

TOWER PATCH Kids



th Year: Issue

PHX
Elon Musk's Lair



TOWER EDITORS DEAD, MURDER MYSTERY ENSUES



(Left to right) Managing Editor Shumona Bhattacharjya '24 is found in room 173 with a printer-sized bump on her head. Editor-in-chief Jessica Chen '24 suffocates under a pile of newspapers. Managing Editor Peter Eaton '24 lies on the floor, covered in Goober wounds.

THE GHOSTS OF JESSICA, PETER, AND SHUMONA, TOWER BOSSES

Editor-in-chief Jessica Chen '24, Managing Editor Peter Eaton '24, and Managing Editor Shumona Bhattacharjya '24 were found dead in room 173 by Will Pittman '27 at 9:05 p.m. last Tuesday. According to security camera footage, a hooded killer crept into the room after newspaper production shrouded in a black cloak and killed each of the victims one by one.

"Yeah, I walked in so excited to tell the Tower editors that I swore I just saw Syra," said Pittman, "But then I looked down and was awestruck. Peter was covered with goober (USB) wounds, Shumona had a gruesome printer-sized bump on her head, and Jessica was buried underneath a gargantuan stack of November issues. I bet someone suffocated her. It was one of the worst days of the month by far.

Detective Levitation and Detective Kingfisher confirmed Pittman's witness statement. Unsure about possible suspects, the two detectives reportedly brought together the groggy team of tower editors, telling them they needed to brainstorm.

Suggested suspects included Ashlena Brown '24, the editor-in-chief of The Prince, PHS's yearbook and second-most highly acclaimed student publication, Eric Karch, PHS's bookkeeper who is constantly scrambling to find Tower money to print when they go bankrupt, a hitman hired by Alexander Margulis, the Tower's proud Multimedia editor, and Physics Teacher Peter Martens.

Detective "Lev" and Detective "King" first interviewed Brown, their primary suspect. When asked what she was doing at 9 p.m. last Tuesday, of course, she had yearbook stuff to do.

"I was busy asking people what bathroom at PHS best represents their senior year. It was really important that I get answers, but I couldn't find a single person who would answer my question in the last six hours," Brown said.

King noted that Brown was highly sus and moved on to interview Tower benefactor, Eric Karch. At 9 p.m., Karch was digging for gold in California.

"The Tower has too many money problems and I gotta work overtime to take care of them. Every Tuesday, I travel to California to dig for gold so the Tower can have enough money to print. I haven't found gold yet but I did find a cool rock. Anyways, I need to dig more," Karch said, while Skyping from Merced River, California.

It should be noted that when Detective Lev and Detective King went to look for Margulis for an interview, he was extremely difficult to find—he was not found in his podcast recording studio nor was he found doing wrestling warm-ups in the dance studio. Eventually, he was found, with the entire debate team, at daycare, where they said they were taking 'rigorous' (daycare-level) grammar classes. Speaking on behalf of the debate team, Margulis said they were just too busy on Tuesday night.

"I couldn't really kill the Senior Editors because I was debating over how to spell animal names with my fellow debate minions," said Margulis. "Anyways, I have to go record a podcast about this."

Peter Martens declined to respond to his email.

To Detective Lev and Detective King though, these suspects didn't quite match the profile of the killer, meaning that the search is still ongoing. With the suspect(s) still at large, the two detectives recommend caution on the part of all people in the Princeton-Merced River region. Detective Lev and Detective King are also accepting tips on possible suspects at their lair in the far northeast corner of the PHS crawlspace.

"Remember to knock!" King exclaimed, rather passive aggressively.

As the search continues, the PHS and global community at large mourn the loss of the incredible senior editors who dedicated their life to the most valiant cause—producing the Tower, which only the editors' parents ever read.

"The saddest part of this all is that there's not going to be any more Tower issues!" said passionate Tower editor Tamar Assayag '25. "Oh ya, also it's soooooo sad that the senior editors are gone. Sad day!"

6ix9ine echoed this statement in a tweet this morning.



Security camera footage shows the cloaked murder.



BREAKING NEWS!

Never seen before...

Freshmen listen up!

STANK

STANK pt2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Sophomore boy unable to stop doing tiktok dances

PHS student wears lanyard around their neck

Freshmen forced to run the mile to pass Peer Group

Dead body found in Tower stair well, contributing to age-old stank

Skunk colony found in bath room walls

Elon Musk takes over school newspaper after the murder of the all three senior editors: A revolutionary rebranding unleashed!

Graphics: Caroline Gu

Daniel Guo, PHX editor

In a shocking turn of events, visionary entrepreneur Elon Musk has taken the reins of the PHS school newspaper, sending shockwaves through the community. After Jessica Chen, Shumona Bhattacharjya, and Peter Eaton were all murdered by a mysterious blurry face, the paper fell into disarray, causing Elon Musk to step in to buy the Tower at a bargain. The once-familiar newspaper, known for its trusted reporting, is now undergoing a metamorphosis that echoes Musk's recent takeover of Twitter.

At the crux of the issue is the shakeup in leadership. Musk, known for his bold decisions, stormed into production, leaving the newsroom in disbelief. The departure of key staff members, who left in despair, resulted in a mass exodus, with half of the employees following suit.

"It was crazy! I was standing there talking to my friends when I smelled a horrible cologne blow past me," said Hayah Mian '25. "I thought it was Nikolai, but I turned around and saw Elon Musk!"

Under his leadership, our school newspaper has been rebranded as the PHX, signaling a new dawn.

"To be totally honest, I thought the new logo was P90X for a minute. I was looking for some workouts, but I instead found out that Mrs. Taylor takes tap dancing lessons. That is pretty cool, but to be honest I'd rather look like CBum. It's a bit misleading, so I think that they should go back to the Tower," said

the ghost of Senior Editor Peter Eaton.

In a daring move, Musk has implemented revolutionary changes to the way news is consumed on campus. Under the new restrictions, PHX has gone completely digital and blurs articles after 100 words. At the price of 5 dollars a year, PHX+ readers can read the first 500 words of each article, and for 20 dollars a year, PHX++ readers can enjoy all articles. Elon Musk is currently trying to convince board members to make PHX++ mandatory for all students in the district.

"I love capitalism, so I think this is a great move," said Ron Swanson.

Additionally, the declining readership has advertisers, once lining up to be featured in the paper's pages, now reconsidering their partnerships, leaving the future of the publication hanging in the balance.

"I was thinking of putting an ad for my new podcast, but Elon Musk has some bad juju and I rely on my instincts a lot," said Matt Chen '25.

Going forward, it is difficult to see whether the Tower will continue to exist with such radical change. Honestly, I don't see it going on much longer. I have just been informed that I have been fired.

"I just want to spread positivity and free speech! What's wrong with taking over a school newspaper and monetizing it? I just want to spread and have people follow my great ideas," said Elon Musk.



Nuclear weapons in learning labs???

Gayassa Ramat (aka Tamar Assayag)

On Friday, November 24th, three PHS freshman students broke into Ms. Birge's office, and took over the loudspeaker; they had an important message for the students and staff: the PHS class of 2027 is planning a rebellion. For a few brief minutes, the hallways and classrooms of PHS rang with outcries and protests coming from the three fearless students. "They want to take our freedom away, but we won't let them!" Following this exclamation was an announcement that the freshmen have been tirelessly working day and night to develop nuclear weapons in their learning labs. Considering the past shenanigans of the freshmen, who now refer to themselves as the Nucleides, this didn't come as much of a surprise.

"I knew they were crazy when they formed a Josh Hutcherson cult in the courtyard," said Allan Chen '26, "but this is a whole new level of unhinged."

However, the loudspeaker thieves were quick to explain the reasoning behind their most recent antic: ever since administration announced that starting with the class of 2027, PHS students will no longer be granted free periods, the Nucleides have been hungry for revenge.

Thankfully, Ms. Birge's office was quickly returned to its rightful owner when all three assistant principals kicked the door open and bravely fought off the menacing Nucleides. But the damage was already done. In the following weeks, PHS administration formed search teams composed of Student Council members, as well as curious science students and teachers to find the hidden nuclear weapons and have them shipped away before the Nucleides use them. An anonymous Chemistry teacher, all too eager for the opportunity to

see an atomic bomb, stated that she always wanted to bring Uranium-235 to school to show her Chemistry students a real-life application of radioactive decay, but for some reason her request was never approved.

Clearly, reactions to this event have been pretty varied. Some students have been surprisingly apathetic.

"Honestly, I don't blame them," said Daniel Guo '25. "I need my free periods to play Call of Duty Mobile."

However, a large portion of the student body is highly concerned about what this could mean for the future of PHS.

"I don't want this year's prom theme to be Nuclear Fission," said Jane Bennett '24, who is worried that the Nucleides will gain so much power that they'll elect one of their own to be the new principal of PHS.

At the moment, Ms. Birge's search crew is still looking for the nuclear weapons. You might find them lurking amidst the mounds of dead fish in the Research classrooms. But don't be alarmed, as they are confident that they're close.

"Sara Shahab Diaz's spidey senses will sus out the goods," said Quentin Touzot '25, who is confident in the PHS class of 2025 Treasurer's abilities.

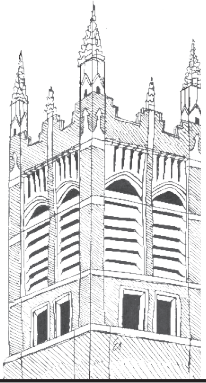
Prior to her murder, beloved E-I-C of the Tower Jessica Chen '24 managed to interview one of the Nucleides.

The student chose to remain anonymous, most likely out of fear of being kicked out of the Josh Hutcherson cult if their fellow Nucleides found out the Nucleide had gone rogue, and was giving out valuable information to non-Nucleides. Although admitting that the freshmen started this project simply out of the excruciating boredom they experienced in the learning labs, the Nucleide didn't pass up the opportunity to send PHS a very clear warning.

"We ask for one thing, and one thing only," the mysterious student told Jessica. "Free periods for the Nucleides, or we blow this place up."



Graphics: Caroline Gu



The Tower

95th Year: Issue 8

Princeton High School
151 Moore Street, Princeton, New Jersey

December 22, 2023

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Author Kim Foster presents her experience in using food to create connections



The panel consisting of Jessica Lee '26, Yugandhara Luthra '24, and Kim Foster answer a question from the audience.

Daniel Guo, NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITOR
Elif Cam, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On the evening of December 7, PHS welcomed author Kim Foster, who spoke about her experiences with food insecurity in America detailed within her new book, "The Meth Lunches: Food and Longing in an American City." The event was done in collaboration with PHS Food Aid and featured booths set up by local food agencies, including Send Hunger Packing Princeton, the Princeton Mobile Food Pantry, and Arm In Arm, all to spread awareness about widespread food insecurity.

Throughout her presentation, Foster had many personal anecdotes about the issues she hoped to address. One story covered in her presentation was about an adult she met who was abused and starved as a child, which left her to deal with emotional trauma and an unhealthy aversion to food for the rest of her life.

"Johnny started bagging [my] groceries, and she mentioned off the top of her head that she was locked in the closet [by her mother] as a child without food," said Foster. "To this day, Johnny works in a supermarket ... surrounded by food. She wonders a lot if she deserves to [even] have food. Kids that are hungry get the message that they don't deserve the most basic needs."

While running a pantry outside her home in Las Vegas during the COVID-19 pandemic, Foster began

"She wonders a lot if she deserves to [even] have food. Kids that are hungry get the message that they don't deserve the most basic needs."

to connect to the struggles of individuals through food and create an active community effort through Facebook group discussions and word of mouth.

"[I] live in a very socioeconomically diverse neighborhood ... and there are people who are really struggling. At first, I was just putting toilet paper in our little free library and other hoarded goods that no one could get, ... like wipes [and] hand sanitizer," said Foster. "[Then] a bar gave us a fridge. And then, the next thing you know, I'm picking up groceries and it's my full-time job."

While poverty, addiction, and similar factors may often work to isolate people, Foster observed how food can help build connections between people who may not have much in common and foster relationships that can strengthen communities.

"When we took food to people, we didn't just drop food at people's houses. We stopped, hung out, talked, and heard stories. And so, what that does is it connects that person to the world," said Foster. "As a high school student, there's probably nothing that you can do to eradicate poverty in your community, but you can create connections."

Dr. Andrea Dinan, coordinator of service learning and experiential activities, shared how she wanted to allow students to hear Foster's message about a topic that is rarely discussed in Princeton.

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PHS holds inaugural TEDxWitherspoonSt Youth event

Claire Tang and Meiya Xiong, STAFF WRITERS

On December 2, an audience gathered in PHS' Black Box Theater for the first-ever TedXWitherspoonSt Youth event. Hosted by Elizabeth Tian '24 and Oliver Huang '24, the event showcased talks delivered by high school students, college students, and professionals surrounding a central theme: "Change in a Changing World."

"This theme was created to tackle issues present within society, questions [for] the future, and how we can better tomorrow through our actions today," said Tian. "The world around us is constantly changing, and it's hard to navigate and define the challenges of change and how to react to them."

During the night, the speakers detailed the intersections between personal, local, and global change through niche anecdotes. Iniya Karimanal '26 discussed how to effectively utilize anger to create change, drawing inspiration from her own experiences. As an avid animal lover, Karimanal created a nonprofit sticker business donating to animal shelters, channeling her anger regarding the common euthanization of animals that are not adopted in shelters.

"I think it's important to take a more holistic view on anger. A lot of us think of anger, and we think immediately of it being negative and destructive," said Karimanal. "We can do a better job of extracting positive energy from our anger."



photo courtesy: Claire Tang

Elizabeth Tian '24 commences the event by introducing the speakers.

Growing up with childhood apraxia of speech, Elina Csapo, another speaker and senior at the Hun School, also talked about how anger can be a useful vessel in creating global change and improvement. In her presentation, Csapo shared how she expressed her frustration in struggling to find a supportive community for kids with hidden disabilities by creating Young Able Voices. Establishing the organization when she was 17, she aims for it to be a safe place for kids with hidden disabilities to connect and find support.

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PHS Research Program to speak at Columbia University's Climate Education Summit



photo: Caroline Gu

Mark Eastburn and Daniela Gonzalez '24 pose for a picture.

Leila Guitton, STAFF WRITER
Mattias Blix and Emil Kapur,
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

On January 26 and 27, PHS Research teacher Mark Eastburn and student Daniela Gonzalez '24 will attend the Global Education Benchmark Group's Climate Education Summit at Columbia University to present the PHS Research Program's efforts to promote diversity while recruiting for their ongoing projects, including their work on using oil derived from black soldier flies to replace the palm oil in soaps and other cosmetics.

At its core, the program's goal is to create a climate project that not only attracts more students, but also reframes climate change as a resolvable problem.

"I've tried to inspire students to take an active role ... within this community to combat climate change. The angle for Columbia is the inclusion-making: finding ways of bringing more students [into the program]," Eastburn said.

With the black soldier flies soap design, which won first place in the 2021 Mercer County Science Fair and the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Competition, Eastburn and leaders of the research program are currently brainstorming ways to expand soap production to transform it into an entrepreneurial prospect, which would create academically-oriented job opportunities.

"[Samsung] was here yesterday to take a video about how these projects help the students involved [and] how this changed our lives, because this 100 percent [opened] doors for me," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez expresses gratitude for the program and hopes that further presentations will increase the program's appeal so that her peers can benefit and draw inspiration from it.

"Some students now know that this exists; they [now] know that they can start with their own products. This [program] is a way to [make their dreams a reality]," Gonzalez said.

By bringing together people from different passions and interests, the research community at PHS and the strong support it receives is what allows its participants to flourish together.

"The research program [is] very successful not only because of the awards that we have gotten, but more importantly ... because it includes students who are recent immigrants and students who are really high academic achievers," said PHS Principal Cecilia Birge. "Not many schools have research programs; it is unique to a handful of schools that are very committed to science."

Anna Rose Gable pursues empathy in education as an ESL teacher

Bengu Bulbul and Reed Sacks,
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Navigating a “winding path” before settling at PHS, Anna Rose Gable has been an English as Second Language teacher for almost three years. A Rider graduate, her self-proclaimed empathetic approach to education was essential in her path to becoming a vital part of the PHS community. Gable’s progressive teaching style and ability to form connections with students creates a uniquely supportive classroom environment.

Gable credits much of her current attitude toward teaching to early experiences with public school. As a child, she first attended an unconventional public elementary school that encouraged a more holistic approach by allowing young students to learn comfortably and focus on personal interests and creativity rather than on grades.

“I went to ... an atypical elementary school [that] used a lot of Waldorf and Montessori principles. It was really project-based, ... [since] we chose what to do based on our own interests. It was very hands-on and experiential, and we [received] a narrative report card that commented on our areas of strength and growth,” Gable said.

Gable’s transition to a more traditional grades-based system in middle school was a shock because she wasn’t prepared for its impersonality and shallow curriculum. For Gable, the flaws of this traditional system fostered a desire to educate in a manner that works the best for students, rather than just doing the bare minimum.

“My middle school was not great. In most of my classes, we read the textbook, we answered the questions at the end of the textbook chapter, and then we went on to the next chapter,” said Gable. “I was like, ‘I think that this could be better.’ I had kind of made this promise to myself that one day, I would go back and try to make education for older kids a little bit more like my education when I was a little kid.”

Progressing through high school, Gable’s interest in education flourished. After graduating from Yale and working as an environmental educator in Atlanta for five years, she relocated to New Jersey for family reasons. Gable then decided to continue her studies at Rider University, choosing to pursue ESL because of her formative experiences working with Atlanta immigrant communities. At Rider, the university curriculum along with the influence of her peers further refined Gable’s values in education and her teaching skills.

Along with two other Rider alumni, she participated in a series of conferences for the New Jersey Education Association. After recognizing the severe lack of subject material concerned with aiding English Language Learners, Gable and her peers decided that their input was needed. Subsequently, at their second NJEA conference, they presented on their use of translanguaging, a central principle in ESL programs.

“Translanguaging is using a student’s first language to help them access the content or the curriculum, but not in the sense that you’re just translating everything,” said Gable. “It’s rather like drawing connections to their first language.”

In addressing the diverse language proficiency levels in her classroom, Gable uses a teaching strategy called differentiation. Recognizing the challenge of reaching every student, she illustrates this approach using assessments.

“The point is [to] make the content of your class accessible, even if you share no language.”



photo: Wenya Huan

ESL teacher Anna Rose Gable teaches an ESL English class.

For intermediate-level students, it may involve multiple-choice options, while for more advanced learners, it may be open-ended response questions instead. To accommodate newcomers, Gable simplifies the process by presenting questions alongside pictures. Her ultimate goal is comprehensibility, an ESL term that denotes the class material’s accessibility.

“The point is ... [to] make the content of your class accessible, even if you share no language. ... You just need enough support to get to that point,” Gable said.

Anuar Viruel Lopez ’25, a student in ESL English III with Gable, voiced her insight on the transformative impact of Gable, shedding light on how Gable’s guidance and support went beyond the classroom.

“I would say something that I learned from her is how to write better [in] my stories and also how to speak better and more formal[ly],” said Lopez. “Something [that] sets her apart is that she actually help[s] us and teach[es] us what to do and what’s wrong. ... That’s why she is an amazing teacher.”

Gable’s doctrine of empathy and assistance is broadly felt, as demonstrated by a discussion with Dany Isai Melchor Garza ’24, another student in Gable’s ESL English III class.

“She is always helping me. I don’t have that many teachers that I can talk [to] about my problems. ... She is the only teacher that always hear[s] me and always support[s] me,” Garza said.

Gable highlighted several PHS initiatives aimed at supporting ESL students in an extracurricular fashion similar to how she does in the classroom. She noted a

new Peer Group initiative last year that is conducted in Spanish, emphasizing its inclusivity. Outside of the ESL department, Gable recognized the efforts of the Latinos Unidos Club, where students learning English and their fluent peers can learn from each other and celebrate their diverse backgrounds.

Reflecting on recent progress at PHS, Gable has remarked many positive changes towards incorporated inclusivity, such as the increase in the number of ESL teachers and bilingual aides. However, while the district has greatly improved on this front, she finds that there is still room for more bilingual staff in various departments.

“For a while, we had a bilingual front office secretary or administrative assistant. And having her meant that if my kid — one of my kids who doesn’t speak English yet — walks in the building and doesn’t know where to go, there’s [always] someone they know they can ask,” Gable said.

Throughout her time as a teacher, Gable has viewed choice as a guiding principle. She feels that every student’s voice should be heard and that this voice should have the power to choose a path. In the ideal classroom, students would be able to pursue learning to the fullest extent using choice as the guiding principle. Gable believes that utilizing this principle requires empathizing with students and that using empathy to hear the voices of students is an essential prerequisite towards creating choice.

“I would like for every kid to feel they have choice in their education, to get to choose to work on things that are interesting to them, [and] to feel like they’ve learned something new every day,” said Gable. “I ... have an attitude that every kid is worth it and every kid has something to say. ... To be a good ESL teacher, you have to believe that everyone has something to contribute.”

PHS delegation reflects on impactful MSAN Student Conference



photo courtesy: Christopher Foreman

CJ Foreman ’23, Sheena Ash ’25, Jihad Wilder ’23, Josh Figueroa ’23, Chance Robinson ’23, Justin McLeod ’25, Lisa Ndubsi ’26, Anita Ndubsi ’26, Henriette Ondongo ’25, Kevin Palacios ’23, Bethany Siddiqui, and Rashone Johnson take a picture after the conference.

Emma Dweck and Harry Dweck,
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

From November 1 to 4, 12 PHS student leaders and chaperones traveled to the Minority Student Achievement Network Student Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. During the four-day event, PHS students participated in thoughtful discussions on social justice issues with other students from around the country.

According to Bethany Siddiqui, coordinator of student and family services at PHS and one of the trip’s chaperones, the goals of the conference were twofold: to help both students and administrators.

“[In] most school districts ... there may not be as many students of color, [so] it’s really hard for ... those students to feel comfortable in the hallways and in class, and to feel represented. So, MSAN is not only [for] students, but for teachers and administration [as well] ... to figure out ways to make their school more inclusive and supported,” Siddiqui said.

Sheena Ash ’25, who joined the district’s MSAN club in seventh grade, came to a similar conclusion, noting that the conference has given her an appreciation for the importance of her work.

“It’s really integral to building ... community in our school and making all of our minority students feel closer

together,” said Ash. “I think it’s really good that we [get to] represent the school as intelligent individuals who have voices and opinions on social justice initiatives.”

According to Assistant Principal Rashone Johnson, another important part of the program’s mission was to encourage minority students to challenge themselves academically.

“It’s about exposure,” said Johnson. “Educating students and letting them know that they are able to do the work and [they] got people that are here to help [them] with [it].”

One of the major parts of the trip was each school’s presentation on a school-specific solution that addresses social justice. In PHS’ case, it was the implementation of a platform called Tiger Talk, created to highlight the achievements of minority students.

“We want to make sure that in any school district, no matter if it’s highly marginalized or diverse, that every single student has a time where they feel seen,” Ash said.

Another important segment of the conference were lectures from minority community leaders. Ash found that MSAN was an opportunity to discuss difficult subjects, such as violence and suicide.

“We had a lot of really personal moments; like, we had a speaker come [in to] talk about ... the youth rate of violence and guns and all that stuff. He was talking about his family and all these obituaries that he [was] doing on the ground. It was a very sad moment. So we wanted to talk to make sure that we all felt ... mentally OK, and that ... we could still have an uplifted point of view and still focus on a social justice project, despite ... hearing such discouraging things,” Ash said.

Despite the challenging topics, both Siddiqui and Johnson have good memories from the trip.

“It was awesome. ... I think [the students] did a great job representing themselves and ... the school. There is not a single school that left that national conference that does not know who Princeton High School is,” Johnson said.

For Siddiqui, the best part was seeing MSAN members grow as leaders.

“I think that’s the biggest takeaway, ... being excited about what’s to come next — what the kids can really do here,” Siddiqui said.

Kim Foster presents her book 'The Meth Lunches' to the PPS community

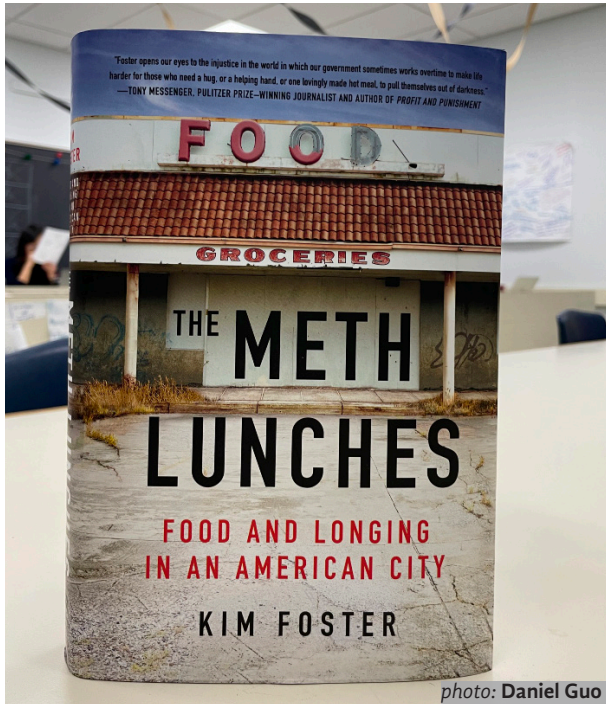


photo: Daniel Guo

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"The Meth Lunches" explores the untold stories of those struggling with their relationship to food.

"Before I worked at Princeton High School, I was really involved in hunger programs, [so when I read the book], it really just moved me. I reached out to Labyrinth Books in town and they were able to get in contact with [Foster] since she is doing a tour to promote her book," said Dinan. "I wanted to bring in PHS Food Aid, which is very much involved in hunger programs in our community, and PHS Generation One because they work with a lot of under-resourced families in town."

Yugandhara Luthra '24, a leader for PHS Food Aid and a member of the panel discussion after Foster's presentation, believes her talk serves as a reminder of what injustices can lie not only within our own, but other communities across the country also.

"For those who live in the Princeton community, we are typically sheltered away from poverty," said Luthra. "At PHS, we can try to integrate the concepts and encourage discussions of topics like hunger and poverty in order to create more awareness as well. Her talk seemed to serve as a reality check to how we view our lives, and if PHS students become exposed to her message, then our school community will truly become more inclusive and open-minded."

After receiving advance copies of the book and purchasing dozens more after release with the help of the PTO, Dinan shared Foster's story with teachers around the school. According to Dinan, the book was recently added to the curriculum of multiple English classes at PHS, and community members who came to the talk were encouraged to sign up for future discussions with the various supporting organizations in Princeton.

"AP English [Language and Composition students] are reading the book ... and [students] in Contemporary Literature are reading it now as well," said Dinan. "I'm hoping more students come [to the event] because she wants to gear it towards students and really engage with [them]."

Food insecurity is not the only topic that is addressed in the book though. Through promoting her book, Foster also hopes to promote healthier eating habits, which could be especially beneficial for students.

"Vending machines in schools are really impacting how kids are going to eat for generations. And it's a hard habit to break," said Foster. "There are [other] things that you can do when you have events at school; start prioritizing home-cooked food over a food truck or ordering from a restaurant, ... [or inviting] parents and staff who have cuisines they want to share."

Overall, Foster's advice to PHS students is to get out of their comfort zones and try to learn about others in their community through avenues such as food. Most importantly, Foster believes these discussions are catalysts to understanding and helping others.

"We all live in our bubbles, and we tend to hang out with people who are like us. And so really what I want people to do after they read the book is [to] jump out of their bubbles [for] a little bit and talk to people," said Foster. "Be open and curious about other[s], and then make a connection."

PHS hosts an inaugural TEDx youth event

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"Having community is something that is very special," said Csapo. "I hope people take away from my presentation that everyone has a bright future, and to not judge a person by their quirks or their differences."

With positive feedback from a majority of the audience, many attendees enjoyed the central theme of change that tied all nine presentations together.

"I really liked how everything was about change and finding positivity in weakness," said attendee Simryn Patel '26. "I feel like more people should be introduced to this opportunity."

The event was not only an insightful experience for audience members, but also a rewarding opportunity for the speakers.

"I [was] able to meet really cool people," said Priya Brunnermeier '25, another presenter at the event. "I liked the research ahead of it and [felt] satisfied after knowing that [I was] able to overcome [my] initial fear in the moment."

Behind the night were months of planning by Tian, Huang, and PHS math teacher Brent Ferguson. Starting in February, they had to navigate the process of obtaining a TEDx license, finding speakers with unique topics, getting sponsors, and contacting photographers and videographers.

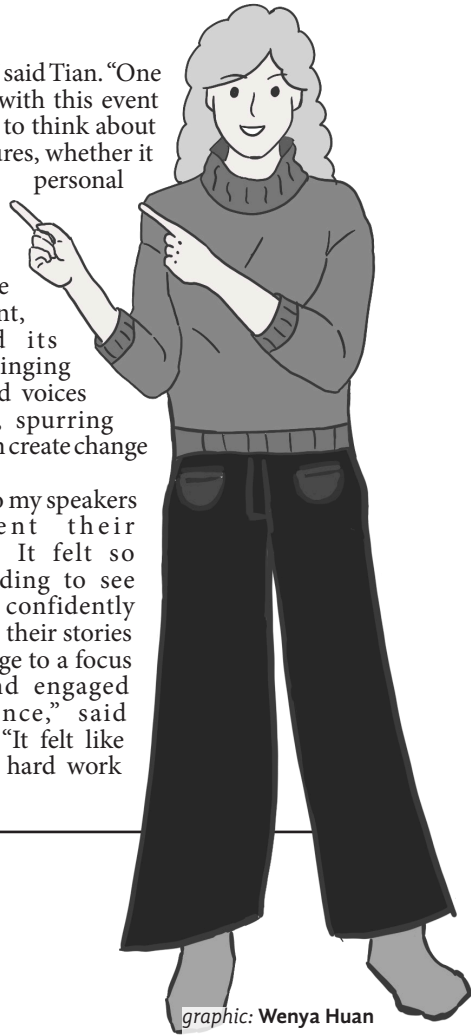
"[The] speakers wrote their talks independently, but we provided them with speech coaches and resources to aid

them with their talks," said Tian. "One of our biggest goals with this event was to inspire others to think about change and their futures, whether it be how they react to personal issues or broader issues like climate change or policy."

Following the success of the event, Tian emphasized its ultimate goal of bringing out underrepresented voices and untold stories, spurring conversations that can create change in the world.

"I loved listening to my speakers present their talks. It felt so rewarding to see them confidently speak their stories on stage to a focused and engaged audience," said Tian. "It felt like all of their and our hard work paid off."

"I loved listening to my speakers present their talks. It felt like all of their and our hard work paid off."



graphic: Wenya Huan

PPS technology workers petition to unionize public schools

Jessica Chen, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Shumona Bhattacharjya, MANAGING EDITOR

On December 11, the PPS Technology workers filed a petition to create a union to the New Jersey Public Employment Relations Commission with OPEIU Local 32 following the Board of Education's refusal to voluntarily recognize their union.

The ten members of PPS' Technology department and union organizer Max Bienstock initially sought voluntary recognition from the Board on October 23.

The PPS Technology workers primarily seek to unionize as Princeton Public Schools Technology Association because of their struggles to service PPS students and staff. The petition cited budgetary constraints, low staffing levels, and workplace conditions, specifically citing how there is only one technician for 1550 students and 300 staff members at PHS.

"There just weren't enough of them to be able to do as good a job as they wanted to, especially now that technology has become such an important part of education," said Bienstock. "They wanted to have more people in the tech department so that it wasn't each one of them having to work insane hours all the time."

Although Bienstock said that the technology workers have been disputing these issues for years, BOE President Dafna Kendal claimed otherwise.

"We had not heard the concerns from this group of employees before," said Kendal. "They brought up the idea of creating the union and then provided the reasons, but it was the first time the Board was aware."

PPS technology workers could not be contacted for an interview.

Despite this discrepancy, the biggest reason the Board could not approve the union was a concern that both supervisors and non-supervisors were present in the union, as different types of employees are not able to collectively negotiate.

"We believe that the Public Employment Relations Commission—an independent third party with the experience and authority to determine the composition of negotiations units, conduct representation elections, and certify exclusive representatives—should make those determinations," stated a Board press release on December 11.

The press release also acknowledged that the Board values and strives to treat all their employees fairly, whether or not they're part of a union.

If the PPSTA succeeds in being recognized under PERC, the technology workers can negotiate a contract with the BOE.

"This is an issue that personally [affects] these workers; it has nothing to do with interpersonal griping," said Bienstock. "It's really all about wanting to better serve the students. We wanted to show that this affects more than just the ten people."

Board Statement:

"The Princeton Public Schools Board of Education received notice today that the newly-formed Princeton Public Schools Technology Association filed a petition for certification with the Public Employment Relations Commission, although we have yet to receive a copy of the petition itself."

"As the Board had previously advised the PPSTA several weeks ago, we believe that PERC—an independent third party with the experience and authority to determine the composition of negotiations units, conduct representation elections, and certify exclusive representatives—should make those determinations. That is particularly important

when there are questions about the makeup of the union, since the Employer-Employee Relations Act generally prohibits supervisors and non-supervisors from being represented in the same collective negotiations unit."

"We value the collaborative working relationships we have with all three unions that already exist in the Princeton Public Schools and we look forward to PERC resolving and deciding this issue. We know

that the employment of caring, dedicated, and skilled employees is critical to the Board's mission of preparing all students to lead lives of joy and purpose as knowledgeable, creative, and compassionate citizens of a global society. We value all our employees, whether they are in a union or not, and we always strive to treat our employees fairly."

"We value the collaborative working relationships we have with all three unions that already exist in the Princeton Public Schools."



Listen to the new multimedia podcasts!



- Bhavya Yaddanapudi '25 on how to find your place at PHS
- Lauren Freedman's vision for PHS
- Look out for NEW episodes!

Graphic: Wenya Huan

OPINIONS

Killing curiosity: the growing obsession with true crime

Claire Tang and Chloe Zhao, STAFF WRITERS



From terrifying podcasts narrating grisly details about stabbings to Netflix series debuting ruthless serial killers almost every month, the public's growing obsession with true crime is undeniable. Unsolved murder cases are often treated by social media like they are works of fiction, with amateur "internet sleuths" pointing fingers at innocent people in an attempt to "solve" the case. While it is important for the public to stay aware of dangerous killers and be informed of crime cases, true crime content often prioritizes profit through sensationalizing their cases, leading to a desensitization towards violence.

People love true crime content; according to InsiderRadio, true crime podcasts experienced a 66 percent growth in listeners from 2019 to 2022. YouTube's analytics show that true crime content was viewed over two billion times in 2019, a 30 percent growth from the year before.

The desire for consuming true crime content seems innocent; after all, curiosity is perfectly natural, especially when it comes to distressing or disturbing situations. It's very logical that one might want to know more. However, true crime content often focuses on sensationalizing a case, as the gruesome nature of certain crimes is turned into something marketable for views. For example, in

true crime podcasts such as "Killer Queens," "True Crime and Cocktails," and "My Favorite Murder," the discussion of disturbing details becomes coupled with cocktail drinking, makeup sessions, cracking disturbing murder puns, and snacking.

The rising popularity of true crime content results in social media algorithms pushing similar content to more viewers, further incentivizing true crime content creators to continue releasing content that can generate clicks. This vicious cycle results in an emotional detachment from crime cases that desensitizes consumers, as they tend to forget that a real person has suffered through every violent detail mentioned in the video or podcast.

True crime content is often created under the guise of educating and cautioning consumers; however, there is a fine line between being informative and being exploitative.

In 2022, Netflix's biographical thriller titled "Dahmer — Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story" aired and quickly became a sensation. When millions of viewers watched Evan Peters' portrayal of Jeffrey Dahmer on the big screen, a fanbase began to romanticize

the character and eventually Dahmer himself, creating fan edits and even sympathy posts for the murderer. With fans' glorification of the show's depicted psychopathic behavior, the series served less as an informational film and more as an exploitative spectacle romanticizing Dahmer's life, with none of its revenue going towards helping the distressed victims' families. Many of these families have also deemed the film as "retraumatizing"; for example, Rita Isbell, the sister of Errol Lindsay, one of Dahmer's victims, has said that she wasn't even contacted by Netflix for consent prior to the series' creation, even though it featured a direct portrayal of her as one of the characters.

This exploitative behavior has also been evident in other shows and streaming services. Hulu released the true crime series "The Act" in 2019, based upon the controversial and nuanced case of Gypsy Rose Blanchard, a victim of Munchausen syndrome by proxy (a mental health condition in which the caregiver makes up or causes an illness or injury for the person under their care) from her mother. In desire to escape her mother's abuse, Blanchard ultimately murdered her mother, later sentenced to ten years of jail time. It was only two years after her conviction that Hulu began production for "The Act." Blanchard claimed in an interview that the retelling of her story was dramatized and inaccurate, with certain details being altered without her consent and compensation. Her public statements condemning the show were ignored by Hulu, and Blanchard claimed the show's producers would refuse to pick up her phone calls.

Exploitative true crime content is uniquely harmful, as it often rewrites victims' stories and puts them on blast in front of a wide, global audience. Especially in regard to large studio productions, victims and primary sources are often disregarded and silenced. Cases like Blanchard and Dahmer show the blatant disregard many studios hold for ethical media production, and make it clear that their intentions are to profit instead of spreading awareness.

“The discussion of disturbing details becomes coupled with cocktail drinking, makeup sessions, cracking disturbing murder puns, and snacking.”

In all forms of true-to-life content in the media, it is important to remember that there are real people behind these stories, and in the case of true crime content, real victims who suffer tremendous physical and psychological trauma as a result.

PHS students are constantly exposed to content surrounding real-life tragedies every day, and without this awareness, it's easy to become desensitized to tragedies and dehumanize its victims. Before consuming any sort of content that contains a degree of real-life violence, it's important to reflect on if your intentions are to entertain or to inform yourself.

We must eliminate insensitive body image discussions in schools

Jane Bennett, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR
Joy Chen and Aarna Dharmavarapu,
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

All teachers and staff members are tasked with the responsibility of fostering a positive learning environment for their students. Whether that be allowing students to go for walks when they feel anxious in class, or opening up office hours for students to ask questions, a major part of teaching is creating a space for students to feel comfortable in. However, this comfortable environment can begin to crack as students and teachers delve into more sensitive subjects.

Body image is not always an explicit topic in our classes but it tends to come up far more frequently than we may realize. Even a simple comment on a character's appearance in a book can potentially stir up the discussion of body image in the minds of students.

Considering how quickly a discussion of looks can turn into one of body image, it seems that avoiding the subject of bodies all together could be beneficial at PHS, especially since these discussions can lead to body dysmorphia and mental health issues.

Gym and health classes contain a large majority of the insensitive discussions surrounding body image that happen in school. It is understandable that a class that is intended to encourage health and fitness would bring up the body as a topic, but these discussions are often not handled particularly well.

Each year as the holidays come around, our gym and health teachers remind us not to eat too many carbs over the holidays and to make sure we walk off the extra calories. While these reminders to students before the holidays can be helpful, they can also be incredibly triggering. Additionally, they fail to take into account the fact that dieting and weight loss may not be healthy options for some students. Through these comments, a

harmful norm is perpetuated: that weight loss is the ideal solution to body image issues. Idealizing this solution pushes that assumption on to students, creating even more harmful standards which students use for self comparison.

Insensitivity in body image discussions is oftentimes unintentional; for example, speech could be rooted from previous stereotypes regarding specific body types.

This could manifest in an art teacher commenting on the ideal body figure to reference in sketches, or in an instance where a teacher undermines student's knowledge on certain "healthy" products because they don't look fit.

The concept of weight as an indicator of status comes up in every single history class at least once. However, pointing such a fact out in reference to a historical figure in front of students can harbor internalization and self comparison. Not only that, but it is important to make use of a diverse array of representations of body types to ensure that students do not feel singled out or pressured by the implicit displays of body image in the classroom.

Although a comfortable learning environment does stem from our teachers, maintaining respect between students is the key way to ensure that students feel good in their own skin.

Walking through the main intersection at PHS makes every student privy to harsh comments jokes and that can be incredibly detrimental to mental health by stirring up harmful ideas in students' minds. It is important that students take a moment to consider the consequences of their words and their actions. In a perfect world, we would eliminate all comments about other's appearance. However, this kind of

respect between students stems from our teachers leading by example by eliminating harmful comments and opening up the more difficult conversations surrounding body image in a sensitive way.

“Through these comments, a harmful norm is perpetuated: that weight loss is the ideal solution to body image issues.”

“Each year as the holidays come around, our gym and health teachers remind us ... to make sure we walk off the extra calories.”



Going forward, our teachers should put a greater emphasis on sensitivity surrounding body image. Before a sensitive lesson, teachers should give students a trigger warning and allow students to leave the room if they are struggling with a certain subject so long as they check in with them before the end of the period. This reflects a level of trust and mutual respect between the teacher and their students. Additionally, teachers should work to include greater representations of all body types to avoid pushing harmful body image standards on to students. We must speak cognitively about body image — no one knows what another person may be going through and what even back-handed compliments can trigger.

Artificial Ingenuity: is AI stealing the creative spotlight?

Tamar Assayag, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR and Harry Dweck, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In late 2022, following the release of Chat-GPT 3.0 and its image-based counterpart DALL-E 2.0, an AI revolution took the world by storm. In just under half a year, Open AI, ChatGPT's parent company, went from less than 100,000 monthly visits to nearly 2 billion. Immediately, dozens of large tech companies, like Amazon and Google, rushed to develop their own AI-powered products.

Now, few dispute the power of these tools in applications as diverse as medical diagnoses, autonomous vehicles, and environmental planning. For example, the Brazilian non-profit, PrevisIA, is using AI to identify parts of the Amazon rainforest at risk of deforestation by analyzing vast amounts of satellite data. However, in fields of creative expression, like the visual arts, literature, or music, the use of AI has proved controversial.

This conflict was central in this year's SAG-AFTRA and WGA labor strikes, where writers, artists, and actors alike feared that AI was and would continue to be used in place of their own creativity. While the strike was eventually resolved with a provision that dictated that AI could not be used to "undermine a writer's credit" or "reduce a writer's compensation," it nonetheless raised an important question: what is the value of human creativity over AI "creativity"?

At the center of the debate is interpretation of creativity. According to influential philosopher Immanuel Kant, it is the "ability to produce works that are "new" and "exemplary." There, a problem arises. AI, despite appearances, cannot spontaneously create original work—known as Strong Artificial Creativity. Programmer Ada Lovelace proposed that for a computer to possess Strong Artificial Creativity, it must be able to produce results that cannot be explained by its creator.

However, AI-generated results have a very simple root—the work of human artists that the system was trained on.

Essentially, AI is fed millions of samples of human work (without the creator's consent) and then regurgitates a product according to the prompt it is presented with. Throughout this process, there is no innovation—AI cannot create truly original work, rather it relies on human ideas. The result is a mass production of art devoid of meaning or thought, which overwhelms the truly new.

Unfortunately, corporations seem willing to sacrifice quality in the name of profit margins. In November of 2023, Michael Whelan—an illustrator known

for designing book covers for the likes of Stephen King and Brandon Sanderson—told the New York Times that while he doesn't feel particularly threatened by AI creativity, he believes competing with machine-made art will be "really tough" for younger artists, not necessarily because AI produces stellar results but because of the high speed and low cost that comes with it. In fact, several publishers have already admitted to using AI-generated art on book covers, and many artists are understandably frustrated over this new development.

The sense of pride and accomplishment you feel after standing back and observing an art piece that you created, a product of your own creative mind, is something special. Creativity is our purpose and our pride; it defines our individuality. So, the thought that this might be replaced by an emotionless machine is not only upsetting, but also terrifying. AI-generated art will never be a true replacement of human art, nor should it be. If the strikes have taught us anything, it's that while the defense of human creativity may be difficult, it's surely worth fighting for.



graphic: Caroline Gu

CHEERS

STUFF WE LIKE

&

STUFF WE DON'T

JEERS

<p>PLANTS</p> <p>Humor as a COPING MECHANISM</p> <p>Blue HIGHLIGHTERS</p> <p>LAUFEY's existence</p> <p>SURVIVOR season 45</p> <p>WINTER BREAK</p> <p>Supporting fellow musicians by attending SCHOOL CONCERTS</p> <p>POLAROID pictures</p> <p>JOSH HUTCHERSON</p> <p>CLAW CLIPS with fun designs</p>	<p>Inboxes spammed with random COLLEGE EMAILS</p> <p>Getting GHOSTED</p> <p>Carrying heavy WINTER COATS around school</p> <p>WORMS</p> <p>INSTAGRAM ADDICTIONS</p> <p>Classrooms that STINK for no reason</p> <p>DRY SKIN</p> <p>Waking up on COLD MORNINGS</p> <p>People who huddle in the MIDDLE of the hallway</p> <p>No SNOW</p>
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Don't follow the Insta-bandwagon: celebrate college decisions offline

Editorial

Considering how normalized it is to post about college acceptances, we start to make the assumption that not posting means a rejection. But shouldn't we be understanding of the fact that not everyone wants to share their future plans? In a perfect world, we would hope that everyone feels comfortable sharing where they are applying because there wouldn't be that fear of judgment. However, the desire to conceal college applications prior to decision day is a completely valid approach to avoid judgment.

Among the posts, there's a stark disparity between posts about universities with sub-20 percent acceptance rates versus "less selective" universities. The stories that get the most traction and people that get the most posts are those that are going to these sub-20 acceptances. While these universities are incredibly difficult to be accepted into, there's no reason to feel ashamed to post about going to schools that are as much of an achievement as getting into 1 percent acceptance schools. As cliched as it is, everyone should genuinely be proud of whatever college they get into.

Not only are we flooded with college content on students' personal Instagram stories, but designated class decisions pages on Instagram constantly update with which college decisions are coming out each day. These pages also post daily about who has gotten in where, continuing to put college on our minds when we may have wanted to go on social media as an outlet for stress in the first place. Granted, getting to congratulate someone you love, respect, or even just see in the hallway on their college decision is an incredibly lovely way of joining together for our last year. However, getting a constant reminder of people's plans especially when yours are up in the air adds more stress and feelings of inferiority in a time that is already so full of it.

While we shouldn't necessarily stop posting — we should all be proud of our friends! — we could start to destigmatize posting about rejections, or just not posting in the first place. It's not so bad to value celebrating with friends and family in person, and not feel the obligation to bring the celebration to Instagram.

You open Instagram and click on the first story. "Congrats! My bestie got into Harvard!!!" You swipe to the next "Class of '28!" post. You swipe to the next "_____ bound, so proud!!!" Although you're genuinely proud of everyone for getting into college, being flooded with congratulations while waiting on your own decisions or after being rejected is not a pleasant combination.

Instagram stories to congratulate friends on getting into their dream universities are not completely toxic. It is incredibly special to see seniors take the next step in their lives and get into the university they've been dreaming of for many years. Furthermore, senior year is when the cliques start to fall apart, walls break down, and peers who have known each other for as long as thirteen years gain more respect for one another because they can recognize the work that it took to get beyond high school. Seeing each other's posts is another way the senior class becomes more united over a shared experience that has inevitably caused everyone more stress.

However, the congratulatory stories are only heartwarming to an extent. After the flooding of stories, a touching action becomes an obligation for friends and an expectation for the college-bound senior. Nowadays, it seems as if the only way for people to know who got into college is to check Instagram stories or the class decisions page. On big decision days, such as Ivy Day, many seniors find themselves continuously refreshing the page attempting to see who did — or didn't — get in.

Hot talk, cold action—the climate may be changing, but policy isn't

Tamar Assayag, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR

In late November of this year, the White House announced that President Joe Biden will not make an appearance in this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference, angering and confusing climate activists. This UN conference aims to formulate concrete plans to combat global warming and decrease greenhouse gases emissions through crucial policy-making. Vice President Kamala Harris has stepped in to fill the seat for the U.S. representative in place of Biden, but the president's last minute withdrawal from the conference still poses an essential question: What is the role of political and world leaders in taking an active position to combat climate change?

The United States is one of the leading countries in the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. According to Statista in 2021, the United States ranked second in a report of countries that produce the most carbon dioxide per capita. Wouldn't a country that causes so much harm to the environment try to make more of an effort to reverse this damage? While it is true that several of the policies passed under the Biden administration, such as the Inflation Reduction Act that aims to reduce greenhouse gases emissions by investing a large sum of money in clean energy, have made steps to improve the state of global climate change, it doesn't mean that missteps have not occurred. For example, Biden's approval of the Willow Project—a large oil drilling plan in Alaska—

in March of 2023 was an incredibly frustrating decision, especially coming from Biden, who had frequently displayed commitment to combating climate change prior to this occurrence.

With the UN Climate Change Conference being arguably the most important and impactful environmental conference in the world, bringing together hundreds of world leaders and thousands of participants and representatives, it's difficult to argue against activists' criticism of Biden's sudden withdrawal. Politicians, particularly presidents, must be advocates for climate action, especially in times such as these. This past summer was the hottest on record according to NASA. Maricopa County in Arizona reported over 500 heat-related deaths this summer; on July 3, the average global temperature reached 62.6 degrees Fahrenheit, the highest ever recorded, according to Science News. At this point, immediate climate action is essential to Earth's survival, and world leaders must actually carry out the promises they've made for decades.

While Biden's announcement has shocked and discouraged many people, it would be incorrect to place all the blame on the sitting president of the United States. In fact, many of the Republican politicians currently battling for the Republican presidential nomination in the upcoming primary election have plans that are detrimental to the environment. In November, NPR

found that all seven of the major GOP candidates agreed that the United States should increase oil drilling as an energy source, with only candidate Chris Christie supporting renewable and clean energy sources such as solar and wind power. Additionally, several candidates, such as Vivek Ramaswamy, have stated their belief that climate change is a "hoax." It is astonishing that there are climate change deniers who could possibly hold presidential or vice presidential positions in just a year's time; the irresponsibility of several of these politicians cannot be disregarded.

While it is the role of world leaders to lead their nation towards a path of environmental consciousness and climate

activism, it is ultimately the role of the general public to elect into office politicians who display a genuine devotion towards protecting the planet from the looming effects of climate change. Considering that a significant portion of the current PHS student body will be eligible to vote at the next presidential or even primary election, this issue is about to be in our hands too. When the 2024

ballot box rolls around, it is high time to remember that unless we significantly decrease global temperatures in the next few years, several ecosystems will begin to collapse, and the impact of natural disasters will be more severe than they ever have been. Voting for a candidate who will help or hurt the environment may truly be a life or death decision, for us, and for all other species that roam the Earth.



graphic: Caroline Gu

The Tower

Princeton High School
151 Moore Street, Princeton, New Jersey

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Mission Statement

The Tower serves as a medium of information for the community through reporting and/or analyzing the inner workings of Princeton High School, the school district, and cultural and athletic events that affect the student body; providing a source of general news for parents, teachers, and peers; voicing various opinions from an informed group of writers; and maintaining quality in accurate content and appealing aesthetics, as well as upholding professionalism and journalistic integrity.

Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of the Tower consists of a select group of 14 Tower 2023 staff members. The views of board members are accurately reflected in the editorial, which is co-written each month by the Board with primary authorship changing monthly.

Letter and Submission Policy

All letters and articles are welcome for consideration. Please e-mail all submissions to phstowersenioreditors@gmail.com. The editors reserve the rights to alter letters for length and to edit articles. The Editor-in-Chief takes full responsibility for the content of this paper.

The Tower Online

The Tower is available to read online at www.towerphs.com

The newspaper accepts advice from the administration and the advisors in regard to the newspaper's content; however, the final decision to print the content lies with the Editors-in-Chief. The Tower's articles do not necessarily represent the views of the administration, faculty, or staff.

November Issue Corrections: The page 2 byline for "Flash Feature: Instant Decisions Day" should be Harry Dweck and Yitian Xiong, not Emily Kim and Aritra Ray. The graphic on page 12 should be credited to Charley Hu, not Leopold Renaudin. The first three photos (top to bottom) on page 14 should be credited to Charlotte Woods, not Caroline Gu.

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PRESENTS

graphics: Mia Gatzke

Fairytales

Few English words are as evocative as “gargoyle” — you can just picture those ugly little creatures perching on church walls or jutting out from the sides of cathedrals, with their claws of cracked stone curling around the cornice and their crooked, time-worn faces leering down at you. One could make the case that “gargoyle” has entered into the pantheon of “Strange Words Small Children Learn Somewhere” (joining “discombobulated,” “megalodon,” “paleontology,” and other venerated terms).

We have the French “gargouille,” meaning “gullet,” (that wet ravine between the mouth and the gut) to thank for “gargoyle’s” smattering of throaty consonants. This piece of etymology is a little misleading, though: it turns out that only some gargoyles are gullets. Yes, the earliest ones were designed as functional waterspouts — slick stone “gullets” for the buildings they oversaw — but I’m not convinced that a sculpture must be connected to a building’s drainage system in order to fall under the gargoyle umbrella. A decorative gutter system, after all, hardly feels like a descendent of the gargoyle.

Some argue that gargoyles are defined by their architect’s intention to scare the common folk into devoutness — unfortunately, unless you believe that the Washington National Cathedral’s Darth Vader gargoyle was built for evangelical reasons alone, the argument doesn’t hold up. The same goes for the idea that you can sort between what’s a gargoyle and what’s not by figuring out whether a statue is meant to protect a building’s interior from evil — or did the architects of that Washington cathedral mean to force-choke away any stray demons?

In the 21st century, gargoyles serve as a meta-comment about gothic architecture itself: they’re strange, over-the-top, and (most importantly) weirdly funny. The word “gargoyle” evokes not just “claws of cracked stone,” but also goofy, granite-toothed grins, awkward, unafraid postures, and the excited gesturing of a binocular-wielding tourist — gargoyles don’t have to be monsters, they just have to be creatures; stone beings crawling out from the parapets to say hello. To see my non-definition in action, let’s take a walk around Princeton’s campus and consider some edge cases.

We start just off Washington Road, outside of Guyot Hall. The building features not just an allosaurus skeleton (funny in the abstract; still not a gargoyle), but also 200 stone carvings of various plants and animals. Only some of them jut out from the building in a gargoyleish manner — engravings don’t count... a gargoyle has depth, you know? — or are distinct enough to make it onto our list, and so I’ll take Gabriel Fisher’s 2015 article for the Princeton Press Club at its word and set Guyot’s official gargoyle count at 65.

Our next stop makes little sense geographically, but this walk is imaginary (if you actually want to take a gargoyle tour of Princeton, you can find guides online), and it wouldn’t be complete without a trip to the graduate college. “Joy Ride,” neither a waterspout nor a monster, is still undeniably a gargoyle. Here’s how the New York Times described it in 1927: “Two representatives of ‘modern youth,’ a boy and a girl, each smoking cigarettes, driving along in a carefree attitude.” Bone-chilling stuff.

Our final stop is outside of Firestone’s Trustee Reading Room. The library’s exterior is flush with elaborate stonemasonry, but only one gargoyle warrants a mention here. The “Flute Player,” dating back to 1948, sits with a dog by his side and a flute in his hands, his crossed legs tucked up towards his chest, his cape wrapping back around into the library’s facade, a pair of circular glasses straddling the bridge of his nose. He has a curious, almost austere look about him. His facial features — the ones you can see behind the glasses — were modeled on W. H. Kilham Jr., one of Firestone’s architects (and a passionate flutist). But the “Flute Player” transcends his history; he outlasted Kilham, and he’ll outlast us, too.

While we’re here, though, we might as well look up. If you listened carefully to the oldest gargoyles, you could hear them at work, spitting water down towards the stones below. If you listen to the “Flute Player,” you won’t hear gurgling. But you might just hear music.

Deconstructing the myth: a begoyling tour of Princetonian monsters

Alexander Margulis,
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Seasonal fairy tales

Will Pittman, **SECTION EDITOR**, Chloe Zhao, **STAFF WRITER**, and Asya Morozov, **CONTRIBUTING WRITER**

For many holiday enthusiasts, “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” by Andy Williams perfectly encapsulates the season, describing adventures in the snow, cozy fires, and get-togethers with friends and family. And while we might celebrate the winter holidays a little differently than we did before, legends around the world continue to fuel wintertime wonder just as they did for our ancestors centuries ago. So, what tales did northern countries tell to pass the time through the bitter wintertime?

In Russia, it’s with the tale of Ded Moroz and Snegurochka. Ded Moroz (meaning “Grandfather Frost” in Russian) was an old man with a long white beard known for bringing presents to well-behaved children on New Year’s Eve. For 2,000 years, he lived alone. One day during a snowstorm, however, a good-natured couple — who were too aged to have children — created a girl made of snow. She was beautiful, with blue beads for eyes, red cloth for lips, and small holes for dimples. As the storm picked up, Ded Moroz took pity on them and brought her to life for those few short months of winter. The couple named the snow girl Snegurochka (meaning “snow” in Russian), and she was the light of their lives, spreading joy to her family, animals, and townspeople alike. She met a young man who she fell in love with, and on the first day of spring when they met, her snowy figure evaporated into the wind. However, Ded Moroz guided her spirit to the North, where she accompanies Ded Moroz on his annual journey to this day, prepared to spread all the wonder that she can in the short wintertime.

In East Asia, winter is celebrated with the legend of a beast named “Nian,” a ferocious creature from ancient China. Having the body of a lion, large horns, and the head of a demon, it normally resided at the bottom of the sea. But every Lunar New Year, the monster climbed up the shore into the village to inflict a rampage, trampling crops, devouring villagers and livestock, and tearing up straw houses. The inhabitants were terrified of the monster, fleeing into the mountains every year, hoping that their properties weren’t the ones attacked. One year, however, a mysterious silver-haired man arrived in the village, claiming he could rid them of the beast. Unconvinced, the villagers proceeded to seek refuge in the mountains that year. Upon return, they surprisingly found all of their belongings perfectly intact. Facing the amazed townspeople, the old man explained his methods. When Nian arrived in the village, he lit off a string of fireworks, setting off thunderous sounds that rang through the entire village. Nian, hearing the ear-splitting noise, froze in its tracks immediately. Next, the old man stepped into view wearing bright red from head to toe, which scared Nian off back into the sea. He explained that Nian had three weaknesses: loud noises, bright lights, and the color red. Ever since, when Lunar New Year’s Eve comes around, people dress up in red and light fireworks to keep Nian at bay.

Holiday tales don’t always come in Christmas shades of red and green. Some come in the blue robes of a frost spirit, and others in the bright red of Chinese calligraphy paper. Although every culture celebrates winter differently, most celebrations revolve around joy: joy for surviving a cold, harsh season; and joy for the arrival of a promising new year.

Why the hell should I care about fairy tales? Well, my dear, hypothetical friend, you should care because they’re fun. When was the last time you fought a dragon while riding a flying carpet? The last time you were a mermaid trying to find a world above the waves? The last time you crawled through a wardrobe door and talked to a goat? But beyond that, they’re also a reflection of our social values: what morals does society think are so important that they’re woven into some of the very first stories we tell our children?

Let’s look at how fairy tales portray women. There’s a grand total of two archetypes here: the poor innocent girl (bonus points for pearl-white complexion and romantic dreams of some prince to marry) and the wicked crooked-nosed witch or sister or stepmother or queen.

Take “Cinderella”: a poor, innocent orphan girl is mistreated by her wicked stepmother until a magical fairy godmother gives her the means to attend the Royal Ball and meet Mr. Prince-Of-Her-Dreams. To me, the lesson here seems like if you

wait around and suffer long enough, all of your problems will be solved, you will get to marry a handsome prince, and live happily ever after. It’s a similar case for “Sleeping Beauty” — a beautiful princess is cursed by an evil witch to sleep until awakened by a true love’s kiss from a savior of a prince. I suppose the moral here is that a woman should patiently wait for a prince to rescue her from life’s troubles.

Even when our heroine plays a more active role, it is almost always to win some prince’s hand in marriage. In “The Little Mermaid,” Ariel is anything but passive — she rebels against her parents’ desires, saves a prince from a shipwreck, and makes a costly deal with an evil witch. But why does she do all these things? Because she wants to marry the prince, of course! And, in the original (less child-friendly) Hans Christian Andersen version, the Little Mermaid commits suicide after she finds that the prince has married someone else.

Of course, not every fairytale involving women goes this way. For example, “The Chronicles of Narnia,” one of my favorite

stories, is a refreshing break from this mold. One of the main characters, Lucy Pevensie, is naive and flawed, yet brave; rather than romance, she is driven by compassion and a n (occasionally dangerous) curiosity. “Mulan” (pre-Disney remake) is another example; the titular character, Mulan, wins the battles not because she is stronger than her comrades, but because she is clever. These are the kinds of stories that I’d want to grow up with.

The traditional fairy tales have history; they have a place in our cultural legacy; they have nostalgia — even I, someone of the demographic you’d least expect to like Western princess stories — have fond childhood memories of Cinderella’s pumpkin carriage. Fairytales can spark a child’s imagination; they can instill that innocent optimism and magic about the world before life’s numbing pressures whittle it down. They are certainly stories worth reading and stories worth studying, but they are often outdated. So, maybe it’s time we question the values that we teach to the next generation. Maybe it’s time we write our own fairy tales.

Phantom in the playhouse

Zoe Nuland, **STAFF WRITER**, Catherine Zhang, **CONTRIBUTING WRITER**

Spooky spirits have long been a key presence in theaters and playhouses — you might’ve heard of Mr. Belasco, the “Bishop of Broadway,” haunting the halls of The Belasco Theatre in New York, or Olive Thomas, a chorus girl from the early 1900s, causing mischief in the New Amsterdam Theatre near Times Square. It’s no wonder that places where the lines between magic and reality blur would have their own behind-the-scenes lore. It just so happens that the PHS Black Box Theater houses its very own paranormal patron: the ghost of the Black Box, Brenda.

Julianna Krawiecki, drama teacher and play/musical director at PHS, recalls her first experiences with Brenda in the Black Box.

“My first year here, we were doing the show ‘Antigone’ in the Black Box. It was a Drama II show,” said Krawiecki. “During that, a trash can moved in the room. There was nobody around, and there was no way to explain it. Before she became ‘Brenda,’ it’s really just how we explained things that would happen in the room.”

Since then, some of Brenda’s favorite hobbies are causing technical troubles and pulling harmless little pranks on the theater community. Multiple drama students have noticed flickering lights, loud banging noises, and problems with the projector during their classes in the black box. During last year’s production of the spring musical, “Newsies,” Brenda caused chaos.

“Brenda made it so that whenever Ms. K touched someone (i.e. shook their hand, patted them on the back, etc), she would shock them,” said assistant stage manager Grace Waldman ’25.

Noa Zacks ’25, a junior in the theater program, also credits the room’s frequent temperature changes and drafts to Brenda, as well as the occasional appearance of mice.

“Maybe Brenda only appears in the form of rodents when us humans are disturbing her that day,” Zachs said.

However, Brenda’s backstory remains a mystery. All speculated that she was an aspiring actress that missed her opportunity in the spotlight and is doing everything she can now to get it back.

“Brenda was definitely the senior theater kid who wanted to get the lead, but ... she wasn’t made for the role,” said Sedona Raphael ’24, president of the Spectacle Theater Club. “Now Brenda will forever haunt the Black Box and try to be the star of the performance.”

Though her past is shrouded in mystery, she will continue to live on and be passed down through generations of theater kids. Next time the lights start flickering, you’ll know who to blame!

From fables to folklore: The not-so-feminist tales

Jieruei Chang, **CONTRIBUTING WRITER**



graphics: **Mia Gatzke**

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

A taste of holiday cheer: three different cookie recipes to try this year

Molasses and ginger stars

Gabby Kaputa, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

My grandmother makes molasses and ginger star cookies for Christmas every year, and while at first I was hesitant to give them a try, they have quickly become my favorite kind of Christmas cookie. They are super easy to make — you just throw everything into a bowl and mix it together — but mine still don't come close to the kind my grandma makes. These are best when warmed up or right after coming out of the oven so that the icing is still gooey and the cookies are soft, but they can also be delicious when they have been cooled and dipped into a warm cup of tea.

Preparation time: 25 minutes

Baking time: 7 to 9 minutes

Makes: around 60 cookies

Ingredients:

The dough:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup molasses
- ½ cup milk
- 3 ½ cups all-purpose (plain) flour

The icing:

- 3 cups confectioners sugar
- 2-3 tablespoons of milk

Recipe:

1. In a large mixing bowl, add the butter, brown sugar, ground ginger, and baking soda with an electric mixer on medium to high speed until combined. Then add in the molasses and milk. Finally, add in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer; stir in any remaining flour with a wooden spoon. Divide the dough in half, then cover it and let it chill for 3 hours until easy to handle.
2. On a lightly floured surface, roll each half of dough to a ¼ inch thickness. Then, using a star cutter, cut the dough into star shapes and place cookies onto greased baking sheets.
3. Bake the cookies in the oven at 375°F for 7-9 minutes until the edges are firm. Remove cookies and cool on a wire rack.
4. In a medium mixing bowl, stir together the confectioners' sugar and milk to make the icing with a drizzling consistency. Drizzle the icing over the cooled cookies.



Serinakaker

Tessa Silver, STAFF WRITER

Every year around the holidays, I look forward to making serinakaker (and eating them even more) with lots of help from my mom who grew up with them. Serinakakers are classic Norwegian butter cookies traditionally made around Christmas. Their simple flavor is complemented by a crumbly shortbread-like consistency that melts in your mouth, and they're quick and fun to make.



graphics: Sara Hu

Recipe translated and adapted from: <https://www.matprat.no/oppskrifter/tradisjon/serinakaker/>

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Baking time: around 10 minutes

Yield: around 30 cookies

Ingredients:

- 1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons vanilla sugar (or vanilla extract)
- ¾ cup room temperature butter, cubed
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg whisked together
- 1 egg white whisked together

Recipe:

1. Mix the flour, baking powder, and vanilla sugar in a medium bowl. Use your hands to crumble small cubes of butter into the mixture, incorporating the butter as much as possible into the mixture.
2. Use a fork to blend sugar and whisked egg into the mixture until you have a firm dough (don't worry if the dough is crumbly; it's meant to be that way). Gather the dough together, and put it in the fridge for up to a night.
3. Let the dough sit for around 10 minutes at room temperature to soften it. Then, divide the dough into small balls about 1 inch wide, and place them on a lined baking sheet.
4. Use a fork to indent and press down the cookies. Brush over the cookies with the whisked egg white and sprinkle granulated sugar over them. Put the cookies in the oven at 390°F for 10 minutes until they have a light golden color.

graphics: Caroline Gu

Peanut butter bonbons

Gabby Kaputa, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Peanut butter bonbons are the perfect dessert for special occasions or everyday life. My mom makes them every year for Christmas, and never seems to make enough; every year, my family and I fight over who gets the last one. While they at first look complex to make, it's really simple and only takes about 40 minutes for a large amount. The peanut butter and chocolate combination makes you want to eat the whole batch. On a cold day, they are especially delicious when the chocolate is slightly melted and when paired with a warm drink.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Baking time: 8 to 10 minutes

Makes: around 52 bonbons

Ingredients:

- ½ cup of softened butter
- ½ cup crunchy peanut butter
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose (plain) flour
- 2 cups chopped semisweet chocolate
- 2 teaspoons solid vegetable shortening

Recipe:

1. In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter, peanut butter, brown sugar, egg, vanilla, and baking soda with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour with a wooden spoon.
2. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place balls evenly apart on an ungreased baking sheet.
3. Bake the balls in the oven at 350°F for 8-10 minutes until cookies are set and lightly browned on the bottom. Remove from the pan and cool on a rack.
4. In a medium saucepan, add chocolate and shortening. Heat over a low setting until fully melted; then let it cool. Dip the peanut butter balls into the chocolate mixture until fully coated. Transfer the coated balls to waxed paper-lined baking sheets. Chill till firm, then store until ready to eat.



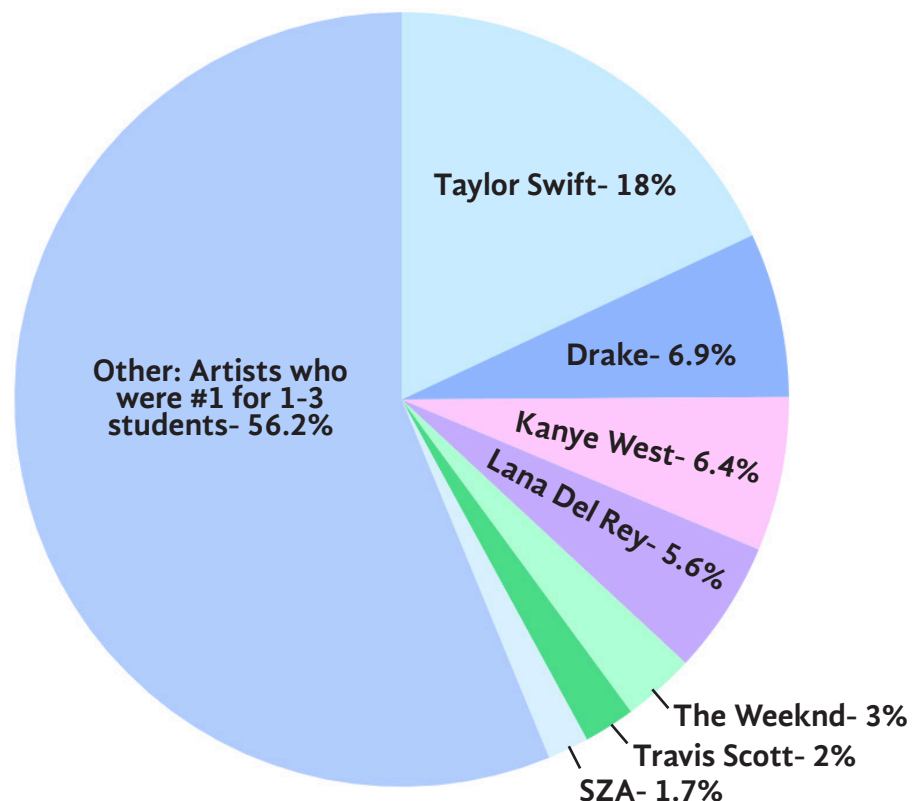
PHS' favorite artists, unwrapped

Ruhee Hegde, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Survey administered by TOWER EDITORS

Wondering how long you've been cranking up your headphones to listen to that one song on everyone's playlists? At the end of November, Spotify and Apple Music released their long-awaited "Wrapped" and "Replay" Series, where millions of music lovers can get a customized breakdown of their top artists, songs, podcasts, and most commonly played genres. To ring in the holidays and "wrap up" 2023, Tower Arts and Entertainment decided to hear some of your results and recap a few favorites that are common amongst the PHS student body. A total of 233 students from all four grades responded to our survey asking for students' #1 most streamed artist of the year. Check out the pie chart to see the top seven most popular artists!

Scan this QR code to listen to a playlist compiled of all these artists!



graphic: Marina Yazbek Dias Peres

PHS Studio Band returns to Abbey Road

Aarna Vachhrajani, CONTRIBUTING WRITER, Jane Hu, CONTRIBUTING WRITER, Yunsheng Xu, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For the second time in Princeton High School band history, Studio Band traveled to London from December 7 to 16, where they performed and recorded six pieces with seven-time Grammy Award-winning trumpet player Randy Brecker and his wife Ada Rovatti, who plays tenor saxophone, at the famous Abbey Road Studios.

In preparation for their upcoming trip, Studio Band members worked with the band director, Joseph Bongiovi, to rehearse the pieces. Bongiovi also coordinated with airlines for flights, found hotels, contacted tour companies, and collected fees. It was especially difficult to prepare in time for this trip from a music perspective. Not only was the music complex, but the Studio Band members also had very little time to prepare.

"We had other concerts and performances to do before we really got to dig into this music. In October, we had a Concert Band concert, and then we also [performed at] Homecoming. So we had a bunch of other [performances]. We really only spent about a month and a half preparing for this," Bongiovi said.

The Studio Band has performed internationally and participated in many competitions in the past. Although the band has previously performed in London, what made this trip especially special was being able to not only record in a historic studio, but also play with two high-caliber professional musicians.



photo courtesy: Ayan Khanna

While in conversation with band directors David Pollack and Joe Bongiovi, musicians Randy Brecker and Ava Rovatti prepare to record their solos for the Studio Band Album.

"I [was] most excited about meeting Randy Brecker and recording with him," said Gabby O'Neill '27, one of three drummers in the Studio Band. "It [was] a really fun experience."

Furthermore, the trip was an excellent opportunity for the students to explore England's culture and history. Many members of the band believed that the trip to England was an unforgettable experience.

"Not only did I learn and grow musically, I grew as a person and got closer to [other] people... in Studio Band," said Helen Tung '24. "I also got closer to my section as we [navigated through] various issues together."

When Studio Band wasn't busy with performances or recordings, they spent time exploring England and its culture. The band saw Stonehenge, arguably the world's most famous prehistoric monument, Windsor Castle, the royal residence in the county of Berkshire, and the birthplace of Shakespeare. The band also visited several Christmas markets in different towns and watched "Back to the Future: The Musical" at the Adelphi Theatre.

Even though the trip offered many exclusive opportunities, it also caused the Studio Band members to have difficulties in recording their pieces, as they encountered challenges in correct intonation and cutting off together. However, the biggest issue they faced was that people did not know their parts well enough for recording.

"As section leader, I had to tackle these issues gracefully and not unkindly, but effectively, and that isn't always

the easiest thing to do when you're working with a lot of different people," Tung said.

Despite all the challenges that the band faced, the recording opportunity was still very valuable. It allowed band members to learn how to problem-solve, stay calm in stressful situations, and work with other people. David Pollack, the director of the PHS Jazz Ensemble, explained that trips out of Princeton High School are a critical part of the band members' musical careers. These trips offer students many opportunities that they would not have otherwise had if they just performed in the United States.

"It was a great opportunity to record. I think it's incredibly important, not only to just explore new locations ... and see different cultures, ... but also [because] it's important to be able to ... take your music that you do every day somewhere else so that other people can experience the music and be a part of it," Pollack said.

This trip was not only an incredible opportunity to travel and explore, but also an introduction to a different side of the world of music that many Studio Band musicians will cherish for the rest of their lives.

"This is a real-life experience. This is something they'll have to document their entire lives ... and they'll always be able to stream it at some point and tell their children and grandchildren, 'This is what I did when I was in high school,'" Bongiovi said.



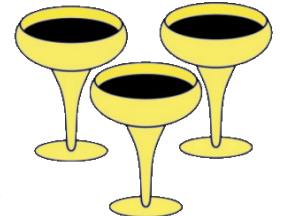
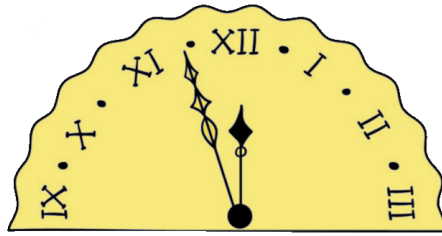
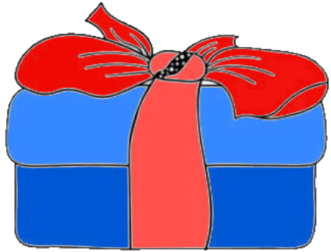
photo courtesy: David Pollack

During the recording session at Abbey Road Studios, Adele Slaymaker '25, Melanie Lamos '24, Isabella Kolleeny '24, Adam Jiang '24, and Oliver Que '24 play the clarinet for the song "Life Must Go On."



photo courtesy: Victoria Figueroa

At the concert at the St Pancras New Church in London, Ishaan Banerjee '24 performs a solo during the song "Sunday Morning."



A bundle of New Year's traditions

graphics: Wenya Huan

Celebrating the beauty of familiarity

Raya Kondakindi, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As the clock strikes midnight, people around the world bid farewell to the year that has passed and hug loved ones in celebration for the New Year to come. In Spain, twelve grapes are quickly eaten; in Denmark, plates are thrown at front doors; and, of course, in America, fireworks burst in unique colorful patterns across the dark sky. In my home, New Year's Eve is less about resolutions and reflections or grand plans and parties — it's about the comforting environment of entering a new year surrounded by the warmth brought by friends and family.

Just last year, my family and friends found ourselves in a different country as the countdown to midnight neared. With nothing planned in this new city, anticipation hung in the air as we wandered through unfamiliar streets. As the minutes got closer to midnight, we stumbled upon the only restaurant open. To our luck, the restaurant served a cozy Indian cuisine, allowing for some familiar food options for my Indian family in an otherwise new setting. Amidst the glasses clinked together, the laughter spread, and the reminiscent moments shared, I realized that creating this core memory relied not on any of the typical scenery of a New Year's celebration, but on the people with whom it was shared.

Living in the diverse town of Princeton, I've come to appreciate and learn about the ways in which people from different backgrounds celebrate the turning of the year. Even though many different traditions are practiced around the world in those closing hours, a global theme of love and connection persists into the New Year. With the people I love, when the New Year has thoroughly been rung in, my family and friends go around hugging each other, expressing our gratitude for one another through changing times.



graphics: Chloe Zhao

Memories of food, family, and friends

Avery McDowell, STAFF WRITER

The New Year's Eve traditions I have practiced with family and friends have always seemed to revolve around food. In recent years, I've spent this holiday with my close friends where we lay out a glittering array of fun appetizers, including pigs in blankets, mini tacos and pizzas, chicken samosas, cheese boards, mozzarella sticks (my personal favorite), and mini desserts — chocolate pretzels, brownies, and ice cream. Afterwards, we adorn ourselves in shiny clothes, put on sparkly makeup, have deep conversations about our past year, and laugh — really just enjoying each other's company.

These foods specifically remind me of New Year's Eve, when my brother and I were little and would watch movies and livestreams of performers in Times Square with our parents while eating the same array of delicious bite-size treats. We would lay in our winter pajamas on our sofa decorated with various fluffy blankets and pillows, warmed by the crackling fireplace. By the time the countdown finished and the ball dropped, we were both asleep. Though I may not always be with my family on New Year's Eve, the nostalgic scene of cozying up on the couch and the idea of bringing people together is preserved through the food.

After a fun New Year's Eve with friends, I am always with my family on New Year's Day. We have a special dinner consisting of pork loin, roasted vegetables, and most importantly, black-eyed peas. We like to believe that these peas give us good luck for the New Year. During these symbolic annual dinners, I get a great feeling of warmth. I particularly like ending my New Year's celebration by spending time with my family, since it sends me and my loved ones off into the future on a positive note.



Unique celebrations with loved ones

Chloe Lam, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

With the New Year just around the corner, families reunite to celebrate all the wonderful moments they have cherished together throughout the year, launching fireworks and following the countdown to its final seconds in excitement. Undeterred by the crowds of tourists, on New Year's Eve, a tradition in our family is to go to the Rockefeller Center in New York City to see the beautiful Rockefeller Christmas tree lights. After enjoying the scenery, we go to a bakery called "Angelina Paris." On the frosty sidewalks, we drink hot chocolate and eat fresh hot bread to stay warm. For my family, the New Year is about coming together to eat food and play games.

Bringing in our Chinese culture is very important to us while celebrating the New Year. We make cake, mochi, dumplings, rice cakes, beef noodles, steamed fish, and more!

On the days leading up to the New Year, I love to spend time with my friends as well. We relax on the couch huddled underneath blankets as we stream TV shows and movies, listen to music, and have a great time. Every year, we dress up according to a certain theme, which makes our get-togethers even more exciting. We bake brownies and cookies together while making pasta, tacos, eggs, buffalo wings, and onion rings. Making food with my friends and family provides a sense of joy and appreciation for the people I have in my life. Everyone has different traditions that make these special days leading up to the New Year personal to them, and I love learning about how different cultures have special traditions to incorporate into my own celebration. By adapting our celebrations and making them unique to ourselves, we open up the possibility of a better year every year.

Winter Celebrations Crossword

Siyona Lathar, STAFF WRITER



Across

4. The Times Square ___ drop
5. Hanukkah is the "Feast of ___"
7. The Three Wise Men gave gifts to ___
8. Place where Santa Claus lives
10. There are ___ candles on the menorah
11. ___ the Red-Nosed Reindeer
14. "Queen of Christmas"
15. Chocolate ___ coins
16. The first principle of Kwanzaa
17. Saint Lucy's Day symbolizes ___
20. Kissing under the ___
21. Day of the week for this year's New Year's Day
22. Lighting ___ at midnight for the New Year
23. Winter solstice: ___ days, longest nights
24. Hanukkah dessert that's similar to a doughnut

Down

1. ___ the Snowman
2. Kwanzaa in English means "first ___"
3. Another name for Santa Claus
5. Spinning top played during Hanukkah
6. Kwanzaa color that represents the future
9. Winter solstice symbolizes the rebirth of the ___
12. First name of the creator of Kwanzaa
13. Goals for the New Year
18. Demonic "evil twin" of Santa Claus
19. The Northern Hemisphere will get ___ hours of daylight for this year's winter solstice
20. Decorative mat that a kinarra is placed on
23. Candle used to light the other candles on the menorah

Answers can be found online at towerphs.com!

graphics: Sara Hu and Wenya Huan

Max Dunlap '24 explores song creation through music composition

Meghna Myneni, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For many people, music is secondary to other responsibilities — a background track for completing chores, finishing up an assignment, or working out. However, for Max Dunlap '24, music is a central focus in his life and a passion he has cultivated all on his own. Whether it be playing his signature instrument, the guitar, in Studio Band, or composing music in his own free time, Dunlap is always surrounded by music.

What made you want to play the guitar?

I was really into rock and roll early on when I was a kid, and I listened to Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones, so I got really into rock-style playing. That's what introduced me to the world of guitar, and I picked it up after that.

How has playing the guitar influenced your music composition?

For the majority of the songs I write, I originally write the central theme on guitar and map out everything else around that riff, or melody, or chord progression. So, a lot of my ideas in terms of music composition come from a riff or a chord progression or something that I originally play on guitar.

What got you interested in music composition?

It was a more interesting way to express music. I felt that when I would play other people's music that I wasn't playing my own style. I got really into writing music when I realized I could create my own songs. When I started to learn how to play more instruments, it became easier to write music as I learned how to express myself through all these instruments.

What style of music do you most enjoy composing and why?

I enjoy composing orchestral music because you can build up the sound so much easier and you can dynamically create really large, intense moments and really small, quiet moments; you can more freely put a song together by doing that. I'm currently recording something that's more orchestral — it'll be out in the next month or two — but producing and composing orchestral pieces is really fun because you can build it up to a larger degree.

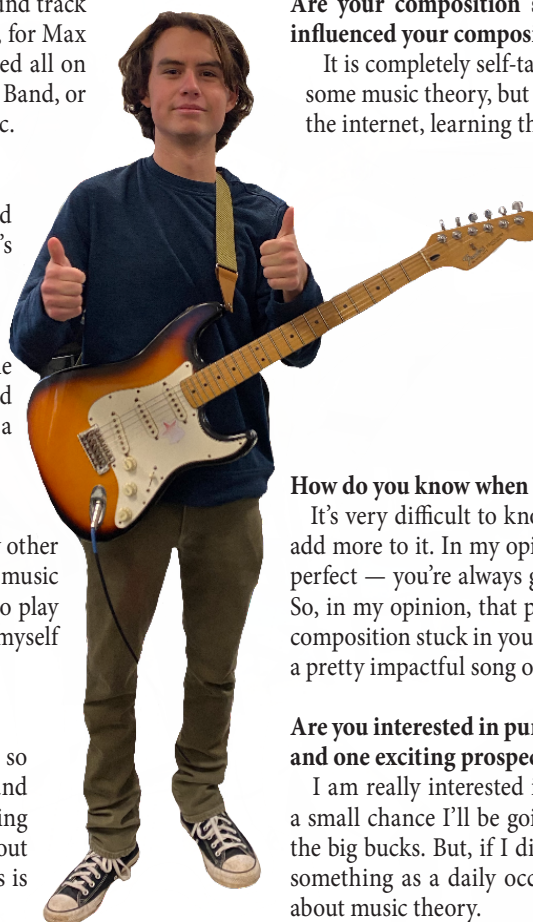


photo: Sara Hu

Are your composition skills self-taught or did you take lessons? How has this influenced your compositions?

It is completely self-taught. I have a very small grasp on reading music and I know some music theory, but most of it is just completely self-taught — looking up stuff on the internet, learning through YouTube, or other things. But it is primarily noodling around and writing stuff that comes to mind and building off of those things.

Can you describe your music composition process?

I usually start out with a melody or chord progression that I write out or initially play on guitar or piano, or sometimes bass. Then, I write stuff around that and create new parts and add them, and I add new instruments to build up this larger thing based on this smaller initial riff or melody that I write.

How do you know when a composition is complete and does not need to be revised?

It's very difficult to know when something is complete because you always want to add more to it. In my opinion, there isn't really a composition that can be completely perfect — you're always going to want to change something or do something with it. So, in my opinion, that point is just when you can sit back, listen to it, and have that composition stuck in your head for the rest of your day; that's when you know that was a pretty impactful song or piece.

Are you interested in pursuing a career in the music industry? What's one challenge and one exciting prospect you anticipate?

I am really interested in pursuing a career in the music industry; however, there's a small chance I'll be going into something like that, just because it doesn't bring in the big bucks. But, if I did, an exciting prospect for me would be the ability to create something as a daily occupation, and one challenge would be having to learn more about music theory.

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LEFT: Renée Cox, *March*, from the series *Queen Nanny of the Maroons*, 2004. Courtesy KODA, New York. © Renée Cox RIGHT: MiKyoung Lee, *Reflected Memory 2* (detail), 2022. Collection of the artist. © MiKyoung Lee. Photo: Joseph Hu

SPORTS

The full spin of the frisbee club with Paulo Barbosa '25



photo: Caroline Gu



photo: Caroline Gu

Left (left to right): Cyrus Cordle '25, Benjamin Gitai '25, and Alex Kwok '25 run plays on the front lawn after school. Right (left to right): Winn Price '25, Benjamin Gitai '25, Muhammad Hassan '25, Ozan Kolygalu '25, Reed Sacks '25, and Paulo Barbosa '25 compete for the frisbee in midair after a long throw.

Sophie Zhang, SPORTS CO-EDITOR
Jaiden Jain-Edwards, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

In September of 2022, Paulo Barbosa '25 turned a shared pastime among him and his friends into an established group now known as the Frisbee Club. While this circle of friends has been playing scrimmages together on the front lawn since 2021, they've transformed this activity into a formal club, with the aim of collectively improving their skills in a fun environment.

Barbosa first found his passion for the sport during his freshman year, when the gym teachers Heather Serverson and Kelsey O'Gorman introduced frisbee to his class. After that moment, Barbosa grew inspired to learn how to play frisbee, and later on, guided members through watching videos, warmups, and scrimmages.

"Everybody's been much more excited about frisbee in the Frisbee Club because [we are] going through the same journey improving together," Barbosa said.

Within these groups, the club practices their aim and catching, as well as specific throws such as the forehand, backhand, and overhand.

"I come around to make sure people are releasing the momentum of the frisbee correctly ... [and] fine tune everybody's throw to make it better," said Barbosa.

"Then afterward we get into scrimmage teams, and that helps people practice more on catching and running."

While each member is dedicated to enhancing their skills, the club has a wide variety of skill sets, ranging from beginners to experienced players.

"We make sure to include everybody fairly and we also evenly balance teams during scrimmages to make sure everybody has a very fun and inclusive time," said Barbosa. "I also make sure to tell our better members that we should focus more on including the newer people rather than trying to win a game because you want... them [to] have that fun experience with the club."

Although the Frisbee Club is relatively new, the membership has increased since the Club Fair, where they brought in around 15 more members. With plans to promote the club more on their Instagram page, @phs_ultimate_frisbee_club, Barbosa is determined to share his passion with the rest of the student body.

"Everybody's really excited to play," said Barbosa. "I got people emailing me when the next Frisbee Club [meeting] is even though it's really cold, so I think the general well-being and... participant tendency of our

members have boosted... because we've been able to fine-tune everything more."

One major goal Barbosa is hoping to achieve is for members to play in a more energetic and competitive environment, by joining the American Association of Ultimate Frisbee. With free pinnies and equipment given by the Association, Barbosa plans to use these resources to train before playing in competitions and tournaments.

"We've also been recently thinking about setting smaller tournaments between the schools [we've talked to] with our members," said Barbosa. "I know I have a contact in Hun who might be able to help the Princeton Ultimate Frisbee club grow."

In addition to playing in a challenging atmosphere, Barbosa aspires for these bonds the club forged to last even after he graduates, carrying on his determination to share his love for frisbee on to future students.

"I was just really excited and happy to see so many people [who] wanted to play frisbee and ... get some good exercise in," said Barbosa. "I can see ourselves going way farther with this ... team."

Why it's never too late to start a sport

Shira Kremer-Godelnik, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

"Athletic" has never been a word I used to describe myself. I wasn't really great at running, catching, kicking, or any of the skills needed in most sports. That's what made it particularly surprising when two weeks before school began, I found myself at the girls' soccer tryouts. I hadn't played soccer in ten years, but I was curious to see if it was possible to turn myself into an "athletic" person. While my immediate response to such a question was no, as is the same for many other high school students, I found that, in reality, such a change was completely achievable. Even though many people consider starting a sport in high school as too many years too late, the truth is that it's never too late to pick up a new sport, or for that matter, join a high school sports team.

Coming into a new sport as a high school student can seem daunting, but a lack of experience shouldn't deter anyone. No matter what your skill level is, if you want to join a sports team in high school, you should — you will always have something to gain and something to offer.

Besides, there are plenty of other beginners in the Princeton High School athletics program. Teams like junior varsity girls volleyball are mostly made up of beginners who join the team to have fun or to

learn a new skill. For many, if not all, of PHS sports teams, junior varsity teams are there as a pipeline for players who might not be ready to play at the varsity level yet but might eventually want to reach that position. This separation of varsity and junior varsity allows for an even skill-level environment, suitable for different groups of players who may be at various points in their athletic careers. This takes away the isolation of being a beginner, an idea that wards many people away from the prospect of joining a high school sports team.

Due to this separation of skills, junior varsity teams often progress at a slower pace to build a better understanding of the sport. This style of teaching is made for beginners, so if someone with no experience joins, they won't immediately be thrown into the deep end. For example, when I joined soccer, there were a lot of rules I didn't understand, as

well as skills and practice drills that I had never seen before. My coach and teammates helped me throughout the season, explaining everything I needed to know, which was only possible because of the way junior varsity is structured. Being on a team that was able to take its time really helped, and can help anyone else starting in the same position that I was.

Besides, athleticism and skill isn't the only thing that coaches look for. For a lot of them, coachability is an extremely important aspect that they seek to find

in their athletes. The 2019 NCSA State of Recruiting Report found that 35 percent of college coaches rank character, or coachability, first. I learned through my first season that as long as someone comes into a sport willing to learn and get along with their teammates, they are bound to progress as an athlete and a person. Fitness can be gained through practice, but coachability cannot be taught.

Starting as a beginner, most of the first-time athletes will find themselves starting on the junior varsity roster. However, starting on a junior varsity team doesn't necessarily mean they will stay there for the rest of their high school years. Many PHS athletes who are now on varsity teams started their journeys on the junior varsity roster. While reaching the varsity team may not be the end goal for many of these newcomers, the improvement that they gain from just joining the team allows for athletes of all levels to move up.

When playing a sport regularly, everybody in every skill level gets a chance to improve. Research shows that as little as two weeks of regular exercise can start to reap results. It was hard for me especially, to start exercising after such a long period of time, but I found that once my body got used to my new routine, aspects of the sport that I once found difficult, such as running a warm-up lap without stopping, became easier as time went on.

Any high schooler that's looking to improve their athleticism, or even just be part of a team community, should join a sport. Look online; see what the next available season is and which sports catch your eye. All these well-known benefits to sports — the physical, mental, and social aspects — aren't by any means out of reach. All it takes is a click of a button, some dedication and passion, but most importantly, an open mind.



graphic: Wenya Huan

Sweating in style: how athleisure has transformed fashion trends

Katie Qin, STAFF WRITER

Layer a sweatshirt on top of a bright-colored tank top paired with some leggings, and boom: an effortless yet elegant look that can keep up with anyone throughout the day, whether they're at home, school, work, or the gym. A fad in which comfort intertwines with style, athleisure has emerged as a fashion statement, becoming more than just a mix between athletic and leisure clothing. Some examples of popular brands who have redefined this look are Lululemon, Nike, Athleta, and Champion. Their staple items include sweatpants, yoga pants, sweaters, hoodies, and sneakers, among other clothing.

As athleisure continues to dominate the fashion industry, more and more people opt for comfy, convenient, and casual clothing without sacrificing style. It seems pretty obvious why it's such a hit, but when did it really start picking up steam?

The origins of athleisure date back as early as the 1930s, when the brand Champion invented the hoodie — a staple in almost everyone's closet now — for their laborers during the chilly winters of New York, as reported by Inc. Magazine in 2019. Another milestone

in technology and fashion was reached when a chemical company called DuPont invented spandex in 1958. It is a fabric commonly used in sportswear and athleisure for its comfort, fitted style, and resistance to a variety of stains, including those caused by sweat.

With new inventions in the fabric industry and more people being inspired to exercise, fitness regimes became more prominent in the 1970s and the lines between athletics and normal attire began to blur. In fact, the word "athleisure" was first used in 1979 to describe clothing for people who wanted to look athletic, according to Tasc Performance in 2023.

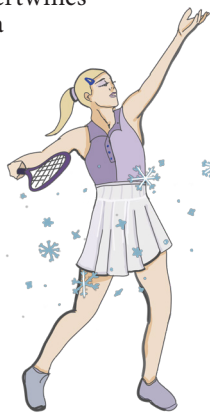
From here, brands dedicated to athleisure, such as Lululemon in 1997, started to form and continue to influence the fashion industry and current trends.

Since its exponential growth (aided in part by celebrity endorsement) and transition into everyday wear, athleisure has adapted to accommodate everyone. Many popular aesthetics contain components of

athleisure; take ballet core, for example. Leggings, tank tops, and skorts blend seamlessly with lace, leg warmers, and bows to mimic (or romanticize) ballet. Another popular trend is oversized clothing. Hoodies, sweatpants, and sweaters are commonly worn to maximize comfort and perfect ambiguousness.

Athleisure is everywhere, and it isn't a surprise that it's also breaking social and gender norms; in this case, the use of men's leggings. Hugging close to the skin, leggings are traditionally seen as a garment for women. However, they aren't just flattering; they're also comfortable and convenient, qualities that have piqued many other peoples' interests. People have even dubbed this trend as "meggings," or men's leggings, supporting the idea that people should be able to wear what they'd like without being confined to traditional ways.

With such inclusivity, athleisure isn't just a passing trend; it's a sign for change in the fashion world. As more individuals begin to explore their style, unrestricted by the typical gender norms, athleisure has become a way to show empowerment and self-expression. The power of athleisure is on its way to shaping the future of fashion, transforming into a statement piece that celebrates individuality.



graphics: Caroline Gu



Navigating the slopes with Shawn Chuang '24

Sophie Zhang, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

A newcomer to the sport at the age of nine, Shawn Chuang '24 has worked his way up since to secure a spot on the National Taiwanese Alpine Ski Team. Beyond playing on the team, Chuang alternates between patrolling the National Winter Activity Center and training through racing on its slopes. Chuang is set on strengthening his skills even further back in New Zealand, with plans to return and dedicate his summer to skiing exclusively. Although it hasn't been an easy road learning the basics and navigating the demands of being a student athlete, Chuang remains persistent with his passion for the sport. He is resolute in pursuing his passion during his gap year, aspiring to reach even higher heights and to participate in the Olympics.

How long have you been skiing?

The very first time I skied was in winter 2015, but it used to be just [during] winter break [and] ... it was just a family thing ... for fun. I started to seriously ski — and by that I mean I would go more than once a year — in my freshman year. ... [During] COVID, [when] we were online, I actually stayed at the mountain for the whole year [and] went up the mountain during lunchtime or after school. ... Even now, like every weekend, I go up to the mountain. For half of the day I'll be racing, and [the other] half of the day I'll be patrolling.

Do you effectively balance both school and skiing?

The thing about patrolling is that we [are] usually just sitting ... in a little cabin at the top of the mountain. And we only leave or we only have to leave if we get a call. So, while we're waiting for calls, I usually just do homework. ... Last year, [there were even] a few times ... I would do my readings on the ski lift. Also, [I] just don't really sleep, especially last year — [it] was really bad. ... [But, I have] definitely [been] able to manage my time better this year.

How did you first get interested in skiing?

I grew up in Taiwan, where it doesn't snow. [I first got interested because of] the "We Ski" Wii game [that] my sister [and I] would play. [When I actually tried it], it was something that came more naturally to me than most other sports. I would not consider myself [as] someone who's very athletically inclined, but skiing was just something that I was able to pick up relatively fast, and I really, really loved it, so that's just kind of the direction I took. It just took off.

graphic: Wenya Huan



photo courtesy: Alessio Bonardi
Shawn Chuang '24 coasts down the slopes of Cardona, New Zealand.

Do you have any role models that you look up to? If so, how have they inspired you?

[There is an] American skier called Mikaela Shiffrin, and she's absolutely insane. There's also this girl called Maggie Lee. She represented Taiwan at the Winter Olympics last season, and I trained with her in New Zealand ... [in] the Chinese national team. ... She's kind of who I look up to, [since I usually think], "I want to be you one day."

Are there any achievements you are proud of?

Having a race where I represented Taiwan was really cool, [since] the race had some [of] the best [skiers]. I think the guy who won that race was 20th in the world. So obviously, it's beating a lot of role models. And I think honestly, for me, my biggest achievement would just be getting into the sport [professionally] ... because it was something ... I've wanted to do [ever since I started skiing]. I saw racers, and I wanted to do it, but a lot of it was just, "Why would I go to ski racing?" ... Most ski racers start when they're like three years old,

and I started when I was seventeen. There's a bit of a gap there and I put it off for a bit, [since] there were a few teams ... [who told me], "Nah, you're too old. We're not gonna take you." ... And for me, it was having that persistence to finally start doing the sport that I've always really wanted to do.

What kinds of challenges have you run into, and have you overcome them yet?

Ski racing is a sport that's very [much based on] nepotism, [because] there's almost zero resources out there publicly available; I remember just trying to figure out what the different events [and] rules were. So just getting the knowledge of how the sport works, how you train, and how you prepare your skis ... was the biggest challenge. ... I reached out to a lot of people, [including] Maggie, [who has] been really helpful. I have her contact information [and] regularly [ask her], "How do I do this?" And it's just finding people who are like this has really helped me overcome these challenges.

What kinds of competitions have you participated in? And how do you mentally prepare for them?

I do racing, where it's just timewise. ... There's four different categories of ski racing: small turns, slightly bigger turns, even bigger turns, and [extremely large] curves. [For] the [two] smaller events, ... it's more technical, and the other two we call speed events, because they're the ones where people go 80 to 90 miles per hour shooting on the slopes. [Mainly], I just take deep breaths and tell myself it's not that serious. Because for me, [while] I can technically tell people that I'm on the national team, ... I'm still very much a beginner in the sport. So, everything to me right now is a learning experience.

What is it about skiing that you think others should also follow and get into?

[I'm] not going to lie; it's not a sport where I think most people should try, because it's so deceptively difficult and, to be very blunt, it's horrendously expensive. ... [Not only is it] physically demanding, but it's also mentally [challenging]. [But], if you really love [to] challenge [yourself] and really want to have something where you have to put everything into it, ... [then] I think ski racing is a really awesome thing. ... It's a blast and the people are great.

graphic: Sara Hu

PREX
PRINCETON RECORD EXCHANGE

Athletes of the Month

Yitian Zhao '24: ice hockey

Sophie Zhang, SPORTS CO-EDITOR
Sky Jo, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Beneath the subtle lights that illuminate the frozen floor of the arena, the scent of sweat and cold air fills the room with anticipation. Yitian Zhao '24 steps onto the rink along with his teammates. Game on. As the puck glides on the glistening ice, he focuses his eyes on it, anticipating the moment to take a shot. Zhao moves with precision, gaining more momentum as he reaches his goal. The backdrop is filled with nothing but the crowd cheering and the crisp echoes of the skate blades cutting the ice.

At a young age of five, Zhao began his ice hockey career after learning how to skate for three years. Inspired by his older sister, a figure skater, Zhao watched her practice and eventually, he grew accustomed to the ice.

"It just came down to choosing figure skating or hockey," said Zhao. "It's a fast-paced game, and I also like hitting people."

Ever since then, Zhao has dedicated much time to the sport, especially towards playing club hockey. While balancing training sessions throughout the week, Zhao also traveled to matches during the weekend.

"The local teams the highest level, so I would always have to travel to places like Philly to play Tier one clubs," said Zhao. Part of the reason Zhao dedicated so much time to hockey was his dad, whose guidance instilled in Zhao to always strive for improvement.

"I enjoyed practicing by myself, but it was mainly him who pushed me to where I am now," said Zhao. "He would take me to all types of practices and tournaments to get some exposure and practice, and even if I sometimes didn't want to, I believe that it has let me get to the skill level I'm at right now."

As an upperclassman on the team, Zhao pays it forward by providing advice to his teammates. Drawing from his father's influence, Zhao gives tips on strengthening his teammates' game.

"If you don't enjoy what you're doing, you won't be motivated to improve," said Zhao. "Outside of motivation, I think that focusing on the basics, like skating and stickhandling, is a must to try and play or get better at the sport. Having a strong foundation will let you build off of it."

Charlie Ross '24 is a teammate of Zhao and appreciates Zhao's style of play and intensity.

"On the ice, he's really fast and he's great at putting the puck in the back of the net," said Ross. "He is also a big hitter, which is fun to watch."

Edwin Zhao '25 is one of Yitian Zhao's teammates and, similarly to Ross, Edwin Zhao feels welcomed by Yitian Zhao.

"He is always in the right spots and [supports] if another player is in trouble," said Edwin Zhao.

"He has nothing but positive things to say, and we look up to him as a leader who is going to help."

Some of this advice is based on his own experience and growth throughout the years. Despite encountering some

bumps along the way, his devotion for hockey has triumphed over his obstacles.

"I feel like high school hockey has given me the opportunity to [improve] because the competition is at a lower level than my club teams, so I can be more laid-back and try to mess around without much consequence," said Yitian Zhao. "It's less of a grind and I get to mess around with my teammates on the ice and in school as well."

Yitian Zhao is hoping to make his last year on the team a fun, memorable experience.

"I love everything about hockey, from the pinging sound of the puck going bar down off the crossbar to the action in the game," said Yitian Zhao. "Even if we had a rough home opener, I have high hopes for how the rest of the season will turn out. It would be amazing to end my high school hockey career on a high, and I'm sure that the other seniors would agree too."



photo courtesy: Yitian Zhao

Gabrielle Bannett '24: basketball

Dester Selby-Salazar, SPORTS CO-EDITOR
Kaelan Patel, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It's down to the last ten seconds of the basketball game. Gabrielle Bannett '24 races down the court with the ball. Evading her opponent, she throws the ball into the air as her teammate guides it into the basket! Princeton wins!

Growing up, Bannett got her love of basketball from her family. Her father was her basketball coach all throughout elementary and middle school.

"He definitely inspired me to stick with [playing basketball], because he always comes to my games to support me," Bannett said.

Along with her father, Bannett has had many other people help her get to where she is now. In middle school, her basketball coach, Coach Mike Maguire, helped her grow as well.

"I really looked up to [Maguire]," said Bannett. "He helped me ...develop a [deep] love for the game."

When transitioning to high school basketball, Bannett had an advantage in that she already knew many players on the team, since they had played on an Amateur Athletic Union basketball team together.

"It was a little bit of a transition, but everyone was super amazing and welcoming," said Bannett. "I had so much fun with that team and we made so many great memories together that really made me want to continue playing basketball in high school."

Head Coach David Kosa of the PHS girls basketball team noted that when he first saw Bannett play in the seventh grade, he immediately knew that Bannett was an advanced player in her skillset.

"Her fundamentals were really strong," said Kosa. "And you could tell that she had a very strong basketball IQ and a very strong basketball persona on the court."

Luna Bar-Cohen '25, a teammate alongside Bannett, reaffirms these sentiments. Bar-Cohen has been playing with Bannett since middle school, and she believes that the years they've played together have greatly helped their team chemistry.

"She does so much for our team on and off the court, and [she's] always willing to go the extra mile for us," said Bar-Cohen. "In games and practices, Gabby does a great job of seeing everyone on the court and facilitating good ball movement. ... When the team needs [help], we always know we can count on [her]."

Bannett is grateful that she can trust the rest of her team in big moments, just like they can trust her.

"We know how to laugh and have fun with each other, but we also know when it's time to be serious and work together," said Bannett. "It's a good balance that's important to have in any team environment."

Heading into her last season, Bannett is looking forward to winning something with the PHS team. For her, putting something up on the banner is the team's biggest goal.

"It's my last shot to win something and put something on the banner, so I really hope we can do that this season," said Bannett. "Coach always says it's banner season, because we have nothing on our banner hanging in the new gym right now. So this is just another opportunity for us to get something new to form."

The team's optimism to win a title for PHS is demonstrative of the team's tenacity. For Kosa, this aspiration is not just talk, noting the work that has been done in the off season.

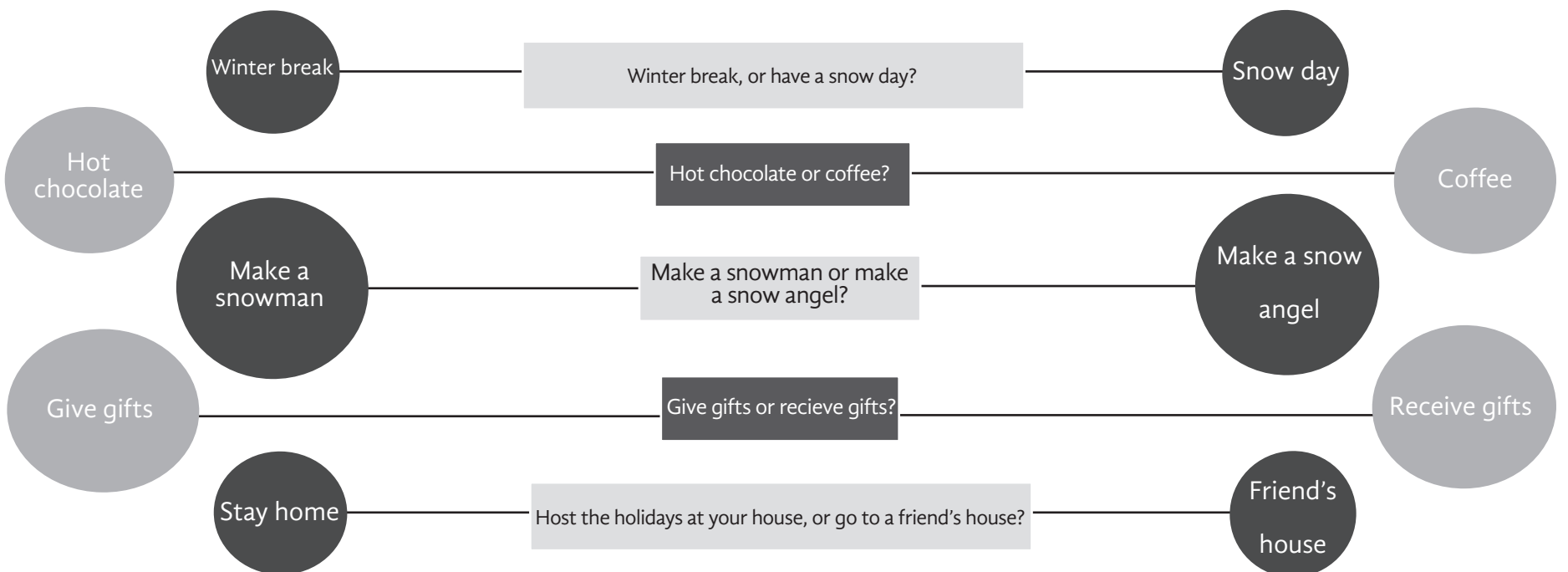
"This year has [had] the most [turnout] that we've ever had in the summertime," said Kosa. "It's not a surprise [that] the girls that have improved the most have been the girls that [put] in the work during the offseason."

For Bannett, she tries to bring a unified environment to the team, which she knows can help the team further down the road in tough games.

"Having team lunches on game days and inside jokes are just some of the things that have strengthened our bonds as friends and teammates," said Bannett. "Over the four years I've been on this team, we have always had great chemistry on and off the court."



photo: Caroline Gu



Opinions



Tamar & Jane

Vanguard!



Will & Syra

VANGUARD: pickles

The school lunch pickle

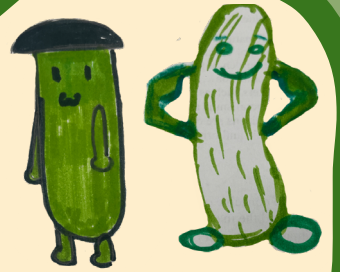
Krish Khanna, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Multimedia



Alex

News & Features



Chris & Daniel

As a student body, I think we can agree that our cafeteria's food is below average. This is no ambush on the hard working people who stock our cafeteria but rather a commentary on the district's inability to feed the students. Food choice at PHS doesn't boast the best tasting or even the healthiest foods. Luckily, there is a very simple solution to this issue: pickles. This unassuming savory snack is the key to solving our biggest lunchtime problem. There are a host of reasons every PHS student should be chowing down on a delicious gherkin's cousin. Let me elaborate further.

First, the logistics. I know what you are thinking as you read this: "My goodness he wants to replace my mid turkey sandwich with four pickles out of a Vlasic jar!" but no, that is not what I desire. I want lunch to be exactly how it is, with the addition of a pickle (maybe in exchange for something like a cold pesto salad). There are some things that people enjoy from the cafeteria, but there are also a lot of things people dislike. What I am proposing is that we substitute the basilisk of vegetables for the least desirable items the cafeteria offers. There are a whole host of reasons why we should adopt this astute menu design.

Pickles are the peak of health. A juicy pickle can curb sugar spikes, help digestion, and strengthen your immune system. The list of benefits for pickle consumption doesn't end there. They can help with blood sugar and cramps. Have you ever woken up to a cramping thigh? Well, I haven't; that's because I enjoy pickles. Furthermore, cucumbers — the pickle embryo — are a vegetable and this delectable snack can supplement the average high schooler's underwhelming 2% of the recommended veggie intake. They have high amounts of vitamin A, preventing acne. They're convenient: they are portable, handheld, easy to eat, compostable, and cost effective. Clearly, the health benefits of pickles are jarring. So why don't they appear on every lunch tray?

There is no true con to pickles except one — the horrifying individuals who dislike them. Bias on social media has caused this pickle-less epidemic. It has become a trend to hate on pickles just because they aren't your average lunchtime snack. People on Twitter and TikTok log on to their apps solely to create hateful content about pickles. This negative narrative has cultivated a cynicism in young people across the world. These videos are creating 'pickle-haters', sheep to anything they absorb as they scroll.

With that being said there is no real reason pickles should not be incorporated into our daily lunch schedule. A cheap, convenient, tasty, healthy, and compostable snack deserves a spot in the cafeteria as well as a spot in your mouth. So the administration must ask themselves a tough question. Do they want to start fostering healthier and happier pickle-wielding students or unhealthy and unhappy sheeple? Those are the only two options our higher-ups have regarding the school lunch pickle, and I encourage them to make the right choice.

Visuals >>



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Online



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GOLF SWING FRENZY PUSHES PHS TO ITS LIMITS

Future pro golfers, America's future Smattster Chenby-Salazhang, on fire!!

On December 1st, 2023, the "Princeton Putt Putt Playoffs" was announced through the loudspeakers, sparking an electrifying reaction from the student body. The promise of an extraordinary prize of skipping the cafeteria lunch line fueled a fierce competition among students, eager to showcase their jaw-dropping, blindsiding golf swings.

The brilliance behind this stroke of genius was none other than Coach David Roberts, a 3-time world golf swing champion and who teaches AP Golf at the school, who noticed guys (specifically) practicing their swings in every nook and cranny of the school. From the hallways to classrooms and even the bathrooms, they were caught perfecting their golf swings.



Peter Eaton '24 leaves the way forward for future prospects. Look at his fantastic technique at board pointing!

"There was just something about their sheer talent," Roberts mused, eyes sparkling at the thought of a future generation of golf swingers. "I couldn't help but be inspired by their unparalleled exploration of golonomics."

On the other hand, some students are a little bit frightened!

"It's lowkey kind of concerning," said Kyuyoung Chung '26 matter of factly. "I think it's just a guy thing tbh."

It most certainly is. According to golfswinganalysis.com in 1564 B.C.E., 99.8% of golfers think they can improve their swings by imitating the motion. Unhindered by their silly actions, however, these aspiring golfers are sticking to it.

It's not just the teachers that are noticing this peculiar phenomenon. Worried parents are calling into school about their children's strange antics, dubbing it the "triple bogey bug" and calling their kids out sick.

"It's a lifestyle, it's a religion!" said Peter Eaton '24, (now deceased) former captain of the Practicing Swings 24/7 Gang. "As seen here, no need to worry! Totes normal to be practicing under the pale moonlight on top of the Tower's roof, in all of life's luxuries."

"Hey!" said a guy, striking a golf stance with an invisible club in hand, as someone walked in front of his swing. "Get out of the way, I'm practicing here!"

Even with all of these late night rooftop practices, the Putt Putt Playoffs proves to be a challenging undertaking, requiring every minute detail to be refined. Even for Jacqueline Zang '25, golf champion in all of the nation's glory, learning the skills of an impeccable swing turns out to be more enigmatic than playing an actual round. It's a mysterious phenomenon, as one may say.

"This is so much harder than actual golfing--and I'm a 15.2X Olympic gold medalist!" exclaimed Zang.

"I can confirm," Emma Li '26 vocalized out of her mouth. "What is this?" (this is not a rhetorical question btw, like seriously, what is this???) Lol Tower Sports on a roll!

Despite the fact no one knows what they are doing, the competition between the teams is scrumptiously fierce. Dismantling one person requires the power of 132 invisible golf swings in one sheer breath, an incredible feat one has yet to achieve!

"I brought my sheep with me to help--they'll beat anyone down," said Meiya Xiong '25, patting the back of one of her sheep. "They are my livelihood and emotional support. Hard times, you know, especially in this economy. Sorrows, prayers."

"Baaaaa," said Xiong and the sheep, yassified in glimmering, pearl necklaces. (Meiya has become one with the sheep if you didn't catch that.)

Although many are not familiar with the golf swing curriculum, some are confident in their ability to overcome these knowledge gaps. Oh, the irony!



Ruhee Hegde '25 has been practicing everyday for the past 10 decades and may finally be able to swing glamorously :0

"Oh my goodness I love this question... um, I think the key to a gorgeous swing is the ending fairy," Zang gushed. "It's important to end the performance with a bang, and that ending pose always leaves the judges astonished--mark my words, girl."

Likewise, Sungjun Jo '24 is looking forward to this opportunity to showcase his skills, even though he doesn't really know what an attack angle is. "I think my K-pop idol dreams are coming true!" cried Jo. "YG will definitely scout me after my performance--they love unique talent."

As the students push their limits, they learn more about themselves. After all, the destination is more important than the journey.

"I'm really hoping I'll be able to win," said James Bertrand '26, teammate of the sheep girl. "I don't really buy lunch, but you know, it'll be good for my sheep rescue shelter resume."

Keeping it real, Roberts knows that this golden generation of golfers is truly a bang-average mediocre group.

"In all my 10 days of teaching, I've never seen so much talent in the same lawn," Roberts affirmed, putting his hand on his heart. "I can't wait for everyone to see it, finally. It will be so fire. So fetch." ■

Classic PHS stereotypes

Avery McDowell, A&E'S RESIDENT PRIMA BALLERINA
Sara Shahab Diaz, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The One Who Just Wants to Graduate

This student has been confused about what's going on in class since the first day of school — which they probably never even showed up to. This student has the maximum number of absences allowed, and when they do show up to class, they only sit in the back, where they're cooking multi-course meal that the teacher never seems to notice. The day before the test, they watch the Organic Chemistry Tutor on 2x speed while playing mobile games on their phone, yet they still end up getting the best grades in the class. This student just wants to graduate so they can continue playing Fortnite for hours on their parent's couch. ■



The Class Clown

This student has been cracking jokes since the day they were born. They listen to Bo Burnham for inspiration every night and search up dad puns to say during class while brushing their teeth. They are always ready to catch the teacher slipping and make the class more lighthearted for everyone. This student is secretly revered as God's Gift to Earth for every student, even if others won't admit it, and they help 40 minutes pass by in 2. Their jokes always hit and even if they don't, they're so goofy that you can't help but laugh. People like having them around, and they might even be successful as a stand-up comedian. ■

The Vandalizers

There is a sudden urge, an idea coming out of nowhere, that this person gets, but maybe it has been on their mind everyday. It is the idea of completely violating the school bathroom. Sometimes in their schedule when they cannot be seen, they are called to throw grass into the sink, break open the paper towel dispenser, and write "i love frogs!" on the stall door. They're also most likely to leave a wad of gum on their chair or desk. ■



The Tiktokers

Despite the bell having rung and class having started, these students find themselves still in the bathroom. They need to finish the TikTok (that will forever live in their drafts) with their group of friends before going to history class. They've clearly forgotten the unit circle since they only have so much time to dance to "Santa Tell Me" by Ariana Grande and finish their math homework. They have mastered the art of lip-syncing, and they're convinced they're never going to need to work again since they'll become a famous influencer with a million followers in a few years' time. They buy a Starbucks latte every morning before school, and they follow all of the makeup and fashion trends. They're always carrying a Stanley cup around with them, and they're definitely taking the advice they hear on TikTok as complete truth. Their parents don't understand the world of teenagers since they're just too old for them to hang out with in public. ■



The PDA

This couple is always making out in the hallway at every chance they get — and it always seems to be right in front of where you're having lunch. Surprisingly, their relationship has been going on for a lot longer than you thought it would. This couple is always super close to each other and saying gushy things like "Honey Bun" and "Love Nugget" that make you want to yell "Get a room!" from halfway across the room. The only way for them to eat is if one of person dangles a chicken nugget in front of the other and says "brrrrrrmm here comes the airplane!" as they pop it into their mouth. This couple has never learned of the wonders of privacy, and, unfortunately, they're always right in front of your locker when you're trying to get your stuff when you're in a hurry and late for class. ■

Tower Employees

During the English class discussion they typically interrupt with "actually...", ready to share their extraordinary insight. They claim that their mind works differently than everyone else, qualifying them to tell their superior theory on how to solve society's problems. They make it known that in their free time, they listen to super underground music. They also are typically a part of the prestigious Tower, writing their fancy and long articles at school until 9pm. ■