



# INTO THE FUTURE



## Congratulations, Seniors

by **MICHAEL RETAKH,**  
**OP-ED EDITOR**

The end of the school year is always framed around senior events, both school-sanctioned and not: Senior Sunrise, Senior Barbecue, yearbook signings, visits to the elementary schools, Senior Assassin and the feared senior prank. These events are certainly important and offer students much needed time of leisure and farewells.

But oftentimes, the busy calendar obscures the humanity of the graduating class. The big events are often remembered; the little ones are not. Through thirteen years in the same school district, growing up side-by-side, the senior class has forged countless relationships, each of which contain countless memories. It's the interstitial parts of life — as Mr. Oatis, advisor of *Kaleidoscope*, tells his classes — that truly matter.

So as we close out another year, as we say farewell to another graduating class, we at *Kaleidoscope* would like to take a moment to recognize the entire Ward Melville Class of 2025, whether they are close friends or simply someone we pass in the hallway. We would like to remember every

day of their Three Village experiences, whether it was the day of a stressful exam, a holiday party or just another Tuesday.

This send-off would also not be complete without a special word of thanks to the senior members of *Kaleidoscope*, and especially our editors-in-chief Oliver Wu and Claire Sloniewsky. They have been models of diligence, patience and camaraderie, and they will not be forgotten. They have taught us all so much, directly and indirectly, and their legacy and inspiration will live on for many more editions. We wish them all the best at Princeton and University of South California, respectively. We know that they will make those schools a better place, just like they did with *Kaleidoscope*.

by **THE WARD  
MELVILLE  
KALEIDOSCOPE**

At the end of last school year, *Kaleidoscope* was in a tight spot. Membership was dwindling, and the club made it through the year largely due to the efforts of our 2023-24 editor-in-chief, Sana Khan. She made our print editions possible, staying up most nights to accomplish the feat.

However, the club has quickly revitalized itself. An influx of new and enthusiastic writers, coupled with never-ending dedication from our board members, helped us get back on our feet, and stronger than ever before.

This year, we managed to release four print editions, and this

edition, at 28 pages, is our longest ever. This year, among many other endeavors, we interviewed congressional candidates, profiled local businesses, covered the ongoing restoration of the Stony Brook Mill Pond and argued about AI and cell phone policies.

We sincerely thank everyone who made this great year possible. We want to thank the generous parents and organizations who helped to finance this edition with senior congratulations and ads. We'd like to thank all the writers and editors and designers of this newspaper, and everyone who reads it. Most of all, we would like to thank our incredible advisor, Mr. Oatis, who devotes hours every day to *Kaleidoscope*. Enjoy reading, and have a great summer!

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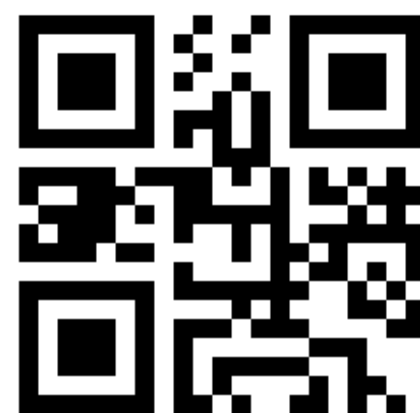
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# Reflections From A First Year Principal

by ALEXANDRA COTLET,  
NEWS EDITOR

The 2024-25 academic year was Mr. Holownia’s first year as principal of Ward Melville High School. To gain insight into his experiences, *Kaleidoscope* sat down with Mr. Holownia. He shared his thoughts on what surprised him, what he’s most proud of and what he hopes to accomplish in the years to come.

## ***Kaleidoscope:* What has been the most rewarding part of your first year at Ward Melville?**

Mr. Holownia: Starting to build relationships and getting to know the fantastic students, the staff, the teachers and all the people that work here in the community has been a nice welcome home. It's also rewarding to get reacclimated, to see where Ward Melville has come since I left as a student in ‘99 and to be a part of this journey moving forward.

## **What are some moments that stood out to you this year?**

There have been a lot of firsts: the first spirit week, the first homecoming — a lot of all those different things. The receptions for all the state championship teams that came back and having the fire department spraying the hoses — those opportunities to celebrate students have all been big and truly wonderful moments. I love getting to see students doing what they love to do.

## **How would you describe the school culture here at Ward Melville?**

I don't want to just use a word like wonderful. It’s true, but that description is almost bland. We are a very high-performing school. I don't just mean academically; we are high-performing in many different ways. Of course we are high-performing academically, but there's a culture of pushing each other up to succeed. There's a ton of athletic success and in all of our extracurriculars like Science Olympiad, DECA or the academic quiz bowl team. There’s excellence everywhere you look, so I think there's definitely a culture of excellence. That comes from hard-working students, a supportive and involved community, parents and, of course, the teachers who are working with students every day.

## **What has been one of the biggest challenges you’ve faced this year?**

Going back to the idea of how much I enjoy getting to know people and building those relationships, it's such a big place. There are so many people here. One of the biggest challenges is getting to know as many people as I possibly can, even something like learning names. I'm only a year in and I'd love to know everybody here, but I'm just not there yet. I probably never will be. But it certainly has been a good challenge for me.

## **Have there been any decisions or situations that have helped you grow as a leader?**

I think every day about the decisions and situations that you learn from. It's this idea of being a lifelong learner. I'm always reflecting on what happened the day before, the week before, and how I handled the situation, whether it concerned an individual or a group. I'm always trying to learn from those instances. I wouldn't say it's necessarily one thing. I think it's the accumulation of all of that reflection and always looking to grow and learn from every situation. It’s certainly helped that I’ve been able to rely on other, more experienced administrators — picking their brains and learning from their experiences to help me grow as a leader.

## **After a full year, how do you see Ward Melville's strengths and what areas are you focused on improving?**

I think the strength of Ward Melville is the very active and involved community; you get a tremendous amount of support from it. Students strive for success in all different areas. It’s great to see, certainly, the culture of excellence I spoke about earlier. This community helps to bring people along to rise to that culture and to that expectation.

Another thing I’d love to see is students trying new things. I think we sometimes get intimidated by that culture of excellence and students tend to get very focused in one or two areas, and I would love to see students trying out more things and taking steps outside of their comfort zone. We have so many elective opportunities here and so many different departments. I would love to see students branching out and trying out new things while they’re here in high school. It’s a great time in your life where you might have some of that freedom and that ability, and it’s just as important to try something new and find out that you love it as it is to try something new and find out that it’s really not for you. Both experiences are valuable and Ward Melville is a great place to be able to explore those things.

## **Is there anything you’ve started this year that you hope to build on in the future?**

One that comes to my mind right away is called the Green and Gold Awards, an initiative we started this year. It’s a new award this year given to students — it’s voted on by the entire staff, and it’s an opportunity for the staff to nominate deserving students. It’s a type of award that people don’t even know they are competing for. It’s about who embodies what it means to be a patriot: who has a positive impact on the school community every day, who has strong character and who just simply makes being at Ward Melville a better place with what they bring to the table every day. It’s not an award that's always meant for the student with the highest GPA or the greatest athletic performance — it’s for students who are consistently upstanding, wonderful people and who have a positive impact on their peers and on the school as a whole. They’re recognized by the staff for that, and those students who are chosen have an opportunity to turn around and recognize the staff members that have had the biggest and most positive impact on them. It’s just a great way to honor the hard work of students who might not otherwise get that recognition.

## **What’s something you’ve learned from students this year?**

I’ve been so impressed by students’ passion this year. Students have shown me, in so many different facets and so many areas, how passionate they are about the things that they are pursuing. Whether it’s their extracurriculars, clubs, classes, athletics or their music performance, they always bring energy and enthusiasm. Their passion helps me to stay motivated and keeps me energized to do this job. After all, students are why we are here, and to see how dedicated they are is a really wonderful thing. I look back at myself as a high school student, and I think I pale in comparison to the passion that students have shown me this year.

## **If you could go back and give yourself one piece of advice before starting this job, what would it be?**

I would tell myself to celebrate the little things as they come up. Sometimes we can lose focus on all the little victories that happen. We get focused on the big things, the big events, the big moments. Trying to shift that focus a little bit, to celebrate those little wins, those small moments that are actually big moments in the students’ and staff's lives, is definitely something to improve on.



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## Three Village Prepares for District Restructuring

by **ARIEL BASSIS** and **MICHAEL RETAKH**,  
STAFF WRITER and  
OP-ED EDITOR

In February 2023, the Three Village Central School District sent out a wide-ranging survey to parents, staff, students and community members. In a series of questions, participants were asked to provide feedback on four different district structures.

To the outside observer, this survey may have come as a surprise. In reality, it was the culmination of a multi-year effort to change the structure of Three Village. The district had long been an outlier by keeping the ninth grade in the middle schools and the sixth grade in the elementary schools. By 2019, concerns from some in the district about this structure, as well as about the start times, led the district to create a Strategic Planning Committee. Even after this breakthrough, work was stymied, first by the COVID-19 pandemic and later by various logistical hurdles.

More than two years after the survey showed overwhelming support among the Three Village community for a more conventional school structure, and one year behind the initial schedule, the district is officially acting to reshape and remodel the educational landscape. To align with New York State standards, they are undertaking a reconfiguration of the current grade system that will have sixth graders moving up to the middle schools and ninth graders moving up to Ward Melville starting in the 2025-26 academic year.

One of the primary issues with the current configuration was the limited opportunities provided to ninth graders in electives, clubs, and even interaction with older and more experienced peers. James Lindsay, an eighth grade student at Gelinass Junior High School, made this mindset clear, saying, “I’ve enjoyed my two years at Gelinass, but the high school is everything we have and more. ... It’s going to be nice to have four years of full opportunities.”

This will be particularly true for students interested in Art, Technology, or English, three departments that offer many electives exclusively at Ward Melville. Students will also be given the opportunity to play in more advanced ensembles through the Music

Department, and they will be able to begin multi-year academic tracks, such as Ward Melville’s Computer Science courses, a year earlier.

Joanna Cadolino, the English Department chair, wrote that, “the incorporation of the 9th grade will allow students to take more English electives, such as Comics and the Graphic Novel.” She also mentioned expanded access to “English run activities outside of the classroom such as *Kaleidoscope*, *Cinnabar*, and the National English Honors Society.” For math, department chair Rocco Vetro said, “At Murphy and Gelinass, we have Geometry Honors and Geometry Theory, but we don’t have Geometry Regents. Now, the ninth graders can get any class that’s best for them.”

Also in the math department, there are usually several ninth graders who take AP Calculus BC at the high school before returning to the junior high for their other classes. With restructuring, eighth graders who meet qualifications will have the opportunity to take Algebra 2 at the high school, as the course will no longer be offered at the middle schools, but the district will not provide transportation between schools for those students.

The lives of student-athletes will also become easier, as they will no longer have to take a daily shuttle to Ward Melville to participate. Lawrence Sun, a ninth grade student at Murphy, told *Kaleidoscope*, “I wish [the restructuring] came sooner. ... It was incredibly difficult to balance a high-commitment sport at the high school and my clubs at the middle school.” This particular change will also benefit non-athletes, as the district will save nearly half a million dollars by not running these buses.

Another reason for the restructuring was the difficulty of interdepartmental communication, particularly between ninth and 10th grade teachers. This issue was most acute in the Social Studies Department. Many students learn world history over two years, beginning in ninth grade and ending in 10th. In the current configuration, it was difficult for the world history teachers to coordinate their curricula. With the new configuration, “it will be wonderful to have all of our [world history] teachers together in the same building. ... This will further support our efforts to create a cohesive and connected social studies program,” said Dr. Christina Cone, the chair of the Social Studies Department. Thomas Worthington, one of the history teachers moving up from Gelinass, said, “I am looking forward to

[next year]. As one era ends, ... a new one begins.”

Sixth grade students will also benefit by moving up to the middle school earlier, not only through the experience of greater independence and departmental specialization, but also through the addition of several new courses. The language department “will be offering an exploratory program for our sixth graders for the first time ... on a A/B day schedule,” said Kerri Golini, the World Language Department Head. Students will also have the opportunity to take two new electives, S.T.A.R.T. (Self-Awareness, Time Management, Achievement, Results, and Teamwork) and S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math).

Nevertheless, a change of this magnitude will necessarily lead to some negative side effects, including logistical difficulties. Because the elementary schools lack the departmentalization of the middle schools, most sixth grade teachers possess a general certificate for grades 1-6. Moving up to the middle schools will require some to pursue an extension or greater specification to their certification.

Some teachers, instead of dealing with this process, are retiring early. Others, such as Anthony Prinzo, a 6th grade teacher at Nassakeag, are going to teach electives such as S.T.A.R.T. Despite the challenges, departments have been able to overcome many of these issues. According to Vetro, in the Math Department, “A group of sixth grade teachers from each of the elementary schools will go to the middle school. All the sixth grade math classes will be taught by sixth grade elementary school teachers.”

Several programs will also be cut throughout the district, at least in part because of the restructuring. The change that has received the most attention and resistance has been the removal of the Intellectually Gifted (IG) program for the fourth grade. Because sixth grade will be at the junior high, fifth grade will be the only remaining grade for the program next school year. When it was announced, students and parents wrote emails to the Board of Education and showed up at meetings to register their disappointment, but to no avail. Teachers have also been unhappy with the change, with Prinzo, who teaches IG, writing, “I wish IG was being offered to 3rd grade and that 4th and 5th would remain.” Linda Earls, a former teacher of the fifth grade IG class, went further, saying, “It’s a real shame. ... The students [who would be in IG] really need to be

together.”

Several other programs will be cut or scaled back due to the departure of the ninth graders from the middle schools. Among these are the Junior Model UN clubs at both Gelinass and Murphy, which are likely going to be eliminated. Lauren Swierupski, a ninth grader at Gelinass and Co-President of the club, made clear the benefits of the club and expressed regret that future students will not be able to participate. She also pointed out how fewer middle school students would be able to “have leadership positions in clubs or other organizations,” thus, “stunting their development.”

The music departments at the middle schools will also be impacted significantly, as the music ensembles and theater programs have heavily relied on ninth grade students in the past. Brendan Meier, the Gelinass band director and theater program advisor, voiced this complaint, saying, “I have grown to really love the unique structure of Three Village. ... As the oldest students in the building, the ninth graders truly flourish and grow in their music ability and confidence. I am sad to see them go.”

The influx of students to the high school must also be grappled with. Despite John Holownia, principal of Ward Melville, making clear that “we’ve had more students [in the past] when the building was smaller than we will next year,” certain changes will be necessitated due to the more stringent security policies existing today. During the years that Holownia was referring to, the school had an open-campus concept, and students were not obligated to take study halls during non-lunch free periods. Neither of these are true anymore, so the school must provide more space. To do so, “the upper locker banks on both sides of the second floor are going to become four different classrooms,” Holownia said. However, despite some rumours, “there will be no combination of departmental offices.”

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about 6% of U.S. public schools operate under non-traditional grade spans. Leaders in these minority districts, and some of those quoted above, often cite reasons and results such as improved academic continuity, better use of physical infrastructure, and expanded access to advanced courses and developmental opportunities. Three Village is about to leave this minority. Only time will tell of the exact nature of the effects.

# Budget Passes as District Prepares for Transition

by TYLER MATUKONIS,  
SCIENCE EDITOR

Each May, residents of the Three Village community head to Ward Melville High School to participate in the school budget vote and board election. With nearly 3,000 ballots cast on Tuesday, May 20, the budget for the next school year was passed. In addition, Amitava Das and incumbent Dr. Stanley Bak were both elected to the Board of Education.

Although the school year begins for students in September, the Board of Education held meetings in July and August 2024 to lay the foundation for their upcoming work. Most notably, the board continued their efforts in restructuring the district. Considering that Three Village is one of the last school districts on Long Island to have ninth grade students attend junior high schools, such a change had been called for by parents and community members for several years.

To account for aspects involved with restructuring such as staffing, transportation and building space, surveys and analyses were performed to assess the feasibility of this change. In an update presented at the March 2025 Board of Education meeting, it was determined that the cost of extra classrooms and offices would amount to approximately \$2 million of the \$3 million in the budget for capital projects for the 2024 to 2025 school year. However, that number was brought down, and the total budget for capital projects was decreased to \$1.5 million to better fit within financial constraints. Additionally, this transition will also allow for improvements to the cost of transportation, leading to savings of up to \$240,000.

Another initiative strongly supported by community members over the past few years has been the changing of school start times at the primary and secondary levels. Currently, Ward Melville High School students begin their first class at 7:05 a.m. In contrast, the National Center for Education Statistics found that the average start time for public high schools was 8:00 a.m. However, it is important to note that while the start time for the high school is significantly below the national average, it is in line with many other schools on the North Shore of Long Island.

Throughout the budget process, it seemed increasingly likely for start times to be pushed back

at the secondary level. A proposal to shift Ward Melville’s starting time to 7:40 a.m. and the junior high schools to 8:15 a.m. had in fact been approved by the Board of Education, with the caveat that it was contingent on the existence of necessary funds. However, the Board of Education ultimately decided not to move forward with this endeavor.

In an interview with Interim Deputy Superintendent Jeffrey Carlson, he highlighted that transportation costs would need to increase by nearly \$1 million for such a change. Additionally, despite the savings of \$983,500 from moving grade levels, an increase in healthcare costs necessitated by national trends had to be considered in allocating money for school start time changes. Although it is currently unclear if start times will be changed for the 2026-2027 school year, Carlson added that “it

this plan, Hochul secured \$13.5 million in the 2026 State Budget to go towards infrastructure for storing smartphones, saying, “This isn’t about being anti-phone or anti-technology — it’s about being pro-childhood. We’re giving students seven hours a day free from distractions so they can focus on learning, access their creativity, and make real human connections.” While Three Village didn’t incorporate storage solutions such as magnetically locked pouches in the current school year, other school districts that did found varying levels of success. As a result, during the May 13 Board of Education meeting, Superintendent Dr. Kevin Scanlon announced that the cell phone committee, which had guided district policy in the past, will be reconvened to explore other options, including the use of lockers.

In addition to funding for

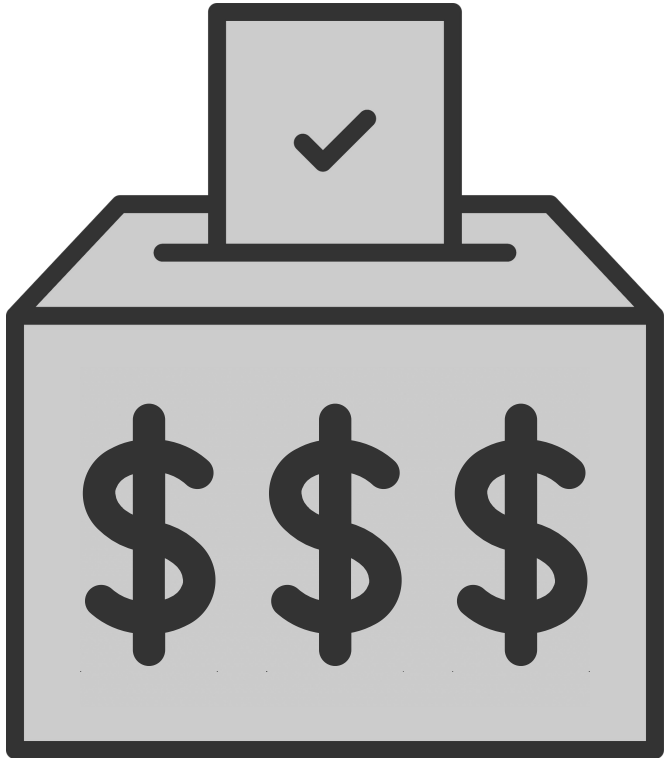
Education meeting, saying, “It’s getting tougher to run clubs with single digit numbers of students at this point in time.”

While the IG program and some co-curricular clubs could not be accounted for in next year’s budget, the Board of Education worked tirelessly to preserve as many programs as possible in a year demanding many changes. For example, during the months leading up to the budget vote, families learned that the music program for third grade students would not be continued for the next year. However, after community members voiced their concerns over the impact this would have on exposing students to the musical arts, this cut was reevaluated. Ultimately, after student performances and a showcase of achievements at music competitions at the May 13 Board of Education meeting, it was announced that the program would be continued. In an email sent to district parents, Dr. Scanlon credited Ms. Ashley Ockner, the Director of Music, with finding a way to maintain third grade music “without an increase to the budget.”

At this point, a finalized proposal was presented to members of the Three Village community. With a budget of \$238,151,502 proposed for the 2025-2026 school year, this represents an increase of \$1,988,547, or 0.84%, from the previous school year. Additionally, the tax levy, or the amount of money the district collects from property taxes to fund the budget, reached \$178,973,738, an increase of \$4,837,466, or 2.78%.

Because the 2.78% increase in the tax levy remained below the state-mandated tax cap, only a simple majority was required to pass the budget. As such, with 1,852 votes for the budget and 1,110 against, the Three Village community was able to pass the budget. Moreover, while they were the only candidates running for the two available positions on the Board of Education, Dr. Stanley Bak and Amitava Das received 2,116 and 1,957 votes, respectively.

Looking ahead, the 2025–2026 school year marks a period of significant change in the Three Village Central School District. With the restructuring of grade levels, shifting school start times, and new state policies, many considerations had to be made in forming a fiscally responsible budget. However, its approval highlights the importance of community participation and collaboration with the Board of Education in guiding decisions that reflect the district’s educational priorities.



is absolutely a goal of the administration and Board of Education to get [school start time changes] into place.”

While many of the decisions related to the budget are guided by the interests of students, staff and community members, some are more closely tied to decisions made by local and state governments. In the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, the Board of Education implemented an updated policy regarding cell phones and other devices. More specifically, a guideline was created for each of the schools detailing the times when such devices can be appropriately utilized. This policy was the district’s own effort to reduce the number of distractions in the classroom, but it has now been forced to go further.

In late April, Governor Kathy Hochul announced that New York State would become the largest state in the nation to require bell-to-bell restrictions on smartphones. As a part of

distraction-free classrooms, New York has also recently become the latest state to offer universal free school lunches. On May 9, Governor Hochul allocated \$340 million for this purpose. As a district which previously did not qualify for providing free meals to all students, this change ensures students have the sustenance to attain good grades in the classroom while alleviating financial stress from families in providing such meals.

Despite improvements to the structure of the district’s schools and the allocation of funds to provide meals, there were some areas where concessions had to be made to follow through with these plans, including the Intellectually Gifted (IG) program and various clubs at the secondary level. Considering that the number of students in Three Village has been decreasing in previous years, the number of participants in clubs has as well. Dr. Scanlon pointed out the effect of this demographic shift during the May 13 Board of



# Debate Over Armed Guards in Schools

by REBECCA MALZ, STAFF WRITER

In October 2024, a Ward Melville student accidentally took their parent’s law enforcement bag to school. The student’s and parent’s backpack appeared similar, and they were next to each other. However, there was one significant difference: this bag had a gun in it. Members of the Three Village community were shocked at the idea that a gun was allowed into school premises so easily. As a result, a variety of reforms have been suggested to the Board of Education to enhance school security, with one of the most notable being to staff armed guards on school property. There are some members of the community who believe that armed guards will make students feel more safe in schools, while others argue that it will only cause more harm.

According to a survey conducted by Three Village of 41 Suffolk County school districts, nine school districts in Suffolk County have already staffed armed guards at their schools, though the district

has not elaborated in detail on the survey. If Ward Melville were to follow these schools, it would already have many of the resources needed to do so. All security guards at Ward Melville have a law enforcement background, which means that they have also been previously trained to use weapons.

There are three potential options that Three Village could utilize: maintaining the status quo, only having armed guards outside the school, or having armed guards both inside and outside of school. Of the nine districts that currently staff armed guards, six of them only have armed guards outside of the school building, two have them inside, and one school district has armed guards both inside and outside of the schools. In the case that Ward Melville were to implement armed guards, it is not yet clear how many armed guards will be present, as the data has not been publicly disclosed.

In response to the October 2024 incident and the demand for further security protections, Three Village integrated new weapon detection technology onto existing security cameras. According to Jack Blaum, the Three Village Security Coordinator, the district installed the ZeroEyes platform into existing cameras, which uses AI to detect potential firearms. After a firearm

is detected, it is sent to a ZeroEyes technician for a human to review before school and local authorities are notified.

In addition, some parents proposed that Three Village increase the number of mental health workers throughout the district to prevent someone from ever considering bringing a gun to school in the first place. However, other members of the community argue that prevention efforts such as mental health workers and upgraded security cameras will not help to fight against immediate threats, but armed guards will. At a February 2025 Board of Education meeting, one parent stated that the discomfort by the presence of armed guards is much safer than enduring “tragedies akin to Sandy Hook.”

On the other hand, there has been some community backlash to the idea of staffing armed guards in Three Village. In December 2024, hundreds of students, parents and community members signed a letter to the Board of Education urging them not to put armed guards in our schools. The letter cited data from the U.S. Department of Justice that found the mortality rate in schools was higher when armed guards were present. Additionally, the letter noted that the October 2024 incident was caused because a parent improperly stored their

firearm and that there were other incidents on Long Island caused by parents irresponsibly storing their weapons, arguing that parental responsibility should be a top priority. Moreover, the letter encouraged the Board of Education to make the decision based on data available from other schools with armed guards rather than the feelings of the community.

In a public comment at the January 2025 Board of Education meeting, Shoshana Hershkowitz, who organized the December 2024 letter, argued that armed guards will not make our schools safer and will contribute to more harm. Hershkowitz included her experiences with relatives of victims from the Parkland High School shooting and explained her belief that Three Village should focus on keeping guns out of schools rather than bringing them in. Finally, Hershkowitz urged people to store their weapons safely and for the district to incorporate further preventative measures to impede guns from entering Three Village schools.

In June, the district sent parents a survey, asking “Are you in favor of arming guards in the district with the appropriate training?” That feedback will be considered as Three Village continues to weigh its options surrounding armed guards.

# Stony Brook Navigates Funding Constraints

by CAROLINE QIAN, STAFF WRITER

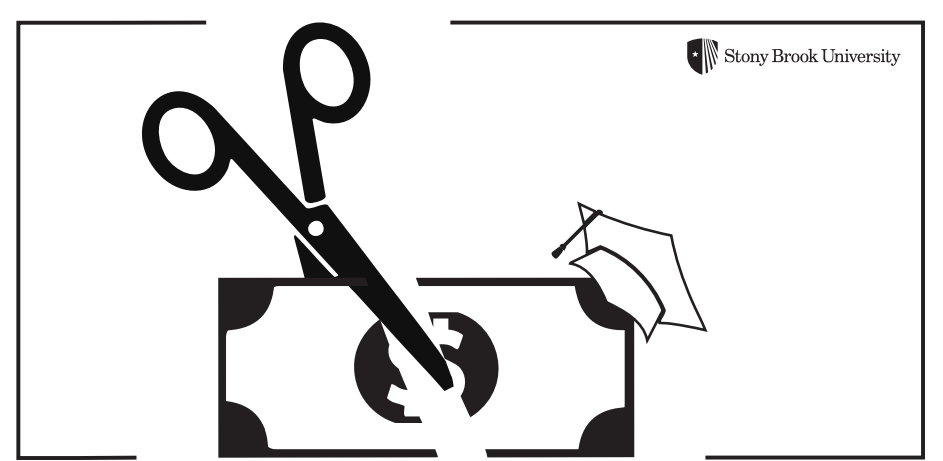
Recently, multiple universities across the nation have made headlines as targets of federal funding cuts by the Trump Administration. These cuts have mostly been directed at top private universities, including Harvard, Cornell and Columbia. Citing the reasons behind such cuts, President Trump has repeatedly claimed that the impacted schools have not done enough to put an end to antisemitism on their campuses. While private institutions have suffered the most drastic cuts to their funding so far, public universities including Stony Brook University have also been affected by reduced funding as of late.

Federal funding cuts and adjacent developments have already affected over 15 faculty members at Stony Brook University, with one grant on marine science becoming completely canceled. The ocean research grant had been operating in tandem

with the Navy, and it centered around mapping oceanic regions to improve military technology. The \$1.5 million grant, previously supported by the National Science Foundation, had its federal funding canceled due to the fact that the project’s documentation included the word “environment.” This particular word is now considered one of the many red flag terms under new restrictions. These restrictions were influenced by the Trump administration’s rollback of DEI- and climate change-related spending.

Following the rescinding of federal funding for the grant, Representative Nick LaLota reached out to the office of the Secretary of Defense. LaLota argued in favor of the research grant, claiming that while he supported eliminating wasteful spending, the Stony Brook project aligned with national defense and financial responsibility goals. He urged the administration to reinstate funding for the project.

The growing challenges surrounding the research community don’t stop at cancelled grants; decreasing funding also means less opportunities across the board for scholarships, stipends and entry-level positions. The 15% cap imposed by the National Institute of Health on indirect spending, which consists of costs to uphold facilities and administrative



processes, has also caused changes in the lab. Purchasing office supplies and equipment, maintaining facilities, financing salaries of general management staff and providing transportation to research sites all fall under the category of indirect costs. Normally, indirect costs can make up 25 to 75% of all direct costs. The significant reduction to a 15% cap on spending will clearly have a ripple effect and force labs to adapt. While some researchers may find ways to innovate and fulfill their needs within the new budget, others will be forced to cut necessary corners.

In these times where federal funding is precarious, most professors and researchers have been hesitant to speak out about their current experiences. However, official statements released by leaders promised that Stony Brook University will maintain its culture

of rigorous academic exploration.

The *Statesman*, the student newspaper of Stony Brook University, was able to obtain comments from the chair of the Department of Psychology, Joanne Davila. Davila confirmed that while staff have certainly been affected by cuts to federal programs, the department will continue to “encourage faculty to...engage in science to the best of their ability.” Additionally, the university’s interim president, Richard McCormick, released an official statement promising that the institution would navigate the transition and remain a center of innovation. The future remains uncertain, but, for now, Stony Brook University is upholding its mission of scientific discovery.

## Sean Skinner Wins at National STEM Research Competition

by SARAH WU, STAFF WRITER

In late April, Ward Melville High School senior Sean Skinner won first place for his oral presentation at the Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (JSHS) in Engineering and Technology. The JSHS competition is recognized as one of the most prestigious showcases in the country for high school STEM research.

From 239 outstanding high school STEM students, the competition awarded 48 National winners — five students from each region — who were then invited to the National JSHS event. From each group of five, the top two finalists advanced to oral presentations, where they competed to win scholarships ranging from \$4,000 to \$12,000. The remaining three finalists participated in the poster competition where they had the opportunity to win cash awards.

With his pioneering work in artificial intelligence and generative design, the award is a major achievement and milestone for the Ward Melville senior.

Skinner's project focuses on an innovative AI tool that is able to generate engineering designs based on priorities set by the user. While generative design — a technique where AI can produce

new content like potential design solutions — is not new, Skinner took it a step further. He integrated physics-informed machine learning, coding physics into the way AI thinks and learns. "I was inspired to do this research through my own experience creating engineering projects for clubs like Science Olympiad," Skinner explained. He continued, "As I learned the engineering process, I saw shortcomings in it, and this project was my way of trying to fix them."

In typical engineering workflow, balancing multiple ideas like strength, cost, weight and aesthetics often requires repeated optimization and testing. This consumes time, money and negatively impacts the environment. Skinner's program greatly simplifies this, efficiently generating designs that reflect the engineer's varying objectives.

In order to show how this could be applied, Skinner created a prototype that can generate car wheel designs based on four inputs from the engineer: how much they prioritize strength, weight, heat dissipation and aesthetics. "I'm personifying the AI program here," he elaborated, "but imagine the engineer saying, 'I want wheel designs that are really strong and very good at dissipating heat. I care a bit about aesthetics, and I don't care about the weight,' and then the program outputs a set of designs it generated that fit that description."

Unlike traditional machine learning models that rely solely on data, Skinner's system incorporates laws of physics into the way AI learns and makes decisions. With

more challenging, but the pressure was less intense as a senior, saying, "It's more about gaining credit than it is sending scores to schools to help you actually get into the schools." Aiming for a five as a sophomore or junior looking to impress colleges is certainly a more demanding task than aiming for a three or four to simply gain credit for college classes.

Taking two exams on the same day is a decidedly difficult challenge. This year, the AP World History and AP Statistics exams were back-to-back, which impacted a number of sophomores. Fortner, who had a similar experience last year, described it as "traumatic." The stress of cramming the night before a single test is significant, so having it doubled is certainly not a pleasant situation. Fortunately, according to numerous students, the majority had their exams more spread out.

While many students were initially opposed to the digitization of the exams this year, student experiences were generally positive. Fortner stated, "I could type faster,



limited information to guide him through this process, Skinner noted, "The physics was very complex and so was the machine learning, but it was putting them together that required much more problem solving and trial and error."

Beyond all the technical aspects, Skinner said that one of the most meaningful lessons he received from this competition was learning how to effectively explain his work and the importance of connecting with other people. "For the competing aspect, I had to learn to explain a complex project in a way that is simultaneously detailed and fully understandable, and to deliver my presentation in a way that really makes an impact on the judges," he shared.

From attending the national competition, Skinner also found inspiration from his peers, making meaningful friendships along the way. When the time came for the awards ceremony, Skinner described the moment as both surreal and validating, adding, "It was structured like a very fancy banquet with a big stage in the front of the room; everything was

and it was easier to remove sentences and read over my work." In addition, some exams were hybrid, being partially digital and partially done on paper, such as AP Chemistry. Perrotta said, "With things like English, it was definitely helpful to type out instead of handwriting all the essays...but more STEM-based classes should be entirely on paper if possible." Will Squire, a sophomore, also noted that typing was faster online, but shared that it was "not ideal" for annotating documents. Nonetheless, the overall sentiment was positive towards the online exams, despite prior reservations.

Some students felt very well prepared for their exams, such as Squire, who emphasized studying throughout the weeks leading up to the exams rather than last-minute cramming. Fortner was grateful for in-class preparation, as thanks to the rigor of her AP US History teacher Ms. Bilek's work, she said, "when I left that AP exam, I was smiling." However, Perrotta shared that in senior classes, "there were a lot of kids not taking the exam...so

professionally lit and decorated, there was dramatic music playing, we were all wearing suits; this all gave me the immediate impression that I was at something out of my league."

Ultimately, winning this award was the closure he needed over the past 12 years of school. "This was something I had hoped would be inspirational to others if I achieved it," he said, "but seeing all those early mornings and late nights working turn into success was suddenly inspirational to myself as well, like a confirmation that it was all worth it and that this kind of endeavor always will be."

Looking ahead, Skinner hopes to continue refining and eventually publishing his findings. As he prepares to study aerospace engineering in college, his long-term dream is to design a spacecraft for NASA. He concluded, "I want to use physics to reveal the best possible engineering designs like I did with my project, and I want to use engineering to build spacecraft that explore the universe and reveal the beauty in it."

it was more of a self-study situation." The lack of in-class preparation certainly made the exams more difficult.

Although everyone has their own preferred study methods, there are certainly common favorites. For example, Fortner used Heimler's review for APUSH, as well as studying with friends, saying, "We had discussions over it, and our opinions on certain people, and...that would help me trigger the information during the test." Perrotta and Squire utilized review videos and practice tests. Perrotta expressed, "I don't really learn by just passively listening, so I would say active practice is what I like to do."

Being a senior, Perrotta has had her fair share of AP exams throughout high school. She advised those taking their first exams next year to "start your preparation earlier...map out the way you're going to study, break down the units ahead of time, and say that you're going to do this unit this week, and by the time the test comes, you should feel entirely prepared for it."

## Reflection on the AP Exam Weeks: An Online Debut

by ALLIE HARRISON, STAFF WRITER

For high school students, May can oftentimes be the most stressful time of the year for one reason: AP exams. Students spend countless hours studying for these grueling tests. This year, the biggest change for most students was the introduction of digital exams, which students had to navigate on top of other challenges, such as having multiple tests on the same day.

Some students who have taken AP exams in the past feel that this year's exams went better than last year's. Violet Fortner, a junior, said, "After experiencing AP World [History], I really got a feel for what the exams are like, and it allowed me to create a more...all-around study guide for this year's exams." On the other hand, Ava Perrotta noted that this year's exams felt



## 3V-IAB Speaker Series Inspires Students

by **ALEXANDRA POTEHKIN, NEWS EDITOR**

What does it really take to wear a white coat or stand in front of a judge? To get a glimpse, more than 70 Ward Melville students crowded through typically empty after-school hallways on a Monday in the middle of May — all thanks to the third annual 3V-IAB Career Speaker Series. The event brought three healthcare professionals and four professionals in law to the school cafeteria. There, they shared insights into their professional lives with Ward Melville High School students.

Behind the scenes, the Three Village Industry Advisory Board, often shortened to the “3V-IAB,” coordinated the event. Efforts started in February, and required months of after-school meetups to fully create. Sammy Gr-

zhibek, a member, called it “a cool event to organize,” describing how the team reached out to speakers, confirmed logistics, and handled the details. Board member Gianna Giancaterino led other students in a setup session beginning ninth period to ensure a smooth and informative afternoon.

To create an organized setting, the student-led board set up a divider in the cafeteria, placing law professionals on one side and healthcare speakers on the other. Sophomores Sammy Grzhibek and Jeren Chi moderated the discussions, making sure pre-written questions were covered while encouraging live student questions as well. Faculty advisor Ms. Littman said the goal was to give students “a real picture of what these careers are like, beyond just the highlight reel.” Outside of the scheduled panels, students asked speakers casual questions, ranging from daily routines to what surprised them most about their careers. The result was enlightening to attendees of all backgrounds and interests.

Students considering medicine heard both inspiration and

caution. “One of the doctors said you should only go into medicine if you can’t imagine doing anything else,” said Sarah Wu. “That really stuck with me.” Board member Zaina Khan echoed the sentiment, noting the doctors’ honesty about the long hours and emotional demands: “They didn’t sugarcoat it, which made it feel more real.” Just across the divider, students drawn to law were exploring a very different — but equally demanding — professional path.

The law panel offered a broad perspective on legal careers. “I didn’t realize how many types of lawyers there are,” said Caroline Qian. “From litigators to family lawyers — it was more diverse than I expected.” Even students not aiming for law found value. Giannacaterino appreciated how candid the attorneys were: “They talked about how demanding it is, but also how you learn to manage and find balance over time.” Hearing how professionals navigated burn-out and found fulfillment helped students better understand the long arc of these careers — not just the starting line.

For many, the frankness of the conversations was eye-opening — far different from what’s shown on TV dramas or college brochures. Ms. Littman emphasized how important firsthand exposure can be: “A lot of students choose majors just because they sound impressive, not because they actually know what the career involves.” Events like this help students make better-informed decisions by showing them the realities — both rewarding and tough.

For Chi, the event offered clarity on questions he’d had “for years.” He hopes the school continues hosting it, seeing its potential to help others avoid years of uncertainty. “If even one student walks away thinking, ‘This is the one path I can’t not take,’ then we’ve done our job.” With the success of this event, the Three Village Industry Advisory Board is already exploring new career themes for next season.

## Behind the Scenes With the Yearbook Club

by **ALLIE HARRISON, STAFF WRITER**

Well after the school day has ended, even well after the sun has set, one room in Ward Melville still has the lights on. It’s the deadline day for the yearbook club, the culmination of their countless hours of hard work throughout the year. Creating a theme, gathering pictures and information, and editing for the entire yearbook is an incredibly meticulous process. Ella Higgins, the editor-in-chief, Piper Whitney, contributing editor, and Violet Fortner, who manages interviews, shared what happens behind the scenes.

In June, the editor-in-chief establishes the next year’s theme. The club typically works on the specifics in August. To brainstorm ideas, the club utilizes pinterest boards, researching ways to make the yearbook unique.

Higgins started this process early last summer. She noted, “I would critique those [pages] myself, trying to perfect the theme so I had a clear understanding of it, so I could translate that to my staff.” Teamwork is essential for the yearbook’s cohesiveness. The exact colors, shapes, and sizes of certain pictures must be consistent. Fortner articulated that this year’s book

“has taken a more abstract thought and made it a reality.”

Next, the club gathers content through conducting interviews covering fall sports, homecoming, and other events starting in September, when, as Fortner said, the club “hits the ground running.” The yearbook must be done by April so it can be printed and distributed.

Higgins described club photo day as their “most hectic day.” Nonetheless, it runs smoothly thanks to the students’ cooperation and the organization of duties. Some yearbook club members get people in height order, others type names, and still others collect the passes. Higgins said, “Everyone has their own different job and we all come together to make it work.”

With a whopping 220 pages, responsibilities must be well organized. The editor-in-chief runs the club, edits pages, makes sure everyone understands their tasks, and ensures the theme is maintained. Fortner expressed that Higgins is “incredible at her job.” She added, “We haven’t missed a single deadline this year.” Higgins herself stated, “It’s a lot, but it’s a lot of the stuff that I enjoy.”

Other members lead different sections, such as sports and student life. Fortner manages the interviews. She stated, “I’ve conducted over 75 interviews this year...I make sure those interviews are typed up and sent in.” As challenging as this may seem, Fortner acknowledged the difficulty of editing, saying, “These incredibly



talented students take pictures of people and trace them around the edge just to get a cutout of them, which can take an hour on its own.” One of these editors is Whitney, whose roles also include working on spreads and overseeing sections, ensuring they meet the club’s standards.

Whitney opined that the most difficult part of creating the yearbook is reworking designs to fit with the theme. She stated, “Every year, we come up with a meaning that connects to a theme. Every spread and quote should try to connect to the general theme.”

According to Higgins, teamwork was particularly challenging. She remarked, “Things aren’t going to one hundred percent go your way, and with that being said, I love working with people too. They all had really good ideas.”

Fortner commended the club’s time management in the face of demanding deadlines. Mem-

bers are sometimes at school until eleven at night on the book’s due date. With only about fifteen people, everyone is vital. Mrs. Baum, the advisor, was absent at the beginning of the year, so the club couldn’t even start until October. Nonetheless, Fortner asserted, “Everyone did their part. There was a good, even flow of communication.” This communication, along with Higgins’ work over the summer, contributed to the yearbook’s success.

Both Whitney and Fortner expressed their love of the club’s community. Whitney mentioned, “I get to build all of these meaningful connections while designing and contributing journalism.” Likewise, Fortner noted, “I feel like we’ve become a family.” That family is a remarkable team, putting together a book Ward Melville graduates will cherish for many years to come.



## Day to Shine Defies the Rain

by SARAH WU, STAFF WRITER

On May 13, the field behind Ward Melville High School came alive with school spirit as the Three Village Central School District hosted its fourth annual Day to Shine. This special event brought together students receiving special education services from across the district for a full day of athletic fun and creativity. Although the weather was gloomy throughout the day, students were able to complete almost all of the activities before it started raining.

Organized in partnership with district staff, Ward Melville student volunteers, the Special Education Department and the Health & Physical Education department, Day to Shine was designed to be more than just a fun field day. It is an event centered on inclusivity, empowerment, and celebration of student achievement.

“We wanted to create a day that truly celebrates every student’s abilities,” said Ms. Kilkenny, the Coordinating Chairperson for Elementary Health & Physical Education. “Our goal was to foster community and offer a joyful,

meaningful experience that students could share with their teachers and families.”

Day to Shine was originally established in 2018 through the collaborative efforts of the Special Education and Health & Physical Education departments. Its creation aimed to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for students to participate in track races, field events, games and crafts. While the event was paused in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was reinstated in 2022 due to the efforts of Ms. Marino, Mrs. McCaffrey, Ms. Driscoll and Ms. Kilkenny. Since then, Ms. Kiersh has joined the planning team, helping to grow the event into a cherished annual tradition.

The event opened with a heartwarming entrance as students ran through a tunnel formed by enthusiastic high school volunteers holding pom-poms and cheering. Students proudly carried banners representing their schools, setting a festive tone for the rest of the day. “It was so fun to see how happy the kids were at the activities,” reflected Jordana Latham, a volunteer. “I especially enjoyed cheering the kids on when they passed the finish line after running the 100m.”

The athletic portion of the event featured various track and



field activities, including relay races and dashes. “I liked the races the best this year,” said Malachi Kwateng, a sophomore participant. “It was fun to race other kids because I enjoy competition.”

“Day to Shine has continued to evolve each year as we reflect on the event and seek new ways to enhance the experience for our students,” explained Ms. Kilkenny. “We consistently strive to introduce new and engaging activities to make the day more enjoyable and inclusive.”

Recently, t-shirts have been generously donated by Ms. Weisman and Ms. DiLorenzo from their business Welo Ink Designs. In addition, music provided by the Bluegrass Club and Tri-M Music

Honor Society has contributed to the encouraging and joyful atmosphere.

This year’s event also featured a brand new addition: pine-wood derby races. The derby cars, built by students in their technology classes and coordinated by Mr. Flaiz, were a major hit with both students and their families. Additional festivities included arts and crafts stations, lunch and ice pops generously provided with support from the Special Education Department and Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA), building on to the overall excitement and celebratory spirit of the day.

## Another Successful Poetry Day at Ward Melville

by CAROLINE QIAN, STAFF WRITER

On Friday, May 30, the National English Honor Society held one of Ward Melville’s most cherished traditions, Poetry Day. Under the soft light of Ward Melville’s auditorium, poetry was shared by a diverse mix of student and faculty voices. All English classes were brought down to the auditorium during their respective periods, where students were given the opportunity to read poetry.

Seasoned poets and first-time speakers alike read works that ranged from humorous to deeply personal. Some poems were by globally acclaimed writers, while other poems were written by Ward Melville students themselves. Many of the National English Honor Society members who helped plan the event also participated by presenting their own creations. While the chapter of the National English Honor Society is just two years old, the origins of Poetry Day itself goes back further in time.

Ms. Joanna Cadolino, the chair of the English Department, shared that Poetry Day has historically taken place in the LGI. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the tradition shifted outdoors. The change stuck, and organizers say it has only enhanced the refreshing atmosphere.

However, this year’s rainy conditions moved the event back indoors. Still, many students at Ward Melville agreed that it was a special day. “Poetry Day is dedicated to the power of language,” said English teacher and NEHS advisor Ms. Jennifer Lesson. “Artistic expression is vital to the human spirit, and activities that enhance and foster that are not only worthwhile but extremely valuable.”

All day, students and faculty took turns stepping up to the microphone to read original poems and recite beloved works. Zahra Vesamia, a sophomore, recalled her own Poetry Day experience. “The poem I chose to read was ‘Nature,’ by Emiy Dickinson. I chose this poem because I think that it reflects how nature isn’t just a materialistic thing, but how we can incorporate its teachings into our own lives.”

For many, the event of Poetry Day offers an even deeper insight into the power of poetry in general. When asked why she



thought poetry was important, even in modern times, Ms. Lesson replied, “Poetry as an artform is ancient, but it remains relevant to our lives in the 21st century. It is about shared experiences.”

Poetry Day also served as the culminating moment for the NEHS Poetry Contest, hosted in the spirit of encouraging students to share their unique perspectives. This year’s contest, with over 25 submissions, highlighted how the artform of poetry still widely resonates with today’s generation. The first-place winner, Jack Mitrani, was honored during Poetry Day for their poem, “Immortality,” which served as a reminder of human vulnerability. When asked why poetry was important, Mitrani explained

that, “Poetry is literature without the impedance of grammar or the burden of reason...its capacity for nuance affords poets and readers endless avenues for discussion.” The contest winner went on to state that, “Poetry Day continues to be an excellent opportunity for the Ward Melville community to showcase what works of poetry are meaningful to them...and it has been an honor and a pleasure to be a part of it this year.”

Ultimately, Poetry Day serves as a reminder of the importance of shared stories. “Nothing moves people like connecting to one another through words and language,” Ms. Lesson reflected. “And that’s what this day is all about.”



## Ward Melville Musicians At All Eastern

by ISABELLA DEVITO,  
STAFF WRITER

In April, two of Ward Melville’s most talented musicians, Ariella Mossey and Joanna Huang, attended the All Eastern Music Festival, a prestigious event where the best musicians on the East Coast join together and perform in concert. The students are each among the best in their fields, with Mossey being a singer and Huang a violinist. These exceptional individuals shared their experience with preparing for and participating in the festival.

Both musicians are grateful for being able to participate in such a wonderful event. “Going to All Eastern was really important to me as it was such a surprise to even get in, considering how many amazing musicians there are across the East Coast,” said Mossey. Huang was appreciative as well, and also sentimental, since it’s her senior year. “Attending All Eastern was a major milestone for me. When I saw my name on the list of accepted students, it felt like everything I had worked towards in the Three Village music program had come full circle. Since it was the last music festival I would ever do in

my high school career, it felt like a really meaningful ending to my Three Village music journey.”

When it came time to try to get into the festival, it was no easy feat. Mossey and Huang endured a grueling process to be accepted. “Preparing and getting in took months, as I had to prepare my NYSSMA piece from the year before and the sight reading for months leading up to it,” Mossey described. She had to attain a perfect score on that piece to qualify for All State choir. After that, she submitted a form with information about herself, and waited to see if she got into All Eastern. Huang described a similar experience after receiving a 100 on her NYSSMA audition. “After that, I advanced through NYSCAME All-County. Once I attended All State, I became eligible for All Eastern.” Even after being accepted, the process didn’t end for her. “Upon acceptance, I recorded an audition to determine my chair placement.”

Both Mossey and Huang spent considerable time honing their crafts. In spite of this, Ariella thoroughly enjoyed the experience and meeting new people. “I had to prepare music before going, and getting a chance to know my part of the music and then immediately collaborate with other musicians who didn’t need to learn their parts was amazing.”

Huang also shared appreci-



ation for the opportunity to spend time refining her skills. “Preparing for all this meant spending a lot of time alone with my violin, zooming in on little details I probably would’ve missed otherwise.”

If one thing is clear, it is that the musicians have great love for their instruments. Huang discussed the life lessons the violin has helped her learn, “Playing the violin has taught me patience and resilience. Overcoming challenges in my playing has not only improved my musical skills but also played a huge part in my personal growth. With every practice session, there is always something new to learn: some technique that needs improvement or a new piece I’m working on. It makes my musical journey more exciting and fulfilling.”

For singing, Mossey described her passion and her appreciation for the people she got to meet through All Eastern. She said, “Singing, to me, has been pretty much my entire life, so getting to go and collaborate with all of these incredible vocalists was one of the best experiences I’ve ever gotten to be a part of.”

Huang also wanted to recognize the people who have inspired her throughout her life. “I’m truly grateful for all the teachers who have supported me, both in Three Village and through private lessons, and for my family who encouraged me every step of the way — I honestly wouldn’t be where I am today without their support.”

## Senior Assassin at Ward Melville

by ZAHRA VESAMIA,  
STAFF WRITER

Each spring, Ward Melville seniors take part in a tradition that turns daily life into a game of strategy, timing, and water. Senior Assassin, an unofficial student run competition, challenges participants to eliminate assigned targets with water guns while avoiding being taken out themselves. With 223 players and over a \$2,000 prize pool, this year’s game has been one of the most competitive and entertaining yet.

Organized by seniors Henna Rashidzada, Courtney Grange, Ethan Tam, Patrick Scali and George Oliva, the game kicked off in April. Entry was \$10 per person or \$20 per team, and eliminations were tracked through the Splashin app. Players were only safe when they had “immunity,” meaning they were wearing floaties and goggles, creating a daily struggle between staying protected and making a move.

As the game progressed, public places like Stony Brook Village, Setauket Plaza and school parking lots turned into unofficial

battlegrounds. Seniors camped out in cars, tracked targets through Splashin and filmed every attempt to prove a valid tag. According to Tam, some students went “above and beyond,” waiting hours just to make a move. “You’d see someone crouched behind a car or casually ‘shopping’ for 45 minutes,” he said.

Alongside the dedication came drama. Disputes over footage, rule interpretations and boundaries became a regular part of the game. One instance involving a player entering a garage stirred debate about fairness and privacy. But these challenges didn’t derail the excitement; instead, it only made it more engaging. “There were daily arguments, but that just meant people cared,” Tam said.

The most discussed moment of the game came with the elimination of Farhan Sinha and his teammate outside Bango Bowls. Matthew Blumenthal had been waiting for an opportunity, and got it. Sinha and his partner arrived without floaties, and the moment they were spotted, the chase began.

“I was shaking. My hand was trembling while I was recording,” Blumenthal said. “We were in the car, and we saw them pull up to Bango Bowls without floaties. They were walking in, so we ran out.” As

the video shows, Sinha began running but tripped and fell, spilling his drink right before Blumenthal tagged him.

“I just remember running and seeing them and going, ‘Oh no,’” Sinha said. “It was so unexpected. I tripped and was like, ‘Wait, am I actually out?’” The video of the elimination quickly went viral and was shared widely across social media and group chats. Blumenthal described the reaction as surreal. “It was kind of funny seeing people repost it. That moment kind of made the whole game for me.”

To keep things unpredictable and flowing, the organizers introduced “purge nights,” temporarily suspending immunity rules to force more action. During those hours, players were never safe, leading to even more eliminations and tension.

In the final stages of the game, when there were only a few players remaining, all gear-based immunity was removed. The final stretch was a free for all, where players could only rely on timing, stealth and luck. According to Tam, the endgame was fast-paced and intense. “Every day, someone’s out. It’s wild,” he said.

Senior Assassin has evolved

into a cherished spring tradition that’s about much more than winning a game. It’s a shared experience woven with strategy, tensions and moments of unexpected friendship. For many seniors, the competition offers a rare chance to connect one on one, helping to forge bonds and memories in the final weeks before graduation. After years of growing up together through classes, clubs, sports and countless school events, this game becomes an almost full circle moment, where classmates get to know each other in a new way before parting ways into adulthood. Whether teaming up or facing off, the game fosters community, making it one of the most memorable ways seniors say goodbye to their peers.

On Sunday, June 8, after a month and a half of competition, Vincent DiCarlo was announced as the winner of Senior Assassin. DiCarlo said, “Senior Assassin was a really fun time. It did get nerve wracking during purges and always having to be careful wherever I went, but the crazy chases I had and long car rides were definitely worth it.”



# Flag Football

## Players Reflect

by ISABEL DE BEI, STAFF WRITER

Although the origins of flag football can be traced all the way back to the 1940s, the sport has only recently surged in popularity. Alongside its anticipated debut on the international stage at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, schools nationwide have been picking up the sport as part of their athletic program.

Four years ago, it became recognized as a varsity sport on Long Island, with Ward Melville at the forefront in flag football’s rise in the Long Island community. The team — led by Head Coach Richard Russo and assistant coaches Richard Seta and Matthew Rickert — is new enough for us to have the unique opportunity to speak to some of its founding members about the sport and their successes.

**Q:** What has this season meant for you?

**Ophelia Rosenthal-Vincenti:** It is my final season playing flag football in high school and the last

one playing with some of my best friends on the team. It’s made this whole year truly special.

**Julia Dank:** I got to see the younger girls learn from us and grow so fast. I can’t wait to come back next year and see their accomplishments — taking over amazingly right where we left off.

**Clover Van Der Velden:** It’s really brought the team closer together as a family, especially because of our playoff spot.

**Erin McHugh:** This season has meant everything to me. It makes me emotional to think that this will be the last season that I will step on the football field with some of my best friends.

**Q:** Are you going to miss playing this sport and do you plan to continue it outside of high school?

**Addison DellaPorta:** I will definitely miss playing at Ward Melville because of the friendships I have made and the coaches who truly taught us the best way to play. However, I am going to continue to play in college at St. Joseph’s University.

**EM:** I will definitely miss this sport, especially all of the connections and friendships I have

made with my coaches and teammates over the years. However, if Farmingdale State College starts a flag football team in the near future, I will definitely continue to play and help spread the program and the sport!

**Q:** What has this sport meant to you?

**CVDV:** This sport has meant coming together, finding a home, making forever friends and working hard as a family to accomplish big things such as reaching the playoffs bracket.

**ORV:** This sport has so much meaning to me because very few people get an opportunity like this. This sport was new to everyone, and we were one of the few schools who had this sport as an option so early on. Our coaches remind us that we are the pioneers for this sport and tell us how lucky we are to have been able to pave the way for younger girls since the start.

**Q:** What were some of your most memorable moments of this season?

**EM:** The most memorable moment this season was definitely our big

win against Half Hollow Hills, as we have never beaten them in our program’s history. The team brought great energy and fought hard against the “toughest” team in our league.

**JD:** Some of the best moments from this season are when we are getting excited on the bus and dancing. It really brings us all together as a team and helps keep us motivated. Another great tradition we have is, after every touchdown, an underclassmen and I jump up and shoulder bump, helping us keep motivated and play our best.

**Q:** What advice would you give to future flag football players?

**CVDV:** Don’t take any practice or game for granted, even if you’re not in the mood. Continue to do your best because eventually you will graduate and decide if you want to continue playing this sport. At that point, you’ll look back and be proud about how you played.

**AD:** Enjoy the time you have playing, have fun with it and work hard to get where you want. Also, listen to your coaches during practice and really focus on every play. One play could make the difference in a game.

# Jon Seyfert, State Champion

by ALEXANDRA COTLET, NEWS EDITOR

Ward Melville’s senior track star, Jon Seyfert, the 1600 meter indoor state champion, reflected on his high school career. He shared the highs, the challenges and the lessons he’s learned along the way. As he prepares to take his talents to the University of Virginia, he opens up about what motivates him, the importance of staying grounded and the goals he’s chasing next.

**Kaleidoscope: Looking back at your time at Ward Melville, what are some moments on the track that you’re most proud of and why?**

Jon Seyfert: Definitely running relays, especially the 4x800. Each time we ran it, it felt like something really special. It’s one of those races where you’re not just running for yourself — you’re doing it for your teammates. There’s a sense of pride every time you line up, and that connection with the others on the relay makes it really meaningful.

**What has being a student-athlete at Ward Melville taught you, both on and off the track?**

The biggest thing it’s taught me is discipline. Motivation might get

you started, but discipline is what keeps you going. You have to develop a routine and stick with it — even when you fail, you’ve got to keep trying. That mindset applies to so many parts of life beyond track.

**Was there a specific race or season that felt like a turning point in your high school career?**

Yes, my sophomore year in the spring really pushed me forward. That season helped put me near the top of the county at a pretty young age, and it felt like people really started to recognize me — even officials at meets. That was the moment I realized, “Okay, maybe I am actually pretty good at this.”

**How has your training or mindset evolved since you first joined the team as a freshman?**

It’s changed a lot. I’ve become way more competitive, which has been great, but also challenging. I try not to let that competitiveness take away from the fun of it. I started running just to have fun, and I want to keep that spirit alive — to still enjoy it and not get too caught up in the pressure.

**Who or what has been your biggest motivation throughout your high school track journey?**

I’d say two people. First, my coaches — when I was at States, my first thought was how badly I wanted to win a state championship for them because they hadn’t



won one yet. I wanted to be the one to give them that. Second, there was a senior named Julian when I was a freshman. He was setting records and he really inspired me. I wanted to be that person for the younger athletes, just like he was for me.

**What made you choose the University of Virginia, and what are you most looking forward to as a Cavalier?**

UVA has amazing academics, which was a huge factor. The team is top-tier — I’m honestly going in as the least experienced one, and that’s exciting for me. It’s like starting from scratch and building myself up again. I’m especially looking forward to training with new teammates from all over the country; from places like Alabama to California — to me, that’s really cool.

**What are some goals you’ve set for yourself before your time at UVA — both athletically and personally?**

My main goal is just to be the best version of myself. That includes a lot of smaller goals, but overall, I just want to be able to look back and say I gave everything I had. Whether it’s my athletic career or anything else, I want to know I didn’t hold back.

**What advice would you give to young Ward Melville athletes who look up to you and dream of following a similar path?**

Keep it fun. It’s really easy to get caught up in the competitiveness and the pressure to be the best. If you lose the joy and forget why you started in the first place, it’s not worth it. Always remember to enjoy the process.



# THE CLASS OF 2025

Eeman Abbas  
Lauren Accardi  
Arhaam Ahmed  
Gianna Alessio  
Jaden Alessio  
Gabriel Alfano  
Colby Alister  
Kayla Allicino  
London Alweis  
Rachel Amato  
Alexander Andersen  
Jillian Anderson  
Sophia Anderson  
Josslyn Appell  
Ayleen Aracena  
Sandra Araujo  
Agata Arkhipkina  
Jacob Arnold  
Zevi Asner  
Jamiliann Ault  
Aidan Ayers  
Yashas Balguri  
Liam Banks  
Savanna Barnetas  
Matthew Barry  
Rosemary Barton  
Alexandria Becker  
Rode-Nissa Belizaire  
Reed Bhella  
Tyler Blasco  
Eden Blatt  
Matthew Blumenthal  
Joseph Boglia  
James Boonin  
Olivia Bosshart  
Robert Boswell  
Sergei Boudreau  
Hailey Bowen  
Emma Bradshaw  
Elisa Bravo Ruiz  
Daniel Breslin  
Elliot Brockman  
Bradyn Brogan  
Lucas Brouard  
Timothy Brown  
Nhyir Browning  
Hope Buchner  
Amber Burns  
Andrew Buscaglia  
Justine Bushman  
Kelly Callan  
Lucas Caltabiano  
Madison Calvanese  
Chloe Cappello  
Isabella Caracci  
Ryan Caravello  
Jacob Carioscia  
Boyd Carrington  
Anthony Cerulli  
Jayden Chandool  
Eileen Chen  
Yilin Chen  
Dhikshika Cherivirala  
Aiden Chi

Claire Chiolo  
Allexia Chou  
Christopher Christian  
Brooke Christopher  
Myles Chu  
Andrew Chuang  
Hailey Cicero  
Logan Ciniglio  
Connor Ciullo  
Justin Clarke  
Emma Clontz  
Hannah Coffin  
Hazel Cohas  
Madeleine Connelly  
Ryan Connolly  
Jordan Conrad  
Niki Constantouris  
George Cosentino  
Maddie Costello  
Sean Cowen  
Jacqueline Cronin  
Tyler Cuff  
Daniel Dai  
Julia Dank  
Colin David  
Lily De Bei  
Jennifer De Blasi  
Thomas De Franco  
Hailey De Marsh  
Addison De Pinto  
Cara Decaminada  
Brian DeGorter  
Addison Dellaporta  
Aala DeLorenzo Freidank  
Nadas DeLorenzo Freidank  
Ethan DelPrete  
John DeLuca  
Brody Delvallez  
Alexander DelVecchio  
Ava DeMarco  
Kayla DeRonde  
Romeo DeSimone  
Danielle DeVeau  
Vincent Di Carlo  
Brayan Diaz  
Nicole Dimech  
Eric DiPalma  
Phillip Divino  
Brett Dixon  
Nicholas Dokadze  
Meghan Donnelly  
Shannon Donnelly  
Sebastian Dos Reis  
Remy Drechsler  
Madeline Dundon  
Katie Duong  
Benjamin Ehlers  
Michael Eilenberger  
Olivia Elgut  
James Ellin  
Valentina Ellis  
Ava Emmerich  
Alexis Evans  
Kyle Fagan

Sarah Fazio  
Kenneth Fee  
Nicolaus Feldmann  
Zhong Yang Feng  
Eamonn Ferrante  
Benjamin Ferrero  
Gregory Finley  
Cameron Fiorella  
Maja Fischbach  
Corey Fischer  
Jackson Foley  
Ava Folkman  
Shaun Fontana  
John Foster  
Maggie Friedman  
Nora Fung  
Courtney Gaine  
Oliver Galeotafiore  
Julia Gallery  
Olivia Gamez  
Alexandra Gandolfo  
Julia Garcia-Diaz  
Sydney Gerle  
Michael Germano  
Yash Ghetia  
Anthony Giantinoto  
Andrew Gillanders  
Nicholas Giordano  
Brendan Glennon  
Kate Gmytrasiewicz  
Evangelina Gomes  
William Goode  
Callie Goodrow  
Margaux Gourlaouen  
Courtney Grange  
Dylan Grant  
Luca Greggo  
Ryan Griffin  
Althea Grubbs-Aubrecht  
Dylan Guise  
Eileena Guo  
Grace Guo  
Lavendia Guo  
Hope Hahn  
Jayson Halpin  
Ivy Hamilton  
Charles Hannigan  
Candace Hans  
Dakota Hansen  
Katherine Hanson  
Breena Harrigan  
Ness Harris  
Kiara Hart  
William Hasho  
Khizer Hassan  
Allison Heidrich  
Brian Heraghty  
Luke Hernandez  
Ella Higgins  
Benjamin Hoffman  
Cameron Holdsworth  
Sophia Holod  
Fawn Honor  
Kaitlyn Horn

Joanna Huang  
Kai Hughes  
Keira Hunt  
Jacob Iasilli  
Ella Ignacio  
Austin Ihriskey  
Victoria Immerman  
Abubakar Imran  
Mehmet Isildak  
Imran Islam  
Sarah Jablonsky  
Madeena Jalili  
Olivia James  
Tegan Jarnagin  
Tyler Jimenez  
Nolan Jin  
Yumi Jin  
Djenyna Joasil  
Brooke Johnson  
Sean Jordan  
Keagan Kaczorek  
Krista Kady  
Aaron Karim  
Ethan Kay  
Gina Keenan  
Ava Kelly  
Daniel Kelly  
Francis Kelly  
Joseph Kelly  
Sean Kelly  
Katherine Kelton  
Ayesha Khan  
Madelyn Kiely  
Alyssa Knudsen  
Kyto Koga  
Kylee Kong  
Adam Konsevitch  
Amal Koraishy  
Luke Kordic  
Sara Kropp  
Jake Kunzler  
Brennan Kurtz  
Sudenaz Kutlu  
Lily Kyriacou  
Livia La Camera  
Natalie LaDuca  
Shan Lajmi  
Raymond Lang  
Sai Siddharth Lanka  
Devon Larsen  
Emma Larsen  
Kayden Laucella  
Anna Lawrence  
Marley Layden  
Maxime Le Lay  
LooJi Lee  
William Lennon  
Sam Leute  
Sydney Levine  
Sara Li  
Daniel Liang  
Remus Liff  
Ashley Lin  
Jason Lin

Kwok Keung Lin  
Silinna Lin  
Vincent Lin  
Madyson Lippencott  
John Lips  
Long Liu  
Yu Xuan Liu  
Maya Livingston  
Dylan Lockel  
Hayden Lomanto  
Jessica Lommel  
Tia Lucas  
Erinn Luo  
Jennifer Lyles  
Grace Lynch  
Kaitlyn Malcomson  
Camille Manguera  
Dominic Marucheau  
Jordan Marvelli  
Soraya Masrour  
Joseph Massaro  
Tyler Matukonis  
Kaylee Mayer  
Jordyn Mazzaglia  
Ireland Mc Gowan  
Erin Mc Hugh  
Callan Mc Laughlin  
Edward Mc Vicker  
Kate McAvoy  
Collin McCabe  
Lila McCabe  
Samantha McGarrity  
Genevieve McGee  
Julia McGee  
James McGrew  
Quinn McKay  
James Medordi  
Jay Mehta  
Garrett Meinsen  
Helen Mejia-Martinez  
Carmine Menna  
Jordon Meyer  
Qinshao Miao  
Matthew Miele  
Luca Milana  
Elon Milerson  
Emma Miller  
Emily Mills  
Sienna Mirabile  
Shaun Mischler  
Jack Mitrani  
Ryan Mohl  
Melina Montgomery  
Jeremiah Moody  
Luke Moore  
Nicholas Moraitis  
Ariana Morales  
Fernando Morales  
Genevieve Moravick  
Ayla Morroni  
Aidan Muller  
Colin Murphy  
Grace Murray  
Jake Nardolillo  
Tyler Nedos

Lea Nekrasov  
Daniel Nemesure  
Montanna Nemeth  
Tabitha Newton  
Brielle Norton  
Ronnie Nunez Jimenez  
Connor O Brien  
Dylan O Leary  
Peter O’Brien  
Megan O’Donnell  
Chisom Okeoma  
Chase Oleaga  
George Oliva  
Cole Palillo  
Aimee Palmer  
Grace Pantano  
Ian Paredes  
Isabella Parente  
Araju Patel  
Adrian Paz  
Kevin Pelosi  
Shashank Pennabadi  
Carson Pepe  
Isabella Peranio  
Olibia Perez  
Ava Perrotta  
Jonah Petersson  
Katelyn Petraco  
Peyton Phillips  
Sadie Pitrelli  
Cayden Plank  
Emerson Powell  
Matthew Poxon  
Connor Prussen  
Ryan Pryor  
Lily Pugliese  
Robert Puzio  
Hafsa Quraishi  
Neelesh Raghurama  
Nicholas Ragonese  
Nicolas Ramirez  
Isabella Ramos  
Matthew Randazzo  
Randy Ranieri  
Henna Rashidzada  
Sophie Reed  
Kyle Reyes  
Olivia Reyes  
Talim Reyes  
CeJae Reynolds  
Genevieve Reynolds  
Alexander Richman  
Conor Riordan  
Luke Rios  
Matthew Rios  
Brandon Rivera  
Matthew Rivera  
Lyla Robertson  
Amanda Robinson  
Jaden Robinson  
Olivia Robitsek  
Nathan Rochelle  
Kate Rodriguez  
William Roell  
Kate Ronzoni

Sophia Rosalia  
Ophelia Rosenthal Vincenti  
Jacob Rosenzweig  
Zachary Rothenberg  
Sophia Roughley  
Carolyn Rowe  
Isabella Rowett  
Natalie Russ  
Giuliana Russell  
Abigail Ryan  
Aurora Ryan  
Jack Ryan  
Kiernan Ryan  
Ever Salamanca  
Christina Samulyak  
Amal Sani  
Athulya Santhosh  
Joel Sasson  
Ava Saunders  
Jordan Sauders  
Angelina Savarese  
Patrick Scali  
Savannah Scali  
Ashley Schelling  
Natalie Schmitz  
Eleanor Schneider  
Lauren Schneider  
Jacob Schwarzbard  
Brandon Sclafani  
Jonathan Scott  
Ryan Scriven  
Annabella Segnini  
Logan Seta  
Jonathan Seyfert  
Fizza Shah  
Mantra Sharma  
Samantha Shaw  
Savannah Shaw  
Emily Shields  
Gabriella Sicignano  
Olivia Siemes  
Ava Simonton  
Joshua Singayan  
Alexander Singer  
Mallika Singh  
Farhan Sinha  
Sean Skinner  
Jack Slavin  
Claire Sloniewsky  
Avery Smith  
Alexander Song  
Mitika Soni  
Mia Soto  
Selim Soykan  
Colin Spatz  
Katherine Specht  
Ryan Spitzenberger  
Kayla Stassi  
Matthew Stein  
Tyler Stickelman  
Jason Stiles  
Jadyn Stoecker  
Korben Straight  
Keifer Stroff  
Lindsay Stype

Sophia Syritysna  
Ethan Tam  
Jaylen Thomas  
Chad Thompson  
Isabella Thompson  
Maxwell Thompson  
Owen Timm  
Lucas Tommolino  
Quinn Torre  
Maia Toth  
Mikaela Tucci  
Talon Turano  
Christian Tyler  
Sehr Vakil  
Matthew Valcone  
Fenna Van der Velden  
Patrik Vasquez  
Adriana Victoriano  
Alessandra Victoriano  
Alex Visco  
Fiona Visconti  
Amit Vishnia  
Logan Vohrer  
Nathan Wain  
Ashley Walters  
Cassidy Ward  
Jaspar Warren  
Aidan Wasileski  
Jacob Wasserman  
Michael Wei  
Charles Werder  
Piper Whitney  
Vincent Williams  
Leah Williamson  
Kennedy Wilson  
John Paul Wong  
Kate Woods  
Ethan Wrobel  
Miranda Wrobel  
Oliver Wu  
Zoe Xiao  
Shirley Xiong  
Leliao Xu  
Zhaoen Xu  
Jia Xue  
Aimee Yang  
Alivia Yang  
Michael Yannucci  
Dylan Yun  
Cameron Zalinger  
Logan Zegel  
Lily Zeidler  
Jordyn Zezelic  
Yuhang Zhang  
Judy Zhao  
Alex Zheng  
Sabrina Zheng  
Steven Zhong  
Rebecca Zhu  
Jacob Zilberstein  
Steven Zoldak  
Julia Zuchowska  
Olivia Zummo



# CONGRATULATIONS

*Congratulations*

**JAKE SANGIORGI**

**CLASS of 2025**

We are very proud of you, Jake! You have worked so hard and we can't wait to see what the future holds! You're a helper, and is someone who is kind and compassionate. Always remember, "Help someone, help everyone" We love you lots!



*Congratulations*

**JEREMIAH MOODY**

We love you and celebrate all God has done in you and through you! Congratulations and enjoy every moment. Remember that you have our encouragement and support wherever you go!



*Congratulations*

**ALYSSA KNUDSEN**

Congratulations to our sweet and beautiful Alyssa!!!

It has been an extreme privilege to see the person you've flourished into today and a tremendous joy to continue to see the wonderful person you aspire to become. It is bittersweet to see your journey continue far from home, but never forget how much you are loved. Love, Mom and Dad.




*Congratulations*

**GABRIEL ALFANO**

Congratulations, Gabriel!

We are so proud of the young man you've become. Smart, kind, and full of heart. You've earned this. We believe in you and we're always cheering you on.


Love, Mom, Dad, and Roman



Congratulations Cayden Nicholas Plank! We are so proud of you and excited for this next season. We love you! Mom & Dad, Justin, Danae & Cole, Chad, Chelsea & Kasey

*Congratulations*

**CAYDEN PLANK**



Congratulations Jake! We are so proud of you for all your hard work and accomplishments. Wishing you all the best in college and beyond.

Love always, Mom & Dad

*Congratulations*

**JAKE SCHWARZBARD**



*Congratulations*

**EDEN LILY BLATT**

Congratulations Eden!!!! You have made a positive difference in people's lives since you were little and now you are about to do the same as a nuclear engineer! You amaze me with your kind heart, smarts, and talents every day... can't wait to see what you do next! I love you!!! Love, mom.





CONGRATULATIONS

*Congratulations*

**ALEXANDER  
ANDERSEN**

**Congratulations A.J. Andersen.**  
**Congratulations on your well-deserved**  
**success for your passion, perseverance,**  
**and beautiful heart! To the next milestone,**  
**you're on your way to great things!**

**Love, Mom, Dad, and Skylar**



*Congratulations*

**BRAYDN  
BROGAN**

Bradyn, you continue to amaze us with your drive and determination to accomplish the goals that you have set for yourself. We are so proud of your hard work and are excited for your future successes academically and rowing D1 Crew at the University of San Diego! This is just the beginning of what the world has in store for you! Carpe Diem! ❤️

Love always,  
Mom, Dad and Audrey



*Congratulations*

**CONNOR  
CIULLO**

Words cannot describe how truly proud we are of you Connor Anthony!! All of your hard work all these years has paid off. We are so excited to see what the future holds for you. Still hard to believe that the “baby” of our family is graduating high school!! We love you more than you will ever know!!!



*Congratulations*

**GABRIELLA  
SICIGNANO**

Congratulations Gabriella, we are so proud of you and all your accomplishments!

Love,  
Mom and Dad




*Congratulations*

**AIDAN  
WASILESKI**

Dear Aidan,

We are so proud of you!!  
Good luck at UMass.

Love, Mom, Dad, and Austin.



*Congratulations*

**COLBY  
ALISTER**

Congratulations Colby!!

We are so proud of all your accomplishments and wish you the best of luck in college.

Love, Mom, Rhys, Pop-pop and Nana.



*Congratulations*

**STEVEN  
ZHONG**

Congratulations! You have laid down solid cornerstones for your future with proven academic achievements in high school, and we are confident at the college you will set another amazing milestone in your life for a successful professional career.

Love, Mom and Dad, Emily, Sophia



*Congratulations*

**MATTHEW  
RIVERA**

Happy Graduation, Worm!

You are the best G-son, nephew and big bro we could ever ask for, and we are so grateful you are who you are. Get after it, LK.

We love you!  
Love Mar, Matt, Pres,  
Vanilla & Loki



*Congratulations*

**CHRISTOPHER  
CHRISTIAN**

To our shining star Chris- Congratulations, our graduate! We have watched you navigate challenges, chase dreams, and become the incredible person you are today, and we couldn't be prouder! Love, Mom + Dad






# Congratulations

## JACOB WASSERMAN

Congratulations, Jacob! May your footwork be sure, your vision on point, your strategy sharp and your precision guide you to victory. En garde for a brilliant future ahead! We are incredibly proud of you!

Love, Mom and Dad



# Congratulations

## SHAUN FONTANA

Congratulations Shaun Michael Fontana- We are so proud of your achievements and can't wait to see what the future brings. Love, Mom, Dad, + Steven



# Congratulations

## MATTHEW STEIN

Congratulations Matthew! We are so very proud of you! Love, Mom, Dad and Zack.




# Congratulations

## CAMERON FIORELLA

Congratulations Cameron! We are so proud of all you have accomplished during your time at Ward Melville! Your intelligence, kindness, talent, and drive amaze us every day. We can't wait to see what the future holds for you at Indiana University and beyond. We love you !

Mom, Dad, Jessica, and Matthew



# Congratulations

## WARD MELVILLE GIRLS SOCCER

To the graduating seniors of the Ward Melville Girls Soccer Team —

Three New York State Championships. Countless memories. A legacy that will never be forgotten.

You've led with heart, played with grit, and inspired a program for years to come. Your dedication, resilience, and love for each other have made this team a family and this journey unforgettable.

As you move on to new chapters, carry the lessons from the pitch with you—leadership, teamwork, and the power of showing up every day. WE LOVE YOU!

Once a Patriot, always a Patriot. ❤️❤️





CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations

KATE WOODS, AVA FOLKMAN,  
COURTNEY GAINES, JORDYN MAZZAGLIA,  
BRIELLE NORTON, KAYDEN LAUCELLA,  
MADDIE COSTELLO, SOPHIE REED

Congratulations, Grads! 🎓

We're so proud of all of you! Watching your friendship grow over the years has been such a joy. You've made it through high school together, and we can't wait to see what's next for each of you.

Keep supporting each other and never stop dreaming big.

With love,  
Your Parents



Congratulations!  
**MATTHEW  
RIVERA**

It has been an amazing and fantastical journey to watch you grow into this wonderful human being. You have embodied the unwavering courage of 'William' with the challenges you face; the intelligence, kindness, and humor of "Spidey"; the modesty, loyalty, and stubborn recklessness of "Harry"; and, of course, the adventurous spirit and witty banter of "Jack". But most of all, we love and appreciate what makes you uniquely YOU!

The Best is Yet to Come!

Love, Mom, Dad, Nathan & Andrew






CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations

MATTHEW RIVERA

Congratulations Wormy! We are incredibly proud of you and thrilled to see where your next adventure takes you. You are one awesome dude, and we love you so much!

Love, Nanny, Aunt Moog, Uncle Jimmy, Sophie & Milo



Congratulations

ZHAOEN XU

Dear Zhaoen:

“Then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8). May you walk in truth and integrity, meditating on God’s word day and night, and find success in all you do.

With all our love, Mom and Dad.



Congratulations

BRENNAN KURTZ

Congratulations Brennan and the Class of 2025! We are excited to see what the future holds in store for you!!

Love Dad & Neely



Congratulations

EMILY SHIELDS

Congratulations Emily Shields! Your determination and commitment for success is courageous. Your kindness and nurturing nature towards everyone who crosses your path is admirable, and your ability to make others smile and laugh is infectious.

We are so proud of all you have accomplished. Continue to strive for greatness and always be a little boulder. “Dirt makes everyone smarter!”

Love...THE FAMILY



Congratulations

AMAL KORASHY

Dearest Ammo, You are the best daughter and sister and we are so incredibly proud of you! We wish you great success in college and all your future endeavors in life!


Love you always!! Papa, Mama, Zara and Babar



Congratulations

JUSTINE BUSHMAN & CLAIRE SLONIEWSKY

Justine & Claire, your journeys have just started. Take a page from Sleepless Saturday and do what we did, always find your sun. XOXO Stewie & Franklin



Congratulations

GIRL SCOUT TROOP 1432

Congratulations Troop 1432! For every senior that has ever been a part of Troop 1432, remember Once a Girl Scout, Always a Girl Scout. Each of you has accomplished so much! I am thankful that you have allowed me to be a part of your life and share in your growth. We have had fun through the years, and I am excited to see each of you go far beyond your potential and accomplish your goals. Congratulations, and although there may not be any MOUNTAIN LIONS on Long Island, it's ok to be vulnerable and scream in fear in front of others!



Congratulations

TO THE CLASS OF 2025!



*In any educational setting, students come and go, but the educators who inspire those students*

## Farewell to Ms. Etheridge, Impassioned Empowerer

by **ZAINA KHAN,**  
**STAFF WRITER**

After over two decades of inspiring students at Ward Melville High School, Ms. Etheridge is beginning a new chapter in her life: retirement. Known for her deep love of literature and unwavering support of students, she leaves behind a lasting legacy in the English department and beyond.

Ms. Etheridge began her teaching career at Ward Melville in 2001, after spending 15 years in the business world. It was her cousin who encouraged her to become a student teacher with a favorite English teacher. That experience sparked a passion for education that quickly took hold. “I wanted to work with younger people, and I wanted to motivate them and get them into literature.”

Throughout her career, Ms. Etheridge taught everything from

*often remain in the same location year after year. Thus, whenever a teacher retires, they leave behind*

Contemporary Issues to AP English Literature. Her focus was always on building critical thinking and empathy in her students. She believed literature could change lives, even for those going into science or math. She said, “This is where critical thinking and empathy happens. For example, if you are going to be a doctor, empathy and critical thinking is as important as everything else.”

She has made a lasting impression on her students, many of whom continue to reach out years after graduation. “When they think of me, that’s rewarding to me. It’s always about the students. They’re my focus,” Ms. Etheridge shared.

Ms. Etheridge is famously known for her dedication to grading and giving feedback to student work at all hours, especially in the very early hours of the morning when she wakes up. One current student, Benjamin Ferrero, recalled a time when he was still up working on an assignment at the same time that Ms. Etheridge had already woken up to start grading it.

As she prepares for retirement, she looks forward to traveling, tutoring and enjoying life at her own pace. Ireland, Colorado

*generations of students whom they have inspired. Kaleidoscope is happy to recognize the incredible*

and Tennessee are just a few of the destinations she has in mind. However, she hopes to stay connected with students through tutoring and possibly working at a college.

When asked what advice she would give to new teachers, Ms. Etheridge emphasized the importance of focusing on the students: “... to not make it about yourself. Make it about the students. ... We don’t need to just sit up there and bore kids to death. Just get them going on something that’s interesting for them.”

Whether her students are writing literature or solving complex math problems in the future, they carry her voice with them — one of compassion, curiosity and encouragement.

One student shared that, “Ms. Etheridge has a palpable passion for what she does in life. It is so infectious and inspiring. Her joy for seeing her students, helping them and getting up in the morning to do it every day is an example of the kind of purpose students should strive for in life.” This speaks to the depth of her influence, not just a teacher of literature but a teacher of life.

It is not often that students

*contributions of five retiring teachers at Ward Melville this year who have left their mark.*

leave a class feeling inspired about how they live, not just what they learned. She is an example to all students, parents, aspiring educators and colleagues that when you are passionate about what you do, you will not only succeed, you will also leave behind something meaningful.

Ms. Etheridge’s legacy at Ward Melville goes far beyond the lessons of any single work or essay. She leaves behind generations of students who think more critically, write more confidently, and read with purpose — skills that will always stay with you and shape their futures long after leaving the classroom.

We thank her for her unwavering passion, her wisdom and the warmth she brought into every class. Thank you for making us better thinkers, writers and people. Thank you for your patience and belief in every student who walked through your doors. Thank you, Ms. Etheridge, for inspiring us all.

## Farewell to Mr. Jourdain, Energetic Educator

by **MATTHEW BLUMENTHAL,**  
**SPORTS EDITOR**

“It’s not a given in life that what you’re going to do as a profession will be uplifting. But I feel very lucky that I can come to the building every morning and feel like ‘this is gonna be good!’ ... I love the person I’ve become.” Instead of feeling burdened by having to go to work every day, Mr. Jourdain feels happy and excited to see his colleagues and students, a feeling he described as “precious.” After 25 years of teaching biology, ecology and environmental science, Mr. Jourdain has decided to retire.

Mr. Jourdain started his teaching career in the Brentwood School District in 2001, but soon came to Ward Melville High School a year later and has been teaching here ever since. Mr. Jourdain said thatm even as a kid in France, “I always enjoyed learning and sharing what I learned with my friends and family.”

As a young adult in college, he delved into the natural sciences like biology and ecology. However he soon realized that he did not want to go into research, as he liked a generalist approach to science, rather than specializing in one particular field. That is when he realized that teaching would be a fitting avenue.

He prepared to be a teacher in France, but soon after meeting his American wife, Mr. Jourdain came to the United States. He learned English, took more teaching classes and soon got a teaching job as a biology (and later ecology and environmental science) teacher at Ward Melville.

It was difficult at first. As he puts it, “It was a lot more cleaning the kitchen than getting good stuff out of the oven.” He spent long hours every night prepping for his classes the next day, but with the help of his caring colleagues, he soon got into the flow of it. These colleagues are what he’ll miss most about Ward Melville. He feels very fortunate to have had such great colleagues.

Among these colleagues are two people who stand out: Mr. Sussin, who helped Mr. Jourdain learn how to teach AP Environmental Science (“[Mr. Sussin] gave me everything he had and took the

time to show me everything and teach me the pace of things,” says Mr. Jourdain), and Ms. Williams, with whom he created a “common platform” and revamped the way biology was taught. For him, he felt like this has been a “great cooperation.”

Mr. Jourdain deeply cares about his colleagues, saying that he feels like, “the luckiest teacher in the world because I am able to claim to have two wives and one husband.” He makes this joke with his students at the beginning of every year, referring to Mr. Sussin and Ms. Williams. However, this demonstrates the amount of care and gratefulness Mr. Jourdain feels for his colleagues, students and job.

Students every year love taking classes with Mr. Jourdain because of the liveliness and happiness he brings into the classroom, as well as his goofy sense of humor. Student Ryan Spitzenberger says, “Mr. Jourdain always made class fun and never took things too seriously, so it always felt like a break from the usual school routine.” Mr. Jourdain’s passion is passed to the students. He truly makes his classes fun and enjoyable for all. Another student, Nick Giordano, remarked, “I walk into class every day expecting something interesting and

exciting, and Mr. J. always delivers. Mr. J. is by far one of the most engaging teachers at Ward Melville, and is equally profound in his teaching.”

After the first day of taking Mr. Jourdain’s environmental science class, I immediately knew he would be my favorite teacher I’ve had at Ward Melville. I’ve never seen a teacher as caring and devoted to his students as Mr. Jourdain. He genuinely cares about his students and makes learning enjoyable by having us do fun hands-on projects, engaging in deep and meaningful discussions or showing us creative videos that put what we learn about into context. I will truly miss Mr. Jourdain, as he has had such an important role in my high school experience.

Everyone Mr. Jourdain meets is touched by his electric and lively personality. Ward Melville will deeply miss this incredible teacher and friend, and we all look forward to the wonderful things he will do in retirement.

Farewell to Mr. Medina, Fantastic Forecaster

by KATHERINE KELTON, COPY EDITOR

Phil Medina, who has worked as a science teacher in Three Village for almost thirty years, is entering retirement. Mr. Medina started as an earth science teacher at Murphy Jr. High School, where he taught for 15 years before moving up to Ward Melville as a physics teacher. Mr. Medina is also known outside of Three Village. Many years ago, he created his own website for all things earth science.

He shares, “It became a pretty big deal. It was accessed from all over the world.” From his successful blog, a publisher reached out to him to create his own textbook Homework Helpers: Earth Science, which was published in 2005. He shared that, from that point on, he became the “go-to guy” for science questions, “People would ask me all the time what’s going on. They’d bring me bags of bugs. ‘What is this bug I see at my house?’ and blurry pictures of something that they saw in the sky and they’re like ‘what is this?’ And particularly right before a storm, people would come up to me constantly asking me if we were going to have a snow day.” To help with this issue, Mr. Medina created an email list to forecast the likelihood of a snow

day: students, parents, teachers and the superintendent all read the predictions. Unfortunately, since he will no longer work in the district next year, and doesn’t live in the community, he has decided to end the snow forecast. While he will no longer be a science teacher, he hopes to continue learning in retirement. He said, “I’d like to start building some robots from scratch just for the fun of it, see what I could do.” For current and prospective teachers, he advises that rather than fight to prevent the inevitable student use of AI and other technologies, they should “find ways to use these tools. When students leave school and go out into the real world, they’ll be able to use AI and Google. They should be able to use it while still thinking

for themselves and processing the information. These are not replacements for human thinking, they are tools to enhance it.” From teaching earth science and physics, running the Academic Challenges and Science National Honor Society clubs and keeping Three Village residents updated on snowstorms, Mr. Medina has left a distinct mark on Three Village. He will be missed by all those who had the privilege of learning from him.

Farewell to Mrs. Sementilli, Purposeful Speech Pathologist

by KATE GMYTRASIEWICZ and LILY DE BEI, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICERS

As the school year winds down and the class of 2025 prepares to say goodbye, one of our staff members is also getting ready for a farewell of her own. After years of hard work and countless contributions to our community, Mrs. Sementilli is retiring. We had the honor of sitting down with her for a final interview, where she spoke about

her career, her favorite memories, and what’s next as she steps into a well-earned retirement. Mrs. Sementilli has been teaching at Ward Melville for years, leaving a lasting impression on students and teachers alike. Whether through her involvement in student activities, her leadership as the advisor for the Muslim Student Association and the business advisor for *Kaleidoscope*, or her friendly presence in the hallway, she has touched the lives of so many at Ward Melville. Her journey as a speech pathologist was inspired by her own family. After witnessing her uncle struggle with speech following a stroke, she knew she wanted to pursue a career where she could make a real difference. That passion became the foundation of the care she’s provided to students ever since. Mrs. Sementilli’s impact

extends far beyond her job description. Her commitment to creating a supportive and inclusive environment has helped shape the culture of our school. She recalls the countless laughs and adventures with fellow staff members, and the strong bonds she’s formed along the way. “Three Village is a special place,” she said, recalling the importance the warmth of our community played in her decision to stay and develop her career here at Ward Melville. Looking to the future, she hopes to see education evolve in meaningful ways. When she first began, tools like communication devices were rare in schools, as they were only accepted in more private, divided environments. Now, she’s seen a shift toward inclusion, with students who don’t communicate traditionally using iPads and other assistive technologies right in the classroom. “People

are more aware,” she explained, noting how the field has become more language-focused and widely understood. This progress is something she hopes continues long after her retirement. Mrs. Sementilli shared her belief that learning should become more “mainstream,” not just for classrooms, but integrated into everyday life. Above all, she encourages both students and educators to “keep their minds open” and embrace new possibilities as the world continues to change.

Farewell to Ms. Taliercio, Leader in Literacy

by KAITLYN HORN and ALLIE HARRISON, FEATURES EDITOR and STAFF WRITER

Throughout the past thirty years, Ms. Taliercio has been an essential part of Ward Melville. Now that she’s retiring, she has shared fond memories and favorite parts of teaching, her plans for the future, and life lessons she’s learned and wishes to share. Even while still in school, Ms. Taliercio has always harbored a love of learning. She said, “I became a teacher because I hoped to encourage students and inspire them to find the light within

themselves.” One teacher in particular stands out in her memory: a high school English teacher. Ms. Taliercio stated, “He wrote a long note on the side of one of my essays, and it was the first time I felt truly “seen” as a student.” Ms. Taliercio wanted to have the same impact on her own students. Considering her particular path in English and Literacy, Ms. Taliercio spoke about how her love of writing guided her to pursue English, and while in college, she chose to focus on literacy. She stated, “In this way, I could help struggling learners to feel empowered by unlocking their individual learning styles and teaching them new ways to learn.” Some of Ms. Taliercio’s most cherished memories of teaching were when students would visit her classroom during free periods, as she stated, “It was validation

that they felt safe with me and that my classroom provided a comfortable, welcoming environment.” However, her favorite aspect of teaching is purpose. She said, “Each day is...a chance to make connections and influence how students feel about themselves. Being a teacher has been a journey of wisdom and compassion, of giving and growing.” When asked about her plans for the future, Ms. Taliercio knew she wanted to become a published author. She also said, “I plan to spend time volunteering at my friend’s shelter, Save-A-Pet and also at Berkshire Farm Sanctuary for rescued farm animals, for which I currently serve as Board member. Maybe I’ll even open a little thrift shop to support the rescue cause.” The lessons learned in school aren’t all written in text-

books — and these life lessons can be equally valuable. Ms. Taliercio stated, “I want my students to know that their voice matters. That no matter what their struggles are, they are never alone and that they have the power to achieve their dreams.” Additionally, students aren’t the only ones who learn in school. Ms. Taliercio said, “my students have taught me to be patient and to listen. They have taught me that I am much bigger than any problem I might carry.”



## Two Miles With Oliver Wu, Class of 2025 Valedictorian

by LILY HUANG, STAFF WRITER

The setting sun melted soft, sherbet pink-and-orange hues into the gull-strewn sky over West Meadow Beach in the minutes before my meeting with valedictorian Oliver Wu. Despite the tranquility, my mind raced, attempting to predict the direction our conversation would take. The only thing I knew for certain was that it wouldn't follow the straight, predictable line of Trustee's Road — our mile-long shoreline path already well-beaten by the countless exchanges of beachgoers and bicyclists.

By all accounts, traditional schoolwork seems only to be a modest-sized fish in a much larger sea of Wu's endeavors. He is undoubtedly accomplished in the typical fashion of a top-performing student, as is evident in the rigor of his courses, various leadership positions and acceptance into the prestigious Princeton University, where he will study public policy. But on this breezily warm spring evening, his enthusiasm for learning about the world around him shone not just through his academic prowess, but even more brightly in his dedication to the art of music and literature, his unwavering commitment to authenticity and, above all, his magnetic affinity for human connection.

In a way, Wu's summer has already begun. With high school pressures lessened, he is taking advantage of his newfound sense of control and freedom. He expects to spend the upcoming months making the last few memories with his peers before they go their separate ways. Currently, his love for reading occupies much of his daily life, from reading books to dissecting poetry to spending self-admittedly unhealthy amounts of time pouring over his Substack subscriptions.

Wu's literary proficiency also shines as editor-in-chief of *Kaleidoscope*, Ward Melville's student-run newspaper club. He plans to take his passion for journalism into his future, ready to join a staff of writers at *The Daily Princetonian*. As such, he's sometimes disheartened by the shortage of sincere interest for the craft, observing that, often, even people who write rarely explore news beyond what they briefly glimpse on social media. He also comments on the usage of AI models such as ChatGPT to replace linguistic skills, saying, "There are more ways to use language outside of what ChatGPT

does ... Even if writing is not something you devote your life to, we have to hold onto our ability to use language." His focus on the importance of language extends beyond school walls as he seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and culture through his research at Stony Brook University.

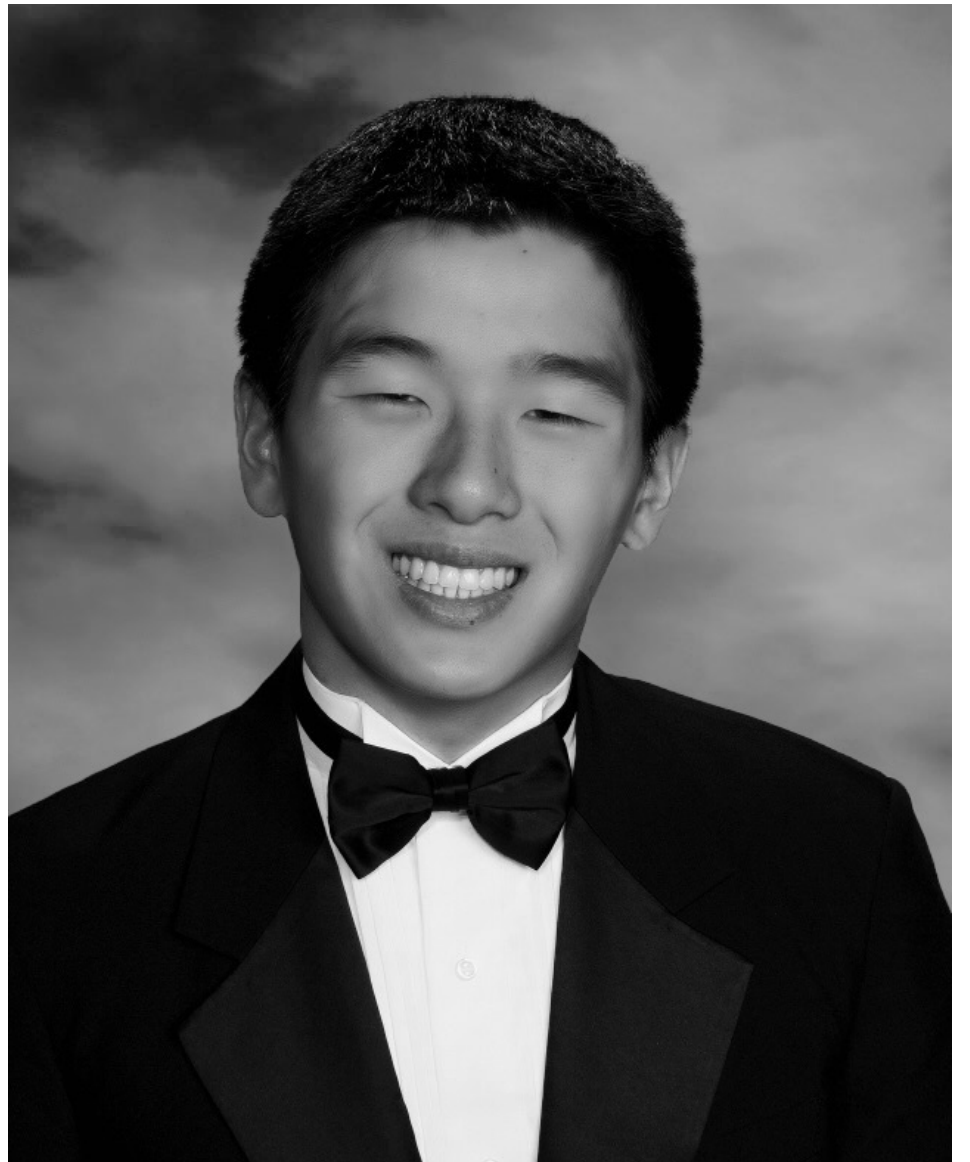
Wu attributes much of his achievement to a legitimate enjoyment for what he does, both in and out of the classroom. "I wish there was more genuine interest from people for what they do ... If you have good grades but don't have interests or individuality, those grades amount to very little," he elaborated.

### Wu attributes much of his achievement to a legitimate enjoyment for what he does.

Further along, he shared that he hopes future students will recognize their autonomy. "I feel as though we could be more adventurous, and I want people to go out of their comfort zone and be involved. Things that are not quote-unquote essential to living are the things that enrich your life the most," he remarked. As evidence, Wu confessed that he struggled with public speaking, a difficulty I would never have guessed through his articulateness and composure. "I don't want people to feel that just because something doesn't come naturally, it's not for them," he said earnestly.

Wu's steadfast belief in pursuing genuine passions can be traced into his study of public policy. The seed of his engagement with the political world was planted in sixth grade through transformative conversations with classmates, who introduced him to an uncharted realm of knowledge and discourse. His curiosity blossomed as he began actively reading about world issues. "When I got my phone and started reading the news often — especially during COVID, the Black Lives Matter movement and Stop Asian Hate — I became really interested in democracy and what social activism could accomplish," he said.

Since then, Wu has been outspoken on a variety of political and humanitarian issues. When I asked if he's ever hesitant of voicing his perspective on topics others might shy away from, he responded, "I say what I say because I truly believe in it. I feel strongly about these issues and I want more people to know about them." At the same time, he searches for the bigger picture scattered throughout a wide array of sources and viewpoints. "Some people feel



that because I am very strong in my beliefs, they don't have room to share their opinion around me. I don't want that to be the case, and I wish more people would feel empowered enough in their knowledge to challenge my perceptions." He expresses excitement towards being surrounded by new people at university who will share a range of ideas formed outside of the boundaries of our community.

### "It falls on me and other upperclassmen to inspire our younger students."

I also found Wu's craving for a diversity of perspectives nestled within his appreciation for music. As we unpacked this instrumental facet of his journey, the profound gratitude he has for the relationships forged through music resonated deeply with me. Wu's early starts on piano and violin are strong foundations for his technical skill and comprehension, showcased through his membership in the highest-honored orchestra at Ward Melville. He is also a leader for aspiring musicians as president of the Ward Melville Tri-M Music Honor Society and the Long Island Youth Development Music Club — roles that are in line with his belief that "it falls on me and other upperclassmen to inspire our younger students."

In addition, he spoke extensively about his bonds with musicians from a mixture of backgrounds, crediting his NYC-based violin teacher as both a mentor and a facilitator who gave him the

opportunity to "play music with others with vastly different life journeys." Ultimately, his time in the orchestral world has served as an invaluable outlet in his mission to familiarize himself with a diverse blend of lived experiences.

As a recurring theme, he also unearths the presence of human connection in his enjoyment of listening to music. He recounts contentedly that, while the performance at the Charli xcx concert he recently attended was "pretty awesome," what stuck with him even more was the "powerful collective feeling of togetherness and weightlessness" that blanketed the streets packed with fans milling outside the concert venue after the show had ended. Although — or maybe because — he did not grow up listening to Today's Top 40, his first encounters with radio music around fourth grade opened up an irresistible rabbit hole of auditory possibilities for him to dive into. In a world where it can feel like everything has already been done and done again, his undertaking to acquaint himself with songs from all types of genres and creators has illuminated the beauty in the "continued ability for people to envision new things."

Wu looks forward to college, propelled by his lifelong eagerness for the unfamiliar and the unexplored that awaits him. "I'm so excited," he reflects, "to have the freedom to feel as if the world is at my fingertips, and I can go out there and take it all in." As he soars into the future with a purpose, I am confident that it is a matter of when, not if, he will leave his mark.





## Two Miles With Alexander Song, Class of 2025 Salutatorian

by SARAH CHERLIN,  
ARTS AND  
ENTERTAINMENT  
EDITOR

I met with salutatorian Alexander Song on a sunny May afternoon at the start of Trustees Road, approaching the interview with an air of intimidation. I was unsure of exactly what to expect going into a conversation with someone so accomplished yet only a year older than me, but the barrier of anxiety was quickly broken down as he approached me with a friendly smile and welcoming demeanor.

Despite his academic achievements, Song is a remarkably humble individual who comes off as if he doesn't take himself too seriously, consistently acknowledging the importance of finding community and building tangible, real-world experience instead of solely focusing on the seemingly all-powerful GPA, which is so highly valued by most students today. He speaks optimistically about his upcoming plans to attend UCLA in the fall and major in computer science, describing how moving to the West Coast was something he never thought he would do, but that it's an opportunity he's looking forward to taking advantage of. As for right now, Song is still discovering what exactly he wants to do with his newfound free time.

Going back to his childhood, Song says that one of the most impactful experiences of his early education was learning from his sixth grade teacher, Mr. Prinzo, after being placed in the Intellectually Gifted (IG) Program at Nassakeag Elementary School. He highlights the importance of how Mr. Prinzo "didn't really care about the grades." Remembering the open environment of the classroom, he reflects, "I think it was really one of the first times in which, in school, I was asked to not just do the homework. It was a place to discuss things, a place to think about things, even if it's the really random things in your own life."

### Despite his academic achievements, Song is a remarkably humble individual...

From the beginning of our conversation, it was evident that robotics is Song's greatest passion, and his proudest accomplishments at Ward Melville have been achieved as the co-captain of the Iron Patriots. He credits the robotics club for his discovery of his love for science and engineering, saying, "It introduced me to this whole new realm of what you can do with STEM." He speaks very highly of the program offered to students at Ward Melville and emphasizes how much the team has changed and grown over the past couple of years. After an unsuccessful year for the team in 2023, Song describes how the group had to search for inspiration from other teams in order to adapt and

improve their own methodology. He explains, "Essentially, from 2023 to 2024, we tried to quickly mold ourselves into a top team."

### He credits the robotics club for his discovery of his love for science and engineering...

His devotion to the team became increasingly evident as he explained in detail the intricacies and nuances of developing a robot and preparing for their annual competitions. He compares the work of the robotics team to running a small business, saying, "We have a product. We have deadlines and prototyping. We have to make a budget, which is a huge issue. We have to do PR, and we have to get money. But all of that is somehow encapsulated in this small high school club. I think that's a kind of experience you really can't get anywhere else." He also stresses the role robotics has played in helping him find a community within Ward Melville. While the competitions only last from January to April, he explains that the team works tirelessly throughout the whole year to perfect their creation. He says, "We're all so invested in winning and making a working robot and meeting deadlines. It creates a sense of community that I don't think really exists in a lot of other clubs."

Outside of robotics, Song is also a skilled violinist — a topic which he is slightly less outspoken about. Last spring, Song auditioned for the all-state music festival, a competitive program which selects the best musicians from across New York State for a performance in December. He was selected for the prestigious festival, and humbly looks back on the performance, saying, "They were all great musicians, so I didn't have to do any heavy lifting."

Despite his modest reflection on his role in the performance, he is undoubtedly a talented musician; Song has studied at the Manhattan School of Music Precollege ever since he first auditioned for the program in sixth grade. While he is still unsure how much of a role music will play in his college life, he acknowledges the unique part it has played throughout his education as one of the only non-STEM-related activities he has been committed to. He says music is a "great way of meeting people," and has allowed him to "do something a lot different in terms of what [he does] academically."

As we moved our discussion toward his college plans, Song spoke excitedly about the potential to explore a new city and get involved with some of the many

exceptional programs UCLA has to offer. Specifically, he says he is interested in joining their Formula SAE team, where students can design and build formula-style race cars. While he will be moving on to new opportunities and challenges as he transitions to college, he will also remain connected to Ward Melville's Iron Patriots. He says, "I'm still really attached to this team in many ways," and explains that he wishes to follow in the footsteps of his former teammate Benjamin Paldy, who has also remained a mentor for the team since graduating from Ward Melville. As for his role in helping guide the team in the future, he says, "I'm still going to be helping them, especially with the design process and obviously warning them of the mistakes that they're probably going to make anyway."

In this intermediate period between high school and college, Song has run into a new problem that he has never previously dealt with: time for solely himself. He concedes that while he has experienced a sense of relief now that he faces less academic pressure, not having such a packed schedule is also "kind of disorienting." "I think it's a good problem. I think it's a good place for me to be at this moment because I always had a little too much to do," says Song.

Reflecting on his high school experience, Song expressed that he wishes he would have maintained a better balance between school and his outside life. When I asked about what he would do differently if he could redo high school, he shared, "I would take more advantage of the system and of what I can and can't do, and be a little less straight on the line."

Throughout our walk, I took note as Song intentionally smiled and waved at multiple young children as we passed by — some climbing in trees, others just walking with their parents. Although a small and simple gesture, I found this to be indicative of his character. Song is a compassionate individual who looks toward improving the future; he makes sure to leave every environment he is a part of better than he found it for future generations, whether it be the robotics team or the passersby of Trustees Road. After our conversation, I'm confident that Song will continue to have a positive impact on every community he involves himself in throughout his future endeavors.

**(Song) makes sure to leave every environment he is a part of better than he found it...**



# School Cellphone Ban Passed in State Budget

by REBECCA MALZ,  
STAFF WRITER

At the beginning of the 2024-25 school year, a district-wide cellphone ban in classrooms was implemented in Three Village. Signs were placed in all classrooms reminding students not to use their cellphones in class and explaining the consequences of breaking the rule. Teachers stressed the new policy when going over their syllabi. The Code of Conduct was updated to include severe penalties for repeated usage.

This was not the first time the district had attempted to limit cellphones; over the last several years, various increasingly restrictive policies had been put into place. However, enforcement had proven challenging, with most of the work being delegated to individual teachers. Not wanting to lose class time, many decided to let slide various offenses. For the same reasons, enforcement of the new, strict ban dwindled throughout this academic year.

However, for the upcoming 2025-26 school year, control over the cellphone ban has left the district’s command, at least partially. In May, Governor Kathy Hochul announced that cellphones would be banned across all schools in New York State. This came after Hochul went on a listening tour across the state through which she gained feedback from teachers and parents about cellphone use. The ban will be “bell-to-bell,” meaning it would also prohibit the use of cellphones during non-academic periods such as lunches and study halls. Students will still be able to use school administered devices, and they will be able to contact family in case of emergency.

Hochul wanted to create a distraction-free school environment throughout the whole day, and not just classroom time; hence the “bell-to-bell” element of the plan. Hochul believes that students will be successful when they are “learning and growing, not clicking and scrolling,” and that her new cellphone policy will lead New York State in “protecting our kids in the digital age.”

However, there is no set plan in place for schools to enforce this ban, so the actual implementation of the ban has been left to district administrators. The state budget allocates \$13.5 million to schools that cannot afford the solutions needed to follow the ban, but Three Village is unlikely to qualify for this state aid, given its general socioeconomic status.

Currently, it is unknown as to how Three Village will implement the cellphone ban for the 2025-26 school year. The Three Village Cellphone Committee, which helped design this year’s cellphone ban, will meet and decide how to enforce the cellphone ban. It is possible that they will simply refine the approach taken at the beginning of this year. On the other hand, the district could take a stronger stance on enforcement, ensuring that cellphones will not be used. What is known is that Three Village will not be utilizing magnetic phone pouches which students could not access until the end of the day. They have been popular in other districts, but, as was made clear during the May 13 Board of Education meeting, the district does not have enough room in the budget to allow for such a large purchase. All we know now is that the cellphone ban for the 2025-26 school year will be announced before the school year begins.

Most teachers at Ward Melville agreed that a cellphone ban needs to be implemented to improve the academic performance of students. However, teachers

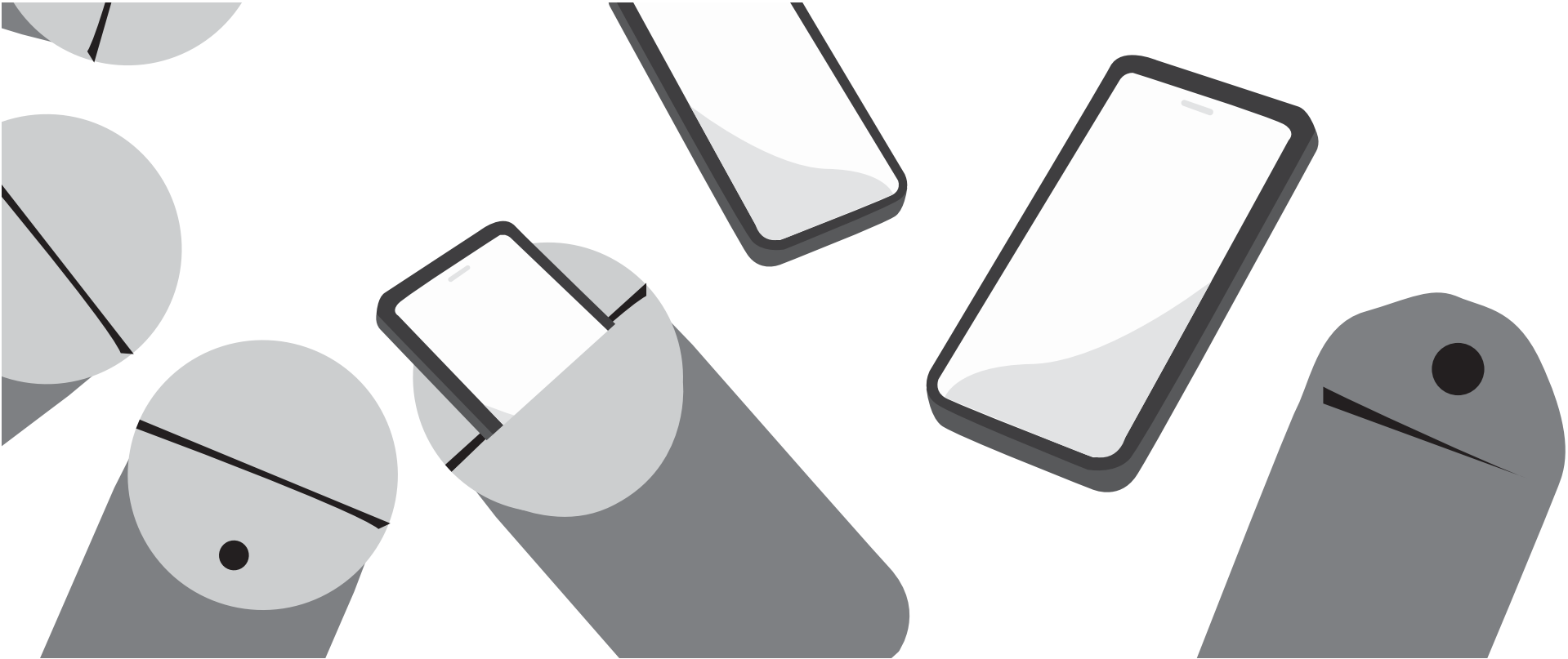
disagree with regards to its implementation. Ms. Jamie Bilek, a social studies teacher, stated that she agreed with the cellphone ban, but was “not sure that it needs to be in the [state] budget.” She argued that the funding for the ban could be utilized for other purposes such as teacher salaries, transportation and educational technology upgrades. In particular, some school districts might need more state aid in other, more important, areas. Ms. Bilek also wasn’t convinced on the necessity of state funding, saying, “There’s other ways to enforce [the cellphone ban] without it having to be a budget item.” Instead, Hochul could simply provide recommendations to schools as to how to enforce a cellphone ban without directly putting it in the budget, especially since schools across the state greatly vary. For example, many believe that larger schools, such as Ward Melville, will have a more difficult time transitioning to a cellphone free environment in comparison to smaller schools.

On the other hand, there are many teachers at Ward Melville that believe a cellphone ban needs to happen, even if it requires being implemented into the state budget. Mr. James Hein, an orchestra teacher at Ward Melville, stated that he is “all for banning cellphones in school.” Mr. Aaron Tam, a math teacher, said that the statewide cellphone ban is a “good plan” because of the academic disruption cellphone usage causes. Many teachers feel that they are competing with cellphones while teaching their students, and that cellphones typically win. Furthermore, many argue that removing cellphones from classrooms will create fewer distractions. When a teacher has to remind a student to put their phone away, it takes time away from instruction. If a teacher has to do so repeatedly, it takes more time away from students that are paying attention, causing addi-

tional distractions and disruptions. The question remains whether the upcoming ban will be any more effective or successful than past bans. Many teachers hope that the mandate from the state will force the district to take the issue more seriously. In particular, English teacher Ms. Lisa Crispino argued that “teachers and administrators need more support in getting kids to refocus and put [their cellphones] away.” With Albany and the Governor’s Office throwing their full support behind a cellphone ban, Ms. Crispino is cautiously optimistic that she and her colleagues will receive the necessary assistance.

More broadly, teachers, parents and administrators have blamed cellphones for a general decline in academic performance over the last several years. Nationwide surveys and personal testimonials — one teacher said, “my students simply aren’t where they were 20 years ago, or even 10” — have pointed to worsening student achievement, though experts have made clear that cellphones are not the sole reason for this decline. While the devices have certainly contributed to problems, other factors such as the lingering effects of the pandemic, must also be considered.

Despite this, Ward Melville Principal John Holownia argued that “eliminating distractions like the cellphone could be an opportunity to allow students to be more engaged in their learning.” Some schools, including Ward Melville, have seen a return to the levels of student achievement seen prior to the pandemic, but a cellphone ban would still test whether or not cellphone use has a significant impact on student performance. Holownia made clear that “we’re always looking for ways to get better,” and that a cellphone ban, especially with support from the state, could do just that.





## In Favor of a Cellphone Ban

by SAMANTHA DELMAGE, STAFF WRITER

The new ban on cellphones in New York State schools — passed as a facet of the 2026 New York State Budget — has sparked much debate among New Yorkers, but it is a necessary step toward improving student focus, academic performance and mental health. While phones have become a part of everyday life, their constant presence in classrooms has led to widespread distractions, reduced face-to-face interaction and a concerning decline in students' ability to concentrate and learn. By removing cellphones from the school environment, educators and administrators can foster a space that prioritizes engagement, learning and social connection over such devices.

As teenagers begin to experience a dissociation and isolation from their peers and the outside world, many question if this has to do with their repeated and constant use of their cellphones and the social media platforms that go along with this usage. Not only this, but many students are beginning to lack the ability to focus on any and all given tasks at hand, contributing to dropping grades and declines in reading ability. In 2024, the average reading scores on the Nation's Report Card, a leading national assessment that judges the reading and math abilities of fourth and eighth graders, declined by 2 points for students as compared to that of

2022. The results show that fewer than a third of students nationwide are working at a proficient level in reading. Many, including parents, teachers and administrators, are taking notice of this, leading to their attempts to go about solving these problems in a professional, proactive and appropriate manner.

Districts will have until August to craft their own specified plans for how to enforce these new policies, the process by which they plan to store phones, and to come up with the funds to take such actions. Although many argue that communication would simply be impossible between students and parents throughout the school day, the policy mandates that schools give parents the ability to contact their kids during the day when necessary. This provision could eliminate any reason for the opposition of the cellphone ban, as it ensures that students remain reachable.

Another common argument that parents make is that their children wouldn't be able to reach out to them in the event of an emergency, such as a school shooting or fire. However, law enforcement officials throughout the state of New York have argued that unrestricted access to cellphones during such situations would create additional safety risks and could serve as distractions from safety and emergency response directions being given by the school, further supporting the cause for limiting their usage in school settings.

Another essential group affected by the overuse of cellphones during instructional time is teachers. In fact, a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 72% of U.S. high



school teachers believe that cellphones are a major problem in their classroom settings. Teachers enter their classrooms every morning expecting to teach their students, not to have to beg for the common decency that is paying attention.

Many teachers, like Devon Espejo, an art teacher at San Marcos High School in Santa Barbara, California, are tired of having to compete with devices to get their students to care. "In addition to all the other things we're expected to do, we were policing cellphones by implementing our own rules," Espejo explains. "It was exhausting and not what I am here to do. I don't want to be the phone police. I want to teach."

Another major concern is the lack of urgency and desire to learn and apply oneself among teenagers, a problem attributed to the overwhelming distractions caused by cellphones. Psychologically, this can be explained by the concept of selective attention. When individuals focus intensely on one stimulus, they tend to ignore everything else they perceive as irrelevant. In this scenario, teenagers are focused on their phones, and in turn disregard their teachers'



lessons, robbing themselves of educational opportunities.

In addition, excessive cellphone use eliminates meaningful face-to-face interactions with peers, which appears to be linked to rising levels of anxiety, stress and depression among adolescents. As Governor Hochul said, "You had that distraction ... sitting in their pocket that you could whip out during lunch or study hall. They would never even talk to another student during study hall or lunch."

Although it isn't anywhere near decided on the way in which each school will go about enforcing this policy, the policy has been enacted. Many individuals from varying socioeconomic statuses, demographics and political ideologies agree that this policy is a significant step towards an improved society for teenagers and the future generations to come, fostering a more interconnected and determined community in educational settings.

## Against a Cellphone Ban

by ZAINA KHAN, STAFF WRITER

Governor Kathy Hochul's recent decision to ban smartphones in New York schools is a narrow response to a complex issue — and it's the wrong move. While concerns about mental health, distraction and cyberbullying are valid, banning phones outright ignores both the benefits of responsible technology use and the real educational opportunities that mobile devices offer. Instead of completely banning smartphones from classrooms, schools should focus on teaching students responsible usage, digital literacy and self-regulation. We need smarter solutions, not a blanket ban.

Phones are not just social tools, they are powerful educational resources. Teachers already

utilize smartphones to improve learning in schools all around the nation. Students take advantage of their phones in order to access instructional apps, work together on projects and record data. In emergencies — whether personal, medical or safety-related — phones give parents, guardians and authorities a direct channel of communication.

Additionally, Governor Hochul's plan undervalues kids' ability to study and use technology sensibly. Rather than banning phones, schools should implement comprehensive lessons on responsible usage of phones. These programs help students understand the consequence of cyberbullying, the risks of overuse and the importance of balancing screen time with real-world interaction. It is significantly more effective to teach pupils how to handle their digital lives than to act as though they don't exist.

Furthermore, this policy also risks widening the inequali-

ty gap. This policy assumes that all students have equal access to resources and support. While some schools can provide devices and reliable internet, others cannot. Not all students have reliable Wi-Fi or personal computers at home, so they often rely on their phones to download assignments, take pictures of class notes, or use mobile data to stay connected during school hours. In districts where school resources are limited, phones help fill critical gaps. Banning phones doesn't just remove a distraction — it removes access.

There are smarter ways to reduce distractions and promote mental wellness in schools. Some districts have implemented structured "phone breaks" or designated phone-free zones, which allows students to remain connected without letting devices dominate the school day. These policies respect students' autonomy while still prioritizing focus and safety.

Governor Hochul's plan

might look like decisive leadership, but it is ultimately a step backwards. We should be preparing students for a digital world, not shielding them from it. Technology is part of everyday life, and learning how to use it properly is just as important as learning how to write an essay or solve an equation. Banning phones sends the message that we don't trust students to grow into responsible users of technology.

We should be focused on education, including the education of digital literacy. We should build trust among students, not walls. Governor Hochul should rethink her plan and give students the tools to thrive in the modern world.



# Sophomore Reflections on a Year at Ward Melville

by ISABEL DE BEI and SCOTT KADY, STAFF WRITERS

Sophomore year presented many ups and downs. The move into high school is a big change, requiring students to adapt to increased expectations and workload. For sophomores, the new experiences have included swimming class in gym class, sophomore seminars throughout the year and AP classes. Beginning next school year, the transition from junior high to high school will happen a year earlier due to the district’s restructuring.

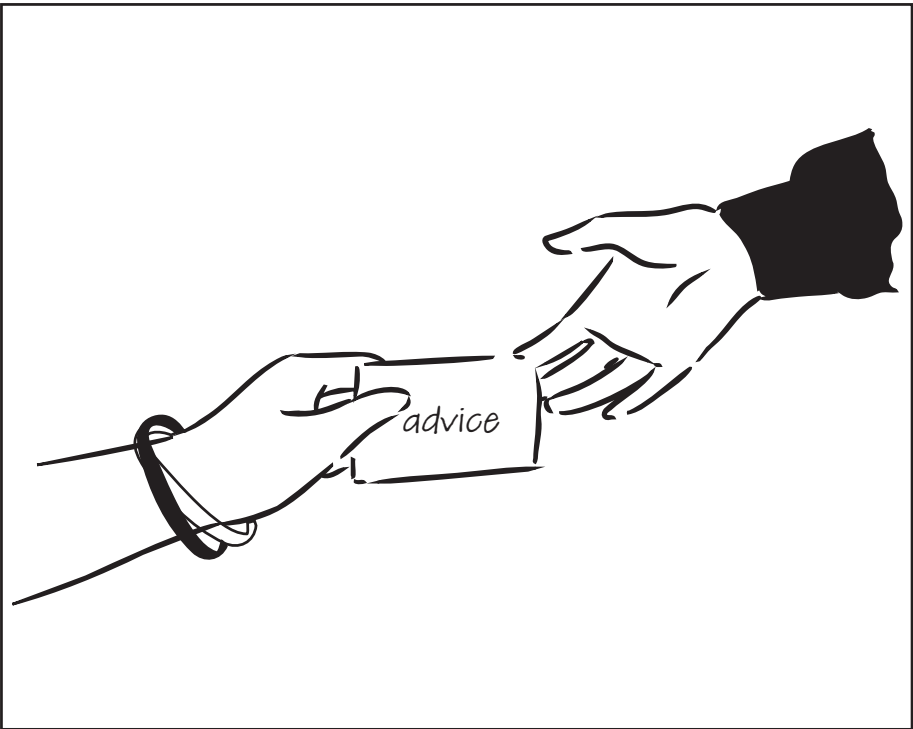
The school year has challenged our abilities as students, forcing us to adopt improved time management skills, effective studying techniques and heightened academic standards. Adjusting to Ward Melville’s difficult academic environment while managing extracurricular activities and personal wellbeing was very challenging. Students had to figure out what study habits best suited their needs, whether individually or as a group. However, despite the academic intensity, it’s important to note that grades won’t “make or break” your high school experience. Staying focused on your goals and exploring your passions will help make you

stand out. We spoke with fellow sophomores to reflect on their first year in high school.

**Question:** What was the most exciting and most scary event from this year?  
**Zaina Khan:** The most exciting event that happened to me this year was watching the school talent show. It was amazing to see my classmates showcase their unique talents, including singing and dancing. The energy in the auditorium was electric, and it was inspiring to see everyone support each other. Even though I didn’t perform, being part of the audience was an exhilarating experience.

The scariest event for me this year was midterms week. This was the first year where midterms accounted for more than just one exam and rather a significant amount of your final grade. I had five midterms, and some were even scheduled on the same day. The pressure was intense, leading to late-night study sessions and constant stress. It was a challenging experience, but it taught me the importance of time management and self-care during high-pressure periods.

**Q:** What differences have stood out to you between junior high and high school? What would you change about the high school?  
**Maddie Vega:** High school versus middle school is like going from a kiddie pool to the ocean, only the ocean is filled with homework



and existential dread. The biggest difference is the illusion of freedom. Suddenly, you’re trusted to not set the building on fire, which is both liberating and terrifying. Academically, it’s a whole new level of intensity, with more complex subjects and higher expectations. Socially, the stakes are raised too. In short, high school is where you start figuring out who you are, or at least who you want people to think you are, while simultaneously trying not to drown in the sea of teenage angst. One thing I’d change? The soul-crushing monotony. School’s supposed to be this enlightening journey, but it’s mostly just memorizing stuff to regurgitate on a test. We need more creative outlets, more chances to explore the weird, dark corners of our minds.

**Q:** Did you accomplish the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the year? Is there anything that unexpectedly happened and you are proud of?  
**Skylar Berger:** I feel like I did. For my grades, I really wasn’t expecting to have to do as much as I did, but I made it work. I definitely had to learn that I needed to put more time into school than I expected. Something unexpected that I didn’t really think about in the beginning of the school year was winning states twice for cheer. I knew they won last year, and I really wanted to win again this year, so we had to work really hard to keep up with the standards we were held to. There were ups and downs, but we pushed through and the results reflected the time and effort we put into our routines.

# Graduating Seniors Leave Their Advice

by KATHERINE KELTON, COPY EDITOR

Coming to the end of their high school careers, seniors reflect on the experiences and life lessons they gathered throughout their formative journeys. Below, several Ward Melville seniors share some words of wisdom for their underclassmen.

**Olivia James:** Senior year is more than just the “final stretch” of high school. It’s a time of growth, reflection and transformation. For all the juniors looking ahead, expect a year full of big decisions, lasting memories and personal milestones. It’s the year where everything starts to feel real — you’ll begin to understand who you are and where you want to go. So, embrace the ups and downs. Show up for yourself. Lean on your support system. And most importantly, stay present ... senior year flies by faster than you think.

**Ryan Griffin:** As you become a senior, remember that you must take ownership of your choices, whether that means monitoring your time or staying focused on work with the many distractions senior year will bring. Support your fellow classmates, work together and don’t be afraid to ask for help, because no one truly has senior year figured out.

**Vincent Lin:** Surround yourself with people who support you, motivate you and are happy to see you succeed. Good friends will support you and push you to be your best.

Find a balance between school, extracurriculars, and most importantly, time for yourself. Resting allows you to do your work more efficiently. Eat well. Get enough sleep. Move your body. Burnout is real, and once it hits, that’s it. Just do what you love, and set goals that matter to you.

**Jake Schwarzbard:** Take this year seriously. It’s easy to get wrapped up in all the end of the year events, but colleges still consider your

mid-year, and even in some cases, end-of-year grades. In all, have a great time, it goes by too quickly.

**Isabella Caracci:** Take the time to do your work, it will pay off. Try your best and put your all into everything you do, but know that you do not always need to be perfect. Make the most of this year because it’ll be over before you know it. Do what makes you happy, and treat people with kindness.

**Jason Stiles:** As you begin your final year at Ward Melville, remember to make the most of it. Take time to enjoy the moments: attend school events, spend time with friends and appreciate the memories you’re creating. It’s important to stay focused and not let “senioritis” get in the way. Enjoy your senior year!

**Katherine Kelton:** Around the third quarter of senior year, there’s a distinct shift in everyone’s mindset: they defocus. I, of course, am guilty of this too. I had to push myself to do what I had done with ease at the beginning of the year. Still, maintaining your drive for

classes and clubs is vital to finishing senior year strong and living up to your commitments. Even if your GPA is no longer a concern, don’t let your standards slip. Also, use that extra time after finishing college applications to apply for a summer job or internship; you will thank yourself for not leaving it to the last moment.

I would say the second half of senior year is the best time to make new friends. With the brick walls of cliques falling apart and teenage hostilities dissipating, people are more open. They branch out and reach out, starting new friendships and mending old ones. Finally, do not forget who helped you through all 13 years of grade school: your parents. I understand that the summer before college is likely the final moment when all your friends will be together, but your parents, guardians, mentors and older siblings have sacrificed a lot for your happiness and success. If you are moving away for college, be with them as much as you can before you go. Make them feel appreciated.



## Student Journalism in Suffolk County

by OLIVER WU,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In late May, the *New York Times* published a profile of the *Ditch Weekly*, a teen-run newspaper covering Montauk and the Hamptons. The article was selected as a “Great Read,” a designation given to one exceptional piece of journalism from the *Times* every weekday. The *Ditch Weekly*, founded last year by East Hampton High School students Billy Stern and Teddy Rat-tray, recently returned with a Memorial Day Weekend issue. They will publish weekly between July 4 and Labor Day. After reading about the *Ditch Weekly*, I was interested in how student journalism across Suffolk County is doing.

In some schools, student sentiment towards journalism has been declining, as can be expected with the rise of short-form video content. In the Half Hollow Hills Central School District, the elective journalism class is no longer offered due to low enrollment, though the district is working on

getting it running again. English Department director Ms. Love Foy said, “My sentiments are that the art of writing, especially news, which takes time and dedication in order to verify sources and report accurately, is not attractive to many students as an activity or a long-term interest. Media in general has become more focused on quick sound bites rather than investing time in accuracy.” Pari Sachdev, the managing editor of *Hills West Media* in the district, said, “attitude towards journalism is declining, and being a part of a newspaper isn’t that popular anymore.”

At Earl L. Vandermeulen High School in the Port Jefferson School District, students founded an online newspaper, *The Current*, in 2019, but it has since stopped publishing. At Southampton High School, their student newspaper, *The Riptide*, was last active in 2023.

Despite decreasing interest in written journalism, some schools have been adapting by turning their focus to broadcast journalism. At Smithtown East High School, Addison Riccoboni, the editor-in-chief of their student newspaper *The Matador*, said, “I feel as though interest in actually completing articles and working

through ideas has decreased so much.” However, three years ago, *The Matador* started incorporating daily broadcasting about school events into their functions. Since then, Riccoboni says, “I definitely feel as though the newspaper has become an afterthought and most people would rather participate in broadcasting, which also receives more funding.” Similarly, at Harborfields High School, the *HF Tornado News Team* has in recent years directed its focus towards broadcasting and video content and away from journalistic articles and the newspaper.

Notably, some student newspapers in Suffolk County have actually been growing. At East Hampton High School, students revived their long-defunct newspaper, the *Bonac Beachcomber*, several years ago. Now, though still somewhat primitive in layout, the *Beachcomber* has been publishing 2-3 issues a year. At Northport High School, the *Port Press* went all-digital in 2018. Dora Fields, the editor-in-chief, said that, although student membership in the club has remained roughly similar, “over the past few years, more people have been interested in reading our articles.”

The *Paw Print*, the student

newspaper of Walt Whitman High School, has not been publishing this year due to issues with their advisor and funding. However, Sienna Leaver, last year’s editor-in-chief, noted how interest in journalism at Walt Whitman has been increasing. She said, “During my freshman year, our team had 5-6 consistent writers and two editors. Last year, we had a team of 10-12 writers, photographers and cartoonists and three editors, so it’s definitely gone up over time.” She added, “Even though we haven’t done much this year in terms of writing, the other editors and I have done some outreach at our middle school and there’s a lot of interest there which gives me hope for the future of our paper.”

At Commack High School, the student newspaper, *The Courier*, has remained a popular club. Casey Schwartz, a copy editor, said, “Our publication was shrinking until this past year, when we had a lot of freshman interest. ... We’ve had stories about local restaurants, star athletes, how students have handled stress and more! It’s truly an amazing club at our school and it seems to be highly respected, especially by English teachers.”

## Stand Up For Education

by MICHAEL RETAKH,  
OP-ED EDITOR

Over the last two years, it has become a common sight for students to boo university presidents and administrators at their graduation ceremonies. Yet on May 29, during Harvard’s commencement, all stood and delivered an ovation to Alan Garber, the 31st president of Harvard.

Why? Because Garber had done what has become a rare sight: fight for education. When the Trump administration sent a letter on April 11 demanding that Harvard make sweeping changes to many of its policies, Garber resisted, making clear that the White House’s demands were not only unconstitutional, but directly antithetical to the principle of education.

The administration has fought most forcefully with Harvard, and their battle has received by far the most attention, but Harvard is not the only educational institution that President Trump has tried to influence. Universities including Columbia, Brown, Cornell, Princeton, NYU, UCLA and Johns Hopkins have either had funding suspended or have been threatened by such cuts. Most

of them have simply rolled over. Others have offered only passive resistance.

What these universities seem to have forgotten is the importance of an education, and of a truly free education. An education does not provide only bare facts. It offers social mobility. The ability to reason. Intellectual curiosity. A framework on which we can build, stretching ever higher into the pantheon of knowledge to try and make clear the mysteries of life. Without education, the discoveries of the last decades and centuries, even millenia, would not have occurred. Aristotle had to learn from Plato, and Plato learned from Socrates.

Education is foundational to the cuts that have drawn the most outrage, such as cancer treatments, space exploration and climate change prevention, but its benefits go far beyond them. If they didn’t, then Trump’s funding threats towards public districts and high schools wouldn’t be a major problem; after all, high schools aren’t trying to cure cancer. But that’s not the case, and the White House’s attempt to exercise control over the public education system and eliminate the Department of Education must be taken seriously. If students are stifled from an early age, if they are not given opportunities to explore, if their curiosity is not encouraged, then the loss

will be incontrovertible.

One cannot pretend that the American education system is perfect, or that it doesn’t require systematic overhauls. But what is happening now directly threatens those few elements that must be preserved or expanded on: the freedom to take sides, or not to; instruction in critical thinking; and the ability to learn regardless of financial constraints.

We should be angered, horrified, galvanized by these actions, but we shouldn’t be surprised. Instead, we must recognize them for what they are: a culmination of a decades-long movement of anti-intellectualism. It’s not just that we have abandoned the pursuit of knowledge, always looking for the easy solution, even if it’s not the correct one. It’s not just that we read the headline but not the article, that we vote for the candidate who sounds better instead of truly exploring their records, that we

take everything literally instead of trying to understand hidden meanings.

It’s that many now actively hate the idea of education. When did being “the smartest kid in the class” become a bad thing? When did an education make one “soft and privileged”? When did an expert with decades of experience become someone who “can’t be trusted”? It’s been a gradual process, but it is now undeniable that many cannot stand the idea that others are smarter than them, or have chosen to make more of the educational opportunities provided to them. Education has become some kind of competition, instead of the collaborative effort it must be.

Fighting against the president is hard, as Harvard has shown. Reversing a cultural shift is even harder. But it must be done. We must stand up for education.





Claire Sloniewsky,  
Thinker

by OLIVER WU  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
PRINCETON  
UNIVERSITY  
CLASS OF 2029

I, admittedly, did not know much about Claire Sloniewsky before we were announced as co-editors-in-chief of *Kaleidoscope* last spring. Despite our work on the same newspaper last year, our interactions had largely been contained through the digital mediums of Google Docs and website drafts.

Since beginning work on our Elections edition in August, I’ve come to see Claire as an exceptionally thoughtful person. While developing article ideas for our editions with her or watching her speak on episodes of the Innerscope Podcast, Claire never ceases to bring vision and clarity to her contributions.

The Innerscope Podcast, which Claire created alongside Katherine Kelton and Soraya Masrour, has been an incredible forum for student discussion of important topics. I thoroughly enjoyed watching each episode, and had the honor of guesting on it a couple of times this year. I hope that what Claire has started will inspire future students to foray into different

mediums of journalism at Ward Melville, which we’ve already seen this year with sophomore Ariel Bassis’ ‘Ward Melville After Hours’ podcast. The podcast is a testament to Claire’s imagination, her initiative and her determination to bring to fruition what she feels to be missing.

I’ve also been inspired by Claire’s love for reading. Reading books with intention seems to be, increasingly, a lost art. But I regularly see Claire around the school, reading, and her passion for discussing literature is palpable. That love for literature translates into her strong grasp of language and has made her an incisive and reliable leader of *Kaleidoscope*.

I’ll remember, somewhat fondly, our (extremely) late nights staying up together to finish print editions, ironing out the countless small details and counting down the pages still left to finalize. What Claire has done with *Kaleidoscope*, and with her other academic and extracurricular accomplishments, is something to be proud of.

I know that, at the University of Southern California and beyond, Claire will bring steadfast integrity and distinctive spirit to everything she involves herself with. Further, with aspirations to enter the publishing industry, I know that Claire will stay close to her values as she makes her impact.

to be heard and original sources to be made more freely available.

However, what comes with a social media-dominated news intake is a loss of perspective, as it’s hard to tell what is actually consequential and what is being exaggerated, and the loss of independence when seeking out information. We hope that our peers hold on to their desire and ability to search for information, rather than simply accept what is being shown to them.

That act of actively excavating information is what we find so meaningful about journalism. *Kaleidoscope* is, ultimately, a small student-run high school publication. Our writers are, like other students, overcommitted and overworked with their many obligations. Despite these limitations, *Kaleidoscope*’s capacity to produce original journalism this year has been admirable.

Over the summer, we secured interviews with five state and national politicians, asking them detailed questions about a variety of issues, especially those pertinent to students, and offering the community original information to help voters make their decisions. In the Winter and April editions, we told original stories of accomplished

Oliver Wu,  
Leader

by CLAIRE SLONIEWSKY  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
CLASS OF 2029

I had the privilege of working alongside Oliver Wu for my last year on the *Kaleidoscope*. Oliver is more than this year’s valedictorian, an incoming freshman at Princeton University or an avid Taylor Swift listener (though he is unapologetically all of those things). Through our late-night calls, joint community interviews and daily layout meetings, I’ve been lucky enough to witness his drive, opinionatedness, and clear journalistic instincts as a co-editor-in-chief and as a friend.

He works without hesitation, making impactful decisions with such ease and confidence. Leading this club with him has been easy, thanks to his ability to always recognize the bigger picture of our paper: What message do we want this edition to send, and what is the perfect way to execute that? Once Oliver has a vision, each edition we create gains an identity and purpose. He is always first to find a solution to our many difficulties as a student-run paper and volunteer time I honestly don’t know how he

fellow students, teachers, local businesses and community developments, from a profile of Kelly Zhou, the founder of local bubble tea chain Yaaas Tea, to an in-depth exploration of teacher perspectives on the digitization of AP exams.

We’re so proud of the *Kaleidoscope* members who went out of their comfort zone to interview someone they didn’t know, ask insightful questions to further their research and take on difficult articles that required much planning and effort.

Just as writing journalism is an active, rather than passive, act, we hope that consuming news remains that way as well. We hope that people continue to recognize the vital importance of a vibrant, independent media in upholding our democracy — and that journalism can only be made possible with the support of invested readers. Journalism, when it fulfills its mission, holds power to account. Journalists tell the stories of those who may otherwise be overlooked by society. They ask the questions and find the stories that are not obvious, uncovering information for the public good. We hope that our peers grow up to be engaged citizens who make an effort to stay

has. Maintaining a perfect GPA, while simultaneously spearheading extracurriculars like *Kaleidoscope* and Tri-M is something only Oliver is capable of, yet he is so much more than his résumé.

I’ve gotten to know Oliver as a person through this publication, and I couldn’t be more grateful. He never fails to keep me entertained and engaged, from his outstanding music taste (see: *BRAT* by Charli xcx) to the compelling news stories he shares via text message. I’ve truly grown as a person because of Oliver, as he showed me what hard work looked like and how to balance a vivid social life with rigorous coursework. It doesn’t matter what student you ask at Ward Melville, Oliver is universally loved and respected. I can only hope that future editor-in-chiefs are able to carry forward even a fraction of his countless contributions and the light he brings to Mr. Oatis’ room each Thursday.

Leaving Ward Melville also means leaving behind the *Kaleidoscope*, putting our immense hard work and passion into the hands of a new board. With time in high school coming to an end, I am forever grateful to have spent my last year working as a co-editor-in-chief with someone as dedicated, passionate and hardworking as Oliver Wu.

informed.

Major newspapers and other media sources should absolutely have their coverage decisions challenged. Journalists should absolutely have their relationships with those in power questioned and have their biases identified. But, to use the shortcomings of media outlets as a reason to ignore the importance of journalism is dangerously detrimental to the health of our society. A society without a strong, free press is one where fact and fiction blur. It’s one where corruption runs unchecked and people lose the autonomy to make informed decisions.

We, as the departing co-editors-in-chief of *Kaleidoscope*, hope that you choose to embrace the value of journalism, to participate in the act of journalism and to fulfill your civic obligation to support it.



A Farewell  
Message From  
the EICs

by OLIVER WU and  
CLAIRE SLONIEWSKY,  
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

It’s been a whirlwind year for *Kaleidoscope*. Through it all, we’ve had the pleasure of working with a dedicated group of board members and have found continual fulfillment in working with, challenging and encouraging staff writers to be the best writers they can be. From our time working with *Kaleidoscope*, we’ve come away with a clear and urgent message: hold on to the value and possibilities of journalism.

For many students today, their primary source of information is social media. People are exposed to what happens to pop up on their timeline, determined by mysterious algorithms, and rarely seek to learn more beyond that. Social media and other forms of nontraditional media undoubtedly have benefits when it comes to information dissemination, allowing voices traditionally left out of the mainstream



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10			11			
	12					
	13					

ACROSS

1. Baroque composer
5. Holy
6. What gets pierced most often
8. Multiple Three Village high schools?
9. Total prescription, abbr.
10. Sign up
12. Interval between C and E
13. Dimunitive suffix

DOWN

1. Ukrainian beet soup
2. Anti-antisemitic and pro-Israel group
3. Ends a filibuster
4. Not gas-powered or EV
5. Reproductive cell
6. Newark airport
7. Phone number addition, abbr.
11. Upstate university

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E	V	O	S	O	A	D	O	E	E	A	S	T	T	M
Y	O	R	C	U	D	C	L	S	E	D	R	Y	P	M
A	E	G	P	R	O	M	E	N	A	D	E	G	A	P

- advanced
- compass
- crucible
- curriculum
- graceful
- graduate
- heart
- honors
- morality
- news

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- pomp
- promenade
- slipper
- summer
- trivia
- trombone
- undulate
- video
- worthy

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	11+			8+
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		4	4+	

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Crossword Puzzle  
by MICHAEL RETAKH,  
OP-ED EDITOR

ACROSS

1. Piano opposite  
6. Colonoscopy discovery  
10. Jazz woodwind  
13. Alpaca relative  
14. BTS leader  
15. “Around the World in \_\_\_ Days”  
16. Spanish goodbye  
17. Sharp-eyed bird  
19. Bowing down, on the Internet  
20. Gym purchase common in January  
22. Serious driving offense  
23. \_\_\_EIO, in a song  
24. “Killers of the Flower Moon” tribe  
25. Former student  
27. Naturally illuminated  
29. Family matriarch  
31. Instruct  
33. Highlander or Forester  
34. South of Canada  
36. CollegeBoard exam  
38. Follows orders  
40. Melville’s second mate  
43. Oy \_\_\_!  
44. French this or that  
45. Extra working hours, abbr.  
46. Mexican wrap  
47. Between Re and Fa  
48. Farm advisor, abbr.  
49. Chagall or Maron  
50. Thinly sliced raw beef  
54. Internet restriction bypass  
56. Spanish rice dish  
57. Largest continent  
59. Parsley or thyme branch  
61. “The Voice” competitor  
64. Spirit strengthener  
66. Shoot long-distance  
67. One without companions  
68. Incite

DOWN

1. Calgary team  
2. Ye \_\_\_  
3. Biblical clothing  
4. Phone service provider  
5. “Stand at \_\_\_!”  
6. First Amendment freedom  
7. Nebraskan city  
8. Internet reviewer  
9. Easy as \_\_\_  
10. “Would’ve, Could’ve, \_\_\_”  
11. Heart chamber  
12. Affair of 1797-8  
18. Quagmire catchphrase  
21. Armed Forces education  
22. European river  
26. Conductor

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28. \_\_\_ pentameter  
30. Introverted  
32. Chaos  
34. Data storage stick  
35. Deforestation products  
37. After BCE  
39. Meditator  
41. Seventh planet inhabitant  
42. “I’m cold!”  
47. Video format  
48. Maine park  
51. Kitchen protection  
52. Good for curtains and commuters  
53. With film, used to preserve food  
54. Colorado ski resort  
55. Tanglewood orchestra  
58. Not lager  
60. \_\_\_ Beta Kappa  
62. Choose  
63. Stan or Suni  
65. Budget stopgap  
66. Italian affirmative



Elementary schoolers,  
**Have a hobby**  
you want to experience with others?  
High schoolers,  
**Want to serve the community**  
and earn service hours?



Join a club at LIYD to develop your skills and interests in a setting that fosters collaboration between peers while giving back to the community.

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