



Tiger Tales



Students Organize Walkout, Protest Gun Violence



On March 14th, a cohort of PPHS students, along with Mrs. Hali, organized a walk-out on the one-month anniversary of the Parkland shooting. Students who spoke included Izzy Alexis, Belinda Gjonbaljaj, Michael Brestin, Hannah Zhang, Gabby Boyko, Jasmin Catalan, and Angelique Perez. "I was pleased. We didn't expect much of a turnout. We thought people would just want to get out of class, but it actually affected people in a positive way. That was the beauty of it," stated Izzy Alexis. "My motivation was because I've lost a lot of people in my life. This is becoming an everyday occurrence that should be stopped. Schools aren't doing enough about it, and parents can't do much, so it's up to the students to demand change, because our lives are at risk," said Belinda Gjonbaljaj. Photo courtesy of Lauren Perez

Athlete Exchange

by Emily Kim

High School athletic competitions are often extremely competitive. Sometimes, this competition unfortunately leads to conflict and tension between opposing players. At Palisades Park High School, this behavior is never acceptable for students and, more importantly, athletes.

In order to alleviate this tension, Dr. Cirillo implemented an experimental concept called a "Student-Athlete" exchange, in order to provide students with new perspectives regarding their opponents.

On Wednesday, December 13th, Palisades Park High School hosted members of the Cresskill Boys Basketball team, as they hosted members of the PPHS Girls Basketball team. Senior Lani Watt, and juniors Laila Khatib, Emilia Perez, Zaniyah Stewart, Rachel Yoo, and Nicolette Costanzo were chosen to attend the student-athlete exchange program at Cresskill High School. Cresskill boys shadowed members of the Palisades Park Boys Varsity team – seniors, Eric Cho, Saro Barsamyan, Kevin Kim and sophomore, Christopher Rodriguez, here, in Palisades Park.

This program was created in an effort to create better sportsmanship between the teams ahead of their game on the following Friday. In a statement to NorthJersey.com, Dr. Cirillo stated, "The idea is to form a respect beyond just basketball. All of these athletes here are role models; they are the ones wearing the school's name (continued on Page 3)

Dance Team Finishes Top Ten at National Competition

by Emily Kim

The Palisades Park Dance Team has had an amazing season with the help of their coach Ms. Morgese. Ms. Morgese founded the team in 2011, when it began as a club, but it wasn't until the following year that it became a competition dance team. Since then, the group has been honing its competitive edge.

Although the 2017-2018 team was primarily comprised of underclassmen, this year has easily been one of the best competition seasons. Veteran seniors Johanna Kim and Esther Kang stepped up as this year's team captains. Ms. Morgese proclaimed, "We weren't sure what to expect this year with such a young team, but they all worked so incredibly hard and blew me away each and every day. Our captains did such an amazing job bringing the best out of all the members and I give them both so much credit. I appreciate the commitment and heart displayed this season and all of the time the members put into becoming this collective powerhouse."

Practices began in September, but from the beginning of January until the end of February, the team prepared and competed at multiple competitions, winning first place in many of them. After countless practices, the dance team received the championship title at the West Milford Invitational, Lakeland Lancer Invitational, Pascack Valley Sweetheart Invitational, and Raritan Invitational. These wins were the first consecutive first-place finishes the team has ever had, after finishing first only once last season.



The girls competed in the hip-hop division down in Orlando, Florida. Coach Morgese said she was proud with the team's performance. Photo courtesy of Rachel Morgese.

Also, the team placed in every single local competition that they participated in this year and finished third in the state.

After six years of building the team from scratch, and relying on hours of hard work and dedication, the Palisades Park Dance Team finally became recognized as a "team to fear," according to Senior Johanna Kim. "We (Johanna and I) wanted our last year

to be memorable, so we pushed ourselves and our teammates," said senior, Esther Kang. Once their wins began rolling in, Ms. Morgese knew that her team was ready to take on the National Championships in Orlando, Florida.

"In years past we always talked about how we wished we could go to Florida to compete, thinking it was just a pipe dream that

was fun to think about but would never actually come to be. The fact that we were able to make it a reality this year speaks so much to the caliber of dancer we had and the hard work each member put in. I also couldn't be happier that our captains Esther and Johanna had a chance to experience that before they graduated—they helped build the team from the start and certainly earned that accomplishment. I knew they would be able to appreciate it the most having experienced where we started from," stated Coach Morgese.

Once at nationals, the team competed on day one, qualifying to go straight to finals. The girls made Palisades Park extremely proud, finishing in the Top Ten for the Varsity Hip Hop Division. Considering it was their first year competing at a National Competition, it felt like "a dream come true" for some of the dancers.

Winter Musical *Grease* a Resounding Success

by Ellen Bang

On the weekend of January 12th, members of the Dramatic Arts society took to the stage to perform the timeless musical, GREASE.

With a larger cast of members than previous years, it wasn't hard to fill the stage with a class full of Rydell High students. The Pink Ladies, played by Angie Rosario, Johanna Kim, Olivia Choi, Karen Roca, and Hannah Zhang, and the "T" Birds, represented by Maric Recano, Eric Kim, Emrhan Elsamra, Solomon Son, and Sean Baek) sang their way through the trials and triumphs of high school life.

The supporting cast included students of Rydell High, who were played by Lena Atasev, Kyle Hong, Nate Meano, and Alana Lopez. The Adults were played by Daniel Kim and Ariel Kim, and the Ensemble players were Javier Hidalgo, Ellen Kang, John Kang, Justin Park, Jonathan Song, and Sage Wang.

The standout moments were the performances of the iconic songs, "Summer Nights" and "You're the One That I Want." These were the scenes that featured most cast members on stage.

According to Mrs. Hali, Grease was chosen for this year's performance because she wanted to pick a play where Johanna Kim, senior, could showcase her talent, since it is her last year performing.

"Out of every musical I've seen or ever done, there's no student who would be better than Johanna to play the role of Rizzo. It's such a good role for her," commented Mrs. Hali.

She also said that she's had the most talented cast yet this year. The performance for next year has already been determined: it will be the "25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," which is based on the Tony-award winning play about middle-school students who compete in a spelling-bee.

Decline of Athletic Participation

What Happened to Palisades Park's Athletic Prowess?

by Jasleen Nanda

School is important, but so are extracurriculars. That's why when we see so few students opting to participate in sports we tend to wonder why. During the late 90's and early 2000's PPHS achieved some of the highest athletic honors. We won championships as teams and not just as individuals. These achievements are still memorialized today by the countless banners in our school gym. However, if you take a close look, you might notice that there aren't very many banners from the last five, or even ten years. What happened to Palisades Park athletics?

A major reason athletics are becoming less and less of a priority is: kids don't have the time to be part of them. Being part of any sport is grueling...there's practice everyday and meets every weekend. It takes you to the point where you only have time to do your homework and go to practice. Unfortunately, this difficulty is compounded by the fact that our generation as a whole is not very good at time management,

and so many kids who would do sports refrain from doing them because they don't have enough "time" for themselves. This lack of time stems from our addiction to technology. More often than not, the technological resources that once educated us now fill our heads with celebrity gossip and "who dumped who" in school.

Teams that used to have 60 kids in the 90's now have 14. Former Pal. Pk. athlete and Winter and Spring Track and Field Coach Fronjian says, "Today, in my opinion, students and athletes have been bitten by the "entitlement" bug. A lot, but not all, students and athletes I have come across have the mindset that they are owed something or want everything given to them. Like I tell my track and field athletes, in both athletics and in life, nothing is ever given to you, you must work hard for it and earn it. I feel this kind of mindset holds students and athletes back from joining a sports program simply because they do not want to put in the time and effort." Coach Fronjian also

commented on the fact that gym classes that are supposed to keep kids in shape and make sports fun aren't always effective. There are many cases in which students are given free-time during gym and get to decide whether they'll sit out or participate. When kids are given a choice, it is likely they'll choose the one that is the lazy way out.

Yet another challenge is that the student-athletes dedicated to their specialty sport may refrain from being a three-sport athlete because they need to focus on developing certain skills in the off-season. This is fair of them to do, but it takes away from the success of certain sports teams in Palisades Park. In a different situation, some student might just join a sport for the sake of listing it on their college applications and they'll do the bare minimum. Once they see that they've done enough for the experience, they quit.

Ultimately, Palisades Park has talent, but so few kids try out for teams, or have the sense of dedication needed, or even the grades needed to be eligible, that there is a huge source of untapped potential. It must be up to other athletes in sports to recruit members, and it must be up to the student to learn how to manage something they'd enjoy---a sport, and what's necessary for success in the future---academics. Managing both is undoubtedly a challenge, but it is a challenge that builds character and builds strong sports teams that represent our school.

A Day in the Life of a Middle Schooler

by Gianfelipe Marsano

As the year progresses, the 7th graders become more and more accustomed to the High School. Many have come to appreciate the High School more than Lindbergh. Many, however, still do not find school that easy and struggle to keep up with schoolwork, homework, and other extracurricular activities. The Midterm Exams were another test many had to prepare for. When asked if she thought extra studying was important, Jefimija Stanojevic replied, "I think it is necessary sometimes." After the midterms, many other students added their input. Ethan Chen stated, "It was easy." Antonio Gonzales stated "It's ok, but it was also stressful." Others had a much harder time. Joshua Surrey stated that, to him, the exams "were terrible." Javier Hidalgo agreed with Antonio, stating, "It was stressful." Roy Park believes that studying in whatever free time you have is the key to preparing for both the midterms, and any other tests. "If you study, then you're good, but if you don't, then you're screwed."

Besides studying for tests or doing work, as they have settled into the year, many 7th graders do a variety of things in their free time. Daniel Kim stated "I like to hang out and talk with my friends." Matthew Kim contributed, "I like to play soccer." Athena Lin added, "I like to listen to music." Smartphones are a big part of students' lives, and are used to listen to music, use the internet, take pictures, and play mobile games. Many students, such as Louae Ishmail, Joshua Surrey, Lea Kelly, Kianna Cho, and many other students have stated that they enjoy using their phones to play mobile games, texting, and going online. Many enjoy simply talking to each other in their free time. Others study extra so they can be better prepared for school. Whatever it is, the average life of a middle schooler can get more exciting than some let on.

There are also many different clubs the 7th Graders have access to that they never had back at Lindbergh. Some interesting ones include Trivia Club, Environmental Club, Dramatic Arts Society, and the newspaper, Tiger Tales. Many 7th Graders are enjoying the year so far, and as it progresses, there are many other things the 7th Graders can not wait to experience.

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Avoid the Third Marking Period Slump

by Victoria Miskulin

Let's be honest, it's been a long, cold, grueling winter. Between midterms, snow days, and PARCC rearing its ugly head in the near future, third marking period feels like a complete drag. This is especially true for members of the senior class who are so close to graduation; many have mentally checked out for the year. I-- like many other students-- have been struggling to find motivation to push through the next few months, as we finish yet another year of school. Summer feels so close, but so far away! It is around this time when many students' grades start slipping. This is when students fall into the dreaded third marking slump. Lucky for you, I am here to give you some much needed advice and encouragement to get you through the rest of the year.

This might seem obvious, but don't let yourself slip through the cracks. It's inevitable that at some point in the year, you're going to slack off a little. No matter how dedicated you are, no student is able to give 110% the entire year. But you cannot allow yourself to almost give up just because the year is almost over. If you slack too much, there is a good chance it will be very difficult to pull yourself back up. It's vital you remember to always give your best effort for your grades, no matter how little motivation you seem to have in the tank. High school isn't easy, and it's hard to stay motivated, but you can't forget that we're being given a free education! We are so fortunate to have knowledge and technology at our fingertips and have to take advantage of it! You want to look back at high school with no regrets, rather than wishing you put in more time and effort.

You may be experiencing "the slump" so bad that it seems impossible to get out of. This is the perfect time to talk to those you trust and love. When it comes to your peers, there is nothing wrong with venting about how you feel, and chances are, they feel the exact same way. I confide in my friends all the time about the stress of school, and their support and encouragement always makes me feel better. But friends aren't your only option for support. Even though you shouldn't be, many of us are hesitant to talk to our teachers and faculty members. We forget that a teacher's job is to help us-- they may even be thrilled to see that you are taking an interest in succeeding. As intimidating as it may seem to talk to our teachers about our problems, many of them are ready and willing to work with you to pull you out of your slump.

Don't forget how close we are to the end of the year. Just two more months! You've already made it this far-- finish on a good note! Stay on top of yourself, manage your time, and don't stress out too much. Im rooting for you!



Victoria Miskulin
"Ask Vicky"

#MeToo, Not Just For Celebrities

by Michael Brestin and Jasleen Nanda

"Me too." This now empowering and unifying statement was once oppressed and forcibly hidden in the deepest, darkest shadows. Victims of powerful politicians, influential movie stars, the wealthy, and the powerful (bosses or superiors)-- and even victims of everyday offenses experienced by everyday people-- are now validated by this phrase, which has served to empower millions around the world, and, perhaps just as importantly, forced others to take accountability for their actions. "Me too" or #MeToo is undoubtedly the start of a massive culture-changing movement that is taking place on a global scale.

The #MeToo movement was begun in 2006 by African American civil rights activist Tarana Burke. Eleven years later, following the sexual harassment allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano (challenged or asked) the public to respond to her tweet with "me too" if he or she had experienced any form of sexual assault or harassment. This tweet quickly went viral, initiating one of the most groundbreaking cultural movements in American history. Reese Witherspoon, Lady Gaga, James Van Der Beek, and Javier Muñoz have come forward about their past sexual harassment and the long-standing impact that it has had on their lives.

The #MeToo movement's goal is to publicize sexual harassment and assault as a whole in order to eliminate the stigma of victim blaming-- to take power away from the harasser and place it back in the victims' hands. It's all about being able to overcome the hardship that victims have had to endure as a result of damaging cultural norms that will inevitably change. For countless decades, victims of sexual harassment remained silent for fear of being shamed, blamed, called liars, or belittled. Victims of sexual harassment are disproportionately female, but the movement has transcended gender-- even men have gained a voice.

A Responsibility to Spark Change

Though this movement has become publicized by prominent celebrities who are well into their adult lives, it still applies to high school students like us. Sexual harassment and abuse can be encountered at all stages of life, and are not only perpetrated by strangers, but by family, friends, and acquaintances. With the #me too movement people should, ideally, no longer think about their harasser when making the decision to come out about what's happened. Says Burke, "These women are able not just to share their shame but to put the shame where it belongs: on the perpetrator."

When she coined the phrase

in 2006, Tarana Burke's main objective was not only to help people after assault or harassment by changing sexual harassment laws, but also reexamining school policies, changing the vetting process of teachers and background checking teachers more thoroughly. Accountability on every level needs to be addressed.

Schools can contribute to changing the culture-- teaching comprehensive sex-ed and addressing cultural issues that contribute to rape culture. "Boys will be boys," for example, is a phrase that has offered an out for male perpetrators, but shamed female victims. Adults must demand accountability from this next generation, but also be accountable themselves.

We, as young adults, must also be willing to change the social constructs that have victimized so many for so long. Rap songs, video games, and films that objectify women must be questioned. The language that we use to describe relationships must be changed. Until both men and women can stand on an equal plane, where mutual respect is placed above damaging expectations of gender or sex, #MeToo experiences will continue. All students must understand what it means to have healthy, respectful relationships so that this generation can understand what is happening and put a stop to it.

Cresskill and Pal Park Exchange Athletes

(cont. from page 1) across their chest and represent their team, their school and their community. I am not going to force them to exchange email addresses, phone numbers, snapchat's... nothing, but I do hope it happens naturally and I do hope the respect extends far past the game on Friday night."

Varsity players from Cresskill and Pal Park pose for a picture outside Cresskill on December 14th.

After the event, senior Eric Cho stated, "I think it is a good thing that our school started. Spending the day with my future opponents shows how similar our lives really are, which will ultimately lead to fewer problems on and off the court." This idea promotes a message about the importance of building a strong rapport with fellow athletes during sports games. A second exchange took place later in the season between the two schools.

The students involved in this movement have been positively impacted, and their perspectives have changed immensely. "We are all equal - we go to school,

eat lunch, do homework, and play basketball", mentioned Junior, Nicolette Costanzo. "There will

not be as much tension now that we are friends."

In preparation for the kickoff of the Palisades Park Basketball season for both boys and girls, the student-athlete exchange program most definitely had an effect on camaraderie between opposing towns. Not only did it allow student athletes to become aware and more prepared for their first game, but it also gave some students a sense of comfort considering they were able to get to know their opponent on a more personal level. It will allow both town's student athletes to have a more enjoyable experience playing with friends, rather than with

complete strangers.

Junior, Laila Khatib, had an incredible experience meeting her fellow opponents at Cresskill High School. She stated, "It changed my perspective on sportsmanship. I realized the most important aspect of the game is to have fun with the girls that we go against. Win or lose, fighting or violence

during games would not benefit anyone in any situation. At the end of the day, every individual deserves to receive an equal amount of respect as their teammates and opponents."

"I love the concept," said Girls' Varsity Coach Will Hutchinson. "It gave both teams a chance to see how the other school community is, and gives them better awareness of life in a different area. I'm happy with the outcome. We actually began our season in Cresskill and ended our season against Cresskill in states, and one of the Cresskill girls commented how much she enjoyed the exchange."

Humans of Palisades Park



"In my country, I couldn't join tennis games a lot, but there is opportunity to join a tennis team here and play on a team. For education, the education is so hard in Turkey. Here, it's easier for me to pass classes and take tests. In Turkey, you take one test to get to college. Here, they look at activities, test scores, and more. I plan to go to college to study computer science. It's an international language."

- Melih Kadincesme, Grade 11



"This isn't even my baby. I switched with Gya because this is much more comfortable than holding a sack of flour. The assignment is for Health-11. It seems that the value of this lesson is to learn that a baby is heavy-- we have to carry a sack of flour for a week everywhere we go. It's kind of annoying. I'm definitely not ready to take responsibility for a 5-pound living creature. Not anytime soon!"

-Alexa Stark, Grade 11

PowerBack, Stigma Organizations Highlight Social Issues

by Andrea DeLaCruz

PowerBack Assembly Focus on Dating Abuse

The students of Palisades Park High School were rattled early Wednesday morning October 11th, with the arrival of Partnership for Change. The presentation went into depth with the upperclassmen on the topics of dating abuse and domestic violence.

The PowerBack program is designed to empower females with both the knowledge to identify unhealthy relationships, as well as tips to handle unfavorable situations. The speaker, Allison Bressler, frankly discussed the many types of abuse, including emotional, physical, verbal, and technological, and also highlighted qualities of healthy relationships.

A separate meeting was held for the male students, who discussed the male responsibilities and advantages of relationships. Senior Geun Tae Kim mentioned that the assembly for the male population focused on making smart decisions that, ultimately, could keep young men on the right path when it comes to relationships.

The program addresses the pressing issue of healthy relationships-- a topic that is not formally discussed in a classroom setting. PPHS was fortunate to have been selected this year to receive this program at no cost. Only two schools receive this program every two years. It's a year-long program that will extend into an after-school organization that will continue to explore the issues revolving dating abuse. "It's a \$20,000 program, but PPHS [was one of two Bergen County schools] that got it for free," com-

mented guidance counselor Ms. Monroe, who oversees the PowerBack club, which will continue to meet and discuss relevant issues throughout this school year.

STIGMA focuses on Mental Health Awareness

There is another new club offered this year that seeks to address social issues-- Stigma. It is also run by Ms. Monroe. It stands for "Students Taking Initiative To Gain Mental Health Awareness" and its goal is to spread awareness so that Palisades Park can participate in the Bergen County effort to be Stigma-free.

According to the Department of Health Services page on the official Bergen County, NJ website, the initiative seeks to "reduce the stigma associated with mental illness... [raise] awareness of the disease of mental illness and create a culture wherein residents who have the disease feel supported by their community and neighbors and feel free to seek treatment for the disease without fear of stigma."

As the year progresses, Ms. Monroe has worked to spread awareness about the STIGMA initiative. The goal is to begin the initiative at PPHS, where all students will pledge to be Stigma-free. Eventually, the town of Palisades Park could become a stigma-free community, joining other towns in Bergen County such as Hackensack, Paramus, Leonia, and more.

The importance of having open, honest discussions about mental health has become more apparent than ever, in the wake of school shooting incidents. Recent events have raised issues concerning the

availability and quality of mental health programs offered to high-school aged children in order to provide a safety net for students in need. It is important to understand that it is okay to seek help. If this generation of students can

diminish the stigma associated with seeking mental health services, it could create a wave of change for future generations.

Interested students can find more information at www.apartnershipforchange.org, <http://www.co.bergen.nj.us/1242/>

STIGMA-FREE-Zone, or see Ms.Monroe to join either organization. Students may look forward to "wellness week" in May, highlighted by a Wellness fair on May 11th.

Mrs. Ko on Life and Teaching

by Gabriela Diaz Merida

ESL students in Palisades Park High School have a lot of obstacles to deal with. They are new to the country. They do not speak English. Many of them must work. But there is one person who makes it easy and comfortable to come to school: Ms. Ko.

Ms. Ko has been teaching at PPHS for 14 years. Teaching has always been her dream. "Since I was little, I wanted to be a teacher. I like children and I like to teach things I know. If I do not know something, then I want to learn so I can teach others."

She has never dreamed of having another job, and many would say that teaching is perfect for her. During these years of teaching, she had 5 of her own children, but no obstacles have stopped her from being a great teacher who likes to learn a lot of things.

"I love meeting students from different countries. I love learning about their culture and their life experiences. I also like to see my students come to the United States with little or no English and in a short time, to learn the language and culture."

Teaching ESL can have some challenges, she says. "My students come with different educational backgrounds, and it is difficult to meet everyone's needs. I would like to have smaller class sizes so I can help students individually."

"Additionally, my students are not like American students who go home to do their homework and then play with their friends. My students go to work after school and work late. They have a lot of responsibilities outside of school. Sometimes, school is not a priority for them, but I want them to know that getting a good education important for their future."

Mrs. Ko can relate to late nights and balancing responsibilities. She has a large family, and balancing work and home is not easy. "I run around like crazy! [It takes] a lot of planning, and much help from my children. I also set priorities... work and family time are both important."

For Mrs. Ko, the secret to balancing life and teaching is to smile. "There is no secret. I am happy. I'm happy because being a teacher was my dream."

Some things that she would still like to achieve in life is to travel. "I want to travel to countries where my students are from. I've heard so many wonderful things about Guatemala, China, Turkey, India, etc... I want to visit and experience some of the culture and what my students have been through."

"I feel very happy because I'm teaching English as a second language for [my students], and I'm glad they learn English. It is very good to learn English and many more languages, but above all to know that they want to learn and get ahead."



Mrs. Ko has been teaching ESL classes at PPHS for fourteen years and continues to be inspired by her students.