

The Elmont Phoenix

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IT RAINED ON OUR PARADE *Reunions, Victory, and Spirit Shine Through*

By Venette Simon

Despite the rain, very low temperatures, and cancellation of the annual community parade, Spartan spirit radiated brighter than ever through the students, teachers, parents and administrators at Homecoming this year. In the days leading up to Homecoming, students and faculty worked diligently together to decorate hallways, create and design banners, and build unique floats to represent this year's "Celebrating the Decades" theme.

The lack of a parade did not inhibit the Elmont community from admiring the banners created by every club or the floats created by every class. All of the banners and floats were still to be judged and announced at halftime only this year, making the judging just a little more special. The Elmont Class of 1966 celebrated their 50 year reunion at Homecoming and, as a way to include them in the festivities, the returning graduates were given the opportunity to be judges of the banner competition.

One of the most awaited parts of Homecoming was the halftime crowning of our new King and Queen. The court alone was made up of such remarkable individuals that it must have been extremely difficult to come to a final decision. This year, Vincent MacDonald, an Elmont

receiver, and Karina Alfaro were given the coveted titles of Homecoming King and Queen.

The Homecoming game itself, against the Mepham Pirates, was the driving force of

most of the enthusiasm and excitement for the day. Each year prior to this one, spectators would come in hopes of an Elmont victory at Homecoming and, unfortunately, left disappointed. This year was unlike any other. There was never a dull moment on the field and looking away for one second could have meant missing an entire game-changing play. From the very first Elmont touchdown minutes into the game to the strategic two-point conversion pass from quarterback Aaron Ruthman to Joshua Milfort, everyone could see that the Spartans were hungry for this win.

In one of the most memorable Homecoming games at Elmont, the Spartans defeated the Pirates 35-33 and ended what seemed to be a never-ending trend of Homecoming losses. Not only did this win intensify the already high Spartan spirit and bring a greater sense of pride to the community, but it guaranteed a home playoff game, which is what any team hopes for when it comes to one of the biggest games of the season.

From the reunion of old friends to the surprise promposal after the winning game, Homecoming this year will remain an unforgettable symbol of what Spartan spirit encompasses.



The Class of 2018, led by advisers Ms. Bak and Ms. Conlon, won first place for the float contest with their creative 1960s bus, driven by Mr. Dougherty.

SPARTANS SPARK UP CONFERENCE 2 *The Spartan Leaders*

By Erick Edouard

The Elmont Spartans were ranked a pre-season sixth seed in Nassau Conference 2 and were given a 4 percent chance at winning any type of championship in a Nassau poll. The Spartans responded with a tremendous 5-2 record, including the end of a 3 year losing streak at Homecoming dating back to the year 2013. A big part of their success is the contributions from senior captains Aaron Ruthman and Lucas Mathieu.

Ruthman, #12, broke school records last year throwing 23 touchdowns on 2,130 yards, earning the top spot for quarterback in all of Long Island. No one expected this from a 5'9" junior



quarterback. In the seven games he's played as a senior, Aaron has thrown 21 touchdowns on 1,715 yards and is currently ranked number one on Long Island in terms of passing yards. Fellow captain Jaydel Richardson described Aaron as "humble and always striving for greatness." Emmanuel Flemming, a sophomore defensive end, described Aaron as "a leader who runs the team with precision."

Lucas Mathieu, #1, is well known for being the "speed

demon" of the Elmont team, running a 40-yard dash time of 4.48 seconds. He has come back in a huge way from a heartbreaking junior season that ended when he suffered a broken foot



during the third week of the season, in a game against H. Frank Carey High School. Lucas has 21 receptions, 3 touchdown and 458 yards on the season so far, but his contributions to the team go way further than him running routes as a receiver. Lucas plays on all sides of the ball and on every offensive and defensive unit. Lucas has become an emotional leader and immaculately represents the beliefs of the Elmont team.

The Spartans feel they have the potential to achieve the big goals they have set for themselves this season, which includes making it to Hofstra. They have put themselves in a great position

to do just that, as they earned the number 2 seed in the Conference, after a thrilling 35-33 victory against Mepham High School during Elmont's Homecoming on October 22, 2016.

Elmont Phoenix

ELMONT MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Assistant Principal..... Mr. Burke

Assistant Principal..... Ms. Calabrese

Assistant Principal..... Ms. Sotirhos

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Principal’s Corner

Dear Students,

It is hard to believe we are almost two months into the 2016-17 school year! We are off to a wonderful start and I am incredibly excited to see what my second year at EMHS will hold. As always, it is imperative that we keep focus on the goals we are looking to accomplish and make the choices that will best help us to achieve them.

Although a bit wet, Homecoming 2016 was a great success. The floats looked magnificent and the various clubs, sports, and activities transformed our hallways into beautiful tributes to Elmont Pride. Congratulations to Karina Alfaro and Vincent McDonald for being named Homecoming Queen and King, respectively, and a big shout out to our football team who grinded out a 35-33 win over Mephram. The rain could not dampen Elmont’s school spirit.

Speaking of school spirit, we also have an energetic new assistant principal who bleeds green and white. As you all know, Dr. Thomas moved on to become the head principal at Uniondale High School and Ms. Sotirhos, our English Chairperson, will be our new assistant principal. Ms. Calabrese will transition to the high school to work with the 10th and 12th graders while Ms. Sotirhos will focus on our middle school scholars. Ms. Sotirhos has dedicated twelve years of her life to the Elmont Community and we are excited to see her in action as the new assistant principal.

As we get set to face the remaining 8 months of the school year, we must always try to keep a clear mind and open heart. We must treat one another with the respect we each deserve and ensure that EMHS remains an educational environment where all students can feel welcome and successful. We must make good choices and realize that the choices we make now affect what consequence (positive or negative) will come after. Lastly, we must work harder than we ever have before. There is no substitute for hard work and there is no sweeter feeling of success than when you accomplish a goal after persevering through the challenges. Get to it; there is no day like today.

Sincerely,
Mr. Dougherty

THE PRIMEVAL DARKNESS The Throes of Self-Induced Isolation

By Shazor Shahid

Isolation, the sole thing that boasts the capability of simultaneously building and destroying a man. Isolation is a wonderfully disastrous thing. It allows one to see the world from new directions, opening new horizons and changing the colors by which common things are distinguished. Isolation is a pathway into the areas deep in the mind that were previously unfathomable. It gives the ability to see beauty in simplistic things. It grants the power to craft into reality a vision seen for oneself. It allows one to walk the dark, cold road of life without the tainting of other’s opinions, leading to a pure perspective on life. It enables one to break free of illusions that cloud the mind and allows one to live within the realities of life. Isolation is beautiful; isolation is demonic.

When one decides to undertake and follow this method of living, one is often unaware of the grim and tough journey that is yet to be faced. Isolation means to build walls around oneself that not even the creator of them can destroy, because in the process, they were made to be

impenetrable. It leads to habits that have yet to be broken. It leads to mindsets that have yet to be changed. It leads to powers that have yet to be tamed. It can twist and warp and deconstruct all that was founded as a basis of character, creating a personality which not even its creator can recognize. It reduces to invisible ash the meaning and purpose of life and leads the person into a never ending maze, lost and alone, walking on an endless road leading to nowhere.

Connections remain a vague idea, never to be fulfilled, save for a few instances where it was found to be an illusion of truth. Then, it is left as a void, a deafening silence, never to be refilled - the person now becoming cold and cynical. In darkness, even one’s shadow leaves them. The pain of separation is not felt until the world is finally acknowledged, but by that time, the mind is no longer anything close to being recognized as a mind. It is the tattered remains of what used to be - a symbol of what could have been, but never was. The capability wasted; the power unreckoned with. The world becomes a depressing place to live in.

The mind starts to dwell in an altered state of consciousness. The constant internal struggle remains to be fought, and with every passing day, it seems to

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fade away - only to remind its host of its presence by a sharp implosion of the intangible materials that form a human being: a collapse of emotions. Nothing can offer contentment, and nothing can ease the pain. Empirically, only those with experience of the depths will be cognizant of the evil produced by this malicious part of the human consciousness. The gravity of this process is too great to be expressed in mere words. One has to see it with one’s own eyes to know the depth of the immense labyrinth and the inner silence that betrays an obstreperous nature one can be hopelessly confined in.

In the end, nothing of tangible value is gained; nothing, but pain and the knowledge that is derived. Escaping from this fortress of solitude requires the pain to be burned, fueling the resolve to change one’s path in life. The person’s self-sacrifices and pain can transform circumstances to show the unwavering power of their resolve. The knowledge gained can create a path to follow, for oneself and for those who they influence, if any remain in their life.

A new force must arise from within, created by the self, to push back the doors of entrapment and cut through the maze, thus emerging from isolation as a new person, stronger and more prepared. Although, this is not always the manner in which those who have suffered return from the abyss. Some may start to call it home, feeling secure in the abysmal place and feeding off the melancholy, thus creating their identity from it. Isolation is a haven for some, but dwelling within it for too long may drain the mind of its humanity. No matter how much of it is burned, the pain stays and continues to break the person, even if the person wants to escape. It becomes their reality. There is no longer an escape. There is nothing, but what you decide.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPINESS IS?
Do You Know That You Can Be Happy?

By Marco Robinson

As a writer, there’s always that one person who we come across that inspires us greatly to write about the things we do. For me, that person is my cousin, Tiffani Malyra Cross. Tiff, I just want you to know that you are truly something special and I hope you continue to find your everlasting happiness. I dedicate this to you.

We all know what it feels like to lose. No, I don’t mean the feeling of losing a bet between you and a friend... or losing that basketball game you so desperately hoped to win; I mean to lose at life. That feeling of loneliness, of grief, of sorrow - of depression... that feeling of no other. That feeling of self-doubt - of who you are as a person and of where your life is headed. We all have this experience within our lifetime and through all of this pain, we are urged to find our happiness. More often than not, we’ll do anything to satisfy our need of contentment.

I think when trying to become content within ourselves, we look toward the wealthier side of life. We want the appealing car, the fancy jewelry, the big house, the money, the nice clothing - even the newest phone. Many of us are guilty of this and, in my opinion, I don’t necessarily think we have ourselves to blame, but more so the society in which we live in. We live in a century where extravagance is everything and the only way to be “happy” is to portray ourselves as being on top and at the best of our game. But, luxuriousness is something that only benefits us temporarily and isn’t something that really helps us to find our inner peace.

Sometimes we are obligated to be happy. A lot of times in life, we ask someone for help or advice about something and the response we get is: “Get over it!” or “It’s not that serious.” This senselessness unconsciously allows us to hide behind our problems. But, it’s okay to not be okay. And, don’t worry - there is something called “true” happiness.

I’ve thought long and hard about what true happiness actually is and I think I’ve come up with an answer. Happiness is when you have the ability to wake up each morning and love the person that you are and the person that you’re becoming. Happiness is when you wake

up in the morning and love the job that you do. Happiness is when you wake up in the morning and can accept all of your flaws, but also work hard to change them for the better. When thinking about what true happiness is I’ve also concluded that we don’t necessarily know how to find happiness. But, I’ve come up with an idea on how to find happiness...

When we come to a point in our lives where we’re not comfortable with the way we’re living or the things we’re going through, I think it is best that we talk to others about our problems. Most of us have a problem with communicating with others about our problems - for the fear of judgement. I know it’s hard to do, but I think it’s important for you to know, even though there’s not always the right person to talk to, there’s always someone to talk to. Talking to others about our problems is really important because as human beings we all share similar characteristics with one another, so it’s only right that we express ourselves and have a better understanding of one another. Once we get to that point, I think we have an understanding of what’s going on in our own lives.

Another step in finding happiness is to stop beating ourselves up about our wrongdoings in the past and things we can’t change. Rather, we need to focus on our positive characteristics and the constructive attributions we’ve made in our lives. But, this all this starts with you, for you are the only person who can change your life around. For anyone going through something, I just want you to know your tough times and trials and tribulations will soon go away. Keep moving because things are going to get easier. I aspire for you to seek cheerfulness, satisfaction, and most importantly - peace of mind.

BANNING HALLOWEEN
Why Can’t We Celebrate?

By Genneil Martin

In 2014 alone, there were approximately 41.2 million children age 5 to 14 going Trick-or-Treating in the United States. Halloween: a celebration of death, the afterlife, the undead, and the glorification of candy. Halloween is said to have originated from the Celtic festival Samhain, signifying the end of the harvest season, the end of the light and the beginnings of the dark half of the year. During this time is All Hallow’s Eve, decorated in dark colors and haunting images, overrun with adults roaming the streets with fantasy-filled heads and folklore of paranormal figures. Their aim: to dress up as ghosts in attempt to scare away said ghosts.

So, why aren’t we allowed to celebrate it? An increasing number of public schools are agreeing to ban traditional Halloween celebrations. In many of these schools, Halloween is seen as a major distraction and a waste of time and effort to monitor. According to Buckman Elementary School Principal Brian Anderson of the Portland Public Schools, Halloween brings about an “unequal school environment” divided between those who celebrate and those who wish not to participate. In 2011, Buckman Elementary banned the celebration and recognition of Halloween. Principal Anderson stated that there are various social, financial, and cultural differences among the families of the school that must be taken into consideration. Some view the day as a joyful, momentous occasion, while others find it highly offensive.

Is the controversy surrounding Halloween a religious issue? Throughout the years, Halloween has been has been portrayed as the devil’s holiday, a celebration of all the evil in this world. However, Halloween was never intended to be for the wicked. It was originally the celebration of a successful harvest season and a method of protection from spirits that were thought to roam the Earth during the beginnings of Fall. Is Halloween just too big of a distraction? New Jersey principals in Springfield agreed to end all Halloween celebrations on school grounds because they felt the costumes prevented students from learning in the classrooms. Springfield Patch Superintendent Michael Davino simply stated that Halloween is a holiday better celebrated with friends and family.

A NEW ERA AT ELMONT

Meet Ms. Dayna Sotirhos, Your New Assistant Principal

By Michael Bailey and Sophie Bien-Aimé

Elmont Memorial High School is proud to announce that Ms. Sotirhos will be the new Assistant Principal for the seventh and eighth grade, effective October 25, 2016.

“[We are] ecstatic,” Assistant Principal Mr. Burke said. “There is [nobody] more dedicated to the children of Elmont and we are lucky and very excited to have her in the Main Office,” he added.

Before becoming Assistant Principal, Ms. Sotirhos was the English Department and Library Chairperson, the District English Coordinator, and taught a tenth grade advanced English class. However, her resume expands far beyond that. Before she was the English Department chairperson, she coached the Elmont Varsity girl’s soccer program and junior high track. She was also the PSAT and SAT English section teacher, advisor for junior high drama, 2009 class advisor, and advisor for the Newspaper Club, for which she won Newspaper Advisor of the Year from the Long Island Press for Nassau and Suffolk County. She also served as an adjunct professor at Adelphi University, where she taught a Master’s course on School and Society.

“Ms. Sotirhos has given twelve years of her life to support the Elmont community and she has gotten great results with the students in the classroom by having one hundred percent of her students pass the English Regents in the last couple of years... the whole high school and Elmont community will benefit,” Mr. Dougherty said.

Ms. Sotirhos is very special and “uniquely qualified” because she is a product of the Sewanhaka Central High School District. She was a graduate of New Hyde Park Memorial High



School. She actually still keeps in contact with some teachers she had in high school, like her old science teacher turned off-Broadway director, who has visited her classes to discuss theatre.

Two years ago, when Ms. Sotirhos served as an interim Assistant Principal for two months, she realized that if the opportunity was ever to present itself, she would apply. Having experience at virtually every level - from student to administrator - Ms. Sotirhos feels her recent change in position is especially important. As an educator, she wants to work with as many students as she can to see if she can inspire any kind of positive change in their lives. As an administrator, she can now “broaden the scope” of students and teachers that she works with within the district. Now that her children are also

working their way through the district at the elementary level, there is no one more “invested” in the lives of the children in this district than she is.

As an Assistant Principal for the seventh and eighth grade, Ms. Sotirhos is now “the face of junior high.” Her work involves all disciplinary actions and team activities and events within the middle school. However, she does not want to limit herself to just one group of students. Her doors are always open to any student who may need her help. After all, it is the students in this school that set it apart from all other schools.

Many teachers are very proud of Ms. Sotirhos and her accomplishments. Ms. Agnello, a long time friend of Ms. Sotirhos and colleague from the English department, states that she is very “upset because [I] loved being with [her] all day everyday. But I’m excited for the building because she is a fantastic leader. She is clear with what she expects.” Agnello went on to add that “we were unified under her. What was good for our department is going to be great for the building.” Mr.

Squillace, who was also promoted to Dean of Students this year, says that “there is no one more qualified or more passionate and more deserving than Ms. Sotirhos. This is one of the best things that could’ve happen to the seventh and eighth graders.”

In the wake of her promotion, there’s a new concern that is brought to light. Who will fill the position that this esteemed educator has left vacant? Her biggest priority is helping find someone who will take care of the “wonderful educators” she has helped coordinate for the last several years. The department as a whole has become an important part of both her life and career, so making sure they are taken care of is very important.

DON'T CRY BECAUSE IT'S OVER; SMILE BECAUSE IT HAPPENED

Saying Goodbye to Dr. Thomas After 20+ Years of Service to Elmont

By Imani Favard

From teacher, to dean, to assistant principal, Dr. Thomas has done it all. He has worked at Elmont since 1995, but this year he is making a big change - he is the new principal of Uniondale High School. Dr. Thomas has witnessed many changes in Elmont and he hopes to bring his experiences with him to his new school.

When thinking back to his first day at Elmont, Dr. Thomas remembers being so overwhelmed that he did not even know where the bathroom was. He remembers being handed five different textbooks and meeting a whole bunch of students, and all of the feelings that go along with the overwhelming nature of being a first year teacher. But, in time, Dr. Thomas became comfortable at Elmont - making it his home. Within ten years, Dr. Thomas was promoted from social studies teacher to dean to be an assistant principal, a position he has held since 2003. While giving his all to Elmont, he also managed to earn a doctorate degree. Having witnessed much progress at Elmont, primarily in technology, Dr. Thomas recalls using floppy disks in his own classroom, denoting a big shift from such outdated technology to the use of iPads and Smart TVs in classrooms.

During his time here at Elmont Memorial High School, Dr. Thomas created many strong friendships, most fondly recalling his time spent alongside Mr. Burke, Ms. Calabrese, and Mr. Capozzi. He remembers sharing many jokes and memories with them, as



they all worked together on various projects over many years. When asked about her dear friend, Ms. Calabrese had nothing but praise for Dr. Thomas. She said: “Dr. Thomas is one of the finest educators that I have ever had the pleasure of working with in my entire career. He has a tremendous understanding of instruction. He is student-centered. He works hard to make sure all students in his care can achieve at high levels. And that’s what he brought to Elmont Memorial High School.” Ms. Calabrese went on to recall the thousands of children and educators “that have benefitted from his mentorship and from his friendship. I know that Dr. Thomas is going to bring these skills to Uniondale High School. He’s going to do such an amazing job there. He’s going to care for the children of Uniondale High School in the same way he cared for the children of Elmont Memorial, and bring Uniondale High

School to new heights.”

Dr. Thomas, is excited for the new challenge that lays ahead of him. He hopes that he will not change as a person and that he will stay the same in his approach to students. He wants to still have an open door policy with students and help them in any way possible. Dr. Thomas wishes to instill in his new student body the truth that “education is the equalizer,” meaning that no matter where we come from, education is the one thing that allows us all to have an equal playing field. He is going to miss Elmont a lot, but mostly the day to day interactions with the students and with his colleagues.

In his office, on his second to last day in the building, he had the kindest words to say about the Elmont. “I would like to thank the students, parents and the staff of Elmont Memorial High School. They are the greatest, praised collective group of individuals. And I am just proud that they have allowed me into their lives. Parents that have dropped their children off here and have trusted that the staff of Elmont, as well as the administrative team, are doing their best to make sure their children will become their very best. I am most proud that the staff members have always come in with a smile on their face ready to work and make Elmont a better place.” Everyone at Elmont with surely miss Dr. Thomas, with his booming voice, warm smile, and helping attitude. We, the staff of *The Elmont Phoenix*, wish you the best of luck with your new endeavors.

THE KIDS BEHIND THE KING & QUEEN

An Inside Look at this Year’s Homecoming Nominations

By Mikelley Baptiste and Fatima Bhutta

Homecoming, and even more so the Homecoming Court, have always been seen as a Hollywood cliché. As it goes, the popular football jock and his perfect cheerleader girlfriend always get the crowns. However, that is not the case here at Elmont. This is a new decade and Homecoming Court isn’t just a popularity contest. Students at Elmont Memorial High School understand the importance of being well rounded. You can be a jock, nerd, and drama geek all in one and be the perfect candidate for Homecoming King or Queen.

THE GUYS

On Thursday, October 6, I, Mikelley Baptiste, had the pleasure of interviewing all of the young gentlemen who were nominated for the position of Homecoming King. At first, I was feeling really awkward... a sophomore girl interviewing all of the potential Homecoming Kings? Some girls would kill for this! But alas, just like celebrities are people too, these boys were very down to earth. The potential candidates were: Damahya Coeur, Steven Girdhari, Christopher Gomez, Justin Hendricks, Joel Lima, Bryant Little, Ali Mahmood, Sevin Malcolm, Lucas Mathieu, Vincent McDonald, Jaydel Richardson, Aaron Ruthman, and Craig Shelton.

Damahya Coeur, track superstar, was really surprised to be nominated “because I didn’t know that a lot of people would vote for me. But, I knew that people liked my personality. I wasn’t even going to run. I asked someone, do you think I should run? They said yeah I would vote for you so I tried it and ended up becoming one of the candidates...from social media I asked [students] to vote for me.” Coeur’s advice to anyone who is aspiring to become Homecoming King or Queen is to “keep a smile on your face, be nice to everyone... do everything you love.”

Like Damahya Coeur, Steven Girdhari was also surprised to be nominated. His nomination “was suggestions from everybody else. I didn’t think about it much myself.” Girdhari, an avid baseball player at Elmont, advises those seeking Homecoming King nominations in the future to just “be yourself and if it’s the title that fits, [then it] was meant to be [and] it’ll happen.”

Justin Hendricks is a member of Model United Nations in which he constantly “experience[s] new things, new cultures.” Like his peers, he did not expect to be nominated by his classmates, but realizes that his “hard work and determination throughout the years [led] to my peers voting for me for Homecoming Court... It just happened in the spur of the moment.” When asked who he might vote for other than himself, Hendricks gave quite the humble response, stating: “There are a lot of good people... I couldn’t choose just one person.”

Craig Shelton was very upfront about why he deserves the title: “I like to be different, I like to stand out. I show [people] how to be a good leader. Instead of doing things the bad way, I take things the long way and do them differently. I show kids that being different is really a good thing.” Shelton’s favorite thing to do at Elmont is play lacrosse. Shelton, like many of his peers, was floored by his nomination for Homecoming King.

Jaydel Richardson was the next candidate to show his persona. A fun fact about Richardson is that he loves football and baseball. “Once I heard my name, I was surprised... because I’m not really known around the school,” said Richardson, as he described the feeling of being nominated. He wants the younger generation to “be yourself... stay humble, [and] do the right things.”

In describing himself, nominee Christopher Gomez spoke of how he was a gentleman, took care of things, and was very responsible. “I’m always smiling, people love talking to me. I talk to everybody.” Gomez loves to participate in Key Club. “It’s [really] fun. There are a lot of students involved and I’m able to talk to everyone throughout the community.”

Bryant Little “was shocked at being nominated for Homecoming King.” An active member of Key Club, Little was very candid about who he is: “I be myself and [keep to] my character. I know who I am.” Little dreamed about becoming Homecoming King. He loves to encourage the students around Elmont. He tells them on a daily basis to “do the good thing[s] ... [if] I see them out of class I tell them get to class [and] hurry up.” Little’s advice to the underclassmen is to “[b]e yourself... that’s how you can conquer a lot.”

“Yeah, it’s probably the most surprising thing that’s happened to me all year... I think I’d be the only one who’s not on the football team, [runs] track like some of the other guys do, or plays basketball.” This was Joel Lima’s response to being nominated for the Homecoming Court. Lima was nominated by his friend. “It was a joke my friend put in his Snapchat ‘Joel for Homecoming King.’ I messaged him... ‘no this isn’t happening.



The Homecoming Court, from left to right: Alexis Stewart, Oprah Charles, Karyse Gocoul, Erika Feurtado, Karina Alfaro (Queen), Vincent McDonald (King), Jaydel Richardson, Christopher Gomez, Steven Girdhari, and Ali Mahmood.

You’re wasting your time.’ He took offense to it and started spreading it like a wildfire... before I knew it they called my name on the announcements.” Lima is a positive figure in the Class of 2017. “I try to go out of my way to help people. If you’re willing to stop and not advance yourself without helping others - you’re a good role model for the position.” Lima’s favorite activity at Elmont is Science Research. “Science research has given me the opportunity to work with really cool people. This summer I worked at Rockefeller University, the number one biomedical institute in the world. I was able to work under the mentorship of some of the leading scientists in the world.”

Ali Mahmood, another football player, has thought about the idea of Homecoming King since he was little. He recalled an experience at a Homecoming. “When I saw the Homecoming King... [I thought] it would be great to be that guy.” Mahmood’s goal for this year is: “I always want everybody to be involved. At the end of the day it’s our senior year. I don’t want [the class of 2017] to look back on high school [thinking their] senior year wasn’t the best it should’ve been. I want it to be the best and it should be the best.”

“Be a good person, do good things, help people,” were Sevin Malcolm’s words to the underclassmen. Malcolm is another member of the football team. “I love it. I have a passion for the sport,” he stated. Like many of the other candidates, Malcolm did not expect to be nominated for Homecoming King. “I play sports, I’m a cool person... I do my work. I mentor younger kids around the school.”

Lucas Mathieu “was ecstatic” about his Homecoming King nomination. Lucas is a member of the football team who represents Elmont in his personality. “We all represent Elmont in many different ways. We all have many different personalities... my personality is different from theirs.” Like many of the Homecoming King candidates, Mathieu did not dream of becoming Homecoming King. However, his advice to those aspiring to be Homecoming King or Queen is “be yourself, be respectful to everybody around you and it’ll help you in the long run.”

It seems that this year’s nominees had one thing in common: the utter state of surprise they were in upon learning they were nominated for Homecoming King. The interviews for Homecoming King and Queen took place on Thursday, October 6, when teachers and parents sat down with each of the nominees. A Homecoming Court composed of five of these young men (and five young ladies) was announced at the Fall Pep Rally, on Friday, October 14. The five young men to continue into the Homecoming Court were Steven Girdhari, Christopher Gomez, Ali Mahmood, Vincent McDonald, and Jaydel Richardson.

THE GIRLS

To be a part of the Homecoming Court is something that many high school girls dreams of for themselves. Many enjoy feeling famous for a day - with all eyes on them. The 13 potential queen candidates were Karina Alfaro, Adriana Brutus, Oprah Charles, Kristina Fanos, Erika Feurtado, Ta’shya Fenton, Karyse Gocoul, Taylor Graham, Amanda Reynoso, Taylor Rodgers, Keibara Simpson, Alexis Stewart, and Samantha Williams. All of the girls were very surprised and humbled to be a part of the court and they were all very supportive of each other, although not all of the thirteen girls were available for an interview.

Adriana Brutus has always dreamed of becoming Homecoming Queen, ever since she saw the queen get crowned at the first Homecoming she had attended at Elmont in seventh grade. Knowing the prestige that comes with such a title, Brutus is “honored to even be a nominee.” A happy and positive minded girl, one of Brutus’ favorite quotes is: “Don’t count the days, make the days count.”

Oprah Charles says something that sets her apart from other candidates is her ability to smile through anything. “No matter what I’m going through, I’ll always try to stay positive and not let my negative energy effect others.”

Charles has been a part of the dance team since eighth grade and she absolutely loves that “being able to make people happy and have fun is just a wonderful feeling.”

Erika Feurtado was not very surprised to find out that she was nominated to be in Homecoming Court. Feurtado says: “I believe that a queen is defined as someone who is beautiful on the inside. A queen uses her beauty on the inside to influence her community and do beautiful deeds for others.” Feurtado’s commitment to service has allowed her to work with four major organizations - King of Kings Foundation, AllyKatz Foundation, Give the Kids a World Foundation, and Sisters Against Violence in Our Communities Foundation which she is very dedicated to.

Kristina Fanos was “basically speechless.” Commenting that her personality and mindset are what sets her above the other

nominees, Fanos was both happy and shocked about her nomination. An Elmont soccer player, Fanos raved about her team and the love and support that they show one another.

Ta’shya Fenton, who is a dedicated cheerleader, revealed that although Homecoming wasn’t a particular goal of hers, she was “absolutely thrilled to be nominated.” When giving advice to future students who aspire to be King or Queen, Fenton outlines the importance of “stay[ing] involved and be[ing] yourself, because your ‘personality’ and outlook affect many of the outcomes you face in your life.” For Fenton, being a part of the Homecoming Court changed Fenton’s year to not just a “great” year, but an “amazing” one.

Karyse Gocoul was not surprised that she was nominated, but was very happy because she always envisioned herself as a potential queen. Her hardworking and ambitious attitude, her community service, her “love for Elmont High School [and] the people as a whole,” and her genuine, caring personality are all things about herself that she feels set her above all other nominees. Gocoul also has her own business that she started at the age of 9; all of the money from the business goes to an orphanage in Uganda, Africa.

Amanda Reynoso was very surprised and very glad that her peers thought so highly of her and also felt it was an honor to be nominated. Reynoso, knowing Elmont represents students with high goals, says she doesn’t “just follow those goals; I truly believe them. I think I would be a good representation of what our school and our community really is.”

Taylor Rodgers was honored to be given the opportunity to represent her “beloved” Elmont community. After being at 5 Fall Pep rallies, she wanted to be involved in the race for Homecoming. Rodgers says: “One might think my favorite activity at Elmont is cheerleading because I enjoy spreading school spirit, however, my favorite extracurricular activity is the Peer Educators Club.” Rodgers loves teaching younger students about character and expressing themselves.

Keibara Simpson, like all the other girls, was very excited and surprised at being nominated. “I was in the hallway screaming and just so thankful that I got votes.” Simpson says her crazy personality and being herself is what sets her apart from others. Regarding her Homecoming nomination and the possibility of becoming queen, Simpson says: “It was my entire dream all of last year. Wearing the beautiful [dress], having everyone cheer you on. I think it would be the most amazing experience ever.”

Alexis Stewart says: “I believe my personality sets me apart from other nominees. I try to always keep a positive attitude and a smile on my face - which not only makes me happy, but can have a positive impact on the people around me.” Stewart says her favorite extracurricular activity at Elmont is cheerleading. “I love being a part of a team and performing to the latest songs in front of our peers! But more than anything, I enjoy attending the football and basketball games and cheering on our players and encouraging them to work hard and finish the games off strong!” Stewart likes to think of the cheerleaders as the “support system” for the football players.

Lastly, Samantha Williams’ favorite club is Big Brother/Big Sister. She enjoys mentoring and being known as someone to look up to. When giving advice, Williams says you want people to “accept you for who you are and not for a phony.” She also recommends being true to yourself and “[b]ringing out the joy in others” which brings out the joy in Williams.

To have an opportunity to be a part of something that many believe to be very special is quite a joyful moment. On Friday, October 14, at the Fall Pep Rally, the final five females for the Homecoming Court were announced. The court consisted of Karina Alfaro, Oprah Charles, Erika Feurtado, Karyse Gocoul, and Alexis Stewart.

HOMEcoming KING AND QUEEN

Class of 2016

By Mikelley Baptiste, Munahil Sultana & Chiamaka Ubani

KARINA ALFARO

Karina Alfaro was very surprised to be nominated to be on the Homecoming Court saying it was way out of her comfort zone. However, she said she was “humbled to be a part of such a huge Elmont tradition and [I] look forward to seeing what happens at Pep Rally.” Little did Karina know that she would make it to the Homecoming Court and would eventually be crowned Elmont royalty. “It’s every little girl’s dream to have a crown placed on her head. However, I’m 17 with bigger aspirations of going to college, possibly med school, and owning a house in Italy,” says Alfaro. Karina is a dedicated member of Elmont’s soccer team. To Karina, winning the Queen position would make her senior year so much more memorable - and it sure did!

As a diligent senior at Elmont Memorial High School, Karina Alfaro has repeatedly proven to be an exemplary student. Her hard work ethic combined with her dedication to the school makes her stand out from the senior class.

Alfaro plans to attend the College of Saint Rose, CUNY John Jay, or Marymount Manhattan College next Fall to pursue a career in forensic psychiatry. Her strong academic record and personal morals impressed her peers and the staff of Elmont interviewing her - leading to her victorious win. Alfaro is an adamant believer in responsibility, respect and positivity, as she believes those duties play a hand in the position of Homecoming Queen. She is involved in many prestigious organizations, such as Key Club, National Senior Honor Society, World Language Honor Society, Science Honor Society, Tri-M, and Rho



Kappa.

As a young girl, she looks up to her father as a role model. Alfaro believes developing a strong work ethic at an early age is paramount to success in the future - advice she has learned from her father. As an immigrant to the United States, he was worked tirelessly through trials and tribulations to pursue a career and create a safe haven for his children. Alfaro’s father reminds her “to never give up and keep trying until I succeed.”

She offers a piece of wisdom to young girls: “Surround yourself with those who respect and support you, always put in your best effort, and don’t be afraid to get out of your comfort zone.”

On behalf of the *Elmont Phoenix* newspaper staff, we congratulate Alfaro on her Homecoming Queen win!

VINCENT MCDONALD

“Watching] him work really hard... seeing him push hard to do all his work... he always had a smile on his face. It was a really amazing thing to see,” Joel Lima said of his fellow Homecoming King nominee and eventual

Elmont 2016 royalty, Vincent McDonald. It seems as if McDonald was not wrong when he said he thinks he deserves the title of Homecoming King the most because everyone saw him as the “best fit” for the position.

Vincent McDonald wanted to win Homecoming King so that he could be “a good, positive figure [for] the school.” But, if he had voted for a fellow nominee to win, it would have been Christopher Gomez because “he would’ve won with his girlfriend,” says McDonald.

Vincent McDonald, too, was a little surprised at being nominated. However, he wasn’t afraid to share his best qualities: “I just feel like I’m best fit

because you know I’m very intelligent, athletic, I have the looks and I’m just a very good, humble person... I always help people out... I help mentor kids, the younger generations.” McDonald had excellent advice for the younger generations: “Be yourself and focus on school. Don’t get involved in any other shenanigans.” McDonald is a student volunteer for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA) with Ms. McGarry, where he helps prepare tax returns for the less fortunate.

Vincent McDonald came to Elmont in the middle of the seventh grade. If you asked Vincent five years ago whether or not he could see himself becoming Homecoming King, he would have most likely said no because he did not appreciate the role for what it was. McDonald plays football, as well as baseball, and what he will miss the most about Elmont next year is playing football with his coaching staff and teammates. Next year, Vincent plans on going to Georgia Tech next year to study computer science and hopes to make it to the NFL in the future. Congratulations to Vincent McDonald on his Homecoming King win!

PUMPING UP THE SPARTAN SPIRIT

Spirit Week 2016

By Arianna Lekhraj

October 17 through 21, 2016 was the jovial and lively Spirit Week at Elmont Memorial High School, which followed the Fall Pep Rally that took place on the previous Friday. Each day of the week had a different theme and student participants in Spirit Week were tallied during their third period classes. Every grade level’s tallies were totaled, so the winners could be announced by the end of each day.

Monday, Hat Day, commenced Spirit Week. Students showed up to school wearing a variety of hats, ranging from their favorite sports teams caps to beanies to berets - and even Mickey and Minnie ears. Ninth grade came in fifth place, there was a tie for fourth between the seventh and eighth grade, third place was taken by the twelfth graders, tenth graders came out second, and the winner of Hat Day was the eleventh grade!

Tuesday was Color Day, which was a new event included in the week full of enthusiasm and spirit, when each grade would wear their class color (Class of 2017, blue; Class of 2018, black; Class of 2019, red; Class of 2020, green; Class of 2021, brown; Class of 2022, yellow). Many did their best to support their class, but ultimately it was the eleventh graders, again,



who displayed the most participation, with tenth graders in second place, seventh graders in third place, a tie between ninth and twelfth grade for fourth place, and the eighth graders in last place.

“Dress For Success” Day was on Wednesday, and a large majority of students looked beautiful, dashing, classy, and definitely professional. Plenty of students in various different grades went above and beyond for this theme. However, the tenth graders managed to snatch the title of first, leaving twelfth grade to fall into second place, seventh and eleventh grade in third, the eighth grade in fourth, and finally the ninth grade in fifth place. In the photo shown here, the members of the Future

Scientists of America (FSA), run by Ms. Farley, dressed to impress - all looking elegant, yet stylish.

Thursday was Mismatch Day, giving everyone the opportunity to feature their silly side and get creative with their apparel. Not only did students get involved in probably the craziest day of the week, but teachers did as well, including Ms. Tague and Ms. Lunati. While the eighth graders took first place, seventh grade landed in second place, twelfth grade in third place, eleventh grade in fourth place, ninth grade in fifth place, and the tenth graders were bumped back to last place.

Finally, Green and White Day ended Spirit Week. This day gave students the opportunity to showcase their school spirit. A vast majority of students and many faculty participated and earned points for their grade level. Even though everyone put their best foot forward, alas, it was the seventh graders who placed first, allowing the eighth grade to come in second, eleventh grade in third, twelfth grade in fourth, and there was a tie between the ninth and tenth grade for last place.

Overall, everyone did a fantastic job in terms of participating and demonstrating their Spartan spirit. Congratulations to all of the winners!

ARTIST HIGHLIGHT: *Lea Gardiner*

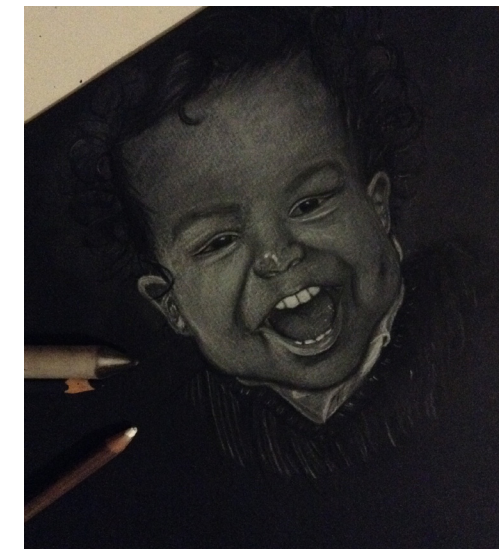
By **Munahil Sultana**

While many of us struggle to draw a stick figure, student artists are walking the hallways of Elmont Memorial High School. Lea Gardiner, an AP Drawing and Painting student, is one such artist. Her phenomenal artwork leaves her audience astounded. As a diligent senior at Elmont Memorial, Gardiner plans to continue with her artwork in the upcoming years and is ecstatic about the art opportunities that she will have in the future.

While Gardiner’s admiration for art has always exceeded that of a typical high-school student, her junior year was quite memorable in her art journey. “I’ve always thought about the idea of working in the art field,” she says. “But it wasn’t anything that I put serious thought into until recently. With all the pressure of exams and grades and creating a path for your future, I’ve been constantly hearing that you should choose a field that you are talented in and passionate about - and what’s more passionate than a skill that allows you to embody passion itself?”

Gardiner’s eyes lit up with excitement as she spoke about her biggest inspiration during her journey. “I have to say hands down, *The Prince of Egypt* has to be my biggest inspiration today. That movie

was a masterpiece. The art in the movie is absolutely phenomenal and a marvel of its time. The amount of research (the movie team consulted with about 600 religious experts to get the movie as accurate as possible) and the meticulousity (the famous Red Sea split took two years



to animate) gives *The Prince of Egypt* a special place in my artistic heart. The smoothness of the animation, the colors, the scenery on top of good storytelling made me realize [art] is something I want to do. I want to inspire someone else like this too.”

Gardiner’s artwork leaves many speechless. Each stroke of lead or charcoal carefully crafts a path on paper, contributing to a larger image. When asked about her most

commonly used medium, she mentioned her love of white charcoal: “It adds such a nice twist to traditional with the fact that you are working the opposite way by creating light then adding dark. I think it changes the perspective of art pieces.”

As a humble and considerate senior, Lea has many words of wisdom to share with the younger students, “So many tips, so little time,” she jokes. “Honestly, I feel the most important [piece of advice] is to be patient. Your work is not always going to come out the way you want it to. It’s going to take time, it’s going to take practice, and it’s going to take dedication. If it’s something

that you will stick to, it really is as simple as it sounds.” Wisely, Gardiner adds: “Also, don’t ever compare yourself to other artists. The foundation of art is individuality and you should create things that embody your character.”

One of the most frustrating issues as an artist would be artist block - when one is unable to use his or her imagination to be creative. Instead of ripping her hair out, Gardiner recommends to “clear your head. Don’t try to force the ideas. Imagination comes naturally and taking a moment to cool off and not let the stress and frustration get to you can really make a difference in the quality of the pieces that you make.”

In the Fall of 2017, Gardiner is planning to attend SUNY Owsego where she will study Illustration.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: *Andrea Ayala*

By **Kimberly Flobil & Ifeoluwa Tugbobo**

Have you ever looked around you and noticed something different about someone? Maybe that person exudes a bright, happy disposition every single morning or wears something that catches your eye. Some students in Elmont Memorial High School have a certain kind of benevolence and generosity; one of these students is Andrea Ayala.

Andrea Ayala is a clever young junior who spends her time playing softball and learning about science. When asked about those who influence her life, Ayala mentioned her older sister, Jamileth, because she taught her that in order to get far in life, sacrifices have to be made. Andrea’s mother and her other sister, Iliana, push her to live life as an example to others - with determination and diligence - and to never settle for less than what you work for. Ayala noted that her motivation in life is knowing that failure is not an option if she ever wants to reach her goals. Knowing that, she has developed a stronger work ethic. Ayala



has made some interesting choices regarding the large amount of clubs she has decided to dedicate her time to, saying that she is “doing [her] best to keep up” with the rigorous lifestyle of her advanced course load, especially to increase her chances of getting into top schools like Molloy, Baruch and New York University.

Ayala has played a large role in a number of organizations that benefit our students and community. She is an extremely active member of Key Club, in which she also holds an officer position. She is also a part of her church’s Youth Group, where she participates in events like Midnight Runs, travelling throughout the city to provide homeless individuals with necessary supplies.

Andrea Ayala can often be found doing something to make someone else’s life better, with a bright smile and an even brighter heart. Her exemplary character and dedication to others makes her the definition of a Good Samaritan.

SIZZLIN’ SENIOR BBQ *Class of 2017 Kicks the Year Off with a Courtyard Barbeque*

By **Erika Feurtado**

Senior year of high school is somewhat of a “big deal.” Senior events are on most high school students’ bucket lists because events such as these are once in a lifetime. Not only are these events fun, but high school seniors can decrease their stress by attending these events. Within high schools around the country, students cringe at the sound of counselors’ voices repeating *college essays, SATs, and deadlines*. With the stress of upcoming deadlines and the anxieties of applying to college, it is imperative that we find time to spend with the kids we’ve sat next to for five years at Elmont Memorial High School - before parting our separate ways towards our futures.

On Friday, September 23, 2016, there was a party in Elmont’s courtyard indeed. With the flow of delicious food, amazing vibes, and a



diverse representation from the senior class, there was no better feeling of entertainment. The mix of many cultures at Elmont was apparent in the differences of dishes available to students from jerk chicken to oxtail. With the various tastes of the islands, many students were delighted to have a different country right here at “home.” The music was an integral part of the fiesta as well; when night fell upon the Spartans, music and dancing was the epitome of what having a great time was all about.

The senior barbeque was a successful event, as well as a great way for all the seniors to become closer to one another. Everyone bonded over meals, music, and making friends. Not only did friendships become even tighter, but new friendships were created in just one night. It was an unforgettable experience for teachers and especially for the students in the Class of 2017.

WELCOMING ELMONT’S NEWEST STAFF

New Faces at Elmont Memorial High School

By Fatima Bhutta

Meeting all of the new teachers that came to Elmont this year was truly amazing. To hear stories of their childhoods, hobbies, and what they’re passionate about - as teachers and outside of school - was very eye opening to hear. Oftentimes, we think of teachers as just teachers, and not people who actually have a life just like students do. To ask these teachers questions and take a small peek into their life was very fascinating to me. I appreciated talking to all of the new teachers very much and would like to welcome them to the building on behalf of the staff of *The Elmont Phoenix*.

MS. DIAZ

Ms. Diaz is a new guidance counselor at Elmont Memorial High School. Before coming to Elmont, she received her undergraduate degree from Boston College, with a double major Bachelor’s degree in English and Human Development. Diaz later went on to get her Master’s degree in School Counseling with a bilingual extension at Queens College. At the beginning of Ms. Diaz’s first year as a guidance counselor, she regards her experience so far as being “very stressful,” but “exciting.” Thankfully, she has found that her transition has been helped by the “really nice and helpful” encouragement and suggestions from her colleagues. Ms. Diaz was motivated to become a guidance counselor because of the wonderful experience she had with a guidance counselor of her own.

As a first generation college-student, the help that her guidance counselor provided her with was instrumental in helping her to find the right college and the right career. She was soon “inspired” to help other students during this important time in their lives and successfully “prepare them for their future.” Her favorite thing about being a guidance counselor is talking, engaging, and interacting with students. The hardest thing about being a guidance counselor is balancing everything and giving each student “the undivided attention that they deserve.” Even with the oftentimes challenging environment, she still loves Elmont as a whole, especially appreciating the “diverse environment.” When she isn’t changing the lives of students through counseling, Ms. Diaz loves running; she even completed the Boston Marathon while in college. Running helps her relax and gives her time for herself. She also loves to spend time with her family at church.

MS. SIEBER

Ms. Sieber is a new special education teacher at Elmont. She attended Mercy College for both undergraduate and graduate school. Ms. Sieber previously worked at Massapequa High School for one year. Her influential English teacher in high school is who inspired her to become an English teacher herself. What Ms. Sieber enjoys the most about teaching is “working with kids in the classroom.” To remain humble while being so invested in a classroom “can be draining.” Ms. Sieber finds it important to “put all [her] energy” into working. Elmont has been very welcoming and “has a great staff to work with.” Outside of school, Ms. Sieber enjoys playing and coaching softball.

MR. JACKMAN

Mr. Jackman is a new physical education teacher at Elmont. Previously, Mr. Jackman was the Athletic Director of Floral Park Memorial High School for about twenty years. Mr. Jackman loves working with kids and improving their health. Having interactions on a personal level and “seeing [the students] improve themselves” throughout the year is also very important to Mr. Jackman. When working with a larger number of kids in the Physical Education setting, team building activities, cooperative games, and group activities are played in gym class. “I really like [Elmont]... it’s a wonderful place to work, and I’ve had a wonderful experience so far, and the kids are great.” Mr. Jackman enjoys coaching football and lacrosse, and other fitness-related activities. Outside of school, Mr. Jackman also enjoys being with his family and spending time with them.

MR. BRUN

Mr. Brun is a new business teacher at Elmont and went to Stony Brook University for his undergraduate coursework and Dowling for his Master’s degree. Mr. Brun has worked in many districts as a teacher, including Middle Country,

Eastern Suffolk BOCES, and Comsewogue. Mr. Brun enjoys teaching his students passionately and enjoys the relationship he gets to build with the kids and his colleagues. Mr. Brun finds it important to give positive reinforcements to his students, while also maintaining a positive attitude with the students and teachers. He uses a reward program called “Brun bucks” for kids who do well in class. Although teaching involves a lot of hard work and planning, Mr. Brun wholeheartedly declares “I love teaching kids!” What motivated Mr. Brun to begin teaching is his passion for jiu jitsu and instructing kids and seeing them learn new things. Mr. Brun finds Elmont welcoming and loves the school, but admits “it’s a lot of work in the beginning. The pressure [is] on, if you want to be prepared and do the best job you can.” Mr. Brun has fundraised in his past career and says “it makes you feel good, knowing you can help others.” Mr. Brun also enjoys spending time with his family and travelling whenever he can.

MR. CABRERA

Mr. Cabrera is a new social studies teacher at Elmont. Mr. Cabrera attended Suffolk Community College and Long Island University - Post Campus. He has his degree in Secondary Education. Previously, he worked at Pave Academy in Brooklyn for one year. Mr. Cabrera enjoys working with kids, stating: “It is my passion to help children succeed and learn all that they can.” Seeing students grow as learners and watching the students have fun while learning is important to Mr. Cabrera. Elmont has been very welcoming to Cabrera and he feels it is a “great place to work... Elmont has a lot of school spirit.” Mr. Cabrera enjoys travelling and visiting museums while spending time with his daughter. Mr. Cabrera is also a big fan of sports and likes playing basketball and baseball.

MS. MENENDEZ

Ms. Menendez is a new foreign language Spanish teacher at Elmont. She went to Queens College for her undergraduate degree and Adelphi University for her Master’s degree. Previously, she worked at high schools in New York City, including in Bronxdale and at the William Cullen Bryant High School in Queens. Ms. Menendez also taught ESL. Growing up in a bilingual household and a having a love for different languages is what inspired Ms. Menendez to teach. “Seeing the kids after they’ve graduated and how their lives are” is something that she enjoys about being a teacher. Ms. Menendez likes to teach with a lot of “visuals and games.” Having so many “different personalities and needs in the classroom” is something that can be difficult at times when teaching. Ms. Menendez really likes Elmont: “I graduated from New Hyde Park Memorial, so I know the District.” Ms. Menendez likes “traveling to other states and countries,” as well as cooking, bike riding, and going to the beach. Ms. Menendez also teaches ESL at night to adults in Great Neck.

MS. BATISTA-GALLO

Ms. Batista-Gallo is also a new Foreign language teacher at Elmont. She received her Bachelor’s degree from Stony Brook University and her Master’s from Hofstra University. Previously Ms. Batista-Gallo worked in the Bronx KIPP NYC charter school for three years, and also worked in the Valley Stream Central High School District. Ms. Batista-Gallo used to observe her Spanish teacher in high school and when she was taking her Pre-med classes, Gallo went back to visit her teacher. “I stayed with her for a couple of days and actually watched everything she did.” Revisiting her teacher made her change her mind and she ended up switching majors to education. “I love watching the kids take the chance to speak

Spanish,” which she knows can be the scariest for every kid.

Having enough time to fit everything into your schedule can be difficult as a teacher: “I feel like I always want to do so much more. There’s never enough time!” A teaching method Ms. Batista-Gallo likes to use when teaching is T.P.R.S which stands for Total Physical Response Stories. “It forces the kids to repeat and say words in Spanish” which helps them to learn even better. Elmont “is a very interesting school, especially coming into a transition this year with technology which can always be hard,” Ms. Batista-Gallo says. “I like the spunk kids have and I feel right at home in Elmont.” Ms. Batista-Gallo enjoys salsa dancing and cooking on her own time. “I wish I was a chef, if I wasn’t a teacher.” She also likes to spend time with her daughter.

MR. RUBANO

Mr. Rubano is a new social studies teacher at Elmont. He went to Notre Dame University earning a Bachelor’s degree in History. Later, he went to Dowling to get his Master’s degree in Education. Previously, he worked on Wall Street for seven years. For one year, he worked as a special education teacher, and then he worked at the St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School. Influences from teachers and Mr. Rubano’s love for coaching inspired him to teach. Mr. Rubano enjoys the “interactions with kids and getting involved in conversations.” When teaching, Mr. Rubano likes to get discussions started in class and to motivate the students to get involved. The hardest thing about teaching, according to Mr. Rubano, is the time. “To cover everything in the amount of depth you want to cover - time creates [an] issue.” Mr. Rubano thinks Elmont is a great school and says “I’ve been here for [8] weeks and I’ve enjoyed my stay so far.” Mr. Rubano skis, snowboards, and is a lifeguard during the summer. Mr. Rubano also coaches JV football at Elmont and will be helping out with lacrosse this year too.

MS. HUDLEY-SIMMONS

Ms. Hudley-Simmons is the new chairperson of the Music Department. She attended Roosevelt University in Chicago, where she received her Bachelor’s of Science degree. Then, she came to New York and attended Columbia University for one year, but it was at Queens College where she earned her Master’s in Music and Education. Ms. Hudley-Simmons then went on to Fordham University to begin her doctorate. She is currently working on her dissertation. Previously, Ms. Hudley-Simmons taught music and English, and was the Director of Music in Brooklyn and Queens for the City of New York. For 3 years, Ms. Hudey-Simmons was the Director of Cultural Community Affairs for Bronx’s proposal to open an art school in Brooklyn from the Bill Gates Fund, which was eventually successful. She was also the Director of the Arts at Freeport High School. Ms. Hudley-Simmons was inspired by her mother to become a teacher. Her mother was also a teacher, and always saw her daughter following in her footsteps. Since then, she has never looked back, and regards teaching as the “best part of [her] life.” The hardest thing Ms. Hudley-Simmons finds about being a music teacher is the rules and regulations of education that are placed on students. She has frequently recognized that people put very little emphasis on music and art education and the positive role it can play in students’ lives, which she aims to change. Although only here a short time thus far, she finds the students at Elmont Memorial “very lovely.” Similarly to Ms. Diaz, she finds the diversity that Elmont has to offer “fascinating” and appreciates what the students and teachers have to offer. To her, learning from students is just as rewarding as teaching them. Ms. Hudley-Simmons loves to travel as a hobby and has been to many countries. “I’ll fly anywhere,” she says.

In Other News...

ONE STEP CLOSER TO MARS *SpaceX's Interplanetary Transport System*

By Shazor Shahid

In search of our place in the universe, we have achieved greater understandings of our world and the mysterious darkness we call space. From the observations of the Greeks, Pythagoras and Erasthones, and the Renaissance scientists, Galileo and Kepler, to the Scientific Revolution pioneers, Newton and Hooke, and the modern scientists, Einstein and Hubble, humans as a race have greatly contributed to the knowledge of the universe and its function. Now, with breakthroughs in technological developments, we may be able to physically explore and live on other planets - particularly, Mars.

Elon Musk of SpaceX says that in order for humans to secure their survivability, they must expand to other planets. We must become an interplanetary species. Mars is the first step. Musk stated it is SpaceX's goal to transport the first human to Mars by 2025.

We will first need a way to transport humans safely and efficiently, before colonies and their sustainable development can progress. From colonies, cities will develop. And in the future, with an optimized transportation system, the people on Earth may begin to enjoy Mars-based commodities, and regular transits to and from Mars. Perhaps stations will be created to host people waiting for interplanetary flights - spaceports - similar in design to the International Space Station, built along the path to Mars.

This is not the only focus of going to Mars. Having teams of scientists physically able to peruse the slopes of the Red Planet will allow research organizations to gather information normally unobtainable from space rovers, further increasing our knowledge of the planets.

Four things are prioritized as essential and desirable for a sustainable transport system

to Mars: full reusability, refueling in orbit, propellant production on Mars, and the right propellant. The ship that transports cargo and people along with the rocket boosters must endure on a large-enough scale to allow multiple trips. This introduces the idea of refueling in orbit. In SpaceX's current design, the ship's booster would separate from the ship and return to Earth to obtain the fuel tanker, which in appearance would be almost identical to the ship. The tanker would attach itself to the ship for refueling. Not developing this mechanism would mean the ship would be almost five-to-ten times greater in both size and cost, which would not be sustainable. Current targets for reusability estimate a booster to be reused 1000 times, a tanker 100 times, and a transport ship 12 times. The ship, in order to return to Earth, would need propellant, which would be autonomously produced on Mars. The current options include refined jet fuel, hydrogen fuel, and the proposed deep-cryo methalox. The proposed methalox is deemed the optimal option, since Mars' atmosphere contains nearly 95% carbon dioxide (CO₂), and with the water from subsurface ice reserves (H₂O), CH₄, a form of methane, and oxygen, O₂, can be produced. With these four features, a low cost for this transport system can be achieved.

Currently, the targeted cost, according to SpaceX, would be the median cost of a house in the United States, which is close to \$200,000. Compared to current methods, this is a major improvement, in the sense that not everyone wanting a trip to Mars would be able to fork over ten billion dollars.

Once Mars is colonized, SpaceX looks to complete missions on the moons of the other planets, such as Europa of Jupiter and Enceladus of Saturn, and then the planets themselves.

A FEW STEPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE *Making Strides Against Breast Cancer*

By Liliann Ulysse

Pink. Pink tutus, pink wigs, even dogs in pink fairy wings. This was the scene at Jones Beach Field 5 for the annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk held on Sunday, October 16, 2016. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and the purpose of the walk is to raise money and raise awareness for breast cancer. The total amount of donations made this year was \$1,418,716.52.

Cancer is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary* as "a disease caused by an uncontrolled division of abnormal cells in a part of the body."

According to a *Forbes* article entitled "The Unfortunate Reality Of A Rising Rate Of Breast Cancer," there has been a 25% increase in the rates of breast cancer from 1975 to 2012. Stage 0 breast cancer is called carcinoma in situ. This means the cancer cells haven't spread outside of the milk ducts, making it hard to detect. Stage 1 is divided into two parts: Stage 1A and stage 1B. In stage 1A, the tumor is smaller than a peanut, and it hasn't spread to the lymph nodes. In Stage 1B, the clusters of cells are the width of a grain of rice, and the lymph nodes have evidence of cancer. As you progress to Stages 2-4, the severity and risk increases. The Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk has one purpose: "to unite as a community to honor breast cancer survivors, and raise awareness about steps we can take to reduce the risk of getting breast cancer."

This year there were over 1,427 teams and 9,193 participants raising awareness for breast cancer. The maximum amount of miles to walk was five miles, but participants could have

chosen to shorten their walk to three miles. Before the walk, participants were greeted by tables filled with ripe honey crisp apples and water bottles - free of charge. Then, walkers went to the registration and check-in tents, while some volunteers had clipboards with registration forms and check-in sheets. After the walk was finished, walkers could go and visit the various booths and tents of sponsors, including Panera Bread and PSEG. It was like a flea market of free items. There was also a stage where a live band performed and there was an area to dance.

In the dance area was Cherry Wilson, who was walking because her mother Rhonda was a three year survivor of breast cancer. The pair was accompanied by a few relatives and family friends. Another participant was Cindy Melendez, who walked in honor of her aunt, who passed from breast cancer fourteen years ago. Ever since, Cindy and her family complete this walk annually.

As I walked around from booth to booth, I ended up signing up to be a volunteer to help with various tasks at the event. I was assigned to the clip renegade, a group of volunteers with clipboards of registration sheets and check-in sheets, meant to speed up the process and shorten lines. I stood near the entrance, screaming "registration and sign-in!" for an hour and a half. During this experience, I ended up talking to and making new friends with some of the other volunteers. At 11:00AM, my fellow volunteers and I helped pack up. Everyone went home with a good experience, a positive memory, and a bit more pink in their heart.

TITLE I *An Explanation Behind the Title "Title I"*

By Laila Choudhry

As the NYS Common Core Curriculum continues to inflict its wrath upon students, more and more start slipping in school. Students from lower income families are most susceptible to failing because of this drastic curriculum change. This was taken into account, and the term "Title I School" soon appeared. Most educators, parents and community members have heard the term "Title I School" thrown loosely around, but what exactly is it? According to the U.S. Department of Education, the Title I school program is the nation's oldest and largest federally funded program. Along with thousands of other schools in the nation, Elmont Memorial High School is named as a Title I School.

The idea of Title I was enacted in 1865 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It's purpose was closing the achievement gap between low-income students and other students.

People who are served by Title I funds include migrant students, homeless students, students with disabilities, neglected students, delinquent students, at-risk students or any student in need. This program provides over \$14 billion to the school systems which have students at risk of failure and living near poverty. A school is given the federal aid depending on the number of students receiving free or reduced lunch. These funds are strictly used to assist schools in meeting the educational goals of low-income students with curriculum support provided in math and science, counseling, parental involvement, staff and program involvement, and so forth.

According to the *Brookings Institution*, a not-for-profit public policy organization, despite Title I seeming to be advantageous, the funding per student is quite low, averaging about \$500 to \$600 a year. And even though it may seem like this funding may help the students, there is little evidence that the funds are actually used for effective services and activities. Research from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a center for educational statistics, shows that achievement gaps between students, disadvantaged and otherwise, have existed for years. To narrow these gaps, extreme measures would have to be taken. Title I spending must be increased by at least five to eight times more and it must be determined that the funds are put towards effective approaches.

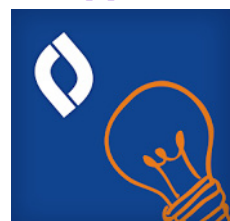
Federal spending should be increased and applied to focusing on effective interventions on the neediest students, so that they may be able to be successful in the future. The more effort and money we put into our students now, the more they'll be able to give back to us in their futures.

Elmont's eBooks!

Did you know... the EMHS library has over 1,300 eBooks available to be read on your phone or tablet?

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Download the "Destiny Discover App" from either the Google Play store or the App store.



Visit the library if you have any questions!

FACE OFF

Who is the better Presidential Candidate?

CLINTON



By Fabrice Tondreau

Hillary Clinton's goals for the country and the way she carries herself on the campaign trail prove she is the only candidate worthy of the title of President. Trump's goals have too little support and his name carries too much of a negative connotation to have him anywhere near the White House.

When looking at the plans Clinton has for the country, you can clearly see she has the people's best interests at heart. As seen by *The Washington Post's* breakdown of each candidate's stance, it is obvious that Hillary Clinton wants to take steps to protect our country through gun control and wants to keep us safe through smart military spending, to ensure that our country stays safe for everyone - including the LGBT+ community. Clinton also strives to create a more environmentally-friendly nation and a more equitable taxation system.

Meanwhile, a mere perusal of Trump's campaign platform shows a completely different future America. Trump claims that global warming is too expensive and quotes that "[w]e're going to have a wall... Mexico's going to pay for the wall." While these claims do seem completely ludicrous, Trump has confirmed these opinions time and time again, but then contradicted these claims during the first Presidential Debate on September 27. This incident corroborates the fact that Donald Trump has gone back on too many of his claims to consider any of his current claims valid. *NBC's* "fact check" on the debate reiterates Trump's contradictory nature, denying and flat out refusing to acknowledge the facts. Trump also makes false assertions regarding global warming as well as New York murder rates. He also implies that the Stop and Frisk movement isn't heavily influenced by racial profiling. His actions make him appear to be untrustworthy and indecisive in his plans for the nation.

Clinton has stayed consistent in almost all of her claims - all of which have factual support. When Clinton argues for increased gun control, she mentions the 33,000 Americans that die every year from gun violence. Meanwhile, Trump, when asked about LGBT+ rights, merely says: "I know many, many gay people." Furthermore, Trump's actions in a 2005 tape that recently resurfaced show his thoughts on women, displaying the sexism and male chauvinism alive in Trump. In the words of the Clinton campaign, "...child care, equal pay, and paid leave are fundamental economic issues - not just 'women's issues.'" Clinton's policies have the needs of every American at heart, not just the rich, the males, or even just the politicians. Overall, when the two candidates are boiled down to just facts, there seems to be only one candidate that is factually accurate.

As is displayed on a portion of her website, "112 Reasons and Counting Why Hillary Clinton Should Be Our Next President," reason #78 in support of Clinton is because she will make education a top priority. She states that K-12 education must be of the highest quality, showing that Clinton understands that the future of our nation needs all of the resources available to ensure that America remains great - the antithesis of Trump's opinion. With these resources, the youth of America will be able to make decisions that will stand to benefit themselves and the country they live in. On March 10, 2016, Clinton stated: "Education should be the great door opener, and yet we know it often doesn't turn out that way. I think every child in this country deserves a good teacher in a good school, regardless of the ZIP code you live in." Just one of Clinton's many 21st century goals is to "provide every student in America an opportunity to learn computer science," citing the excellent job outlook for that field. It is obvious that Clinton has strong values for education, for our students, and even for our teachers.

This drive to provide our youth with high quality education has to be one of the most important qualities of the Clinton campaign and here's why: presidents are role models. Presidents hold positions of such esteem and renown that even the youngest of children know to admire them. Because of this, presidents have to model to the younger generations what is important. In a society where it is becoming more and more difficult to become successful without seeking higher education, children need some type of boost to bring them to the top. As President, Hillary Clinton will boost our youth and boost our nation.

TRUMP



By Munahil Sultana

"My whole life is about winning. I don't lose often. I almost never lose." - Donald Trump

In the words of Republican Party Presidential Candidate, Donald J. Trump, "...you're measured not by how much you undertake, but by what you finally accomplish." Within the political reign today, numerous politicians will sway their policies on conflicting matters, dodge questions at presidential debates, and seldom take action unless necessitated by their political party. Real estate mogul Donald J. Trump strays from the popular stereotype that surrounds politicians.

Trump prides himself on the notion that he is different. Unlike other candidates, Trump is the face behind a multibillion dollar real estate empire in the heart of New York. He was able to uplift his business while overcoming many trials and tribulations. Most notably, in 1989, his property development projects faced a great deficit; Trump filed for bankruptcy and was forced to restructure his debts. Through negotiation - a skill necessary for the President of the United States - Trump was able to save his business and defeat the crisis his project was facing. He realized that the crisis was temporary and through perseverance, he could defeat any obstacle that came his way. The reality is that the United States of America is facing a crisis. Citizens no longer feel safe in the "land of the free and the home of the brave." Trump is the only viable candidate in this election who has the potential to save the United States - in a similar manner to that which he once utilized to save his business.

As a president, it is vital to have a confident, self-assured, and strong personality which cannot be altered by outside influences. While other candidates often steer their policies in the direction of the campaign, Trump has always stayed firm in his beliefs. His policies regarding immigration, abortion, and foreign policy have hardly strayed from his original stances. If anything, his campaign has strengthened his beliefs as he now has the power to impact a greater American population than in the years prior to this election.

The Democratic nominee and former First Lady of the United States, Hillary Clinton, lacks the qualities necessary to be President of the United States. After all, this country was established by our founding fathers who put their sweat, blood and tears into creating a nation out of ashes. The selection of rulers were decided by popular sovereignty rather than ascension through bloodlines. Do we really want the first female president to be the wife of a former president? President Bill Clinton previously failed the nation with mediocre welfare reforms and ineffectual trade agreements. Legitimate candidates should be able to excel without relying on their spouses or relatives to determine their eligibility for the presidency.

Similar to the actions of previous candidates, Clinton is often fickle in her ideas on policies, especially gay rights. In January of 2000, Clinton was reported to claim that marriage does not include gay unions: "Marriage has got historic, religious and moral content that goes back to the beginning of time and I think a marriage is as a marriage has always been, between a man and a woman." She retained her stance during her 2008 campaign and continued with her policy until 2013 when advocacy of gay rights proved expedient to her campaign. She then claimed gay Americans are "full and equal citizens and deserve the rights of citizenship, that includes marriage." Her sudden shift of policy intrigued most Americans; while it is possible that Clinton simply had a change of heart, her statements claim that she has always supported LGBTQ+ Americans, which is simply false.

When realizing how vital the presidential election is to the success of the United States, we must ask ourselves the question: Who is the best candidate for this election? Is it Hillary Clinton, a fickle woman who treats this election as a joke by lying about her policies? Or, Donald J. Trump, a triumphant businessman who prides himself on the notion that he can bring this country to great success?

As a nation, we have not felt safe in quite a while. Through turmoil, this country has thrived - only to be on the path to failure once again. Unlike previous years, we have found a new light. A man who can live up to his claims. A man who can bring us back to the pedestal where we came from. Donald J. Trump can make this country "great again."

College Highlight

AN INTERVIEW WITH STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

By Saarah Braithwaite

Established in 1957 and located in Suffolk County on Long Island, Stony Brook University is known for being one of the most prestigious public universities in the country. Stony Brook is divided into 12 schools and colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the Graduate School, the School of Journalism, the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, the School of Professional Development, and the five health sciences schools: Dental Medicine, Health Technology and Management, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Welfare. Such offerings provide students with diversity in their decisions when choosing majors and minors. Stony Brook has a page on their website for school funding and improving life on and off campus; they also use all proceeds to fund the largest hospital in Suffolk County - Stony Brook University Hospital - since it is under their operation.

Mr. Christopher D’Orso, who has been the Assistant Director of Admissions at Stony Brook for nearly twelve years, was able to give great insight into this local SUNY college. Mr. D’Orso completed his undergraduate studies at SUNY Geneseo and acquired his Master’s of Science degree in College Student Development at Long Island University. Mr. D’Orso answered questions that many students looking to apply to Stony Brook might want to know the answers to...

Q: What does Stony Brook offer students who want to explore outside of New York State?

A: “Even though we’re on Long Island, you get a wonderful sense of the world here at Stony Brook. We have one of the most diverse populations of any of the top universities in the country (<http://priceconomics.com/ranking-the-most-and-least-diverse-colleges-in/>), and our students can access hundreds of study abroad programs, nearly anywhere in the world: stonybrook.edu/iap”

Q: Why can Stony Brook boast that it is ranked in the world’s top 1% of universities by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings?

A: “There’s a long methodology to the [Times] rankings, but for a relatively young university



- we’ve only been around 60 years - to be recognized like that internationally is quite an honor.”

Q: Students on college.niche.com ranked the local area of Stony Brook lowest... how does campus life make up for that?

A: “We have over 400 clubs and organizations, twenty Division I sports, shows, concerts, lectures, and a lot more. We’ve worked hard with our local community to increase offerings outside of campus as well, but the campus is in a suburban area, surrounded by houses. There isn’t much that’s walkable from campus, so we offer as much as we can on campus.”

Q: What is life like for an undergraduate?

A: “That’s a tough question to answer, because it varies so widely based on your academic focus and your interests. The academic experience here is paramount; you will be challenged in your classes, and you’ll work hard. But, the payoff at the end is totally worth it: <http://www.bestcolleges.com/features/best-roi-colleges/>”

Q: What can students at Elmont do to apply themselves and meet the credentials that Stony Brook has set for freshman admission?

A: “Good question. Your academic experience is the most important piece of your application. It’s important to us that students have every opportunity to graduate on time, and part of that is having the right preparation coming in. So for example, an applicant into one of our engineering or computer science majors should really have a calculus and physics background; those are courses that are crucial to your freshman year, so having some experience with them already is a big plus.”

Q: What can student athletes expect trying to balance sports and academics?

A: “Being a Division I athletics program has its advantages, but there’s also a lot of pressure on our athletes. We have an advising team that is with our athletes every step of the way, ensuring that they get the most out their academic experience as well.”

Q: What extracurricular activities provide students with knowledge they would not be able to get during their regular coursework?

A: “Again, depends on your goals and plans. You can see the clubs and organizations we recognize here: <https://stonybrook.collegiatelink.net/>”

Q: How does Stony Brook ensure the safety of students when they leave campus?

A: “We have a number of educational programs that assist our students both on and off campus. Our Red Watch Band program (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/rwb/>) has been nationally recognized, and we offer Green Dot bystander intervention (http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/cpo/bystander-intervention/Green_Dot_NEW.html)”

Q: How has the virtual tour proven to be helpful for students looking to explore the campus?

A: “Our virtual tour is wonderfully helpful! When we did a massive redesign of the university home page this spring, all of our student focus groups told us that having that virtual tour on the main page impacted their enrollment decision. It’s a great way to tour campus without leaving home.”

Q: How are the arts, theatre and humanities programs incorporated into campus life?

A: “The arts & humanities have a very robust presence on campus. The Staller Center for the Arts, which is the largest arts center in area, is right in the center of campus and offers a “first on us” program, where [undergraduates] can get a free ticket to their first Staller Center show. We have numerous student performance groups (bands, a cappella groups, dance groups), a Craft Center that offers workshops regularly, and all of our music department ensembles are audition-based and are open to all students, regardless of major.”

THE DISTRICT COLLEGE FAIR

Optimizing Your Experience

By Dominique Browne

From seniors finalizing their college choices to ambitious underclassmen exploring some of their options for secondary education, the District College Fair provided a wonderful opportunity for students and parents to examine some of the colleges and universities that New York and many other states have to offer. Only at the Sewanhaka District College Fair can you find information about unique careers and professions, like becoming a customs officer and regulating the smuggling of dangerous plants or rare and exotic animals over the border.

The District College Fair took place on September 19 at 7PM, when Elmont Memorial hosted colleges as close as Stony Brook University on Long Island and the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical

Education in New York City, to schools further in distance like the University of Chicago in Illinois and James Madison University in Virginia. Over 120 college and career institutions attended - 122 to be exact, from the CUNYs to the SUNYs to the U.S. Air, Army, Marines, and Navy.

But, what exactly is a college

fair? A college fair involves students meeting representatives or admissions officers from different

admitted into that particular school.

To make the most out of your visit to a college fair, be sure to first create a list of colleges that you are interested in or that specialize in the major you are planning to pursue. Then, make a list of questions you plan to ask the admissions officers (i.e. How selective are your travel abroad programs? Or, how do commuter students feel at home on campus?) Third, bring a notebook and pen to write down notes about each college and to write down the responses to your questions. Next, pick up any pamphlet or brochure available regarding the college’s average class size, ideal SAT scores, financial aid packages, etc. If you are especially interested in a certain school, exchange emails with the admissions officer so that you can communicate further.



colleges/universities to discuss the demographics of the institution, its financial aids packets, and necessary requirements for being

CAN AN APPLE A DAY KEEP FAILURE AWAY?

A Look at the District's New iPad Initiative

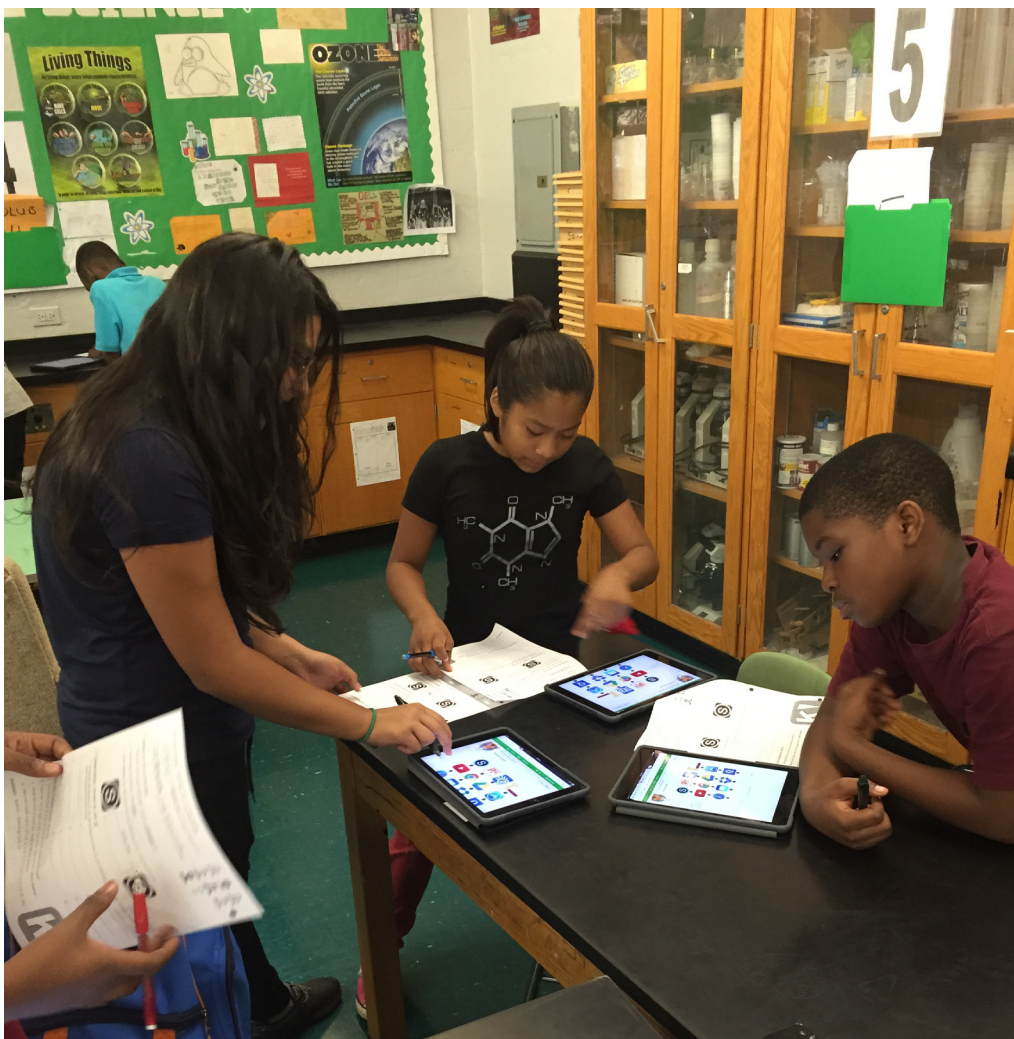
By Sophie Bien-Aimé

Members of the Elmont community may have noticed an interesting change in the educational experience for some students. If you walk by any seventh grade classroom, you'll see each student equipped with an iPad Air 2 and their teacher equipped with an iPad Pro. Gone are the days of paper, pencils, and hardcover textbooks. Elmont is steadily moving into the digital age.

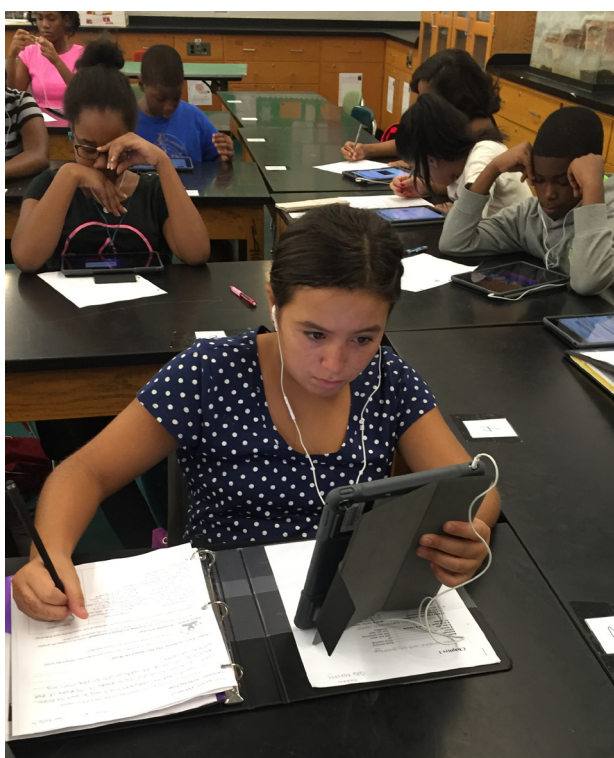
The iPad distribution is a part of the Future Ready Initiative, a federal program that was put in place to advance students - and their learning environments - technologically. After visiting about twelve other school districts, the Sewanhaka Central High School District decided to equip seventh grade students and their teachers with iPads to begin the process of learning how to be successful in an environment almost completely digitized. According to Mr. Christopher Nelson, the District's Technology Coordinator, the main goal of the Future Ready Initiative is "accommodation." He often highlights the importance of the 1:1 (one device per one student) process, pointing to how powerful it is to introduce technology that students are familiar with in their social lives to the educational setting. This way, students can be more comfortable with what and how they are learning.

Much to the dismay of older students, the iPad initiative begins with the middle school grades. All seventh graders received iPads at the beginning of the school year and eighth graders and their teachers will make the conversion by the beginning of the second semester of the 2016-2017 school year. Currently, the iPads are not available to all of the grade levels for many reasons. For example, budget restrictions put a cap on the amount of devices available at the same time. All of the devices and upgrades are reliant on the district's budget and money-saving practices developed by the district (like buying less textbooks if they are available electronically), so it will not be known for sure what can and cannot be done in the future until budget season. Mr. Nelson hopes to make the devices available to all students over a three-year period. There is a chance that a failed budget may delay the update process, but Mr. Nelson outlined that "communication" with students and parents on how beneficial the initiative is will point them in the right direction. Many seventh graders come with technology knowledge from elementary school; these students easily adapt to the technology, retain new skills, foster new knowledge, and help their peers. Another reason why the devices are not currently available to older students is because one of the goals of the initiative, according to Nelson, is to "get students ready for the next year." Spending time teaching older students would essentially be misused time and energy because they are expected to move on and graduate sooner.

With such big change comes a learning process and adaptation. When asked about the perceived success of the initiative so far, Nelson mentioned that it was "too early to tell," but as far as he could see, the initiative was "well received." Even though the initiative has been welcomed by students and staff alike thus far, there is still work to be done. Teachers and students have to be trained to use the devices effectively in an educational setting. Because of the novelty of the entire initiative, families may have to develop new routines to better accommodate these new tools. Services like school and at-home Wi-Fi will become almost mandatory to a student's success. Before adding almost 1500 devices to the district's Wi-Fi at the beginning of the school year, many more routers were added to each school in the district



Students in Mr. Spinnato's Science 7 Integrated Advanced Courses utilize their iPads daily. Mr. Spinnato was the Elmont teacher to facilitate the iPad pilot during the 2015-2016 school year.



and each school was moved onto a "high[er] capacity" network.

Because the three main technological giants (Apple, Google, and Windows) work well enough with each other, compatibility is becoming less and less of a problem. The same or similar apps are available across all of the devices and platforms that a student may encounter during their day, and programs like Remote Desktop are available to help make completing assignments more convenient.

But, what about the devices in question? The Apple Corporation is known for frequently updating their technology. So, how will students keep up? To accommodate for this, Mr. Nelson and the District Technology Committee have developed a three-year update plan. After three years of using the devices, old devices will be returned back to the school district and outdated devices will be traded in for the latest model. These older devices can be given back to the Apple Corporation for a buying credit that can help alleviate the cost of the newest devices. Sadly though, students do not keep the devices in the summers between school or after graduation. During the summer, the iPads are retained by the district to allow the technology department to "clean up" the devices and hand them back to the students at the beginning of the school year. After graduation, they are

retained for use within the Sewanhaka District.

One of the district's goals in implementing this Future Ready Sewanhaka initiative "is equity," according to Nelson. The distribution of devices to all students ensures that each student has equal access to modern technology and is on a level playing field when it comes to the benefits such technology offers. One of the most notable benefits is the advantage of "always having access to your information" - a luxury, as well as a responsibility. Now that all students have access to the same resources, it prevents many students with less material resources at their disposal from getting an incomplete education. These devices essentially create a mobile classroom where students must take responsibility for their education and access the digital information provided to them and available for them on the World Wide Web.

With all of these wonderful changes, students will not be granted all of the fun and leisurely components of an iPad's capabilities. Services, like iTunes, have been disabled. However, in the place of the App Store, the district has put Self Service, an app that allows students free access to additional academic resources. Students can enter the Self Service app

and download tons of educational apps to supplement their scholastic needs. This models how many employers who provide technology to their employees also provide them with additional resources to facilitate their jobs.

And what if a student breaks or misplaces his or her device? There are policies put in place for that as well. The school did purchase insurance on the iPads, however, the Future Ready Initiative has a handbook that details the specific procedures put in place for each misfortune and details the assumed liability taken on by the student. If another student happens to find a misplaced device, reporting it to the Main Office would be the best course of action.

This initiative isn't just about the students though. Teachers, too, have had their teaching landscape changed quite drastically. Just last year, all teachers were given Surface Pro tablets to use in classrooms; these tablets connected wirelessly to new, high definition monitors. Now, over a three-year period, all of those Surfaces will be replaced with iPads and some monitors will be updated to remain compatible with these iPads. Because teachers and their views on the transition are different, Mr. Nelson has observed mixed reactions. Some teachers are quicker to pick up the technology than others. In any case, there are teachers with exceptional knowledge of the devices that are put in place to help other teachers through workshops and training sessions. Teachers that are being observed by their peers in "peer observations" also have the technology at their disposal, so it's all about "teaching teachers" to incorporate these new practices efficiently.

The Surface Pro tablets, no longer in use by teachers after three years, will be redistributed to teachers who may not have yet received an iPad. Or, the Surface Pro's might be given to classes like Science Research, where handheld and fast technology is becoming a necessary component of scientific exploration.

Looking forward, Mr. Nelson eventually wishes to incorporate more video conference use, now that all of the devices have cameras. He also eventually wants to use virtual reality, a relatively old concept with new technology being developed for it every day. Who knows, maybe one day, textbooks will be a thing of the past and we'll be 100% digital. Will the future be ready for Future Ready Sewanhaka? We're one iPad away from figuring that out.

Long Island History

ACTION & SUSPENSE AUTHOR GRADUATED FROM ELMONT

By Shaji Rahman

Elmont Memorial High School achieves excellence in English - from its AP Language and Literature classes to its high earning English Regents scores to its award-winning newspaper. For many English loving students at Elmont, Nelson DeMille might be of particular interest.

The very famous and well known Nelson DeMille is a graduate of our very own junior/senior high school.

Nelson DeMille was born in New York City on August 23, 1943 to Huron and Antonia (Panzer) DeMille. I'm sure these parents had no idea that their child would become a well known author. Nelson DeMille moved to Long Island with his parents when he was a young child. While attending Elmont Memorial High School he played both football and track, but at the same time focused on sharing his passion of journalism. After Elmont, Nelson DeMille went to Hofstra University for three years and then later on he joined the military and attended officer candidate school. Through this military training he became first lieutenant for the United States Army from 1966-1969. He had a division in Vietnam and through his great work



in the military he was decorated with many medals, such as the Air Medal, the Bronze Star, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. After three years of serving the nation, Nelson DeMille went back to Hofstra and received a degree in History and Political science. He has three children, Lauren, Alexander, and James, and still lives on Long Island. So there's the chance you might drive past him on the Long Island Expressway.

DeMille, in the beginning stages of his journalism career, wrote many NYPD detective novels. The first novel that gave DeMille his huge break was *By The Rivers of Babylon*, published in 1978. Later on, he continued to publish many novels that made him a very well recognized author. He was a member of the Authors Guild, the Mystery Writers of America

and American Mensa. DeMille was the president of The Mystery Writers of America in 2003 and 2004, and he was later coined the "thriller master" in 2015 by another association called the International Thriller Writers. He is also a proud earner of three doctorate degrees - a PhD in Humane Letters from Hofstra University, a PhD in Literature from Long Island University, and PhD in Humane Letters from Dowling College.

How amazing is it to know that a famous author came from our wonderful high school? Here are some Nelson DeMille books that you should definitely read: *By the Rivers of Babylon*, *Cathedral*, *The Talbot Odyssey*, *Word of Honor*, *The Charm School*, *The Gold Coast*, *The General's Daughter*, *Spencerville*, *Plum Island*, *The Lion's Game*, *Up Country*, *Night Fall*, *Wild Fire*, *The Gate House*, *The Lion*, *The Panther*, *The Quest*, and *Radiant Angel*. Most novels are set on our very own Long Island. For example, *The Gold Coast* is about the super-wealthy living on Long Island; *The Gate House* is the follow-up novel to *The Gold Coast* and is centered around mafia-drama on the island.

EMPOWERING THE NATION *Talented and Gifted Students Take the Nation By Storm*

By Munahil Sultana

In the modern era that we reside in, we are frequently set back from our goals due to foolish reasons. In a myriad of cases around the world, our age, gender, religion or sexuality can create a barrier that deters us from success. As a student, I can attest to the fact that my age is often utilized to discriminate against my intellectual capabilities - a notion that is erroneous as it creates stereotypes that are far from the truth. In Ms. Harley's classroom at Elmont Memorial High School, students find themselves in an interesting situation - as they step into the doors of her classroom, they are treated as adults and are taught that their voice matters.

While we often hear cliché quotes about how "every voice matters," we've become accustomed to the fact that we can't make a difference - at least not in the way we want to. After countless years of sitting in classrooms where the teachers truly did not care about my opinion, you can imagine the surprise on my face when Mrs. Harley brought topics, such as animal cruelty and LGBTQ+ discrimination, into her classroom discussions. What's even more astounding? That she actually cared about what I had to say.

We began to work on "Empowerment Projects," individual assignments that we've chosen for ourselves, battling issues that we believe have tainted today's society. With our own deadlines and our own boundaries, we are able to tackle our issue with full force. While some students created videos, murals, or artwork, many others chose to utilize different forums they were introduced to in order to raise awareness about their issue, such as websites and public service announcement videos.

Alongside another student, Fisola Aruleba,



I began to meet with the principal of Elmont Memorial High School, Mr. Kevin Dougherty, in hopes of introducing the projects schoolwide. While I, along with many others, had been exposed to the teachings of Mrs. Harley, those who had not been given the opportunity to be a student in her classroom seemed to be missing out. I aspired to touch the souls of all those in my school and show them that they can make a change - just as many of us have done.

While we were presenting our project to different platforms, we were given the opportunity to attend Confratute - a conference hosted by the University of Connecticut that is an institution for learning directed towards educators. The summer institute is geared towards providing educators with effective strategies for the enrichment of the learning of all students, while also providing adequate learning strategies to meet the needs of talented and gifted students. With over fifty strands of mini-lessons and evening forum sessions, Confratute is dedicated to providing in depth training of the Schoolwide Enrichment

Model (SEM). Hosted by the University of Connecticut, the 39th annual Confratute brought over 650 educators from around the world who were enthusiastic about properly meeting the needs of all students present in their school.

Hannah Meikle, who is now in the eighth grade, was extremely ecstatic about the event: "Confratute was an amazing experience. We were able to speak to educators who truly valued our time and thoughts. This experience helped me to see how much of an impact children can make and how much we matter to this world and the future. It was truly incredible and inspiring!" From California to Texas to South Carolina, when our Talented and Gifted (TAG) team presented at Confratute, we were able to impact teachers all across the United States. Several teachers were amazed at the fact that students were enthusiastic about making a change. While we often hear these notions reiterated by our elders, it is quite a rare opportunity to hear *students* advocating for these societal issues.

A wise man once said, "One of the greatest feelings in the world is knowing that we as individuals can make a difference." Over the years, I've come to take this quote quite dearly. As young students, we often underestimate the power that we hold; the power within our very hands - the power that one person has to impact the world. While we as individuals can make a tremendous impact, the impact we have if we work together is truly amazing.

All we are asking is for you to be active. If you see something in your society that you want to change, take the initiative to change it; if you don't, chances are no one else will either. We all have to step forward to empower others, otherwise nothing will ever get done.

POETRY PAIRINGS

Feminism

Because I’m a Girl
By Momna Choudhry

Sometimes I wonder,
Why do you look down at me instead of up?
Are my words of no importance to you?
Am I any less human than you are?
I am so confused... Please explain -
Do I have any less of a right to be successful like you?
Sometimes your words hurt...
Just wanted to let you know

That just because I’m a girl does not mean
You are stronger than me;
That you have to be taller than me;
That you are more educated than me.
I will tell you:
I am way more than the bottom of your shoe -
I am way better than you.

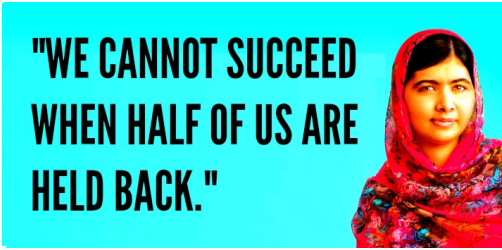
I am tired of being ignored and harassed;
I am tired of being treated like a toy.
My mind and body is mine!
I am proud to say I fight like a girl,
Like a Warrior.

I am proud to say that as a girl, I will not be put down.
I am not fragile;
I am a strong and steady woman.

You can tell me that I am not worth it,
But, I will ignore you.
Flip my hair,
And walk away.

From today on,
I will not listen to you,
I am my own self and belong to no one.

Because I am a girl.



WHAT THE F-WORD REALLY MEANS

Insights into Feminism

By Momna Choudhry

From feminist-themed memes to jokes being made about those who identify as feminists, people look at feminists in an uninterested or negative way. There is a common misconception about feminists that just screams “man hating” or “sexist.” And to be honest, at first I didn’t even like feminists; I thought they were weak.

For a long time, the word “feminism” has been thought to conjure up images of women who are angry or aggravated. This is not at all the case. The word itself first meant “the advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men.” But, through time, it seems the word has been adopted and transformed into something else - something with negative connotations. Feminism began to mean that women were going overboard, allying against men, wanting to be in competition with men, and wanting more attention than men. These were never the goals of the feminism movement. Feminism is about equality, not about overpowering.

I call myself a feminist because I believe that women and men are equal. I don’t believe that women are better nor do I believe that men are below women. I only believe that men and women are created and meant to be treated equally.

People, in general, don’t take feminism seriously. They think it’s a random protest and that we’ll get tired of it. This is not true. We still need feminism today. True, women are being treated better in many ways today than in the past, but we still have many issues to fix. According to *The Huffington Post*, “It is great so many women today feel like they have equal opportunities as men. If it wasn’t for past feminist movements, who knows where we would be today. But, we still need feminism, and will continue to need it, until every other woman in the world feels this way as well.” Casey Cavanagh, author of the *Huffington Post* article entitled “Why We Still Need Feminism” provides reasoning such as “...because when people get married it is assumed the woman will take the man’s last name. Because when women are assaulted, they are often the ones who feel ashamed.”

The feminist movement demands change and the people who benefit from the potential change are not always open to change. That is why I think it is so important that after many years “asleep,” the feminist movement is back and now it is being seen as a human right’s issue. We can’t do anything to inform those who don’t want to listen. All we can do is “plant seeds” that, hopefully, will foster growth.

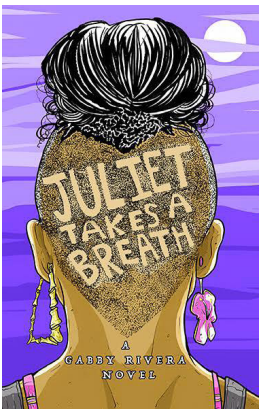
MORE DIVERSE READS THAN NOT

Young Adult Literature Reviews

By Wesaun Palmer

Welcome to More Diverse Reads Than Not, where you can get recommendations for books that are more about people like you (than not). The purpose of this column is to get more great books about marginalized people of all types - whether it be race, religion, disability, people who struggle with mental illness/trauma, or sexuality - in the hands of today’s youth. The goal of this column is to give a voice to the voiceless by whispering the titles of these wonderful novels into the proverbial ears of Elmont, in hopes that it will land near someone who needs it.

The themes for this issue are recommendations for books by Hispanic/Latina/Latino/Latinx people for September’s Hispanic Heritage month and books about bullying and the queer (LGBTQ) community for October’s National Bullying Prevention Month and Queer History Month.

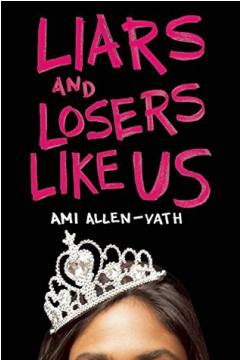
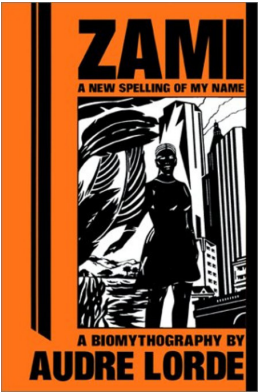


Juliet Takes A Breath by Gabby Rivera is set in the summer of 2003 and takes place in the Bronx, as well as in Portland, Oregon. Rivera begins the book with a dedication stating that this is “a call out into the world to move forward” and is about a Latina who starts an internship with an author in Oregon, her

first summer after her freshman year of college - after coming out to her mom. *Juliet Takes A Breath* is a beautiful, powerful, original story about a strong, brave, fat Latina who uses her words and who she is as a whole to change the world.

Zami: A New Spelling Of My Name: a Biomythography by Audre Lorde is set in the 1930s through 1960s and encompasses the majority of the life of Audre Lorde. In this “biomythography” (a term Lorde coined herself), she discusses all the people she loved, as well as what her life was

like as a “radical feminist, lesbian, and woman of color” during this time period. *Zami* is an addictive, well-written, moving and mature read that will open the eyes of what it was like to be black and gay in a way that only Audre Lorde can portray and teach. It redefines love, grief, and emotion in a way that will change you.



Liars and Losers Like Us by Ami Allen-Vath is the story of a girl who commits suicide after being bullied and leaves one epic way to be remembered. *Liars and Losers Like Us* is a book that you will fly through; a book that’s more thought-provoking than the cover and the synopsis make it appear to be. Allen-

Vath infuses drama, humor, and characters of different ethnicities and sexualities very well into a more realistic portrayal of high school. It will make you laugh, and think, and may leave with you a resolve to move forward in healing rather than continuing this generation’s legacy of suffering by bullying.

The next column of “More Diverse Reads Than Not” will be themed around books by authors of and for teens of marginalized religions, such as Islam and Judaism, for the holiday season.



SPORTS

THE NEED OF EVERY TEAM

A Captain Like Brianna Harris

By Mikelley Baptiste

Junior and Captain of Cross Country, Brianna Harris, age 16, is making track a better place for her team. “Brianna is a hard working student athlete, tenacious in competition, and an overall wonderful human being,” states her coach, Boys and Girls Cross Country Coach, Mr. Graham.

Harris is All State, All County, and All Division. Harris didn’t have much experience with track before Elmont. “I’ve been running track since I was in seventh grade, but I had a little experience when I was running with my uncle in elementary school. When I came to Elmont in seventh grade - that’s when I officially became a part of a team,” she remarked. This marks the fourth year that Harris is a part of the Elmont track team.

One might find it hard to balance sports with all other priorities, but Harris has it under control. She was proud to say: “Usually, I balance out my time... I set a time for school work because I know I have to get everything done. With track, I’m able to exercise and then when I get home it’s the books.” Harris is dedicated to the commitment she’s made to track, her team, and her coach. She states:



“Track is my passion. It helped teach me a lot of things in life... [For example] to have discipline. It helped my confidence a lot.” Harris is a good example of how school-related activities can help a person show their true colors. She loves her team and shows you can strive for anything. “Track is always a challenge, that’s why I like it. It makes me set higher goals and I’m able to rise to the occasion and push myself.”

Senior Damahya Coeur, a teammate of Harris’ recalls: “My experience with Brianna Harris has been a long and hard four years. We’ve broken sweat and tears at practice and

have had laughs of joy. If [there’s] one thing I can say about Brianna Harris [it’s] that she is always willing to push herself past her limit and is like a machine that keeps on going. She inspires others to never give up and also inspired me. I love that she has a strong personality and that she is so consistent. I will never forget Bri and the amount of effort she puts [in] on and off the track.” Overall, Brianna Harris has a “can do” spirit especially when it comes to track. The team itself mimics her can do spirit with its determination and dedication.

Coach Graham had nothing but praise to say about Harris: “Brianna is very serious about the sport of Track and Field. She trains/ practices with passion and competes with tenacity. This passion and tenacity has matriculated into a top three ranking on Long Island. As a captain she leads by voice and most importantly her action.”

During the Fall 2016 season, track has won three out of five track meets with two more left to go. Harris motivates her teammates by joking around with them and being lighthearted fun. Track is a place where one can forget everything for that moment and just immerse oneself in the work of perseverance and self control.

THE ONE AND ONLY TENNIS PLAYER

Caira Walker Represents Elmont

By Rodney Legrand

Senior Caira Walker is the only tennis player in Elmont. She has a record of 12-3-1 and represents Elmont, and the District, well. She commutes to Carey for her practices on a daily basis and has to take the bus to get there.

Recalling her start in tennis, Walker said; “I’ve been playing tennis since I was 8 years old and the reason I started was because my dad always played for fun and we would play when we went on vacations.” When Walker’s mother saw that she enjoyed the sport she soon signed her daughter up for private lessons. “I began playing for Elmont in the eighth grade and have enjoyed every second playing tennis,” she commented.

Walker is in a unique position, especially playing tennis at such a young age and being the only student at Elmont Memorial High School to play tennis. She has not only excelled at the sport, but has participated in All Conference for four years in a row and has remained the team captain for the past two seasons. She has been MVP twice and will most likely win again this year. Walker will surely be missed after all her accomplishments on the district-wide tennis team.



THE TENACIOUS TACKLING TRIO

A Highlight on Leaders of the Varsity Girls Soccer Team

By Rodney Legrand

Elmont Varsity Girls Soccer team never gives up during a game, whether or not the odds are against them. Spectators continuously compliment the team on how they put in 100% effort on the field. Captains Chiamaka “Chewy” Ubani and Tanecia Sears love the sport tremendously. These two are always eager to get near a soccer ball, arriving to practice an hour early on many occasions. Chiamaka has been playing the sport since the seventh grade, while Tanecia has played since the eighth grade.

When asked how she would describe herself and her contributions to the team, Tanecia replied: “I am definitely not the best on the team nor the one that makes the most goals, but I’m very dedicated to the team in general and I make it my goal to be at every single game and practice.” Tanecia has exerted a lot of effort into encouraging the

team to play to their fullest potential. Her teammates know her for how she always sends them reminders about practice times, when the bus is leaving for the game, or when there is a captain’s practice.

Chiamaka has also been standing side-by-side with Tanecia, leading the team to victory. She is known for playing very aggressively on the field. Also helping to push the team to victory is a very unlikely leader, freshman Nyla Allen. Nyla has proven herself to be a star on the field. Nyla Allen plays midfield and scores a goal almost every single game. She has tremendous footwork and scoring ability. Because she’s a freshman, she has three more years on the Varsity level to perfect her craft and help our school’s team gain more force in the league. If she continues to play with the same dynamic, she’ll become an All County player. Congratulations to these three girls on their accomplishments and contributions to Varsity Girls Soccer.





GREATNESS IS HIS GOAL

A Highlight on Varsity Boys Soccer Player, Angelot Georges

By Reginald Joseph and Venette Simon

In every sport, the formula for success equals hard work, commitment, and some raw talent. Our Elmont Spartans Boys Varsity Soccer Team has many players who fit the description of great teammates and great players, but tenth grader Angelot Georges seems to gel perfectly into each of those categories. With his second season as a varsity player about to come to an end, the young sophomore has plenty of time to improve on his already impressive game.

Although the Spartans have endured a long, rough season, there is always a bright side and a learning experience in everything they do. Georges - and the peers he surrounds himself with - demonstrate that they have mature minds and great technical ability when it comes to the game of soccer. Angelot Georges, Robson Point-Du-Jour, Jephthe Joseph, Festus Alonge, and Eduardo Cardona all seem to push each other to get to the next level; even in the Spring and Summer you can find them practicing and looking to improve their game - whether on the field, in the gym, or even just hanging out together. When asked what motivates Georges to keep moving forward and get better, he



Angelot Georges (L) with teammate Eduardo Cardona (R), at a game against Garden City.

replied: “My uncle motivates me because he was an amazing player and all he wanted was to be a soccer player, but no one in his family believed in him and they didn’t give him the support. They thought it was hard, that he couldn’t do it. That’s why when I get onto the field I put everything I have in the game because I want to do it for him and show everyone that doubted him and I, that we can achieve anything we want to achieve, all we have to do is put our mind into it and work hard for it.”

Soccer is also an outlet for the varsity sophomore player. “Since I was a little kid, I always enjoyed playing soccer. When I am on the field, nothing else matters. It is the only time when I feel free. Despite having a lot of family related problems, soccer has always been there for me.” Pulling the strings in the midfield and bagging two assists on the season so far, Angelot Georges has everything it takes to be a big-time soccer player in high school, and even at the college level. With plenty of time to develop, Angelot and his friends will be the core of rebuilding the Elmont Soccer program in the years to come.

SITTING DOWN WITH THE NEW COACH

Ms. Marcinkiewicz, Junior Varsity Cheer



By Gabrielle White

We have all witnessed the Elmont Cheerleading Team in all of their green and white glory, performing at football games and pep rallies. Although it might be a clash, the girls don’t care - the cheerleaders wear pink bows in support of breast cancer research. You might ask who guides and mentors the cheerleaders? Who is the wonder woman in charge of these girls? Her name is Ms. Marcinkiewicz and she’s the new coach of the Junior Varsity (JV) Cheerleading team.

This is not Ms. Marcinkiewicz’s first rodeo; she cheered for her local park and was on the step team in high school. Last year, she even coached Junior High Cheerleading, along with Girls Lacrosse. But, this is the first time she has been in charge of JV Cheer. In the short time that she has worked with the girls, she has built a strong bond

with them and finds working with the girls to be enjoyable. When asked about the temperament of the team, the new JV Cheer Coach responded that the girls were easy to work with and practice well with each other. Since the team is friends outside of cheering, it is simpler to get work done, making Ms. Marcinkiewicz’s coaching job less trying.

Ms. M runs practices like previous coaches have done. For her, lateness is a non-negotiable if you want to be a part of the cheerleading team. Practice starts precisely at 3:15P.M. and for every minute late the girls must complete five jumping jacks. That is a pretty good way to teach the girls to be on time!

“Always try your best, always stretch, have a positive attitude, and school comes first,” she articulated.

SET UP FOR SUCCESS

Strides Made by the Varsity Boys Volleyball



By Rodney Legrand

Volleyball may not be the most popular sport in Elmont for boys, but the new additions to this year’s squad create hope for future success. Coach Reyer has recruited a couple of sophomores to the team which means they have plenty more time to get better and to be a force in the future.

The new players are Jordan Lawson, Ryan Gill, Jordan Simmonds and Jarell Pierre Louis. Returning members from last year’s Varsity team include Rodney Legrand, Carlos Lopez, Johnny Alexis, Robin Varughese and John Hynes. Tenth grader Carlos Lopez is an integral part of this team. He shows up to every practice, he’s the first one in the gym, and he tries his hardest every single second during games. He may only be 5’2”, but he definitely does not let his height stop his competitive nature and his determination to win - no matter what the score is.

The new players have lots of

height and continue to do a great job at blocking and spiking the ball every single game. Captains of the squad are Robin Varghese, Rodney Legrand, and Carlos Lopez. When Coach Reyer was asked how he felt about the future of this team, he said: “We have a lot a new guys that just started playing volleyball and I’ve noticed that they’ve improved fairly quickly in the past couple of weeks. These guys are athletic and have the length to play the sport. We are losing four guys this year. Carlos and Rodney are going to be the real experienced players and will have to lead this team.” Coach Reyer went on to warn that “[y]ou have to keep an eye on this team for the years to come.” He promises that they “will be a playoff team and be top in the conference in the next year.” Coach Reyer commented that there are some good Junior Varsity members and that “along with these members, we’re going to be winning games left and right.”

Follow Elmont Memorial High School Sports on Twitter @ElmontAthletics...

ELMONT PHOENIX REPORTERS ON THE SCENE

Hofstra’s High School Summer Journalism Institute

By Michael Bailey, Mikelley Baptiste, Fatima Bhutta

This past July, six students from Elmont - Rex Asabor, Michael Bailey, Mikelley Baptiste, Fatima Bhutta, Karyse Gocoul and Rodney Legrand - devoted two weeks of summer to intense instruction under the tutelage of Professor Peter Goodman and Professor Scott Brinton at Hofstra High School’s Summer Journalism Institute. Both Professor Goodman and Professor Brinton worked with the students using their knowledge and expertise in the field of journalism. The students were also helped by Courtney McGee, Danielle Agolia, and Nakeem Grant, participants of Hofstra’s Journalism Master’s program, who served as “one-on-one” mentors.

In this college-bound program, the Elmont students learned how to write proper news stories, create websites, and record and edit videos. “I loved [this program],” Karyse Gocoul, a current senior at Elmont Memorial High School, said. “I think that [it] was a good experience because instead of only writing, we got to incorporate the whole broadcasting aspect of [journalism],” she added.

The trip to Manhattan to *The New York Times* facilities allowed for an even greater experience and stronger insight into the front lines of journalism. Mr. Jones, the tour guide, made sure we left with the knowledge that no matter where we go to college, the “cream always rises to the top.” Mr. Jones even joked about the fact that *The New York Times* rejected plenty of Ivy League students because they had no skills and “only a name.”

Students learned all of the skills necessary for true journalism with the help from professors and the hands on experiences. For example, the idea of “verification” was discussed by Professor AnnMarie Boyle. The crux of Boyle’s speech was that everyday we are bombarded by statistics from politicians and that journalists have the responsibility of verifying statistics via databases and “.gov” links.

On the first day of the ten-day long program, student participants were greeted by the professors in Hofstra’s state of the art lab, which contained a big television constantly streaming *CNN*. Students were taken on a brief tour of the Hofstra University campus and were shown the many labs of the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication, studios where students can edit video and pictures with top quality software. Nsikak Ekong, a recent graduate of Hempstead High School, states that “[t]he facilities at Hofstra [were] updated with the latest technology. Their Mac labs [have] a lot of features. They make it easy to use since the people that are using it are students and staff.”

Students were shown different radio and television stations, divisions of the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication, where students can produce their own television shows or broadcasts. Students even got a sneak peak at a Hofstra-produced *SNL*-esque show. Students can rent out high-quality cameras that can be used for projects.

“Let’s get the big question out of the way,” Professor Goodman said at the onset of the institute. “Here is your free meal card!” The card contained \$15 allotted daily that allowed



Professor Goodman passionately discusses the resources that are located in the Hofstra library. Photo credit: Professor Scott Brinton, Hofstra University.

the students to get free lunch from Hofstra’s cafeterias and Starbucks. “The food was amazing [and had] many options,” Rodney Legrand, a current junior at Elmont High School, said. Along with a meal card, students were exposed to college professors, guest speakers, various journalism related media studios, and even earned a \$250 stipend for their time and dedication to reporting during the two-weeks of intensive study.



“I don’t know how to do it, but I’ll learn” Gonzalez repeated as a mantra for students.

During the program, the students had the privilege of having live speakers come to discuss the importance of journalism in a changing, modernized world. Professor Mario Gonzalez, another Hofstra professor and a photographer for *Newsday*, discussed the importance of photography. Gonzalez states that a phone camera can be just as useful as an expensive Nikon camera. One thing that he stressed that all of us do is to say this phrase: “I don’t know how to do it, but I’ll learn.”

At one special event, students were acquainted with Laura Curran, Nassau County Legislator of the 5th Precinct, during a mock interview process. “Curran was very understanding to the issues of racism in America,” Mikelley Baptiste, Elmont sophomore stated. Curran spoke of the Raise The Age campaign that targets minorities being tried as adults for minor crimes they committed when they were only teenagers. Curran wants this to change. After the mock interview, the students were expected to write a 500-word news article, in under

two hours, describing the mock interview as objectively as possible. The article would then be dissected one by one with the students and professors. “They called it the hot seat,” Baptiste stated. “And God! They didn’t hold back! This was wrong! That was wrong! This could have been worded better! It was intense, but it really made me think and view writing differently,” senior Michael Bailey added.

On the second to last day of the institute, the young scholars were visited by Keith Herbert (below), a *Newsday* investigative reporter who spoke about his career. After a passionate talk about his history as a journalist, he spoke of databases and their

significance. In investigative journalism we can combine two databases to create a new “hybrid” database. This new database that we created can show new relationships that can form a story. To test this out, Herbert had an empty Dunkin Donuts box that once held munchkins - filled with names of databases on thin sheets of paper. One at a time, each student randomly picked out two databases from the box. Some results were humorous like “timing of the McBib release” and “rates of infidelity in the United States.” But some were really interesting like “highest paid people on Long Island” and “topography of wealth distribution on Long Island.” It was interesting to see how combining two seemingly different ideas can create new insights.

The entire program was filled with excitement. Every minute was used to attain knowledge and it was an invaluable experience for each student journalist who attended. Esly Rodriguez, a current senior from Hempstead High School, who was also a part of the program, says: “I was able to face something new. Being able to be a part of a diverse environment... experiencing a different field from [that] which I wanted to go in, was eye-opening. I made great friends [that] I will never forget about and I was able to enjoy and learn many things from my mentors and professors.”

When Professor Brinton, one of the leaders of the summer institute, was asked about his experiences with the Summer 2016 Elmont students, he said: “The students were all fantastic. They were all so respectful and friendly and committed to the program. They worked hard throughout the two weeks. At the



Keith Herbert, a reporter for *Newsday* and formerly with the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, speaks to students about “databases.”

the institute to encourage students to at least consider careers in journalism. Two words to that: Mission accomplished.”

same time, I believe all of us had a great time. I know I did. For me, the institute was an experience that I’ll never forget, and I hope, and believe, the students would say the same. We began