy-houses, cotton candy machines, stands selling clothing and lacrosse gear, and booths



The girls lacrosse team practices in preparation for their upcoming season.

offering face-painting. The day also included a "fast shot" competition sponsored by Maverik Lacrosse Company, which featured a few Ridgewood lacrosse players competing for accuracy and speed of lacrosse shots.

Ridgewood's Lax Day, as always, served as an exciting start to the spring season and truly brought the community together. One little girl at the event seemed to express the sentiment of everyone present when she said, "It's my favorite holiday of the year!"

Hommen's 400th Win

Domenic Boresta
staff writer

On Friday, May 3, Ridgewood Varsity baseball coach Kurt Hommen achieved his 400th career win with a 12-1 victory over Hackensack. The win took place at a home game at Veterans Field, and marked a milestone in Hommen's career. Pitching and getting another win for Ridgewood was Jerry D'Andrea, who got plenty of offensive help with 15 hits from the offense. This win was a watershed moment in Hommen's illustrious 24-season coaching career, split between 20 years at Tenaflly and his four at Ridgewood. Hommen will join the 400-win club along with a two other Bergen county coaches. Reaching 400 wins will not convince Hommen to stop anytime soon. His other milestones as a high school coach include winning the 1994 County Baseball Tournament with Tenaflly, an accomplishment that he will be driven to achieve with this year's Ridgewood Varsity team. Ridgewood defeated Hasbrouck Heights in a play-in game



Coach Hommen watches his team play.

Wednesday to earn a spot in the County Tournament. They lost to Hasbrouck Heights 6 years ago, under the same circumstances and the same seeding. Following the post-game talk was a big congratulation to the endearing coach, which included a brownie cake in the shape of a '400' and was thoroughly enjoyed by the entire team following a great, much needed win. The baseball team looks towards the next games on the schedule, as the playoffs fast approach.

Girls' Track Goes To Penn Relays

Laura Weisberger
sports editor

On April 25, 26, and 27, the boys and girls track teams traveled to the University of Pennsylvania for the annual Penn Relays Carnival, one of the largest, most well-respected track and field event in the country. On Thursday night at 6:05 p.m., as Franklin Field was packed with hundreds of fans and prestigious runners, the Ridgewood girls ran a distance medley relay in the High School Girls Distance Medley Championship of America along with some of the best high school teams in the country. The team consisted of sophomore Kelly Cleary running the 1200 meter leg, senior Micaela McPadden running the 400 meter leg, junior Laura Weisberger in the 800 meter leg, and sophomore Catherine Pagano closing the race with the 1600 meter leg. The girls ran a good race and placed tenth out of fifteen teams, with an overall time of 12:16, which is a personal best for this squad, and is currently the eighth best time in the state. Cleary split 3:59.8, McPadden ran 57.9, Weisberger split 2:21.6, and Pagano ran her personal best time of 4:56.5, which if ran in an individual race, would have been the fourth best time in New Jersey this year so far. When asked about the race, Micaela said "It was an honor to have had the opportunity to run at such a great meet all four years of high school. I think we ran a solid race and I know we can continue to improve." The team looks forward to their next meet.

Nick Salamone

Nick Salamone is a senior member of the varsity track and cross country team at RHS.



Nick Salamone competes at the Bergen Relays 2013.

How long have you been running?
I have been running all throughout high school.

Why do you like running?
Running helps me relax and gives me time to myself, and I get to see new places

How did you get into running?
I got into running because I needed an activity.

What is your favorite memory of being on track and cross country?
My best memory was winning a state sectional or running at SMOC, which is the State Meet of Champions where I set a personal record.

Are you running in college?
Yes, I'm running at Marist College next year.

What is your goal for this season?
My goal is to be all American, which is placing in the top six in the country at Nationals in any given event.

Who is your favorite professional runner?
I don't follow professional running

How long have you been a member of the varsity track and cross country teams?
I have been on the teams for three years.

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Art and Photography

Annie Thurston

Annie Thurston, a junior, has been interested in art for as long as she can remember. She began studying oil painting at the Ridgewood Art Institute when she was eight years old. At RHS, Annie takes AP Studio Art and is enjoying being able to explore a wide range of mediums outside of oil paints.



Annie often paints portraits and still lifes, but she most enjoys painting snow scenes. She loves finding the colors reflected onto the snow that many people do not see.



Annie has begun her college search, focusing on schools where she will be able to study both art and education. In the future, she hopes to be able to teach art at an elementary school.

