

# The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper

*"The Pulse  
of the  
Student  
Body"*

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## Education Runs on Duncan

By SADIE BERGEN

Arne Duncan, President Obama's pick for the cabinet position of Secretary of Education, used to play professional basketball in Australia. In fact, on election night he played a pickup game with the President himself.

However, Obama chose the seven-year chief executive of the Chicago Public School system for more than his basketball skills. As we come to the end of Obama's first year in office, the changes Duncan has brought to the United States Public Education System are already evident.

Duncan's experience in the Chicago Public Schools earned him a reputation for confronting difficult issues, including ways to improve teacher quality and failing schools. He opened over 100 new schools, closed down

underperforming schools, improved the quality of teachers, and vastly improved standardized test scores throughout the city. As Parent Coordinator Harvey Blumm said, "his general thrust has been to shake things up." Duncan's policies towards education align closely with Obama's; both stress the importance of standardized testing and funding for schools that is based on statistical evidence, derived from both student and teacher performance. "For [Duncan], it doesn't mean anything unless you can quantify it," Blumm said.

In his official biography on the education department's Web site, Duncan cites education as "the most pressing issue facing America," Duncan wrote. "Preparing young people for success in life is not just a moral

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## First Ever SU Winter Carnival Held In Cafeteria

By CHESTER DUBOV and SAM FURNIVAL

The Student Union (SU) held its first ever Winter Carnival in the cafeteria on Friday, December 11. The event, which began after 10th period, lasted until 5:30 p.m.

The SU organized the carnival in order to give clubs and publications an opportunity to fundraise. "With the ban on bake sales, clubs have been unable to fundraise effectively, and the SU cannot grant all requests for funding," senior and SU Chief Financial Officer Rosanna Soba said.

"During an Executive Council meeting, we talked about holding the carnival in order for Clubs and Pubs to be able to raise funds," senior and SU Club/Pub Director Masudur Rahman said. "I emailed all the clubs with a questionnaire asking what they planned to do at the carnival. Any club that was interested then filled it out and sent it back to us."

The admission price for the carnival was five dollars. All attendees were given six tickets at the door, which were used to buy food or participate in activities set up by the clubs. According to SU President Paul Lee, the number of tickets earned by each individual club will determine the amount of money they receive from the carnival.



Students enjoy the wide array of food offered at the first ever Winter Carnival.

"Each Club or Pub has been collecting tickets that were sold at the beginning of the Carnival."

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## Opinions

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### You Can Read This Later

What's wrong with putting off our schoolwork to improve our virtual farming abilities and social networking skills?



Article on page 11.

## Arts & Entertainment

### Little Company, Big Flavor

We've all stared open-mouthed through their windows, wondering how those pies taste. It's time to find out.

## Parents' Association Donates to Help Restore Per-Session Pay

By NICOLE ZHAO and BEN GARNER

In a meeting with Principal Stanley Teitel on Monday, November 30, the Stuyvesant High School Parents' Association (PA) proposed donating 60,000 dollars to the school to be used for per-session pay, the money used to compensate teachers for the time that they spend after school. According to Teitel, this amount is less than half of the amount necessary to fully restore per-session pay. However, Teitel said that while not all of per-session pay would be restored, he would try to distribute the donation evenly among the different after-school activities previously covered by per-session pay.

"He's going to try to stretch out the per-session dollars as much as he can by cutting back on the number of tutoring classes or cutting the number of teachers leading the sessions," PA president Larry Wood said.

The donation will be made once the PA votes to approve the

proposal at the monthly PA meeting on Tuesday, December 15. "I'm assuming if it's approved [at the meeting], we'll immediately give a check to the [Department of Education], which will be put into [Teitel's] budget," Wood said.

According to Wood, the entire budget of the PA's Appropriations Committee, which, according to the PA Web site, "solicits and reviews requests for funding by students, faculty, and the administration," currently consists of \$120,000.

After consideration, the PA "came out with a figure of 60,000 dollars," Wood said. "We're hoping the Alumni Association will also come up with some funding."

All of the money the PA proposed donating was raised through fundraising events, such as the 100 Years of Broadway, and donations from parents. "We usually get donations from about a third of the parents, but we're hoping as many parents as possible make a contribution, even if it's a small one," Wood said.

According to Wood, the PA

chose to contribute to the budget for per-session in particular because, "We think it's very important for the school and for the students. It's what makes Stuyvesant special in many respects," he said. "We just wish we could fund the whole thing. It's just so critical."

"It's a worthy thing," drafting teacher Stephen Rothenberg said. "[After-school tutoring] is very important."

Although Teitel is not sure when he will receive the money, per-session pay will resume "most likely after [winter break]," he said.

Students were optimistic about the proposed donation. "It is good to see the [PA] getting involved," junior Matteo Battistini said. "The economy is not good, and every little bit helps."

Junior Rebecca Scher agreed. "I'm glad that the Parents' Association will be donating the money for the after-school tutoring program," she said.

"It's very generous on [the PA's] part to be helping us in this manner," Teitel said.

## The Valerie Piro Push to Walk Fundraiser Held in Brooklyn

By KAREN ZHENG  
*with additional reporting by GEORGIANA YANG*

Nothing regarding the lawsuit was written because there are no new developments. Alfred said that the case would not go to court for years, and he did not want to talk about it. He said if they had won the case already, there would be no need for the fundraiser, but nothing of the sort happened.

We could not get any direct quotes from Valerie because she had to go to the hospital after the run. I e-mailed her but she did not reply; she did send out an email to the team though: "I went to the hospital and found out that I had severe hypothermia. When they took my temperature, it was 91.5 degrees (this was after a ride to the hospital in the warm ambulance). After three hours of what the doctors called "aggressive heating" I felt fine, but they wanted to keep me there overnight just to make sure I was okay." I doubt that she wants us to write about it, but I could if needed, just let me know.

The Valerie Piro Push to Walk Four Mile Run was held at the 69th St Pier in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 5. The fundraiser was sponsored by Tri & Run For Your Life, a local sports store special-

izing in triathlon equipment. The course was four miles: two miles out in the direction of the Verrazano Bridge, and then back to the pier. It rained, snowed, and hailed throughout the race, and the temperature stayed in the low 40s. Valerie Piro ('09) herself attempted the course in a wheelchair and completed it in 1 hour and 27 minutes.

Valerie Piro was traveling to a meet at Dartmouth College with five other members of the Stuyvesant girls' track team on Friday, January 12, 2008, when their van went off the road. She suffered a spinal cord injury and became paralyzed from the chest down, and spent the next six months in various hospitals working on rehabilitation.

According to the Tri & Run For Your Life Web site, "[Valerie Piro] began a home rehab program, working at it 15 to 20 hours a week. Slowly she began a process of recovery that has gone on over 20 months, regaining feeling and muscle strength inch by inch. At the present time, varying levels of feeling have returned all the way down to her toes."

Mike Kasper, the owner of Tri & Run For Your Life, said that Piro was a member of the store's running group for about a year

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# News

## First Ever SU Winter Carnival Held In Cafeteria

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At the end of the night, the SU collects the tickets and our budget directors will redistribute the funds accordingly," Lee said. According to Lee, while plans have not yet been finalized, a majority of the funds made at the carnival will go back to the clubs and pubs.

All participating clubs were required to set up their own booths prior to the carnival. In an attempt to attract attendees over to their side of the cafeteria, some clubs incorporated special activities to their booths.

"We had a really unique activity, which was crepe-making," junior and co-president of the French Club Abbie Kouzmanoff said. "It was really fun making the food, and I think people enjoyed it."

Prominently displayed in the center of the cafeteria was the Rowing Club's booth, which featured two indoor rowing machines on which attendees were encouraged to try out rowing.

"[Junior] Konrad Wojnar and [sophomore] Vlad Bledstein went and got the machines from the boathouse we row out of, and [computer science teacher and faculty advisor Mike] Zamansky is letting us keep them in his room over the weekend," senior and president of the Rowing Club David Rice said.

Other activities included Twister from the Gay Lesbian and Straight Spectrum, darts from the Future Union of Stuyvesant Speakers and a game of Super Smash Bros. Brawl from the Neglected No More Club.

Although the main purpose of the carnival was to fundraise, participating clubs/pubs were also able to showcase to students what their club does. "I'm here for people to see what we do. Publicity is always an issue for us," Rice said. "We got some people who never rowed before rowing. That's always good."

In addition to students, several faculty members were also in attendance. "I came because I knew it was a fundraiser and the clubs need money and I want to support them in their endeavors," biology teacher Dr. Maria Nedwidek said. "It's also nice to see my students in a setting outside the classroom."

Health teacher and Coordinator of Student Affairs Lisa Weinwurm, who helped coordinate the carnival and was present for its duration, declined to comment.

Both attendees and SU members expressed positive feedback about the event.

"It was great. I absolutely loved all the food and games," junior Matteo Battistini said.

"We got a late start on the advertising, but everything came together great and a lot of people showed up and had a great time," senior class vice president Steven Arroyo said. "This was definitely a huge success."

According to Lee, more carnivals may be planned for the future. "This was a great success. A good amount of people came out and had fun," Lee said. "I hope that we can have bigger carnivals in the future to raise as much money for clubs and pubs as we can."

## Letter Drive Promotes Human Rights

By ALEX WANG

The Write-A-Thon is an annual letter drive sponsored by Amnesty International meant to coincide with International Human Rights Day on Friday, December 10. During the event, activists are encouraged to write letters to government officials in countries where there are victims of human rights violations, in the hope that these officials will become overwhelmed by the global concern and stop violations or release those who have been unfairly detained.

The goal of HELP is to "to educate the student body about human rights and the violation of human rights that continues in the world today. We also empower students by showing them how they can help through activism," junior and president of HELP Seong-Im Hong said. The event was promoted along two fronts. Students were encouraged to sign pre-written letters at a table near the second floor entrance. A sign displayed on the table asked students to "Take a breather from tests and quizzes—sign a letter, donate a stamp or two, walk away knowing that you've just saved a life." Parents were also encouraged to sign letters at the Parents' Association meeting on Tuesday, December 15.

According to Hong, "This is a fantastic example of how Stuyvesant students can show their selflessness by dedicating their time, effort and stamps for the cause of human rights worldwide."

This year, HELP focused its efforts on several victims. Aung San Suu Kyi is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who has been under house arrest for more than a dozen years for supporting democracy in Myanmar. Mohammed Mohammed Hassan Odaini has been detained in Guantanamo Bay despite being cleared for release over two years ago. Rita Mahato has received threats of rape and death for working at a women's rehabilitation center for victims of violence in Nepal. Shi Tao is a Chinese journalist serving a

ten-year sentence for sending an e-mail to the United States about a Communist party directive.

Last year, the club promoted the Global Write-A-Thon as well. "A few hundred" people signed letters, according to former president Theresa Lee ('09). The focus was Fathi El-Jahmi, who was arrested by Libyan authorities in 2002 after calling for free speech and political reforms. He was transferred to a hospital in Tripoli, Libya due to his deteriorating health. El-Jahmi was released in 2008, but still remained in state custody. Unfortunately, he passed away in May 2009, after the event took place in Stuyvesant.

"It was a challenge to get people to really care about the issues, or just even explain what was happening since a lot of people signed letters in between classes," Lee said. "I found that a lot of people questioned the effectiveness of a write-a-thon because they didn't see how writing a letter can help improve human rights or free a prisoner of conscience. However, I really do believe international pressure does work, even if it is gradual."

HELP also has a women's rights subdivision in addition to its human rights branch. They plan on promoting speaker events and holding a clothing drive for battered women's shelters later in the school year. They also hold monthly movie nights that try to raise awareness for issues such as maternal mortality and female genital mutilation.

"I felt that women's rights needed a special attention since [women are] so vulnerable" said Hong.

Although it is frustrating and stressful at times leading the club, Hong firmly believes in the causes the club promotes. "It's satisfying just propagating information about human rights to the student body and maybe helping us a step toward a better world," Hong said. "Everyone should be passionate about the well-being of fellow human beings, no matter how different or far apart they are from each other."

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## Merchandise on Hold



The school store closed recently due to a lack of funding.

John Mennell / The Spectator

By JENNY FUNG

Walking through the hallways of Stuyvesant are hundreds of students wearing t-shirts emblazoned with a "Stuy" logo. Athletes as well as many gym students carry their gym clothes in a gym bag with the word "Stuyvesant" stenciled on the side. These students have most likely purchased these customized items from the school store.

However, the school store closed in November. Carmen Citron, the manager of the school store since 1998, explained that the school store was closed as a result of the budget cuts.

"Budget cuts from the Department of Education caused the city to let go 500 school aides," Citron said.

Unfortunately, one of Stuyvesant's school aides, who also took care of the store, was cut. This left only Citron to look after the store and she did not have the time to do so.

Principal Stanley Teitel made the executive decision to close down the store.

The school store was located next to the senior bar on the second floor. Although not often visited by students, it did occasionally get business. Students were able to buy items such as gym shorts, sweatshirts,

school supplies and other school souvenirs. The store also sold some food and drink items.

"I used to get OJ from there," sophomore Ann Shum said.

The store also had an online Web site that allowed students to order things via the internet. While the online portion of the store did not prove to be very successful, it is still in operation.

After hearing about the closing of the school store, many students were surprised.

"I am really surprised the school store is closing because it seems like lots of people buy school merchandise," sophomore Libby Dvir said. "I think we should have a school store because it promotes school spirit."

However, others feel indifferent about the issue.

"It doesn't really affect me because I've been there only once," junior Vanessa Yuan said.

Until the economy improves Stuyvesant students won't be able to show their school pride through customized mugs or boxes. However, there is still hope.

"If the budget, you know, lifts and we can hire a school aide, then I don't see a problem in reopening it," Citron said.

## Medical Ethics Class Hosts 24th Annual Symposium

By SANDY CHAN

The 24th Annual Medical Ethics Symposium, an event open to all students and faculty, took place on Thursday, December 10 in the Murray Kahn Theater. The topic of this year's symposium was cyber-medicine—the use of the Internet to deliver health care services such as medical consultations and drug prescriptions.

**"It's a chance for students to question critically about what they're listening to."**  
—Roz Bierig, biology teacher

The event was organized by biology teacher Roz Bierig and the students in her two Medical Ethics classes. Seniors Anna Menkova and Zach Stromer began the evening with an overview of cyber-medicine and popular Web sites that offer medical services, including WebMD and MedscapeCME.

They were followed by the keynote speaker of the night, Acting Regional Director and Executive Officer at United States Department of Health and Human Services Dennis Gonzales. Gonzales contributed the federal government's stance on cyber-medicine.

"Technology has advanced into a wonderful thing," Gonzales said. "The Web sites are very good and very useful, but be very careful when using them."

Manager of MedscapeCME Kathleen Walsh Tolley spoke about the positive sides of cyber-medicine, which included the faster distribution of information and the raising of public awareness. Tolley also stressed that applications such as WebMD, which provide medical information to people, should not be used as a substitute to seeking professional help.

"Medicine education from a web base is not to supplant but to adjunct," Tolley said. "It's a

team approach."

Chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology Dr. Stephen Landauer described the faults of cyber-medicine, including misinformation and its lack of emotion.

Chairman of Department of Anesthesiology and Associate Professor of Neurology Dr. Stuart Apfel introduced another branch of cyber-medicine: robotic technology. He argued that the use of robots to complete medical procedures is benefi-

**"Medicine education from a web base is not to supplant but to adjunct."**  
—Kathleen Walsh Tolley, manager of MedscapeCME

cial because it results in smaller incisions, quicker recovery time and smaller scars for patients.

Dr. Apfel also acknowledged the downside of robotic surgery, mainly in its heavy cost. According to Dr. Apfel, the most commonly used robotic surgeon is the da Vinci System, which is cleared by the Food and Drug Administration for a variety of surgical procedures including surgery for prostate cancer, hysterectomy and mitral valve repair. It is used in more than 800 hospitals in the Americas and Europe and currently sells for 1.75 million dollars.

However, Dr. Apfel believed that technology should continue to be developed. "If we remain positive about technology, there are virtually no limits," he said.

The last speaker of the night was Assistant Counsel at New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation Mathew Varughese, who discussed how the law pertains to cyber-medicine. Varughese praised the level of confidentiality that the Internet could provide patients.

"The reason that confidentiality is so important is because it is the root of the patient-doctor relationship," Varughese said.

Students in the audience had varying opinions about the symposium.

"There were a lot of sound issues so a few of the speakers were hard to follow, and it was harder to concentrate," junior Kimberly Lawrence said.

"It was great, being my first. I found out about things I never thought were possible, such as robotic surgery," freshman Benjamin Raja said.

Between speakers, students in the Medical Ethics classes performed skits to entertain the audience. The students also collected raffle gifts and donations from neighboring restaurants and stores.

The Medical Ethics class and symposium were started 24 years ago by Bierig, who wrote the curriculum for the course. Her students applauded the amount of hard work that she put into this symposium.

"Ms. Bierig contributes a lot to the environment and gives it her all," senior Bessie Rentzler said. "She adds a lot of charisma to the class."

According to Bierig, these symposiums are one of the things that make Stuyvesant so special.

"Something like this is along the line of higher education," Bierig said. "It's a chance for students to question critically about what they're listening to."

## The Valerie Piro Push to Walk Fundraiser Held in Brooklyn

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prior to her injury. "This is our second Jingle Bell run, and we try to have all our races sponsor local causes. Al [Alfred Piro, Valerie's father] appeared as I was thinking about it. A great cause and a good race combined make a happy event," Kasper said.

According to Kasper, more than 100 people registered for the race. The race fee was 25 dollars, which included registration numbers, T-shirts, and snacks. About 500-1000 dollars was donated from non-racers, and 2844.50 dollars was collected in total. One-hundred percent of the profits went to the Piro family for medical bills.

"It is going to help financially, but this is also a very big moral boost [for Valerie Piro] and it is very exciting for us to see the big turnout," Kasper said.

Excluding special education students, "Val was the first kid in a wheelchair at Stuy," Alfred Piro said. "Last year she went to school, came home, and worked out every day. The whole staff was wonderful in accommodating her." He spoke highly of Principal Stanley Teitel, math teacher Ashvin Jaishankar, English teacher Kerry Garfinkel, and social studies teacher Reuben Stern for "always being there when Val needed anything," Alfred Piro said.

Among the prominent attendees were Garfinkel, the Stuyvesant girls' Cross Country team, former track team member Connie Cheng ('09), Bronx Science Health teacher Karen Susnitzky, Push to Walk co-founder Cynthia Templeton, and Valerie Piro's primary trainers from Push to Walk, Mike Anastasiou and Eric Prol.

Push to Walk, an alternative care facility in northern New Jersey that works on getting people out of their wheelchairs and onto their feet, is not covered by health insurance. Its hourly rate is 85 dollars, and Valerie Piro goes there for six hours over the course of three days each week.

**"It is going to help financially, but this is also a very big moral boost and it is very exciting for us to see the big turnout."**  
—Mike Kasper, Tri & Run For Your Life owner

are combining alternative therapy with acupuncture. This is something that nobody does to improve or cure a spinal cord injury," Templeton said. "One of the biggest benefits of Valerie coming to Push to Walk is that she does so much on her own. The combination of our workouts with what she does at home is what is helping her improve."

"Valerie has been doing very well. She has had 100 percent attendance. She has already made a lot of strides," Prol said. "Her posture and hip flexure has

improved, and she has some controlled movement. We are working on initiating crawling by pulling the knee forward. Our philosophy is that nobody ever stops recovering until they stop trying. [...] You certainly don't want to stop trying."

When asked about Valerie Piro's anticipated full recovery date, Anastasiou said, "She'd have a lot of hard work to get there but I wouldn't want to rule anything out. Eventually, she will reach a maintenance phase. She will probably always have to keep working out at some extent."

According to Templeton, "progress with spinal cord injury is very slow [but] Valerie has been very hardworking and optimistic," Templeton said.

Family friend and event volunteer Joe Rose agreed. "Val has a great work ethic. I often see her on the machines. She has worked very hard for this, progressing slowly and very well on all accounts," he said. "[This fundraising event] is great. It's amazing seeing so many people turn out for this in such terrible weather. Val's parents have almost had as hard a time as she has."

Bronx Science Health teacher Karen Susnitzky attended the run, but the Bronx Science boys' and girls' track teams couldn't make it because they had a meet that morning. "The run was great. There's nothing like running with a purpose behind it. This [running] area is so picturesque," Susnitzky said. "The [Stuyvesant girls'] Cross Country team has so much spirit. There's a nice, personal feel of community."

The team members agreed that the race was enjoyable. "This race is not only a great opportunity to raise money for Valerie but it also brought people together show support for her. The cross country and track teams came out to show Valerie what a valued member of the team she was. We had a lot of fun despite the rainy," senior and



Runners participated at Jingle Bell Run, which was held on Saturday, December 5.

indoor track captain Lily Ostrer said.

Freshman Helen Nie agreed. "It was an awesome race. Even though I didn't know Valerie, it felt good to be supporting a fellow runner."

Valerie Piro expressed her thanks in an e-mail to the team the following day. "I was so happy and touched to see you all there and I hope you had fun despite the yucky weather," she wrote. "It was great meeting the new girls and being with the veterans. I missed you guys."

Valerie Piro was accepted

into Harvard University, where she will begin studying in September 2010. She is taking this year off to "improve as much as she can before she gets to Harvard," Alfred Piro said. "She is learning to play the guitar, working out, reading, and seeing friends when she can. One of the great things about the computer is that she can keep up with her friends, especially those in Harvard."

Valerie Piro hopes to walk into Harvard on her own two feet.

# Features

By ARIELLE GERBER

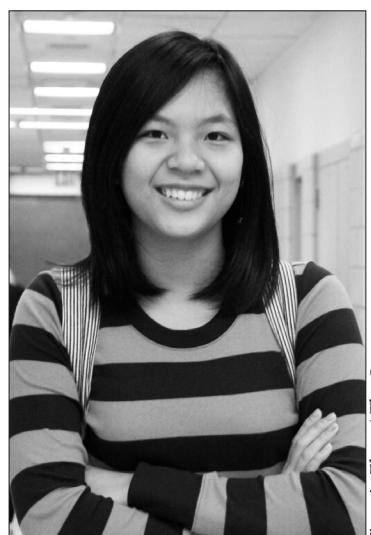
Near the bridge entrance on the second floor was the table where, on Tuesday, November 10, 235 freshmen cast their vote for the freshman class president. Starting on October 15, candidates campaigned to convince the student body that they were best suited to represent their grade in the Student Union (SU). And, on the day of the election, the freshman class voted for who they thought would best serve their needs.

Well, not quite.

In reality, most of the freshman class didn't know enough about the candidates to make an informed decision. Freshman Sofia Wyetzner voted in the primary elections for freshmen Saru Nanda and Evie Rosenberg, simply because "[she] didn't know anything about anyone else running," she said. "I just voted for my friend." Similarly, freshman Lavinia Lee cast her ballot for freshmen Jamie Lee Solimano and Neeta D'Souza



Freshmen President Jennifer Zhou (left) and Vice President Amber Lin (right) hope to better inform the freshman class of 2009-2010.



Victoria Zhao / The Spectator

because they were the "only candidates [she] actually knew," she said.

The majority of students didn't even cast a vote—out of 885 freshman students, only 235 students voted. Among the

non-voting majority was freshman Hannah Brodheim, who abstained because "no one ever told [her] what the advantages of electing a certain person were."

Many freshmen now report not knowing who won the elec-

tion. Evan Rosenberg, a candidate in the primary election, "[doesn't] know who it is," he said.

The actual winners of the election were freshmen Jennifer Zhou and Amber Lin, for president and vice president, respectively. While running for office, Zhou and Lin had problems finding a platform to run on.

"The freshman president and vice president don't really do anything," Zhou said. "Nobody really needs anything because this school is already so good."

Thus, they focused less on their campaign platform and more on making themselves known.

"We wanted people to think, 'I don't know Amber and Jennifer but I'll vote for them because they took the time to make posters,'" Zhou said.

It comes as no surprise to many freshmen that the majority of votes were earned through publicity rather than platform. "They win by how well they are

known," freshman Lucy Woychuk-Mlinac said in an e-mail interview. Woychuk-Mlinac voted anyway, for her friend freshman Thomas Zadrozny, running mate of freshman Tiffany Chan, because "he asked me to," Woychuk-Mlinac said.

Zhou and Lin are aware that many freshmen seem to be under-informed about their reasons for running and their goals as freshman president and vice president. "I'm scared of people looking back and saying, 'What did you do?'" Zhou said. To prevent this, Zhou and Lin have created an e-mail address, [freshideas2013@yahoo.com](mailto:freshideas2013@yahoo.com), where freshmen can send their thoughts, suggestions, and ideas.

For now, however, the obstacle is not getting the word out about their candidacy, but getting the word out about their presidency.

"I didn't know anything about anyone else running," said freshman Sofia Wyetzner. "I don't know who won."

## Education Runs on Duncan

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obligation of society" but also an "economic imperative."

These comments are reflected in the emphasis that has been put on education during the recent economic crisis. The "Race to the Top" program is a plan that would provide 4.3 billion dollars in grants to several states that show exemplary performance and improvement in their public education systems, a larger sum than has ever been allotted for education reform. Duncan, in an op-ed for The Washington Post published on Friday, July 24, explained the plan further.

"The program is also a competition through which states can increase or decrease their odds of winning federal support. For example, states that limit alternative routes to certification for teachers and principals, or cap the number of charter schools, will be at a competitive disadvantage. And states that explicitly prohibit linking data on achievement or student growth to principal and teacher evaluations will be ineligible for reform dollars until they change their laws," Duncan said.

To receive the funds a state must have fostered innovation, improved achievement, raised standards, recruited effective teachers, turned around failed schools and built data systems to back all of this information up. Underneath these general requirements are the foundations of Duncan and Obama's shared view on what the future of education in the United States should be. Through their "Race to the Top" program, they are thus providing incentive for states to jump onto their bandwagon. However, some students don't believe that Obama and Duncan's policies really represent change.

"Obama is putting more emphasis on funding Bush policies that are already established. They are just going along the same path," senior Matt Leiwant said.

Senior John Connuck agrees that Obama hasn't done as much as he could be doing for education. "It's a travesty that the Obama administration overlooks education when it is clearly the only definite solution to our economic and social issues," he said.

However, social studies teacher Robert Sandler is impressed with the Obama administration's boldness so far. "So far [the Obama administration] has shown that it's willing to be innovative. It's going against the unions, who are the backbone of the Democratic party, which takes a certain amount of chutzpah." However, Sandler is "conflicted" about Obama's education policy, he said.

During the Obama Campaign there was much talk of an overhaul of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, which would mean a reduced federal role in education and a lesser emphasis on standardized testing and numerical data. [However], the "Race" program actually requires schools to have no "barriers to linking data on student achievement or student growth to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation," the rules say. "Race" is therefore not a departure from No Child Left Behind, but an extension of it that specifies what should be done with the test scores that No Child Left Behind mandated—only evidence of greater accountability will go rewarded. The "Race to the Top" fund promotes such transparency by openly challenging public school systems.

New York does not currently qualify for the program because of its policy of not basing teacher salaries on standardized test scores; however, Mayor Michael Bloomberg has been encouraging the New York State Legislature to amend these limits. On Wednesday, November 25, Bloomberg gave a speech in Washington D.C. in which he discussed his plans and hopes for New York City public schools. If the Legislature does amend the limits, NYC public schools would immediately begin using student test scores as a factor in deciding which teachers earn tenure. Test scores would also be used to lay off teachers as an alternative to making these decisions based on seniority.

These would be significant additions to the determinations already made by test scores, which include teacher and principal bonus pay and the assignment of letter grades to all public schools in the city. Bloomberg called on the New York State Legislature to evaluate test

scores with the data systems required to qualify for the "Race to the Top" funding.

However, the teachers' union has frequently criticized the idea of connecting teacher evaluation to test scores. In fact, they lobbied and successfully banned the use of test scores in making tenure decisions, but this law is set to expire in 2010.

Other critics say that test scores are not a fair measure of performance for teachers or students because the state tests given do not reflect public school curricula and are often too easy.

Leiwant also believes that testing is not a fair way of judging performance. "The problem with standardized testing is that there is no multiple choice test that can encompass how a child is learning or how a teacher is teaching," he said.

However, senior Lily Ostrer thinks that a more concrete way of measuring student and teacher performance is necessary. "A national tracking system is important because education in different states can be manipulated to show a huge improvement," Ostrer said. "Having more accountability on a national level is very important."

According to Blumm, a system of rewarding teachers or schools based on data might not work for Stuyvesant. "It would be a lot more complicated here because kids come in with high scores, so by the end of four years there hasn't been much visible improvement," Blumm said. For this system to work for Specialized High Schools like Stuyvesant, special criteria would have to be applied, which, for the "Race" program, do not currently exist.

Sandler is doubtful that awarding pay and tenure based on merit is a viable option. "I'm skeptical of any one size fits all model. Why does someone deserve merit pay who teaches at Stuyvesant, where all the students are motivated?"

Currently New York State doesn't qualify for "Race to the Top" funding is a stipulation that there be no limits on funding for charter schools in the state. Bloomberg, like Duncan, is an enthusiastic advocate of charter schools, which are privately run but publicly financed. Charter schools are generally non-union, which frees them from the labor

restrictions that public schools are under. They have garnered support with their promise of innovative teaching methods and more flexible work rules for teachers.

Within New York City, tensions have arisen when charter schools, which receive no public money for construction, are forced to share a building with public schools, which limits already tight space.

Both Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein encourage charter schools, and Bloomberg has called on the state legislature to provide money for their facilities and to lift the limits currently on them.

"I think charter schools are a great idea because they offer stuff that isn't available at other schools," Ostrer said. "We need to start somewhere in improving the disastrous quality of education in the country."

Leiwant agrees. "Charter schools are the best way to improve public education from where we are now," he said.

However, parent and junior representative for the School Leadership Team Emily Shapiro feels differently. "While I don't have a problem with encouraging excellent charter schools to sprout and grow, I would not want that to be at the expense of traditional public schools," Shapiro said. "I would like [Obama] pay some attention to gifted education since the US's brightest youth have been left behind to devastating effect socially."

"In the long term it's a mistake to give up on the public school system," Sandler said.

Missing from the "Race" Program is any kind of requirement for smaller class sizes. According to the Institute of Education Services, the research branch of the US Department of Education headed by Duncan, smaller class sizes are one of the only reforms proven to increase learning overall. Some argue that Duncan should not have left such a vital component out of the fund's specifications, especially since he has often praised charter schools for just this quality.

Another plan of Duncan's, which would hit very close to home for Stuyvesant students, is that of lengthening both the school day and the school year. In an interview for CNN Duncan explained that our six-hour

school day puts students at a competitive disadvantage, and that increasing the amount of time spent in school would give students the academic achievements they need to move forward.

"Children in India and China are going to school much more than our students are," Duncan said. "It doesn't matter how poor, how tough the family background, socioeconomic challenges," Duncan said. "Where students have longer days, longer weeks, longer years—that's making a difference."

An issue that impacts New York City directly is that of Mayoral Control of schools. Bloomberg's right to complete control of the school system was renewed by the state legislature this summer, and he was completely backed by Duncan. In fact, Duncan encouraged the legislature to give Bloomberg unlimited control, meaning no checks and balances and no input from any parent organizations.

Further, as part of the "Race to the Top" guidelines, states will be awarded based on "the extent to which the State has demonstrated commitment, support, and/or funding from the following key stakeholders: the teacher unions, charter school authorizers, the "business, community, civil rights, education association leaders and private foundations." The notable exception to this list is parents.

However, Blumm does not believe that this will necessarily affect Stuyvesant students or their parents in an adverse way.

"On an individual school level Duncan's plans involve support of parental involvement," said Blumm. According to social studies teacher Matt Polazzo, Stuyvesant is unlikely to feel the impact of Duncan's reforms any time soon.

"Because the education system is almost completely controlled by states, any impact from Department of Ed reforms would take a long time. First the New York State Legislature would have to make the changes that are required to receive benefits [from programs like "Race to the Top"]," Polazzo said.

Nonetheless, if these reforms are made with the legislature, effects will be felt and Stuyvesant will have to adapt to meet them.

## Features

### The College Craze

By SHILPA AGRAWAL

It is early on the morning of Tuesday, December 1, and senior Kelly Quinn is struggling to finish her college application. She hits the submit button and immediately receives a confirmation email from the school:

"Dear Mr. Kelly Quinn, you have successfully submitted your application." M R . Kelly Quinn?

"It was 3:30 in the morning, and I was really aggravated and frustrated about it. I just ended up laughing because it became so farcical," Quinn said.

Quinn's response to the college's gender confusion reflects many students' frustrations with the complexity and apparent randomness of the college application process.

Over the next months seniors will frantically fill out applications and make decisions for college. However, most students have been making these kinds of decisions for a long time already.

"[College] has always been something on my mind both because of the teachers here, and the staff here in general, and because of my parents," senior Tasso Bountouvas said.

"A lot of my advanced courses, like AP courses, especially personally in history, I just took because I was like 'Oh, why not. I might as well, it will look good on my application,'" senior Eileen Kim said.

This mentality is not unique to Kim. In fact, some students even chose to attend Stuyvesant for the effect it could have on their future in college.

"I thought at my old school I wouldn't be prepared for college, and I wouldn't be able to get into a good college, so I did end up coming to Stuy to be better prepared for college," junior Anca Dogaroiu said. "However, now I tend to think that Stuy might hurt your chances for getting into college, because every college wants to compare you to other people from your school. Being compared to other people from Stuy is going to make it very difficult to get in."

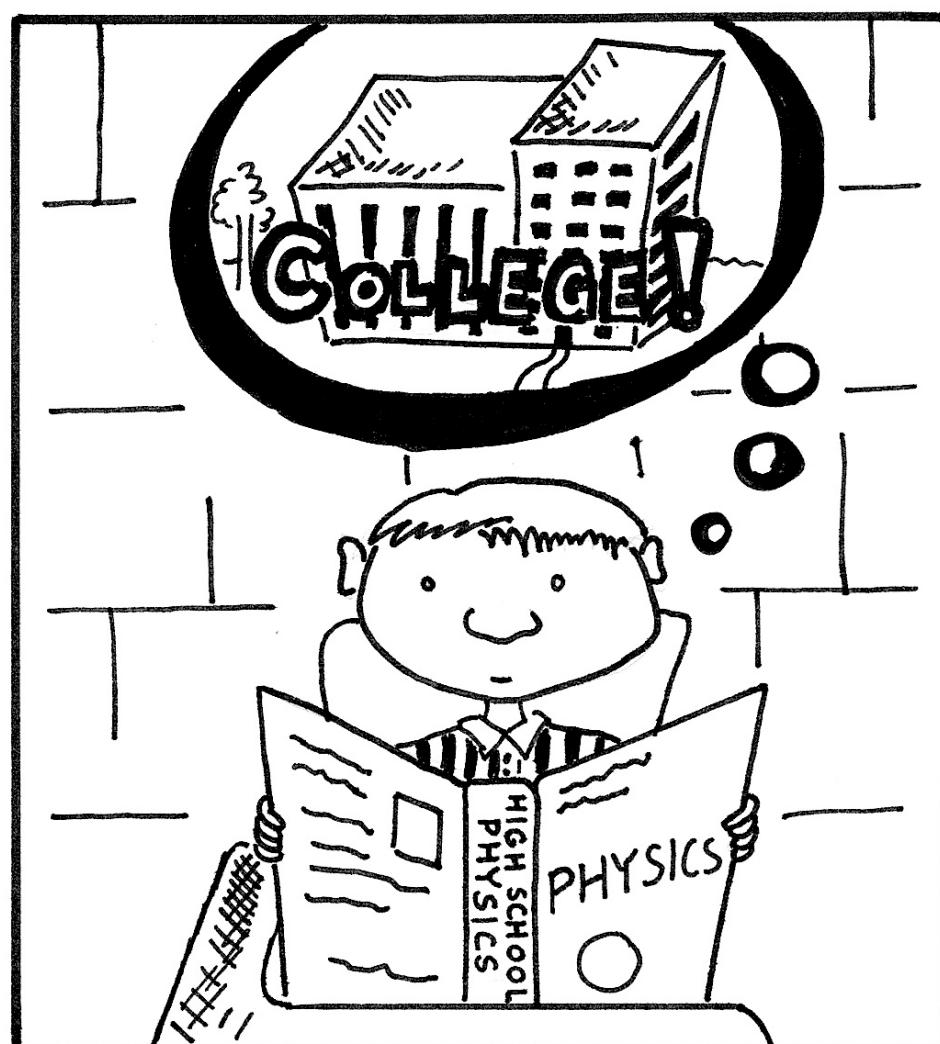
While some students may have come to Stuyvesant with the hope of being better prepared for college, once in the school there is a large amount of work that has to be done to build up an exceptional college application. A large number of Stuyvesant seniors confessed that they chose to take some classes and join some clubs or teams partly for the sake of college applications.

"One of the things that I did for the sake of college is ARISTA [...] When you talk to colleges about something that shows what a good participant in society you are, ARISTA is one of those things," senior Alex Albright said.

Through various seminars, information books, talks with graduates, and help from guidance and college offices, everyone knows the keys and bullet points to having a successful college application. Yet, as the January 1st deadline approaches, the process of applying to college can end up overwhelming students.

"We know that they are under a lot of stress," guidance counselor Jeremy Wang said. "For instance, their attendance records are suffering based on coming to school or cutting classes, because they want to take care of their college applications [...] We know that they are under a lot of pressure."

Most teachers take into account the pressure students are going through. However, they try not to let it prohibit their class from functioning as it should.



"The work has to get assigned, and the work has to get done. But when the early application deadlines are looming, I usually scale back on the amount of assignments I give," math teacher James Cocoros said. "But there is only so much I can scale back, and not stall my class."

While teachers may try to ease the burden of colleges for students, the pressure still exists. Some students feel that Stuyvesant itself is responsible for a lot of this pressure.

"The atmosphere of Stuyvesant definitely puts pressure on the students. Everyone knows where everyone else is applying, and you compare yourself to them to see if you're going to get in, or what chances you have of getting in [to certain schools]. I mean, in my case, I definitely do it too," Quinn said. "I feel that all of this fosters a competitive atmosphere in the school."

While some students feel that the competitive attitudes of the students can cause a lot of the pressure, Stuyvesant has also instituted many policies and requirements in order to prepare students for college and boost the competitiveness of seniors applying to college. One requirement that is currently being debated is the four-year math requirement.

According to Principal Stanley Teitel, college admissions are part of the reasoning behind the proposed requirement. "I'm not sure that not including mathematics in your program as a senior doesn't somehow inadvertently tell colleges that you are not serious about learning," Teitel said.

Aside from this tentative math requirement, the English department also requires all senior English classes to write an essay with college in mind.

"They write a personal essay that they can or cannot send to colleges," said Assistant Principal English Eric Grossman. "We were helping them with their college essays anyway, but this was a way of kind of ensuring that everyone who wanted help would

get it, whether or not the essay they submit for class ends up being something they put in an envelope."

Many students begin to prepare for college in their junior year, when they are given the option to go on college trips organized by the school. These trips are funded completely by the students. During these trips, students often miss a day of school to venture on the busy itinerary planned for them.

"I think we are doing a service to the parents and students by taking them on these trips," Teitel said. "Most colleges welcome us. They usually send an assistant admissions director to meet with our students to talk about the school, what they have to do, and of course answer questions. [...] I also think it helps our student body begin to call their list of what they like, and what they are looking for."

While these policies and trips are instituted to help students when applying to colleges, some students feel that the emphasis on college within the school takes away from their high school experience.

"I think it would be very idealistic to say that Stuyvesant students are concerned with learning for the sake of learning. For most Stuy students, practicality kind of gets in the way and they know that maintaining high grades is what's going to determine their future the most," senior Lily Ostrer said. "Students are very concerned with how the grades that they get in these classes will affect their getting into college, and they often times don't take advantage what they can learn at Stuyvesant now."

In some ways, the policies can also prevent students from pursuing their personal interests. Students are being forced to take classes they are not necessarily interested in, and funds for these classes takes away from carrying out other classes. In the past year, the English department has lost courses due to budget cuts, including freshman composition

and the sophomore writing seminar.

"That hurts kids in the college process," Grossman said. "Our goal should be to ensure that every Stuy student has an equal opportunity to pursue his or her strengths in the college process, not to create a two-tiered system in which some students have an unfair advantage over others."

Teitel reported that if the institution of the four-year math requirement were to take place, it will probably cost him the funds of two electives and would require students to forgo other electives in order to fill the requirement.

"While I understand how [the four-year math requirement] might help students apply to college, a lot of the kids who aren't interested in math or science, they shouldn't be forced to take four years of a class they don't enjoy, especially if they are not going to need it for college. If they want to go into liberal arts, and they are not a math whiz, it's just going to harm them more than help them," Kim said.

Ostrer, who attended the recent Student Leadership Team meeting which discussed the four year math policy, was disappointed with what she saw.

"Many of the administrators that were there were solely considering the value of the four-year math requirement in terms of how it would look for college, and they weren't considering it in terms of how it would make a student have a well-rounded education at Stuyvesant [...] I think that the policies in some ways reflect too much of showing off for college," she said.

Some teachers are also dissatisfied with the hype about colleges at Stuyvesant. "I think that there is way too much emphasis on college here. On the other hand I can't say that's unreasonable given the way our society functions today," Social Studies teacher Matthew Polazzo said.

Other teachers feel that Stuyvesant's being a college-oriented school has some posi-

tive effects, but it also takes away from the natural interest and drive in students.

"College sort of manifests itself in some good ways and some bad ways. The bad way is that there is an overall drive amongst students to take more and more AP classes just for the sake of taking them," Cocoros said. "However, in terms of the positives [...] it creates a system in which kids push each other to do better and to do more."

Students often live up to this stereotype about colleges.

"I've tried my best to take a lot of AP classes for example to look good," Bountouvas said.

While students might blindly sign up for some AP classes throughout their four years of high school, some feel that this is not the only thing students lose sight of in the midst of the college frenzy.

"I feel like, for so much of the student body, where you get into college isn't so much about where you are going to be happy or where you are going to find a place where you are going to fit [...] it's more about a scorecard, like 'how did you do at Stuy?' [...] I wish it was more focused on finding the right place for you," English teacher Mark Henderson said.

Other teachers agreed with Henderson's take on the near-sightedness of students when choosing schools to apply to.

"Students tend to look at the same list of schools, and generally a lot of kids don't consider the sort of smaller liberal arts schools as a viable option for education past Stuyvesant, whether it be because of size, or whether it be because of name recognition," Cocoros said.

In 1999, Alan Krueger, a Princeton economist, and Stacy Berg Dale, affiliated with the Andrew Carnegie Melon foundation, conducted a study to support the assertion that attending a top-tier school does not lead to a necessarily lead to a more successful future than those who do not attend. In the study they compared students who had been accepted to Ivy League schools, but went elsewhere, with those who actually attended.

Their results showed that after twenty years, there was not a large difference in the incomes of each group. However, the lure of top-tier colleges still drives many students to strive to go to these schools.

"I think a large part of it is the name and the prestige. I think that's something Stuy kids get hung up on. I think that's why some overlook really good liberal arts schools because of the name," senior Steven Arroyo said.

This focus solely on reputation and excellence can have a detrimental effect on one's future. A paper written by the members of Harvard's Office of Admissions, William Fitzsimmons, Marlyn E. McGrath, and Charles Ducey, observed that many who view college as a measure of their success may regret the path that they have taken.

"It is common to encounter even the most successful students, who have won all the 'prizes', stepping back and wondering if it was all worth it. Professionals in their thirties and forties [...] sometimes give the impression that they are dazed survivors of some bewildering life-long boot camp [...] Often they say they missed their youth entirely, never living in the present, always pursuing some ill-defined goal," the paper said.

"It makes you wonder what the whole craze is all about," Polazzo said.

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Tuesday / Thursday Class 5:00 PM~7:00 PM

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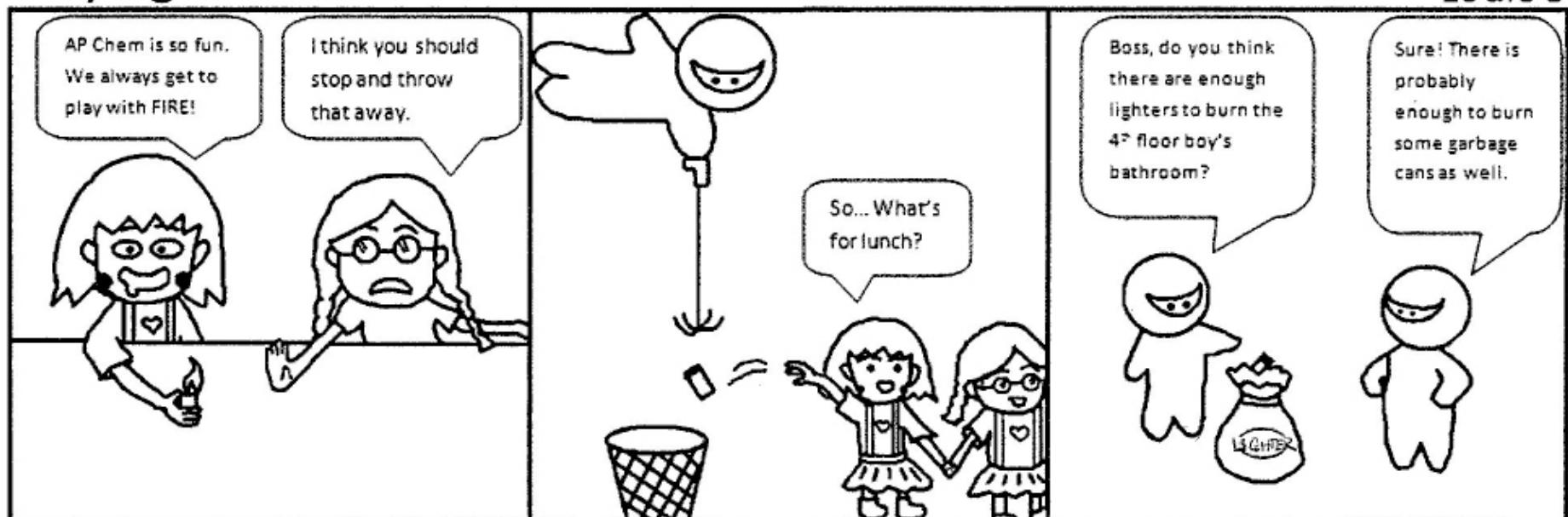
"The resemblance is eerie"



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## Anyone At All?

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# Editorials

## STAFF EDITORIAL

### Beating the Budget

In a school system where budget cuts always seem to be looming, we have grown accustomed to constantly bracing ourselves for the budget axe to fall, and for the next extracurricular or elective to vanish.

Stuyvesant students should not resign themselves to this state of affairs. There are many avenues the student body can pursue on its own to improve the current budget situation.

For instance, while we may roll our eyes during the morning announcements when we are urged to hand in our lunch forms nearly two months after they were given out, these forms could seriously benefit the school's budget for the next year. At stake is Title I funding, a grant from the U.S. Department of Education provided to schools at which at least 41 percent of students are from low-income families. According to Assistant Principal Technology Services Edward Wong, 40.2 percent of Stuyvesant students already turned in lunch forms that qualify them for reduced lunch, and if just 30 more students who qualify for free or reduced lunch turn in their forms, we will meet the threshold and the school could potentially receive one to two million dollars. The grant would greatly help counteract upcoming budget cuts for the 2010-2011 school year.

However, Title I funding is handed out with strings attached. The federal government dictates what the grant can be used for. "That money comes with very specific things you can do. One thing we could do with the money is reduce class sizes," Principal Stanley Teitel said. "If we used the money inappropriately the federal government could technically ask us to give it back." The money would allow

the school to hire extra teachers to ease overcrowding in classes.

Despite the boost that Title I funding would give Stuyvesant, many students feel that the largest impact of the budget cuts lays not in the classroom, but in extracurricular activities. Without enough funding, several activities suffer from a lack of per-session pay—the money paid to faculty advisors to supervise clubs after school, theater rehearsals and trips.

The Parents' Association (PA) provides Stuyvesant with a significant amount of money every year and recently contributed 60,000 dollars towards restoring per-session pay—a much appreciated boost. While the PA gives Stuyvesant this grant with the intention of funding per-session pay, it is up to Teitel to decide how that money is distributed to the various clubs, publications and extracurricular activities that require faculty supervision.

We believe that the money would best serve the majority of the student body by going to support the most popular clubs and activities in the school, such as SING!, Speech and Debate, Model United Nations, the Stuyvesant Theater Community, the robotics team and the Science Olympiad. These organizations, which are all an important part of the Stuyvesant community, require a large after-school commitment from students and paid faculty advisors.

Along with the money granted for per-session pay by the PA, the Student Union (SU) has the opportunity to allot money for per-session pay to clubs and pubs. Of the 50,000 dollars the SU had at the beginning of the 2009 year, a large portion will go primarily toward SING!, and approximately 12,000 dollars has been allocated

to clubs and other student organizations so far. Clubs and pubs have become even more reliant on SU money since the banning of bake sales, a vital source of revenue for extra-curriculars, by the Department of Education. To combat the limitations on club fundraising, the SU has attempted to provide for these needs by holding its first ever Winter Carnival on Friday, December 11, which gave clubs and pubs the opportunity to showcase themselves and raise money.

But there is only so much that fundraisers can do to alleviate the SU's limited funds. In order to make the most of its budget, the SU should distribute money more generously to organizations that play a bigger role in the student body. Although Stuyvesant's many clubs and pubs could all use financial support from the SU, it's important that the SU choose wisely in terms of where to put its money. Consequently, smaller clubs may not receive as much funding, although their needs should not go unnoticed. These clubs should be encouraged to come up with more innovative fundraising tactics to support themselves. This, in conjunction with PA money and better-distributed SU money would begin to counter the problems created by the budget problem.

Whether students are creating innovative fundraisers or simply getting their forms in on time, they should take initiative by helping the PA decide how the budget should be distributed and finding ways to raise money themselves. In hard times, it is up to us to determine how the budget can best serve the student body. We have a responsibility to make sure the administration knows what is important to us.

#### OP-ART



## The Spectator

The Stuyvesant High School Newspaper



*"The Pulse  
of the  
Student  
Body"*

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#### FOR THE RECORD

- In Issue 7, in the article "Fires Continue, Planned 'Lockdown' Postponed," the name of the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), was misspelled.
- In "The SU's Battle for Effectiveness and Reform," it should be noted that, in fact, no members of the Student Union's Communications department was cut. The department lost a member due to a resignation.
- In the byline for "Junior Arrested in Connection with Fires," it should be noted that Alexander Shin did additional reporting.
- In the News-in-Brief, "Student Food Drive's a Success," it was falsely stated that students in Brad Badgley's social studies classes were given extra credit for donating food. The students made the donations on their own accord.
- The outquote for "One For All" by Samantha Levine was misprinted. It should have read: "At the conclusion of a period of time, the final product is presented to the teacher, and the students all receive the same grade."
- In "Jammin," it should be noted that the third performer in 'Steam Heat' was freshman Nick Miller, not senior Justy Kosek.

# Opinions

## Point

### Arbitrary Allocation



By LOULLYANA SANEY

You stand in front of 615A and wait patiently until you are ushered in. About 20 Student Union (SU) representatives are sitting and waiting to hear what your club or pub's monetary request is.

After a club's representatives present their request, they are ushered out so that the SU members can make their decision. They discuss the request for about 10 minutes, and then vote to establish the final decision.

This is how the SU allocates funds—a short meeting with a brief discussion and a vote. "This is the most effective way to allocate funds," senior and SU Chief Financial Officer Rosanna Sobota said. "Voting members are elected or appointed, and represent the student body well. It also gives the presenting club the chance to explain their needs fully."

But on an issue as pertinent as budget allocation, discussion is not enough. Casual conversation regarding allocation is insufficient to determine how much money each club should receive. The voting is then meaningless when members do not have a concrete basis to vote off of.

The way in which money is allocated now does not reflect the amount clubs actually deserve. More factors need to be taken into account when determining the allocation. Clubs with more members, for example, deserve more money because they represent a larger portion of the student body. Clubs that show a high com-

mitment (i.e. clubs that meet every day, work on weekends, etc.) should also get more money.

If a club spends time fundraising or collecting dues from its members, but still needs extra money to participate in specific events, the SU should cater to its needs. For example, the Speech & Debate Team makes huge efforts to fundraise and also receives money from the Alumni Association, as well as other corporations and companies that make donations to the team. Yet the team does not have sufficient funds to go to all of its planned tournaments. A club that is making an effort to supply its own funds shows dedication and commitment to its cause, and deserves more money if it cannot fund itself fully.

I propose an equation that can be used in the SU's allocation of money. It would take into account various factors that all clubs have in common, such as the number of members and meeting days, efforts to fundraise for themselves, whether or not members pay dues, etc.

A general equation that takes into account basic club elements creates a basis for the allocation of money. The equation could then be modified based on extraneous factors. For example, if the club enters into competitions, then the number of awards or trophies that the club received in the past year could be taken into account as an additional variable in the equation. Clubs in their first year should also receive more money so that they have the opportunity to flourish.

Prior to the day of the budget allocation meeting, every club should send in a file with information regarding the different variables that apply to their club (e.g. number of members with proof through signatures). The SU could then determine the base amount for every club by using the equation. But this equation simply serves as a foundation for further discussion and should not be the only factor leading to the final decision. Afterward, SU members should discuss how the clubs plan to use the money, and then make a final decision regarding how much would be allocated to them.

On the basis of a strong formula and subsequent discussion, budget decisions would be the result of an organized process that has a clear foundation. There would be fewer complaints from clubs and pubs. Less funding to certain clubs may motivate their members to fundraise independently, collect dues, meet more often, or recruit more members. Ultimately, the funding that clubs would be granted would reflect what they truly deserve.

## Counter-point

### Spreading the Wealth



By SHARON CRUZ

A few weeks ago, as I was riding the train home with a friend, I suggested that we go shopping as a way to remedy our stressful day at school. A busy-body of a woman next to us then turned to her friend and said, "These kids. All they care about is makeup and shopping. Nothing ever affects them. They're not suffering the way we are—with a failing economy. It's going to be such a shock to them when they're out in the real world."

While we might not be suffering from the failing economy as much as our parents and older siblings are, we are suffering from budget cuts. Budget cuts threaten our after-school activities, various theater productions and our 174 clubs and pubs. AIS tutoring and per-session pay have already been cut. It is the responsibility of the Student Union (SU) to allocate money to clubs and pubs throughout the year during budget meetings. At the beginning of the school year, the SU had 50,000 dollars to use for SU events, SING!, per-session pay, and clubs and pubs. So far this year, approximately 12,000 dollars were allocated to clubs and pubs. However, many clubs and pubs still lack enough funds to carry out their plans for the year.

The student body should hold the SU accountable for its mistakes and shortcomings, but it is foolish to blame the SU for budget issues out of its control. At the start of this school year, the SU possessed a largely diminished amount of money (as compared to previous years) to distribute to clubs and pubs. Due to its small budget, the SU should not favor clubs that already have a means of supporting themselves. While it is suggested that the SU should follow an equation to make budget allocation stricter and fairer, the money would still not be distributed effectively. With an equation that rewards organizations based on their efforts to raise their own money, the SU's budget would be wasted. In order to make the most of the problems inherent in such a small budget, the SU should distribute its limited budget more evenly, tak-

ing into account the organization's initial wealth so that every group has sufficient funds to maintain itself.

To reduce the number of clubs vying for money, clubs with similar purposes and objectives should merge. Clubs like Kids for Kids and Stuy's Free Hugs clubs, which both do charity work for St. Jude's Children's Hospital, should merge. Rather than distributing a hypothetical 300 dollars to each club, the SU could give the merged club (Free Hugs for Kids, anyone?) 450 dollars. The SU would end up saving 150 dollars. By merging such clubs, the SU would be saving money, and more money overall would be awarded to each organization. It would also be more likely that merged clubs would survive throughout the years, due to the increase in members.

Clubs and teams that rely on member donations and the Alumni Association should not receive any money from the SU. Big teams, like the Robotics team, Math Team and Speech and Debate team, have large budgets because they rely on outside funds. These teams should remain financially independent from the SU. All 200 members of Speech and Debate give a mandatory donation of 800 dollars annually, which results in approximately 160,000 dollars for the team. This money helps pay for tournament registration, judging fees, hotel charges, transportation, and coach fees. This year, the SU gave Speech and Debate 1,500 dollars, or about 12.5 percent of the money the SU distributed to clubs and pubs so far. But this amount does little for the team, since it is equivalent to the dues of two members. Instead, the 1,500 dollars would be more beneficial to smaller clubs that financially depend only on the SU.

The SU is not doing a bad job of allocating money, but it could be distributing it better. By refraining from aiding organizations that are already financially well-off in comparison to others, and by encouraging the merging of similar clubs, there would be more funds to be allocated. Smaller clubs should not be discouraged because they have less money than larger clubs that raise their own funds. According to its constitution, the SU serves to "improve student life with respect to education, extra- and co-curricular activities, and other areas of school life." As an integral part of the school, clubs should all have the same opportunities to thrive in the present and future. But without taking into account the financial success of some clubs, and the repetitive clubs in existence, the budget problems will continue. We have to make the most with our limited funds—desperate times call for fiscal measures.

## Mix-ups and Miscommunication



By DONNA KOO

As the year draws to a close and college application deadlines inch closer and closer, Stuyvesant seniors are giving new meaning to winter's long nights. Burdened with balancing their academic workloads and writing the perfect college essays, many seniors are up working at early hours of the morning. Bleary-eyed, they turn to the College Office for guidance, seeking advice on editing their list of colleges or keeping up with application deadlines. Yet poor communica-

tion between the College Office and the student body often leads to confusion, resulting in more work for both parties.

Take, for instance, a recent incident regarding seniors applying to the CUNY Macaulay Honors College. The College Office sent a notice regarding procedures for students to follow, one of which included handing in a Document Return Receipt—generated upon submission of the Macaulay application—by Tuesday, December 1. But not all seniors applying to Macaulay received this notice. In fact, in interviews with 15 seniors applying to Macaulay, only five received the notice. Of these five, two could not understand it and simply disregarded the news.

"I got the notice but I didn't understand what it was [the College Office] wanted so I just dismissed it," senior Elaine Liu said. "I didn't know that we had to finish our application before we could hand [the Document Return Receipt] in, so I put it off. I actually blame myself for not doing the research, but I still think the notice should've been much clearer."

The week of Monday, November 30, was hectic for both students and the College Office. In addition to holding college meetings with students, the counselors were bombarded with questions about the Document Return Receipt and the implications a late form entailed. Due to the large number of students who missed the December 1 deadline, the College Office was forced to allot an extra week to the disgruntled seniors, making the process more difficult for both parties.

Another problem marring seniors' relationship with the College Office is a perceived lack of accessibility and availability. "Because the office is open at such short intervals, there are always people waiting, which means you have to wait too," senior Janet Tang said.

"I feel as though it's almost impossible to reach my own college counselor within the time frame that I am allowed to," senior Sarah Zhao said.

Other students disagree with these criticisms of the College Office, citing its small staff and commending the office for han-

dling its enormous workload, for the most part, smoothly. "I have worked in the College Office as a monitor before and I have first hand experience of how hectic [things] could be," senior Winnie Tong said. "They have a lot of paper work and things to handle, especially with about 800 seniors and only three advisors and several secretaries."

While the student body holds some of the responsibility for the lack of communication between themselves and the College Office, the problem can be remedied with a few changes on the school's part.

Notices regarding specific college information can be relayed to seniors more efficiently through weekly homeroom. In addition to having student monitors search for students in their classes to pass on letters from the College Office, teachers could distribute letters to seniors in homeroom, making the most out of the 10 minutes each week and encouraging seniors to go to their homeroom classes. Furthermore,

at the start of each week and month, a list of upcoming general deadlines could be sent to

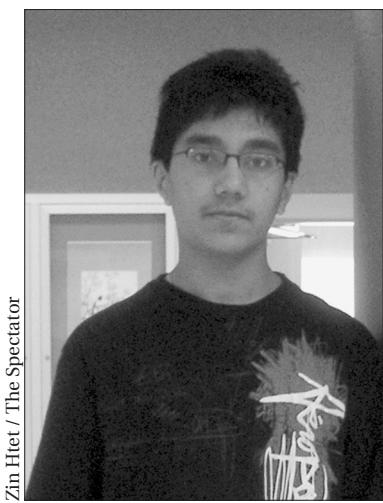
homeroom teachers. A printout of the "Senior Bulletin" on the Stuyvesant website, filled with information about scholarships and college representative visits, could also help alleviate future confusions like the Macaulay mix-up.

Another possible remedy is setting up an e-mail system that alerts students of deadlines they need to meet. "Half the deadlines that are posted online for us to see won't be seen unless you're actively looking for it," Tang said. "Maybe [the College Office] should set up a newsletter system that goes directly to our emails instead of having us hunt for everything."

Applying to college is, arguably, one of the most important parts of the high school experience. Students spend three years preparing their resumes and trying to become the most competitive candidate for college. By increasing communication between the College Office and the students, the college application process can be made less stressful for both parties. Maybe then will the overworked seniors finally be able to get some sleep.

# Opinions

## You Can Read This Later



By VARUN SHARMA

They might look like a hard-working bunch, but The Spectator editors are pretty lax. Well, that may not be true for all of them, but it certainly is for my editor, who set the deadline for this article to a few hours before he had to edit it. This gave me around 18 hours to forget, remember, worry, dream, and finally write the article. I was also able to sneak in a few hours of Facebook lurking, chatting, and lying brain-dead on my chair. This process occurs pretty much daily for me and countless other Stuyvesant students. It is impossible for us to avoid some kind of preaching about teens and their bad habits, whether it's from our parents, teachers, or even the nightly news. We are told that we have to stop procrastinating, or our bad habit will carry into adulthood. However, procrastination is not just a routine for teens; it's a routine for just about everyone, and last time I checked, everyone's doing just fine.

While we all accept procrastination as a norm of student life (who wants to do petty homework when Heroes/Glee/Pimp My Bride is on?), our parents and Dr. Phil refuse to. Instead, they claim that procrastination demonstrates an individual's laziness and lack of responsibility. This is quite far from the truth: our procrastination more often than not demonstrates our online networking skills, virtual farming abilities and capabilities of identifying a cat in desire

a need to take a breather after a long day of cramming for tests, copying friends' homework, and complaining about the harsh grading policies of teachers. When watching a mindless movie or playing the infamous Farmville at home, a person is regenerating so that he or she does not burn out entirely. This time of unwinding is essential to the quality of work a student will complete; a relaxed mind does higher-quality work. The exhaustion caused by the school day results in a tired brain that simply wants to get work over with rather than do it well. True, you could finish all your work immediately and relax later, but you'll be working with a tired mind, and the quality of the work will suffer.

The part where parents and Dr. Phil speak of teenage procrastination carrying into adulthood, however, is very real. But why shouldn't we procrastinate as adults? Watching adults on October 30th, December 24th, and April 14th—the days before the deadlines for Halloween costumes, Christmas presents, and tax filings—helps us realize

**The main cause of procrastination is not laziness but a need to take a breather after a long day of hard work.**

how normal and expected adult procrastination is, as they rush to get things done at the last minute. Halloween eve, for example, is a sad day for fire safety agents around the nation: stores like Party City are packed with excited and restless children with their procrastinating moms and dads who decided that Halloween costume shopping can wait. The same can be said about large department stores such as Macy's as we rapidly approach the holiday season. But Macy's isn't complaining; it is expecting to earn more on one day of last-minute shopping than on several of the days leading up to Christmas Eve combined.

Thus, procrastination helps both measly high school freshmen get their minds prepared to write the next great I-Search essay and giant American corporations make a fiscal killing from last-minute shoppers. There isn't any validity to naysayers' opposition; parents procrastinate just as much as teenagers, and anyone who believes Dr. Phil would probably recommend marriage counseling from Jerry Springer.

So go ahead, buy your Christmas presents this December 26th. Avoid the massive crowds, over-priced items, and sold-out stock. And when asked about the delay, just tell your friends and family that Santa was a little late this year because he had to find a home for that darn lonely black sheep on his Farmville account.

**Macy's is expected to earn more on one day of last minute shopping than several of the days leading up Christmas Eve combined.**

of a cheeseburger. All of these are actually quite healthy and beneficial.

In a school where writing-across-the-curriculum and fire drills are taken so seriously, our minds and bodies are often over-worked and over-stressed. In fact, the main cause of our procrastination is not laziness but



By KIRAN SURY and ANI SEFAJ

Even though school has only been in session for a few months, it's been a tough year at Stuyvesant. Students have had to deal with fires, budget cuts, new locker policies and the like. Alone, these problems are surmountable, but combined they can really put a damper on your day. Fortunately, that's not true for everyone. Some people are enjoying it. That's why we've researched, speculated, and flat-out made up our picks for who's having the best year ever!

### The Arsonist

Disturbed vandal, or misunderstood s'mores lover? The paper towel dispensers may disagree, but we think The Arsonist just wanted a more intimate, campfire setting to toast his marshmallows. He (or she!

### The SU

(but let's face it, probably a he) certainly lit up the school's consciousness, making sure 2009 goes out in a blaze of glory. Plus, the evacuations let us miss a bunch of tests. Arsonist, you've warmed our hearts, and you may be having the best year ever!

### Voyeurs

The Student Union (SU) has gotten ready for summer bikini season ahead of time, purging its excess members for a trim physique. With the new, sleek look, money won't be the only reason clubs will knock on the SU's door. Ever wonder what SU President and Vice President Paul Lee and Keiji Drysdale look like in Speedos? Neither do we, but they might be having the best year ever!

### The Best Year Ever

the only grade without access to gym lockers? We don't know, but we're not complaining. Stuyvesant's bathrooms are heating up, and it's not just because of the fires. For those seniors daring enough to change in the hallways, the newly installed hidden cameras have a record of every strip for posterity. The makings of the latest Red Light blockbuster? We don't know, but Voyeurs must be having a pretty good year, if not the best year ever!

### Illegal Candy Sellers

Psst. Hey buddy, wanna buy a Snickers? The recent bake sale ban may have decimated the local rodent population, but it has led to record profits in the candy black market. Standing at the foot of the stairs, at the top of the escalator, or crouching under your desk in History class, vendors peddle their wares out of shoeboxes and gym bags, which makes it totally incognito. The first time's free, the second time will cost you, and the diabetes may haunt you for life, but that doesn't stop the Illegal Candy Sellers, who could be having the best year ever!

### The Verdict

So who's really been having the best year ever? We know, all the choices are so tempting, but you can choose your favorite online at [www.stuyspectator.com](http://www.stuyspectator.com). We're going to go with the dark horse of the race, the graduating class of '09. These lucky alumni managed to escape just in time.

## Candles and Candy Canes

### By DANIEL SOLOMAN

When I was in elementary school, my teachers always asked my class how many of us were celebrating Christmas and how many were observing Hannukah. Because I have a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, I would raise my hand twice, and the class would shoot envious looks at me. Christmas and Hannukah! That meant double the gifts.

**Ironically, my mom cooked the latkes, and it was my father who masqueraded as Santa Claus.**

In addition to the piles of presents I received for Christmas and Hannukah, I loved and still love the joy of both holidays. Though I embraced Judaism, I could think of nothing more fun in the month of December than decorating a Christmas tree. Before I learned that Santa Claus was a fantasy, I was mesmerized by the magic he represented. Santa was, in fact, my father, who used to dress up and sneak the presents beneath the tree.



Rose Huang / The Spectator

equally enthralled by the Christmas specials which blanketed the TV. The holiday season also presented an opportunity to bring together my inter-faith family, with Christian, Jewish and Muslim relatives sharing a meal. Each person brought his or her own perspective to the dinner table, and it made for a lively discussion. It was a fun experience but it was also a time for learning. Being exposed to such diversity teaches you to be tolerant and open to new cultures and people.

In the end, the holidays always meant much more to me than getting spoiled with presents. When we sit down for a Christmas dinner, we must not forget that there are those whose tables are empty. When we light the menorah, we must remember that there are still people deprived of freedom. In these times of turmoil, we need to appreciate the simple joys of the holidays: bringing a family together, sucking on a candy cane and lighting candles.

# Arts & Entertainment

## Into Tim Burton's World

By ANASTASSIA BOUGAKOVA

Between movies about beetles, barbers, chocolate factories and skeletal brides, Tim Burton boasts an impressive resume of dark and eccentric films. The writer, producer and director has been in the business for almost 28 years—his take on Alice in Wonderland, which will be released next year, is his 15th film. To honor his years of cinematic creativity, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) has created an exhibit recognizing the respected filmmaker's work. Running from Sunday, November 22, until Monday, April 26, the exhibit displays everything from Burton's childhood drawings to his short stories and puppets.

**"I knew it was going to be crowded, but I didn't think it was going to be this crowded."**  
— MoMa staff member

Accompanying Burton's art exhibit is a collection of films called Tim Burton and the Lurid Beauty of Monsters. These are films that have inspired Burton and encouraged him to create his own monsters such as Jack Skellington and Edward Scissorhands. The films will be shown on selected dates throughout the exhibit's duration.

The dark, yet strangely amusing, exhibit captures the very essence of Burton's art, exploring everything from childhood drawings to the movies his fans have come to know and love. The walls are lined with sketches of well-known cartoons as well as some that have never been shown on television. Some of Burton's original poetry is even on display.

Although some of the cartoons and cinematography might be a bit too graphic and mature for children, the exhibit was swarming with children. The parents admired the art and the children pointed out all the characters they knew from watching Burton's movies. "My kids love [Burton's] cartoons. It's great to be able to share this with them," said Maria Gonzalez, a mother of two.

Burton reaches a varied audience through his work, from kids and their parents to teenagers and college students. The eccentric exhibit serves as inspiration for many aspiring artists. "It made me want to use my imagination more in my drawings," said Olga Lebedeva, a high school student,

Burton's art is full of everyday themes such as the troubles of adolescence, friendship, fear and love. Hidden in his drawings are little pieces of opinions and humor that jump out if the viewer looks hard enough. "[Burton] is really sinister, but at the same time, he sees life in such an interesting way. It's like, he gets it," sophomore Cecilia Kim said.

Due to the immense popularity of Burton and his films—Corpse Bride earned the highest per-screen average, the amount of money made at each screening, of the year—getting into the exhibit can be difficult. The museum has created time tickets to see the exhibit at specific times on the weekends. Time tickets are free and can be acquired online along with your MoMA admissions ticket. Admissions tickets are free for children 16 years and under and are \$12 for students older than 16 with their student identification.

Despite the crowds and lines, the exhibit is well worth the trip. Visitors get a look inside Burton's crowded, gloomy, yet fascinating head. Avid fans of the filmmaker are sure to be entranced by all that the exhibit has to offer, but newcomers are sure to be disturbed by his maniacal visions. Then again, in the words of Burton himself, "One person's crazy is another person's reality."

*The Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53 Street  
New York, NY 10019  
<http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/313>.*

## Little Company, Big Flavor



An Old Fashion Apple Pie is \$7.50 at Little Pie Company.

By ALICE ANICHKIN

American humorist Jack Handy once said, "When you die, if you get a choice between going to regular heaven or pie heaven, choose pie heaven. It might be a trick, but if it's not, mmmmm, boy." One of Tribeca's newest additions is the little pie shop located only one block away from Stuyvesant. Little Pie Company, situated on Greenwich Street and Chambers, is a tiny bakery, but there is much to be discovered inside.

Founded by Arnold Lichtenstein and Michael Deraney, Little Pie Company opened up its original store on 43rd Street between ninth and 10th avenues in 1984. Its Tribeca store opened on November 24, 2009 in place of Pane Peppe. "We liked this location because of the many ranges of customers ranging from students to families," manager Raul Hart said.

Some students view the replacement in a positive light. "Pane Peppe wasn't in the price range for some of the students who did go outside to eat. Another bakery is always welcome because everyone loves baked

goods," junior Derek Ku said.

Upon entering, the smell of fresh batter and frosting are present. The cupcakes, cakes, and signature pies are all on display and there are several simple wooden tables and chairs to sit at. "We're fairly new but we get a good amount of customers. Thanksgiving really attracted people here," Hart said.

Pies come in three sizes: 10 inches (\$30), 8 eight inches (\$22), and 5 five inches (\$7.50). A slice (\$4) can be bought with ice cream for an extra \$1.50. To lessen the cost, pies can be split among friends.

The venue offers many classic pies, including Montmorency Cherry, Pumpkin, Old-Fashioned Apple, and Florida Key Lime. The signature Sour Cream Apple Walnut Pie is the company's most popular. "My personal favorite is the banana coconut cream pie," Hart said. The Three Berry Pie—a tangy blend of strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries—is also a must-try.

Though it specializes in pies, the venue sells cakes which are sold small (\$12), medium (\$22), and large (\$32). Choices include Red Velvet Cake, topped with a

creamy cheesecake icing, and Old-Fashioned Chocolate Cake, which is made of rich Belgian chocolate and Dutch cocoa.

The smaller and more affordable desserts are the cupcakes (\$3) and muffins (\$3). Cupcakes range from vanilla to applesauce carrot. The muffin selection has choices like banana nut and orange. Both the cupcakes and muffins, being the least expensive and being remarkably large for their inexpensive costs, can be great lunchtime snacks.

The home-baked cookies (\$1.50) are also quite big and come in flavors like chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin, and snickerdoodle. These are ideal as lunchtime snacks because they are the least expensive goods available in the store. "I might go in and buy a cookie once in a while," freshman Nancy Ko said.

"I go there once in a while if I get the craving for something sweet and I have a little extra money," junior Sam Trost said. Little Pie Company is a great bakery that provides fresh and delicious sweets, but the high prices may cause a student to think twice about eating there.

## A Not So Christian Christmas

By TAMMUZ HUBERMAN

"Hey man, how come you don't sell Hanukah bushes?" I once asked a Christmas-tree vendor. Suffice it to say, he did not have a valid response.

December is generally devoted to Christmas trees, stockings, lights and red and green festivities all around. Yet New York City is filled with people who hold a diverse array of religious beliefs, and many experience a variety of non-Christian Christmastime traditions. At Stuyvesant, the two most common religions other than Christianity are Judaism and Islam.

Some non-Christians do buy into the Christmas atmosphere, even though they are not religiously affiliated with the holiday. "Although I do not celebrate Christmas, the few days before and after the holiday do feel festive and merry at home, especially since my friends and I are growing up as Americans, as opposed to simply Muslims.

Happiness and joy are contagious during this time," junior Mithi Hossain said.

For most, the holidays are more than just presents, food and decorations. They are a time to bond with family and reunite with people. "It's more of a family-oriented holiday for my family. The Christmastime atmosphere has a comfy aura. The whole family loves getting a Christmas tree mostly because of the smell," said freshman Ellie Abrams, who is Jewish.

Others have familial or ethnic traditions that are carried out during Christmastime. Some of these traditions are associated with holidays that fall around the same time, such as Hanukkah and Eid al-Adha. "[My family] upholds traditions that tend towards my Colombian ethnicity—we eat 12 grapes right before the New Year: one for each month to bring good luck in the year to come," said junior David Levitt, who is a Colombian Jew.

"We celebrate Hanukah,"

said junior Ariel Lerner, who is Jewish. "Most years we go to my grandma's house where my mom makes latkes [fried potato



pancakes usually eaten with applesauce] and sufganiyot [jelly donuts]. Lerner, however, does engage in Christmas celebrations as well. "There is a family

friend whose tree we help decorate, and we often spend Christmas Eve with them," Lerner said.

Many Jewish families partake in the stereotypical Christmas events for non-Christians: going to the movies and eating Chinese food. "In proper Jewish tradition, either on Christmas Eve night or a night around then we order Chinese food and rent a movie," sophomore Julian Michaels said. "Seems like it's the right thing to do."

No matter what religion their families follow, many Stuyvesant students agree that the Christmas spirit is contagious. "I enjoy Christmas carols and the cheer and togetherness in the air is in my opinion unmatched," Levitt said.

There is a different feeling in the city during the holidays; people tend to be happier and more thankful. "As a Muslim, I've never lit a Christmas tree, nor hung stockings, or stayed up all night in hopes of catching a Santa in the act, but I have

partaken in the holiday spirits, which affects my everyday acts in a positive way," Hossain said.

Although tourists crowd the city, many New York natives still enjoy seeing the holiday attractions that the city offers: the intricate, beautiful and holiday-inspired shop windows on Fifth Avenue; the tree at Rockefeller Center; the light shows in Grand Central Station; and the holiday markets dispersed throughout the city. "I like doing Christmas-y things with friends, like seeing the tree at Rockefeller Center," Lerner said.

For non-Christians, winter break can simply serve as a vacation from school, a reason to buy a great smelling tree, or an excuse to weasel gifts out of parents. However, many use the break simply as an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. "Christmas for us is a family-oriented holiday. It's kind of just a chance for the whole family to be together once a year," Abrams said.

## Arts & Entertainment

### The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds



Rita Kirzhner / The Spectator

Stuyvesant's studio drama, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, was held on December 4.

**By RITA KIRZHNER, SERENA BERRY, BEN KOATZ**

Family issues are infamous for being convoluted, amusing and extremely frustrating. Families experience moments of laughter and happiness, as well as many of misery and hardship. Stuyvesant's most recent studio drama production, *The Effect of*

*Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, presented a gripping portrayal of one exceedingly dysfunctional family.

The show opens with Matilda Hundsorfer (senior Kyla Alterman), delivering a quirky monologue about atoms and science. Alterman played the bookish, nerdy character in the show, complete with large

reading glasses and a congested voice.

After she delivers her monologue, the lights come on to illuminate the stage and reveal a bright and disheveled living room. Matilda's mother, Beatrice Hundsorfer (senior Clio Contogenis), who opens by yelling on the phone about how awful her daughter is to Matilda's principal. Upon hanging up the phone, Beatrice yells at Matilda and then threatens to "chloroform" her pet rabbit. Contogenis depicted the cruelty of her character well, successfully mixing bitterness and misery.

The duo is joined on stage by Matilda's sister Ruth (junior Willa Beckman). No dysfunctional family is complete without the stereotypically pretty, mean sibling—precisely the role that Ruth plays. The sister is rather bipolar, bouncing from perky to depressed and back again in numerous scenes. Beckman was able to convey both humor and tragedy when the appropriate situation demanded it.

The first scene gives the audience insight into the everyday life of the family: Beatrice and her favorite daughter, Ruth, torture unloved Matilda. "Nanny," (junior Miryam Coppersmith), whom Beatrice takes care of for money, also lives with them. Though her character had a quiet role, Coppersmith's portrayal of "Nanny" was fantastically realistic. Coppersmith was able to fully embody a frail old woman from her turtle-like walk to the shaking of her fingers as she reaches to sit down.

In a later scene, Beatrice reminisces with Ruth about her life, and the audience is introduced to the reasons behind the mother's bitterness. As Beatrice grows more nostalgic, she is overcome with how unsatisfactory her life is and launches into

an entirely convincing, moving, heartbreaking speech.

When the Hundsorfers receive news that Matilda is a finalist in the school science fair, the entire family suddenly embraces and praises her. It is the first time anyone in the family shows any kindness or respect for Matilda, and this new attitude is unconvincing. Only Beatrice receives this news quite indifferently, telling her daughter that people are going to laugh at her. When Ruth announces that the school wants Beatrice to appear on stage with her daughter, Beatrice refuses to, driving Matilda to tears.

In the next act, Ruth and Matilda find out their mother was teased when she was in school. Ruth spitefully calls her mother a nickname from her

**The first  
scene  
gives the  
audience  
insight into  
the everyday  
life of the  
family.**

At the science fair, Coppersmith's second character was introduced. She is Matilda's main competition in the fair, and her project involved boiling the skin off of a cat, clearly indicating her character's creepiness. Coppersmith delivered her insane lines with a deranged smile and a disturbing, shrill laugh that made the audience burst out in laughter. Her performance, like her portrayal of Nanny, was magnificently accurate and distinct, and never failed to capture the article's attention.

What follows is an extremely bizarre sequence of scene changes. There's a quick blackout, and then suddenly Matilda is back at the science fair, nervously presenting her project. Another blackout, and then the two daughters arrive at home, loudly cheering and carrying a large trophy. As the girls check on the rabbit, they dissolve into shrieks and screams and seizure-prone Ruth convulses horribly. Meanwhile, their apathetic mother remains silent, seeming perfectly unmoved by the situation. Contogenis played the dazed and wearied Beatrice well, but her portrayal of the angry mother is far superior. In yet another awkward blacking out of the lights, the audience is greeted by a single spotlight on Matilda at the science fair, as she explains her project and how the atoms in her experiment work.

The curtain closes on a thoroughly confused, yet overall pleased audience. While the ending was unclear, the strong [performances] of the actors made up for the overall ambiguity of the storyline. From the touching monologues to the talented cast, the production was worth seeing for its great performances, not for its hazy plot.

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# Arts & Entertainment

## Hard-Hitting Poetry

By SHAH ALAM

Inside a small Chicago jazz club in 1985, history was in the making. Poet Marc Smith had walked into the Get Me High Lounge with a vision for a new style of poetry. He proposed that poetry should place a greater significance on performance. In doing so, Smith became the father of slam poetry.

Renowned slam poets Jon Sands and Jeanann Verlee visited Stuyvesant on Wednesday, December 2, to share the same vision of slam. Sands and Verlee are both local slam poets who are well known in New York City slam circles. Both have performed at numerous poetry clubs and cafes in the city, including the Bowery Poetry Club and the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. Verlee was a member of the 2008 LouderARTS National Poetry Slam Team, which placed second in the nation, and Sands is still a member of the team.

Sands and Verlee, who were invited to perform by English teacher Emily Moore, read poems in the library during 10th period and joined "Caliper," Stuyvesant's literary magazine, for a post-performance workshop. Sands' poetry, with lines like "pretend for one moment you are me because you are," focused on the audience-poet relationship. Some of the poems Sands chose were particularly relevant to the Stuyvesant audience. The poem "Am" brought up themes of adolescence with lines like "I am the stapled mouth of my little cousin and each teenager who steals themselves from a universe that has not taught them how to scream."

Verlee's poetry was rawer, but also more striking. "You don't want to hear how they scissored me, how they gnawed me like raw meat," she read in one poem. Her poem "Communion" featured fierce lines like "I have razors under my tongue." One particularly beautiful line from "Communion"—"I walk like an apology"—brought to mind an image of walking regrettfully.

Many were impressed by the poets' wide variety of styles. They were "funny, sad, regretful, angry and witty," senior Allegra Wiprud said.

As slam poets, Sands and Verlee lived up to the required emphasis on delivery. Their voices fluctuated to signal the varying power of each word. Their hand gestures were original. As Verlee read the lines, "When a boy you think you love delivers the first black eye, use a screw driver, a beer bottle, your two good hands," her hands made clear how each object would be a viable weapon.

"Usually when poems are read, they're read monotonously," sophomore Sany Begum said. "But sometimes words have different meanings and different intentions and the guy [Sands] conveyed that with his tone, his body language, everything." "After reading some of their work I became a big fan of their style," Moore said. "Students were inspired. It was amazing to be able to hear a pin drop because everyone paid attention."

After the performance the poets took part in a "Caliper" workshop in 615E. During the workshop the group dissected the poems "Things I Could Never Tell My Mother" by Aaron Smith and "The One Thing I Cannot Forgive" by Rachel McKibbens. Sands encouraged the writers to "read, read anything you can," Sands said. He pointed out how helpful reading is for writers and credited reading as his inspiration for writing better. He also warned the participants not to "pin yourself down like this is what I do and what I don't do," said Sands, referring to artificial limits writers place on themselves. Rather, he suggested to "experiment with your comfort zones." After the reading, the participants wrote their own poems in a similar format as an exercise in experimenting with different styles. "Writing the stuff that's the hardest to write is the juiciest," Sands said.

"I'd watched a lot of slam poetry on YouTube, but I had al-

ways thought of it as something distant," senior Claire Littlefield wrote in an e-mail interview. "Working with Jon [Sands] and Jeanann [Verlee] made me realize that all of the amazing poetry I was watching online was taking place just outside my door."

"Since then, I went to a show at the Bowery Poetry Club featuring Jon Sands and another slam poet named Adam Faulkner,"

**"Writing the  
stuff that's  
the hardest  
to write is the  
juiciest."  
—Jon Sands,  
slam poet**

Littlefield wrote. "Poetry is so accessible for us New Yorkers."

"In the workshop, Jon [Sands] and Jeanann [Verlee] wanted to show us the feel of a slam poem," senior Jan Raphael Cornel wrote in an e-mail interview. "The workshop was unique because Jon [Sands] and Jeanann [Verlee] could talk from experience and explain to us what they believe defines slam poetry."

While many enjoyed the performance and the workshop, for some it didn't go beyond a typical poetry slam. "Sorry to say that neither the performance nor the workshop had a profound impact on me," Wiprud said.

Some walked into the library unsure of what slam poetry was while others walked in with high expectations. After the performances many students of both groups were shaken and speechless by the effects of the poetry, or at least were familiar with a new take on slam.

## Stuylin' Holidays

Abercrombie & Fitch T-shirts is a little pricey. Scarves, gloves, and hats make perfect presents for the cold weather. If you know how to knit or sew, try making your friends hats and scarves. If not, many stores offer great ranges of these winter accessories. A more personal and creative present is to make a shirt. Buy a pack of plain white t-shirts and personalize them with buttons, stencils, or use iron-on paper to transfer a picture onto the shirt. This can also be done with canvas bags. If your friend doesn't mind used presents, go over to a thrift shop or a second-hand clothing store and look around.



By CHRISTINA LEE

Getting into school without an ID: \$1.00  
Sandwich from Terry's: \$8.00  
Locker by the senior bar: \$120.00  
The look on someone's face when they open up their present: Priceless

With the holidays coming up and the economy being at its worst, here are some cheap gifts that will make any Stuyvesant student's holiday shopping easier.

For...

### RELAXATION

With bundles of never-ending schoolwork and tests, every Stuyvesant student needs to sit back and relax sometimes. Give your friend a present that's guaranteed to refresh them over the holidays. Lush, a bath and body chain, sells "Bath Bombs" which fizz up in water and come in a variety of scents. The prices range from \$2.95 to \$7.35. Take a friend to a local salon to get his or her (and your) nails done or get him or her a gift card to his or her favorite spa. Or organize a game of football or capture the flag.

### THE FASHIONISTA

New York City is a fashion capital, and Stuyvesant students' outfits definitely display this fact. But getting all your friends \$30.00

### POP CULTURE FANATIC

Have a friend who can't stop reading tabloids? Try to get him or her an autograph (or used tissue) from his or her favorite celebrity. If that fails, find him or her a poster or picture of his or her dream husband or wife. Treat him or her to the new movie starring his or her favorite celebrity.

### THE ART AND MUSIC-LOVER

Stuyvesant is filled with artists and musicians. An artist can never have too many pencils. Get your friend some supplies or personalize a sketchbook for him or her. Take him or her to one of the many interesting art exhibits in New York City. Did his or her strings break again? Is his or her pick getting old? Head over to SamAsh and do your friend a favor. If composing is his or her thing, try buying an empty notebook of sheet music. Or, for inspiration, either buy a CD or make your own mixed tape. Another great gift is a set of new headphones.

### SENTIMENT

Although it sounds cliché, everyone loves a present from the heart. If you are good at cooking, bake something for a friend. If the kitchen is not your comfort zone, buy some nice chocolates or cookies for your friends. Make them a card and write something meaningful on the inside. In the end, it's the thought that counts.

## Chong No: Playing the Beat



Polina Rozina/The Spectator

Chong No practices playing his guitar.

By JENNY CHE

Senior Chong No is known for coming to school with his guitar, and casually plopping himself down in the hallway and singing. Within minutes, a small crowd forms around him. Sometimes he performs songs that he has already rehearsed and other times he improvises based on his current mood. If No's songs are simply for entertainment, "they are just so silly and funny that you once again feel connected to your inner child," senior Peky Huang said.

"Once my repertoire was good and I had my peers' approval, meaning that they were listening and not leaving, I started bringing my guitar in to school," No said. "I'll cover mainstream songs, like Katy Perry [songs], to make people laugh."

Music has been part of No's life since he was young. At age three, he began to listen to church choirs with his parents. By eight, "I had really gotten in to it," he said.

At the end of last year, No started a band, East 12th Street, with fellow Stuyvesant seniors

Daniel Suh and Brian Woo, whom he had known since fourth and seventh grade, respectively. The three worked well as friends and well as musicians: "What could go wrong?" Woo said. The band writes its own songs, and describes its music as "spanning across the genres of punk, ska, pop, ballad and straight-up rock n' roll," Woo said. No sings lead vocals and plays electric guitar.

"We have a Ying-Yang sort of relationship when it comes to our music," Woo said. "My playing and vocal styles tend to shift over to excitement and some aggression, while Chong's tend to shift to the side of relaxation and freedom."

No also has solo gigs playing at the Five Points Variety Hour in Chinatown and at the Youth Galeria in Queens. He continues to pick up gigs through word-of-mouth. No would "love to continue music as a living, but I know that there aren't a lot of careers available," he said. He admits that he is not very active in sending his music to record companies, but believes "what will happen will happen" and relies on word-of-mouth to introduce him to new audiences.

Over the summer, No took

his guitar to Central Park and jammed. "There's this one tunnel that has great acoustics," No said. "It's like practice for me, like when I play in the hallway."

No is currently working on releasing a five-song solo-extended play, a preview album of his performances. He hopes to sell some copies in school and raise money to be able to make an album later with his band.

This fall, math teacher Jonas Kalish heard No sing first-hand. After telling Kalish that he had written a song for him, No came to the classroom with his guitar "and was basically pleading me to write a college recommendation for him," Kalish said.

"It was a funny song, and he had a great voice and didn't hold back at all," Kalish said. "It was hard to refuse."

At school, No participates in band, chorus, and A Cappella, and performs in the Culture Fest and Norimadang, the Korean Culture Night.

"His voice impresses me the most," said senior Ray Min, one of the directors of A Cappella. "His vocal range and the timbre that he has when he jams with his band or sings with us, or serenades a girl, just makes you feel uplifted."

"He's a great person to work with," Min said. "He's often the frontman solo kind of guy but he's great with the entire group, giving and taking inputs, and having fun all the time."

No says that he likes to keep a low-profile and tries not to draw too much attention to himself. Nevertheless, his playing has attracted an audience, and No enjoys being in a large school because of "[the] people who I don't know coming up to me and telling me that they like what I play," he said.

Others call this humbleness and say that this is what makes No unique. "Before Chong sings for the class, he usually starts by warning us that what's to come isn't all that good and apologizes for hurting our ears," Huang said. "People think he is just making a joke. Because his singing and playing is actually truly good, he continues to practice and play, in hopes of continually getting better."

"He's one of the best musicians I've met so far," Min said. "His music brings out his whole character: likeable, confident, creative, and funny."

# Arts & Entertainment

By JENNY FUNG

When lunchtime rolls around, many people choose to satisfy their hunger with Halal delicacies from the local streetcar vendor. The smell of grilled chicken with basmati rice and lamb gyro with hot sauce makes any busy New Yorker stop in his or her tracks.

However, Halal is not just the basmati rice and grilled chicken served on the street; it is a diet

followed by Muslims. A Halal diet forbids the consumption of pork, alcohol, animals that were not slaughtered in the name of Allah, blood and other substances. Most Halal carts follow these guidelines and do not serve dishes containing these forbidden products.

Gyro, which should be pronounced YEE-roh instead of the commonly mistaken JAI-roh, has its roots in Greece. Greek vendors were dominant when street

carts first premiered. The new Muslim street vendors assimilated the Greek cuisine into their own menus. Gyro is a dish that consists of grilled meat—usually lamb—wrapped in a pita with lettuce and tomatoes and topped with “white sauce.” Many Halal carts pride themselves on the white sauce that they have concocted. Traditionally, white sauce was a tzatziki sauce made with yogurt, cucumber and spices. Its purpose was to calm and cool the

tongue after the fiery hot sauce that was often served alongside it. Today, the actual sauce is as ambiguous as it sounds. Many Halal carts have chosen to use mayonnaise as their base. However, regardless of whether it’s yogurt-based or mayo-based, customers still enjoy it.

Due to popular demand, Halal carts have become a familiar sight in New York City. We see them as often as we see Starbucks. The first Halal carts were

established in the 1990s. Their target audience was the increasing population of Muslim taxi drivers. Today’s Halal carts attract hungry students, workers, and tourists from all over the place. The number of new Halal carts sprouting up in the city has made it a competitive business. The annual Vendy Awards shows this competitiveness as vendors around the city compete for the coveted trophy.

## Chambers Street and West Broadway

The street cart located at Chambers Street and West Broadway is the closest to Stuyvesant, making it the most convenient for students. It was established approximately a year ago. This vendor not only offers all the common Halal specialties such as chicken gyro, lamb gyro and rice platters, but it also serves breakfast. Customers are able to order a bacon, egg and cheese along with a coffee in the morning. The cart’s long working hours—4 a.m. to 9 p.m.—attract both early birds and night owls. This Halal cart also offers student discounts. Instead of the regular \$5.99 for the rice platter, students are able to purchase it for \$5.50 with a free can of soda. The vendor’s most popular dishes are chicken with rice and gyros. Customers rave about the “white sauce.”

“[I like] lamb on pita bread mostly because of the white sauce. It’s their specialty,” sophomore Shahriar Islam said.

The long hours and close proximity to school make this cart a better choice for lunch. The student special also adds to the appeal, especially during this current economic situation.



Shirley Liang / The Spectator

A Halal cart located on Chambers Street.

Although there is much competition between Halal street-cart vendors, one thing is clear: Halal carts have become one of the staples of New York City. Their convenience, affordable prices, and delicious tastes are perfect for the New Yorker who wants a quick, filling lunch but does not want to sacrifice taste.

## Chambers Street and Broadway

Two blocks down is another Halal cart decorated with many colorful images of Halal dishes. It was established five years ago and is open five days a week. This street cart serves lunch from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Although it is open for shorter hours, it is still quite successful due to its busy location. Many office workers near City Hall visit this cart religiously. Its menu is limited to traditional gyros and rice platters. One can choose from grilled chicken, lamb, beef or a combination of the meats. However, they also offer hot dogs for those who crave this New York City favorite. Although only one cook mans this cart, the service is speedy and efficient. The customer favorites are obviously the gyros and the rice platters, which cost \$3.99 and \$5.99, respectively.

“I like the lamb. It has a salty flavor,” junior Saung-won Ko said. “I also like the chicken because it’s chicken.”

## Stuy Alumni Pursue the Arts in College

By SERENA BERRY

As the alma mater of adult film director Cameron Lyndon Bennett, better known as Bud Lee, Stuyvesant High School has a reputation for producing unique artists.

Recent graduates pursuing artistic endeavors in college may not be directing adult films, but they are nonetheless involved in the arts. Many of these students have not enrolled in arts schools or conservatories but are taking arts courses or engaged in arts activities at liberal arts colleges throughout America.

Star of the Stuyvesant Theater Community (STC) shows “Urinetown,” “Bye, Bye, Birdie” and “Moby Dick! The Musical,” Ella Gibson ('09) has continued to pursue theater while studying at Harvard College. Gibson participates in theater extracurriculars, and her four courses this semester include two theater classes: Theater, Dream, Shakespeare and American Drama Since 1945.

“The workload for my classes is significantly more intense [than at Stuyvesant],” Gibson said. “There’s a lot more required reading and the expectations are much higher.” Despite her heavy workload, she makes time to perform in shows. She recently performed in Martin Crimp’s “Attempts on Her Life,” a disjointed show about a woman’s identity. Her performance, in which she played multiple parts and had to shift into different characters between lines, earned her a positive review from The Harvard Crimson, Harvard’s daily newspaper.

“The rehearsal process for ‘Attempts on Her Life’ was much more time consuming than any-

thing I’ve ever done before,” Gibson said. “That being said, I think participating in ‘Attempts on Her Life’ was very rewarding.”

Much like Stuyvesant shows, “Attempts on Her Life” was completely student-run. “It was undoubtedly more professional than any show I’ve done before,” Gibson said.

Another college that has attracted Stuyvesant students interested in theater is Kenyon College. Stuyvesant alumni Miles Purinton ('08) and James Dennin ('09) are both deeply involved in Kenyon’s theater program.

Purinton has officially declared theater as his major. His classes in theater have covered topics from acting to playwriting to stage management. At Kenyon, Purinton had three roles his freshmen year and is currently directing one show and acting in another. Purinton also created the two Kenyon theater groups “Roundtable Theater,” a student playwriting group, and “Play With Your Food,” an organization that performs short plays in the college’s dining hall.

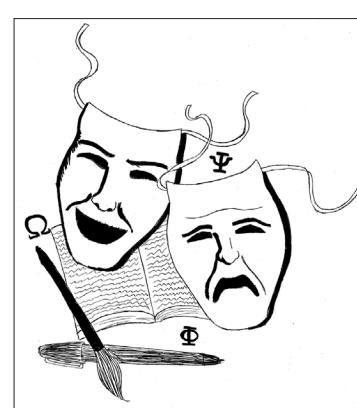
“I’ve definitely become more active in the extracurricular arts in college,” Purinton said. Although he has been acting since he was five and had a role in the film “Dogville,” he did not act in any STC shows. Purinton was an active member of the Speech Team, however.

Dennin, on the other hand, directed and acted in Stuyvesant shows and was on the STC slate during his senior year at Stuyvesant. He has continued to be just as active at Kenyon and is currently taking Introduction to Theater.

Dennin has also taken advan-

tage of Kenyon’s writing program. He writes for the newspaper and is enrolled in Introduction to Poetry.

Kenyon was named one of “The Fifteen Best Colleges for



the Aspiring Actor” in the College Finder. In addition to opportunities for the experienced, there are openings for beginners and non-majors. Many student theater groups, including a freshmen-only theater group, exist.

Anna Rubin ('09) is at one of the most prestigious arts schools in the nation, Rhode Island School of Design, to study painting. Her first year also called “foundation year” gives the students the basics of drawing, other media, art history and an English class.

“The classes are intense,” Rubin said. “The workload is more than Stuy’s, but different in the sense that it is based more on your own motivation and your own sense of what you can make, as opposed to tests.”

At Stuyvesant, Rubin took part in art for the shows and was even art director for the STC.

“There are a lot of creative kids [at Stuyvesant] and I think

stuff like SING! art crew is valuable,” Rubin said. She enjoyed the extracurriculars that Stuyvesant offered, but believes that it should offer more art classes, such as “AP Art History.”

Another Stuyvesant Alumni pursuing visual arts, Matthew Gottesman ('09) was costume director for his grade’s Senior SING!, while at Stuyvesant. He has continued to pursue this passion by majoring in Fiber Science and Apparel Design at Cornell University’s College of Human Ecology.

Currently, Gottesman is taking classes called Art, Design, and Visual Thinking and Introduction to Computer-Aided-Design (CAD). For the latter he uses CAD to make patterns for clothing and is required to make his own fashion magazine for the class. A sophomore nightmare for many Stuyvesant students, the Introduction to Technical Drawing (drafting) course gave Gottesman valuable experience for his current CAD class.

“I have more experience with the computer programs than some of the other students since some of them haven’t used Photoshop or any form of CAD before,” Gottesman said. “Stuyvesant has prepared me for my classes.”

Stuyvesant has also given him some good experience in other aspects of fashion and design. “In terms of sewing and designing, I was prepared for those just through the practice I got from SING! costuming,” Gottesman said. “Also, student involvement in theater and the way that students basically do everything to make productions come to life definitely helps in the way that

**“Student involvement in theater and the way that students basically do everything to make productions come to life definitely help.”**  
—Matthew Gottesman ('09)

you can try things like costume out and get better at them too.”

“I think coming from Stuy and going into something like design is really a great combination because there are lots of ways where you can include aspects of the more technical or mathematical into your work,” Gottesman said.

Perhaps Gottesman’s reasoning—that math and science and the arts feed off each other—explains how a supposed math-and-science school has produced so many artistic alumni.

# Sports

## Girls' Basketball

### Phoenix Looking For Hot Start

*continued from page 20*

been a problem" for the team in the past.

"We ran on the day when the baseball team didn't run because it was raining and it was too cold," Albright said. Their desire to condition harder than in previous years should pay off in late game situations.

**"We have a long way to go. It's a long season."**  
—Michelle Nichols, coach

One thing that the Phoenix is trying to avoid this year is what it calls its "Third Quarter Blues." Often the team experiences a lack of energy after the first half, leading to a devastating run by the other team. Quinn said that "keeping energy up and being more vocal," are important fac-

tors that can help contribute to preventing this. Another objective for the team is improving its offense against a man-to-man defense. Furthermore, the team wants to stop allowing the frustration of one mistake lead to more mistakes. "When we have one turnover it spirals into a bunch of turnovers," Quinn said. If the Phoenix can successfully make these improvements, it should be able to make another run in the playoffs.

One big reason for the girls' passion for the game and their drive to win is Nichols. "She definitely knows how to help," Albright said.

According to Quinn, Nichols is successful as a coach because she puts the team in "high pressure situations" and "simulates what a game would be like." This prepares the Phoenix for the tough competition it faces in its league games.

Nichols, who was pregnant last year, still dedicated herself to the team for the entire season. Although there was some doubt as to whether she would return as coach, she is back, and the team feels they are better off because of it. "I wouldn't have done basketball if coach Nichols wasn't back," Fleischner said.

With a dedicated and knowledgeable coach, and another experienced team, the Phoenix looks to stay hot, and make the playoffs for the second year in a row.

## Boy's Indoor Track

### Boys' Indoor Track Looks to Rebound

*continued from page 20*

like to throw things. Then, we'll have a very well-rounded team," Mendes said.

However, even with these solid runners, the main focus will be on senior and captain Daniel Hyman-Cohen. Hyman-Cohen had four first place finishes and did not have a finish lower than eighth in his eight indoor track events last season. Furthermore, Hyman-Cohen finished in the top four in all of his cross country events, including a second place finish in the City Championships, falling only to Curtis's Jason Stapleton by a mere 15 seconds in the 5K event with times of 16:58 and 16:43, respectively.

"He brings inspiration as captain. Everyone wants to be great when they see him. As an athlete, he makes our relays very, very strong," Mendes said. The runners certainly do look up to Hyman-Cohen and his work ethic.

"He's probably going to sweep by the city," Surkont said. "We just try to follow him and get the same results as him. We all practice four times a week, and everyone's dedicated."

This dedication has led to an extremely balanced indoor team, with sprinters, middle distance, and long distance runners. Being able to compete in a wide variety of events should work to their advantage. "Most other schools are oriented to-

wards sprints and jumps and throws," Mendes said. "Aside from LaGuardia, I don't think anyone has the depth to challenge us." The team will also have to watch out for schools such as Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science, Staten Island Tech and Curtis, but are confident that they have enough depth to bypass those teams.

**"We were missing two guys who I thought would be in our top five overall, and we had a very young team."**  
—Mark Mendes, coach

"Overall, we'll definitely win our borough, and there should be a lot of guys who go to [the] City [Championships], and we'll do pretty well for ourselves," Barnes said.

## Student Athletes Wanted

*continued from page 20*

cally fit students perform better academically.

I am not advocating placing athletics over academics. Part of the problem is that the cases in which athletics take too much precedence over academics receive the bulk of public attention. Exaggerated stories of college athletes skipping class and professional athletes incapable of forming coherent sentences misrepresent the situation.

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association, 79 percent of Division I student-athletes graduate with a bachelor's degree in four years. Student-athletes are doing significantly better than the typical college student. A report released by the American Enterprise Institute places the

**The positive role of athletics in education must be recognized.**

rate at which college students in general graduate with a four-year degree at less than 60 percent.

The positive role of athletics in education must be recognized. Exhausting repetition and attention to detail are at the heart of both athletics and academics. My athletic commitments have forced me to value rest and sleep as much as possible, allowing me to

be well-rested and focused in class.

Furthermore, physical fitness needs to be given equal standing to academic proficiency in public schools. The message currently being sent to students is clear: athletics are not essential.

Academic teachers should not be able to use athletic participation as leverage over a student. Other extra-curricular activities require afterschool time as well. However, with the exception of SING!, athletics is the only extracurricular that I have heard teachers threaten.

A struggling student should be mandated to go to tutoring. A teacher should not have the right to preemptively threaten all the student-athletes in the class, regardless of whether those athletes are doing well, that they will be thrown off of their team if they slip up once. The actual academic eligibility requirements, according to stuy.edu, require athletes to maintain 80 percent attendance, pass at least four classes plus physical education and earn eight credits in the two semesters prior to the season.

I have personally experienced this threat at Stuyvesant. A teacher told the entire class that he would make sure that any student-athlete who fell behind would become ineligible. This was said early in the course after only one test. The teacher had no definitive evidence that the student-athletes of the class were performing poorly. Rather, he was basing his assertion on his own prejudices.

More importantly, physical education classes need to factor into students' grade point averages. As long as the current policy is in place, students will continue to think that physical education is not necessary. Currently, the only consequence tied to physical education is the possibility of summer school. This gives a student an incentive to pass, but there is no re-

ward for doing well.

Creating a fair, objective grading process for physical education classes would be very easy. Keeping tabs on student participation in discussion-based classes can be difficult. Essay grading can be very subjective as well. On the other hand, physical education classes could be graded on very objective, numerical scales. There is no room for bias when

**The message currently being sent to students is clear: athletics are not essential.**

counting how many push-ups or pull-ups a student can do.

The potential grading system would be based on a combination of improvement and performance. This would level the playing field between student-athletes and other students. While most student-athletes will already be able to perform better than average students, the improvement aspect in the grading system allows for a non-athlete to maintain a good average in the class.

Public schools have a responsibility to promote physical fitness. Giving students the tools necessary for living healthy lives are just as important as providing them with academic skills.

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# THE SPECTATOR SPORTS

## Girls' Basketball

### Phoenix Looking For Hot Start



The Phoenix, the Stuyvesant Girls' Basketball Team, face off against School of the Future's Bulldogs.

By XERXES SANII

The Phoenix, Stuyvesant's girls' varsity basketball team, is just three games into the season and has already created excitement. In its first game, on Tuesday, November 24, at Washington Irving High School, the team won 45-44 in an overtime thriller.

Senior, guard, and co-captain Kelly Quinn called the season-opener a "nail-biter." Senior, forward and co-captain Alex Albright had a double-double, when a player reaches double digits in two statistical categories, with 11 points and 11 rebounds. Junior and guard Audrey Fleischner hit the game winner on a bank shot when Stuyvesant was down by one with 10 seconds to go in overtime. The pressure of the moment, however, didn't faze Fleischner at all. "It didn't really feel any different than a normal shot," Fleischner said. "It didn't even occur to me that that was the game-winner. All I remember is it going in and then just running back on defense."

"It was good that we managed to clinch the first game so that we come in with some confidence," Albright said of the team's 1-0 start.

Unfortunately for the Phoenix, the second game was a tough loss. The team played Baruch, a 3-0 team, and lost 59-31. Although Sophomore Lisa Qiu scored a team high of 16 points, the rest of the team struggled to score, with the next highest scorer having only 3 points. "We have a long way to go," coach Michelle Nichols said. "It's a long season. Our goal is to go .500 or better." A .500 record is what the Phoenix needs to make the playoffs, a goal that they met last year. All of the captains stressed their desire to make it to the playoffs this year, even though they lost six players to graduation after the 2008-2009 season.

To make up for this loss, Nichols has been working harder to keep her team in shape. According to Quinn, fitness "has always

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## Boys' Indoor Track

### Boys' Indoor Track Looks to Rebound

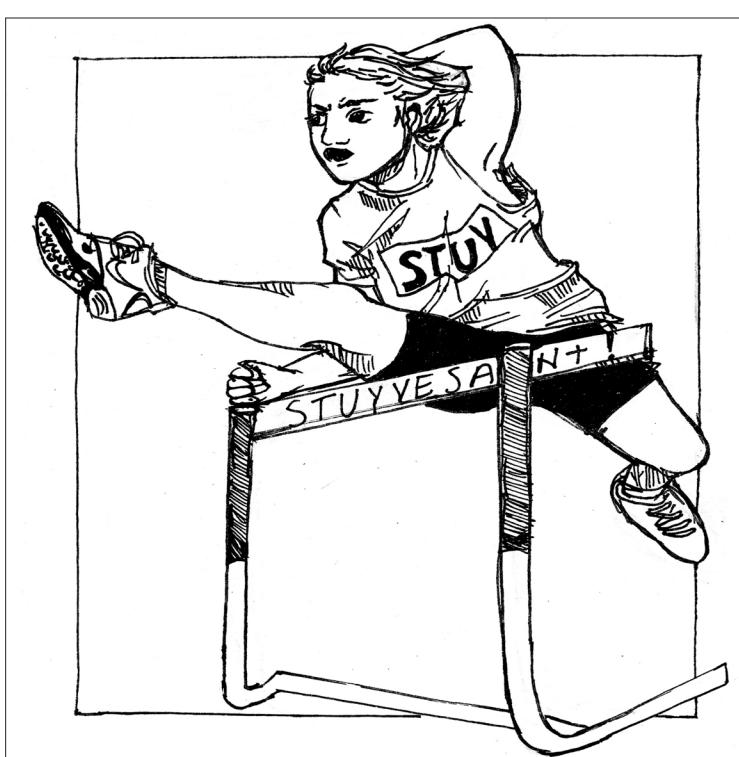
By PHILLIP GODZIN

After failing to qualify for States by falling out of the top four seeds during this past cross country season, the Stuyvesant boys' varsity indoor track team seeks redemption. Despite being seeded fifth out of 75 schools in the city and winning the Borough Championships, an injury-plagued team was still disappointed with its results.

"It wasn't that surprising. A lot of our guys were injured and sick," junior Billy Barnes said. "Now with track, we are a lot stronger because runners like [senior] Pace [Lee] and [senior] Elvis [Mitropolous], who were key parts to our team, are back and healthy. Also, a lot of the team has gotten better since last year."

Lee, who was injured for most of the cross country season, placed first in three events in the 2008 indoor track season. Senior Elvis Mitroloulos placed second in the only event he was healthy for in cross country. "We were missing two guys who I thought would be in our top five overall, and we had a very young team," coach Mark Mendes said.

For the indoor season, the



team will also rely on other runners such as senior and sprinter Raveen Sugantharaj, who had three top three finishes in his five races last indoor season. Sophomore Konrad Surkont, who finished first in the cross country Manhattan Borough Championships and qualified

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## Boys' Swimming

### Pirates in Search of a 'Ship

By NICK HEIM

For most sports teams at Stuyvesant, going three years without a championship would not be an issue. But the Pirates, Stuyvesant's boys' swim team, are not most teams.

The Pirates are among the group of premier Stuyvesant athletic teams for which winning is expected. However, after amassing a record of 32-0 in the regular season over the past four years, the Pirates have found it difficult to finish their perfect seasons in the playoffs. Stuyvesant tied Brooklyn Technical High School in the Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) finals in 2007, lost to Brooklyn Tech in the semifinals in 2008 and lost to Fort Hamilton High School in the finals last season.

These three teams have established themselves as the elite boys' swimming teams in the city. Two of the teams have made the finals over the past three years. With Brooklyn Tech and Stuyvesant off to 2-0 starts and Fort Hamilton 1-0, it seems likely that these powerhouses will meet again in the playoffs this year.

While the Pirates swim in a different division than Fort Hamilton and Brooklyn Tech and never face either team in the regular season, learning from their past playoff losses continue to help the team improve. "The biggest problem was that we kind of psyched ourselves out. The potential was there to play much better against [Fort] Hamilton," senior and co-captain John Connuck said. "We have to know we can win," senior and co-captain John Connuck said.

Yet even with these future challenges, the team has not lost sight of the immediate goals behind the strong leadership. "The captains and [coach] Bologna really help us stay focused," junior



A member of the Boys' Swim Team practices for the upcoming season after school.

Adam Zhou said. [...] "They all really care," junior and second-year swimmer Adam Zhou said.

After last season, the loss of key players seemed to threaten the team's character. However, Connuck is not worried about this year. "This year's team's personality is particularly good. We have a great group of guys," he said.

The Pirates graduated six seniors last year but managed to keep most of their 27-man roster in tact for this season. "We lost a lot of talent last year, but our rookies will make up for a lot of the talent we lost," physical education teacher and coach Peter Bologna said. "The new rookies that have come in will contribute a lot to our meets, so with our returners we have a good shot."

This year the Pirates will be trying to avenge recent playoff disappointments. Connuck is optimistic about the Pirates' ability to make it deep into the playoffs this year and, having been there before, establish themselves as the best team in the PSAL. "We've got a really good shot. These guys want to win, they are hard workers and they are having a lot of fun too," he said.

cautioned that there is a difference between being confident and being cocky. "Some swimmers put up some of their best times however, we could still use some work on technique," Bologna said. "The good news is that it is still early in the season."

The Pirates, who practice five days a week, spend the bulk of their time conditioning and getting into shape. The team is also focusing on improving their technique before the really difficult matches begin. The Pirates still have seven more meets in the regular season. Their meet on Tuesday, December 15th at Hunter College High School is highly anticipated. Hunter College finished ahead of Stuyvesant in the Bronx/Manhattan division last year with a 7-1 record.

Although it is early in the season, the team is confident that it can re-write avenge recent playoff disappointments. Connuck is optimistic about the Pirates' ability to make it deep into the playoffs this year and, having been there before, establish themselves as the best team in the PSAL. "We've got a really good shot. These guys want to win, they are hard workers and they are having a lot of fun too," he said.

## Student Athletes Wanted



By SHALIYA DEHIPAWALA

The consequences of childhood obesity are becoming increasingly dire. Mission: Readiness, a bi-partisan group of retired military leaders, revealed in its report, "Ready, Willing, and Unable to Serve," that a lack of physical fitness is one of the largest factors preventing youth from joining the military. Given the circumstances, a new emphasis should be placed on athletics in public schools.

The benefits of student athletic participation are numerous and varied. Not only

do athletics keep students in shape, but they also establish workout habits that will allow them to live a healthy life well beyond school. Team sports simulate the workplace environment where competition coexists with cooperation. A successful athlete needs to balance individual goals with those of the team.

The qualities that build a successful athlete—diligence, perseverance and patience—also make great students. A report published by the New York City Health Department in July concluded that physi-

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