



Ben's Pen

Spring Edition, Volume 4, Issue 2

A Publication by Benjamin Franklin Middle School Students

Remote Learning at FMS due to the Pandemic

Coronavirus Changes Delivery of Education by Anthony Pastore

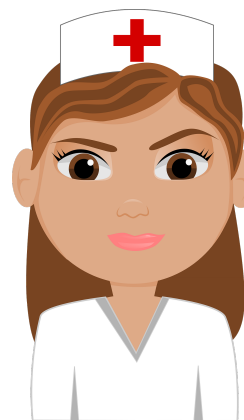
Coronavirus has played a big role in our school lives between the school closure and trying to communicate with our teachers and staff. Most of our school uses Zoom or Google Meet to try and connect with FMS students but there have been some complications, especially in the beginning of the Pandemic. Students and teachers have both adapted quickly. When students first went on Zoom, they had to download the program, and explore the features of Zoom, such as the chat and reactions features, and screen sharing. Zoom has helped me to keep up with my assignments, and it has made communicating with teachers easier. It has helped me to feel connected to school without being able to be in the school building. Thanks to Zoom, students do not have to go through the packets they received in the mail by themselves. If they want they can go over it with teachers, especially when we can not be in a classroom to ask directly. One downside to Zoom is that it can be really laggy. Laggy means when a device is slow, so for example, if you are on a call with a teacher, and you have your mic unmuted, and there are other kids talking, the server gets really laggy which forces the teacher to mute all the students' mics. Issues with online meetings does not happen only with students though; it happens with staff also. Mrs. Zummo, a math specialist at Franklin, stated "About 3 weeks ago I attended a meeting on Google Meet and I could see the other teachers talking, but I could not hear them at all. I was relieved I could click on the closed captioning option so that I could understand what people were talking about after all."

Virtual classes have presented some challenges to families as well. My sister and I are in different grades, and sometimes our classes are scheduled at the exact same time, so we have to work it out. Luckily our teachers understand that this can happen. Another challenge of remote learning is device access. For example, I have to share one Chromebook with my sister, and prior to the device handouts, my family was sharing one device. In spite of the challenges we have made the best of the situation, and are doing our best to keep up with schoolwork.

Virtual classes have many upsides and downsides. If you are having any issues, the best way to get through this situation is to keep in touch with your teachers on a regular basis, either by using Zoom or email.

Team 5-1 Spirit Week by Mason Mullins

The fifth grade Team 5-1 did a spirit week online to brighten up everyone's day. I am sure a lot of students are on Zoom or Google Meet for class meetings. However, Team 5-1 came up with the idea to do a spirit week. Everyone on the team wore something special each day, so each day would be just as special. We all saw what everyone wore on screen. On Monday we wore BuffaLove. All things Buffalo! Woohoo! On Tuesday we wore superhero day! All things super! Some people dressed up as doctors, nurses, police, and grocery store workers, they are the real heroes!



On Wednesday, we had sports day to honor all the sport seasons and games that are being canceled. On Thursday we had Franklin Day. Just because we are not at Franklin does not mean we cannot wear Franklin colors/clothes right? Go Franklin Falcons! On Friday we wore pajamas because, why not? So comfy! We had a great week and hope you stay happy and healthy! Have a great day!

School-Wide Commitment to Shrek the Musical, Jr.

by Evvie Clinch

You probably know some people who were involved in Theater Troupe. Being part of the musical is very enjoyable but you have to put in a lot of work. The cast did a very good job staying in character even during the funny times. The cast of the musical also did a fantastic job with their performances.

I asked some of the cast of Shrek Jr. how they felt being a part of the musical. Rachele Henderson, who played both Mama Ogre and Ogre Fiona, said, "I felt really happy because theater is really fun. There are a lot of nice people that help you out, and we do a lot of fun things. Doing the production gives you something to do. Although when it was over, I was really sad, because it was really fun to do and it was my last middle school musical." Emaline Bara, who played Pinocchio, said, "It was fun but the nose was kind of annoying; I had to take it off and then put it back on and then clean it too! Otherwise it was amazing, and the fact that I was a tap-dancing rat was pretty cool. I liked being a lead and hanging out with a ton of new friends that I will be friends with for a while. I love doing the musical at Franklin because you get to have new friends and new adventures with what you can do." Bella Mullins, who played Peter Pan said, "When I was onstage as Peter Pan I loved it! I loved playing a different person! I loved being a part of something so big. I also loved getting to make people laugh!" Heidi Brown, who was a backup singer to the dragon and a dragon flame, said, "I felt like I was doing something meaningful when I was part of the musical." This is why the cast of the musical put in their commitment and do what they do.

In addition to the cast, the stage crew is a vital part of the performance. Without them, the show would fall apart. Here are the reasons why the stage crew members commit to making the musical a success: Brenna Ivancie, who was a stagehand, said, "I love that in stage crew we were able to watch the performance turn into what it came to be! I liked being in stage crew and working together with everyone else on stage crew and having some fun once in a while." Jennifer Pritchard, who was the head of the lighting board, said, "I like being a part of the musical because my dad does the same stuff for a living that I do for fun, and I put in the commitment because it is fun to do." Mariella Holden, who was the stage manager, said, "I liked being part of stage crew because it was a really fun experience. I enjoyed making new friends, and getting closer with friends I already had. I put in the commitment because I really enjoy being part of a production."

In summary, Isaac Needham said, "It's fun, it's fun and it's fun." This is why being a part of the Theatre Troupe is an amazing experience, and why many students make the commitment to put together a performance. Shrek the Musical, Jr. was an outstanding performance and it was quite a bittersweet moment when it was over.

Ideas for Showing Appreciation to Essential Workers during the Pandemic

If you are thinking of ways to show gratitude to the essential workers, first ask a parent or guardian to help you brainstorm some ideas. If your family is still looking for some more ideas, some possible options are explained below.

- People tend to decorate lights on trees, bushes and shrubs during the holidays. Maybe your family could put some lights on one bush in your yard in honor of the essential workers. It's a unique idea, but maybe if your family can get a couple neighbors on board, it will catch on in your neighborhood. The first family in the neighborhood to do it could put a sign up too, so that people understand what the lights are for.

- Create a sign to put in your front yard or window that says thank you to the essential workers. Make sure the letters are large enough to read from a distance.

- Surprise a neighbor who is an essential worker by dropping off an outdoor flower pot or an outdoor plant while he or she is at work, so finding the gift on the porch after a long day of work will lift his or her spirits, and it will be a contact-less delivery. Just like the other ideas in this article, make sure you check with your parents first to see if the idea is feasible.

All about Koi

by Isaac Needham

Koi are very interesting creatures. First, Koi are a type of fish and they originated from carp. Koi are a colorful and beautiful species of fish that descend from the carp. In the 1600s, Chinese farmed carp in rice paddies. Rice paddies are a type of land that has water to grow rice. This practice caught on in Japan, where the Japanese noticed unusual color variations in some of the carp and bred them, creating the Koi species.

My family has Koi. My uncle takes care of a big pond with massive Koi. My grandpa helps with the eggs. . .yes I said eggs. In the springtime the Koi breed and can make hundreds of Koi eggs in the summer. After the eggs hatch the baby Koi are HALF A CENTIMETER!! Some of the baby Koi have grown to two feet long and now are in the big Koi pond. Another interesting fact is that Japan's representative fish is Koi. Japan hosts Koi events every year called "The Annual Koi Growing Contest." The colors that Japan looks for are white and bright orange. One of the Koi that won The Annual Koi Growing Contest is worth 1.8 MILLION DOLLARS! In the end Koi are very beautiful creatures.



Our Amazing Ancestors

by Mrs. Zummo

The Newspaper Club continued to work during the school closure. One topic some of the newspaper club members explored was ancestry. These members provided very interesting ancestry descriptions, and a summary of their information is shared in this article. Phoenix Mascellino wrote about his great-grandfather Lucian. According to Phoenix, Lucian went to a beautiful college, Colgate University, near Syracuse. When he went to college, he worked at a market and had a wife and two children! After college, he worked at Nationwide Insurance as a large loss adjuster. Phoenix explained, "This is a person who goes out and takes care of you when your house burns down. He would go out of town occasionally if there were big emergencies like hurricanes." Lucian and his wife had six children and a lot of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Kassie Sonerson stated that her grandfather has been doing concrete work in Buffalo for many, many years, and her step-dad grew up doing concrete with him. After many years later, her step-dad learned a lot with his father's concrete business, so he decided to start his own business called Birdman Concrete. Sometimes, they still do concrete work together because that is where it all started.

Meyah Franklin explained that her grandfather was in the army, he fought in World War II, and her grandmother was a nurse. Her dad works for Google.

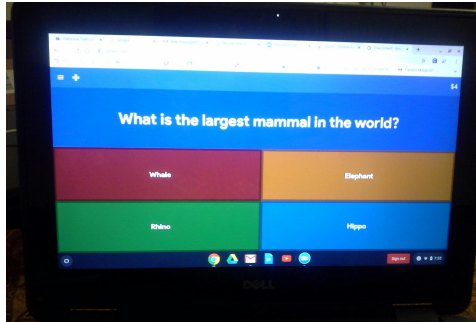
Some students wrote about what countries their ancestors came from. Eliana Maalouf explained that her dad's ancestors are from Lebanon. In Lebanon there was a lot of war, so Eliana stated that her ancestors were probably involved in some wars. Eliana's mother has ancestors that came from Italy, Germany, and England. Evvie Clinch commented that her ancestors migrated from the French speaking part of Belgium and came to the U.S. The Clinches came to America around 1840 and the Bartz family came to America in the early 1900s. Evvie is a seventh generation member of the Clinch family. Mason Ham-Deveans stated that his great-grandmother came over to America from Czechoslovakia when she was just 13 years-old.

A special thank you to the newspaper club members for sharing their interesting ancestry information!

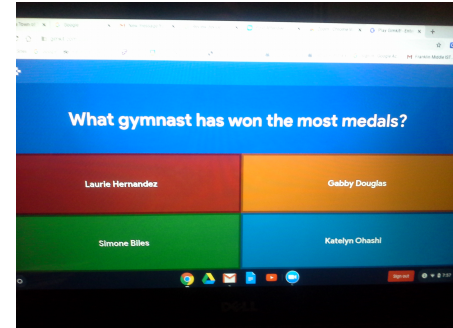
7th Grade Game Night

by Brayden Horner

After almost two months being stuck in the house with my family, Mrs Grandits suggested a family game night. Is she crazy? I already had enough with my family! At 7:30 the family was logging on excitedly, talking strategy on how we were going to beat the other families. However, our strategy did not work, as we did not win the family game night. When we got on Zoom it was fun seeing all the families together and talking. Then the game started. The tension rose. We were trying to answer so quickly, that most of our answers were wrong but we were laughing like big goofballs. Did you know sharks have no bones? We do now. At the end we were in sixth place. After the game was over we all stayed on Zoom laughing, which during this time of quarantine, laughter is what we all needed. As we logged off I realized we were all winners because we all had fun with our families.



These are examples of some of the trivia questions that the families answered while participating in the Game Night. After connecting on Zoom, Franklin families played against each other on Gimkit.



Book Reviews

Book Review #1 by Joseph Stevens

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Are you bored? Do you need something to read? Well then you should try reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*! It's a really good book and you should really read it! It is about Harry Potter and his best friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. This year Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban and Harry thinks Black wants to kill him. But . . . you have to read the book to find out what happens.

P.S. Only read this book if you have read Harry Potter's 1 and 2.



Book Review #2 by Evvie Clinch

The book I chose is *All The Impossible Things* by Lindsay Lackey.

I would give this book 5 out of 5 stars. This book repeats this phrase "It always seems impossible until it's done." This phrase keeps repeating to remind us that nothing is impossible. This book really motivated me to believe in the impossible. If you want to read this book go to a bookstore or find it online.

Book Review #3 by Kassie Sonerson

Recently, before school was out, my class had read the book called *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan. This book is a really great read for those who like reading about Greek mythology and wizardry/magic, like Harry Potter. If you like any of those, I totally recommend reading this book!

Book Review #4 by Phoenix Mascellino

The book I am going to be talking about is called *Eragon* by Christopher Paolini. It is about a boy named Eragon (Eir-a-gon) that found a dragon egg, which was the last of its kind, and he had to hide the dragon. That led him on an epic adventure. . . and an epic war alongside it. I, for one, love the book and rate it 5 stars.

Randy's Ripe Red Rhubarb Recipe

by Joseph Stevens

1 cup rhubarb stalks, cut up in small pieces
¼ cup spinach
⅓ cup onions
40 crackers
15 cupcakes (optional)
1 M&M (optional)
3 chocolate wafer bars (optional)

Directions: Put in large bowl. Mix it up. Enjoy!



Note from Ben's Pen: Humor gives people a break from the serious matters in the news these days, so the recipe above is intended to help make some people laugh or smile or do both.



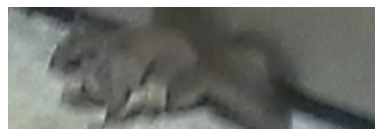
The Unexpected Visitors



by Mrs. Zummo

It was the first week of the Coronavirus Pandemic. We already knew that having extra “company” at your house was not really a good idea. I was home working in my dining room. All of a sudden, I heard a strange sound in my house. I assumed my cat was running around the house and getting into something, but I was busy checking emails, so I ignored the sound. Then I heard it again. I got up to investigate and then I saw that a frantic, black bird was inside my house and trying desperately to fly out through a closed window. My cat was nearby, patiently watching the bird. Then the bird flew down to the basement, and my cat quickly followed. The bird only stayed down there a few minutes, and then it flew up to the second floor of my house. The poor bird was a nervous wreck, while my excited and curious cat continued to stalk the bird. Finally, we were able to open the screen of one of the upstairs windows, and the bird flew right out. Watching the bird fly away from my second-floor window and regain true freedom was a sight that I will never forget. To this day, I have no idea how the bird got in to my house.

Just a few days later, in the middle of the night, I was awakened by a strange sound downstairs in my house. I walked down the steps and went in to the kitchen. I found out who was disturbing my sleep. It was a small squirrel! It seemed much calmer than my previous guest, the bird. The squirrel was leisurely walking around my kitchen for a couple minutes. Finally, this calm, cool, and collected creature went under the dishwasher, and did not come back that night. I figured that somehow the squirrel must have been able to enter my house through the area under the dishwasher. Evidently there was a small hole from my house to the outside world, all under the dishwasher. That night, we gathered some wooden boards to block off the access from under the dishwasher. It was just a temporary solution, but it seemed that it would work. Well, it did not work. The very next night, around 3 AM, I heard those strange sounds again. I went to the kitchen, and the squirrel was back! I knew he was really small, but I did not think he could come in the house again! This time the cat came out after I entered the kitchen. The cat and the squirrel had a two-minute staring contest. Finally, the cat started to chase the squirrel, and the squirrel escaped, unharmed, as he went back under the dishwasher. We thought we had closed off the area under the dishwasher thoroughly enough, but apparently, we did not. We could not wait to go to the hardware store to buy some materials to better secure the area under our dishwasher. What a relief that the hardware stores were open during the Pandemic! I am happy to report that the squirrel has not returned. Having these unexpected guests was quite a surprise.



This picture was taken as the squirrel went for a leisurely late night walk around my kitchen.

Note from Ben's Pen: Hopefully you will not have any wild animals trespass into your home, but if you do, your family may need to call a professional such as an exterminator, or the local animal control officer, especially if the creature does not leave. Some wild animals can carry diseases, so it is much better that they spend their time outside, instead of inside. While rare, a bite from a wild animal would probably require medical treatment.

MOVIE REVIEWS

Movie Review #1 by Eliana Maalouf - *Sonic the Hedgehog*

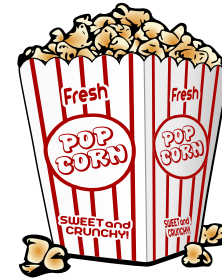
I saw the movie *Sonic the Hedgehog* last February.

Question: Who is Sonic the hedgehog?

Answer: Sonic is a hedgehog who can run really fast and he is the only one who can run at 300 miles per hour (in the movie).

In the beginning Sonic was found in his original land. And these odd looking animals found him, so he took his rings and went to San Francisco.

So I do not spoil anything, make sure to go watch it. You will probably find it on Disney+, Netflix, and other services.



Movie Review #2 by Mason Ham-Deveans - *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part*

Have you seen *The Lego Movie 2*? If you have, then you need to skip to the next movie review. If you have not, then keep your eyes peeled. *Lego Movie 2* is a comical movie, good for families. Young kids will be laughing from start to finish in this sequel to the best-selling Lego movie. All the characters have revealed hidden back stories. Watch it in the morning, afternoon, or evening. It has a stockpile of new characters, with hidden intentions. Perfect for children ages 4-12.

Movie Review #3 by Eliana Maalouf - *The Christmas Chronicals*

This movie is really fun and exciting. It all takes place on a Christmas night and there are two kids Teddy (the oldest) and Katie (the youngest). Ever since their dad died they have fought a lot. But it is Christmas Eve and they do not have the decorations up, and their mom gets upset with Teddy for leaving Katie home alone and for not putting lights on the tree. When the mom gets home they make Christmas cookies and start the eggnog but then the mom has to go to work. Then Katie and Teddy make a trap and follow Santa out to his sleigh. Then they make Santa get distracted and the sleigh falls and breaks. Skip forward a little Katie finds the elves and finds out Teddy is on the naughty list.

I like this movie because it is really fun. I think you should watch it. It is on Netflix.

Movie Review #4 by Mason Ham-Deveans - *The Phantom Tollbooth*

I watched *The Phantom Tollbooth*. I like how they play with words with things like the "whether" man, and the "which" lady. And I love how there are two kings who do not agree. But later, the main character points out that the two kings did agree, about disagreeing. I give this movie a 4 star review.

Fun Facts - the Newspaper Club members researched various fun facts. The color of the text correlates with the source where the fun fact was found. Enjoy!

All babies are color blind when they are first born.

The speed of a typical raindrop is 17 miles per hour. source: funfunnyfacts.com

The Least Interesting Day in History was April 11, 1954.

Pteronophobia is the fear of being tickled by feathers. source: <https://bestlifeonline.com>

It can take a photon (a particle that transmits light) 40,000 years to travel from the core of the sun to the surface, but only eight minutes to travel the rest of the way to Earth. source: medium.com

McDonald's once made bubblegum-flavored broccoli.

source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/why-mcdonalds-created-bubble-gum-flavored-broccoli/>

A sheep, a duck, and a rooster were the first passengers in a hot air balloon. source: <https://time.com/3583782/hot-air-balloon-history/>

The following facts were found from the inside of Snapple iced tea bottle caps:

If you multiply 111,111,111 by 111,111,111 you will get an answer of 12,345,678,987,654,321. (Note: for more interesting number patterns, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watchv=nsfMtbb6Ws4>)

Spiny lobsters migrate in groups of 50 or more, forming a conga line on the ocean floor.

It is against the rules for a professional baseball player to wear cabbage leaves inside of his hat.

In ancient Rome, lemons were used as an antidote to all poisons.

James Madison was the smallest US President, weighing only 100 pounds.

Harry Truman was the last U.S. President to not have a college degree.

An egg that is fresh will sink in water, but a stale one will not.



All Citizens would Benefit from a Reliable Internet Source

by Evvie Clinch

I wish there was a law that said there is a reliable internet source for all US citizens. I feel this should be a law because not every child that goes to school is able to do online learning during this pandemic. Where I live there is a Spectrum line a mile away down our road and another one a mile down Route 77. Governor Andrew Cuomo said by 2018 there would be reliable internet to all New York citizens. The internet companies are paying the fines to not bring reliable internet to where I live.

The internet should be an essential resource. If electricity is an essential resource, reliable internet should be too. The government makes sure US citizens have reliable resources so why is reliable internet not in every household? The internet is a big part of our lives and future. How can it be the future if not everyone has it or can afford to have it?

Advice from the Falcon Friend



Dear Falcon Friend,

Besides the typical hand-washing advice, what else can my family do to avoid catching the Coronavirus?

The Germ Avoider

Dear Germ Avoider,

While I am sure there are a lot of different answers to your question, the easiest way for me to answer your question is to let you know about some things that my family is doing. First, my family decided they will plant a garden this summer. There will be tomatoes and lettuce in our garden, and maybe some carrots. This summer we can have salad anytime we want! Even a small garden, if your family is able or willing to have one, will reduce the amount of time spent around other people in the grocery stores, and you do not have to think about other people handling the food in the produce section of the grocery stores. Second, both my mom and my dad keep a small bottle of hand sanitizer in their cars, so that after shopping, they can disinfect their hands before starting to drive home. But they only use a little bit of sanitizer because it can dry out your skin. They wash their hands when they get back home too. I hope this helps. Try not to worry about the virus too much. I am sure you and your family are already doing your best to stay healthy. Hang in there, brighter days are ahead.

Falcon Friend

Famous Quotes for Hope and Inspiration during these Challenging Times

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” ~ Nelson Mandela

“Energy and persistence conquer all things.” ~ Benjamin Franklin

“If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.” ~ Fred Rogers

“The doors of wisdom are never shut.” ~ Benjamin Franklin

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”
~ Dr. Seuss

“Do not anticipate trouble, or worry about what may never happen. Keep in the sunlight.” ~ Benjamin Franklin

"The ability to triumph begins with you. Always." ~ Oprah Winfrey

“A spoonful of honey will catch more flies than a gallon of vinegar.” ~ Benjamin Franklin

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow." ~ Albert Einstein

“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” ~ Benjamin Franklin

“Real strength has to do with helping others." ~ Fred Rogers