

THE NEXT ACT

Hills prepares to select new mascot PAGE 2

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THE LION

#JackStrong: Student battles leukemia PAGE 8



THE RINGMASTERS

Nurses, custodians lead Hills through Covid-19 pandemic

A look at the 'ringmasters' guiding us through the 2020 circus.

By Briana Keenan

School nurses and custodians at Pascack Hills have put in an extra effort to help the community this year amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Hills' two nurses, Mrs. Rose Welyczko and Ms. Tara Wholey, have been working at the school for 23 years and two years, respectively.

In addition to working with, educating, and supporting families as they have done in the past, they have been working with the local health department during the Covid-19 pandemic. "This year, we are working in conjunction with our local Board of Health, conducting contact tracing. As in the past, we continue to work very closely with families, educating, guiding and supporting everyone through this very trying time," they explained.

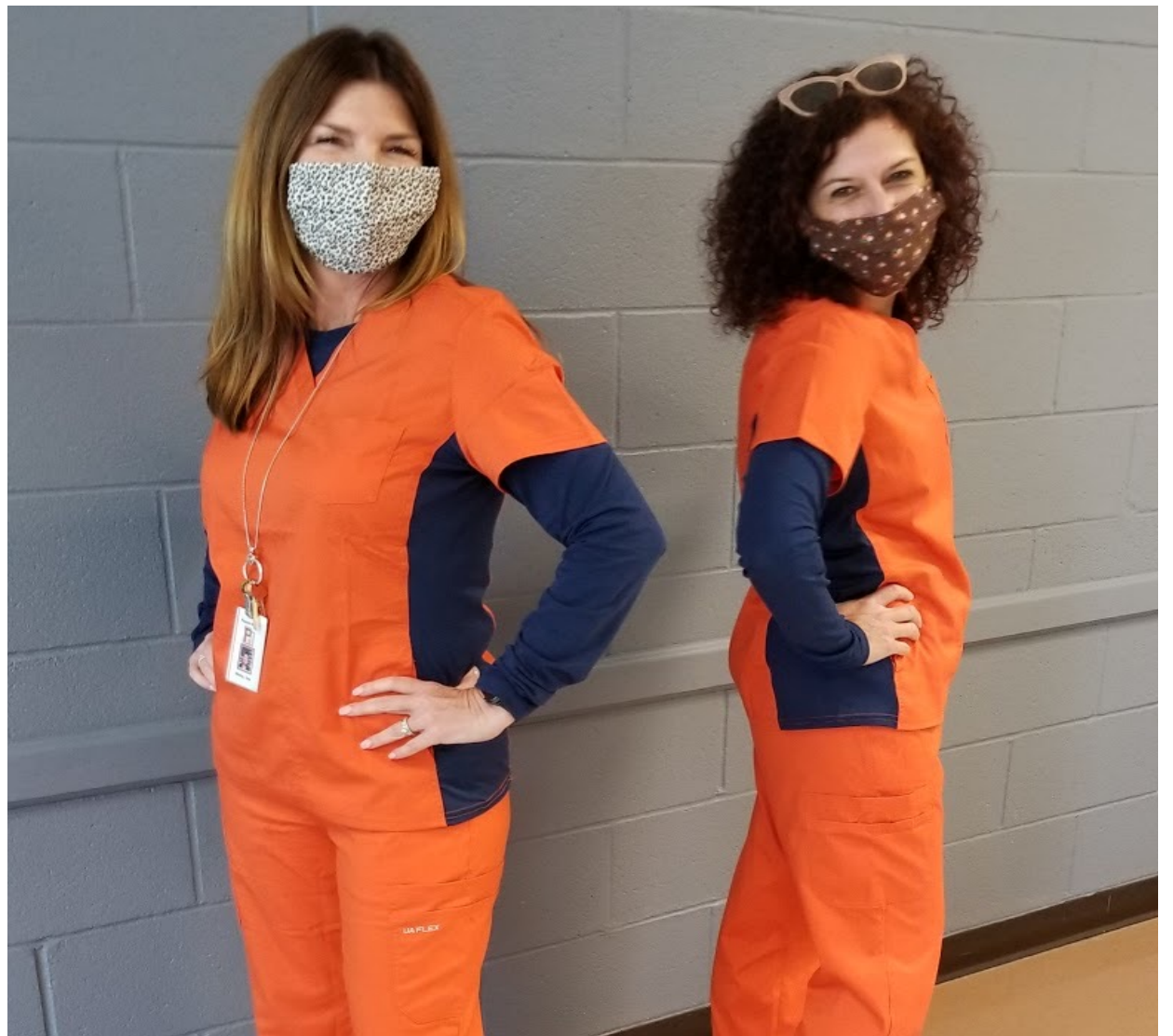
In order for Hills to reopen safely in September, the school nurses led faculty to ensure that the building was complying with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. They also have done multiple contact tracings between the first positive case at Hills in October to before Thanksgiving. Due to an increase in cases across the state and community, the Department of Health has ordered Hills to close.

Although the school is fully remote for two weeks, the nurses continue to lead the community through this time of uncertainty.

When asked about "lockdown," the nurses stated that they video chat with guidance counselors, students, parents, administration, and special service workers. They also discussed the connotation of the word "lockdown."

"Can we not refer to this effort to protect those around us as a 'lockdown'? We are asking everyone to limit social interactions, in [an] effort to limit the spread of Covid-19. This is not a punishment, as 'lockdown' insinuates. As far as our routine, we are at home doing the same as when we are at school — that is the perk of all our technology."

Both Welyczko and Wholey urge those who feel anxious due to the pandemic to **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**



Above: Pascack Hills nurses Wholey and Welyczko pose for a photo at Hills. (Contributed by Rose Welyczko)

Students want 'refund,' return to normalcy in 2021

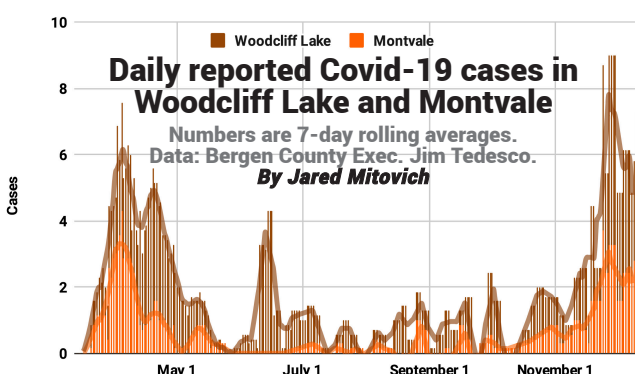
THE REFUND By Mackenzie Blowers

The coronavirus pandemic changed the course of the school year for all academic institutions around the country. The district originally closed for in-person instruction from March through the end of last year's school year. Now, after returning to hybrid instruction in September with divided cohorts and closing due to health protocols, Hills students have reflected on the traditions they must forfeit due to the year's unusual, shocking circumstances and even voiced their hopes and expectations for the upcoming new year. Many wish they could refund the sequence of events that was

2020, and move on.

As underclassmen, the Class of 2021 expected their senior year would be something much different than what it has morphed into. With traditions for Halloween, spirit week, senior trips, prom, and graduation either cancelled or modified to adhere to social distancing requirements, seniors are hoping for any remnant of a normal school year in 2021. Senior Jess Gudin, for example, wishes for a return to normal:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



THE NEXT ACT

Despite delays, Hills prepares to select new mascot • By Jared Mitovich

2021 will mark the beginning of the “next act” for Pascack Hills: a new mascot.

It has been six months since the Pascack Valley Regional Board of Education voted to remove the Cowboy and Indian mascots at Hills and Pascack Valley, respectively. As 2020 ends, the selection process of the new mascot is just now officially getting underway, and the resulting changes from a new mascot remain in the earliest stages of discussion.

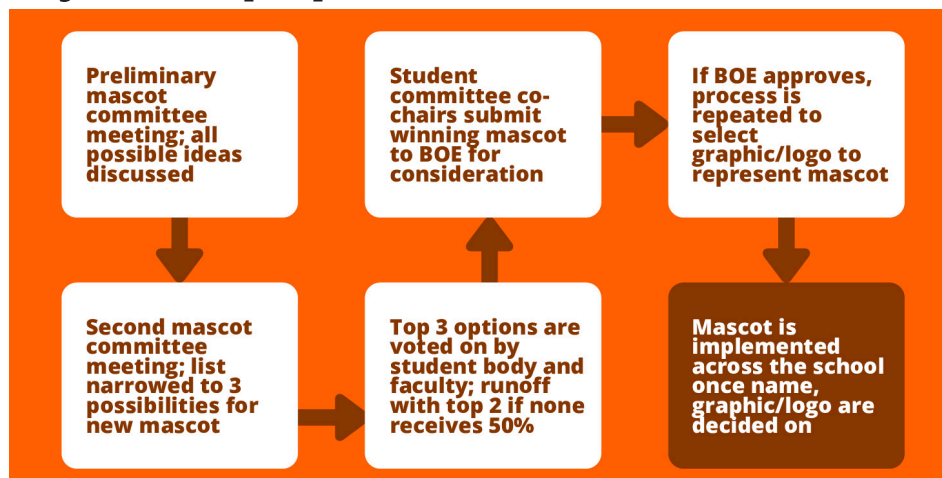
At the Board’s meeting on Oct. 26, Paspalas and Valley Athletic Director Shawn Buchanan outlined what they described was a “student-led” process at each school to choose its new mascot. “[W]hen the schools were both founded, the mascot search and mascot selection process was driven by the students 50-plus years ago, and we felt it important to do that again,” Paspalas explained.

The two ADs estimated then that the student advisory committee would hold a preliminary meeting in November, in order to “prioritize [the] important characteristics of a new mascot to consider.” Buchanan also noted at the time that the process could extend past January, which was when they estimated that students would present their school’s mascot choice to the Board.

Since this October Board meeting, the selection timeline has been pushed back, and possibly stretched out, in part due to the switches between hybrid and remote learning at both schools. So far at Hills, the student-led committee has been formed. It is composed of 51 students, teachers, advisors, and coaches according to Paspalas, who said that the process the Board approved has not changed.

“We had planned to meet in person on Dec. 3, but we are on remote learning right now. It’s felt that it’s important that the first meeting be in person so real discussions could take place,” Paspalas said in early December. The meeting was rescheduled to Dec. 16 in person, but it was delayed again due to a snowstorm and is now planned for Jan. 6.

Paspalas asked committee members to



come up with possible suggestions for the new mascot. He said the suggestions should be “positive and inclusive in nature” without identifying with a gender; promote “school pride and excitement,” and portray values such as “strength, toughness, competitiveness, commitment, grit, togetherness, pride, excellence, history, fairness & compassion.”

Prior to this preliminary meeting, two students with roles in the selection process said discussions of the new mascot had been relatively infrequent.

“We haven’t done too much regarding the new mascot lately,” said Danny Dibella, a soccer player and a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Council, which includes students from different athletic teams at Hills.

Maeve Rossig, executive president of Student Government, agreed with Dibella that much remains to be discussed. “We have definitely been having lots of discussion about the mascot removal going all the way back to last [school year],” she acknowledged, “but there is definitely a lot to be done in terms of getting the students to welcome our new mascot with open arms.”

Dibella and Rossig both clarified the roles that the S.A.A.C. and Student Government, respectively, have in the selection process. The S.A.A.C. is “still in the brainstorming phase” of new mascot ideas, Dibella said, “but some important

qualities that we are looking for in a mascot are strength, courage, and leadership.”

Rossig highlighted Student Government’s presence on the mascot committee. “[E]specially within [the committee], we’re focused on just making the right decision that everyone can get on board with... I know that any SGA member would have a clear view of the students’ thoughts and give important input.”

Once a timeline is settled, Rossig said that Student Government will “be doing everything we can to grow support for the mascot.” Many students have accepted the end of the Cowboy era, but there remain some who are disappointed, like Hills senior Matthew Bourghol.

“You don’t pick a mascot for the characteristics it represents, but for the passion it provokes in the students it represents,” argued Bourghol. “That’s why I believe that Cowboys is the only mascot for Pascack Hills: because it has more meaning to our students than the name of the school itself... The change was made because [the Board] succumbed to a small amount of pressure from some students.”

In the coming months, much of the weight of the new mascot decision will be lifted from the Board’s shoulders. Members have repeated that the selection process should be public and student-led (while still ending up for a Board vote).

“As we all know,” member Michael Fronte reminded the Board in October, “we all got a lot of feedback [after the removal vote], and it would be great if the public was brought along on every step. That way there’s no one’s thinking we’re not fully disclosing everything.”

According to Paspalas, as progress is made in the mascot search, committee members will provide updates at public Board meetings. Eventually, three choices will be narrowed down for Hills’ new mascot. They will be voted on by the student body and faculty. Similar to Student Government elections, if no choice receives 50% of the vote, the top two will go to a runoff.

When a mascot is chosen, the same selection process — consisting of committee meetings, a school-wide vote, and the Board’s approval — will be repeated to choose a graphic to represent Hills’ new name. Then comes the work of implementing the change across all school property, uniforms, paraphernalia, and media. At that point, Dibella said the S.A.A.C. will “look into what changes have to be made within the program such as a new logo, uniforms, et cetera. Depending on what mascot we end up with, we may change the school colors, so hopefully we won’t have brown home uniforms anymore.”

There will also be a ripple of smaller changes, like the renaming of some school clubs. Jess Gudin, co-editor-in-chief of the Wrangler, Hills’ yearbook, said its name will eventually be changed to match the theme of the new mascot.

“Since we’ve designed the yearbook already, we can’t change it, but once we have the mascot set, we will talk to [Principal Tim Wieland] and think of a new name for the yearbook for following years. Basically, this year is going to have to stay the Wrangler.”

As this “next act” in the history of Pascack Hills begins, Paspalas said the voices of the current school community have the opportunity to “set the tone and image of Pascack Hills for generations to come.”

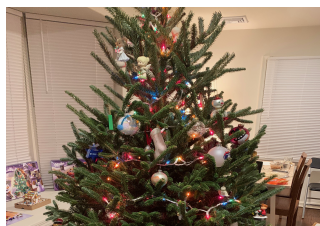
THE FESTIVAL

Celebrate the 2020 holidays with morality

By Claudia Kim • OPINION Photos by Jared Mitovich (left) and Simmie Brisman (right).

At the tail end of a particularly gruesome year, many are looking forward to capping off the monstrosity of 2020 with the quiet comfort of tradition. Large family gatherings during Christmas time and New Years’ would normally represent this celebration of a year well passed in the company of loved ones, but now, that picture of extended family gathered around a fireside is more irresponsible than ever.

As Covid-19 cases rise in New Jersey, the United States, and the world, it is of the utmost importance to resist the urge to congregate during the holiday season.



With a vaccine on the precipice of being distributed to America at large, it is of vital significance that we keep cases to a minimum to ensure that the virus doesn’t take any more lives before we can effectively give each willing American a way to protect their immune systems.

This new dissonance between what most would consider a time of comfort and relaxation and the sudden moral duty to protect yourself and your fellow man has only resulted in a greater accumulation of stress that the end of the year should not call for. Many have been forced to reconcile their familial love with the

question: How can we celebrate this year, a time we need to most, in an ethical fashion?

Most of us are lost without the example of those who came before us and would hastily rejoin their old pastimes as a small means of enjoyment as something of a reward after this hectic year. While it’s true that this option is the one that is most gratifying and that the semi-self-righteous rhetoric of those insisting on isolation can be alienating, our proximity to a vaccine should act as motivation to listen to authority and reason one last time.

One Pascack Hills senior, Izzy Sanar, commiserated with the common regret, saying, “though I usually spend this time of year with my family and friends, I completely understand that it would be reckless right now to hold large, in-person gatherings.” She, along with thousands of others, has supplemented tradition with innovation, driving to her friends’ houses to drop off presents to

open them on FaceTime.

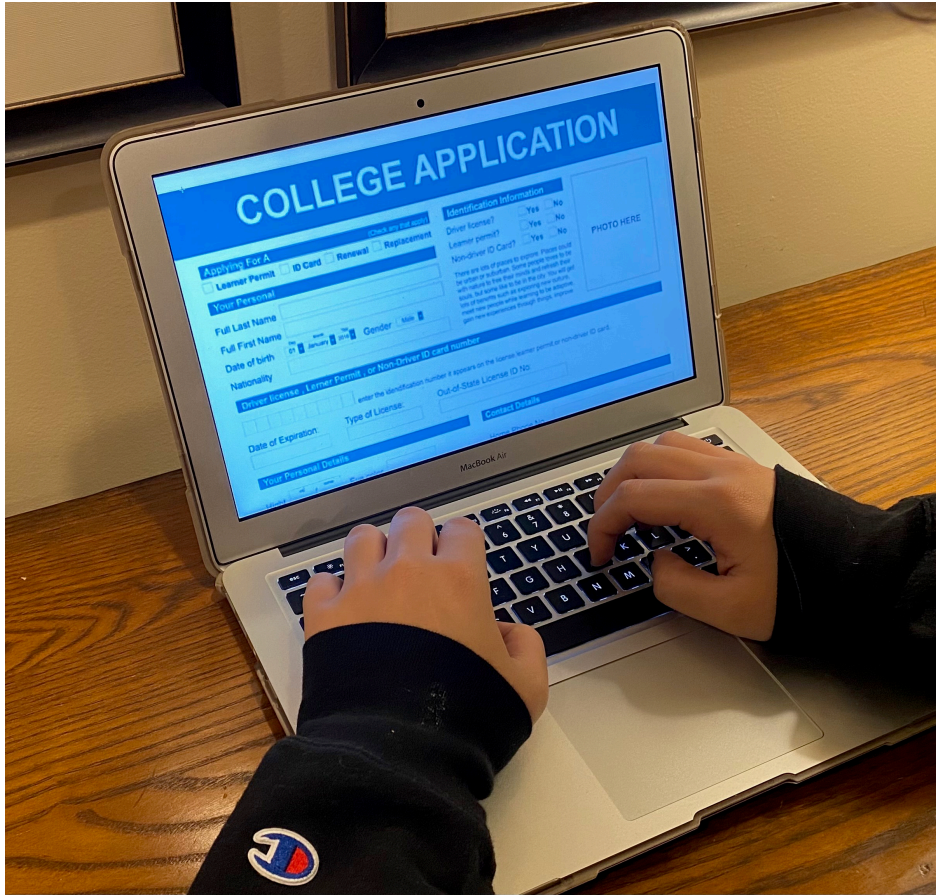
Others have simply opted to keep their celebrations within their immediate family, not hosting cousins and high-risk grandparents under one roof. Hills student Lauren Eusebio acknowledged the disappointment of the death of the large gathering. “I normally have all of my family here for Thanksgiving and Christmas, so their absence will feel odd this year; hopefully, though, we can all meet again in 2021,” she said.

It is no secret that many have disregarded the calls for small family reunions this holiday season, as we continue to see certain graphs trending in unfavorable ways. However, with the onslaught of people, both at Hills and of a larger global community, who have been committed to following CDC guidelines throughout this harrowing time with little relent, there seems to be a bright hope for a near-future filled with now-forgotten embraces and face-to-unmasked face greetings.

THE BLINDFOLD

Students apply to college during pandemic

By Riley Solomon



Above: A Pascack Hills student fills out a college application. (Photo by Stephen Schmidt)

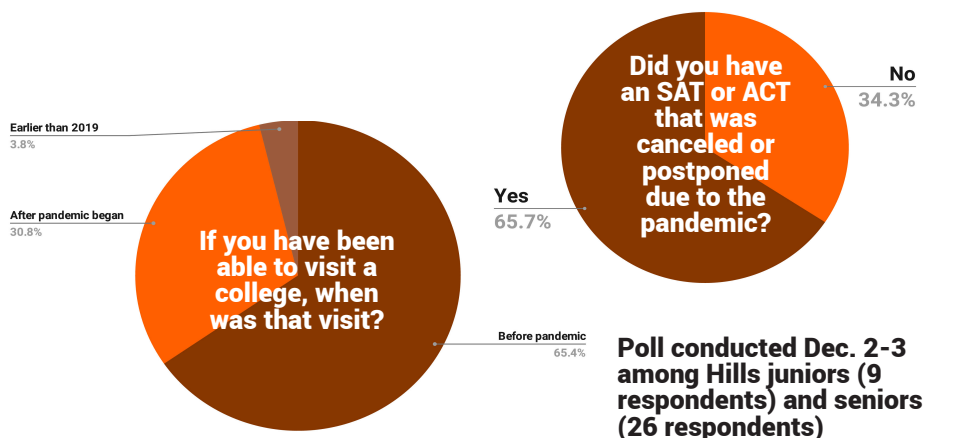
Applying to college is always a wild and chaotic process, but the Covid-19 pandemic has made it feel even more like a circus for Pascack Hills juniors and seniors. The pandemic has affected how students are applying, if they are able to visit schools, and even how they are choosing what colleges to go to.

According to a survey conducted by the Trailblazer, 77% of seniors and 44% of juniors have been able to visit colleges,

but only 30% of those students have done so after the pandemic began.

One of these lucky students, who visited the University of Connecticut this October, said that on their visit, [t]he only students on campus were ones who either lived in the town in apartments or were there because of their major/certain classes.”

The student continued, “It’s really



difficult to get a feel of a school and if you'll be a good fit at a time when the college experience is not normal and you can't see what people's normal lives are like. Luckily, UCONN wasn't that far, but when you are interested in schools across the country at a time when travel is restricted/advised against, you question whether you should even apply if you might not even be able to visit prior to commitment day.”

Not being able to preview a real campus experience for nearly nine months has posed a serious dilemma for seniors — all of whom, according to the poll, have already begun applying to colleges.

One student remarked, “I applied to colleges before I even looked at the campus, and if I did get to see the campus, I wasn’t able to see inside any buildings. It’s a lot of relying on what’s on the internet and what you know about the college already.”

Another student commented that not being able to see the campus has made it harder to choose which college to commit to, as some of the most appealing and deal-breaking features of colleges are the campuses themselves.

Virtual tours have proved helpful for many, but as one junior remarked that

they are not the same. “I toured Wagner College,” the student said, “and each major was separated into different Zoom calls. It was difficult to ask specific questions, because I wasn't really sure what the campus itself was like and wasn't able to tour the inside of any building.”

Additionally, the pandemic has caused serious changes to the applications themselves. 66% of students who responded to the poll said that they had an SAT or ACT exam that was cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic, a common occurrence nationwide that led many schools to switch their application requirements to “test optional.” In fact, every senior who answered said that at least one of the schools they were applying to was test optional.

A student also remarked, “The main way the college application process has been affected for me is through testing and my extracurriculars. In the spring, I was supposed to take the SAT and compete in a few competitions, like the national competition for DECA.”

Hills juniors and seniors are certainly in for an interesting year as they figure out their futures while navigating the insanity of a global pandemic.

2020 has been a year like no other. School and learning have been drastically redefined as Google Meet replaces the in-person classroom, and students now spend time at home instead of out with their friends. Life has been stressful, to say the least, and within the craziness of our new world one of the major stress relievers has been taken away.

Exercise is considered one of the most important factors to someone’s health. It can help prevent conditions like heart disease or high blood pressure, improves mood and energy, and promotes better sleep. The majority of high school students get their exercise by participating on school sports teams.

But sports have changed, just like everything else. With the amount of regulations and precautions, trying to participate in organized sports is like jumping through hoops. Masks are required, but it’s hard to play in a mask. Social distancing is necessary, but some sports are contact.

In order to try and avoid the need for these regulations altogether, some teams opted to “virtual practice”, where the team would get on Zoom or Google-Meet and workout together. Virtual practice

THE SPECTACLE

Sports' new normal • By Izzy Frangiosa



also includes doing drills and conditioning exercises.

Practice isn’t the only thing that’s changed. The regulations to be able to play in games are strict, with club teams unable to travel across state lines and high school sports shut down, athletes are

unable to find an outlet. Even when games are able to be played, the experience seems to be drastically different.

Spectators and sports fans are also struggling to enjoy athletics in this new time period. While viewing from home has more benefits than the other two, like being comfortable and saving money, most fans are missing out on the hype of the live game experience.

As 2021 approaches and a vaccine hits the markets, hopefully sports will soon return to normal. Athletics are for everyone to enjoy together and in person, and its only a matter of time until we can all do that safely

Graphics by Izzy Frangiosa.



NEWS ROUNDUP

- **Project Paterson collected 1,348 toys from the Hills community for its annual toy drive**
- **Teens Against Cancer raised \$1,200 in Hills Pride Shirts for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital**
- **Pascack Hills' virtual winter concert was held on Dec. 21**
- **Student Government planned a school-wide Kahoot in support of #JackStrong on Dec. 22**
- **Four new members will join the Pascack Valley Regional BOE in 2021**

Virtual class after Hills was mandated to switch to fully remote learning for two weeks due to Covid-19. (Charlie Goertz)

Students hope for return to normalcy in 2021

By Mackenzie Blowers
From Page 1

THE REFUND

'No one knows what to expect,' said Hills senior Jess Gudin

“For the new year I hope for some sense of normalcy, whether it be returning to in-person classes or even having a (safe) prom. I think that is all anyone wants, really, just to be able to close off high school having done ‘typical high school things’ and having ‘one last hurrah’ with our friends, so-to-speak.”

Ava Henrich, also a senior, spoke along the same lines as Gudin, highlighting the importance of experiencing a normal graduation and stating how “as someone with two older brothers who graduated from Hills, I want the same experience they had of walking in with someone and sitting in rows with the kids we’ve gone to school with since kindergarten for one last time. I doubt that will be possible by the end of the year, but I really hope it is.”

If anything, Hills students are regretful of not enjoying all of the school activities and experiences they previously took for granted. Henrich stated that, “I wish I had known that everything I was doing last year would be my last experiences. I didn’t appreciate going to football games, or sitting at lunch tables, or visiting my favorite teachers nearly as much as I wish I did because I didn’t realize it would be the last time.”

”

I wish I had known that everything I was doing last year would be my last experiences. I didn’t appreciate going to football games, or sitting at lunch tables, or visiting my favorite teachers nearly as much as I wish I did.”

– AVA HENRICH, HILLS SENIOR

Sophomore Briana Keenan acknowledged the same feeling of missing out on extracurricular activities, most of which have been modified to suit a virtual setup or cancelled altogether.

“Since I’m a sophomore, I definitely don’t face the same disappointments as seniors do not being in-person. I miss in-person activities for clubs such as Interact. These include helping at the Halfway Hounds 5K in-person, making posters for the food drive, and connecting with people,” spoke Keenan. “However, I want 2021 to reflect the state of the pandemic. If cases keep rising, I think it is best that we are remote for longer. Although I miss some of these experiences, it does not compare to putting people in the community in what could be a life-threatening situation.”

In addition to all of the cancellations and modifications to extracurricular activities, the hybrid schedule has led students to experience fully remote learning for long periods of time, especially in situations such as following Thanksgiving, where the district remained fully remote last week due to the advice of health officials. Henrich noticed the difficulty that virtual learning can bring: “As someone who is on a mechanical engineering path and takes a lot of STEM courses, this is the most challenging academic year I have ever experienced. Taking physics and calculus and any STEM class is challenging in a normal world; learning completely virtually with no hands-on experiences makes it infinitely more difficult.”

With all of the changes 2020 has brought to everyone’s lives, students are hoping that 2021 can be the beginning of a movement in the right direction of returning back to a normal, safe learning experience. Jess Gudin voiced what most seniors and other Hills students are thinking of the new year: “No one knows what to expect. For now, all we can do is hope.”

Mackenzie Blowers is co-editor-in-chief of the Trailblazer along with Jared Mitovich.

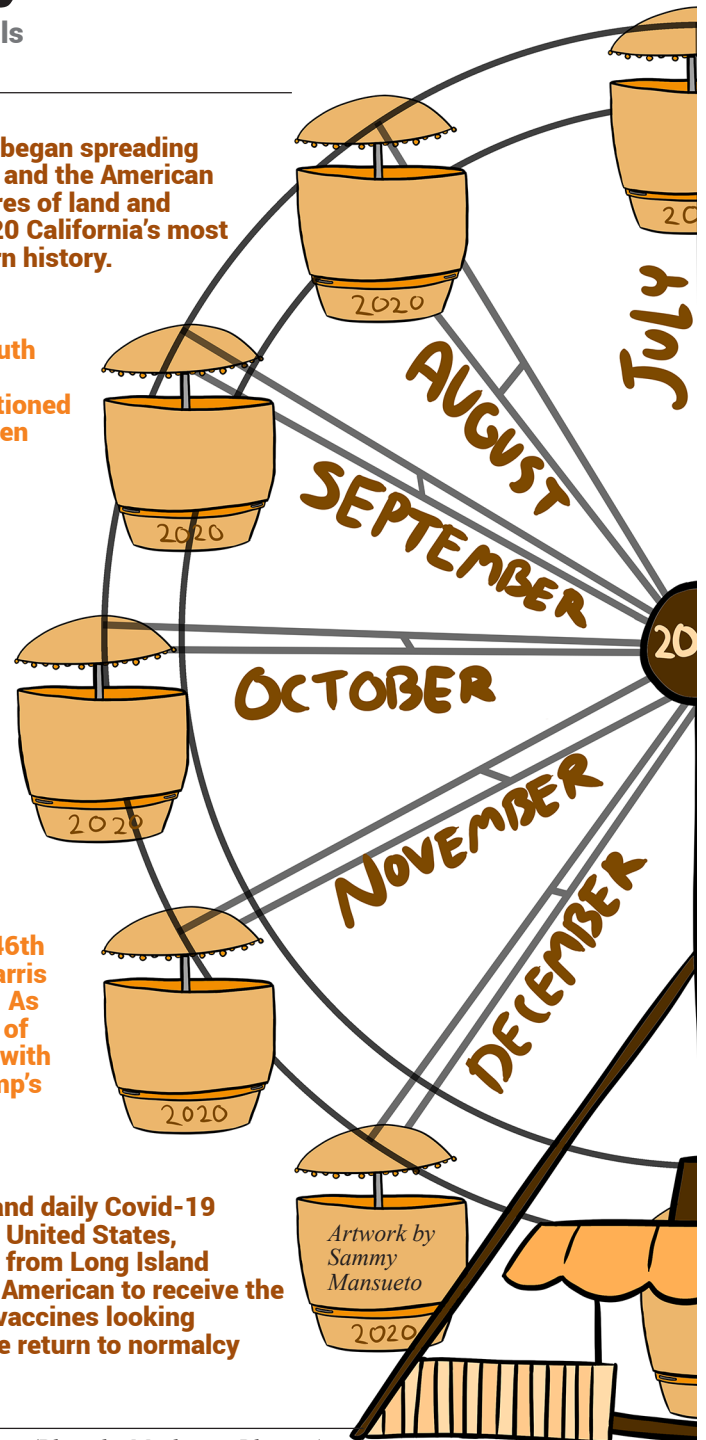
In **AUGUST**, thousands of lethal wildfires began spreading throughout California, Washington state, and the American West. The infernos burned millions of acres of land and displaced countless citizens, making 2020 California's most severe wildfire season recorded in modern history.

On **SEPTEMBER 18**, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away. An admirable spokesperson for gender equality, many questioned how her death would affect the status of women and the LGBTQ+ community in America.

On **OCTOBER 2**, a tweet by President Donald Trump once again shocked the world -- this time, he announced that he and First Lady Melania Trump had contracted Covid-19, likely from a superspreader event at the White House. Continuing this string of surprises, he recovered in three days after receiving care at Walter Reed Hospital and quickly returned to the campaign trail.

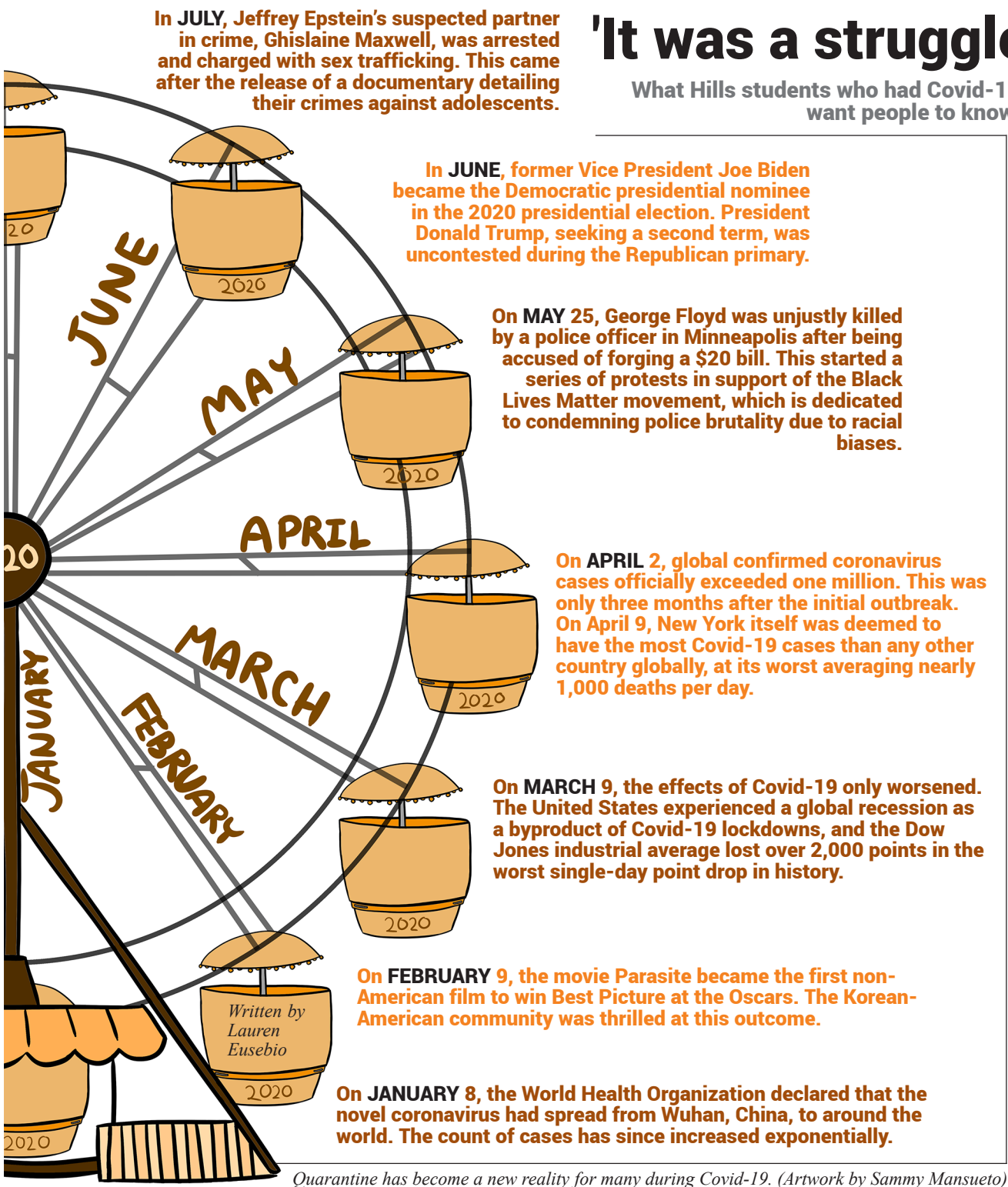
On **NOVEMBER 7**, Joe Biden was elected the 46th president of the United States, and Kamala Harris was elected as the first female vice president. As Americans grew impatient after multiple days of mail-in ballot counting, Biden eventually won with 306 electoral college votes in contrast to Trump's 232.

On **DECEMBER 15**, as cases surged and daily Covid-19 deaths reached a record 3,000 in the United States, intensive care nurse Sandra Lindsay, from Long Island Jewish Medical Center, was the first American to receive the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine. With more vaccines looking promising, 2021 may bring with it the return to normalcy that many have been waiting for.



Seniors walk to school the first day of their senior year in August. (Photo by Mackenzie Blowers)





'It was a struggle to get out of bed'

What Hills students who had Covid-19 want people to know

THE TIGER CAGE

By Kate Zydor

Covid-19: the invisible cloud that has loomed over everything and everyone for the past nine months. Some of the aspects of Covid-19 that make it different from other viruses is the speed at which it spreads, the randomness with which it spreads, and the impact it has on those with preexisting conditions. Adding in our lack of knowledge of this virus prior to March of 2020, a perfect storm was created that has completely altered our society as we know it.

One example of the randomness of this virus is how it can affect people in the same household completely differently. Unfortunately, I know several people who have contracted the virus in the age range of 14 to 18 years old. As we know, teenagers are not in the group that is considered “high risk,” and once they contract the virus, they are generally expected to recover relatively quickly and without incident. However, unlike younger elementary age children who are found to not easily spread the virus, teens and young adults are at a higher risk for spreading Covid-19 to those they come in contact with.

“It was a struggle to get out of bed in the morning. My head felt like it was pounding and my muscles were weak,” explained an anonymous student from Pascack Hills who contracted Covid-19.

After speaking to two individuals who have had this virus, and knowing the stories of many more, it can be affirmed that one of the most common symptoms is extreme fatigue and severe headaches. Also, along with fatigue and severe headaches comes a fever that could last for a day to several days.

Other symptoms of Covid-19 that patients experience are shortness of breath, a sore throat, and congestion. The virus takes a mental and physical toll on one’s body, as it affects almost every part of it.

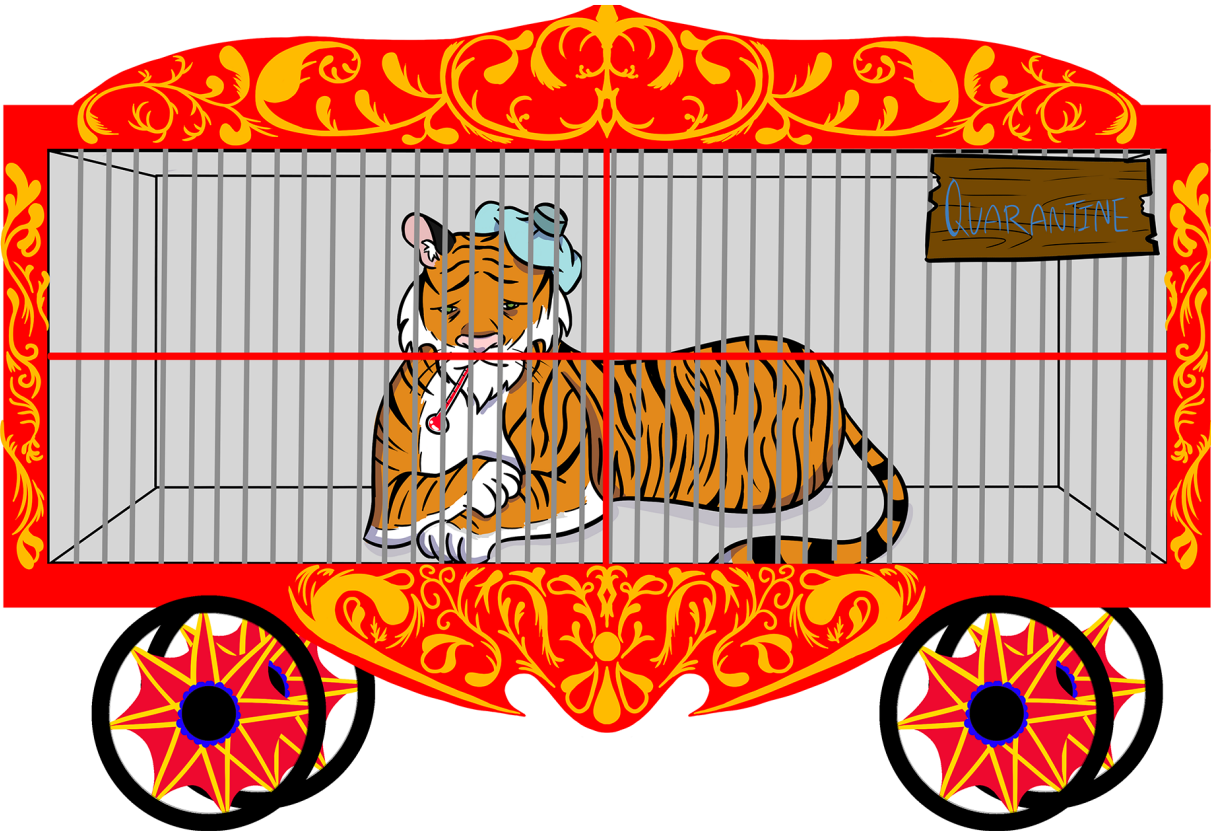
“The first sign that I should be tested for Covid-19 was when I lost all taste and smell. I honestly experienced no other symptoms,” stated another anonymous student.

This is, unfortunately, the reality for many people who are completely unaware of the fact that they have contracted the virus. Although this teenager did not experience any other symptoms, their grandfather contracted the virus, leading to his hospitalization for two weeks with severe pneumonia. Of course, it is impossible to say who contracted it from whom, but herein lies the danger of not taking the relatively moderate Covid-19 symptoms in teens seriously.

Although a majority of Hills students are not in a “high-risk” group, it is important to stay grounded and to realize that our choices not only affect ourselves, but our communities, the people around us, and even our family members.

The second student that I spoke to went on to express that “the fear of the unknown and stigma associated with testing positive for Covid-19 was worse than the actual sickness. You feel like you did something wrong, and wondering if you gave it to someone else is a terrible feeling.”

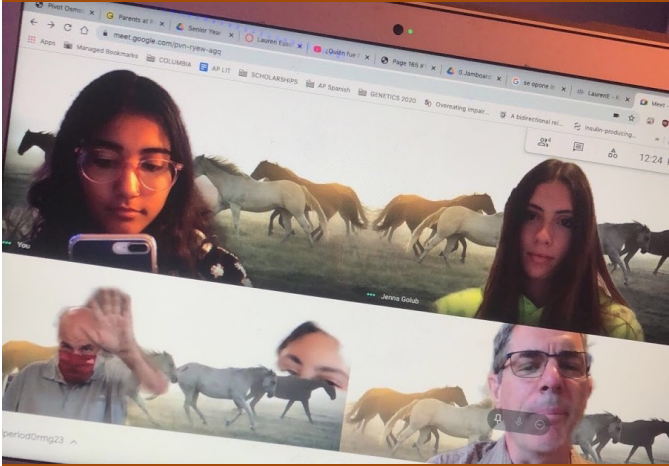
Many teens do not fear Covid-19 for themselves but worry about their older relatives. However, it is unclear how much that actually deters teens from wanting to get together and change their daily activities. With Pascack Hills and Pascack Valley students being completely virtual on and off for extended periods of time, teenagers want to go out with friends to escape the four walls of their homes. Understanding that is not healthy for young people to be trapped inside for extended periods of time, but also that gatherings in public can endanger people’s lives, is pivotal. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**



THE FUN HOUSE

Bring your Google Meet to life

By Lauren Eusebio



An example of a Google Meet background used during class. (Lauren Eusebio)

Are you tired of working from home, perhaps wary that your classmates and teachers can view your unmade bed in the background? Fear no more, because Google Meet has brought the ranch to you!

Hills students have made the most of our new learning medium by taking advantage of the fun green-screen backgrounds offered. We have seen students on beaches during Statistics and studio apartments during Psychology, but one background seems to be the fan favorite: the horses.

Sharing smiles and laughs when teachers point out the unique background, the abundant use of this photo has allowed students to bond through a common love of these graceful horses despite being physically separated. Even teachers have joined the trend, with Dr. Martin Edelberg happily swapping his lab for the farm. Next time you're in virtual class, consider a fun change in location to lighten the mood!

THE COSTUME

A pandemic of... pajamas?

By Charlie Goertz

The Covid-19 pandemic has led shoppers to buy more Postmates and pajamas rather than pants. In just one month, from March to April this year, the online sales of pajamas increased by 147% according to Adobe Analytics and the data from 80 of the top 100 U.S. retailers. In contrast, the pants sales fell 13% in the same timespan.

Those two statistics sum up the fashion of the pandemic, as students, teachers, and parents alike are trading in pants for pajamas. Many are asking themselves, “What’s the point of wearing suit pants or a dress when virtual meetings only capture the top half of your body?” Simply put, students don’t need any excuses to throw on a pair of sweatpants or pajamas instead of dressing up.

Max Martinez, a Hills senior, has found that “since Covid [began], I have definitely found myself in pajamas more often. I used to wear them a lot, but now since I’m mainly in my house and don’t have to go out a lot, it’s just nice to stay in comfortable clothes throughout the day.” Martinez is one of many to think this way, and apparel companies have taken notice as online websites have been advertising a format of comfort from the waist down. Amazon’s best-selling clothing list consists of comfortable sweatshirts, sweatpants, pajamas, and leggings.

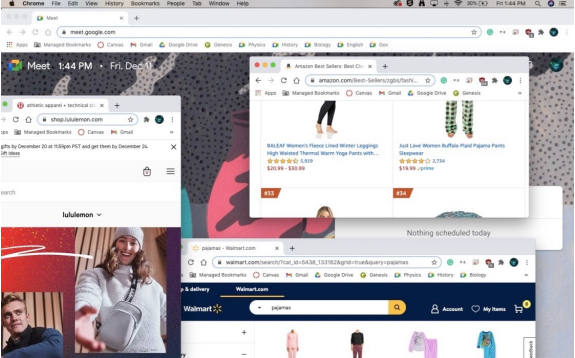
Others echoed Martinez’s sentiment. Sam Saoud, another Hills senior, agreed that, “instead of trying to dress nicer for school, I’m usually wearing sweatpants and a sweatshirt now since everything is virtual.” This exact idea is causing the decrease in sales of pants and professional attire. With many people no longer needing to go to work, school, or out in general, Americans do not need to buy clothes for these occasions.

Even Hills teachers are feeling the effects of quarantine as Mr. Nicholas Scerbo, a history and economics teacher, said “I absolutely dress down while teaching from home. Most days at school, I wear a shirt and tie. I would never wear a hooded sweatshirt or a t-shirt to school, but I do that if I’m teaching from home. I definitely don’t wear pajamas, though — if I didn’t get changed for the day, I wouldn’t ever get anything done.”

Scerbo may not be wearing his pajamas to class, but the change in attire is apparent.

This leads to the question of what is to come in the new year. Will we see whole new brands and clothing styles based on “Zoom fashion,” or even fashion shows dedicated to the latest style of sleep wear and athleisure clothing? Either way, 2020 has shaped the online marketplace in a completely different manner than just a year before, with pajama sales skyrocketing and pant sales plummeting.

Below: Online retailers selling pajamas. (Charlie Goertz)



How to juggle... 2020's life-changing events • By Aaron Gerber

Juggling is hard — too hard for most people to do. It requires the most delicate precision to make sure you don't drop any balls.

Though, imagine those balls being global, real-life events that could alter your life in seconds. This is what 2020 has been like. We’ve had to juggle all these events thrown at us out of nowhere: First, the threat of World War III; then the Australian wildfires; then the Covid-19, and then the killer bees. 2020 has been a trainwreck of a year.

Jay Gilligan, a professional juggler, has once said, “Juggling technique usually just takes time to learn. This is the part of the process where I don’t need to personally be involved.” He explained that juggling takes time to perfect. In 2020, we’ve had virtually no time to prepare for this terror. Not everyone can be the dazzling juggler who captivates their audience at the circus. Few people have that precision and delicacy.

It’s hard to make sure you’re on top of things most of the time, though Richard Kennison, another professional juggler, has said “I am helping them [jugglers] increase their vocabulary and enlarge their vision.” People can always improve at juggling. Here are a few tips that can help you balance everything going on:

MAKING A SCHEDULE: Professional jugglers need a juggling schedule for practice. A schedule can help you stay organized; it is a tangible reference of everything you need to get done.

SELF-REFLECTING: A juggler always has to reflect on their progress. Reflecting on yourself at least once a day helps you assess how you’re feeling and what you can do

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Juggling technique usually just takes time to learn. This is the part of the process where I don’t need to personally be involved.”

– JAY GILLIGAN, PROFESSIONAL JUGGLER

to make things easier.

EXERCISING AND MEDITATING: Professional jugglers will exercise and meditate to help them focus perfecting an act. Exercise and meditation can both reduce your stress and clear your thoughts to leave you open-minded to any situations that may present themselves.

EATING HEALTHY: Jugglers are athletes, so they definitely need to eat healthy. Eating nutritional food can help provide more energy to your body, which will help you be able to achieve more goals without pushing yourself.

SLEEPING OFTEN: The number one concept that jugglers use to be perfect is gaining lots of sleep to remain active. A good night’s sleep can help reduce stress and help you feel more energized to do many things.

Hopefully, these tips will help you juggle everything that has occurred in 2020 and what may come in 2021. Juggling is a unique activity that requires special skills. Although not everyone can be an amazing juggler, everyone is capable of throwing and catching a ball. If you ever find yourself juggling too many things, just keep your eye on the ball.

THE RINGMASTERS

Nurses lead Hills through pandemic

From Page 1 • By Briana Keenan

“talk talk, talk [because] the more one continues to talk about how they are feeling, one will learn they are not alone, that their feeling are valid, and that their concerns can be addressed.”

The nurses also said they “are sources for resources and support...not just band aids and ice packs.”

Students at Hills commented on the work the nurses and custodians have put in to lead everyone during the pandemic. Samantha Macaluso, a junior at Hills, stated that “the nurses and custodians deserve more recognition because they make sure that each and every student and teacher have been set up for success throughout the years.”

Amy Sheehan, a sophomore at Hills, followed with “the school nurses and custodians have always been important in our community, but during this pandemic, they have become even more important. They have worked hard day and night to ensure that the school is as safe as possible by cleaning and monitoring health.”

Grace Zak, another sophomore, agreed; “without them, school would not have been open for as long as it has or at all...they both work hand in hand to help the students and staff feel healthy and safe in school.”

Throughout the pandemic, both custodians and school nurses have been seen as ringmasters to many in guidance for the Hills community.

Cures for Covid: A circus with a purpose

By Simmie Brisman • SATIRE

Graphic by Jared Mitovich.



Nine months into the first major pandemic in one hundred years, coronavirus cases are still rising faster in the United States more than in any other country. The increasing cases make it harder for children to go to school, parents to go to work, and people to live their everyday lives. People are starting to question the reason for the rapid incline of Covid-19 cases. I have asked several people their views on the new safety protocols required to keep everyone safe in order to try to find the answer to this perplexing problem.

These regulations include wearing a mask, standing six feet apart from others, and sanitizing as much as possible. Children in many communities attend school every other day to reduce the transmission of germs from one student to another. Pimpley Princess, an aspiring makeup artist and sophomore at Pascack Hills, has strong thoughts on the mask requirement.

“The mask irritates my face and also gives me acne on my lip,” said Princess. “My weekly facials are not cheap and this scratchy, bulky face mask ruins it. I refuse to wear it because all it does is makes me ugly and compromises my own health care for my skin.”

Boy, I hadn’t thought of that. What a great point. They say that masks are to protect us and keep us healthy, yet all they do is ruin our skin! Acne can cause emotional distress and scar the skin, which is just as bad as any virus. The people that feel otherwise must be reading “fake news,” which is another major problem in our country today.

“During a survey done by Statista, a leading provider of consumer data, 40 percent of Democrats or Democrat-leaning Independents stated that they believed fake news is a major problem in the United States, whereas 62 percent of Republicans said the same,” wrote Amy Watson, who studies this concept.

If Amy Watson says so, it must be true.

Pimpley Princess continued on her rant about masks: “Also our national hero, Donald Trump, says that all I have to do to stay safe is drink bleach. It is the only solution! Masks should be banished, and we need to all start drinking bleach.”

“It wouldn’t be through injections, almost a cleaning and sterilization of an area. Maybe it works, maybe it doesn’t work, but it certainly has a big effect if it’s on a stationary object,” said Donald Trump, the 45th president of the United States.

Despite the fact that Trump got the virus himself, his solution still makes sense to me.

“He was so powerful that he was able to make it through no problem. If he can do it, we all can. I have never been more sure of anything in my life. All we need is a private helicopter, an army of doctors, a personal hospital, cutting edge technology, and of course bleach. That way, we all would be fine with no acne like the man himself, Donald Trump,” Princess proclaimed.

The solution was starting to make sense to me. I continued my investigations over to Pascack Hills senior Freedom Umabiggot.

“I can wear whatever I want. I can do whatever I want. If I want to wear a mask, I will wear one, but if I don’t want to, I won’t. That is my freedom, and it is protected by the Second Amendment. If anyone has a problem with that, they can come talk to me; however, they may not want to, because I will not be wearing a mask.”

I responded, “the Second Amendment states that you have the right to bear arms. I think you mean the First Amendment, where you have the freedom of expression. Either way, I get your point and totally agree.”

He continued, “if I don’t know the person, why does it matter? If I breathe near them or cough on them, they should know what to do. Everyone knows that they should

THE CLOWN SHOW

One debate: Two clowns

By Justine Marinkovic • SATIRE

While 2020 was filled with many negative news headlines, one humorous thing was able to make the papers this year. The circus rolled into town! The show for the first time featured a battle between two of the circus’s most beloved clowns, clown Trump and clown Biden to see who could win the title of the biggest clown. The event offered endless moments of joy and comedic relief ... for those who do not live within the country.

The two clowns were saddened by the fact that they could not perform to as many people live this year, however they still performed with enthusiasm for all those watching from their home television screens.

Clown Biden rode in on his unicycle, pointed his finger to the television screen and said, “Look, here’s the deal...”

But, right before he could finish, the audience heard a familiar voice interrupt him. Clown Trump had arrived at the show; late, because he had to make sure he drank his bleach before the show.

Trump interrupted clown Biden’s act several more times that night. But it didn’t matter because clown Biden kept forgetting what to say next.

Clown Trump did not bring a mask to the circus that night or to any performances going forward. But this was not because he believed the coronavirus was a hoax, it was because he wanted everyone to see his detailed stage makeup which was definitely an important part in being the “best clown”.

He arrived at the event with his face concealed vibrantly with bright orange face paint that he stole from first clown lady Melania, and a lightly colored wig.

For the rest of the year, the two clowns both paraded around the state of America performing their

shows, one socially distanced, and the other not so much. They did this to show off their unicycle tricks and dance moves to the scared American people who were desperate to see a change, desperate to see a light at the end of the tunnel, desperate to know who would best show their worthiness of the title of “best clown.”

Clown Biden was first asked by the ringleader about how he would juggle the economy across the tightrope.

“I think that is a great question about the coronavirus,” clown Biden said.

“And speaking of nuclear weapons his son Hunter is such a terrible man he was discharged from the army he did such a disservice to this country” Clown Trump danced into the conversation.

Then, Clown Biden stopped twirling his Baton and proceeded to hit Clown Trump over the head and said “will you just shut up.”

The ringleader then asked the two clowns to keep their performances separate and not interrupt each other which was definitely effective and the two clowns showed each other complete respect for each other for the rest of the night.

The ringleader continued to ask clown Biden about his ability of juggling the economy.

“Look, here’s the deal-”

“He wants to raise your taxes!” adds clown Trump.

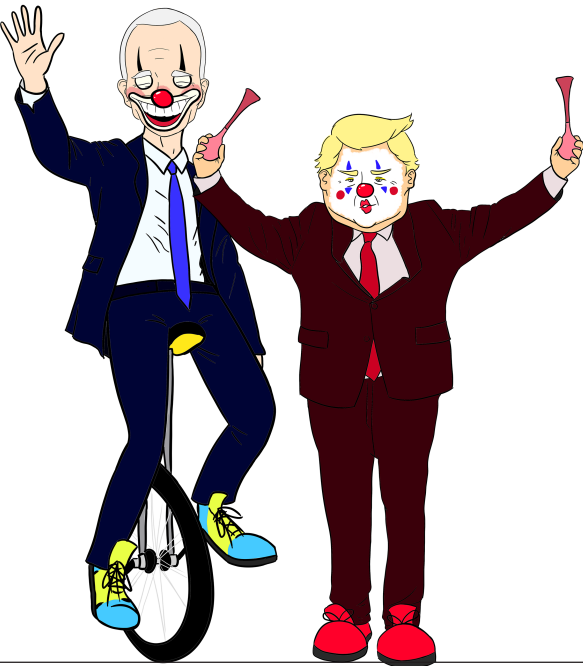
The performance did not actually end for a while after this. For the rest of the night, the two continued to ride their unicycles in circles chasing each other around the tent, as the American people watched, and rushed to book their plane tickets out of the country.

Towards the end of the night, people rushed to the booths to vote America’s top favorite clown. Now that the election is over, people are sad to see that the show has come to a close, however, once again, those people are the ones who do not live in America.

The Clowns of this circus season were a clear representation of what America has become, a torn, divided nation. After the last year, Americans should be less concerned with who won and who lost, and focus more on working together, both parties alike, to restore the America they once had.

The United States of America is at a time in its history where the country is divided by a deep rift for reasons that should not be responsible for ripping apart a country. Going forward, Americans need to remind themselves that they are not as different as they seem. All Americans alike have one ambition, to create the best country possible for the people.

Political cartoon by Sammy Mansueto.



drink bleach.”

I stopped and asked one more person to get a variety of perspectives. Fraud Cheatman, valedictorian of his class and two-sport varsity athlete at Hills, is inspiring to all his fellow classmates.

“My grades are even better than before. With all these new ways of cheating, it is like the teachers are asking for it. I will never have to learn anything now, and I am thankful for this new school environment. I’m not scared about getting the virus, because rumor has it that bleach will do the trick,” Cheatman said.

Bleach really sounds more potent than masks and social distancing. Also, less stress on students to do their school work makes our lives easier and is the way it should have been for a long time. Who cares about learning and getting ready for the real world? Let’s focus on the present.

Despite the above evidence that I have presented,

certain “experts” such as UC San Francisco epidemiologist George Rutherford, MD, and infectious disease specialist Peter Chin-Hong, MD say that the more people that wear masks, the better chance of reducing the spread of the virus.

States such as Florida, Georgia, Missouri, and more do not require face masks to be worn. They are only strongly encouraged. Being the fifth-most state to struggle with the virus, Florida has over 914,000 cases and 17,809 deaths. They either should be wearing more masks or drinking more bleach.

The world will be in good shape one day, because there seem to be many solutions to the coronavirus. There are masks, social distancing, bleach, and private helicopters. We are on our way to returning to a normal life. To learn more, please pick up a copy of my new book, “Vaccinations: A Cure or a Devil’s Work?”.

Left: Jack at Camp Lokanda, his summer sleepaway camp. (@jack.strong2 on Instagram) Right: Jack on Day 1 of his fight against leukemia. (@jack.strong2 on Instagram)



Jack Silver, a model Pascack Hills student, outstanding athlete, and amazing brother and friend, was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) about six weeks ago and in need of a bone marrow transplant. On Nov. 12, he was then diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML). This was the day that Jack began his fight and the spark for his army of supporters was ignited.

AML deals with an excess amount of white blood cells and myeloid cells that occur in the bone marrow and the blood.

Jayne Silver, a Hills alumna and more importantly, his sister, promptly created an Instagram account as a reminder to Jack of all those who are by his side with love, support, and lots of encouragement throughout his journey. It has been evident that Jayme and Jack have an amazing and strong relationship filled with endless amounts of encouragement and love.

When speaking about her brother, Jayme stated, “I am so impressed and inspired by the way Jack is handling this all. He is by far the strongest and toughest kid I know. This has made our family stronger and closer and we know that we can get through any bumps that might come up along the way. We are so thankful for the immense amount of support we have received and we can’t thank everyone enough!”

Jayne created an Instagram account called @jackstrong.2 shortly after Jack’s diagnosis. Immediately, those within the Hills community and beyond began to follow, share, and bring light to this account to show their immense care and adoration for Jack. Already, the account has a following of over 5,000 people and is filled with so many touching posts. From messages from friends and family to videos of encouragement from celebrities and athletes, the support is endless and has left many in awe.

Celebrities and athletes such as actor Noah Schnapp, entrepreneur Mark Cuban, football players Jason and Devon McCourty, former linebacker Bill Romanowski, and basketball player Cam Reddish have displayed words of encouragement over social media and in videos addressing Jack himself. The New York Yankees also sent a letter reminding Jack to keep fighting and stay strong!

Mark Cuban enthusiastically addressed Jack. “I just wanted you to know that I’m thinking of you, everybody at the Dallas Mavericks is thinking about you, and we know that you are a fighter, and we know

you got this. You’re going to power on through. When you pass this beast, we want you to come down to a Mavericks game...”

The Silver family has designed t-shirts and hoodies to honor and motivate Jack with a big “#JACKSTRONG” lettered on the back. As of right now, all of the proceeds from the shirts are going to be donated to four different organizations that include Tackle Kids Cancer, The Jillian Fund, MDS Foundation, and Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Most importantly, the Instagram account gives constant updates on Jack’s journey. Everybody is able to support from afar and push Jack throughout the process. Jack Silver is a fighter. With his army behind him, there is no doubt in anybody’s mind that he won’t come out ten times stronger than before.

Make sure to follow the Instagram account @jack.strong2 to show your support and love for Jack and keep the Silver family in your thoughts! **#JACKSTRONG**



Jack with his sister, Jayme. (Contributed by Jayme Silver)

THE TIGER CAGE

What Hills students should know about Covid-19

From Page 5 • By Kate Zydor

Before forming an opinion on the current situation our world is in because of the coronavirus, it is vital to educate ourselves on the long and short-term effects of the illness. It has been detrimental to hundreds of thousands of families, and it has resulted in a staggering loss of life — with a record of over 3,000 deaths reported in one day this December in the United States. Although we can not do much as young people, we can in fact social distance, wear masks while out, adopt habits of cleanliness, become mindful of Covid-19 symptoms, and hope that the current vaccinations are safe and effective.

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If other students at Pascack Hills could only take one thing away from my experience with Covid-19, I would want it to be that it is not something to make jokes about and take lightheartedly.”

— HILLS STUDENT WHO HAD COVID-19

“If other students at Pascack Hills could only take one thing away from my experience with Covid-19, I would want it to be that it is not something to make jokes about and take lightheartedly. It is very taxing on the body and a very scary virus to have,” said one of two Hills students interviewed who tested positive for a virus that has infected millions worldwide.

DEAR READER,

Thank you for reading our December print edition. Going into 2021, it is our hope to continue to be the eyes, ears, and voice of the Pascack Hills student body and broader community. If you enjoyed our stories, please consider following @phtrailblazer on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Our website, phhstrailblazer.org, will continue to be updated with the latest news (and whatever 2021 has in store). Stay safe, and have a happy new year!

—TRAILBLAZER STAFF