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Decomposing Body Found In Hudson



Alex Wang / The Spectator
Police boats were seen in the Hudson River when a dead body was pulled out of it near Pier 40 on Friday, October 29.

By DEVON VARRICHIONE

The decomposing body of a 35-year-old Asian male was found floating in the Hudson River near the intersection of River Terrace and Chambers Street on Friday, October 29, at 4:15 p.m., by a New York Police Department (NYPD) Harbor Unit. The body was recovered in Rockefeller Park, adjacent to Stuyvesant High School. According to a representative of the NYPD's Deputy Commissioner of Public Information, the corpse was identified as belonging to missing person Avery Man. The date and cause of Man's death have not yet been determined by the office of the New York City Chief Medical Examiner, and the re-

sults of the autopsy will not be published for several weeks.

Man was born in America to parents of Chinese descent and moved to New York City 22 years ago. At the time of his death, Man was living in Bellerose, Queens. He practiced acupuncture on Utica Avenue, in Brooklyn. Man was last seen alive on Friday, October 22, when he left his sister's house on Greenwich Street at 9 p.m. His family waited until Monday, October 25 to file a missing persons report with the Manhattan District Attorney's office. A missing person flier with a picture of Man is currently posted at the corner of

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Damesek Wins Best Assistant Principal Award

By MAYA AVERBUCH
with additional reporting by
CHESTER DUBOV

Assistant Principal Organization Randi Damesek has received a prestigious "Assistant Principal of the Year" Blackboard Award. The award for administrators, which was created last year, is given annually to school administrators who demonstrate excellence in education. This year, Damesek was the only Assistant Principal to win the award. As to date, she is the only Stuyvesant teacher or administrator to win a Blackboard Award.

For the last nine years, Blackboard Awards have been given to select schools, principals and teachers who "work so hard to create and sustain successful learning communities," according to the Blackboard Awards Web site. The awards are a result of study conducted by a team of educational experts employed by various small-scale newspapers run by Manhattan Media. They evaluate childhood, elementary, middle and high school educational opportunities for the city's children.

Any principal or assistant principal who works at a public, private, religious or charter

schools in New York City is eligible for a Blackboard Award, and anyone can submit nominations online through the Blackboard Award Web site. The awards for principals and assistant principals are sponsored by the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA).

CSA Communications Director Chiara Colletti nominated Damesek by asking the union's field directors to describe the most effective assistant principals in the city, and then narrowing down the list by asking other CSA members for their opinions. The Blackboard Award advisors selected Damesek after reviewing the nominations Colletti submitted.

Colletti said that Damesek's job is particularly difficult because of the scale of the school she runs, which is much larger than that of most other schools. "The style of schools in New York has changed radically, and rarely do you get one assistant principal for operations who is in charge of the operations of an entire, humongous school," she said. "She does it uncomplainingly and many, many hours a day, so a lot of APs around town really seem to admire her and respect her."

"She's extremely efficient,

extremely dedicated and takes almost no credit for herself. And she's like an old-fashioned principal," Colletti said. "Her father used to be a principal [...] of an old school, where everything had to be done exactly right and schools ran very smoothly, in a way many schools are not run nowadays. And she does it just like her father probably did."

Her colleagues confirmed that Damesek is a vital part of the Stuyvesant community.

"It is gratifying to see that Ms. Damesek is being recognized for her dedication to the students and teachers of our school," history teacher Debra Plafker said. "Her organization and dedication have a direct positive impact on our students' ability to navigate their way through our school, through their exams, through their commutes and so much more."

"She's probably one of the unsung heroes of the school," history teacher Eric Wisotsky said.

Damesek herself declined to comment.

The award ceremony was held on Monday, November 1, at

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Drastic Programming Changes for the Class of 2015

By MADHURIMA CHOWDHURY and ANIKA RASTGIR

Sitting on a wooden shelf in Principal Stanley Teitel's office is a perfectly crafted, miniature-size grandfather clock. The clock was made by a former Stuyvesant student, who spent an entire term constructing it from scratch as part of a clock-making class, which has long since been phased out. In three years, a wooden birdhouse and a clay flower pot may also be the only visible remains of Advanced Woodshop (TMPPDWA) and Ceramics (TMPPCMA), because, by 2014, some technology courses will be stricken from the Stuyvesant curriculum.

According to Principal Stanley Teitel's announcement at the Student Leadership Team (SLT) meeting on Tuesday, October 19, starting with the class of 2015, students will have to meet drastically altered requirements. Sophomores will have to take two semesters of computer science (ML1), instead of just one semester. As a result, juniors will take Technical Drawing (TD1) and, as in

previous years, Health Education (PHA). Five-tech courses, the single-term technology courses students are currently required to take, will be eliminated. However, there will still be a technology requirement for seniors, who will each fulfill two credits of Applied Science. Some of the current Technology Lab courses, commonly known as 10-Techs, and some advanced computer science classes will fulfill this requirement. In addition, seniors will also be required to fit a fourth year of math into their schedules.

Math to the Fourth Power

Last year, after a heated debate over whether students should be required to take math during the entirety of their Stuyvesant careers, the administration allowed students to opt out of a fourth year of math by speaking with their guidance counselors. Starting September 2014, however, seniors will need to take math during all four years at Stuyvesant. Teitel feels the change will not have a great impact on the senior class because every year only around

80 to 100 choose not to take a math class, according to Assistant Principal Technology Edward Wong.

"We are one of the only schools that say we are a math, science and technology school that doesn't require the full four years [of math]," Teitel said. "Even schools that do not profess to be a [math, science and technology school] have a four year requirement."

Assistant Principal Mathematics Maryann Ferrara declined to comment.

Many students feel the requirement is justified. "[The requirement] would be helpful, so long as students were reassured they would be facing quality teachers," Madeline Martinez ('04) said in an e-mail interview.

Others believe that students should have the choice to pick courses that best suit them. Seniors "should decide whether math will take a greater part of their future [or] their future jobs [than other subjects]," senior Jacqueline Yeung said. Those who opt out of a fourth

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DOE Repeals Extended Building Use Fee

By ALEX WANG

priate usage of extended use permits for school activities."

With the policy now repealed, Teitel will continue to use the DOE funding he received to employ the custodial staff whenever the building is used after hours. However, once these funds run out, the DOE will cover further costs, contrary to the previous plan that forced the school to use money from its own general budget.

"If I run out of money, the DOE will pay. So, I don't have to worry anymore," Teitel said. "That's not to say we'll squander it, but it relieves me of that stress."

Teitel was informed of the change via an e-mail from Chancellor Joel Klein on Thursday, October 28.

Events that require using the building after-hours include parent-teacher conferences, SING! rehearsals, Public School Athletic League games, student extracurricular activities and concerts.

According to Teitel, the evening session of parent teacher

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Opinions

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Don't Volunteer Me

AMIGOS: Altruism or Slumdog Tourism?



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Arts & Entertainment

A Street Cart Named Waffles

Wafels a la Cart



News

Drastic Programming Changes for the Class of 2015

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year of math "want to spend more time on other classes, so they should have the decision [...] to take what courses that they want."

Math teacher Gary Rubinstein agreed. "It's not necessary to change the requirement since most students do take the fourth year," he said. "For the students that don't, what is the benefit to suffering through an extra year?"

The Computer Generation

Teitel believes that because the world is becoming more technologically advanced and more dependent on computers, making computer science (ML1) a yearlong course will help students become more

added that he has "had people in all sorts of walks of business lines and research in all areas use what they learned in computer science classes here."

Since computer science will take up a whole year, Zamansky has outlined an extended curriculum. Teachers will cover Scheme and NetLogo—the two computer science languages currently taught—more in depth and will help students become familiar with the parts of the computer and how they function. Zamansky also hopes to show students how to use a computer language "as the tool set to study the types of question or types of problems that [they] will get in more practical applications," he said.

He hopes additional exposure to the subject will increase the number of students who pursue computer science, a change he believes will be beneficial to the entire country. "We aren't producing enough technologists and computer scientists. One of the reasons for that is because people don't see it in high school," Zamansky said.

However, some students feel that the requirement is negative because it curtails students' freedom to study what interests them.

"I don't think [students] should be forced to do anything. They should have the ability to choose what they want to do. Why would they have to take Comp Sci if they are never going to use it?" junior Thomas Hsu said.

Zamansky feels students' protests will die down quickly because "the changes don't affect current Stuyvesant students. This affects students who aren't even in the building yet," he said. "No matter what, whenever you change things, everyone's going to yell and scream for a minute."

Redefining Technology

Moving the Technical Drawing (TD1) requirement to junior year will eliminate the need for students to take a one-semester Technology Lab class, commonly known as a 5-Tech. Some of the current 5-Tech courses will become electives.

"Video journalism, photography and classes of that nature [may] become electives. I know that many students like them," Teitel said. He will decide which classes are to become electives before September 2014.

"Most of the 5-Techs are kind of useless. 5-Techs were incorporated [years ago] to meet the needs of society then. Comp Sci meets the needs now," junior Yorkbell Jaramillo said.

Other students credit 5-Techs with influencing their future careers. "[Teitel] should not assume that students won't benefit from the courses. After taking Video Production, I took

an advanced course at Rhode Island School of Design," senior Sophia Abbot said. "Video

"This is a matter of vision. The school should be moving toward real technology. I don't see wood as a real technology. I don't see ceramics as a real technology."
—Stanley Teitel, Principal

Production is the reason that I want to go into [film production]."

In addition, seniors will be required to have two credits worth of Applied Science classes, which will include computer science classes, such as Advanced Placement Computer Science (ML1X/ML2X) and System Level Programming (ML5), along with certain former 10-Techs. However, Teitel is uncertain if students will be taking double-period classes or single-period classes. The class is meant to teach students to utilize what they have learned at Stuyvesant. "We've taught you plenty. Now let's see what you can do with it," Teitel said.

Teitel sees the greater focus on computer science and elimination of some of the hand-on classes as a step to tailor the curriculum to the needs of Stuyvesant students. "Most parents, when they think about a vision for their own child, they think about their child going to college. They don't see their child going out and becoming a plumber or electrician [...], even though they are wonderful professions," he said.

Amherst College's Director of Admissions Katie Fretwell believes that the changes are in the students' best interests. "I might consider [students] more academically challenged [in computer based courses] than in woodworking," she said.

However, some teachers feel the change is ultimately harmful towards students.

"Colleges want creative people," photography teacher Janis Juracek said. "It seems like the forms of visual intelligence and the creative process and being able to create something with your hands and the artistic experience will be an experience that Stuyvesant students will not be able to have."

Classes such as Ceramics and Advanced Woodworking will be eliminated. The workshops used by the two classes will be modified for classroom

use, possibly being turned into computer labs. Teitel has not yet determined whether Principles of Engineering, Architecture and similar classes will fulfill the Applied Science requirement, become electives, or be eliminated altogether.

Since many of the technology teachers will be teaching fewer classes after the changes are instituted, Teitel has offered them the opportunity start learning computer science programs so they can teach them later on. However, no one has responded to the offer yet.

Juracek said that a valid compromise would be "having computer science, math and technology courses be choices along with photography, ceramics and woodworking. Let the students choose what they would like to take."

Modern Education

Teitel justifies the change in requirements in order to adapt to modern times. "This is a matter of vision. The school should be moving toward real technology. I don't see wood as a real technology. I don't see ceramics as a real technology," he said. "Very few schools have what they call the hands-on experience anymore."

By removing so-called creative classes, Ceramics teacher

these courses will affect Stuyvesant students poorly in the long run. "As a designer, I believe [ceramics and woodworking] are extremely relevant in the modern world. The world is still a physical construct. Computers are not the only answer. We can design anything in a computer, but the true test is to see if it can be built. Materiality and construction are essential

"I don't think [students] should be forced to do anything. They should have the ability to choose what they want to do. Why would they have to take Comp Sci if they are never going to use it?"

—Thomas Hsu, junior

to innovations in design," said alumnus Olivia Lau ('06), who is currently a fifth year architecture student at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, in an e-mail interview.

"Our core value is to produce the most intellectually curious, disciplined and diligent high school graduates that then go on to be leaders in their respective professional worlds," Martinez ('04) said in an e-mail interview. "I understand Principal Teitel's intentions in modernizing the core requirements to reflect the demands of the 21st century market, but I do believe that, in modernizing the curriculum, he is eliminating much needed flexibility for individual expression outside of the traditional sciences."

"One thing that makes Stuy so great is the varied electives they have," alumnus Jaeyoung Byun ('09) said in an e-mail interview. "It seems to me that Teitel wants to make the school more engineering-oriented, but why try to limit such brilliant minds from other areas of the liberal arts and the design?"

"It's important to give a lot of different learning styles and learning experiences to young people in their education, because they are still evolving to who they are. You don't know who you are at 14. You should be discovering still," Juracek said.

Teitel defended the fact that he has the final say in this matter. "My job is to provide visions for this school," he said. "And if I feel this is the vision that we need to be moving towards, then that's where I'm going."

"As a designer, I believe [ceramics and woodworking] are extremely relevant in the modern world. The world is still a physical construct. Computers are not the only answer. We can design anything in a computer, but the true test is to see if it can be built. Materiality and construction are essential to innovations in design."

—Olivia Lau ('06)

James Lonardo believes administrators "are taking away an important aspect of a general, well-rounded education," he said.

Former Stuyvesant graduates agree that eliminating

"It's important to give a lot of different learning styles and learning experiences to young people in their education because they are still evolving to who they are. You don't know who you are at 14. You should be discovering still."
—Janis Juracek, photography

successful in the long run.

"It's long overdue," said Computer Science Coordinator Mike Zamansky, who has repeatedly urged Teitel over the last ten years to make this change. "In order to give you guys what you should have, to give you a competitive advantage in the future, we need this full year."

Junior Mohammed Hosain agreed that the change is just because "we are more of a computer and technology generation."

Zamansky believes that computer science is a lot more useful to students than many of the other required courses are. "If you think about it, when are you using chemistry, physics, biology, math beyond the very basics; world languages if you don't visit a Spanish-speaking country?" Zamansky said. "I would argue that computer science is more fundamental than most of the topics we [teach] here and are much more likely to help the typical student." He

Two Stuyvesant Students Named Regional Finalists in Siemens Competition



Joseph Park (left) and Jay Shim (right) achieved Regional Finalist status in the Siemens Science Competition.

By SAM LEVINE

The Siemens Foundation named seniors Joseph Park and Jay Shim regional finalists and senior Anya Krok a semifinalist in the 2010-11 Siemens Foundation Competition in Math, Science & Technology.

The prestigious annual Siemens Competition recognizes high school students across the nation for science research projects. Of the 1,372 total submissions nationwide, 10 papers were selected from each of six regions in the United States to advance to the regional round: five individual and five group projects.

The regional finals will occur at Carnegie Mellon University on Friday, November 19, and Saturday, November 20. Park and Shim have already won 1,000 dollars each for advancing to the regional finals; there, they will vie for a chance to advance to the national round in Washington D.C. and to win the 100,000 dollar grand prize.

Park worked closely with an assistant professor at Hofstra University in the spring and summer of his junior year to complete his individual project, titled "Improved Upper Bounds for the Steiner Ratio." The project is about mathematically "finding the most efficient point," Park said.

He felt his project would best be explained through an example of how the mathematics would be applied in the real world. "If you have a bunch of randomly located oil rigs, you want to find the most efficient location to build a refinery plant so that [the total amount of piping required for transportation among the rigs] is minimized," he said.

Shim completed a group project with a student from upstate New York that was titled, "Super Resolution Imaging of Filopodial Interactions of Gastric Cancer Cells."

"There are little hair-like protrusions [called filopodia] on cancer cells and we wanted to see if they are used to communicate with other cancer cells in the area," Shim said.

Shim stained cancer cells with a fluorescent dye, used a stimulated emission depletion (STED) microscope to scan the cells and viewed images of the cells with resolutions of tens of nanometers. His project attempted to present utilizing the STED microscope as the ideal method for studying the cells' filopodia.

Krok worked with two students from Hunter College High School and High Technology High School on her group project, titled, "The Pneumonia Hypothesis: Exploring the Statistical and Genomic Foundations of Mortality from Pandemic and Non-Pandemic Influenza."

The group collected data from 36 countries regarding deaths by historically pandemic flus and bacterial pneumonias. An unexplained characteristic of the pandemic flus was that adolescents and adults were more severely affected than all other age groups. Krok's group tried to find relationships between the sets of data to support the hypothesis that the increased mortality in that age group was due to co-infections.

"We [also] tested whether or not [the] increased mortality in the [middle-aged persons] group can be attributed to an overload of cytokines – small molecules in

the immune system that help locate intrusions – because immune systems at that age are more robust and capable of over-reacting," Krok said. "We matched up nucleotides in the NS gene, [a gene involved in stimulating cytokine release], from the Spanish flu, swine flu, and seasonal flu strains to see which matched up the best."

Shim was initially shocked that his paper had advanced to the regional round. "I was not really expecting [it]," he said.

Park was also surprised that he had made it thus far in the competition, but looks forward to presenting his project at the regional finals. "I didn't have too many high hopes for my project. It's hard for a mathematics project to be a successful project for Siemens," he said. "But my project has a lot of potential. It all just depends on how I appear to the judges and audience at Carnegie Mellon."

The participants encountered obstacles in their research. "I remember being stuck on one part of my project for weeks. Sometimes I felt like just dropping it there, but I persisted," Park said.

"I pretty much spent my whole summer at the lab doing research and I still go after school about once a week. Because it is so time consuming, I have to sacrifice other extra-curriculars and my school work," Shim said.

However, Krok attested to a sense of fulfillment for overcoming such obstacles. "It's a nice feeling knowing that all of your hard work amounted to something," she said.

Stuyvesant students in the past have met success in the competition. Last year, senior Stephanie Chen was named a na-

"I remember being stuck on one part of my project for weeks. Sometimes I felt like just dropping it there, but I persisted."
—Joseph Park, senior

tional finalist. In 2007 and 2008, one Stuyvesant student was named a regional finalist and at least three, semifinalists each year.

"Stuyvesant is one of the elite few schools that have Siemens finalists and semifinalists on a regular basis. So students should try it," said biology teacher and Research Coordinator Jonathan Gastel, who has worked with Stuyvesant Siemens finalists in previous years. "You have to be very efficient and good at presenting your work because they don't know anything about you. They don't know that you go to Stuy. They only read the paper. Any national award, any award of this kind, is very difficult to acquire, so the performance of the individual has to be excellent."

Damesek Wins Best Assistant Principal Award

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Fordham University Law School, at 6:30 p.m. The event was presided over by radio personality Brian Lehrer.

Teitel, who attended the event along with Assistant Principal Mathematics Maryann Ferrara, wrote a short speech that the Master of Ceremonies used to introduce Damesek. "Once Randi Damesek sets Stuyvesant's clocks, everything runs on time for the entire school year," Teitel wrote. "From her precise coordination to her security and fire drill procedures, to her efforts to ensure that Stuyvesant students receive every single benefit despite

an ever shrinking budget, Randi Damesek has proven to be an invaluable and superb advocate for the Stuyvesant community."

Students agreed that Damesek plays an important role in their educational experiences. "From my personal experience, what I see Ms. Damesek doing in the school is maintaining order. There's a bunch of illegal activity. There are a couple of thousand kids that come to Stuy each day," junior Edward Cho said. "If she isn't there, that's a big problem."

"She's a powerful woman," senior Shourya Sen said. "I have a lot of respect for her."

News in Brief

Electromagnet Malfunction Keeps Doors Closed

Due to a malfunction of the door magnets, the doors leading to escalators and through hallways have been shut for the past few weeks.

"The door magnets are electromagnets controlled by a transformer in the custodian's office," Principal Stanley Teitel said. "About three weeks ago, the transformer burnt out."

Though a new transformer was installed, it lacked the sufficient amount of power to run the system. Once it was replaced, school machinist Kern Levigion encountered another problem with the system. "It looks like the battery isn't charging," Levigion said. "We're currently waiting for a transformer specialist, but until then, there isn't much we can do."

The doors will stay closed until the transformer is fixed; they cannot be propped open due to fire prevention measures. "The administration has not been able to put in blocks to keep the doors open," Teitel said. "When there is a fire, the doors near the fire are supposed to close to contain the smoke in one area of the building," he said.

Teitel does acknowledge that the closed doors present a safety hazard, because it is difficult for younger students to open the heavy doors. However, he believes that opening the doors poses the greater threat.

"For weak people like me, they're really hard to open, and they slam in my face," junior Aliy Xiao said.

According to Teitel, the doors will be fixed when the Department of Education sends a specialist to check the system. However, it is still unknown when that will be.

Stuyvesant Receives "A" On DOE Progress Report

According to the results of the Public School Progress Report published by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) on Wednesday, November 3, Stuyvesant has received an overall grade of "A" for the 2009-2010 school year. However, for the second consecutive year, Stuyvesant has been given a "B" in the School Environment category.

The progress reports are broken down into three sections: School Environment, worth 15 percent of the total score; Student Performance, worth 25 percent; and Student Progress, worth 60 percent. School Environment is measured by evaluating four criteria: Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement and Safety and Respect. Stuyvesant, receiving 8.9 out of 15 possible points in School Environment, has maintained the exact score it received on the 2008-2009 report. The grades are determined by parent responses to a survey sent out in the mail by the DOE, as well as by the answers that students and teachers choose when the same survey is given out in homeroom.

The results of the Student Progress section of the progress report are another matter. Compared to the 2008-2009 Progress Report, which awarded Stuyvesant 46.2 points out of a possible 60 in the Student Progress section, this year's assessment only awarded Stuyvesant 39.6 points. The weighted, average pass rate for the Global History Regents dropped from 1.07 to 1.06, and the average completion rate for any regents

exam, excluding those in Math, Science, Global and U.S. History, fell from a 65.4 to 62.7 percent completion rate.

It is unclear if any changes in school policy will result from the report.

When asked about the reason the school received a "B" in the School Environment category, Principal Stanley Teitel cited the importance of participation on the survey that determines the DOE's final assessment.

"There was a lack of teacher participation on the survey. We had a 19 percent teacher participation figure," he said.

Teitel went on to discuss the "B" grade in Student Progress, noting that the grade is biased towards schools with existing high levels of student success on standardized tests.

"Student Progress is a comparison and a measure of yearly improvement," Teitel said. "When you start hitting a 98 percent Regents passing rate, it's hard to improve. When you have a 70 percent rate, it's easy to improve to a 75 percent. A .2 decrease on the passing rate of a Regents becomes insignificant when we have numbers so high."

Pier 25 Opens

Pier 25, the newest addition to Hudson River Park, has opened its gates at North Moore Street and the West Side Highway, approximately seven blocks north of Stuyvesant High School. People were first permitted onto the park's premises on Thursday, November 4, but the pier's construction had been visible from north-facing classrooms in the Stuyvesant Building since 2006, when The Hudson River Park Trust first began work on the site.

The pier features many amenities and recreation facilities, including an artificial turf lawn, several small boat moorings, a snack bar and a children's playground. Sand volleyball courts and an 18-hole miniature golf course are set to open later this year. On land, the park encompasses natural lawns, a basketball court and a skate park that replicates common street obstacles such as railings, concrete ledges and a picnic table.

"I'm pretty excited about the new basketball and volleyball courts," senior Casey LaMountain said. "The view [from the pier] is nice."

Initial funding for the pier's construction came from a portion of a 70 million dollar grant given to Hudson River Park by the Lower Manhattan Development Company (LMDC) following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The LMDC views the project as a way to make a portion of New York City's 500 miles of waterfront more accessible to the public.

Just north of Pier 25, construction continues on Pier 26, the future home of a community boathouse and perhaps an estuarium. Pier 26 will be completed in the spring of 2012. It received a capital grant of five million dollars from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, as well as a 335 thousand dollar grant from the United States State Department for planning and design.

"I'm interested to see how it compares to the Pier 25 of 10 years ago," senior and Battery Park City resident Colin O'Connor said. "The hotdogs and lemonade were good."

News

“Daily-Scanning” Feature Added to Parent Tools

By NABANITA HOSSAIN

Parents can now see the precise time their children swipe into school each morning through a new feature added to the Parent Tools section of the Stuyvesant High School Web site. The feature is located under a tab labeled “Daily Scanning” at the top of the webpage, and was added to the site on Monday, September 13, by Assistant Principal Technology Edward Wong.

According to Wong, swipe-in information from the scanner bank at the second floor bridge entrance has always been available for the administration to post. “Since it was available, I thought it would be nice for parents,” Wong said. “I e-mailed staff towards the end of September [about the feature] and had [Parent Coordinator Harvey] Blumm email all the parents.”

Every morning, the scanning system on the second floor creates a file containing the times at which every student swipes into the building. After several periods, Wong uploads the file onto Stuyvesant High School’s online system, where parents can access it through Parent Tools. “I usually try to update it around 11:30 am so parents can log on and see if their child has scanned in or not,” Wong said. “[The times] are [accurate] to the minute.”

According to Blumm, the feature has been useful for concerned parents. “Every year, especially for the first

few months, I always get at least four to five calls a week from freshmen parents, asking ‘Would you mind seeing if my daughter is in school?’” Blumm said. “Now, parents don’t have to feel like they’re bothering the school. They

“Now, parents don’t have to feel like they’re bothering the school. They can go online and check. [This feature] reassures parents.”
—Harvey Blumm, Parent Coordinator

can go online and check. [This feature] reassures parents.”

Principal Stanley Teitel agreed with Blumm. “[This feature] lets you see if students arrived at school safely. There are a few parents that leave before their children and this is a way for them to see if their children arrived at school,” he said.

Junior parent Monica Watt praised the feature. “I, for one, like the swipe-in information,” Watt said. “A parent, who wishes to remain anonymous, called me telling me her child had too many ‘incorrect’ morning cuts. I told her to check the swipe-in information to see if it could shed any light on the situation. She was unaware of this new parent tool, and to her surprise she saw that her son was constantly swiping in very late on certain days.”

Sophomore parent Julie Law echoed Watt’s sentiment. “In my opinion, the swipe-in information is very useful to parents whose children have to take public transportation,” Law said. “This way, [parents will] know whether their children get to school on time or not. Furthermore, this is New York City. You never know what’s going to happen or when. Safety is our major concern.”

Students have expressed mixed reactions to the new feature. “It gives parents too much knowledge. If there’s a subway delay and a student comes in late, his or her parents can become suspicious of their child’s whereabouts, which the child does not deserve,” sophomore Rachel Zaurov said.

“It doesn’t bother me at all. My parents know that I am not a morning person, and them being able to see that I come in to school a few minutes late sometimes isn’t exactly groundbreaking,” sophomore Samantha Hom said.

borhood—the majority of the Stuyvesant community was unaware of his body’s recovery.

“I am shocked to even hear that the body was found so close to Stuyvesant. So close to our school. And that the kids could see it,” Assistant Principal Pu-

Decomposing Body Found In Hudson

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Chambers Street and Greenwich Street, in front of McDonalds.

Because Man was found on the afternoon of Parent-Teacher conferences—a busy time for teachers and administrators and a day when most students, having been dismissed from school early, had already departed from the Battery Park City neighbor-

hood Services Eleanor Archie said.

Sophomore Adam Lieber agreed. “The idea that a body was found in the Hudson, so close to Stuyvesant, is unsettling to many of us here,” he said.

Students present at Rockefeller Park when the body was pulled from the river were disturbed by its appearance.

“Skin was falling off...I won’t look at the waters of the Hudson the same anymore. I knew they were dirty, but this is something else,” senior Kevin Hua said.

“I was playing football with some friends, when I saw a couple of firemen walking across the field. I thought nothing of it until I noticed a crowd of people rushing toward the edge of the pier,” senior Nathan Kheysin said. “Instantly I dropped everything, grabbed my bag and ran toward the water as well, thinking that somebody had jumped in.”

However, no one interviewed believed that the body’s being recovered so close to the school warranted increased concern for the safety of the school’s student body.

“If they [the administration] made a bigger deal about it, I would feel less safe, but because I heard nothing about it right after it happened I think I have little to worry about,” senior Nadia Hossain said.

“I feel that the body should have no impact at all on how safe or unsafe Stuyvesant is,” Kheysin said. “Just because it was found near Stuy doesn’t mean the person’s life was taken near our school, as well.”

DOE Repeals Extended Building Use Fee

continued from page 1

conferences on Thursday, October 28, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., cost between \$800 to \$1000 dollars, at \$400 dollars for each hour. This money was taken out of the \$131,000 dollars the DOE provided him.

Students involved in extracurricular activities that require use of the building after hours were relieved by the DOE’s decision. “It was really affecting us,” senior and Speech and Debate team captain Omika Jikaria said. “Sometimes we would have to relocate from the speech room [to Whole Foods or students’ homes] because we weren’t allowed to stay after six. It’s not convenient for everyone.”

“I first believed that it would affect the fencing team in a very drastic way, because we would miss more practice. And it did. We had to shorten practices,” senior and captain of the fencing team Andrei Tapai said. “[However, our games] were completed in a timely fashion which I didn’t think was possible. So, it didn’t really affect us to the extent that we thought it would, but it’s still good anyway that they repealed the fee.”

As long as the extended use fee stays repealed, all extracurricular activities should operate under the normal restrictions of previous years. As long as an extracurricular activity has faculty supervision and Teitel has filled out a DOE permit beforehand for the custodial fees to be covered, a club can remain in

the school building for as long as the students wish. However, if a permit has not been filled out, or if there is no faculty supervision for an activity, the club must leave the building at 6 p.m., when Teitel leaves the building. Most clubs do not have faculty supervision and, consequently, they are forced to leave the building by 6 p.m.

“That gives [the students] enough time to say, ‘five o’clock, we’re done, I gotta go to my locker, I gotta go to the ladies’ room,’ but by 5:30 or so you should be crossing that bridge,” Teitel said.

Although the DOE retracted the fee for this year, Teitel believes that the repeal is only temporary. Because schools were not prepared to make the payment, “there was a lot of pushback, from various organizations, parents, etc. So, I think they relented this year, but I don’t think it will be permanent. I think it will be back next year,” he said.

In order to prepare for the possible reinstatement of the policy, the administration plans to keep track of how often the building is used outside of the instructional day during the 2010-2011 school year.

“If I find out at the end of the year that we needed [...] \$160,000 [dollars] and I’m only getting [130,000], well then I know I need to fight for \$30,000 dollars,” Teitel said. “I certainly don’t want to provide the student body with anything less than we do.”

First Students’ Forum of the Year Held

By EMMA LICHTENSTEIN

The Student Union (SU) held its first Students’ Forum of the year on Tuesday, November 9, in Lecture Hall B. The turnout was larger than expected, due to the credit ARISTA members could receive for attendance and general student interest.

The topics discussed at the meeting included the new, yearlong Computer Science requirement, the four-year math requirement, the effort to clean up and allocate more spaces for student activities and the management of Stuyvesant’s eclectic clubs and publications.

Students first discussed the new technology requirement for the class of 2015. Principal Stanley Teitel plans to make Computer Science (MC1) a full-year requirement for sophomores. In their senior year, students would take two terms of applied science, the course menu for which has yet to be determined. According to Coordinator of Student Affairs Lisa Weinwurm, Teitel’s decision is based on the school’s mission statement, which categorizes Stuyvesant as a specialized school for mathematics, science and technology. Weinwurm said his action is meant to uphold Stuyvesant’s reputation and ranking as such a school.

While some students felt that they could benefit from a full year of Computer Science, affirming the integral role of technology in our lives, the majority of students were not in

favor of the new requirement. They felt that the policy would limit student choice and make it difficult for students to develop into well-rounded individuals. Some students said that the requirement should not be forced upon those who wish to pursue other endeavors and who would consequently not have time to do so. One student suggested that the Computer Science requirement be moved to freshman year, so that as upperclassmen, students would have the same large number of choices that current upperclassmen do. Others suggested that the administration allow Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science to fulfill the 10-Tech requirement or condense the real-world applications of Computer Science and the basics of programming into one term.

Additional questions raised included the necessity of the other mandated technology classes, such as Technical Drawing, and exactly which courses would be in the menu of applied sciences. Students pointed out that while many of the popular, currently 5-tech or 10-tech workshops might remain for this requirement or as electives, they may eventually be phased out due to budgetary issues, and the menu would purely be of courses within the Computer Science field.

Students touched upon the four-year math requirement briefly, saying that students should be able to opt

out, as is currently the policy.

The second main issue discussed the regulation of clubs and publications. SU president Oren Bukspan confirmed that the SU Web site is up and running and that clubs should be able to sign up for rooms online within the next week. Other students suggested that the SU merge clubs with similar interests together and suspend charters for inactive clubs. Weinwurm responded that the SU is in e-mail correspondence with faculty advisors to make sure that groups sign up and meet on a regular basis; otherwise their funding will be cut off.

The next concern regarded acquiring more space for students to congregate within the building. Some believed that people should keep areas clean to prove that students are responsible enough to have more space. Bukspan referenced the StuySpace initiative, a collaboration between the Building Stuy community and the SU to raise student awareness about cleanliness and proper behavior. He said that in the past, students gained privileges by establishing an achievement, presenting it to Teitel and making a campaign with an incentive. He suggested that these students join the new SU department, Student Involvement, to help with this process.

Bukspan hopes to bring the concerns and opinions that students brought up at the Forum to his next meeting with Teitel.

Features

A Conversation With Ned Vizzini

By SHILPA AGRAWAL
and SADIE BERGEN

Ned Vizzini, Stuyvesant alumnus '99 and bestselling author, walked up to the podium at the Barnes & Nobles Park Slope and took a picture of the crowd with his Blackberry so he could remember the 40 or so people at his book reading. He then began to read aloud from his bestselling novel "It's Kind Of A Funny Story," which has recently been released as a major motion picture. He also read from the manuscript of his new book, "The Other Normals," which will be released in the spring of 2012. As he finished each page, he threw them on the floor behind his back, focusing only on what was in front of him.

Vizzini is also the author of two other books, "Teen Angst? Naaah...." and "Be More Chill," both of which are about the adolescent experience. The former even tells stories about Stuyvesant itself.

From his second grade story, "The Poor Old Wizard," about a wizard who lived in a cave with a roommate who was a bear, through his high school years during which he published an article for The New York Times Magazine, to today, Vizzini's writing career has come a long way.

After signing the books of avid fans for a few minutes, Vizzini stopped to talk to The Spectator about his experiences at Stuyvesant and how they influenced his writing career.

Q: What was your involvement in the writing community when you were at Stuyvesant?

A: I tried to write for The Spectator and was not accepted. Don't worry! It's not your

Stuyvesant was pretty stressful because of the workload but now looking back at it, I realize it was very good preparation for the way things fly at you in the real world.

fault! But I began writing for New York Press, which is a local free newspaper distributed on the street. I wrote funny stories about school and about my life and I sent it into the paper and they all of a sudden they paid me! It was exciting and fun and one of my most happy memories from Stuyvesant is this correct? Seems off was when my English teacher [Ms. Khouri] said in class, "We're not going

to read anything in class today because Ned wrote something in the newspaper. Ned, come on up here and read this," and I read it in front of the class. It was a really nice thing for the teacher to do.

I also wrote in this magazine called Antarus that was science fiction in which I wrote a story called "Badoom," which is also the name of one of the parts of "It's Kind Of A Funny Story." "Badoom" is a story set in Stuyvesant in which a student, who doesn't know why he is getting the grades he is getting, does some investigation and finds out that there is a gigantic beating heart at the top of the building. It is like an alien heart, like in the video game "Contra," and it actually is spitting out the grades at random, and he learns that is how his grades are determined at school – by this giant festering alien heart.

Q: Does this science fiction story reflect your view of Stuyvesant in any way?

A: It was just an absurd little tale but certainly one of the things you get frustrated about as a kid is the arbitrary nature of grades – you think you deserve a grade and you don't get it. So it was fun to play with that.

Q: How did the stress at Stuyvesant affect your experience there?

A: It's important for people to realize that the pressure that

put me in the hospital wasn't pressure from Stuyvesant. When I went to the hospital, I was 23 and it came from a book contract – I was supposed to write a book and I was trying and trying to write a book but it wasn't working and I thought my life was over. [...] Stuyvesant was pretty stressful because of the workload but now looking back at it, I realize it was very good preparation for the way things fly at you in the real world.

Q: What was your fondest high school memory?

A: Most of my fondest memories at Stuyvesant involve playing Magic cards on the sixth floor. I've heard that some kids are still there – do they play Pokemon now? And I just remember very distinctly being able to walk in and throw down my backpack and it was like everyone knew your name – except they didn't! Because we didn't even know anybody's name. We just said "Hey, you! Wanna play?" And there was a sense of camaraderie among the Magic playing kids. It was like there was everyone else in the world, and there was us. And that was a cool feeling.

Q: How has Stuyvesant changed since you were there?

A: Things have changed in terms of the English department. I know that when I went to Stuyvesant, they did not have a science fiction and fan-



Ned Vizzini, class of '99, wrote about his experience at Stuyvesant.

tasy class, and I went and spoke to a science fiction and fantasy class this June. So it's a testament to the English department – they've beefed things up there.

Q: How did you feel watching the movie "It's Kind Of A Funny Story"?

A: I felt very lucky because a lot of writers who are better than me don't get their books turned into movies, and a lot of writers who are better than me get their books turned into movies, but they totally butcher the books, and add a bunch of characters who weren't there or turn male characters into female characters, and I think the movie did a really good job of capturing the tone and feel of the book.

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Features

Despite SHSAT Racial Demographics, Students Favor the Individual over Ethnicity

By SHILPA AGRAWAL and SADIE BERGEN

Look through any class attendance sheet at Stuyvesant and you'll notice a trend—a prevalence of Asian last names. Stuyvesant may be famous for its science and math prodigies, but it is also notorious for lacking racial diversity.

According to the New York Times article, "A Demographic Breakdown of Who Took, and Passed, the Test," the New York City school system is 40 percent Hispanic, 31 percent black, 15 percent white and 14 percent Asian. Yet, only five percent of blacks and seven percent of Hispanics who take the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) are offered admission to a specialized high school, compared to the 34 percent of Asians and 30 percent of whites who are.

Every Stuyvesant student was admitted by scoring high enough on the SHSAT. Many of these students prepared for the exam by taking SHSAT prep classes and spending their weekends or summers doing practice tests. A provocative trend is that most of the students who take preparatory classes come from Asian families.

In largely East Asian communities such as Flushing and Chinatown, test prep centers, like Aim Academy and Mega Academy, boast their statistics of Specialized High School entrants. In addition, Dr. Mansurul Khan, a Bangladeshi-American, runs Khan's Tutorial, which has branches in Jackson Heights, Brooklyn, Jamaica and the Bronx. According to its Web site, 90 percent of its students over the years were accepted to specialized high schools, 30 percent of which were accepted to Stuyvesant.

Junior Keerthana Krishnarajah went to Elite Academy in Flushing for SHSAT prep. She recalled that the students were mostly Chinese or Korean, with a small Indian minority. Although practicing math and English "took away my summer," she said that she learned tricks that saved her time while taking the test.

But she also emulates the stereotype that Asian families are devoted to education. Describing this devotion as "very strict," Krishnarajah said, "[My family is] all like, 'You should get into a good school, get a good career, become rich.'"

Junior Josephine Chen agrees. "Asian parents perceive educa-

tion as a way into job markets and thrust their children into this rigorous academic regimen," she said.

Of course, Asians are not the only ones who take SHSAT prep. Junior Ashley McQuiller, who is black and Hispanic, enrolled in the Specialized High School Institute (SHSI) at Stuyvesant. The program serves economically disadvantaged students who score high on standardized tests. Her peers were mostly Asian, black or Hispanic, with a white minority. McQuiller enjoyed her experience because she attended the SHSI with friends from middle school and learned test skills she retains today.

As to why not as many blacks and Hispanics as Asians attend test prep, McQuiller believes that they are unaware of any affordable programs—even of the SHSI, which is free.

While some Stuyvesant students believe that ethnicity correlates with academics, most believe that different ethnicities have different mindsets about school and test prep.

Junior Morgan Higgins found that working on her own was more productive, so she did not take SHSAT prep. But for her opinion

on test prep racial demographics, Higgins believes that both parental pressure and traditional values play an important part in encouraging students to study for the SHSAT. If their cultural values viewed education as a crucial part of life, parents would undoubtedly push their children along a successful academic path.

"I know a lot of Asian people do find what high school you go to, to be more important than a lot of the [other] people that I know," Higgins said. "It probably has to do with more recent immigration here, and a lot of parents want their kids to do the best that they can."

Junior Adam Matrab, who is both Moroccan and French, also did not take SHSAT prep. He believes that Asians have a superior work ethic instilled in cultural value, as opposed to other races, which is "the only thing that'd explain [the racial disparity at Stuyvesant]," Matrab said.

However, he believes that internalized racism is the key problem. "Any person of any race can do whatever they want," Matrab said. "It's just that they have this idea that they can't."

Although McQuiller disagrees that different ethnicities have

different work ethics, she agrees about internalized racism within races typical of lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

"Society puts it on to you that you won't do well, [that] you live in this bad neighborhood, you go to a crappy school, you're not going to pass the test, [and] there's no point in even really trying," McQuiller said.

Junior Kimberly Iboy, a Hispanic, believes that many stereotype those of her ethnicity as mere laborers. "We want to get ourselves out of that rut and have something other than our physical labor to fall back on, hence the importance of education," she said.

Yet, no matter how much stress is put on education by affordable test prep organizations like SHSI, many students agree that it all comes down to the individuals and their families. Ultimately, it is parental encouragement and the individual's drive that allow one to do well in school.

"It doesn't all depend on your background, or where you live," McQuiller said. "It really depends on what you're willing to give, what you're willing to look for, [and] what you're willing to take upon yourself."

Vito Recchia: A Sense of Life



Vito Recchia has taught Italian at Stuyvesant since 2001.

By DANIEL SOLOMON

Stroll through the halls of the seventh floor, you will feel the rhythm of a regular day at Stuyvesant: teachers are drily lecturing, students are passively listening and everyone is waiting for the end bell to ring. But walk past Room 738, and the school's monotonous melody is interrupted as hushed sounds give way to loud, staccato voices that are not necessarily speaking English. It's

Stuyvesant's Italian class, taught by Vito Recchia, where laughter that punctuates learning fills the air and everything from pizza to politics is discussed.

Recchia is a man full of joie de vivre with deep roots in his homeland. He was born in the 1950s in Mola di Bari, a small town situated on the Adriatic Sea known for its focaccia and a booming fishing industry. When he was young, Recchia juggled helping out on his family's farm with class work

and eventually earned acceptance to one of his area's better high schools. However, in 1972, before he could graduate, Recchia and his family took a trip to America, where they decided to stay and pursue opportunities unavailable across the Atlantic.

They settled in Brooklyn and Recchia enrolled at New Utrecht High School, later moving onto Hunter College, where he received his bachelor's and master's degrees. A lover of books and an ad-

mire of William Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe, Recchia completed a doctorate in comparative literature at the CUNY Graduate Center, but failed to finish a dissertation, which prevented him from becoming a Ph.D. Beyond his partiality for writing, Recchia also harbored what he described as "a lifelong dream, since my childhood, to teach." While he was working on his master's degree, he translated that dream into reality, beginning his education career at a Catholic school in Staten Island.

He entered the city's public school system in the 1980s, during rough and violent times for New York. A largely self-taught polyglot fluent in English, Spanish, French, Italian, and Latin, Recchia was eminently qualified for a teaching position in foreign language, a subject that he taught at William E. Grady High School and later at Lincoln High School for about two decades. Grady and Lincoln were places plagued by the problems of a typical underperforming school; Recchia had to contend with apathetic and badly behaved student bodies, a challenging situation that nonetheless failed to diminish his effervescent personality.

An opportunity for a change came in 2001, when Stuyvesant's Italian teacher, Anacleto Tiseo, retired due to poor health. "I always wanted to come to Stuyvesant. I knew it had the best students and also because my predecessor, Mr. Tiseo, was a good friend of mine who always used to tell me wonderful things about Stuy," Recchia said.

"Mr. Recchia is an incredible person who truly cares about his students," said junior Jeremy Co-

hen, who is in third-year Italian. He has a liberal class management style and believes that "you learn best when you are happy." Accordingly, Recchia encourages his students to express themselves and develop a sense of humor. He is famous, or rather infamous, for his nonsensical yet hilarious wisecracks, which have been dubbed "bad Recchia jokes" and last year earned him the moniker, "The PUNisher." He also incorporates Italian culture, cuisine and literature into many of his lessons. His students sing to the jams of pop musicians from Italy and Recchia—a man with a sophisticated palate—discusses food and eateries. Juniors taking his course also read "Pinocchio" in the language it was originally written in.

Though they are fun, his courses are not without structure. When his class misbehaves, he has a firm, humorous admonition ready: "This is like a regular Lincoln High School," a phrase Recchia is fond of saying. He also employs the Socratic method to teach subject material; he asks questions of his pupils that elicit answers designed to promote critical thinking. In this way, his students gain a vast knowledge of the Italian language in an engaging, entertaining, and edifying environment.

His classroom is a special place in Stuyvesant; it's one of the few spaces where students can relax and be themselves. There, students gain a temporary respite from the stresses of their daily routines, and finally when that end bell does sound, it greets Room 738 not with relief, but with regret.

3008

93

27

94

58

2

Number of people with regular lunch

Number of people with music lunch

Number of people with religious lunch

Number of people with lunch voided because of owed textbooks

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Allen Cheng attended Arcadia High School, where he earned a full SAT score and 5's on 13 AP exams. He represented the United States at the International Chemistry Olympiad. Most importantly, his passion for writing and crafting the perfect application got him into **EVERY college he applied to**, including Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and MIT.

Allen entered Harvard College in 2005 with a full scholarship. In four years, he earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Chemistry, graduating *summa cum laude* (top 5% of his class), Phi Beta Kappa, and as one of **America's Top 20 College Students** in USA Today's All-USA Academic Team.

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Editorials

STAFF EDITORIAL

Tech No Longer

On September 12, 1904, when 155 students walked through the doors of Stuyvesant High School, they were embarking on a four-year education that would combine both technical training and academic coursework. These students later became revered high school graduates, succeeding not only in the field of technology, but also in the fields of art, literature, science and math. A century later, with the threat of budget cuts and rash curriculum changes looming in the horizon, Stuyvesant students will not receive the same, well-rounded education that they received in the past.

In an attempt to keep courses up to date and maintain the school's reputation as a math and science school, the administration is planning to make changes to the Technology department. Technology classes consist of "5Techs" and "10Techs," including drafting, photography, woodshop, ceramics and video production. Principal Stanley Teitel announced in the Student Leadership Team (SLT) meeting on October 19, that starting with the class of 2015, these classes will be replaced with computer science-oriented classes. The reason for this drastic overhaul, according to Teitel, is that the current technology classes are not "real" technology classes. Teitel is reported to have said to ceramics and drafting teacher James Lonardo, "When you retire, you know I'm not going to replace you."

In addition, Teitel mentioned an "applied science requirement" that would span the length of the entire senior year in place of a 10Tech, with only one period each semester.

This proposal is detrimental to some classes like ceramics and acrylic oil painting, which thrive on the longevity of the class to glaze pottery and paint outdoors.

The predominant reason for these changes is that the administration feels it is catering to the demand for Stuyvesant's emphasis on math and science. However, when Writing Across the Curriculum was enacted, Teitel failed to mention the pro-writing inclinations of this policy. Stuyvesant is forfeiting its character and diversity of classes at the whim of the administration's unilateral decision. With this cloak and dagger approach, the administration is giving the students less choice in deciding the classes they will take. Although most students do not come to Stuyvesant dreaming to be plumbers and electricians, some may find the option of having technical classes to be a defining part of their high school experience. Furthermore, the Stuyvesant Open House showed that for many prospective students, choosing between Stuyvesant and a different school boils down to the humanities alternatives, not the number of mandatory years of computer science. Judging by its entrance exam, which tests math and English with equal weight, Stuyvesant is a Math and English school, not a science one.

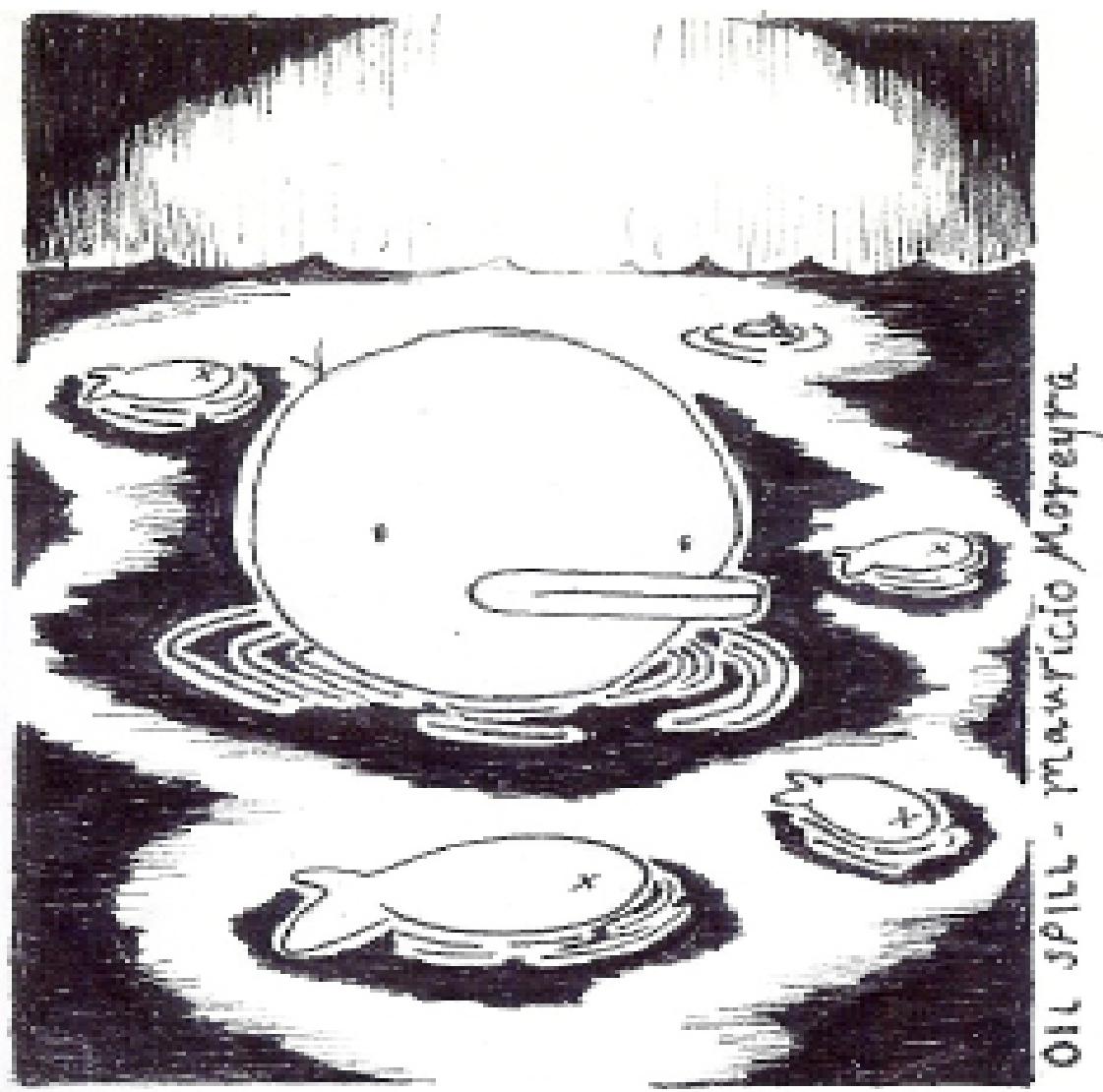
The best way to approach these changes would be to include everyone's input. Large organizations such as The Spectator and the Student Union could team up to administer a school-wide survey, so that a compromise can be reached. The survey could be distributed during history or English

classes—classes that every student must take—and should ask all the students how they feel about computer science and technical drawing being required classes and how much they take out of their technology classes.

Through these surveys, the administration is bound to find that computer science is not in fact the most coveted class in the school. As a possible solution, sophomores could be required to take computer science first term and then be given the option to continue computer science into the second term or to take technical drawing in its place. While the logistics of this proposal are not fine-tuned, there is bound to be a way to work with the programming office and technology teachers who, in many cases, have already been placed to teach in other departments.

The administration thinks it is embarking on a technology revival for our school, but these efforts by the administration are better spent updating the pre-historic CADKEY98 software used in drafting or the monitors that still use floppy disks that students rummage out from layers of dust in the back of their closets. While it may be difficult for the administration to stray from its current vision of a technologically advanced, math and science school, a diverse range of classes may be the most important factor in enriching the Stuyvesant experience. After all, it is that same diversity that attracts prospects from every field, providing the education necessary for students to become the successful scholars, artists or engineers their classes may inspire them to be.

OP-ART



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FOR THE RECORD

- In the "for the record," Vasili Tzallas' name was misspelled.
- In the cutline of "COSA Appointed to Second Term," Lisa Weinwurm's surname was misspelled.
- In the cutline of "A Closer Look at the Writing Center," the cutline should say "Students can bring their work to the writing center in the library to be corrected by English teachers."
- In "A Closer look at the Writing Center," Ria Malhotra's surname was misspelled.
- In the article "Ambush in the Alcove" Sara Lu's name was misspelled in the photo credit.

Opinions

Point

Computer Science: The Source Code for Success



By JOSEPH FRANKEL

Whether they're used for checking homework assignments, communicating with distant relatives, modeling complex scientific phenomena, or looking at cleverly captioned pictures of cats, computers play an integral role in the lives of Stuyvesant students. Yet the same mechanisms that allow the existence of popular Web sites such as Facebook and YouTube also play a monumental role in almost every scientific field. And, while our school has already cultivated one of the best high school computer science departments in the country, it's only a logical step for students to learn more about this most important of topics.

At the last Student Leadership Team meeting, Principal Stanley Teitel announced the new graduation requirements for technology courses, which dictates that Technical Drawing will be offered junior year, replacing 5Tech. In its place, sophomores will be mandated to take a second semester of computer science following up on the current Introduction to Computer Science class. While the decision has been met with great opposition, it should be lauded as one of the best decisions the administration has made in recent years. Not only is the class itself an exemplary way for students to broaden their intellectual horizons and discover new ways of thinking, but the opportunities it offers to students, along with its growing importance in the world, demonstrate that it is a positive addition to the school curriculum.

One of the most widely voiced arguments against a mandatory second term of computer science is that while Stuyvesant is indeed a "math and science school," requiring the course constrains students who have no plans on either pursuing computer science as a career or field of study. But the truth is that for Stuyvesant's many students who plan on pursuing a career in any of the sciences, an understanding of at least the fundamental concepts that would be covered in the proposed year-long introductory course is necessary to be able to make relevant contributions in their desired fields. Computer science is not just the study of manipulating machinery, but of learning how to think in new ways and solve problems with real-world relevance and applications.

just working with data. As detailed in a March, 2001, New York Times article, "All Science Is Computer Science," almost all experimental and theoretical work in the sciences, even Sociology and Anthropology, has become inseparably linked with the processing of immense amounts of data and computer-based modeling of various phenomena. Given that an article written nearly 10 years ago acknowledged the then current and ever-growing need for more focus on computer science, it seems obvious that Stuyvesant should now do the same. It is not simply a matter of black and white, of whether or not we are a math and science school, but of doing what is necessary to keep us, one of the best high schools in the country, on the cutting edge. Students who might not want to pursue the higher-level computer science courses offered at Stuyvesant still deserve to finish school with a competent grasp of the subject.

While it's true that computer science may not be the best path for every student, a second term makes it possible to pursue many other fields. This parallels the situation with classes in mathematics and Physics, both of which are important fields in their own right, but are studied only in part by many who are pursuing other subjects. In the same way that prospective medical school students are often required to learn Calculus, many science students are becoming increasingly encouraged to have at least a basic mastery of computer science. In fact, Georgetown University Medical School formally recommends that students complete two semesters of computer science before applying. This, if nothing else, shows that the planned extension of instruction in programming that the second term of computer science would offer will be useful to students beyond their time at Stuyvesant.

Computer science is not just the study of manipulating machinery, but of learning how to think in new ways and solve problems with real-world relevance and applications.

Although this shouldn't necessitate the end of more traditional technology classes at Stuyvesant, our curriculum should not be completely static. At the time of Stuyvesant's founding, it made sense for a technological school to train students in architectural drawing and woodworking. Now, at a time when these studies are not outdated but instead superseded by a subject that is the key to unlocking many other fields, it is the most sensible decision for the school to provide its students the same means that these technological classes once provided. Now more than ever, it is time for computer science to be treated as a science.

Counter-point

Think Outside the Computer Box



By LEOPOLD SPOHNGELLERT

Ask any technology teacher, and he will tell you that the high school level computer programming instruction offered at Stuyvesant is among the best of its kind in the country. The introductory course is, among many other half-year classes, required by our school, in addition to the overarching yearlong subjects. Most high schools do not even have computer science for their students, let alone mandate it. Nevertheless, there has been debate over the length of the required programming class, with some arguing that it deserves a requirement of a full year of study.

The recent proposal to extend the introductory class to two semesters, which pushes Technical Drawing into junior year and eliminates all 5Techs, is opposed by many students, and rightfully so. The administration claims that in an expanding modern world, an understanding of computer programming is essential. Teachers who support the change state that the information obtained solely from Stuyvesant's computer science classes carries over into several of their past students' current professions.

The skills found in the computer science classes shouldn't overshadow the many instances when students have discovered unknown talents and skills in the 5Tech classes. Many of these classes have allowed students to apply their creativity in useful ways and are now, sadly, on the chopping block. I, along with many others in the sophomore and freshman classes, would be frustrated to discover that the opportunity to explore my interests in a 5Tech selective was to be eliminated for extended computer science instruction. Eliminating the 5Techs would detract from Stuyvesant's appeal as a school and restrict students' ability to explore their interests—something that high school is supposed to encourage.

The intention of high school classes is to expand students academically and to provide beneficial skills and knowledge in relation to the world in which we live. Biology and computer science succeed in both of those areas, but biology requires a full year to do so while computer science does not. Intellectually, computer science requires that students draw upon logical reasoning and understanding of code in order to direct the computer to accomplish a task. However, biology is farther reaching than accomplishing a task is. It calls upon a multitude of skills including mathematics, logical reasoning and creativity for the absorption of subject material and the carrying out of tasks.

In addition, the amount of necessary subject matter is farther reaching than that of computer science. This is supported by the notion that a student

would lack the intellectual foundation necessary to enter an Advanced Placement Biology class after only a half year of study in it, previously. However, advanced computer science students are successful in taking the Advanced Placement class after taking only the sophomore introductory class. Computer science need only remain a one-semester requirement, in relation to the other sciences, which merit full year instruction.

Even without comparing computer science to other yearlong courses, the benefits of extending the course still do not add up. It is evident, even in the early stages of the class, that many students at Stuyvesant find computer science understandable and are able to learn the material very well. These pupils of

Not all students' minds work within the limits of (define (lambda (n)))

ten go on to take the Advanced Placement course offered in junior year and then proceed to take the Systems Level Programming and Computer Graphics electives in senior year. Unfortunately, many students depart from the class with a lesser understanding than that of their peers.

The class offers skills in programming and problem-solving. In regard to the problem-solving benefits of computer science, it should be noted that an entire year's course that already incorporates logic and problem-solving is required in the freshman year Geometry classes. For those who do not intend to take further instruction, the introductory class provides enough information for a fundamental understanding of what computer science is and how a computer functions. Adding a second term of the subject would not improve many students' absorption of the material.

Our four-year science requirement often gives students a better understanding of many subjects than that of pupils of other high schools. However, there is a limit to our willingness to sacrifice other subjects for our science-focused curriculum. We must adapt to the diversity and abilities of our student body by focusing on strengths, even if they extend outside of the sciences. While valuable in theory, the effects of a full year computer science class would damage the Stuyvesant experience because, ultimately, not all students want to work within the limits of (define (lambda (n))).

Opinions

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

RE: Protecting the Alcove

I was extremely upset when I read the salacious NY Post article, describing the recent decision by administrators to add "The Alcove," a beloved destination for student loiterers, to their patrols. It's not enough to merely entrap the students on the suspicion of illegal behavior—but any student found in the Alcove to begin with has their IDs confiscated and runs the risk of a meeting between parents and administrators.

First and foremost—to describe the alcove as a bastion of pot-smokers and class-cutters, as the NY Post did, is a gross overstatement. At most, it was one of few places where stu-

dents could hang out during the last precious minutes of their lunch break—or to wait for an hour as afternoon plans came into fruition. During my senior year, the alcove and the grounds in front of it were home to a number of gatherings, pick-up soccer games, and Frisbee tosses. There was the intermittent dabble in illegal activity—but no more than any other gathering of teenagers comparable in size.

The administration's decision to crack down on the alcove is problematic for a few reasons. It is first and foremost a waste of time and resources for an already overworked faculty. The alcove does not provide the shel-

ter for those breaking the law that the article implies. Quite to the contrary, the alcove is in full view of one of Manhattan's most crowded streets, the West Side Highway. It is within hearing and smelling distance of the administrative offices in the Student Union; and dozens, if not more, yuppie-Tribeca-parents frequent it each hour.

Moreover, the decision to crack down on the alcove represents yet another action by the school which elevates the importance of unmitigated academic achievement over the many other skills and behaviors that also contribute to the moral and intellectual health

of young adults. The decisions not to break the law or skip class are only meaningful if we have, at one point, had the opportunity to do so. It's what separates the morally-informed from the over-sheltered. For Stuyvesant to institutionalize the one place where students can be social without the constrictive presence of deans and faculty is to deny them an important part of growing up. It undermines many of the ways in which High School prepares students for life and subverts it into an unmitigated pressure-cooker with the expectation that students can only be trusted in a classroom, with their nose in a book, or at

home.

I worry about a Stuyvesant without an alcove because I had a number of good times there. However, when the erosion of student privileges begins to manifest itself outside of the school itself something must be done. If an administrator suspects drugs are being used outside of school grounds—there are few acceptable alternatives to calling the police. Banning a popular student hangout punishes the school for the actions of individuals and indicates the presence of a more sinister agenda.

—James Denin ('09)

Music to My Ears



By EVA FINEBERG

Throughout my school day, I notice students sneaking phone calls in the stairwell, texting covertly in class and sneaking a glance at their phones for the time. The cell phone ban at Stuyvesant makes sense for practical reasons, even if it has an indiscreet effect on students. But the ban on iPods does not result in students' practicing such clandestine tactics, and lifting the ban could, in fact, benefit the school environment.

As a sophomore, I still haven't gotten used to Stuyvesant's strict ban on music players. Listening to music on my iPod is second nature to me, though I must go through half of my day without it. In April 2006, the Department of Education (DOE) placed a ban on " beepers and other communication devices"—including cell phones and mp3 players—with all public school grounds. Students who enjoy their music as much as I do, however, should be allowed to use their mp3 devices in school. They are distinctly different from cell phones and should therefore be considered separately by the DOE.

The prime concern behind the DOE's policy is that the banned technology endangers the students and is detrimental to the classroom environment. These devices have proven to encroach on other students' privacy through the use of picture-taking and video-recording. This was exemplified by the Rutgers incident, where a closeted homosexual was exploited by his roommates through the use of such technology. Cell phone use can also be disruptive to students and teachers alike in class.

However, there is little reason to ban iPod use in school. Though the iPod Touch allows the device to connect to the Internet through WiFi, personal computers are capable of the same thing and are permissible in class. The iPod Touch makes up only a fraction of the mp3 players that students use, the rest of which don't provide much more than a way to listen to music. This neither poses a threat to school security, nor does it distract a student, his or

her classmates or the teacher, if used with discretion.

The use of iPods in the classroom is obviously inappropriate because it can cause distraction and would interfere with instruction. But iPods should be permitted in school hallways, libraries and cafeterias. Listening to music through headphones prevents any disturbance to nearby students, and students using iPods in non-classroom environments wouldn't disrespect any teachers.

Schools across the city and nation have already embraced the opportunities that music players have to offer. The Dalton School, for example, has loosened its policy on iPods and experienced no negative effects on the academic environment. Furthermore, teachers are trying to take advantage of the devices by encouraging students to keep exercises and audio books on their mp3 players. Several teachers in Stuyvesant have also suggested that students download podcasts on subjects ranging from New York City History to Chemistry, thus welcoming iPods and taking advantage of what they can offer.

With respect to the massive population at Stuyvesant, students would appreciate the opportunity to escape into a small world of music uninhabitable by the students next to them. In addition, students may find it easier to concentrate in the currently noisy, overpopulated library.

The right to listen to music outside of class, when it can benefit students, would enrich our school environment.

Widespread studies on the effects of music on students' concentration have been conducted throughout the past few decades. These, however, have ended with contradictory results, providing no academic basis for a ban on music players outside of the classroom. Students should therefore be allowed to decide on their own whether or not to use the entertainment device.

The right to listen to music outside of class, when it can benefit students, would enrich our school environment. Rather than reject new technology that is becoming continually pervasive in our lives and harder to restrict, teachers and administrators need to open their ears to the new ideas and innovative ways with which it can be used. A ban on iPods isn't a tune we should be marching to for much longer.

Don't Volunteer Me



By EDITH VILLAVICENCIO

Recently, my Spanish class was interrupted by an unexpected proposition from two college-aged female volunteers. After an approving nod from my teacher, they spoke to us in quick Spanish. They soon began to pass out brochures covered with pictures of American teenagers surrounded by smiling Latino children.

They were advertising a program called Amigos de las Américas (frequently referred to as AMIGOS), a volunteering experience that takes high school students to impoverished countries in Latin America, such as Paraguay, Peru, and Ecuador. The goal of the program, which sends participants to live with a host family for about seven weeks, is to immerse them in Latin American culture, improve their Spanish skills, and make a difference in the communities they visit through project-specific activities such as repairing damaged houses and preparing food for traditional festivals. Each trip lasts seven weeks and costs around 5,000 dollars.

The prospect of volunteering in third-world countries abroad is appealing. As high school students, we are, for the most part, jobless and have the time and reason to spend our summers abroad. However, it seems inappropriate for such an expensive program to be advertised at a public school that requires no tuition. Furthermore, I see a certain amount of hypocrisy within programs like AMIGOS. They seemed insensitive to the cultures they visit, and more pressingly, ineffective as pioneers of global aid.

As a Hispanic student, I had personal issues with the message AMIGOS and its representatives were sending. The representatives, along with the organization's Web site, push the idea that as young Americans, we are the best people to travel to and help out in struggling, impoverished countries. While this may be true to some extent, many Latin American cultures emphasize different cultural values, like the principle of respect for elders. In Peru and its surrounding countries, it is customary to put the wisdom of those older than you above your own abilities. For example, it would be considered rude for a young, healthy man to insist on doing a job that an older, weaker man has been doing for years just because he is more physically capable. AMIGOS is a program that promises to build leadership skills, but the concept of American teenagers becoming leaders through meager work in long-standing Latin American communities is intrusive and disrespectful toward important aspects of Latin American culture.

I also question whether the aid offered by the AMIGOS volunteers has any real impact on the villages to which they're

sent. According to the AMIGOS Web site, all communities are put through a thorough evaluation to ensure that they meet safety standards. In order to be considered as hosts, communities must have access to a major hospital by way of private car or ambulance, have a plentiful supply of food, and a low sexual assault rate. Also, on-call support is available to the communities at all times. Although it's important to make sure that the volunteers are safe in the communities they are sent to, it's clear that these communities are not the ones that have the greatest need for assistance. Even though the aid offered to the suitable communities is somewhat valuable, this restriction prevents communities that are suffering the most from receiving help. Offering real service and help to struggling people is compromised by the need to find communities that are suitable for teenaged volunteers.

It's when the lines between volunteering and tourism are blurred that a grey area forms.

The contrast between the cost for the trip and the reason behind it – to give aid – is contradictory. Much of the approximately 5,000 dollars that volunteers pay is split between paying the support workers, airfare, costs of food and shelter, and insurance for any emergencies that might occur. These costs, while necessary, consume so much of the tuition that the communities are given next to nothing. Because of this, the only aid participants are sure they are giving their host communities is what they directly contribute, which is not much more than the community could do on its own. If a potential volunteer wanted to provide serious financial aid to poverty-stricken people, it would be much more efficient to directly donate the money instead. By placing himself or herself in the actual community, despite whatever personal enrichment may be gained, little monetary value accrues.

Of course, there is plenty to be gained from a trip to Latin America, as there is on any other trip. There's no doubt that people who travel to a country with a culture so vastly different from their own will have the opportunity to learn and develop a better understanding of its people and customs. It's when the lines between volunteering and tourism are blurred that a grey area forms.

The goals of providing aid to struggling communities and taking a culturally enlightening trip are easier achieved when separated, especially for high school students. AMIGOS, as a program that promises to do both, is bound to fall short somewhere along the line.

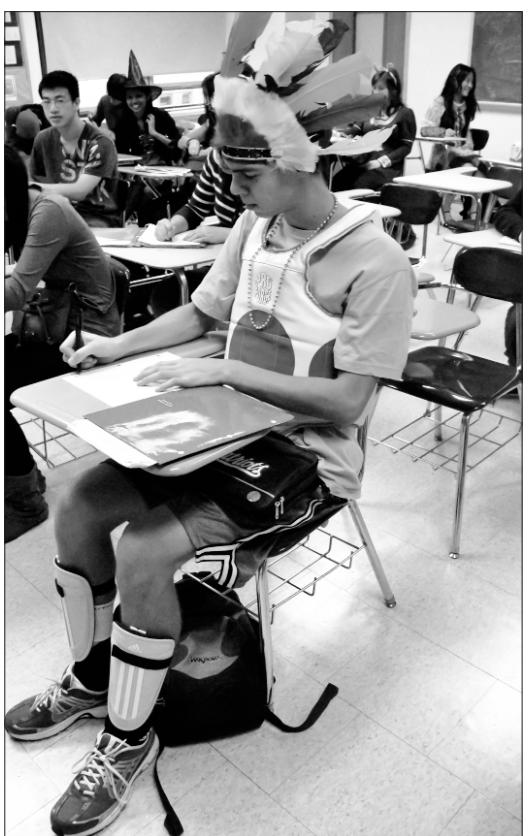
An Average Day at Stuyvesant



Courtesy of
Jackie Ho,
Helen Lin
and Mark Zhang



Halloween



With ‘Stuy’le



Photos by
Natalie Fang, Ms. Juracek,
Carolyn Kang,
Harry Poppick, Stacy Wang,
and Mark Zhang

Arts and Entertainment

The Horrific Unknown



By SHAH ALAM,
CHRISTINE LEE
and HYEMIN YI

A masked child is trapped in a dark, musty basement. As light filters through the barred windows, children mockingly point and sneer at the young prisoner. Several years later, that basement is filled with the same scornful children, except now, they are rotting corpses. This is just a glimpse into the genre of horror, which allures its viewers through mystery, gore and, most effectively, fear. Although much of mainstream horror cinema has been reduced to petty screenplays with bad acting, there are many underappreciated horror gems out there that continue to raise the standard for entertainment and create a means of reevaluating the quality of the genre. On the wake of a declining movie industry, the members of A&E feel inclined to offer a glimmer of hope to those searching for

significant thrills.

Battle Royale (2000)
Japanese, 114 minutes
(Director's Cut)

Based on a controversial novel of the same name, the premise of the movie revolves around an alternative future. Japan has collapsed, and 800,000 students have boycotted school. To keep the youth under control, the adults pass the Battle Royale Act. Every year, one randomly selected class is placed on an isolated island for three days, with the students pitted against each other until only one remains. The movie focuses on one such class.

The thought experiment is certainly interesting, frighteningly bloody and, at times, riddled with uniquely Japanese humor. An overly peppy Battle Royale spokeswoman explains the rules of the game via video, mentioning that weapons are

randomly picked, so one may or may not get lucky. After picking up an axe, she exclaims, "This one is SUPER lucky." A minority of kids commits suicide, unwilling to kill their classmates. Some embrace the game, killing their classmates on the basis of failed middle school crushes. Others form alliances, trying to escape while avoiding violence. Yet, the most intriguing dilemmas of the film focus on adolescents' coming-of-age, survival instincts and loyalty between friends.

May (2002)
English, 93 minutes

"May" tells the story of a troubled young woman who lacks the social skills necessary for finding a comfortable position within society. May, a socially awkward assistance surgeon, struggles to find friendship after continuously facing rejection by her peers. As she continues to search for sol-

ace, she is fixated by the most attractive body parts of the people she comes across, later murdering them to assemble a perfect friend out of the said parts.

The film presents an original perspective of life through the eyes of a lonely individual seeking a single, perfect friend. After receiving Loopy, a pet cat from her colleague, May temporarily finds relief at home until a fit of rage results in Loopy's death. Heartbroken by her only friend's death, May sees no other option but to preserve Loopy's corpse in her fridge. "May" succeeds in constructing what other horror films rarely attempt—a tasteful questioning of humanity through intense gore and emotion.

To Sir, With Love (2006)
Korean, 93 minutes

This narrative focuses on the reunion between a terminally ill elementary school teacher, Mrs. Park, and a group of her former students. After the group arrives, several flashbacks depict Mrs. Park's cruel history and make it evident that each student harbors murderous intent toward her. As night falls, a rabbit-masked killer kills off each student, one by one. The identity of the killer is slowly unraveled as the group's number dwindles.

As with most Asian horror films, "To Sir, With Love" makes you cringe with every death. One victim is forced to eat razor blades, while another is strapped into a chair and has ants run through his ears. The rabbit-masked killer's streak of vengeance is memorable from beginning to end, with each kill more gruesome than the previ-

ous one. Reminiscent of "Friday the 13th," the movie effectively captures the thrill of watching a spine-tingling slasher film.

Let the Right One In (2008)
Swedish, 115 minutes

This film's story itself sounds enough like that of a vampire movie. It centers on Oskar, a 12-year-old social misfit perpetually bullied by his peers. One night, he meets Eli, a child who smells faintly of a corpse, doesn't wear a jacket when outside and just moved in to the neighborhood. While the two befriend each other, Eli's vampire father-figure is out murdering a series of locals to get blood for Eli.

But the term "Swedish vampire movie" fails to encapsulate the thoroughly grim nature of the film. Rather than focusing on supernatural elements, the height of the drama remains grounded in two painfully lonely adolescents seeking ways to survive, even if it means committing violent acts. Bloodshed rarely comes as a surprise and is far from glorified—the blood is black and it doesn't splatter. Oskar and Eli have cute puppy-love moments together (Oskar stares at Eli longingly as she explains how to solve a Rubik's cube), but their relationship seems twisted and tragic. The movie depicts vampires as more than just barbaric bloodsuckers; it portrays them as sentient beings seeking to survive happily. Upon learning that vampires must be invited into a room before they can enter, you begin to wonder who the real victims in this movie are—humans or vampires?

Dynamic Dance-aholics



Christina Bogdan / The Spectator

Andzelika Dechnik and Margaret Kostova are world class dancers at Stuy.

By BENJAMIN KOATZ

"Dance is the hidden language of the soul," 20th-century choreographer Martha Graham once said. Junior Andzelika Dechnik, who represented America in the World Dance competition in Korea with her partner this year, and junior Margaret Kostova are talented ballroom dancers, managing their commitment to dance competitions along with their onerous Stuyvesant workload.

Kostova has been dancing for seven years, Dechnik for eight. Both consider ballroom their forte and are world-class dancers taught by highly qualified dance instructors. Though Kostova is considering a professional career more, Dechnik is just as serious about dancing.

Right now, Dechnik is in the middle of an indefinite break from dancing, while her partner, who is turning 19, decides whether to remain with her or search for an older partner in-

stead. But before her recent lull in the action, which she spends watching dance online and on TV, she was as much of a dance-aholic as Kostova.

For Kostova, dancing is more than a hobby or a possible profession, it is an extension of emotion. "I flip personalities when I dance," Kostova said. "In school I have no personality, but I've cried countless times while dancing; it's where I can let go." She has been moving from dance studio to dance

studio since she was about nine years old, mainly due to frequent partner switches.

The sporadic nature of her dance studio membership is consistent with her hectic schedule as a traveling artist. Kostova points out that she changes partners to fulfill her own needs. "You need a good relationship, you need to be happy," she said, explaining why she is currently unaffiliated with any studio. Not only is partner choice a crucial factor in being able to enjoy dancing, but it also determines the outcome of competitions.

The dancing levels range from Beginner to Newcomer, Bronze, and all the way up to the pinnacle: Champ. There are also age groups, which are determined by the age of the oldest partner in a group. For Kostova, who also has a 19 year old partner, this means dancing with competitors of up to 30 years in age. And that means a lot more work in an already difficult junior year.

Adding to the stress, both dancers must juggle dance and school between a few hours of sleep. "I'm very torn between [dancing] and school," Kostova said. Things get especially hectic during AP Schedules, during which they pass up attending international competitions and instead focus on schoolwork.

Whenever they have time, dancing is a consistently valuable social opportunity, allowing Dechnik and Kostova to make

life-long friends while traveling. "You get to meet different dancers with different styles, different experiences," said Kostova, while Dechnik recalls traveling to exotic places such as Britain, Latvia and Korea.

But there is a downside to attending large scale competitions as well. "They put 12 couples on the floor, and you try and work hard to stand out," Dechnik said. "It's not on purpose but it does happen a lot." In these conditions, it is hard to avoid the physical contact that can throw off any dancer's technique. Dechnik tripped and fell as a child because of this, but ultimately recovered to win the competition.

Through the thick and thin, Dechnik and Kostova continue to look toward the brighter side of their lives as dancers. "With your first dance lesson, it will be weird, awkward, uncomfortable, a different world, almost," Kostova said. "But if you continue, it's more rewarding than any hobby."

The story of two champion dancers hidden within the vast student body of a math and science school is a testament to Stuyvesant's diversity. Though their sacrifices go unnoticed within the Stuyvesant community, Kostova claims to have no regrets. "[Dance] starts out as something your mom wants you to do," she said. "But after a while, you can't imagine your life without it."

Arts and Entertainment

Waiting for Superman Gets an A+ for Effort

By SERENA BERRY

Every nine seconds in America, a student drops out of high school, according to the American Youth Policy Forum. The drastic number of drop outs is not completely caused by the students themselves, but rather, because of the epic problems facing American public schools.

"Waiting for Superman," released October 8, is a documentary directed by David Guggenheim (the director of "An Inconvenient Truth") that tries to dissect the issues that have led to a large number of failing schools—those with a high number of dropouts. It covers the issues facing American public schools and the difficulties in reforming them for the better.

According to the film, teachers and the teachers' union seem to be the root of the problems within the public school system. Not enough teachers provide students with the education they need; they fail to make the information digestible and to motivate students to try harder. Because of the teachers' contracts, there are neither incentives for the teachers to do better nor ways to fire bad teachers. The union absolutely resists any changes toward a merit-based pay scale, which would decrease pay for incompetent teachers.

The documentary presents many convincing statistics about the percentages of failing schools and poorly performing

children. One grave statistic is that students who do not graduate from high school are more likely to end up in jail than those who finish. Yet, the yearly cost of one prison inmate is more than double what is spent on one child's whole public education. The documentary argues that if more funds were put toward students, it would probably save the nation a good deal of money.

Though the statistics are effective, the movie best proves the gravity of the situation through the narratives of five children looking for a better education. Each of the students is hoping to get into a charter school, the only affordable alternative to their local, zoned schools. Charter schools are privately and publicly funded, and because they are not bound by contracts with teachers, they have control over the faculty and curriculum. Sadly, admission to a charter school is decided by lottery. The documentary ends climactically with the children finding out their results. While we rejoice with those who got into their dream schools, we also feel saddened that the kids who didn't might have hindered their futures.

The documentary uses these emotions to sway the audience members and demonstrate the failings of the public school system. Each child's story represents different issues within local schools. Francisco Regalado has trouble learning how to read, but

no one at his elementary school takes the time to help him, while Anthony Black, a young boy living in a poor neighborhood with his grandparents, wants to avoid that drugs and gang violence that plague his future, zoned middle school.

While we sympathize with these children, the documentary does not go deeply enough into the issues of public schools. A great amount of information is covered, but only one solution—charter schools—is emphasized. The documentary makes charter schools seem like the only hope for these five children. This adds a heightened drama to the story, but it makes the problem too black-and-white. Not all public schools are bad and not all charter schools are great. In fact, only a very small percentage performs better than the average public school. Charter school teachers are also poorly treated, working long hours while being closely monitored. A lot of teachers quit because of these conditions and others are fired, creating an unstable learning environment.

Though it fails to provide a useable solution, "Waiting for Superman" highlights an often ignored issue that impacts many. When going to Stuyvesant, it definitely can feel like teachers put too much pressure on their students. But this documentary has shown that the pressure teachers put on us, if anything, is considered a privilege by less fortunate students.



NC-17 May Be Worth the Watch

By ALICE ANICHKIN

What prevents Oscar worthy movies from hitting the big screens? Four little characters—NC-17.

The constant pattern of branding films with a taboo NC-17 rating, which significantly lowers a movie's chances at reaching a large audience, is not only hurting movie makers, but the audience as well. In fact, some of the most noteworthy directors have had to cut out essential scenes in order to please the film studio. It is this rating system which restricts creativity and availability of great films.

prevents anyone under 17 from viewing the film because there are extremely heavy depictions of violence, sex and nudity.

The MPAA "raters" consist of anonymous mothers and fathers who determine the rating of a film. Although the raters are required to have adolescent children and a maximum serving time on the board, many of the raters do not have children at all and serve for years longer than allowed. A continuing trend over the years is the increased strictness of the system, despite our more progressive and open society.

Movie watchers are unaware of the amount of editing that may be required to meet MPAA standards. "The Godfather III" has a three-second snippet where blood spurts out of a man's neck. This seemingly insignificant scene originally gave the film an NC-17 rating, until it was cut out. "South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut" had to be shown to the MPAA six times before finally resting on its R rating. What gave the raters such a difficult time? A few select curse words and the description of a sexual act (though the name was still mentioned in the film) proved problematic.

Yet, sometimes it seems as if raunchier films are given milder ratings than films which received R or NC-17 ratings. For example, John Hughes' "Sixteen Candles" features a scene with full frontal nudity and the F-word. But the film received a mere PG rating. Nowadays, the film would have gotten a PG-13 or even R rating for its content. Over the years, new guidelines, such as any on-screen smoking, automatically gives the movie an R rating, and has made it increasingly harder to dub a film as family friendly. Directors usually grudgingly follow MPAA suggestions when cut-

ting out inappropriate scenes. However, even taking out what may seem like an insignificant amount of footage is still taking away from the director's vision.

An NC-17 rating is detrimental to a film because people often assume that an NC-17 rating is simply a film that replaces the word "porn" for art. "When I see an NC-17 rating, as much as I want to take into account how great it may be, all I can think of is that it will include tons of sex, violence, and drugs," junior Patrick Bacon-Blaber said. "It's unfortunate, but the public isn't going to spend time to look into a film with such a harsh rating."

Not only is a film's commercial success hurt when slapped with an NC-17 rating, but so are its chances at winning awards, such as an Oscar. But there have been some exceptions, such as "Midnight Cowboy," which initially received an X rating (in



However, even taking out what may seem like an insignificant amount of footage is still taking away from the director's vision.

1969) but went on to win three Academy Awards. Yet, in the case of "Blue Valentine," the latest film to go under fire with the

rating system, many fear its NC-17 rating will hurt its chances at nominations when award season comes this January.

Though the NC-17 rating may seem disheartening, it does have some useful qualities. It informs the public of works that may not be appropriate for younger children because of violence, sex and drugs.

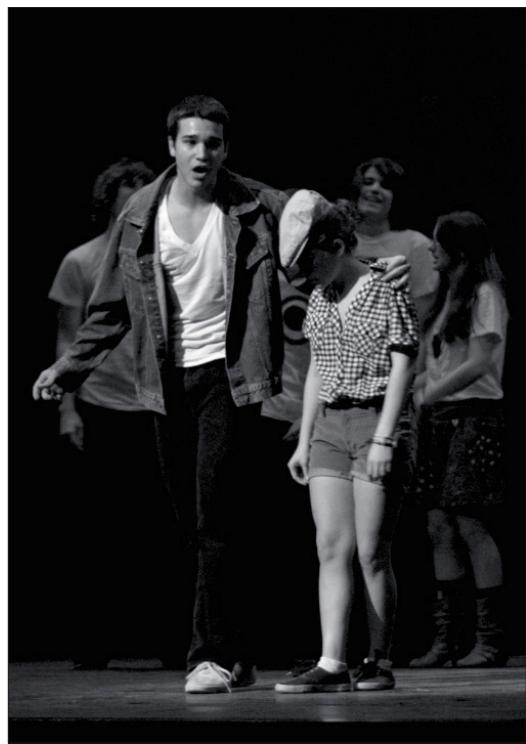
So the next time you see a film with an NC-17 rating, don't just label it as a pornographic

picture or an over the top narcotics and gun flick. Although there are some films that are gratuitously filled with sex, violence and drugs, this isn't always the case. The MPAA fails to understand that with the development of the Internet, the exposure of all the things the system wishes to mask will soon be widespread and unavoidable. Next time, think for yourself before you watch the flick.

The ratings system prevents directors from portraying life with its raw emotions and behaviors.

Beginning in 1968, the MPAA's rating system has caused controversy over their unfair judgments and conservative restrictions. Directors have been forced to cut out material from their work in order to escape restrictive ratings. As of now, the ratings are G, PG-13, R and NC-17. G is the most child-friendly, PG-13 suggests parental guidance for those under 13, R requires parental presence for anyone under 17 and NC-17

Arts and Entertainment



The STC's "Tommy":

By ANASTASSIA BOUGAKOVA
and MOLLIE FORMAN

The slumped figure of a boy stands looking at a mirror, blind and deaf to the pleas of his grieving mother. In a flurry of anger, the distraught woman smashes the mirror, setting her son free from the cocoon he has been wrapped in for the better part of his childhood. At first he is exultant, but when he sees his parents standing there, the very people who put him in this situation, he turns and leaves the stage, finding himself not free, but in a different type of prison.

Stories about the triumph of the underdog are always captivating, and *The Who's "Tommy"* is no exception. But the deaf, blind, and mute protagonist was not the only underdog during the fall 2010 STC production. Weakened initially by technical difficulties and low energy from the cast, the production itself began with a rocky start, but picked up for the second and third performances, allowing it to truly shine.

Directed by Jeremy Cohen, Alex Treitel and Nick Kaidoo and produced by Emma Handte and Mallory Miller, "*Tommy*" is the story of a young boy who, after being ordered by his parents never to talk about the murder he saw his father commit, goes deaf and blind. The one thing he can do is play pinball, which brings him fame and the connection to the world he secretly longs for.

Three actors portrayed Tommy at different times in his life: freshman Zara Leventhal as the four-year-old, sophomore Cat-

alina Piccato as the ten-year-old, and junior Josiah Mercer as the adult and subconscious to the two younger Tommys. Leventhal and Piccato, while having few lines, portrayed the blankness of the character well, acting listless and unaffected by the action around them.

Mercer conveyed Tommy's desperation to escape from his self-imposed imprisonment convincingly, moving around restlessly and showing the anxiety in his eyes, but had trouble finding the sweet spot in his voice. He entered strongly, striding across the stage to his catatonic younger self to sing the powerful "Amazing Journey," a song that invites the audience to experience Tommy's story. Mercer's voice worked well with this song, but often slipped into keys too high for his range later in the show. Overall, however, Mercer gave a strong performance, especially during the spoken part of the finale, where he was able to show off his astute emotional acting ability.

Sophomore Clarissa Sorenson (Mrs. Walker) and senior Peter Liu (Mr. Walker) played Tommy's parents and had two of the strongest voices in the show. Their emotional duet of the song "I Believe My Own Eyes" took advantage of their vocal chemistry and was by far the best musical number of the night. Sorenson's rendition of "Smash the Mirror" was a close second, during which she showcased the wide range of her voice and hit a fantastic, show-stopping note. But Sorenson and Liu's acting was

Arts and Entertainment



From Rocky Start to Rocking Ending

not wholly convincing; neither of them portrayed much emotional range, and their romantic moments were stilted and uncomfortable. However, their lovely voices more than made up for it.

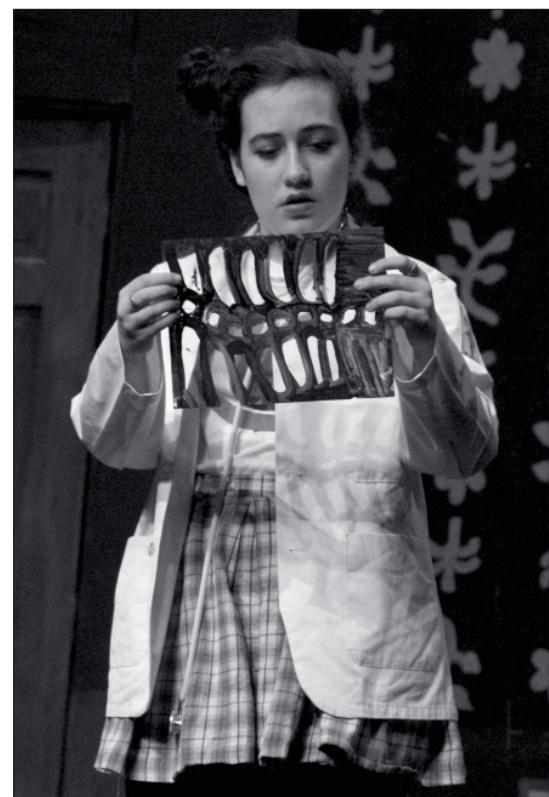
Many characters in the supporting cast were able to hold their own against the strong leads. Sophomore Ian Outwhaite played the drunken Uncle Ernie, and while having few lines, killed with his spastic physical comedy. Junior Lucinda Ventimiglia and junior Lucy Woychuk-Mlinac exploded onto the stage as a pair of shady characters, displaying fantastic energy and vocal ability. Sophomore Emmalina Glinskis as the Acid Queen, a prostitute who promises to cure Tommy with drugs and sex, also brought energy to the stage, although it is debatable whether her overt sexuality gave the show the kind of energy it needed.

Two aspects to the musical were consistently amazing throughout all three performances. One of them was the set design, directed by seniors Nils Axen, Rebeca Žamborg, and junior Idalia Bamert. The backdrop was a beautifully designed piece of art depicting stylized renditions of Tommy and his parents, with the title of the show splashed in creative font alongside. Other aspects of the set were equally impressive, like the realistic paintings of a WWII plane and fluffy clouds, which looked expertly wrought despite only being used for one short scene. Other set pieces, like a beautifully painted and

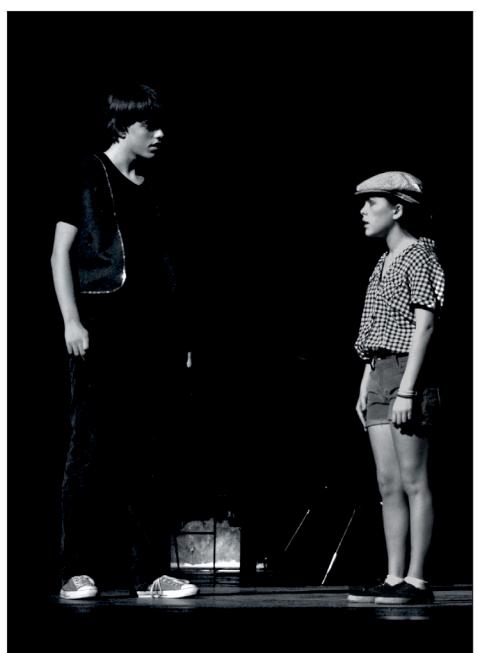
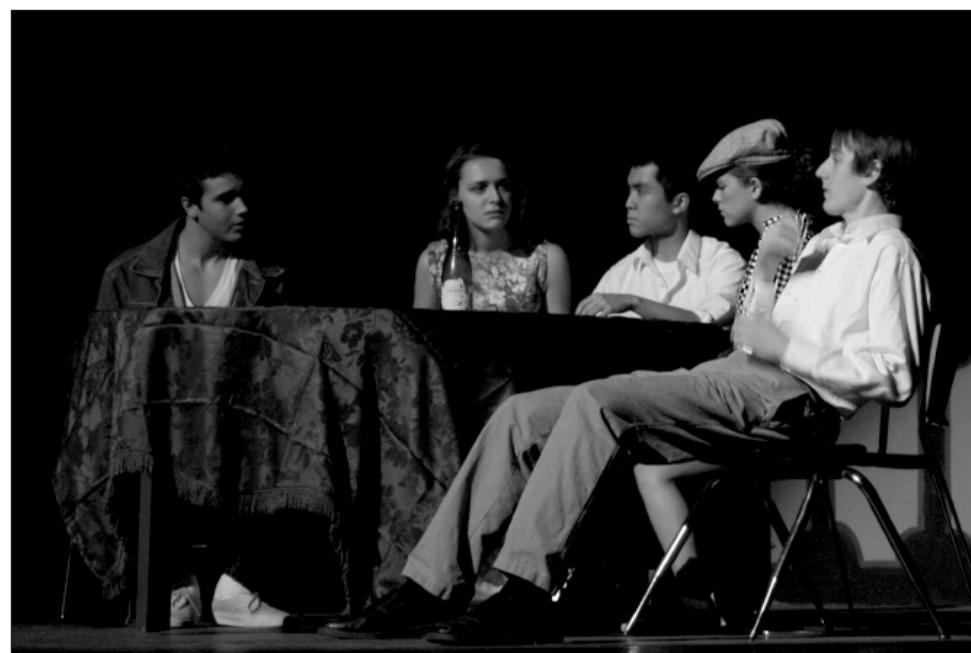
functional pinball machine, added a professional feel to the production. "I love the pinball machine," junior Shelby Hochberg said. "I love how they had actual flashing lights. I felt like I was in a real arcade!"

The second, consistently good aspect of the production was the band. Their rendition of the music was precise, unrelenting and very loud. "The electric guitars are really good," junior Emily Atlas said. "The musicians have so much energy. They make the show come alive." The one downside to the band's performance was that it tended to drown out the actors' vocals during tender, emotional moments.

These emotions, portrayed through an actor's lines, solos, or the rhythmic strumming of electric guitars, are why The Who's "Tommy" is just as relevant today as it ever was. On the surface it is about a boy who is good at pinball, and indeed, the phrase "he sure plays a mean pinball" is what audiences often remember most about the show. But in truth, the substance of this show lies in Tommy's struggle to reconcile the innocence of childhood with the realities of the adult world. "For 15 years," he says to his misguided pinball admirers, "I've been waiting for what you've already got." Likewise, the audience had to wait through a rocky start before finally seeing a satisfying production. But, just as with Tommy's long wait for a proper life, this wait was well worth it.



Photos taken by Victoria Zhao



Arts and Entertainment

A Street Cart Named Waffles

By JAMES HONG

Batter Up! Adding to the extensive list of food vendors in the Stuyvesant area is a Belgian waffles cart on Greenwich Street. "Wafels and Dinges," is operated by Bert and Soleh "van Dinges." "Wafel" is the Flemish word for waffles. According to Bert and Soleh, dinges, pronounced "dinguhns," is the Flemish word for "things and stuff." The brothers declined to give their real last name and instead use "van Dinges" as both a joke and a way to denote toppings.

Spekuloos is a "secret ingredient" spread that has the "texture of peanut butter with the sweetness of chocolate."

Wafels and Dinges was founded by Belgian Thomas DeGeest in 2007, and since then, the business has expanded into several trucks across Manhattan. The mini-franchise has ap-

peared on celebrity chef Bobby Flay's television show, "Throwdown with Bobby Flay."

The Greenwich Street cart serves two types of waffles: Brussels and liege. Brussels waffles are the predecessors to American waffles and taste similar to them. They were introduced to the United States at the 1964 World's Fair in Queens. However, liege waffles are softer, chewier and a tinge sweeter than Brussels waffles are.

Wafels and Dinges serves many dinges with their waffles, such as strawberries, bananas, vanilla ice cream, fudge, walnuts, nutella and a special spread called "spekuloos." Spekuloos is a "secret ingredient" spread that has the "texture of peanut butter with the sweetness of chocolate," Bert said.

Plain waffles, both Brussels and liege, are \$5, with the first dinges free and the second dinges an extra dollar. Then there's what's called the WMD, or "wafel of massive deliciousness," which is two extra dollars for any combination of dinges. The most popular waffle is called the debom (\$7). It consists of a waffle topped with fudge and vanilla ice cream and sprinkled with powdered sugar. If there was ever such a thing as mouth-euphoria, this would be it. You can also order a "mini-wafelini" (\$3)—a small waffle on a stick flanked on both sides by pieces of fruit and topped with spreads. The waffle ice cream sandwich (\$5) is also very tasty. For deals, Wafels and Dinges is able to give extra toppings to students who



The "Goesting" cart, run by Waffles and Dinges, stops at Greenwich and Murray on Wednesdays.

let them know that they attend Stuyvesant.

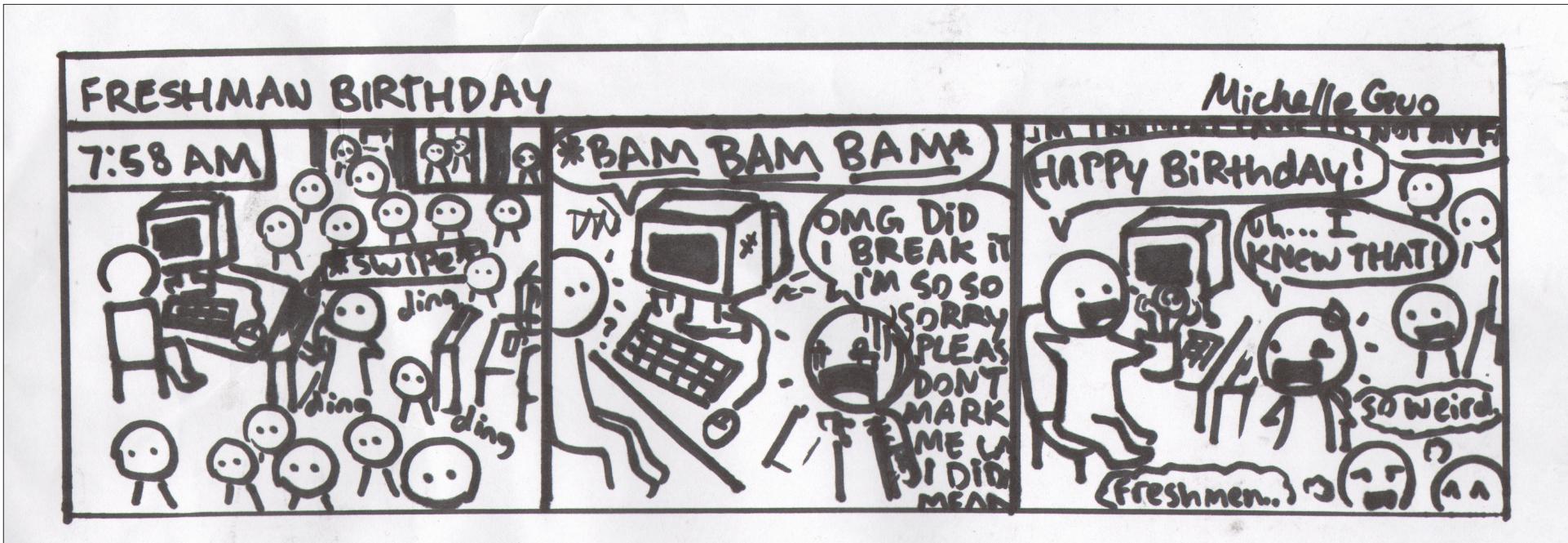
Some students have taken notice of the stand, which is hard to miss. The waffles have a "very homemade taste, like something my mom would make at home," senior Gabriel Hwang said. "The waffles are not only tasty, but they are also aesthetically pleasing, like the ice cream sandwich."

Junior Kevin Choi expressed similar sentiments. "The waffles are definitely worth five dollars," he said. "You have to try them at least once before you graduate."

The particular stand in Tribeca has only been open for three weeks, so Bert said he expects to see "more curious student customers," though the stand only appears two or three

times a week. Wafels and Dinges has a Twitter account to announce its whereabouts, much like the famous Kogi BBQ truck in Los Angeles. When the stand does appear, there are lines of people already adding a waffle to their daily culinary options. So, leggo' your Ego, and get ready for waffles of massive deliciousness.

Cartoons



Sports

The Doctor Will See You Now

continued from page 20

"Coach [Markova] knows that we care about track and want to do well, but she also understands that we have other obligations, such as school work," senior and co-captain

team."

The girls on the team are excited about their new coach and the prospect of having stability at the coaching position. "We're very excited to have Dr. Markova as our coach," senior and co-captain Vanessa Yuan said. "We're glad to finally have someone to help us with [field events]. They're easy point-scoring events."

Senior and co-captain Anna Tsenter praised Markova's attitude. "Dr. Markova seems very dedicated to coaching. She's a good addition to the team and to the Stuyvesant community," she said.

"She cares a lot about the season and wants us to do well, but not at the expense of our happiness," Bauer added. "She wants track to be fun."

Dr. Markova has a talented team around her, as well. "We had some freshmen who were amazing last year, and the upperclassmen have been improving a lot, so we're expecting some new personal records," Yuan said.

Dr. Markova will bring the

experience and attitude necessary to help the Greyducks

"I would like to have 30 dedicated athletes on our track and field team. [...] I prefer quality, not quantity."

—Dr. Anna Markova, coach

as they prepare for a brand new season. All signs lead to her arrival being the start of a great new era for girls' track at Stuyvesant.

"She wants track to be fun."
—Lindsay Bauer, senior and co-captain

Lindsay Bauer said. "She also recognizes how valuable underclassmen are and wants to make them as comfortable as possible since it isn't a walk-on

Girls' Golf

Birdie is the Word

continued from page 20

not come in numbers. Instead, they relied on a six-girl roster

niors Soo Hoo and Jessica Plotnikov, the number one and two golfers, respectively, since their freshman year. There were no official captains designated this year. "Despite this, us six girls have become almost as close as family," Soo Hoo said. "We've learned to support each other, on and off the golf course."

The small size of the roster has also allowed Nieves to work closely with each individual girl and develop their skills. The fast ascent of the Birdies in only three years can be greatly attributed to Nieves' coaching. "He spent a good portion of his summer dedicating his time to the team," Soo Hoo said. "He's been one of the most supportive coaches and definitely one of the most dedicated."

With such a young team, the Birdies have used this season to gain experience for next year, when the expectations will be higher. However, Tottenville is graduating only one senior and McKee/Staten Island Tech has a six-girl roster with no seniors

and will graduate none like Stuyvesant. These teams will threaten the Birdies' title run again next year.

"I definitely believe we can win the championship again," Soo Hoo said. "It won't be easy,

"We've learned to support each other, on and off the golf course."
—Sarah Soo Hoo, junior

but I know we have the potential to do so." Dominance can be expected.

"It's another story of what hard work can do."

—Emilio Nieves, English teacher and coach

of five juniors and one sophomore. The team was led by ju-

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Girls' Bowling

Pinheads Strike Again With Perfect Regular Season

continued from page 20

ing alleys. The two main ones we attend are Jib Lanes and Maple Lanes," Liu said. "We switch back and forth because some of us live in Queens and some of us live in Brooklyn...and one in Staten Island."

During practice, the Pinheads let no time go to waste. The team members are very encouraging to each other, giving suggestions, tips and help on techniques and skills.

But for the Pinheads, success comes from more than just attending practice. "I always thought that the Pinheads were successful because of the bond we have as an entire team," senior and co-captain Michelle Qu said. "Each one of us isn't afraid to help each other. We always have high energy. I guess in a carefree easy comfortable environment, we're able to do our best."

Another key to their success is respect. "We try not to show superiority," Qu said. "Plus, as this year's captain, I tried to learn a lot from the past captains and try to do everything that they managed to do so well."

The Pinheads' positive attitudes stem from their motto,

"Don't let one bad frame dictate the rest of your game," which

"We [lost] some very good senior players, who we were all very affectionate toward."
—Sweenly Liu, senior and co-captain

Bologna recites during every game. The team members do not get frustrated by poor performances. Bologna's ability to instill this persistent spirit in his team has kept the Pinheads at the top of their game.

"We're just a great team together. We're all really close to each other and we love each other. Every single member is like family," Liu said. The Pinheads will try to build on this spirit and team chemistry to make it deep into the playoffs this year.

How Old Are You Now?

continued from page 20

own age, he was simply an average pitcher.

In order for the PSAL to prevent players from being too old, they need to re-analyze their rules and regulations for eligibility. Though there are rules for transfers from one public school in the city to another (these transfers must sit out one year before they are allowed to play), there are no provisions for athletes that come from other countries, which is not uncommon in the PSAL.

Baseball players from the Dominican Republic are recruited to play at powerhouse schools like George Washington, Norman Thomas and Monroe; soccer players from Africa are recruited to play at schools like Martin Luther King Jr. High School, but these players are not required to sit out a year by PSAL rules.

In addition, the PSAL allows students who turn 19 on or after July 1st to play on a team in that school year. Therefore they can still be at least a year older than the next oldest seniors, who would not turn 19 until they are in college. This does not take into account juniors who play at the varsity level who are two to three years younger than these 19 year old athletes.

Athletes who lie about their ages have become a problem at the professional level as well. A New York Times article on October 10 titled "Less Demand for Dominicans as MLB Scrutiny Increases" talked about the MLB's crackdown on players who are forging their ages. The

amateur player development system in the Dominican Republic is run by trainers called buscons who receive 35 percent of a player's signing bonus when they receive a major league contract. Because of this, the trainers encourage the player's to fake their ages in order to become more attractive to a major league club. A talented young player will always be more desirable.

However, MLB commissioner, Bud Selig, along with director of MLB operations in the Dominican Republic, Sandy Alderson, have cracked down on these players, causing the stock of Dominican players to fall. According to the article, "Baseball officials said teams recognized that they were overpaying for 'mythological' players who were not as good or as young as they appeared."

In the end, this lack of care for how old players are is hurting the players themselves more than the major league teams. They are given the false impression that they are more talented than their peers, but when they make it to the professional level, the playing field is evened. These players who were once dominating are now at the bottom of the totem pole. It is degrading and disappointing, and ultimately, these players drop off in the end and have little to return to at home.

Talented players need to realize that they cannot rely on age to drive them to the professional level. At some point, the rest of their peers will catch up, and they will eventually be overshadowed.

THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

The Doctor Will See You Now



Anna Markova is the new coach for the Varsity Girl's Indoor Track team.

By OLIVIA CHU

Three coaches in the last four seasons. While that sounds strikingly similar to the tumultuous Washington Redskins of the early 2000s, who changed coaches five times in four years, it is also the alarming reality of Stuyvesant's girls' indoor track team. However, the Greycliffs are looking forward to a fresh start this season under their new coach, Dr. Anna Markova.

Doctor Markova. Doctor is not often a title associated with team coaches—especially not high school coaches. Markova, originally from Slovakia, is the exception. She has a PhD in Physical Education-Pedagogy and master's degrees in Physical Education and biology.

Markova came to the

United States seven years ago after being recruited, along with many other international teachers, by the Department of Education (DOE) to teach in the States. At the time of her interview with the DOE, Markova was working as an Assistant Professor at Slovakia's largest college, Comenius University, at its School for Physical Education and Sports, teaching Adapted Physical Education, Sports for the Disabled and Inclusion in Sports. "Since I wanted to expand my knowledge of physical education, I decided to take advantage of the DOE's offer and work in the American school system," Markova said.

Markova specialized in Adaptive Physical Education, because, as she explained, "I think every child, every person, deserves to play sports and have fun."

Currently, Markova works at Aviation High School in Queens and is an adjunct professor at Manhattan College.

Markova's newest job as the Greycliffs' coach has already begun with no-cut tryouts. Follow-up tryouts will take place a week before November 15, the start of the season. Markova said that tryouts will be in three events: the long jump, the 50 meter dash and the 1000 meter run. "I would like to have 30 dedicated athletes on our track and field team," she said. "I prefer

quality, not quantity."

Markova, who has coaching licenses in track and field, as well as in tennis, has already held three meetings with current team members and potential members. "I am in touch with the captains on almost a daily basis," Markova said. "We exchanged e-mail addresses and phone numbers, so we stay in touch."

Markova, an athlete herself, played tennis at a competitive level while in elementary and high school in Slovakia. She was recruited by her high school's track team and was a sprinter, hurdler and long jumper. She was later introduced by her coach to the heptathlon, a two-day event comprised of the 100 meter hurdles, high jump, shot put, 200 meter run, long jump, javelin throw and 800 meter run.

The team has not had much recent success in field events—Markova's forte—but Markova hopes to change that. "I was asking the girls about their interests, so I'll see how many of them are interested in technical disciplines," Markova said. "I will also observe them during practices to see if there are any potential talents for technical events."

She added that it is too early to tell how practices will be arranged, because there are many factors to consider.

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Girls' Bowling

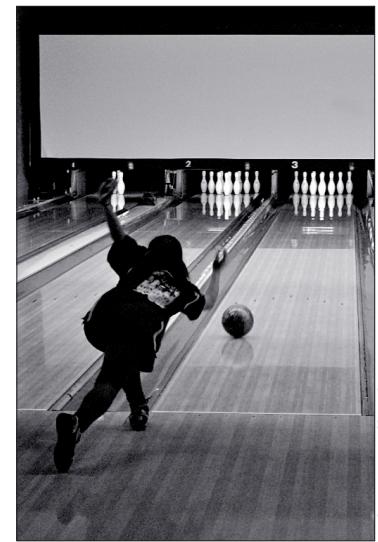
Pinheads Strike Again With Perfect Regular Season

By LAVINIU FILIMON

With the fall season coming to a close, the Pinheads, the girls' varsity bowling team, are undefeated once again. Their success since coach and physical education teacher Peter Bologna took over has become routine. They finished the season at 10-0, leading the Manhattan division outright, leaving the second and third place teams—Chelsea Career and Technical Education and Seward Park Campus—behind at only 5 wins each.

Despite another perfect regular season, the team misses several valuable players who graduated last year. "We [lost] some very good senior players, who we were all very affectionate toward," senior and co-captain Sweeny Liu said. Seniors Rosanna Sobota ('10) and Diane Yam ('10) both had strong seasons last year, with season averages of 122.00 and 115.55 respectively. Though it may seem that this loss has not dramatically affected the Pinheads, considering their record, how much they are affected by these losses will be seen when playoffs come around next week.

Since bowling cannot be played anywhere but a bowling alley, and bowling alleys are



Senior Sweeny Liu bowls in the Pinheads' game on October 27th.

difficult to rent during the season, practice is not very flexible and can only be held at specific times. Therefore it is important that the team has the dedication to attend all of the practices, since it is so hard to schedule them. According to Liu, the practices have been occurring "almost every single weekend since the season kicked off," she said.

"Each week we go to the 'early bird specials' at the bowl-

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Girls' Golf

Birdie is the Word



The Birdies won the PSAL Girls' Golf Championships on Tuesday, November 2.

By EDDIE CYTRYN

For the Birdies, dominance was expected. During the regular season, they won every match 5-0, winning each of their five individual matches. So it came as a shock when they beat Tottenville High School 4-1 in the semi-finals, losing their first and only individual match all season. That one match provided the solitary blemish on their perfect season.

On Tuesday, November 2, the Birdies, Stuyvesant's girls' golf team, finished their perfect season by capturing their first Public School Athletic League city championship in only the third year of the team's existence. They defeated McKee/Staten Island Technical High School 4-0, tying their final individual match, in the same dominant manner they had beaten everyone else en route to their first championship game appearance.

"The best part about it is that we truly worked hard for this," English teacher and coach Emilio Nieves said. "It's another story of what hard work can do."

The Birdies have been building to this season since their inception two years ago. In their first season, they finished 6-2 and last season improved to 7-1. "We've dedicated ourselves to winning the championship," Nieves said. "We have made it our goal."

After a heartbreaking 3-2 loss in the quarterfinals last year to Susan Wagner High School, the Birdies dedicated themselves in the offseason. "We didn't want to experience the same this year," junior Sarah Soo Hoo said. "Many members of the team made it their duty to show up to practice everyday."

The Birdies' strength did



By SCOTT CHIUSANO

It is certainly intimidating to see an opponent walk off the field and drive off in his own car, or to play defense against someone twice your height with a full beard and tattoos covering his arms, or to watch a player hold his newborn baby in his arms after a game.

Situations like these have become increasingly common in high school sports, especially in the Public School Athletic League (PSAL). This is not to say that all athletes who drive cars or have abundant facial hair are ineligible; many of them just have early birthdays that put them a year ahead of other athletes in their grade. Though this gives these particular athletes an advantage (an extra year of strength makes a big difference in high school sports), they are still eligible. However, athletes faking their birth certificates to prove their eligibility have become increasingly common in high school sports.

One of the most recent and

controversial cases of age eligibility was that of little league pitcher Danny Almonte. Almonte, who played for the Bronx Baby Bombers and led his team to an unprecedented third-place finish in the 2001 Little League World Series, pitched a no-hitter, the first perfect game in the tournament since 1957. His pitching prowess was celebrated and admired until Little League officials began to investigate the legitimacy of his birth date.

To play in the Little League World Series, you must be 12 years of age or younger. Almonte's 5-foot 8-inch frame, which towered over his opponents, raised suspicions. Though Almonte's birth certificate said he was born on April 7, 1989, making him a legitimate 12 year old, it was later discovered that he had actually been born in the Dominican Republic in 1987, making him a 14 year old pitcher against kids 12 years old and younger.

It is no wonder that Almonte blew his opponents away. A two year difference is an enormous gap, especially in a sport where strength is such an important factor. The fact that Almonte's father, knowing his son was two years older than his opponents, could still celebrate his son's dominance is what is so disappointing. If Almonte had been pitching against kids his own age, he would have been a talented pitcher, but by no means as dominating as he was in the World Series.

In most of these cases, the parents are to blame, often knowingly concealing their child's real age. Almonte had

no idea that he was an illegitimate player, and his father was only creating the false illusion that he was better than the rest of his peers. Almonte's stock as a talented pitcher fell dramatically after his true age was revealed.

He went on to pitch successfully in the PSAL, where he remained a year older than his competition, but he never made it much further. He was never selected in the Major League Baseball (MLB) draft and has spent his career since bouncing around minor league and semi-professional teams.

Almonte's case is not inherently unique, though. In 2008, Norman Thomas High School received a transfer from the Dominican Republic, Mariel Checo, who was enrolled as a sophomore at the school. Checo went on to become a premier pitcher in the PSAL, throwing a fastball near 96 miles an hour and helping lead his team to a City Championship, the first in the school's history.

Checo, though, was a 19 year old junior turning 20 during the season, making him two to three years older than most of his competition. It is no surprise, then, that Checo recorded 60 strikeouts in 32 innings that he pitched in his junior year. Unlike Almonte, Checo was drafted by the New York Yankees in 2009, but in his first year in the Gulf Coast League, he got hit hard. In 15 innings he gave up 15 runs with an earned run average of 8.40. Like Almonte, as soon as Checo faced opponents his

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