

# CHRONICLE

## WINTER CONCERT CD DROPS

by Wyatt Thorsen

In 2020, a year full of changes, things are bound to be different in the APHS Music Department. One event



in particular is the high school's winter concert. This concert is where all different kinds of music come together on one night to bring joy and smiles to faces of all ages.

This year, with all the changes that have occurred, the only way to have some form of concert or performance was to change it up.

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## CAPITAL PROJECT VOTED DOWN VOTERS PARTICIPATE DESPITE PANDEMIC

by Julie Hale

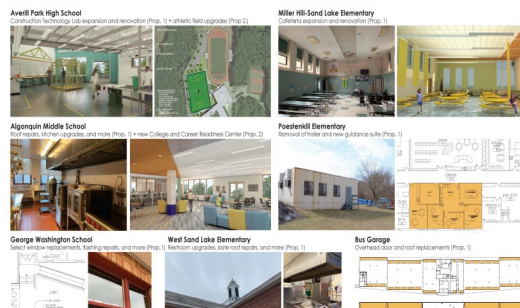
Averill Park School District residents voted down the proposed school capital project on December 8, defeating both Proposition 1 and Proposition 2 of the referendum. While the project approval had required a simple majority "yes" vote to pass, Proposition 2 could only have passed if Proposition 1 also passed. Neither passed, however; Proposition 1 fell 816 to 676 (55% no votes), and Proposition 2 fell 928 to 564 (62% no votes).

District superintendent Dr. Franchini released a statement on December 9 stating "Thank you to our community members who came

out and exercised their right to vote." Proposition 1, which totaled \$32.7 million, focused on increasing safety and security at each school building, including new vestibules, eliminating the Poestenkill Elementary School trailer being used as an educational space, and expanding Miller Hill-Sand Lake Elementary's cafeteria.

Proposition 2 was to cost \$12.8 million, and would modernize the Practical and Fine Arts wing at the Algonquin Middle School and provide enhancements to the high school athletic facilities, including a multi-purpose turf field, lighting and parking.

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## WHEN COVID-19 HITS SCHOOL SCHOOL NURSE EXPLAINS PROCEDURES

*Note - This article was written as a collaborative effort during a 15 minute Journalism Club meeting virtual interview with Mrs. Miller. The interview took place on November 4, one week before the school went virtual for 2 1/2 weeks due to in-school COVID cases. Miller spent every day the next week on the phone doing contact tracing.*

by Members of the AP Journalism Club

Averill Park had its first in-school COVID case in October. Mrs. Miller, the high school nurse, explained how

she learned of it, and the steps involved after that.

Once Miller found out, she needed confirmation from the New York State Department of Health, because she didn't want to go off of "hearsay". When she was contacted at 7:30 am, the state health official required Miller to gather information based on a series of questions, such as did the student walk around classroom, did the teacher walk around, how long the student was in class, etc. This is also why faculty

had previously been required to turn in classroom seating charts.

"It's a long process," said Miller, explaining that it took a couple of hours. "It's really important to have accurate information so that people aren't being quarantined for no reason."

When asked if there is a certain amount of exposure time near a positive case that a student would have to quarantine for, according to

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## WINTER CONCERT CD (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

The change? Instead of a live concert with an audience and on-stage performances, the music department has made a winter concert CD, with all costs covered by the school district (it hasn't been determined yet if extra copies will be available to the public).

In order to put this CD together, members of each performance group had to record their parts and send it to their music teacher. After they were sent, the sound tracks were put together to form a group performance piece. This process took hours of work by both musicians and teachers.

"I would have to say that the most challenging thing about being in both Jazz band and orchestra was probably the time it took to record," said sophomore Kim Mazzacco.

This is just one of many challenges faced by the music groups. Another is the health and the safety of stu-



dents, which is prioritized by teachers, students and staff members. Mrs. Christy, the choir teacher at Averill Park High School stated, "It is no secret that singing is one of the riskier things to do right

now. The biggest challenge was ensuring student safety." This is, for sure, a big challenge for teachers as well as students.

"The effort that this has taken the kids to pull off is remarkable," said Christy. Since coming back from fully remote learning in the spring, the music department has taken huge leaps. Mr. Blostein, the Band, Jazz Band, and Orchestra teacher, said that, "It's been nice to get back to doing things in a manner that has some resemblance to our traditional program."

Being back in person has been essential for all of the music teachers and students. Even so, there are many non-

health related challenges. Coming up with new ways to keep students both at home and in-person engaged has been a big challenge. "Not playing all together at the same time added a new level of difficulty that none of us have experienced before, but we did pull through," Mazzacco said. And that's just it. Pulling through. In whatever form that comes in at the end of the day. Finding a way to perform, without an in-person audience and often staying at home has proven to be quite difficult.

Throughout all of the challenges, the highs and the lows, our teachers and students have persevered and found ways to overcome. A CD emerged as the safest and best way to perform. *Pandemic Presents: Season's Greetings! (from 6 feet away)* will put winter music at Averill Park High School in the history books forever.

## CAPITAL PROJECT VOTE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

**Prior to the vote, Mr. Franchini provided detailed information about the capital project. What follows are some of the questions and answers:**

**Why does the school need a vote? Doesn't state aid cover it?**

Voting is not required in relation to state aid, but the district will be spending funds to make capital improvements that have not already been authorized by the community to be spent within the General Fund budget. Additional funds are required for this project, so a separate vote...is needed to approve the project.

**How often does voting happen?**

NYS Law requires that each capital construction project proposed in a facility owned or leased by a school district

requiring an appropriation of funds must be properly authorized.

**What do you hope the results will be?**

I hope that our community will come out to vote. We have spent a great deal of time and effort in trying to educate our community so they can make an informed decision. Throughout this process, we have said we will do this right and not rushed. We feel the result is a proposed project that is centered on the District's mission of "Meeting the needs of and creating opportunities for every student every day," and we feel this aligns with our community's expectations for their school district...the two propositions in the referendum are in the hands of our community, which is how it should be.

**What happens if it doesn't pass? Will it go up again?**

The administration and Board of Education will need to evaluate the results of the vote to determine the next steps.

**If it does pass, how soon would you start? What would you start with?**

We will begin work in the Summer of 2021, primarily with the replacement of aging roofs district-wide as these are one of the most critical concerns and are the project components that will receive the quickest approval by the State Education Department's Facilities Planning Unit which is responsible for approving project plans.

**What was the process of coming up with the capital project? Who was involved?**

Initial planning was formulated by the District's Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC), a stakeholder group comprising community members, parents, educators, Board members, and district staff. The LRPC's guiding principle was to "develop a facilities plan that will enhance Averill Park's educational environment by making our buildings more secure, technologically flexible, student and community connected, operationally efficient and structurally sound.

The report of the LRPC was then used by the district's central office administration, building principals, and Board of Education in consultation with the architect and project manager to develop the final project scope.

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# WILL CASES CONTINUE TO RISE?

## MANY FACTORS SUGGEST ROUGH TIMES AHEAD

by Mara Little

The coronavirus pandemic numbers have been heading in the wrong direction for more than a month, topping 80,000 newly confirmed infections across the country, with hospitalizations rising in more than three dozen states and deaths creeping upward. Now, the United States is heading toward another inflection point: a holiday season dictated by the calendar and demanded by tradition.

This makes those exposed to large numbers of people, such as the students and teachers involved in the hybrid model at Averill Park High School, consider several questions: Will cases rise the longer that we are in school? Will our infection rates spike due to holiday events and big gatherings? Could both be the culprit?

“From my personal standpoint, I don’t think everyone feels the same way as I do. I don’t exactly believe cases rose due to prolonged time in school but rather the time after holiday functions,” said Jeana Monaco, a junior. “Especially with Halloween, we saw a spike in cases near-

ly 30 in our school district alone. Prior to that holiday there was only one case over the span of two months. Now everyone’s traveling to see their family for Thanksgiving.



We don’t exactly know who is coming in contact with whom through these events. It’s harder to trace those. Plus, coming to school every other day and every day for teachers after those events could lead to an additional spread.”

Concerns like Monaco’s are similar and widespread across the student body, faculty, and staff, as many have anticipated surges in interstate travel, family gatherings and indoor social-

izing, and expect these to facilitate the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. This isn’t like the run-up to Memorial Day or Independence Day;

outdoor barbecues or pool parties, aren’t on the itinerary of many people. In fact, it is quite the opposite as many normally prepare for large numbers of family members to congregate within their homes and share food, memories, and laughter throughout the holiday season.

While fall and winter holidays are homey by nature, respiratory viruses thrive in dry, warm indoor conditions in which people crowd together.

The statistical peak of flu season typically comes close on the heels of Christmas and New Year’s, and colder weather is already driving people indoors.

Most people have to estimate their vulnerabilities, and that of friends and relatives, based on age, underlying health conditions, occupational exposures, access to health care and the level of coronavirus transmission in their community and in the places where their holiday guests are coming from. For example, junior Ashleigh Mein said, “We usually go to my mom’s parents’ house but this year we weren’t going to risk it, especially with the cases in our school.”

“The Meins will be celebrating small this year, just the three of us (plus our two dogs). We plan to FaceTime as an entire extended family so we can safely see everyone else,” followed up assistant principal Mrs. Mein. “Despite the changes that 2020 brings, we will continue one tradition this year which is to decorate for the holidays the day after Thanksgiving.”

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# UPCOMING SCHOOL FUNDRAISERS

## ACTIVITIES CARRY ON DESPITE PANDEMIC

by Emma Deo

At Averill Park High School, we host many fundraisers to benefit our classes, as well as our clubs and extra-curricular activities, to ensure that they are operating to the best of their ability, especially while attempting to function during a pandemic. This has

hindered some events; however, there are fundraisers being held in the future in support of our school.

The sophomore class of 2023 has just finished the Jostens class ring fundraiser. They also plan to host an online gift card fundraiser to support the sophomore class before the Decem-

ber break for this school year.

The junior class of 2022 also worked with the sophomores on the Jostens class ring fundraiser. Junior class president Michelina Lombardi said they “are also currently working on a few fundraisers, such as the Charleston Wrap fundraiser,

where those willing can buy all sorts of different items, and a portion of the funds will help support the class.” Michelina said that the class’ largest fundraiser is coming up soon, which is a fund drive, where instead of asking the commu-

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## BUILDING PROJECT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

### How long was it in the making?

The Capital Project is the result of three years of research, evaluation and collaboration. This process began with a Long Range Planning Committee, which was made up of members of the Board of Education, Administration, community members and the district's architect. Through monthly meetings and a bus tour of the five schools, this group identified and prioritized areas that are in need of improvement.

The next phase centered on internal design and analysis. Teachers and administrators provided the greatest input during this stage. The process then moved to a subcommittee that included members of the Board of Education, administration, and the architectural firm.

### How did you collect info as to what should be changed?

For Proposition 1: The Building Condition Survey (BCS) is a state-mandated facilities assessment conducted every five years by a licensed architect. The BCS evaluates and prioritizes all program spaces and building system components for deterioration, structural failure, probable useful life, and need for repair or replacement.

The BCS was used to develop the capital project scope by the District's Long-Range Planning Committee. The LRPC also emphasized safety and security as a high priority for this project. Secure main entrance vestibules with similar layouts and common admittance procedures will be installed at each school building. Interior intruder door hardware will be enhanced to increase security. Resolving longstanding problems at Poestenkill Elementary School and Miller Hill-Sand

Lake Elementary School were categorized as necessities by the LRPC.

At Poestenkill Elementary School, the detached classroom trailer will be removed and by repurposing existing building space, students now being served in the trailer will relocate back into the building. The Miller Hill-Sand Lake Elementary School cafeteria will be expanded to accommodate more students at each lunch period. Improvements will also be made to the acoustics and natural light flow.

For Proposition 2, this proposition was developed from educational program needs, plans and the visions of teachers and administrators presented to the Board of Education to enhance the educational experience for all Averill Park students.

### How was the financial aspect figured out? How will the project be funded?

School district capital projects are funded through a combination of New York State "Building Aid" and "Local Share". Building aid is often viewed as a return to the community of taxes you have already paid to New York State and the local share is the amount that needs to be included in a district's budget to fund project principal and interest costs, after applying building aid.

Our building aid percentage is 77.9%, meaning any part of the capital project considered aidable will be reimbursed at that percentage. We anticipate only a small portion of the project cost will be unaided, resulting in a 74% net building aid and a 26% local share for both Propositions 1 and 2.

School districts typically plan for new capital pro-

jects at about the same time the debt payments from prior projects are being paid-off. By timing projects in this way, districts are able to use the local share that is already built into their budget from the old project, to fund the local share of the new project, thus requiring no budget or tax increase."

Averill Park has been fortunate that over the past 20 years we have been able to leverage various state incentive programs to increase our building aid reimbursement to about 95%. Over that time period, we have accomplished a remarkable \$101 million of district-wide capital improvements with minimal tax impact due to the very low 5% local share component. Unfortunately, these incentives have expired and because the district's budget currently only includes a 5% local share supporting the current debt being paid-off, both propositions will require a budget and tax levy increase to fund the local share increase from 5% to 26%."

### How would this project impact my taxes?

The district would issue a 15-year bond to fund the \$45.5 million project. Currently, interest rates for school district borrowings are exceptionally low, with some districts recently issuing 15-year bonds at less than 2%. By taking advantage of these low borrowing costs we are able to reduce the project's tax impact.

### Did you plan for the vote to come out now, with the pandemic, or was it already pre-planned and unchangeable?

This project vote was originally scheduled to coincide with the May 2020 budget vote but was postponed due to the pandem-

ic. The rescheduled project vote for December 8th will be the first major district-wide project brought before our school community in more than 20 years.

### Why do it now, and not when schools go back to normal?

Most importantly, we do not want to miss another summer construction period which delaying the vote will do. Roof replacements can only be done during the summer when buildings are mainly unoccupied..

Additionally, the district's retiring debt service and historically low interest rates provide an opportunity to present the capital project at a time when the tax increase can be kept much lower than if the project was planned for a future time period. Additionally, construction costs continue to escalate over time and if we choose to wait, we expect the project cost to be higher.

As a district, we understand that a capital project vote in the uncertain times of a pandemic may seem like unusual timing. But we know the pandemic will end soon and I believe we have an obligation to our entire school community to continuously plan for their future so that we can meet the needs and create opportunities for every student, every day.

### Was the budget increased to accommodate this plan?

The budget won't be increased to fund this project until 2023 which is when the projected tax increases indicated above will be implemented, and they will be phased in over a three-year period.

# SEEKING TO CHANGE TEACHER EVALUATIONS

## STATE REQUIRES EVALUATIONS, THOUGH VARIANCES MAY BE GIVEN

by Sophia Maddalone

Since March, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the Averill Park School District and other schools across New York State to rethink the manner in which schools typically engage with and teach students. With this in mind, APCSD needed to rethink teacher evaluations.

APPR is the Annual Professional Performance Review, also known as teacher evaluations. Every year, the New York State Education Department requires school districts in the state to perform evaluations on teachers, school administrators, and instructional staff.

The state Education Department did not require APPR for the 2019-2020 school year due to state-wide building closures in March. Typically, APPR consists of two observations per year between October and May. One observation is announced and the other is not. Before the announced observation, a pre-meeting occurs and then a post-meeting follows. A pre-meeting does not occur when an un-

nounced observation takes place, only the post-meeting.

"Usually we do the announced observation first and the unannounced observation second," said Mr. Quiles, the APHS building principal. During the APPR

state, there is a possibility that APPR will be conducted differently this school year.

"As of now, for this year we will still be responsible to complete the APPR," said Quiles. The New York State Education Department

the teacher or administrator to choose between either a pre-meeting or post-meeting for this year.

Quiles stated repeatedly that the main goal of the variance is to reduce the number of times evaluations and meetings take place.

Another aspect that may change is the number of components used within the Danielson Rubric. "One of the things we are applying for in the variance is that maybe we don't have to use the whole rubric, maybe we can focus on using parts and pieces of the rubric to make it easier for this year," said Quiles.

As of today, even if the school district moves to 100% remote learning, the State Education Department still requires APPR unless State Ed informs otherwise.

As to whether or not State Ed will approve APCSD's proposed alternate plan, it is still in question; as Quiles stated, "It's hard because we don't know, there are a lot of unknowns this year." For teachers, students, and administrators wondering when APCSD will have a definite answer, Quiles said, "We really hope to hear from State Ed before the December holiday break."



process, two different officials observe the person being evaluated; one is the building principal and another is an administrator. To conduct APPR, the school administrators use a rubric called the Danielson Framework for the Teaching Evaluation Instrument. The Danielson Rubric consists of components that create effective teaching based on research.

Due to changes in school districts across the

will allow school districts to apply for a variance to create a teacher evaluation plan that will fit into the ongoing changes within school districts. "As a district we have submitted an alternate plan and we are waiting for approval," stated Quiles.

There are various scenarios that the State Education Department will approve for this year's teacher evaluations. For example, performing one observation instead of two, or allowing

## FUNDRAISERS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

nity to participate in various different fundraisers throughout the year, they have asked the donors to just make a one-time donation of \$25, with the class getting to keep almost all of the money that gets donated.

For the Averill Park senior class of 2021, senior blocks are due on December

18, and orders for their senior apparel were due on December 4. Both result in a slight donation given back to their class. The Mr. AP event is also beginning, and nominations are underway. The event will not occur until March of this school year, but this event is always one of the senior class's largest fundraisers.

Due to the Corona-

virus, the freshman class of 2024 does not have any upcoming fundraisers planned until after the new year.

Despite the irregularity of this school year, the students are still attempting to raise money to benefit their classes. Make sure to get involved and support your school community in these fundraisers.

## We Want Your IDEAS

The Averill Park Chronicle wants your story ideas. Send them to any Journalism Club member, or to Mr. Strich, The Chronicle's advisor.

# THE EFFECTS OF GOING REMOTE...

## TWO STUDENTS SHARE — ONE VIRTUAL, ONE HYBRID

by Carly Antolick

When our school community received the news on November 17 that Averill Park would be transitioning to fully remote learning, students had mixed responses. It also had different effects on students, based on their previous learning plan; in other words, whether they were following the hybrid learning pattern or whether they were already learning entirely remotely. By comparing the experiences of two tenth grade students, who were each using a different learning model, it's possi-

ble to see the variety in these students' reactions. The two students who were interviewed are Elizabeth Aiossa, who was following the hybrid

model, and Emma Hanlon, who was learning remotely. Both students said that they understood the necessity of the school's closure,

but it was disappointing all the same. "I liked the schedule much better, but I didn't like not being able to see my friends," said Aiossa. Hanlon's schedule remained similar, but she said that she enjoyed being able to see everyone in her classes, even though it was not in person.

Hanlon and Aiossa are both enrolled in advanced courses, but both said that the difficulty of their classes did not change much. Both explained that the workload that they received increased at first, but became manageable as both students and teachers adjusted to the new situation.

"As everyone adjusted to the new schedule, it got a lot easier," said Hanlon.

When asked if she considered remaining fully virtual after school reopened, Aiossa gave a very adamant "No," saying, "I need socialization!". However, Hanlon was asked a

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# ...AND THE CONCERNS

## VIRTUAL GENERALLY APPROVED, YET QUESTIONS REMAIN

by Ashlyn McGarry

COVID-19 has caused quite the stir in the Averill Park School District. We recently came out of a brief pause in the hybrid format, and the debate on the virtual model has become a common topic of discussion among people. There seems to be a general consensus: most people believe that the virtual format is the best option.

When asked, both students and teachers said they felt comfortable with the virtual schedule, and thought it was a better idea to keep the building closed longer than the previous closure. Many students found the schedule to be much more manageable, and even made the day easier to get through.

However, there were also multiple concerns with what going virtual could mean. Some students were worried about their level of

motivation going down. Some were worried the information they're taught this year would be easily forgotten, and that next year they wouldn't understand the material as well. Another concern from students was falling behind on work in general. The most

common concern was that this would create many missed opportunities for students.

When asked what their main concerns were,



about having a similar situation to last year, where students would miss classes and assignments.

Overall, there seems to be both a positive and negative side to going fully virtual. Both students and teachers have concerns about what going fully virtual could bring, how it will affect their teaching and learning, and how they are personally going to keep up with it.

One final thing to mention is the overwhelming amount of responses that indicate the school and its administrators are doing an excellent job at keeping the students and staff safe. On behalf of everyone in the school, I would like to thank you all for creating an environment where each student is able to learn, no matter the circumstances.

teachers responded with worries about being able to connect with their students on the same level that they used to. They also noted, that they felt concerns for their students' mental health and ability to stay connected with their teachers. Some were nervous

## SOME GROUP TRIPS STILL A POSSIBILITY ORGANIZERS PLANNING FOR THE BEST

by Sarah Wallace

This year is definitely one for the books, but it's safe to say that at this point everyone needs a safe getaway. Unfortunately, Averill Park High School is unable to provide these safe getaways as they have in the past due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Little did we know that last school year would only be the beginning of lost opportunities as our school district has unfortunately had to cancel various school-sponsored trips. One such trip is the junior class's Washington D.C. weekend getaway. The class of 2021 lost that opportunity as the trip, which was to be held this past March, was refunded to the students, thus cancelling the trip.

Washington D.C. trip advisor Mr. Cole seemed to lack hope when it came to offering the trip again to the class of 2021, and even to the class of 2022. "At this point it has been difficult to determine what is going to happen by the end of this week, let alone come spring," he said. "It was

certainly our hope to be able to offer the trip up to last year's juniors as well as this year. Given the current circumstances, I am not confident there will be any trip at all."

While there seems to be no hope for the Wash-

ington D.C. trip, the same cannot be said for the Spring Break trip to Italy and Greece. What was supposed to be a week-long trip during the month of April 2021 will now be postponed until April of 2022. Unfortunately, several of the trip members belonged to the class of 2021, and due to graduation and heading off to college, many people have

had to drop out. This leaves a few openings if one wishes to attend; those with questions should please contact Ms. Bailey or Dr. Perry.

Ms. Bailey and Dr. Perry, the trip's main organizers, shared one important new detail about the event.



The Spring Break trip, which was supposed to be sponsored by APCSD, is no longer a school-sponsored event. Rather, it is instead a private trip led by two of Averill Park's teachers.

"Ms. Bailey and I planned to take a group to Italy and Greece this spring (April 2021) but the school canceled the trip due to glob-

al uncertainty in light of Covid," said Perry. "Ms. Bailey and I picked it up as a private trip, not sponsored by APCSD, so that our travelers could still go. We did postpone the trip until April of 2022. I'm sure we all will be excited to travel after being stuck home for a year. It's going to be a fantastic trip!!"

Two other trips hold several uncertain pieces — the Spring Break trip to the Galapagos Islands and Mr. Brown's Spring 2021 trip to France. As of several weeks ago, trip advisor Mrs. Clark-Appelanz was saying that the Galapagos trip is not completely out of the question yet. Obviously due to the current circumstances in our world today, the original trip was canceled indefinitely until further information is released, or if the possibility of Clark-Appelanz hosting the trip sponsored by APCSD arises. Mr. Brown said the France trip is still up in the air, as well.

Every day comes with uncertainties, so we as individuals must be patient and, most of all, safe if we wish to attend trips like these in the future.

### VIRTUAL EFFECTS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

slightly different question about whether she considered going hybrid. She explained that it was never really an option for her. Ai-ossa's family decided to keep her remote this year, because she has high-risk family members, as is the case with many in our school community.

Both students expressed their hope for the

ability to be offered the hybrid model again. When asked whether they thought that the high school would be able to remain open, Hanlon responded, "As long as our community members do their part to keep case numbers low, I am hopeful that school will be able to stay open." However, as we learned on December 4, from December 7 to Decem-

ber 11, the school was forced to transition to entirely remote learning yet again.

The only thing that can be done at this point is to hope that the virus slows its spread, and that the members of our school community abide by CDC and WHO guidelines, so that Averill Park experiences as few cases of this devastating virus as possible.

### **We Want Your IDEAS**

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## IF CASES CONTINUE TO RISE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

People have had to make their holiday calculations, even as the scientists and doctors have adjusted their own ideas and guidance. At the end of November, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed the definition of what “close contact” with an infected person meant — it’s now 15 minutes of cumulative exposure within six feet within a 24-hour period, instead of 15 consecutive minutes.

With this change in information, that only makes the exposure during the holiday season all that more risky. In addition to this, being in school around great numbers of individuals combined with Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s gatherings could easily lead to a significant rise in COVID-19 throughout the district.

“I think putting a group of people together in a school will always increase

the risk of spread, but look at the districts around us — many are still open!” junior Emily Walsh said when Averill Park had to temporarily go to all-virtual learning. “I believe our issue is stemming from irresponsibility of actions taken after school. As for the holidays, I will guarantee that there will be a rise around the time off.”

Although we can not specifically narrow down the possible originating causes in

our evidential spike in cases, many have come to the conclusion that holiday interaction, irresponsibility both in and out of school, and consistent contact with others can lead to an increase in COVID-19 numbers. However, no matter what our opinions are on the topic, we need to remember to wear our masks, remain six feet from others at all times, and keep any family gatherings as small as possible.

## SCHOOL NURSE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Miller, the Department of Health “will go 48 hours back from the symptomatic person.” Our Advisory period was not considered because it was a short time frame, and that “It really depended on all the other pieces like movement in a classroom, mask breaks, etc.”

As for how many cases would have to occur for Averill Park to go all-virtual, Miller couldn’t say. She thought it would be based on the Department of Health and school superintendent, but was not sure based on the number of cases or where the person was in the building.

When asked how she has been doing herself, and if she is more fearful this year dealing with sick students, Miller responded that she’s “not feeling more fearful.” When she worked in the hospital ICU, Miller learned how to protect herself with sick patients by wearing protective gear. She takes all of her necessary precautions for her protection. “You’re never 100% comfortable doing stuff like that but I am doing the best I can do in taking extra precautions.” That includes not even taking her own children trick or treating this year because she was being as safe as possible.

As for specific duties that have been impacted due to COVID, Miller said there is no change to handing out medication, other than wearing a mask and the shield up in the nurse’s office. She did say “the office looks very dif-

ferent compared to last year” due to the plastic shield in place to help prevent any COVID spreading. Also, she said when handing out their medications, if students don’t want to take the cup from her, she can set it down.

Miller has seen a decrease in students coming to the nurses office this year. “Yes, there aren’t many

kids at all, and the ones that I’m seeing are legitimately not feeling well,” she said. She acknowledged the dangers of students who don’t go to the nurse because they fear being sent home, stating, “That always poses a risk that they

send you guys home for any of the symptoms that are on the list.” She pointed out that many of these symptoms can be from so many different sources other than COVID. Unfortunately, “We can’t take any chances with the symptoms.”

When asked if her school day has lengthened due to COVID, Miller said, “I Check my emails a lot more now than I used to.” There are also more parents asking questions. At the beginning of school, “there were days I wasn’t leaving until 4:30, 5:00 pm in the afternoon,” but that has improved. “This month is looking a little bit better, with time frames and stuff,” and she is sometimes able to finish around 2:30-3:00 pm.

Miller is “still figuring out policies, situations, problems not predicted yet,” and supporting staff and other nurses as best she can, “trying to answer everything as best as possible.” When asked for one piece of advice she would give to APHS students to stay positive during these times, Miller said to “try to connect with friends and family over the phone or connect with them safely, and to remember that it is okay to not be happy with what is happening.”



ferent compared to last year” due to the plastic shield in place to help prevent any COVID spreading. Also, she said when handing out their medications, if students don’t want to take the cup from her, she can set it down.

Miller has seen a decrease in students coming to the nurses office this year. “Yes, there aren’t many

might be sent home.”

An additional problem, though on a more personal level, is that, “Parents and teachers have had conversations saying how they cannot just come in and say “Hi” anymore,” which she said makes her “very sad.”

As for the biggest challenge she’s faced this year, Miller said “having to



# EDITORIAL PAGES

## THE BLACK LIVES MATTER IMPACT

by Violet Dupuis

The Black Lives Matter movement is a motion for social awareness started in 2013 that advocates against racial discrimination, particularly in the justice system. Recently, the movement has exploded and spread like wildfire across the country, even affecting Averill Park. The spark in interest follows the murder of George Floyd who, in May, was brutally killed by police officers in Minneapolis.

From protests attended by students in Troy to posts on social media, it's clear that this movement has had an impact on our school and our community. Through this movement, students all across Averill Park have been inspired to try to become more educated and more informed about what we can

do to help. While the options for teenagers are somewhat limited, people have still tried to help through signing petitions, educating themselves, attend-



ing protests, putting up signs, and even having a talk with their family on who they were voting for in the recent election.

While some efforts have unfortunately slowed

down when the Black Lives Matter movement stopped "trending" on social media, many of the students in our community are still trying to get informed and help in any way possible. Arguably, the biggest impact that the movement has had on teens is in our conversations. When talking with friends, parts of the Black Lives Matter movement are often discussed, such as dismantling systemic racism, reforming the criminal justice system, and defunding the police, as well as other social justice issues. Even between two strangers, the topic can come up as part of a conversation and it can be discussed in an educated manner.

Although the Black Lives Matter movement has unfortunately been made po-

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## A PARENT WEBSITE WE'D REALLY LIKE TO SEE

by Owen Perala

This crazy time we live in has certainly been stressful for everyone. The district has tried to invent a few ways to help combat this stress. One of the most recent ideas was a webpage the district deems "Parent University." The idea is to provide a centralized place for resources that parents may need to access and use to help their children, and to understand what's going on in the district.

It's certainly a good idea for an issue many parents had and continue to

face. However, although this is good, it may not be exactly what parents want from a school resources webpage. In



any way, what is the dream parent university? Take it from me, a high school student, I

know exactly what parents want.

The first feature of this dream site that I'd like to talk about is of course...a math helper. It is true that the school curriculum has certainly changed a lot over the years. When a student needs help with a problem on his math homework he'll normally go to his parents, especially at a younger age. Now the student will get help but end up more confused than when he started. Parents just often don't understand our mathematical processes we use to

solve a problem, and we don't understand theirs. I like to call this the "Common Core Theory," simply because it shows how uncommon our core knowledge really is. Ironic right? The math helper would walk you through each step of the problem until you get your answer, thus avoiding the problem altogether.

A second feature of this website would be cooking recipes. With students studying at home as well as in school, parents have had

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# EDITORIAL PAGES

## LET'S RETHINK THE REGENTS

by Bella Bernstein

On November 5, the Averill Park community received an email regarding New York State's winter Regents exams. The winter Regents that would be held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday on the week of January 26 were CANCELLED. YAYA! Who knows,

maybe the state may have read my previous article and finally developed some sympathy for students' mental health. I guess we'll never know.

Due to this cancellation, we will have regular days of instruction for students in the high school. DO NOT WORRY if you were relying on the Regents, as you may still be getting your diplomas. Also, the email stated that "Examinations from which students

have been given an exemption as a result of the COVID-19 related cancellation of the January 2021 Regents Examinations shall be excluded from any calculation used for determining eligibility for an Honors or Mastery endorsement on a diploma." If you have any winter Regents, you are off the hook! LUCKY! Everyone else who has their Regents this spring, let's cross our fingers.

I view Regents as a horrible exam that now surrounds our education. In eve-

ry class teachers do not say "You will want to remember this for life," they say "You will have to remember this for the Regents." What has education become? We spend 6 hours a day in school, over 1,000 hours a year, to learn math, sciences, social studies and English. We are not learning

the students who can't memorize or can't take standardized tests. Imagine marks on exams playing such a huge role in your future. It is disgusting to me.

Mr. Quiles, our school principal, has a very different view on this topic. He noted, "I certainly wouldn't say that Regents exams

the State have mastered the same set of academic standards in a given course, in a consistent manner". How can Regents provide evidence that all students through the state have mastered the same set of academic standards if the test itself is unfair?

Why is our education surrounded by a test trying to prove if education is fair when I can tell you the answer is no! It will always be NO! The system is corrupt. You who are principals or teachers, do you really understand what we, the students, are going through? You say you do, but do you add on hours of homework and studying? Do

you understand the stress, anxiety, the depression teens are going through? Do you understand that you are the main sources of these things?

Regents exams have no purpose; they are unfair and horrible for mental health. While I will try to keep you all updated on spring Regents, let's hope the state and school understands the difference between saying you have sympathy and actually having it.



about mental health or how to get a job, but how to memorize information for exams. School should be your gateway to become a better person and understand how lucky we are to have the freedom to learn. But what it has become is the reason kids are depressed, their sources of anxiety or the place that gives them stress 24-7.

Most kids don't refer to school as a place they want to go to. The education system is unfair for

have a negative impact on students. They have served their purpose well for a good deal of time. What I do believe is that this is probably an excellent time for all of us to step back and re-assess whether they are still of the same value we once believed they were".

So, do Regents really serve a purpose? Quiles went on to say that "Historically, they have provided the system with a common benchmark to ensure that all students throughout

# EDITORIAL PAGES

## MUST-HAVE GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

by Katie Doran

The holidays are always filled with magic and excitement, and while this year may not have gone according to plan, there are still some pretty fantastic things to add to your Christmas list.

For all the gamers out there, the Playstation 5 and Xbox series X are in high demand and will be released just in time for Christmas. The Playstation 5 has faster downloads for games and great new controllers. The Xbox series X does have a lower GB range of 2.4 compared to the PS5 with 5.5GB; however, those already invested in the Xbox community will find this latest addition to download games faster.

Anyone looking for an upgrade from their old

phone? Look no further, the iPhone 12 is brand new and offers a pro version and a



mini version for those who don't love an overly large

phone in their pocket. However, if you are worried about the bugs and glitches of the

new iPhone that have yet to be worked out, the iPhone 11

is a fantastic option as well, with a fantastic camera and high resolution. And Samsung offers a brand new Galaxy S20 for people who prefer Androids.

While face-masks are meant to keep us safe, that does not mean they can't be fashionable as well. For the girls, Alice & Olivia is a high-end fashion company that has fantastic masks for a low price, ranging from \$12-15. For every mask, sold \$1 is donated to No Kid Hungry.

Tory Burch, which was featured by Oprah on her list of favorite things of 2020, also offers facemasks; a pack-

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## SNOW DAYS ARE...A NECESSITY!

by Isabella Bernstein

### Snow day

*noun*

1. a day on which a school or other institution is closed due to heavy snowfall or other extreme winter weather

All across the nation, schools including our very own Averill Park High School are having to modify to a fully remote or hybrid learning system. With this new method of learning, everyone, including the staff and students, have had to determine



new ways to adapt to online learning. But a huge question everyone is wondering is:

will we still have snow days? The answer is simply...YES, we will still have snow days.

This year is difficult for everyone, which is why our district agreed that everyone needs a few days off to recuperate during this crazy, challenging time. We as human beings need that one day to step back from technology and simply relax.

This new way of learning has brought in a lot of stress to the entire community as a whole, but now that teachers have the ability to teach from home, is there even

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# EDITORIAL PAGES

## THE PERFECT ESCAPE

by Belle Klimek

As I follow the words across the page, I imagine the main character walking through the woods, nervous and unsure. They approach a clearing, taking a deep breath, knowing that this next step will change everything. They move a branch out of their way, and their face expresses a deep horror... and then the chapter ends.

Of course, I could immediately read the next chapter, and most times I do, but I stop for a moment. I put my bookmark on the page of the next chapter, and close the book. I hug the book close to my chest and take a deep breath of my own. I love this book, but then again, I love all the books I own. Life can sometimes be a tough place, everyone knows that, and we all need an escape every once in a while. We need a place to go that isn't real, and can't impact tomorrow, a place with no consequences for our actions. For me, reading is my escape.

I have always been a reader, ever since I was able to read. I remember when I was young, I would take the books off of my dad's bookshelf and pretend to read them. I couldn't, because I was barely seven, and most of his books were far beyond my reading level. I just enjoyed the feel of books in my hands, and the smell of the pages. The first book I ever read that I considered to

be "not a baby book" was the fourth book in the series Dork Diaries. I don't know how I didn't realize it was the fourth, because it made references to previous books, and had a large 4 on the spine, but either way, this book impacted me in such a way that I was inspired to read more, and to increase the level of difficulty.



Books, to me, are not solely about the difficulty, of course. It is about the story. The story is a whole new world, unlike my own, that has a beginning, middle, and end that are all intertwined in a coherent plot. It is not like the real world, because nothing goes without explanation. Hardly anything is left as it is, with no meaning behind it. It is a nice relief when all things make sense, because in day to day life, this simply isn't true. Each book has its own life, its own personality, as well. One can take you to a magical land where only good things can

happen, while others take you to a grim world where loss and grief are common things.

No matter the atmosphere of the book, it is the people who are the reader's point of interest. We as people enjoy things that we can relate to, such as a flawed character. As we build an emotional connection to these people, we get

me back to a memory or a place. Some books smell like dust and dirt. These are typically older books, and they make me remember my dad's books, because his were typically older copies that he had had for numerous years. Newer books smell sleek and fresh, and remind me of book fairs. New books smell like new beginnings. The feel of books as well are something of a joy to me. Hard covers with the flimsy plastic coverings, are the sweet reminders of the library near where I used to live, which stocked mostly those kinds of books. Soft covers are the ones I have been reading recently, because they are smooth, and sometimes make the book more comfortable to read if it is smaller. The texture of the pages, the smell of the books, and the covers themselves are all factors that lead me to a book that emotionally engrosses me.

Reading is not just about the story, it is about the people in the story, and the physical features of the book. Reading is a couple of hours a day that I can spend alone in a world with no consequences. I get to let my conscious mind fall asleep and stimulate my subconscious. I do not think of the rest of the world when I am reading, I think only of the world in front of my face.

With these thoughts in mind, I open the book and begin the next chapter.

more invested in watching them grow and change through adversity and trial. We are watching people we can relate to go through worse than us and come out on top. It leads us to believe that maybe we too can overcome smaller challenges. As we watch these people suffer with grief or loss, or become overjoyed from triumph and victory, we begin to think "Maybe that could be me."

It's not only the story that gives me a sense of a good book, it is the physical features too. Certain books have specific smells that bring

## BLACK LIVES MATTER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

litical, many in our school community are encouraging people to educate themselves

about it and participate in discussions with their peers. One of the best things that a

person can do is be educated about this movement, and on all social movements, so that

eventually some real change can be made in the world.

# EDITORIAL PAGES

## A NEW WINTER SPORT OPTION

by Sean Malenfant

The days are getting shorter, the temperature outside is dropping and the weather is getting more and more miserable. This can only mean one thing — it's time for our annual dose of seasonal depression. But that's okay, we have winter sports to distract us from the fact that we're going into the worst weeks of winter...oh wait, it's 2020...

As of right now, the only sports deemed moderate and low risk enough to play are bowling and indoor track. This means that the rest of winter athletics are postponed, and the next potential starting date for winter sports is January 4.

How are we going to fight seasonal depression now? The obvious solution is by locking yourself in your house and doing homework. Alternatively, what if we just had

some more COVID friendly sports to hold us over? What would these sports be?



One possibility is "eSports." In fact, some colleges have added this "sport" this year. For those who don't

know, eSports is a fancy name for competitive video gaming. The downside of eSports is that in order to really master this sport, you would have to go over the two hour limit of screen time suggested by the American Heart Association in 2018. For some reason I feel as if schools are not too worried about screen time anymore, so eSports should do just fine.

So what would it be like joining the eSports team? First of all, tryouts would be intense. The most serious of gamers would be arising from the depths of their room for the first time since March prepared for total war. Xbox players, PlayStation players, and PC players would all come together for the same common goal — to destroy. Never before would we have witnessed a sport with such dedicated athletes. Morning lifting sessions? Gamers eat that for breakfast. They don't

wake up at 5:00 am to lift, they take it to a whole new level by staying up until 5:00 am. These gamers live "eat, sleep, game" to the fullest.

It's going to take a coach of extremely high merit to tame this new wave of jocks... "Okay guys, I want you at practice no later than 3:00 pm; if you're late, you have to use a common weapon during 1v1s... this is your only warning, and make sure you're staying on that regimented meal plan I assigned you before Saturday's tournament. You all know what's on the line here."

In my opinion, as long as the gamers are allowed to have their mics on and talk trash during games, this would be a big hit.

It looks like Friday nights are going to have to make room for the new king.

## PARENT WEBPAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

to feed their kids more often. It's not easy to keep good food coming when you are faced with an exact time to have food ready for them. Yes, school food does get some flak, but there are some meals that are absolutely delicious. The last thing we want is for little Timmy to have missed breakfast or lunch one day because he's quarantined.

School facilities are often used for non-academic purposes. Whether it be that yoga class your mom brought you to as a kid because she couldn't find a babysitter, or the rec sports league you

used to play in. Obviously, as the entire world is currently battling a bunch of evil circles right now, these things haven't been able to take place. So why not get something up on the webpage to keep parents and kids busy? We all have trouble staying busy nowadays.

Some ideas I think parents would really enjoy are studies in modern simplified communications, where you'll decrypt coded messages such as "lol", "omg," and "idk." Also, what about some foreign language courses, because you'll probably be surprised when you learn the

average number of fluently spoken languages in the US is rated from 0.5–0.8, while other countries can speak an average of as high as 3.2 languages. Go ahead and look it up.

A final feature I think parents would enjoy being added to the webpage would be a work tracker. I think I speak for the entire student body when I say we wouldn't, but this webpage is for the parents. Quite simply, it would be a program notifying parents when their kids have work due, and their current grades. This does exist in a way with

sites like Google Classroom, Google Calendar, and Schoology. Although, they aren't the most accessible things in the world and could be made a lot simpler. So why not add more pressure to our students' lives?

While a dream parent university webpage doesn't exist, I'd just like to remind you there is an actual one. I think it will be a good addition to the resources we have in this quarantine. We all could use any help we can get in these random and unpredictable times.

# EDITORIAL PAGES

## THE QUARANTINE DIARIES

In early October, Averill Park High School had its first case of COVID. As a precaution, five faculty and 52 students were sent home for a two-week quarantine period. English teacher Mr. Strich was one of those sent home. What follows are entries from Mr. Strich's diary he kept during his enforced stay at home:

### DAY 6:

Not sure if relocating microwave to below desk for easy access was a smart idea. Gained three pounds and starting to feel woozy from radiation.

Cat doesn't like someone in that Block 4A class; keeps lunging at the computer screen.

AARGH - six days in before I realized I didn't need to wear a mask teaching virtually from home.

Neighbors seem less likely to call police about my loud music during the daylight hours.

Feeling sooo bored. Rearranged all my bookshelves by copyright date. Cut toenails for the second time this week.

### DAY 7:

Who would have known you can get a pizza delivered at 8:30 am?

Disappointed in substitute. Hearing my lecture on Romanticism in Puritan New England for third time might be tedious, but that's no rea-

son to fall asleep.

Mailman's name is Chad; seems like a good guy, though not too ambitious. Accepted my offer of coffee cake and chatted for half an hour about Jetss' dismal season on my front porch.



Block 8B class is so reluctant to speak up. Taught the entire block today with a caraway seed stuck between my teeth and no one said anything.

### DAY 8:

Realized I've started my "no-shave November" three weeks early.

Forgot to log in to Block 3A class due to Andy Griffith Show marathon on local cable channel.

Learned the difference between Priority and First Class postage from Chad today. Wonder if I can work that into a lesson?

Fritos and whipped cream actually aren't bad together.

### DAY 9:

Wonder what I'm missing on the school's morning announcements today?

### DAY 10:

Can't believe how many squirrels play in my backyard each day. I've started naming them.

Just realizing if I don't assign essays, I don't have to grade them.

Tried playing virtual Monopoly with four other faculty being quarantined, but didn't work due to so much cheating.

I've never seen a substitute cry in front of students before today.

### DAY 11:

Who would have known you can still watch Oprah on reruns?

So frustrated Block 8B class won't talk. As a test, opened class today with a raisin stuck in one nostril, and no response. Halfway through the block I removed and ate it, and still not a peep.

Made snickerdoodles with Chad (his recipe). Hardly any leftovers.

Principal called to see if I was "OK," but not quite sure what he meant by that.

### DAY 12:

Falling behind in *Hamlet*, but did manage to show Block 2A class how to make a killer soufflé.

Didn't realize I'd given up my first born by checking all the boxes on the daily screening survey.

Extra credit for raking my leaves idea nixed by principal

I miss Averill Park.

# REVIEWS

## THE BIG “STAFF DINING CHOICE” REVEAL

by Sydney Davey

Out of curiosity, I was wondering what each teachers' favorite restaurants are to order from in the local area, so I asked staff around Averill Park High School. I was surprised to find out what their choices were — and here are the results:

The first person I asked was my Special Education teacher, Mrs. Mo, and she responded with Lakeview Inn on Crystal Lake. She wasn't the only one naming Lakeview Inn however, because Mrs. Agnew, Ms. Arsenault, Mr. Brooks and Mrs. Burger all agreed on Lakeview.

Why Lakeview is favored by many is quite possibly because it has family dining with a wide variety of food, and it offers its famous pizza, prime rib, and seafood. They also have delicious soups and sandwiches. Lakeview even offers daily specials to please the most judicious diner.

“Their soups are AMAZING, Potsticker appetizer... YUM!” said Mo. “And their white seafood pizza... sounds yucky, but it's

SO good!” I have to agree that their soups are the best, especially their seafood chowder.

The second person I asked was my Physical Education teacher, Mr. Luskin, and he responded with Paolo Lombardi's, which is on 104 W. Sand Lake Road in Wynantskill. Paolo Lombardi's serves Italian Cuisine and they serve both lunch and dinner. I've also eaten at Paolo Lombardi's and it is fantastic. Paolo Lombardi's has really good reviews, not only from Luskin and me, but also from Mr. Keegan and Mr. Engel who also enjoy this restaurant.



The third person I asked was my science teacher, Mrs. Hunter, and she responded with The Towne Tavern

which is at 2850 NY-43 in Averill Park. The Towne Tavern gains some attraction from its historical aspect of once being a blacksmith workshop. I've also eaten there, for my mom's birthday, and it is a very nice

place. It appears that quite a few others have found its aesthetic appeal, because Mrs. Dutcher, Mrs. Mackey, Ms. Bailey, Mr. Betram, Mr. Blostein, Ms. Christy and Mr. Colbert all agreed this was their favorite restaurant.

Another person I asked was my Global teacher, Mr. Smith, and he responded with AJ's Pizzeria. AJ's Pizzeria has been a take-out and dine-in restaurant for over 30 years. AJ's Pizzeria has been sold five times to different local owners.

However, the name has stuck around.

I also asked my English teacher's aide, Mr. Quinn, and he responded with The Mess Hall. The Mess Hall is a popular spot for "to-go" food, usually selling out its value-priced take-out dinners. It's been opened since 2016 as a big catering company run by a Navy veteran and a chef-owner named Shawn Hardy. Their new location is 8095 Route 66 in Poestenkill.

Likewise, I asked health teacher Ms. Ashline and she responded with Norte' Azul. Norte' Azul is in Stephentown and it serves Mexican food. Norte' Azul is also vegetarian friendly. This restaurant serves anything you can think of that is Mexican.

Even though many teachers responded with their favorite restaurant, a few teachers, like Mrs. Boulay, remained neutral and responded that they don't have one.

Clearly, there is a big assortment of restaurants that we all should try, and no matter your taste, there's a place for you! Happy eating!

## HOLIDAY GIFTS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

age of 5 for costs \$35 or a package of 3 with a baggie to hold them is \$35. Tory Burch facemasks are made of 100% polyester, and \$10 is donated from the purchase.

Banana Republic, a clothing store, offers a package of 3 face masks for the guys. The colors vary from blue, red, grey, camo and



many more.

Reusable water bottles are a must this year.

With the virus staying on plastic for a potential three days, reusable water bottles avoid this problem as you wash them everyday after school, and, you help our environment by not adding to pollution in the ocean. Local store Unbreakable Nutrition offers reusable tumblers, and while you are

there, a gift card makes the perfect stocking stuffer!

Etsy also offers very cute personally-designed water bottles and tumblers.

Hopefully these gifts can provide joy when you or a family member unwraps them. Stay safe, and Happy Holidays!

# REVIEWS

## MY TOP THREE LOCAL TAKEOUT PLACES

by Mia Lucey

You have been cooking dinner for your family all week. Tonight, you just don't feel like you have the energy. Takeout it is! You don't want to just give your family a good meal though, you want it to be great. Let's take a look at three great local takeout places that you could choose from.

### #3: LaBella's Pizza

LaBella's is your classic Italian restaurant. They have the traditional pizza and wings, pasta, calzones, and so much more. Some menu favorites of mine are the pasta connections, shrimp scampi, garlic twists, grilled chicken salad (their house Italian dressing is beyond incredible), and of course pizza.

There are a lot of menu items to choose from and this is definitely a great choice when you don't want to break the bank. For example, a baked ziti is only \$13.75... and it's delicious!

Pre-COVID, the service in the restaurant was incredible. The food was always fresh, hot, and ready. The staff was attentive and respectful. During one part of the COVID-19 outbreak, LaBella's dining room was closed, but takeout and contactless delivery remained available. On October 5, LaBella's opened their doors to the public again. As before, the service was quick and the food was excellent.

The dining room is open from 11:00 am to 7:30 pm daily. Pickup and delivery are available from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm daily. LaBella's

Pizza is located at 174 Main Ave, Wynantskill, NY. The phone number is (518) 283-0800.

### #2: Off Shore Pier

Off Shore Pier is a fish market and eatery located in Rensselaer, NY. There



are fresh catches on the fish market side and scrumptious hot meals on the restaurant side. The most famous item on the menu is of course a fish fry.



They also have delicious milkshakes, fries, other fried fish, and more.

They are super busy on Fridays during Lent because many people can't eat meat, so they eat fish instead! The prices are extremely reasonable for fish. For a fish fry, it's only \$4.95! Great deal!

An important thing to take into account when going to Off Shore is that they are cash only. However, they do have an ATM in the fish market right next door. The food is usually ready quickly, but I recommend if you are taking out, call ahead and order. They are almost always busy so it can take upwards of 25 minutes if you order upon arrival. However, the staff is kind, genuine, and works at a consistent pace.

During quarantine, they remained open for pickup. The

have sushi, hibachi dinners, regular dinners, and more! Some of my favorites on the menu are the shrimp and steak hibachi, Oh My Lord sushi roll, and the fried rice.

The prices are very reasonably priced considering the quality and quantity of the food. They are a very busy restaurant so I would definitely suggest calling ahead to order. Staff is very friendly, personable, and accommodating. They have sit-in dining which consists of regular tables, an open bar, and hibachi.

During COVID, they closed their doors to the public for a little while. Then they reopened for takeout only. In the late spring, Hanzo reopened for restaurant dining. When coming into the restaurant, they are doing mandatory temperature checks and you must wear a mask when you are not seated at your table.

The address is 102 Van Rensselaer Square, Rensselaer, NY, 12144. They are open 11:00 am to 9:00 pm Tuesday through Saturday. On Sundays they are open from 12:00 pm to 8:30 pm. They are closed every Monday. The phone number is (518) 650-7212.

I hope you will be able to choose something delicious from one of these restaurants' menus. There are so many things to take into account when choosing something for your family and I feel as though one of these three restaurants will make the choice easy!

restaurant is open Monday-Saturday from 11:30 am to 7:30 pm. They are open Fridays until 8:30 pm and they are closed every Sunday. The market is open Monday-Saturday from 9:00 am to 7:30 pm and they are open until 8:30 pm on Fridays. They are closed every Sunday as well. Their phone number is (518) 283-9880 and the address is 637 Third Ave Extension, Rensselaer, NY, 12144.

### #1: Hanzo Japanese Steakhouse

Hanzo is a great idea for family dinner! They



# REVIEWS

## TEEN AUTHOR'S FIRST NOVEL RELEASED

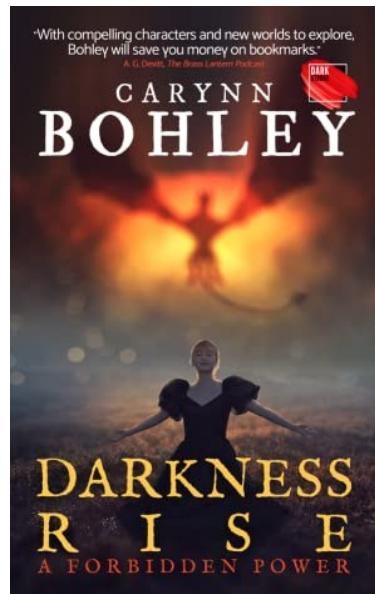
by Alex Gaboury

Carynn Bohley's newest book, *Darkness Rise*, currently sits on my shelf, the glossy matte cover sliding into my growing collection of Bohley's books, this one a thrilling fantasy read featuring Kydessia Swift, a girl with hidden powers growing up in the magic banning city of Sospes in which her father is mayor. After she's forced out of her home and left to find haven in the very world Sospes was attempting to shield her from, she encounters terrifying creatures, new friends, a growing list of threats and enemies, all through this new territory: the land she was kept from and the powers she hid from.

The book has been in the works for a number of months now, finally released on November 20, a product that has been created through a pandemic and Bohley's college course schedule. Although she said that COVID and closures didn't necessarily change much of her life as an online college student at Herkimer County Community College, it is still nevertheless, an impressive feat.

Bohley, 17 and from Salem, has self-published two short reads (*Bailey, Precipice* and *Bring Me Back*) and a novella (*Dear Jackson*). "One of my proudest moments was when I received my first copy of *Dear Jackson*, my self-published YA drama/romance novella," Bohley said. Her newest novel, *Darkness Rise*, is her first traditionally published book, published by the firm Darkstroke Books. "My proof copy of *Darkness Rise*

produced the same feeling [as *Dear Jackson*]; there's nothing like holding your own book in your hands," said Bohley. "It's so much different than printing out something you wrote and stapling it. The smooth cover, the spine, the thickness of the



pages and the music of flipping through them... there's nothing else like it."

But Bohley's writing journey did not simply start with these publications. Her love of writing has been a thirteen-year journey since she first started typing to relatives as she began to write. "I began sending made-up stories to them, starting with short pieces and slowly increasing them in length," Bohley said. She's still increasing, as *Darkness Rise* was first a novella about 20,000 words which she finished in a week, but was then transformed into the novel on sale now, with about 55,000 words. With a goal to write a future novel over 110,000 words, her literary journey is just beginning. Bohley's publishing

experience itself is fairly unique, having published her books by herself and thus assuming roles which a publishing firm would provide. Bohley remarked that one positive of being traditionally published is "that people take my book more seriously, and I'm not alone as I work. I receive guidance from my publisher, my editor, and even the other authors at Darkstroke (they're the best!)." But neither way is the "right" or precise path to being a big name in the publishing world. Darkstroke is a fairly new firm, and as self publication does not make publicity easy, self promotions are a must and a hard thing at that. "I'm quickly learning that writing and publishing were the easiest steps, and that the post-launch promotion is the real challenge," she said.

Due to prioritizing college classes, the time for publishing came between semesters, meaning that when Bohley was querying agents in the summer and then getting a book deal with a firm in August, she was beginning a new publishing journey and a college semester and year at the same time. "It was pretty hard at first," Bohley said. "Most of the editing I did was in my free time, but sometimes I incorporated it into my daily schedule to make sure I got it done."

The writing style itself Bohley described as, "...a lot of witty dialogue, though I try to break it up with descriptions and action scenes as much as possible. I think that this is mostly because I enjoy sarcastic humor, so I try to incorporate it

often." But she doesn't write this dialogue or specifics until after a long and arduous planning process. She provided me with an example which she used for the first chapter of *Darkness Rise*; the few sentences she shared were of the very beginning scene, completely laid out and planned in basic text, which she then goes back and colors in later.

"I plan out EVERYTHING, plot point by plot point, chapter by chapter, scene by scene, and sometimes even line by line," she said.

It's with this style that Bohley has personally found a relative cure for writer's block, although that's not often a problem as she has a constant stream of projects and new ideas coming. In addition to the second book in the *Mysticus Trilogy* for Darkstroke, she's also working on a supernatural romance novel (*The Prince of Sumatra*) and an alternative history novel (*Why the Loon Cries*), projects which she hopes to see on shelves soon.

Fortunately, Bohley plans to stay in the writing community, fleshing out a base as an author in publications as she continues in college after finishing her Associate's degree in General Studies this May. She plans to focus her studies in Wildlife Biology, a field she is greatly interested in, and which she hopes will provide her with the means to continue writing, at least until she can cement a concrete and comfortable publishing base.

You can find her most recent book, as well as others, on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Darkness-Rise-Carynn-Bohley/dp/B08L3XBVMH>

# AREA GROUP CONSERVES LOCAL LAND RENSSELAER PLATEAU ALLIANCE WORKS FOR PUBLIC GOOD

by Tyler Michaels

As climate change continues to devastate the world, it becomes increasingly crucial to conserve what land we can. Many organizations around the world are dedicated to saving land, including one local group, the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA).

The RPA is a land trust, meaning they conserve

demically.

"We are also working on making nature more inclusive and accessible," said Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director for the RPA. "At the Poestenkill Community Forest we recently added an ADA compliant 'equal access' trail so that people with limited mobility can enjoy nature too."

The RPA was incorporated in 2008, and conserved their first land in

to the public, or will be soon.

One of the most important aspects of the RPA is their ability to work with the community. "I really like working with community members," commented Bonesteel. "It is very satisfying when we invite the community in to help solve problems and people that were once skeptical of us get involved and become supporters." Mr. Bonesteel told a

preserve. All of the neighbors are now happy, and even the most skeptical of them admitted that the additions worked well.

The RPA also facilitates many Eagle Scout projects to help involve the community in creating new things.

Over the past few years the RPA has continued to quickly grow. The RPA now has five staff members, and they are expecting to hire

## Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

Conservation Through Community

the forests and other natural areas of the Rensselaer Plateau Region. The RPA meets twice a year with the town and village officials of the region and forms committees of community members to oversee and manage each of their properties.

The RPA also works to find ways the conservation can help solve community problems. An example of this was when the alliance partnered with the NOPiates Committee to hold a healing walk in the forest for those affected by the opiate epi-

2014. In 2015 the RPA hired their first staff, and the alliance has been growing ever since thanks to donations from the community.

The RPA has currently conserved 12,250 acres of land, and owns 2,485 of those acres. The rest of the land is owned by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, a state-wide forest and wildlife conservation department. This land consists of state forests or state wildlife conservation areas. All property conserved by the RPA is currently open

recent example of this when there were issues with parking and visitors at the Barberville Falls Preserve. The RPA invited neighbors and the community to meetings in order to figure out how to solve the problems. The old owner closed the land in the summer to avoid these issues, but the preserve is now open year-round. Because of this and quarantine, there were more people visiting it over the summer than there had been before. The RPA decided to build a new parking space, new signs, and even added a new trail to the

another one or two people next year. It can be difficult to keep up with all of the work that needs to be done. Yet through the pandemic the RPA has improved their land and has many more projects in the queue.

The RPA is a valuable organization that works hard to help keep the land in the local area well-kept and available to the public. The RPA continues to grow and manages to save more and more land, proving what a valuable asset they are to the community.

### We Want Your IDEAS

The Averill Park Chronicle wants your story ideas. Send them to any Journalism Club member, or to Mr. Strich, The Chronicle's advisor.

### SNOW DAY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

a point to having snow days? Are we just missing a day of crucial learning?

To answer that question, no, we are not missing opportunities to learn, because one way or another we would still have those proposed snow days. Plus, what good does it do to be learning when all one

feels is stress and pressure?

Say we don't use all of our proposed snow days? The result of this simply decreases the number of days we will remain "in school" at the end of June.

The cold, beautiful and glistening snow days we

all looked forward to as a child will be here to stay. Use that time to disconnect from the internet, go outside and breathe in the fresh air while potentially having a snowball fight, or sip on some nice, warm hot chocolate.

# SURVEY SAYS (VIRTUAL EDITION): TWO TEACHERS, TWO INTERVIEWS



by Katie Armlin

For this column, I sit down with two faculty members of different ages and subjects, and ask them the same set of questions. The two teachers that this prestigious and distinguished honor has been bestowed upon for this edition are Mrs. Mouzakes (English) and Mr. Minkler (science)

***Do you prefer teaching all remote or hybrid?***

Mouzakes: I definitely prefer teaching all remote! From a technology point of view, I feel like the class on a whole moves much more smoothly when we are all on the same platform remotely. When I teach in the hybrid model, the process moves very slowly. I feel like it's a never ending battle of microphone, volume, and speaker issues. As far as the health and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff, I absolutely prefer the remote model. This has been a stressful year, and one less worry about safety is definitely welcome.

Minkler: Hybrid! Even though it is more prep I became a teacher because I enjoy interacting with students. Remote is very lonely and difficult to engage students in conversations.

***What is the funniest thing that's ever happened on a Google Meet?***

Mouzakes: I always enjoy having pets and siblings pop into my Google Meets. Typically they provide lots of smiles and laughs!

Minkler: Hmmmm...not sure it's the funniest, but maybe embarrassing. I was on a Meet and a parent took the place of the student and I kinda' didn't notice for a while! Also, I have said some strange things on Meets (because that's just me) and students' parents were in the room!

***What is your favorite holiday tradition?***

Mouzakes: On Christmas Eve, ever since I was little, Santa always made an appearance sometime after dinner. He would share stories about each person at the house and give a small little gift. When I was young, the stories were always about accomplishments or exciting events during the year. But as we all got older, the stories became comical as Santa highlighted all of our ridiculous and embarrassing stories from the previous year. It's always a fun time and lots of laughs! I have been informed that this year Santa will either do a Zoom visit or have pre-recorded messages for the family since he is practicing safety and social distancing.

Minkler: Having my girls run down the stairs to open gifts,

sitting by the fireplace with coffee and the movie *Christmas Story* playing on the TV.

***If you could bring your teenage self into 2020, what type of virtual learner would you be?***

Mouzakes: I definitely think I would be the type of student that would keep my camera

on, but I would not look awake at all!

***If you could go anywhere in the world right now, where would you go?***

Mouzakes: I would LOVE to be on a beach — Greece, Puerto Rico, Hawaii — I'll gladly take any of those places!

Minkler: A tropical island where COVID does not exist! I love chillin' on the beach with a good book and tunes!

***What's the worst advice you've ever gotten?***

Mouzakes: Hmm this is a tough question! When I first began teaching, I remember being told, "Don't smile until after the winter break!" I think the idea behind this is that teachers need to be serious. I had a tough time with this because I love to laugh and smile, and I feel like a lot of my positive interactions with students are because of my rapport. If I followed that advice, I would have missed out on a lot and wouldn't be who I am. :-)

Minkler: This is a tough one, because I am not someone who asks for advice very often, and when I do, I ask people I really trust and admire. Although, in high school I had an aptitude for accounting. It came very easy to me and in high school that was rare for me! My guidance counselor told me I should pursue an accounting degree. So in my first year of college I was an Accounting Major....by the second semester I had enough! The thought of being in a room with a computer and no human interaction drove me to switch my major! Best decision I ever made because I eventually became a teacher/coach and I love it!

on because I'd want the teacher to know I was there and interacting...but also because I would want to have fun with my friends in class. Recently, I attended my daughter's high school Open House over a Meet. When I entered the class, one of her best friends was also in the class. We immediately started waving in the Meet, and then texted each other, and the teacher caught on and remarked, "Oh, I see we have some friends in this class!" Clearly, my behavior was a bit distracting, and definitely indicative of how I would act as a student!

Minkler: Great question! I would be the worst! My attention span is not good anyway! I am all over the place and if I was home I would be doing everything EXCEPT, listening to a Google Meet! My camera would be



# PET ADOPTIONS SOAR DURING PANDEMIC

## A SIGN OF THE TIMES AS PEOPLE SEEK COMPANIONSHIP

by Emma Hanlon

If you were to ask anyone about the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, I'm sure they would have an endless list. On the other hand, would you be able to list one benefit? Surprisingly, there are some upsides to the pandemic - one of them being pet adoptions.

This year is arguably the best year to get furry companionship, leaving fewer pets in shelters and more in loving homes. Pets, especially dogs and cats, have many health and mood-boosting benefits that are even more important during the stress this year brings. Pets have shown to reduce stress, depression, anxiety, ease loneliness, and encourage physical activity. They also provide companionship and unconditional love into our lives.

The early outbreak of the coronavirus forced many businesses to close, leaving people home and working remotely. Staying home has a large mental impact on everyone, especially when spending it alone. Before the pandemic, many peo-

ple did not have the time to spend with a new pet. So, when we were left in a "never-ending" quarantine many sought out a pet companion to spend it with.



Simultaneously, positive national trends amongst adoption rates increased in the early weeks of quarantining. The number of homeless dogs and cats entering shelters dramatically decreased. The Sheltered Animals Count, a national database of sheltered pet statistics, released data from animal welfare centers across the United States. This sum-

mer they shared that among 1,270 centers, 548,966 pets entered the system. During the same time period last year, 840,750 animals entered the same organizations. This created a dramatic 35% decrease, the largest seen in years.

The early increase in adoption coupled with decreases in input improved the "live release" rate of homeless animals by 3%. In simpler terms, tens of thousands fewer homeless cats and dogs across the United States lost their lives this spring.

Numerous people have shared their positive experiences about having a pet during the pandemic. Caroline Nero, a freshman, said, "When you can't hang out with friends and are stuck at home it can be really

stressful, but your pet is always there to cheer you up and be your best friend."

During this tough time, the saying "a man's best friend" has been proven true for many people. As of March 15, during the early months of the pandemic, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals saw a 500% increase in foster applications between New York City and Los Angeles. This trend is popular throughout the rest of the world. Some breeders and shelters have waiting lists that go well into 2021.

Pets have been a unifying factor for many families; things as simple as playing with a furry friend provide much joy for kids and adults. "When we first went under lock down, it was amazing for my dog because he is already hyper active," said sophomore Katie Doran, "and it was great for my family to be able to do something together as simple as walking our dog."

If we can see the pandemic through a pet's point of view, the glass would be more than half full.

# SECRETARIAL ROLES TO CHANGE

## MRS. HALE'S DEPARTURE LEADS TO NEW DUTIES

by Ava Ferriero

As you may have heard, one of Averill Park's secretaries, Mrs. Hale, has left APHS and started a career elsewhere. Hale will be greatly missed by the district as she did so much for our school, leaving a lasting impact on her coworkers and students.

"Mrs. Hale was a breath of fresh air to see every morning as I arrived at



work," said athletic department secretary Mrs. Shupe when asked about Hale's departure. Shupe, who worked closely with Hale,

said, "Her cheery 'Good Morning' always set my day off to a good start with her smile."

Shupe was not the only secretary who thought so kindly of the former Averill Park employee. "My thoughts about Mrs. Hale leaving are both happy and sad," said Mrs. King, a teacher's aide. "I am sad to see her go, and will miss seeing her smiling face every day. She will be

greatly missed by all. On the other hand, I am happy for her. I wish her the best of luck as she begins her new adventure in life."

Although she was an important addition to the school, Hale is encouraged and supported by her community as she moves on to her new job.

Now that Hale has

(continued on page 21)

# HOLLYBALL IS A NO-GO DUE TO COVID

## SCHOOL LOOKS TO OTHER ACTIVITIES TO FILL IN LOSS

by Michelina Lombardi

The coronavirus pandemic has definitely affected students at Averill Park High School in many ways. It has taken a huge toll on many people and has greatly influenced much of what we do, including constantly having to adapt to new rules and guidelines set forth by the Department of Health. Though at times this may be challenging, it is our "new normal" and we must adapt to it. Many events and activities have been canceled due to this unforeseen circumstance, some of which include sports, clubs, fundraisers, and school dances. With that in mind, the Averill Park administration was led to make the decision to cancel the 2020 Hollyball.

It is with great sadness that this has to happen, but under the present circumstances, the school cannot hold the dance. With the Department of Health stating that the school cannot have more than ten people at a gathering, a school dance cannot occur.

Traditionally, the high school has had a winter dance. The name tends to change, but lately Hollyball has stuck. This dance is open

to all students in grades 9-12 and is held on campus in the gymnasium. Hollyball is a nice way to kick off the holiday season and a great opportunity to get together with your friends to dance and have some fun.



Mrs. Mein, an assistant principal, was willing to give some details in regards to the dance. "Unfortunately, given our COVID-19 crisis, we will not be able to have this dance because it does not adhere to Governor Cuomo's guidelines of not exceeding a gathering of more than ten people," said Mein.

Although the school cannot host the Hollyball, Mein and her team are hopeful that the spring dances may be able to happen if things improve as time goes

on.

The Averill Park High School faculty and staff know that especially during these times it is difficult to find ways to connect. One of these opportunities had been Hollyball. Now that this

dance cannot happen, the staff is working together to come up with other ways for students to connect and have some fun.

"This dance is typically a really fun time, but we know right now our students are struggling with finding ways to stay connected and have some fun," stated Mein. "In addition to the Hollyball, we have Spirit Week, which is a great opportunity for students to have fun," she added.

The staff is working

on trying to plan Spirit Weeks and more fun activities that students can frequently participate in. Since not all students are in the building together, a Spirit Week is a great option to bring students together, whether they're in school or remote.

At Averill Park High School, student safety is the number one priority. Offering students a way to have fun and feel a sense of community, while staying safe and healthy is a must. Mein said, "A spirit week is one of the things that we can do and students can participate both remotely and in person. This allows every student to participate, regardless of what program they are involved in. Our goal is to make sure everybody feels included and part of our culture with the confines that we're in."

No matter what, Averill Park High School will try to provide the best opportunities they can to students. While all are faced with unfortunate circumstances, the faculty and staff will continue to adjust and do the best they can. Although the Hollyball cannot happen this year, many other fun holiday activities may occur.

## SECRETARIAL ROLES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20)

left, there are many jobs that will have to be completed by the other secretaries. For starters, Shupe will take on the periodic aspects of Hale's old position.

"Going forward, I expect to do some work with exam scanning, mailings, or any other function that is necessary as directed by Mr. Quiles," she explained. These tasks won't always be easy to complete, as she has her

normal duties to perform as well as aspects of Hale's old job.

As for King, she will take over the management of the mailroom. With the help of students, she will be distributing all incoming mail and making sure everything ends up where it is expected to go.

Lastly, Mrs. Otty, a secretary, will become the new owner of Hale's old office. She will be expected to

take over the copying aspects of the former secretary's job. "I will start setting up the new area so it works for me," stated Otty. "Eventually there will be more changes through a minor renovation; however, until then it is temporarily set up so I can do my work in this area. When these renovations are done it will give the area a little more room and a better flow."

Once Otty gets used

to these changes, she feels the new space is going to be a great fit, designed specifically for her.

Although there are many additional tasks to be performed by the secretaries on top of their prior duties, the most important job, as Shupe said is "to support the staff and students. We work well together and do our best to support everyone the best we can."

# APHS'S SUPER-GREETER

## THE JOB OF THE HIGH SCHOOL'S FRONT OFFICE SECRETARY

*Note - This article was written as a collaborative effort during a 15 minute virtual Journalism Club meeting on December 2.*

by Members of the AP Journalism Club

Due to her position, she's the face of the school for most people entering APHS. Though officially a typist, but calling herself more of a receptionist, Mrs. Fink has the important job of greeting everyone entering the high school through the front lobby.

In addition, Fink said that, "From my position, I deal a lot with the staff. I'm the main hub for staff asking me where students are located... I'm also in contact with parents asking for an early dismissal or late arrival."

Prior to coming to Averill Park, Fink had never worked in a school district. "I worked in a dermatology office for five years," said Fink. "It was very high stress, working with patients working with doctors, working with nurses, so it's been really nice actually to change up the environment." Her previous employment all had an aspect of customer service: bartending, waitressing, and working in a tanning salon.

"I've always dealt with people, so I really like to

relate with people and develop relationships."

Fink was somewhat familiar with the school before joining the office last year, as she is a 1991 graduate of Averill Park. She presently lives in

Stephentown in her grandparents' farmhouse on 94 acres, and seems to enjoy her surroundings. "I've seen moose out here, coyotes, bears." She shares her house with her husband, a 19-year old son, a 20-year old daughter, five Italian greyhounds, three cats and fish. "I'm a simple country girl," she said, mentioning her enjoyment riding her four-wheeler and snowmobile.



Stephentown in her grandparents' farmhouse on 94 acres, and seems to enjoy her surroundings.

"I've seen moose out here, coyotes, bears." She shares her house with her husband, a 19-year old son, a 20-year old daughter, five Italian greyhounds, three cats and fish.

"I'm a simple country girl," she said, mentioning her enjoyment riding her four-wheeler and snowmobile.

As for her job, Fink says there are many aspects beyond just greeting people. One aspect of reception that people wouldn't expect is when students are called to the office for discipline, parents sometimes show up. "The main of-

sure them we are here to help and be sympathetic to their feelings, although we may not know all the details due to confidentiality."

She also is often contacted when school staff experience technology problems. "Most of the time we are more aware of it from the staff members and so they report that they're having issues in the classroom, so we will communicate that information to the administrators and they take the steps to actually contact the Tech Department," she said.

Fink has also been training to help with attendance to lend help if Mrs. Pollock is absent.

"The staff in the office is basically a family," she said, and that includes school principal Mr. Quiles. "He's probably one of the most genuine, amazing and caring people I've ever met," Fink said. "He's so bubbly...so happy." Fink said Quiles is about "safety first," as he "cares about the school, school district and students," and that despite the pandemic, "he wants to bring life back into the school."

Fink especially wanted to emphasize how grateful she is for something that occurred last year.

"Some of the students and staff members may not have been aware that I did have a major accident months after I started working for the high school and that they actually required me to be out of work for about two months," she said. "It was very serious; I had a lot of damage to my body physically and I had actually used up all of my sick time."

Fink was touched by how the staff responded to one of its newest employees.

"I was extremely touched by the generosity of the high school staff and faculty who donated time for me to stay home and recover and that's something I've always wanted to say. I don't know who ever donated (sick leave) time to me, but I was so unbelievably touched by the generosity and the caring staff at the high school."

"I want to take this opportunity to say thank you for the generosity of the APHS staff and faculty when I was in a time of need," referring to them as an "amazing caring group of people among the high school community."

**Look for  
issues of  
The Chronicle  
on-line!**

Go to the APHS webpage on the APHS District website at [averillpark.k12.ny.us/aphs](http://averillpark.k12.ny.us/aphs) and click on "Student Parent Resources." Then click on "Newsletters."

**-In Color-**

# YOU DON'T SAY?

## MEETING UP WITH AP'S NEW SPEECH THERAPIST

by Olivia Tindall

This school year, APHS welcomes our newest staff member, Shawn Logstin, as the new speech therapist.

Before her job at Averill Park as a speech therapist, Logstin worked part-time in Schenectady with younger children. Eventually, however, she decided she wanted new scenery, with older kids.

Even before her job in Schenectady, Logstin worked in advertising with an undergraduate degree. After a few years in the advertising industry, she decided to go back to college and get her undergraduate degree in speech therapy at the University of Nebraska. Soon after graduating from the University of Florida with her

master's degree, Logstin was hired here at the high school.

When deciding what field of work she wanted to re-



enter, Logstin had to take a few things into consideration. With her desire to help people, and

her love for the medical field (even though she dislikes blood), she figured speech therapy would be a good compromise.

When asked how she knew she finally picked the right job for her, Logstin responded with the aforementioned along with how much she absolutely loved her line of work. She loves seeing the potential that her students have, and getting the opportunity to help them reach their goals. But most of all, she loves having those breakthrough moments with her students.

One of her most impressionable moments was when she was still working in Florida: her patient was non-verbal and only five years old, and Logstin had helped him speak his first words!

She really appreciates the different challenges

that come along with her job and the different people who follow those challenges. Now though, some of those challenges are created by the COVID crisis.

One of the key aspects of speech therapy is to watch the patient's mouth movements to find where the problem lies, but wearing masks would clearly complicate that. When we wear masks, it's hard to see any facial movements from the nose down, and being a speech therapist, Logstin needs to see her patient's teeth placement and lip movement. To get around this obstacle, Logstin has asked her patients to wear a clear face shield instead of a regular mask.

Despite all the challenges that come with being a speech therapist in 2020, Logstin couldn't be happier with her job, and said she wouldn't want to be working anywhere else.

# COVID SUPERHEROES

## SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS UP TO THE CHALLENGE

by Sophia Maddalone

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in several fundamental changes to be made at the Averill Park Central School District. New regulations were implemented to ensure the safety of every student and staff member. While this school year looks and feels very different for teachers, students, and parents, we must not forget the challenges that substitute teachers also encounter.

Mr. and Mrs. Beck



are two familiar faces seen in the halls of the APCSD schools. Mr. Beck has been a substitute teacher for six years, while Mrs. Beck has been substituting for four

years. In an interview, the Becks expressed the obstacles they face while teaching during the pandemic.

"This year has been different - having to work with only half the students in the classroom," said Mrs. Beck.

The Averill Park School District decided students in sixth through twelfth grade would attend school in a hybrid flex model, so that students are split up based on the students' last names (students with the last names of A-K come to school

on separate days than students with the last names of L-Z). Students who are home in the hybrid model attend classes in a very non-traditional way, through Google Meet. Over Google Meet, students take notes and participate in class discussions as if they are in the actual classroom.

"Often, teaching through a Google Meet has been a challenge," said the Becks, and "coordinating all the technology can be

(continued on page 24)

# VIRTUAL SCHEDULE: GOOD OR BAD?

## NO REAL CONSENSUS ON WHICH IS BETTER

by Elizabeth Aiossa

During the spring when the pandemic first hit, no one was prepared for what was to come, especially schools. The unexpectedness of the situation led to little planning and no set schedule for students. However, this school year, with extensive work done over the summer, two very different learning models have been created, and it's hard to determine which is really the best fit for students.

Due to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases in the district, the school has twice gone all virtual, once for three weeks. For some this was a great change, but for others it wasn't something to look forward to.

The virtual schedule definitely has some perks. For one, you don't have to wear a mask, and the classes are shorter,

which makes it much easier for some to pay attention for the entire class. "80 minutes of staring at a screen is not good," said math teacher Mrs. Agnew.

You can also sleep



in until just before 9 am if you truly desire. "I like how relaxed it is," said sophomore Logan Barslow. There also isn't any rushing around to get something to eat in the four minutes between clas-

ses. Chemistry teacher Dr. Perry said, "It's a much more humane schedule."

However, the virtual schedule definitely has its cons. The participation that the teachers are get-

while classes are shorter, there are concerns it's too short. The teachers are still planning for the full 80 minutes so anything that doesn't get done in class becomes homework on top of any other homework that was assigned. It can get a bit overwhelming for students.

There also are hardly any hands-on activities, which is really hard for chemistry, art, engineering, and many other classes.

The other hard part of being home is not being able to see your friends or teachers. Senior Anna Jankovic said, "You don't get to socialize with your classmates," and while you can FaceTime with them, it just isn't the same.

It's hard to decide if the virtual schedule is better or worse than the hybrid schedule because there are so many pros and cons. The answer really depends on you and your ability to learn.

### SUBSTITUTE TEACHING (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23)

difficult." It has been tricky for everyone to grasp this new technology that is needed to teach and to learn in the hybrid model, and substitute teachers at Averill Park have done well to overcome the difficulties and become proficient in the ways of the new technology. Doing so has ensured that classes run smoothly and students continue to excel during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Averill Park also instituted a mandatory mask requirement for anyone on school premises. "Wearing a mask all day is difficult!" the Becks agreed. While it is difficult to wear a mask, members of the school district - including substitute teachers - have risen to the occasion and adapted to wearing masks daily.

Fear is oftentimes a recurring feeling, due to the unknowns of the ongoing

pandemic. The Becks stated, "There certainly is more potential for an exposure being in school, than being home. But we don't feel concerned about attending school."

In regards to the school closing that occurred from November 9 through November 29, Mrs. Beck said, "Both Mr. Beck and I love subbing at AP, we love the kids and the staff, we feel lost right now since we can't spend our day with

kids." She added, "I guess after you spend almost every day with kids for 33 years - you miss it when you can't."

The Averill Park School community would like to thank the Becks, and every substitute, for their years of involvement in the Averill Park schools and to wish each member of our school district a safe and healthy rest of their school year.



# SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

## HOLIDAY SEASON GIVES AN EXCUSE TO HIT THE STORES

by Zareena Ansari

Were you going to slack on black? The yearly shopping craze, a.k.a Black Friday, seemed debatable as a “good idea.” Of course, one could have always waited for Cyber Monday, but it’s the rush that makes Black Friday the triumph. Even though one could have also shopped for Black Friday deals online, the real definition of Black Friday is “survival of the fittest” in jam-packed stores.

The side effect of death didn’t seem to phase people. Considering headlines of people being trampled at gate entrances, the old saying “Shop ‘til you drop” could never be more ironic, nor iconic.

Stepping into Crossgates, you would be welcomed with a corn maze of people...oh wait, those were lines. Recalling this past summer, many of us were greeted with socially distanced lines to reach stores or restaurants with a limited amount of people per establishment. This was abnormally similar to Black Friday shopping. Traditionally, stores have gates on Black Friday to hold back a crowd, while only letting small groups of people in to

avoid messing up displays and preventing injuries. This year, it was apprehended to have only a slight change in precautionary measures.

As we continue rock-eting toward Christmas, along

considering the abundance of parents who hope to find these materials at half the ticketed price during holiday sales. If you were planning to gift any of those, hope you planned ahead.

and wouldn’t open their entrance, so you should have skipped out and gone all-out on Cyber Monday, or gone out searching for deals in November to beat crowds and a potential wave of COVID-19. Stores like Walmart and Kohl’s were offering new deals and sales every week, known as “Deals for Days 2020”. This was to not only distance crowds and reduce cases, but also to give time to restock items. As for the stores that are fully online, your package might come later than usual counting for the reduced, socially distanced staff and overload of packages.

The gift of giving (diseases) seems like a small act, but it can affect millions of people; it’s a continuous chain. Taking precautionary measures is vital for the holidays, so we can all spread love instead of germs, and have a safe shopping trip. This year’s holiday shopping is full of surprises like early deals, exclusive offers, and for the first time, curbside pickup. As always, one should see the glass of eggnog half full. Happy holidays!



with the obvious health risks this year’s holiday shopping poses, there is also a chance there will be merchandise shortages (think the Great Toilet Paper Depression in March). Regarding millions switching to fully online or hybrid, there are numerous at-home needs. Desks, chairs, computers, and basic school materials are hard to reach,

Taking extra precautions when driving welcomes itself as a necessity this year, as many Americans are trying their hand at curbside pickup. Stores like Target and Lowe’s allow you to shop for a new 125” plasma television, but bring it to your car instead of in-store shopping.

Many stores went 100% online for Black Friday

### CLASS OFFICERS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26)

The co-treasurers are Meghan Walsh and Kendall Dollard, and Katie Armlin is the class secretary. The senior class also voted on class representatives and elected Mackenzie Rockwell, Allison Lapinski,

and Meghan Ratigan to fill those positions.

While some of the officers were placed in their positions because they were the only ones brave enough to step up and run, they all are

very intelligent and certainly fit for their responsibilities. Let’s hope they are ready for the challenging year ahead of them and won’t give up.



# AND THIS YEAR'S LEADERS ARE... CLASS OFFICER ELECTION RESULTS FINALIZED

by Paula DeAndres

Not long ago, the presidential election had the whole country on their toes and was dragged out for what seemed like a very long time. In contrast, the Averill Park class officer elections went very quickly and in some cases, voting wasn't even necessary!

The freshman class officers were announced October 20. None of the candidates were contested and therefore they automatically filled the positions - with no voting from the student body. Tommy Biette became class president, with Bella Bernstein as vice president, Ava Ferriero as acting secretary and Jackson Bartlett as treasurer. Kay Tichy is now the fundraising chair.

In November, APHS sophomores saw a video introducing their officers, who were also un-

with Emma Hanlon as vice president and Isabelle Reylea as the secretary.

In the second

ran uncontested as well. However, the junior class voted on two student government representatives. The results were as follows: Michelina Lombardi as class president, Lilly Vrsalovic as vice president, Isaac Joseph and Ella Lindheimer as co-treasurers, and Dani LaPier as secretary. Sophia Maddalone and Thomas Nero were elected as student government representatives.

Mrs. Freeman, the senior class advisor, held elections toward the end of September. The officers had competition and the seniors did vote in this one. Lauren Paris was elected president and Anthony Geraci as vice president.



contested. Mrs. Glunk announced that David Mooradian was class president,

week of October, Mrs. Yost held the junior officer elections. The primary officers

(continued on page 25)

## MIDDLE

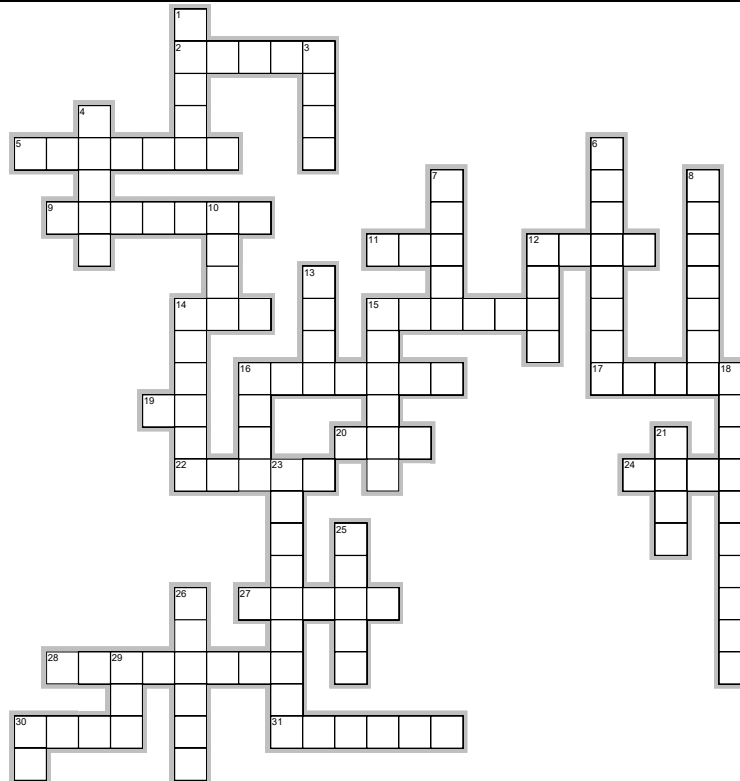
## NAME

## CROSSWORD

Match the STAFF MEMBERS  
with their  
MIDDLE NAMES

ALLEN  
ANN  
ANNE  
BRAY  
COLLEEN  
ELIZABETH  
EMILY  
GAYLE  
HARRIS  
J.  
JON  
LEE  
LYNE  
MARIE  
NONE  
RENEE  
THELMA  
VI

ANDREW  
ANNASTACIA  
BETH  
CLAUDINE  
DAVID  
ELLEN  
GAIL  
GREGORY  
HEATHER  
JEAN  
KENNA  
LOUISE  
MAE  
MARY  
PULTORAK  
SARA  
THOMAS  
WILLIAM



EclipseCrossword.com

## Down

1. Oldendorf
3. Malenfant, Medici, Mein
4. Blostein
6. Daviero
7. hotaling
8. Church, Hall
10. Engel S
12. Engel B
13. Heilmann
14. Rees
15. Miller
16. Agnew
18. Glunk
21. Caruso
23. Kimberling
25. Shupe
26. Strich
29. Dutcher M, Quesnel
30. Marruffo

## Across

2. Gildersleeve, Minkler
5. Freeman
9. Galcik
11. Fairchild
12. Perry
14. Mackey, Yost
15. Gierthy
16. Gregory
17. Clark-Apelanz
19. Ashline
20. Otty
22. Schmidt
24. Klepsch
27. Gibbins, Hale, Pauly, Sorriento
28. Rohl
30. McKeough
31. Fox