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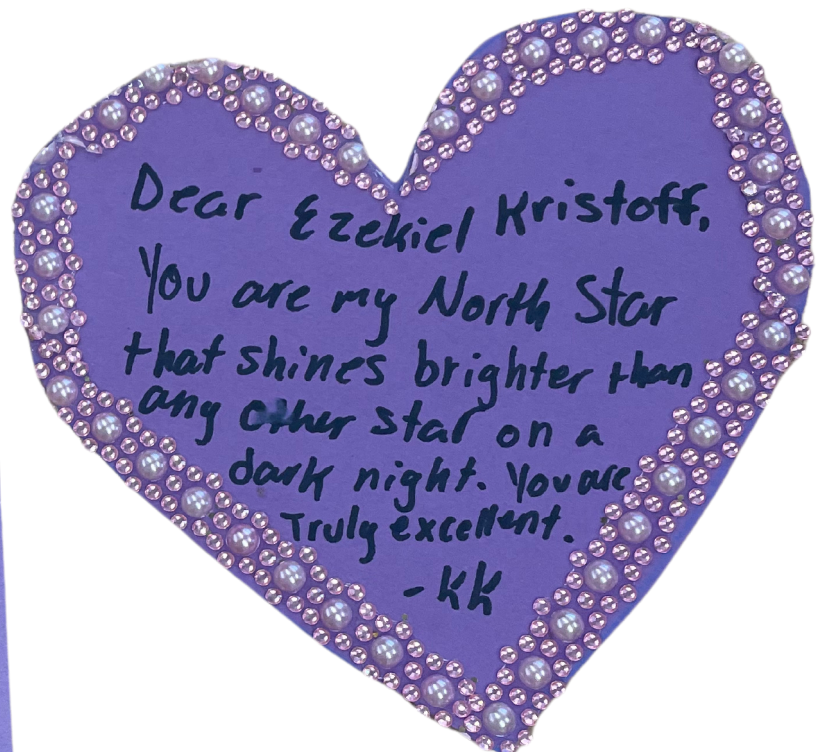
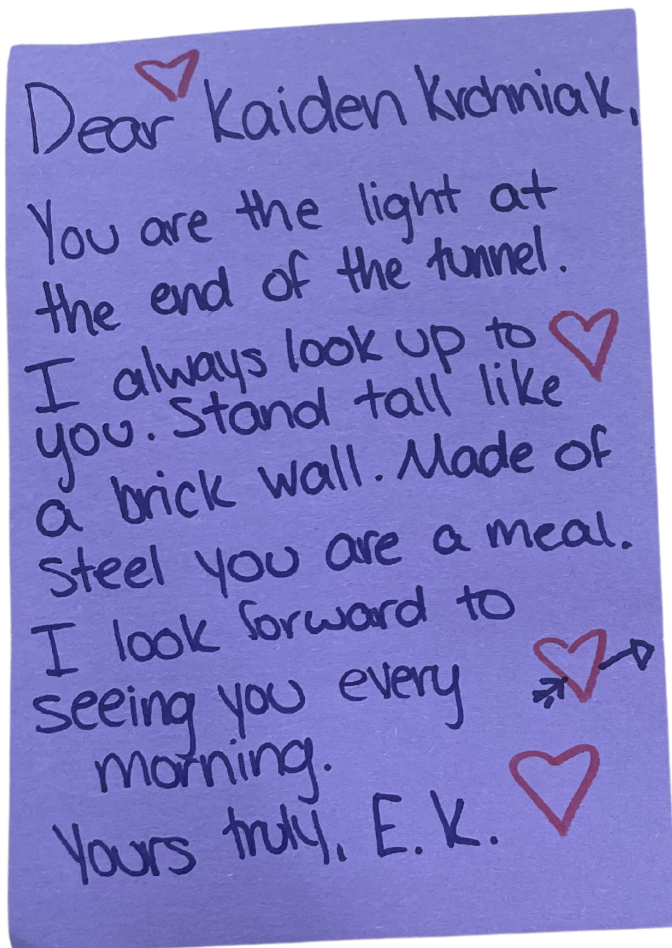
Our goal for the second issue of the Towpath was to increase student participation and collaboration. We decided to go with a Valentine's Day theme for the issue cover, Towpath Member Olivia Liermo then volunteered to collect student valentines day messages. It was the perfect solution to making the new issue eye catching and to increase student input in the paper. The valentines on the cover feature LHS Students messages to their peers. The Valentines themselves were made by the Towpath Staff. Throughout the issue there are valentines from the cover showcasing messages from actual students. A special thank you to Athena and Layla for helping to edit articles. A thank you to Nico, as well for helping with putting the cover onto the issue itself. And to Eva and Gianna for helping with last minute details. I hope you enjoy this Issue of the Towpath! Thank you to the Towpath Staff and the STEM Hub for working hard to make this issue happen.

P.S. - These two valentines are my favorite.

Bella Varecka

Bella Varecka

President of the Towpath





Volume 1

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LHS Vocal Jazz - "You'll Be On My Mind Forever"

Written by Valen Coronado, Interviews by Bella Varecka

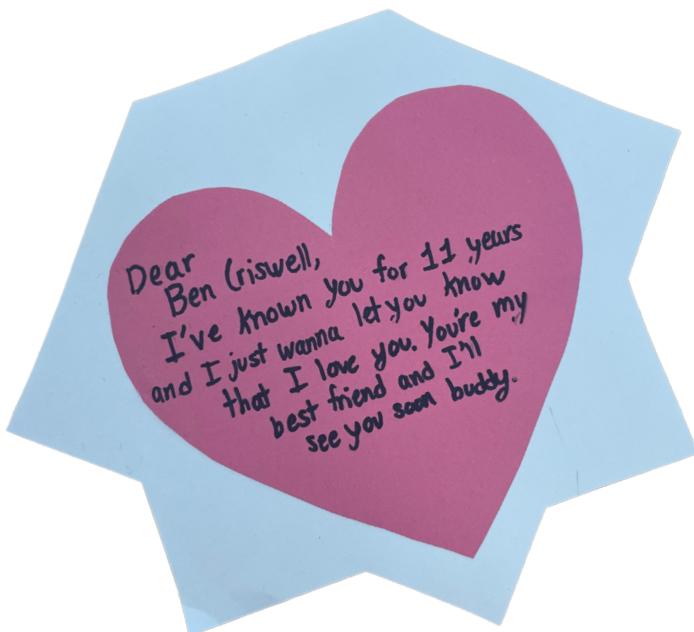
What would our lives be without jazz? Whether it's Coffee Shop jazz with someone shredding on a saxophone, Motown Jazz with a strong percussion sound, or Vocal Jazz with awesome funky chords sung by your own peers right here in the high school! If you haven't heard about our Vocal Jazz group directed by Mr. Pacillo, you're definitely missing out. From songs by famous artists like Norah Jones, Al Jarreau, New York Voices, and The Temptations, to songs from famous Broadway musicals like *Wicked*, we sing it all! Before my high school career started, I was determined to find my group. A group of people that I love, doing what I love. I never thought that would be the Vocal Jazz group. In my freshman year, I went to my first ever school concert, it included Lockport High School's 2019 Concert Choir, and Vocal Jazz groups. The only thing I can remember from that evening was how I felt walking away from that auditorium. An incredible amount of joy and excitement. It was that night I realized that the Vocal Jazz group was the thing I was looking for. Not only were they all singing in perfect harmony, they all looked so joyful and happy to be there singing for everyone. It was pure bliss. I knew I couldn't let such an amazing opportunity pass me by, so I decided to audition. Looking back, I'm so thankful that I did. After getting the chance to sing in that group for two and a half years, I can tell you it was the best choice I've ever made. And when I found out I was accepted into the group? I was ecstatic.

I walked into Mr. Pacillo's classroom the morning of my first day back from summer break. I was hesitant and unsure of the situation I had got myself into, but decided I'd continue with the path no matter what. As soon as I walked in I was welcomed with what sounded like a million hello's, and a plethora of smiling faces. Little did I know these people were going to become my best friends. The work ethic the Juniors and Seniors had was astonishing while practicing the pieces for our first performance. Sopranos asking for their pitch again mimicking it over and over, determined to get it right, people getting frustrated about making the same mistake again and again not only because they wanted to sing it right, but because they wanted to do it better for the sake of the music, and most of all their friends, the Vocal Jazz group. The room was not only ringing with the music we sang, but it was filled with the passion every single one of them had for singing.



Currently, I'm in my senior year. This will be the last year I get to sing with these wonderful people, and the outstanding musicians they've become over the years. Speaking of these other musicians, when asked if the Vocal Jazz group has a positive impact on her life, Janiah Bennefield says "Oh, it definitely does. It makes me feel alive, when I come to school this is what I look forward to". Two more of our members, Ava Conklin, and Alexis Runfola were asked why they were in Vocal Jazz. Ava responded with "I chose Vocal Jazz because I love singing, and I wanted to branch out. After high school there's not as many opportunities, so I try to take a hold of them". Alexis responded with "Definitely because I wanted to be with all my best friends and I think it's something that brings us super close, I think that's the main reason why." When we asked Bishop Christy why someone might not want to audition, he simply said "These are some of the best singers in our school. We go and we do things that are harder than things in Concert Choir and Mixed Chorus. It's beyond what normal professionals would do". Lastly, when we asked Esme Schaus if she would encourage others to audition for Vocal Jazz, she said "Oh absolutely. It's not for everyone, but you should always try it. I've learned so much about teamwork, being a friend, singing, just everything. A lot of who I am goes to that, so I would encourage anyone to do it. It's an amazing opportunity, it's great, I love it".

As sad as I am about this being my final year with these people, I can say I've been absolutely blessed by everything Mr. Pacillo and all my Vocal Jazz friends have taught me. Like Esme mentioned, I would not be the person nor the singer I am today if it weren't for this group. Personally, it's not quite Vocal Jazz, it's more like home. The friends I've met, the mistakes I've made and learned from, there's nothing like having such a safe environment to learn and grow in. What really makes it so awesome for me is that it fits right into my school day. It's like a nice little break from all the stress of keeping up with school work, focusing on my job, trying to graduate, pleasing all my teachers. It really is my home away from home. I absolutely adore everyone in the group, and especially Mr. Pacillo for being the awesome teacher he is. I'm so excited to be able to come back after my graduation to see all the lovely new faces in the group, and hear all the wonderful things that they can accomplish as well. It reminds me of the song by Norah Jones, "Don't Know Why", our Lockport High School Vocal Jazz group will be on my mind, forever.



The vocal jazz girls above

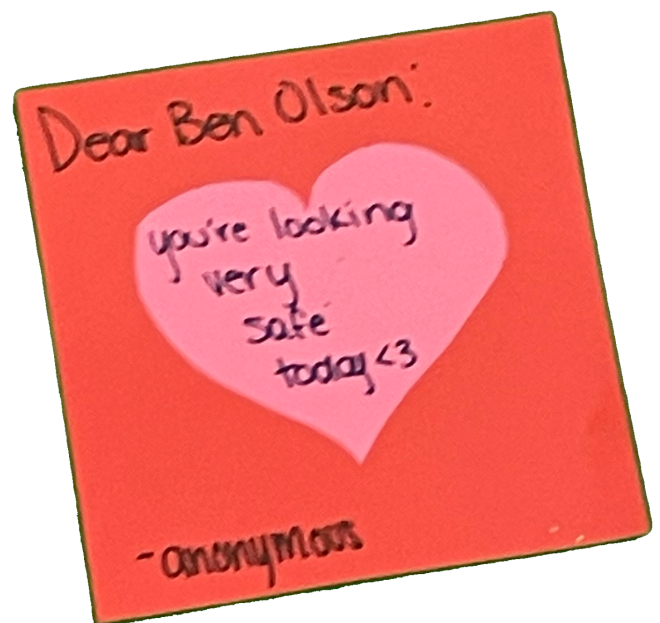
What is the Value of the SAT?

By: Bella Varecka

In 2020 Covid-19 shut down the world. Schools were remote to limit exposure to the coronavirus. Due to schools being primarily online, during 2020 and 2021, the SAT's were canceled. Regent exams were also canceled during this time. Although having exams canceled can feel like a relief for students and reduce anxiety about passing or failing their class, it is also harmful for students' test-taking skills. Personally, I was relieved when exams were canceled when I was a freshman in 2021. Naively, I thought that my classes at that time were difficult and I would never struggle again in highschool if I could just have my Biology exam canceled. However, After not having to take exams for two years, I definitely struggled with some of my exams my sophomore year. Chemistry and Geometry were my worst nightmares, I wasn't able to just coast through the class by using extra credit and points back on tests to get my grade up in subjects I found difficult. Once June hit, I was struggling and anxious about taking my exams. I was the second last person to finish my chem exam. After I was done, I cried in the car knowing that I didn't know the chemical symbols for Bromine or Thallium. My test taking skills, once my greatest asset in a class, had been slowly deteriorating for 2 years till they became a liability.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test, better known as the SAT, is a standardized multiple choice exam used by colleges and universities as part of the admissions process. Its purpose is to gauge a student's potential, their academic strength, and their weaknesses. It has sections on Math, Evidence based reading, and Writing. The SAT is scored between 400 to 1600. With an average score of 1060. Schools such as the University of Florida, Georgetown, MIT and University of Tennessee still require SAT scores.

Since 2001, some Universities across the U.S have been making test scores optional. Universities making standardized testing scores voluntary has only heightened with the Covid-19 Pandemic. In his article "Examined Life," Malcolm Gladwell states, " Earlier this year, the University of California—the nation's largest public-university system—stunned the educational world by proposing a move toward a "holistic" admissions system, which would mean abandoning its heavy reliance on standardized-test scores. The school backed up its proposal with a devastating statistical analysis, arguing that the S.A.T. is virtually useless as a tool for making admissions decisions." The SAT has been used for 97 years and gradually colleges are starting to change the admissions process to the students current grades and not their potential academic success. With the end of the 2022 school year bringing back Regents and AP exams, it seems to mark that schools are going back to some semblance of normalcy.



When I asked Senior Gracie Cordle if she felt not taking her SAT affected her college admissions process and acceptance, she remarked, "It's actually been pretty normal, I think, considering I've gotten into many colleges and been given the same opportunities as other people who have taken it." I asked Gracie if she had felt anxiety when applying, having not taken her SAT and she replied, "I don't think so, no. A Lot of schools are score optional and I think if I would have taken my SAT I would have been more anxious to be honest." I asked Mrs. Catalano, LHS Guidance Counselor, If not taking the SAT could leave a gap on students' admission to college. She explained that she felt that it does not leave a gap and a student's high school transcript is the best predictor of college success, but that taking the SAT is more advantageous for students.

Will the SAT start to fade out as more and more colleges and universities make scores optional? Only time will tell.

History Behind the Beloved Holiday: Valentine's Day

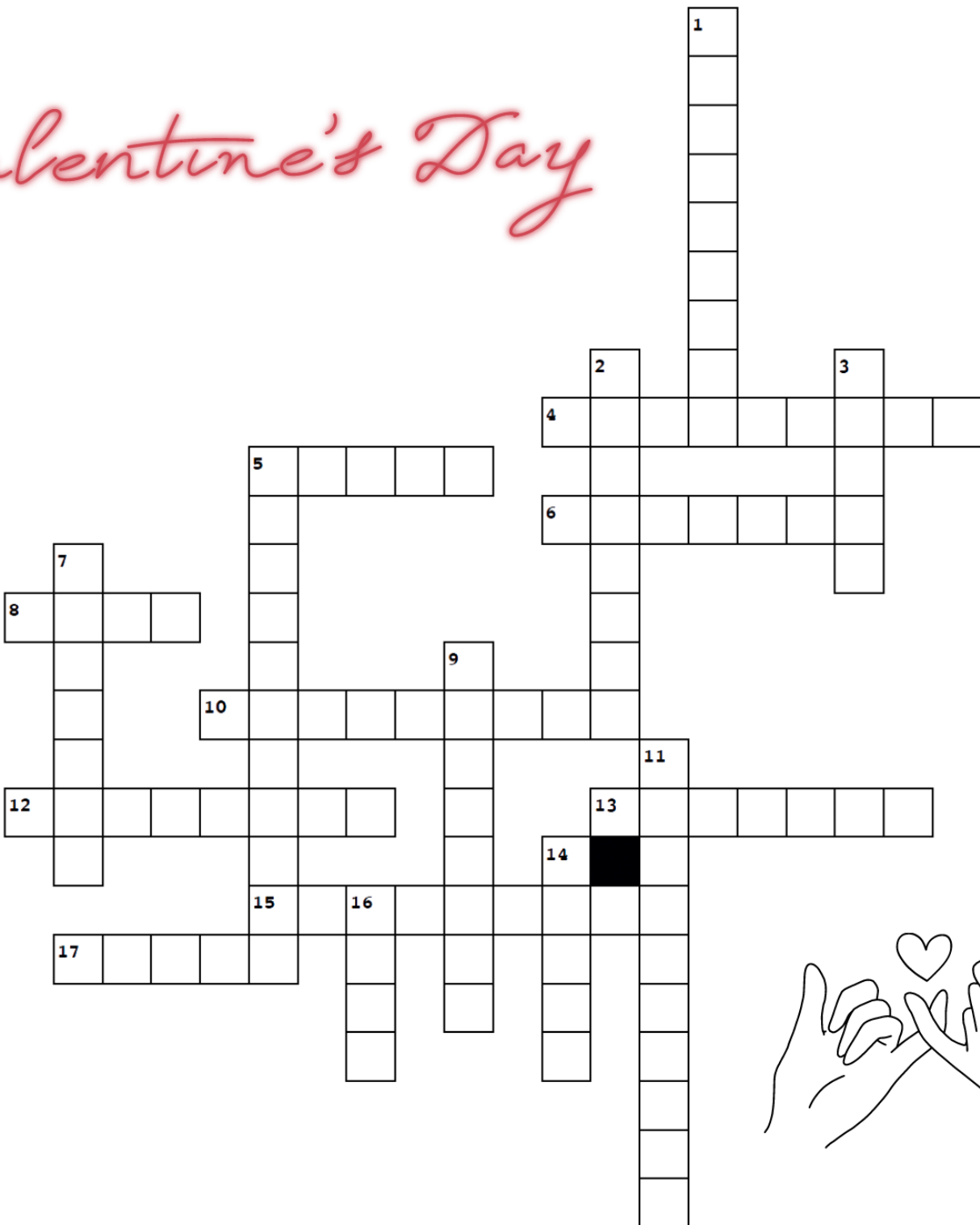
By: Olivia Hufnagel

February 14th marks the date of the well known holiday St Valentine's Day. Flowers, candy and many other gifts are exchanged on this date between lovers. The real question is who is St Valentine and why is he so important?

St Valentine was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church who served during the third century. There are multiple stories about what happened to him, however these two are the most prominent: Emperor Claudius II had decided that single men would be better as soldiers because they didn't have a wife and kids to tend to. Valentine was enraged by this and went behind the Emperor's back and performed secret marriages for the soldiers. When he was discovered he was then sentenced to death. In an attempt to save St Valentine the people insisted that a different valentine was behind it. This resulted in both Valentines being beheaded. Others say that St Valentine was trying to help prisoners escape from harsh Roman Prisons which landed him a spot in said jail. In the time he was there he met a young girl who was said to be his jailer's daughter. They fell madly in love and before his death he wrote her a letter which was signed "from your valentine" Which became a very popular phrase used today. No matter which story is true Valentine was seen as a very romantic figure. He not only tried to help people but in the end he died for love. Now if you asked me that's one heck of a man.



Valentine's Day



Across

4. Another name for a couple
5. Uses his arrows to make people fall in love
6. Gift with a nice aroma
8. "**** gossip girl"
10. Sweet treat for Valentine's Day
12. Month of love
13. Concept associated with love
15. Stuffed animal
17. A flower most associated with the holiday

Down

1. Another way to say "young love"
2. A forever partner
3. Someone you have a romantic liking to
5. Candy that has messages on it
7. People the holiday celebrates
9. An expression said to someone you adore
11. Valentine's Day date
14. Shape associated with Valentine's Day
16. An outing you take with a significant other

Winter Sports Roundup

By Jocelyn Velazquez

The 2022-23 Winter Sport Seasons at LHS have been full of great success. We have seen many young athletes just starting their high school sport career as well as some older athletes coming towards the end of their highschool career. We have seen many great advancements in our athletic department and improvements in our teams.

Starting off strong with indoor track senior, Samuel Marquez, is a top finisher for his team in every meet he goes to! Just in his first track meet earlier this season he qualified for sectionals in the 55m dash. His current PR for the 55 meter dash is 6.88 seconds! When speaking to Samuel we heard about his experience on the team and how much he has improved from freshman year towards senior year. "I started track in 9th grade and honestly didn't get the best times, I always was behind my group and started on JV. My stats were not "great" or recognizable, but one thing is that I always worked hard even as a freshman my mindset was always "Hard work gets you to the top."



Girls Wrestling Team

He has improved immensely since his freshman season in both track as well as how he works with his team. During practice you can always see Sam working hard but not only does he work hard for himself but he also does it to show his teammates what it takes to get to the top and hopefully motivate them. "Sam always gives me a helping hand whenever I need it, he taught me how to use blocks and even gave me many tips to improve my technique. He's a great teammate and I wish him luck in his collegiate career if he chooses to advance," says fellow teammate Sian Powell (sophomore).



Boys Wrestling Team During A Match

When asked about his collegiate career he tells us he's excited for college and hopes to continue his career. He would be happy to continue to run track wherever because his love for the race has only ever grown. With this being said Marquez tells us how he sees much talent in the younger athletes on the team he tells us "Keep an eye out for Melia Towns, Sian Powell, and Jahkwon Davis. They are some young athletes that we will see at the top their senior year".

During the winter 2022-23 season we have also seen a great advancement in Girls in Wrestling. Where we even had our own girls team introduced this year as well as high placements in tournaments and more. With this team, we see many young girl wrestlers, some of them just started wrestling this year yet advanced incredibly far!

Freshman Ava Bragg placed 3rd overall in the first ever NYSPHSAA all girls Wrestling State Championships. She had an outstanding season this year with many high placing spots at various tournaments: 1st place in the Chautauqua Lake Women's tournament, placed 1st in the Linda Knuutila Memorial Tournament and many more!

We also see great improvement in the boys team, a great teammate mention would be 8th grader Jayovanni Ostrander, "he is an underrated wrestler with tons of potential, he works hard at practice daily and always has a strong mindset, he has a great highschool career ahead of him." Says teammate Tyler Tomaino, a sophomore on the wrestling team. While there is young new talent we also have to acknowledge wrestlers that have grown through the years. Liam Whalen is a great wrestler; he is a junior at LHS and dedicates a lot towards his wrestling career as well as football. Former teammate Gerardo Loredó Diaz tells us "Liam always showed great promise, I remember seeing him the first day of practice and seeing how determined he was for being a sophomore starting a new sport. With the short season we had he was my wrestling partner, he always asked for help and tips with new moves and he was always open to criticism and improvement. He is a team player and I am proud to see how far he has come as well as seeing my technique in the way he wrestles." Although this is only his second year doing wrestling he has gone above and beyond to prove his spot as being captain and one of the best wrestlers on our team. He has gone to Sectionals twice in his career and has recently placed 2nd in the 172 weight class and will be making his way to the Division Qualifier very soon. Coaches are extremely proud of Whalen's progress and he definitely is one to watch next year for his big senior year.

Although the water is frozen outside, our school pool is still very active! Recently our boys swim team had an amazing season ending in a 11-1 record and ended up being 2023 NFL League Swimming and Diving Champs. With many amazing achievements and many team members PRing every meet, many swimmers have earned NFL All-Star designation. A name worth mentioning is 8th grader Cooper Zugelder, He is a Varsity swimmer and has immensely improved throughout the season. Zugelder earned a spot on the 3rd team for the NFL All Star designation; he will be contributing to the 200 medley relay with fellow teammates Drew Kauffman, Aidan Morgan, and Adam Sheedy. He will also be swimming the 200 IM which he swam a 2:14.33 time during the Niagara Frontier League Championship placing 3rd overall.



Boys Swim Team

He is for sure someone that has a great future ahead of him, for such a young swimmer swimming these times, we can definitely count on seeing him improve throughout the next couple of years, especially since he hasn't even began his highschool career yet. We have seen a similar story play out with senior Aidan Morgan, who was also a very excellent swimmer growing up, and always showed promise. His times always progressed throughout the years and you can see his dedication and hard work put into his sport throughout the years. Morgan went to states last year and shows promise to do this again. He is currently ranked 7th in Section VI and 22nd in NYS. Morgan has decided to continue his swim career and is ready to work hard and dedicate his time to swim at Geneseo University. "He's definitely a guy we shouldnt be surprised if we saw him at the Olympics in a couple of years, he works hard for his ranks and his times and is dedicated to his sport." - Nathan Couturier

2024 and 2025 School Trips

By Laurel Creamer



London's Big Ben and Parliament Buildings



The Louvre in Paris



Amazon Rain Forest

Has that trip you've been planning not been as easy and cheap as you thought? Every year there is a trip organized to go outside of the country to give students the opportunity to travel for cheaper through school and experience different parts of the world. In 2024, Mrs. Isherwood will be taking students to Costa Rica and Panama. You will experience white water rafting, snorkeling, hot springs, waterfalls and so much more to do and see. This trip is for those who want to go out of their comfort zone and experience new once in a lifetime adventures. There will be a 10 day trip to Italy in 2024 as well, you will stop in 7 different cities and get to experience Italy more in depth than ever. This trip was filled up in 24 hours but you can still be waitlisted if you wish to get a spot. Mrs. Isherwood recommends signing up for another trip if the one you wanted is already full. There will be two more trips in 2025 to the Amazon Rainforest as well as a 10 day trip to London, Paris and Madrid. During the trip to the Amazon you will experience rare species and local animals throughout the Amazon river on this thrilling and adventurous trip. On the second 10 day trip of 2025 will be to three different countries including the United Kingdom, France and Spain. Mrs Isherwood started these trips to give students once in a lifetime experiences and hopes each student will continue to seek a lifetime of travel. These trips are open to all students and their friends and family. For more information about these trips and how to sign up, stop down to Mrs Isherwood in the guidance department.

Valentines Day Crossword Answer Key



Across:

- 4. Another name for a couple - lovebirds
- 5. Uses his arrows to make people fall in love - cupid
- 6. Gift with a nice aroma - flowers
- 8. "**** gossip girl" - xoxo
- 10. Sweet treat for Valentine's Day - chocolate
- 12. Month of love - february
- 13. Concept associated with love - romance
- 15. Stuffed animal - teddybear
- 17. A flower most associated with the holiday - roses

Down:

- 1. Another way to say "young love" - puppylove
- 2. A forever partner - soulmate
- 3. Someone you have a romantic liking to - crush
- 5. Candy that has messages on it - candyhearts
- 7. People the holiday celebrates - couples
- 9. An expression said to someone you adore - iloveyou
- 11. Valentine's Day date - fourteenth
- 14. Shape associated with Valentine's Day - heart
- 16. An outing you take with a significant other - date

How to Lose a Guy, Gal, or Pal in 10 Days

By Layla Tucker

As Valentine's Day approaches, the question(s) of, "Why can't I get a boyfriend/girlfriend/partner/etc.?", "Why is my best friend ditching me for their significant other?" and basically everything around the concept of relationships. But some relationships have questions not in a romantic way, "Why do I feel left out in the friend group", "Why can't I hold onto a friendship" and so on and so forth. Now trust me, I know it's hard feeling/being alone, but to be in a relationship with anyone, you need to evaluate and analyze past relationships and yourself. So in this issue I will, "discuss" the relationship "do's and don'ts", the dilemmas with avoiding toxic relationships and keeping healthy ones, how to find a balance between your independence, and how to understand that relationships are the key foundations in every aspect of our daily lives.

How to : Do's and Don'ts

Don't self-sabotage. Now truly, even I am one to self-sabotage. Self-sabotage is when you're actively trying to ruin your own relationship or make it fall apart, whether consciously or subconsciously. For most people in relationships this can stem from lack of self confidence. This may lead to belief that you aren't worthy of love therefore, this can result in jealousy and insecurity in a relationship. People with low self esteem may expect their partner could be attracted to someone and suffer the constant fear of being left and alone. Ways to have a better relationship with yourself may include getting time alone for inner work, practicing self-care, trying new hobbies. But make sure throughout everything that your feelings are valid. Ways to help with self-confidence can be trying new hairstyles, reading a new book, going outside more, making pinterest boards, posting on Tiktok and Instagram. Honestly for me, no matter how embarrassing it may sound, making (don't even have to post) a "before and after transition" tiktok, makes me just have motivation to get ready, to get out of bed even. But make sure throughout everything that your feelings are valid.



How to : Find a Balance Between Your Partner and Your Independence

Now the first step of this how-to I believe is the hardest, the first step is finding independence. Emotional independence is the ability to regulate your emotions and still feel good about yourself even when difficult situations present themselves. One thing to help achieve this is practice self-peace, take some HEALTHY alone time. Healthy meaning distancing yourself with healthy distractions. Examples include; outdoor activities, going on a walk/hike, experimenting with recipes/baking, exercising, time with pets, and even simply listening to music. Make sure you are still communicating with people and not completely isolating yourself. The key is finding balance. If your partner is not letting you have alone time and respecting your wishful space, you need to understand healthy vs. unhealthy. You need to remember what you valued before you started your relationship. (Also note these advice columns don't just go for romantic relationships.)

How to : Understanding The Dilemmas with Avoiding Toxic Relationships and Keeping Healthy Ones

The media tends to glorify toxicity, may it be the enemies to lovers trope, Colleen Hoover's prose, etc. It's all fake, it's there to get views and money. Please understand that there is a major difference between communicating and controlling. Communicating is talking and validating the feelings of both parties; it is a mutual activity. Controlling is one sided, there is no sharing or participating in an exchange of information. Controlling relationships are typically manipulative in nature. The key to a positive relationship is validation. Make the validation both ways, if you're validating their emotions and they're not returning the respect, communicate! Respect goes both ways, if it's not earned in a relationship, why are you putting yourself in a negative aspect? Never invest in someone who isn't invested in you. You deserve to be allowed to confide in your partner and friends.

How to : Understanding That Relationships are The Key Foundations in Every Aspect of Our Daily Lives

Whether it be a friendship, romantic, or work related relationship each one is important for your well being. You need to be sure to establish boundaries with people to ensure both party's happiness. It is incredibly important to show respect and that is a two way street! Finally, trust is an extremely important factor. If you can't trust the person or people you are with you will never progress in the relationship. Don't be afraid to assess and reassess the relationships, asking questions about what is going right and where there are faults is key to maintaining a healthy relationship!



New Years Resolutions to Make You a Happier and Healthier Person in 2023 and How to Stick With Them

By: Eva Conley, Nico Radwanski, and Abigail Shortridge

With the new year already upon us people are creating new habits to better themselves. But sometimes we don't know what to come up with because there are so many ways we can improve our lives that it can be overwhelming. Here are three habits to make you feel mentally and physically better in 2023.

1. **Spend less time on your phone** - Though it can be difficult to give up our phone, studies show that it can actually help our mental health in more ways than we think. Instead of going on your phone you can spend your time doing something that increases your mental state, but also interests you. For example spending time with friends, reading, going on a walk, etc. The negative effects that form by excessive screen time can be stress, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and relationship issues. This is because when we are on our phones, the negativity that we read about can affect us adversely including going on social media and comparing ourselves to other people.
2. **Exercise regularly**- Exercising is something that not only can improve our physical health but also our mental health. Experts say working out can improve your brain health, reduce risks of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve our ability to do everyday activities. It can be difficult to feel motivated, however studies have shown it releases feel-good endorphins and natural brain chemicals that can improve your sense of well-being. Exercising is not just going to the gym it can also be taking up a sport that interests you in school. It will not only make you a physically healthy person but also a mentally healthy person.
3. **Focus on academics** - Though it is hard to stay focused on school especially before or after a break. Staying focused in school helps us to get started on a task and sustain it. A way to stay on top of our school work is to study. Studying is not only for educational development but also builds personal skill. Even though most people just want to pass and move on it is hard to do that because if it is a class that builds, you lack the skills to another level.



Girls Basketball Team

If you know that you told yourself that you are going to stick with your resolution and still haven't even thought about it, you're not alone. It can get overwhelming and can easily get incredibly toxic. That pressure also isn't the best motivator. The University of Scranton published a finding that states only 8% of people fully commit to their resolution.

It's month two out of twelve, it is not too late. Most goals can be achieved at a fair pace, so there isn't that much of a rush. Although taking your time is important, the lax view on your resolution could also hinder you even ever rewarding yourself with your accomplishment.

Here are some tips on how to get to that one thing that you've been thinking about at your own pace.

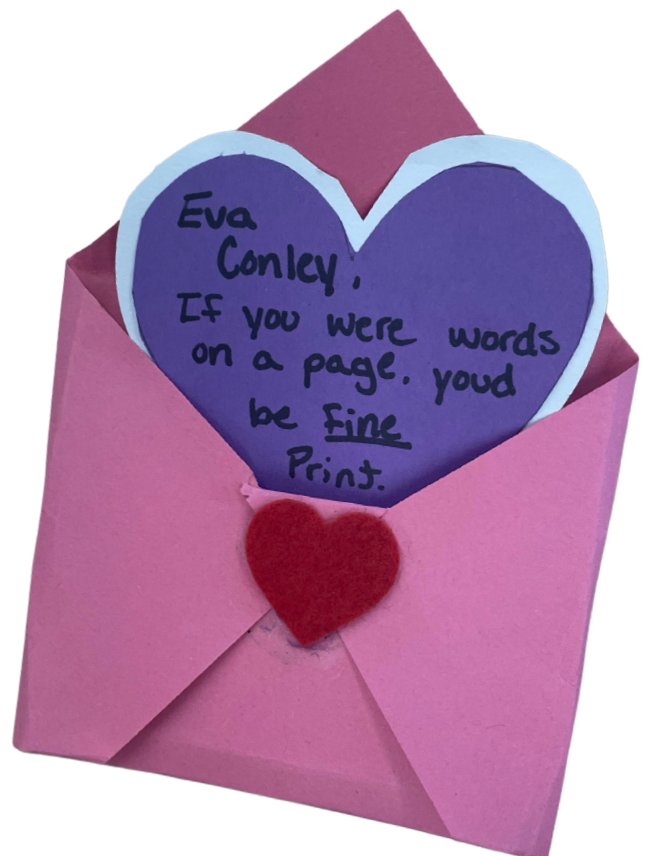
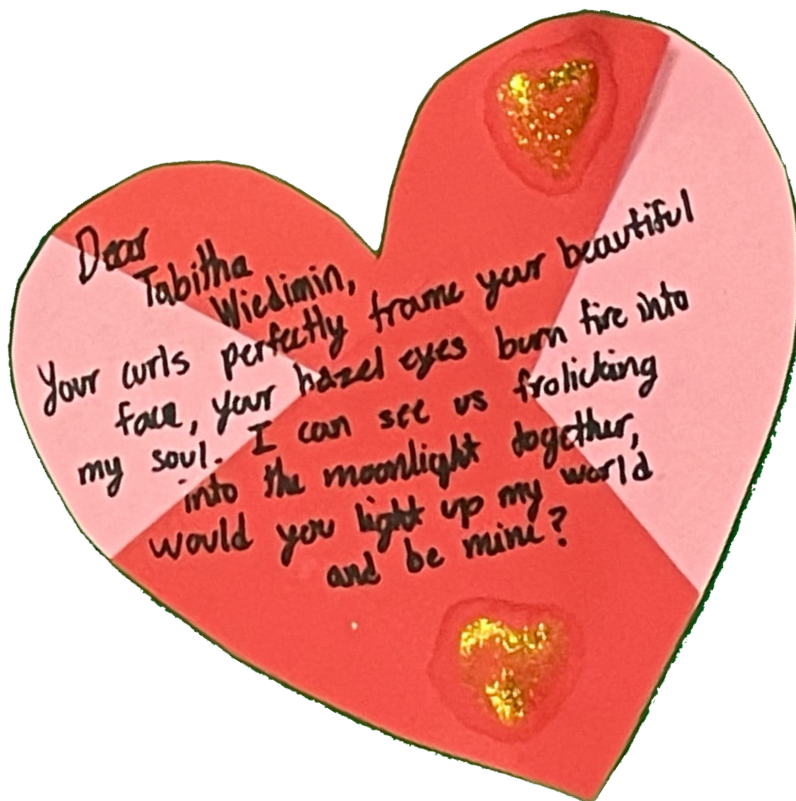
1.) Choose a time frame for when you would hope to see the effects of sticking with your goal.

Ex: 'August - October', '7-9 weeks from now'.

2.) Think in the NOW, not the FUTURE. Analyze the steps that you need to take at this moment and avoid looking too far in the future. If you're looking to start exercising regularly, think about that first step of getting up and active instead of complete results that aren't attainable in only a few days worth of progress.

3.) Refrain from beating yourself up over a missed opportunity or putting it off to the side. Self sabotage is too common with resolutions. Once you tell yourself that you're being lazy or you aren't working hard enough, you'll affirm that with yourself and ultimately abandon those goals you're setting.

4.) Compare yourself to the version of yourself you strive to leave behind — not others who are already well within their journey. Take those first steps and then compare that small but impactful accomplishment to those thoughts you would have of dreading the start of your resolution. Seeing that change within yourself is a great motivator.



2022 Recap

By: Grace Peracciny

The year 2022 brought the world many things, both good and bad, as every year does. From deadly wars to crazy television stunts, this past year has been quite the rollercoaster, and I think it would be fun to look back and see the highlights, so why not do just that!

Famous Deaths:

Throughout the year we saw several great faces pass. Some memorable people who are sadly no longer with us include Pelé, Vivienne Westwood, Stephen “tWitch” Boss, Leslie Jordan, Olivia Newton-John, Bob Saget, Queen Elizabeth, etc.



Queen Elizabeth II above

World News:

One of the biggest occurrences of 2022 was Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Thousands of people were forced out of their homes, and those who couldn't make it out were left in serious danger. This was and still is a major topic on the news, continuing the war into 2023. Inflation has also made a comeback this past year. Gas prices have been rising to outrageous numbers, along with everyday items that would normally reside on the cheaper side. This has left a lot of people with financial issues and is honestly just flat out outrageous, having to pay 100s of dollars for gas. In June of 2022 women's rights took a tumble when Roe V. Wade was overturned. The frightening news caused women to feel a great sense of backtracking in their efforts to equality.

Local News:

Buffalo sadly suffered several tragedies in 2022. On May 14th, 10 grocery shoppers were shot and killed in a racially motivated shooting located at a Tops store. The act of violence was made by a 19-year old who would later be sentenced to life in prison without parole. Towards the end of the year, Buffalo ran into the biggest blizzard recorded in years, receiving snow in heights up to 5 feet. The storm created extreme dangers for those outside of their homes, trapping people in stores, random houses, and cars. As of now, 31 deaths were recorded due to the storm. Bills fans and the people of Buffalo have recently come together concerning the health and wellbeing of Damar Hamlin. While playing in a game against the Bengals, Damar was tackled and passed out, unable to breathe. Prayers and love filled Buffalo as we all wished Damar a safe and healthy recovery.



Pelé above



Pop Culture:

Many moments in the media have made headlines this past year. Drama in the movie industry, award show mishaps, and crazy court cases have attracted the attention of lots of people. Some of the memorable happenings from the year include, Will Smith slapping Chris Rock, the Johnny Depp vs. Amber Heard court case, Don't Worry Darling drama, crazy Stranger Things fans, Taylor Swift Ticketmaster conflict, Top Gun: Maverick popularity, and Kanye West controversy.

AFUT Album Review

By Marcus Hammond

Less than a year after the release of their debut album, For the first time, the British rock band Black Country New Road released their second studio album, *Ants From Up There*. It's hard to define BCNR in one genre, however the genre I've heard most in reference to the band is post punk. The album overall has longer songs that take their time, with the album being only 10 tracks and having a 58 minute runtime. One of the most unique aspects of the album are the vocals, performed by Isaac Wood. While his vocals are divisive, they bring these songs to another level.



The clever songwriting mixed with his raw, emotional vocals create such an incredible experience overall. A lot of the tracks have a somber feeling that slowly crescendos into a cathartic ending, and there's no better example than the third track *Concorde*. The beginning of the song is quiet, with very somber vocals and minimal instrumentation. As the song goes on the instrumental builds, until the payoff of the ending. Isaac is nearly screaming, with a dense and distorted instrumental, still resembling the melodies we've heard throughout and fitting in well despite being such a contrast to how the song started out. There are other songs structured more traditionally as well, such as *Chaos Space Marine* and *Good Will Hunting*, being shorter than other tracks. Even then *Good Will Hunting* has a similar crescendo to other tracks, just much less so. The final track of the album, *Basketball Shoes*, is by far my favorite track from the album. It's 12 and a half minutes long, and it really takes its time. It takes nearly 2 minutes to get to the vocals, but this song's draw isn't just the vocals, but the unique instrumentation. Distorted guitars, piano, flute, and saxophone all meld together to create an overall beautiful yet emotional. The ending of the song is genuinely perfect, with Isaac practically screaming over the beautiful yet loud instrumental. This was my favorite album to come from 2022, and I can see it being talked about much further down the line, especially with this being the last album with Isaac Wood as a part of the band. See the AFUT Album Cover above.

Overall Score: 10/10

The Deeper Meaning Within The Top Songs Today

By Madison Fragale

Songs consist of a special rhythm that stimulates the brain to catch the lyrics. However, people may not realize how the background of the song can play a significant role in influencing you as well as the deeper meaning or hidden messages within the lyrics.

“Anti-Hero”- Taylor Swift

The debut accompanied by the music video of “Anti-Hero” from Swift's latest album *Midnights* dropped on Friday, October 21st 2022. Swift has said that this is one of her top favorite songs she has ever written. She explains to the public her honest words on “Anti-Hero” Swift states, “I don't think I've delved this far into my insecurities in this detail before. I struggle a lot with the idea that my life has become unmanageable, and not to sound too dark, I struggle with the idea of not feeling like a person”. To correspond with this, a significant lyric in this song is “I stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror” the meaning behind it is the concept of acknowledging the parts that we like or dislike about ourselves and figure out who we really want to be. Life can throw so many challenges at you and it's very easy to get caught up and distracted by it all to the point where knowing who we are can slip away from us. In conclusion, sometimes we need to look in the mirror and figure out who we are and how we want to be remembered in life.



"Midnights" by Swift above
Metro Boomin's "Creepin'" Below



“Creepin’” -Metro Boomin ft. The Weeknd & 21 Savage

“Creepin’” was released by the American producer Metro Boomin in December of 2022. This was the top played and most popular song in the album called “Heroes & Villains”. This song is a spin off of the hip-hop song “I Don't Wanna Know” by Mario Winnans and Puff Daddy in 2004. The difference between the two songs despite how similar they are is that the newest version gives off a more sentimental feel.

This second version takes place with a man being convinced that his lover is seeing another man behind his back but opting to not confront her about it. Metro Boomin depicts “creepin” as sneaking around with someone else or potentially cheating throughout the lyrics. For example, “When looking in your eyes, I can't believe and I don't need to know the truth but baby keep it to yourself”. The artist(s) knows about everything but doesn't want to know for sure due to the difficult acceptance of acknowledging that the person he loved betrayed him.

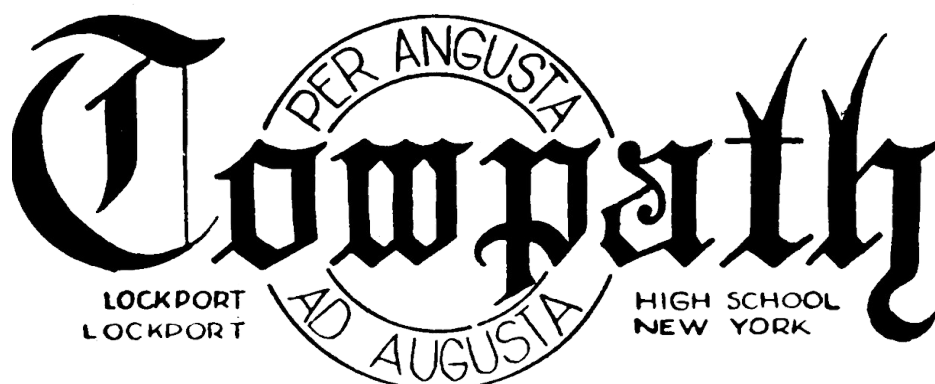


"Lift me up" Rihanna above

“Lift Me Up”- Rihanna

In honor of Valentine’s Day coming up... On October 28th, 2022 Rihanna released a very special, heartfelt song “Lift Me Up” for the late Black Panther actor Chadwick Boseman and his legacy. Boseman had passed away in 2020 after battling colon cancer. Rihanna stated that she “Wanted to write something that portrays a warm embrace from all the people that i've lost in my life”. Valentine’s Day is not only just about the relations and the love that we show people now but it is a great time to reflect and “embrace”(Rihanna) our love for those that we miss. At the end of Rihanna's last two verses of the song the lyrics are “We need light, we need love”. Those words convey her entire message that she wants people to hear, to spread light and love to others and remember the love that ones we have lost or miss have brought to us.

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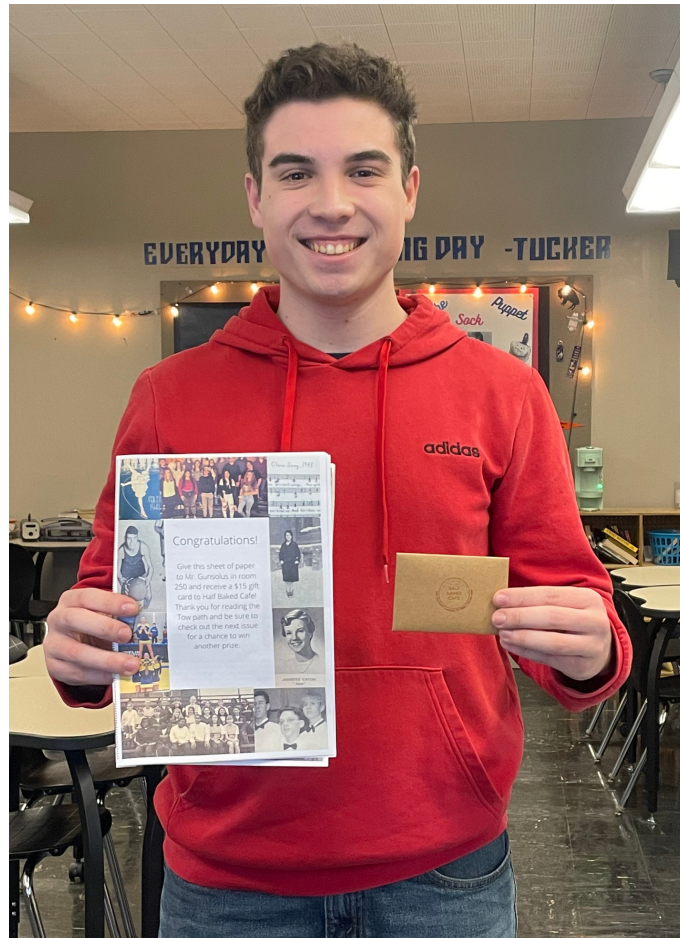


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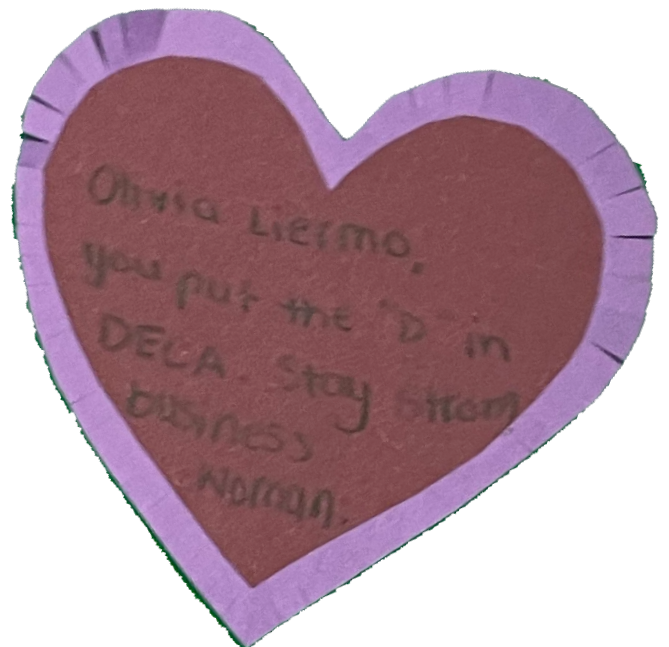
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Issue 2

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Winner from last issue Jason Czechowicz!



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