# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Interviews

- Meet Charlie Weingarten, President of… Student Council ................................. 5
  by Elika Shirazi
- Meet Julie from Cafe Commons ............................................................. 4
  by Sophia Joseph
- From Stajduhar to Shepherd ............................................................... 5
  by Eva Abrego
- Sacon’s Story ......................................................................................... 6
  by Avery Bergman
- The Pug-obsessed English Teacher ....................................................... 7
  by Chloe Williams and Tess Miller
- Meet Mr. Dalle, French Teacher Extraordinaire ...................................... 8
  by Adrien Liu
- Interview with Mr. Touchton ............................................................... 13
  by Charlie Weingarten

## Opinion essays

- We Have The Power to Change Gun Laws .............................................. 9
  by Avery Bergman
- How The Walkout Impacted Me ........................................................... 10
  by Steffan Gilani
- Free At a Price ....................................................................................... 11
  by Eva Abrego
- #NeverAgainWalkout ........................................................................... 12
  by Bo Watts
- How do Self-Driving Cars Impact Us? ................................................ 16
  by Jackson Watts
- Distressed? Read About Stress .............................................................. 17
  by Elle Kaveh
- The Actual Stress of School .................................................................. 18
  by Megan Moradi
- Do Video Games Lead to Violence? ...................................................... 19
  by Sophia Joseph
- A Quiet Person in a Loud Classroom .................................................... 20
  by Tess Miller
- African-American Superheroes ............................................................. 21
  by Adrien Liu
- Culturally Imperfect ............................................................................. 22
  by Rafaela Martinian
- One Size Fits All ................................................................................. 22
  by Natalie Martin
- Inner Beauty Vs. Outer Beauty ............................................................. 23
  by Ashley Keen
- Major Rumors About Feminism .......................................................... 24
  by Chloe Williams

## Features

- Buckley Student Council ................................................................. 15
  by Charlie Weingarten
- The Fair: Here or At The Pier .............................................................. 25
  by Eva Abrego and Tess Miller
- Passion Projects .................................................................................. 26
  by Avery Bergman

## Art & Fiction

- Drawings by Dakota Goldberg and Sage Mast ....................................... 14
- Amber short story ................................................................................... 27
  by Austin Gillespie
- Banner Maker ....................................................................................... 29
  by Audrey Gutierrez
Charlie Weingarten,
The President of ...
Student Council

by Elika Shirazi ‘22

Mature, kind, and gracious are a few words to describe Charlie Weingarten. At 14 years-old, she has achieved things that teenagers only dream of. Throughout her time as student council President, she has conducted many fundraising sales, dances, and other events. Charlie is always taking care of others before she take care of herself.

With her bright smile, warm hugs, and charm, she can turn a bad day into a good one. She served as a representative for student council for two years before running for president. “I liked being involved with the dance and the sales. I love everything in student council, so I figured to run for student president. I also wanted to bring a change in a way. I have been bullied a lot of my years at Buckley, and hoped to make a change.” Even though she likes Buckley if she could change one thing, she would change how the school handles bullying, "Sometimes I feel like they don't handle it properly."

Charlie reflected on her last few years at Buckley, responding, “I have changed much about myself, and collectively all together the entire student council has helped people in need, and we have also organized many dances for students to take an academic break.” Charlie believes that the student council is an important part of our community because it is what makes our community into a stronger community.

If she could describe Buckley in three words she would describe Buckley as a diverse, determined, and committed school. According to Charlie, her favorite school subject is English, "because I love writing. It's my creative outlet, I use it if I ever need to calm down or sometimes just for fun.”

Additionally, she added that one of her mentors who inspires her is her mother. “I look up to my mom because she is like my superwoman, she has time to take care of me and my family. She has time to talk with me, make dinner, keep the house clean, and just be an amazing mom.” Her final advice is for students to join student council even if they are on the fence about it. "Do it! It's too much fun to miss out on. If you enjoy being a leader and doing good things for the community, join us!"
Meet Julie from Cafe Commons!

by Sophia Joseph ’22

Throughout the year, we spend countless hours in Cafe Commons. We get our lunch, snacks, drinks, and make small talk with the kind people behind the counter who always seem to remember our names. One of the most loved people at Cafe Commons is our favorite panini maker, Julie, who brightens our day with her kind smile and positive attitude.

"I love seeing the kids everyday," says Julie in response about her favorite part of working at Cafe Commons. Julie is loved throughout campus by both students and teachers. She is most famous for is her delicious paninis. From 7:30 to 10:00 am, Julie makes dozens of paninis. In the midst of all of the orders and waiting students, she never fails to say good morning.

Julie’s ideal day is a Saturday where she can sleep in as late as she wants. She loves Jane the Virgin TV series and her favorite character is Rafael. If given the chance to have any dinner guest, she would choose Oprah Winfrey. Oprah’s wisdom and honesty inspires Julie. She loves Oprah’s ability of “always knowing what to say.”

Behind it all, Julie is most grateful for her son and daughter. Her most treasured memory is, “when [she] delivered [her] last baby. She’s a girl and she’s so cute.” She thought her daughter was going to be a boy and had always wanted a girl. Julie’s kids are all grown up now. One child is at CSUN and the other in a university. No matter how old they get, to Julie they will always be her babies.

Julie somehow manages to helps out dozens of students everyday, make a million paninis, and raise two children. The Buckley School is incredibly lucky to have Julie. Julie’s motto is, “honesty is always key.”
From Stajduhar to Shepard

by Eva Abrego ‘22

Have you ever had an advisor whom you can talk to about things like your favorite shows? Well, that would be Ms. Shepard. From sharing a favorite TV series like the *Vampire Diaries* and the *Originals* to providing academic advising, Ms. Shepard is an all out amazing advisor and friend.

Ms. Shepard is a caring and loving advisor who places more emphasis on her advisees’ well-being than their grades in classes. “It totally doesn’t matter how you do in school, that isn’t as important to me as how you are doing socially and emotionally, and I would hope that you know that I care about all of you.” Ms. Shepard has been working at the Buckley school for the past four year as a Communications Director who maintains the Buckley website. Without her, we would be lost in homework and never hear the daily announcements.

During advisory, we laugh and talk about our weekend activities and what is to happen during the following week. Her young spirit makes it feel like she is one of us, making for an advisory that is a comfortable space for us. She also enjoys bringing in delicious snacks like Cape Cod potato chips and frosted cookies.

“I didn’t know if I wanted to be a full on teacher all the time, but I really like working at schools, and I also really like strategic thinking and graphic design and writing.” Ms. Shepard’s passion for graphic design started in college. She also has an interest in astrophysics and quantum physics. “I love learning about black holes and theories of everything like loop quantum theory and string theory.”

Born in Chicago, Ms. Shepard enjoys backpacking, yoga, and traveling. Her latest backpacking trip was in the Iceland highlands for 9 days. She also enjoys doing yoga and is currently working on her floating handstand. Her favorite foods are sushi and homemade pizza but is not a fan of nuts in cookies or ice cream. She has played over six different sports and suffered three concussions that prevented her from playing contact sports again. After living in Chicago, she moved to a town called Sandwich, Massachusetts where she finished her elementary school, and in 5th grade she changed her last name from Stajduhar to Shepard.

Sadly, at the end of this year, Ms. Shepard will be moving back to her home to be near her family—we will all miss her!
Mr. Sacon's Story

by Avery Bergman '22

Whether you are building spaghetti and marshmallow towers or creating your own hotel, you are bound to have a blast in Mr. Sacon's classes. Mr. Sacon always lights up a room when he walks in with a smile and encouraging words that make students inspired. Mr. Sacon became a math teacher in 1998, and was previously a summer camp counselor, loving to work in an environment with kids. "My mom was a teacher for 40 years too, so I grew up around it. That always made me wanted to be a teacher," Mr. Sacon explains.

Although Mr. Sacon is an amazing, fearless teacher, when he first started he was terrified by his job. "You walk in, and you think you know everything, and you're standing in front of 20 to 30, 15 year-old kids who actually do know everything and it's a little scary." Although his first encounters of being a teacher were a bit scary, he loved when he began making connections with students. Mr. Sacon has always taught math, but in addition, he also loves things like Voices & Choices, advisory, and council where he can "sit with a group of kids and talk about stuff that they're interested in or what they're going through." Mr. Sacon's new design lab class is a huge hit in Middle School. He says that he began getting into that subject when Ms. Stehman introduced it to him three years ago. He saw how many schools and corporations were using it and decided to do some research. Flash forward three years later, Mr. Sacon made an amazing design lab class and passion project class where students can be creative and use their passions to solve problems.

One of Mr. Sacon's most admirable traits is his sense of humor. With this sense of humor comes many funny moments as well as a few gross ones during class. "One kid said, 'Oh, I think I have to throw up,' I said, 'Okay then go ahead, and I pointed to the door and he thought I meant go ahead and throw up and he threw up all over the desk." Although Mr. Sacon shares many laughs with his students, he also experiences some challenges. One of the biggest challenges he has to go through is when students don't understand things and they aren't motivated, because he thinks that it may be something he's doing wrong.

Mr. Sacon's mom and dad are the most important people in his life because they both inspired him. His mom was a teacher, so she taught him how to work with kids. His dad was a psychologist, and he taught him how important building relationships are in life. If Mr. Sacon could meet anyone living or dead, he said that he would want to meet his dad's dad whom he never met. He would also want to meet Lee Harvey Oswald because he would like to find about why he killed former President John F. Kennedy. Mr. Sacon want his students to remember him as someone who cared about them and that they enjoyed his class. He wants to be remembered as a man who was simply nice, adding "He was bald, his clothes were kind of messy, he was generally a kind of nice guy. And maybe funny!"

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL MAGAZINE
Our Pug-obsessed English Teacher

by Chloe Williams ‘23 and Tess Miller’23

Pugs, singing, volleyball, Star Wars, and English are her forte. How many teachers have you met who will say, “I love really fat and squishy pugs who are very lazy?” This Buckley middle school teacher who has hair longer than the height of a sizable two-year-old and has dreams of skydiving is no one other than Ms. Shinn. Some of Ms. Shinn’s hobbies are writing, singing, reading, and volleyball.

When she and her brother were younger, they both loved Star Wars. “We would do Jedi training exercises and we would make up these games.” Along with her neighbor, she once told her younger brother to jump off a yoga exercise ball as part of the game, “We were telling him that he had to jump off of one of those giant exercise balls, as part of his Jedi training.” Then her brother ended up jumping off and falling onto his wrist, breaking his wrist. After it happened, Ms. Shinn felt terrible for doing that to her brother.

Ms. Shinn’s background story started with the birth of her siblings. She says, “The creation of them, I guess, has hugely impacted me.” She also told us about her move to Indiana, “moving to Indiana, which my family did when I was seven was a big part of my life as well.” Ms. Shinn’s mother inspired her love of reading, which put her on the path to becoming an English teacher at Buckley. Three of her favorite books are East of Eden by John Steinbeck, The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and The Feast of Love by Charles Baxter. Ms. Shinn went to college at Indiana University. She says that studying and being in a choir at Indiana University was an important part of her life. She also lived and worked in New York City. She says that New York City is a very different “environment to live in and to teach in.” Ms. Shinn added that the people she has met and the relationships she has formed throughout her life are an influential part of her life.

Ms. Shinn is an incredible teacher who always wants her students to do their best. She understands seventh grade humor and teaching is her passion. We couldn’t ask for a better English teacher!
Interview with Mr. Dalle, French Teacher Extraordinaire!

by Adrien Liu '22

Q: What kind of French classes do you teach?
A: French 2, 3, 4 Honors, 5 Music / Cinema and AP

Q: How do you manage all of them?
A: You have to consider your job as 5 different jobs, be ready for different kinds of students and topics there are.

Q: What made you decide that you wanted to be a teacher?
A: It was random. When I was sent to Egypt to teach there, I had the opportunity to do a civil service instead of the military (a kind of French 'Peace Corps'). I found it fun and quite fascinating to teach.

Q: How long have you been teaching?
A: On and off for a good 21-22 years.

Q: The three books you have written are called Le Caire (Cairo), one called Regards Sur Beyrouth (Visions of Beirut), and one about L.A. Why did you write those books and what were they about?
A: You have done your research! I have written or published three books in French and then six books in English. The ones in French were about the Middle East. The ones in English are about neighborhoods in California, Mexico and Japan. I am extremely interested in big cities, the way they are structured and the people who live in it, as I feel they best represent the world around us . . .

Q: Have you had an embarrassing moment? If so, what was the most embarrassing moment?
A: All the time! I keep having embarrassing moments. I think it’s a part of life, at least for me. What changes is how you take them. You have to accept them. You have an embarrassing moment when you aren't up to par with what you believe you have to do.

Q: Do you have a pet peeve? If you do, what is it?
A: Pretty sure. Anything related to plastic. The sound of plastic - or rubber. Actually, I would say the sound of wipers on dry windshields.
So far in 2018, there have been 17 school shootings (CNN). That is way too many. I do not think that students should have to go to school every day scared that someone may come and shoot people with a gun. School is supposed to be a safe environment where people go to learn. On top of school shootings, there have been many deaths caused by guns this year. A total of 38,658 deaths by guns were reported in 2016 according to The Trace. The amount of people killed by guns every day is way too high. That is why gun laws must change.

Students from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida began a grassroots movement to reform gun laws. A group of students from the school started the #NeverAgain campaign. They have spoken out about their personal experiences and shown how important it is that we make sure these mass killings never happen again. According to one of the founders of the #NeverAgain movement, Cameron Kasky, decided to turn his grief into a way to educate people. “If everybody with goodness in their heart got up and did something to change the world, it would be a much better place,” he said in an interview in The New Yorker. Kasky wanted to show how this tragedy had affected him and every other person who either attends the school or knows one of the 17 victims killed. The personal stories of the high school students who were at school when the shooter came are inspiring and have shown how extreme this situation is. Since there are many school shooting every year, these students decided that they wanted to take action to make this the last school shooting.

There are many reasons in which politicians are hesitant to change gun laws. One reason is because many Republican politicians receive millions of dollars from the NRA each year. They like the fact that the organization gives them this money, and do not want to lose that profit. They know that if they change gun laws, the NRA will stop giving them all of this money. Some politicians came up with the idea to arm teachers in case there is an active shooter on a school campus. They think that it would make school secure and safer.

There are differing sides to this argument. I talked to many teachers at Buckley, and all of them thought this was an awful idea. They were all terrified by the idea that they would have to carry guns with them all day. “I think that it is a super scary option, I’m scared of it, it’s a very uncomfortable thought to me,” Mr. Neddermeyer said.

I think that we live in an unsafe country where guns are not under control. There are far too many shootings every year, and this needs to stop. The United States is one of the only countries that faces this many shootings every single year. I do not think that safer laws will be passed for the next few years because of our current president. President Trump has received about $21 million from the NRA, Romper explains, which is why he does not want to make guns harder to buy, even if
it makes the country a safer place. I think that safety should come over money. I do not think it is right that politicians are putting the continuous want for these donations over the safety of their citizens. I believe that in order to buy a gun, one must go through a series of steps. They should have background checks and an official should be sure that they will do nothing dangerous.

How the Walkout Impacted Me

by Steffan Gilani ’23

I personally participated in the walkout. I thought it would be boring because it would be seventeen minutes of silence. But when I got there, my state of mind changed because the students were describing the victims of the Parkland shooting.

I remember that every time they said someone new, I tried to picture them in my head and felt sad. I later learned that when you know a little more about a person who has endured rough times, you can feel empathy for them. Because of what happened, I think that we need more restriction on gun laws.

Many other schools in the nation also participated in the walkout. I am very happy that other communities participated. Other schools did the same thing as we did. According to The Washington Post other schools where chanting slogans to end gun violence. Some schools even went to Congress to change laws on gun restrictions. I am very happy that other communities participated.
Free at a Price

by Eva Abrego '22

Personally, something that interests me is education and how expensive it has become nowadays. Here at Buckley, we pay a $40,000 annual tuition just so we can receive a great education, but this is not the case for many other people. Kids who cannot afford private schools must go to public schools where the education they receive may not be as strong. Education is a basic right, but no one ever said if it has to pass a certain standard.

Many kids with dreams and passions will never get to experience what I experience because they don’t have enough money to afford a good education. It is sad that our country doesn’t give all children access to a quality education that will help them in the future. Here, we have small class sizes as well as extracurricular classes and other excellent opportunities such as writing lab and math lab. In saying this, I am definitely grateful for the benefits I receive, but at the same time I also feel a sense of guilt that other kids like me do not have access to the same privileges.

Before I came to Buckley, I attended a public school in Sherman Oaks, in which the class sizes were up to 30-40 people, and the only time the teacher knew you personally was if you were a good student. Now I’m not saying that my education was bad (I loved my public school and I believe it gave me a whole new perspective) but many other students who go to public schools in less fortunate neighborhoods receive a poor public education. LAUSD especially has the misfortune of having big class sizes and an under-enriched curriculum. They also have frequent budget cuts which I remember were the worst. “Los Angeles has one of the most vibrant arts communities in the world, yet many of its public schools have lost their arts teachers,” said Diane Ravitch, former Assistant Secretary of Education. Many public schools lose their art teachers and extracurricular teachers because of a severe lack of funding to pay teachers.

Personally, I believe that Buckley should offer more financial aid for students as well as hold fundraising events that focus on increasing financial aid to recruit more candidates. I would also like to propose a club or charity group that could help public schools in our community. My final proposal would be to donate old technology to schools in need of gently-used, adequate equipment and technology. Last year, we got brand new computers in the computer room in the Math and Science building and while I’m not sure where the old computers went, we should donate our old equipment. We could also sell them and the money made could greatly help a school or financial aid candidates.

Education plays such an important part of our lives because it sets us up for the future. The experience I gained a valuable perspective by going to a public school, which was eye-opening and amazing, because I am now far more grateful for being able to go to an elite private school.
#Neveragain Walkout

by Bo Watts ‘22

Parkland, Florida recently endured a mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School. At Buckley, where I should always feel comfortable, I don’t always feel comfortable because of the recent school shooting. I think that gun control laws are not strict enough. Depending on the state, almost anyone can just walk into a store and buy a gun. Knowing that what happened in Parkland, Florida could have been in my school is terrifying to me.

At our school, we had a political walkout in which you could choose to walk out in solidarity with the student protesters against gun violence or choose to stay in class. Organized by two Buckley sophomores, Jasper Cerone and Mason Lee, this walkout consisted of 17 minutes of silence in order to honor those victims during the Parkland shooting. This protest might not have made a difference in helping the issue of gun control but it helped spread awareness among the student community.

On March 14, 2018 many schools across the nation did different activities to show awareness in New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, etc. According to USA Today, students from about 2,800 schools marked National Walkout Day, many by leaving their classrooms at 10 a.m. to show solidarity for the 17 killed in the attack Feb. 14 at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Personally, I chose to walk out because I think that the more people that walk out, the more awareness and change is likely to happen.

The issue of gun control has become a serious epidemic in the last decade. According to the website Dosomething.org, “Americans own approximately 270 million guns, which gives America the highest rate of gun ownership with, 89 guns for every 100 people.” I think that the government should get more involved with gun control to restrict the purchase and availability of weapons. As one of the survivors of the Parkland shooting recently said, “To let these victims' lives be taken without any change in return is an act of treason to our great country.”
Interview with Mr. Touchton

by Charlie Weingarten ‘22

It’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s… Mr. Touchton, soaring over high expectations! The Buckley community was introduced to Mr. Touchton before the new school year began, and there has only been positive feedback about this dog-loving, piano- and French horn-playing, extroverted teacher. Mr. Touchton came to us all the way from the District of Columbia, and took a six-day road trip just to get to us. Mr. Touchton decided to come to the Buckley School because he, “connected with the administration and faculty here through the interviewing process”, and he felt, “like this would be a great match. There was a lot of excitement about building a choral program, and I just fell in love with the school in that way from early on.” When asked why he even wanted to be a teacher in the first place, he said “I really, really, really enjoy working with other people, and I’m a fairly extroverted person, and I love connecting with other people, and I love collaborating, and making music. To get to do all of that in a school setting is just the greatest job in the world. I love that.”

Mr. Touchton loves to sing “repertoires from musicals.” Mr. Touchton’s hobbies include biking, reading, and cooking. “And if I weren’t a professional artist, I would’ve either been a professional chef or a therapist,” Mr. Touchton added. He has worked as many things in the past, including being a conductor for orchestras, being a solo pianist, and, of course, being a teacher. Mr. Touchton is “a big advocate of following your bliss.” He thinks that everyone should “follow your passion, and just work hard.” We are so lucky to have this amazing and inspiring teacher at our school, and we can’t wait to see more of the success he’s bringing to the Buckley choir program in the future.
“Stornhornet” by Dakota Goldberg ‘22

Sage Mast ‘22
Buckley Student Council

by Charlie Weingarten ‘22

Middle School President Jonah Nazarian and Vice President Nathan Park are two very different people. Jonah prefers cookies-and-cream ice cream, while Nathan prefers a more classic mint chocolate chip. Nathan loves to read and write, while Jonah would rather do a math equation. However, they are similar in one way... and that’s being inspiring and passionate leaders. Both Jonah and Nathan have high expectations for this upcoming school year, and have already made a fantastic head-start into planning events for the Buckley middle school. They can both assure you that the next school year is going to be lit!

Now, students may be wondering who exactly it is that they elected for office. You may think you know who VP Nathan Park is, but how can you be sure? Well, Nathan wants to let you know who he is, and what his hopes and dreams are for the upcoming school year. Nathan is “looking forward to just having fun with the students at school,” and that he understands that “school isn’t the first place you want to go.” Because of this, one of Nathan’s goals for the upcoming year is “to make school a place where you can enjoy childhood.” That’s not all Nathan is looking forward to though. He says that he’s “looking forward to spirit week and also the dance.” There’s a lot of hard work and agonizing hours to planning a dance, but Nathan, seeing as he was a representative for the seventh grade this past year, is ready to take on that huge responsibility. You can be sure that Nathan won’t be a stickler, because he “decided to run for VP because being a rep was such a fun job,” and he “enjoyed being involved in all the events in student council.” High expectations are being held for Nathan, but he is one-hundred and fifty percent ready to rise up to any occasion.

In order for every good student council to succeed, you of course have to have a good advisor, a whole bunch of reps reporting ideas from their grades, and a honest, hard-working VP. But, at the base of it all, you have to have the most knowledgeable, talented, creative, and inspiring of them all... the President! Lucky for the Buckley middle school, you have a President that fits all of those descriptions, Mr. Jonah Nazarian. If you think that you’re excited for the upcoming school year, well, Jonah is one thousand percent more pumped! Jonah has already decided on the next school year’s BSC theme, which is “having fun with the public while still having a course,” which essentially is having fun, but also staying on top of everything and continuing to do his best.

It’s clear to see that Jonah and Nathan have their work cut out for them this year. High expectations are being held for the two of them, but they want to assure everyone that they’re ready to knock it out of the park!
How do self-driving cars impact us?

by Jackson Watts ’22

Since self-driving cars are a brand new invention, companies such as Tesla that make self-driving cars, are being been questioned about their safety. Recently, a woman was struck by a self-driving car while crossing Mill Avenue in Tempe, Arizona. Apparently, an Uber driver had picked someone up on a Sunday night and had the car on “self driving mode”. The Uber car struck the woman and immediately killed her. According to The New York Times, “The accident was a reminder that self-driving technology is still in the experimental stage, and governments are still trying to figure out how to regulate it.” This woman’s death was the first pedestrian death associated with self-driving cars.

I think that self-driving cars would be a great product, but they still need to be properly refined before being used by ordinary people. In order to work properly, these cars have sensors that direct the car to drive safely. But, according to CNN, “humans will always have a quicker reaction than a computer.” I think that if the cars became more popular they should be regulated and checked multiple times to make sure they won’t get into an accident. These cars can also be dangerous if people jay walk in the street. Right now, companies say that self-driving technology will not be able to identify someone illegally walking across the road because it isn’t set up to recognize a “crosswalk” or “stop light” in the system. Currently, the cars recognize only crosswalks, so this would have to be improved before these cars are launched. According to The Guardian, “self driving car companies should not be allowed to investigate their own crashes.” Yet, in my view, companies have to learn by their own mistakes in order to improve their self-driving cars.

In conclusion, self-driving cars are a progressive idea that could help many people in all different ways, such as helping those with impairments and disabilities. They have the capability to revolutionize the way that people travel, but before these cars get out on the road, they need to be improved. In the end, these cars will be an amazing invention that will change our world forever.
Staying up late with eyes burning from fatigue, students stare at the screen that demands three more paragraphs by tomorrow. As an eighth grade student, I am constantly trying my hardest to get the best grades, but a great deal of stress comes with it. Homework takes up the rest of my day after school as well as a majority of my weekends. Whether it is unintentional or purposefully done, a majority of our teachers assign homework assignments that pile up into too much stress for students to handle.

A majority of students across the U.S. are distressed about school, which can come with major consequences. According to *The Atlantic* in 2015, “A recent study surveyed and interviewed students at a handful of these high schools and found that about half of them are chronically stressed.” Everything adds up: school, homework, sports, and other extracurricular activities leave the slightest amount of downtime to relax. Consequences of the loads of stress leads to “burn out by the time they get to college, or to feel the psychological and physical effects of stress for much of their adult lives.”

Nowadays, with the extreme competition of getting into colleges, many students need the strongest application they can get but this leads to unhealthy habits to overcome anxiety and stress.

At Buckley, it is realistic that teachers try to limit the amount of work assigned to reduce stress levels. According to policy, teachers cannot give students more than two assessments and quizzes total per day. Although they do try to make a difference, an overload of work frequently occurs. While it is true that we do need stress in our lives as it encourages us and eventually leads to growth, either physically or mentally, it depends on how much is necessary. According to psychologists, stress will always be a part of life, but according to a source online, “when stress and anxiety exist for an extended period of time, they can become a burden or even a health risk” (psychology.org). Buckley cannot eliminate all assessments because it has to be done in order to achieve a higher education for some students, but they do have the power to limit the amount of assessments and papers. As the psychologist Bill Phillips once said, “Stress should be a powerful driving force, not an obstacle.”
Have you ever felt stress over homework and school? Well, you are not the only one. School is overwhelming not only for me but also for many of the students on campus. I believe that school puts a lot of stress on students who have extracurricular activities and don’t have enough time to complete everything after school. Many students get home around 4:00, when they may want to relax for a little bit, before doing homework or studying for quiz or test. Depending on the homework load, they have limited time to complete work before or after dinner. This doesn’t leave time for students to hang out with friends outside of school. I feel that being able to hang out with friends outside of school would help us develop stronger social skills and create stronger friendships that would lead to being happier and more fulfilled.

According to the American Psychological Association, about 61% of students feel overwhelmed, depressed or sad due to the stress of excess amounts of homework. More than 33% of teen students report having fatigue and or being tired because of stress. Additionally, almost ¼ of students skip a meal as a result of stress. Most teenage students sleep much less than the recommended amount. Many of them sleep for about 7.4 hours on school nights, although the National Sleep Foundation recommends you get 8.5 to 9.25 hours of sleep per night. I would get more sleep if I had less homework and less stress.

According to Stanford University in 2014, researchers found that less than two hours of homework a night is productive. Denise Pope, a senior lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Education and a co-author said, “Our findings on the effects of homework challenge the traditional assumption that homework is inherently good.” She emphasized that too much homework has negative effects on student well-being and behavioral engagement.
Do Video Games Lead to Violence?

by Sophia Joseph '22

Over the past decades, the United States has experienced hundreds of school shootings. We come up with numerous explanations to try to comprehend the tragedies happening in our hallways but there is no single answer. Our most recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida created major controversy surrounding gun control, mental illness, and the effects of violence in video games and media on children and teenagers. The first time I ever heard of school shootings was when I was in second grade at Buckley School and we had a lockdown drill. I felt confused and horrified at the thought of a student wanting to harm other students. Seven years later, sadly, it’s become commonplace to hear about school shootings. According to ABC News, since Columbine took place in 1999, there have been 270 school shootings. Tragically, violent video games and violence in media have become a part of everyday life.

The discussion about violence in media and video games was sparked again after the Parkland shooting. President Trump addressed his concerns with violence in media, stating, “We have to look at the internet because a lot of bad things are happening to young kids and young minds and their minds are being formed.” Trump’s comments have sparked conversations throughout America about this topic. Researchers have gathered different intel involving this issue.

Some researchers believe there is a compelling link between video games and violence. According to CNN, in the United States, 90% of children, primarily aged 12 through 17, play violent video games. This shocking statistic shows how many kids are exposed to violence through video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics and American Psychological Association do not support young adolescents playing violent video games. Recently, an 18 year-old man in Germany killed nine people. He was a big fan of first-person shooter video games and his interest led police to believe this was the cause. However, there are many researchers who claim there is no real connection between video games and violence.

More evidence supports the claim that video games do not directly cause violence. According to NewZoo, a gaming market research company, about 60% of Japan’s population plays video games. Despite the high rates of people playing online games in Japan, the gun violence rate is very low, compared to the United States. These low gun death rates are explained by the country’s strict gun laws which ban handguns and rifles. According to The New York Times article, Henry Jenkins, a professor at the University of Southern California, revealed that juvenile crime in the US was at a low. Even though 90% of American teens and kids play video games, crime rates are at a 30-year low. I believe that video games and violence in the media do not cause violence. Trump’s comments completely disregarded the real problem which is gun control. Gun violence rates would decrease with stricter gun control. Japan’s current low rate shows guns are the real problem, not video games.
A Quiet Person In A Loud Classroom

by Tess Miller ’23

Imagine these scenarios: The teacher says, “Okay Tess, read this paragraph,” or “We will go around the room and everyone will read a page.” Or, the teacher calls on you out of the blue. Or, almost every prose report reads, “She needs to raise her hand more,” or “She should speak up in class more,” or “I would like to hear some more input from her.” Or the teacher assigns a presentation in the near future. It causes a sinking feeling in your stomach, your heart beating out of your chest, and sweat seeping out of your hands. It honestly sucks.

Being an introvert is difficult in a world designed for extroversion. One of the many difficulties is school and being in a classroom where extroverted behavior is rewarded while introverted behavior is frowned upon. Susan Cain, in her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*, says that schools are increasingly “designed for those who enjoy group projects and high levels of stimulation,” and argues that “research suggests that the vast majority of teachers believe that the ideal student is an extrovert.” Aspects like being graded on participation in terms of raising your hand and offering to read aloud, or being assigned excessive group projects are difficult for introverts but are highly valued in our current education system. Having anxiety about these situations does not mean you aren’t prepared, don’t know the answers, haven’t studied or aren’t smart. It is absurd to punish or undervalue someone for something that is beyond their control and something that should not define them. People are usually born with introverted or extroverted traits. According to Cain, one third to one half of the population are born introverts. It isn’t a choice, and believe me, if I had a choice I would be an extrovert. Many teachers try and make kids who are introverted behave like an extrovert when introversion is part of who they are. It’s almost like trying to force someone who is left-handed to write with his or her right hand.

Some people say that introverts should just get over it. They should get over their fear and participate even if it is uncomfortable or difficult because it is good to break people out of their comfort zones. And I understand that sometimes it is good to push yourself to do things you are uncomfortable with because you can grow and become more comfortable with those things over time. However, there are some things about introversion that will never change. And why should half the kids, the introverts, have to change when the other half, the extroverts, don’t have to change? Why should education be difficult for introverts, when there may be more effective ways to teach them? As Michael Godsey says in *The Atlantic*, “Certainly, group activities can serve a purpose in the teaching of introverts. But cooperative learning doesn’t have to entail excessively social or overstimulating mandates; it can easily involve quiet components that facilitate internal contemplation.” Schools need to get better about serving introverted students.

I believe that children who are introverted are not served by the current system of education. We need to create programs that work with the learning style of introverts because I don’t like going to a class shaking with nervousness because I know I will have do something as “simple” as to read something out loud to the class. We don’t need to split the classes in half and educate introverts and extroverts separately, but we need to find a way to accommodate everyone’s learning styles so they can learn and retain information in the different ways they feel most comfortable. Right now, we have a “one-size fits all” learning style in classrooms and that size does not and will never, fit everyone.
African-American Superheroes

by Adrien Liu ’22

Have you ever seen a superhero who isn’t white? The answer is probably no. Recently on February 16, the film Black Panther came out with an all African-American cast. This inspired many African-Americans and I think it could inspire many other movies to come out with a cast mainly of one race and a superhero with the same ethnicity. I think that this is a good way to inspire more equality among races in society. When it came out, I went to see it in theaters and I thought it was really cool to see a non-white superhero for once. As well as that, it was ironic because it showed Africa as the most powerful nation as a response to Trump making derogatory remarks and racist comments toward African Americans. I would like to see a future movie about Asian-American or Latino superheroes.

In Black Panther, the hero features a strong, muscular superhero with an almost impenetrable suit with many high tech weapons who protects Wankanda from their enemies. Black Panther had a budget of $200 million and had a Box Office of $1,302,387,938. This lands Black Panther right behind Star Wars: The Last Jedi with a profit of 1.33 billion dollars. Its popularity shows how much minority groups have been waiting for a movie like this. Disney and other movie companies should continue making movies with minority star characters and cast not just because of the massive profits made but because it’s culturally important. Originally, movie makers didn’t want to make this movie because they were scared that it wouldn’t be profitable. Now that it has proven to make money, they will probably continue to make these movies.

I believe that more movies should be made with casts made up of diverse actors that represent our broader American culture. We need to progress so that minorities have an equal chance in the movie industry to promote different stories than the ones we’re already familiar with. Many people also want something new from Hollywood. I personally want it to change because it would be cool to see a movie with a mainly Asian cast because I’ve rarely seen Asian-Americans in Hollywood. According to Shawn Robbins, chief analyst at BoxOffice.com, he said “This is the beginning of a new era not just for them, but for the entire genre and tentpole filmmaking at large. This is the tipping point — a major indicator of where we’ll see studio decision-making go when it comes to casting big-budget films in a more diverse way, not just with black actors, but all races and genders.”
Culturally Imperfect
by Rafaela Martinian ’23

Cultural expectations make me uncomfortable when I see blogs, pictures, and especially when my beautiful friends say, “Wow, I wish I looked more like her and less like me.” From fad diets to photoshopping to face tuning, social media has not only lowered my own self-esteem and my friends’ confidence, but most of the girls in the world as well. When we see a new photo, whether it’s posted by a favorite celebrity or another friend, it seems to be a natural instinct to compare ourselves to the posts. I get frustrated when I see girls with “perfect” bodies and I look nowhere near as slim as them. Instagram is swamped with fake girls with fake bodies promoting themselves and their brands and misleading impressionable, young girls who will grow up thinking that these are how our bodies are supposed to look like.

There are so many famous, beautiful and real, not “insta-body goals” models posting pictures, but why do I only see Kylie Jenner’s new photoshoot promoting her brand? Because the models who are not “insta body-goals” do not seem to be good enough to be on the trending page of Instagram. I truly believe that girls with natural bodies are the ones who deserve to be on the trending pages. I am not saying that posting on social media is bad for you, but I am saying let’s not be ashamed to post pictures of our real, non-photoshopped bodies. Let’s all be confident because together we can help the next generation of impressionable young girls grow up knowing everybody is “insta-body goals.”

One Size Fits (Not) All
by Natalie Martin ’22

Try and think of one size that could really fit all… Exactly, it’s impossible. Every human is made differently and no one’s body will ever be the same as someone else’s. One store that is very popular amongst teenage girls today is Brandy Melville, who has set an unrealistic “one size fits all” for their shoppers. Many teens may feel critical and insecure because Brandy Melville’s “one size” happens to fit only a few sizes of thin girls. This provokes an important issue of society’s unrealistic “perfect body image,” especially since Brandy Melville is promoting their clothes for young teens during one of the most insecure phases of a young girl’s life. Brandy Melville was founded by an Italian fashion designer name Silvio Marsan. He has been in his fashion designing career for 50 years when he and his brother opened up the first Brandy Melville clothing store in the U.S 15 years ago (The Huffington Post). Many people have had an issue with Brandy’s clothing being an unrealistic fit for the majority of women’s bodies. Middle school student Elle Kaveh ’22 commented, “People have different body types and so when they see clothes and like them but they don’t fit, it causes insecurities and messes with their self-confidence.” Brandy Melville has made a choice as a company only to sell to the thinnest of body types, which should be criticized.
Inner Beauty Vs. Outer Beauty

_Excerpt from a TedTalk Speech_

by Ashley Keen ‘22

When I was 11 years old, my dad started working with a trainer. After watching them work out, I started to become interested. At 11 years old, I was working with a trainer 3 to 4 days a week. I was happy and I looked a little creepy, but I wasn't working out for the way my body was “supposed” to look, I was doing it because it was fun.

Now at 14, I look back on those experiences and memories and wish I could still think the same way as I did when I was 11. I feel the need to exercise constantly to maintain a positive body image so I can uphold the perceived societal “standards” of how I should look as a teenage girl. Just for a second, think about how many times a day, or even a week you say to yourself, “I shouldn’t eat that it’s unhealthy.” Well, that’s great, you should be thinking about what you’re putting into your body. Eating healthy is important and everyone should think about it but, are you telling yourself to eat healthy because it’s good for your body, or if it’s the right thing to do for your body’s image? Body image is how you choose to feel about yourself.

Having self-confidence is one thing that can drive you throughout your life. Dealing with negative body image is becoming more and more publicized and spoken about everyday. I would like to discuss with you today about why it’s so important to focus more on inner beauty instead of outer beauty. Why is it that Children between ages 7 and 9 are already worrying about their body shape and their weight? Girls between the ages of 6-10 wish they were thinner. Thats 42%, 42% . Thats almost half of the girls surveyed. I don’t want to grow up in a community where I feel the need to think that I’m overweight. I want my friends, and the friends of friends to know that the shape of your body does not matter as much as it matters on the way you choose to act and your personality.

The way you present yourself in front of people will usually be the way people look at you, or think of you. Body image can be a blessing and a curse, but also defines who you are. I have personal experience in thinking that the way we look defines who we are; not our ideas, not our thoughts, but purely the way we look on the outside. Whenever I leave the house I try to make sure that I look presentable - meaning, brushed hair, fresh makeup and that my clothes look appropriate. The one thought that doesn't cross my mind enough is, “why am I worrying so much about how I look on the outside? Why do I feel the need to wake up at 6:15 in the morning before school to make sure I have enough time to do my makeup? Why do I feel the pressure that if I do not look 'pretty'?"

I’m going to get judged. I do not want to be around the people who make me second guess myself. I don’t want my friends to think that they need to look good to feel good. I don’t want others to feel greater than me by putting me down. These are comments and remarks that can completely change the way someone may feel. The things that people say when you see someone looking different can change your personal perspective. It may not be that I have low self-esteem, or that I have no self-confidence — it is just as simple as I do not want to feel pressure from my peers to look a certain way because it may be a standard, because it’s not. It is a choice to be nice to someone and raise them up, or the choice to bring them down, so what are you going to do?
Major Rumors About Feminism
And The #MeToo Movement

by Chloe Williams ‘23

In a world of change, feminism has become a recurring issue of social protest, and this movement is spreading. Feminism is the advocacy of women’s rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes. It is basically the word for yin and yang. Equality. But, let’s expel some rumors first, shall we?

One major rumor that I have been hearing is that men cannot be feminists. This is false because feminism advocates for the equality of the sexes. Feminists believe that men do not have to be very strong and the ones always providing, economically. Basically, they believe that women can be strong so that men do not have to be. So of course, men can be feminists. If they believe that women and men are equal, then they are a feminist. Feminism does not have a gender.

On the other hand, another rumor that has been up in the air is that feminists hate men. This is not true either. As I said earlier, feminists believe in equality, not the superiority of one gender.

Singer Ariana Grande once said, “It’s not about being above men, it’s about being equal to men.” The most extreme rumor I have heard is that all feminists are “feminazis,” which is not just false but offensive. “Feminazi” is a term that came about when people related feminism to Hitler’s nazi regime. This is a horrible term that should never be used. When people begin to call feminists “feminazis,” that is when political correctness goes down the drain and people begin to fight. I have even seen this kind of conflict happen at Buckley. Unfortunately, this myth is probably the one that will not die out.

Feminism has become a widespread movement when the #MeToo movement came about. The #MeToo movement is a grassroots movement in which women are able to speak up about being sexually harassed or abused. This movement really took off when hundreds of women rallied together to speak up about being sexually abused by well-known figures in power such as Harvey Weinstein and Bill Cosby. If it were not for the #MeToo movement, many of these accused perpetrators might have gone continued, unrecognized and unpunished. The #MeToo movement has created a safe space for women and men to speak up about being sexually victimized without fearing retaliation. In the end, feminism is a movement that encourages people to challenge old stereotypes and treat everyone with the same respect.
The Fair: Here or At the Pier

by Tess Miller ’23 and Eva Abrego ’22

From the controversy of the fair location here at Buckley on Gilley Field or the Santa Monica Pier, the Buckley fair has never been set in one location. There are benefits and difficulties with both locations when considering which one is better or worse. From riding on the Gravitron to the roller coaster at the Pier, both locations create an enjoyable environment for all ages even if one location may benefit one age group more than the other.

For the 85th anniversary of Buckley, the school decided to bring the fair back to Gilley Field where it used to be until it changed in 2015. From food to rides, the Buckley fair was all-out amazing, but was it better than the Santa Monica pier? Here at Gilley this year, we were accommodated with rides, food trucks, and games which could be speculated as better or worse than the pier. Here at Buckley, there is a sense of community and safety that people—and most of all the parents—feel when coming to the fair. With this sense of safety, parents are more lenient about letting their young ones go off on their own during the fair. “We have never sold out the parent lounge before, people were begging us to sell more tickets,” said Adriana Abrego, Parent Association Treasurer. Unlike the fair at Buckley, at the Pier parents felt compelled to watch their children because it was perceived as more hectic and unsafe. With fewer rides and a sense of thrill at Gilley, the fair appealed to the younger side of Buckley such as kids in the lower grades of K - 5th. Even with this, 46% of students at Buckley preferred the fair here at Buckley than at the Santa Monica Pier, according to a Junior Voice poll. When the fair is at Buckley, it feels more enclosed because it’s on campus, and the rides are nowhere near as professional as the ones at the Pier. Additionally, the tickets for the fair at Buckley were more expensive: $75 online and $95 at the door. Some people can’t afford to pay almost $100 to play some games and go on rides for a few hours.

We also have to to consider that the Santa Monica Pier appeals to the upper schoolers. The huge rides, the beach, and the unfamiliar yet familiar landscape all appeal to older students. They can enjoy the exhilarating, big rides, and can roam around wherever they want. At the Santa Monica Pier, the price is a lot cheaper as the general admission for the Pier was $55 for a better variety of rides and roller coasters. Going to the Santa Monica Pier for the fair is somewhere different and exciting where you can hang out with your friends from school and enjoy the fair without having to be at school. But with all of that said, both fairs are a great experience and an amazing time to hang out with your friends no matter where you are—we are grateful to be able to enjoy spending time with our friends and family during the spring.
Passion Projects
by Avery Bergman ’22

Has there ever been something you really wanted to do but have never found the time? While some people may not feel this way, according to a spring survey by *The Junior Voice*, 65% of middle schoolers report not having enough time to pursue a passion. The 19 students who have participated in Passion Projects this year have been able to spend an entire year doing something that they enjoy. Whether it is starting a business or learning more about something you’re interested, Passion Projects are a great way to do something that you are super passionate about.

Middle school is a stressful time for many students. Balancing homework and extracurricular activities is already super hard. Adding your own interests that you want to pursue do not fit in to many students’ busy schedules. Passion Projects is an amazing program because it is a designated time in your schedule to work on things you enjoy. There are no grades and it is a great way to do things you have always wanted to do but never had time. In May, 8th graders who participate in Passion Projects participate in an expo where they get to share everything they have accomplished. Not only did they have a Powerpoint presentation to share what they did, but they also displayed their work in a booth to tell people more about their projects. Here are just a few examples of the amazing projects that were done this year.

Annabelle Rowe ’22 and Ava Tartakovsky ’22 created a design company called Empire Designs. Through the company, they want to “encourage, empower, and inspire people to follow their dreams and do what they want to do,” says Rowe. Their initial passion project was to make band aids with medicine inside to heal mosquito bites. They realized that this could take years to make and decided to save it for applied sciences. While changing projects mid-year was a big obstacle, they are both really excited about Empire and can not wait to expand it! Another amazing project was done by Manning Haskal ’22. He chose to “build a game space behind the CCA with a bunch of games made from mostly recycled or donated materials.” He chose to do this because of his love for building.
Haskal thought that Passion Projects was a great opportunity to do something he enjoys especially since he usually would not have time due to his busy schedule.

Cosmo Callaway ’22 built a “PC for the low price of... free.” While this was something he had always wanted to do, he did not have enough money in his budget to buy all the parts to build a computer so he got parts from Craigslist, his friends, his friends’ parents, and anywhere else he could get them. Although he went through many hurdles with the computer, he finally completed it.

There are many students who decided to do projects involving music. One of these students was Kyle McCutchen ’22. He composed music through the program Ableton. “I chose to do this because I have always loved music and I was originally introduced to music composition in a class last year. Then, I met a kid who wanted to teach more about Ableton, and basically everything started there,” McCutchen says. One of the biggest obstacles he faced was when his computer broke and he wasn’t able to work on his songs for 3 weeks. Once his computer was fixed, he was able to finish his songs.

Another project that involved music was done by Ella Bergeron ’22. She wrote her own songs and made music videos for them. For her first song, she filmed at school with a bunch of help from her friends. For her other song, she filmed the video during her trip to London and Paris. Eliana Stanford ’22 is one more student who did an amazing project. She chose to research tiny houses. “I always wanted a treehouse when I was younger, but my parents told me that I couldn’t because there were no trees in our backyard that were stable enough to support a treehouse, so they told I should look into alternative options. That’s when I found tiny houses,” Stanford says. Since she could not really do much work during the Passion Project exploratory, she veered towards researching instead of actually building a tiny house.

During the May 22nd Passion Project Expo, students shared all the projects that they did with a slideshow that revealed their journey and all the obstacles they faced. For the second part of the expo, there were booths set up by each student where people could learn more about projects. Empire Designs as well as Dakota Goldberg ’22 decided to sell things that they had made at their booths. Eliana Stanford showed the size of a tiny house so that it could be put into perspective. Nicole Nishimori ’22 and Ryan Sellers ’22 who started “Cookology” gave out tons of their awesome desserts. Finally, Manning Haskal had all of his games out so that anyone could try playing them. In conclusion, Passion Projects was a success and could not have been done without the amazing, creative, and supportive advisors Mr. Sacon and Ms. Convoy.
Amber

A short story by Austin Gillespie '23

Silence. For the first time in his life, Michael heard silence -- true silence. There was nothing but darkness and a sense of solitude. Then there was a bright light. All of a sudden, Michael snapped awake to the bright California sunlight bleeding through the curtains. He looked up hoping to see the familiar hardwood paneling of his brother's upper bunk, but it was gone. He was sitting in the room by himself. If only his brother were still there...

After sitting to think for a minute or two, he got dressed. He looked over to the box of toys that he and his brother had had so much fun playing with when they were little. He looked down from his second floor window over his yard, which was bathed in the shade of the big valley oak with the rope swing on it. He smiled and tuned out reality. The sounds of the city slowly faded out and were replaced with sounds of laughter. Now Michael was standing outside, barefoot, watching himself playing with his brother on the Slip'n Slide their aunt brought for the 4th of July party. Everything was in a slightly distorted amber color, but the emotion stayed boldly apparent: Happiness.

"Honey! Breakfast is ready," his mom called from downstairs. It interrupted his reverie.

"Be there in a second," he replied, automatically. Michael missed his brother, who was his only good friend. Usually, Joseph was the one who made the family breakfast on the weekends. But now they were so far away from each other. He was thousands of miles away -- in England, a foreign place, a far-off land. Joseph was at St. Charlie's School for Boys, in the English countryside. Michael had only seen pictures of the school, and it looked like a castle, with winding stone staircases and a grand, marble entrance hall. There was no Internet at the school, and the next holiday was Christmas, which was still four months away. Joseph's only method of contact was writing letters, of which the family had only received two. "Michael, it's going to get cold if you don't come down here," his mother said.

"Coming!" Michael dashed down the stairs. He smiled when he saw the beautiful breakfast laid out before him. He took a bite of bacon before shoveling the scrambled eggs into his mouth.

"Mmmm. Thith ith great! Thankth mom," he said, through a mouthful of food.

"Thorrry," Michael said, and gulped down the rest of his breakfast with some orange juice.

"Honey, we have a great idea for you," she said. "Your grandparents just bought a new house in Maine. How would you like to go and stay with them for a few days?"

"That sounds great!"

"I'll tell them you said that," his mother said, smiling.

****

"What would you like to drink, hon? We've got Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, Fanta, Ginger Ale, Root Beer, and whiskey," the flight attendant asked him with a wink.

"Just some Ginger Ale please," Michael said.

"Sure thing." She scooped ice into a cup and handed him the can. "Here you go."

"Thanks," Michael said, as she continued pushing the cart down the aisle. He took a sip, tasting the snap of ginger and the smooth bubbles. He looked out the window and saw a luminous orange sunset over Nevada, and began to drift off. He woke up to a pale pink sunrise as he flew over a small town in the woods. As he shook himself awake, the heavyset woman next to him, who was wearing a crisp black nun's habit, asked him where he was headed.

"To visit my grandparents," he said, stumbling a little. She was soft-spoken and seemed pleasant, but her question had caught him off-guard.

"That's wonderful," she said. After a moment she added, "Why are you all alone?"
“I usually fly with my brother, but he’s away until Christmas.” Michael caught his breath. “I really miss him,” he said.

“That’s a shame,” the nun said softly. “Well, I hope you have a good time at your grandparent’s house.”

They sat quietly, enveloped by the dull roar of the plane. Suddenly, the PA crackled to life, and the flight attendant announced, “Please fasten your seatbelts; return your seat-backs and tray-tables to their full upright and locked positions. We will be landing shortly. Have a good day.”

*****

“Michael, would you mind passing me the silver paint?” his grandfather asked.


“I suspect you’ve got a bit of jetlag, but please pass the silver paint, there on your left,” his grandfather repeated.

Michael passed the paint and watched as his grandfather stroked the brush around the cockpit to make it look metallic. He washed the brush and then dipped it in black paint before passing it to Michael. “For the finishing touch, Michael, just paint N55063 onto the tail,” he said.

Michael carefully wrote the number onto the vertical stabilizer and then leaned back to appreciate his handiwork.

“Nicely done,” his grandfather said. The plane was modeled after a Piper Cub and was bright yellow. It had a gas motor and a remote control.

“Shall we take it out for a spin?” his grandfather asked.

“Indeed, Captain!” Michael saluted his grandfather, and then grabbed the gas can from the red workbench to fuel the plane. They carried the plane outside into the late afternoon sun and started the engine. Michael asked his grandfather for a lesson on using the controls, and in a minute had the plane up in the air. As he was guiding the plane in for a landing, a boy who looked about Michael’s age rode up on a bicycle.

“Cool plane you’ve got!” he said. He stopped his bike and balanced it against his right leg. “My name’s Freddie,” he said. “Would I be able to try flying?”

Michael looked up to his grandfather for approval and then nodded. “Sure,” he said. “My name’s Michael, but you can call me Mike.” He handed Freddie the controller.

Freddie turned the plane down the road and opened the throttle. The plane scooted down the runway and lifted off. For a minute, Freddie flew the plane around slowly. Then he began a steep climb and guided the plane into a loopy-loop high in the late afternoon sky before leveling off.

“Wow, that’s a neat trick, son!” Michael’s granddad called out.

“There’s more,” Freddie said, grinning. He aimed the plane at them, and then sped up. As the plane rocketed towards them, he flipped it upside down and flew by just inches above their heads. Then he banked it into a turn and cut the engine. It glided into a landing.

“Whoa! That was awesome!” Michael said. He looked in astonishment from the plane to Freddie’s grinning face.

“Want to come over sometime?” Freddy said. “I live two houses down that way.” He pointed to his left, across the field.

Michael raised his right hand and popped his thumb upward.

“Then I’ll see you later,” Freddie said. He hopped back onto his bike. He pushed off and began pedaling down the road. Michael watched him ride off. He had some sensation in his chest that felt so familiar, like he was walking into his own house, surrounded by everything he knew. The sun had begun dropping in the sky. It cast long shadows, and colored everything around him with a sort of amber hue.
Banner Maker

A short story by Audrey Gutierrez '23

The day so far has been normal. I wasn’t introduced to the class because I was new, like movies would lead you to believe. As I walk down the cold hallway, I clutch my sketchbook to my chest with my head down as people are yelling and banging on lockers. They’re all so excited for lunch.

I get to the cafeteria as the smell of cheap pizza fills the room. I look for a table, preferably away from everyone. I see one in the back corner, with no one sitting in it. I quickly move over there and sit down. The hard plastic is cold and a faded mint green color. I realize I forgot to buy my lunch. I’ll get it in a few minutes. Meanwhile I open my half-full sketchbook and start drawing. It’s a silhouette of a man and woman dancing in front of the Eiffel Tower. The woman is being lifted up by her waist. I continue to draw when all of a sudden I hear a voice on my right say, “Wow, that’s really good! Did you draw that?”

I look up to see three girls standing over me. They were obviously the popular girls. I want to say to them “No, I just like to pretend I can draw,” But that would be rude. I don’t want to make anyone mad.

“Y-yeah, I did,” I reply.

“How do you do that?” the same girl says, grabbing my sketchbook, “I can’t even draw a stick figure.”

“Well I have been drawing all my —” I’m cut off as I reach for my sketchbook.

“You should make the banner for the fall dance!” She says, annoyingly cheery.

“Yeah!” Another girl chimes in, her obnoxious pink hair in a braid. “The theme’s ‘A Night in Paris.’ This drawing would be perfect!”

“Please do it!” The shortest one says as she hops excitedly, her hair pulled back with a pink clip.

“Uh, sure. I guess I’ll do it,” I respond, just wanting them to go away.

“Yay! The first meeting is after school today in room A-105. Don’t be late!” The first girl says as they walk off and drop my sketchbook back on the table. She’s definitely the leader of the group, no doubt about it. The other 2 are just her lackies. Like the hyenas from The Lion King.

Suddenly the bell rings, telling the school that we have 5 minutes until class starts. It didn’t feel like that long. I quickly buy a muffin and speed walk to my next class.

***

After the final bell rings and I go to A-105. I look in the room through the window and open the door. It’s a madhouse in there. Everyone is yelling gossip, “Did you hear that Mike is dating Sam now!” Someone shouts.

“I know! They are so not good for each other!” Another responds. There’s so much drama for the first day. I find the three girls from lunch. I found out that the leader was Reneesme. I think her parents googled ‘most annoying girl names’. The pink-haired one is Britney, and the shorter one is Tiffany.

“So uh, what should I do?” I ask the three. They seem surprised that I’m here for a second before realizing who I was.

“Oh! You! Ok so, we have that big banner over there,” Reneesme says, pointing to a blank white banner, “We need you to do that drawing you were doing at lunch, but on there.” Britney shoves pens, markers, and paint into my hand, “Have fun!” Britney says, and they turn around and continue to talk. I leave them be and walk over to the banner on the ground. I drop everything
down and pull out my sketchbook. I open it to the silhouette drawing and take one of the pencils they gave me. I begin to try to draw on the banner, keeping my head down, when I feel a hand on my shoulder.

"Yo," A girl stands there, watching over me as I draw. She crouches down next to me, smiling, "That's really good, I could never do silhouettes."

"Oh, thanks," I reply as I reach to pull my sketchbook closer to me, expecting the girl to grab it.

"I'm Phoenix, weird name, I know."

"I'm Ari, nice to meet you." She stops crouching and sits next to me.

"Did those three bring you here?" She nods her head towards Reneesme, Britney, and Tiffany.

"Y-yeah. Why do you ask?"

"I've never seen you here before, and you don't seem like the type of person to join the dance committee on the first day of school," Phoenix says, jokingly.

"They came to me at lunch when they saw me drawing," I reply as I finish up the woman's dress.

"What were you drawing?"

"This picture," I point to my sketchbook.

"Nice. One second," she gets up and grabs her things. She sits back down next to me, "I'm making posters. Those three really like to advertise. I have to make at least 20 per hall," Phoenix says sarcastically. We chuckle, then she says, "It's not much of an exaggeration though."

We talk and draw for the rest of the time. Once we're done Phoenix invites me over to her house. I text my mom to make sure it's ok, and we start walking.

***

"Then here's my room," Phoenix says as she opens the door to her room. The walls are a pale mint blue, but you can barely see the walls underneath all of the posters for shows, mostly anime along with drawings and pride flags. She flops onto her bed and gestures for me to sit. I sit down in a lavender bean bag.

"I like your room," I say, looking around. I mean it, but I feel like she might think I don't like her room.

"Thanks I just repainted it a year ago. What you want to do?" She asks. I take another quick look around and notice a drum set in the corner.

"You play the drums?!" I ask over-excited. Phoenix stands up and walks over to the drums.

"Yeah, want me to play something?" She sits down behind the drumset, and puts in earplugs. She offers me some, but I decline. Right as she is about to start playing, my phone buzzes. Phoenix takes out the earplugs.

"Who is it?" She asks me.

"I don't know, do you?" I reply. She takes my phone and looks at the number.

"Oh, that's Reneesme. She must have found your number on the dance committee list. What does she want?"

"She says she wants to get to know me more. She sent a list of questions. What's my favorite color, band, celebrity, type of music, and... who's my crush?"

"What are you gonna say?" She asks me, getting excited.

"Answer honestly, I guess. What would you do?"

"I don't know, she never did that with me?" She says. I reply to the text and make her a contact. My reply is,

Ari: Green, don't have one, don't have one, whatever I find on Youtube, I don't have a crush. Reneesme: Really? You don't like anyone? Everyone likes someone.
Ari: I haven’t been at the school long enough to like anyone.
Reneesme: You have to at least think one of the guys is cute, who is it?
Ari: I don’t think any of the guys are cute.
Reneesme: Ok, come sit with us at lunch, we’ll help you find someone. (;

“What should I do?” I ask Phoenix.
“Sit with them tomorrow! I’ll sit nearby and listen to everything!” She responds. “All you have to do is play along. Those three talk so much that you’ll barely have to say anything.”
“Oh, I’ll do it!” I say. I hope this goes well.
For the rest of the day we hang out. We play some video games, watch videos, and other random things that we felt like doing. I head home and get some sleep.

***

The next day at lunch I sit down with Reneesme, Brittany, and Tiffany. They talk about boys as I doodle on my hand and suddenly they turn to me and Reneesme asks, “So, are you sure there’s no one you like?”
“Yeah, I don’t like anyone,” I tell them as my head slowly lowers, getting closer to my food. They look around at everyone then Reneesme says, “Look at him,” she points to one of the jocks, “He’s cute, right?”
“I guess, I don’t know?” I say as this conversation gets even more awkward.
“You should ask him out!” Tiffany squeals.
“How about this,” Brittany says, leaning in to us, “We’ll get him to join the dance committee, that way you can get to know him. Then you ask him out!”
“He’ll do anything if I ask him,” Reneesme says as she stands and walks over to the jocks. It looks like she’s flirting with him, but what is flirting when you’re in middle school? She returns and says, “Good news. He’s going to join the dance committee, and he wants to get to know you.”
“Cool. I guess I’ll get to know him,” I say, looking down even more as I feel my face turn red. I hope no one notices.
“Oh! Ari, are you blushing? You two are going to be so cute together!” Tiffany says. Someone noticed. Tiffany continues, “This is going to be so fun!”
It’s not going to be fun.

***

“What?!! They really want to set you up with Xander!” Phoenix screams so loud that people’s heads turn in the hall. “He’s the captain of the Middle School football team. He is the most stereotypical jock there can be!”
“I know. They didn’t ask me if I want this. They just did it.” I reply to her as we get to the door. “What should I do?”
Phoenix looks through the window of the door, thinking. She looks back at me and asks, “Would it be ok, if you played along? I know it may be weird but, no one ever gets to talk to them, much less actually be their friend. Would that be ok?”
“I, um, yeah! Let’s do it!” I say and push open the door. Phoenix and I look at each other, Phoenix winks at me and we go to different sides of the room.
“Hey Ari!” Reneesme calls to me, “This is Xander! He’s going to help you with the banner! You two have fun!” They push Xander towards me and walk away. As they leave us, Britney whispers in my ear, “You’ll be cute together.” I look up at Xander, he looks down at me, smirking. I turn away and walk to the banner lying on the ground.
“Let’s get to work,” I tell him, kneeling down and picking up a sharpie. I go over the pencil lines I had drawn the other day with the sharpie. “What do you want me to do?” Xander asks, whatever he says sounds like he’s flirting. “Just paint those sections for me,” I point to the large sections of the silhouette. He seems annoyed that I’m giving him something to do and not flirting back with him. “Ok, but just for you,” He says, even more annoying than before. I don’t say anything, not wanting the conversation to go on any longer. I look up at Phoenix, she winks at me and I smile back. The hour and a half seem to last forever, it feels more like 5 hours. When we’re done Phoenix and I go to her house and do our homework. We laugh about Xander the whole time.

***

Over the next two weeks Xander kept flirting with me. We had finished the banner and I hoped he would leave the dance committee but he didn’t. People are now asking each other to the dance like they’re going to prom. I don’t understand how people are in relationships at our age. Only a year ago everyone thought that everyone was gross and that they had a shot at marrying celebrities. I had told Phoenix all of this before.

We’re walking to lunch and talking about how I got into all of this. “I still can’t believe that on the first day of school you sit down in the corner of the cafeteria and Reneesme comes over to you and asks you to join the fall dance committee! That’s insane!” Phoenix says, replaying all of the first day.

“I know. I just wanted to stay by myself this year and now they want to set up me and Xander,” I reply, speaking softer than Phoenix ever has. She stops for a second then says, ”Wait, I forgot I have to go talk to a teacher.” She starts to run off saying, “See you in a few minutes!” That leaves me alone in the hallway. I start walking again when someone gets in front of me, leaning on the wall, “Hey cutie.” I don’t need to look up to know who it is.

“Hi Xander,” I say, not looking up at him.

“The dance is coming up in a few weeks,” He continues.

“I know. I just wanted to stay by myself this year and now they want to set up me and Xander,” I reply, speaking softer than Phoenix ever has. She stops for a second then says, ”Wait, I forgot I have to go talk to a teacher.” She starts to run off saying, “See you in a few minutes!” That leaves me alone in the hallway. I start walking again when someone gets in front of me, leaning on the wall, “Hey cutie.” I don’t need to look up to know who it is.

“Hi Xander,” I say, not looking up at him.

“The dance is coming up in a few weeks,” He continues.

“I know, I’m on the dance committee,” I’m speaking in a way that would make it obvious that I’m annoyed, but he doesn’t seem to pick up on that. I try to step around him but he blocks me. I spot Reneesme, Brittany, and Tiffany standing at the door to the cafeteria. They give me a thumbs up as they smile at me. I look back at Xander.

“So, you wanna go with me?” He asks.

“What?” I ask, very confused.

“Do you want to go to the dance with me?” He says again. The girls are still smiling at me. Reneesme mouths to me, “Go on! Do it!” They look so excited about this. Like they were actually my friends.

“Come on honey,” he says, and I feel like he’s getting closer to me. I can feel the world beginning to close around me as he takes a step closer again.

“I-um-“ I stutter. If I say no then they’ll be mad at me, but I don’t like him. He acts like he’s the best thing to happen to the world. Xander takes yet another step closer.

“N-no,” I manage to say.

“What did you say to me?”

“No. I don’t want to go to the dance with you. We barely know each other and the dance is more a reason to get kids off our phones for an hour. This isn’t prom!”

“It is for us. Why wouldn’t you want to go with me. We know each other. You should be grateful that I would ask you,” he starts to walk away when he turns to me and says, “I guess Reneesme was right about you being gay.”

I freeze, “What?”

“She said you were probably gay, but I didn’t want to believe it.”
“I am,” I mumble.

“Pft- of course you are. To bad, we could’ve been cute together,” he walks off. Xander and the girls go and sit down together in the cafeteria.

All of a sudden I feel someone’s arms around me.

“I’m so happy!” Phoenix says as she tightens her grip on me. She turns me around and puts her hands on my shoulders.

“You’re fine with me being g-”

“Of course I am! I’m gay too, along with almost everyone I hang out with. Come on, let’s get some lunch,” She pulls me along into the cafeteria. As she introduces me to all of her friends, I can feel the worries of this year melt off my shoulders. It seems like I won’t have a repeat of last year.
Editorial Staff Writers
Middle School Journalism Elective

Eva Abrego ‘22
Avery Bergman ‘22
Orlando Berry ‘23
Sophia Joseph ‘22
Steffan Gilani ‘23
Elle Kaveh ‘22
Adrien Liu ‘22
Rafaela Martinian ‘22
Natalie Martin ‘22
Tess Miller ‘23
Megan Moradi ‘23
Elika Shirazi ‘23
Bo Watts ‘23
Charlie Weingarten ‘22
Chloe Williams ‘23
Madison Williams ‘22

Photo collage by Avery Bergman

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nicky Schildkraut