



SCHOOL NEWS

Sarah Bilotti transitions into new role as district's permanent superintendent

PAGE 2

By Briana Keenan

FOLLOW @PHTRAILBLAZER



SPORTS

Hills' first season under the Bronco's logo

PAGE 6

By Ethan Kaufman



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

"Most changed:" The class of 2022

Hills seniors knew two different principals and superintendents, navigated through three schedule changes, fought through a pandemic, and witnessed a historic mascot change.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

DASIA JARVIS

Female athlete of the year



SCAN TO READ

PHHS PLAYERS

Directed a musical



SCAN TO READ



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

MAX ZUCKERMAN

Broke pole vaulting records



SCAN TO READ

BEN LEVIN

Published author



SCAN TO READ

30 STATES & 3 COUNTRIES
200 SENIORS

CONTINUED ON PAGES 4-5

Meet the valedictorian and salutatorian

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

By Justine Marinkovic

As the school year comes to a close, the class of 2022 begins to prepare for their end-of-year commencement ceremonies where friends, family, and school faculty come together to witness the graduating seniors turn the tassel.

One of the highly anticipated aspects of each high school graduation ceremony are the valedictorian and salutatorian farewell speeches. The selection process for the valedictorian and salutatorian positions are based on a weighted grade point average (GPA) scale, and whichever two students have the two highest grade point averages at the end of their seventh semester claim these positions. This year's candidates are Jolie Lefkowitz and Lina Kim, who will represent the class of 2022 as the valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively.

The recipients were notified of their status in February, and since then, both Lefkowitz and Kim shared their reactions to receiving the news.

"When they did tell me, I was still very surprised. I felt extremely

happy and proud that my hard work for the past three and a half years had paid off," Lefkowitz said.



Jolie Lefkowitz (valdictorian) Lina Kim (salutatorian)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

OPINION

Does high school prepare you for adulthood?

By Madison Saks

This is a question that many ponder and debate, but the real question is does it need to and how would it?

Pascack Hills High School attempts to prepare its students for life after high school with financial literacy, 21st-century life skills, public speaking, and many other electives that take on real-world skills, but do these classes really prepare students for adulthood?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

SCHOOL NEWS

Sarah Bilotti transitions into new role as district's permanent superintendent

By Briana Keenan



Sarah Bilotti, the current superintendent for the North Warren Regional School District in Blairstown, New Jersey, was approved to be the Pascack Valley Regional High School District's permanent superintendent at their regular Board of Education meeting on March 28. She will officially start in this role on July 1.

According to a letter that was sent by BOE president Joseph Blundo, Bilotti has been the superintendent for the former district for the past seven years, and has previously served as principal, assistant principal, and director of special services in other districts.

The search process for a permanent superintendent began after former superintendent Dr. Erik Gundersen resigned and took the position in the Suffern Central School District. On June 7, 2021, Dr. Daniel Fishbein was approved to be the district's interim superintendent.

He has been in this position for the past year and helped the district find a permanent superintendent.

Fishbein shared his experience in hiring a new superintendent.

"I have been lucky to work with [staff within the district] as the BOE worked to hire a permanent superintendent," he said

Members of the community had the opportunity to fill out a survey stating which qualities they wanted and did not want to see in a permanent superintendent. Based on those results and interviews with each candidate, Bilotti was selected.

"Ms. Bilotti is an excellent choice...she has been in the district several times since her appointment and I know she is very excited about starting her tenure in the [here]," Fishbein said.

Paul Zeller, the director of technology and communication for the district, interviewed her for a series on the district's YouTube channel called, "Spotlight On." She discussed her past education, present work, and plans for the future.

When she first started studying at Pennsylvania State University (commonly referred to as Penn State), Bilotti was an

anthropology major. After teaching swimming lessons at a summer program, she changed her major.

"When I came home after my freshman year, my dad's friend who was a superintendent asked me if I wanted to work in his summer school program for students with Autism...It only took about a week before I contacted my [college] advisor to change my major to special education. There was something just so magical about teaching kids how to swim and seeing their small successes just in the first week," she said.

Fishbein commented on her prior

experience.

"She is an experienced superintendent with over 7 years in the position. Her background as a principal and director of special education are areas of strength that will enhance her work in this district," he said.

After, Zeller asked her what she is most looking forward to once she steps into her role as permanent superintendent for the district.

"I was very drawn to [the district's] vision and commitment to promoting a culture of innovation, inquiry, and individuality. I'm really looking forward to collaborating with students & staff and continuing that mindset focusing on student achievement," she said.

When asked for a fun fact about herself, Bilotti expressed that she enjoys reading.

"I try to read at least one novel a week," she added.

The interim superintendent expressed that he will be available to Bilotti as a resource, if needed.

"I have been working with Ms. Bilotti on her transition and will be available to her if and when she may need my assistance. The district will be in great hands," he said.

At the end of the interview, Bilotti concluded with a final message for the community.

"I can't wait to come on board and officially join the [district]...I look forward to hearing from students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the community at large about their ideas on how we can grow together," she said.

IN-DEPTH

School climate bringing change

By Sabrina Moe

Change is inevitable as the world progresses. One way that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District is enacting change is through the school climate survey.

In early April, an email was sent out regarding a school climate survey. It is a voluntary, anonymous survey that uses responses from students, faculty, and parents to improve the school climate.

The school climate survey helps evaluate the state of school culture and climate at both Pascack Hills and Pascack Valley. It asks various questions to parents, faculty, and students to understand how different people feel about the school.

Dr. Mark Russo, District Supervisor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, explained how the survey is based on the "idea that if we understand how stakeholders [students, staff, and parents] are feeling about the schools [then] we can find areas to improve so that more stakeholders feel that the school is working well for them."

Questions can vary based on certain groups of

people.

For example, students are asked questions about how accepted they feel in the student body. Faculty and parents would be unable to answer this question since it is based on a student's experience.

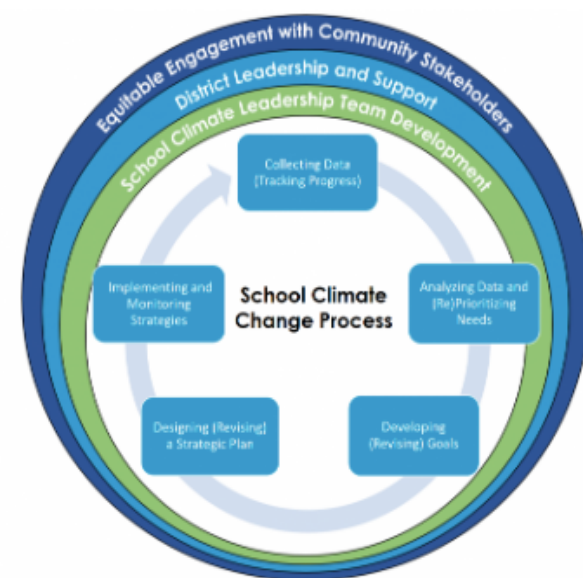
However, all groups can also be given the same question; a question about behavioral expectations in school for example.

The purpose of these questions is to allow the people who analyze the data to gain a better understanding of specific areas of the schools' climates.

Hills sophomore Lily Plechner, who is a member of the school climate team that analyzes the survey's data, commented, "[The survey] reflects the opinions of students and teachers at Pascack Hills . . . [It shows] aspects of our school that are benefiting them and aspects of our school that are hurting them."

A federal survey created by the U.S. Department of Education was used to collect this data from 2019 to 2021. However, the New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Survey made by Rutgers University was utilized to collect the data this year.

Russo described how this new survey followed "all the legal requirements and board policies [as well as]



A graphic showing the process of change within school climates. PC: NJ School Climate

communicated effectively with all stakeholders so that people feel like they are part of the process . . . everything was very transparent."

He also mentioned how "the old survey was a little bit clunky" and that the new survey is more "user friendly . . . [so] more people could have more access to the data and can understand what they are looking at."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Jolie Lefkowitz and Lina Kim named valedictorian and salutatorian

By Justine Marinkovic • Continued from Page 1

“It was definitely a surprise, as there are so many bright, hardworking students in our class. But I’d say my shock was quickly taken over by happiness and pride, especially since I was surrounded by figures who have been such integral parts of my high school career,” Kim said.

The selection process for the valedictorian and salutatorian positions are based on a weighted grade point average (GPA) scale, and whichever two students have the two highest grade point averages at the end of their seventh semester claim these positions.

“I took all honors and AP classes throughout all four years besides a couple of electives. After freshman year, when I had more freedom in my schedule, I took multiple science classes since that’s what I was interested in. This year, I took three sciences and two maths, which made for a pretty rigorous schedule,” Lefkowitz said.

While candidates for the valedictorian and salutatorian positions are expected to have a rigorous schedule, it is helpful to have a strategy when it comes to course selection.

“Take the time to find subjects you’re interested in and sign up for those classes. I was personally drawn to the STEM field, so a majority of my schedule was composed of STEM classes. If you’re enjoying the contents of the class and sprinkle in a little hard work, the grades will come naturally,” Kim said. “Most of my classes were honors and AP, and as I mentioned before, my course load was pretty STEM-focused.”

While academic achievement is heavily considered in the selection process, extracurriculars such as clubs, volunteer work, and athletics are also advisable.

Lefkowitz has been an active member of the Hills community. She has been a member of Teens Against Cancer (TAC) since her freshman year of high school and was a part of the executive board in her junior and senior years. Her experience in TAC allowed her to plan and arrange the club’s largest event, Relay for Life. She is also a part of the National Honor Society.

Kim also held leadership positions in clubs such as medical club, National Honor Society, Model UN, and environmental club. She gained leadership experience through several fundraising-based organizations such as the Red Cross Blood Drive, bake sales for school clubs, school cleanups, and battery collections.

When asked how it is possible for one student to juggle so many things, Kim advised that “an important part is learning to manage your time well, especially if you have extracurriculars on top of an



Valedictorian Jolie Lefkowitz and salutatorian Lina Kim.

“Don’t underestimate yourself, especially if your perception of your academic achievements are based on what your peers say. Just because your classmates aren’t expecting you to be valedictorian or salutatorian doesn’t mean it’s impossible, so keep trying.”

-Jolie Lefkowitz, valedictorian

ambitious course load. It’s easier said than done, but I think writing your to-do’s down and outlining your goals are great ways to get started. There were certainly times where I felt overwhelmed, but in those cases, I tried to step back and craft my schedule in a way where I did not have too much work to do in a small amount of time.”

Along with their club, volunteer, and leadership experiences, they also won several academic awards throughout their years at Hills.

Lefkowitz invested several hours of her weeks working on scientific research projects that were orchestrated by Dr. Martin Edelberg in his molecular genetics course which she had been enrolled in for three years. She won multiple academic awards such as the second place winner of the Behavioral Science category in the North Jersey Regional Science Fair. She was also a National Merit Commended Scholar.

In addition, Kim had her research published in the Journal of Emerging Investigators and was an Intel ISEF Finalist. She is also an AP Scholar with Distinction, a National Merit Commended Scholar, a sophomore ambassador for Hills, and a two-time second place winner of the VIVO International Music Competition.

In terms of post-graduation plans,

Lefkowitz will be attending Cornell University

to pursue a major in biology with a concentration in genetics, genomics, and development on the pre-med track. Kim will be attending Princeton University for ecology and evolutionary biology, also on the pre-med track.

“I was always influenced a lot by my dad, since he is a doctor and loves his job. I have always wanted to follow in his footsteps, so him also being the valedictorian of his high school class and going to Cornell was a major motivator for me. Both of my parents have also put a lot of emphasis on academics, and my mom especially continued to push me in times where I would lose my motivation to do my best,” Lefkowitz said.

“I think in terms of how hard I worked, it was a number of things. But I’d say my main motivator was my goal to become a better version of myself. It sounds cheesy, but I think trying to build a strong work ethic can only help you, so I kept that in mind [through] all my high school endeavors. My family was also a big influence. My cousins and grandparents are especially high-achievers in their respective fields, so their diligence inspired me as well,” Kim said.

Lefkowitz and Kim also reflected on their journeys to becoming valedictorian and salutatorian and shared their own advice on how to aspiring underclassmen could achieve this goal.

“In order to be valedictorian, you need to be motivated and willing to work. You also need to be able to keep up with higher-level classes and manage your stress. I always tried to take any honors/APs that I could even though I knew I would be stressed sometimes. I also always made sure I turned in my work and had good relationships with my teachers, since they are happy to go the extra mile for you if you show you are

LIFE & STYLE

2022 summer playlist

By Claudia Carson-Keane



SCAN TO READ

Both new artists as well as old artists are able to live out their dreams of becoming musicians because of the popularity and opportunities that come along with having Tik Tok. Content creators are able to post clips of their music for public viewing with links to apps for where to find it, causing an uprising in artists, DJ’s, and songwriters.

From the Spotify playlist above, new songs of 2022 are being added daily. From grunge rock to self-worth anthems to emotional pop to sunbright, upbeat rhythms, the first few months of 2022 have changed the music game entirely. A mix of fun, challenging, and calming new singles will hopefully be playing on repeat throughout the start to end of summer.

2022 is the year for change, especially in music.

willing to do the work,” Lefkowitz said.

“I didn’t procrastinate too much throughout high school, so I still had time to do everything else. My social life is also very important to me, so I found it helpful to do most of the fun things on Fridays and Saturdays and school work right after school and on Sundays” said Lefkowitz.

The salutatorian concluded with some of her insight that she thinks could be helpful to underclassmen at Hills.

“Whenever you’re met with adversity, instead of always looking at it as an annoying obstacle, look at it as an opportunity to grow,” said Kim.

Where the class of 2022 is headed

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

By Dylan Cochin, Briana Keenan, & Justine Marinkovic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ALABAMA

University of Alabama

ARIZONA

University of Arizona

CALIFORNIA

Biola University
San Diego State University
University of California Berkeley
University of Southern California

COLORADO

University of Colorado at Boulder
Colorado State University

CONNECTICUT

Fairfield University
Quinnipiac University
Sacred Heart University
University of Connecticut

DELAWARE

University of Delaware

DISTRICT OF COLOMBIA

American University
George Washington University

FLORIDA

Florida State University
University of Florida
University of Tampa
University of Miami

GEORGIA

Emory College
University of Georgia
The Savannah College of Art & Design

ILLINOIS

University of Illinois

INDIANA

Indiana University

LOUISIANA

Tulane University

MASSACHUSETTS

Amherst College
Bentley University
Boston College
Boston University
Northeastern University
Smith College
University of Massachusetts - Amherst

MARYLAND

University of Maryland - College Park
Loyola University of Maryland

MICHIGAN

University of Michigan

MISSOURI

Washington University St. Louis

NORTH CAROLINA

Elon University
High Point University
University of North Carolina
Wake Forest University

NEW JERSEY

Bergen Community College
Christine Valmy School of Esthetics & Cosmetology
Fairleigh Dickinson University

Monmouth University
Montclair State University
Princeton University
Ramapo College
Rider University
Rutgers University
Rowan University
Seton Hall University
Stevens Institute of Technology
The College of New Jersey

NEW MEXICO

University of New Mexico

NEW YORK

Binghamton University
Colgate University
Cornell University
Fordham University
Hamilton College
Ithaca College
Marist College
Mount Saint Mary College
New York University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Syracuse University
Union College
Yeshiva University
West Point Military Academy

OHIO

Case Western Reserve University
The Ohio State University
Miami University

PENNSYLVANIA

Bucknell University
Drexel University
Lehigh University
Misericordia University
Muhlenberg College
Pennsylvania State University
University of Pittsburgh
Villanova University

RHODE ISLAND

Bryant University
Johnson & Wales University
Providence College
University of Rhode Island
Roger Williams University

SOUTH CAROLINA

College of Charleston
University of South Carolina

TENNESSEE

University of Tennessee
Vanderbilt University

TEXAS

Southern Methodist University

VERMONT

Castleton University
University of Vermont

VIRGINIA

James Madison University

WEST VIRGINIA

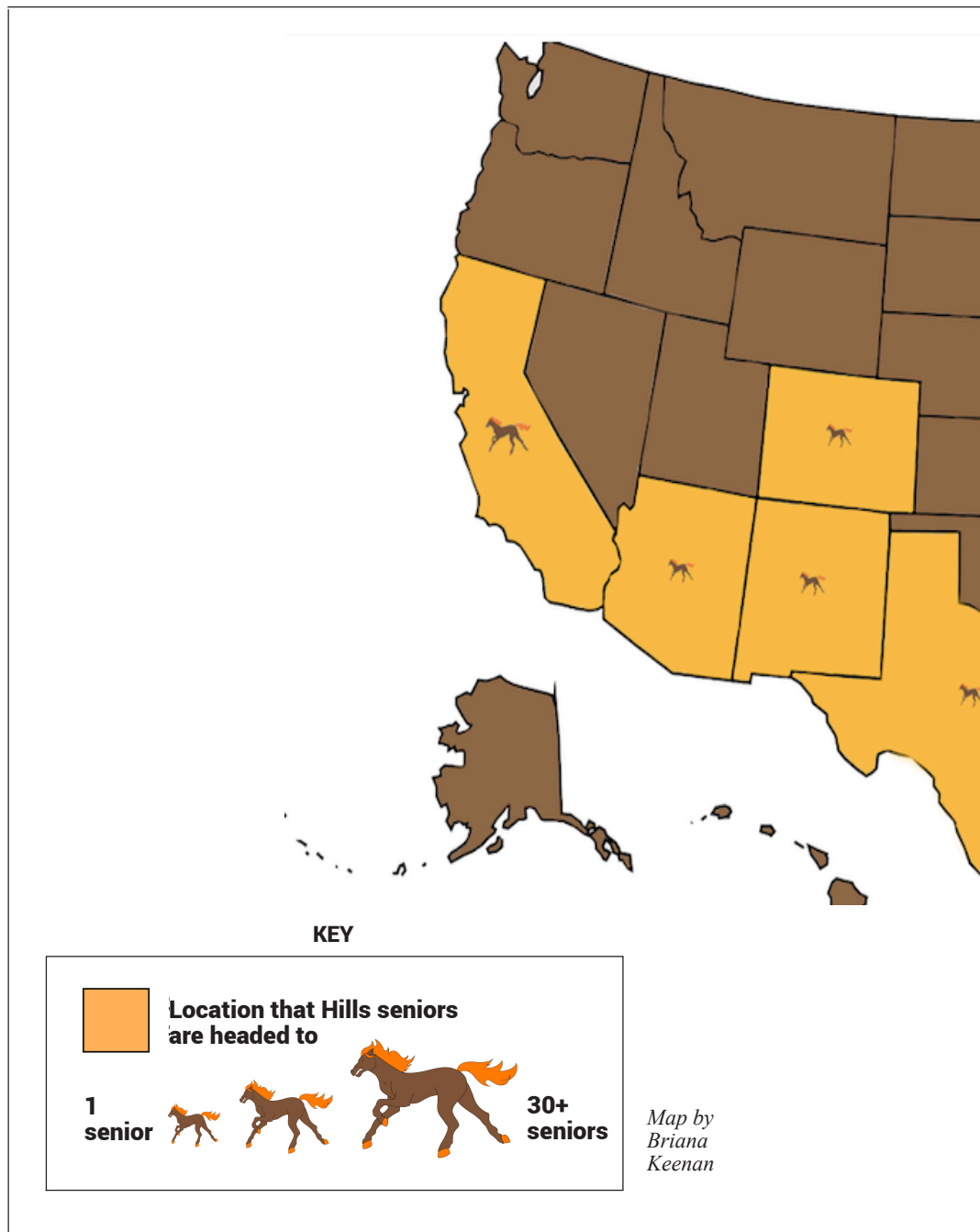
West Virginia University

WISCONSIN

University of Wisconsin at Madison

COUNTRIES ABROAD

Germany
Japan



Fast facts about the Class of 2022. (Graphic by Briana Keenan)

6 TIME ZONES	28 U.S. STATES	2 TOTAL COUNTRIES
FURTHEST DESTINATION	CLOSEST DESTINATION	
Japan	Ramapo College of New Jersey Mahwah, NJ	
6,716 MILES FROM HILLS	8.9 MILES FROM HILLS	
Rutgers University	MOST POPULAR DESTINATION	

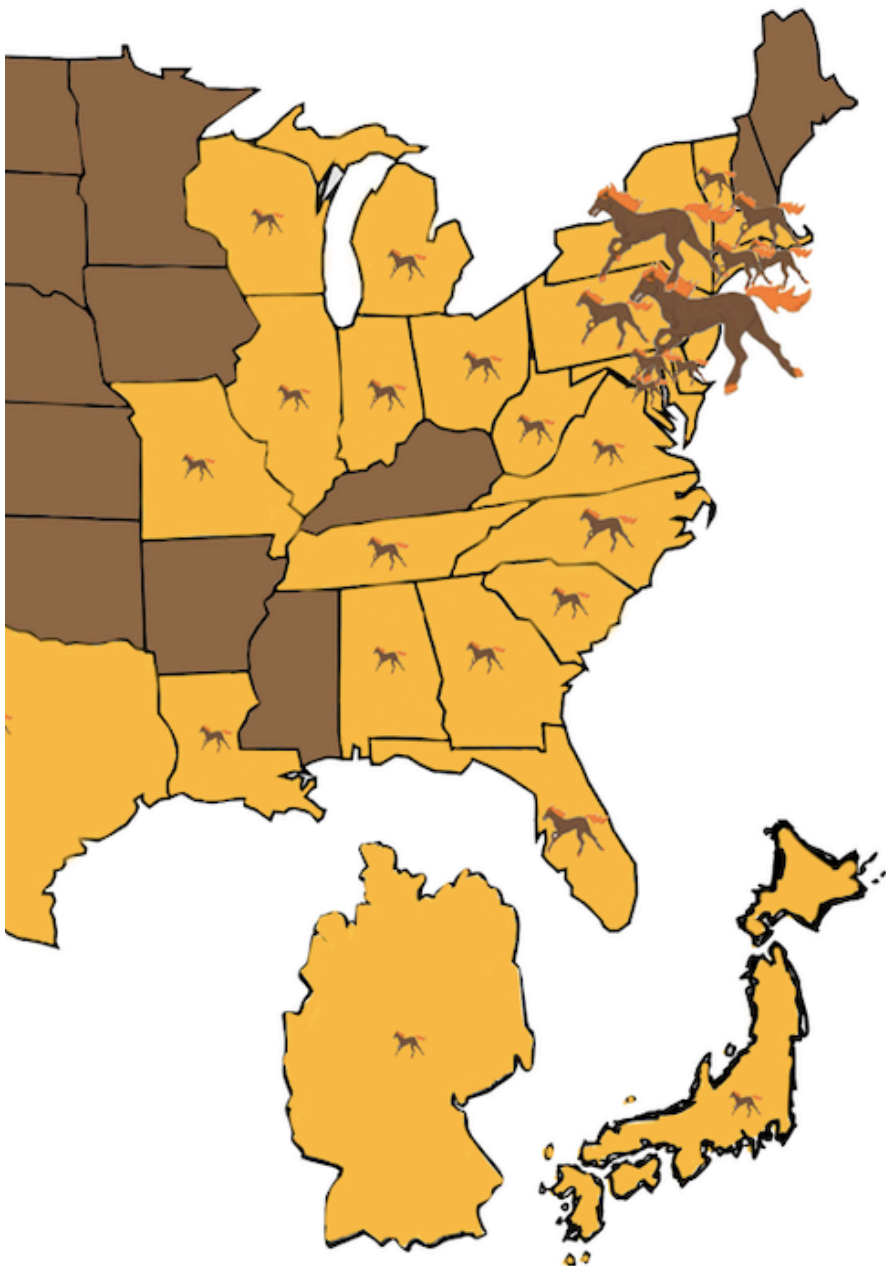
2022

Does high school prepare you for adulthood?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

OPINION

By Madison Saks



One of the most useful of these electives is financial literacy, which teaches students about taxes, mortgages, the bank, and other important adult responsibilities. This class is mandatory for all students, so most decide to get it over with and take it freshman year, or even take a shorter and less hands-on version over the summer.

embedded in schools, it can be argued that high school traditionally only prepares you for pursuing higher education. Achievement in high school is based on academic success, and the goal for many students is making their resume impressive for colleges. Hills is very focused on and provides these opportunities to its students.

By taking it freshman year, all of the knowledge is lost by the time students are in their senior year and ready to graduate. Although the school cannot make this a mandatory class for seniors, it would be prudent to make financial literacy only available to upperclassmen. On the flip side, it is understood that most upperclassmen take electives based on their interests, or what they want to pursue outside of high school.

Some might argue that college is where one prepares for adulthood. After all, the independence of living outside parental reach and the freedom to make decisions mirrors “real world” living. So the question shifts: is high school supposed to prepare students for adulthood?

The idea of making a financial literacy class mandatory is great because it directly sets students up for success in “the real world.” However, most students take this class, like most of their classes, because it is required. Most students aren’t taking this class with the intent to prepare themselves for their life after high school; they are taking it to get a good grade and check the mandatory class off their list. It is less about learning the ins and outs of financial literacy and rather a means to an end.

Hills does a lot to prepare you for life, but as it seems, it really all comes down to how you want to prepare yourself. To some students, an impressive resumé that includes hard electives and classes, and that is completely okay, and also not the school’s responsibility.

Jacob Charnow, a senior at Hills said, “It depends on your high school experience: if you’re hyper-focused on your schoolwork, you are less prepared socially for networking in the real world.”

While financial literacy and other business classes are relatively new curricula that are being

If you are a student who took financial literacy, 21st-century life skills, public speaking, cooking, or anything along these lines, because preparation for life was more important to you than your resumé, then that is perfectly fine as well.

High schools can improve on a lot of aspects to prepare students for adulthood, but it is also up to the students to prepare themselves.

Hills students fundraise for war in Ukraine HILLS LIFE

By Briana Keenan

On Feb. 24, Russian troops officially invaded Ukraine. Conflict between the two countries built up over years as Russian president Vladimir Putin wanted to take over Ukraine to prevent its government from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (more commonly known as NATO).

At Pascack Hills, the AP World History class and Student Immigrant Alliance (SIA) club fundraised to support refugees and those in Ukraine who are in need as a result of the war.

Nicholas Scerbo, AP World History teacher at Hills, explained how he decided to start fundraising for this.

“In our class discussions, students in the AP World class seemed to be interested in what they could do to help people affected by the war in Ukraine. It seemed to be a worthwhile use of time to see if we could raise money to help,” he said.



PC: Jane Yeam
From left to right: juniors and SIA co-founders Jonathan Mathew and Jake Agranovich with donations for Ukrainian refugees. CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

DISCLAIMER

The information for the college map presented above was collected in collaboration with @phscommitted22 on Instagram, where members of the Class of 2022 were able to voluntarily share their postgraduate plans. Responses were collected from Oct. 6 through May 24. The list and map of postgraduate plans may not be comprehensive.

SPORTS

Hills' first season under the Bronco's logo

By Ethan Kaufamn



As students and staff alike will recall, it was back in March 2021 when the Pascack Hills mascot of “Broncos” was officially approved by the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education. However, it took a fresh school year, one marked by a vote for the logo in mid-October, to truly usher in the change.

“This is the first time we’ve had something to go off of instead of just a word,” said Hills athletic director Steve Papa. “Now people can put stuff on t-shirts, hats, you name it. I think having that visual now, it’s been a big unifier, and I would say everyone at the school - - whether it be students, teachers, or anybody else -- has done a tremendous job rallying behind the new mascot.”

Papa noted the similarities between the Bronco mascot and that of the former Cowboys, claiming the related genre was likely a prime reason for the smooth student reception. There’s also this year’s freshman class to remember, the Bronco being all they’ve known since entering. Still, even the upperclassmen appear to have adjusted well.

“The mascot change was a big decision, but I think everyone’s been behind it since it happened.”

– Jack Silver, Hills senior and baseball player

Part of the baseball team, Silver said the school spirit has gone past the academic day.

“[The baseball team] has done a really great job rallying behind it since getting our Bronco jerseys. At the end of the day, whether we’re the Cowboys or the Broncos, we’re Pascack Hills.”

PC: Tim Wieland

There’s an argument to be made that school spirit doesn’t need a consistent mascot to go strong, as even people who grew up as Cowboys are just as passionate now, after the change. Take Evan Lampert, Hills alum and head coach of the football team.

“I’ve never gotten too caught up in [the mascot]. When I played sports in high school, I played for Hills and the community that mascot represented,” said Lampert. “My attitude hasn’t changed. I don’t care what our mascot is, I just want there to be a strong sense of pride within our building.”

The building itself will be undergoing changes over the summer to fully integrate the Bronco mascot. With several athletic areas and more than 20 teams worth of uniforms to revamp, the heavy undertaking should speak to the district’s dedication.

“Between uniforms, clothing, and signage, we’re really trying to embrace everything,” Papa stated, “We’ll have a new gym floor with a big Bronco logo in

the middle. By next school year, it’ll be fully entrenched and there won’t be anything reminding us of the past.”

The renovations seem to have garnered more criticism from students than any other aspects of the change, with the Board’s initial estimated cost last March coming out to \$159,000.

INITIAL ESTIMATE FOR REPLACING THE COWBOY MASCOT

\$31,000
Rebranding of signage, murals, and other existing Cowboy references

\$53,000
Replacing athletic uniforms

\$75,000
Replacing football field endzone and wrestling mats

“People are generally together on the mascot, but I know some are angry about the money being spent on the field and gym instead of more air conditioning in classrooms or other things like that,” said Daniel Goldman, junior and member of the golf team. “For me at least, it’s more those things than a name or mascot which can distract from playing the actual sport.”

Most are supportive, some have issues with it, but everything seems to be settling. Whatever the underlying opinion of the community might be, the words of the athletic director ring true.

HILLS LIFE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

The donations that this class are collecting are monetary, and they will be going to UNICEF Ukraine, which Scerbo explained helps children who are refugees and stranded in war zones.

“Because of the complexity of getting supplies to a war zone, it seemed that providing cash to people with expertise was the way to go,” he added.

Jonathan Mathew, Hills junior and SIA co-founder explained the club’s fundraiser. They collected toiletree products which will go to local refugees that escaped the war in Ukraine and are now living close by.

“We also opened this drive to the communities of Montvale and Woodcliff Lake, collecting donations from local citizens as well,” he explained.

Jane Yeam, SIA advisor, mentioned that the World Culture Club at Hills partnered with SIA to support refugees.

Hills students fundraise for war in Ukraine

By Briana Keenan

“[The two clubs] worked together to provide a monetary donation to be given to a local non-profit organization that will be working with Ukrainian refugees in the New Jersey area,” she said.

Scerbo also discussed other ways students have been raising money.

“[They] have donated the food and drinks that we have sold on days when multiple spring sporting events were happening on the fields. [They] have also volunteered their time to help sell at games,” he said.

Scerbo and Mathew expressed the importance of helping people when possible.

“It is important for those with the capacity to work in the service of others to do so,” Scerbo said.

Mathew added, “These past two years have been filled with so much chaos and sadness throughout the world. Within the Hills

community, we should try to take advantage of the opportunities we have by helping those that are still not as fortunate as us and coming together as one to help those in need.”

As a history teacher, Scerbo shared his insight on the war in Ukraine in terms of the predicted outcome of the situation in the future.

“Whatever happens with the course of the war in the near future, the damages it has caused won’t end when a peace treaty is signed. Because of the damage that Ukraine has suffered in this conflict, it will be in need of humanitarian aid and assistance for some time to come,” he said.

“It is important for those with the capacity to work in the service of others to do so.”

– Nicholas Scerbo, Hills AP World History teacher

June Horoscopes

By Rily Alexander

Aries (March 21 - April 19): This month, you will face a lot of challenges with your personal life, but towards the end of the month, you will improve things.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20): Taurus, your horoscope reveals that, financially, you will be safe! Your personal life will improve, and you will strengthen lots of relationships!

Gemini (May 21 - June 20): Congrats! You will finally get that leadership position you have been hoping for! All your relationships will continue to thrive so stop overthinking!

Cancer (June 21 - July 22): This month will be good for you – if you do not listen to all of the negative voices. Your life is on the right track, do not let anyone convince you otherwise!

Leo (July 23 - August 22): Get ready to do lots of traveling with friends this summer! As for your bank account, do not worry about it! Go enjoy the sun!

Virgo (August 23 - September 22): Your career/work life may pose a problem for you this month, and you will need to find a new way to approach your personal life. As for your mental and physical health, you will be in great shape!

Libra (September 23 - October 22): Be careful with your money this month; it is better to be safe than sorry! Make sure to travel this summer!

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21): Make sure to show commitment to the people who mean the most to you this month, let them know when you are available! Your personal life is sure to thrive during this month!

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21): Your education will take a turn for the better this month and take you to the next level.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 20): Make sure not to take things for granted this month! Remember, you never know how much something means to you until you lose it, so be careful!

Aquarius (January 21 - February 18): Your health will be fine this month, but we suggest making some changes in your personal life.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20): Make sure that the people around you know how you feel about them. Showcasing your feelings every once in a while is a healthy thing, and do not forget that!



Chamber Choir on their first day maskless. PC: Margarita Elkin

A&E

Hills going maskless: How does it affect the performing arts?

By Darcy Bergstein

This past March, Pascack Hills dropped the mask mandate after the New Jersey government lifted their mask restriction in schools after over a year and a half of keeping students masked. It was an arguably drastic change, one that significantly impacted many areas of Hills, especially the performing arts.

Concert band was heavily impacted by the pandemic. Performers had to wear covers over their instruments to minimize the spread of germs, and the band room had to be moved to the auditorium to rehearse.

There was always a risk with band because of students having to remove their masks in order to play; so, students had to be very spaced out or in the marching band's case, be outside. But now, things are much easier after vaccinations and maskless classes.

"It is a much needed return to normalcy being able to perform without bell covers or masks. The masks on the instruments did their jobs well, but there was a noticeable difference in the sounds from each instrument which put a damper on our musicality. Being able to perform like normal again really makes me appreciate what we are able to do each and every time, it is a special experience and I hope I don't take that for granted" said Pascack Hills band instructor, Ryan Dore.

Pascack Hills' musical theater group, The Pascack Hills Players, was also heavily impacted by the pandemic with masks being a hindrance when it comes to facial expressions and communication.

"Performing without a mask was not a

reality I expected in the 2021-22 school year, but it has been so exciting to perform with our entire hearts (and faces). We had to be masked for rehearsals for our fall show, "Songs for a New World," but were able to perform unmasked for our spring show, "9 to 5." said senior Rebecca Cohen.

"Our uncovered faces allow us to connect to the audience in a more meaningful way, and it has been such a pleasure to return back to normal," said Rebecca Cohen.

Choir was affected similarly to theater since their communication and facial expressions were being covered by masks, making it hard to perform. Just like concert band, the choir room got moved because of the pandemic, in which they were moved to the original band room; the original choir room was turned into its own classroom for language and history.

The classes haven't moved back to their original spaces, but there is a significant difference in the masks being removed. It's a sigh of relief.

"Singing in masks for two years was harder than you can imagine. The masks limited the ability to take a proper breath, add facial expressions to the performances. How exciting it was to finally see people's smiles!" exclaimed Hills choir director Margarita Elkin.

The performing arts scene at Hills went through a rough time during the pandemic, but now that Hills is safer and mask mandates are being removed, we are taking another huge step towards normalcy.

Productive ways to spend your summer

By Rebecca Lovett

LIFE & STYLE

Once summer break begins, the routine and schedule of school flies right out of the window. While this laid back lifestyle is much needed in the beginning, it can lead to an unproductive and uneventful summer. Having a simple job or hobby can transform summer into a time for productivity and self-improvement.



Licensed by Creative Commons

There are a variety of seasonal summer jobs for all skill levels that are in need of workers during the summer. This could include being a camp counselor, lifeguard, gate attendant at a pool, or working as a cashier. Jobs show colleges that you have responsibility and experience and they are also easy ways to make money and improve your resume.

Wegmans in Montvale offers jobs such as cashiers or lot attendants for people over 16 years old. Being a cashier is a beneficial job because it is a job that improves communication and comprehension skills. If you like a more hands-on job, being a lot attendant is the perfect summer job because you have to make sure that the lot stays safe and organized.

Woodcliff Lake and Montvale both offer summer camp counselor jobs. Being a camp counselor involves working with children and ensuring that they have an enjoyable summer. Although it can be difficult working with many children in the heat, it can be rewarding seeing how much fun the children are having. This is the perfect first job for people of all ages.

Lifetime Fitness in Montvale also offers a wide variety of jobs for people 16 and older. With a lifeguard certification, one can work as a lifeguard or swim instructor. If you like working with kids, the Lifetime summer camp or kids academy is the perfect place. The Life Cafe is another option for a job if cooking is your passion. Lifetime is the perfect place for people of all passions to spend their summer.

Emily Sailer, junior at Hills, said, "my

friends and I are lifeguards together at Lifetime and it makes working so much fun."

Passion projects are activities that will fuel your inner soul and happiness. This can range from painting and sewing to raising money for the community. This type of project can leave you with fulfillment because you are completing something that is meaningful to your life.

Journaling is a great way to keep track of your inner thoughts or daily activities. It can also be found as a way to relieve stress and anxiety, as you are keeping everything in perspective. And as a bonus, this hobby can keep your writing skills sharp for the upcoming school year!

A huge part of summer is relaxing and becoming a new person for the school year ahead. Self-improvement and reflection are great ways to reconnect with your inner self. Although you are not completing a project or making money, self improvement is still productive because you are improving something in your life. Once your inner soul and mind improves, all aspects of life will follow.

Summer creates the opportunity and time for self transformation. Becoming productive over this time will aid in that improvement, as you are gaining more responsibility and knowledge about yourself.

School climate bringing change

By Sabrina Moe • Continued from Page 2

One other reason for switching to this survey is how it is easier to categorize and separate data based on questions. If the school climate team was concerned about a specific question, they could divide the responses into groups to compare them (given a large enough group answered).

"It just gives us a lot more information to not only

see how students are feeling more generally, but how different groups of students are feeling about particular aspects of school culture and climate," Russo clarified.

Based on the data from previous years, several changes within the district have occurred. Two results from the 2019 data were the formation of the equity team consisting of students and faculty from Hills and Valley as well as a recognition of the importance of school climate for students.

The fact that students were experiencing school in different

Equity is the characteristic of impartiality and fairness. With this in mind, a reason for the survey is to ensure both Hills and Valley have equity.

"The goal is to try and support each and every student in our schools," Russo stated, "and that is a communal process that involves faculty, staff, that involves parents and caregivers."

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

2022 Senior Superlatives

A Google Form was sent to Hills seniors to select winners for the following categories.

Note: Not all winners were available for pictures and therefore are not displayed.

By Kaitlyn Verde

Most Likely to be President



Nathaniel Krigsman and Lindsay Fleishman

Most Likely to be on Broadway



Christina Priestner and Aaron Solomon

Future Entrepreneurs



Amanda Bang and Kai Hamazaki

Future Reality Show Stars



Nicholas Iosevich and Caitlin Kim

Aspiring Inventors



Lina Kim and Akul Sethi

Most Changed



Michael Blackford and Charlotte Scholze

Most School Spirit



Nikki DiCaprio and Dylan Reissman

Best Laugh



Katie Hoppe and Matt DiBella

Dynamic Duos



Jacob Charnow and Dasia Jarvis
Jesse Belnick and Jack Silver

Gym Class Heroes



Kira Quigley and Adam Yunaev

Future World Travelers



Sonia Balani and Lukas Nunn

DEAR READER,

Thank you for taking the time to read our end-of-year print issue. In a world that is increasingly online, it is our belief that there is still value in being able to hold these stories in your hands.

As we depart Pascack Hills, we want to thank our readers for supporting the *Trailblazer* in a year like no other for news in the Pascack Valley Regional High School District. Throughout, we sincerely hope you have found the *Trailblazer* to be a trusted news source.

We are grateful that you have let us be the eyes, ears, and voice of Pascack Hills, and we are thrilled to pass the torch to Briana Keenan as next school year's Editor-in-Chief. The *Trailblazer* will continue to report with Hills Pride in new and exciting ways.

With gratitude,
Justine Marinkovic & Riley Solomon
2021- 22 *Trailblazer* Editor-in-Chief