



# The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper

*"The Pulse  
of the  
Student  
Body"*

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## Meningococcal Disease Alarms School

By RACHEL KIM  
with additional reporting by  
ARIANNA MOSHARY

Senior Ava Hecht died from Neisseria meningitidis, otherwise known as meningococcal disease. According to the New York Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream or meninges, a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord, caused by the meningococcus germ.

It is possible for anyone to contract the disease but it is more common in infants and children. There are approximately 30 to 50 cases reported in New York City every year.

The meningococcus germ is spread by direct close contact with the nose or throat discharges of an infected person. Only individuals who are in close contact with an infected person such as prolonged face to face contact or sharing food or drinks are at risk of the disease. Those with casual contact such as having a conversation, sitting in a classroom, meeting or passing by in a hallway are not at risk.

The symptoms of meningococcal disease are high fever, chills, headache, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash. If you are able to touch your chin to your chest, you do not have a stiff neck. The symptoms may appear two to 10 days after exposure, but usually within five days.

Antibiotics, such as penicillin G or ceftriaxone, can be used to

treat people afflicted with meningococcal disease. Individuals who were in close contact with an infected person are advised to obtain a prescription from their physician for a special antibiotic, such as rifampin, ciprofloxacin or ceftriaxone.

Hecht's parents notified Assistant Principal Pupil Services Eleanor Archie of the cause of death on Saturday, January 10.

The HHS contacted Principal Stanley Teitel, who proceeded to post the information on the Stuyvesant Web site and the Parents' Association (PA) Web Site. Teitel sent an e-mail to every student containing the information that was posted on the Stuyvesant Web site. He also left a voice message in each student's home, notifying parents to check the Web site for further information and of the necessary precautions that they should take.

Parents' Association Co-President Paola de Kock also sent an e-mail to the parent listserv informing them that "it was very important to parents that they consult their doctors and take any symptoms seriously," she said.

"I've gotten some emails [from concerned parents], but I referred them to the letter on the Web site," Teitel said. Students also obtained information through sites such as Facebook. Senior Erica Sands, who was contacted by the hospital workers who were performing the

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## Stuyvesant Wins WorldQuest Competition



Courtesy of Linda Weissman / The Spectator  
Four Stuyvesant students won first place in the WorldQuest New York competition and will compete in the national WorldQuest 2009 competition on Saturday, April 4.

By ASHLEY SEENAUTH

The Foreign Policy Association named seniors Snigdha Das, Charles Leung, William Young and Susan Zheng first place winners in the WorldQuest New York competition on December 4, 2008. Each student was awarded \$100 dollars.

Competitors in WorldQuest are tested on their knowledge of international affairs, geography, culture and history. Teams consisting of four members must answer multiple-choice questions related to 10 previously selected categories under a time limit of 15 seconds.

The competition consisted of 10 rounds: current events, global population, Great Decisions 2008, international film, global business technology, The New York Times Upfront, Lebanon, biotechnology and genetics, water and transnational crime. Great Decisions 2008 tested students on major resolutions that have been made in the world. The New York Times Upfront tested students on their knowledge of articles that were published in the newspaper.

The competition was held at the Scholastic company headquarters in New York City, where it has been for the last three years. The Stuyvesant team competed against five other schools in the New York City area: Herricks

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### Opinions

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### The Art of the Interview

Applying for a position in a Stuyvesant Organization?  
Here's five pieces of advice for mastering the interview.



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### Arts & Entertainment

#### Alphabet Soup: The Melting Pot of New York

An in-depth guide to everything from the theater to the Russian Bath of one of the city's most culturally diverse neighborhoods.

## Stuyvesant Mourns the Loss of Senior Ava Hecht

By PAULINA KARPIS

Senior Ava Hecht died on Thursday, January 12 from bacterial meningitis.

Ava was a beloved member of the Stuyvesant community. "She was the one person I know who was spontaneous and generally hilarious," senior John Wittrock said. "She was always on, just moving and doing."

"Ava was really full of life in everything she did," senior Mark Surya said. "She approached everything with such intensity. It was always so inspiring to see."

Ava, an Art Director for The Spectator, was a talented artist. She was always doodling, even during class. "It was so clearly not an indication of lack of focus or attention. It was part of how she learned," Assistant Principal English Eric Grossman said. "I loved watching for that moment when she'd look up from her doodling with a glint in her eye and I'd know that she had something to say."

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For reflections and some of Ava's art, see pages 6-12.

## Ten Stuyvesant Students Are Named Intel Semi-Finalists

By ARIANNA MOSHARY

Ten Stuyvesant seniors were named semi-finalists in the 2009 Intel Science Talent Search (STS). The Society for Science and the Public, which runs the competition, released a list of 300 semi-finalists on Wednesday, January 14.

As stated on the Intel STS Web site, the competition "finds and encourages the nation's most talented high school seniors, furthering their pursuit of research and careers in the science, math, engineering, and medicine disciplines." This year, Intel STS had 1,608 applicants from 470 high schools.

Each semi-finalist receives a \$1,000 dollar award, and an additional \$1,000 dollars goes to their school. Forty of the semi-finalists will be named finalists on Wednesday, January 28 and those 40 finalists will go to Washington, D.C. to compete for a \$100,000 dollar grand prize.

This year's Stuyvesant semi-finalists are seniors Charles Choi, Aidan Daly, Francesca diDomenico, Daniel Jeng, Anissa Mak, Gayatri Malhotra, Adam Sealoff, Ksenia Timachova, Adriana Weiss and Qi Fan (Jenny) Zhang. Seventy-two Stuyvesant seniors entered the competition this year.

According to biology teacher Dr. Jonathan Gastel, who teaches the Biology Research course, the

students who entered the competition took a research class, conducted individual research, and wrote a report and application which was submitted to the Intel STS. The application requires essays as well as scholastic and biographical information.

"The goal of the competition is to find students who have the potential to become great scientists, mathematicians and engineers," Dr. Gastel said. "[There are] many other research contests looking for different things."

The students worked with both mentors and teachers to put together their projects. "[Mathematics teachers Peter] Brooks and [Oana] Pascu gave me a lot of help with my project," Mak said.

Stuyvesant's performance this year is similar to that of previous years. "Last year we had 11 semi-finalists, this year we have 10, so it's about the same. We're fourth in the country in terms of the number of [Intel STS] semi-finalists," Dr. Gastel said.

The semi-finalists and their teachers are thrilled by the news. "I was really surprised. If I'm a finalist, I'll be excited," Jeng said.

"I thought [my project] was an interesting idea, but I was still really surprised," Weiss said.

"They've done a lot of work and they strive to be the best in the country," Dr. Gastel said of the students. "Many of them seem to be on that track."

# News

## Postponed Pie-a-Teacher Event Successful

By NICOLE ZHAO

Stuyvesant High School's Building with Books club held its fourth annual Pie-a-Teacher fundraising event after school on Thursday, January 8 in the cafeteria.

The event was originally supposed to take place December 22, 2008, but was postponed because Principal Stanley Teitel wanted to use the cafeteria on that day. "I needed the student cafeteria for the faculty," Teitel said. According to Teitel, the faculty had gathered in the cafeteria "to have a little food together."

"There wasn't any other location to serve food that can hold the faculty," Teitel said. "[The event] really just moved

four school days."

Teitel had notified history teacher and faculty advisor for the Building with Books club Brad Badgley of the change a week before December 22, the day the event would have taken place.

When asked about how the club initially responded, junior and Vice President of Fundraising of the Building with Books club Nisa Beceriklisoy said, "We asked [Assistant Principal Organization Randi] Damesek what was going on. There really wasn't much we could do."

Club members were upset about the postponement at first, but realized its benefits. "I'm a little angry, but it does give us more time," Beceriklisoy said at

the time. "I feel like they told us we had the room first and it really isn't fair."

"It was just really last-minute," senior and President of the Building with Books club Elizabeth Kelman said. "We sort of got over it."

Teachers who signed up to be pied did not mind the postponement. "As long as I am given enough heads up, it doesn't bother me," Jaishankar said. Jaishankar was notified of the changed date on December 17, 2008.

"It works out better. I think [the club] could sell it now as a chance to release frustrations out before finals," Badgley said at the time. "We'll get more people."



Pie-a-Teacher, a Building with Books fundraiser, took place in the cafeteria on Thursday, January 8.

## Medical Ethics Class Holds 23rd Annual Symposium



This year's Medical Ethics Symposium, held in the Murray Kahn Theater, discussed alternatives to prescription drugs.

By KAITLYN KWAN

The 23rd annual Medical Ethics Symposium, entitled "Mind, Body and Beyond - A Journey through Spiritual Healing," was held in the Murray Kahn Theater on December 18, 2008. The Symposium was run by biology teacher Roz Bierig and the students in her Medical Ethics class. "We want to introduce alternative methods of healing to

people's daily lives," said senior Vella Voynova, a student in Bierig's class.

"[The audience members] learn more about different types of medicine and not just prescription drugs," senior and Medical Ethics student Abby Erickson said.

The Keynote speaker was Dr. Bernard Siegel, author of "Love, Medicine and Miracles." He spoke about the importance of happiness in relation to one's health. "The body speaks through symbols and drawings," Dr. Siegel said.

"Dr. Siegel is not your conventional doctor," Assistant Principal Biology Elizabeth Fong said. "He [recognizes] there's a direct link between the mind and the body."

The other guest speakers included Wendy Burton Brouws, professional photographer and author of "Joy is a Plum Colored Acrobat;" Stewart Apfel, M.D., founder and president of Parallax Clinical Research and associate professor of Neurology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine; Sa-

ranne Rothberg, founder of the Comedy Cures Foundation; and Wendy Edwards, M.D., chief of Palliative Care at St. Vincent's Hospital and professor of Clinical Medicine at New York Medical College.

The students in Bierig's class presented skits throughout the Symposium, and ended the event with a raffle. Free copies of Brouws's book, "Joy Is a Plum Colored Acrobat: 45 Life-Affirming Visualizations for Breast Cancer Treatment and Recovery," were distributed.

The Murray Kahn Theater was filled to capacity on the day of the Symposium. "It was a mix of people," senior and Medical Ethics student Michael Fracentese. "Some people were just here for the extra credit."

Senior Sercan Ture, who went for Advanced Placement Biology extra credit, said his teacher makes "us go to lectures so that we aren't just learning in the classroom."

Some students went because they are interested in the subject. "It's related to psychology and I might want to major in psychology in college," senior Diana Wu said.

"It was an interesting way to approach medicine in that no one really thinks about spiritual healing," junior Samantha Shetty said.

While many students enjoyed the Symposium, there were some issues with the time frame. "It was a little bit too long. I expected it to be only two hours," freshman Blake Elias said. "It started at 4 and ended at almost 7."

Despite running past 7 p.m., the Symposium, according to Bierig, was a success. "It was fantastic," she said. "It met my expectations and more."

## Stuyvesant Mourns the Loss of Senior Ava Hecht

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"She told me once that the sure sign of how hard an essay was for her to write was the number of scraps of doodled paper on top of her computer desk because as she sat there struggling about what to write about she would just sit there doodling," English teacher Jonathan Weil said. "That's a classic Ava thing."

Ava was a Soprano I in the Stuyvesant Chamber Chorus for three-and-a-half years. Music Appreciation teacher and Chorus director Holly Hall said Ava was "full of good humor and full of jollity that kept the spirits of her colleagues up."

Her experience in chorus was the inspiration for a comic Ava drew, "Soprano Man," in which Soprano Man and his sidekick, Tenor Girl, battle Raging Soprano, the villain. The superheroes she created were modeled after her friends.

Ava also enjoyed fencing. She was a member of the Stuyvesant fencing team for two years. Senior Lydia Booz said that Ava "could do all of these crazy bendy things like put her foot behind her head."

Ava was a kind and compassionate friend. Before this year's Winter Concert, senior Mem Barnett and Ava walked around Chinatown in the snow and sleet. "Ava was just there and we talked. She listened to everything I said (I probably talked too much) and didn't complain," Barnett said.

Ava also comforted senior Simone-Marie Feigenbaum when she had a problem. "She didn't say random clichés that wouldn't have made me feel any better. She just listened and hugged me

and told me everything would be okay," Feigenbaum said. "I miss that."

Ava had many friends inside and outside of school. She befriended the teenagers who hang out at St. Mark's Place in the East Village after they asked her for money.

"Ava was the most open-minded person I've ever met," Barnett said. "People I would never think anyone would ever talk to

**"[Ava] was really open-minded about music, people, books."**

**—Simone-Marie Feigenbaum, senior**

were a big part of her life. She had this culture she was a part of."

"For her very first essay this year, she wrote about her friends who hang out on St. Mark's and about her admiration for them," Grossman said. "I wrote back that I was thrilled that she is interested in so many different types of people."

Ava, who played the piano, was also interested in many different types of music. "[Ava] was really open-minded about music, people, books," Feigenbaum said. "If she found something new, she would go and experience it."

**"It met my expectations and more."**

**—Roz Bierig, Medical Ethics teacher**

## Stuyvesant Ranked 23rd Best High School

By CHRIS LEE and ANI SEFAJ

This year, U.S. News and World Report ranked Stuyvesant the 23rd best high school in the nation. Stuyvesant earned a gold medal for its high "college readiness" score.

According to the Web site for U.S. News and World Report, "more than 21,000 public high schools in 48 states" were considered. Bronx High School of Science and Brooklyn Technical High School were ranked 33rd and 67th, respectively.

The rankings were based on

"college readiness," which was evaluated using student performance on Advanced Placement tests and International Baccalaureate tests, both of which evaluate accelerated coursework. Other factors included performance on state tests and the percentage of students who attend college.

Stuyvesant earned a gold medal for being ranked one of the top 100 high schools in the nation.

Last year, Stuyvesant was ranked 15th by U.S. News and World Report. However, the administration does not seem concerned over the drop in ranking. "I am aware that we were a dif-

ferent number this year than last year," Principal Stanley Teitel said. "But overall, I'm not worried about it."

Assistant Principal English Eric Grossman agrees. "Rankings shift constantly. It doesn't mean anything."

Concern among some students, however, does exist. "The problem could be related to incompetent faculty members or the increased number of freshmen accepted," sophomore Matteo Battistini said.

Still, many students are impressed by Stuyvesant's high ranking. "Being ranked 23rd in the nation is amazing, consider-

ing how many schools there are across the country," freshman Roy Vlcek said.

"Stuyvesant is deserving of its high ranking," junior Petros Skalarinis said. "The facilities are excellent, the teachers are mostly good, and the students are hard-working. What more could you ask for?"

Both students and faculty agree that Stuyvesant's high ranking helps the school's reputation. "Stuyvesant is a wonderful high school and I am glad to see it acknowledged as such," Grossman said.

Freshman Ardi Demaliaj agreed. "With all the high schools

in the country, it makes you feel special to be attending one that's so prestigious," Demaliaj said.

In the end, many in the school question the importance of the rankings. "Twenty-third place is nice and all, but what exactly does that number mean?" junior Jeffrey Wu said. "If you ask me, it's just an arbitrary number."

"Statistics are slippery and don't get at what I value most about this school and what the indicators are that make this school special," Grossman said. "It is unhealthy and unwise to place too much credence on these kinds of statistics."

## Meningococcal Disease Alarms School

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autopsy, wrote a Facebook note containing information of the disease, treatment and preventative measures on Saturday, January 10. "I put it on Facebook because I thought everyone should know what happened," Sands said. "I wanted to make sense of the whole situation."

Representatives from the HHS visited Stuyvesant to investigate the degree of severity and to answer any questions that students and faculty members had regarding the disease the following Monday, January 11.

The HHS officials visited the sixth and eighth period chorus classes and fourth period German

class, which were some of Hecht's classes.

"They described what meningococcal disease is, the symptoms and preventative measures," senior Shayra Kamal said.

"It was really informative," senior Emily Cheng said. "A lot of people had their questions answered."

The HHS officials also attended the faculty meeting held after school on Monday, January 12 to answer any questions that members of the faculty had.

"They tried to present it fairly and objectively without a sense of panic," social worker and guidance counselor John Mui said.

History teacher Phillip Scandura said that the officials were "helpful in answering the questions

that came from the faculty." The students and faculty "had their concerns but after listening to the [HHS representatives], their concerns were alleviated," Archie said.

According to Teitel, he is aware that certain parents have decided to give medicine to their children as a preventative measure, but he believes that "the majority of students should not be overly concerned," he said.

A sophomore reported to the nurse's office on Tuesday, January 13 "indicating that he didn't feel well, so we called the Emergency Medical Service and he went to the hospital," Teitel said.

"The media picked it up. They connected dots that weren't there. They somehow suggested in their

reporting that there might be a connection between this young man going to the hospital and the tragedy of last week," he said.

Eyewitness News on channel seven had a televised segment titled "Possible Second Case of Meningitis at Stuyvesant High School."

"Parents were very concerned and worried when they heard there was a possible second case of meningitis," Parent Coordinator Harvey Blumm said. "In my six years as parent coordinator, I have never gotten as many calls from parents in such a short time as I did about this."

Parents who contacted the school after watching the segment were told to read the PA Web site

for pending information.

According to Teitel, approximately 400 students were absent on Wednesday, January 14, the day after the media coverage about the possible second case. It was discovered that the student did not contract meningococcal disease. Teitel made a Public Announcement and posted the notification on the Stuyvesant Web site.

"We need to keep a sense of proportion because there is not much to be gained through fear," de Kock said.

"I know this has been a very stressful time for us all, but rest assured that we will continue to be vigilant here at the school," Teitel said in the announcement posted on the Stuyvesant Web site.

## Stuyvesant Wins WorldQuest Competition

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High School, The Child School/Legacy High School, Kennedy Onassis High School, Eleanor Roosevelt High School and The Talent Unlimited High School. Participation in the competition is open for all public and private New York City high schools.

Herricks High School placed second in the competition and The Child School-Legacy High School placed third. Herricks High School offers a class that prepares students exclusively for

the WorldQuest competitions. Stuyvesant placed second in the previous two WorldQuest competitions.

The Foreign Policy Association will sponsor the Stuyvesant team on a trip to Washington, D.C. to compete at the national Academic WorldQuest 2009 competition, where Regional winners will compete for national recognition on Saturday, April 4. The Foreign Policy Association is the organization that hosts and sponsors the WorldQuest competition.

"The four students who com-

peted represent all the best about Stuyvesant," said history teacher Linda Weissman, who coached the team.

Weissman offered the opportunity to participate in the competition to the students in her government class. Das, Leung, Young and Zheng were chosen out of that group based on their level of interest and dedication.

Prior to the competition, the Foreign Policy Association posts online reading material containing information on topics that students will be tested on.

"One of the things you can be

assured of is that the questions will come from the material provided. However, there are extensive amounts of material to read. The questions are very specific, and also very difficult," Weissman said.

The Foreign Policy Association posted a downloadable document on their Web site that featured links containing information about the topics of each round.

The team prepared less than two weeks for the competition.

"We got the information for the competition about nine days

before the competition," Young said. "We completely did not expect to win."

Regardless of their success, the team enjoyed the experience.

"I thought that it was rather relaxing and casual because I didn't really aim on trying to win. I just felt like competing because it was fun," Leung said.

"I did it because I wanted to force myself to pay attention to current events," Zheng said.

The team will meet weekly to prepare for the national competition.

## Students' Work Featured in TriBeCa Photo Contest

By HYEMIN YI

Ten students from the 10-technology Photography and 5-technology Digital Photography classes were honored for a photography contest held by developers Greg Rechler and Michell Rechler of R Squared Real Estate Partners at 34 Leonard Sales Gallery on December 16, 2008. Their photographs were all displayed in an exhibit called "TriBeCa: A Neighborhood Retrospective by Stuyvesant High School," which was

open to the public from December 16 to Saturday, January 10.

The contest allowed students to submit up to one black-and-white and one color photo. The one requirement was that they had to be shot in the TriBeCa area.

The works featured were "New Jersey Gold Coast" by senior Philip Kraus, "TriBeCa Street" by senior Jack Fleming, "Car Passing Garage" by senior Paul Han, "Building" by junior Alberto Arias, "Graffiti Luxury

Loft Sign" by senior Michael Ng, "Couple Playing Instruments with Dogs" by senior Maria Perunovic, "Market Flowers" by senior Emily Koenig, "Decaying Statue" by senior Ashley Seenuauth, "Woman with Boy" by junior Steven Arroyo, and "Park Bench" by junior Mun Cheng (Rebecca) Kwan.

In addition to having their work displayed, the top three students, Kraus, Fleming and Han, were each awarded a new digital single-lens reflex camera.

The first place winner, "New Jersey Gold Coast" by Kraus, was described by judge and local architectural and view photographer Ed Lederman as "very colorful, good subject matter, had a professional yet artsy look to it. It was immediately in the top 10," he said. The color photo, which was mostly taken up by water, with the bright New Jersey coast visible on the top, was taken at night.

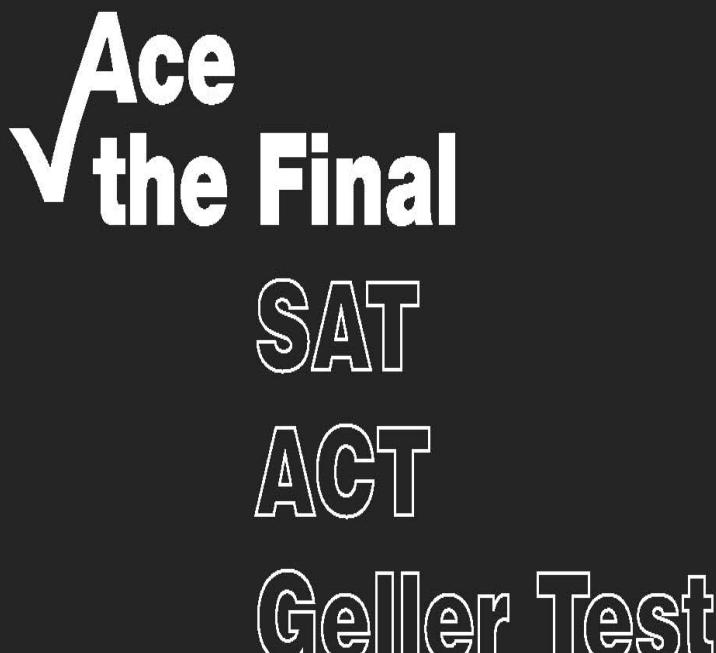
"TriBeCa Street" by Fleming is a black-and-white photo "shot in the first two weeks of

school," Fleming said. The photo was taken on Jay Street and centers on buildings reflected in a puddle. Han's "Car Passing Garage," another black-and-white, shows cars rushing past a parking lot, with the frame cut off just below a sign reading "Fast."

"Having a client in mind when I was shooting made me take more time with each shot," Kraus said.

"I didn't go with any expectations," Lederman said. "It was a pleasant surprise."

## ADVERTISEMENTS



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National Olympiad CompetitionsBiology Olympiad (including AP Biology)

September 14 ~ mid-February

20 sessions. Sunday 3-6pm.

Chemistry Olympiad (including AP Chemistry)

September 14 ~ late February

20 sessions. Sunday 3-6pm.

Physics Olympiad (including AP Physics B & C)

September 14 ~ late February

20 sessions. Sunday 3-6pm.

AMC 10 & AMC 12

Class begins the second week of September.

SAT II – Preparation for the June 2009 SAT II exams

SAT II Biology Starts October 4. Saturday 4-6pm.

SAT II Chemistry Starts October 4. Saturday 2-4pm.

SAT II Math IIC (including Pre-Calculus)

Starts October 4. Saturday 12-2pm.

SAT II Physics, U.S. History, World History, Spanish, and English Literature

Individual tutoring sessions can be scheduled. Recommended frequency and length is 1 hour per week

SAT I – Saturday classes

SAT I students may come in to take a diagnostic exam any Sunday between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M. They must arrive at the academy between these hours in order to finish the exam – which takes 3 hours and 45 minutes – before the academy closes. Students must bring their own calculator.

9th-10th: September 13 ~ late January (20 weeks)

11th: Will prepare for the Jan 2009 exam. September 13 ~ late January (20 weeks)

12th: Will prepare for the Dec 2008 exam. September 13 ~ late November (13 weeks)

Saturday Morning – Reading, Writing, and Math

9am-1:30pm. 5 levels (5 classes).

Saturday Evening – Reading, Writing, and Math

3pm-7:30pm. 2 levels (2 classes).

SAT I – Weekday classes

English

Reading and Writing: 6-8 pm

Tuesday/Thursday Group Starts September 16.

Wednesday and Friday Group Starts September 17.

Mathematics

Math A: Starts September 17

Wednesday 4:30-6pm.

Math B: Starts September 17

Friday 4:30-6pm.

SAT I Math: Starts September 17

Friday 8-9:30pm.

# Features

By DANIELLE OBERDIER  
and AVA WOYCHUK-MLINAC

Located 15 minutes away from any subway stop in the Lower East Side, Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) is a public high school where 500 to 600 students go to school. However

**"We hug and eat cupcakes with teachers, we have open conversations about sex, drugs, and rock and roll."**

—Nori Zimmer,  
BHSEC sophomore

Bard is not a normal high school. After attending BHSEC for four years, students graduate with an Associate in the Arts degree (an undergraduate degree that can be earned in most colleges after completing two years) as well as a high school diploma.

## Bard High School: Finding College Early

BHSEC was the first school founded by the Gates Foundation's Early College Initiative that was created to give more high school students the opportunity of college education. "I feel relieved about the two years of college credit because that means I can get out of two years of tuition," BHSEC sophomore Nomi Zimmer said.

However, not all students view their college credit in the same way. BHSEC junior Noa Bendit-Schtull thinks that it is "fantastic that I will be able to save two years of my life and get into the 'real world' faster. Being able to take challenging college level courses right at your high school is an incredible opportunity. It's challenging and exciting," she said. However Bendit-Schtull is unsure if she will use her college credit and enter college as a junior.

BHSEC does not offer Advanced Placement courses and its courses are not geared towards the Regents. It has a very strong humanities curriculum. "There are social sciences for everyone—they range from Creative Writing to Microeconomics to Modern China," Bendit-Schtull said. Other classes include Chinese calligraphy, drum circle, story telling and rock ensemble. The four languages offered are Chinese, Latin, French and Spanish.

BHSEC's application process is multi-faceted. The requirements for matching BHSEC's "Admissions Profile" include an above 85 Grade Point Average, a score of at least a 3 or 4 on the city-wide math and writing ex-

ams if applicable (private school applicants haven't necessarily taken such exams), and no more than 10 unexcused absences for the entire eighth grade school year. Students fulfilling these requirements are eligible to enter into BHSEC's admissions process which consists of a writing and math examination, completion of BHSEC's own admission form, and for those who perform well in both these areas, an interview.

After having been admitted, some students are surprised to find that BHSEC has a more open environment than other high schools. "We hug and eat cupcakes with teachers, we have open conversations about sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Everyone is very open-minded, even when it comes to non-liberals," Zimmer said. "Bring up a topic and you'll have five people to duke it out with."

BHSEC teachers are well qualified in their respective studies. Fourteen out of 28 teachers listed on the school's Web site have PhDs and a large number have graduated from well known universities and colleges such as Yale University, Northwestern University, New York University, Oberlin College and Columbia University.

Like many schools strong in the humanities, BHSEC has a student population in which 70 percent of the students are female. Some students are bothered while others view it in a positive light. "It's less of a distraction for me and my schoolwork," BHSEC junior Chelsea Sue said. "However my friends find it difficult to

get boyfriends seeing as how (this is a rough estimate) 80 percent are taken, 10 percent are gay, five percent are shorter than you and five percent are just plain stupid."

Some students think that the girl to guy ratio affects the way genders act both academically and socially. "Guys are nicer and less abrasive when they're constantly surrounded by females," Zimmer said. "It's kind of a role reversal, with girls being the tough ones and guys getting angry over sexism directed at them."

Regardless of the way in which it is divided, the BHSEC community is an active one. Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities such as the Asian Culture Club, the Animal Rights Club, the Feminist Club and the school newspaper The Bardvark.

Some Stuyvesant students view BHSEC's two years of college credit as being pointless. "When I first heard about the whole two years of college I thought that was pretty cool, but it seems like most colleges don't even accept these as credits so it ends up being a bit of waste," Stuyvesant junior Rhianon Mancinelli said.

Others feel that Stuyvesant students deserve the college credit as much as the BHSEC students if not more. "Bard is a small school, so it must have a much higher ratio of teachers to students than Stuy. It's gotta be easier to do most things in such a supportive environment, whereas in Stuy, even if a teacher tries to help, they've got 200+ other

kids on their hands," Stuyvesant junior Nisa Beceriklisoy said. BHSEC offers students several

**"Being able to take challenging college level courses right at your high school is an incredible opportunity. It's challenging and exciting."**

—Noa Bendit-Schtull,  
BHSEC junior

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# Editorials

## STAFF EDITORIAL

### In Memory of Ava Hecht

It is sad but inevitable that we, at some point in our lives, must learn how to bury a friend. If we are lucky, that lesson comes much later in life. Unfortunately, that is often not the case. The Stuyvesant community was confronted by an unexpected tragedy. It is impossible to try and make sense of what happened to Ava Hecht, who was a member of the Spectator's editorial board, and a classmate and friend to us all.

Ava left a mark on the Stuyvesant community. Whether she was tracking down props for the

atrical productions, lending her voice to the chorus or rallying students to shut down Guantanamo Bay, we all felt her presence. The news cast a shadow over the school that Friday, and came as a shock to us all. We struggled together to overcome our surprise, our grief and our fears.

She was known for her Doc Martins, her mischievous smile and her affinity for concerts with mosh pits. She could talk to anyone about anything. She was incredibly personable, and was passionate about the things she cared about. Ava had a deep con-

cern for the world around her, which she applied to her subversive cartoons and comic strips.

It's impossible to say where Ava was headed—she was a talented artist, writer and student. Indeed, the only thing more tragic than the death of a friend is the death of a friend with her whole life ahead of her. However, we can take some comfort in the poems she wrote, the comics she created and the fact that though her life was unfairly short, it was full.

### Ava's College Essay

*with permission from her family*

7:02 AM. Stand clear of the closing doors. As the Long Island Railroad rushes past the Bayside station, I look out the window at the colorful blur that makes up Queens. I'm on my way to school, and I have twenty-five minutes before I reach Penn Station, so I pull out my iPod and untangle the earphones. I scroll through my music, looking at the seemingly never ending list of classical, indie pop, krautrock, punk, jazz, opera, cabaret, ska, choral, reggae, a cappella, techno, classic rock, pop, funk, folk... It's too difficult to choose only one artist. Instead, I scroll down to the bottom of the screen and press the shuffle button.

The first song that comes on is "Waiting Room" by Fugazi. Fugazi is a punk band, and their music is loud and fast and has a message. I silently mouth the words to myself. "...but I don't sit idly by/I'm planning for a big surprise/I'm gonna fight for what I wanna be..." The lyrics take me back to the first time I heard the song, at the beginning of my junior year. At that time, a series of new school policies had led to the creation of Stuywatch, an online forum which discussed ways to protect students' rights. Troubled by the school's new regulations, I became very involved. As Fugazi's

raw guitar riffs continuously play, I remember the editorial cartoons I published in the school newspaper, hoping to inspire students to make a difference. Though the majority of the student body remained apathetic, it didn't deter my involvement.

The song changes suddenly, bringing me sharply out of my daydream. The shuffle moves to Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat. I've played this piece on the piano before, and my fingers absentmindedly move over an imaginary keyboard. Many people my age don't like classical music, but I don't understand why. It's hard to imagine anyone listening to this nocturne and not falling in love with its calming, tender melody. However, too many of my peers often dismiss things that aren't contemporary. I'm reminded of my friend, who once refused to watch Casablanca—a timeless classic—simply because it was filmed in black and white. She was convinced that a movie made in the 1940s couldn't possibly have any relevance to her in the twenty-first century. I persuaded her to watch it. She ended up loving it.

As the nocturne's final chord sounds, the music switches to Charlie Parker's "A Night in Tunisia." As the intricate saxophone solo washes over to me, it's easy to

forget that much of what I'm listening to is improvised. The ability to create something through improvisation fascinates me. When I cook, I seldom follow recipes. Instead, I'll see what food is in the kitchen and simply start cooking, making it up as I go, in the same way that jazz musicians play variations on a basic theme.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the next and final stop will be Penn Station. Please take this time to gather all personal belongings..." At the sound of the conductor's voice, I turn my iPod off and fold up the earphones. Before I put it back in my schoolbag, I take one last look through my playlist. There are 2,753 songs comprising a variety of genres. People are sometimes amazed by the diversity of my music, unable to believe that the same person who listens to punk rock can also listen to opera, folk, and reggae. But people who know me well are not surprised, because my diversity extends far beyond my musical tastes. While it's true that I like some songs more than others, there's almost always something in the music that I can relate to. At a glance, my iPod may seem like it contains everything one could possibly imagine. But in my mind, there's always room to add a few new songs.

## The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper



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of the  
Student  
Body"

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## The Spectator

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### FOR THE RECORD

- In Issue 8, the number of teams who achieved first place in Policy Debate was misstated in "Speech & Debate Team Wins Villiger." The team of senior Daniel Goldstern and junior Anna Gordan tied with three other Stuyvesant teams.
- In "Controversy Over Senior 90s Day," there should have been a disclaimer stating that Christopher Zhao was not involved in the writing or editing of the article.
- The photo credit for "My Holiday Bailout" was incorrect. Stephanie London took the photo.
- Stuyvesant was misspelled in "Racism Without Racists."
- In "Unearthed from the Slushpile: The Virgins," Donald Cumming's surname was incorrectly spelled.
- In the Sports Calendar, it should have read Boys' Swimming, not Girls' Swimming.
- In "High School Musical 4: The Penguin Story," Silvanna Choy's first name was misspelled.



AVA  
NOTHING I DRAW  
CAN CAPTURE  
WHAT AN  
AMAZING EDITOR,  
FRIEND, AND  
PERSON YOU  
WERE. I WILL  
MISS YOU  
DEEPLY AND  
YOU WILL LIVE ON  
IN ALL OF OUR  
HEARTS.  
Alicia Bonham



# Reflections

**B**eauty, grace, talent, benevolence, Ava had it all. She had this wonderfully unique smile that warmed me up whenever I saw her walking into Ms. Hall's eighth period chorus. She welcomed me with open arms and really made it easy for me to get adjusted. She was always so kind and wonderful in that way. She always wanted to know how I was doing, how I felt, and how my weekend was, and she was always telling me about her. I found out a lot about her that way: the music she liked, the people she hung out with, and the crazy things she'd do. I never learned what she liked to eat, though. I wish I knew, because she always took some part of my food during chorus, and then I could have gotten my mom to make me something she would have really liked.

In chorus the day we found out, we sang Spaseniye

Sodelal, an intense Russian piece that she loved so much, in her memory. Through my tears, I felt like I could see Ava sitting in front of me, saying, "Stop crying, Ray. What the hecht? Sing already." It was something I always liked her to hear her say, because it was so damn funny. And then she smiled her "Ava-esque" smile that brought me back to the first time I came into chorus. She was there singing with us that day, her voice shining through like it always did.

In our hectic (hecht-ic) lives, we have to take a step back and look at what we have, and who we love, and who loves us. Ava, I hope you know that you'll always be here in my heart, and whenever I sing, you'll be singing right next to me. Rock on and keep smiling that gorgeous smile.

Forever yours,  
Ray Ryan Min, ('10)

## A remembrance of Ava Hecht

Whenever Ava recited a poem for my class, she closed her eyes and seemed to draw the words up out of her very core. She loved poetry deeply, authentically. She'd stand in the front of the room in her Doc Martins and her wallet chain and let the fearless words of her poetic idols - Anne Sexton, Allen Ginsberg - flow through her. She often came up to chat after the bell, and as she did she would roll her ankle to the side, cock her head, and look up at me with those big, imploring eyes. She was easy to say yes to, easy to recommend, easy to teach.

One of Auden's most famous poems begins with the line "Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone." Devastated by loss, the poet rejects the comforts of the world: "The stars are not wanted now; put out every one; / Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun; / Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood. / For nothing now can ever come to any good." I felt that way this morning, Monday, December 12th, as I walked over the bridge. Ava was such a delight - so lively, so joyful, so encouraging to her classmates - that I did not want to go to school and find her absent.

My one comfort, my one reason not to stop all those clocks, is that Ava's short life had real meaning. She leaves behind countless poems, drawings, stories, essays, paintings, and compositions. She wrote some of the warmest, most effusive sharing day notes I've seen, and she reached out ceaselessly to the people around her. She adored her family, and she and her sister Elena enjoyed one of fate's great gifts: they were sisters who were also, amazingly, the best of friends. Ava was quotable and democratic, and as a result almost everyone who has ever met her has some funny story to tell. I am grateful to have taught her.

—Emily Moore, English Teacher

Sodelal, an intense Russian piece that she loved so much, in her memory. Through my tears, I felt like I could see Ava sitting in front of me, saying, "Stop crying, Ray. What the hecht? Sing already." It was something I always liked her to hear her say, because it was so damn funny. And then she smiled her "Ava-esque" smile that brought me back to the first time I came into chorus. She was there singing with us that day, her voice shining through like it always did.

In our hectic (hecht-ic) lives, we have to take a step back and look at what we have, and who we love, and who loves us. Ava, I hope you know that you'll always be here in my heart, and whenever I sing, you'll be singing right next to me. Rock on and keep smiling that gorgeous smile.

Forever yours,  
Ray Ryan Min, ('10)

## Art by Ava Hecht



I'm Arabella Uhry, a 7th grader at The Ethical Culture-Fieldston School, and an elite youth fencer. I obviously did not know Ava at Stuy but I knew Ava well from The Peter Westbrook Foundation (PWF), a fencing foundation that we were both members of. Ava was one of the nicest people I have ever met. She was kind, friendly, and such a wonderful person. I will never forget her. She had a smile and a laugh for everyone at PWF, and I am sure she did at Stuy as well. I hope her lasting legacy will be what a terrific person she was, and what a wonderful role model for someone like me, who is almost six years younger than she was.

My deepest condolences to Ava's family and the whole community at Stuyvesant High School.

En garde, Ava!  
Arabella Uhry,  
The Ethical Culture-Fieldston School, ('14)

I only knew her first name, not her last, But Ava brought a sparkle to the day. She must have been too lively to stay. The time we spent together went too fast. We only shared one period - chorus class She always talked and liked to have a say We sang her song - Manchai Puito - that day We had a glimpse of her, and then she passed. She lived life to its full and loved to be She took each day and gave it a new spin She had energy you could almost see A colorful and vibrant Harlequin She moved on, leaving us behind to see This is the end, and where we must begin.

—Esme Cribb, ('12)

## To the friends and teachers of Ava Hecht:

We were all so blessed to have known Ava. May Ava's light always shine on you. Please keep her spirit alive. Live, love, and laugh in honor of Ava. Smile when you think of her originality, her sense of humor, her creativity, and her warmth.

I hope that you will always remember the joy of being a part of Ava's life.

My love is eternally with her,  
Lois, a lifelong friend

In many ways, it feels strange to be submitting this to The Spectator for publication. After all, I am currently in college, no longer a student at Stuyvesant. However, the main reason that this feels strange is that I didn't know Ava very well. I certainly considered her a friend, but there were others with whom I was closer, and others with whom she was closer. And yet, I feel compelled to write.

Anyone in the same room as Ava could see that she had

a beautiful energy. She was constantly smiling, and approached every activity with enthusiasm. To Ava, everyone was a friend, and everyone was treated as such. This is why I have felt such an urge to write because Ava was able to touch even those who did not know her. I can remember several times when I felt overwhelmed, or anxious, or just plain sad, and Ava's bubble smile as she entered the chorus room would lift my spirits.

And so, I've written this blurb, this all too short pas-

sage, as a memorial for a truly remarkable young woman. I'm sorry for any space that has been taken up that could have been filled with a personal anecdote, by someone who truly knew her. However, I hope that my words have served the purpose for which I wrote them - Ava, we all miss you, and we will always remember you, even those of us who can only wish that we'd known you better.

With deepest sympathies,  
Miles Purinton, ('08)

I am thinking of the first time I met Ava, a puny little eighth grader at her sister Elena's graduation. Elena, who had been my student, ran up to me, beaming, in her cap and gown. "This is my little sister," Elena said, and Ava looked sheepish in the way that only little sisters being embarrassed by their big sisters can. "She's coming to Stuyvesant, so you and the English Department have to take care of her."

I'm thinking about seeing Ava in the halls during her freshman and sophomore years, before I got to work with her, when she'd always stop to say hi to me. On her own now, she was no longer sheepish, and we developed one of those sustaining hallway friendships.

I'm thinking about Ava in Creative Nonfiction, in Room 615A—thinking about her writing, her essays about her

sister, her father, and her family, about traveling, about art, and about herself. She was so engaged in our work, and she believed strongly that writing mattered.

And I'm remembering how I'd get pissed off sometimes when she doodled in her notebook during class. (Imagine: drawing during a writing workshop. Unthinkable!) But I knew that her art sustained her. (She once told me that a sure-fire way to know how hard a particular essay was for her to write was to count the number of doodled scraps of paper on her desk at home.) And on some days she was chatty in class and I'd hassle her about it. We teachers get sensitive about those things, and we develop strategies for spotting the pairs of students most likely to chat. The thing about Ava was she had no pattern, was not part of

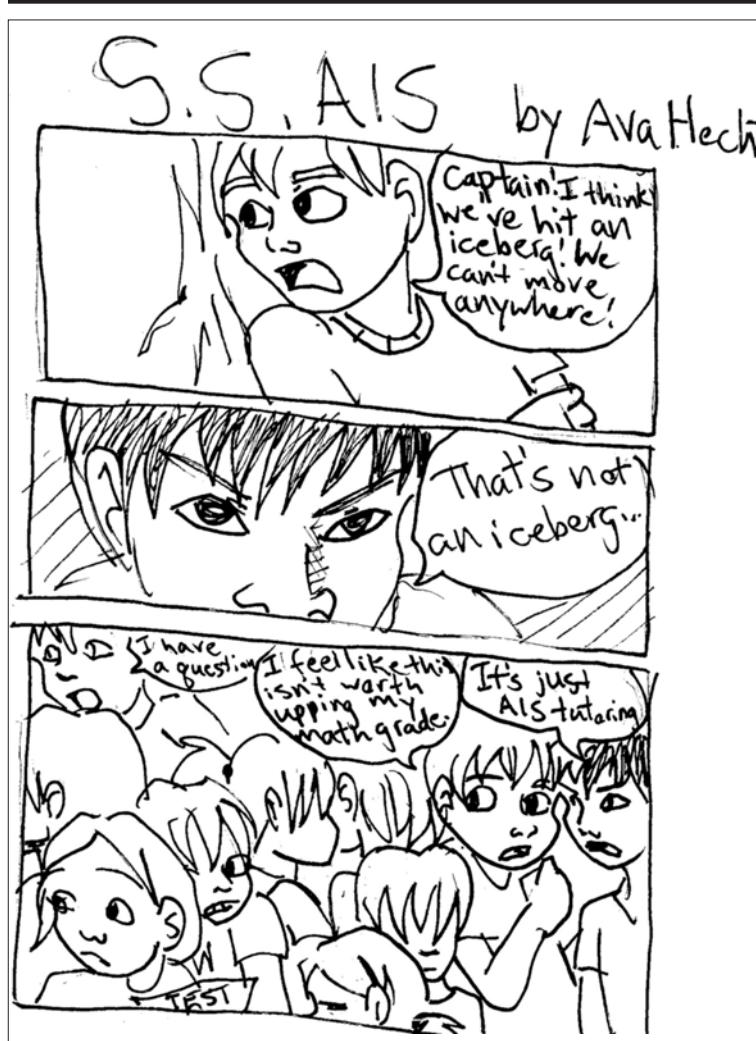
a permanent chatty pair; Ava could chat with anyone, and she could get anyone to chat with her.

So I gave up.

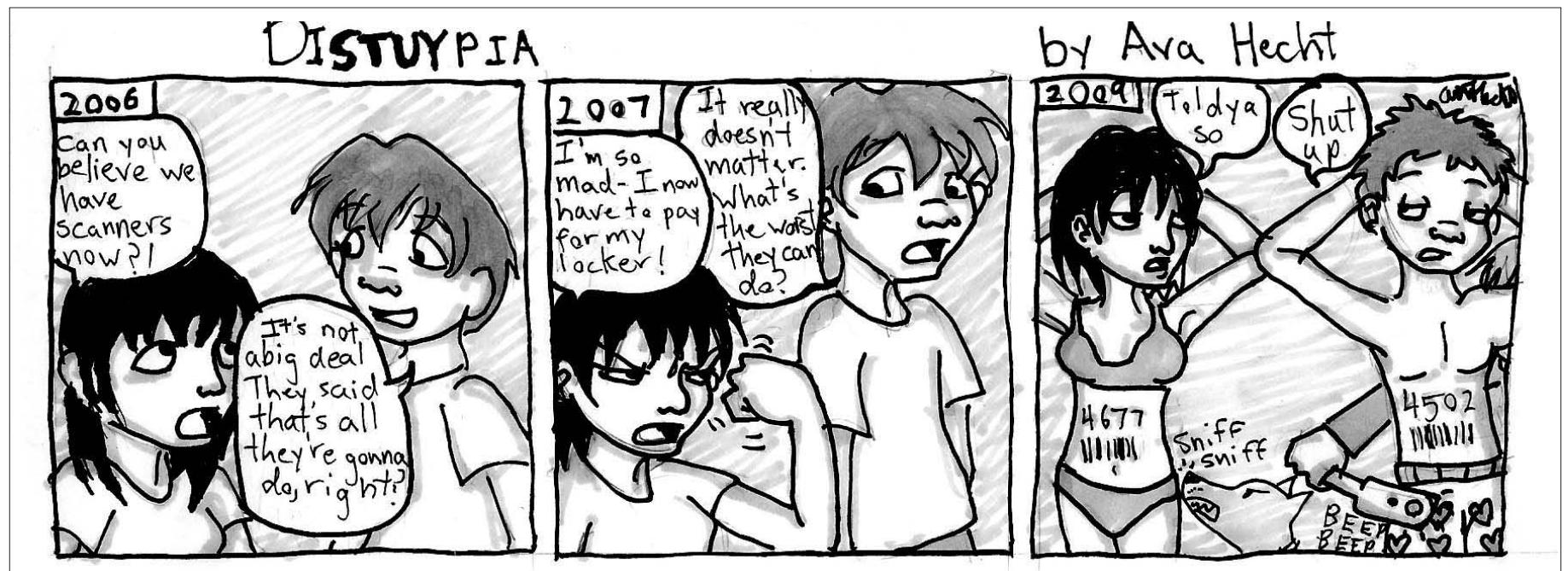
Besides, how could you stop someone like Ava, who wanted to chat, from chatting? How could you stop someone like Ava, who wanted to draw, from drawing? How could you stop her from writing, which she also deeply loved—she took all of the creative writing classes here at Stuyvesant.

So I got to write with her for a semester, and while I'm not sure if I or the English Department took care of her the way Elena asked us to, I know she was taken care of here. I know this place sustained her and that she made her life among us each day.

—Jonathan Weil, English Teacher



# Reflections



How should one live when faced with death? Should she stay on all tongues, in every last breath? Always next door, in the infinite breadth Sempiternal scope and "always" of death? Or should one press on, with work as their guide— Thoughts just too painful, and thus nudged aside. But somewhere, you know, she'll always reside In all your dark corners and in each turning tide. In silence we'll weep. In solidarity we'll stand. When one of us wavers, there will be bracing hands: Not one, not many, but thousands, but more We'll stand many hours at death's ugly door.

How long? Not sure. But this I'll assume:  
If for a moment she returned to this very room  
We'd look up, and yes, we'd adore  
But she was Ava. Just Ava. Not anything more.

She was young and joyous, soulful and great  
And we can (should) curse the antics of fate  
But grieve what you knew. Do not mourn what  
you missed.  
Just think of her kindly. Those thoughts will persist.

How should we live when faced with death?  
Here: hold her forever in thoughts, that eternal  
breadth.  
Have her linger behind words and live between  
breaths  
Then she will never, never be held by death.

—Jack Fleming, ('09)

There are just not enough words in the English language to describe Ava. She was a bundle of joy, and offered nothing but smiles and happiness to anyone who crossed her path. She greeted everyone, whether just a classmate or a close friend, with a warm hug. We should all learn from Ava to appreciate life and to treat everyone with love. Ava thought positively about everything that came her way. She just wanted to be happy and did the exact thing that made her feel that way: Art. Ava had the most amazing and inspiring ideas when it came to art. I remember one particular portfolio piece of hers which reflected the idea of texture. She actually drew texture, and I could feel it. But that was not where it stopped: her jewelry was art. Her necklace consisted of a Master Lock, and her earrings were safety pins. Her clothes were art, as well. I can still picture her wearing this baby blue shirt with a comic

bubble on it. It was the most fascinating shirt I had ever seen.

Ava was so involved with Stuy, and I admire that about her. Not only was she a great fencer, but she was also a huge part of the Stuy Theatre Community. I remember her staying afterschool one day to make a water bottle pyramid for Urinetown. She was literally ready to go through trashcans to find empty water bottles. She even thought about making the entire cast and crew drink Poland Spring water. I could possibly go on for pages with Ava memories, but I am sure everyone has their own. Ava touched us all, each person in a unique way. Rest in Peace, Ava, because that is just what you deserve after all the happiness you gave to the world – especially my world.

—Manpreet Kaur, ('09)

To say that Ava was an active and beloved member of Stuyvesant High School is somewhat of an understatement. She was a part of Stuy in the actual structure of our school. She will be a missing piece of our school. Every time I am in the props closet, every time I am back stage, with every old-fashioned typewriter or rolling chair I see, I will think of you, Ava. Every time I see rope, every time I listen to ska, every squatter I see, every time I wear black, I will think of you, Ava. In death and in life you will be a part of me. In memory and in thought you will be a part of me, because of the memories of you that have seeped into my lifestyle. Because every second I see our friends, every time your not on the 3-5 up escalator, every time I can't bite your necklace, and every time you're too short to sit on, I will cry.

I will cry in your memory, and I will cry to remember. I can't be without you. I can't succeed without you in my life. But for you I will carry on. I will continue in my life, but I will never forget you, Ava. I will never let myself forget you.

I will always love you, Ava Hecht.

Your most amazoniest amazon,  
Your most cluelessest cluelesser,  
Bess Judd, ('11)

Ava, I miss you so much. I need you, love. Who's going to laugh at my comics, even when they suck? Who's going to eat all my cookies, and then hoard their candy? Who's going to cheer for me when I finally manage to do something I'm afraid of? Who's going to tell me I'm awesome and pretty and that they love me? Who's going to scream my name on escalators and grab at my hand so that we both almost fall? Who's going to make me feel better about

procrastinating so long because they've done the exact same thing? Who's going to squeal when I poke them and knock me off of library chairs and be online at midnight when I need to talk? Who's going to hug me so tight that even the worst day seems amazing?

I love you Ava, and I'm really glad I always told you that. Look out for us, ok?

Your lovely conquei,  
Simone-Marie Feigenbaum,  
('09)

Ava. The last thing we want you to be is Ava-Hecht-who-died. We want you to be remembered like an old-school celebrity, like Benjamin Franklin. We remember what you did with your life, instead of your death. Already, most people can't help but smile as they remember the little things you did that made up a life, instead of its tragic ending. That's what is special about you. That day, we lost someone very beautiful, but we were already so lucky that a person like you existed in the first place.

Your potential was electrifying. Trying to understand how much you could have done is like trying to contemplate a sheet of paper folded over 800 times. We know that with your kind of stuff, you're not going to give up because of

a little thing like death. There are still people walking around who want to dedicate songs, paintings, photographs, computer programs, whole galleries, and whole galaxies, to you. All those other creatures and people you could have helped, don't worry, we'll help them for you. If you still can't have artistic visions, we're more than happy to let you share some of ours. You've already teamed up with us and injected awesomeness into our brains. Are we not worthy? No, everyone was worthy to you.

And the best part: while we heal and admire and give out too much information, sometimes our brains will reward us with a little mini-Ava, putting her hand to her chest and saying, "Aw, that's great. You guys are the best."

—Liz Sarapata, ('09)

Hey, Ava.

I keep trying to think of what to say, and every time I think all I can come up with is memories. I can't think of anything but memories, because I can't get my head around the idea of you not being here. I can't pinpoint the last time I saw you, although I've been trying, because you were always there. Mornings all throughout this semester, you would walk in talking about classes or portfolios or how you wanted to get a Mohawk (it would have been awesome and badass, apart from just looking good), or the "chastity belt for your neck" (I'm pretty sure I told you, but I thought that was rather brilliant as well - I've never seen such a pretty lock).

So here I lay out memories, because I cannot find my emotions. I don't miss you yet, because I can't possibly imagine that you're gone. And if you haven't gone anywhere, then what is there to miss? I'll see you tomorrow morning, coming in just before the warning bell, stopping to brighten our day before hurrying off to get to your locker before class—that's what my mind keeps telling me. I'm not quite sure what'll happen when it realizes otherwise.

There are a ton more things to say, but I don't know how to say them, so I'll end with this. You have my love, my admiration, my appreciation.

Thank you for everything.  
Julia Sterling, ('09)



# Reflections

## Penn Station

Over winter break, we were going to meet up at Penn Station so that we could take the subway to Brooklyn together. Something came up and you ended up not being able to go. It would have been the last time I saw you. But I do not see this last experience as having been lost. I believe that it simply took place a few months earlier, when we ran into each other in Penn Station, completely by chance. I heard you call my name, and then this little cannonball in a bright blue shirt slammed into me, wrapping me in a joyful hug. You were waiting with your friends down by the LIRR, people I didn't know, but you immediately

introduced them to me and invited me to stay, since I was waiting for a train as well. I was surprised by the way you treated me, speaking with complete trust and sincerity, and directly meeting my eyes. I felt as if I was talking to a close friend who I had known for many years; but technically, we only knew each other through a mutual friend. When we hugged goodbye and I walked away, I felt infused with the warmth of being appreciated and loved. That short encounter with you has helped and inspired me ever since. I feel like you taught me a lesson, Ava. I promise to never forget it.

—Bryce Livingston

## To my darling Ava,

We used to throw around the phrase "What would you do without me?" Now here I am, without you, and I don't really know what to do. I can't even understand how it is possible that someone so full of life, with that adorable smile, could be gone forever. All the memories I have of our many adventures together are still so vivid. I can't even imagine Stuyvesant without you...all our gossip sessions during fencing exercises, the rushed conversations in the hallways, taking pictures (many of which you successfully hid from...you knew me too well), demonstrating your flexibility in the park, singing karaoke until we were beyond hoarse, pole dancing in the subway trains, our team ice-cream sessions, the 'orgasmic' (as you would always say) hugs, chance encounters with strangers (Remember the man who flashed us? You couldn't stop laughing.), and of course, playfully arguing over SING!. You made high school (and some Saturday morning workouts) an amazing experience. I'd look forward to practice just so that I could talk to you again. I am so grateful for the time that I got to share with you.

You are such a special person: a perfect friend who always listened to me whenever I needed someone, a talented artist (I was in awe every time you showed me another one of your comics or even 'scribbles.'), and a joy to be around. We always had so much fun together. It's not fair that I can't use the present tense anymore, or see your screen name pop up on my computer ever again. I don't remember the last time we talked or even the last thing I said to you, but I hope you know how much you meant to me and how much I love you.

Always,  
Anais Berland ('08)

## Show That Spirit!!! by Ava Hecht

Following the popular Senior Beard Week—the SV strives to create even more fulfilled Spirit Days...



Ava Hecht was a beloved and integral member of the Chamber Chorus for the last three and a half years. Her joyful presence, effervescence, beautiful voice, and commitment, were vital to the chorus.

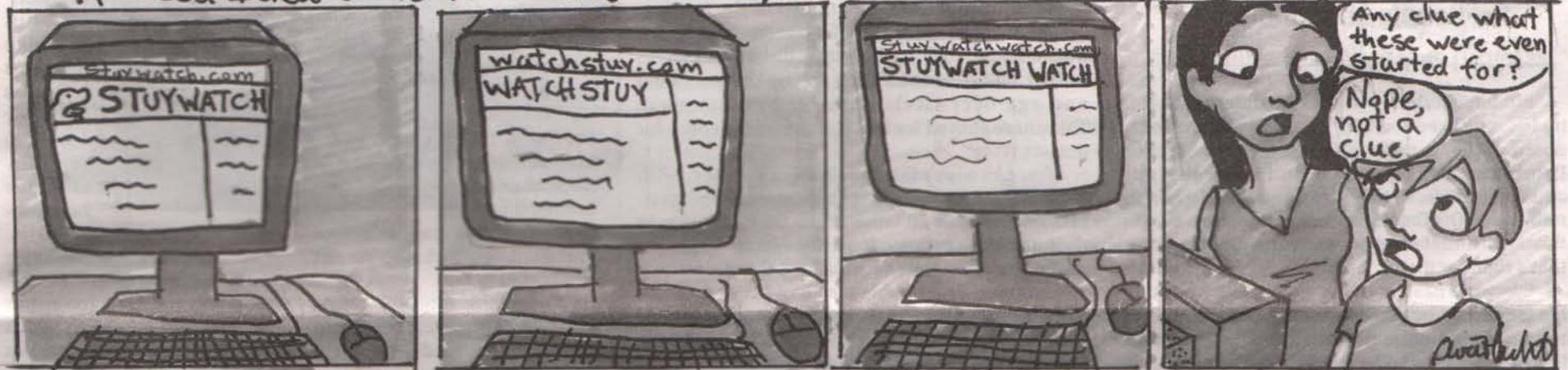
Ava was "SPARKLE," always twinkling. We are sure that this sweet, gentle girl is bringing that brilliance to the other angels. Her "CHAIR" in the soprano section will never be filled.

The grief we all feel is incalculable. Our thoughts and prayers are with her and her family.

We love you, Ava.

—Holly Hall, Liliya Shamazov, and the Stuyvesant Choruses

## A Good Idea Gone To Waste by Ava Hecht



In my eight years of knowing her, Ava has been the most alive person I've ever had the pleasure of calling my friend. I refuse to use the past perfect tense in describing her; it fits with neither the unbroken persona she's left behind nor does it yet reflect how I consciously think of her. She is not, as a Latin teacher might say, a "completed action." I have not erased her phone number from my cell phone, nor do I intend to until I really, truly feel that she's not going to appreciate a call every once in a while. I won't stop writing on her Facebook wall, because I see her profile picture right there, making an utterly ridiculous face at anyone who dares to say she is not alive. "Oh really?" she says, "Do you, like, honestly think that I'm gone or something? Elena and I are right here, looking like the completely insane and insanely happy people we are." She's not a "completed action," because my friends and I still talk about her in the present and will far into the future, even if we can't see her grow any further.

My dad woke me up Friday morning, telling me to check my email because something had happened to Ava. In my inbox was a note from my mom, a forwarded letter announcing the funeral's time. I quickly checked Facebook; nothing was amiss. She had a fresh status from Tuesday, nobody had posted anything

out of the ordinary, and the box under her picture announced "Ole!, Ole!, Ole!, Ole!, Ole!" I called my mom and said very matter-of-factly, "Mom, don't believe it, Ava's fine. Don't worry. It can't be true if it's not on Facebook." I then proceeded to futz around with Photoshop and dabble in my English homework for a few hours until the reality of what had occurred began to sink in.

I think this is the weirdest thing about Ava being "dead." What does that even mean? Even now, after I've attended her funeral, made a Shiva call, cried more than a few times, seen articles about her "death," I still don't really feel any different about her existence. I still write on her wall because she still seems alive to me. I've sort of come to the conclusion that even though her body is buried and I'm not comfortable thinking of her in some sort of "heaven" or "other side," her soul (to me) is very much contained in her Facebook: her favorite music, a picture of her on St. Mark's Place posing behind a table covered in bongs and phallic objects, the "Cows + Politics = <3" group, and her About Me: "In Soviet Russia, table mangoes you." It's just too random and quirky to be a dead person's Facebook. I refuse to believe that she won't respond to my posts on her wall, because come on. She's right there!

This is what I posted on her

wall the other night, because I can't really talk about Ava without talking to her (at least for the moment). Pardon the rambling and the terrible overuse of "like"; I can't really help it when I'm talking to her:

"Hahaha today your sister reminded me of the time that we went to the Tartan Day Parade, like 2007, was it? Maybe 2006. Anyway, I had wanted to go wave my new enormous Scottish flag (even though I wasn't Scottish, and neither were you), and I invited like ALL of my friends to come. Like seriously, I made SUCH an effort for people to come with me to the parade but I think you ended up being the only person who was like "Oh sure, why not?". It was March, and it was hailing and sleeting and the weather was godawful, and I didn't have gloves and my fingers were numb within 30 seconds of being outside, but we screamed so loud and we used the flag as a cape and we had so much fun, no matter how soaked and freezing we were."

"And then we went to the MoMA afterwards. I just found the pictures from that. I wish I'd taken more of you... God, I feel stupid now. They all came out shitty, but at least I could have tried to take some of you. I can only find one with you in it, and you're just...a reflection. I feel so stupid now."

"I can't even figure out how to rotate it."

"Now I'm feeling bad about not taking more pictures of you and crying about that. It's silly, but ugh. It's the least I could have done, no?"

"I read somewhere in your memorial group that you went to Die Neue Galerie in December. It makes me so happy that you got to go there. That's one of my favourite places in the city. My grandma and I go there for Sachertorte when she's feeling homesick for Vienna. I wish I could have taken you, but I'm happy you got to go with a friend."

"I wish we'd have gone to more museums, and had more conversations. I tried to say goodbye today, but I guess it didn't work. I'm sorry if I'm holding on too long. People are asking me "how close were you with her?" and it's a stupid thing to say, because we were only in school from 4th to 6th grades and the last time we saw each other was at Bye Bye Birdie, but I feel so close to you it's unbelievable."

"And your sister and mother were talking about how you would talk about me fondly, and I'm so sorry, I'm so so, so sorry I didn't see you more often or call more often or ask how you were more often. I really care about you, about how your apps are going. I wish I could have been a bigger part of your life. I'm reading all these things people are posting about your adventures on St. Mark's and the concerts you went to. I feel so shitty

that I didn't know about any of those things or do them with you or talk to you about them. On Wednesday I was actually on St. Mark's. I wish I'd known that you liked hanging out there. Maybe I'd have called you or at least thought of you one last time. I'm so sorry. I feel so terrible that I wasn't as good a friend to you as you were to me. Seriously, you were the only person who came with me to the parade that day. Next time someone needs me like I needed you, I'll try to remember you and be like you to them. I'm sorry, Ava."

"I miss you so much."

"I'm just realizing that the reason I didn't take pictures of you was because I took you for granted. I'm so sorry. I'm so angry at myself for doing that. You would have been totally mystified as to why I would be angry at myself for such a little thing and you would be like "dude, it's okay, really, it's okay" but I know that I should have taken pictures of you because you were so much more valuable than that artwork."

"That's probably my favorite memory of her, just because it shows how good a friend she's been, how random and awesome she is, and how much I hate the fact that I didn't do more to make her feel loved while she really could hug me back."

—Thomas Kettig, Hunter College High School ('09)

## Reflections



**I**t still hasn't sunk in. Everything. It all seems so surreal. It's all unfair. It doesn't make sense how someone so young, so talented, so great a person, can be here one day, smiling and laughing, and gone the next.

I was not as close to Ava as some of her other friends were, and I regret that I won't have the chance to be. I can remember those semi-awkward chats in the library. Both of us would have nothing better to do during our lunch periods than sit in the library and do homework. Except she would be drawing.

It was art within art. She would joke about how lame she was, how she had nothing better to do but sit in the library and draw. Her hands moved quickly on the pad, the pen or pencil moving up and down. I would look up from my homework and see figures on the

page before I could even start my precalculus problems. I always loved reading her comics. They were always the funniest and most relevant. No other artist could draw Teitel better (or more menacing) than she did.

We'll always remember her work and her admirable personality. I knew her as a talented artist, and now as a talented writer. As her mother read her college essay during her funeral, I was captivated by its insightfulness and how the words flowed so smoothly like lines in a drawing. My friends showed me some of her "Soprano Man" comics and, while visiting her family, I got a glimpse of her earlier work, "The Adventures of Little Siggy Freud." I wish I knew her for just a little longer. Rest in peace, Ava.

—Gavin Huang, ('10)

**D**eath. As teenagers, it's not something we ponder too deeply. We hear about it in the news on Gaza, we read about it in books but hardly ever does it truly penetrate our young minds. The first time the notion of death really struck me was when I lost my friend April Lao, freshman year. I remember writing a reflection for her too, and I can't believe I'm writing another one.

When April died, what I sought most for was an explanation. Why did this happen to her? When I heard about Ava, my reaction was different—my question this time was, How did she die? For there is no explanation for why either of them died. Neither of them deserved it. I learned from April's death that life just works in mysterious ways. As corny as that sounds, it's true.

Ava was someone who brought light and vitality into the lives of others. After I gave a speech to my Spectator editors on my frustration at our lack of communication, Ava hugged me. It was a simple gesture but I appreciated her showing me that at least one person had understood my message. I knew I could always rely on Ava as Art Director. When Spec recruitments were imminent, I asked her to take charge of the Spec recruitments banner and make sure to hang it up on the second floor. She called me one morning telling me she was sick and wasn't sure if she was coming to school. I told her she didn't have to and not to worry about the banner, but when I got to school, the banner was there. Ava was never afraid to speak her mind. Although she spent the greater part of her time doodling during Spec class (a behavior of hers I found endearing and accepted as inevitable), she still followed our class discussions and voiced her beliefs with conviction.

It is frightening to realize that we will never see Ava smile again, or hear her laugh, or see her make her sheepish, apologetic face. But Ava will live on in our memories. We will never fully recover from the loss of Ava. But for now, we should take comfort in our family and friends. Stay students, remember to let yourselves actually enjoy life once in a while. Years from now, you won't remember that math test you bombed, but you might remember that Friday when you had a crazy fun night with your friends. Ava showed us how ephemeral life could be. She would want us to enjoy it.

—Melissa Chan ('09)

## Propaganda

by Ava Hecht



**A**va, as cliché as this might sound, I love and miss you more than words can ever, ever express. The first time I met you, you were a breath of fresh air to me. You never passed judgment, even after learning about who I really was. You were my educator on...well, just about everything. Who is going to reassure me that everything is going to be all right? Who is going to tell me that we're going to survive? Who is going to make fun of me for being a second-term junior? Any time you do want to talk to me, I still have the same contacts. I still expect you to respond. I still expect you to distract me from doing my homework at the most inconvenient times. I still expect us to have conversations for hours on end.

My dearest Hippie, you once

told me that Celine Dion butchered the French language and you could never understand why I liked her so much. Now you're up there rocking out on your iPod, teaching people about real music and telling them about obscure movies. I'm so jealous of all those who are now able to benefit from your infinite wisdom. Who's going to tell me about real music? About good music?

You taught me about politics and culture and about the 1960s. Every time we met up with each other, we would open up our arms and you would shout, "REPUBLICAN!" and I would respond with arms wide, "HIPPIE!" And so it went until we finally embraced. I miss your hugs. I miss you making me uncomfortable with your snarky and witty remarks! I miss your

glorious quirks and movements and ways! I want to skip school with you like we planned and just listen to you!

I honestly wished we could have talked more than we already did. I wish that you could take me around St. Mark's and I wish that you could call me by accident on one of your prank calling nights. I wish that I could see you in your Mohawk. I know how bad you wanted one, and you finally convinced me of how cool it would look. Who else could have made a convincing argument for a Mohawk using the principles of anarchy and rebellion in such an eloquent and funny way as you did?

Ava, the last time I saw you, I had to leave. You cried out, "Don't leave me!" I swear, if I could turn back time, I would never leave you. I would run

back to you in that chair and laugh with you until it was time for us to depart. And in my mind, I would never depart. I swear that I would let you sing out loud, "My Girlfriend Who Lives in Canada." Even the last line. And I wouldn't flinch, like I did when you sang it on the train.

If I could be just like you in the smallest amount, I would feel blessed. I feel selfish for saying this, but I want you back. I want you here so badly. I miss having you comment on all my political notes and shaking your head at all my wacked views on politics. I miss all of our discussions from the random and wacky and mundane, to the sincere and intellectual and thought provoking.

I just miss you. I appreciate you. I love you. I desire that you come back. I want you to come

back...if only in my dreams.

Just promise that you'll stay forever in my memories? That you'll give lessons on music and movies in your own Ava way? Somehow? I would like that.

All of what I said feels truly inadequate, but no one can ever express how you honestly left your mark on me. On others. On the world.

No description is good enough for you. Even my keyboard stutters as I try to describe the glory that was you, your heart, and your soul.

Hippie, whenever you feel like distracting me from my homework, I will be waiting. I will put everything aside just for you.

Wishing you were here,  
Chelsea Sue, Bard High School  
Early College ('10)

## Reflections

Ava—

I'm going to laugh constantly now that I've discovered your middle name is "Gang"—I sort of wish I could hunt you down right now, and tickle you and hear your squeak (you hated being tickled) and then call you Gangrene, as your middle school buddies did, and then say, "You can't be Gangrene, isn't that supposed to grow quickly?" And you would say, "Oh snap!" and get that offended look on your face that is singularly yours. I'm trying to describe it, but the adjectives just aren't coming together.

I miss you, Ava. I want to see you in the hallways and say, "Hello, darling,"—which is how we always greeted each other in the hallways—and have you cock your head to the side and say the same. I want to complain about getting low grades on English papers with you, even if you would always call me out on me tending to get good grades on papers. I want to let you read every English paper I've ever written, and let you do the same, because I never thought to ask and confirm what I always knew, which is that you were a spectacular writer. I want to edit your college essay, because there were some words in there that could be phrased "less awk"; and I want you to edit mine, too, because I

never thought to ask you.

I wish I had never taken AP Italian, because that would have given me more time to sit and talk with you in choir. Those eighth period chats (I mean, "singing rehearsals") are going to remain as some of the best memories I've ever shared with you. Remember when Ms. Hall said you were a little girl with a big mouth? Or when JJ snuck a burrito into class, and we had to almost sit on it to avoid her wrath when she jumped over the chairs to see what mischief we were up to? Or, when we had to sing "Deck the Halls" and we couldn't stop laughing because of how the guys said the "la's"? Or, pretending we were basses and growling out notes like he-beasts?

Four words for you, Ava—foux da fa fa. (I like to think that, wherever you are, you are stopping to remember this reference, and then cracking up.)

Ava, I wish I had taken the three years I spent getting to know you and applied all of that to my senior year. There are so many things I realized I never got to learn about you, to share with you, because I grew so distant this year (college, school, life—and no matter how excited you were when you found out it had paid off, I can't help but regret it). We always wanted to have a "Georgia-Ava" day, and now we never can; we wanted to sit and

swap our Pale Fire-essays, but you never even finished yours.

You were one of the best people I ever knew, and it kills me that it took you dying to realize that, because when we had you around us, we took your beautiful smile and your optimism and everything that made you wonderful for granted. Every inch of you was so familiar and certain that we could postpone the things we wanted to do; we never thought twice about rain checks. Ava, I want to dedicate everything to you now—my essays, my writing portfolio, my SING! script submission—because I can't think of what I did when you were alive that was equal to all the things you were worth.

Two last things. First: I will never forget you. No one could. Your funeral was full of people—teachers, friends, family—and whenever I remember your songs and jokes about being just a number at Stuyvesant, I think that this is where we proved you wrong, Ava-bean. Just look at the people who came, who cried for you, who would do anything to be able to talk about you just once more in the present tense, or to see you making your way down the halls with your Doc Martens in tow. But, know that I will always love you, that I will always miss you, that a day doesn't go by that I don't miss your voice and your smile and your hugs; a day doesn't pass that I don't miss

you, Ava. I would do anything to see you again, even if it were just for a day, and you would probably hate me because I would only cry and cry and hug you instead of make fun of you and tickle you like I normally would do. I cannot believe that there were times that your unassuming nature and your charm and your constant bubbliness annoyed my typically-pessimistic self. So, know that we all love you; we all miss you. Please don't forget it, because I can't bear the thought of you dying without knowing how much we all love you.

Second: I don't find comfort in existential thoughts. But I did find comfort in this, from The Little Prince, and so just take a pause from all the doodling up there in heaven:

"People have stars, but they aren't the same. You, though, you'll have stars like nobody else."

"What do you mean?"

"When you look up at the sky at night, since I'll be living on one of them, since I'll be laughing on one of them, for you, it'll be as if all the stars are laughing. You'll have stars that can laugh!"

And he laughed again.

"And when you're consoled (everyone is eventually consoled), you'll be glad you've known me. You'll always be my friend. You'll feel like laughing with me. And you'll open your

windows sometimes just for the fun of it... And your friends will be amazed to see you laughing while you're looking up at the sky. Then you'll tell them, 'Yes, it's the stars. They always make me laugh!'"

Ava, you were a Spec editor, like I was a Spec editor, and I want to laugh and wince with you just one more time about how much that excerpt is going to give Layout a nightmare (sorry, Layout!), but that is just one of the many reasons and excuses I can give for wanting to hear you laugh again. And, because you would appreciate this—our Great Books class was the best class; only now is it the worst, because we had you in our class and now we don't. But I think that the only thing that can make me happy is the image of you, doodling and drawing up there in heaven—if they didn't take you, who would they take?—and laughing and laughing always, forever, constantly happy and constantly waiting for us to stop crying, because soon, I guess, we're going to see you too, and you're going to have all of the most beautiful drawings we've ever seen to remind us of how much we missed you and how lucky we were to have you around.

Love,  
Georgia Stasinopoulos, ('09)



To read more Soprano Man, visit  
[www.stuyspectator.com/ava](http://www.stuyspectator.com/ava)

I taught Ava last spring in Writers' Workshop, after having taught her sister Elena in the same class five years before. She was a gift to teach, especially in a workshop class: so full of positive energy, so warm and open and giving and funny. Ava poured herself into her writing and her art, often sketching in class in her writing notebook, sharing her work and her ideas. At the end of the semester, when I asked students to request group assignments for our last few workshops, Ava was one of the most-requested students in the class. She had a gift for making people feel truly heard and appreciated, while at the same time being strong and vocal about her own opinions and ideas. Ava surrounded herself with some of the most artistic and creative and vibrant students at Stuyvesant. She belonged with them. She still does.

—Annie Thoms, English Department

I met Ava sometime in the beginning of my junior year. She was a freshman, and she and her friend Mem had lockers in the same block as my friends and me – down at the end of the 6th floor hallway by the rooms where Mr. Garfinkel and Mr. Francis teach. My friends and I pouted a bit about not getting all the lockers in the block, but before we knew it we had become amazing friends with Mem and Ava both. They were so funny and creative and wonderful, always drawing comics and making us laugh and smile. The more we got to know Ava, the more we loved her. I remember her comic book, Soprano Man, which she and Mem wrote together. We used to read it and laugh about their escapades in choir.

The next year, when I was a Senior, she was in Fiddler on the Roof with me and we were broken up into families and she was one of my daughters. We spent the next two months laughing and becoming closer. She was one of those people who made every day brighter and more wonderful.

One time last year when I came to the city to visit, the two of us and another friend, Julia Leffler, spent some time riding up and down the elevators in the Marriott in Times Square and taking small things from the maids' carts and then putting them back. I took a hanger and I remember how she laughed as we snuck away, trying to conceal it under our clothes. We put it back on the next cart, hanging off a beam poking out, and then proudly took a cell phone picture of our handiwork.

I remember the last time I saw her, I had come backstage at Urinetown to visit people. She came running out of the backstage area as fast as she could to give me hugs and love, and to ask me how college was, and to tell me about her life. Ava Hecht was one of those truly goo and wonderful people and I will miss her so much.

Ava, wherever you are, know that I love you forever. Thank you for making my life that much more special.

Love,  
Michele Balsam, ('07)

# Reflections



Dear Ava,

As you and I stand in the soft orange glow, courtesy of the 6th floor dance studio, looking at ourselves in the mirror, I can't help but laugh. I laugh because you're shorter than me and your definition of a hug is to jump on me, wrap your arms around my neck, and take me down with you.

As you and I stand next to the 6th to 8th floor escalator, waiting for Mr. Winston, I can't help but admire you. You're carrying your fencing bag, which is almost as tall as you are. You look around confidently and then spot me staring at you. You break into a wide smile as you approach me.

"You're trying out for the fencing team?" you ask.

I nod. "How long have you've been fencing?" I point to your bag.

"Only a couple of years," you say. You're good at fencing, better than most of the girls standing here, but because you're Ava and you only care to make others feel better, you downplay your own talents. I smile knowingly.

You and I are running laps around the dance studio. You and

I hate running, and the soreness from yesterday's intense practice doesn't help our situation. So you and I jog slowly, like two middle-aged women. You're talking to me in that excited, almost giddy, voice of yours.

"Why do you run like that?" Mr. Winston's voice breaks our conversation. He's looking at us run. He's not angry, no, he's curious. Because you do run a little weird; your body twists left and right as your arms pump up and down.

"I don't know," you reply sheepishly. You're blushing like mad. It's okay, Ava. You run weird. You're special and I love you.

It's my first real fencing match. I'm up and I'm sweating profusely, even before the 'bout begins. As I walk over to the fencing strip, I feel your tiny hands enclose around mine. I look back at you, with your hair disheveled and beads of sweat rolling down the side of your face.

"You can do it Ke," you say but your voice is drowned out by the screams from both teams.

So you could imagine my surprise and confusion on Friday morning when I walked into school two minutes late to second period and was told to report to

the auditorium. I knew something was wrong by the eerie silence that magnified the size of the building. But it wasn't until, when I sat down in a seat near the back, and my friend told me you died, that I knew just how wrong this day was. I gaped at my friend. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't imagine you cold and lifeless. Because all I could see is your smile – the one where your head shrinks back into your body like a turtle and your nose scrunches up as your smile reaches your ears. Because all I can hear is your laugh and your voice telling me I could do it. Because all I can feel is your warm embrace enveloping me – reassuring and kind. Because, Ava, I don't understand how you can be gone, just like that. How all that is left of you are the memories that keep replaying in my head.

I'm half mad at myself and mad at you for just leaving me like this, without giving me a chance to say goodbye, without a chance to tell you how much you affected me, and how much I'll miss you. Because, Ava, I do. I miss you.

Love,  
Ke Jiang, ('09)

Dear Ava,

What an awesome person and friend you were. I'm trying to put all your wonderful attributes into words and I scarcely know where to begin. You were vivacious, sweet, kind, caring, unremittingly positive, intelligent, and spunky. You had a silly, random sense of humor. You showed that it was possible to be both a punky counterculturalist with a subversive streak and a successful student. You were far more involved in the Stuy cultural scene than I ever was. But you were never the slightest bit arrogant, despite your manifold artistic talents and all your other admirable qualities.

We hung out and chatted it up outside my econ and Latin classrooms until we both absolutely had to go to class, and as if Dr. Brockman didn't know you well enough because of that, you

became an honorary member of our Greek class, even attending our end-of-year feast. We'd get engrossed in conversation on the subway and you'd stay on past your stop and accompany me to mine. During Alum Days and over Facebook, we supported each other as we each tackled our daunting workloads.

The night before you left us, I cracked up in my dorm because I remembered your story about the guy who said, "Gimme the phone"—that one never fails to make me laugh.

Disbelief, shock, tears, wistfulness—the atmosphere balefully pressing down on me—it's been tough. Since I heard the news, I've often felt pangs of sadness when downloading a new punk-rock song, beholding the beautiful snow on my campus, enjoying a ride on a "real" train—or even when doing something mundane, like taking a shower—because I know that you won't

be able to do those things anymore. I can't imagine what your parents are going through. It's so unfair: my parents still have their kid, but yours have lost one of theirs. Every memento of yours they encounter around the house will renew their pride as well as their grief.

Your mom said her heart soared with joy when Elena read her the posts on your Wall and memorial Facebook group, at the thought that you must have been aware of even a fraction of how much you were loved. Thursday's tragedy brought families, friends, an entire school closer together—but that doesn't even come close to compensating for your loss.

The universe doesn't operate according to any sensible human concept of justice. All I can do is cherish your memory forever.

Your friend,  
Erik Zyman Carrasco ('08)

Dearest Ava,

I am adding my voice to the chorus that sings of what a kind, caring, joyful and talented person you were. I don't remember how we met, though it was probably on the theater or the music floor, since those are mostly the things we shared. Our first full conversation was an argument about Star Trek. Since then, our frequent unplanned meetings always brought me great joy and infected me with your smile and vivacity. I will miss those most of all, but also your caring, your intelligence, your wit and curiosity, your laugh and of course

the good book suggestions and sharing our love of theater, singing and writing.

Once last year, I was getting a drink of water and you appeared out of nowhere, ran up to me and enveloped me in a huge hug. "I LOVE it when you wear that sweater! It makes me feel all pink and fuzzy and bubbly inside!" you beamed. Fuzzy and bubbly, indeed, that was you. I'll miss you.

With love,  
Katie Banks, ('08)

Rosie left me a text message Friday night, asking if I was awake. I wasn't. The phone was in the other room. I called the following day to find out what it had been about and Rosie told me that Ava had died. You'd think that my reaction would be, "No!" but her words had the shock of truth to them, so my reaction was unconditional belief. "Oh my God," I said. And then, "How?"

In the novel I wrote for NaNoWriMo, I have a character who has a special relationship with Time. He speaks of the dead in present tense. I try to do the same as much as possible. Time passes; I think I've reconciled myself to the fact of her death, but then the thought comes: "But it's Ava!" as if the fact that it's Ava of all people, precludes the possibility of her death. I don't think I've raged at fate that much in all this time. I've just been rather shocked.

"But I saw her on Monday! She was fine!" How can Ava, so full of life, laughing, grinning, running, hurrying to lunch, was it when I saw her last be dead?

She drew a webcomic, The Soprano Man, about stylized, funny versions of her friends

(and mine). And she hasn't updated it in ages, but every once in a while I checked it, hoping that she had. But she hadn't. And she won't now. Because she's dead. I still can't really believe it. Why dead? Why Ava? But when I ask that question, I see Death, cool and implacable, saying, "Who would you rather I had taken?" And the answer to that is no one, of course. I would rather you take no one at all, Death, but that's not possible, is it?

After the funeral, a couple of us went to a friend's house and we hung out, ate, played Guitar Hero, didn't talk about it. And it was pleasant, it was good to know that we could still laugh, that life hadn't ended for us when it had for her. But then when we're done having fun and the laughter's over, what do we do? I went back home and reread The Soprano Man, and wept some more.

Ava, darling, I have memories with you by the dozen. I shall polish those memories, I shall keep them safe in my heart, and I shall speak of them. Be well there, wherever there is, wherever you are. I love you.

—Polina Malamud, ('08)

# Opinions

## This Article is Rated R



By GAVIN HUANG

"Excuse me."  
I looked up from my bag of popcorn. My eyes met the dark face of a movie theater usher. "You don't belong here," he said.

Ugh, I thought. I've been caught. I picked up my things and glanced at the giant screen as the lights dimmed in preparation for "Slumdog Millionaire." The usher cleared his throat, indicating his impatience with my stalling. I got up and he showed me to the auditorium next door where "Valkyrie," the movie I had paid for, was showing.

I later asked a friend of mine who was old enough to see the film what it would call for an R rating. "Some violence," he said. "But in this day and age, R-rated movies should have gore." He also cited some scenes with hard language that might have given this critically acclaimed love story such a harsh rating.

He was right. According to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the film was rated R "for some violence, disturbing images and language." Harsh language is the most ridiculous reason for an R rating. Curses may be distasteful, but we use them every day and they're a part of our language. In order for a film to receive an R rating for language, it must contain more than one use of one of the harsher sexually-derived words as an expletive. However, if the word is used in a sexual context even once, the film is stamped with an R.

Violence, though, has to be extreme to receive such a rating. Gore, as my friend noted, is one of the criteria. "Saving Private

Ryan," for example, was rated R for "intense prolonged realistically graphic sequences of war violence." A scene where a soldier's arm was torn off was deemed too realistic, as opposed to a scene in PG-13-rated "Valkyrie," where soldiers were superficially executed with no blood shown. The scenes were violent nonetheless, even without blood. But the realism, all the gore and horror, is part of the art, and people should realize and tell kids that it is all only entertainment.

These ridiculous ratings are determined by a Ratings Board consisting of a chairman (chosen by the MPAA) and a group of 10 to 13 other parents of school-aged children (chosen by the chairman). Together, from their screening room in Encino, the justices of political correctness control what can or cannot be seen and thus, determine the success of a film in the box office in a culture that is dependent on the media for information.

A 2006 documentary film, "This Film Is Not Yet Rated," revealed disparities in the rating system such as the board's harsher treatment of homosexual content and independent films. Kirby Dick, the film's director, also found that raters are deliberately chosen for their lack of expertise and that most of the parents had children over the age of 18 or no children at all. The appeals board, the entity that producers can flock to if they feel a film's rating is unjustified, was found to be made up of mostly movie chain and studio executives and, strangely, two priests.

The MPAA's attempts are futile in this modern age of crass television shows, constant war zone coverage and easily accessible pornography. Some of the ratings films receive are just absurd in today's standards. "Alien vs. Predator" was perhaps unique in its PG-13 rating for slime while "Twister" was given the same rating for "intense depiction of very bad weather."

It's also disappointing that many must-see classics were

given the R rating. In the last decade, six of the 10 films that won Best Picture were rated R and I'll bet you the next one will be rated R too. Heavily acclaimed classics like "The Godfather," "Schindler's List" and even the film adaption of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" were also restricted. Violent films, yes, but the age restrictions for R-rated movies should only act as recommendations rather than be enforced. Who's to say a group of whiney parents can judge whether a teen is mentally prepared to watch a movie?

The MPAA can rate a writer's artistic vision before it even gets into the hands of the producers. The screenplay of "The Panic in Needle Park" was initially rated X, comparable to today's NC-17. Filmmakers had to revise many of the drug addiction and sexuality parts to gain an R rating and make the film marketable. It's a shame when one's work has to face the red pen.

We read all these great books filled with violence, sex, cursing, gore and both physical and psychological torture in middle school and high school English classes. Jerzy Kosinski's "The Painted Bird," a book I read in my sophomore English class, was perhaps more graphic than anything I will ever see in any film, with vivid descriptions of rape, incest and bestiality.

But all literary extremes aside, we're exposed to more cursing, violence and sensuality in our daily lives than in movies. If they're a part of life, why should they be censored in films meant to capture our lives as realistically as possible?

I'm hoping to successfully sneak into "Frost/Nixon" next. So what if Frank Langella drops a few F-bombs or if Michael Sheen is in a sex scene. I'm watching it because it's a good movie. I'm there for its historical significance, the intriguing plot and the exceptional acting. That's the only way a movie, or any piece of artistic work, should be rated.

Michael Silverblatt /  
The Spectator

Stephanie London /  
The Spectator

Given the R rating. In the last decade, six of the 10 films that won Best Picture were rated R and I'll bet you the next one will be rated R too. Heavily acclaimed classics like "The Godfather," "Schindler's List" and even the film adaption of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" were also restricted. Violent films, yes, but the age restrictions for R-rated movies should only act as recommendations rather than be enforced. Who's to say a group of whiney parents can judge whether a teen is mentally prepared to watch a movie?

Ambition is an admirable quality. However, if you are particularly zealous and aspire to take on a multitude of activities, ambition is not the only quality you can rely on. Connections and chance can be factors as well.

The best path to leadership is to be thoroughly involved in whatever club, team or organization you are interested in. But leadership positions for Stuyvesant's extracurricular activities are often marred by nepotism—the distribution of positions to friends or acquaintances based on connections, rather than purely on talent and ability. If a club seems to be politically unstable, if the same people are chosen by the Stuyvesant Theater Community (STC) show after show and if nepotism wreaks havoc on SING! yet again, then you might be the change that organization needs.

The most common way to try out for leadership positions is through an interview. But keep this in mind: although the interviewers may be "superior" to you within this organization, they are essentially your peers. This means that they are not necessarily competent at what they do, and consequently, their interview questions may be illogically thought out. But forget the behavior of your peers for a moment. Don't assume they have anyone else in mind for this position (even though they probably do) and follow these techniques for a successful interview.

1) Don't be sad. Unless, maybe, you are trying out for the winter drama. If you are apprehensive about not getting the position or haven't held similar positions before, a negative attitude won't make things better. However, if your facial expression is naturally melancholy, there's not much you can do about it—it is important not to overcompensate or act unlike yourself.

2) Know why you want the job. Why do I want to do this? Am I capable of this? What good could I bring to this position? If you have positive answers to these questions, then you have probably prepared yourself well for the position.

3) Is it worth it? If the desired position is a leadership role in a mediocre or obscure club, consider whether it is worth your time. Does the club have potential? Are the current leaders competent enough to get things done? Is the club very cliquey? A negative answer to any of these is not a good sign. Think about starting your own club or joining another similar club. If the desired position is heading an STC show or SING!, it requires a lot of time and effort, and many of the positions are based on previous experience and connections. But it definitely does not hurt to try if you think you can handle it and want to gain more experience in the theater.

4) Prep yourself with questions. Consider questions you might be asked. Chances are some of the questions will have nothing to do with your work

ethic or desire for the position. Don't think too much about the answers to these. It says more about the interviewers who lack the creativity to ask unique or penetrating questions than it says about you. Examples include: If you were a sandwich or a can of soup, what kind would you be? What are your weaknesses as a (desired position)?

For the soup question, say something short and witty, because it is completely irrelevant. For the second, give a weakness that isn't really a weakness, like: "I'm too dedicated for my own good."

Some other common questions include: How free is your schedule? Why do you want this position? What relative experience do you have? What is your vision or what changes would you bring? Do you have any questions to ask us?

It is best to be honest with these questions. Exaggerate your facial expressions when necessary, like "I've dreamed of becoming SING! director since I was six years old!" (pouty face). If you are asked if you have any

## Stuyvesant's extracurricular activities are often marred by nepotism.

questions, once again, be honest. If there are specific questions that would show the interviewers your existing knowledge in the area, ask them. Or, if they neglected to ask you questions that you anticipated, turn them into questions to express your curiosity. If you have a question like "What is SING!?", you are better off not trying out in the first place.

5) Enter the "kick-ass mode." In kick-ass mode, you are fully confident of your capabilities and ready to take on the challenge that you face. Get yourself prepped and excited for the interview so you can show them what you're made of. Put all nerves aside and enter the interview self-assured.

If your interviewers are seated in a semicircle during the interview and give you withering stares the whole time, do not be discouraged. Make sure to make eye contact right back. Follow the techniques, relax and be yourself.

Sooner or later, you'll find out whether or not you got the position. If you've succeeded, that's great—your work has been acknowledged. If you are not so lucky, don't worry. Perhaps this was not the perfect position for you anyway, and you can invest your time in other things. If you have good reason to believe the results were purely based on favoritism, there is not much you can do about it except to keep trying to gain experience. Essentially, it is important to never give up because there are always people who will do things the ethical way. But if all else fails, you can always try scheming your way to the top, and then be fair when it's your turn to ask the questions.

## There's Always Next Year



By SAMANTHA SEID

Every year, around this time, millions of people fish out their self-help books, their Slim-Fasts and their subscriptions to Jenny Craig. Loyal McDonald's customers flee to the nearest Subway's. The number of jumping-jacks is at an all time high. And for what, an innocent bystander may ask. Why, 'tis the season for New Year's Resolutions.

The New Year's Resolution motivates people to make a change in themselves. During early January, people garner a list of various resolutions to complete by the next New Year's Day. It's often seen as a fresh start, a chance to remedy the faults of yesteryear.

But no matter how determined one may be, that determin-

ation often dissolves into apathy. People forget to renew their subscriptions to the Y. Jared and his sandwiches are left forgotten. Towards Christmastime, indifference turns into regret. That's what leaves many saying (yet again), "Next year I'm going to be a changed person." You should know already that it's easier said than done, Charlie Brown.

I'll admit I also have a hard time keeping the resolutions I declare every January. Be it avoiding that lonely piece of chocolate cake in the refrigerator or huffing up the stairs instead of the escalator, I can never seem to follow through on any of my resolutions. Take last year for instance: I vowed I would join clubs and volunteer to help fill out my oh-so-empty SSR. Today, I only have this article as proof I participated in an extracurricular activity.

Yes, it's disappointing not being able to reach your goals by December 31. It is upsetting that, while others frolic at parties, you are left alone at home, sipping a Slim-Fast to console your broken spirit. Alas, poor soul! There's a solution to your resolution-blues: try again next year.

It often doesn't occur to people that they have another chance to improve themselves. Many don't realize that come midnight, it's a new beginning. Oftentimes,

people believe that their resolutions have an expiration date of New Year's Eve; these people end up rushing and eventually getting nothing done. As with Santa Claus and the Great Pumpkin, time limits on resolutions are not real. Grow up.

So my advice—though it would be hard to take it from a person who has yet to resolve her own problems—is to persevere. As an alternative to crying into the New Year, find out what stops you from changing. Once you discover the hindrance, find a way to overcome it. If you feel that you need some emotional support, ask a friend to help give a hand. Maybe you don't have the time. So make time by reorganizing your schedule. Or, if you feel that the effort is worthless, think of the benefits of running the extra mile or studying a bit longer, instead. And whatever you do, do not pick up that double-fudge brownie.

So as long as people continue to try, their resolutions will be fulfilled. It really doesn't matter when or how you reach your resolution, just as long as you become a better person out of it. As for me, I'm still uncertain if I can complete my resolutions in time of the next New Year's Day. If I don't, there is always next year to look forward to.

# Opinions

## Don't Worry, Be Happy — Not Really



By VALERIYA TSITRON

Bribery, lying and cheating are usually unethical. Ironically, all three occurred during the Medical Ethics Symposium on December 18, 2008.

The Medical Ethics Symposium is held annually at Stuyvesant's Murray Kahn Theatre. It is supposed to be an opportunity for the Medical Ethics class to present what they've learned in a forum beside educated speakers. In reality, it serves as a way for biology teachers to give extra credit. Bribery, check.

**We can't let go of anxiety when it fuels us, and motivates us to study until we pass out.**

Our teachers also lured us in with the promise that the event would only last for two hours. Like chumps, we took the bait. Instead of leaving at 5:30 p.m. to go type up our reports on the event, we were kept inside until 7:10 p.m. The symposium ran late, each speech seemed longer than the last, and finally one of the security guards kicked us out. Lying, check.

The final nail in the coffin was the raffle at the end. It was supposed to be a reward for our patience, but it turned out to be a sham. I'm not an expert in the laws of probability, but it's unlikely so many people

from the Medical Ethics class could have won in a filled auditorium. A lucky day for the Medical Ethics class? Probably not. Cheating, check.

Not bad for an ethics symposium.

I'll admit it—I'm being harsh. The biology teachers weren't really bribing us. They probably felt it was a good opportunity to enrich our learning experience and boost our grades. Similarly, the event organizers didn't really lie to us. Scheduling conflicts and the fact that we started late certainly contributed to our late finish.

Even the possible cheating in the raffle can be rationalized. At least two kids who weren't in the class won prizes, so that has to mean something, right? Besides, I'm sure the class worked hard on their presentation and deserved some Terry's gift certificates and home-made brownies after a long night.

The real problem with the Symposium was the hypocrisy of its content. The speakers preached relaxation, letting go of anxiety, self-healing and self-realization. But in a competitive, stressful setting like Stuyvesant, that fell on deaf ears. We can't let go of anxiety when it fuels us, and motivates us to study until we pass out. A positive outlook may reduce stress in some situations, but, at Stuy, envisioning getting our work done isn't going to make it happen. I'm not sure less stress is possible in our day-to-day lives considering our workload and out-of-school obligations. Although we should be the perfect audience for a stress reduction talk, the means the speakers proposed—happier thoughts, laughter, the like—were very frustrating to hear when all I could imagine at the time was my sleep time being halved.

It comes down to the convergence of all these circumstances and the mob-like frustration we all felt towards the end. The organizers had good intentions, but the audience left feeling worse. Maybe next year the coordinators can come up with a way to solve the problem. Perhaps instead of having the speakers throw pieces of candy at the front part of the auditorium, they might walk on over to the back. And instead of handing out cafeteria juice and cookies, they might actually splurge a little and feed the general (starving) population instead of raffling out brownies to a select few. Then maybe next year's biology students won't write another negative article about the Medical Ethics Symposium.

But maybe that's just too much positive thinking.

## RE: Students to SU: Talk to Us

It's not fair to point fingers exclusively at the Student Union (SU). The SU has only so much power without the support of the school administration. Stuyvesant boasts of its "strong and active Student Union" on its extracurricular activities profile on the Department of Education (DOE) Web site, but what is there to show? The student voice has been turned off by the administration, as shown by growing censorship of SING!. The administration has not communicated well, even with The Spectator. For example, Ms. Damasek has adamantly refused to talk to the newspaper about issues that are pertinent to every Stuyvesant student's experience. And this lack of communication has not weakened the SU, but also ARISTA and other student-run organizations that make Stuyvesant more than just a beacon of classroom pedagogy. As a member of the ARISTA Executive Council (EC) last year, I witnessed first-hand the EC's frustration at the weak support from the administration. It's quite hard to maintain the honor society without the help of administrators.

Student involvement allows Stuyvesant kids to develop leadership skills and gain a sense of self-worth, both of which are necessary in college and beyond. It will help build a sense of school community, which many describe as lacking. Equally important, it can help the administration attain its goals. For example, if students can demonstrate to the DOE the importance of maintaining the school's budget in spite of the economic difficulties, Stuyvesant might be cushioned from some of the painful cuts affecting city schools. This will allow the administration to keep Academic Intervention Services running, maintain teachers to keep class sizes lower, and keep offering electives that allow students to delve deep into different subject areas.

And don't forget that alumni will donate based on how attached they feel to their alma mater: would an alum donate to a school at which he or she didn't even feel welcomed as a member of the community?

—Dennis Ng, '08

## It Wasn't Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas



By CHRISTOPHER NATOLI

Every weekday morning in past winters I have silently eaten breakfast next to my dad and looked out the window into the darkness. But just to the right of the glum view outside would be our Christmas tree, decorated with ornaments scattered among tiny colorful lights and topped with a star. It was a charming sight to wake up to.

And so I'd set out for school, bracing against the cold and fatigue because the holiday spirit kept my spirits up. Everywhere I'd go it was obvious that Christmas was coming. Every place, from supermarkets to the subway token booths, was decorated with lights and fake wreaths. Christmas carols could be heard in every store and on every radio station. For me this is the joy of the holidays, which builds until Christmas. But this year, I missed it.

My recent lack of holiday cheer is partly due to the large amount of homework that results from rushing to finish the curriculum before finals. Instead of noticing the garland hanging from the token booth, my mind was on my pillow catching up on the sleep I didn't get the night before, or my nose was in the book I was reading for homework. Instead of listening to holiday music on the subway, I was either too sleepy to do anything, or too busy reading a handout or book that was crammed into the last few weeks of the term. Homework was on my mind, the upcoming holidays were not.

The weekends had their own special purpose: term projects. Note that "projects" is plural. Many of us had more than one term project that were all due the Monday before vacation. Without the

break to work on them, we were forced to squeeze them into any free time we had—that is, on weekends, since weekdays were needed for the heavier homework-loads. I admit, some term projects were given a fair amount of time before December, such as my Advanced Placement European History term project, but others were assigned in late November or December. For example, my Math Honors final project—an extensive math research paper—was assigned just a few weeks before its due date. However, students had little time to explore and write about their topics with longer homeworks and other term projects due as well. Weekends became days for school-work instead of holiday events, decorating the house or building holiday spirit.

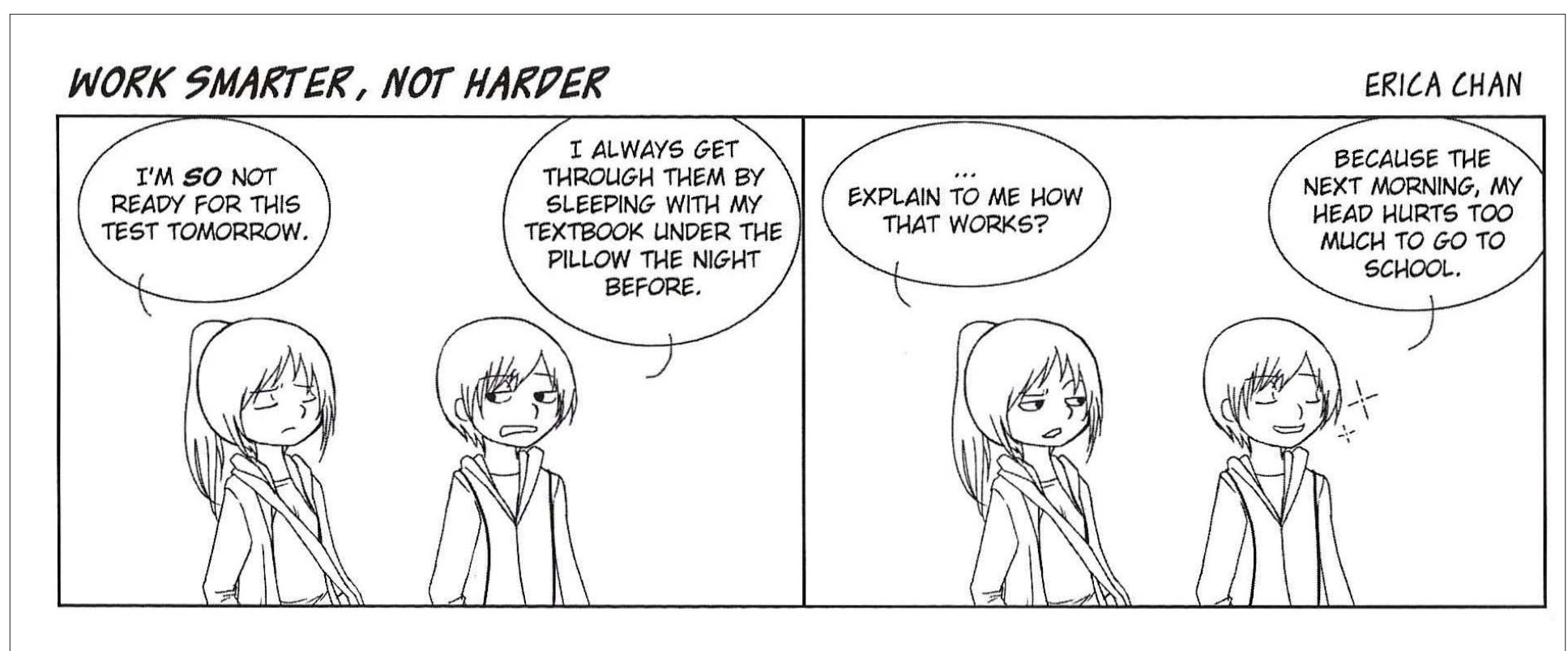
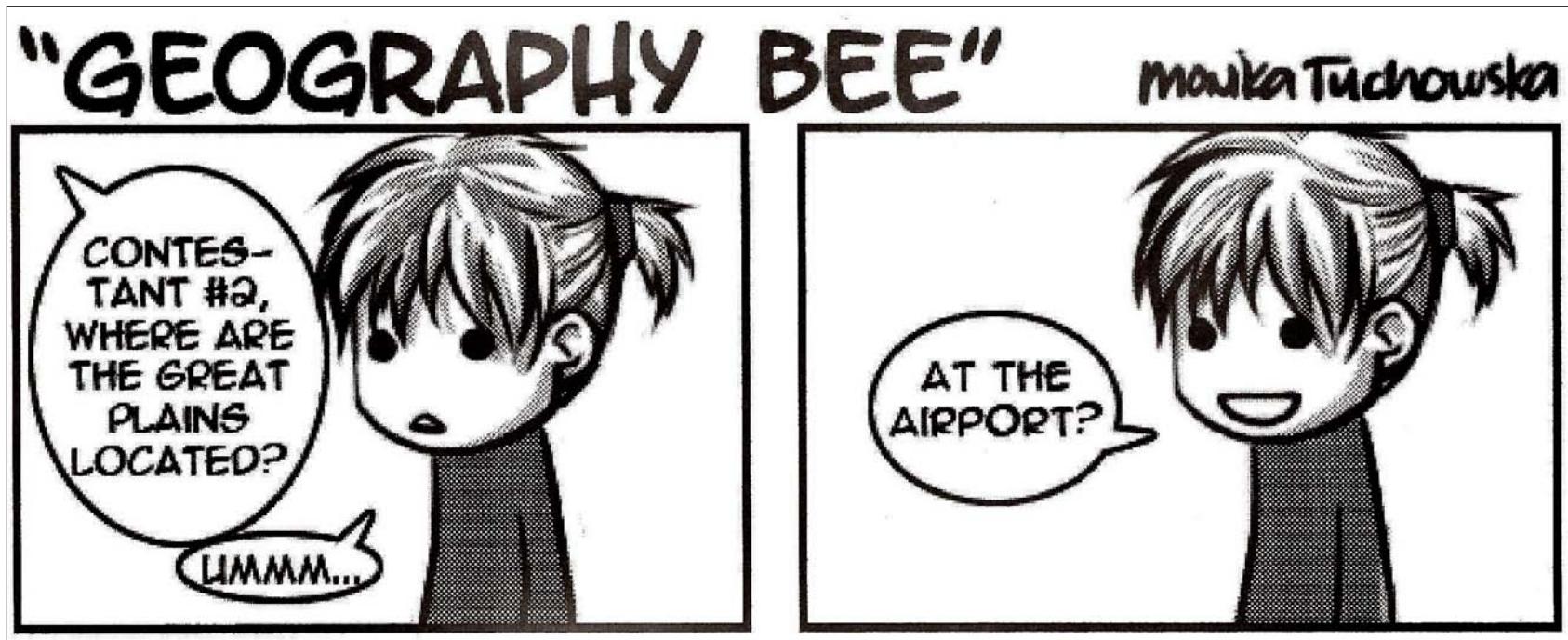
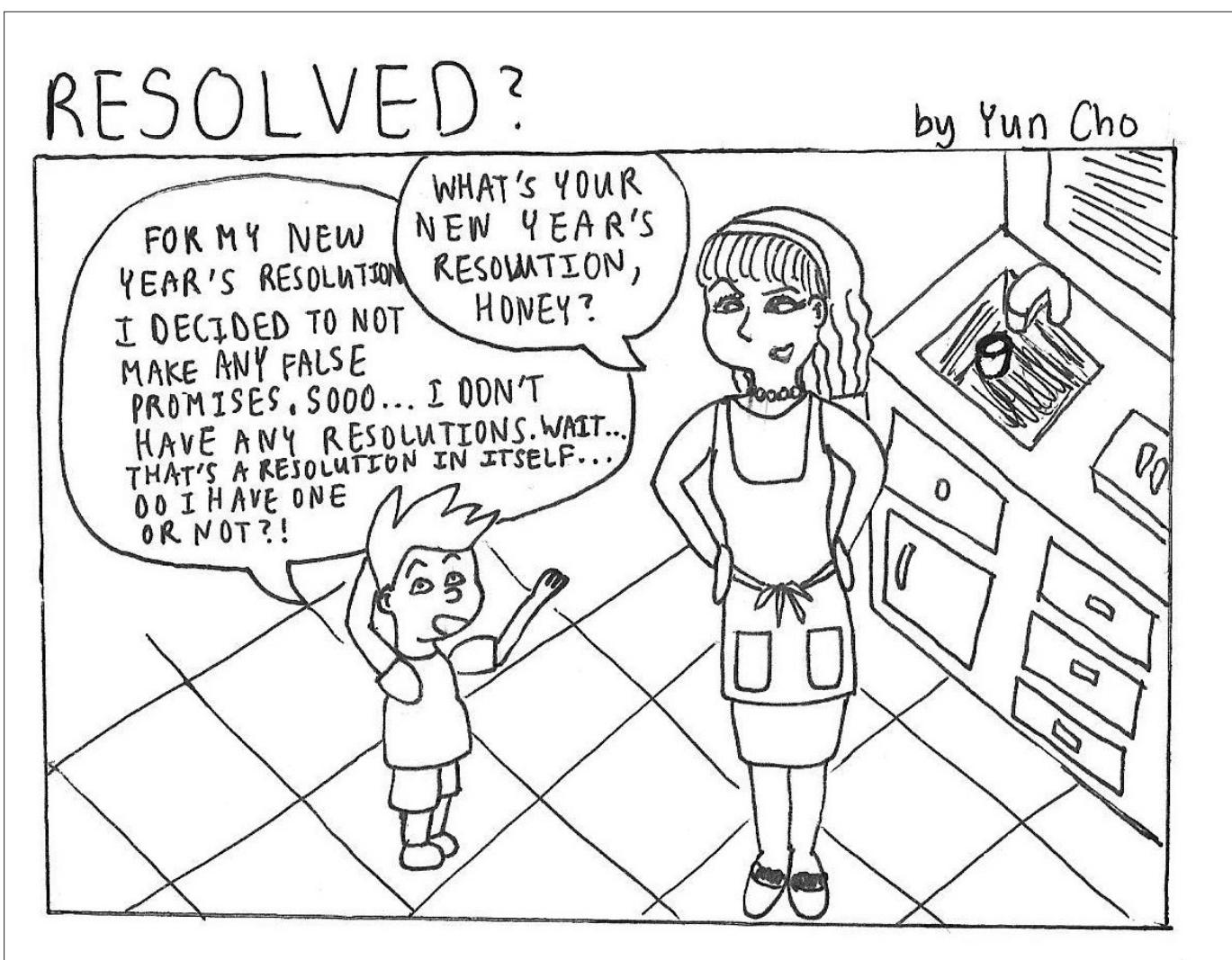
But holiday cheer could, and should, be saved by setting the due dates for these projects after the break, as many other term projects are. True, students might end up spending the whole break working instead of enjoying the holidays, but that depends on their time-management and organization. Extending the due date would give students freedom to choose how they want to sacrifice their time and pleasure, whether that be by using weekends, the break, or a mixture of both. Meanwhile, this frees up time for merry gatherings and traditions before the holidays that brighten the entire month. There's a reason why the Vacation Homework Policy allows projects to be given "as long as students are provided ample time before and after the vacation to complete them."

So my family didn't spend a Saturday hunting for the best tree, haggling down the price and setting it up near the window to be surrounded with cotton snow. Nor did we take a Sunday night to decorate the tree together—hanging the lights, digging all the ornaments out of the closet just to select the best ones, and placing the star while worrying about whether it will fit under the ceiling. Burdened by homework and projects, I was unable to partake in pre-holiday tradition, holding my family back. Without much time left, my parents bought one on the weekend before Christmas and my dad just hung the lights. Those almost magical moments on December mornings only occurred twice this year.

**For more footage of the Rebels in HD, visit [www.stuyspectator.com/rebelsvideo14](http://www.stuyspectator.com/rebelsvideo14).**

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## Cartoons



# Arts & Entertainment

## A Red Light on Child Trafficking



By BETTE HA  
and HELEN SONG

There are more slaves now than ever before in history, according to the March-April 2008

issue of Foreign Policy magazine. Musician, writer and director Justin Dillon's response was "Call and Response," a "rockumentary" that aired at Tribeca Cinemas from December 4, 2008

to December 14, 2008.

Featuring a wide selection of artists, such as Cold War Kids, Matisyahu, Imogen Heap, Rocco Deluca, Natasha Bedingfield, Switchfoot and Five for Fighting and notable politicians such as former Secretary of State Madeline Albright and former congressman John Miller, Dillon's "Call and Response" depicts present-day slavery in a stunning documentary.

The film describes the experiences of labor slaves, sex slaves, child slaves and child soldiers (not to mention child sex slaves), many of whom are tricked illegally into becoming so-called indentured servants. "Call and Response" defines these as the four aspects of human slavery. Conscious of the audience, "Call and Response" details some of the goods often produced or processed by slaves, namely coffee and cellphones.

Pictures of helpless young children and women in fields and brothels are portrayed to cause emotional and psychological attachment to the issue. Interviews with victims of sex slavery give life to the rumors of the trafficking world.

The film's pattern of hidden footage followed by interviews and performances explains the issue without overwhelming the audience. The hidden footage

gives life to the facts presented by the interviewees, and the black-and-white shots of the performances connect music and abolitionism.

The film's music performances, accompanied by the "respon-

**The few seconds of silence following each performance make the most noise, letting the viewer absorb what he or she has just seen.**

ses" of several artists, give the film much of its energy. Dillon's performance of "Baby Blue," an original song about the experiences of female slaves, offers heartfelt lyrics like, "This is not my voice. This is not my choice." Performer discusses their connection to the fight against human trafficking. There's a memorable performance by Sudanese hip-hop artist Emmanuel Jal, who was once

a child soldier. "Music is a form of communication," Jal says in the film. "It can enter someone's mind without their permission." However, the few seconds of silence following each performance make the most noise, letting viewers absorb what they've just seen.

The film also features interviews with numerous experts. One of the most memorable, Princeton Professor of Religion Dr. Cornel West, ties together American slavery and the evolution of music, describing how love can be expressed through public justice. "Music is the truth-teller," West says in the film. "It's about helping folk, but it helps somebody by getting them to dance, getting them to move, getting them to think."

"Call and Response" is a stark reminder that slavery was not eradicated 200 years ago. The film avoids preaching or making anyone feel overly guilty—instead it illuminates how to respond. "If we stand together to fight the cause, we will see the end to slavery in this lifetime," said Alissa A. Moore, co-executive director of Nomi Network, an organization affiliated with the documentary. This eye-opening documentary stresses the importance of using our own personal talents to help end slavery and respond to the cries of those forced into it.

## Fields of Strawberries and Park-side Performers

By LAUREN DE VITO  
and DIANA HOU

In the immortal words of John Lennon, "Music is everybody's possession." Lennon lived in New York City, and loved taking walks through Central Park, a natural muse. Twenty-eight years after his death, Lennon's memory was honored in a section of the park named "Strawberry Fields," after The Beatles' famous song. It was at Strawberry Fields that we began our search for other musical innovations that have also been inspired by the park's natural beauty.

**"Listening to people play music adds a little something to an everyday walk through the park."**  
—Joshua Francis,  
Central Park fan

The first musician we stumbled upon was saxophonist Ralph Luke who played a jazzy "Winter Wonderland" on one of the more frequented paths near Columbus Circle's entrance to the park. The cheery Christmas carol attracted a crowd that sang along with the tune. A Central Park veteran, Luke has been playing on the grounds for the past 10 years. Smiling benevolently, he clearly enjoys creating music for the appreciation of passersby. "I



love Central Park. I play for enjoyment and it's great to meet new people. There's nothing else I would rather do," Luke said.

As we continued our search for traces of artistic life, we heard what sounded like a church choir from a distance. Upon closer inspection, it was in fact a family of seven, consisting of a mother, father and

five children ranging in age from eight to 14. The family called themselves The Boyds for Praise Company and sang gospel songs to the accompaniment of music from their CD and a hand drum played by the father. Like a modern version of the Von Trappe family from "The Sound of Music," the family sang song after song under a bridge.

"It's a family thing," said Jenny Boyd, the youngest of the group. "We come out every weekend, mostly to raise money for a music camp back in Michigan." The family comes from Michigan but is staying in New Jersey, commuting to the park to sing. As people gathered around to pay for CDs and donate money, the family fell back into their singing, much to the

delight of the growing crowd. Not far from the talented family was a woman playing an instrument unlike any other. The contraption appeared to be a setup of strings on a wooden table and her music was hard to define. Too distant to be an organ, but too harsh to be a

**"There's no better place to play music than Central Park."**  
—Arlette  
Permienko,  
Central Park  
performer

violin, the instrument seemed utterly foreign.

"It's a dulcimer," Arlette Permienko, the player of the instrument, said. "From Persia. You don't see these around here very much." Permienko has been playing music in the park for 20 years, and says that she loves it. The lack of people gathering around to hear her play had no impact on her enthusiasm. "There's no better place to play music than Central Park," Permienko said.

The park's performers take real enjoyment in sharing their music and adding to the beauty of the park with their instruments. The park seems to have inspired them to make music everybody's possession. Or at least, all who go to Central Park.

# Arts & Entertainment

## Hot Chocolate Wars

By SERENA BERRY

A cup of hot chocolate warms the soul. And in Tribeca, it's easy to find a variety of hot chocolate flavors. Restaurants offer different ingredients, like Swedish chocolate or exotic Asian blends, and serve their hot chocolate differently—for better or worse.

### The Soda Shop

125 Chambers St



Hot chocolate from Soda Shop is a rich blend of whole milk and three different chocolates.

If you're willing to spend extra on hot chocolate makers who pull out all the stops, look no further than the superb drinks at the Soda Shop. The owner is highly knowledgeable about ingredients and the intricacies of producing great hot chocolate. Their drinks are made with steamed whole milk, which gives them a full texture, and three different types of chocolate: Swiss chocolate syrup, Dutch cocoa powder and Belgian chocolate disks called pistoles. The flavor is rich, sweet and a little bitter. It is served in a glass mug, with sweet, creamy whip cream and chocolate syrup. An added scoop of peppermint ice cream is also recommended. At \$3.50, this may not be your daily hot chocolate fix, but it is nice for a treat, especially considering the venue's unique retro atmosphere.

### Kitchenette

156 Chambers St

The offerings of Kitchenette are disappointing, and their drink looks and tastes like dirty tap water. The hot chocolate (if one could even call it that) is deceiving. It is undeniably overpriced at \$4.50, which may lead one to think it will be of high quality. The ratio of steamed milk to chocolate is severely skewed, and the drink doesn't even taste like it has chocolate in it. The atmosphere of the place is cozy and welcoming, but the hot chocolate will scare you away.

### Zucker's Bagels and Smoked Fish

146 Chambers St



Zucker's offers affordable hot chocolate with a smooth milky texture.

Zucker's hot chocolate is inexpensive and a favorite of some students. Sophomore Abbie Kouzmanoff says it is "by far the best." The hot chocolate by itself is nice and has a smooth milky texture. With whip cream and marshmallows (both can be added for free), the hot chocolate becomes a perfect blend of cream and chocolate. A small is reasonably priced at \$2.

### Whole Foods



The hot chocolate options from Whole Foods are exotic but expensive.

270 Greenwich Street

Whole Foods gives you three different hot chocolates, each in its own tall and narrow glass, though none of them live up to the expectations set by the heavy price tag. One has chocolate from the Amazon, the next from Ghana and the last from Columbia. These chocolates on their own are wonderful and unique. The glasses are lined up on what looks like a throne. The presentation, while interesting, seemed gimmicky. Junior Clio Contegenis said, "Each is an experience." But at \$5.85, this may not be an experience everyone is willing to try.

### Amanzi Tea

166 Chambers Street

Newly opened Amanzi Tea provides new takes on traditional cocoa—the most notable of which is a chocolate chai, a cross between hot chocolate and black tea. The tea is not too strong, and chocolate gives it an interesting flavor. The texture is very smooth and enjoyable. They also have vanilla chai, which costs 4.25 per ounce and is made with vanilla spice. It has a playful and slightly spicy flavor.



Amanzi Tea has original takes on hot chocolate.

## Jokes and Grinds



The warm up is part of the fun for Improv Club.

**By RITA KIRZHNER**

Stomping, yelling and the most common sound of all—laughing—are heard every Tuesday, seeping through the door of room 233. Unlike some quieter afterschool activities, the Long Form Improv Club is not afraid to get loud as they practice improvising funny and imaginative scenes.

The recently formed club, also known as Jokes and Grinds, was founded by senior Erica Sands. She is now President of

the club, with junior Justy Kosek as Vice President, senior Rosie Kavanagh as Treasurer, junior Tara Anantharam as Secretary and Louie Pearlman as their coach.

Sands first became interested in improvisation at a summer camp, where she learned all about the craft from counselor Louie Pearlman. Pearlman now works at Magnet Theater and comes to Stuyvesant to teach the club. According to Sands, the summer that she was introduced to the art enabled her to open up

her shy personality and increase her confidence. In her sophomore year, Sands started the Long Form Improv Club because she wanted to bring the fun of improvisation to Stuyvesant and let other students experience it. "Beginning the club was a lot of work," Sands said. "It was so difficult at first, getting things organized, talking to the SU, getting funds, and so on. But it kept getting better and better. I put a lot of effort into the club but I can't even tell you how much I love it now." The club president's hard work paid off, as the club was running smoothly by the end of her junior year.

The club spends the majority of their weekly meetings delving deeper into the styles of improvisation, focusing on short and long form improvisation. Short form is usually comprised of games and short scenes for the participants to make their own. Long form improvisation focuses more on one suggestion or prompt that is brainstormed into sets of scenes and shows. The goal of both types of improvisation is to be funny, clever and creative. Most scenes end with peals of laughter from both the actors and the audience. Sterling said, "The increasingly popular club attracts all kinds of students. Many are outgoing and loud, while others are quiet

and timid. Kavanagh is ecstatic about the variety of personality types that come to meetings because she enjoys seeing typically reserved students be more outspoken. "You meet a different side of yourself. The club lets

**"You meet a different side of yourself. The club lets you tap into other parts of your personality."**

**—Rosie  
Kavanagh,  
senior and club  
treasurer**

you tap into other parts of your personality," Kavanagh said.

Each meeting begins with all the members pushing chairs to the corners of the classroom to make space. Pearlman usually has a lesson plan of some

sort, and the session begins with warm-ups and games. For example, one person may say a random word or phrase, and the next person must say what first comes to mind. The group creates a chain of ideas that may later be used to form a scene. Next, they dive into scenes and long forms. For these activities, two people usually volunteer and are given prompts that can be one word or a more detailed description. They must create a whole scene from the information given. The lessons wrap up with short-form games that are similar to what the meeting started with.

Junior and club member Andriy Duyko said, "Erica and Louie are both really energetic, and control the group well. It's always a good time because there's just so much activity that everyone manages to do something funny."

The club's unique blend of humor, and opportunity to think on your feet and express yourself leaves the members loving the group as much as the officials do. Senior and club member Julia Sterling said, "It's such a fun, comfortable, welcoming atmosphere that builds confidence while taking away some self-restraint. Instead of wondering whether I should do or say something, I just do it!"

# Arts & Entertainment

## Alphabet Soup: The Melting Pot of New York



An abstract mural designed by "Tats Cru," Avenue A and Second Street.

Alan Sage / The Spectator

**By EMMA POLLACK  
and JASMINE WONG**

A is for artsy. Alphabet City, flanked by Avenues A and D between East Houston and 14th Streets, offers one of the city's most diverse selections of art, music and theatre venues. The small neighborhood's varied arts offerings stem from Alphabet City's diverse history.



Nice Guy Eddie's Restaurant, 5 Avenue A.

Alan Sage / The Spectator

Remnants like the Irish Black Iron Burger Shop pub and the In Vino Italian restaurant are the legacy of turn-of-the-century European immigrants. During the 20th century, Alphabet City saw a dramatic rise in Puerto Rican immigrants. By the 60s and

visiting.

Like street art, lush and often mysterious community gardens are spread throughout Alphabet City. The gardens, with names like "Le Petit Versailles" (346 East Houston St) or "Vamos Sembrar" (198 Avenue B) are filled with



Russian and Turkish Baths, 268 East 10th Street.

Shirley Liang / The Spectator

70s, Alphabet City was known as "Losaida," meaning "Lower East Side" in Spanglish.

Upon arriving in Alphabet City, one immediately notices the prolific street art. Antonio Garcia,

trinkets—a statue of the Virgin Mary, a sculpture made of cans, a wooden shack known as a sukkah used for the Jewish holiday of Sukkot and the occasional Puerto Rican flag.

The high arts have also long been components of the Alphabet City lifestyle. The Living Theatre at 21 Clinton Street houses the oldest existing experimental theater group in the U.S. The experimental group has, over the years, staged poetic dramas by William Carlos Williams and is known for rarely performed plays by European authors like Luigi Pirandello and Bertolt Brecht. A revival of the 1959 play "The Connection," directed by and featuring Judith Malina, the co-founder of The Living Theater, opened on New Year's Eve. "The Connection" focuses on the despair of addiction and the redemption of jazz music (Mondays are "pay-what-you-will" at the door only). The Living Theater also has Monday night poetry readings, and coming soon, Thursday open mics.

The Losaida legend has it that the author of "Rent", Jonathan Larsen, did most of his writing at the back table in the Life Café (343 East 10 Street), which itself appeared in "Rent." The café has acted and still acts as an inspiration for writers, known to sit by their laptops in the bohemian



Kiss Graffiti by Chico.

Alan Sage / The Spectator

Like any haven for up-and-coming artists, Alphabet City is filled with coffee venues. Ninth Street Espresso (700 East Ninth Street) is famous for its minimal-



The Living Theater, 21 Clinton Street.

coffee to create designs like trees or hearts.

Alphabet City also has Russian and Turkish baths, which are built on a natural spring at 268 East 10th St. They've been around since 1892. The Baths smell like authentic Russian food. The Baths have "always looked like this," said Ross Anderson, a client for 20 years, while eating his borscht (\$4.00), a traditional Russian soup made of beets and cabbage. "It is like a human car-wash," Anderson said.

The Baths includes an array of rooms, like the Russian sauna, made "Russian" by the buckets of cold water used for a cooling shock within the heated room. The Turkish room, a sauna infused by Eucalyptus odors, is immensely popular. Also offered are treatments like the "Plaza Oak Leaf," which involves being beaten with oak leaves. The Baths offer male-only hours, women-only hours and coed hours, and services both the older crowd of long-time customers and a younger crowd who are just discovering the Baths. Despite the steep entrance fee of \$30, which allows access to all of the rooms, the Baths offers a unique Alphabet City approach towards spas.

At the Etheria record store (66 Avenue A), employee Brion Vytlacil considers Alphabet City's artistic development a direct result of its diversity. The small store, which sells CDs and vinyl records in just about every genre, has been part of the neighborhood music scene for 13 years.

"People used to come learn about music and what is new," Vytlacil said. "Music always brings a huge cross section of people together, rich and poor." And Puerto Rican and Jewish, starving artist types, baristas, Russians and everyone else.

**Like any haven  
for up-and-  
coming artists,  
Alphabet City is  
of course filled  
with coffee  
venues.**

give her last name), a waitress at Life Café. If you're interested in doing a "Rent" tour, you may also want to check out the New York Theater Workshop (79 East Fourth St), where "Rent" was first performed.



Ninth Street Espresso, 700 East Ninth Street.

Shirley Liang / The Spectator

## From the Archives:

From our 80th anniversary issue in 1984, a look back to past principals.

Thursday, December 20, 1984

SPECTATOR

**80**

# Principals of the Past

By Jeremiah Pam

**"A gentle father figure and outstanding scholar who spoke with a quiet eloquence. He understood people and ruled by example providing an inspiration for students and teachers alike."**



**Dr. Frank Rollins**  
1904-1908



**Dr. Ernest von Nardoff**  
1908-1934



**Sinclair J. Wilson**  
1934-1943



**John P. Clark**  
1943-1944

During Stuyvesant's eighty years, ten principals have held office. Some enjoyed popular and prosperous reigns while others were regarded as dictatorial monsters. But each of these men were unique individuals, and stories about them abound.

Stuyvesant first opened its doors under the leadership of Dr. Frank Rollins, a noted physicist. He called the original intent of the school "the development of keen eyes, steady hands, clear intellect and disciplined will." Upon his retirement in 1908, Dr. Ernest von Nardoff became principal. Dr. von Nardoff was a world-renowned physicist, who helped the school to prosper for over twenty-five years. He did not waste his scientific genius and often did public experiments in the auditorium. In one famous experiment designed to demonstrate the heat absorbing capacity of water, he had molten lead (from the foundry on the second floor) poured from the auditorium balcony to the main level below. He then dipped his hand in water and passed it through the lead, escaping unharmed. Michael Kosas, who graduated from Stuyvesant in 1913, described Dr. von Nardoff as "very capable" and remembered "a great feeling of pleasure when he spoke to us."

Sinclair J. Wilson replaced Dr. von Nardoff in 1934. Mr. Wilson was a noted chemist and had written a chemistry textbook. From 1934 until 1943, when he died, he created much of the school that exists today by improving and expanding courses in math and science and de-emphasizing the mechanical arts program. He also es-

tablished the admissions examination for potential students.

After a year under the administration of Acting Principal John P. Clark, the school was under the leadership of Fred Schoenberg, a Stuyvesant alumnus. Joseph Dorinson, who graduated in 1954, remembered him as "a gentle father figure and outstanding scholar" who spoke with "a quiet eloquence." Mr. Schoenberg "understood people" and "ruled by example providing an inspiration for students and teachers alike. During his nine years at Stuyvesant, he lobbied for school funds and was successful in getting a plan for modernization of the building passed. Mr. Schoenberg became Superintendent of Schools in 1953, and Jacob Wortman, a math teacher since 1925, became acting principal.

In 1954, Dr. Leonard Fliedner, a chemist, was appointed principal. Dr. Fliedner's administration was one of the longest and most controversial in the school's history. Feelings about him range from vehement hatred to intense admiration. Most of this controversy arises from Dr. Fliedner's use of his administrative power. He was a strict principal, which caused frequent conflicts between students and the administration.

"He was a destructive influence and was totally insensitive to any and all student needs," said Mr. Dorinson. Another alumnus, John O'Brien, called Dr. Fliedner's administration "autocratic...it's foolish to say some students needed it." This sentiment was expressed by many students and even some teachers. He did take some harsh actions and at one point banned jeans. However, Assistant Principal Murray Kahn, who was a teacher during Dr. Fliedner's administration, said, "Fliedner was caught between eras. He was involved in a transitional period between the 50's and the 60's in which attitudes changed dramatically. He wanted to keep Stuyvesant standards high. The students wanted rights and this created a conflict. They regarded him as standing in the way of progress." Graduates of the 50's generally felt that he was justified in ruling a bit harshly while graduates of the 60's

strongly felt just the opposite. But one of his crucial achievements was the admission of girls into the school in 1969.

In 1971 Dr. Fliedner retired, and Gaspar Fabbricante was appointed principal. Mr. Fabbricante had been the Chairman of the Foreign Language Department and was the first humanities-oriented principal. This was a turning point for the school, as it marked a further step away from the strictly math and science program built up over the years.

Mr. Fabbricante retired in 1982, and was replaced by Acting Principal Kenneth Tewel. Although immensely popular with students and teachers, he made it clear that he was only at Stuyvesant temporarily. During his short stay, however, he began several reforms which not only helped the various departments, but also increased morale among the students and the teachers. Such changes included the addition of more computers to the computer labs and the revival of the Student-Teacher-Parent (STP) Council. In 1983, he was replaced by Abraham Baumel, Stuyvesant's seventh principal.

Through the students and the faculty, and throughout the curriculum and requirement changes, Stuyvesant has retained one purpose which all of the principals have tried to uphold. It was best stated by the first principal, Dr. Rollins, in 1905: "Above all, it should be remembered that the special function of this school will not be to make college students or mechanics, but to make men (and women)."



**Fred Schoenberg**  
1944-1953



**Jacob Wortman**  
1953-1954



**Abraham Baumel**  
1984-



**Kenneth Tewel**  
1982-1983



**Gaspar Fabbricante**  
1971-1982



**Dr. Leonard Fliedner**  
1954-1971

refused to attend school, and protested on Fifteenth Street. On May 15th an agreement between the students and the administration was reached, and students went back to their classes. In September, 223 girls were admitted to the school after the restrictive quota was abolished.

**1971** On February 18, students



War protests broke out in violence.

protested the Vietnam War and the invasion of Laos. They boycotted school, and refused to go to class. In September, Dr. Fliedner retired after 17 years, ending the longest tenure of any principal. Gaspar Fabbricante, formerly Chairman of the Foreign Language Department, was appointed principal. The SPARK

## Pie-a-Teacher Photo Essay



Photos taken by  
Sean Gordon-Loebl

## Pie-a-Teacher Photo Essay



## Where In The World Is Nzingha Prescod?

*continued from page 24*

under (Y10) Regional event at the Armory in Harlem on 168th Street. I was nine at the time, and I remember being so confident, then losing so badly. I also remember not knowing how to put on my equipment because I had only started fencing a few months before. A year later I fenced another Y10 and won.

**"My first competition was a disaster!"**  
—Nzingha Prescod, junior

**TS:** When did you start competing internationally?

**NP:** When I was 13, in 2006. My first tournament was in Jena, Germany, and I came like 44th. The year after, at the same tournament, I won and it seemed crazy because no one expected me to win. Since no one expected it though, there wasn't any pressure, but I was still nervous. I was so nervous that I threw up on the first day.

**TS:** What was it like competing for a spot in the Olympics?

**NP:** It was so stressful. The international senior level is much more intense than the junior level, especially because it was Olympic year last year. The girls were a lot bigger than me, and most of them were more experienced and really intimidating. It was definitely a nerve-wracking experience, but I'm glad I did it so that I know what competing at a senior international level is like for this year.

**TS:** Now that you're competing internationally, has your training regimen changed?

**NP:** Not significantly. I always trained a lot so it's not too much different. Maybe to other people it seems like a lot though. For senior world cups, which I have to do more of this year, I have to take longer and harder lessons with my coach, and do more footwork to be able to keep up with the older, more experienced seniors.

**TS:** With all that training and globetrotting, how do you manage to find time for schoolwork?

**NP:** Well, a lot of times I don't do work at tournaments because I make myself believe I'll finish it on the plane, which never ends up happening. Recently my coach has been forcing me to do at least an hour every day, because I don't have enough discipline to make myself do it. When I'm not away I

try to do some during practice and on the train and stuff. I try to finish as much as possible before I get home.

**TS:** Tell us more about your recent competition in France.

**NP:** It was a cadet world cup, so there were a lot of kids my age and a little younger. Going into the tournament, people expected me to win. It gets rather annoying because it just adds pressure. [...] The gold medal bout was against another American, Luona Wang. I've fenced her a lot, and in the beginning it was pretty close. I'd get one; she'd get one. We got to nine. I was exhausted by then, but I got an adrenaline rush, thank god, and I jumped ahead. The end score was 15-10.

**TS:** So where did you stay during all of this?

**NP:** During this tournament I stayed in a Hotel Ibis, which is a hotel chain in Europe. I hate European rooms. They're so tiny and their beds are so short. It was like a box, and the food in the hotel sucked.

**TS:** What is the most exciting place you have gone for a competition?

**NP:** Usually we don't get to see much of the city unless we stay for an extra couple of days to train, or if we have back to back competitions in Europe. So far my favorite city is probably Budapest, in Hungary. I lived there for three weeks in Feb-

**"I definitely plan on going to the Olympics in 2012, 2016, and maybe 2020. Hopefully a medal will be in my prospects."**  
—Nzingha Prescod, junior

able to see a lot of the city because we were there for so long. We got to go to the famous opera and the Turkish baths. Also we saw a Hungarian movie and ate really traditional Hungarian food. Their pastries are fantastic!

**TS:** So have you made friends all over the world through fencing?

**NP:** Yes. Most of the fencers are really sociable and want to be friends with the Americans. In the past few years I've gotten close with a few German, Hungarian and French kids. This summer my German friend came to New York for 16 days just to visit.

**TS:** Sounds like you're doing a great job of balancing your burgeoning fencing career with high school life.

**NP:** Yeah, it can get a bit overwhelming and frustrating at times, but it's all worth it because fencing is what I love doing. It has truly been a rewarding experience.

**TS:** Looking ahead, what are your goals for the future?

**NP:** I definitely plan on going to the Olympics in 2012, 2016 and maybe 2020. Hopefully a medal will be in my prospects. This year the senior team got a silver medal at the Beijing Olympics, so anything is possible. American fencing has come a long way since Europeans dominated in the 20th century.

## Boys' Basketball

### Rebels Survive a Close One and Stay in First Place

*continued from page 24*

els called a Hail Mary, sending the remaining four players to the other side of the court to wait for the ball. The Rebels were unable to give Stumpf a decent target, and he was called for a five-second violation. Seward regained possession on the Rebels' side of the court with three and a half seconds left on

a long three-pointer. Everyone in the gym held their breath. Time expired as the ball was in mid-arc, and when it clanged off the rim, the Rebels let out a sigh of relief.

With one minute 15 seconds left in the four-minute overtime period, Diamond hit a crucial three-pointer to tie the game at 80 points a piece. Several seconds later, Diamond was fouled while driving towards the basket. He hit both of his free throws with ease, putting the Rebels up by two, seeming to solidify a Rebels victory. With 17 seconds left to play, however, Seward senior Cortney Pitts silenced the crowd by hitting a high arcing three-pointer, putting his team up by one.

The next play turned out to be the decisive play of the game. A botched pass and a near steal led to a loose ball on the Rebels' side. Becker and Pitts both dove, and after several seconds of tossing and turning, the referee awarded the Rebels the ball.

This time, the Rebels were successful in their Hail Mary attempt. Becker used his baseball skills to fire a strike straight to Tse on the other side of the court, who sunk an uncontested layup to put the Rebels up by one with a few seconds left to play. Seward had one final

chance to seal the upset victory, but the underdog visitors were denied, as they failed to sink a last-second shot from half court.

When the final buzzer rang, fans stormed the court, happy to know that the Rebels' winning record was still intact at the moment.

"I believe the fans come to be entertained, and my goal is to help my team play the best brand of basketball that we can so that we'll look good on the court but also on the scoreboard," Becker said.

Nonetheless, the Rebels are not content just yet. With 11 games to go in the season, Fisher is aware that a lot can change. "Sometimes I wonder if they can handle success," he said, "because they don't realize how hard it is to win, and how easy it is to lose."

The Rebels did learn this the hard way, losing the two following games by scores of 82-75 and 53-50 to the Landmark School and the High School of Environmental Studies, respectively, falling to 6-2 but retaining in first place.

As for the remainder of the season, Becker said, "Well we need to set our goals high and keep thinking one game at a time, because if we win each game, we win every game."

**"They don't realize how hard it is to win, and how easy it is to lose."**  
—Philip Fisher, coach

the clock, more than enough time to score a game winner.

Seward senior Charles Morgan passed the ball out to senior Gabriel Fermin, who attempted

**For more footage of the Rebels in HD, visit [www.stuyspectator.com/rebelsvideo19](http://www.stuyspectator.com/rebelsvideo19)**

# Sports

## Boys' Indoor Track

### Indoor Track Hopes for Borough Championship in 'Rebuilding Year'

By CORY BEHROOZI

After winning the Manhattan Borough Championship in 2008, the boys' indoor track team suffered the loss of six of their top

**"We're much worse without the seniors from last year."**  
—James Chen, sophomore

eight runners to graduation. "The departure of last year's seniors has had a major impact," sophomore James Chen said. "We're much worse without the seniors from last year."

Now the team is looking to repeat that feat with what is "basically a new team," coach Mark Mendes said.

"We have smaller junior and senior classes than we did in previous years," said junior and captain Daniel Hyman-Cohen. There are 12 juniors and eight seniors on this year's indoor team, as compared to 16 juniors and 16 seniors on last year's indoor team. This means that there is a great deal of pressure on Hyman-Cohen, the other juniors and the few seniors to perform.

The team is off to a promising start as it moves into the indoor season, and many members believe that it is on pace to win the Manhattan Borough Championships. To begin the season, Hyman-Cohen helped the varsity 4 x 800 meter relay team place eighth at the Jim McKay Games on December 7, 2008.

**"We have smaller junior and senior classes than we did in previous years."**  
—Daniel Hyman-Cohen, junior

The performances of the freshmen and sophomores have been very promising as well. Stuyvesant's sophomore cross-country team won the city championship this year, and the freshmen are in great form

as the indoor track season begins. Freshman Konrad Surkont placed first in the 1000 meter run at the Jim McKay games in three minutes 1.55 seconds, followed about eight seconds later by freshman teammate Genghis Chau, who took second place. These two also led Stuyvesant's 4 x 800 meter freshman relay team to second place, with a total time of 10 minutes 40.46 seconds.

One of the few Stuyvesant runners to participate in the Day of Distance, a meet at the Armory, on December 12, 2008, Surkont once again placed first in his event, this time the 1600 meter run. He finished in five minutes 11.1 seconds, just fractions of a second ahead of the second- and third-place runners.

"He's definitely showing a promising start," sophomore Oren Bukspan said of Surkont. "For the rest of the team we also now have a little bit of an incentive. It's a pride issue."

Although many of the stars of the championship 2008 are no

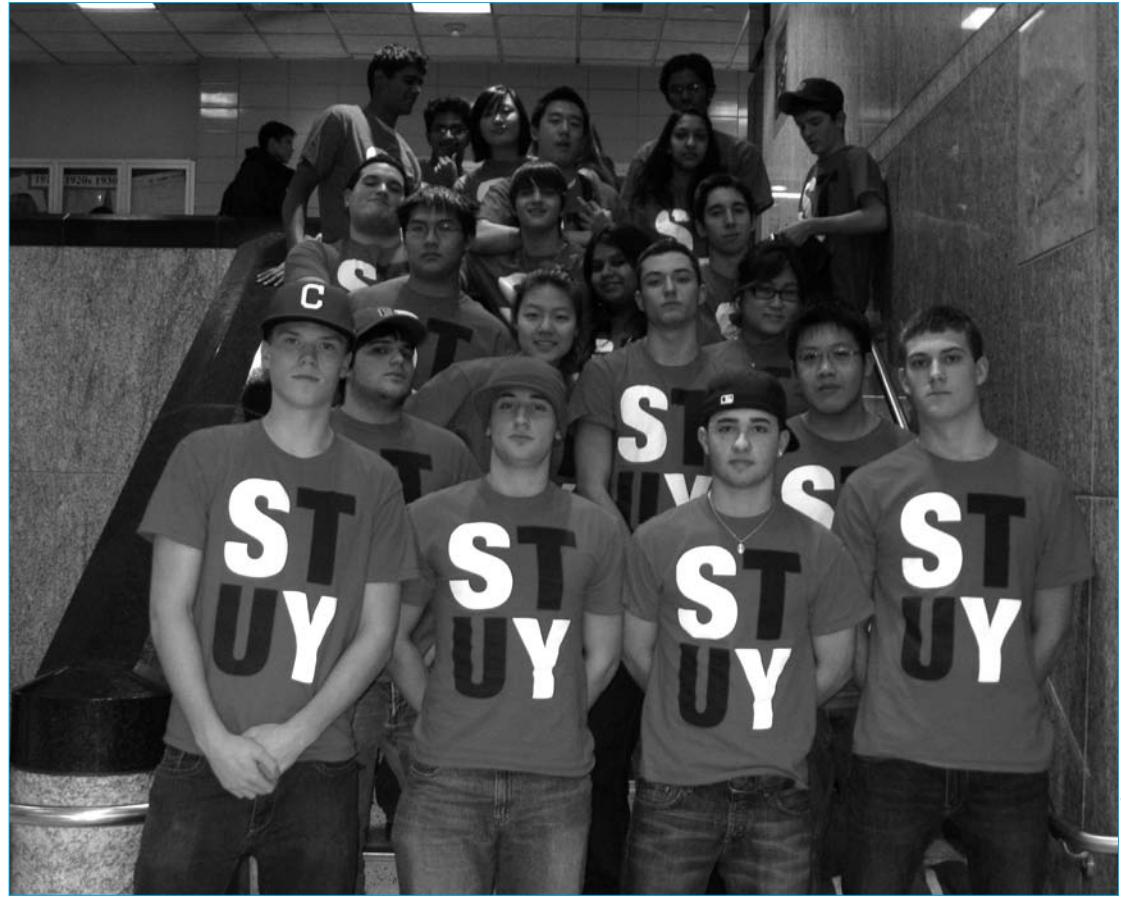


longer running, Chen said that the team expects to once again win the borough championship in indoor track. However, on a city-wide level, Stuyvesant expects to face much tougher competition, such as perennial championship contenders Midwood and Sheepshead Bay High Schools. "In indoor track we're not even a threat to win the city championships," Chen said. According to Bukspan, this is because Stuyvesant is focused mainly on cross-country and long-distance running, while the major events of the indoor season are sprints.

Hyman-Cohen and Chen recognized that much of this optimistic start to the indoor track team's season can be attributed to Mendes's coaching. "He's a very good coach," Hyman-Cohen said. "He helps us get a lot better, and helps keep us organized."

For a team that expected to have a sub-par season following the loss of many of its top athletes, the future of the boys' indoor track team is looking surprisingly bright. "The rebuilding process has begun," Mendes said, "and it's well underway."

### WooPegSooie: Revolutionizing Stuyvesant's Athletic Spirit



WooPegSooie brings school spirit to Stuy's athletic teams.

By LUTHER BARBAROSSA and CHARLIE GINGOLD

On a cold autumn afternoon in November 2007, Stuyvesant athletes Aaron Ghitelman, Mikhail Goman, Nick Goldin and Nick Wheatley-Schaller went across town to attend the girls' swimming city championships at New York University. On the way, they picked up red and blue paint and an American Flag. The foursome painted STUY across their chests, and despite the Penguins' loss to Townsend Harris, Stuyvesant's booster club, "Woopagsooie," was born. In just over a year, the club that refers to itself as the Official Booster Club of Stuyvesant Athletics has grown not only in terms of membership, but also in its effect on Stuyvesant's athletes and school spirit.

Co-president of Woopagsooie, senior Nick Rozar said, "We started a sports booster club because we felt that high school would be more fun if sports were more important and emphasized." Woopagsooie has done just that, and radically changed the sports atmosphere at Stuyvesant. Empty crowds have been replaced by raucous fans in Woopagsooie t-shirts or paint, cheering and banging together "thunderstix" noisemakers.

**"We felt that high school would be more fun if sports were more important and emphasized."**  
—Nick Rozar, senior

Athletes appreciate Woopagsooie's presence. They attended the girls' swimming city championship between Stuyvesant and Townsend Harris High School on November 25, 2008. Woopagsooie cheered the Penguins on to their first City Title in years. "It made a big difference for them to be there, because almost everyone else from the stands were from Townsend and so when they all came out, it really helped raise our spirit," senior swim co-captain Nora Cunningham said. "It was funny though, because then Townsend tried to do the same thing, but they only had like three guys and it wasn't nearly the same."

The name Woopagsooie comes from the University of Arkansas Razorbacks' rally cry "Woo-Pig-Sooie!" The club replaced the "pig" with "peg" in reference to the football team's mascot the Peglegs.

After attending the swimming championship last fall, Woopagsooie focused their attention on the boys' varsity basketball team. In the six games that the club has cheered at, Stuyvesant has a 5-1 record, with their only loss coming to the undefeated Bread and Roses team. "[Woopagsooie] keeps the team motivated and reminds them that they have fans on their side," senior and basketball co-captain Nolan Becker said. "It's nice to feel like you're in an environment that cares about sports, because a lot of times at Stuyvesant you don't get that feeling. The support has always been there, but this year we've really taken it to a whole other level with this new club."

Co-president of Woopagsooie Wheatley-Schaller said, "There is a palpable home court advantage when you play in Stuyvesant. You can tell that the opponents are getting rattled and are uncomfortable when they are playing in the WooPit, as we like to call it."

Woopagsooie may be best known for their ubiquitous red shirts. The club has been getting a lot of support throughout the school from members and non-members alike. The shirts are worn by most Rebels fans on game-days. So far, the club has

sold over 150 of these shirts at 12 dollars each.

The hard work behind the club isn't just cheering at the games. Nick Rozar said, "It takes a lot more work than people know about. There is a lot of work done behind the scenes, which include midnight trips to the UPS outlet to make sure that there are thunderstix when people are promised them." Rozar, Wheatley-Schaller, Ghitelman and Rozar's mother, Julie Rozar, have all put much time and effort to organize and fund the

**The name Woopagsooie comes from the University of Arkansas Razorbacks' rally cry "Woo-Pig-Sooie!" The club replaced the "pig" with "peg" in reference to the football team's mascot.**

Woopagsooie club.

Because the Woopagsooie club is currently composed of mostly seniors, it's hard to tell whether this newfound school spirit will leave as quickly as it came. Wheatley-Schaller said, "We are looking to recruit a basis of students that can replace us and keep Woopagsooie going, and then a basis of students below them to keep this going forever because we think this is an irreplaceable part of the Stuyvesant community."

Courtesy of Kevin Fertig

**Boys' Gymnastics**

## Starting on the Flip Side

By SAMMY SUSSMAN

As a new season approaches for the Lemurs, Stuyvesant's boys' varsity gymnastics team, excitement builds at what looks to be a promising year for this experienced team. Their two leading scorers from last year's team, seniors Eli Bierman and Andrew Sang, both return as captains to try and guide a team that believes that this year is theirs. This hopeful approach has been spurred tremendously by the leadership of two other



senior captains, Danny Wu and Carl Zhang. These four seniors bring 12 years of combined gymnastics experience to a team that is looking to turn hope into success for the first time in quite a while.

After a winless season in 2007, the Lemurs, who lost the first six matches of 2008, seemed to be headed in the same direction. But in the last meet of the season, against Tottenville High School on February 15, 2008, Stuyvesant rallied to win by a score of 95.9 to 86.9, boosting momentum that has carried over to the start of the 2009 season.

Returning from a one-win season is never easy, but because that win was the first for the Lemurs in 13 meets, team members view it as a reason for optimism. According to Wu, the team has been dedicated in looking to build off the Tottenville victory. They practice six times a week, and coach Naim Kozi, who teaches at Health Professions High School, which is located in the old Stuyvesant building, runs a very tough regime. They practice for two and a half hours a day at Stuyvesant every day after school and on Sundays, as they have all six years in which Kozi has been coaching. However, Wu said that the team is thinking of increasing the number of practices to seven per week, meaning no days off. "Let's just

say, we practice a lot," Bierman said.

With so much practice comes a thirst for victory and real sense of team unity. "After being on the team for four years, I've seen kids come and go, and I really want to make this year count," Bierman said. "We have a good chance this year and we have a come a long way."

"We have worked hard enough," Sang said. "Our improvements should pay off."

Most gymnasts on the team began their careers by choosing

to focus their efforts on only a few of the six events, which include rings, parallel bars, high bar, floor exercise, vaulting and pommel horse. While the floor exercise is probably the most popular, all events have equal weight in competition. "After some practice you begin to realize which events you are suited for" Wu said.

The Lemurs are also an extremely close-knit group. "We all help each other out and have come together as a team more than in years past," Wu said.

Since only a few star seniors graduated last year, the 2009 Lemurs are merely the more experienced and improved versions of the 2008 Lemurs. According to Kozi, this year's team is "better than last year's, but not as good as years past."

After winning their first game in two years to end last season, the Lemurs are very determined not to let their one game winning streak turn quickly into another losing streak.

"This team is ready," said sophomore Harry Ngai, who specializes in pommel horse.

With their captains' experience and the hunger for victory that practice brings, the Lemurs are focused and ready. "We will try hard to live up to the old standard of Stuyvesant gymnastics," Wu said. "We won the championships in 2001. We'd like to bring it back."

## Athlete Spotlight: Pitches Go a Long Way for Nolan Becker

By EDDIE CYTRYN  
and CHRISTOPHER ZHAO

Senior Nolan Becker has been playing organized sports since he was five—all of them. Throughout his time at Stuyvesant, Becker has found himself on five different teams: junior varsity football, varsity bowling, junior varsity and varsity basketball and varsity baseball. The teams have come and gone, and now as a senior, only varsity basketball and baseball remain.

For Becker, last fall was not the typical college-application frenzy that the rest of the senior class found itself in. By early July before his senior year, he already had a list of noteworthy universities that made him offers of admission, included the University of Pennsylvania, Yale, Harvard, Oregon, Villanova and Santa Clara. Baseball was Becker's path to college admission.

Becker has pitched for the last four years as a member of Stuyvesant's varsity baseball team. Last season he had a record of 3-0 with a 1.08 earned run average. His lefty dominance and 90 miles-per-hour fastball caught the attention of college scouts from Division I and II schools including the Ivy League. The average professional pitcher's fastball is clocked between 89 and 91 miles-per-hour. "My parents' importance on academics really played a large role in my decision," Becker said. Becker committed to play baseball for the Division I Yale University Bulldogs on October 24, 2008.

Many students will often find it difficult to manage school work and extra-curricular activities, but for Becker it hasn't been much of a problem. "Sports really keeps me organized," he said. "The work ethic I developed from playing sports has helped me with my school work ethic as well. For me, they go hand in hand."

Basketball has been another passion for Becker, which he

**"Being a senior and captain, I feel it's my responsibility to pick up any slack in games."**  
—Nolan Becker, senior

developed when he was young and watched the New York Knicks on television. He joined the junior varsity basketball team as a sophomore, and that season he led the team with 18 points and eight rebounds a game. The team went on to an undefeated record of 12-0 as Manhattan West Division A Champions.

Before basketball season began this winter, Becker had toyed with the idea of quitting basketball in order to focus



Senior Nolan Becker is a top-scoring player for both the Runnin' Rebels and the Hitmen.

Stephanie London / The Spectator

**"The work ethic I developed from playing sports has helped me with my school worth ethic as well. For me, they go hand in hand."**  
—Nolan Becker, senior

and as a junior he batted 0.478. Coach Matt Hahn said, "[Nolan] has developed immensely from freshman year. He has improved at every stage." So far he has won three team awards for baseball, including Rookie of the Year, Offensive Player of the Year and Most Valued Player.

"As soon as March first comes, it's a whole new slate," said baseball co-captain Zack Karson, speaking of Becker's transition between his two sports. "But Nolan is always ready."

Becker has been a member of the varsity baseball team since his freshman year. As a freshman he batted 0.278, as a sophomore he batted 0.333,

# THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

## Boys' Basketball

### Rebels Survive a Close One and Stay in First Place



Tina Khiani / The Spectator

The Runnin' Rebels maintained their strong start and first place with an overtime victory over Seward Park Campus.

By NICK GALLO

After a season high of 29 points and 20 rebounds in an 88-67 victory over the High School of Economics and Finance on Wednesday, December 10, senior and captain Nolan "Franchise" Becker lived up to his nickname on Monday, December 15. In this game against Seward Park Campus, he scored nearly half of his team's points in the thrilling 84-83 overtime victory, finishing with 41 points and 23 rebounds.

However, while Becker's performance was one of the game's deciding factors, the other members of the Runnin' Rebels, Stuyvesant's boys' varsity basketball team, continued to play the A-game that has brought them an 8-2 record, good for first place in the Man-

hattan A Southwest division. Coach Philip Fisher is certain that the Rebels' dominant start is no fluke. "This is the best start in my 16 years, and I told [the team] at the beginning of the year that they had a chance to do something very special," Fisher said.

Friday's game was the Rebels' most competitive league game played on the home court so far this season. Before it, the Rebels had won their home games by an average of 12.67 points. After becoming used to first half leads often well into double digits, the Rebels were feeling anxious when they were up by a mere three points when the first half ended.

Throughout the first half, Diamond, who is known primarily as the Rebels' second-best three-point and perimeter

shooter, right behind senior Alan Tse, made off balance and unorthodox lay-ups. "I really feel like we play to the opponent," he said. "So when we need to we're going to step up and not make the mistakes that we make against lesser opponents."

After a relatively uneventful third quarter, the Rebels had increased their lead to six. The game, however, was far from over. After forcing several key turnovers, and hitting numerous difficult shots, Seward tied it up with three and a half seconds left to play.

A controversial foul call caused the Rebels to get the ball at the baseline under their own basket. Junior Ethan Stumpf was given the ball and the Reb-

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## Girls' Basketball

### Phoenix Fall to Hunter in Rival Matchup

By SANGHO PARK

With Shakira's "Hips Don't Lie" blasting in the background, the Phoenix, Stuyvesant's girls' varsity basketball team prepared themselves in the warm-up shoot-around. With two straight losses following their first win, the Phoenix hoped to even out their record. This time, on December 11, 2008, it was against Hunter College High School—an exceptional team that averages over 50 points per game.

The game started off favoring Hunter, with Stuyvesant losing the opening tip-off and giving up the first basket. However, the Phoenix retaliated with a lay-up from senior center Abby Schaeffer. After that, the Phoenix gained momentum and caught a four point lead at the end of the first quarter.

In the second quarter, the Phoenix posted high scores and had a total of 10 points. How-



Emily Koo / The Spectator

ever, Hunter compensated with 13 points in the same quarter to shorten the point gap to a one point lead by the Phoenix.

The home crowd, unusually large in attendance, cheered the Phoenix on. Despite senior forward and co-captain Tina Khiani

## Where In The World Is Nzingha Prescod?

By ORION TAYLOR

It's hard for Nzingha Prescod to find the time to sit down for an interview. Even during the Winter Recess, she travels from her home in Brooklyn to the Fencer's Club on West 25th Street in Manhattan, training for about 25 hours a week, six days a week.

Prescod is currently ranked first in the national women's cadet group (for fencers 17 years or younger), the junior category (20 years or younger) and the senior group (all ages). Last year she narrowly missed qualifying for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, partly, she said, because some key competitions interfered with school.

During the first semester of the 2008-2009 school year she has already traveled to national and international fencing tournaments in Slovakia, France, Montreal, St. Louis and Colorado Springs, all of which she won. When I finally had a chance to sit down with her (after she emerged from a practice

at the Fencer's Club), I asked her about balancing school-work, training, and competition.

**The Spectator:** Can you tell us how you first got interested in fencing?

**Nzingha Prescod:** One day mom saw an article in the Daily News about the Peter Westbrook Foundation (the club I represent, although I train at the Fencer's Club), which met every Saturday morning to expose city youth to fencing. She brought me and my sister there in 2001, when I was nine. A couple months after that we were put in the after-school program at the Fencer's Club, and ever since then I've been fencing.

**TS:** Tell us about your first competition.

**NP:** My first competition was a disaster! I came in 13th out of only 16 fencers. It was a 10-and-

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Courtesy of Nzingha Prescod  
Junior Nzingha Prescod, a fencing enthusiast with Olympic aspirations, is ranked first nationally among women in her age group.

posting 12 points, the most by any player in the game, Stuyvesant couldn't hold on to their lead in the game. By rotating 11 players, Hunter continued to bring in fresh legs and did not let the Phoenix focus on guarding any specific players.

After an energetic team cry of "TOGETHER!" to start the fourth quarter, Stuyvesant posted an exciting comeback where both teams answered upon one another.

Stuyvesant took the lead with 4:56 left in the game 26-25.

However, Stuyvesant ran into foul trouble, committing 11 fouls in the entire game. With 18.3 seconds left in the game, Hunter took back the lead. When Hunter brought the ball in bounce to try to run down the clock, Stuyvesant committed another foul, which gave Hunter three free throws. "In the end, it's about making those free throws," said junior and center Alex Albright, who had five rebounds off the bench.

Despite the fans' attempts at distraction, the Hunter player successfully made two of her three free throws. With only 6.6 seconds left on the clock, Hunter had a decisive 34-30 lead. When asked on her thoughts about the game, coach Michelle Nicholls said, "It was a good game and I think this is a really good rivalry. But in the end, it comes down to making shots and boxing out."

Despite Phoenix's attempt to get the ball back, incessant fouls hindered its plan significantly. When asked what foiled a possible Phoenix win, senior and co-captain Katherine O'Dowd said, "We have the winning spirit. What we need to do is take that winning spirit and put it into a magical converting machine and turn it into wins."

*Disclaimer: Abby Schaeffer was not involved in the writing or editing of this article.*