



Students Don't Learn So Early in the Morning

By Yovanna Garcia and Ana Rojas

It is 7 a.m. and Passaic High School students are expected to be in school even before the sun rises. In the mist of the morning, the gloom echoes through the air as teenagers with empty stomachs drag themselves into the building. How are students expected to learn under these circumstances so early in the morning?

Mary Carskadon of Brown University has evaluated the



www.muarchives.missouri.edu

Continued on page 2



Photo by Deyaniras Abreu

24 Horas perform at PHS during our Hispanic Heritage Celebration

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage: Energy Filled our Hearts

By Jenny Hernandez, Diane Ortega and Guadalupe Garcia

Walking through the doors; students were full of excitement for what was awaiting PHS students. As the minutes passed, the excitement of students arose as Principal Weissman talked about his love for the students here at PHS. Principle Wessiman soon introduced Ariela Colon, vice president of Club Latino, and Anthony Gonzales who represented Mayor Alex Blanco.

Both Colon and Gonzales spoke about Club Latino and how it would help student's education in college. The help and scholarships are available to all Hispanic students, but are very compet-

itive to win. The students cheered at the idea of so much help for their education and both speakers motivated students to achieve more than they can imagine.

As they came to their ending remarks, students were beginning to feel ecstatic for what was to come. They presented their first guest of the day; Michael Joseph Luciano also known as "Luciano Xactamente" who graduated PHS back in 2010.

Upon his arrival on stage, Luciano sang his first single, "Sigo Enamorado." After his performance, the DJs presented the well known Bachata group from New York, 24 Horas. You could see the excitement in the crowd while they were singing a few of their songs.

Once they were done singing,



Photo by Deyaniras Abreu

they spoke to the students and motivated them to achieve their dreams. As a result, they were presented with a plaque from the mayor's office for visiting and helping inspire students.

In the end, the performance was a huge success. Students, faculty, and staff loved the group. The Latino pride was really in the air!

WELCOME NEW TEACHERS

By Dhavni Desai, Erik Mixcoatl, Gisel Santamaria and Guadalupe Garcia

Mr. Frank

Mr. Frank, a graduate of Columbia University with degrees in Math and Economics is our latest addition to the PHS Math Department. Let us solve this equation: What does a recent college graduate from a highly recognized school plus PHS equal? The answer is a greater understanding for any student interested in the math field.

Mr. Frank has a great passion for math and wants his students to obtain that same outlook. He would like his students to push their knowledge of math and strive for academic mastery. Also, he hopes that when students leave his class they will be able to use math in the real world.

Ms. Yan

Ms Yan, currently a new biology and human anatomy teacher at PHS, attended a very prestigious school, Cornell University, where she was a Biological Science and Nutritional Science double major.

Ms. Yan wants her students to set goals for themselves, not only in their academic lives, but also in their personal lives. She said, "Having a vision is nothing without the work ethnic nec-



Mr. Frank



Ms. Yan



Mr. Simon

Photo by Dhavni Desai, Erik Mixcoatl

essary to see it come to fruition."

Ms. Yan swam all through high school and into college. She even went to Olympic tryouts! She also boxes three times a week, sometimes she even wakes up at 3 a.m. to go to boxing practice. For the future, she hopes to start her own charter school which would specialize in helping students further in such fields as bioengineering. In addition, she would like to start her own non-profit organization, which would give students quality tutoring to prepare for the SATs or college entrance exams.

Mr. Simon

Mr. Simon is a new and very dedicated environmental science and chemistry teacher. He received his MA from Stanford University and his BA from Michigan University where he also was part of a jazz band. Mr. Simon wants his students to realize the power that they have. He also wants his

students to realize that they can do anything they set their minds to do. "If they don't get something, they can get help and work to understand it. If they don't like what's happening in their community, they can change it. If they want to pursue some crazy career, they can do it," he shared.

Mr. Simon gives his students after school tutoring and helps them in many ways. He truly cares about them. He said "It's an honor to be a part of the Passaic community. I'm proud to say that I teach at PHS."

Mr. Garcia

Mr. Garcia, the latest addition to the Industrial Arts Department, has been teaching in Passaic for 34 years. He earned his degree in Industrial Arts in 1978 from Kean University and has been inspiring students ever since.

Mr. Garcia coached the JV baseball

Continued on page 3

A View from the Top

A Chat with Mr. Weissman

By Lodymyer Pina, Jenny Hernandez, and Gisel Santamaria

Sitting in his office, on his couch with no boundaries separating him from the journalists, we interviewed Principal Weissman who was very entertaining. He proved himself to be open-minded, as he answered all our questions and shared many new ideas.

When asked about his experience in PHS so far, he said, "It's been great. I think you guys are very compassionate students who deserve the best education." Principal Weissman has a lot to handle in PHS since there are many student complaints. Instead of ignoring the complaints, however, he gives the students ideas about how to improve the situation. He believes in empowering students by giving them responsibility.

The second issue we discussed was about teachers and students leaving school at the same time. He admitted that he wished teachers could stay longer, but because teachers are under a contract it is not possible. Finally, we asked Principal Weissman about what the biggest challenge at PHS is for him. "Convincing people that change is necessary and healthy," he responded.

Furthermore, Principal Weissman has many plans for PHS. In fact, he wants more structure in the school, as well as, improving

students' lives on a more emotional and social level. In addition, Weissman wants more hands on activities that will help the students to be brought up to par.

Besides helping students during high school, he wants to make sure the students will be ready for the real world by having a new

program for careers and technical education. Careers and Technical education will help students learn about the careers they may want to pursue in the future. Most importantly, Weissman wants "learning to be fun!"

To sum up, Weissman loves the fact that our school has such a diverse

student body, and how many students support one another. He noticed and likes our drive to want to succeed in life. All in all, he wants to see more progress in PHS. Weissman's final remark was, "Let's transform this high school into a happy joyful school."

After a good two days of interviewing Mr. Weissman, we asked if he sees himself staying in PHS for more years to come. Actually, he plans to be here for a long time, because he has a lot more ideas for PHS. He plans to enhance the high school's reputation to the prestigious level it held in the past. One thing's for sure, Principal Weissman is happy to be here.

On a personal note, *The Hilltop Star* staff is glad you had a speedy recovery and are back at school.



Photo by S. Yedwab
PHS Principal
Mr. Weissman

Senior Night Out: A Dreamy Evening



By Guadalupe Garcia and Sally Flores

The senior class of 2012 enjoyed a memorable Senior Night Out. As the students walked in, they were captivated by the beauty of the scenery ahead of them. Gisel Santamaria said the food and the vibe of the place blew her away. She thought the DJ was decent and fun.

During the lovely evening, seniors lined up to get their pictures taken by professionals. Students posed with their friends, dates, or solo.

The night was well worth the money, and now, people cannot wait until prom.

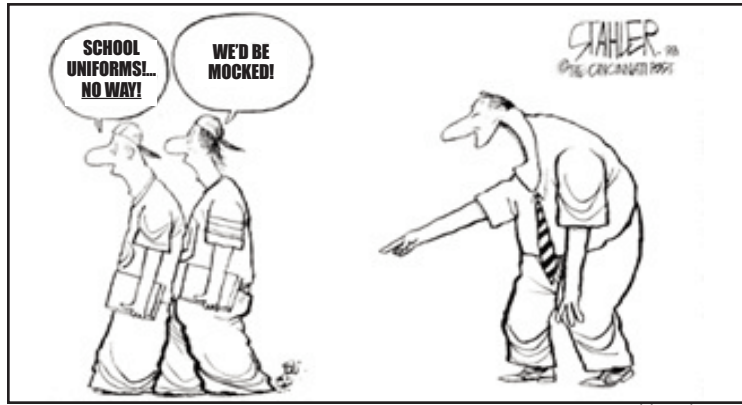


Daniella Esparragoza and Michael Espinosa

What's in this Issue

VIEWPOINTS.....	2
TEEN PEP RETREAT.....	3
ON OUR MINDS.....	4
STAFF BIO.....	5,9,11
CENTERFOLD: TISSUES FOR TEENS	.6-7
ASK AIDA.....	8
A&E.....	10
FASHION.....	11
SPORTS.....	12

VIEWPOINTS



www.blogcdn.com

Not about the Uniforms, All about the Attitude

By Lodymer Pina, Julia Lora, Jennifer Rojas, and Alyssa Rivera

Uniforms are not responsible for whether students fail or pass their classes. It's all about the attitude they have. It's true that many students are sent home, if they don't have the proper colored belt or all-black shoes, regardless of how bad the weather is. Granted, sending students outside in the pouring rain for details as little as that is extreme.

However, if people are continuously getting sent home for not wearing the uniform correctly, it's their own fault. You'd think people would learn from their mistakes, but in PHS, that's obviously not the case.

If you make a mistake once, you learn from it and move on. If you get sent home once for not wearing your uniform correctly, why would you do it again? Even if we were upset, we would still wear the proper uniform just to avoid the drama that comes with getting sent home. Rules are rules and they are made to be obeyed. If you don't follow the rules, you must suffer the consequences.

The students who always get sent home for not wearing the proper uniforms are always students that hate the uniform policy. They don't like the idea of having to wear the same khakis and polo shirts every day, so they refuse to obey the rules.

Unfortunately, the student's attitudes are affecting their education. The uniform policy is not responsible for students doing poorly in class. Even though students do not like the uniforms, they shouldn't let their feelings hinder them.

Strict Uniform Rules Hamper Education

By Branden Navedo and Lluvi Rosas

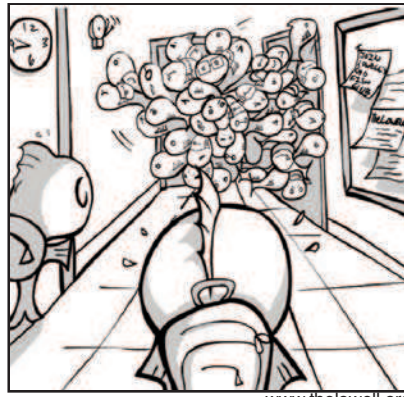
The strict rules of PHS are causing students to fail. Uniforms are interfering with our education by making us late for our morning classes. When students are sent home for wearing the wrong clothing, they will end up missing classes and then fail. In fact, many students who are sent home do not return to school.

Another question arises concerning wearing the same clothes every day. Will students really be motivated to get up every day to follow the same routine of wearing the same clothes?

In addition, the fact that we're barely awake so early in the morning heightens the feasibility that we'll wear the wrong shoes, the wrong belt or shirt. So, what is the point of coming to school? When we get to school, there's a good chance we'll be sent home for not following the dress code. Therefore, there is no motivation to go to school in the first place.

This explains the connection between student failure and the strict enforcement of uniforms. Students are sent home for insignificant reasons, such as insignias, lack of proper belts or shoes, etc. If they're not in school, they can't learn.

In a school as large as ours, making sure that everyone is following the uniform code is too much of a hassle. What students wear is insignificant compared to their main goal which is to obtain an education.



www.thelowell.org

Too Little Passing Time

Causes Extreme Lateness!

By Alyssa Rivera, Jennifer Rojas, Tracey Cuevas, Mabelly Tejada

How many lates do YOU have?! Is your teacher always getting on you because you're late to class very often? Well, it's not our fault we only have four minutes to get from building to building.

Last year, we had five minutes and THAT wasn't even enough! Students have failed classes due to their tardiness, and that was probably the only thing that made them fail.

The school's population has increased, so the hallways became more crowded. This makes it harder for students to move between classes.

Since the policy has changed, the administration should take into consideration what an impact less time has had on the students. Not only do students stress about being late to class, but also, being sure that they haven't missed anything in the beginning of class.

In conclusion, the new policy has only brought students down. We need change now!

More Time Means Less Time for Students

By Ashley Burgos, Deyaniris Abreu, Julia Lora

As you may all know, students and teachers enter and leave school at the same time this year. We strongly feel that the changes in our time schedule are unnecessary and detrimental to our education.

The teachers' contract allows them to work seven hours a day. With the longer day, teachers start and end school at the same time as students, which effectively eliminates teacher/student contact time.

We, the students, looked forward to time before or after school just in case we did not understand the lesson.

Last year, teachers would have time to help students individually. We understand they added an extra seven minutes to every period, but the problem is that many students need undivided attention. We believe students may be

at risk for failure because after and before school is the time most students use to study, complete missing work, and make up tests if they were absent the previous day. Many students learn better when the teacher is not focusing on *thirty* students at a time.



www.pencadernews.com

Do you think most teachers will want to spend extra time in school without getting paid? Teachers as well as students have separate lives and responsibilities outside of school. Students and teachers entering and leaving school at the same time is not a good idea. It eliminates the time before and after school when students need to get extra help.

Students Don't Learn So Early in the Morning

Continued from page 1

sleeping patterns of adolescents. According to ThinkQuest.org, her research has proven that, "after puberty, teenagers require more sleep (about 9.5hrs) but get less sleep (about 7.5hrs)." These studies suggest that by delaying the start time of high schools, teenagers will perform better academically and retain more information. After all, isn't the purpose of school to educate the youth of America?

Aside from the required

sleep hours needed to perform well in school, a good breakfast is also necessary in a teenager's daily routine. According to pediatrician Dr. William Sears (LiveStrong.com), students "who eat breakfast also participate more in class discussions, are better able to handle complex problems in class and get better grades."

Taking ten minutes to eat breakfast in the morning will allow students to gain both mental and physical benefits; but when a student is supposed



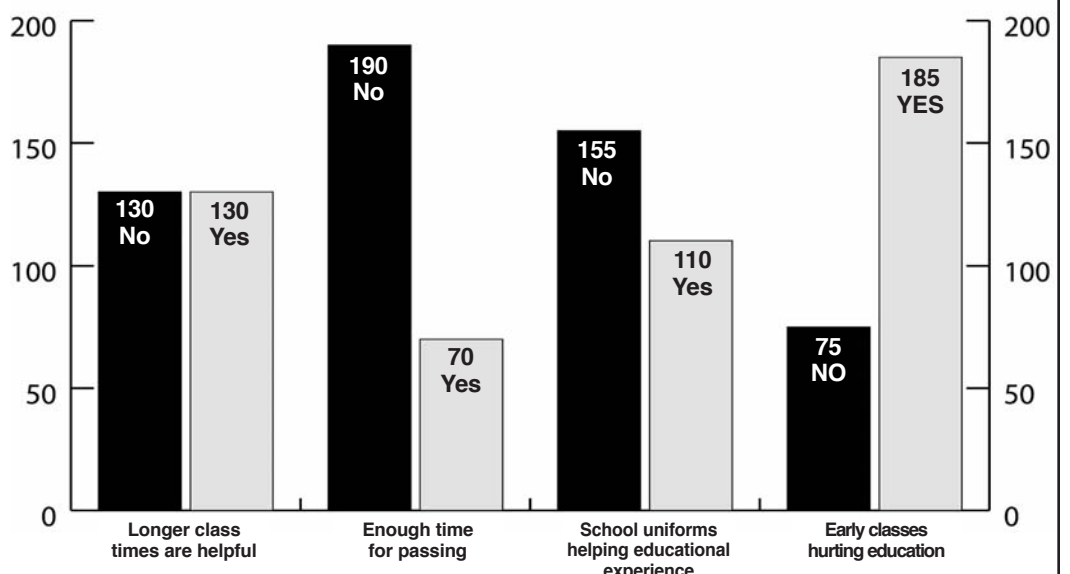
www.muarchives.missouri.edu

to be in school so early, is this really possible? Are students being deprived of their carbohydrates to success?

Who's Who in The Hilltop Star

- Ms. S.Yedwab.....Advisor
- Mr. R. Messina.....Assistant Advisor
- Alyssa Rivera.....Editor, Ask Aida Team
- Jennifer Rojas.....Editor, Sports Reporter
- Julia Lora.....Editor
- Branden Navedo.....Assistant Editor, A&E Co-Editor
- Yovanna Garcia.....Assistant Editor
- Ana Rojas.....Assistant Editor
- Lodymar Pina.....Assistant Editor, Fashion Editor
- Lluvi Rosas.....Assistant Editor, A&E Co-Editor
- Ashley Burgos.....Assistant Editor, Layout Designer
- Tracy Cuevas.....Assistant Editor, Fashion Layout
- Deyaniris Abreu.....Assistant Editor, Layout Designer, Photographer
- Mabelly Tejada.....Assistant Editor, Ask Aida Team
- Gisel Santa Maria.....Star Reporter
- Jenny Hernandez.....Star Reporter
- Diane Ortega.....Star Reporter
- Guadalupe Garcia.....Star Reporter, Ask Aida Team
- Gabrielle Rodriguez.....Star Reporter
- Shacora Wells.....Centerfold Editor
- Andrea Teanga.....Centerfold Editor
- Cabrera Odalys.....Ask Aida Team
- Ana Vazquez.....Ask Aida Team
- Alan Humphries.....Sports Reporter
- Sally Flores.....Sports Reporter
- Cristal Soriano.....Sports Reporter
- Dhavni Desai.....Contributer
- Eric Mixcoatl.....Contributer
- Kyara Pinedo.....Contributer
- Mayra Cabrera.....Contributer

PHS Student Polls



More News

Journalists in the Making Rutgers Journalism Conference

By Gisel Santamaria and Jennifer Rojas

The fascination and art of journalism lives on. On October 24, 2011, PHS's journalism class attended Rutgers, Piscataway for an educational workshop about young journalists. We were able to explore the different perspectives of journalism and learn more on how to make the ultimate newspaper.

We attended two workshops while we were there. The first workshop we attended was entitled, "Visual Journalism." This workshop was given by the famous photo journalist, Thomas E. Franklin.

He is most famous for his 9/11 photo of the three firefighters putting up the American flag in Ground Zero. Franklin talked



Photo by S. Yedwab

PHS Journalism students attend a journalism conference at Rutgers University.

about how he tells stories through his images and then he showed us a few short clips about his work. Franklin covers many topics from sports to politics and current events. He has been a photo journalist for about 20 years and currently works for *The Record*.

Our second workshop was entitled, "Ten tips for a Better Looking Newspaper." The workshop was hosted by Claire Regan, who works for the *Staten Island Advance*. Regan is an Associate Manger who edits the paper.

She gave us many pointers about how to make our newspa-

per a better looking paper. One tip was to use different font sizes in the paper, but never overdo fonts. Another important tip was to leave white space in the paper. This allows readers to zoom in and focus on the main topic of the article.

To sum up, our trip to Rutgers was interesting and very educational. We learned a lot and were able to meet great journalists. At the end of our trip, we were also able to eat at the Bush Dining Hall and take a look at Rutgers University. Happily, everyone enjoyed the trip.

Band Frenzy, Beyond Music

By Kyara N. Pinedo

In charge of the PHS Marching Band are Guadalupe Hernandez and Mark Colon, better known as the Drum Majors. Like other band members, they joined the band because they liked playing their instruments and wanted an opportunity to make new friends.

For their last season, the band's main goal was to have fun, win competitions, and keep everyone united. These musicians feel that the band is like their family. Hernandez stated, "Even through the hard times, we were able to stick together."

The band members believe the best thing about competition is the feeling of adrenaline they get when they're out on the field. They also say that they love hearing the roar of the crowd when they're done playing.

While many people claim playing in the band isn't a sport, Hernandez and Colon think otherwise. In fact, band members claim that it is more demanding



Photo by Kyara N. Pinedo

PHS marching band

than a sport, and it requires much more work. David Perez, section leader for low brass, questioned, "Why can't it be a sport?"

Every player and section leader says being in the band is a wonderful experience and they highly recommend it to upcoming freshmen. Although their duties as section leaders and drum majors are hard, the band members we interviewed find being a part of the band rewarding and a

good experience.

Clearly, the band is more than just a team playing instruments; it's like a family. Although some of the members have difficult assignments, it's what they love to do. All agree that the band is a wonderful experience.

Congrats to the band for taking 2nd place in the USSBA Group IV Class A competition on November 12, 2011.

A Moment of Compassion at PHS

By Gisel Santamaria

On September 11, 2011, the United States commemorated the 10th anniversary of 9/11. While the whole country remembered 9/11 on Sunday, Passaic High School had its ceremony on Monday, September 12. The ceremony took place in our new auditorium.

There were many guest speakers including Dr. Holster, the superintendent of Passaic. He spoke about 9/11, but also about how we all can reach our dreams no matter what our circumstances are. He concluded with a flashback of a former Passaic High School student who is now a flyer for the U.S Army.

The next speaker was one of our own from the PHS family, Mrs. Smackowitz. She was a volunteer for the American Red Cross who went to the site of the World Trade Center to hand out water and other drinks to the workers there. Mrs. Smackowitz told us about her experience while volun-



Photo by S. Yedwab

Mayor Blanco addresses PHS on 9/11.

teering and then ended with a heartfelt poem that truly touched us.

In addition, other speakers included our Mayor Dr Alex Blanco, our principal Mr. Weissman, and former Councilman Lucianin. They all shared their thoughts and experiences of 9/11.

The ceremony concluded with Mika Tampac from ROTC singing The Star Spangle Banner from her heart. Overall, the ceremony was great and touched everyone in the auditorium.

Teen PEP Retreat Builds Bonds of Friendship

By Marcos Flores

On October 27, 2011, while students at PHS were in their first period classes tired and sleepy, Teen PEP was on its way to Camp Ralph Mason in Sussex County which is about an hour away. We were ferried to an overnight retreat in the middle of the woods with people who were still strangers to us. Only our second mothers, the Teen PEP faculty advisors – Ms. Cilento and Ms. Petersen, knew what would be in store for us.

Although we knew each other, we were conversing and mingling as if it were our first encounter. On that chilly and damp day, we sat comfortably in a room around a warm fire where everyone shared their innermost personal feelings. Naturally, tears were inevitable.

The bravery and strength of everyone was so overwhelming, as all the students spoke of the sad times in their lives and how they conquered them. Our eyes were opened to the genuine side of each other, the side we would later get to know and appreciate.

As requested, we each brought along something personal that was tangible and pertained to our unique qualities. We were then asked to share its significance. What we learned



Photo by M. Peterson

Teen PEP at Spruce Lodge

about each other that evening could not have occurred in a classroom.

During this overnight retreat, we discovered there was an enormous amount of talent among our teen members. Besides leadership skills and awesome problem solving skills (which were used the next day in the team building activities with Ryan from the Camp Mason Staff), we were wowed with impressive singing from classmates who we never knew were able to sing. The entertainment never ended until the early morning hours.

The purpose of our retreat was to build a working team among Teen PEP members and form a bond, one that would enable us to successfully conduct future workshops and learn from our second mothers. Surely, this was a once in a lifetime priceless experience.

Welcome New Teachers

Continued from page 1

team for PHS back in the 90's. He even coached Little League for 6 years.

Teaching is all in the family for Mr. Garcia. His two sons, Steven and Daniel, are also teachers in New Jersey. One thing Mr. Garcia enjoys doing is going sky diving. He went sky diving before school started and plans on doing it again. It's great to have such a highly motivational teacher here at Passaic High School.

Mr. Lauricella

A great addition to PHS is Mr. Lauricella, who is part of the History Department. Mr. Lauricella has a BA in History which he earned at Montclair State University. He likes PHS and its diversity. In fact, he believes the diversity

here is a huge advantage because it helps in class debates. This is a change from his high school, which was in the suburbs of New Jersey that lacked diversity.

Mr. Lauricella is originally from Los Angeles California. So far, his experience in PHS has been fun he said, but he found the whole first month of school to be weird. Mr. Lauricella's vision for PHS is to become a breeding ground for success within the city, and for all the students to be proud of PHS.

Mrs. Peppers

Mrs. Peppers, a new member of the Science Department, earned her BA in Biology and her MA in Zoology at Texas Tech University. She came from a small farming community in Alberta, Canada. In fact, her high school graduating class only had 83 students.

Mrs. Peppers works in the Depart-

ment of, Instructional Support Services. However, like many PHS teachers, she also has Caf duty, which she finds amusing. "Cafeteria duty is always entertaining," she said.

Mrs. Peppers especially likes the diversity of PHS. "I think the diversity of PHS creates a unique opportunity for rich learning experiences," she stated.

Mrs. Pepper's vision for PHS is based on everyone giving it their all. "This high school is capable of remarkable improvement as well as high levels of academic achievement," she shared.

Ms. Nunez

Ms Nunez a new entrant to the Special Education Department, graduated from Montclair State University with a BA in English and is currently pursuing an MA in Special Education.

Ms Nunez has only been here a month, and so far she believes her experience has been great. She went to school in Union City, so she's used to a large urban school.

Ms Nunez is teaching English to five freshman classes, which is very demanding. It's wonderful that Ms. Nunez was able to join us on such short notice, and we know she will give it her all to do the best for her students.

Ms. Yildirim

Ms. Yildirim is part of the Math Department here in PHS. She has a degree in Mathematics which she earned at Montclair State University. Ms. Yildirim teaches algebra and geometry. She loves the diversity in PHS because she thinks that students learn from different cultures. Her vision for PHS is academic excellence.

Ms. Yildirim, from Wayne, went to Wayne Valley High School. She says both schools are great with much school spirit and involvement.

Ms. Fourounjian

Ms. Fourounjian, a new member to PHS's Math Department, teaches algebra and HSPA math. She graduated from Montclair State University with a degree in Mathematics. What she truly enjoys is learning from her student's diverse cultures and trying different foods she never knew existed. Her goal for this year is to have all students pass the HSPA.

Ms. Fourounjian is originally from Parsippany. Her high school wasn't anything like PHS because she went to an all girls school. So far, the funniest thing she has experienced is her students mispronouncing her unique last name.



Is coming to school early helping your education?

Yes, I feel like I'm learning because I am an early person.
J.L

It doesn't bother me if we come in at 5 a.m. as long as I learn.
G.B

No, because when I get to school I am still tired.
A.G

No, because it's too early in the morning and some people walk to school. Some come from uptown or downtown.
E.L

I think it's helping because I actually am learning something during those forty-seven minutes.
A.L

It's hurting my education because my brain and body are still sleeping.



Photo by S. Yedwab

Junior Dressup Day for Spirit Week

No, because there is psychological information showing that students don't learn so early in the morning.
D.O

No, because our brains are not working in the morning. People who come to school fall asleep in classrooms due to the lack of sleep.
A.R

I feel coming to school early is hurting our education because we are not wide awake, and don't pay attention. Our bodies are in the classroom but our minds are sleeping.
Ruth Ramirez

Coming to school early is good because some people get to leave early.
R.R

Coming early to school is hurting our education in several ways. For example, some students have trouble being in school on time and that affects our education.
E.T

I feel that coming to school early is hurting my education because my ride can't get me to school till 7:30.
Y.C

I feel no affect from it because I always walk to school and I don't mind what time I wake up.
L.R

Coming to school is hurting and helping me. It is helping me because now I really have to manage my time. It is hurting me because I am not getting enough sleep. Staying up doing homework, and then having to wake up early is not allowing me to function well in class.
B.V

No, because you have no energy and you're not capable of listening so early.
R.N

Do you think the longer class times are helpful?

Yes, they are helpful because we learn more in one period.
Anna Hernandez

Yes, more time allows for teachers to effectively and efficiently teach.
R.V

Yes, because it's more useful having longer periods, so that students can get more help in learning the things they don't understand.
S.C

I think the longer class times are helpful because we get more done and, well, I really don't even feel those seven minutes. It still feels like the regular time schedule we had last year.
Odalys Cabrera

I do believe that longer class time is helpful because you get more time to do class work and get all your thoughts.
K.M

Yes, it definitely is helpful. We get to spend more time in going over work, and that's a good thing, if you don't understand.
M.T

Yes because we have more time to learn.
E.T

Longer class times are a bit helpful, but it is not drastic. The only thing you can pretty much get done is some homework.
K.R.

It is somewhat helpful, but you can't really tell the difference. However, it is no help for students who have far classes and need 5 minutes to get to class.
N.D

Yea, more time equals more learning. The teachers don't have to rush through the class.
K.C

I think that longer class times are not helpful because all I do is think about after school and I stare at the clock. It brings tiredness, and hungeriness. As a freshman, I start and end late. By the time I get home from practice or wherever, it is already the next day.
G.M

No, because it seems like it takes forever to get out of that class.
A.R.



Photo by S. Yedwab

Evacuation drill

Do you have enough passing time between classes?

No, we don't because I'm always late.
Jess

No, I am always late to my second period class due to not having enough time and people not knowing where they are going in the hallway!
Sha'cora Wells

No, there are too many people and there is too little time to get to class.
J.M.

I don't think so, due to the fact this school is so packed.
T.M.

No, the school is way too crowded and some classes are in another building.
E.C.



Photo by S. Yedwab

Evacuation drill

No, there are a lot of kids in the hallways, so I think we should get more time because of the crowds.
Y.S.

No, the hallways are extremely crowded and four minutes is not enough time especially when classrooms are in different buildings.
J.N.

No, I don't have enough time. If it's not the huge traffic jams, it's the long way you have to take to get from class to class. They're so far apart.
D.E.

No! I need more time because I'm Boss and I don't walk at the speed of light.
S.C.

For the majority of classes, yes, there is enough time. However, the various people that are crowding the halls prevent people from getting to class.
R.G.

As a student of PHS, I feel like the passing time is really short because when I try to get to my class, the hallway is always crowded and I end up coming late. Overall, I feel that the passing time should be extended.
L.J.

No, I don't think four minutes is enough. I have no time to go to my locker.
R.J.

Are school uniforms helping or hurting our educational experience?

They're helping because there is no jealousy, and there are no gang related colors. We are all wearing the same colors.
Rosemelly Rosario

It is helping because it makes us become more like a community.
Lizaury Paulino

We can focus more on school instead of what we wear.
Anna Hernandez

The uniforms help our education because we don't need to spend valuable time in the morning deciding what to wear.
Jennifer Rojas

It is hurting me because people don't get to know the real me.
Evelisse Carrero

Wearing uniforms is neither helping nor hurting my educational experience at PHS. However, some rules are ridiculous like not being able to wear a simple black sweater or getting sent home for not wearing a black belt.
M.F

Wearing uniforms is actually helping a lot. It keeps me disciplined. But I don't think it really matters. Your education doesn't depend on the way you dress. Education depends on how much you desire to actually get done.
D.R.

It is hurting my education because, when I go to school, I want to wear what I choose to wear and then I'm more excited to learn.
R.S.

It is helping because I get to school on time because I don't have to look for an outfit.
Amanda Mirkovic



Photo by S. Yedwab

Navel Science bake sale

In my I point of view, uniforms don't bother me. As long as I get to learn, I don't mind what we wear.
Jullisey G.B

It is helping a lot. I don't get distracted by looking at other people's outfits. It makes me concentrate more.
Jennifer R.

It is helping our education because you don't have to be late to school when you don't know what to wear. It saves time.
L. R.

No, because uniforms have nothing to do with it.
M. T.

Do you think the longer class times are helpful?

It's helpful because teachers don't feel rushed and cover more.
Rosemelly Rosario

I think they are because we aren't in a rush.
Jennifer Rojas

No, because I don't like them.
Leonnah Dorch

I think longer times are helpful because I know we have more time to complete a lesson in class. Students in general have more time to ask questions and do homework in class.
C.A

Longer class time is helpful because they give a few extra minutes to better understand what you are learning. It also gives the teachers time to better explain the work they are giving, so that students can understand it better.
J.P



Photo by S. Yedwab

Sophomores during Pep Rally

I think they are helpful because we learn more and 'NEW THINGS.' This will help us take good notes for the rest of the year through high school.
Madeline Rojas

Yes, it really helps to have extra time in my classes. My main classes are AP and before we were not able to accomplish a lot in class. The extra minutes in class are very useful to me.
Jackie M.

No, longer time doesn't help because it's still the same as last year
Amahi R.

Yes, because longer class time gives the teacher more time to teach the lesson right and she's not flying through it
Ana R.

No, because teachers take things slower thinking they have time, and in the end not much gets done. Also, students lose interest after a while.
G.S

No, because the students begin to lose interest after forty minutes anyway.
Sha'cora Wells

My World Combines Art and Music

In the summer of June 16, 1994, a girl arrived on earth. Who's this girl, you ask? Hello, my name is Guadalupe Garcia and there are two things that help me fly through life: music and art. I'm very opinionated and like to meet new people. I'm easy to get along with and cool to hang with. My friends find me chaty and bossy at times.

Art really inspires me to open my imagination. The colors really look vivid and the paintings talk to me. Each painting says something to me. It's as if their world blends into mine; starting a collision between two worlds. I'm not good with brushes, but having a picture in my mind creates itself onto a piece of paper. The image takes over my hand and the pen. It then transfers itself to my paper. Some call it bogus; I call it art.

Music is another huge part of my life. I turn to it when I'm stressed, happy, or tired. It makes a positive impact on my life. To me, music is like a portal leading me into a retro time machine/ twilight zone. I'm very addicted to music. It helps me think clearly and it adds to my character. Art and music define me and the way I see the world.

—Guadalupe Garcia

Fact not Fiction

Hello, my name is Andrea Julie Teanga. I'm a senior at Passaic High School. I'm really looking forward to this year and the events seniors get to experience. I grew up in Ecuador where I was born and then moved to New Jersey when I was four. It was exciting when I arrived because my entire family greeted me, my mother, and sister.

I would say I'm creative, indecisive and talkative once you get to really know me. I love to go out places; I'm not a homebody at all! My favorite place to be at all times is at the Jersey shore either getting on rides I'm forced to get on or eating fried Oreos which are disgustingly good.

Eventually, my time at PHS will come to a bittersweet ending. I plan to go to culinary school. I'm just looking forward to my future.

—Andrea Teanga

Writing is My Passion

On a cool morning on January 29, 1993, I was born in Passaic, New Jersey. Growing up in Passaic as a middle class family, both my sister and I were very spoiled. Having everything we wanted, given to both of us, we had the mentality that we could have what we wanted, when we wanted it. Although, we never worked hard for the things our parents gave us, we actually work hard now for the things we earn on our own.

Regardless of what our situation, our family sticks together and keeps our love strong. We are all about family and nothing comes between us. We push each other to aim high, which is why I want to pursue a career in journalism. I feel that my greatest strength is in writing and expressing my opinion to others, which has become my passion.

I plan on playing an important role in both magazines and newspapers one day. Hopefully I can accomplish it all!

—Jennifer Rojas

Tracey's Eve

While everyone was getting ready for the New Year, my mother was giving birth to me. I am Tracey Carolina Cuevas. I am a very unique girl living inside my own world. I am 17 years old and Brazilian and Honduran. I live with both my parents and I'm the youngest of 3 brothers and 2 sisters.

For those who know me well, I'm very funny and friendly. A bit shy at first, but once I get to know you we'll get along just fine. Giving good advice and being dependable are the qualities that make me a good friend. I also have a lot of spirit and leadership skills which make me a good Cheer Captain for the Passaic Indians.

Journalism is a career I plan to pursue next to becoming a lawyer. I hope my writing will make an impact on *The Hilltop Star* and will keep our readers entertained and updated on what goes on in our school.

—Tracey Cuevas

Hilltop Star Staff



Photo by S. Yedwab

Live... Laugh... Love

I'm my own best friend! Trusting people is hard now a days. I'm Alyssa Rivera. I'm 17 years young, and I'm a senior in high school.

I have Dominican, Puerto Rican, Black, and German blood running through my veins. I have three siblings; two sisters and one brother. All three of them are former graduates of Passaic High School.

For nine years of my life, I was a cheerleader. First, I started in Pop Warner for The Warriors. Then, all 4 years of high school I was a cheerleader, this being my last. I live with my mom only, and she is my mother and my father.

Gymnastics has been a part of me for 2 years, and I hope to continue in the future. I'm a laid back person, who is loyal and faithful. I'm also trustworthy & reliable. Being committed to a good relationship and a good career is what I focus on most. I love my life and believe I was given it for a reason.

—Alyssa Rivera

All About Me

Hello my name is Lluvi. I was born and raised in Passaic, New Jersey. My birthday is on June 18, 1995. I am Mexican and Spanish. Part of an okay-ish family. I enjoy singing, dancing and acting.

I am a person with many different personalities. For example, sometimes I can be mean/nice or both. It actually depends on how you treat me. You just have to get to know me. I'm care-free most of the time but I do acknowledge the consequences.

My goal is to become a crime scene investigator when I grow up. I'm petite. I throw gum wrappers at people when they're not looking. Dislikes: copycats and kids.

One day I would actually like to have a blue pony. My interests are to be different, to study science, and everything from scary to funny. Other things I love are monkeys, my boyfriend, dying my hair, jewelry and makeup. I'm actually just looking forward for people to understand me most of the time. Can you be one of them?

—Lluvi Rosas

Gabrielle, Here to Help Get the Word Out!

The true definition of awesome was born on September 13, 1993 and came to be known as Gabrielle Rodriguez. As I'm sure we all know, I'm a pretty down to earth kind of gal. Sure, most of you know me, but this is for those who do not. Now we go into the mind of Gabby.

My hobbies consist of the awesome ability to draw, the amazing lungs of life to sing and a pure heart of gold for my acts of kindness. My epic side is mainly video games and making Animated Music Video's, also known as AMV's.

One thing you may not know about me is that I help my stepfather repair X-ray machines. Another thing is that I love to dance and have attended dance classes for a while; when I was younger. Many people do not have a word to describe me so they use the phrase, "You're just Gabby!" So here I am, as a new member on *The Hilltop Star Staff*, please use me as your voice. I'm here to help you get the word out.

—Gabrielle Rodriguez

Short and Simple

Hi everyone! Well as some of you know me, I'm Ana and I'm a senior at PHS. Yes, I know what all of you are thinking, that this is some explanation about some girl explaining her boring old story and you don't have the time to read this at all. Yeah, I've been there already. But it's true I am going to explain a story, but no worries, it's going to be short and simple, so I won't waste your precious time. And yeah I know my sarcasm stinks, but here goes nothing.

I'm going to be graduating PHS in 2012 and that's when the world is supposed to end! But it might not, so hooray for all the graduating seniors!

I'm just your normal 17 year old, who has 2 awesome parents and three sisters whom I love, even though we fight a lot, and am scared about graduating and every time I think about it I get even more scared the next time! I know, crazy, huh? But after I graduate I head out to Los Angeles, California and yes, that's the other side of the country, so I look forward to graduation after all.

It's scary but at the end I'm moving to LA so it's not all that bad. I'm realizing that all this is coming to an end and will lead to a new beginning in life. I'm going to start college and once I'm there, I will have to study extra hard to pursue my career as a graphic designer and getting my dream job.

Well, that's all I have to say except, good luck and hope everyone one of you is eager to be graduating, when your time comes.

—Ana Rojas

Seasons Greetings
from *The Hilltop Star Staff*

My Life

My name is Deyaniris, yea I'm 100% Dominican de la capital. I am mostly known as Nini y Dee Dee to all my teammates. This will be my third year at PHS. I'm very outgoing, loud and super friendly but you don't want to get on my bad side because it isn't pretty. I was born on the 24 of Enero del 1995. I am a very spontaneous person, I may decide to do something very crazy at the last minute and nine out of ten times it becomes an everlasting experience.

Besides, being at home with my family, my hobbies include tattoos, shopping, chilling with my mains, going to parties and playing sports. I played volleyball, softball, basketball, swimming and freshman football, which was a life experience. I love to listen to music and dance to my favorite types of music; bachata, rap dominicano, salsa, reggeaton and the list goes on and on. I am all over the place, but in my own way I am so organized.

My family here in the UU.EE includes my mother and my little brother, Bebe (Steven), who is eight years old. However, I spend most of my time at my grandmother's and Aunt Karina's house.

My perfect day/life, which I would not trade for the world is to be in my house with Jeanna, my boyfriend J, my family, my Brady bunch Bb family, and I would be the happiest person in the world.

—Deyaniris Abreu

Why did the Chicken Cross the Road?

To get to the other side. Are you laughing yet? No? I guess I should start off by stating that I am a very practical person (even though I think I'm hilarious). I was going to write about the time I performed on stage with a rock star, crowd surfing as the lime-light captured the manifestation of thrill. However, I would be lying. There's a saying that suggests that there are no boring stories, only boring writers. In that case, with regards to the average teenager's attention span, I'll try to make this short and appealing!

My name is Yovanna and I represent the Class of 2012 seniors! I befriend more teachers than those in my own age group. I can converse with just about anyone about anything because I am easy-going, but persistent when I need to be. I laugh at my own jokes, and yes, I am a dork. I would sit and read all day if I could (but, you know, I actually like to shower and eat and stuff).

As one of the most involved students in school, I always have time to be a perfectionist. Hopefully, I will bring my talents to *The Hilltop Star*. I am very excited to write informational and insightful stories for the newspaper!

—Yovanna Garcia

Continued on page 9

Cyber Bullying

Can be Damaging

By Diane Ortega

Bullying in school has always been a problem. With more children becoming active online, social web sites allow bullying to turn into cyber bullying. According to www.troubledteen101.com, cyber bullying is now a growing trend in the online world. Now children, preteens and teenagers have become more active online through social media websites and channels. Due to this, Cyber bullying has emerged.

Cyber bullying takes place in the online world so it isn't real, but the consequences, both emotional and physical, can become real. Emotional cyber bullying is scarring since it involves humiliation. Cyber bullying in some cases, has blended into the "real world" with harassment continuing offline.

It is important to note that cyber bullying occurs between minors. Cyber bullying is not limited to the internet. It includes digital technology like cell phones texting by minors or groups of minors to embarrass, torment, threaten, harass, or target another minor. This does leaves scars, since online "friends" as well offline friends can see the abuse.

There has been a recent movie that came out about cyber bullying. The movie is called *Cyber Bully*. This film hopes to delete digital drama in the society. The movie is about a girl that is bullied online by her classmates. The girl soon finds herself becoming a victim of cyber bullying on a social website.

She becomes afraid to face her friends including her best friend, which leads her to a breaking point where she almost commits suicide by overdosing herself with pills.

Our source noted her mother learned from the incident and sued the school system and state legislation to prevent others from going through the same problems as her daughter. This shows how powerfully words can affect the mind and soul of a person. Cyber bullying can ruin the social life and self esteem of its victims.



www.heyugly.org/cyberBully.php

Peer Pressure

It's Very Real

By Gabrielle Rodriguez

Here's the situation: you're in school and there's this big math test, but you didn't study. A bunch of friends tell you, "If you didn't study for the test then don't go to class, just cut 7th period with us!" At first, you're a little upset about the idea, but then you feel that it may work, so you decide to do it. This is peer pressure.

"Hey, we're all going to this party after school at Chris' house, you should come!" say your peers. Then, you answer, "Oh, I can't, I have to finish up some things at home." "Well, if you don't come then you won't be invited to any other parties, I'm just going to tell Chris you're coming.." This is also peer pressure.

A lot of the times, people say they don't go through it, but it doesn't just involve someone wanting you to smoke or drink. Peer pressure is when you are under pressure by a person or a group of

people to do things you wouldn't normally do. I'm sure we've all felt like this.

Many times, people are even pressured to fight. When you have a group of people around you, when you're confronting another person someone, will yell, "FIGHT," and then the fight breaks out. You can even be pressured to have sex when you're not ready. When your friends are telling you that they've already done it and find out you're a virgin, they'll start putting you on the spot telling you to lose it.

The one thing that can fix all this is to just speak up. A



person is easily peer pressured when they think they don't have any other friends, or they don't have a voice. Friends really do come and go, and, if you don't want to lose them as friends, just say, *Listen, I'm not ready* or *It's not my kind of thing*. If that doesn't work, then just say "NO" and walk away.

Cliques

In or Out

By Sha'Cora Wells

A dirty little secret that students need to know is that cliques still exist! We all know that not finding the right clique can make our high school experience problematic because we never feel that we belong.

Being a part of a clique usually means being a part of a group of people that will support you through your high school



www.hd-wallpapers.com

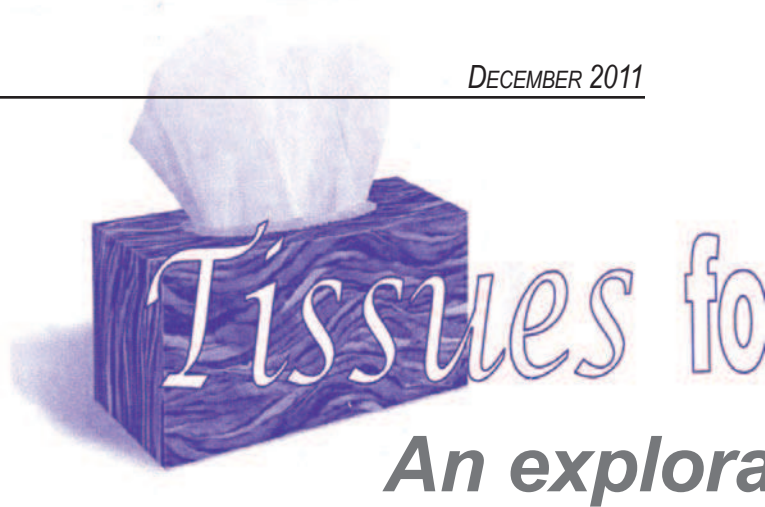
endeavors. Some students believe that being a part of a clique makes them important, while others feel it makes them safe.

There are various cliques in PHS ranging from the most popular to the not so popular people. Believe it or not, even the most unpopular people may become part of a clique.

PHS cliques include your jocks, cheerleaders, band geeks, nerds, emos, the weirdo's, and

the socially awkward people. These cliques make up the basis of our school, and, if you aren't a part of at least one of them, you are technically considered out of the matrix.

However, don't be alarmed. Sooner or later, you will find the perfect clique for you because there's the right group out there for everyone. Just make sure that that the clique you join will make you, not break you.



Date or Hate Quiz

By Gabrielle Rodriguez

- 1 **Is the Girl/Guy you're dating:**
 - A. A Player
 - B. Someone easy to talk to
 - C. A hopeless Romantic
- 2 **What gifts has she/he given you?**
 - A. A Headache
 - B. Stuffed Animals
 - C. Roses & Chocolates
- 3 **Where do you guys go?**
 - A. McDonalds
 - B. The Park for a fun 1 on 1 time
 - C. Applebee's, Red Lobster, etc.
- 4 **Do you feel this relationship is:**
 - A. A joke
 - B. Something sweet that can grow
 - C. True love and passion
- 5 **How much effort does he/she put into the relationship?**
 - A. 15%
 - B. 75%
 - C. 90%

Scoring System: A=1 point B=2 Points C=3 Points

13-15 points: they're a keeper and deeply fixated on nothing but your happiness.

9-12 points: It's puppy love for you both and who says you can't enjoy it a little? Have fun!

8-5 points: I wouldn't take it too seriously, but you never know, they may be out to surprise you.

An Option Teens Don't Have to Choose

By Gabrielle Rodriguez

Teenagers can be very antsy to lose the one gift that they have a choice to hand over, their virginity. However, the problem that follows this is teen pregnancy. When teens become so eager to have sex, they are not always well protected. Then a month or two down the line, the only things they have to show for it are a few missed menstrual cycles, a positive pregnancy test and a baby bottle.

Pregnant teens face very serious money issues and possible health problems with the baby. Sometimes, a teen mom may even have to face raising a baby on her own.

Virginity should not be taken lightly. Once it's gone, it will not return. Teens should realize that they do have choices when it comes to their virginity. They can be prepared with a variety of birth control methods or they can just say no to sexual activity.

For those teens who are pregnant and

don't have a plan, there are a few things you can do. Talk to your doctor! Your doctor will help you figure something out so you and your unborn child can stay healthy. Another good thing you can do is to talk to your parents. Your parents aren't that crazy. They gave birth to you, chances are they'll have a great idea about what options you have with work, school and potential financial issues. You can also talk to your guidance counselor. That's what they're there for! guidance! If you have any questions or need some supporting facts or a confidential place to go when you don't trust other people, visit the free clinic. If you

Teen Pregnancy

For Teen Issues

Evolution of Teen Concerns

My Struggle to Be Thin

By Mayra Cabrera

Ever since elementary school, I have been known to be fat. During my middle school years, I was insulted for being overweight. I was once in my gym class, when a girl approached me and called me, "jiggly" because of my weight, and I knew she was right.

During my shopping experience, I was never able to wear fashionable clothing. Instead of looking at what was in style, I could only choose what fit my body. My choices were limited.

At some point in my life, I said to myself that, if I was going to be called fat, why not just eat what I wanted. I started to be careless with what I ate. One time, I took a whole chocolate bar and placed it into my dresser so no one could see me eat it. I used to dress with dark colors, so no one could see how overweight I was. At that moment, I was so depressed, that I felt hopeless. For anyone who thinks this issue is not very traumatizing, let me tell you, it sure is.

My first year of high school, I finally saw the light at the end of the tunnel. My parents took me to a nutritionist. My nutritionist advised me that not eating was only going to make me more overweight. Instead, I began a new lifestyle. After a year and a half, I lost at least 40 to 50 pounds.

My advice to anyone struggling



Body Image

www.healthtipsandguides.net

gling with their weight is: don't give up.

Don't let the insults, comments, or name calling affect or destroy your self-esteem. Find the inner strength to become the person you know you truly are.

CONFIDENCE

Nobody's Perfect, but Everyone is Beautiful

By Dhavni Desai

One thing that I think a lot of girls struggle with is self confidence. Especially in high school, girls seem to have low confidence levels. Many girls talk negatively about themselves and others. Here are a few tips that all girls in high school should know:

- Don't pick at things that you don't like about yourself, or your "imperfections." I have always overheard conversations where a

girl would say "Oh I'm so fat, my nose is too big, my thighs are too big." These little things that you think are your "imperfections" are really the things that make you beautiful. They make you different, but they make you *you!* So, don't ever call yourself fat or ugly because you're not! You're beautiful in every way possible!

- I know that in high school there are girls that are always trying to tear each other down. They make fun of each other and pick

Teens Question Their Sexuality

By Yovanna Garcia

Ages 13-19 can be the scariest years of any teenager's life. Adolescents are still trying to understand their bodily changes as well as all the different feelings that they are experiencing. This is also the time when they want to search for their own independence and reassure themselves of who they are. Although, for many teens, the most uncertain thing is their sexuality.

While mainstream society encourages boy-girl relationships, there are other types of relationships (lesbian, gay, bisexual). No matter what type of relationship exists, there will always be ups and downs. According to Dr. Gottman of The Gottman Relationship Institute, "after a twelve-year study of same-sex couples, research demonstrates that all couple types—straight or gay—have many of the same problems and the same paths to staying happy together" (www.gottman.com).

As teenagers who begin to conduct research learn, there is a world of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and those questioning (LGBTQ). While the people from this community are degraded and undergo bullying, society lacks the



Who am I?

www.chuvachienes.com

ability to protect these adolescents. In addition, society does not tell teens that it is okay to be themselves, if that means being different.

However things are changing. Websites now tell stories of how teens begin to cope and accept their own sexuality. For example, a boy named Sean felt like he was a girl trapped in a boy's body at the age of two. He finally told his family and friends when he was fourteen. From the constant bullying from his peers, Sean got pulled out of middle school and his mother began to home school him. He was pleased that his mother and

close friends still loved him for who he was.

Just as in Sean's case, examiners say that "an increasing number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender — LGBT — children are "coming out" earlier than high school because of greater cultural acceptance" (www.abcnews.com). New York recently passed the same-sex marriage law, making it the seventh state in America to accept this partnership. This goes to show that society is slowly changing. History is being made and people are being accepted.

Self Esteem



www.maketheworldyourstage.com

on other girl's physical attributes. If you're a girl out there that has been called fat, ugly, stupid, etc., let me tell you one thing. Be who you are and have fun and enjoy your life. If someone is going to judge you and make fun of you for enjoying yourself and being who you are, then that is their problem.

- In the words of Dr. Seuss: "Be who you are and say what you

feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." If you believe that, you are beautiful, and what other people say about you won't matter.



www.clipart.com

tor will you and y. o is talk en't all you, so ea about school, idance ere for, ons and a confi- n't trust If you

don't know where the free clinic is or you need to know the hours for the clinic, ask the school nurse.

Teen pregnancy is an issue that some teens face, but they should realize that they are not alone. They need to realize their options and to get help in making tough decisions.

Most importantly, teen pregnancy does not have to happen. Many teens don't know what they want until it's too late. To avoid problems, educate yourself about birth control or just say *no*.

Frenemie's Quiz



www.zilaselamberbadak.blogspot.com

1. Do you have a close personal friend you tell all your secrets to?
Yes or No
2. Do you consider your friend to be a true friend?
Yes or No
3. Does your friend ever tell you you're ugly?
Yes or No
4. Has your friend ever told anyone your deepest secrets?
Yes or No
5. Has your friend abandoned you in your time of need?
Yes or No
6. Has your friend ever embarrassed you at a party?
Yes or No
7. Does your friend judge your every move?
Yes or No
8. Does your friend ever go after the guys you like?
Yes or No
9. Does your friend only call you when they need something from you?
Yes or No
10. Does your friend ever try to influence you to do things you don't want to do?
Yes or No

Not a True friend

If most of your answers are yes: your friend is not a true friend and you shouldn't let him/her judge you or treat you like you're unimportant. Take the time to evaluate your friendship with this person to determine if he/she is a true friend to you. Remember true friends are here to the end!

True Friend

If most of your answers are no: your friend is a true friend and treats you with respect and kindness. This person has been there for you when you needed him/her. You can tell your deepest secrets to him/her and they will never judge you.

Potential True Friend

If most of your answers were yes and no, there is a possibility that your friend is a frenemy. You should take the time to talk to this person to find out if he/she is a friend that will be there no matter what or an enemy who will eventually undercut you or stab you in the back. Determine if his/her intentions are good or not to discover if the friendship is worth saving.

Dear Aida,

I have a friend who got pregnant and left school a couple of months later. She really wanted to have a baby, which was her dream. But, wouldn't it be worse to have that dream accomplished, and not have a way to survive with the little child? She actually has no support from her family. How can I help her?

Concerned

Dear Concerned,

Your friend made the decision to have a child and start her own family, so she must feel confident and ready to make the sacrifices to keep her family well and healthy. If she has no support from her family, then you can support her. Be a good friend and show her she's not alone. However, if she doesn't have a plan, help her form one. She has to make a plan to be successful.

My final advice is to stay by her side and be the friend that she needs, so she can build up that confidence and strength to get through this.

Dear Aida,

I have a friend who is stuck between two guys. Which one should she pick? Her number one love or the guy who treats her like a queen?

Your Dearest Friend

Dear Your Dearest Friend,

I think she should pick the guy who treats her like a queen. There's a reason why she caught feelings for the second guy. She may love the other one, but if she loved him as much to not focus on someone else, then she would've never paid any mind to the other guy.

Love isn't the full responsibility for a relationship. There's also trust, honesty, and respect. Honestly, if the guy she doesn't love treats her better, then she should turn her attention to him.

Dear Aida,

I have a friend who just moved here from a different state. She moved here because she had too many problems in her old school. She now lives with her dad and her little brother. Her little sister lives with her mom. Her mom has a drinking problem. She doesn't want to leave her little sister alone, in that situation, but her little brother needs her just as much. She doesn't want to make one sibling feel more important than the other. What should she do?

Someone Who Cares



Dear Someone Who Cares,

Having a family separation is something really sad. It's especially hard, if they have young children who have no idea of what's going on. Both of your siblings need you and you have to be strong to help them out. One of your parents should be mature enough to see that their kids are suffering. They should come up with some sort of agreement among them, so no one suffers.

Both your siblings and yourself need your parents. Now that all of you guys are growing up, they need their support, physically and mentally. Your brother and sister both need you, but I believe that in this case your little sister needs you more. She needs you more, because your mother might not be sober all the time. Your mother can abuse your sister physically and emotionally when she is drunk.

Got a question...

ASK AIDA



Photo by S. Yedwab

The Ask Aida Team

Another thing you can do is convince your dad to bring your sister to live with him. That is the best option you have in this entire situation. By doing so, you'll be with both of your siblings and you won't have to worry about your younger sister. Make sure you convince your father by telling him what's really going on with your mother. There's a possibility he might not even know what's going on! I hope my advice helps you and good luck.

Dear Aida,

My friend's mother passed away and I want to make my friend feel better, but I don't know how.

Worried Friend

Dear Worried Friend,

I'm sorry to hear about your friend's loss, but I have a couple of options for you. One, give him/her some space, or two, stay and comfort him/her. Since you know your friend better than I do, you decide what's best. Remember, this is a delicate topic, so be patient and sensitive.

Try not to be aggressive and don't smother him/her. When talking, make the conversation light, simple, and bring some comedy into it. You must distract your friend from his/her tragic problem.

If your friend wants you there with him/her, go out and make an effort to entertain. If your friend wants you to give him/her space, respect that.

Be like a silhouette to your friend, but don't suffocate him/her. Since this is a sensitive subject, I understand that it all might be stressful. Think twice before you make your move.

In the end, give it a shot, because he/she might need you. Don't abandon the friendship.

Dear Aida,

I have a friend whose father recently passed away. I know everyone deals with pain in different ways. However, my friend hides the pain to show others that she is strong. Should I tell her to express her true feelings or let her continue to hide her pain?

Concerned and Confused

Dear Concerned and Confused,

How ironic, I have a friend whose father also passed away and I feel like she does. The best thing to do is just support her in her time of need.

If she is acting a certain way, you are better off letting her act that way. That just may be her way of dealing with the pain.

As long as you accompany her and support her, I'm sure she'll get through this. She needs to know she isn't alone. However, if you see she isn't feeling better, you should advise her to seek help from an adult she trusts.

Dear Aida,

I have a friend who has a baby and she is pregnant again. Her boyfriend cheated on her a couple of times, but she doesn't break up with him. She says she is crazy in love with him, but sometimes I feel like she's just with him because of her son and her baby that's on the way.

She keeps coming to me crying and I tell her the same thing over and over again. What can I do to make her understand that she needs to make better choices?

Super Concerned Friend

Dear Super Concerned Friend,

I would suggest telling her that she doesn't need a boyfriend right now. She needs to think about her two kids. I know he is the father of the kids, but seriously, who wants a boyfriend who cheats on you and is constantly lying to you?

Does she really want a guy by her side who doesn't love her? Does she want to cry every day and suffer for him? She should worry about her two wonderful children and how to raise them in a loving home.

Your friend needs to break up with the guy. Yes, a break up is going to be hard and difficult, but let time pass by and she will see that she can continue with her life without him. Eventually, she will find someone who is right for her and her children, but first she needs to learn how to make better decisions.

Dear Aida,

I have a friend that found out that he is not going to graduate this year, and he is starting to give up on school and himself. I was wondering if you could give good advice to him or others.

Worried Friend

Dear Worried Friend,

The advice I would give to everyone who is in the same situation as your friend is not to give up so easily. Just because someone said you can't graduate this year because of some classes you failed or you just don't have enough credits, to graduate doesn't mean you should stop doing your work. Your friend should talk to his/her guidance counselor to try to make up any classes online or consider going to night school.

I really recommend just talking to Guidance. They will explain everything to him/her and the chances for graduation. So he/she should take a trip to Guidance for the real scoop.



www.bostonherald.com

Dear Aida,

I have an 8-month-old baby and I'm happy with that but I have a problem, I live with her daddy and he drinks too much. He has two jobs; one is on weekdays and the other one is only on the weekends. He drinks Friday, Saturday and Sunday and he even drinks on weekdays. I really don't like it, but he refuses to stop.

I told him that if he loves us, he should stop drinking especially for his daughter. He says he will stop, but he doesn't. I'll leave him if he doesn't stop, but I really love him and I don't want to leave his daughter without her daddy. Can you please tell me what I should do?

Mother's Love

Dear Mother's Love;

In this situation you should put your baby first. Do you think he's setting a good example for her? I'm aware that your baby is only 8 months, but she knows and distinguishes the good and bad things. By the way, you're saying that he drinks mostly every day. He seems to have a big alcoholic problem and should seek help.

Maybe he is trying to change because he really does care about his daughter and you. But there might be factors that are making him come back to drinking. One of them could be his co-workers. The people among us make a huge impact in our everyday life. I bet that most of the times he is not drinking alone. He, as the father, should think more about his daughter and try his best not to be influenced by the surrounding people.

Another thing I can recommend is take him to a specialist. Be more open to him and talk about whatever he might have on his mind. More than his wife, girlfriend and baby's mama, you should be his best friend too.

Remember, he is a human being. He also has problems and gets stressed out. He's not perfect and neither are you, but you both have each other to help each other out. That is what a relationship is mostly about; to help each other out regardless of the situation. Good Luck!



www.psychologytoday.com

A Poet at Heart

As a writer, I preferred to seek inspiration in solitude. I'd spend most of my time alone studying and writing poetry. You could say I grew in my own world, allowing no one to trespass into it. To me, it's considered both a sanctuary and a living hell, perhaps because the only way to fuel my happiness was the sadness that I craved. I always converted my sadness into pieces of art and that made me happy.

Inspiration is a word I find trouble defining. It was either search for it, wait for it, or just stop and write. As I said, it didn't matter where I found it; I always ended up happy with the result. I didn't completely isolate myself from others because I enjoyed receiving comments from others.

I began writing poetry because of the way it made me feel, and so I wanted to be able to make others feel the same way. Letting go of everything on a blank piece of paper was always easy for me.

—Branden Navedo

Working for a Better World

On October 21, 1993 at 11:51p.m. I was born in Passaic General Hospital. I was 6 lbs 12 oz, and surprisingly had light green eyes. I was born into a half Puerto-Rican, half African-American family. Throughout the entire nine months of my mother's pregnancy, my first name was to be Alexis, middle name Sha'Corra, and last name Wells, but it all changed once I was born.

As a child, I was shy and timid, but very observant. I would sit in my footy pajamas and watch everything that happened around me. I was definitely a grandma's girl. We did everything together.

As I became older, I had somewhat of a hard time making friends. Not many people could accept my personality due to the fact that I am African-American with a "white girl" attitude. I have always been the kind of girl that would sit in the far end of the bleachers and day dream about being the most popular.

I never spoke without being spoken to, but always listened to what everyone said.

That has had its advantages and disadvantages. At home I would sit and read books for hours and write in my diary about the troubles of life and the nightmares of being in middle school.

By the time I hit high school, I hadn't changed much. I am still that anti-social girl who lacks confidence and is trying to find herself. However, I do get out a lot more with my friends that have stuck by me since the second grade.

We go to the movies, the mall, and even the park where we act like we're seven years old again.

Although I'm now a senior in high school, the idea of college is both exciting and terrifying. I hope to become a social worker that deals with foster children, so I can help young kids find good homes like my social worker helped me. I want to change lives for the better and leave a mark, so that others will want to follow in my footsteps.

This year I hope to contribute much to *The Hilltop Star* and make the paper more exciting than it has ever been.

—Sha'Corra Wells

Hilltop Star Staff



Photo by S. Yedwab

Journalism Is My Passion

I was born July 9, 1993 in Saint Joseph's hospital in Paterson NJ. I have a wonderful family that supports me in everything. My family came from Cancun, Mexico, a beautiful place in the Mexican republic. My parents always tell me, "Aim higher in life." I have one brother and one sister. My brother lives in Chicago and is becoming a future lawyer. My sister is still in grammar school.

My favorite hobbies are playing tennis, soccer, photography, and ice skating. My interests are traveling, art shows, and music. I travel to California, Brazil, Mexico and Chicago. I also enjoy painting beautiful places I have been to and making a collage. I enjoy photography, which is my favorite passion. Journalism is one of my passions. I love to write and investigate what occurs in the world.

My goals for my future are to become a clinical psychologist or entertainment reporter. I want to travel all around the world and take pictures of everything. I love writing creative stories. My goals for *The Hilltop Star* are to become a star reporter and give the best Art& Entertainment section. I want to make the newspaper less boring, and more interesting and enjoyable.

—Diane Ortega

Just Me

Hello, my name is Gisel Santamaria. I'm a senior at PHS who is really looking forward to graduating this year. I was born a spring baby on April 22. I grew up in Passaic, but I actually lived for a few years in Florida. I'm Dominican and Costa Rican. It's a weird mix, but I love the diversity in me. One thing that I love about Passaic is the diversity and it's something I hope to find in college too.

I think of myself as regular girl who likes to have fun and go out. However, I always keep my priorities in check. For me, school is important because getting an education is important. I'm a determined person who never lets anything or anyone stop me from reaching my goals in life.

Another quality of mine is that I'm a strong believer in God. I don't really see it as a religion, but more as a lifestyle of doing the right thing and always have faith and hope. It's just me; it's the way I grew up and I can honestly say no one ever forced it on me. Being a Christian is just part of me.

Something else about me is that I love "Hello Kitty." I'm just fascinated by this adorable little kitty. I think I will be 30 one day and still love "Hello Kitty."

All in all, I'm a compassionate and friendly girl. I like to have fun, and one day hope to have a successful career either as a lawyer or a teacher.

—Gisel Santamaria

Learning from Adversity

In a perfect world, I would be a perfect teenager. I would never lose my temper, talk back at times, have tantrums, but it's not a perfect world. I'm a regular teenager with all that that entails. There are some experiences that make me unique. After all, isn't that what defines us all, our individualism? In reality, what defines every human being is how we react to certain situations. My name is Julia Lora and I'm no ordinary fifteen year old.

I was diagnosed with scoliosis at the age of one. I've had to use a torso brace since I was two years old. It's difficult to know how detrimental having to go through social ridicule is to one's self esteem. I always questioned my mother about the fact that no one else I came in contact with had to wear a brace over their

clothes, so why did I? My mother's always the same: "We all have differences and how we deal with them is what defines us individually," so I dealt with things as best I could. I held my head up high and excelled at everything I set out to do. I no longer wear a brace because the scoliosis has been controlled through surgery, but I can honestly say the experience has made me a stronger person.

As I've had to adjust to being a high school student, last year my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I thought my world was going to end. Cancer doesn't only break down the person suffering from this disease; it affects anyone close to the person. It was a sudden diagnosis and one that still lingers. I've cried so much that my tears could fill an ocean, but

All about Me

What's up Passaic High School students? My name is Ashley Marie Burgos. Everyone knows me because I'm very loud. I am a junior of Puerto Rican descent. I was born on May 6, 1995, in the famous General Hospital. I'm a cool person, friendly, outspoken, and loveable. Although I tend to be shy in the beginning, I'm always smiling. People sometimes call me mean, but it's because they don't like it when they are told the truth.

I love music and art. Music relaxes me so much and it gets me hyper as well. Another thing I love is to draw. I have always loved to draw things, ever since I was a little girl. In addition, I can sing. I love singing and writing songs, and raps depending on my mood at the moment. When I write songs or raps, I express all my feelings.

My parents are both Puerto Rican. My mother was born in San Juan, and my father was born in Brooklyn. I have a younger brother who is a pain. His name is Jose Burgos; he is a sophomore at PHS. I honestly don't even know all my cousins because there are so many of them. I have eight aunts and uncles from my father's side, and from my mother's side, I have one aunt and one uncle.

I can honestly say I've been through a lot in my sixteen years of living on this planet called earth. Everyone feels that I am mature for my age because I may be young, but I know a lot for my age. My past has made me strong and I realize how life doesn't usually turn out the way you want it to. I tend to keep things to myself. The only ones who really know me are my best friends, Darelys, Sindy, and of course, my family.

Lastly, there's nothing I really can do without my family or my best friends. I wouldn't change anything that has passed in my life so far. That is really all anyone needs to know about me.

—Ashley Burgos

Spirit!

"I am neither especially clever, nor especially gifted. I am just very, very curious," said Albert Einstein, who has always been of interest to me. His intellectual thinking and mathematical skills influence my way of thinking to this day. I'm a 17 year old girl named Mabelly who questions a lot and has an affinity for human interaction and behavior. For this reason, Forensics Psychology is a career I aspire to pursue.

I'm easy to get along with and enjoy making people feel comfortable around me. As such, I have always been an optimistic individual. This also makes me an excellent cheerleader. I look at the bright side of things and always smile at the outcome of any situation.

This year, I hope to contribute to the Sports and Ask Aida section of *The Hilltop Star*. Sports section interests me because of cheerleading and my love for football, as well as other sports. My interest in Ask Aida is because I love hearing people out and helping them. Bringing this positive and encouraging attitude to *The Hilltop Star* is my mission.

—Mabelly Tejada

High School Life

My name is Ana Vazquez; I'm a senior at PHS. I live with both my mother and father. In my family I'm the youngest of two siblings, and I'll be the first one to go on to college. My mom is the most incredible person in the world to me! We have a great relationship, my mother is my best friend. My family is my greatest treasure. We're all really tight in my family, everyone helps each other. Even though sometimes there are some arguments among us, we manage to fix them. At the end of the day, they are the people who will be with you forever.

After high school, I plan to attend community college in the field of early childhood education. I'm interested in that particular field because I like to help and be part of younger kid's life. I want to make a difference in someone else's life and their family. I chose that career because I like to help others and being around younger kids has been something that I've known most of my life, I also believe that has that everyone has the potential to learn. Most people just need a little push to be on top of their game.

During my four years of high school, I've learned a lot of different lessons about life. I made new friends and lost communication with others. Honestly, I started on the wrong foot and didn't do all the right things I was supposed to do. I cut class, wouldn't work, wouldn't listen to my parents, got suspended and did all those things "bad girls" do.

After a while, I started realizing that all the things I was doing were not worth it at all! I was just wasting time, I wasn't appreciating the best thing that I have with me which are my parents.

Now that I look back at all the things I did before, I see the person I am now and the one I used to be. I'm proud of it because I know I grew up and matured. I'm more prepared as a person for the future.

—Ana Vazquez.

Hilltop Star Staff
Continued on page 11

—Julia Lora

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3



By Gabrielle Rodriguez

There is no doubt about it that Call of Duty is one of the most popular game series launched for Xbox, PS3, and Wii. The game of 2011 was released on November 8, 2011.

Within the first 24 hours of 6.5 million copies were sold in the U.S. and U.K. and grossed \$400 million making it the biggest entertainment launch of all time.

Modern Warfare 3 is all new and improved. New perks have

been added. Sensitivity has been made more intense for the weapon progression system. There are even better attachments and amazing weapon focus and stability, making it less likely for you to flinch.

In terms of classes, there are now 5 options. With an additional 16 maps the game has an amazing sense of game play and realistic features make it even better! This game has its own rating and I for one think its rated A for Awesome or Amazing. Don't believe me? Tryit and see for yourself.

Best of All Sequels Transformer's Dark of the Moon

By Ana Rojas

Whoever hasn't seen *Transformer's Dark of the Moon*, is missing out. If you don't think this is the best of the best, then you must be out of your mind. Seriously, all the explosions, action, sudden twists, and much more, make this movie so exhilarating, that you run out of breath telling your friends about it!

However, don't just take my word for it. A.O. Scot in an article for *The New York Times* said, "*Transformers: Dark of the Moon* is among Mr. Bay's best movies and by far the best 3-D sequel ever made about gigantic toys from outer space." I agree with him 100%.

Dark of the Moon brings *Transformers* and *Transformers Revenge of the Fallen* together into one masterpiece. I wish they'd even make a fourth one. That's how good it is.

The Decepticons lost two



www.movieweb.com

battles in a row and that's low even for me and now they're coming in with a new secret weapon, The Ark, which they can use to transport the Earth to its home! Stop! Sorry guys, I'm spoiling the movie by saying too much. You just have to go see it and believe it with your own eyes!

Ok, all I'm saying is

Transformers Dark of the Moon is a MUST see movie. Optimus, Bumblebee, and Sam are here to battle again, but with bigger impact and huge action that will make your jaw drop through the whole movie. So, get up and get yourself to the movies or any rental store and GET THAT MOVIE ASAP!

Love's Loneliness

The sky's star strings
Struck lightly by waves of light
Struck at my heart strings
As I sing in the lonesome night.

The winds join me and sing
With a voice as angelic as yours
I'm whisked to the Heavens,
By a voice as angelic as yours.

The night fills me with your love
Though my heart begins to break
Your love blinds me in the night
And my heart has gone astray

I lose myself in search for you
But the brightness of the day
Silences the music
And my eyes can't find their way.

—Brandon Nevado



Twilight

The tears of Twilight are filled with memories of you
From the fun we had, your pretty eyes,
And the aroma of your sweet perfumes.

When I held you in my arms I used to get a warm sensation.

You were of God, a blessed creation,
But through the door that leads me to your heart,
There was no penetration.

You once gave me the key to your broken heart,
but you just tricked me

And shot me with a dart so poisonous
That I cannot cure the feeling of being so torn apart,
And I can't seem to find myself
because you left me in a million parts.

Now my old self is looking at me through the heaven
that I once thought I found on earth,
Waiting for me to find that missing
piece so it can be reborn.

—Ana Rojas

Mirror

My heart holds a mirror to cover the
wound,
Someone left one warm day in the
month of June.
And, still, it beats for her when I remember
The feel of her hands in the cold December

And the sadness I felt when you said
Why you couldn't return the love
I had for you

When you looked into my heart it read
uoy devol I

But I look and see a pinch of Heaven
Hidden away in your heart that remains crimson
Even after you lost your angel that day.
And yet it seemed the clouds were kissed away

Though I wished I knew what you had done
To revive your broken heart anew
You kissed the strings of my heart and sang
I love you

—Branden Navedo

Music Star

Let the music in you swell
Like a lost star in the dark
Make the wish that will repel
The darkness in your heart.
The morning bells that ring
As the morning sun shines
Cannot light the world
As your music brightens mine.

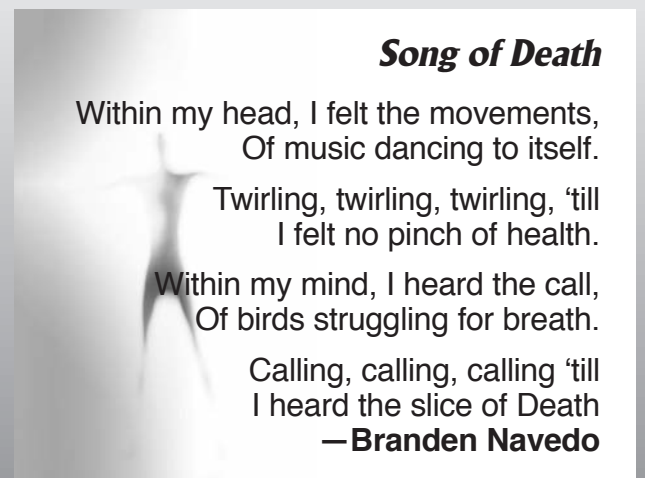
—Branden Navedo

Today Will Never Come Again

Live for today
Hope for tomorrow
Spend your time in happiness
And never in sorrow
Go with the flow

Wherever life takes you
Because you never know which way the wind blows you
All it can do is show you what your yellow brick road is
But if you're not open, there's no way you can walk it.

—Julia Lora



Song of Death

Within my head, I felt the movements,
Of music dancing to itself.

Twirling, twirling, twirling, 'till
I felt no pinch of health.

Within my mind, I heard the call,
Of birds struggling for breath.

Calling, calling, calling 'till
I heard the slice of Death

—Branden Navedo

Hilltop Star Staff

Life is Great

The past four years of being in PHS have been the best times and experiences I have had in my life. My goal for this year is to graduate with my class and get accepted by the Institute of Culinary education. I love how the colors of foods mix and how it smells, brings inspiration to me.

I'm seventeen years old and I was born on March 9, 1994. I have lovely parents that I adore. One sister and one brother who drive me crazy, but I wouldn't trade them for anything. I am Mexican. I love my culture, the food, everything is fantastic. I love where I am from and who I am.

In my spare time I do photography. I love how I can capture something that is so beautiful with a camera. Photography is really an inspiration to me. It is the way I see nature's beauty. I'm also learning how to play the piano. I've always wanted to learn how to play it and be able to succeed. I'm really the kind of person who is dedicated and perseveres. I'm a very quiet and shy person at first but then I'm more talkative.

This year I'm part of *The Hilltop Star* staff and the Ask AIDA team. I'm glad to be working on the newspaper with my classmates. We're hoping this year's issue will keep you entertained and informed.

—Odalys Cabrera

Who's That Girl?

Born in Brooklyn, now a Jersey girl, I am Lodymer Pina. I love the fact that my name is so unique; it combines my mother's name, Lady, and my father's nickname, Mero. The earth welcomed me on the gorgeous day of June 17, 1994. I come from Dominican roots and enjoy every minute of being a Latina.

Family is one thing I am very passionate about. Blood is thicker than water and I'll do anything for my family. I am very friendly, humble and goofy at the same time. I prefer to get to know someone first then make my judgment. I have two close girlfriends, Lisbeth and Jessica (they're my cousins) and that's about it. I am more of a guy's girl than a girl's girl.

I am a very good student, but I also know how to have a good time. I know when it's serious time and when it's time to loosen up. I work hard and play harder. I am not perfect and don't pretend to be, either you love me or you hate me. Hate takes energy so why not put all that energy into something else! On that note, I am looking forward to being on the newspaper staff this year. Fashion is something I love which is why I am one of the fashion editors at *The Hilltop Star*. Advice is also something I like giving which is why I want to write for the Ask Aida segment of the newspaper.

—Lodymer Pina



It Was About Time

During the very hot summer of 1994, a baby was born. Little did the mother know the baby would bring about change. The baby boy's name was Allen Humphries. My hobbies are diverse, including swimming, knitting, crocheting, unicycling, and golfing.

I love swimming I'm currently a member of the high school swim team. This is my fourth year competitively swimming. I plan to train hard and possibly get an athletic scholarship for swimming.

This is my senior year and I plan to accomplish a lot. There are college applications to be filled out, and SAT's to be taken. There are portfolios to be made. With all this work, the year will go by fast. I've got so much to do in a short amount of time, so I have to stay focused.

This year I will be working on the sports section of the news paper. I plan to cover all the major events. This year will be an exiting one. I hope to keep my audience entertained with my sports articles.

—Allen Humphries

A Dreamer Times Infinity

Growing up, every little girl had dreams of becoming a singer even though half the things she sang off the radio were words she thought she heard, a dancer because she used to do ballet at a much younger age, a mermaid because *The Little Mermaid* is her favorite movie or a witch just because she's truly obsessed with Harry Potter. That girl is me.

Hello *Hilltop Star* readers my name is Jenny Hernandez and I am a senior here at PHS. I was proudly born and raised here in Passaic. I grew up with many of the students here some from middle school and others from beyond that when we used to walk the halls of #3 school and I have met fantastic people here in high school.

My friends in school know me as the sweetheart or the girl that's always happy; I don't mind giving anyone a smile when they need it the most. I also enjoy getting involved in school. I help out my senior class, get involved in clubs like INTERACT and enjoy sports. I am part of the PHS Marching Band as a baritone player.

I sing my heart out all the time because it's a passion to me. I dream BIG, I have high expectations for myself and hope to accomplish everything I have my mind set on this year and for the rest of my life. I hope to make not only my parents proud, but also my friends, my peers and my teachers.

Four years flew by way too fast, but I hope a lot of you enjoy after graduation, or even the next year or three you have here in Passaic High. Make it worth it and dream BIG, smile, and remember dreams never have a limit, infinity never has an ending; and always be proud of where you came from because it's who you are.

I am proud to be a part of PHS and *The Hilltop Star* staff; I will do everything in my power to make this year's newspapers interesting. I hope you all enjoy it.

—Jenny Hernandez

Sports

Cheerleading, More Than a Sport!

By Jennifer Rojas

Everyone always wonders what exactly makes a cheerleader. After interviewing the captains of the varsity cheerleaders, Mabelly Tejada, Tracey Cuevas, and Alyssa Rivera, it's obvious that they have an automatic attraction to participate in the energetic sport. "Ever since I was younger, I would always watch cheerleading movies," said Cuevas. Having older siblings already in cheerleading also inspired Cuevas to aggressively participate in the sport.

Cheerleaders love bringing spirit to the games and having both football players and the crowd pumped for the game. "I'm fond of being happy and supportive of people, and that's what cheerleading is all about," said Tejada. They enjoy feeling a big part of the supportive team for our football players and love the excitement.

Every year brings its fair share of challenges for the cheerleaders and having a new set of girls brings certain trust issues. Having to do stunts in the air and having a person catch you is very nerve racking according to all three athletes.

This year, also brings the challenge of improvement. The cheerleaders want to stand outside of the typical high school cheerleaders. "We can do it if we put our minds into it," said Rivera.

The new coach, Ms. Ludwig, has definitely made a great impact on the cheerleaders. "She's experienced and makes us work hard," said Rivera. The new coach has pushed the girls to achieve their full potential.

Representing our school is very important to our cheerleaders. It makes them commit to their grades and focus more on what keeps them on track.

"I have to set a good example, since I am one of the captains," said Cuevas. Her fellow captains, Tejada and Rivera, certainly agreed. In fact, all three are tremendous role models for the squad. Being a part of such an important support team for the Passaic Indians definitely has its own responsibilities.

2011 Homecoming King and Queen



Desiree Vasquez

William De Jesus

Photo by S. Yedwab

Seniors Win Spirt Week at Pep Rally



Photos by S. Yedwab

Racket Back Girl's Tennis Is Joyful

By Sally Flores

Senior student, Juhi Shah, is a fourth year tennis player for the PHS Tennis Team. Her reason for joining the team was because she wanted to follow in the footsteps of her relatives who were also past members of the PHS Tennis Team.

Shah's goal for this season was to have a 500 season or better. Unfortunately, the team came close, but didn't quite make it. The toughest opponent they faced was Immaculate Heart Academy. Shah feels they are the toughest because they play

12 months straight and also have private lessons.

When we asked Shah to tell us how she feels about her coaches and teammates, she said that she loves Coaches Contaldi and Major, and her teammates are like a second family. She also let us know how much she enjoys being on the team. "Getting along with everyone, laughing together," she said, "Is just a good time."

Their scores for this season were 6 wins and 9 loses. With their positive attitude, we know The Girl's Tennis Team will be terrific next season.



Photo by S. Yedwab
Juhi Shah

Girl's Soccer: Off to a Great Start

By Cristal Soriano and Sally Flores

After not having a Girls Soccer Team for several years, PHS has finally started a Junior Varsity Soccer Team for their devoted Lady Indians. Many girls were excited to participate and try out for the official team after playing in what had started off as just a simple club.

Alondra Vasquez received the honor to become the first ever captain for her team. "I'm proud to say I made captain the first year of girl's soccer!" said Vasquez, a sophomore. Her enthusiasm is so contagious, that we asked her to share her story about her devotion to soccer.

Vasquez participated in soccer for a year and a half before playing for PHS. Her love for soccer is what motivates her to play, and she finds everything about soccer fun! "Soccer is my all year round sport," said Vasquez.

Every player has their own

way to prepare for a soccer game. Vasquez simply concentrates and is motivated by close friends and teammates who give her great pep talks. When we asked Vasquez who was the team's most challenging opponent for the first season, she replied, "Definitely, IHA! Immaculate Heart Academy."

However, Vasquez has a great deal of respect for the ability of her teammates to meet all challenges. She feels each one has her own special talent, and they all contribute equally to the team.

Let us not forget about the team's great Coach Meyers. He started the Girls Soccer Club in the school year of 2010 - 2011 and then tried his best to make it into an official team for his devoted soccer girls. "I think he's a good, inspirational, and motivational coach," shared Vasquez. "He always supports us in the good or bad throughout our season."

Great first season Lady Indians and we hope for more to come!



Photo by S. Yedwab
Alondra Vasquez

Boys Varsity Soccer Aims High

By Cristal Soriano and Sally Flores

As players of the Varsity Soccer Team, Jerry Tlatelpa and Serafin Ariza have proven themselves to be outstanding athletes. Now seniors at PHS, they have demonstrated being able to keep up with their academics, while also focusing on their sport.

Tlatelpa's reason for joining the PHS Soccer Team is the passion he has for soccer in general and because he enjoys playing it. Ariza joined the soccer team because of his friends. "Having people that relate to me in a certain way creates bigger and better things," said Ariza.

They both had their own goals and high expectations for this soccer season. Their season might not have gone as they had expected, but overall, the team ended strong. "Unfortunately, we didn't make States, but things happen for a rea-

son. It just goes to show, that soccer is a game, that no matter what, the show must go on," said Ariza.

Tlatelpa sends his best wishes to his underclassmen teammates for a better season next year. "As for me," he said, "I plan on going to college and playing soccer there, since it'll always be a big part of my life."

Ariza also has last words to give before he leaves PHS. "I wish the best to the future team and good luck to Coach Fazio and his goals to win Counties," said Ariza.

He plans on going to college and working hard to put all the life lessons Coach Fazio taught the team into action. "He always told us to become better men on and off the soccer field," Ariza said.

PHS appreciates the dedication and effort of this team, and we're looking forward to witnessing what next year's Varsity Soccer team brings to the field.



Photo by Cristal Soriano
Serafin Ariza and Jerry Tlatelpa

A Peek Inside Cross Country Running

By Allen Humphries

A lot of hard work and endurance go into running long distance. This is at the heart of Cross Country. Here are the experiences of two members of the Boys Cross Country Team. Nainesh Rana, the captain of the team, and Anthony Navarro relate their feelings for the sport. Rana, when asked why he joined the sport replied, "My cousins ran Cross Country for Clifton, so I just followed in their footsteps." Navarro said, "Coach Fazio saw me walking to the gym and told me that I had the appearance of a runner."

Both Navarro and Rana planned to break a time of 17:30 or better. Their strongest opponent this season was Clifton.

Both athletes have a strong affection for their coaches. Navarro said, "Coaches, Fazio and Weiss, are excellent and the training that

they put us through pushes us to our max." Rana said, "Our coaches are the best, because they really want the best for the team."

Some athletes tend to focus on one sport, as is the case of Rana. While, on the other hand, some athletes like to play multiple sports like Navarro, who plays soccer out side of school. Even though Cross Country for the most part is an individual sport, the bond between teammates is important. These teammates share

a bond and a comradery that can't be replaced.

To prepare for these races, they eat well the night before, and then the day of the race, they keep their mind off the race until it's time for the start. The Cross Country's score this season was 6-1 and they finished 4th in the Passaic County Championship. Kudos to the PHS Cross Country Team for placing 2nd in Leagues.

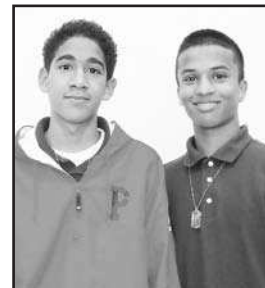


Photo by Sally Flores
Anthony Navarro and Nainesh Rana

PHS Football Team on the Gridiron

By Allen Humphries

Bryan Sheppard and Tykkar Womack, the captains of the PHS Football Team, are totally devoted to the sport. Both athletes agree that they started playing football because they always loved watching it—either on television or with friends and family.

They are both very dedicated and realize that it takes a lot of heart to be tackled repeatedly and get back up to keep playing. Sheppard said, "Just watching people make it big motivates me to strive for big things." Womack added, "Wanting to be remem-

bered forever and to make it to the NFL is what I'm dedicated to."

Coaches Curry and Smith play an essential role in the athlete's lives. "They are good coaches and they trained me well," said Womack. Sheppard agreed. "They are good people and they trained us well."

To Womack and Sheppard, the team is like a family. The captains would like to give recognition to Darien Giles and Mark Gardinet.

Although the PHS football team has not had the best year, we wish the members of the team good luck in the future.



Photo by Sally Flores
Bryan Sheppard and Tykkar Womack