

SCHOOL NEWS

**Wieland announces
Teacher, Educational
Services Professional
of the Year**

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and Kaitlyn Verde

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SPORTS

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By Olivia Ge and
Matt Merlino



HILLS LIFE

Music Department trip to Disney

By Bethany Chen and Alanna Karuru

On Dec. 6, the Pascack Hills Chamber Choir and Concert Band made a long-awaited journey to Orlando, Fla. to share their music on a global stage. As the student musicians boarded the bus to take them to the airport, the music department realized a dream six years in the making.

This trip was originally planned to take place in Dec. of 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic put it on hold. After many years of planning and countless hours of rehearsal, the five-day excursion became reality.

Julia Du, a senior member of the Concert Band who was supposed to attend this trip her freshman year, reflects on the experience.

"It was wonderful to finally bring our department on this trip after waiting so many years. It felt like a full-circle moment to have this final hurrah with my bandmates," she said.

Many helping hands helped bring this trip to fruition. Bringing numerous musical instruments



Alex White

and two ensembles to Florida was no easy feat.

"The logistics of the trip were jam-packed! We had 14+ hour days on this trip," said Ryan Dore, the Pascack Hills Director of Bands.

On the morning of Nov. 7, the Concert Band was brought backstage to Disney Imagination

Campus, an opportunity that allowed band members to learn how to contribute to guests' experience at Downtown Disney.

The band then performed repertoire including "Star Wars The Marches" by John Williams and Jerry Brubaker and "Pirates

of the Caribbean" by Klaus Baddelt and arranged by Ted Ricketts on the Waterfront Stage

for an audience of people from around the world.

"It made me realize what music can do. I even got chills during the performance," said senior band member Christine Yang.

The musicians then made their way to EPCOT, where they were amongst some of the first to see the new fireworks and light

show, "Luminous Symphony of Us at EPCOT," which celebrates Disney's 100th anniversary. Through curated music and visuals, the show tells the shared stories of the human experience.

The following day, the Chamber Choir was featured at ICON park in downtown Orlando, singing songs that included "The Circle of Life" by Lebohang Morake and Hans Zimmer and arranged by Roger Emerson, and "Oh Come All Ye Faithful" arranged by Pentatonix, in front of the iconic Ferris wheel.

"The Chamber Choir captured the hearts of the audience, and the performance left an indelible mark on the students," said Margarita Elkin, the Pascack Hills Director of Choir, "Families, tourists, and Disney enthusiasts alike were captivated by the harmonious melodies and skillful execution of each piece. The students' hard work and dedication to their craft shone through, creating a sense of pride and accomplishment that will be cherished for years to come."

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Upcoming winter events near Montvale and Woodcliff Lake

By Victoria Turelli

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Rily Alexander

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IN-DEPTH

Amazon's journey to monopolizing the holiday season

By Thomas Samouhos

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HILLS LIFE

New teacher, faculty features

By Bethany Chen

This school year, Pascack Hills welcomed 11 new faculty members to the community. *The Trailblazer* followed up with a few as they conclude their first semester here at Hills. Read below to learn more about their experiences, and also their advice:



"Learning how to think is really important – beyond memorizing information for a test. Thinking critically is the most valuable skill a person can take from high school."
– Julia Abahazy, Physics Teacher



"Try your best everyday and you will end up exactly who you are meant to be."
– Melissa Comitto, Spanish Teacher



"I have really enjoyed getting to know all of the students and building relationships and connections with people here. I am so grateful to be part of the Hills community!"
– Danielle Guertin, Speech and Language Therapist



"My favorite part about working at Pascack Hills is getting to know the students through their art making. Student's interests, passions and talents shine through their work so I am able to learn a lot about them with the projects they make in class."
– Angela Rossi, Fine Arts Teacher

SCHOOL NEWS

Wieland announces Teacher, Educational Services Professional of the Year

By Paige Geanopulos and Kaitlyn Verde



Pascack.org

Corin Gamgort is the business education teacher at Pascack Hills. On Dec. 4, she was recognized as this year’s Teacher of the Year.

Gamgort described the moment she was awarded this honor.

“I was in my period 5 honors marketing class, and I started to tear up and cry because it really caught me off guard. It was very, very sweet. I was very honored to get the news,” she said.

Gamgort has worked at Hills for 13 years. She teaches several different classes on the business spectrum, including Marketing, Financial Investments, Entrepreneurship, and Principles of Business.

“We just keep expanding to meet the needs of our consumers, which are the students. All of the other high schools offer all these classes as well, so it makes sense to kind of expand that department,” she said.

Gamgort majored in marketing with a minor in public relations at the University of Rhode Island. She received her MBA with a concentration in marketing from John Hopkins University and a second MBA through the University of Illinois.

She worked in corporate for 25 years before transitioning to a career in education. Gamgort was also a substitute teacher at Northern Highlands, where she gained experience in the business education department.

When asked about her favorite parts of teaching, Gamgort immediately

responded with two words: the students.

“I love having the side conversations with the kids. I love actually seeing them outside of the classroom and just bonding with them and being there for them in that way. That’s the best part,” she said.

Outside of the classroom, Gamgort serves as advisor for DECA, Investment Club, Class of 2025, and Yearbook Club. She is also the advisor for the Marketing Club, which is new to Hills this year.

Several of Gamgort’s students shared their personal experiences having her as a teacher.

“Ms. G is an amazing teacher, she does so much for all of her students. Despite having so much on her plate she truly cares about every one of her classes and clubs,” said senior Dylan Fitter, a Teacher’s Assistant (TA) for her Honors Marketing class.

“Ms. Gamgort is an amazing teacher who always puts her students' needs first. She’s always putting a smile on her students' faces every day,” said junior Drew Varian.

Two days later, on Dec. 6, Student Assistant Counselor Jennifer Zimmermann was awarded Educational Service Professional of the Year in honor of her contributions to Pascack Hills.

Zimmermann found out that she was awarded Educational Service Professional of the Year after being out sick on Monday and Tuesday. Zimmermann described the events that took place leading up to the

surprise with glee and laughter.

Since beginning her career at Hills in July 2020, Zimmermann has made a large impact on the school in a short amount of time. Before counseling at Hills, she worked at Don Bosco Preparatory High School for two years.

Zimmermann described this as the beginning of her counseling career, for she worked in the mental health field as a clinical specialist in adolescent mental health and drug abuse for 13 years.

“I had all these skills that I wanted to still use, and I thought that with all the experience that I had, I could use these skills on prevention efforts versus like knee deep in the trenches... I was like, well, what better way to use those skills than to go to high school? So that's what I did...I always knew I wanted to end up in a school. I just didn't know when that would be,” she said.

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Read the full articles on phhstrailblazer.org

SCHOOL NEWS

BOE election follow-up

By Paige Geanopulos

On Nov. 7, voting citizens of Hillsdale, Montvale, and Woodcliff Lake elected their town's Board of Education members for the Pascack Valley Regional High School District.

Election results:

Gini Varghese (Hillsdale) – reelected unopposed
Kristin Martin (Hillsdale) – reelected unopposed
Michael Weaver (Montvale) – reelected unopposed
Stephanie Mong-Ping Huang (Woodcliff Lake) – elected as a first-time board member

SPORTS

Tyler Duffy wins SFC Man of the Year

By Olivia Ge and Matt Merlino



@ph_athletic_director via Instagram
Duffy (left) and Lampart (right) the night he was acknowledged for the award.

Each year, the Super Football Conference (SFC) awards the Steve DiGregorio Young Man of the Year award. This award is given to a football player from each school competing in the Super Football Conference that excels in community service, putting others before himself, leadership, academics, and others. In 2023, Coach Evan Lampert chose senior Tyler Duffy to represent Pascack Hills as the Young Man of the Year.

Along with his contributions off of the field, Duffy played a huge role in the Broncos’ second consecutive winning season. Duffy joined teammates Jordan Morrell and Connor Ohnikian on the SFC Ivy Red First Team Offense as an offensive lineman.

To grasp the significance of the award, Trailblazer Co-Editor-in-Chief Olivia Ge conducted an interview with Duffy.

Olivia Ge: How do you feel about winning the Steven DiGregorio Young Man of the Year Award?

Tyler Duffy: I feel really honored to win this award, knowing how only one player gets picked for it on every team, it was a really special moment for me.

OG: Why do you think you were chosen to receive this award?

TD: I think many other seniors were just as qualified as me, I think I was picked because of the leadership role on and off the field. Other seniors and I would host team bonding, and off-season practices on the field, and would keep everyone on top of their workouts which played a big role in our season. Again, getting this award was not possible without the help of my coaches and team but those are the reasons that I think I got picked.

Ge also interviewed head Coach Evan Lampert on the reasons he decided to give Duffy the award.

Olivia Ge: Why was Tyler chosen for this award?

Evan Lampert: Tyler is an excellent recipient of the Steven DiGregorio award because he is extremely selfless, and a leader in the classroom and on the field. He also sets great

examples for his teammates and peers, and consistently makes the right decisions. I am very proud of him and am very appreciative of all he has done.

OG: What attitude does he maintain as an athlete?

EL: Tyler exhibits that rare attitude where he doesn’t let his emotions get the best of him. He is one of the toughest athletes I’ve ever coached both mentally and physically. A lot of times high school athletes let circumstances dictate their attitude and performance, Tyler is able to harness his emotions and stay focused through any adversity or success he has. He also has a team first mentality and would do anything for his teammates. A true leader and role model.

OG: What is it like coaching Tyler?

EL: I was very fortunate because I got to coach Tyler since he was in 7th grade during the Jr. Cowboys football program. He was a kid that I would always look forward to being around just because of his general demeanor and attitude. I had 100% trust in him and really counted on him in so many ways while he was an athlete and he always came through and never had any excuses. I’m not only proud of his performance during football season, but how he developed as a young man and I am looking forward to seeing how bright his future is.

Senior athletic commitments

By Olivia Ge

Some Pascack Hills students have decided to further their athletic careers in college. Listed below are the athlete commits for this year so far:

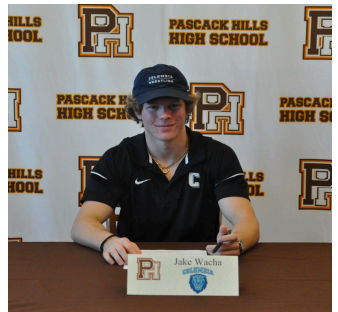
Joey Giordano committed to continue his athletic and academic career as a Division I baseball player at the University of Richmond.



Peter Priestner committed to Lehigh University for Division I track and field.



Jake Wacha committed for Division I wrestling at Columbia University.



Photos @PHathletics via X

OPINION

Student employment at Hills CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

By Julia Bang

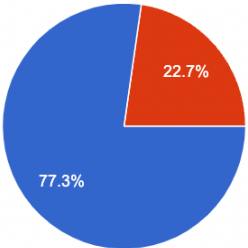
A first job—whether a babysitter, cashier, or camp counselor—is a core memory for most teenagers. But just how integral is employment for a student’s sense of financial responsibility, work ethic, and overall life insight?

Teenage employment can be a product of demographic factors and sensitive financial situations. Not all individuals have the privilege to perceive their first job as an “experience,” but instead, they might be forced into work out of necessity.

In the context of Pascack Hills, 77.3% of survey respondents reported having had a

job, as compared to the US average of 30%. Yet in a schoolwide survey, only 14.3% of respondents selected “financial necessity” as a reason for employment.

Rather, the majority of students credited “experience” as their primary motivation, whether from personal passions or parental influence. Likewise, 90.5% indicated wanting to earn “their own” money.



77.3% of Pascack Hills students reporting having a part time/full time job.

Julia Bang

SCHOOL NEWS

Wieland announces Teacher, Professional Services Professional of the Year (CONTINUED)

By Paige Geanopulous and Kaitlyn Verde

Before enriching Hills students’ educational careers, Zimmermann got her bachelor’s of social work at Rutgers University. At NYU, she earned a master’s degree in advanced clinical social practice and was able to get her master’s in a year because she got into the advanced standing program. Reflecting on her college career, she praised her alma mater.

Considering that Zimmermann began working at Hills during COVID, she has

helped many students through different circumstances, which attests to her dedication and acumen. Zimmermann elaborated on her time at Hills and how it has changed.

“This is my fourth year, and I feel finally, after four years, that I’m actually developing relationships with students. I’m seeing students just feeling happier as far as being together, and I’m seeing students asking for help... I think it was really difficult to start in education when I did because it was probably one of the hardest times in the history of education. Also, people were not really here, so I wasn’t able to get to know the students. And it took a while because, if you think about it from 2020 to 2023, going into 24 every year has been different,” she said.

Read the full articles on phhstrailblazer.org

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Upcoming winter events near Montvale and Woodcliff Lake

By Victoria Turelli

As the snowflakes slowly flurry to the ground, the cold weather approaches and the winter events start to come to life! Many events during this holiday season in the Woodcliff Lake and Montvale area are starting to take place. There is nothing like a good holiday escape at any of the following locations!

The Orchard of Lights starts on Nov. 23 and runs through Jan. 1, 2024. The show is presented to the public through a 32-acre holiday light display at Demarest Farms in Hillsdale, New Jersey. There is also a fireplace with smores, hot chocolate and more! The cost is \$35 per car, and you can also take pictures with Santa, which is a perfect way to spread the holiday cheer.

Another fun winter-filled event this holiday season near Woodcliff Lake and Montvale is the **Let it Glow: A Holiday Lantern Spectacular** located at the Van

Saun Park in Paramus. This event runs through Jan. 14, 2024, and throughout the park, there are 30+ lanterns shining. The cost per adult is \$18 and \$9 for children. It is an event you do not want to miss, with the many holiday lanterns and shining lights.

Although Holmdel may be a stretch for some, the **Magic of Lights** at PNC Bank Arts Center is a captivating show you will never forget. Speaking from experience, going to this beautiful light show, participating in the many holiday filled activities like ice skating and drinking the hot chocolate near the fire is a holiday tradition that should never end, costing only \$20 per person. The event will run all the way through Jan. 14, 2024, with opportunities to participate in the many celebrations outside.

If you would prefer to go to a more local light show more close by, the American Dream Mall in East Rutherford is

showcasing a **Winter Lantern Festival!** Taking place on the second floor around the ice rink, the event will showcase over 1,000 Chinese lanterns and lights. This gives you an opportunity to experience many different lights and enjoy a new experience. The cost is \$17 per adult and \$10 per child, and it will run all the way until Jan. 2, 2024. This experience is something you will not want to miss.

Although a NYC commute might seem time consuming, the **Dyker Heights Christmas Lights** is worth the while! Located in Brooklyn, running all throughout December, this winter wonderland provides you with an out of body experience. Every year, the community transforms from a quiet scene into a carnival-filled experience with beautiful lights and Christmas cheer. Citizens are sure to receive a shock of tremendous Holiday spirit at one of the city’s most popular holiday attractions.

If you want to experience the most iconic Christmas tree to date, the **Rockefeller Christmas Tree**, located in the Diamond District of New York City, is always available to see and enjoy! Standing over 80 feet tall at 85 years old, the tree is its own unique entity that you cannot miss around Christmas time, especially living in the area! Although the tree was previously lit on Nov. 29, it is still a once-in-a-lifetime experience to see it lit and to watch all the families stop by and see the tree. The tree will be open for viewing until Jan. 13, and it is so special because it showcases over 50,000 lights.

Living in the New Jersey area gives plenty of room for fun holiday cheer and quality time with family. Plan a day to scope out these events with some friends or family and spread some holiday cheer!

LIFE & STYLE

Mindful activities to do over winter break

By Samantha Lazar

School has been in session for about 4 months and in a few days will be the first full-week break. Winter break is a great time to destress and reconnect with yourself, reflect on the year, and come up with new goals for the new year.

However, some people might find that there is too much time on their hands and do not know how to actually successfully rest and restore their energy. Spending endless hours in front of a phone or binge-watching shows only gives off the allusion of rest and relaxation. In reality, staring at a screen only causes more fatigue and strain to your eyes and makes it seem like time is passing by a lot quicker than it is.

It is important to keep your brain stimulated just not in the same way it is while at school. Engaging in mindful activities keeps your brain working and allows you to stay present in order to fully take advantage of your time off. *The Trailblazer* has compiled a list of mindful and recharging activities you can do during break:

Journaling

A strong way to reflect on your year is to journal. Journaling, or writing down your internal monologue, is a popular mindful activity that allows you to honestly reconnect with yourself and inner thoughts. Reflecting back on your year is also an effective method to understand what you need or want to accomplish or change in the coming year.

Gingerbread house competition

A classic holiday tradition with a competitive twist! Even if you don’t have a pre-made gingerbread house in your home, it only takes a few ingredients to bake them from scratch. All you need is: flour, butter, brown sugar, eggs, baking soda, assorted spices and, of course, ginger! Once the gingerbread houses are made, get creative and a little messy with a few friends or family members and vote on which gingerbread house is the best!

Board games

Playing board games with family or friends is a great way to have fun and bond with your loved ones when feeling bored and unmotivated. We suggest Monopoly, Scrabble, Candy Land, Sorry, Clue, Battleship and Connect 4.

Baking and cooking

Baking and cooking are great ways to test your culinary skills and experiment with ingredients while making tasty treats. Just by using the supplies in your kitchen, you can create your own recipes and twists to some classic ones.

Reorganizing or redecorating your room

Reorganizing and decorating your room is something productive you can do during winter break. Putting up paintings, moving furniture, and cleaning out your closet are ways to make your room feel brand new!

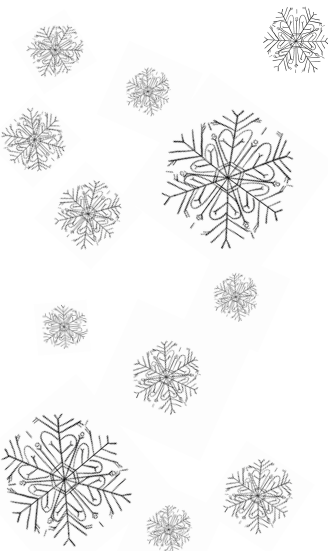
At-home spa day

Having an at-home spa day is a refreshing

way to treat yourself from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Making bubble baths and doing skincare can be fun and relaxing, relaxing, especially when paired with listening to music, reading, or watching a movie.

One-second story

Consider continuing your mindfulness journey into the new year with the "One-Second Everyday" app. This app asks you to record a single second everyday for 365 days. If you’re a visual person, this is for you. Watch your year unfold on Dec. 31, 2024!



Drawn by Chris Cintron Choi

GAME SOLUTIONS

8	2	3	4	9	7	6	5	1
1	7	6	3	5	8	4	2	9
6	5	4	1	9	2	3	7	8
2	8	7	9	1	3	5	6	4
3	6	1	7	4	5	9	8	2
5	4	9	2	8	6	1	3	7
4	3	8	9	2	6	7	1	5
7	1	5	8	3	4	2	9	6
9	6	2	5	7	1	8	4	3

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ranking the best holiday songs
By Sam Goldstein

It's that time of the year! What's better to listen to while you watch the snow fall outside than some of the best holiday songs?

Making a holiday playlist is essential to getting that perfect wintery, cozy vibe. Here's a list of some of the best holiday songs to listen to this holiday season. We threw in some of the classics you already know and love, along with some new ones you might want to add to your playlist!

1. All I Want For Christmas Is You - Mariah Carey (1994)
Would this be a holiday music list if we didn't include this classic? You can never go wrong with this universally beloved song. It is so iconic that it has broken three Guinness World Records and is the first song to ever have four separate runs at No. 1 on the Billboard charts.

2. Last Christmas - Wham! (1942)
You can't listen to this song and not automatically be in a good mood. Its use of sleigh bells and synth works perfectly to create the perfect atmosphere. The world seems unable to get enough of it, with the Guinness World Records naming it the best-selling single of all time!

3. Christmas (Baby Please Come Home) - Darlene Love (1963)
No song can make me want to get up and shout from the top of my lungs like this song does.

4. Jingle Bell Rock - Bobby Helms (1957)
Hearing those first few chords followed by those iconic jingle bells could get anyone in the holiday spirit, even Scrooge!

5. Santa Claus is Coming to Town - The Jackson 5 (1970)
Although through the years we've seen many variations of this iconic song, the Jackson 5 get it just right. Baby Michael Jackson singing is just too perfect to not have this song make it on the list.

6. Happy Xmas (War Is Over) - John Lennon (1971)
John Lennon and Yoko Ono created this song with the Harlem Community Choir as a protest against the Vietnam War. The song's soulful singing and powerful meaning make it more special and impactful.

6. Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree - Brenda Lee (1958)
To think that Brenda Lee was only 13 years old when she made this classic!

7. Sleigh Ride - The Ronettes (1963)
This classic song has been redone repeatedly, from Andy Williams' version to the Carpenters. However, something about the Ronettes' rendition of the song creates the ideal holiday atmosphere.

8. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! - Dean Martin (1959)
Ironically, this song was written and composed by Jule Styne and Sammy Cahn during a heat wave in July 1945 because they wished for cooler conditions. Luckily for that heat wave, we got another classic that you can't help but sing along to!

9. Wonderful Christmastime - Paul McCartney (1979)
The Beatles had quite the talent for making some of the best holiday songs. McCartney made an undeniably fun song that fills you with that festive spirit.

10. Underneath the Tree - Kelly Clarkson (2013)
Although this is one of the most recent songs on this list, it definitely deserves its spot. It was named the most popular Christmas song released in the 21st century by ASCAP, and we can see why. With its chiming sleigh bells, harmonic singers, and beautiful, yet somewhat saddening, lyrics, it makes for a very relatable holiday song.

There are so many great holiday songs to set the mood for the upcoming holiday season.

"The Holiday season is such a great time, especially for music! Everyone can agree that this time of year, there are special songs that when we hear those first few notes we are brought back to happy memories," said Ryan Dore, the Hills band teacher.

Make sure to check out the *Trailblazer's* holiday playlist via the QR code:



LIFE & STYLE

How to stick with your New Year's resolutions
By Rily Alexander

As the calendar slowly creeps closer and closer to the new year, many are filled with the desire to reinvent themselves through new goals and expectations for next year. While others may have given up on the idea of setting goals as they find it difficult to stick to them and often abandon them before the end of January. However, wherever you may stand on the topic, we are here to help you get back into the rightful mindset of New Year's resolutions and get out of the pressure-filled modern day idea of resolutions. Here are five ways to stick to your New Year resolutions!

Set realistic goals

Many people set unrealistic goals for themselves before the new year begins and then become overwhelmed and disappointed with their progress that they often give up. However, if you set smaller, more realistic goals for yourself, it will be more likely that you stick with your resolution for longer in the year. For example, instead of making a resolution to go to the gym at 5 AM every morning, say you will make time for a calming walk at least once a week. It may seem too easy, but people stick with resolutions like this up until December.

Be specific

When making resolutions, people tend to generalize too much, stating they will "drink more water." However, without a set amount, it is hard to keep track of your progress and lose sight of your goal. It is more beneficial to set a specific goal such as drinking at least 3 bottles of water every day. Specifications like these help you stay on track!

Share your resolutions

Don't keep your goals a secret! Share them with friends and family and update them throughout your journey. This reinforces your goals and establishes a make-shift support group that will help you stick to, and achieve them.

Reward yourself

Even if it is as small as starting a new show to allow yourself some downtime and stick to your resolution, it is important to recognize your progress. This helps



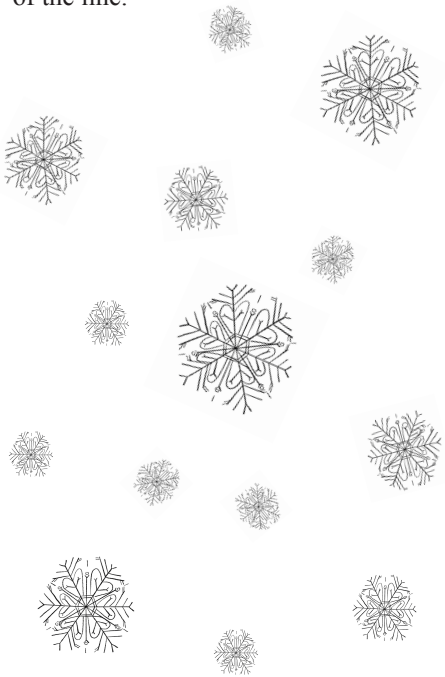
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keep a positive mindset and motivates you to keep working towards your resolution.

Accept setbacks

No one is perfect. If you fall off your plan for your progress for a week, it is alright. The important thing to remember is that setbacks don't mean to stop! It is easy to lose motivation and give up after falling off for a bit; but, don't give in! You do not have to follow your goal every second in order to succeed. Be nice to yourself and allow yourself to be human!

So, as the clock strikes 12 and the confetti falls to the floor, we hope you keep our tips in mind and go into the new year with a positive mindset. Sticking to your New Year's resolutions requires dedication, planning, and perseverance. By setting realistic goals, creating a plan, and staying positive, you can make the new year one of personal growth and accomplishment. Remember, progress is not linear, and mistakes are not the end of the line.



Drawn by Chris Cintron Choi

IN-DEPTH

Amazon's journey to monopolizing the holiday season

By Thomas Samouhos

Amazon has recently swept the holiday gift shopping world by storm appropriately adjusting to the exponential increase of technological advances in the business industry. A rise in social media platforms and digital communication mediums improves the efficiency of gift shopping and consequently further boosts sales for digitally-savvy companies.

However, Amazon’s recent success and technological adaptations have resulted in a decrease in sales from the allegedly “antiquated” mall storefronts.

Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic’s isolating effects did not contribute to the improvement of sale success to dig companies and business conglomerates out of the dark rabbit hole impeding their economic prosperity, and instead further perpetuated their vulnerabilities to the modern digital age.

The installation of quarantining upon the pandemic’s arrival in the United States in 2020 added more fuel to Amazon’s massive fire of profit and solidified a new digital era that eliminated in-person

shopping for some altogether. This detachment from in-person shopping even continued when the pandemic had relaxed.

Traditional mortar-and-pestle stores suffered from a depletion of customer interaction and limited employees. Despite promising marketing tactics, these businesses struggled to attract new and returning customers to locations for purchasing holiday merchandise. Lethargic American citizens preferred to make the convenient 30-second trip to their laptops instead of exposing themselves to the disease-infested atmosphere to pick up the essential holiday present.

Shoppers quickly exploited the pandemic’s quarantine qualities by lazily awaiting their gift deliveries from Amazon delivery vehicles, without experiencing the two-way physical connection that holiday gift shopping instills.

Ever since the pandemic, in-person storefronts have attempted to compete with Amazon by price-matching cheaper Amazon goods to try to retain their customer service. By increasing user-friendly websites and curbside pickup options, storefronts are better able to maintain their clientele loyalty.

The introduction of Sunday delivery improves the shopping experience by adhering to the homebody and pre-occupied American demographic. By accommodating to the needs of shoppers through improving accessibility and effectiveness, in-person retail locations become more appealing to shoppers across the board.

To compete with Amazon, in-person retailers, specifically Best Buy, have previously attempted to refund the difference of an item until Christmas Eve if a customer finds it priced lower elsewhere. Their method to boost sales, however, comes with its downsides, resulting in lower prices potentially dictating less profit. This is a risk that these retailers are willing to take to maximize customer persuasion.

Instead of succumbing to the arrival of digital shopping platforms, in-person retail spaces have adapted to the American demographic’s preferences by embracing these changes. They began using their locations as warehouses to store inventory that would later ship to customers’ homes.

The advent of new technologies furthers competition between companies by establishing an uphill battle for

maximum holiday-season profits. An inevitable competitive edge in the marketing industry generates increased friction for businesses to receive a security blanket that keeps them safe by kick-starting their success in the upcoming year. Amazon continues to increase its distribution locations to compete with its business opponents.

“I think that Amazon has definitely used social media to its advantage and utilized digital marketing through social media platforms that allow them to engage with their customers even more and promote their company. This would therefore make Amazon more successful,” said Hills sophomore Sameeha Ahmed.

Amazon has taken over the holiday industry with its accessibility and strategic marketing tactics that persuade the general public to pick their system for gift purchases this winter. As the world continues to further evolve digitally, traditional mortar-and-pestle retail locations lose buyers to the more technologically superior Amazon able to accommodate more consumer needs.

OPINION

Student employment at Hills (CONTINUED)

By Julia Bang

Locally, these results identify a driving force for teenage employment: exposure to the real world. An entry-level job, regardless of how monotonous, represents a lifelong milestone—critical along the route to adulthood.

Most Hills students reflected on their jobs with gratitude, characterizing their time as deeply impactful.

Hills senior Mia Hennessy appreciated her time at a chiropractic office, advocating, “It teaches them how the world works.”

Despite the harsh realities of her job, an anonymous junior agreed that the experience was enriching overall. “I had a boss who was very nit-picky. Even though I hated my first job I was grateful for the job for the job, opportunity, and experience,” she said.

Whether it be chasing children as a camp

counselor, or scrubbing dishes as restaurant staff, a first job experience leaves teens deeply imprinted. In exchange for their work ethic, a student is financially rewarded—giving tangible value to their investment of energy and time.

With optimism, several Hills faculty members offered insight. In all of the collected statements, teachers accentuated the “real world” elements of employment.

Elise Naramore, a Hills science teacher, shed light on the realities that accompany ‘real-life’ work.

“Experiencing the inevitable inconveniences, indignities, and insults that come with an entry-level job...putting a pleasant face on regardless of liking the job...all of these things are real-life lessons,” she said.

Many other faculty members pointed to the vital wisdom learned from employment. Katherine Donahue, a Hills English teacher, said, “Real-work experience is a rite of passage.”

Another Hills English teacher, Ed Sandt, commends it as a natural chapter of growing up.

“I’ve always thought it important to treat young people like the adults we expect them to become. If we treat them like kids – then that is what they’ll always be. Exposure to different types of people—their strengths, weaknesses, worries, and accomplishments are what make us well-rounded, empathetic human beings,” he said.

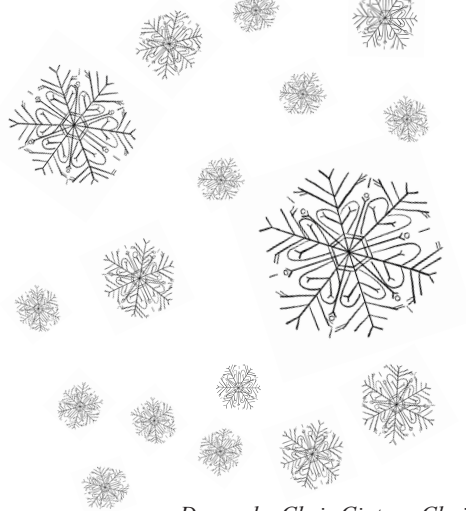
Differently, some Hills students felt that their jobs awarded no such praised “lessons.” An anonymous junior said, “Teenagers need to focus on moving forward instead of focusing on material 'milestones' that only hold them back.”

Another anonymous junior called his minimum-wage job a “waste of time.”

“If you want to progress in life and give your children a better future than your own (which is my goal), you need to push the boundaries and not waste away at a minimum wage job for spending money,” he said.

These students demonstrate a goal-oriented mindset, as opposed to the experience-oriented perspective of most. They argue that tedious jobs are unproductive in comparison to their intentions of “greater” success.

Ultimately, with financial stability, a teenage job is a personal choice. While this mindset emphasizes career “advancement,” others focus on the grounding, humbling experience of entry-level work. Yet, both frames of mind boil down to a youthful desire for long-term success—whether it be through gaining good sense or quantifiable payment.



Drawn by Chris Cintron Choi

LIFE & STYLE

The history of horoscopes

By Samantha Fontana and Victoria Turelli

You may have read the *Trailblazer’s* “monthly horoscopes” articles, but have you been craving a more in-depth guide to understand horoscopes and how they function? Follow along while the Trailblazer dives into important terms to assist you in learning more about astrology and how it works!

For those who don't know, astrology is the belief that the arrangement of stars and planets impact every individual's mood, personality, and environment depending on when they were born. For example, based on each person's time and date of birth, they have specific horoscopes that predict their upcoming futures.

Let’s plunge right into the terms that are crucial to aid your understanding of the astrology world.

Birth chart

A great place to start is understanding your birth chart, also referred to as an astrology chart. This is a snapshot of the planets at the exact time, location, and date of your birth. Each individual's personalized chart can be read to interpret what types of energy they were exposed to at the moment they came into this world. The best part of the birth chart is that it is personalized to you! This is where monthly horoscopes differentiate, because they are more broad and generalized, whereas your birth chart is individualized.

Zodiac and horoscope

In astrology, a sign of zodiac refers to constellations that the sun passes through. You may be familiar with the term, as it is normalized to ask peers and even new friends their sign! A person's zodiac is determined by the position of the sun in that particular time you were born. On the other hand, horoscopes forecast your present or future, and are determined by the stars and planets.

Houses

Similar to a birth chart, the zodiac is divided into 12 houses. For example, in a neighborhood, each house is different, just like how it is for your zodiac! Each house represents a different facet of your life. For instance, houses 1-6 are the personal houses and rule the private, immediate parts of your life, whereas houses 7-12 are interpersonal and explore less intimate areas. If you're looking to learn more deeply about yourself, it is highly recommended to look into your 12 houses!

Ascendant and rising sign

In addition to what you have learned so far, it is also important to know that each person has an ascendant sign, or more commonly known as a rising sign. This sign is based on the eastern horizon at the exact time of your birth. Although the rising sign is often referred to as the

mask worn in public, it is more in depth and personal. When looked into, this sign can reveal themes and patterns that may have been recurring throughout your lifetimes. Additionally, by looking into our rising sign, it informs not only how you see others, but how others perceive you. It may sound complex, but this can be useful in finding a deeper connection within yourself.

Earth, Water, Fire, and Air signs

The earth, water, fire, and air signs represent the elements that are associated within each horoscope. These four elements are believed to influence the zodiac signs, behaviors, and personalities.

Earth signs

Earth signs are known to be the more intuitive and driven signs. They are also the most grounded, which correlates to the element that they are associated with.

Taurus (April 20- May 20): Taurus are known to be the practical, gentle, and most stable sign. They are often the most reliable sign and good with people.

Virgo (August 23-September 22): Virgos are often very detail-oriented, pensive, and practical people. They take a more literal approach in helping others, but it helps keeps them real.

Capricorn (December 22- January 19): Capricorn are known to be the most ambitious, hardworking, and persevering. They never back down from a fight, making them even stronger.

Water signs

The water signs are known to be sentimental, emotional, and vulnerable. They are also very attentive to other people's feelings, which aids them to be more attentive with other aspects of life.

Cancer (June 21- July 22): Cancers are the most nurturing, sensitive, and emotional sign. Cancers are known to form lifelong connections, and have strong feelings about family and home.

Scorpio (October 23- November 21): Scorpios are known to be passionate and assertive while also remaining mysterious. This makes them highly emotional in a different, yet important way.

Pisces (February 19- March 20): Pisces are known to be the most empathetic, artsy, and creative sign. They are very attentive to criticism, and have a high emotional sensitivity.

Fire signs

The fire signs are the most vibrant, lively, and assertive signs. They enjoy being in the center of attention and are easily able to help other people by creating a vibrant path for them to shine on.

Aries (March 21- April 19): Aries are known to be the most assertive, energetic, and daring sign. They enjoy a good challenge and upholding the initiative in group settings.

Leo (July 23- August 22): Leo’s are the most confident, expressive, and captivating sign. Leo’s are known to be at the center of every party and crave validation from others.

Sagittarius (November 22- December 21): Sagittarius are often positive, thoughtful, and creative. Sagittarius strive in an independent setting, with the idea of freedom and positively motivating them always.

LIFE & STYLE

December horoscopes

By Samantha Fontana

Libra (September 23 – October 22): This month, Libras may find that your workload has slowed down, but do not worry because this is temporary. Use this moment as a time to reflect and work on your patience, as this is something you struggle with.

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21): In the last month of the year, Scorpios will find that they are diving deeper into their true emotions. It is time to focus on what you really need and want. With influences along this process, you may find you come to realizations and breakthroughs.

Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21): Sagittarius! You may feel uncomfortable, as you may be faced with changes in both your personal and professional life this December. Stay calm! This is normal, and part of growing through life is allowing yourself to grow through the unwanted.

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19): December will provide you with many positive opportunities in every facet of your life! Capitalize on this, as there are stressful months approaching, and take advantage of each opportunity that comes your way.

Aquarius (January 20 – February 18): This month, you will be given the chance for new beginnings. Say “yes” to each adventure that is thrown your way, and don’t hesitate to allow yourself to just breathe. Have fun, Aquarius!

Pisces (February 19 – March 20): Pisces will be filled with joy and excitement this December! Your social life and career will be action-packed, and you will be provided with new opportunities. Luckily, it will launch you into the new year with a fresh start and success!

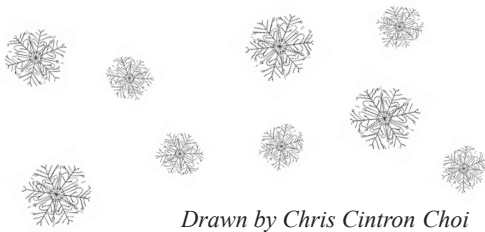
Air signs

The air signs are the signs that are known for their effective communication and their liberating vibes. Air signs are curious, and always questioning important topics, yet they provide a breath of fresh air to anyone who meets them.

Gemini (May 21- June 20): Geminis are known for their ability to communicate, and they are critical thinkers. They are very curious, and are able to be playful yet thoughtful.

Libra (September 23- October 22): Libras are known for their strong sense of balance, and their genuine honesty. They are able to successfully communicate harsh subjects, whilst still maintaining great social connections.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18): Aquarius are the signs that are most independent, and assertive. They are able to effectively solve problems, and provide you with their truthful opinions.



Drawn by Chris Cintron Choi

Aries (March 21 – April 19): Aries, this month is going to be on the quiet side, but take advantage! Try to reflect on the past months, and how you can overall better yourself for the upcoming. You can do this by focusing on your mental health and staying physically healthy!

Taurus (April 20 – May 20): In December, Taurus will have an optimistic, upbeat mood! With the sometimes stressful holiday season approaching, take this opportunity to relax your body and your mind.

Gemini (May 21 – June 21): Gemini, a big theme for you this month is love and partnerships! As exciting as this is, you may struggle with miscommunications throughout these relationships, so try and spend time focusing on being clear with your interactions.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22): Although you are known for being the most emotional sign, December is looking like a positive month for you, Cancers! You will take pride in your work and health. Take advantage of this, as the holiday season is approaching.

Leo (July 23 – August 22): Leos, allow December to take you back to your roots, as you may have felt a disconnect these past few months. Point your center of attention towards family and friends that you may have felt distanced from.

Virgo (August 23 – September 22): December may bring deep emotions and insecurities, which may affect your self-worth and confidence. Allow yourself to feel these emotions, and come out of this month stronger mentally and physically! You can do this by working out and journaling your thoughts.

LIFE & STYLE

Apple cider recipe

By Samantha Lazar



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This amazing apple cider recipe is sure to make your home smell incredible while it's cooking, and it tastes even better!

Best Apples for Cider

The best apple variety for cider depends on your taste preference. If you enjoy a sweeter cider, opt for a sweet apple like Gala or Fuji. However, if a tart punch is more your style,, try McIntosh or Pink Lady. If you're unsure of your preference, combining sweet and tart apples is a great way to achieve a balanced flavor.

- Ingredients:
- 10 large apples, quartered
 - Water
 - ½ cup granulated sugar (white)
 - 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
 - 1 tablespoon ground allspice
- Materials Needed:
- Stockpot
 - Tablespoons
 - Kitchen knife
 - Cheesecloth-lined sieve
- Directions:
- Place the apples in a large stockpot. Cover them with at least 2 inches of water. Stir in sugar, cinnamon, and allspice.
- Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil, uncovered, for 1 hour. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer for 2 hours.
- Strain the apple mixture through a fine-mesh sieve; discard solids. Drain cider again through a cheesecloth-lined sieve.
- Serve warm or refrigerate cider until cold. Enjoy!

SCHOOL NEWS

Trailblazer wins six awards in GSSPA contest

By Kaitlyn Verde

On Oct. 30, the Garden State Scholastic Press Association (GSSPA) announced the 2023 award contest winners at its annual Fall Press Day. *The Trailblazer* won five awards and one honorable mention in its fourth year entering the statewide contest.



Media Awards

- 1st

First place: Overall Social Media Presence
- 1st

First place: Broadcast News Show by Ethan Kaufman (Bronco’s Breakdown: Episode 7)
- HM

Honorable Mention: Overall Online Excellence

Individual Awards

- 3rd

3rd place in In-Depth Reporting: Paige Geanopulos “Mahsa Amini’s death: The state of Iran and its online discussion”
- 5th

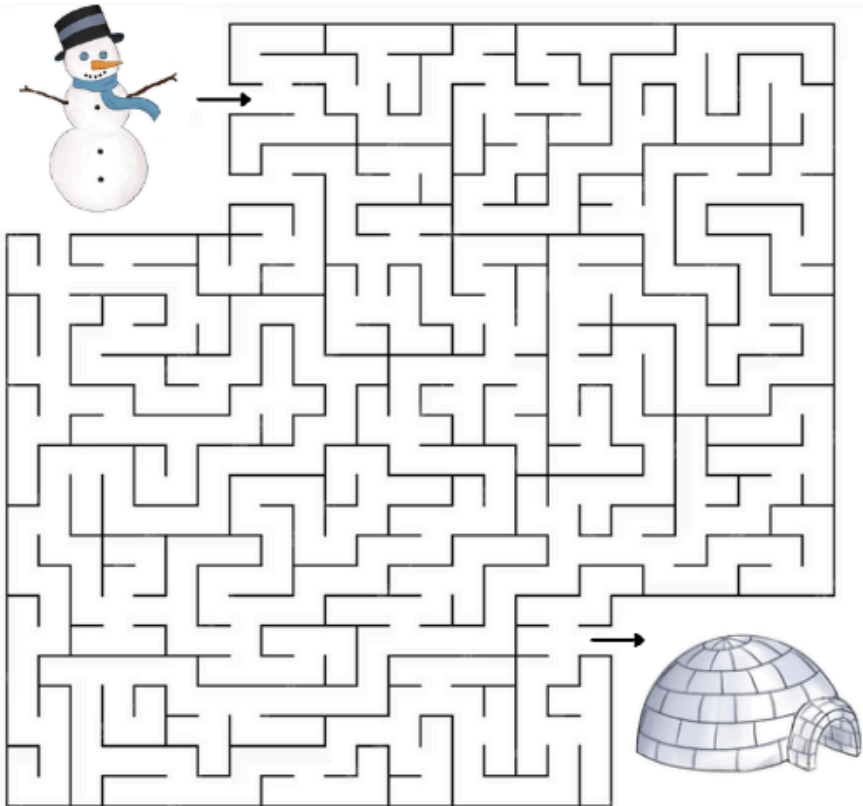
5th place in Review Writing: Ethan Kaufman "Every Lana Del Rey Album Ranked"
- 8th

8th place in News Writing: Thomas Samouhos “Turkey-Syria earthquake brings forth global response”

Created by Olivia Ge

GAMES

Help Frosty the Snowman get home!



Graphics drawn by Chris Cintron Choi

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Dear reader,

Thank you for reading this year’s Winter Edition. Although we could not fully distribute this edition to students this year, we still find it important to have a special edition as we near the end of first semester. We hope to continue to be the eyes and ears of Pascack Hills as we keep producing content that is timely and relevant to the community. To stay up to date with our reporting, check out our website, phhstrailblazer.org and our Instagram and Twitter accounts, [@phtrailblazer](https://www.instagram.com/phtrailblazer). Happy Holidays!

-TRAILBLAZER STAFF