

THE grotto

OUR LADY OF LOURDES ACADEMY MIAMI, FLORIDA VOLUME 50/ISSUE 4 February 2013 www.olla.org/grotto/february



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Annual Father-Daughter Mass

SARAH MARINI

Father-Daughter Mass took place Sunday, Feb. 3 at 11:00 a.m. in the school auditorium. Father Ekiert, the school chaplain, delivered the mass.

The auditorium was filled with students from all classes and their fathers.

“I go to father daughter mass every year and every year I always enjoy the time I get to spend with my dad. I think it is the perfect way to really take time out of our hectic schedules and really consider how important we are to each other. I am so grateful for my dad,” junior Nicole Fernandez-Valle said.

During the mass, Father Ekiert explained the importance a father has in a daughter’s life. He explained how the path a father walks with his daughter is so important and how it must be one that is filled with understanding, patience, and most especially love.

He then explained to the congregation that when he thinks about the relationship between a father and a daughter he always thinks of a wedding procession when a daughter is walked down the aisle by her father. He explained that often when he is asked to do a wedding and a daughter requests to get walked down the aisle by

her father, she often does not understand what this tradition signifies.

He then explained a story of a young woman who indeed understood why she wanted to have her father walk her down the aisle. She said she wanted everyone to know that her father had been walking with her until this point in her life and that he would continue to walk with her throughout the rest of her life. The homily conveyed the message of how father and daughter must walk their paths of life together. After the homily, as tradition would have it, the fathers and daughters held hands and repeated words as they gazed into each others eyes.

The words are very significant as they describe the complex relationship that exists between a father and a daughter.

“It was such a beautiful mass. Father gave a beautiful homily that really allowed me to consider how important my dad is to me and how grateful I am to have him as my dad,” junior Victoria Ann Vega said. “Being able to hold hands with my dad and repeat those words to him was also very beautiful for me.”

Father-Daughter Mass was again a success. Students attended with their fathers to celebrate the relationship that exists between a father and a daughter.

Students Study Government Close-Up

KELLY VALDIVIA

Close Up is a program for high school students that gives them the opportunity to study the U.S. government first-hand. It enhances what they are learning in the classroom by providing a hands-on experience in the nation’s capital, Washington, D. C.

The seniors, in an action-packed week, will be listening to speakers from every aspect of the government, from government officials to military officers. They will also visit monuments and museums. It will take place February 17-22.

“I am looking forward to learning about the American political system in such a direct way—through seminars from lobbyists, journalists, and members of the armed forces—and even simply by visiting monuments and memorials with my classmates,” senior Alexandra Lazcano said.

The seniors will also be visiting the Mall and will have guided tours of the city by recent graduates who studied history.

They are escorted around the city in buses.

While on the buses, they will be lectured and then they will have the opportunity explore the site when they reach the bus’ stop.

“The Mall is a large area of grass from the Capital to the Washington Monument. The students are allowed to explore all of the museums and Smithsonian along it or go ice skating,” social studies teacher Ms. Prieto said. Students from all over

the country are invited to share in this experience. The seniors will each choose one roommate from the school, and will then be paired with girls from other parts of the nation.

There will also be several social events designed to facilitate interaction among the diverse students.

These events include dinners and dances. This allows for the formation of new and lasting friendships away from home.

“It will make the trip more memorable if we have friends to keep from other states by the time we leave,” Lazcano said. “And I’m rooming with one of my closes friends from school so together I’m sure we will have a great time meeting our roommates.”

The trip will be educational and fun. It is designed to help students understand their government.

Hopefully, it will inspire a longing to be involved in government in some of the students that attend Close Up.

It will help them to remember what they have learned and become more interested in it. It provides an opportunity to apply their knowledge and see how it is applied in real-life situations.

This trip is proof that learning can be interesting and does not have to include reading and taking notes, but can involve exploration and amusement.

When the seniors return from the trip, their interest in the subject matters that they study will be renewed and they will have the experiences to bring a new enthusiasm to class.



SNAPS, POETRY, COFFEE: Junior Catherine Buckler opens the first annual OLLA Out Loud with her original narrative “In Time.” OLLA Out Loud is a new school function that caters to original songs, written work, and spoken word. “Reading your work out loud is a litmus test for how confident you are with it,” Buckler said.

word in the halls WHAT’S YOUR MOST MEMORABLE VALENTINE’S DAY EXPERIENCE?



“My dad is my Valentine. He bought me a box of chocolates.”

FRESHMAN LAURA IGLESIAS

“Last year I went to the Drake concert with my boyfriend as a surprise. It was really fun because I had never really done something like that on Valentine’s day before.”

JUNIOR CAROLINA RODRIGUEZ



“In fourth grade a boy that liked me a lot asked me if he could take me to dinner and he gave me a giant teddy bear on Valentine’s day.”

SOPHOMORE MADISON FERNANDEZ

“My most memorable Valentine’s day was when my sister and I both had the same valentine. It was kind of funny because he had to come to our house and give us both something.”

SENIOR ASHLEY SOTO



“In fourth grade, this boy named Andy Livingston left chocolates, gold coins, and a teddy bear on my door step. My grandfather...thought that the gift was witchcraft so she threw it away. When I got to school, Andy asked me if I had gotten the gift, but I knew nothing about it because my grandfather had thrown it away.”

TEACHER MS. YVETTE BARRENECHE



Collecting Hope

WICS Club gathers old phones for charity

ALYSSA GONZALEZ

Everyone loves the idea of giving back. It's just one of those you-can't-help-it, you've-gotta-smile type of things, seeing someone appreciate what you've done for them. But sometimes it's difficult, exerting the effort to go out and actually perform service--and maybe that's why everyone also loves the idea of a good drive, knowing that collecting a few items can impact someone's life in such a significant way.

Books you don't read anymore, the little shampoo bottles you collected from your road trip last year but never used, some of the school supplies you overstocked on--and now, cell phones: drives will collect just about anything to use for a good cause. It's easy to get involved, and the school community knows that all too well.

The WICS Club is currently supporting a program called Hope Phones,

which collects old cell phones that we may not need anymore--such as the BlackBerry® that may be sitting in your drawer after the iPhone® became all the rage--and refurbishes them to provide better medical and educational services to children in rural areas.

Hope Phones began in 2009 as a program that would help fund the efforts of Medic Mobile, their parent organization that "advances health care in 11 countries with mobile technology." The value of a cell phone recycled through the Hope Phones program is transferred to their account and is later used to acquire the appropriate technology for the field.

Medic Mobile uses an application called FrontlineSMS to help improve health services in challenging settings. The application facilitates the availability of drug information, emergency care, patient status updates, treatment support, and referrals between clinics using SMS technology. Medic Mobile strives to use this communication technology to help underserved and disconnected communities, as well as guide their partners toward low-cost technologies and efficient health services.

It is easy and free to participate with Hope Phones, whether donating from home or creating a local drive within a community. Recycling old cell phones through Hope Phones also helps reduce the hazardous waste that pollutes the environment because of discarded cell phones.

The WICS Club is currently working to collect old cell phones of any type from the school community to support Hope Phones' efforts. Any student wishing to donate their phone may see Mrs. Sanchez.



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

While students and faculty were on break for the holidays, the construction team was hard at work completing the first floor of the new building.

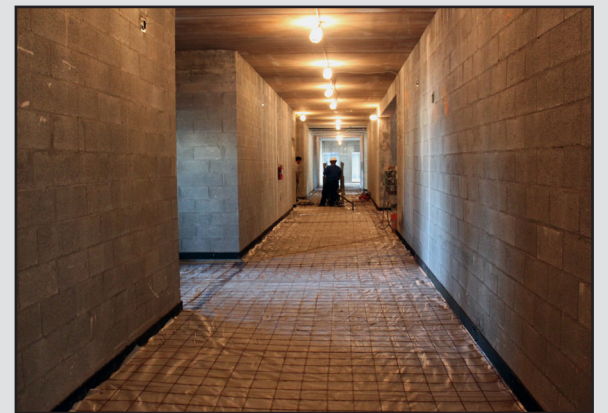
Construction of the second floor was started and completed during the midterm exams week. The roof of the new building was put up the week of January 25. Sister Kathryn and the other members of the construction team are extremely optimistic about the timing of the construction projects.

"If things go on track, I'm planning to start moving things into the new building in the beginning of May," Sister Kathryn Donzé, IHM, said.

The next project is the renovation in the current office area in which a new chapel and a new office area will be built.

The last project will be the gymnasium, construction of which is predicted to start in the end of July or beginning of August.

Sister Kathryn and the other members of the construction team are extremely optimistic about the timing of the construction projects.



from the newsdesk

Junior Bling Mass

DANI GRANDE

As the end of the year approaches, the Juniors are preparing themselves for their Ring Mass ceremony. As every upperclassman has done at Lourdes before, the girls will finally receive their blue class ring to keep for the rest of their lives. The mass which takes place in the Epiphany Church will be held on Monday, February 11th.

Many of the Lourdes rings that the juniors use are the rings that have been passed down from their parents, to their sisters, and now to them. This ceremony represents the class's unity, and marks the beginning of their final years at Lourdes.

"I'm using the same ring that my sister wore when she was a junior 3 years ago," junior Carolina Carbonell said. "I was excited to wear it because its like a second bond that we created through Lourdes."

Every year, the students choose a theme for the mass that they feel symbolizes their class as a whole. This year, the theme they chose was a sort of play-on with the new construction that has been going on at the school: "The Road to Growth is always Under Construction."

"I'm really looking forward to Ring Mass because it's the first time that our Junior Class will come together in a ceremony," junior Daniella Consuegra said. "I love the whole idea of the theme too because it's like a play on with the construction going on at Lourdes. I think it represents our class really well."

The mass will allow the girls to strengthen their sisterhood and make their mark at Lourdes.

Students Become Stars on Stage

DANI GRANDE

Girls stole the stage Friday, Feb. 8, during the Spirit Day Talent Show. A number of girls took the stage dancing, singing, playing an instrument, and even performing a song with cups. The girls cheered for their fellow classmates, sung along with the songs they knew, and clapped away with the beats they loved.

This year, there were some new-comers to the stage, as well as returning performers from last year. From dancers to singers, the show was a success.

One of the crowd favorites was the "Pitch Perfect Final Number" which was performed by a group of senior girls. The girls got into costume wearing wigs, skirts, and even nailing the dance exactly like the one in the hit comedy movie of the year.

"I got to be 'Fat Amy' in the pitch perfect dance," senior Nicole Perez said. "I was super excited to play her and sing her lines since she's my favorite character in the movie."

Along with the Pitch Perfect dance, the "Evolution of Rap" performance also had the crowd singing along. "Evolution of Rap", which was also done by a group of seniors, incorporated several different hit rap songs from past years.

"It was so fun to get to dress up like the different rappers," senior Karina Quinteiro said. "I didn't think it'd be that exciting to get up in front of everyone and just dance and play out the songs. I loved it!"

With over 15 acts from singers to a surprise, breath-taking performance from fine arts teacher Ms. Minette Perez, the talent show was a total success.

POINT VALENTINE'S DAY INCLUDES FRIENDS TOO

True or False: In order to celebrate Valentine's Day, you need to have a "significant other." The answer to this commonly asked question is, false. The biggest misconception about Valentine's Day is that you need to be in a relationship with a guy in order to celebrate it or enjoy it. In reality, having a boyfriend is not what Valentine's Day is about. Once the Christmas rush and New Year's high have passed, the aisles in nearly every store are stocked with heart-shaped goodies and red and pink balloons. When asked about what Valentine's Day is, most people tend to answer, "It is a day when you show love to your loved ones, specifically your significant others." That sounds pretty accurate, right? Well, Valentine's Day was not always about candy hearts and teddy bears.

There is very little known history behind this celebration of love and admiration. What we do know comes from multiple traditions and legends that have been mixed together as they were passed down from generation to generation. These stories all link the origin of this holiday to one specific man, Saint Valentine. The theory that is widely accepted starts with a Christian priest named Valentine who lived in third century Rome. At that time, Rome was ruled by Emperor Claudius II. The Emperor did not allow young men to marry; he claimed that single men made better soldiers in the army. Priest Valentine did not agree with this rule and secretly married young soldiers to their loves. To make a long story short, Emperor Claudius found out about these secret weddings, jailed, and later executed Priest Valentine, resulting in Valentine's martyrdom and later sanctification.

I guess that is where we get the idea of celebrating love on Valentine's Day, in honor of Saint Valentine. There

is nothing, however, that links Valentine's story to the specific date of February 14, even though it is said that on that day, "love is in the air".

Now that you know the history of Valentine's Day, let's talk about how it's true meaning has been distorted by modern society. In today's world, we think that we need a boyfriend or "guy that we are with" to be happy or celebrate this holiday. Wrong! Who said that it has to be this way? Most girls who parade around groaning that they're "forever alone" should be saying they're "forever awesome." Who says that we need a guy to celebrate Valentine's Day? Take this opportunity to tell your friends and family how much you love and appreciate them. I personally love going to stores to buy cute Hello Kitty or Toy Story themed Valentine's cards and taping little chocolate candies to them, so I can give them to friends. I love that there is a whole day where we can just stop and appreciate all the people who care about us.

Now, if you are part of the population that does get to spend this day with a significant other, congratulations! Have fun on your romantic movie date, ("Safe Haven") or picnic date or whatever else you have planned. There's no doubt that it's amazing to get all dressed up and go on a romantic Valentine's Day date with your boyfriend. Enjoy the flowers, chocolates and stuffed teddy bears.

If you are "forever alone," however, round up your "forever awesome" friends and have a party, a sleepover, or even a Sky Zone get-together. You can do anything; just make sure to take this opportunity to celebrate love and friendship.

On another note, most people think Valentine's Day is just a way for stores and companies to make money. That

may be true, but who cares? I don't see people complaining about this for other holidays.

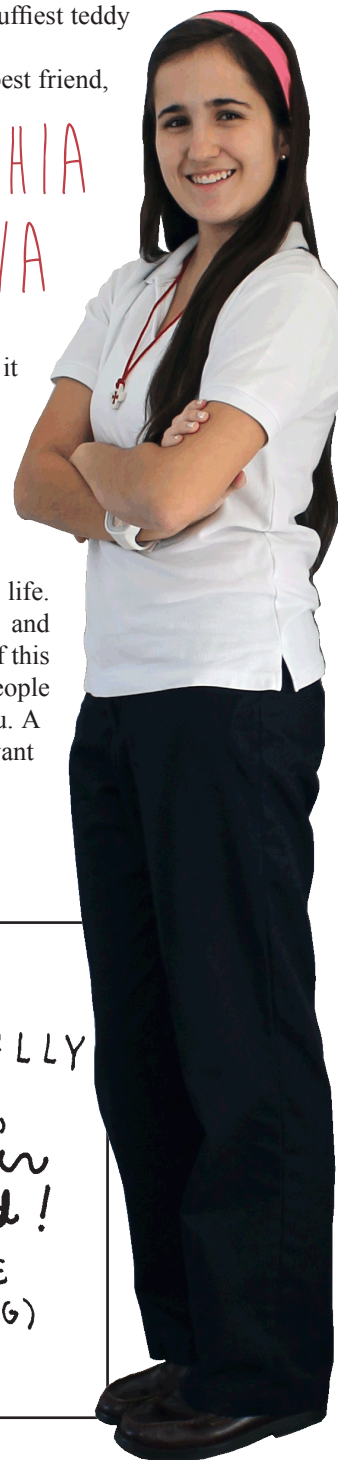
So what if Hallmark makes over \$20 billion in sales. Who cares if we gorge on chocolate and sweets for a day? And I don't know about you but I love cute and fuzzy teddy bears. So to all those "Debbie Downers" out there, Happy Valentine's Day! I'll be sure to get you the biggest box of chocolates and the cutest, fluffiest teddy bear there is.

Whether they are said by your best friend, your boyfriend, or your family members, the words, "I love you," can give you the greatest feeling in the world.

Love is something that we definitely take for granted, and this holiday reminds us how important it truly is.

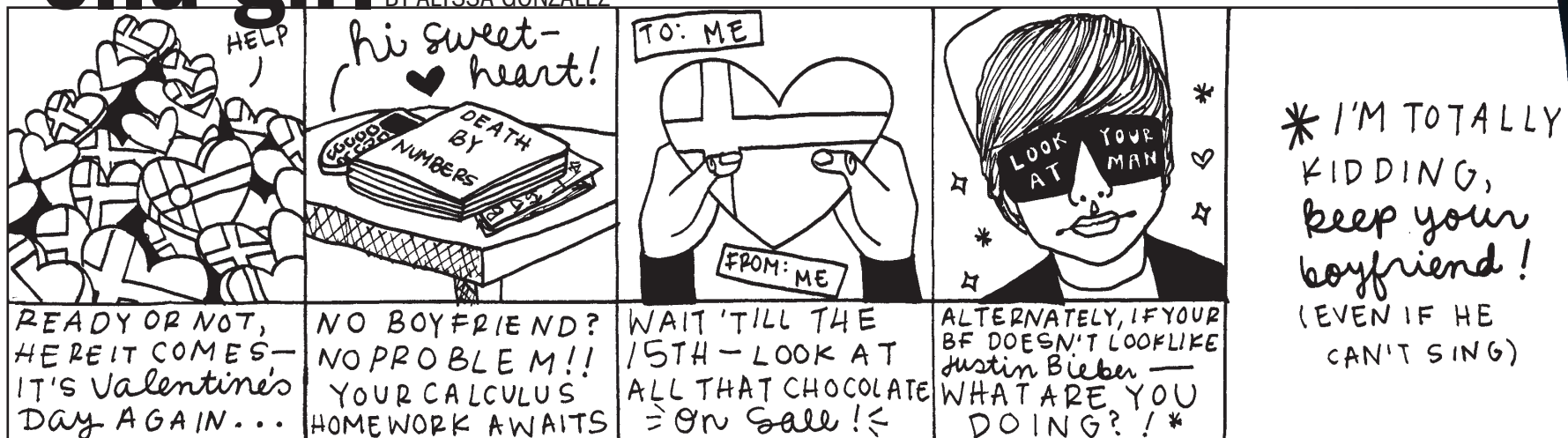
On this Valentines Day, be sure to notice all the people in your life who love you, and who you love. Obviously, you should tell them everyday how much you appreciate having them in your life. But this year, stop for a moment and look around you. Take advantage of this special holiday and truly let those people know how much they mean to you. A whole day of love—who doesn't want that? Happy Valentines Day.

SOPHIA OLIVA



olla girl

BY ALYSSA GONZALEZ



VALENTINE'S DAY STINKS IF YOU'RE SINGLE

COUNTERPOINT

Writing on the con-side of Valentine's Day feels at first like kicking puppies, but upon further reflection on the specifics of the holiday, it may make you rethink the so called holiday of love.

St. Valentine's Day began as a liturgical celebration involving one or more early Christian saints named Valentinus. And as with all early Christian saints, this story ends with a punitive death. Good news though—their heads are preserved in various churches

CATHERINE
BUCKLER

s o m e w h e r e
E u r o p e .
Coincidentally, as it happened, there was a Roman festival called Lupercalia that was celebrated February 14. Lupercalia involved animal sacrifice, drunken debauchery, and "romance." To thwart the pagan holiday, Pope Gelasius I in the Fifth Century A.D. combined Lupercalia with the martyr Valentine's remembrance and Valentine's Day was born. Ironically, only the name stuck. The "romantic" aspect of Lupercalia prevailed. In a typically muddled history, Valentine's Day, because it sounds similar to the Norman holiday Galatin's Day, became entwined with the latter. Galatin, of course, meaning "lover of women." Over time, the holiday slowly moved away from its hedonist overtones until the Middle Ages when Chaucer, and then later on

Shakespeare, romanticized the day in their works. Around this time exchanging handmade paper cards became a popular Valentine activity. Valentine's Day innocence was then lost forever when quaintness met the Industrial Revolution and in 1913 Hallmark began mass-producing Valentine cards. Today, Valentine's Day accounts for almost \$20 billion dollars in sales.

Nevertheless, the case against Valentine's Day cannot be solely based on its roots or that would pretty much negate even the legitimate holidays, like Christmas and Easter, let alone its closest tacky green cousin, St. Patrick's Day. The unique and debilitating aspect of Valentine's Day is the negative impact all the way up and down the holiday food chain. Consumerism is the easiest target against any holiday, yet this is the one celebration where "it's the thought that counts" really comes into play. Valentine's gifts are a romantic litmus test for the dating set. Yes, there are comical scenarios for forgetful husbands, but nothing compares to the nuanced intricacies of selecting the correct gift for single people. The Valentine gift comes with an imaginary scoring table, where receipt is instantly met with a series of judges, 7.5, 7.8, 6.9, 8.0, and 7.7—oh, it looks like somebody will not be advancing to the finals.

The big three of Valentine's Day - chocolates, flowers and stuffed animals (okay, these may be slightly skewed towards women) have become clichéd tokens and also have unintended repercussions. For example, a dozen long stemmed roses costs about \$120. The \$7 for twenty-four roses at the traffic light are not the same and the next day when the petals have jettisoned you may wish you got the six semi-peeled oranges instead.

Chocolate. Now that they've established there's a nutritional aspect to chocolate, it has become practically a medicinal requirement. The fine print: that's eating unadulterated dark chocolate and in moderation, and if there's anything antithetic to Valentine's Day it is moderation. A single piece of chocolate is about 100

calories. Who eats one? Who gives one? Only on Valentine's Day, the bigger the box, the bigger the love. Baby, forget about the obesity epidemic, the only thing that would make me love you more is a few extra pounds and a sugar crash depression.

If there is one gift that elicits the "awww" factor, it is stuffed animals. Stuffed animals are scientifically proven to calm young children, but after you are six they are stupid. I have my own menagerie, mementos of my youth, now exiled to their shelf where they stare down at me with their little gray dust-coated furry bodies. Their toxic state assures they will never be moved. Recent Valentine adoptions have not been as well-received. A stuffed Valentine's animal makes me wish for temporary chocolates or roses. There's a sense of obligation to keep a stuffed animal, so long after the paramour has moved on, there's a pink unicorn to taunt me. Unlike the relationship, I cannot just dispose of it or that would upset the immortals, so instead they shift with me like a Rubric's cube around my bed. I've decided for next guy that gives me a stuffed animal: I am going to give in return a live ferret.

I am not cynical. I love love and romance. I just don't love Valentine's Day. It is a contrived accounting for something that should happen in its own natural progression. Valentine's Day and romance are similar to collecting a test 25 minutes early—"Wait! I'm not ready yet." And that is for the participants. If you happen to find yourself on Valentine's Day without even an insignificant other, it is not like Halloween where you can wait it out in the dark, listening to the door knocks. Only on Valentine's will obnoxious couples will seek you out and console you, all the while telling you about their romantic plans. It is surprising that the Saint Valentine's Day massacre isn't more of a tradition. I know a lot of us are thinking that.

So my recommendation is to do away with Valentine's Day and make the world a better place.

At least until I find a boyfriend.

74% CELEBRATE VALENTINE'S
DAY, 31% WITH A
SIGNIFICANT OTHER



63% CELEBRATE IF THEY'RE SINGLE



55% DO NOT EXPECT
PRESENTS ON
VALENTINE'S DAY

"EVERYDAY SHOULD BE VALENTINE'S DAY IF YOU'RE IN A RELATIONSHIP. IT SHOULDN'T TAKE ONE DAY IN THE YEAR FOR HIM TO BE CUTE AND BUY YOU PRESENTS."

These responses were taken from a survey of 164 student and faculty members.

THE grotto

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As the official student newspaper of Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, *The Grotto* strives to inform and entertain its readers in a precise and fair manner.

The Grotto is a forum for ideas and opinions of the newspaper staff, student body and faculty.

All information is gathered and reported with the highest regard for journalistic integrity. All content, however, is subject to prior review by the school principal.

Each column reflects the opinions of the bylined writer. Unsigned editorials represent the opinions of the entire staff.

Students and faculty are encouraged to send Letters to the Editor to ollagrotto@gmail.com. Unsigned letters will not be published.

The Grotto reserves the right to edit any letter for grammar, clarity and space requirements.

Advertising Policy

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Common Sense, Common Good: The Gun Violence Debate

It is the challenging and tricky role of government to balance the common good of the nation with individual rights. To “promote the general welfare” as well as “secure the blessings of liberty” as the U.S. Constitution states, government must mediate between the safety of society as whole and the individual’s liberties.

It is this conflict between classical republicanism and natural rights philosophy that can be seen in the current gun debate within the country.

The clash between gun control advocates and gun owners raises the question of whether gun control infringes on second amendment rights or whether the perceived absolute right to own a gun infringes on the public safety.

We feel it is important to remember that the only absolute right is freedom of conscience and that in determining the balance between individual rights and public good, the right to own a gun must be applied in a way that is responsible, logical, and in accordance with the common good of society.

To limit a right for the common good

is a serious governmental action, but it is not the horrifying end of constitutional government as many perceive it. The Supreme Court has in the past used three different scrutiny tests when considering whether legislation that affects individual rights is constitutional. In the case of gun ownership, the government would have to prove that it has a compelling governmental interest to limit the individual’s right to own a gun. Considering the shootings that made national news in 2012, we are pretty sure it does.

And yet, organizations like the National Rifle Association are willing to address any issue related to acts of gun violence, other than the guns involved. Armed teachers, limitations of violence in video games, and a national database of the mentally ill are just a few suggestions. The refusal to even consider the possibility of enacting restrictions on the sale of guns and assault weapons is a decision that attempts to put an individual right above the safety of citizens. The public danger here is not potential or an unlikely occurrence; it is a very real aspect of life in this country where acts of gun violence are committed

every day. The impact of gun violence harms the innocent, and affects the nation as a whole—the recent shooting in Newtown proved that much.

Gun advocates who assert their right to own any type of gun with no restrictions, fail to recognize that that right is not absolute. When drafting the 2nd Amendment, Madison did not intend for it to be used licentiously and he certainly could not have imagined the technological advances that have allowed citizens to acquire military-style assault weapons. The 2nd Amendment was meant as protection against tyranny, a reference to the events at Lexington and Concord during the American Revolution.

And while gun advocates argue that steps toward gun regulation in the form of universal background checks and assault weapons ban foreshadow tyranny to come, the fact is that an even more chilling and violent reality is already here. Placing restrictions on the right to carry a gun is not tyrannical; it is common sense, it is constitutional, and it upholds the common good.



SARAH MARINI

My Superhero: A Personal Look at Father-Daughter Mass

The relationship that we have with our fathers is one that is beautiful, but can be confusing at times. As a child, I was always “Daddy’s Little Girl.” I believed my dad could do no wrong. To me, he was perfect. I regarded my dad as some sort of superhero, possessing the strength and intellect that came with the job description. The only thing he lacked was a cape.

As I matured and began to think for myself, I realized that my dad, in fact, was not superhuman, but human. It was about during this time that I began questioning many things my parents said. I questioned things that I once would have accepted blindly; I began to ask the question, “Why?” This also marked the time that our opinions diverged and we did not always see eye-to-eye.

My father and I have attended the school’s Father-Daughter Mass since freshman year, but this year was different. This year, my junior year, when my dad and I attended the mass, I did not expect anything special. We arrived at the auditorium, sat down, and waited for the mass to begin. I listened to all Father Ekiert had to say. His discussion on

the relationship between a father and a daughter really struck me. Father Ekiert explained the importance a father has in a daughter’s life. He explained how the path a father walks with his daughter is so important and how it must be one that is filled with understanding, patience, and most especially love.

He explained to the congregation that when he thinks about the relationship between a father and a daughter he always thinks of a wedding procession when a daughter is walked down the aisle by her father. However, he explained that often when he is asked to do a wedding and a daughter requests to be walked down the aisle by her father, she often does not understand what this tradition signifies. Father explained that this is an old tradition from the Middle Ages that signified a father giving away his property (daughter) to another man.

Leaving the congregation confused as to the point of the story, he then explained a story of a young woman who indeed understood why she wanted to have her father walk her down the aisle. She said she wanted everyone to know that her

father had been walking with her until this point in her life and that although she was now going to be married, her father would continue to walk with her throughout her life. The homily explained that a father walks a very significant path with his daughter, one that should be filled with understanding, patience, and love.

Sitting there, during the mass, I came to the understanding that though my dad had made mistakes at times, those setbacks did not mean that he was not the perfect father. The most momentous time of the mass was when Father Ekiert asked the fathers and daughters to look into each other’s eyes and repeat the words he said. It is a process that I have always found awkward, except this year. Something inexplicably special happened during that moment. It was a moment between my father and I that will never be forgotten.

Although we have attended this ceremony multiple times, this year was the first time I fully experienced the true happiness and love that results from an event of this kind. Of course my father and I will continue to disagree on many things, but my dad will always be my superhero.

SECOND SEMESTER GUIDE

How to Survive the Five Months until Summer

SOFIA MCGRAW



Now that midterms are wrapped up and Quarter 2 grades are submitted, we can all sigh in relief that the first semester is officially over. Second quarter for many was the chance to redeem the grades from first quarter and raise them. Unfortunately, some students, including myself, did not quite reach the anticipated goal. Midterms were stressful for everyone, teachers and students alike, and we are definitely thrilled that the long testing days have ceased. Teachers have posted the grades for second quarter and the midterm, so students now can determine what they must do for this upcoming semester.

After reviewing my first semester grades, I realized that I still have 6 more difficult months ahead of me and increasingly arduous work. I was extremely stressed. Instead of fueling my worries with pessimism, I have made a plan for even the most distracted students to conquer this next semester successfully.

Step one: Write down everything in your agenda. The best way to stay organized and focused is to know exactly what one must complete. I have found

myself perplexed multiple times because I was unable to recall what was assigned for homework. Occasionally I have forgotten the homework entirely, and arrive to class with no homework and a zero in the grade book. Homework is an easy way to get an 'A', and the best way to keep track of it is to write in down. Save yourself those frantic minutes of profusely calling and texting your friends to ask if the test or essay is tomorrow or the following class, and write the dates of tests and essays before it's too late.

Step two: Pay attention in class, regardless of sleep deprivation. Of course it's easy to get the notes from a friend and sleep through a boring lesson, but it's definitely not the best way to get a good grade on the quiz next class. Plus, the information in next class' lesson will probably be more complex than and cohesive to the previous lesson. Copying the notes after not paying attention often feels like a bunch of gibberish. Plus, everyone takes notes differently. Your friend might have pretty handwriting, but that does not mean that she takes clear and concise notes that will be easy for you to study from. When you pay full attention and copy down the teacher's notes in your own words, studying and memorizing is twice as fast and easy.

Step three: Resist procrastination at all costs. Everyone suffers from procrastination, so we can all relate to this major dilemma. It's so tempting to take a break and watch your favorite show, check

Instagram, scroll through Wanelo, or just stumble through the Internet. STOP NOW! Instead of taking a taking short break, which then turns into over an hour of wasted time, finish your work before it gets to be too late. Make a compromise with yourself; do all of your homework, and then take an hour break. As soon as that time is up, start studying for those time-consuming quizzes and tests, and write your essays. To help keep track of time, use the timer on your iPad or iPhone. This is useful when studying; simply set the timer for 30 minutes or more, focus entirely on studying and once the alarm goes off, take a short break (try not to exceed 20 minutes). Also, start your assignments and studying a few days ahead, that way you will have less work and stress the night before.

Step four: Routinely check your Edline account. During my Freshman year, I checked my Edline account around once a week. My attitude about my grades was relaxed, so I did not care about finding my test grade out as soon as the teacher posted it. I have found that checking Edline more often actually motivates me. When I consistently see an annoying or good grade in a class, I feel more determined to improve it or maintain the grade. So if I see that my homework grade did not actually boost my grade up past that 'B+', then I know that I have to study extra diligently for the upcoming quiz or test. If you care more about your grades, your goals and focus will be higher than if you act too nonchalantly about them.

Step five: Relax, meditate, and sleep (emphasis on sleep). Stress levels during school are constantly high. I'm stressed about my quarter grades, the SAT, the upcoming test on a hard chapter and much more. You might be anxious just reading about all these different steps to take for this semester. Well, I luckily have a some tips to stay calm, which helps with staying focused. In order to stay stress-free during test and quiz days, remember to study until you feel absolutely confident that you know the material forward and backward. Also, make a relaxing playlist to listen to when you feel your anxiety increasing. Music is definitely a major stress reliever. Listening to classical music or instrumental music is usually more calming and helps with your focus more than the song that you know all the lyrics to. Sit in silence for a minute, take a deep breath, and pray. This always helps me lose some stress before taking a test or going to bed. And most importantly: sleep. Try your best to sleep for as many hours as possible so you can be more rested and focused the next day. It may seem paradoxical to study as much as possible and sleep as much as possible, but it's not. If you start studying a few days ahead and as soon as you get home, then your bedtime will be much earlier.

These five steps are a fool-proof way to achieve your goals this semester. Start making these changes now so you will less stress later on this quarter. In order to be satisfied with our work and grades, we have to put the effort in.



CARO PEREZ

Yearly conundrum: Fulfilling New Year's Resolutions

Being a universal tradition, New Year's resolutions always seem to be the topic of conversation in the first few weeks of the new year. Essentially, they motivate people to change their bad habits to good ones.

Everyone has had their fair share of unfinished and forgotten resolutions. It is much easier to make a plan in their head than to actually follow through with the plan. People seem to follow their New Year's resolutions religiously throughout the first few weeks and then quickly derail from progress. The popular phrase, "new year, new me" quickly fades and before people realize it, it is December 31 again and they are making the same New Year's resolution they made the previous year.

Whether people say they are going to read more, eat healthier, exercise, or take soda out of their diet, most will agree that New Year's resolutions commonly fail. Because

it can be more difficult than expected to pursue a new years resolution here are some tips on how to make them work:

1. Bad environments lead to bad choices. Do not put yourself in an environment where there is pressure to quit on your resolution. In other words do not go into a candy store if you chose to take candy out of your diet.
2. There will be bumps in the road. Do not bring yourself down just because of a measly mistake. Continue to pursue your goal.
3. Don't reach for the stars yet. Rather than setting unrealistic goals, set goals that are specific and close to reach. For example, instead of deciding to lose weight, decide to lose ten pounds in ninety days.
4. Do not procrastinate. This is a big one. "I'll start my New Year's resolution next week" is what many people use as an excuse to prolong the pursuit of a New Year's

resolution. Start as soon as you can. If you begin to procrastinate, you might never even start.

5. Daily reminders always help keep you on track. It could be a picture, an alarm, or a note in your agenda. Either way, daily reminders help bring to mind your goal in the days when your busy life overtakes your daily thoughts.

Although people should be thinking of ways to make themselves healthier, physically or mentally, throughout the year, the New Year's holiday gives people a chance that they are not given throughout the year to want change themselves or their life in some way. So why not take a chance to make yourself better in any way possible?

These small but important tips will help keep you on track. Although some may have already failed in following your New Years resolution, it is never too late to start.

GUN VIOLENCE

BY KATERIN RODRIGUEZ

Gun violence has become a controversial topic over the past few years. In 2012, alone, there were multiple tragedies in places that many once considered safe. Some believe that guns should be banned altogether. Others believe that this would encroach upon the rights guaranteed to them by the 2nd Amendment. Most, however, can agree that something must be done.

"It's going to be hard to compromise with both sides, but we definitely need to come up with a plan to prevent these kinds of situations," junior Catalina Ruiz said.

This seems to be the course of action. Following the tragedy in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, President Obama proposed a policy for gun control. This policy, which needs congressional approval, is set to deal with the availability of guns to the public, school safety, and mental health. This policy would require background checks for all potential weapons buyers, reinstate the ban on assault weapons, hire more law enforcement, and provide

mental health services to schools. The last clause of this policy seems to resonate deeply with parents and teachers.

"Having counselors in the schools can detect early on anyone with risky behavior and provide them with help," math teacher Mrs. Idania Dorta said.

It may not be a fool-proof plan but early detection is key to prevention. The massacres in Columbine High School, Aurora, and Virginia Tech are examples of violence in a presumably safe and comforting environment. People are scared to go to highly populated areas, like a mall, because they are scared of what might happen.

"I think it's horrible that people are worried to go to a movie theater or the mall because of past events," freshman Jasmine Hernandez said.

Many believe that stricter gun laws will prevent further tragedies but it is more complex than that. The media and society also play a major part in these events. In order to truly reduce the risk of other shootings, reforms have to be made in multiple areas.

"IT'S GOING TO BE HARD TO COMPROMISE WITH BOTH SIDES, BUT WE DEFINITELY NEED TO COME UP WITH A PLAN TO PREVENT THESE KINDS OF SITUATIONS.

— JUNIOR CATALINA PEREZ —

88% FAVOR GUN STRICTER REGULATIONS

BELIEVE IN LIMITED OWNERSHIP OF FIREARMS 80%

69% BELIEVE THE 2ND AMENDMENT PROTECTS THE RIGHT TO OWN A GUN

BITING THE BULLET

AFTER A RECENT SPIKE IN VIOLENCE, CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GUNS AND GUN CONTROL HAVE BEEN SPREADING ACROSS THE U.S. LIKE WILDFIRE.

BY VANESSA QUINTERO AND ALYSSA GONZALEZ

BY NATANIA
QUIROS

MIND BEHIND THE CRIME

Bam. After hearing the first initial shot, things start to get a lot scarier than how it looks on the big screen. In a society where young children play violent video games and where most movies contain an action scene involving fights, it is no wonder that crime rates continue to increase over the years.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2011 the assault crime rate increased by 17 percent. The increase broke the steady decrease since 1993.

"The increase makes me feel scared not only for myself, but for the community around me and the impact it'll have on future generations," freshman Marlene Gonzalez said.

Mass shootings have increased throughout the last three decades, more specifically, 62 significant massacres. Of these, 25 took place after 2006, and of those 25, 7 took place in 2012. Of all these shootings, more than three quarters of the weapons were obtained legally. How do people that are seen as potential killers get a hold of rifles and shotguns? Easy.

In the state of Florida, one simply has to go to a firearms store and fill out some information for a background check. For handguns, within only 72 hours of submitting the paperwork, citizens allowed to take it home. Therefore, it only takes 72 hours for a person to get his or her hands on a gun and use it.

Some feel that the government should form laws to make the process of obtaining a gun more difficult. If a thorough investigation is made, as well as a mental evaluation, it is more likely to find if the

person applying for a gun has a psychological condition that may trigger violent reactions later on.

"[The government] should attack the problem from both ends," social studies teacher Alfred Peña said. "Help the people that are psychologically troubled and make it harder to obtain a firearm."

Improving laws will prevent some violence, but not stop it completely. There can always be loopholes around since the system is not perfect. Yet steps should be taken to take safety measures to another level.

"I feel that it's really a sad time in America, when so many innocent people are dying like this," junior Alexandra Rodriguez-Pulley said. "I'm pro gun control, but criminals don't follow the law; they'll get guns either way."

One may ask themselves, why would a person do harm to the innocent? Society may criticize the shooters, but many of the ones who commit these heinous crimes are generally not mentally stable. The majority do have serious neurological conditions.

Usually the murders are linked to revenge. One type commonly seen as the killer of mass shootings is a psuedo-commando.

This shooter is prepared with an intricate plan, goes in with several weapons, and recognizes he or she will die. Studies show this kind of person has previous self esteem issues and ends with a motivation to commit murder-suicide.

The average age of killers based off of

the 62 massacres is 35, but the youngest is a mere eleven year old, which took part in the Westside Middle School shooting of 1998 in Jonesboro, Arkansas. While other children are playing with toys and riding bicycles with their friends, this child was committing acts of gun violence.

Government officials and a great number of the population feel violence amongst such children may be due to video games and television programs. Others question whether it really is a factor.

"I feel like that's poor parenting, video games are there solely for entertainment, not to desensitize the youth," Rodriguez-Pulley said.

Many ponder on whether gender plays a key role in mass shootings and gun violence. Some feel it is totally irrelevant; however, studies have shown men are more prone to psychological and neurological conditions and therefore commit violent acts more than women.

Whether the killer in a mass shooting is a woman or man, adult or child, he or she generally displays signs that show they are unstable a good amount of time before committing the act. The fact that they are not getting the help they require, raises the concern if gun use is a decision that should remain in the hands of the people or if guns should be strictly regulated to prevent any more acts of violence from occurring.

BY CATHERINE
BUCKLER

MEDIA BREEDING VIOLENCE?

Let's start with a geographical Rorschach test: Oak Creek, South Valley, Hazard, Akron, Bloomington, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, Boulder City, Sharon, Prince Georges, Cleveland, Tillamook, Columbus, Kearny, Baxter County, Henry County, Baltimore, Glendale, Tuscaloosa, Phoenix, Breckenridge, Marin City, Allentown, Cambridge, Pleasant Valley, Oakland, Chicago, Greensboro, Raleigh, New York, Tollhouse, Ocala, Detroit, Modesto, Manatee, Flint, Philadelphia, Elkton. Any clue? Some famous, some obscure, some urban, some rural, North, South, East, West.

Actually, this would be pretty much just a list of random U.S. cities, if not for the fact that each location represents the shooting of minors since the first of this year. Not a death, but in many instances, several deaths. According to a running tally of gun related fatalities maintained by Mother Jones, an independent news organization, since the Sandy Hook shooting December 14, there have been 1224 Americans

killed by guns through January 24. Facts like this are the current that feeds the whole gun control debate. There are so many facts and theories, statistics and impressions, that each proponent, or opponent, uses to substantiate their perspective.

More and more frequently, young people are the perpetrators of these the shootings. The question that follows is, what is causing young adults and adolescents to act out so violently? One quickly identified distinction is that kids today are exposed to enormous examples of violence, and in increasingly graphic detail through media, including television, movies, music, and video games.

So, in the form of entertainment, children are witnessing, and participating in more and more killings than was ever thought possible. The issue is whether or not these forms of entertainment are a contributing factor to aggressive behavior in children. Is constantly

portraying images of war zones and high definition shoot-outs on shows a good idea?

According to the website Tech Spot, an experiment conducted in France, concluded that violent video games lead to violent people. The National Rifle Association (NRA) even came out with an App shooting game that they first considered toddler "safe"-early exposure. Despite this, studies from the Huddersfield University for the British Psychological Society's Annual Conference said that violent video games actually reduce stress compared to their race car counterparts that increase stress.

There is no definitive answer out there as to whether media and video games are to take all the blame. Statistics only can tell us so much, and everyone draws differing conclusions from them. The only hope is for those in legislative power and that those playing COD Modern Warfare 2 can distinguish real violence from virtual violence.

Walking Dead, Drinking Blood

DIANA MARTINEZ

It feels like just yesterday the world shed its final tears for the end of the “Twilight Saga.” After the release of the first “Twilight” movie in 2008, vampires went viral, becoming the mythical creatures on everyone’s mind. Since the release of “Twilight: Breaking Dawn Part II,” things have taken a turn and vampires are no longer such a hot topic of interest. Now with the recent release of “Warm Bodies,” a comically romantic yet terrifying motion picture, and the rising popularity of the TV series, “The Walking Dead,” people have invested their sights into the latest phenomenon: Zombies.

The “zombie craze” has swept the nation, taking over television, cinema, and even video games.

One of the main reasons why zombies have gained so much popularity, is the fact that one of the hottest and most watched shows on television is “The Walking Dead.”

The show premiered in 2010 and is based on a widely read comic book written by Robert Kirkman. “The Walking Dead” focuses on a group of men and women who have survived a widespread zombie apocalypse.

The show’s characters live day by day trying to avoid and kill off zombies. This show has gained such a large following that Universal Studios’ “Halloween Horror Nights XXII” centered its annual theme around it.

Gamers can also take part in all of the hype with the “The Running Dead” app, which places the gamer in the shoes of an apocalypse survivor running from flesh hungry zombies.

This fun and high-speed game is just

one of the ways that gamers and non gamers alike can experience a post-apocalyptic world filled with a bunch of undead savages.

The show’s soaring viewership has also inspired many new zombie projects, allowing the “zombie-craze” to further infect the public.

One of the many networks jumping on to the zombie bandwagon is The CW, which is currently developing a new show called “The Awakening.”

This show chronicles the lives of two sisters at the start of an apocalypse. NBC is also currently in the process of planning for the creation of a new show about both zombies and vampires, in hopes of merging the two different fandoms and developing a hit.

“World War Z” now set to hit theatres this summer, is based off of the acclaimed novel by Max Brooks. It is a look inside a post apocalyptic world filled with hardship, horror, and a riveting face off between the living and dead. Although the creators of the film have made clear that the novel and movie vary in multiple ways, there is one element that is sure to coincide between both: the human fight for survival against zombies.

In the wake of this zombie sensation, it is hard to flip through a single Entertainment Weekly magazine without seeing the latest scoop on a current or soon-to-be-released zombie TV series, movie, or book.

Although the last couple of years in pop culture have been focused on “blood-suckers,” zombies are quickly taking over mainstream media, making vampires a thing of the past.

Not only are zombies out to eat brains, but they are also out to take over the entertainment industry.

Walls Up, Dress Down, Spirits High

Students Celebrate Spirit Week; After Competition Seniors Take Title

MARISSA MARTINEZ

This year, the school’s spirit is louder and more united than ever. Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors have built a bond as classmates and as sisters. This energy and unity was evident during this year’s spirit week. The school’s executive board decorated the halls with colorful banners depicting each day of the week. The week commenced Monday, Feb. 4 with Movie Star Monday and Penny Wars. Students arrived to school racing to the cafeteria to begin stocking their bins with positive coins (quarters, nickels, and dimes) and drowning everyone else’s bins with negative money (pennies and dollar bills).

Hallways were flooded with young celebrities and deceased celebrities: Audrey Hepburn, Hannah Montana, Mia Thermopolis, Kim Kardashian, Justin Beiber, and Sherlock Holmes.

“I dressed as the Spice Girls. I wore something that represented each of the girls: Scary, Posh, Baby, Sporty, and Ginger. I think I was the only one that really understood my costume,” senior Sofia Rosell said.

The week progressed with Twin Tuesday, Wayback Wednesday, Trapeze Thursday, and the infamous Spirit Day.

“I was so happy with the changes that student council made to the dress-up days. It made the week so much more exciting,” junior Carolina Perez said.

Twin Tuesday was a confusing day at school with the look-alike twins, triplets, and quadruplets. Students wore identical costumes like Tia and Tamera Mowry, and others reproduced famous groups like

Fall Out Boy and the Bellas from “Pitch Perfect.”

Wayback Wednesday took the school back several decades, and even centuries for some. The senior class arrived to school wearing their freshmen garbs: green class shirts, beanies, belts, and suspenders.

“It was nostalgic seeing our entire grade covered in green. I mean, I love being a senior, but I think we are now realizing how quickly it’s all coming to an end,” senior Andrea Llano said.

The school embraced this year’s theme, Cirque d’Olla, on Trapeze Thursday as clowns, acrobats, ring masters, and really, anything wacky. Thursday also marked the last day of Penny Wars—one of the school’s most competitive events. Girls poured out their piggy banks to benefit different charities, and of course, win.

Friday was an exciting Spirit Day with Hall Wars, Think-a-Thon, Talent Show, and Dance Off. The grotto was vibrant in purple, red, orange, and green.

“I have always looked forward to being a senior, specifically for our purple wall. I couldn’t have been prouder of how it turned out. The sleepless nights definitely paid off,” senior Lauren Villanueva said.

The unity and pride among classes was evident throughout the day. The final round of Think-a-Thon was left to the freshmen and the seniors with the seniors taking the win.

This year, Talent Show was made special with a performance by an older “senior,” Ms. Minette Perez in her fourth year as a teacher at the school.

For the third year in a row, the seniors won Spirit Week. They do most definitely “run this.”



CATHERINE BUCKLER

BOBCAT BEAT

Local Music? Das Right

Think how hard it is sometimes just to coordinate a group project. Of course everyone has a vested interest to completing the assignment, but when it comes time to get together—with everyone’s other priorities and schedules—it is like herding cats. Being in a startup garage band is much the same, only worse, and then multiplied to the umph-degree, when most of the band members attend different schools. So right off the top, one thing you’ve got to appreciate about Das Phobia is their commitment. After more than two years, the band has stayed together and evolved, moving away from covers to original material.

Das Phobia is a young South Miami neo-retro punk rock band consisting of Jasmine ‘Pixie Marie’ Romero (lead singer), Mario Fontes (bass, back-up vocals), Alberto Fontes (guitar, back-up vocals) and Daniel Mesko (drums). Das Phobia’s sound is an evolving smorgasbord of their individual musical interests, including progressive, metal, reggae, jazz and blues, indie, ska and old-school rock and roll. While they struggle to label their musical style, what does define Das Phobia is an intense, high-energy, melt-your-face jam.

I’m a big fan of watching local bands play. There’s always a certain performance art quality to their shows. They have lots

of spontaneity, and intimacy (as sometimes the band outnumbers the audience), and no matter how much rock-n-roll pretense, once you’ve seen their moms unloading the equipment, you’re like family. Also, if they ever make it big, you get to say things like; “I know his mom,” or “I watched his dog.” So when I heard Das Phobia had a local gig, I penciled them in right away.

In fact, Das Phobia’s performance was at The Annex in Hialeah, which is actually a rental storage unit that has been converted into an underground reggae, punk, rock and roll refuge with a gritty CBGB-esque atmosphere including creepy clown masks and a blue-sky background.

The Das Phobia set was loud, fast and aggressive. In the punk-style their songs are short and jumpy. Jasmine’s dry angry vocals fall in with the clamorous bass and gritty guitar of the Fontes brothers, and Mesko’s drumkicks fill in any empty space. They sound as if they are approaching a cacophony, but then again it’s punk, and energy is more important than melody.

Das Phobia will be playing next at Churchill’s on February 18th and they’ve just been added to the list of bands at Florida Supercon 2013, July 4-7. The band has an EP available on iTunes and you can check them out on Facebook at DasPhobiaofficial.

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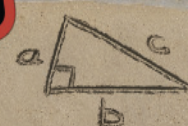
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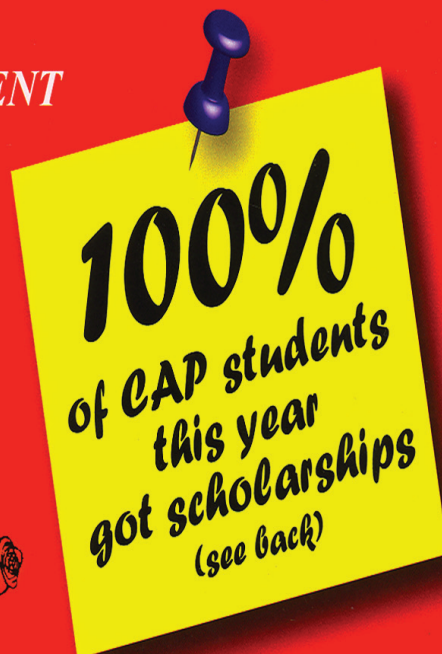
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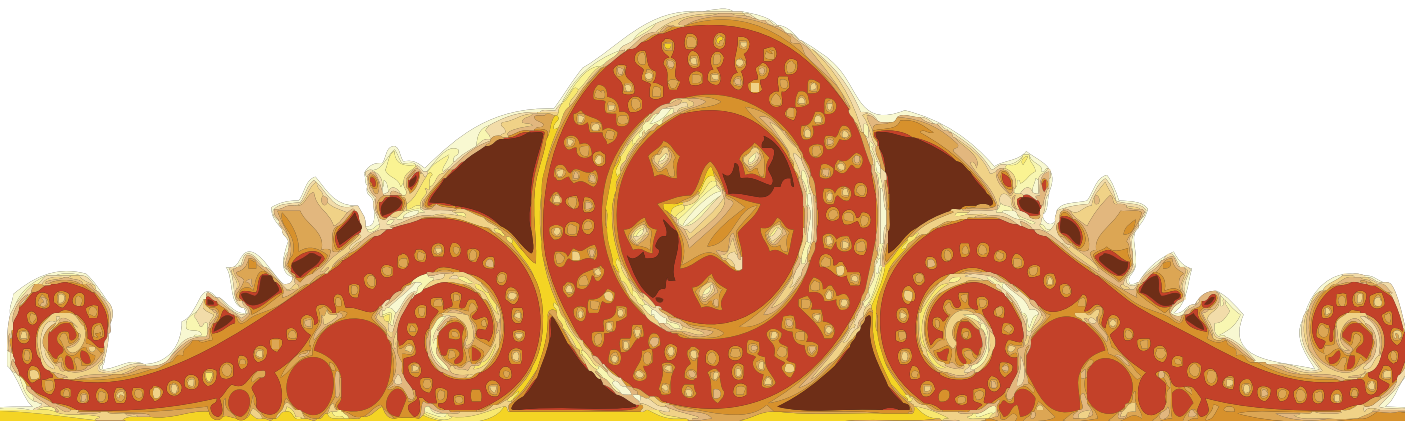
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"REMEMBER THE TIME WHEN..."

A LOOK BACK ON 2012

STORY BY VANESSA QUINTERO
DESIGN BY ALYSSA GONZALEZ

AUGUST

A flurry of backpacks and ponytails were spotted back on campus, meaning the 2012-2013 school year had begun! The month was kicked off with Beach bash, loop roads, and course profiles. Returning students got back into the OLLA groove while freshmen got their first taste of what it's like to be a bobcat.



SEPTEMBER

Students were officially welcomed back with an amazing OLLAFest and Welcome Week celebration. Welcome Week had each day correspond with a grade level, whose members got to wear their class shirt that day. The freshmen received their infamous beanies on the first day and were forced to dance, sing, and praise the seniors, as tradition has it. Overall, it was an incredible week that went out with a bang—OLLAFest!



OCTOBER

October brought the first annual Halloween dress up day, including a parade and spirited winners from all grades. Girls really went all out and had a great time, dressing as characters ranging from PSY to Flo, the Progressive girl. Many girls also decided to take part in the Locks of Love event, cutting their healthy locks and donating them to the Locks of Love charity.



DECEMBER

Christmas Formal swept the school by storm as everyone got their dresses, hair, make-up, and dates prepared for the much anticipated night. As always, the event was a huge success and everyone had a fantastic time. Later in the month, students wore their Santa hats proudly as they prepared for the long break ahead of them, which was kicked off by an unforgettable performance of "OLLA Style," a parody of the YouTube hit "Gangnam Style," by the faculty.



Many students and faculty members ran to the voting polls in order for their voice to be heard in the 2012 presidential election! Those students who hadn't yet turned 18 played their part by participating in class debates and discussions. The Bobcat Holiday Bazaar was also a huge hit this month, with plenty of vendors, food, and fun. Finally, students got a break from all the school stress to celebrate Thanksgiving with their friends and family.



Students March for Life in D.C.

KELLY VALDIVIA

40=55M. That was the new slogan for March for Life, the largest civil rights protest in the world, this year. It means 40 years since the Roe v. Wade decision has led to 55 million abortions. This year marked many new changes in the March for Life community, including a change in leadership due to the passing of former leader, Nellie Gray.

There was also a change in the amount of motivational speakers that participated in the pre-march rally, more press and social media, and the use of jumbo trons.

"There were jumbo trons used to show photos of aborted children which were, of course, very depressing and motivational," junior Caterina De Leo said.

Many news sites and online forums predicted that the march would be much bigger than the inauguration. They also waited for a few days after the inauguration to begin the march so that all of the elected officials would be in the office.

"The changes in health care mandates I believe created a big difference, as well, because of the awareness there is at this time," Alumnae Coordinator Mrs. Martica Castellanos said.

There are ceremonies commemorating the March for Life in other cities throughout the country, such as Chicago. At these ceremonies participants pray for the lives taken

by abortion and celebrate the lives saved. The participants that attend the actual protest go to several prayer services and rallies in the days leading up to the march.

This year, Father Armando from St. Louis joined the group and led the liturgies. They also attended the Holocaust Museum.

"We went to several churches, like the Immaculate Conception Basilica, which were breathtaking. There were prayer services everyday," junior Katerina Alderegia said.

Students had to brave the elements in D.C. as they attended the rally.

"It was unusually cold this year... but we were very well prepared! We waited approximately an hour and a half for the march to start and then walked for another 45 minutes. And then as we approached the Supreme Court the snow began to really come down," Castellanos said.

Since 2003, there has been an annual presence of about 250,000 people, both young and old.

It was about 20 degrees and cloudy. A true testament to their strong beliefs and will is that the marchers had to be willing to stand in cold, crowded streets.



COURTESY OF CATERINA DE LEO

Marching Madness: Students march in Washington, D.C. Friday, Jan. 25. It was an important day for students as they walked for the pro-life cause while representing the school. "I felt so happy to walk because the cause was something worthy of fighting for; I have learned so much from such little time spent here," junior Brianna Quinteiro said.

Students Share Original Work at School's First OLLA Out Loud

KATHERINE MELLINGER

Allegories, alliteration, blank verse, and dictation. Written word is spoken and songs are sung. Poetry flows from many sources just waiting to be unstrung. OLLA out loud gave students the ability to express themselves through poetry and song. With the stress of the school load and everyday life, it provides a momentary escape and showcases student talent from both the school and Belen.

In order to create the ambiance necessary for a poetry slam, the cafeteria was transformed into a coffee house, with coffee, cookies and brownies galore. The event was hosted by fine arts teacher Ms. Minnette Perez.

"OLLA Out Loud gives students the chance to learn more about one another," junior Alex Dominguez said. "Many of the performers surprised me, because I never knew that they wrote poetry or were interested in expressing themselves in that way."

This poetry slam, truly gave students the opportunity express their "hidden" talents.

Catherine Buckler kicked off the first ever OLLA Out Loud with an original narrative, which chronicled the struggle to get to school on time and avoid late detention. Sofia Davalos, Sofia McGraw, Marylin Caserta and Katherine Menendez

all shared their musical talents: Davalos with a soulful rendition of Lady Gaga's "Poker Face", McGraw through her interpretation of Bach's "Prelude in Minor E", and Caserta and Menendez through their performance of "Call Your Girlfriend." Seniors, Kelsey Quigley, Emily Bezold, Veronica Sanchez, Clarisse Vamos, and Anne-Marie Hunter read parodies of popular poems, while Samuel Maya, a junior at Belen, read an original poem. The show was closed with a surprise addition to the line-up. Jacqueline Gonzalez, surprised the crowd with a last minute decision to read an original poem, which gave a new meaning to the frequently used phrase "what if?"

The poetry slam served as a fundraiser for the school's literary magazine. Mrs. Lynne Arguelles and Mrs. Rebecca Retana collaborated in order to organize the event. The Business Honor Society, which sold tickets for the event, raised \$545.45. Overall, OLLA Out Loud was a success because it raised the much needed funds for the Literati and allowed the voices of the students to be heard. In the wake of such a popular event, put your turtle necks and berets back into storage, and wipe away the trailing tears, because there is no need to stress; there's a good chance OLLA Out Loud will be back next January, better than ever. So, get writing.

Thespians Launch Fundraiser, Start February Fudge Fridays

KELSEY QUIGLEY

The thespians are bringing a sweet treat to the month of February with the start of "Thespian Fudge Fridays." The team launched its fundraiser Friday, Feb. 8 and every Friday in February, the thespians will be selling boxes of homemade fudge to raise money for their trip to the thespian state competition in Tampa, as well as for their upcoming production of "Twelve Angry Women," an adaptation of the play "Twelve Angry Men" by Reginald Rose, Thursday, Feb. 28. The troupe is participating in state competition in individual events such as the large group musical and solo musical.

The fundraiser is an attempt to reduce the cost of attending the state competition for each student and is also the society's main fundraiser for the year, aside from school productions. Every thespian is contributing by volunteering to bake or sell to students and teachers. Students bake the fudge according to a thespian recipe, adding their own unique twist with nuts or candy.

"We wanted to be able to do some type of bake sale to make money," senior and thespian president Emily Bezold said. "We wanted something different than the usual brownies and cookies and cupcakes. And we figured, nobody sells fudge, we have an

easy recipe to make it, and we can make different types of fudge, so why not?"

There is, however, a change to the thespians' strategy this year; students this year will also be able to pre-order a boxed container of fudge to be received that Friday, as well as have the option of buying individual pieces after school like last year. Thespians suggest a boxed container of fudge as an original gift idea for a friend or relative's birthday or for a significant other on Valentine's Day.

"People should buy the fudge because it's unique," senior Clarisse Vamos said. "You can buy it for yourself, but you can also get it as a gift for someone else."

Seniors Gabriela Corzo and Vamos are heading the committees of thespians to bake and sell the fudge.

The thespians are selling their fudge for 50 cents a piece, with options and toppings ranging from Butterfinger to M&Ms to their original recipe.

The thespians hope that by the end of February, they will have raised enough money to reduce the cost of attending the state competition and have the funds needed for costumes and props in "Twelve Angry Women."

Their work is a testament to their dedication and has already brought a unique fundraiser to the group and the rest of the school.

Teacher of the Year

Mrs. Edith Diaz recognized for her Dedication ; Passion

CAROLINA KOKENGE

Every year during Catholic Schools Week, teachers vote for the colleague they believe is most qualified to receive the title of Educator of the Year. This teacher is passionate, spiritual, and humble to say the least.

Sophomore English teacher Mrs. Edith Diaz was awarded the title Educator of the Year Monday, Jan. 28.

As an alumna of the school, Catholic education molded her into the inspiration teacher she has become. Teaching young women how others throughout history have achieved their American Dream and proving that it is a reality is only part of what Diaz does. Diaz spiritually guides her students on a path to success.

It was her teachers as a young girl that motivated her to become a teacher and shape the future. Before attending Lourdes, Diaz went to Saint Brendan Elementary where two teachers in particular, Mrs. Bund and Mrs. Lundar, taught her, and she is grateful to have had them both as her teachers.

Diaz says they made a tremendous impact on her life and were a major contributing factor to her becoming an educator.

Senior Samantha Isern believes Diaz has excelled in educating students as her sophomore English teacher.

"She taught me so much in my second year at Lourdes," Isern said. "I was so happy when they said she won that award because she's one of the best teachers I've had at Lourdes. Mrs. Diaz taught me the meaning of the American Dream as well as how to live out my American Dream with God in all things."

Isern speaks highly of her sophomore English teacher because it is one of the few classes in which she remembers most of the materials two years later.



"I can tell you some of the themes and imagery used in the books we read in Mrs. Diaz's class," Isern said. "That shows just how passionate she was about everything she taught us because I can't even remember what I had for dinner two nights ago."

Mrs. Diaz was just as surprised as she was excited when she found out that she had received such a prestigious award. Diaz found out she would be receiving the award the week before so that she could invite her loved ones to celebrate with her when the award would be presented.

"The surprise doesn't happen at the Mass," Diaz said. "The surprise happens when you see your name as a nominee on the ballot."

An award like this is something for which teachers work for years.

Diaz says her aim as an educator is not to receive a bunch of awards and titles, but rather small and simple acts of gratitude from students.

"It's about getting that one 'thank you' e-mail or note from just one student that makes my job satisfying and rewarding," Diaz said.

Thinking about her daughter, Nina, Diaz says she has seen her daughter pretend to teach a class in her bedroom. This makes Diaz smile because she recalls doing the same thing as a young girl. Diaz looks forward to many more years of teaching.

Diaz is happy to have received such a prestigious award. Diaz says this award will in no way alter her teaching habits and methods but rather continue her same style of teaching.

Back on Broadway

BRIANNA PEREZ

Forget Broadway! This year's Dinner Theatre will make you feel as though you have just taken the 1 line to Franklin St. and then walked to Broadway.

The Lourdes Singers will host an evening of dining and show tunes Friday, Feb. 15 in an effort to bring the bright lights of Imperial Theatre to our very own auditorium. The aptly titled "Lullaby of Broadway" will feature a medley of songs from famous Broadway musicals performed by the Lourdes Singers.

The orchestrator of the production, Mrs. Michelle Garcia-Bode says the audience can "expect a fresh take on classic Broadway songs."

While enjoying the spectacle, visitors can enjoy a 3-course meal, which includes salad, dinner, and dessert, served by the performers themselves.

During the past years, dinner has been served by the singers in between acts, so that guests can enjoy their three-course meal while settling in for the show.

"I was so excited to be singing Broadway songs because I have loved Broadway musicals since I was little," senior Celina Pelaez said. "I think everyone can recognize once we start singing their favorite song from their favorite musical. The theatre is universally relatable, and I think it is near to all of our hearts."

The singers have worked quickly to make the show successful and entertaining.

"We have been staying after school to make sure that the show is fun for everyone," senior Alianne Valladares-Prieto said.

Dinner Theatre is a school tradition that began in the mid-1990s and has continued ever since. Past themes have included songs from Disney classics, as well as magic shows.

Tickets include dinner and a show, and they will be available Monday, Feb. 11 for the cost of \$15. The singers are excited to see their hard work and practice come to fruition.



**VANESSA
QUINTERO**

SENIOR COLUMN

Bittersweet Ending to Four Successful Years of Spirit

As the class of 2013, we all mentally prepared for the most important week of our high school careers: our final spirit week. As we all know, we've been champions for all four years of high school. We glitter our penny loafers, make posters for hall wars starting in November, and bring in all of our Christmas money to win penny wars. Needless to say, the class of 2013 has spirit.

We started off as trains our freshman year, trekking around Lourdes with our braces and bows. We approached spirit week with no idea what we were getting into. We thought it would just be a couple of marker-covered posters and \$1 bills being thrown around. Little did we know, spirit week would prove to be more competitive than the summer Olympics. Five hundred dollar bills were dropped, glitter was on every inch of every wall, and trivia was learned for months on end to prepare for

Think-a-thon. Considering we had no idea what was going on, we did incredibly well when it came to be time to announce the winners. We placed second during spirit week.

Sophomore year is when we got really serious about our spirit. We wanted to do something that was incredibly rare: win spirit week as sophomores. This year, we saved up our spare change for penny wars, starting working on the giant sophomore wall in NOVEMBER, and ordered orange paraphernalia weeks before spirit day. It was a year that any student council member would classify as "cruel and unusual punishment". We even cried when they announced that we had won first place in hall wars! Even though we cringe at the sound of "sophomore year wall", we're all extremely proud of it. Even if we worked 4 months for something that would be up for 2 hours.

Junior year came and went with another victory. More

spirit, more coins, and way more class participation! Every member of the class of '13 made their own poster for our wall to promote the theme of "unity", which was never stronger than when we became champions once again.

Now, it was the last series of endless days at Marissa's house, the last time we had glitter stuck to us for days on end, the last time we'd ever tackle anyone to get money into a box, and the last time we'd wake up at the crack of dawn to put up giant pieces of paper. We dressed up as clowns and twins and movie stars (with NAVY SCHOOL SHORTS UNDER!) while doing the final preparations for our last wall. Most importantly, though, we stood united as the class of 2013, chanting "OLLA OLLA EY!" and bowing down to the "Dream Team" for the very last time. Thanks to a lot of hard work and preparation, it became the best spirit week yet.

Going for the Goal

Brutal end to amazing soccer season

CARO PEREZ

Beginning the season with high expectations, the soccer team made history on Saturday night as the first soccer team to reach the 5A State Championship game. Unfortunately, the team was not able to win the title.

"I am really proud of the team and what we have done and how far we have come as a team. Even though we lost we still have to be thankful for making it this far," goal keeper Jenny Herold said.

Coming from club teams and outside school training all the student athletes were prepared to fight for a successful season since pre-season and did.

In the State semi-final game they celebrated a great victory, defeating Palm Beach Central 4-0 and earning a chance to play for the State championship trophy.

At the match on Saturday night versus Oviedo high school a huge crowd of fans swarmed into the stadium as they chanted and cheered throughout the whole game. They showed great support and congratulated the team

through to the end and even when the team lost. Along with those that came on their own, a fan bus was organized through the school.

Being at a draw throughout the whole game, it was a well fought match on both sides. But while Lourdes had many shots on goal, Oviedo was only able to have one shot on goal throughout the entire 100 minutes of playing time, that Herold easily caught.

"Jenny was a huge factor because she only let in three goals in the entire season and acts like a leader on the team" senior Amanda Delgado said.

After reaching over time and then double over time the match would be decided through a penalty kick shoot out. Both teams braced themselves for the results. The Lourdes team teared over a 5-3 penalty kick shoot out loss.

Although the Lourdes team lost the state championship title, they were still able to make history and celebrate a very successful season.



COURTESY OF YEARBOOK STAFF

KICKIN' IT: (Above) Fans, including faculty, students, family, friends, and even alumni, gather and swarm the stands at Saturday's state championship game in Melbourne. (Right) Senior Bailey Plummer defends the ball against a Palm Beach Central player. The Bobcats won the game 4-0 and advanced to the state finals in Melbourne. (Below) Fans cheer their bobcats on as they win the semi-finals game and are headed to states. "It was crazy because this is the first time in history that we have ever gone to state finals" sophomore Tatiana Hernandez said. "After that, it was really sad because all the seniors had put a lot of work into it, and our team had trained extremely hard for it."



Varsity Freshman

REBECCA CHARUR

To see any athlete make a varsity sport is an accomplishment in itself, and the accomplishment is only more impressive when it is a freshman that has made the cut.

This season, freshman Carly Cuadra has been chosen to play on the varsity soccer team. Fresh out of St. Brendan Elementary, Cuadra is preparing herself for the years to come.

Surrounded by a team of experienced upperclassmen, she finds herself in an ideal situation for such a preparation.

"I think playing with the varsity team will really prepare me for my later years in Lourdes and help me improve my game," Cuadra said.

As a member of two soccer teams, Cuadra is constantly practicing. The team practices every day that there isn't a game, besides Sundays. On the other hand, she also plays for Kendall United outside of school play. This dedication to a second team keeps her busy but also leaves her better prepared for what the future holds.

The benefits that accompany any varsity sport go beyond immediate benefits; a college career is being built.

"I really want to play soccer in college," Cuadra said. "It has always been really important to me."

Still, to enter into a new school and join a team dominated by a different age group defines itself as an intimidating experience.

"I was nervous to be on a team with all upperclassmen but after a couple practices I felt comfortable around them," Cuadra said.

In fact her first experience as a member of the varsity soccer team could be described as a very welcoming experience rid of any churlish hazing that normally accompanies a sports team initiation.

"They really made me feel welcomed by talking to me and including me," Cuadra said.

In playing a team sport, such as soccer, there is a significant emphasis on the word team, and each member contributes to the unit in a unique way. In Carly's case, there are multiple aspects of the game to which she contributes.

When playing her primary position as the forward, Cuadra's main purpose is to create scoring opportunities. In her first season, she scored six goals. Each goal contributed to a varsity game and is cemented into the road that led the team to the state championship.

Just as the team showed Cuadra support upon her arrival at the school, she has expressed a mutual support towards her teammate. On the field she shows this support in her play; still, she provides the same support on the sidelines as she cheers on the team.

"I play twenty minutes for some games," Cuadra said. "But on the days I don't play, I'm there for support and ready to cheer them on."

The school community is looking forward to the varsity soccer years in the near future, especially at the close of a dynamic season with the team's advancement to the state finals. Such a season only increases the confidence the school community has in the athletic abilities of the future team and Carly Cuadra.



There's No Place Like Home: Softball Team Adjusts to Changes

KATERIN RODRIGUEZ

The 2012-2013 school year has been an exciting and hectic year. With construction underway, the school has had to make changes in many areas. This year is a test of the students' ability to adapt. The softball team knows this challenge all too well.

As a result of the construction, the softball field was destroyed. The new building takes up so much space that any future hope to rebuild the field has been shattered permanently.

For many years, the softball team was the only school team to have the advantage of being able to practice on campus. This convenience reduced the stress of transportation.

The unavoidable, grueling commute to Palmetto Bay Park five times a week for practice is a sacrifice that team members recognize.

"It's pretty far away but everyone works it out and tries their best to make the practices," junior Jennifer Herold said.

Not only does the team practice there but it will also be the location of their home games. This is a definite change for the team members used to having a home field advantage.

Through the upcoming months leading to the season, the team has tried to become comfortable and adapted to their new practicing location. This change has been harder for some of the upperclassmen on the team used to the old school field.

The team this year is composed largely of seniors—one of whom was signed for an athletic scholarship. Team



COURTESY OF AMANDA BRENNAN

The softball team practices before their first game at Palmetto Bay Park. This is the first game at their new practicing location. The team has spent the past few weeks preparing for the start of the season and adjusting to their new surroundings.

captain, Carolina Clark Rodriguez signed with Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut as the team's catcher.

An event like this not only energizes the player but also the team as a whole. Rodriguez's excitement for her future softball career transcends into the upcoming season.

"The goal for this year is to grow as a team and practice hard so we can win games," Clark Rodriguez said.

The concern for the juniors on the team is having enough players for next year. Two years ago, the team had around 16 players, a large number of which were seniors. The next year, that number dropped to 10, which is one more than the number of players needed to play.

Since softball only has a varsity team, younger students may be intimidated to try out, scared of the possibility that the upperclassmen on the team will not accept them. The team is close-knit, however, and excited about the prospect of new players. They encourage people to try out and display their skills.

"I think it's great to have freshman on the team so that they can grow with the team and by their senior year they can be leaders," junior Amanda Senra said.

Leadership is key in varsity sports. By the time a student athlete spends four years on a team, they are comfortable with the sport itself as well as their team mates.

They will have the knowledge and experience to help incoming players and create future leaders for the team—all of which are components of being an effective team

captain.

Despite the changes that the softball team has had to make this year, they are optimistic about the upcoming season. They are working hard to reach their goals and passionately driven to achieve nothing short of success.

Back on Track: Team Prepares for Season

ELIZABETH DELGADO

Track and field has finally begun and the runners are warming up for another incredible season. Even though last years defeat in districts by Ferguson was devastating, the team is ready to take back their title.

Many runners have been conditioning for months before the season began doing long, extensive workouts to get back into shape. Other players are just beginning.

Runners are preparing for the long battle that lies ahead. As the first meet is quickly nearing, many runner have been pushing their limits trying to break personal records.

"One of the most incredible things about this team is that we have the ability to do whatever we set our minds to; each girl on this team is not only a teammate but really cares about helping you get better," sophomore Sofia Rodriguez said.

Unity—it is what keeps our team going and motivates every teammate to do the best that they can. Without this, no girl can win.

One of the most important things about track and field

is not how each runner works individually; it is how they all work as a group that will get our team far.

This is how the team will be able to defeat Ferguson and win back their district title this season.

"This is my first year doing track and its incredible how everyone is able to work together and push each other.

I think it's going to be a great season," freshman Daniella Perez said.

This team is not far from success; with hard work and dedication, anything is possible.

This year they have a clean slate and a new chance to win the state championship.

"I think anything is possible at this point. The girls know that they can do it but we're all going to have to work together to get to where we want to go," coach Tammy Foster said.

The track team is really looking forward to this season and hoping that it will be the most memorable.

There is one thing on this team's mind: winning.

But winning is nothing without each other to share it with. Henry ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is process. Working together is success."

“One of the most incredible things about this team is that we have the ability to do whatever we set our minds to; each girl on this team is not only a teammate but really cares about helping you get better.”

- SOPHOMORE SOFIA RODRIGUEZ

UP TO Speed

Saturday, February 16th
-Basketball Regional Tournament

Friday, February 22nd-Saturday, February 23rd
-Sam Burley Hall of Fame Tack & Field Invitational.

Tuesday, February 26th
-Softball, Lourdes vs. Ferguson @ Palmetto Bay Park

Monday, March 4th
-Softball, Lourdes vs. Southwest, @ Palmetto Bay Park

Tuesday, March 5th
-Tennis, Lourdes vs. Braddock @ Columbus

photo essay

Preparing for War



The Battle of the Year: Hall Wars

The halls were buzzing early Friday, February 8, 2013, as the representatives from each class arrived early to start preparing their walls for Hall Wars. As tradition would have it the girls did not sleep the majority of the night before, spending every waking moment creating more and more posters in order to fill their wall. They even arrived at school as early as 5:30 a.m. in order to start covering their walls. Each class' hard work definitely paid off as all the walls looked very festive and well-made. First place was awarded to the senior class for their very creative and personalized wall.

