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Damesek Barred from School after Report



Michele Lin / The Spectator

By LINDSAY BU
and EUGENIA SANCHEZ
with additional reporting by
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Due to the sensitivity of
the issue, many sources re-

quested to speak anonymously. This news piece reflects an ongoing investigation. Check our website for updates.

Assistant Principal of Guidance Randi Damesek was de-

nied entrance into the Stuyvesant building on the morning of Tuesday, September 3, following the release of a 56-page report by the Department of Education (DOE)'s Office of Special Investigations on the June 2012 cheating scandal. The report was published by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and other media outlets on Friday, August 30, after reporters from the Times filed a Freedom of Information Act request. The report recommended that appropriate disciplinary actions against Damesek be taken for her failure to efficiently and effectively carry out the administrative duties entrusted to her as a testing coordinator.

Currently, Damesek reports daily to a separate facility reminiscent of the DOE's Temporary Reassignment Centers, which were eliminated in April 2010. Also called "rubber rooms," Temporary Reassignment Centers are classrooms in which teachers who are suspected of inappropriate behavior are forced to stay during regular school hours. Though under investigation, teachers or administrative members contin-

ue performing administrative tasks, while receiving their full salaries from the DOE. Sources speculate that this is only a precursor to Damesek's permanent job termination, due to the pressure put on the DOE as a result of the recent media attention. However, no definite action has yet to be taken by the DOE regarding Damesek.

The report is a compilation of interviews conducted by the Office of Special Investigations with involved parties, including Damesek, Principal Jie Zhang, Student A (who organized the mass cheating) and his father, various superiors in the DOE system, and Stuyvesant teachers who proctored the June 2012 Regents. The investigators cite multiple flaws in Damesek's handling of the New York State Regents Examinations testing protocols. According to the Office of Special Investigations's Investigative Report, "none of Stuyvesant's numerous proctors appeared to have a clear understanding of the instructions that they were to give prior to an exam's administration" and that "as testing coordinator, it was Ms. Damesek's responsi-

bility to oversee this process."

Biology teacher Shangaza George proctored Student A's testing room on Wednesday, June 13, 2012, the day of last year's Physics Regents. According to the student, George "just sat at her desk and fell asleep" while students were taking the test. As cited in the report, though George does not have independent recollection of which exams she had proctored, "she adamantly denied falling asleep during any of her proctoring duties."

Student A was able to send approximately 10 separate text messages to roughly 80 classmates providing answers to that test. He received 37 incoming messages from other students during the test, none of whom were caught in the act.

The DOE believes that Damesek's instructions to proctors should have prevented this from happening. During the investigation, it was revealed that Damesek could not recall whether she had given instructions via the loudspeaker about the prohibition of mo-

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Staff Editorial: Cheating Scandal Part II

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Don't Fire Damesek

Assistant Principal of Organization Randi Damesek was banned from entering the Stuyvesant building on Monday, September 2. She was told to report to a temporary holding space (formerly called "rubber rooms"), where she will wait while the Department of Education (DOE) prepares to fire her. This action came just days after a November 5, 2012, report condemning her and former Principal Stanley Teitel was released to the public under the Freedom of Information Act. The DOE is using Damesek as a scapegoat: her career is being destroyed

in order to placate a frenzied media. This Editorial Board unequivocally condemns this decision. We call on Stuyvesant's students and teachers to put up a united front in her defense.

Let us first make one fact very clear. This Editorial Board believes in strict discipline regarding cheating. Before the cheating scandal, The Spectator published a controversial survey (This Was Probably Plagiarized, March 2012), exposing rampant cheating within the school. We warned that unless strong action was taken, the situation would worsen. It did. Last year, we denounced the 71 students who were found to have cheated on the Regents exams. We urged the

administration to take a tough stance. Serious punishment, we argued, would be the most effective deterrent to future cheating. We proposed a student-run ethics committee to publicly handle cheating. We still remain open and willing to work together with the administration to solve this problem—a problem that will not disappear if Damesek is fired.

The accusations against Damesek are undefined and illegitimate. The vast majority of the DOE's 56-page report focuses on Teitel, not Damesek. Where Damesek is mentioned, she is criticized for not remembering whether she made an announcement about the cell phone policy.

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Teacher Evaluation System to be Implemented This Year

By ANDREW WALLACE

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) has revamped its method for evaluating teachers with its new "Advance" Teacher Evaluation and Development System, which will be implemented during the 2013-2014 school year.

The guiding principles of the Advance program are to establish a system that is instructionally valuable; supports development; promotes school-level autonomy; and is reliable, valid, fair, transparent, and feasible.

A pilot version of the program, involving 20 schools and over 700 teachers, began in the 2010-2011 school year. Three years later, Advance is being implemented in every public school in New York City.

The new system is broken into two main components: Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL). MOTP will comprise 60 percent of a teacher's yearly evaluation and MOSL the other 40 percent.

MOTP consists of three main components: observation, feedback, and teaching

artifacts. The criteria used to evaluate teachers in the observation component are based on Charlotte Danielson's "Framework for Teaching," a "research-based set of components of instruction [...] grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching," according to its website.

Teachers are given a choice as to how they will be observed. Observations will be split between Principal Jie Zhang and the assistant principals of the

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Not All Lockers are Created Equal

By COBY GOLDBERG and TINA JIANG

Senior Rose Mintzer-Sweeney opened her Student Tools account in mid-August to check her locker notification letter and found out that she was assigned a first floor locker. Seeking to obtain a locker closer to those of her friends, Mintzer-Sweeney visited the Facebook group that had been created to facilitate school locker trading that year, "Stuy Lockers 2013-2014." She then searched for someone selling a locker at the senior bar. The cost? \$90.

"I bought one on the bar because it's convenient and also nice for hanging out after school," Mintzer-Sweeney said in an e-mail interview. "I had the money from babysitting, and although it would have been nicer to get a better locker in the first place, it's something I'm actually going to use every day."

Every year, hundreds of similar sales, purchases, and trades of lockers are completed. More recently, social media has been playing a large role in facilitating such transactions, as students create Facebook groups in which they can openly request and offer lockers throughout the school building.

A group has been created to facilitate trading every year since 2010. "People were freaking out about the new random-

ized locker system," William Knight ('12) said in a telephone interview. "Everybody wanted a bar locker or an atrium locker or whatever, so it seemed pretty obvious to create a group so people could get the lockers they wanted."

Though vast numbers of students take part in exchanging lockers for different locations or for money, according to the Stuyvesant Student Handbook, "Students may not swap or share lockers."

However, the rules appear to have little impact. "Locker trading is something that's become a major aspect of Stuy culture, despite its being against the rules," said a sophomore who wished to remain anonymous. "The group aims to provide a quick and easy way for buyers, sellers, and traders to find matches in a marketplace-style environment." Once the sales and trades have been made online, in-person meetings are arranged and occur at a variety of locations, typically in the school building.

The policy prohibiting students from swapping or sharing lockers is meant to ensure that the administration knows which students are responsible for what lockers, particularly in case of potential contraband searches. With the 1965 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in "New Jersey v. T.L.O.", public schools retain the right to search stu-

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Arts & Entertainment

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Global Music

What if there was just one musical identity that everyone can relate to?



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Features

An Interview with the Principal



An interview with Principal Zhang about her plans for the upcoming school year.

News

Eight Students Interned Across the Nation to Protect Environment

By REBECCA CHANG

This past summer, eight Stuyvesant students participated in a month-long internship aimed toward environmental awareness and education. The program, Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF), was formed by the Nature Conservancy in 1994 and currently works with over 30 urban high schools in the U.S. with environmental programs, including Stuyvesant. Students are sent to an array of locations across the nation learn about environmental protection and help conservation efforts.

Stuyvesant's participation in the program was organized by biology teacher and Environmental Club faculty advisor Marissa Maggio. The internship attracted approximately 20 applicants from Stuyvesant, primarily from Maggio's biology classes and the Environmental Club.

"I love the idea of taking kids

and dropping them in a completely different environment. It is so out of their comfort zone," Maggio said in an e-mail interview. "For many students this is the first time away from home [...] in environments so different from NYC."

Because the program is highly selective and provides participants with a \$1,000 stipend, prospective applicants were required to submit an application that included an essay, short answer questions, and two teacher recommendations. After the applications were submitted, students were interviewed by The Nature Conservancy.

The accepted students were randomly split into teams of three or four. Each group was assigned to a different location throughout the country, including Maine and Wisconsin. Depending on the location, different sets of jobs were relegated to the student interns, but every group went

on trips to visit The Nature Conservancy's environmental offices in the area as well as affiliated groups or individuals.

The eight students accepted from Stuyvesant were split into a number of different teams. Junior Fauna Mahootian's group travelled throughout West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland, and focused on pulling out various invasive plants that pose threats to the natural environment. In addition, the students met farmers who had agreements with The Nature Conservancy, spoke to workers in charge of maintaining water quality in nearby rivers, and visited the environmental portion of the Toyota factory.

"The Toyota worker was basically in this huge factory and not in nature at all, but he was innovating the designs and making them have less impact on the environment," Mahootian said. "It's taught me that you don't really have [to be] directly in the

environment to be helping it."

Seniors Lucinda Li and Joan Kim worked with Maggio and other local interns in Wisconsin, where they built and maintained docks for a lake. The docks provided shade for the smaller fish in the lake. Their team also went canoeing with scuba divers and a university professor to remove invasive weeds in the water that would harm to the natural plants.

"My favorite part was living on my own and being able to cook [by] myself," Li said. "It was great to meet the other people that I was living with and becoming best friends with them by the end of the month."

Other interns, including senior Corey Brown, went to Maine. The team there was further split into two groups, with each group navigating to different sites where pipes carrying water were found under roads. The goal was to measure the pipes and determine if fish could pass through them,

making records of the data. The interns also spoke with the landowners of the area where the pipes were located and advised them on how they should fix or maintain the pipes.

"It was fun, and it changes your view on the environment for sure," Brown said. "I learned that the environment doesn't just involve animals and people. It also involves abiotic factors."

One of LEAF's primary goals is to encourage students around the country to pursue careers related to the environment, and to help them realize that there are many different ways to help the Earth. Maggio believes the internship accomplished this goal effectively.

"Students grow as individuals as they learn life skills, they gain an appreciation of the natural world and learn the value of hard work," Maggio said. "What more can you ask for in a four-week program?"

Teacher Evaluation System to be Implemented This Year

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teacher's department. The first option consists of one formal observation and at least three informal ones. For a formal observation, teachers and administrators agree on the date of the observation and meet before and after the lesson to discuss it.

The second option for teachers is to have at least six informal observations and no formal ones. At least one observation must be unannounced, and each must last upwards of 15 minutes.

The second component of MOTP, feedback, consists of the Tripod Student Survey. This survey, distributed only to students in the third through 12th grades, asks students to fill in one of five answer choices (from "totally untrue" to "to-

tally true") in response to questions about individual classes and teachers. The survey is completely confidential, and the results will determine five percent of a teacher's overall evaluation.

While the survey will be administered, its results will not count toward teachers' evaluations this year, as it is still in its developmental stages. The surveys will begin to count toward the five percent of teachers' evaluations beginning in the 2014-2015 school year.

The final aspect of MOTP is the submission of teaching artifacts to administrators. A "teaching artifact" is something that a teacher uses in class, such as a lesson plan or an analysis of student work. Teachers may submit up to eight pieces to be evaluated by

an administrator.

MOSL, the other 40 percent of the teacher evaluation, can be broken down into state and local measures of student learning. Each of these two sections accounts for 20 percent of the overall evaluation.

State measures of student learning revolve around students' performances on state assessments. Principals decide which state tests to use to evaluate teachers.

Local measures of student learning are set by School Local Measures Committees. Principals at individual schools can choose to either evaluate their teachers based on the committees' guidelines or opt out of those guidelines in favor of default local measures of student learning.

Within Stuyvesant, a com-

mittee of four administrators and four teachers agreed to use the Regents exam for the MOSL portion of teacher evaluations. "Schools have some flexibility to choose which tests can be used as the measure. We've made the decision to use the default measure, to use all of your Regents to measure the school-wide student learning," Zhang said. "To accommodate teachers that do not teach Regents classes, ninth-grade teachers will have a different city assessment. Also, English is the only subject where the city is doing an assessment for every year, because the English Regents is taken at the end of junior year."

Once teachers have been fully evaluated, they will be placed into one of four categories: ineffective, developing, ef-

fective, or highly effective. This stands in contrast with the unsatisfactory/satisfactory model that the DOE has used for the past 80 years. Teachers with a composite score of 0-64 are deemed ineffective, those with a score of 65-74 are categorized as developing, those with a score of 75-90 are considered effective, and those with a score of 91-100 are deemed very effective.

Teachers categorized as ineffective will be observed during following school year by an independent validator, whose will confirm or reject the "ineffective" ratings. All teachers rated ineffective or developing will receive Teacher Improvement Plan the following year, detailing ways in which they can update their methods for better results.

Not All Lockers are Created Equal

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dent property, which includes lockers, if they reasonably suspect the presence of contraband materials, such as drugs and weapons.

"It was a useful tool when I was there," said Eric Nadelstern, a former Principal of the International High School at LaGuardia Community College. "If I could do my career over again, I would probably just eliminate lockers to get rid of this issue of balancing student convenience and safety."

It is unclear whether the Stuyvesant administration is aware of the extent of the underground trade in lockers. No administration official was willing to discuss the issue with The Spectator as of press time.

The issue of fairly assigning lockers to students has given rise to three different systems in the last two decades alone. When the new building first opened in 1992, the school assigned each student a free locker on the first day of school that he or she would then be expected to claim and secure with his or her own lock. Different grades were given lock-

ers on different floors as is done under the current system. However, the school was unable to enforce the assignments as students argued and claimed lockers that were not technically their own.

"You basically would just come in on the first day and try to claim as good a locker as you could get near your friends, and then hope the person you stole it from wouldn't tell the school. Instead of the different floors going to different grades, like they were supposed to, they ended up being controlled by different social groups," Naamah Paley ('03) said in a telephone interview. "It was pretty wild."

Starting in 2007, the school introduced a pilot program in which juniors could choose their locker over the summer via their Student Tools accounts. Under this system, students had a three day period in August to select a locker in a set range of floors on a first-come, first-serve basis. The pilot was expanded to include sophomores in 2008, but was ended in 2010 because of what former principal Stanley Teitel described to The Spectator in

2010 as unfairness. "Some of you are away and don't have access to a computer," he said.

In September 2010, all students had their lockers randomly assigned to them by the administration and could purchase the lock combination for a small fee.

Within the randomized system, each grade's lockers are located within a certain range of floors, with freshmen at the top of the building and seniors on the bottom floors. Due to lack of lockers, freshmen have been required to share lockers under every system since the christening of the new building in 1992.

Some freshmen avoid this problem by purchasing lockers in areas traditionally occupied by upperclassmen. "I had a [senior bar locker] my freshman year," junior Paul Krondateyev said. "No one gave me any trouble for it, besides my friends, who did it playfully. I bought from a senior who I didn't know and we actually became friends after that."

Krondateyev's action reflects a sentiment common among many students who are simply unhappy with their as-

signed lockers' location. The students either accept their unsatisfactory lockers or break the official rules by trading or buying another one.

"Location is really the only thing I look for, because other than that, a locker is a locker all the same," junior Shirley Huang said in a telephone interview. "My assigned locker is on the fourth floor near [the Hudson staircase], but I have cheer practice in the atrium, so a third-floor one would be much more convenient. It would be so much simpler to fix this if the school gave more choice in locker location, but now I have to look for someone to trade with, which has been pretty hard."

Junior Ben Lanier believes the school should legalize and regulate the locker trade by officially running a locker exchange. As detailed in a proposal for such a system submitted to last year's Student Union (SU), Lanier's plan would allow students to rank locker preferences before the beginning of the school year and then trade in a regulated fashion by the beginning of the year. "People can use the lockers they want,

the administration still can track down contraband, students don't have to break rules, the Student Union and the administration regain some respect, fraud is almost impossible, the only manpower required is one person on the SU collecting contracts, and everyone is happy," Lanier wrote in his proposal.

Other students, however, are not as optimistic about this change. "The school isn't going to be acknowledging the trade of lockers anytime soon," SU President Eddie Zilberbrand said. "It is something we know about, but there is really just nothing we can effectively do about it so we just won't be bringing that up." Lanier withdrew his proposal following the response from Zilberbrand.

However, Lanier continues to believe that a valuable opportunity was lost. "The student body, the SU, and the administration cannot take each other seriously when all of these parties acknowledge that the administration's rules are being broken on an enormous scale, and everyone just turns a blind eye," Lanier said in a telephone interview.

More Rigorous Regents Starting This Year

By DAVID MASCIO

New and more rigorous Regents exams will be administered this year. Part of an ongoing shift to teach and test a new set of standards known as the Common Core, the changes will first affect students taking the English or Integrated Algebra Regents. Next year, a new Geometry Regents will be introduced, followed by an updated Algebra II/Trigonometry Regents the year after.

The Common Core State Standards are spearheaded by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. New York State adopted the standards on July 19, 2010, joining 44 other states across the country.

"The crucial design principle that informed our work [on the Common Core] is that we had to build a staircase that kids could follow, and if they did so, they'd truly be ready in the areas of literacy and mathematics for the demands of college and career," Common Core contributing writer and President of the College Board David Coleman said during an April 28, 2011 seminar sponsored by the State Education Department.

Research has shown that most New York City high school graduates are not ready for college. According to New York City officials in 2011, only 25 percent of high school seniors were prepared for college-level classes. Nationwide, the College Board estimates that only 26 percent of 2013 high school graduates were college-ready in English, history, math, and science. The Common Core was established to help increase college-readiness across the country.

The Common Core emphasizes critical thinking skills over memorization. Throughout the school year, the state will distribute more about this year's Common Core-aligned Regents exams. So far, the state has released "teaching tool" questions for Integrated Algebra.

A short-response question from the June 2013 Integrated Algebra Regents asked students: "The distance from Earth to Mars is 136,000,000 miles. A spaceship travels at 31,000 miles per hour. Determine, to the nearest day, how long it will take the spaceship to reach Mars." Answering this question requires plugging information into formula for speed and rounding the answer.

In comparison, a sample Common Core short-response question asks students to create and solve an algebraic formula, " $12x + 9(2x) + 5(3x) = 15$," based on information from the problem.

While the state has not yet released resources regarding the Common Core English Regents, the city has prepared sample English lessons aligned to the Common Core. For the June 2013 Regents, students wrote a single essay in which they used any two works they had read earlier to agree or disagree with Cicero's quote "...the greater the difficulty, the greater the glory."

In contrast, one lesson geared toward the Common

Core asks students to view a set of speeches about racial equality and then analyze the claims and counterclaims in a table format. Students then write a two-page essay arguing why the speech they chose is more effective than the others. For a high score, students need to include quotes and specific references to the speeches to defend their positions.

The transition to Common Core exams on the high school level follows a similar transition affecting statewide math and ELA exams administered to students in grades three through eight.

Following that transition in the 2012-2013 school year, passing scores plummeted. On the 2012 exams, which tested earlier standards, 55 percent of New York State students passed the English exam and 65 percent the math. In 2013, only 31 percent passed the new Common Core math and English exams.

The city was not entirely dismayed with the results, noting that New York City's drop in scores was comparable to those of other states. Following

The Common Core emphasizes critical thinking skills over memorization.

the introduction of Common Core-aligned exams, Kentucky and Tennessee saw respective drops of 58 and 67 percent in math and English proficiency on the elementary school level. Officials also noted that New York City's students outperformed those of the state's other urban school districts.

Many believe the transition to the Common Core on the high school level will lead to a similar, perhaps even bigger, drop in scores. "The new Common Core standards are even more demanding than the ones we contemplated, and could cause an even more precipitous drop in graduation than the possible 30 percent decline we [had predicted]," former New York State Commissioner of Education David Steiner wrote in a policy brief on the CUNY Institute for Education Policy's website.

Stuyvesant is widely considered to be one of the city's best-performing high schools, with a 2012 graduation rate of 99.4 percent. Assistant Principal of English Eric Grossman believes his department is on track to succeed on the Common Core English Regents and continue a trend of success. "We'll continue to make sure our instruction is aligned with the Common Core ELA standards," Grossman said.

"But the three through eight state test scores aren't going to force us to radically change what we're already doing."

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bile devices during testing periods. In the report's conclusion, the DOE also criticizes Damesek's failure to track her proctors' locations or efforts to follow proper testing protocol, which made her unable to hold proctors accountable.

However, numerous proctors contest these conclusions. A meeting among teachers was held at Stuyvesant on Tuesday, September 3 to further discuss the repercussions of the cheating scandal on Damesek and the rest of the faculty. During this meeting, teachers expressed discontent toward the report's treatment of teachers and proctors—namely, the statement that "none of Stuyvesant's numerous proctors appeared to have a clear understanding of the instructions that they were to give prior to an exam's administration." DOE investigators had asked each proctor interviewed in the investigation a similar set of questions: How many exams did you proctor? Which exams did you proctor? Do you remember an announcement regarding cell phones? Did you know Student A?

"As a proctor, I understood what my duties were. There was never a time when I felt when my duties were unclear, and we were given very specific directives on how to handle cheating," one anonymous teacher said. "So when I read one of the last paragraphs of the report, I was aghast. [Damesek] has always been the pinnacle of productiv-

ity, efficiency and effectiveness."

Though the DOE deemed Damesek's supervision of the incident inadequate, the report also cites events in which Damesek attempted to follow the procedure indicated by the DOE. In an e-mail correspondence between Damesek and Teitel, Damesek instructed him to report the cheating to state officials. In one of these e-mails, which Damesek sent to Teitel on June 20, 2012, she asked, "should we call the state regarding the regents cheating [...] we are supposed to report in... [sic]," to which Teitel responded, "I have voided some Physics Regents exams."

Furthermore, it is unclear as to how the DOE expected Damesek to react to the cheating scandal under Teitel's supervision. According to the report, following the confiscation of Student A's cell phone (through which he text-messaged his classmates during the Regents and LOTE exams), Damesek identified 70 students who received or responded to the message. In the process of recording their names, times at which texts were sent and received, and the content of some texts, all the information was remotely erased from the phone. Attempts made to download information from the phone were unsuccessful, with Computer Service Technician Jonathan Cheng realizing that software was necessary for the download.

Damesek also assisted in developing the interview protocol for the students caught

cheating, which would help determine future disciplinary action. Damesek, along with Teitel and Zhang (then a Network Leader), interviewed approximately 52 students on June 27, 2012. They asked questions from a questionnaire, took notes, and requested that the students write statements reflecting their versions of events. According to the report, Zhang recalls Damesek explaining to the students that, "[Cheating] is not what we expect out of you. This has consequences."

Zhang also took part in dealing with the aftermath of the cheating scandal. "When I read [the report], I wasn't very happy about it," she said. "I felt like I was put in the middle of it as well, and there was a piece in the report about how I was helping the family. So the public school system does not expel students. We cannot tell the student to leave the school. There are procedures. One of the things you read was about the safety transfer, which the parent told me about, and he also confirmed, 'We don't feel safe.' You can't do a safety [transfer] if a student doesn't feel unsafe. So I said, 'You're not forced out. You're not going to be forced out. I'm going to be your contact.' That was where we left. That was my role."

Teachers have acted sympathetically toward Damesek, even voting to create a legal defense fund on her behalf. English teacher Colette Brown was appointed to represent the teachers in this matter.

One World Trade Center Completed Amidst Controversy and Commemoration

By COBY GOLDBERG

Stuyvesant students return to school this week in the shadow of a milestone for post-9/11 downtown Manhattan. The final bolts were put into the top spire of the new One World Trade Center building (formerly known as the Freedom Tower) on Friday, May 10, thus completing the tower's 12-year construction period.

For the first time, New York City and the rest of America will commemorate the event's anniversary with a completed building occupying the long-empty Ground Zero.

"It has a very interesting structure and the glass panes add a cool feature. It basically blends in with the sky," junior and Battery Park City resident Theo Klein said. "If anything, it will spruce up the neighborhood even more and increase demand for residential as well as commercial investment in the area."

The original design for the building featured an asymmetrical spire meant to pay homage to the Statue of Liberty's torch. "I arrived in New York by ship as a teenager," the project's original architect, Polish-born Daniel Libeskind, wrote in defense of his design for the building. "The first things I saw were the Statue of Liberty and the amazing skyline of Manhattan. I have never forgotten those sights or what they stood for."

Libeskind's design was replaced by a symmetrical design chosen by the site's owner and developer, Larry Silverstein. Silverstein's aim was to maxi-

mize office space in the new building. Libeskind, on the other hand, sought "a space for people, not just corporations," he said. This led to an extended legal battle between Libeskind, an internationally renowned architect chosen by a public committee to design the site, and Silverstein, who chose David Childs to be the building's architect. Silverstein ultimately prevailed, and the only remnant of Libeskind's proposal is the symbolic height of 1,776 feet, making the building the tallest in the Western Hemisphere.

As time went on, however, Libeskind and a few other critics withdrew their previous reservations toward Silverstein, Childs, and the ultimate design. "Surprisingly, [it] pleases me to see it rising, even though it's not a great building," former architecture critic Kurt Andersen recently told *Vanity Fair*. "And the fact that it's taken more than a decade to finish, I think—the gradualism—makes that sense of emblematic rebirth more acute and irresistible."

Not all are supportive of a new building standing on the historicism of the original Twin Towers. The attacks on September 11, 2001 had a devastating impact on New York City and especially the surrounding area, including Stuyvesant. "It was one of the worst days, and week, of my life," Stuyvesant alum Chloe Rosen ('05) said. "I'll never forget it."

Given the emotional significance of the area, the development of the building has continued to garner much criticism, as many argued that

it is wrong to develop new office space on top of the former World Trade Center rubble. "I like the memorial and I think that was a good idea, but I don't like the idea of trying to build back what was lost," junior Lucy Wainger said in an interview with *stuypod*, a podcast run by senior Juliette Hainline.

"It almost feels offensive to try to build another gigantic tower right next to the memorial," Stuyvesant alum Lisa Li ('05) said.

With One World Trade Center projected to be open for business by the summer of 2014, the focus now turns to the construction of Two, Three and Four World Trade Center. Many are hopeful that once construction is completed, the site will breathe new life into the city. "My vision for the site is once the streets and the sidewalks are open that this site will serve as a public space not that different than Union Square or Washington Square Park," designer of the World Trade Center Memorial Michael Arad said in an interview with *stuypod*. "I think making this site a public plaza is an important thing because of the inherent democratic values which are embodied and strengthened by public places."

"What happened here was horrible and a sight I'll never forget," Stuyvesant alum Richard Koyfman ('04) said. "But I really think the new World Trade Center buildings will help the area and the city and those affected move on."

News

SU Election Dispute Resolved

By ANDREW WALLACE

Almost three months after the controversy surrounding the 2013 Student Union (SU) election season began, one thing has been made certain: senior Eddie Zilberbrand and junior Keiran Carpen will lead the SU in the 2013-2014 school year. Zilberbrand had rejected senior Jack Cahn's proposal to split the leadership at the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year.

Last June, the ticket of Cahn and junior Remi Moon won the popular vote for the SU Presidency and Vice Presidency, receiving 447 votes to Zilberbrand and Carpen's 329. However, in the same Facebook post in which the Stuyvesant Board of Elections (BOE) first announced this wide margin on Tuesday, June 11, the BOE also announced Cahn-Moon's disqualification from the race.

Cahn and Moon officially appealed the BOE's decision on Thursday, June 13 to a panel of five administrators, including Principal Jie Zhang and Coordinator of Student Affairs Lisa Weinwurm. The appeal was unsuccessful, and the administration upheld the BOE's decision to disqualify the Cahn-Moon ticket. Zhang referenced the administration's desire to stay relatively removed from the BOE's affairs. "We want to respect the culture of the students making decisions here," she said.

On Monday, June 17, Cahn posted an "appeal brief," responding to points the BOE had made in its official statement,

which was published on Sunday, June 16 and detailed each of Cahn-Moon's three violations. One of Cahn's campaign managers sent the BOE a picture of a student and a picture of the illegal fliers that the BOE mentioned in its reasons for disqualification, claiming that he saw the unaffiliated student posting them.

If these allegations were to have been proved true, the first strike (having too many campaign posters on the same bulletin board) would have been called into question. The BOE, however, did not see the evidence as sufficient to reverse their decision.

Carpen himself felt that the disqualification was unjust. At first, Carpen even said that he was willing to concede SU leadership to Cahn and Moon. "Initially yes, I did agree to concede. I did not think it was right to win by disqualification based on (what I perceived as) insignificant premises," Carpen said. In the end, however, "The controversy dragged on longer than most people desired and the publicity was abhorred by most students," he said.

Cahn was impressed with Carpen's actions throughout the election process. "I respect the fact that [he] opposed the disqualification on the record because he didn't think it was appropriate," he said. "[It] says a lot of good things about his character."

When Cahn-Moon lost the appeal, Cahn proposed to split leadership of the SU with Zilber-

brand and Carpen. Zilberbrand had been presented the idea before the appeal and had initially seemed receptive. Scheduling conflicts with the BOE forced the two tickets to wait a few days before having a meeting to discuss splitting leadership. In that period of time, however, Zilberbrand had a change of heart. He decided he would no longer consider the possibility of working together with Cahn-Moon.

"A compromise that seemed plausible was to create a dual Presidency and dual Vice Presidency," Carpen said. "However, our attempts to reach a compromise failed, most likely due to the weak relationship between [Cahn] and [Zilberbrand] and the unwarranted negative publicity."

Zilberbrand elaborated on his reasons for declining the offer to share the presidency in an e-mail to Cahn, Moon, and Carpen on Monday, June 24. He posted the letter to Cahn's Facebook wall on Thursday, June 27, for the student body to see.

In his letter, Zilberbrand listed four reasons for declining the co-presidency. First, he said that agreeing to serve as co-presidents would trivialize the work and even the existence of the BOE. "If we simply decide to be co-presidents it feels to me that we basically ignored the BOE's statements and actions and decided to do our own thing," he wrote. "From there, what's the point of having a BOE in the first place?"

Secondly, Zilberbrand be-

lieved he would not feel comfortable working alongside Cahn, because Cahn intentionally involved the press in the SU election process. "If [Cahn] truly believed in a better Stuyvesant and a more united student body there was no need to get the press involved in this school election," Zilberbrand wrote. "I don't think Stuyvesant needs any more negative press, something that a majority of the student body agrees with," he said. Cahn, however, believes that discussions with the press are necessary for change. "This has in no way affected the school's reputation as an academic powerhouse," he said. "Sometimes, it's important to bring issues to the public attention in order to solve them." He noted that "Slutty Wednesday" was successful precisely because it was picked up by the media.

Zilberbrand additionally stated that "[A] lot of policies that [Cahn] has insisted on I have disagreed with and felt uncomfortable with being forced to support." He specifically mentioned Cahn's staffing suggestions and planned policy for the SU to meet every morning at 7:30 a.m. as topics on which his and Cahn's opinions conflict.

Finally, Zilberbrand insisted that he and Cahn are incompatible in their leadership styles. "I personally don't think I can work with [Cahn] in an efficient manner as co-presidents," he wrote. "We both have strong and loud personalities that I think will clash and create more drama and an inefficient SU."

Cahn, however, thought that the joint presidency could have been a great success. "[T]he school would benefit from the energies of both presidential and vice-presidential candidates," he said. "From Stuyvesant's point of view, it's unfortunate; four of us could do more to help the school than just two of us."

Despite his disappointment with the incidents of last spring, Cahn plans to serve the school in other ways this year. "I will be applying to be the SU Chief of Staff so I can work together with [Zilberbrand] to improve the school. What's most important to me is having the ability to make [Stuyvesant], a school I love with all my heart, even better than it already is," Cahn said. "I can improve the school without being its president."

Carpen and Zilberbrand feel that, despite all the conflict, they are still able and ready to lead the SU, and will do so with great success this coming year. "[Zilberbrand] and I are neither incompetent nor the antagonists of the situation," Carpen said. "We intend on running the SU as efficiently as possible."

Zilberbrand hopes that the Stuyvesant can move on from the events of the spring. "To me, one of the most important things about [Stuyvesant] is how much it feels like a community with everyone working together and there to support one another," he said. "I hope that everyone just learns from this event and makes sure to never forget that we're a family at [Stuyvesant]."

Features

Ned Vizzini: Surviving Teen Angst



Ned Vizzini in 2005, signing books for a student who got into Stuyvesant.

Courtesy of Ned Vizzini

By TERESA CHEN

"That table's worth more than you. If there were a fire in this house, I'd take that table out first, and then I'd come back to get you." This was the senior yearbook quote of bestselling author Ned Vizzini ('99). "It's a quote of my father's," Vizzini said. "Then the freaking Stuyvesant yearbook people added a typo to it! My father knows about the quote and he feels horrible about it, because he tells me he was just being sarcastic. I grew up in a very sarcastic household."

Reflecting on his high school years, Vizzini identified Stuyvesant as a trove of lessons and experiences. Among the memories of studying for tests and "playing

Magic cards on the sixth floor," he remembers Stuyvesant for its "hard fun [and] Asian kids," he said. He especially loved the idiosyncrasies of the student body, "because the only thing people had in common was that they passed the test. So it was weirdoes of all stripes," he said. Vizzini even appreciated the academic pressure, because the hardships thrown at him later in life could not measure up to those in Stuyvesant. "Whenever things get bad in my working life—for example, last year, when I had to wake up at 4:30 a.m. to write 'House of Secrets' (a New York Times bestseller) before going to work on 'Last Resort'—I realize that Stuyvesant was harder. So I really appreciate the pressure in

hindsight," he said. One thing he hated, however, was (unsurprisingly) the homework load. "Four hours a night? I'm still happy I don't have homework," Vizzini, 32 years old, said.

Unlike most Stuyvesant students, Vizzini felt no need to fill his list of extracurricular activities. "The only extracurricular activity I am documented to have been in was 'Banned Film Club.' But I wasn't even in that club. They just pulled me aside while they were taking the picture to make it look like it had more people in it," he said.

Instead, Vizzini pursued his love for writing, which he found as a hobby in grade school. "When I was in second grade, my progressive grade school in Brooklyn had 'Writers' Workshop week,' where they gave us a blank book and told us to fill it. I couldn't believe it. I thought blank books were very rare and were all hoarded by the book companies. I was off to the races," he said. At Stuyvesant, he found an outlet in "New York Press," the newspaper that inspired the first kind of writing I ever had success with," he said. "I met with The Spectator people early on and they didn't like me. 'New York Press' was available on the streets on my walk to school, and it was the most incredible paper I had ever read in my life."

This local newspaper helped him publish a personal essay called "The Bagel Man" in 1996, jumpstarting his success in writing. Vizzini found much

inspiration in his own life, particularly his experiences in high school. In fact, these brought life to his earliest novel, "Teen Angst? Naaah...," which is an amusing memoir of thoughts and experiences collected from middle school and high school, published when he was 19. He also drew from his high school experience in "It's Kind of a Funny Story," a novel about a depressed teenager who institutionalizes himself in a psychiatric ward.

"It's Kind of a Funny Story" is 85 percent true. I made the main character 15 instead of 23, and I added the love triangle, but all the people in the story are based on real people. So I put quite a lot of myself in there," Vizzini said. Regarding his own experience with depression, he said, "I was 23 and under contract to write a book and couldn't. I thought my career and life were over because my art had betrayed me."

Unlike in his novel, his depression didn't relate to his experience at Stuyvesant. "I idolized suicide for a long time before I was diagnosed with actual depression. I don't think it had to do with [Stuyvesant]. It had to do with Nirvana, because I loved that band, and since Kurt Cobain killed himself, I had a bad role model," Vizzini said. However, he does believe that the pressure in high school can be too much to handle sometimes. This is why he suggested that "all students, in [Stuyvesant] and elsewhere, should get

five 'mental health days' to use during the year to stay sane." Eventually, time helped him climb over the rut in the road and go on to become a successful writer. "I found comfort in time. Time is also what helped me overcome. Time is great," Vizzini said.

Today, with five published books to his name, Vizzini is recognized as a popular young adult author. He is currently writing for "Believe," an upcoming NBC television show that will air Sunday nights at 9 p.m., starting March 2014. "Believe" centers on a ten-year-old girl with supernatural powers who needs to protect her abilities from being used by evil forces.

Vizzini's proudest achievement, however, is "happening now, as 'It's Kind of a Funny Story' continues to find a wider audience than he expected. "House of Secrets" being an official New York Times Bestseller (which "Funny Story" is not) is also a big deal," he said.

Vizzini credits his success to his ability to write about his own life. For him, writing about himself is easy because he enjoys connecting with his audience. "You just have to be shameless," he said. "I have always been interested in writing about my own experiences. I'm an open person. If you spent four hours hanging out with me, you would know just as much about me as if you read one of my books," Vizzini said. "So you might as well just read my books, so I get a little money."

Features

An Interview with the Principal



Justin Strauss/The Spectator

**By TERESA CHEN
and EMMA LOH
with additional reporting by
EDRIC HUANG**

This interview with Principal Jie Zhang on Wednesday, September 4 at Stuyvesant High School has been edited and condensed for the print publication. For the full interview, please check our website.

Q: Looking back on your first year here, if you could give as general or as specific an evaluation as to how your first year at Stuy went, what would you say?

A: Well, first year, I would consider that as kind of a learning period. I feel that after a year, I'm definitely in a different place. A year ago, my knowledge about Stuy was limited to a colleague, Mr. Teitel, and being a parent. I also didn't consider myself a very active parent in school because my old jobs were always overlapping with any time there was a parent involvement. So during this first year of physically being here, clearly I didn't actively make an attempt to make changes. It was when things came to me. In other words, it was somewhat passive decision-making. There were more passive decisions versus active, proactive decisions.

An example is the fifth floor area where kids used to hang out. It wasn't like this principal came here and decided that the fifth floor is not a good idea. It was after receiving repeated feedback from the assistant principals and teachers from the language department complaining about instruction, the noise, and safety issues. And after once, twice, three times—then you say, "what do we do?" That's one example, and maybe through this, you can tell that I wasn't active in looking to make changes in those areas. Especially with my cabinet of 12 assistant principals, most decisions were not mine alone; it was with the consultation of them. Another example was when seniors approached me about the going out for fees—you know, it was after a number

of conversations involving the need of the building (because we were so overcrowded and kids with free periods were always in the building) and also the students' requests. So it took a little time, but most of the decisions from me were based on intensive conversations. When you're new you don't just walk around to find problems.

I'm also impressed with the ways the students are represented here, and I enjoy communication with them, as you see. I learned a few things as well. Not every conversation was pleasant. There were conflicts, and especially toward the end of the year, I think we got a little off our relationship because of the conflict of the SU election. Personally, I do want to apologize for all the consequences that have come with that. I do know there were holes in the handling because SU rules are not like a Constitution, you guys are not lawyers. Certainly, in the real world it would have been different, I feel the administration tried our best collaboratively to allow students to be leaders, to practice things that may happen in the real world. So if, by any chance, or for any reason we've upset students, I hope we can further discuss to see how these questions can be answered. I just hope I continue to have a positive relationship with the student body.

So my first year, I would consider it as more learning than leading. Or more learning and maintaining than leading, let's put it that way.

Q: What from the past year do you consider to be a failure or something you didn't do particularly well?

A: Well, obviously, at the end of the year, The Spectator didn't give me very good grades. (laughter) All I can say is that from my experience, I tried my best to basically work with every constituent. I think that operationally, for example, we had some disasters in program changes. I almost want to say—I don't mean to blame anybody—that coming to a school with 109 years [of history], I didn't think that I needed

to be involved in that until we found that there are 500 kids outside my office. So I actually learned, from my experiences, not to make assumptions. To actually still consider that better planning is necessary.

[I learned] to re-assess students' reactions and emotions, I should say, to be more careful with certain decisions. In other words, I came with some assumptions. When the library was only going to allow students in for the first 15 minutes, in fact, the librarians first say 10. I said, "Can we do 15?" So I didn't anticipate the student body would be upset. That is something I think I need to carefully think about before we move forward. So instead of sending out a blast e-mail, we'll meet with a group to say, "This is what we're going to do." I think that with the emotion[al] reaction to something like the dress code, I will definitely be more thoughtful before blasting things out or notifying students, thinking that it is a notice. There may be other emotions attached to anything. That will be something I really will put on my agenda to remind myself.

Q: You've said that last year was mostly a learning period for you. How will that change this year?

A: I hope that I spend more time thinking about the long term direction of the school. Honestly, last year, I had no time to think about it. How are we going to look at the computer science program? Where do we want to be? How important the tech courses are? So those are going to be much more detailed thinking. Last year, for three months, they talked about 10 Tech, 5 Tech, it took me awhile to actually understand what the argument was. This year, I feel that I'm in a totally clear initial place. So again, long term plan instead of a short term problem solver.

Q: What do you think are the biggest issues at Stuyvesant for this upcoming year?

A: Well, I think it's still building relationships with students. I feel like the parents' goal is to have a connection by the school, to be heard by the school, so I actually feel I did well with that. I think that the biggest challenge is to continue to build relationships with students, parents, and faculty. In other words, if you think about the fact that I was pretty much dropped in here 12 months ago, and for me to be completely trusted by students and faculty and teachers and staff, I think that is definitely a challenge. And especially if you come in and make some changes—then it could be misunderstood. But I think it's going to take some time, so that's one.

The second challenge is the topic of dishonesty. Making sure that students understand that it is not about not being caught, but that it is about internalizing the concept of importance of honesty. It will continue to be a challenge, because we did have a few incidents here and there. I think it's a long term challenge, with the technology, with the cell phones, and we just have to continue working on it.

A third one is the budget. In

terms of operations, we have to work with the budget and not reduce our offerings. So my challenge is how to utilize or maximize the current budget to make sure you kids are served with the best possibilities.

Q: Why has there been so much irregularity in the graduation requirements?

A: So that, actually, I am almost here to clean up, because the "irregularity" was pretty much caused because of the introduction of one year of computer science.. Because of that one year, and because there was an announcement before I came that we're no longer calling them 5 Techs/10 Techs, we're calling them "Applied Science." I was made aware it was a plan that didn't have a concrete ingredient. So the concept of "Applied Science" is great, but I came to this situation with consulting the science department, tech department, and the feedback that I got was that there was no concrete phasing-in plan of what "Applied Science" may look like.

Q: In our transcripts, Computer Science credits are included under Mathematics. Is there going to be a separation between the two or will it stay the same?

A: The reason that happens, I need to explain to you, is that the state education department does not have a comp[uter] science certification. In New York State at least, there are no certified computer science teachers. They do not exist. Therefore, it's a common practice that math teachers, are the ones who are likely to have a computer science background. That is why, traditionally, computer science classes have been coded as math class.

Q: Amongst the student body, there is still some ambiguity about the dress code. Could you clarify the terms of the dress code for the upcoming school year?

A: Last summer, we were very lucky that there were no hot days until all of the sudden there were 90 degree days in June. So what I did for a few days, was to watch what happened. There were people following up, people at the scanners would take the liberty to challenge students, and, again, it was the first [time] ever that I saw [this]. Of course, the decision for that month, needed to be made to see what I could do about it. First, I read the dress code, and people complain about having longer arms, shorter arms, so I must say—yes, it was somewhat ambiguous. I started to be a little more careful on judging kids.

If students were upset, they were not wrong because I could not make up my mind. I didn't have a set of ideas of what [the dress code] could look like. Also, by serving the faculty, that there were very split responses. Some faculty think, "What? They walk in the streets like that." Some other faculty members say,

"We're uncomfortable." So I actually spent time reviewing the DOE regulations, and there are really no specific requirements [for dress code]. The general message is, [students' attire] is not disturbing, not dangerous,

not inappropriate. Right now, I can't say whether I will write a new set of dress codes, or forget about what we had, but I would like to have a discussion with students.

I feel like putting the responsibility on the students. I feel that you kids, you're such a bunch of good kids. I really feel if that's something we can go for, I'm very willing to say, "Forget the looking at everybody's shorts." But we as a student body, we need to have some sense of appropriateness in school. Some responsibility, some professionalism. If, at a point, your peers feel uncomfortable and your teachers feel uncomfortable, then there is something to be said. I understand that today's shorts are shorter than ten years ago, but I think we adults also need to adjust our minds a little bit. I hope that you [the student body] will at least get the message that it's for the reputation of the school, it is for your own reputation and for your safety. If those messages can be sent, I'd be very happy to take away the dress code that are in the handbook next year.

Q: Between this year and last year, there has been a substantial overturn in guidance counselors. Do you think that there may be issues with this, such as in writing SSRs?

A: Not at all, it's totally administrative. A lot of changes were based on the fact that [guidance counselors] were going on maternity leave. The position is reserved for the person before. Obviously, there will be an adjustment [for new guidance counselors]. So as part of the interview process, [of new guidance counselors] writing was very heavy.

Q: What will the role of Assistant Principal of Guidance be this year?

A: Unfortunately, I can tell you as of today (Wednesday, September 4), our assignment of AP Guidance is still Ms. Damesek. That's from my end. That's a standard answer, I really mean it. Last week, Ms. Damesek began as AP Guidance and that's why she took over the entire Camp Stuy. As of now, what I can tell you is that she is still officially assigned to AP Guidance unless something else happens, which I must say I do not have any information to share right now.

Q: Who will be in charge of testing administration?

A: As of last Thursday (August 29), our decision was that Ms. Damesek will continue to work with PSAT and AP. The new AP of Organization, Ms. Rodriguez-Tabone, will take over the Regents. Those were only conversations, nothing has happened yet.

Q: Is Mr. Moran's title still the Assistant Principal of Security and Student Affairs?

A: AP administrative titles are completely building-defined. I have asked him to take over student affairs. Last year, we didn't add [Student Affairs] to his title because Ms. Damesek was very comfortable supervising all of the student

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continued from page 5

activities and he was new. His responsibilities will be your safety; security; involving the student discipline, including intervention, attendance, cutting and student activities.

Q: Have you read the report about the “cheating and testing improprieties at Stuyvesant during June 2012” released by the DOE?

A: Yes, I read my name was all over the place as well.

Q: What was the role of a Network Leader?

A: My Cluster Leader, Charles Amendsen, called me to ask, “Have you heard about this cheating at Stuyvesant, and when I called Mr. Teitel, I think it’s not a secret, he told me, ‘Yes, we took care of it.’ You saw the report. My boss then asked me, ‘Can you ask [Teitel] to put it into writing?’”

As the Network Leader, I was not [Teitel’s] supervisor. You have to differentiate. [Teitel’s] supervisor was Tamika

Matheson, [who is the Superintendent of NYC high schools in District 2]. I’m kind of advisory. Basically, I had that communication and I was told to come to Stuyvesant. So I spent two days here, the 26th and the 27th, so everything you saw was during those two days. Then I flew to China. That’s it. My involvement ended there. When I read [the report], I wasn’t very happy about it. I felt like I was put in the middle of it as well, and there was a piece in the report about how I was helping the family.

So the public school system does not expel students. We cannot tell the student to leave the school. There are procedures. One of the things you read was about the safety transfer, which the parent told me about, and he also confirmed, “We don’t feel safe.” You can’t do a safety [transfer] if a student doesn’t feel unsafe. So I said, “You’re not forced out. You’re not going to be forced out. I’m going to be your contact.” That was where we left. That was my role. So I was kind of identified as the contact to talk to the parent.

If you want to know, [as part of the Network], we went to schools when there were crisis. We went to 30 schools, so it wasn’t like I was sent [to Stuyvesant] for the wrong reasons; I went to every one of the 30 schools multiple times and I was in Stuyvesant for other things as well. I wasn’t part of the investigation and I wasn’t part of being investigated. I was just [at Stuyvesant] to represent the Network.

Q: When reading the report, what was your general opinion of how the administration was being portrayed?

A: I read it just like you did and I learned a lot about [it]. But, I don’t know, like I said, this thing came out about me saying, “I’ll help you, you’re not going.” It really was about educating a parent about the rules and regulations the DOE had. I must say at this point, I don’t feel comfortable sharing any comments and I am a DOE administrator, so I am not in the position to be sharing comments about this.

Q: How do you feel, given the media attention, and the developing information with Ms. Damesek, the situation will affect the atmosphere, the tone here at Stuy?

A: I’m absolutely very worried. Definitely. I hope that it’s not going to affect it—especially with students. One thing I worry is that students take the information the wrong way or even the right way. I just don’t want [the students] to be emotionally, academically affected by this. And the school culture, school tone, I’m absolutely very concerned.

Q: If there were to be negative repercussions or a negative change in culture at Stuyvesant, what actions may be taken?

A: We have been having conversations in the building, with the adults. Being the principal that came here at the end of the scandal, I think I am in a bit of a complicated position. We [the faculty] know the DOE rules. We know our roles as teachers, and I hope that we will focus on student learning. If there are re-

ported incidents, I will have to follow up, based on the report. Students also need to know, as much that they have the right to express their concerns, feelings, or their reactions, during the school day I expect the regular instruction to take place.

Q: In The New York Times article, one of the spokespersons from the DOE said that Ms. Damesek may get demoted or she may get fired. Can you comment on this?

A: That’s only with The New York Times. I’ve not heard an official word from the Department of Education. That was released to the press.

Q: Do you want to give your assessment of that statement [in the NYT release]?

A: Absolutely. Again, I am not in communication with any officials in the DOE about [Ms. Damesek’s position]. No one is talking to me about this. You can just go into my e-mail if you want to look—you know that I don’t delete them.

Pikachu or Teemo?

By SCOTT MA

As you read this article, more than five million people are playing League of Legends (more intimately known as League). Each month, players worldwide invest more than one billion hours into the game—the equivalent of over half a million years. In League, players are placed into teams and select characters, called champions, to represent them on the battlefield. The winning team is the first to take down the opposing nexus, a structure within the opposing team’s base.

Pokémon, on the other hand, has sold over 200 million video games as of 2010, making it the second most successful video game-based franchise in history. Its success has led to everything from Pokémons trading cards to legal tender bearing a picture of Pikachu. The most well-known Pokémons games put the player in the shoes of a novice Pokémons trainer who adventures and meets various people and Pokémons. Each game culminates in a showdown between the player and the Pokémons League, a group of strong Pokémons trainers.

Pokémons and League of Legends are without a doubt two of the most well-known video game franchises in history. Each has developed a loyal fan base and continues to grow internationally. However, the question remains: which reigns supreme?

Pokémons Is Some Serious Business

By SCOTT MA

Everyone remembers their his Pokémons game. I was seven when Professor Oak introduced me to Squirtle, my first and greatest friend. Together, we triumphed over enemies all over Kanto. We fought legendary Pokémons, eliminated the evil Team Rocket, struggled through the Elite Four, and crushed Gary, that whining excuse of a rival. In fact, I still have yet to overwrite my original file on Pokémons FireRed.

Pokémons is the embodiment of my childhood, and as clichéd as this may seem, it also taught me the value of friendship. My Pokémons were my teammates, and I learned to care for them as we fought side by side, battle after battle, becoming stronger each passing day.

League of Legends offers no such moral value. In fact, it actually causes people to behave rudely toward fellow players. The game’s highly competitive ranking system results in high amounts of toxicity in the community. Ask anyone who has played League, and they will tell you that harassment by teammates and enemies alike is commonplace.

Of course, there’s more to Pokémons than just the handheld games. Like League, there’s an entire competitive portion to the franchise, in which players attempt to assemble the strongest possible Pokémons team.

The competitive scene in Pokémons is much more complex than League’s. There are over 650 Pokémons and over 550 unique Pokémons moves to date, and the combinations of each Pokémons and its four-move sets are endless. Furthermore, there are countless other alterable characteristics, ranging from happiness values to in-game weather. What results is millions of possible Pokémons teams.

In battle, the same amount of foresight and critical thinking is necessary.

Each Pokémons has its weaknesses and strengths, and trainers need to exploit their opponent’s weaknesses and bring out the best of their own team. Most importantly, they have to stay one step ahead of the enemy team by predicting its attacks while carefully timing their own. Needless to say, this is no easy task.

League of Legends, on the other hand, currently has only 115 champions, each with his or her predetermined four-move set. This severely limits player innovation, as almost every aspect of the game is already set in stone. In Pokémons, players determine their teams’ functions and characteristics. In League, it’s the exact opposite.

League of Legends may be the more popular game statistically speaking, but in the end it will never replace the innovation and goodwill taught by the Pokémons franchise.

By SCOTT MA,
with additional reporting by
ALAN JIANG

With over 12 billion hours logged annually, League of Legends has become one of the most successful games of all time. It surpassed Pokémons in number of players in only a matter of years, a surprise given that Pokémons is a twenty-year-old franchise.

What sets League of Legends apart from other video games is the intense competition involved. Players who wish to test their skills in ranked games are put into tiers based on ability. As a player’s performance improves, so does his or her ranking. Through this, players are given incentive to improve.

Though some websites have attempted to give Pokémons a ranking system for competitive play, this system is unofficial and even inaccurate. It’s

Why League?

simply not possible to compare Pokémons’s competitive scene to League’s. In fact, the competitive scene in League is so huge that its 2013 World Championship Finals will be held at the Staples Center and offers a prize of \$1,000,000.

In the familiar, single-player version of Pokemon, there’s even less competition. Since you are the only human player, there’s no real motive to get better at the game after you finish it. Some players get bored of a Pokémons game after playing it through once. However, people return to League game after game because they can experiment for the sake of self-advancement.

Another reason for League’s success is its risk factor. A game of League happens in real time with real people, so an individual’s mistakes or successes can have a heavy impact on the outcome of the game. Nothing is preprogrammed; the split-second decisions you and your teammates make are what make the difference. In Pokémons, you can save the game before important events and restart at your save file if something goes wrong.

There’s more to League of Legends than just intense competition and risk, however. All of the champions are part of an ever-expanding lore. Each champion has a distinct personality, shown through his or her history and interactions with other champions. While the storyline in Pokémons games is limited to what is coded into the cartridge, the story in League of Legends never stops developing.

All in all, it’s clear why League of Legends, not Pokémons, has become the most played video game in the world.



Judy Mai/The Spectator

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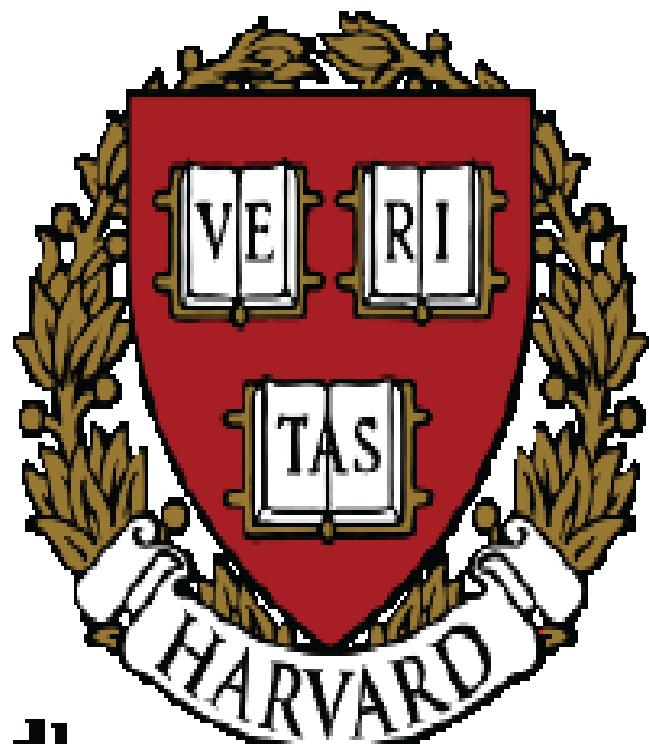
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Editorials

STAFF EDITORIAL

Don't Fire Damesek

continued from page 1

Multiple teachers told The Spectator that they remember her making one, and we recognize that she has been consistently competent in doing so. The DOE investigators found that she "appeared to have little interest in the manner in which the proctors under her supervision carried out their duties." Specifically, they called Damesek out for mishandling the Stuyvesant proctors in three ways: 1) The list of Regents proctors was continually updated, and eventually lost; 2) Proctors didn't know how to react if they encountered cheating; 3) She did not hold proctors accountable for their diligence. These standards are unfair, because: 1) This list was finalized on the day of the exams, and all proctors showed up to their exams; 2) All teachers know that if they encounter cheating, they report it to their supervisor. It's very simple; 3) How can an assistant principal simultaneously monitor 100 proctors for competence? These claims are trumped-up nothings. They are irrelevant and inconsistent excuses to insult an extremely strict testing coordinator. Damesek has a long-standing reputation among the Stuyvesant student body as an administrator

who deals with disciplinary issues, including cheating, harshly.

In fact, the results of the investigation demonstrate that Damesek attempted to take the correct course of action. Despite her subordinate role to Teitel, she encouraged him to report the cheating scandal to the State Education Department (SED), which he unfortunately did not heed. This was Teitel's decision, and she should not be held liable for it.

It is certainly worth noting that Damesek was fired after the report was made public on August 30, 2013, not when the investigation/report were finalized on November 5, 2012. If Damesek is, supposedly, such a liability that she must be banned from the school building, why was she allowed to run the AP exams last spring? Why was she allowed to run Regents exams and finals? Why was she allowed to run the PSATs and SATs? Why was she allowed to fulfill, just as competently as she always has, the countless responsibilities that keep this school running? The DOE has put itself in a double bind. If Damesek was "criminal" in her handling of the cheating scandal, it should not have allowed her work at Stuyvesant last year. If she wasn't, then firing her now is unwarranted.

The reason Damesek's removal from Stuyvesant has engen-

dered such a passionate response from students and teachers (who have created a legal defense fund on her behalf) is that she is the glue that holds Stuyvesant together. She is the only top-level administrator who has worked in the school for more than one year, and she is widely accepted as the single most competent person in the building. In fact, only three years ago she won the Best Assistant Principal Award in NYC.

It's hard to overstate Damesek's role in the life of the average Stuyvesant student. She manages the school's finances, lunch forms, AP exams, lost and found, SATs and PSATs, lockers, and SING! Just two weeks ago, she helped coordinate the smoothest Camp Stuy in recent memory. She is known for arriving in the school building at 7 a.m. and staying late into the night, dedicating all of her energy to a job she loves. This paper has stood opposite Damesek on many policy issues over the past decade. We have had our impasses: she was the primary enforcer of the dress code, and cellphone confiscator-in-chief. But we acknowledge that Stuyvesant cannot function without her. We are infuriated by the injustice perpetrated against her. The student body should not let this stand.

The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper

*"The Pulse
of the
Student
Body"*

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With Principal Teitel, It's Complicated

An analysis of the DOE report as it relates to the performance of former Principal Stanley Teitel leads us the following conclusion: faced with a unique situation and little precedent, Teitel acted rationally and within the confines of DOE protocol. He made significant mistakes, but none warranted his resignation.

Safety/Transportation Transfer: Teitel called in the father of "Student A," the ringleader of the scandal, soon after Student A was caught. Teitel told the father that "[Student A]'s not staying in my school." He referred Student A to guidance counselor Mazra Schindler, who could help Student A request a safety/transportation transfer from Stuyvesant rather than being expelled for cheating. Though the media has labeled this decision as part of a cover up, such transfers are not unheard of within the DOE. Expulsion hearings are long, expensive, and damaging to the students involved. As a result, administrators find alternative reasons to transfer students.

Not Reporting the Event to the SED: Teitel waited eight days to report the cheating violating to the SED, a state authority responsible for the exams, and only did so then because it had reached out to him directly. We agree with the DOE—Teitel should have reported the cheating earlier. That said, it

is important to remember that Teitel's immediate superiors, Jie Zhang, who was then his Network Leader, and Tamika Matheson, his superintendent, gave him a free hand in taking care of the situation. Neither of them intervened or advised him to act otherwise. Adina Lopatin, Deputy Chief Academic Officer, Performance, told the investigators that "to her knowledge, the scope or the manner in which this investigation is to be conducted is 'not spelled out in the Reg[ulation]s.'" Steven Katz, Director of State Assessment Office for Standards, Assessment and Reporting, confirmed that there are no established guidelines for reporting cheating to the SED.

Not Canceling 70 Tests: Teitel was criticized for not immediately canceling the tests of the 70 students suspected of involvement in the cheating ring, or at the very least comparing the tests to reveal which of these students had copied answers from Student A. We agree with the DOE in this regard. However, we believe it is important to recognize that, lacking evidence of wrongdoing, it would have been difficult and subjective to establish which students had cheated and which hadn't. Indeed, we can envision a parallel universe in which Teitel, having canceled all of the tests, was asked to resign because the DOE deemed this act in

violation of students' due process rights.

The Sting: Donald Conyers, Senior Supervising Superintendent, told investigators that Teitel should have "prevented" the cheating from occurring "as opposed to creating a system for 'catching' him in the act." We agree that preventing cheating should always be a school's priority, but in this case, Teitel made the right decision. Stuyvesant students, especially Student A, needed to be caught in the act so that they could be punished accordingly. We acknowledge that a scandal could have been avoided had Teitel simply given Student A a slap on the wrist. But this would have meant allowing the cheating to fester, unpunished and undeterred. This school is better off today because Teitel refused to allow students to get away with cheating.

It is undeniable that Teitel conducted an imperfect investigation. He failed to report cheating to the SED and did not conduct a proper investigation into which of the 70 cheaters had read Student A's texts. However, his punishment—being barred from ever working in a New York City public school—is one that does not fit the crime, especially given the plethora of mitigating circumstances.

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The Spectator

We are compiling an archive of past issues.

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The Spectator will now accept unsolicited Op-Ed pieces written by outside students, faculty, and alumni. These columns, if selected, will be published in The Spectator's Opinions section. Recommended length is 700 words. Articles should address school related topics or items of student interest. Columns can be e-mailed to specreaderopinions@gmail.com.

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Write a letter to the editor and e-mail it to letters@stuyspectator.com or drop it in The Spectator box in the second-floor mail room.

Wishlist '13-'14: Is this really too much to ask for?

Dear Stuyvesant administration,

As we start the new school year, we are enthusiastic that by working alongside the administration we can address some major points of contention.

We want a stronger voice:

- A more active SU-administration relationship that has open forum meetings
- An anonymous teacher-evaluation system regulated by the administration
- Answers in a timely manner: Official responses to issues like the election controversy, Assistant Principal Organization's Randi Damesek's current status

We want more opportunities:

- Increased number of AP seats available
- Wider variety of electives for freshmen and sophomores
- Lunch time tutoring help centers for all departments modeled after the English department's writing center

We need more breathing space:

- Everyone, not just seniors, should be able to go outside during frees
- Access to more floors during frees and lunch periods
- Access to the 5th floor balcony
- Access to the library during the entire period, instead of just 15 minutes after the start bell
- After-school library hours

We want to get rid of nuances:

- A more relaxed dress code that has reasonable and consistent enforcement
- Constant supply of toilet paper and paper towels in all of the bathrooms
- Larger assortment of vending machine foods and drinks
- Freedom to enter the school before the warning bell during lunch periods
- Freedom to enter or leave the building through the first floor entrance

We hope that you will work with us to see these changes come through.

Sincerely,
Your student body

Opinions

Teacher's Take: History: Worthy of study on its own merits



Sam Kim / The Spectator

By DAVID HANNA

I was a little hesitant at first after The Spectator asked me to write on a topic of my choosing. After all, I had just completed my first year teaching at Stuyvesant in June. Though my experience teaching here is as valid as anyone else's, it is neither broad nor deep. In fact, it has primarily been confined to a slice of the building on the third and second floors, where I share an office space and teach my classes. So, instead of writing on Stuyvesant specifically, I felt I should write on something where I might

enjoy greater credibility with students and colleagues: history. This will be my 18th year teaching history, and frankly, I can't imagine doing anything else.

I love teaching history. One of my fondest memories is of fishing on the Maine coast with my grandfather while he told me about Hannibal and his army of elephants crossing the Alps.* History holds the same fascination for me now as it did then. For me, the past has always been this distant, unreachable country that at the same time is strangely near. I suppose this is a result of us all being part of some-

thing larger than ourselves—the story of humanity—a continuum with all those that came before, and all who will follow. I must admit, however, that the future, in a broad sense, holds little interest for me. I'm an antiquarian. What use is this? I've often heard this question posed in one form or another, both as a student and as a teacher. That in order for history to justify its inclusion in the curriculum it needs to possess a utilitarian function. As if something couldn't possibly have value if it didn't have a practical application. When I cast my line into the water beside my grandfather as he introduced me to classical history all those years ago, this was the last thing on my mind. It was interesting, and that was enough.

Later, as a more serious student of history, I often heard the justification that those who ignore history are bound to repeat its errors. Initially, this thesis appeared sound. I didn't question it. However, as I learned of its application in both the present and the past, I found it didn't bear close scrutiny. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus once postulated, you can never step in the same river twice. Like a river, the continuum of the story of humanity is constantly changing. The variables are nearly endless. Alexander Kerensky's decision to launch his July Offensive in 1917, following the overthrow of the czar and the establishment of the provisional government, comes to mind. Like most of the Russian Revolution's leading figures, Kerensky was a keen student of the French Revolution. The lesson that he drew from it in this instance was that a free citizenry of a nascent democracy would be able to sweep the forces of autocracy by dint

of sheer revolutionary enthusiasm, as had the French levée en masse at the Battle of Valmy in 1792. Later, after his most enthusiastic troops had been mowed down by German machine guns, the offensive sputtered out. Kerensky was left with his authority and credibility permanently eroded, thus paving the way for his great rival, Lenin, to come to power. Kerensky knew his history, but he drew the wrong lessons from it. More recently, I recall quite well the learned opinions of those who confidently predicted the Iraq War would prove to be a repetition of the Vietnam War. To be sure, there were certain similarities between the two. But they were very different wars, motivated by very different lines of thinking, with different outcomes. Did George W. Bush draw lessons from Lyndon Johnson's actions in an earlier decade? I don't know. But even if he had—which lessons? Were they the correct ones? This is the problem with using history as some kind of tool. It can provide examples, inspire, and shed light on how others pursued certain courses of action, but it is not a fail-safe predictor of future events (e.g. this policy will absolutely result in X because it did so in the past). Additionally, beware those ambitious minds that craft grand, unifying historical theses—Karl Marx comes to mind. In my opinion, his manifesto is brilliant (and prescient), but it conveniently ignores, or trammels over, the power that nationalism and religion wielded in his own times, and in our own. Again, there are too many variables for history to be reduced to a formula.

So, if not a tool, then what value is there in learning history? Well, there is the craft of history itself: the analysis

of documents; acquiring familiarity with highly regarded secondary sources; an awareness of how the process of revision makes history a subject that is always becoming (i.e. not static); and writing effectively, and often persuasively. These types of exercises develop one's intellect and cultivate critical thinking. There is little to criticize here. And yet, as much as I like to emphasize historiography (when possible) and writing, these, to me, are not the primary reasons why I believe history is important. Ultimately, it comes back to the story. A story that encompasses all of mankind's various endeavors and hopes. Art, literature, diplomacy, finance, architecture, industry, science, philosophy, exploration, government, law, faith, war: all are part of this story. And we are part of it. The simple act of taking an interest in one's surroundings (How was my neighborhood created? Why?) demonstrates a capacity for historical empathy and opens up the possibility of seeing the present in a fresh way. If nothing else, the ability to discern the difference between a Gothic and a Romanesque arch, or discuss Zola's role in the Dreyfus Affair, or examine the impact of the GI Bill on post-war American society makes one a more interesting person to spend time with, and makes one's life simply more interesting as a whole. I think that, in this, history is a gift. It binds us, brings vitality to life, and improves our minds. It's a bit of a mix of Homer and Socrates. And that's pretty good company to keep.

* There is lack of agreement among historians whether Hannibal was able to get his elephants across the Alps alive to Italy.

Celebrating Failure: NYS Test Scores Plummet

By JACK CAHN

"Would you rather have gotten a 95 that you didn't really earn or the 94 that you did?" At the close of my first semester at Stuyvesant, English teacher Maya Zabar concluded an 828-word e-mail sent to me with those words. While at first I didn't understand her message, Zabar taught me a valuable life lesson: that it is more valuable, in the long run, to receive an honest grade than an inflated one. Honest feedback makes you more self-aware and allows you to learn, improve, and grow.

With this memory in mind, I'd like to celebrate! New York State's third through eighth graders are miserably failing statewide exams. The percentage of students passing English and math exams has fallen from 47 percent to 26 percent and from 60 percent to 30 percent, respectively. The plummeting test scores are the result of New York's recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards—testing standards established by the

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices to "prepare America's students for college and career." These poor test scores are a cause for celebration because they provide the state with an honest assessment of our students' abilities and force us to face the truth: our students are woefully unprepared for life in the real world.

Past test standards were dishonest because they didn't measure a standard of excellence in course materials. Forbes Magazine explains that for decades, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) "dumbed down" standardized Regents Exams to increase the number of students who would be able to pass. According to CNN, federal funding is dependent on student performance, so as more students passed, the NYSED received more funds. However, as more students passed, "student competency and college readiness decreased," because students were raised to lower standards and ultimately learned less. In fact, a

CBS News New York investigation showed that 80 percent of high school graduates needed to relearn basic skills such as reading, writing, and math before college.

Adoption of the Common Core Standards has made test scores more reflective of actual knowledge, because now our testing standards are designed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, an independent, third-party organization with no financial motives. While the standards are higher, the results of the new tests give students an honest understanding of where they stand.

The Common Core Standards have been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia. Some New Yorkers, however, continue to oppose to the new standards. According to the New York Times, some have gone as far as to boycott statewide exams. They argue that the Common Core is too difficult and that students aren't smart enough to handle so much learning in such a short time. This is a

defeatist perspective that assumes that New Yorkers are bound for mediocrity. While it will take time to adjust, New York State, forced to raise test scores in order to receive federal funding, will eventually improve to meet these new standards.

The plummeting test scores are a cause for celebration for a second reason as well: they aren't that bad. New York City students significantly outperformed other urban districts, even though NYC has more underprivileged children. In Rochester, for example, only five percent of students passed. This means that New York City students are, in fact, improving in relation to the state. Education in the past years under Mayor Bloomberg has been successful, and we're headed in the right direction.

While the scores reflect positively on the city, mayoral candidate Bill Thompson has used the poor test scores to attack Bloomberg. The United Federation of Teachers has also begun pointing fingers, blaming school administra-



Sam Kim / The Spectator

tors for not adequately training teachers to teach the new curricula. In the end, though, politicians need to put aside their personal political relationships and come together to improve education.

Adopting the Common Core is an experiment. It's not perfect. But it's a risk we need to take to get our education system one large step closer to perfection.

Opinions

Point-Counterpoint: GMO Labeling

Let's Label Tomatoes “Grown in Dirt”



By AUSTIN OSTRO

“Genetically modified” (GM) sounds scary. It evokes images of science-fiction—hamburgers growing hands and grabbing you, carrots walking on their own. It also spawns horror movies in which a ubiquitous new “great product” turns humans into zombies. Fear of new things is an inherent human trait. When it comes to GMOs, however, this fear is misplaced.

According to the United Nations, the global population will be nine billion by 2050. Overpopulation is a huge issue today, and with many countries struggling to feed the people they already have, imagine how strained food resources will be when there are two billion more mouths to feed. One of the effects of

“It is the overwhelming consensus that genetically modified foods are not, in any way, shape, or form, bad for humans.”

global climate change is increased desertification, which has already reduced and will continue to reduce the amount of arable land on Earth.

The only way we will be able to feed nine billion people is through genetically modified foods. Scientists funded by Monsanto, the leading genetic engineering (GE) corporation, have developed sweet potatoes that grow with basically no water. These sweet potatoes have been brought to newly arid areas of sub-Saharan Africa where local tribes have had trouble farming due to changes in their environment. The introduction of this GM crop has saved these tribes and allowed them to stay in their homeland.

But such research extends beyond sweet potatoes. Scientists are working on making crops like corn, sugar beets, squash, papaya, and all types of grain easier to grow and more resistant to pests. This will enable global food production to grow despite shrinking amounts of arable land. All this progress, however, is put in danger by the labeling movement. According to an ABC News poll from June 2013, 57 percent of Amer-

icans say they would be less likely to buy GM-labeled food.

However, it is the overwhelming consensus that genetically modified foods are not, in any way, shape, or form, bad for humans. In fact, you'd be hard-pressed to find any respected scientist who dissents with this view, which has been confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the American Medical Association. Despite this, GMOs have their detractors, who today are waging a legislative war on genetically modified foods. The current manifestation of this war is here in New York State over the dangerous bill A.3525-A, which seeks to label products with genetically modified food.

One of the main contentions that proponents of labeling use is that people have the right to know what's in their food. However, most countries in Europe have mandatory labeling for GM products, and the results have been devastating for the genetic engineering industry. Europeans have refused to buy GM foods, causing these companies to either go out of business or abandon Europe entirely. Imagine if every healthy food had to state all the chemicals in it and details of how it was made. Nobody would buy it. If tomatoes were labeled “grown in dirt,” I bet sales would drop. The point is “warning labels” should be limited to foods that actually require a warning.

Another major point made by proponents of labeling is that, while there is no evidence that genetically modified food is unhealthy, not enough research has been conducted to prove their safety. However, the FDA tests all new GM foods for safety. The WHO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, and the USDA also test all new biotechnological practices nationally and internationally. Long-term studies are being conducted on humans, and the ones that have been conducted on animals have yielded no ill effects. No other product has been held to a tougher standard than genetically modified foods have.

Ultimately, we must make a choice. Is it worthy to risk a developing technology that will ultimately feed an overpopulated Earth, a product that has revolutionized farming and lowered both the price of food and the risk of famine, just to prove a point that consumers should know every detail about how their food is produced? Genetic engineering is simply a replication a perfectly natural process—hybridization. Different strains of different crops mix together all the time to develop new crops. Thus, we should laud companies doing GM research, not treat them with suspicion. It is time to put a stop to pseudoscience-based fear. We must prevent mandatory labeling of GM foods and must not pass New York State bill A.3525-A.

Give Me a Choice, Give Me a Voice



By EMMA BERNSTEIN

New York State is considering a new bill modeled after the recently rejected Californian Proposition 37 that would require genetically modified organism (GMO) labeling of food products.

GMOs have slight alterations in their DNA that allow for increased rates of production at a lower cost. This sounds great at first, but these foods can have detrimental impacts on our health, small farm businesses, and the environment. In fact, despite the prevalence of GMOs, we are still unable to understand the long-term health effects of these food products because they have been around for less than a generation.

Even though we may not yet be able to draw clear-cut conclusions, some studies have already begun to link GMOs to health problems. One study in particular, published by the International Journal of Biological Sciences, found that human consumption of approved GM corn from Monsanto, one of the largest producers of GMOs, can be dangerous. The study concluded that consumption of this GM corn can affect our kidneys, liver, heart, and bloodstream. Other studies, such as one conducted by the University of Caen, have found direct links between GMO and cancer in lab rats, specifically induced by one type of GM corn known as NK603.

But how can Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved foods be dangerous? Despite the authoritative seal these foods have been awarded, this approval isn't as reassuring as it sounds. Many people responsible for evaluating these foods may be influenced by their previous ties to GMO producers. For example, Michael Taylor, commissioner of foods at the FDA—a job that includes determining the accuracy of food labels and planning of new food safety legislation—previously served as the Vice President for Public Policy at Monsanto. The list goes on: Sam Skinner, William Conlon, Mi-

chael Friedman all work to regulate our food but also have previous ties to GMO producers. Though the evidence may be murky, it seems that their approvals should be taken with a grain of salt.

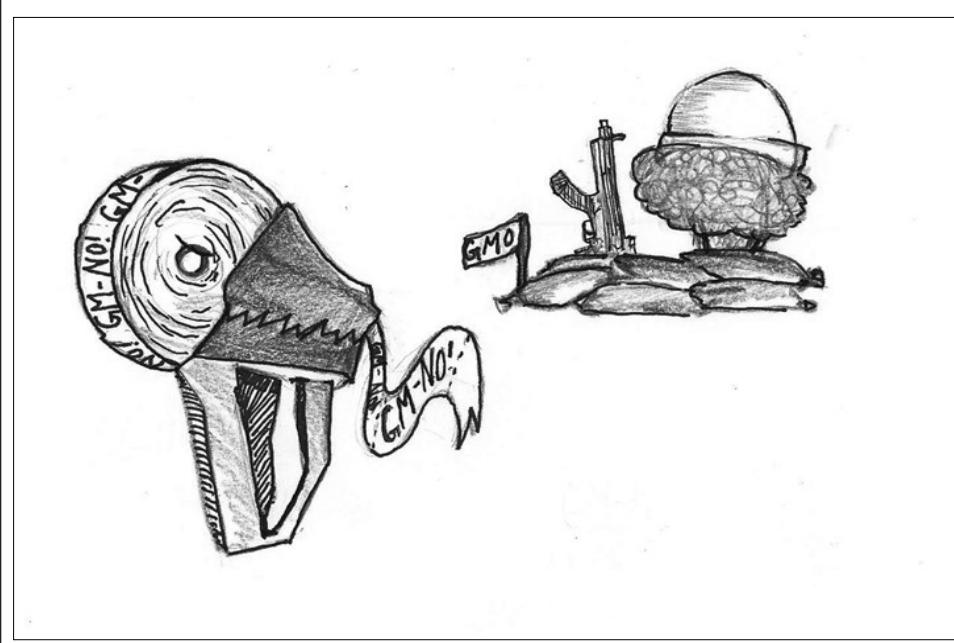
The effects of choosing GMOs at the supermarket don't affect you alone. By choosing GM foods, you support practices that damage our environment and hurt small farmers in the process. A GMO label will allow you to know just what your dollar is supporting.

Here's how it works. GMOs are easier to produce: they're more robust and use fewer resources, so farmers are inclined to choose them. GMOs' immunities to pesticides encourage farmers to use them more frequently, harming nearby ecosystems and reducing biodiversity. For example, weed killers such as roundup were found to cause birth defects in amphibians and organ damage in animals, even at very low doses. Furthermore, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, GMOs have a large effect on Monarch butterflies. Pollen from GM corn is toxic to monarch larvae, causing damage to the entire ecosystem.

One of the major arguments in favor of GMOs is that the only way to combat world hunger is through using GMOs. However, in truth, this argument stands no ground. We already produce enough food for 10 billion people; we could sustain ourselves past 2050. The question we need to ask when facing hunger isn't about production, but instead about accessibility.

As for biotechnology, 40 percent of the world's population already utilizes GMO labeling, and the industry is doing fine. In fact, most major GM products are used for fuel and animal feed. As consumers, we should have the right to stand up against the atrocities of today's GMO market and the big businesses behind it, and do what's best for our health and environment.

We are what we eat, and we have a right to know just what that is.



Laura Eng / The Spectator

Opinions

What Big Teeth You Have, Rouhani

By DANIEL KODSI

There's a new big man in the Middle East. Welcome the new president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani. He's a lawyer, a diplomat, an academic, and even a political moderate. Naturally, the Western world is highly optimistic—this is a chance for a new age of diplomacy with Iran, a huge geopolitical foe in a region that we can no longer even nominally claim to control. In comparison with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Rouhani seems like a reasonable man.

However, we've set our hopes all too high. In terms of foreign and nuclear policy, Rouhani's regime won't differ remotely from Ahmadinejad's, and the more time we spend negotiating with him, the more time Iran will have to build and perfect a nuclear warhead. We need to accept that Iran is not our ally and that its policies will not change with a snap of a finger.

Let's take a closer look at President Rouhani. A political moderate, he achieved an overwhelming victory in June's presidential election. How could the Supreme Leader allow a moderate to come to power? Because in reality, Rouhani is a hardline Muslim cleric. Rouhani supported Ayatollah Khomeini throughout the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and post-revolution he worked in the Supreme National Security

Council for 16 years. Most importantly, he was the leading nuclear negotiator while Iran was amplying its nuclear program. The fundamental issue for the United States with Iran is nukes, and on that, Rouhani is as conservative as they come.

In fact, according to a Washington Post article on August 7, Rouhani claimed in a recent interview that under his tenure as chief nuclear negotiator (from 2003 to 2005), the number of centrifuges grew from 150 to over 1700. He bragged that he not only expanded but completed the program while European leaders were engaged in negotiations. For example, take the nuclear facility of Natanz in Iran. When Rouhani went into talks with Britain, France, and Germany, the facility had 10 spinning centrifuges. That number is now greater than 10,000. Rouhani is clearly a man who purposely deceived the West into wasting time in talks. And yet we still want to go back to the negotiating table?

That is where the problem lies. By deluding the United States and European powers into thinking that he's a moderate, Rouhani has bought more time for Iran to complete nuclear bombs. We can't afford to wait out the clock while engaged in a fallacious dialogue with Iran. According to David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, Iran will easily

be capable of producing nuclear weaponry by mid-2014. We need to stop the program now. So when Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu calls Rouhani "a wolf in sheep's clothing," he's 100 percent right.

Speaking of Netanyahu, the relationship between Israel and Iran is as fraught with tension as it has ever been. Even before his inauguration, Rouhani pursued the typical Iranian policy of Israel-bashing, calling Israel a "sore that has sat on the body of the Islamic world for many years." Those are not the words of a man who plans for a peaceful relationship. Israel is understandably apprehensive, requesting increased scrutiny of Iran's nuclear program. After all, it is Israel that has the most to lose if Iran were to start stockpiling nuclear weapons. Even if Iran were to do nothing with them, according to the US Department of State's Country Reports on Terrorism 2010, Iran is still the biggest state supporter of terrorism and provides "financial, material, and logistic support for terrorist and militant groups throughout the Middle East and Central Asia." The sheer number of Islamist extremists operating out of Iran means that there is a legitimate risk that a nuclear weapon could fall into the hands of a terrorist organization.

Israel's fears ought to be our fears. Regardless of your opinion on Israel, it's important to realize



that the Israelis are our only true allies in the Middle East. Israel has by far the strongest track record on human rights, and, despite the Arab Spring, remains the sole true democracy in the region. It has provided testing for our military equipment, cooperated with us in developing new and better technologies, and provided a base in a region that's inhospitable to basic American interests. We've supported Israel unconditionally in the past, and we ought to continue to do so in the face of threats from Iran—if not for Israel's sake, then to protect US hegemony abroad.

Rouhani's election isn't a step forward for Iran. Yes, it's possible that he will move to remedy some of Iran's domestic problems. Yes, it would be a miracle

Hayoung Ahn / The Spectator

The Element of Expectation

From the early days of the Arab Spring to this year's brutal Arab Summer, the Obama administration has responded unpredictably to international crises, with a series of moves that don't appear to be part of any long-term strategy.

Egypt, 2011-2013

Early in the 2011 Arab Spring, Egyptian resistance leaders asked President Obama to publicly ask Mubarak to step down, but he refused. "We have to balance our ideals and also our strategic interests," rationalized former U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen. According to the Washington Post, Vice President Biden went further, claiming that Mubarak was neither a dictator, nor had the obligation to step down. Instead, he "proclaimed Hosni Mubarak to be a friend."

This past summer, the ouster of Mohammad Morsi in a military coup was met with no substantial reaction. Rising casualties in the resulting protests led the United States to cancel its military exercises with Egypt, although we did not cancel our aid. Both in 2011, and this past summer, we refused to even voice our views about the situation in Egypt until after the events had decided themselves.

Libya, 2011

In 2011, the Libyan people rose against their oppressive dictator Muammar Gaddafi. As protests escalated, the US itself took no action. Weeks later, on March 17th, did the United Nations finally authorize a no-fly zone, and then, according to CNN, only because European nations led by the French needed to keep their oil prices down. The Libyans knew it. The United States "with their great grand speeches...at all these conferences...in terms of finances they are a complete failure. Our people are dying,"

rebel chief Ali Tarhouni told Reuters. Our refusal to lead only reinforced what the Syrians already knew: that for us, oil is more important than our ideals.

Syria, 2011-2013

The goriest conflict occurring in the Middle East is the Syrian civil war. Repeated calls for a no-fly zone, monetary aid, and the provision of weapons to the rebels have gone ignored by the United States. The Obama administration announced that Syrian use of chemical weapons would force it to respond, but when Syria met this threshold, the President made excuses to avoid acting, claiming that he had to wait for the international community to approve his decision (see Calling the Bluff, Issue 15). Lack of resources has led to a radicalization of the Syrian rebels, which is making us wearier of who might come to power if Assad does indeed fall.

Despite recent moves by Congress to arm the rebel groups, The Economist reported in early August that most of this aid has yet to reach them. Recent findings of even greater chemical weapons use by Syrian rebels has led to a discussion of limited bombing of military headquarters in Syria. However, even if Congress were to approve of these bombing, they would be not enough to change the balance of power. Massacres can occur on our watch. The world knows we won't act.

Leading from Behind

The Obama administration has no uniform foreign policy when it comes to the Middle East. Rather, it has consistently opted to respond to events as they happen. The result is a weakening US deterrent effect and plummeting approval ratings abroad.

Deterrence relies on predictable retaliation. Nations will only be dissuaded from acting in their own interest if they perceive retaliation to be imminent and force-

ful. Today, however, Middle Eastern leaders know that they have nothing to fear. For leaders like Assad or Egyptian generals, the message is, "If you win, we'll leave you be. If you lose, we'll start condemning you, and maybe even try you in an international court." These leaders have little to lose, and everything to gain, because the United States will not act.

Nobody likes hypocrites and liars. But the United States has been applying different standards to different circumstances for decades. This randomness is something that is alienating Arabs in the Middle East. As a result of the American response to the Arab Spring, according to the Pew Research Center, the percentage of Egyptians holding a favorable view of President Obama fell from 42 percent to 29 percent. In addition, 61 percent of those surveyed believed that the U.S.'s role in the country was "mostly negative."

Even if they don't agree with our decisions, the global community will respect us if we follow our own values. But when we fail to articulate a clear strategy, we're perceived as a meddling country up to no good.

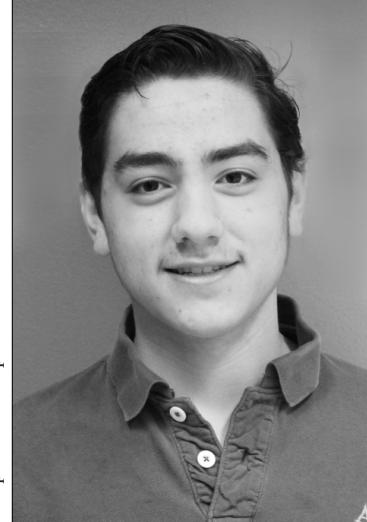
Like a chess player, the United States cannot spend the majority of its efforts escaping threats. It

must lay down a strategy (in this case, a foreign policy) in which it clearly states to the world (and the American people) how it views its role in the world, and in what circumstances it will intervene in foreign affairs. The basic principle of this foreign policy should be 1) No country that suppresses viable democracy movements using outright violence will be eligible to receive US aid. 2) Use of chemical weapons will necessarily trigger US preventative air strikes. 3) Nuclear proliferation will not be tolerated. They will be met with air strikes and economic sanctions. 4) The US should default to vocalizing its support for democratic movements. Only when our allies are entrenched, and success is unlikely, should we opt not to do so.

These guidelines are basic. I don't have the time, space, or experience to flesh them out further here. Our government should form a doctrine for intervention abroad. If planned thoroughly, and implemented consistently, this would serve as a pivot around which every other nation would be forced to act. We would be leading rather than following. The element of expectation is lot more powerful than the element of surprise.



Michelle Lin / The Spectator



By DAVID CAHN

Congratulations, you're alive. You survived the bloodiest summer in recent memory; it is a summer your children will ask you about when they are in school. I hope you paid attention. The Syrian Civil War is now in its most violent phase, and the Assad regime has begun to use chemical weapons en masse, including on children. Egyptian democracy came and went. Morsi's government has crumbled at its seams and the military now controls the country with an iron fist. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations began, but don't get your hopes up—Hamas has refused to participate.

Amidst this chaos, the United States made vague, noncommittal statements to the press. Only recently has President Obama begun to discuss military options, albeit limited ones. Liberals describe this as a rational foreign policy. Calm and control, they argue, is preferable to impulsive action. Conservatives, on the other hand, label US foreign policy as weak and submissive. Both presume a foreign policy exists.

But it doesn't.

Opinions

An American Tour de Force



By SEVERYN KOZAK

"[We] threaten none, covet the possessions of none, desire the overthrow of none." Woodrow Wilson, in describing the American people, was either lying or severely delusional. Retrospectively, the United States has almost invariably pursued policies that it found most economically and politically (as opposed to morally) rewarding. Despite pretensions at humanitarian justice, our nation has, when necessary, facilitated everything from the very atrocities it publicly condemned to the subversion of democratically-elected leaders and financing of puppet despots. When it benefited us, we've gladly ignored Wilson's lofty precept and exercised realpolitik.

Thus, in the context of Syria, American voters and their rep-

resentatives must understand that intervening isn't about policing the Middle East; crippling Bashar al-Assad's regime isn't punishment for a humanitarian injustice, and even a violation of the Geneva Protocol (a chemical weapons ban practically codified into international law); intervening is the United States's preservation of its integrity, an assertion of the credibility of its threats and political promises.

President Obama, roughly a year ago, remarked to the press that "a red line is [...] chemical weapons moving around or being utilized." But with foreign policy and military maneuvers shadowed by the specters of failure in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with America exhibiting only minor economic growth after the worst of a protracted recession, threatening military action ap-

peared risky. Obama was gambling and cleverly weighing the Syrian conflict.

The President reasonably believed that he could afford to issue a hollow threat. By warning Assad against the use of sarin gas and comparably potent agents, the United States could assume a moral, humane stance on a consequential Middle Eastern war. Moreover, a year ago, the Syrian government nearly verged on collapse, as the majority of rebel factions were united under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army, sectarian extremists were marginal, and the conflict hadn't begun decanting into the fringes of adjacent Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Assad's overthrow was practically within sight, and, hence, Obama's threat would remain relevant for a short period of time. He expected that he'd never have to enforce the "red line" he established. After all, would the dictator of a withering state dare to test an American threat?

Assad evidently has. Initial reports of chemical weapon usage surfaced in December 2012, but, despite endorsement by the State Department, were overturned by the National Security Council. Others followed: in March 2013, missiles allegedly delivered gas payloads to districts in Aleppo and Damascus; a month later, British scientists confirmed the presence of weaponized chemicals in a soil sample smuggled out of a war zone; and, of greater importance, nerve-gas attacks resulted in upwards of 600 deaths just two weeks ago. Ample evidence points to Assad, whose initial refusal to allow United Nations inspectors entry equated, according to Secretary of State John Kerry, an admission of guilt.

Obama blundered, the gambit failed, and the United States will now likely intervene in yet another peripheral conflict. Regrettable, yes, but we're past the event horizon. Congress, now considering authorization of military action, must act definitively and unhesitatingly. America remains the globe's leading superpower, if only for the near future—indiscreteness in enforcing a military threat reflects miserably on its national integrity. To preserve our political credibility and mitigate the damage it has already suffered (from Obama's foot-dragging immediately after the August attacks), the United States must deal Assad a crippling blow. Otherwise, what's to prevent the likes of an increasingly confident Russia and China from asserting their preferences on the international stage? What ultimatum will deter Iran and North Korea from constructing nuclear weapons? Intervention won't quell the civil war, nor, should it remove Assad from power, herald the rise of an improved Syria. The rebels, now laced with terrorist cells and extremist militias like Al-Qaeda's Jabhat al-Nusra, don't offer better prospects for the country's future than does its current dictator. But an attack will reinforce America's political weight and prevent its deterioration.

We should undertake surgical strikes: maximally cost-effective, measured, and pulverizing, a contemporary iteration of blitzkrieg. Ballistic missiles can decimate the regime's infrastructure with minimal collateral damage, targeting command centers, weapon stockpiles, and energy supplies. Aerial bombardment could be conducted when necessary. If concerted properly, intervention in Syria would hardly resemble the chaos of Afghanistan and Iraq, mostly because we would driven by an obligation, rather than a desire, to intervene. (Syria doesn't quite have 150 million barrels of oil.) We will not deploy soldiers, we will briskly secure our goals, and we will depart as cleanly as we entered.

After the dust has settled, though, Obama and like-minded American politicians must learn from the Syrian mistake. After witnessing the delayed response to Assad's chemical massacre, deviant nations will be even more eager to test our willingness to enforce foreign policy. We must expect to make good of any further threats and political promises we issue. Moreover, we should gradually decrease overt involvement in the hotbeds of foreign turmoil and continue our work covertly. Meanwhile, to conclusively end our role in the Syrian crisis, Congress must authorize intervention, act with decisive military action, get out, and avoid repeating the blunder.

Parent's Take: Time to Exercise



Courtesy of Brian Hainline
By BRIAN HAINLINE, M.D.;
Chief Medical Officer, NCAA

As you begin your new academic year, you are undoubtedly thinking about how to manage your schedule so that you can study and prepare for your classes. Your schedule must be efficient and practical, and will hopefully allow time for exercise. What? Exercise? Why exercise? Especially if time demands are so great? Let's try to answer that question thoughtfully.

Exercise has proven beneficial effects on health. Though you are young and might feel invincible, the health patterns you establish today will have a profound effect on your health in the future. Exercise reduces your risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, and hypertension. High school students who engage in sport or regular exercise are eight times more likely to exercise as adults than are students who don't.

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Our bodies evolved in such a way that they depend on exercise—or, to put it another way, we evolved as hunters and gatherers, lifestyles that require frequent physical activity that

is moderately or vigorously intense. Even though technology allows us to function without hunting and gathering, our evolutionary essence has not changed. If the body is not doing what it has evolved to do, then the body will develop disease. Think about the immune system, which seems rather removed from hunting and gathering. The white blood cell is the cornerstone of fighting unwanted viruses and bacteria. The white blood cell has various receptors, one of which is an opiate receptor.

Opiate receptor? You mean like opium? Here is a short story about that. As we co-evolved with plants on this great planet, the plants helped to shape our nervous system (the plants need to survive as well). During this process, our nervous system developed receptors that allow us to cohabit with plants. Indeed, we have developed brain receptors for chemicals that are produced within certain plants, such as the opium-producing poppy plant. When used strategically for medicinal purposes, opium and its derivatives are very useful, and can be provided

with great compassion to those who are suffering with refractory pain.

Coming back to white blood cells and opiate receptors, our body makes its own opium, known as an endogenous opiate. So what has this to do with exercise? When you finish a great workout (or hunt), your body feels rejuvenated, sometimes described as a "runner's high." What happens is that this workout leads to endogenous opiate production, and thus the high. In addition, the endogenous opiates bind to white blood cell receptors, causing the white blood cells to function better. Think about how many times you were stressed out and not taking care of yourself. You feel awful, your endogenous opiate system is shut down, and you are more vulnerable to infections. The white blood cell needs endogenous opiates. The white blood cell needs exercise.

Okay, you might say, I understand exercise might be good for my health. But seriously, I am healthy enough, and I really have to study. Well, that seems to be a line that even some school administrators believe. But look at the stark reality of exercise in our country. The recommended amount of exercise for a high school student is one hour or more of physical exercise every day. Most of the one hour or more a day should be moderate- or vigorous-intensity physical exercise, and you should do vigorous-intensity exercise at least three days a week.

What is moderate-intensity exercise? From a cardiopulmonary reserve viewpoint, you can talk but you can't sing; you are winded just enough that you can't utilize your breath for song. Vigorous-intensity

exercise means that you even having trouble talking; you are definitely winded. In the United States, three out of four high school students do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity. Additionally, obesity has tripled over the past 30 years, and the United States had, for quite a while, been the fattest country on this planet. (We are now second, behind Mexico.) Even more depressing is this: your generation is projected to live five years less than your parents' generation. In addition, your generation will live a less healthy life than your parents'. Another first place for the United States: this is the first generation to be the living example of such dire statistics.

Okay, okay, you might now say, enough moralizing and preaching. I'm busy. Well, maybe you're not that busy. Please bear with me and allow me to move away from health issues and societal woes that may not have convinced you to exercise. Let's talk about getting good grades.

More importantly, let's talk about improving cognition. Science has demonstrated that exercise is directly, proportionally, and positively correlated with academic achievement. In other words, students who exercise regularly improve their cognition, and, on average, perform better in school and on cognitive tests (e.g., SAT) than do non-exercising students. The reasons why are fascinating.

Here is the essential reason: exercise facilitates synaptic plasticity in the hippocampus. Whoa! Big words! Here's the translation. The hippocampus is a critical area of the brain because it is a key structure in memory, spatial learning, and connectivity to other cognitive

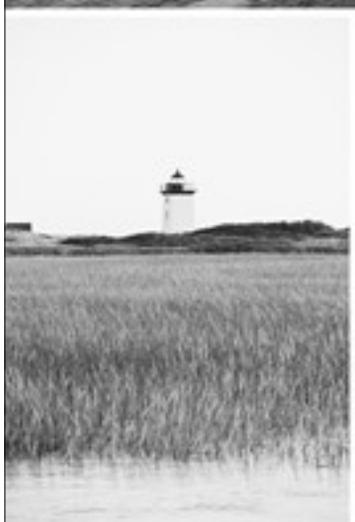
brain areas. We used to believe that the adult brain (your brain is a young adult's) could not grow new nerve cells, and that the only possibility was progressive nerve cell death over time. We now know that the brain is plastic. No, not the synthetic material that is non-organic and a major source of pollution on planet Earth. Plasticity means that the human brain can develop numerous new connections in response to certain stimuli. Exercise is one such stimulus, and an extraordinarily powerful one.

Yes, exercise is a powerful stimulus to the brain because it leads to the production of three key brain neurochemicals: brain-derived neurotrophic factor, insulin-like growth factor, and vascular endothelial-derived growth factor. With regular exercise, these three brain neurochemicals lead to an amazing array of brain changes:

- (1) improved hippocampus function;
 - (2) improved brain plasticity;
 - (3) improved learning;
 - (4) modulation of depression;
 - (5) formation of new brain blood vessels, which allows the neurochemicals to work even better.
- Wow! All of that from exercise? What are you waiting for? Studying is only part of the picture. If you want to really improve your brain health (and your grades and learning curve), then get moving now.

So be prepared next time you are asked the dreaded question: "Honey, did you finish your homework?" You can answer with a runner's high smile: "No, but I did my exercise. And I feel smarter already!"

Snapshots of Summer



By the Photo Department

Arts and Entertainment

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Looking Forward

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<p>10 Album release Sean Kingston's "Back 2 Life" Genre: Reggae fusion, hip hop, R&B</p> <p>Album release Moving Mountains's "Moving Mountains" Genre: Indie rock</p> <p>Concert Goldfrapp Beacon Theater 2124 Broadway 8 p.m. Tickets: \$55-\$85</p>	<p>11 Concert Flume Webster Hall 125 E 11th St 8 p.m.</p> <p>9/11 Memorial Open 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Last entry at 7 p.m.</p>	<p>12 Concert The Rosebuds Mercury Lounge 217 E Houston St 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Concert Kishi Bashi Irving Plaza 17 Irving Pl 8 p.m.</p>	<p>13 Album release Avicii's "True" Genre: Progressive house, folktronica</p> <p>Movie release "Insidious: Chapter 2" Genre: Horror Cast: Patrick Wilson, Rose Byrne, Lin Shaye, Ty Simpkins</p> <p>Movie release "The Family" Genre: Crime Cast: Robert De Niro, Michelle Pfeiffer</p>	<p>14 Guardian Angels Fair Broadway, 47th-57th St 10 a.m.-6 p.m.</p> <p>Concert Anathema Gramercy Theater 127 E 23rd St 7 p.m. Tickets: \$25</p> <p>Concert Blue October Irving Plaza 17 Irving Pl 7 p.m.</p>
15 Eighth Avenue Festival 8th Ave from 42nd-57th St 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 92 Street Y Lexington Avenue Festival Lexington Ave, 96th-79th St 12 p.m.	16 Album release The Wanted's "Word of Mouth" Genre: Pop, dance-pop	<p>17 Album release MGMT's "MGMT" Genre: Psychedelic rock</p> <p>Album release Nightmare on Wax's "Fee-lin' Good" Genre: Electronic, techno</p> <p>Album release Drake's "Nothing Was the Same" Genre: Hip hop, R&B</p>	<p>18 Concert Washed Out Terminal 5 610 W 56th St 8 p.m.</p> <p>Amateur Night at the Apollo Apollo Theater 253 W 125th St 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>19 Concert Ahmad Jamal & Wynton Marsalis Rose Theater at Lincoln Center 8 p.m.</p> <p>Concert Kacey Musgraves Bowery Ballroom 6 Delancey St 8 p.m.</p>	<p>20 Album release Kings of Leon's "Mechanical Bull" Genre: Alternative rock, southern rock</p> <p>Movie release "Prisoners" Genre: Crime Cast: Jake Gyllenhaal</p> <p>Movie release "Rush" Genre: Action Cast: Chris Hemsworth</p> <p>Concert Icona Pop Webster Hall 125 E 11th St 6 p.m.</p>	<p>21 Broadway Autumn Fair Broadway, Waverly Pl to 14th St 10 a.m.-6 p.m.</p> <p>Concert New York Philharmonic: 2001 Space Odyssey Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center 8 p.m.</p> <p>Concert Sarah Brightman Radio City Music Hall 8 p.m.</p>
22 87th Annual Feast of San Gennaro Mulberry St, Little Italy Features religious processions, parades, various ethnic foods, free musical entertainment, and a cannoli-eating competition.	23 Album release Birdy's "Fire Within" Genre: Indie pop, pop	<p>24 Album release Icona Pop's "This Is..." Genre: Electropop</p> <p>Album release Sub Focus's "Torus" Genre: Drum and bass, dubstep</p>	<p>25 Museum exhibition "Hopper Drawing" Whitney Museum of American Art Available through October 6, 2013</p> <p>Light the Night Walk Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Hudson River Park's Pier 57 25 11th Ave 5:30 p.m. Registration required</p> <p>Concert Grouplove The Bowery Ballroom 6 Delancey St Doors open at 8 p.m. This event is 16+</p>	<p>26 Museum exhibition "New Photography 2013" MoMA The Robert and Joyce Menschel Photography Gallery Available through January 6, 2014</p>	<p>27 Album release Justin Timberlake's "The 20/20 Experience: 2 of 2" Genre: Neo soul, R&B</p> <p>Album release Haim's "Days Are Gone" Genre: Rock, indie pop</p> <p>Movie release "Don Jon" Genre: Romance Cast: Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Scarlett Johansson, Julianne Moore, Tony Danza</p> <p>Movie release "Runner, Runner" Genre: Crime Cast: Ben Affleck, Justin Timberlake, Gemma Arterton, Anthony Mackie</p>	<p>28 Museum Exhibition "Robert Motherwell: Early Collages" Guggenheim Museum Available through January 5, 2014</p>

Food

A Reimagining of the Classics in a St. Marks Basement

By ANGELA SUN

On the same block as dessert shops like Yogurt Station and Pinkberry, Spot Dessert Bar keeps things interesting by reinventing classic favorites with an Asian twist. Standards like cheesecake and molten lava cake are transformed with exotic ingredients like kabocha and yuzu (Japanese fruit). Hidden away in the basement at 13 St. Marks Place, the dessert bar nevertheless sports lines extending out of its door, and for good reason. Opened by famed pastry chef Pichet Ong, known for creating visually mesmerizing desserts (called "tapas" at Spot) while incorporating Asian flavors, this eatery serves starred restaurant-quality desserts at a fraction of the cost.

Customers can enjoy their tapas at the bar in front of a window with a view of flip flops and sneakers on the street, or at one of the dessert bar's picnic-style wooden tables. The artificial turf on the floor gives the shop a casual ambience like

that of a porch in a quaint bakery.

Like other dessert shops, Spot offers the typical cupcakes (\$2.75) and macarons (\$2.25), but with innovative flavors like Vietnamese Coffee and Vanilla Green Tea. Most of the customers, however, come for the renowned dessert tapas (\$8.75) and not these mediocre small treats.

The bar's best seller, the Chocolate Green Tea Lava Cake, is a moist dark chocolate cake oozing with warm green tea and chocolate ganache, complemented by a scoop of green tea ice cream on the side. One does not meditate on this dish; one devours it, spoonful by delightful spoonful. Unfortunately, the green tea's subtle flavor can be overpowered by the sweetness of the more pompous chocolate. The green tea ice cream, however, more than makes up for its eclipsed companion in the lava cake. The ice cream is not overly sweet like many of its kind in Asian supermarkets and bakeries. Instead, it contains a slightly bitter but authentic flavor

balanced by a sweet creaminess.

Another popular dessert tapa is the Yuzu Eskimo, which consists of four slices of frozen yuzu cream bars, chocolate pearls, passionfruit foam, and macerated strawberries. Most customers mistakenly eat each item on the plate separately, finding the yuzu cream bars far too tart and the passionfruit foam quite odd. However, with the right amount of everything on the plate, the chocolate mellows the sourness of the frozen yuzuganache, and the passionfruit foam adds a light, frothy texture to the solidity of the other three ingredients.

Spot Dessert Bar also offers seasonal creations, experimental desserts with ingredients that correspond to the season's. Its Golden Toast is plush, sweet bread, toasted to a golden brown, drizzled with honey, buttered throughout, and complemented by fresh cut strawberries and whipped cream. Spot twists the dish's traditional version by serving the condensed milk usually drizzled on top as a scoop



Spot Dessert Bar, at 13 St. Marks Place in East Village, offers a wide variety of desserts and tapas.



Vivian Huang / The Spectator

of rich condensed milk ice cream on the side. Unlike its liquid form, which can make the bread soggy, the ice cream keeps the bread light and crispy.

For the ultimate Spot experience, customers should order the Omakase (\$50), which includes their choice of five dessert tapas, three macarons, and three ice

cream scoops or sorbets. The key to eating the dessert tapas is to combine every item on the dish for a seamless balance of flavors and textures. Even for a delectable dessert, \$50 is a lot, but for under \$10 you can always indulge in a delicious Spot tapa and satisfy your sweet tooth while your taste buds shark back to faraway places.

Arts and Entertainment

Art

America, Land of Loneliness

By EMRE TETIK

It is often said that American society stresses individualism more than any other society does. Some will even say that this emphasis has made us lonely and isolated.

If this is true, then there is perhaps no better chronicler of American life in the 20th century than Edward Hopper, whose paintings are immediately identifiable by their depictions of sparsely populated streets, industrial scenes, gas stations, and motels. "Nighthawks," which shows a few people sitting at a diner with clear glass walls facing a nighttime New York street, might come to mind.

Hopper's entire oeuvre is pervaded by a strong sense of loneliness. This is obvious in paintings in which only one or two people occupy an empty street, diner, or bedroom. It's less so when the work has multiple characters, as in "Three Men at Art Exhibition." In this painting, three men stand close to each other as they view paintings in a gallery. Upon closer inspection, however, a noticeable distance separates them. One man has his hand on another's shoulder, whispering something into his ear. But the latter doesn't seem to be listening, standing coolly with hands behind his back and a foot tapping. The third has his back turned to them completely, bending for a closer look at a painting. Their spatial proximity belies the fact that they are

all off in their own little worlds.

"Edward Hopper: Drawing," an exhibition at the Whitney Museum, showcases the gloomy solitude of Hopper's art not through his paintings, but by focusing on his drawings and preliminary sketches, divided into rooms themed by subject matter.

Despite their variety of foci, the drawings show what a master of drama Hopper was. His sketches, and by extension, his paintings, convey a multitude of emotions through the smallest of gestures. In "Three Men in an Interior Space," a man faces an abyss of pure blackness. His hands are tucked calmly in his pockets, suggesting quiet resignation to the darkness before him. In "A Woman in the Sun," a naked woman stares out of a window to the sun. Her arm is restfully bent and she holds a cigarette casually, creating a mood of repose as the light from the window shines on her.

Even better examples of the expressive power of Hopper's slight gestures are his nudes and hand studies. In one of his nudes, a woman wearing a stern expression is standing straight, her hands folded. She is an imposing figure, exuding certainty. Next to this drawing is another nude. Her back is turned to the viewer, her arm gently folded behind her back, and one of her feet is slightly ahead of the other, as if taking slow, tentative steps. In contrast with her neighbor, she is a picture of shyness and hesitation.

But these sketches do more

than highlight Hopper's technical mastery of drawing. The scratchy, hazy textures, the lack of color, and general greyness of his black chalk and charcoal works (his favorite medium, it turns out) capture the Hopper-esque sense of loneliness even better than some of his paintings do. His study for "Compartment C" depicts a woman in a train car, the seat next to her empty. The black chalk forms a hazy blur on her featureless face. A window leads to a space of blackness, with no distinguishable forms.

The paintings, which occupy the latter rooms of the exhibit, are deconstructed into the many sketches that led to their completion. The galleries are set up such that each sketch leading up to the painting is more complete, with more details and shades filled in, than the last. We see the work come to life. The exhibit devotes an entire room to Hopper's "New York Movie," with dozens of preparatory sketches and photographs and, of course, the painting itself.

The painting that is, in some ways, Hopper's most literal representation of isolation and distance is "Soir Bleu," which depicts patrons at a restaurant in France, Hopper's second home. The group is eclectic: there's a wealthy socialite couple, a pimp and a prostitute, a poor-looking drifter, and a clown. While Hopper uses a relatively compact composition to bring his characters together, they are all completely different



A man and a woman view drawings by Edward Hopper, part of The Whitney Museum's exhibition of Hopper's drawings, drafts and paintings.

Eva I/The Spectator

people from completely different walks of life, and though no one looks particularly unhappy, they are all lonely.

The exhibition does not skimp on what we associate Hopper with—that is, his scenes of 20th century America and its technological development. The increasing prevalence of technology and mass transportation is exemplified in "High Road." The true subject of the painting is the road occupying the foreground, flanked by telephone poles, and not the house in the background. The painting, like all the others, sets up an atmosphere of isolation. Perhaps, by combining this feeling with an image of technological development, Hopper is trying to tell his contemporaries—and us—that the growth of these technologies is inexorably tied to the growing

separation in our daily lives.

As fascinating and relatable as this idea may be, it's best not to go too far on this train of thought. It would be a grave mistake to reduce Hopper to a socio-historical chronicler and forget the immediacy of his work, what he can communicate to a viewer gazing at his creation from just a few feet away. "Early Sunday Morning," a quintessential Hopper painting that depicts an empty New York street, demonstrates his ability to capture powerful moments and the emotional tug between opposites. The shops at street level are closed and the curtains of the windows above are drawn. What is astonishing is the irony of an image that depicts no people but shows a building probably filled with people, maybe getting ready for the day, maybe still sleeping.

Podcast

Mostly Void, Partially Stars

on the school board the next. And never forget the malevolent omnipresence of the city council. It's always watching. Always.

On WTNV, all of this is treated like it's normal. The nonchalance of the town's residents toward all the weird occurrences is what keeps WTNV's story from becoming a cheesy horror plot. It strikes a perfect balance between the certifiably strange and the mundane daily life of a small town. You want to be weirded out or scared, but Cecil makes everything sound so normal. Only a tendrill of dread in the back of your mind that makes you wonder when things will get worse. Cecil intersperses daily tasks with genuinely horrifying events that no one seems to see as such. He discusses constructions jobs and traffic, with the occasional advertisement and shout-out to good Samaritans. But voting wrong sends you to lifelong quarantine, and pulling out a certain ticket at the annual fundraiser could get you sacrificed to wolves. No biggie.

I have a painfully short attention span, so listening to a 20-minute podcast is not something I'd usually be able to do. But with WTNV, I'm fully focused the entire time. There's something exciting in every episode, and it's very easy to get caught up in the drama of small-town politics. The cast of characters

is incredibly diverse and very memorable, and includes Old Woman Josie (who has angels who do household chores) and Steve Carlsberg (what a jerk). Everyone has a unique story and identifiers. The characters' infrequent but recurring mentions tie the episodes together and invest you in the daily life of Night Vale. You get to know them by their short stories and remember them easily the next time they're mentioned. It's almost like they're really your neighbors.

The humor in WTNV is dark, dry, and thankfully not blatant and slapstick, which prevents it from becoming a horror movie parody. It's the kookiness of this dystopian town and the ridiculously casual statements Cecil makes (he mentions his Facebook once) that lighten the mood and steer it out of the failed-horror genre.

WTNV's presentation as a radio show also gives the podcast a very personal touch. You feel like a citizen of Night Vale yourself, tuning in every night to listen to your town's talk show. WTNV's unique, involving style pulls you even deeper into its world. There are weather updates ("The sky will be mauve today"), a community calendar ("Secret police vs. fire department baseball game next Sunday!"), and frequent talk of Cecil's personal life (he has a giant schoolgirl crush on

Night Vale's newest scientist, the beautiful Carlos, with his perfect, perfect hair).

WTNV can boast amazing representation and equality. Carlos a queer person of color, and his relationship with Cecil is treated as adorable, sweet, and nothing out of the ordinary. The show also has great race inclusion. There is no "white by default" labeling for any of the characters, and some of the angels are canonically black. One character, the Apache Tracker—"just a white dude in a cartoonishly offensive headdress"—is frequently called out for being an "an asshole" and a "racist embarrassment" to the town. There are also major female characters, like the mayor, who aren't instantly killed or overly sexualized.

This show gives some stunning material for surrealistic imagery and never fails to come up with original and intriguing plots. I'm always excited to enter the world of Night Vale, though I probably wouldn't survive long if I lived there. So by order of the city council, go listen. And remember, the Dog Park does not exist.

WTNV is available for a free download on iTunes and at commonplacebooks.com.



By NICOLE ROSENGURT

Welcome to Night Vale, a quaint desert town where strange lights hover over the neighborhood Arby's, the secret police is always watching, and something might try to kill you.

What is "Welcome to Night Vale" (WTNV)? Is it a coded message sent from beyond the stars through our radio waves? Is it an introduction to yet another government conspiracy to keep us in the dark? Maybe. What we know for sure is that WTNV is a bimonthly podcast broadcasted as a local radio show from the town of Night Vale in Who Knows Where, USA. WTNV premiered in June of last year but skyrocketed in

popularity this summer. Each episode is 20 minutes long, with a song break in each. The host, Cecil, informs his beloved listeners of all the goings-on in his town. Be careful getting too comfortable listening to his dulcet voice, known to lull some to sleep. Cecil can switch from calm and cool to ominous and threatening in a second, just like the town he lives in.

Night Vale isn't your average town, oh no. There's the Dog Park, where mysterious hooded figures (who, according to the city council, definitely don't exist) wander around. PTA meetings are occasionally interrupted by pterodactyl attacks, and sentient glow clouds can attack the city one day and have spots

Arts and Entertainment

Music

Global Music



Alisa SU / The Spectator

By ANNE DUNCAN

In 1964, my grandfather pulled my mother to the television by the arm, exclaiming that "this new British band is going to be big" and that she had to see it. She watched, memorizing the melody, as the Beatles were first broadcasted in America on The Ed Sullivan Show. After all, she didn't know when she would be able to hear it again. There was no Spotify, no SoundCloud, no iTunes, and no Amazon. Music couldn't be casually shipped across oceans and continents for a second lis-

ten.

My, how times have changed. Our grandparents chastise us for taking the internet for granted, but we might not realize this as we absentmindedly click through 8tracks playlists and YouTube music videos. To us, it's normal to have a favorite musician who's Irish or see an Icelandic band in concert without traveling. We probably wouldn't think twice about listening to an up-and-coming British rock band, though our ability to do so is remarkable. Peoples have exchanged music for as far back as music can be

traced, but thanks to the internet and easy travel, the rate and ease of musical and cultural exchange has increased exponentially.

In spite of my grandparents' chastising, I had not realized how spoiled we are. This only really struck me in Italy, when I heard a strange mix of songs by The Black Keys, The Lumineers, Miley Cyrus, and other American musicians playing in a bar, accompanied by Italian teenagers singing the few English words they knew and mindlessly humming the rest. In response to the apparent confusion on my face, they laughed and said, "American music is better." They still sang loudly to the Italian music on the radio, though, and excitedly recommended their favorite Italian musicians to me.

But this trend is more than a casual exchange of music between teenagers of different countries. When a musician hears a song, the experience can mold and inspire. Sometimes it has a negligible effect, but other times it can change the way a musician feels music and, in turn, the music he or she makes.

Different cultures develop very distinctive musical fingerprints through the use of differ-

ent parts of the sonic spectrum, with common popular intervals. As people explore each other's music, they learn to open their ears to new sounds they never would have imagined on their own. This is made even easier by computer software, which can create sounds and notes that are atypical of local instruments, allowing musicians to explore new tonal intervals and mix together preexisting songs in popular "mashups."

These advantages have led to inventive blends of music across the world. Afropop, for example, is a mix of African drums and rhythms and Western melodies and guitars. As cultures mingle, artists combine styles in a number of different ways. They incorporate new sounds into familiar themes and languages and sing over familiar instruments in foreign languages.

Who would have thought that French rap would play on the radio? Who would have predicted that Korean groups would sing Korean lyrics to pop melodies and dance beats originally developed in America? Subcultures are even developing in the United States as immigrants bring unique musical perspectives to their new environments. Despite how normal

it seems now, these changes are indicative of a developing global trend. Modern artists are making musical history, and by listening to it, we've become a part of it.

It's difficult to say how musical trends will develop from this point on, but this international intermingling of musical styles could preface a few interesting developments. New genres are certain to keep cropping up, as rapidly as they have been. Someone will probably find a way to fuse reggae with classical music, or folk with hip-hop. Perhaps so many genres and sub-genres will blend that labeling songs as rock or techno or indie would not do any musical justice.

After exchanging our cultures and understandings with each other, perhaps people will develop one musical identity that everyone can relate to. Songs are relatable because familiar instruments and musical themes stimulate our memories. If a musician could incorporate styles from many parts of the world into his or her music, it could speak to everyone. Maybe there would be no more African music, Latino music, and American music. There could just be global music.

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Humor

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Miley Cyrus Exposes Midriff, Shoulders



Courtesy of gazetadopodo.com

Miley Cyrus was seen at the MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs) exposing her midriff, shoulders, and legs, three violations of the Stuyvesant High School dress-code.

By JEREMY KARSON
with additional reporting by
and ROBERT MELAMED

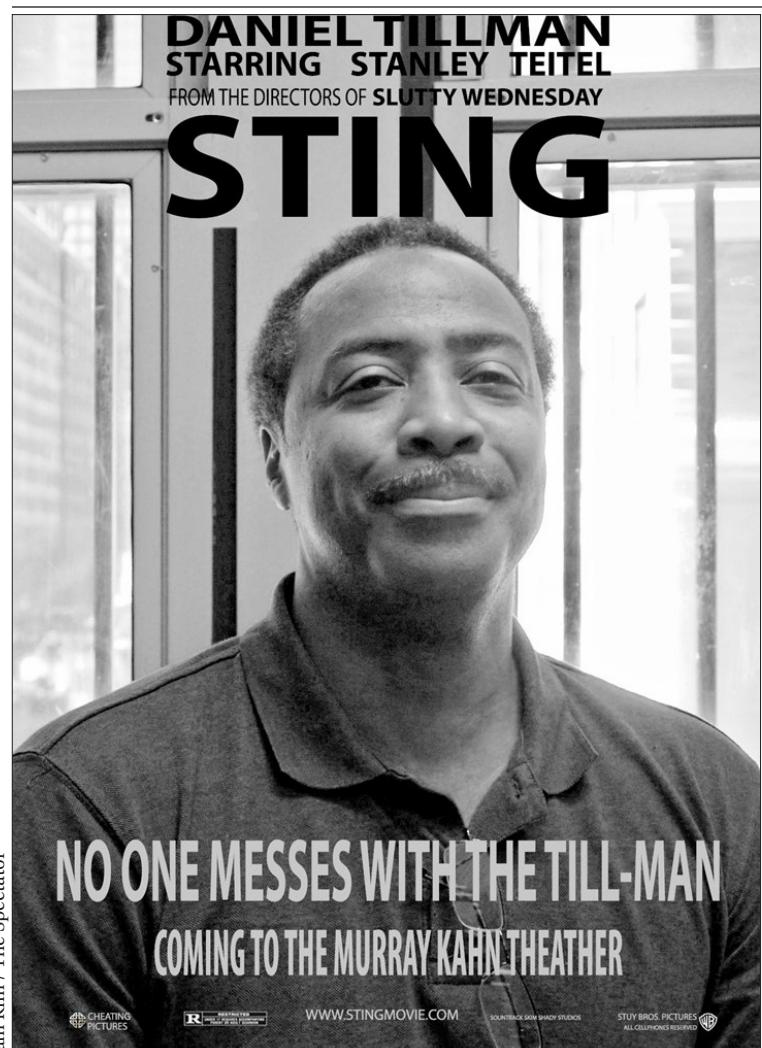
Good girls gone bad? Miley Cyrus shocked the world and,

day, August 25. Cyrus exposed both her midriff and shoulders to millions of Americans on national television. To make matters worse, there are numerous reports that her thong did not

Her thong did not extend past her fingertips when her arms were extended at her sides.

more prominently, the Stuyvesant community with her risqué performance at the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards on Sun-

extend past her fingertips when her arms were stretched out at her sides. Will she ever get married?



Sam Kim / The Spectator

Financially Well-Off Student Spends Summer in Africa to Rescue Starving College Application

By SHANE LORENZEN

The two months of summer vacation are precious for students, who make sure not to waste it. Sleeping, getting high, and playing video games are just some of the many ways students spend their summers. However, some students, including Noah "Money" Rosenberg, have opted to use their free time more altruistically. This year, Rosenberg spent two weeks in a rural Ugandan village, where he helped build houses and wells to end the poverty that has plagued his College Application. "How could I spend my summer in my air-conditioned, four-acre Hampton summer house when I didn't even have a topic for my college essay yet?" Rosenberg said in an interview. "That would have been completely immoral."

What sets Rosenberg apart from the average student is his willingness to act. When most hear about the impoverished states of their College Applications (no APs, no extracurriculars, etc.), they resign themselves to the Application's fate. But Rosenberg saw a problem that begged for a solution from a young, handsome, and industrious man like himself. Rosenberg was willing to go to great lengths to save his College Application, even if it meant leav-

ing the United States for non-leisure reasons. He left for the far-off land of rural Uganda on July 5.

complained to.

By the end of Rosenberg's two weeks abroad, he had already received e-mails from top

Student selflessly spends two summer weeks away from air-conditioned Hampton house to save his impoverished chances of Ivy League acceptance.

In Uganda, Rosenberg woke up each day at the crack of dawn to pose for photos with the children of the village, because "those photos always get hella likes on Facebook. Some solid default material, I kid you not," he said. Afterwards, he took a break from his work to have lunch, "which always sucked, because I had to bring it from home [the United States]. They had, like, no food there," Rosenberg said. His work ended after lunch, primarily due to "wicked food tiredness," an ailment that reportedly drew confused looks from the villagers to whom he

colleges inquiring about him and his charitable ways; some even offered him scholarships.

"That's when I knew I'd done it, I'd really made a difference," said Rosenberg, discussing how he felt when reading his emails from Harvard, Yale, and other top-tier universities. "I knew that through my charity, my College Application was going to have a chance in this world—a chance that should be a birthright to all those born into the upper/upper-middle class," Rosenberg said, a solitary tear falling down his cheek.

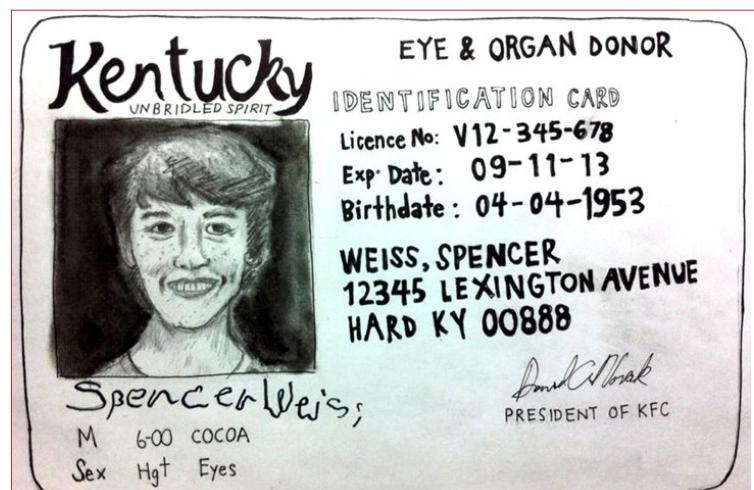
Organ Donor Purchases A Six-Pack

By JEREMY KARSON
and ROBERT MELAMED

Last Wednesday, a short, seemingly prepubescent organ donor by the name of Spencer Weiss purchased a six-pack of Coors Light at his local bodega. Klein reportedly walked into the deli, checked for security cameras, and muttered something about "getting turnt up" as he placed the beer on the counter with shaky palms. He proceeded to pretend to look bemused when the cashier asked him for identification.

"It feels like ages since I've been carded," said Weiss. "Reminds me of when I was in high school."

According to eyewitnesses, the ID card used by Weiss was a fake Kentucky driver's license. It describes him as a twenty-one year old eye and organ donor, and almost looks a little bit like



it might have been issued to Weiss by the Kentucky government. The back of the card features fine print that says, "Call Mikey at 212-566-888 and get your ID today."

"Oh, that young gentleman from Kentucky? Yes, I respect

a man who will donate his organs," the shop owner said. "An ID is an ID, and he definitely had an ID."

As of Sunday night, when The Spectator went to press, Weiss was under arrest for distributing alcohol to minors.

Stuyvesant Senior Wants a Bar Locker Really Badly; Doesn't Get One

By ETHAN SCHWAB

One Stuyvesant senior was reportedly disappointed a few weeks ago when he did not receive a senior bar locker, even though he really, really wanted one. Twenty-four hours after the student learned that he did not have the locker he desired, his parents called the police

and reported him missing. "I'm pretty sure he ran away," Officer Jonathan West of the Department of Police of Ozone Park (DPOOP) said. "Everyone who has a locker on the first floor usually disappears and turns up far, far away at one point or another."

The student was found lost on the first floor with dozens

of other students. "We've been stranded here for weeks," the senior said. "No one ever comes down here."

He told The Spectator that he plans on using his first-floor locker for the whole school year, and has realized that his life would not be any better or worse than the lives of students with bar lockers.

Michelle Lin / The Spectator

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Sports

Perfect Practice Makes Perfect: Differences in Coaching Styles

Tough Coaching

By RAYYAN JOHKAI

What is the purpose of a team? At the non-competitive or under-10 level, the correct answer may simply be to have fun. However, if we really think about it, whether it be for a school, club, state, or even nation, the main objective of a team is to win. Athletes are often viewed as representatives of some larger body. Would we want our athletes to go out there and lose for us? Would we be okay if U.S. athletes failed to perform at expected levels at the Olympics? We'd get over it, but in the moment of it, none of us would be happy in the slightest.

If we take a look at history, the team that wins is not necessarily

the most talented, but rather the one that works the hardest. More often than not, this diligence is a product of the team's coaching. Unfortunately, that favorite coach who says it's okay to come to practice late, cuts practice an hour short, or says, "We played great!" after a huge loss isn't really coaching. To be an effective coach, one must have a certain degree of toughness. I invite you to find a professional coach who's laid-back. (You probably can't.)

In the preseason, a tough coach is definitely going to make his team work harder than will a laid-back coach, who may neglect the preseason entirely. Any athlete knows that preseason practices are just as important as regular season ones. Normally focusing on conditioning and

fitness, these practices make sure that an athlete will be able to handle all the physical obstacles that may arise during future games. Without these practices, a team is sure to be unfit for the regular season, ultimately leading to a lackluster (and losing) performance.

Just as with the preseason practices, practices held during the regular season hold immense value. During the regular season, a coach who is more laid-back probably holds practice sparingly and leisurely blows off a few practices. An athlete is likely to reflect his or her coach's lack of initiative; he or she is less likely to show up to practice and more likely to give about 5 percent effort when (or if) he goes. Conversely, a tough coach will make sure that athletes are at every

practice, for punishments normally accompany negligence. As an athlete, you take a pledge to your team and to your sport to show up to every practice and game. A tough coach will make sure you fulfill this requirement.

In addition to practices during the regular season, a tough coach will give you the all important criticism after a game. While the nicer, more laid-back coach may tell you that you played "super" after losing by 25 points, 5 goals, or 7 runs, a tough coach will drill into your mind what you did wrong. While he may be tough on you after the loss, what he is doing may actually be the most helpful thing he can do. Through all of his yelling, if you manage to make out what he is saying, you will notice he has paid attention to each and ev-

ery player and play throughout the entire game. In pointing out what an athlete has done wrong, a tougher coach makes his players aware of what they can do to improve. Nine times out of ten, the athlete won't make that mistake the next game.

While having a tougher coach may seem like a burden, in the end, that trophy makes it all worth it. When you are standing at podium, with the laid-back coach's team nowhere in sight, you'll look over to the tough coach you hated throughout the season, who made you work so hard at each and every practice, and silently thank him. Tough coaching makes a team perform at its best. A tougher coach knows the game, cares about winning, and is motivated to make his team the best.

Finding Middle Ground in Authority and Encouragement

By LEV AKABAS

I've played basketball for coaches on both ends of the toughness scale. I once had a coach who thought basketball practice should be replaced by army training. I once also had a coach who thought basketball practice should be replaced by goofing around during leisurely scrimmages. As you might imagine, neither style was effective.

The primary goal of everything a coach does should be to benefit the team. There's no sense in being tough simply for the sake of being tough. Getting angry over issues like how fast an athlete is tying his or her

sneakers accomplishes nothing but damage the relationship between player and coach. Benching a player for making a physical mistake, such as not catching a pass, will not improve that player's skill or decrease the chances of the blunder being repeated. Mocking a player for messing up will not make that player correct the mistake; rather, it will invoke fear of trying again.

One example of effective toughness was demonstrated by a coach at a camp I attended last summer. At the end of every practice, each member of the team would shoot a pair of free throws, with a miss on either the first or second shot resulting in the rest of the group running a suicide (sprinting). The shooter, however, had to stand in shame and watch his teammates run

because of him. The running would continue until everyone had made a free-throw. The drill was certainly tough, but it got us in terrific shape, sent the message that every player was equally important, and, most of all, practiced pressure-shooting. In the final minute of the semifinals of the inter-camp tournament, I was at the free-throw line, and the image of my teammates sprinting during practices resonated in my mind, helping me focus especially hard on knocking down the shots.

Yet another instance of effective toughness was demonstrated by my physical trainer, who would often tell me that I "sucked" in a specific area of basketball. The distinction between him and many unsuccessfully tough coaches is that he didn't

raise his voice or act like he was better than me; he just gave honest, helpful advice, regardless of how harsh it could be.

However, it is essential for a coach not to let his ego take over and allow himself to be rude or condescending. This prevents players from developing a positive relationship with their coach, makes the coach less approachable for guidance, and creates a tense atmosphere during practices and games. As Phil Jackson, 11-time NBA champion as a head coach, writes in his book "Eleven Rings," "If your primary objective is to bring the team into a state of harmony and oneness, it doesn't make sense for you to rigidly impose your authority."

Conversely, Jackson also writes that "the suck-up coach,

who tries to mollify the stars on the team and be their best friend," is doing "a fool's exercise." The coach must still maintain a certain level of superiority, lay down necessary rules, and let players hear criticism when they need it. A balance must be found between being tough to no point and purpose, and failing to lead the team.

In general, though, it is crucial for coaches not to become obsessed with results, especially at the high school level. Worrying too much about not losing can counterproductively cause stressful emotions that make it harder to perform well. The best a coach can do is to help his team become the best that it can be, while creating a fun experience for the players.

Easy Coaching

By LUKE MORALES

There's a very fine line between tough coaching and outright disrespect. We all hear about "Tough Love" and harsh coaching, but what happens when the coach takes that harshness a bit too far and disrespects his or her athletes? That's just a formula for bad team chemistry. However, any team is a well-oiled machine that functions as a whole—if any part ceases to do its part, the whole mechanism goes down in a blaze of disappointment.

Confidence cannot be lost and morale must be kept high among any team. The sad truth is all athletes are, in some way or another, head cases—especially

at Stuyvesant. A poisonous comment by a "tough coach" can leave an athlete hesitant, lost, and unable to compete at his or her regular level of athleticism. This is simply because athletics are as much mental activities as physical ones, and any threat to that mental stability is a threat to the performance of the athlete and the team.

A coach's job is to produce the best team possible. If the coach has a poor relationship with his athletes due to ill will from his "tough love," then the team will inevitably fall flat. A certain level of respect and honor must flow in both directions to maximize the team's abilities and help it achieve its full potential.

Now I'm not saying a coach has to be easy or a pushover. But in some cases, a relation-

ship bordering on a friendship is more symbiotic than one that mirrors a boss-employee association. With positive reinforcement and light-hearted passion, a team can get a lot more done than one that resents its coach. If a player makes an error and a coach were to yell, "How could you miss such a simple play? Get your head out of you're a**!" in the middle of the game, that coach risks ruining an athlete's confidence and starting an avalanche of bad plays from said athlete. If, instead, the coach shouts, "It's alright, shake it off! You'll get the next one," he can enhance that athlete's drive to improve and redeem himself or himself.

Even the best of athletes make mistakes. But no matter what a coach does in terms of

consequences, nothing can eat away at an athlete more than his or her own knowledge that a mistake cost the team a point, a game, or even a title. Instead of harassing a player, a coach should work with the player on his or her downfalls, stabilizing both the physical and psychological components of the athlete.

There's a reason why in every sports movie ever made, the coach makes a motivational speech that helps the team win the game it's focused on—because it works! The coach is normally in the middle of the locker room, holding the clipboard and pacing as the team files in at halftime. He brings up points about how the team hasn't been playing as well as it could be and highlights strengths that haven't

shown in the game thus far. Yes—he yells, he screams, he turns red as he delivers his potent words, but he never hurts the team's spirit. This positive reinforcement makes the team want to win, try harder, and improve.

If the coach, instead of doling out words of encouragement, yells about how terrible the team is making itself look, the natural reaction of the athlete is to accept his words of derision and lose the desire to win.

A true coach knows how to bolster his team through encouragement, not hope that the players realize their faults when he yells contemptuous phrases about their inability. The focus should be on improvement, not on what needs to be improved. That's why the easygoing coach is superior to the "tough" one.

Boys' Cross Country

Despite Losing a Star, Greyducks Remain Diligent and Expectant

By CHRIS KIM
and ERIC MORGESTERN

The highly-anticipated Greyducks came up short in a disappointing loss in last year's championship game to the Curtis High School Warriors. This year, the team is looking for redemption. The runners have high expectations for the upcoming season and are looking strong as ever, even after losing their star, Jack Stevenson ('13).

The Greyducks immediately realized this season that they were left with large shoes to fill, as Stevenson was the 2012 PSAL Champion in cross country. "With [Stevenson] gone, the team loses not only a valuable runner, but a leader as well."

I'm sure just his presence was enough to motivate people into working hard, simply because they aspired to run as well as he did," junior Eric Chen said. "It's clear that he was very important, but I'm sure the team will move on and still achieve great things without him."

Senior and captain Jeremy Karson echoes Chen's sentiment. "I think we're going to bounce back from losing him extremely well," he said. "We are returning with a strong group of upperclassmen from last year. A lot of our younger guys have been working hard all summer and have the potential to develop into great runners as well."

In fact, Karson believes that

the Greyducks have a new rising star who can take up Stevenson's role. "[Chen] was our second man last year, and I think he's as good as any runner in the PSAL this year." In addition, this isn't the first season the Greyducks saw an extraordinary talent graduate from the team to leave open expectations. Last year, the team lost Konrad Surkont ('12), the 2010 and 2011 PSAL Champion in cross country, but still proved its ability to not only bounce back but thrive with its returning members.

Coach Mark Mendes is also confident in the team's ability to overcome the loss of its star runner. "We have won four team championships in the

last eight years. Only one of those teams had the individual [champion]," he said. To him, the overall play of the team is more important than having one superstar athlete. "It takes seven athletes to win the meet. Five score and two more can displace other teams' runners in the scoring," Mendes said.

For the runners, nothing else has changed. "I expect us to win a city championship. Anything short will be a major disappointment, as far as I'm concerned," Karson said. However, without Stevenson's name on the roster, people don't believe that the Greyducks will dominate as much as they had previous seasons.

Junior Kai Pacheco, among

other members, believes otherwise. "We have the ability to succeed, and hopefully we will prove it once the season starts," he said.

If the Greyducks want to take the championship, it'll ultimately be decided by the hard work they put into their practices. Fortunately, they have already proven their solid work ethic. "We're definitely the underdogs this year, and there are probably some people who have already written us off," Karson said. "But we've been working our butts off for months, and we're going to keep working our butts off every single day until the city championship."

Girls' Soccer**A New Start for the Hopeful Mimbas***continued from page 24*

"We already have strong shooters and an overall solid offense, but it all comes down to stopping the other teams from scoring," sophomore Alexis Kushner said. Last season, junior and goalie Sophia Gershon had 196 saves and allowed 41 goals in 12 games. With an average of almost 20 shots on the goal per game, it's no wonder the Mimbas had such a bad record. Relying on their goalie won't do the Mimbas much good, so only a good defense will ease the burden.

Unfortunately, the defense isn't going to get any relief, particularly after losing former captain Eugenie Thompson ('13). In addition, Truemner, the starting midfielder, suffered a back injury in the preseason that might force her to miss the first few games of the season. Truemner is "a huge factor on this team—she has a strong kick and is a really aggressive midfielder," Kushner said.

However, there are few bright spots among this season's Mimbas. "[Campbell] is an incredibly talented soccer player, and she can play anywhere on the field. She's really stepping up as captain and getting the team ready for this season," Kushner said.

The younger players seem to have promise as well. "Last year we had a really strong group of incoming freshmen, so as sophomores it seems as though they've progressed a lot since then," Campbell said.

With two weeks of pre-season under their belts, the Mimbas look to start the year avoiding their past trends as far as season outcomes. While a favorable schedule and up-and-coming players provide a glimmer of hope, they had the same optimism in seasons past. Only success on the field will prove otherwise.

Boys' Soccer**Centaurs Gallop into Season with Strength and Unity**

By SAMANTHA LAU

The Centaurs, Stuyvesant's boys' soccer team, hope to not only step up their game by incorporating new drills and new roles for their players, but also gain from the top two teams in the city. Their record (6-5 last season) has been less than stellar these past few years, and with the loss of Asa Conover ('13) and Matt Hoffman ('13), great assets because of their previous club team experience, it may not seem as though their record will improve. Conover played striker and was a main goal scorer, and Hoffman was the central defender. However, the team has two juniors and a new addition who will step up this season and hopefully fill in for Conover and Hoffman's roles.

A star to watch is senior Stas Banartsev, who only joined the team this season but has played on Academy, a group of highly selective travel teams, for the past few years. Banartsev, a former center-midfielder, specializes in passing the key through balls needed to put forwards in goal-scoring position. In the last couple of years, he has moved up to striker and now helps score goals. "I feel honored to be seen as a key player by my teammates. I am quite used to having this sort of weight on my shoulders because I was the captain at several different teams for several years, so I know of the responsibility," Banartsev said.

Other players to help carry the team include juniors Mohammed Haque, forward, and Sean Fitzgerald, the central defender. "[Haque] steps into the role of main goal-scorer and has great dribbling talent. [Fitzgerald] is an all-around great player, but with his height, speed, and leadership qualities, he will need to lead our defense instead of playing midfield or striker," senior and co-captain Zane Birenbaum said. It should not be hard for Haque and Fitzgerald to fulfill these expectations, as they were both starters the previous season and belong to a club team—Manhattan Soccer Club Cruzeiro and Manhattan Soc-



Sophomore Sorato Doken dribbling against Senior and captain Zane Birenbaum during the Centaurs' preseason practice at Pier 40.

Mehak Ijaz / The Spectator

"In a team sport, you're always more confident on the field when you know your teammates' strengths and weaknesses."

—Milo Han, senior and co-captain

cer Club PSG 96, respectively.

The active role of these members may not give the Centaurs instant success. Last year, the team's primary shortcoming was its stamina. "Last year we did [work on] fitness, but it wasn't good enough, because we weren't able to last whole

matches," Haque said. "It was usually at the end when the opposing team would start to take the lead."

To improve the team's stamina, Coach Vincent Miller has been "increasing the amount of fitness we do because we need to get physically stronger. Each practice we work on our technique for about 30 minutes," Miller said.

The Centaurs also have to work on better positioning and decision-making with the ball. They have not focused on specific strategic plays, but rather on how to play with each other by switching between positions. For example, junior Demos Sfakianakis will be the new step-into goalkeeper, and junior Cole Reschke has moved from outside back to midfield. "We've been practicing for a while, and everyone gets to play multiple positions when we practice. We are getting noticeably better every practice in terms of playing together," senior Shehtab Zaman said.

As a result, team chemistry isn't something the Centaurs will have to worry about, because most of the players have been playing together for two to three years. "In a team sport, you're always more confident

on the field when you know your teammates' strengths and weaknesses. You can guess at what they're going to do next, if they're about to make a run or if they're going to pass the ball to you," Han said.

The Centaurs also face changes within the Manhattan A division this season. Typically, the division is comprised of seven teams, and each team plays each of the other teams twice, for a total of 12 games during the regular season. Unfortunately for the Centaurs, Manhattan Center moved to the Manhattan B I division due to its lack of wins last season. Each team still needs to play 12 games, so Stuyvesant must play Martin Luther King and Beacon three times each. These teams rank first and second, respectively, in both the A division and the city, which means that the Centaurs will have to work even harder to make playoffs.

"We stand a viable chance against MLK and Beacon," Birenbaum said. "In the past we have led against these teams at some point, so I would hope this season we could pull away with a win or draw against either team."

Beyond the Stereotype: Respecting Cheerleading*continued from page 24*

and trust in each other to achieve its maximum potential.

For the past three years, Lo, a United Cheerleading Association (UCA) member and Stuyvesant alumnus ('06), has served as the team's source of guidance. Lo has made much headway as an ambassador of the sport by not only helping the team, but also introducing a different level of cheerleading to New Yorkers—a level of cheer that only seems to exist in Division I football colleges.

"The point of cheerleading makes a ton of sense once you see a big football game," Lo said. "And people in NYC don't get to see that." In New York City, there are neither incredible football teams nor a huge football following. The two professional football teams

of New York are based in New Jersey. To have following for a sport such as cheerleading is nearly impossible if the sport it's supposed to cheerlead for doesn't have a backing.

Despite this lack of support, the cheer team has shown its dedication to perfecting techniques and breaking barriers that seemed very improbable for a high school team even a decade ago. To say that their desire to better themselves and make a real impact in the sport is admirable would be an understatement. With love for the sport, a great coach, and nowhere to go but up, the team will, in years to come, make a real name, not only for itself, but for the sport as well.

Should the team choose the second option, it should not expect the school to treat it differently, because it's not feasible to concentrate on both creating cheers for the football and basketball team and practicing competition routines. To top that off, the team has yet to create a routine for this year.

Should it choose to become the main attraction, the cheerleading team needs to qualify

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for big-name competitions. To do so, it needs to improve as a team. Grace Kao, a volunteer who cheered for her high school and college, occasionally runs the cheer team's practices and did so during the practice that I observed on Wednesday, August 21. In the two years she has been with the team, Kao has noticed that while individuals (such as Chebanova, Guinta, and Lau) have improved, the team has stayed on the same level.

While she supervised the practice, Kao did not lead it. Rather, the team captains did. The practice ran from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., but the team was often unorganized and not unified. At the practice, the 15 (of 23) members present were split into three groups: one experienced group comprised of mostly upperclassmen and two groups with members who had been on the team

for less than a year. During the latter part of the practice, the more experienced group practiced an advanced stunt, while the less experienced groups struggled to get their flyers to stand upright. The team will be judged as a whole during competitions, so it's important that everyone is on the same level.

The cheerleaders also need to focus on the stunts they are weak at. "[The team] needs to work on [its] tumbling skills," Kao said. Tumbling is a major aspect of competitions, so if the team's tumbling isn't up to par, it shouldn't hope to make it far this season.

Stuyvesant cheer team—figure out what you want. You guys have the dedication and determination that any successful team must have, but those traits are useless without a unified sense of direction.

THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

Girls' Soccer

A New Start for the Hopeful Mimbas



Sophomore Alice Rabkin playing against fellow team member Sophomore Charlotte Johnston during the Mimbas' preseason practice at Pier 40.

By SAMUEL FUCHS
and DAVID ROTHBLATT

The last few years have left a bitter taste in the Mimbas' mouths. The girls' varsity soccer team has failed to make the playoffs in the last three years, and this is the last opportunity for the team's seniors to make their playoff dreams a reality.

Despite a 2-9-1 record last season, in which the Mimbas' only two victories came against the same last-place team, the team still believes that it can make the playoffs this year, especially since two new teams have moved up from the lower division. "This year [Lab Museum] and [Eleanor Roosevelt] got moved into our league, and I think they will be good com-

petition," senior and co-captain Rosalie Campbell said. "We always come pretty close with Hunter, and I definitely think we can get a win this year."

The Mimbas are also confident in their chances against tougher teams. "Our biggest rival, as always, will be Beacon," junior Madison Truemner said. "But many of their first-string players have graduated, and we're working hard to play as a team. Hopefully we'll have a favorable score when we face them."

The Mimbas have a strong offense and seek to improve on the defensive end, which is led by Campbell and senior and co-captain Raquel Brau-Diaz.

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Boys' Football

Fifty-Nine to Zero

By GRACE LU

It's been 59 years since the Peglegs last won the championship. Last year, that number came the closest it has ever been to being reset. Under the leadership of an all-star group of seniors, including quarterback Alen Makhmudov ('13) and receiver Nathaniel Biggs ('13), the Peglegs tackled their way into the championship game but let the trophy slip away. Now, the Peglegs are returning, fueled by the looming memory of their recent, agonizing defeat in the final game.

A return to that position will be difficult and perhaps a little ambitious, without seniors from last season—the same seniors who played on the undefeated JV team three years ago. Though it may seem as if last season was the best chance the Peglegs ever had of bringing home the trophy, coach Mark Strasser believes that the team's co-captains, seniors Solomon Quinn, Kevin Chen, and Michael Mazzeo and junior Cooper Weaver, will fill the leadership positions and help the Peglegs become "a grittier football team," Strasser said.

Strasser plans to employ a fast-paced offense and a hybrid defense throughout the season. "By employing an up-tempo offense, we will accomplish a few different objectives. We set the tone of the game, opponents are not used to performing in a fast-paced tempo, and therefore tire by the end of the game, and we will be able to better predict what a defense will do against us," Strasser said. "On defense, we have created interchangeable positions in our 4-3 hybrid defense. We will be able to conform to the offense in front of us, and match our strengths against the other teams' strengths."



The Peglegs set up to practice their plays for the upcoming football season.

Taekyung Kong / The Spectator

ing the defense into battle.

While the despair from barely missing out on the trophy is still in the returning players' minds, it has only pushed the team to work harder and achieve more. "Last year we made the championship, and that's fantastic, but this year we intend on winning the championship," Mazzeo said.

The Peglegs have completed their annual, rigorous preseason training at Camp Scatico, also known as "HellWeek," during which the team developed and grew. "Our team's main strength is never from sheer power or speed, but from constant practice, hard work, planning, discipline, and communication," Chen said. "There's never been a harder-working team than Stuyvesant."

As the first game of the season approaches next week, the Peglegs are more driven than ever. "The culture of the team now does not allow losing to be acceptable," Strasser said.

Beyond the Stereotype: Respecting Cheerleading

More Than Meets the Eye



Stuyvesant's cheerleaders impress with their dedication, stunts, splits, and smiles, but they have yet to find their way as a truly respectable team.

By LUKE MORALES

When you think of cheerleading, you probably think of girls skipping around with pom-poms and cute uniforms while repeating grammatically incorrect sentences at the top of their lungs. At least, that's what I thought before coming to Stuyvesant. However, neither the sport itself nor the Stuyvesant cheerleading team resembles that stereotypical model.

Successful cheerleading involves a combination of flexibility, endurance, and extreme coordination, along with a long list of other qualities that many other sports are respected for. The primary deterrent to recognition of cheerleading as a sport, however, is the general public's ignorance of the sport's actual happenings and difficulties. This misconstrued reputation has caused a lack in

following and formation of incorrect prejudices.

"A common misconception is that cheerleading is girly and is easy," sophomore Lulu Cho said. However, as I witnessed during cheer practices, the stunts performed during the average "cheer" not only include boys, but are also extremely dangerous. In fact, cheerleading is one of the riskiest sports offered at Stuyvesant. "While football players throw a two-pound ball, we throw a 100-pound girl 10 feet in the air and catch [her]," senior Phillip Lan said.

A 100-pound object in free fall for 10 feet is not very easy to catch—especially when that object is a human. It takes a certain level of skill, strength, and technique to avoid injuries and physical conditions like concussions, broken bones, paralysis, and even

death. Cheering programs are shut down in many states due to these very injuries, which result from incorrectly teaching these stunts. Furthermore, in New York City, where dodgeball isn't even allowed in physical education, any injury from cheer is likely to have drastic consequences.

To prevent such injuries, team chemistry and good technique are stressed by not only head coach Richard Lo, but by the Stuyvesant cheerleaders themselves. "The sight of a girl in midair standing only on someone's outstretched hand isn't very common. It also isn't very easy," senior and co-captain Valentyna Chebanova said. "It takes a lot of correct form and technique to do a stunt, as well as an amount of teamwork."

If it's impressive to see a girl standing eight feet above the ground, imagine a girl flying 20 feet in the air. In a stunt called the "Basket," a girl is tossed some two stories into the air and caught. "Last year, when we were throwing baskets for our competition routine in the third-floor atrium, the flyers could see through the windows of the fourth floor," Chebanova said. "That means that catching is vital."

Injury is a very possible outcome for anyone tossed 20 feet in the air, and thus Stuyvesant puts in lots of hard work to achieve a high level of technique. From conditioning to strength-building to team bonding, the team works year round, with or without its coach, to gain the correct abilities

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A Lack of Direction

By ANNIQUE WONG

While Stuyvesant's cheerleaders are unified in their willingness to practice often, their expectations for the team are far from unanimous. "The different goals are what makes the team strive to be the best that it can be," former captain Stacy Chun ('12) said. While that may be true, there is no point in having different goals if other members can't come together and act toward those goals—and the cheerleaders of Stuyvesant clearly cannot come together.

Senior Crystal Lau wants to "register in more [competitions] and continue to compete," she said. Senior Phillip Lan, on the other hand, wants the team to qualify for Nationals. There is no problem with competing more often for the experience and exposure to the routines of the other teams, but several cheerleaders agree that Lan's goal is way out of bounds.

In fact, the cheer team did not even participate in Regionals last year, a competition that allows a team to qualify for States, which gives teams a chance to qualify for Nationals. Furthermore, senior and co-captain Valentyna Chebanova believes that it's only "plausible [for the team to qualify] for states in a couple of years," she said.

According to senior and co-captain Isabella Giunta, however, the team "just wanted a chance to learn what it is to be a competing team and use the feedback in order to improve as a team, rather than [participating in] regionals," she said.

The cheerleaders' plethora of goals extends beyond competition.

Sophomore Lulu Cho hopes "that one day cheerleaders get the same respect that footballers do," she said. At Stuyvesant, cheerleading is currently seen as a club by the administration. As a result, cheerleaders are not allowed to leave class early, be exempt from certain homework deadlines due to sporting events, or sign up for ZT10s, forms that allow sport team members to have a 10th period free to get to sporting events on time. These are privileges that other sports teams can indulge in.

But the administration is right in its decision to withhold these privileges from the cheer team, as there is no official way of confirming the dates of cheerleading tournaments. Because cheerleading is not a PSAL sport, competitions are not listed on websites. In fact, the cheerleading team itself cannot give me a list of tournaments they participated in last year. The team still has yet to find some kind of administrative or organizational structure, and without any official notice, the administration would only have the team's word for reference.

To the students, a Stuyvesant cheerleader's job has been to cheer for the football and basketball team. "Cheerleaders are generally known for being the sideline people," Lau said. No matter which way you cut it, sideliners will never get as much respect as the main attraction. So if the cheer team wants more respect, it needs to be the main attraction.

The team has two options. If it wants to be the main attraction, it has to do things that will bring it respect. At Stuyvesant, respect is earned, not assumed. "The bet-

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