

## PHS on Mission to Become Number One

By Oscar Gutierrez

By now every student at PHS has heard, if not memorized, the mission and the vision statements. We hear it every morning, during announcements, we have heard it during classes, have read them posted on walls and in classrooms, and have discussed them at length. But what

do they mean, and how will they affect the students and school?

One of the first things that our new superintendent, Mr. Pablo Munoz, did when he began the position last year was formulate the current mission and vision. They took effect officially this year for the 2014-2015 school year. The main purpose for the mission and vision is to fuel,

inspire, and ignite the potential of the Passaic Public Schools. The entire school district will be better, to better prepare the people of Passaic for today's highly competitive world.

To be the best urban school district is easy to say, but how will the administration judge when Passaic is the best? Currently the best urban district is Union City and soon, Passaic will achieve the same success, if not greater.

These two statements will work together to guide all aspects of every school in the district. At PHS, students will be exposed to a variety of experiences so that they can better determine what they wish to become in life. Students will be given more opportunities to choose what they want to take as far as course offerings and programs. These specialized programs will help better prepare students for college, which is of course, the vision for Passaic. Everyone understands that this will not happen overnight, but the new administration will be taking small steps to build upon every success.

Union City school is rated as the best urban school district in New Jersey. The administration of Passaic Public Schools will model Union City to achieve the same results. This modeling happens with trial and error among all the schools in the district. The administration will monitor the success of our

students based on their performance in a variety of ways. First, administration will closely monitor the classroom environment. The administrative staff walks into classrooms asking students what they are learning. Then, the curriculum will be altered to positively affect the learning outcomes of students. The process will work in a cycle where the school staff continues to ask themselves what is wrong, giving negative results and then change the scenario to produce positive results, and then keep the positive results constant. All schools will get better and then maintain the advancements made.

Part of this process has already yielded results. The class of 2019 will see some of the new changes. Their graduation credit requirement has been bumped to 140 compared to the current 120 credit requirement. The extra twenty credits will allow students to take elective courses and broaden their educational experience.

Another improvement is the CEP or College Education Preparation program. This program exists to help students be prepared for the college of their choice. If the vision is to prepare every student for high paying jobs, then college preparation is the logical vehicle to help get PHS to that goal.

Another dramatic change for ambitious students is open enrollment for advanced place-

ment courses. The goal is to provide students with challenges during their high school career in hopes they will accept the challenge head on, and be better prepared for it.

These changes are not being born by the school only, but by the whole community of Passaic. Successful individuals will be giving back to the community and supporting the schools by visiting and speaking with students about how they have completed years of education to achieve their goals and become professionals like doctors and lawyers.

There are a lot of positive changes happening in all the schools of Passaic. While these changes will not happen overnight, they will have a positive and long lasting impact on the lives of the students. These initiatives are the building blocks for success. Students in the Passaic Schools should expect new programs, extracurricular activities, and educational experiences.

The whole process will take time and effort. There will be a significant amount of trial and error, which is needed so that the best outcomes can be realized. However, the end result that all administrators, staff, and faculty have in mind is that mission and vision. Students should also be part of this team, so that we can all become the best in New Jersey, prepared for all that life has to offer.

### Mission

**The Passaic Public Schools will provide an excellent education that prepares our students for college and to earn high-paying jobs.**

### Vision

**The Passaic Public Schools will become the best urban school system in New Jersey.**



**Passaic  
Public Schools**

CHILDREN • COMMUNITY • COMMITMENT

## Meet the New Principal

By Stephanie Espinoza

Everyone has heard his voice, speaking during announcements every morning, or from behind a megaphone, telling students to take off their hoodies, but how many students have actually met the new principal? As the academic leader of the school it is important for the students of PHS to get to know their principal a little better, and Mr. Velez wants students to know that they have an advocate in him, for their success.

First, Mr. Francisco Velez was born to Puerto Rican immigrants, and he was raised in Jersey City. He is a NJIT alumni. He loves math and has a degree in mechanical engineering.

So how does a mechanical engineer become the principal of a high school? He said, "I think not having a teaching background allows me to have a different perspective on how things should work to be effective. I see this school through a different lens."

Before coming to Passaic High School, Mr. Velez was the vice principal of Abraham Lincoln High School in Jersey City. Upon seeing PHS through his different lens, Mr. Velez's first impressions of the students and faculty were impressive. He said, "My first impression

of the students was that they were hungry for rigor, hungry for challenges and hungry for something a lot deeper in terms of education. My first impression of the staff was that they were hard working and hungry for something different, something that will transform the school and take it to another level."

While some may be quick to bash PHS, Mr. Velez hopes to be a positive voice for our school. He admits to not knowing how big a deal it was coming in as the new principal of the only high school in the city. He has been a little anxious under the pressure, but he thanks everyone, including the students, for being tremendously helpful and supportive. Mr. Velez wants to thank all the students and staff for making him feel welcome and for making the transition easier.

As the educational leader of the school, the principal's philosophy of education is important to how the school will feel and function. Mr. Velez's philosophy on education is simple. He stated, "All students have the right to a high quality education," and he added, "The fundamentals of providing a quality education for our students is already here. Teachers and staff are working hard, so

we can do this to get better and to forward ourselves."

Mr. Velez stated that the mission of our school is to become the number one urban school in the state. PHS has the potential and the talent to do this and now it is time to apply both. In order to improve, we must make some changes, some being obvious and others not so apparent.

Mr. Velez would like to make some cosmetic changes that would make the building physically look better, so that students and parents get a better vibe when they walk in. Right now, he says, the vibe is very "blah." He specifically points out the courtyard as an area that needs repairing and upgrades.

Furthermore, Mr. Velez would like students to have more choices and options when choosing classes for scheduling. Students need options to be able to make the best decisions for themselves. However, before these options can be given students need to prove that they can cooperate with what they already have.

As for becoming the best urban school in the state, Mr. Velez believes that we are already well on our way. While it may take a few years, changes being made by Mr. Munoz and administration will help. Citing

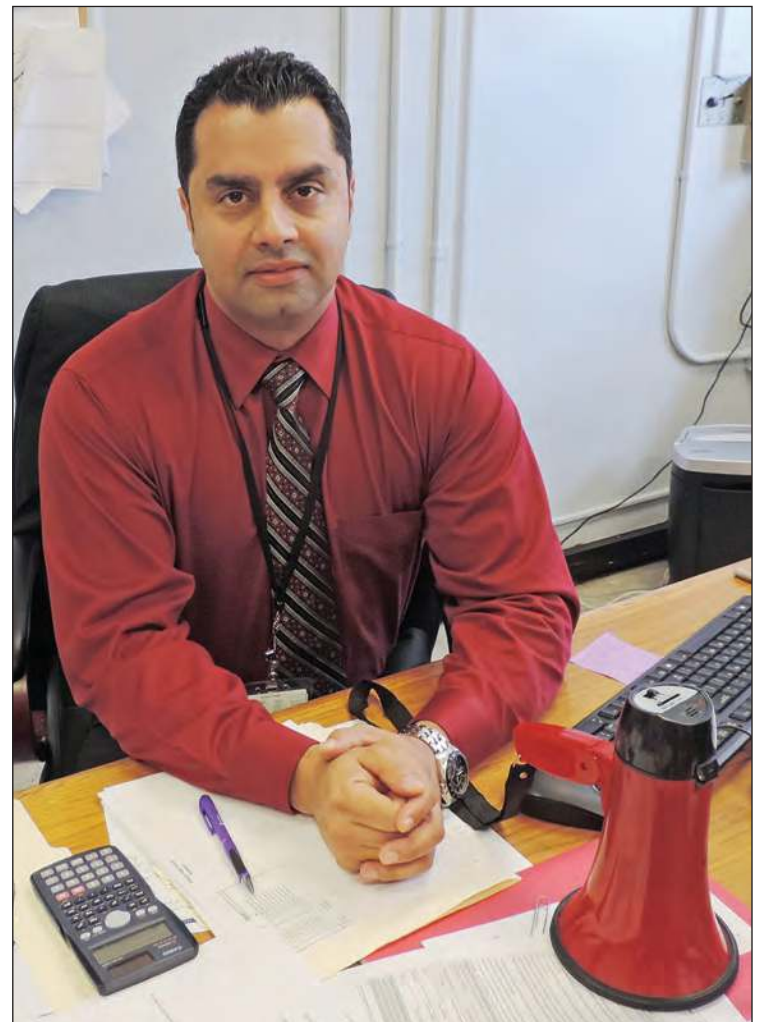


PHOTO BY STEPHANIE ESPINOSA

**Mr. Francisco Velez, the new principal of Passaic High School, believes his engineering background will help him to look at PHS "through a different lens."**

other school districts like Elizabeth and Jersey City, where the ethnic makeup and economic situations are similar, he sees no reason for PHS to be even bet-

ter. As for the megaphone, well, the new principal just wants everyone to hear how great PHS is, and how it will be even better.



PHOTOS BY TERESA LUIS

Above, PHS Chorus entertains all residents of the Chestnut Hill Nursing Home. Below, Passaic Mayor Blanco greets Santa at the nursing home Christmas party.

## Octagon Club Visits Nursing Home

By Teresa Luis

The purpose and mission of the Octagon Club is to help connect PHS students with the community, as well as giving students a sense of what it feels like to work hard and give back to the community. Recently the young optimists spread cheer and love by visiting the senior citizens of Chestnut Hill Nursing Home. Singing, bringing tasty treats, and just sitting and talking with the senior community, means a lot to the seniors, as well as the students.

To spread cheer and hope, members of the Octagon Club visit the "Chestnut Kids," needy youth in the community. This Halloween they made arts and crafts with the kids, and then at Christmas, they brought presents and spread Christmas cheer.

"I think the students get as much out of playing with the kids, as the

children get having some big kids to play with," said Mr. Sheridan, club advisor.

The club raises money to perform these deeds of kindness in the community by selling fundraising cookies (not in school) and by selling goodies at the concession stand at home games. So, by performing a service to the school they raise money to help perform service to the community.

The Octagon Club is advised by Mr. Sheridan and Mrs. Nieves. They keep the club running smoothly and help young optimists achieve their goals. The executive board was recently elected, Jamnesh Rana is president, Mitul Aswala is vice president, Arleth Cespedes is secretary, and Arnold Hernandez is the treasurer. Johana Amigon & Teresa Luis are the public relations coordinators and club historians this year.

With the temperature being so

cold right now, the do-gooders of the Octagon Club are sponsoring a winter clothing drive. Please help this worthwhile cause by donating new or gently used winter clothing, such as coats, hats, scarves, gloves, etc., and get ten central removed. It is not often when students get the opportunity to do something that makes them feel good and also get out of serving ten central detentions. This is a win/win activity for everyone involved. So, bring in your warm clothing to Mr. Sheridan's room, and get credit for ten centrals.

This year has promise to be a great year for the Octagon Club. Everyone is always welcome to join in the fun meetings, which meet in the cafeteria, section E. Just listen for announcements to find out when the next meeting is being held. Students will never have some much fun doing something so worthwhile.



## PHS Library 2.0

By Amanda Oyola

While the library has been under construction for some time, the changes have been great. Walking past the folder paper artwork by one of Mr. Schmitz's art classes and through the glass doors of the school library, the new media center is a completely new and renovated space. It is unrecognizable now, when compared to a year ago.

The most obvious changes are the new conference rooms, but looking around, there are many, many more additions and improvements. There is new carpeting, a new and sleek librarian desk (complete with depressible book return), and new seating areas with comfortable gray seating, and even card catalog cabinets from the 1950's which have been repurposed as tables.

Throughout the library, there's new shelving with a fresh assortment of books still being organized, a magazine display rack that stores previous issues of magazines while also separately displaying the current issues, and a total of eight Macintosh computers available for



Folded paper art greets visitors to the new library media center.

student use.

There are many smaller multi-purpose rooms, on is a television production area, an office for computer technicians, and other rooms for training purposes. There are even some larger rooms, big enough to teach classes, and they are equipped with a smart board, swivel chairs that double as desks, automatic lights and storage cabinets.

The complete reimagining of the library, complete with new technology and furniture has not been easy. In addition to being the librarian, Mrs. McGinnis has also taken over as a French teacher since Mrs. Nesser retired last year. Before school and for the first four periods of the day,

she attends to the library, and for the remainder of the day she has classes, all of which are taught in the library itself.

McGinnis's full schedule has resulted in the postponement of the grand opening. Also complicating the grand reopening of the library was the pipe leak that

left some newly renovated areas damaged.

"The library also lost quite a few books as a result of pipe damage back in February 2013," Ms. McGinnis said.

Just because there is not a grand reopening, does not mean that the new library media center is not open for business. It certainly is. The before and after school library program is being staffed by Mrs. Janoowalla and Mrs. Hamade. Furthermore, there are currently two students trained as library aids. Dayanira Aguilar and Ariadni Aguilar both help with tasks including (but definitely not limited to) shelving and organizing before school, updating homeroom information in the library system, and preparing new books for checkout with barcodes and spine labels.

The library is open for an hour before and after school, when students are free to bring their IDs to take out books and use the new computers. Due to the classes going on in the library throughout the course of the day, students are asked not to come during their lunch periods as it can be distracting to the classes. The media center, at the back of the media center, is open every day for id's before homeroom begins.

All of the work and time put into PHS' new library media center renovations have turned out amazing, and the future of our library truly looks promising. So, take advantage of this great new space to study and learn. The new Media Center will be a great tool to making PHS number one.



PHOTOS BY AMANDA OYOLA

The new multi-purpose media room in the newly renovated library.

## School Board Member, Vincent Capuana, Dies

By Yara Rivera

Vincent Capuana, also known as "Mr. Passaic," who served for 30 years on the school board, has died at age 76. He lost his battle with cancer on Tuesday, January 20.

Spending almost all of his life in the city of Passaic, serving as school board member, and a city council member, Mr. Capuana definitely earned the nickname, "Mr. Passaic."

He graduated from PHS, loved the sports program and sent his two sons, Rosario and Anthony to PHS as well. Even after his sons graduated, he could be found often in the stands of PHS games. Both of his sons played for the PHS football team.

He is remembered today as a friend to the students and people of Passaic, and has been honored by having School No. 15 named after him.

The students and community of Passaic will surely miss this advocate for our town.



PHOTO BY HILLTOP STAR STAFF

Vincent Capuana, the namesake of Passaic School 15.

# Best Five Video Games of the Year

By Pedro Django

Here are five of the best games that came out this past year. Enjoy!

First, from the co-creators and developers of the Call of Duty franchise comes **Titanfall**. Developed by Electronic Arts and a new studio Respawn Entertainment, comes this great first person shooter game, set in a science fiction world of giant robotic fighting machines. This is a massive first person shooter with advanced combat fighting styles and of course the robotic titans, which gives this game its name. Players must fight and shoot their way through just about everything. It is wildly fun to play, especially when piloting a great big mechanized robot warrior.

The backstory of this game is not as intense as the gameplay but still worthwhile. There are two factions at war over a portion of space called the Frontier. There are many resources on the Frontier, that the Interstellar Manufacturing Corporation, or IMC, wants to increase their power and influence. However, the militia forces, which is really a civilian band of rebels, fights back against this evil corporation.

This game is currently available only for X-box and PC. However, the game is good enough that it is worth the price of getting an Xbox. The environment is stunning with great graphics and smooth controls make gameplay easy. Titanfall will surely supply the action intense gameplay that gamers crave.

Next, a recently released game, developed by Insomniac Games and published



Sunset Overdrive

by Microsoft studios, **Sunset Overdrive** is available exclusively for the Xbox One. It is a comedy, open-world third person shooter. This game puts the player in a funny world that is full of crazy and terrifying fun. When Sunset City is overrun by mutants, it needs a hero to save the city. Playing as this hero means that this game lacks the multiplayer action that defines many other great games these days. However, it makes use of its unique graphics and over the top action packed adventure. Playing as an individual in this game still delivers the action rush that Sunset Overdrive brings and the comedy that flows from the mutants and the game characters means that playing this game is a rewarding experience.

Not all the best games this year are for the Xbox. **Destiny** is published by Activision and is a first person shooter that allows you to build your character and journey to the stars and beyond, as you play, fight, and develop in the distant future of mankind. While the gameplay of Titanfall is superb and the story is simple, in Destiny the story is much deeper, and darker, but the gameplay is not quite as intense as Titanfall.

Some of the backstory is that during the golden age of mankind, humanity colonized the solar system, and all was peaceful. But, everything took a turn for the worse after an event called the collapse, gamers play as a survivor of the great collapse, forming their own destiny. Players start with a basic character, but they then customize and upgrade him with new weapons, armor and other items. So, this is a role-play-



Destiny

ing adventure, as well as a first person shooter. Then, you can also play online, and wherever you go, Earth, the Moon, Venus, Mars and everywhere else in the Solar System, you can bump into other players having their own adventures. It is a great experience.

To be able to do all of these types of games into one game is a great technical achievement. More than that, it all works very smoothly. However, as great as this game is, as beautiful, and as technically amazing as it is, it just is not as fun as Titanfall.

A holiday season would not be complete without another installment of the **Call of Duty** franchise. While there have been some missed opportunities in recent installments of Call of Duty, with clunky gameplay and weird storylines, the Advanced Warfare has brought back some of the best Call of Duty strengths. This first person shooter was developed by Sledgehammer Games and published by Activision. With Atlas's Exo suits at your disposal it has a more futuristic view of warfare, but it is not weird or corny. To maneuver through the environments, decimating enemies is challenging but not impossible. It keeps the fun of playing these types of games. Call of Duty: Advance Warfare has something for everyone to enjoy. Put yourself in the warzone of the future as you play as Jonathan Irons through in campaign mode or absolutely dominate others in multiplayer mode.

Finally, a long awaited game that has been the source of a lot of hype is **Watch Dogs**. It was developed by Ubisoft, and



Call of Duty

is another open world action adventure game. Watch Dogs was supposed to represent the next generation of gaming. However, it seems as though the game has not really lived up to the hype. It is a mind blowing adventure, to say the least, but it is both a great game and a horrible one at the same time.

The story is appealing, set in the not too distant future, there is a massive computer interface that links all the electronics of the future so that they can work in harmony. Playing as Aiden, an incredibly skilled computer hacker, the player of this game can hack anything connected to the network.

This sounds great but it is sometimes difficult to use and while it is fun profiling people around the city, to see anything scandalous that they have done, it is also strange. Some of the video is excellent but some of it seems rushed.

While the game is low on this list, it is worth playing. It is both great to play, and somewhat addictive, but it is also a work in progress. Hopefully there is a second generation version of this so that all the details that detract from this game get worked out.



Watch Dogs



Titanfall

# Curl Up with a Good Book this Winter

By Odalys Leal

**The Eye of Minds (Mortality Doctrine, Book #1) by James Dashner** - Yet another brilliant book series by *The Maze Runner*'s James Dashner, *The Eye of Minds* takes you on a journey to the future where technology is a lot more advanced and exciting than ours. The story welcomes you to VirtNet, a virtual world that offers total mind and body immersion for gamers to interact with others and play inside the video game of their choice. However, soon all fun and games stumble to an end when a mysterious and deadly gamer named Kaine begins kidnapping fellow gamers and not letting them go back to the real world alive. It is up to Michael and his friends, amateur hackers, to try and stop Kaine before humanity suffers the wrath of this deranged killer.

**The Scorch Trials (Maze Runner Book #2) by James Dashner** - If you liked *The Maze Runner* then you must read the second installment of the series, *The Scorch Trials*. WICKED is back and Phase Two of the trials has been initiated. The Gladers find themselves once again thrown into chaos and forced to fight for their lives; this time with a deadline hanging above their heads. The Gladers are given two weeks to cross through the Scorch—the most burned-out section of the world. Along the way, new characters are introduced and the boys are stuck in the predicament of not knowing who is a friend and who is a foe. The almost non-stop action and unexpected twists and turns that occur in this book keep you from putting it down.

**The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien** - In simple terms, *The Hobbit* is a classic fantasy novel

that must be read by everyone at least once. Filled with undaunted dwarves, savage orcs, a peculiar old wizard, an egoistic talking dragon and a loveable brave hobbit, this book takes you on a quest filled with excitement and danger. Read the book and then go enjoy the movie!

**The Silkworm by Robert Galbraith (Cormoran Strike Book #2)** - The second book installment to this brilliant series, *The Silkworm* follows Detective Cormoran Strike and his assistant Robin Ellacott into another case where a novelist has gone missing and found days later; brutally murdered under bizarre circumstances. The dead novelist left behind a manuscript for a book that if published, would have spilled many secrets and ruin lives. Due to this, the number of possible suspects is incredibly high, making the puzzle even harder to solve. An out-

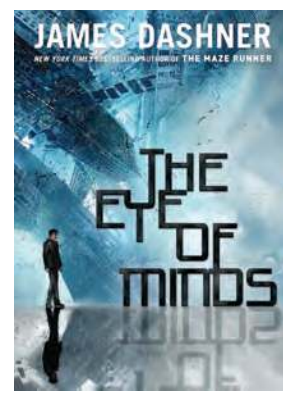
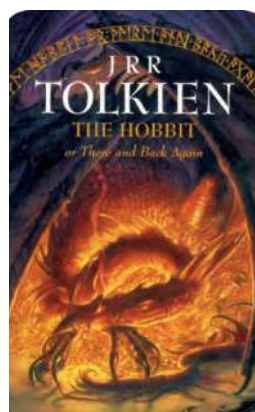
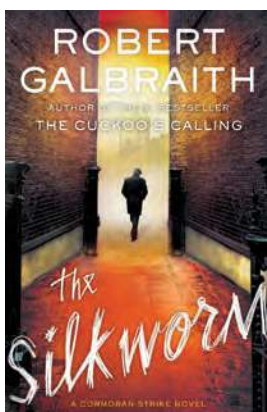
standing series written by *Harry Potter*'s J.K Rowling, under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith, this book is a good read for those who enjoy crime and mystery.

**Insurgent by Veronica Roth (Divergent Book #2)** - The second book continues immediately where the last one ended, introducing new characters and another side to the main character, Tris. Her choice to switch faction alongside her status as Divergent has been the one of triggers to an unstoppable war between factions that will destroy friendships, take lives and cause unbelievable secrets to emerge.

**Half Bad by Sally Green (Half Bad Trilogy Book #1)** - Set in modern-day England, we enter a world where witches live alongside humans. There are White witches, who are good; Black witches, who are evil; and sixteen-year-old Nathan who is shockingly both. Nathan's fa-

ther, Marcus, is known as the world's most powerful and cruel Black witch, and his mother who was a White witch is dead. Abandoned by his father and ripped from his remaining family due to prejudice and fear, Nathan is kept in a cage where he is beaten and tortured. As his seventeenth birthday approaches, Nathan must escape the cage and find his father to receive three gifts from him and come into his own as a witch—or else he will die. No one is to be trusted and the journey ahead of Nathan is unforgiving.

**Four by Veronica Roth** - If you are a *Divergent* fan then this book is perfect for you. Find out more about the events that occurred in the *Divergent* trilogy through the perspective of Tobias Eaton, better known as Four. Read all about Tobias's backstory and re-discover the story through a new perspective.



# Is There BULLYING at Passaic High School?

By Natalie Probst

Why? Why do they do this to me? I don't understand.

Why can't they just let me be? "Go and die," they tell me. "Go rot in hole" "Why do you exist?" they say "You are not worth anything." Is it because I am so different?

## WHY?

All these thought run through my head. They won't stop to let me think. They are like a broken CD Playing over again and again.

I know these people don't like me. They probably want me gone. They hurt me and break me.

But I don't care what they think. I just want to know why. Why did they pick me?

Why can't they just understand? Do they think that they are better than me? Should I change who I am?

### My Victimized Friend

I have a friend who used to be bullied by a bunch of girls, because she was a little bit chubby. The girls who bullied her were skinny.

My friend never spoke up for herself or reported her bullying. As a friend I did not want to disrespect my friend's wishes by reporting her troubles and possibly making her situation worse.

The situation never changed because we never did anything to change it. We were both quiet about her hidden pain.

One day the bullying became just too much for her to bear and she exploded in violent fury. The girls began calling my friend chubby and she snapped. She punched the bullies in their face.

Realizing her power she actually began bullying others, calling some other girls short. I lost a friend because I could not be friends with a girl who was a bully.

She had been bullied and then became a bully. It was not right for her to hurt others, just because she was hurt.

Bullying affects everyone differently. However, it hurts those who are bullied, those who are bullies, and the friends who are just caught in the middle.

### God says don't bully

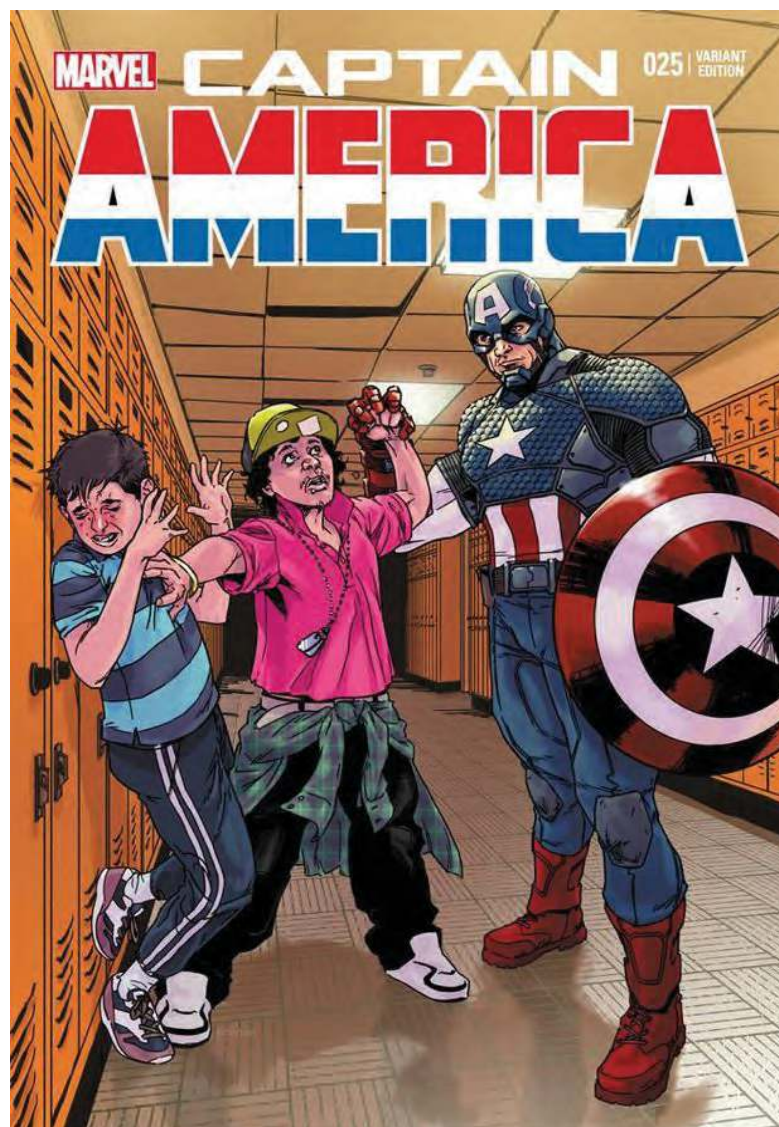
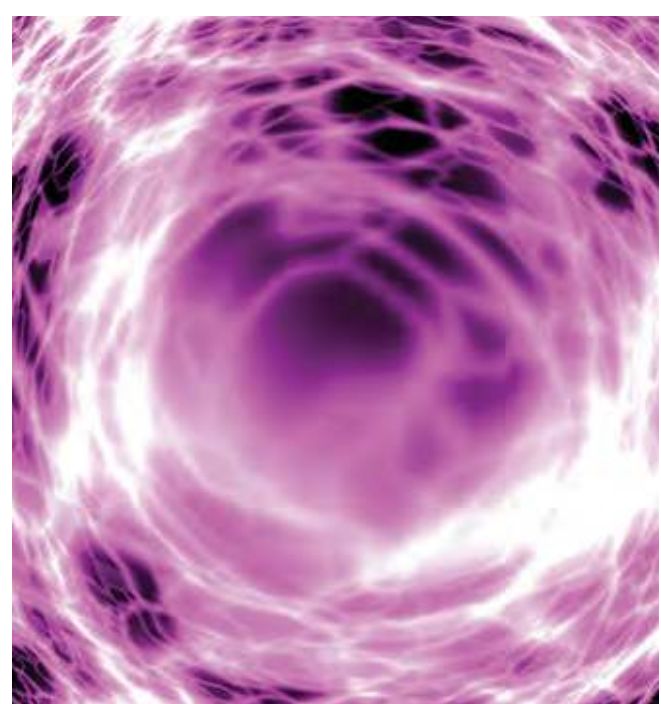
By Luis

I was once bullied because I was an atheist.

Everywhere I went people called me the Anti-Christ and Judah. I even was beaten up because I didn't believe in a God that would let this happen to me. This bully had no idea that what he was doing was not good or holy at all.

I felt really bad, but I heard a voice. The voice said that everything will be better if you believe. All the pain will end if I gave it up to Him. He told me not to listen to the bully.

The next time the bully tried to hurt me, I didn't care. I was safe. I have faith in God, so no one can hurt me now.



Marvel Comics put out a series of "variant Edition covers in 2014, showing their superheroes' stand against bullying.



By Michelle Pardo

Every day I leave my loneliness out of the door, out of the car and I wander afar, Sneaking into the corners with crisp cool air.

Then I see you coming to sit and stay, the look at me and say,

"Your shoes are so cheap, where did you get them, out of the trash?"

You laugh, I cry. Why I don't find the need to dress to impress.

"Do you have to be such a nerd, think books will make you fly like a bird?"

Shove me around, I won't make a sound,

All these little things, make all these little stings,

And you don't know that this may send my heart to snap and bend.

For no apparent reason I deal with you every season,

Every teacher asks after class, why I would let this nonsense pass,

No one around me knew, I mean who had this experience too?

Surprisingly, my counselor did, a time of the past that she hid, "I won't allow this any longer, I won't let him get any stronger!"

So I couldn't sit and out, might as well tell and let the truth come out.

## What is bullying, really?

By Aleli Bravo

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance, according to the government website stopbully.gov. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. Even when the bullying stops, usually the hurt goes on.

But bullying has to have certain components in order to qualify as bullying. For example kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

However, to be bullying the acts must be repetitive. Someone who is mean to you one day is not necessarily a bully. They are probably just having a bad day. They need sympathy more than the authorities.

While most people think that bullying is a big kid who beats on a little kid, the truth is that there are six distinct kinds of bullying. If a bully threatens, spreads rumors, attacks someone physically or verbally, and excludes someone from a group,

then they are being a bully. Physical bullying, where someone is physically hurt, is just one of the kinds of bullying. Most students will tell you that things that people say hurt just as much, if not more than getting punch. Verbal bullying is where name calling and jokes about others is used to hurt others and it is bullying.

Other related forms of bullying are indirect bullying and social alienation. If a bully uses indirect methods to exclude someone from a group, by spreading stories, lies and rumors, then that is considered bullying. By pointing out the differences between someone and the rest of a group, including ethnic background, by spreading lies or stories, just to keep someone out of a group, then that is just as much bullying as punching them.

Intimidation bullying is another type, where the use of threats to frighten others makes a victim afraid to do the things that makes school fun. When a victim is afraid, they cannot concentrate on school work and will be unhappy and eventually depressed.

Finally, in this age of digital media, cyber bullying is, sadly, part of our culture. Advanced communications unfortunately means advanced bullying for many students. When embarrassing pictures, and other information is sent to specifically hurt someone, then this is a particularly hurtful kind of bullying.

Bullying can occur during or after school hours. While most reported bullying happens in the school building, a significant percentage also happens in places like on the playground or around town. It can also happen when travelling to or from school, in the youth's neighborhood, or, especially today, on the internet.

However, authorities are aware of this problem and if anyone feels like they are being bullied then they should tell someone. Tell a teacher, a guidance counselor, or a principal and they WILL help. In fact, they want to help. No one needs to ever be the victim of a bully.

## Passaic High School Falls Far Below the National Average for Bullying

By Jonathan Toxtli

Bullying has recently been brought the attention of the nation. Many schools have been plagued by this horrible event, and it has become a simple fact of life in many schools throughout the nation. It is an unfortunate event in the lives of children across America.

However, in a survey conducted by the Hilltop Star, PHS falls far below the national averages for bullying. On the question of bullying PHS fell over thirty points below the national average. While every victim is a tragedy, every student interviewed knew that the best course of action for bullying is speaking up and getting the situation resolved.

Most students also feel that bullying is not a serious problem at PHS, whereas nationally over 70 percent of students believe it is a problem at their schools. Therefore it seems that at PHS students get along. While there will always be conflicts, which is just part of growing up, organized bullying doesn't seem to be a big issue here.

With all the issues that face a school, it is nice to know that PHS students get along, and help each other. Let us continue to help to become the number one school.

## The Scoop on Bullying at Passaic High School

By Marlene Mendez

The problem of bullying in high school has been discussed on the national level for some time now. However, it is a hidden issue. Many students do not report the incidents of bullying and schools do not publicize any occasions of bullying to keep students as comfortable as possible.

At PHS, bullying is not a real problem. Movies make schools seem like a terrible place, especially for incoming freshmen. However, the reality, at least here at PHS, is quite different.

Students do not terrorize the freshman when they arrive at PHS. Other than a little laughter when a freshman walks into the wrong room, another student will help the lost student find their way. There is a feel-

ing that we are all in the same boat here at PHS.

The typical expectations of students at PHS are just like any other typical high school. Students are expected to get good grades, graduate, and make something of themselves. Students from all around the school say that there no instances of bullying here.

"Students just seem to help each other here," said sophomore Aleli Bravo.

Like any school, there are disagreements, there are even fights, and some days people are in a bad mood, so they might be mean to their fellow students.

But, there is not an organized system to make some students feel good at the expense of their classmates.

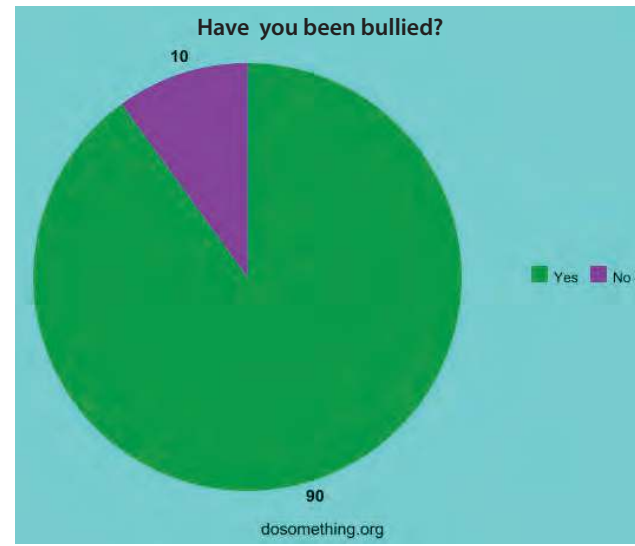
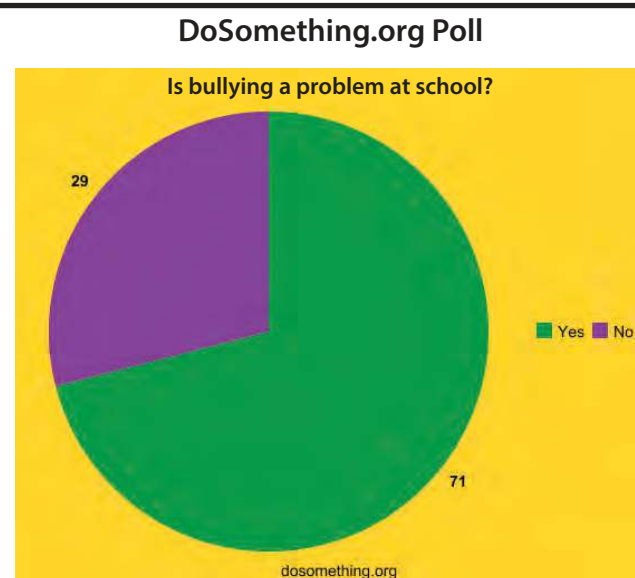
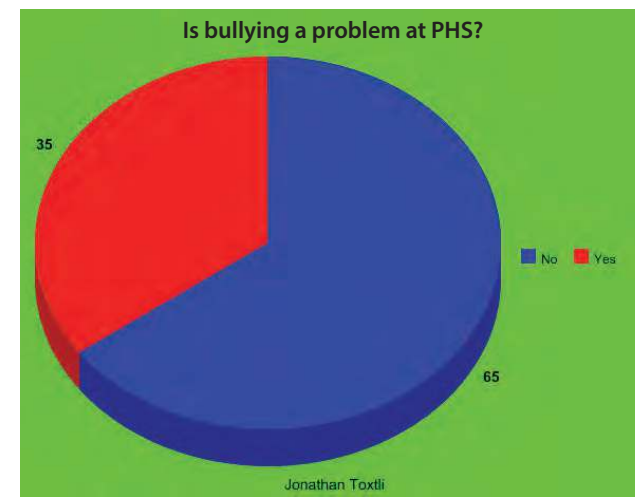
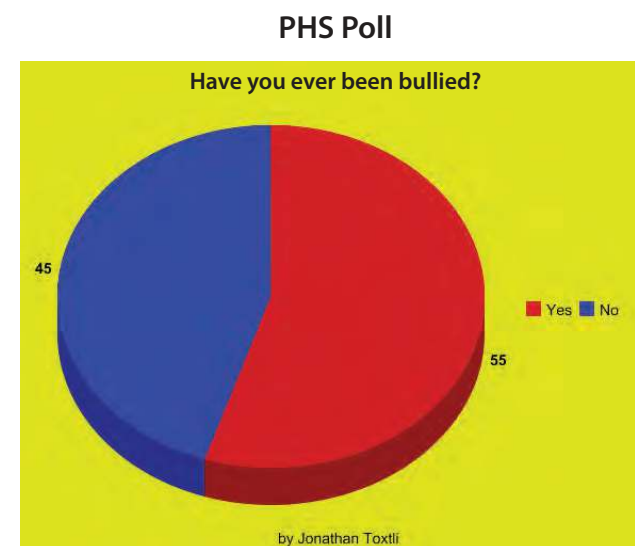
One reason why this is such a bully free

zone is because to the strict policies in place by the district to curb any actions of bullying. In other words, the students know that acts of violence or bullying lead to major consequences, so students would rather avoid the issue.

Another reason that there is so little, if any, bullying at PHS is that there are so many security guards and other staff in the halls to help and monitor students as they go from class to class.

Senior Jonathan Toxtli said, "I have been to other schools and the students at PHS are more helpful and accepting. Everyone will help each other to succeed."

While every school will have problems from time to time the positive social environment at PHS will definitely help the success of students at our school.



### THE 6 TYPES OF BULLYING

<b>PHYSICAL BULLYING</b>	<b>VERBAL BULLYING</b>	<b>INDIRECT BULLYING</b>	<b>SOCIAL ALIENATION</b>	<b>INTIMIDATION BULLYING</b>	<b>CYBER BULLYING</b>
any physical contact that hurts a person like hitting, kicking or punching	name calling, jokes about or offensive remarks about a person's religion, gender, ethnicity, appearance or socioeconomic status	excluding others from a group, spreading lies, secrets, rumors or exaggerated stories about someone	pointing out differences in others, excluding others from a group, and spreading rumors	using threats to frighten others	sending pictures, messages or information using electronic media, computers and cell phones

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# TV Shows to Watch

By Melissa Perez

Every fall there seems to be a great deal of new shows, but most of them fizzle out and die. The hype that surrounds new shows hardly ever matches the quality of the shows. What seems like a great show, all too often turns out to be boring and forced. However this year, the season was a little different. Frankly, this fall television season had too many shows to watch, and still be able to get some homework done. Here are six of the best shows to watch. Be warned though, they are addictive.

**Gotham** is the famous fictional city protected by Batman and preyed upon by the likes of the Joker, Riddler, Catwoman, and Penguin, is the setting for one of the darkest superhero shows of this season. **Gotham** takes a novel approach to the Batman universe, because there is no Batman in this show. A prequel to the Batman saga, Bruce Wayne is present in this series, but he is just a child.

James Gordon (played by Ben McKenzie) is just a young detective, but later, he will become the police commissioner. As a young detective, Gordon is partnered with a famous cop, Harvey Bullock (Donal Logue). Their first case is to investigate the double murder of Thomas and Martha Wayne, the parents of a young child, Bruce Wayne. Of course, Bruce Wayne will later become the infamous Batman.

There are younger versions of other classic Batman villains. It is interesting to see the backstories of all these characters develop as the show begins. Young villains, Fish Mooney, Selina Kyle, and Oswald Cobblepot are played by Jada Pin-



Sleepy Hollow

kett Smith, Camren Bicondova and Robin Lord Taylor, respectively. This series airs on Mondays, at 8 p.m. on Fox.

**How to Get Away with Murder** is a legal thriller produced by Shonda Rhimes. Viola Davis stars as Keating, a dubious college professor who gets a series of students to work in her law firm and they become entwined in a murder plot.

The series begins with an actual murder. A group of law students quickly decide what to do with the body. The suspense in this show comes from establishing the many characters (law students in a competitive program) and then discrediting them, keeping the audience guessing who is responsible and how they might get away with this.

There are many compelling characters including Wes (Alfred Enoch), Michaela (Aja Naomi King) and Asher (Matt McGorry). This show lives up to its tag line, which comes from a lecture Keating asks during one of her lectures on witnesses, "Do you know who anyone really is?" The series airs on Thursdays, 10 p.m. on ABC.

The next three shows are continuations of series that have been student favorites for years. This year's seasons, so far, lead



The Walking Dead

little doubt that they will continue to be fan favorites. First is **American Horror Story: Freak Show**, which is currently in its fourth season. This season is set in 1950's Miami, telling the story of one of the last remaining freak shows in America and the struggles they have to keep the business alive. The roadside freak show is competing for audience and losing to the new medium television. In addition, suspense is added from a serial killer, on the loose, leaving dead bodies everywhere. As usual the show is drowned in mystery and suspense, with plenty of returning actors from the previous seasons. The acting is superb, the writing is good, and the overall this show is very compelling. This series is on Wednesdays, at 10 p.m. on FX.

No list of shows to watch would be complete without the insanely popular zombie drama, **The Walking Dead**. Ironically, the greatest danger in **The Walking Dead** is not from zombies, but from the other humans who are left alive after the zombie apocalypse.

When this series began, Rick Grimes, a deputy sheriff, played by Andrew Lincoln, awakened from a coma to find that the world has been dominated by flesh eating zombies. He tries to find his family and encounters other survivors along the way. As **The Walking Dead** progresses from season to season, the plot has never grown old.

Now in season 5, Rick has been trapped in a boxcar since the finale of season 4. This season seems to be concentrating on why people who survived, want to keep on surviving. Certainly the action, plot and suspense will keep the students of PHS glued to their televisions on Sun-

days, at 9 p.m. on AMC.

A show that only started last year, but happily has been renewed for a second season is **Sleepy Hollow**. This series surprised many critics that doubted the show when it first premiered. However it developed a big fan base. The draws to this show are its great dialogue, surprising twists, amazing adventures and strong performances.

The series has a heroic duo Ichabod Crane (Tom Minson) and Abbie Mills (Nicole Beharie) who fend off the forces of evil to save their town and the entire world. The mix of Ichabod Crane's antiquated notions about life and his partner Abbie Mills' tough ideals from modern day America, make for a dynamic and interesting show. This series is on Mondays, at 9 p.m. on Fox.

Finally, no list would be complete without a show from HBO. **Boardwalk Empire** is a crime drama set in the 1920s during the prohibition era, in Atlantic City. It focuses on the public and private life of Enoch "Nucky" Thompson, a political figure who rose up and controlled Atlantic City. The political intrigue is intense and the complex plot twists keep the show fresh and interesting, season after season.

Now in its fifth and final season, the series is set during 1931, seven years after the previous season. The show has no shortage of mobsters, politicians, and government agents. To see it before it is gone watch on Sundays, at 9 p.m. on HBO. With the Atlantic City casinos closing at an alarming rate, watching this show, when the city was in its heyday, might be the best way to enjoy this historic part of New Jersey history.



Boardwalk Empire



Gotham

# Fall Movie Season Full of Romanticism, Horror and Some Action

By Leslie Olvera

The fall movie season is usually difficult for movie buffs because there are so few films released during the back to school time. This season actually has some offerings that were worth the time and some that could be skipped.

**Annabelle**: Released October 3, **Annabelle** is a spinoff of the popular movie, **The Conjuring**. The plot is about a killer doll, who haunts the lives of a doctor and his wife. Crazy things really do come in small packages. This doll is not just a Chuckie copy, but is truly horrifying.

The plot is somewhat predictable as many horror films are, but the style in which this story is told is really well done. The director, John R. Leonetti, served as the cinematographer on **The Conjuring** (2013). The style of horror from this film involves tricks of the eye, such as a murder in a neighbor's house is seen through Mia's (the doll collecting protagonist) bedroom window.

Some of the details that were wanting were the usual collection of self-shutting doors and self-popping popcorn. However, there is little doubt that **Annabelle** will be back because "haunted dolls have been

around since the beginning of civilization." This film is entertaining but it does not blaze a new path in the horror genre.

**Ouija**: Released in October this thriller horror movie has been one of the top releases this fall season. A group of teens face their darkest fears when they awaken the malicious powers of an ancient spirit, which is brought out of Ouija board game.

These teens discover that this specific Ouija board is a portal to the afterlife. The board was altered when a family had used it to practice satanic rituals. Those in the afterlife sought revenge when the group of teens opened the door to the afterlife through the board.

This film does a good job of unnerving its audience for a good scare, in addition to the typical genre of teens being killed by evil in a horror movie. It was a fun movie, definitely worth the price of admission.

One of the most anticipated movies this year is **The Hunger Games: Mockingjay-Part 1**.

The third installment in the series is the first of two parts. This sequel is filled with suspense. The protagonist Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) remained in District 13 after she had demolished the games forever. Getting stronger with

every installment, Katniss makes the decision to fly her wings with the leadership and help from her friends and President Coin to save her beloved friend Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) as well with the nation who had been motivated by her courageous actions. This movie will not make any sense on its own, but in concert with the first two installments it is a commendable effort, and a very entertaining movie.

The film **Gone Girl** begins easily enough, with a happy couple enjoying their marriage. However, as the plot develops and the wife, Amy, (Rosamund Pike), mysteriously disappears, her husband, Nick (Ben Affleck), becomes the primary suspect.

This drama, mystery-thriller centers around the media circus that engulfs Nick about the mysterious disappearance of Amy, and the things that come to light about Nick. At first the audience is convinced that Nick is innocent, but as the details of their marriage emerge, then perhaps he is not as innocent as first thought. The mystery holds to the end of the film. By the end the story is about a couple making ruins of each other. While this story is a suspenseful thriller it becomes a horror of a relationship for this couple.

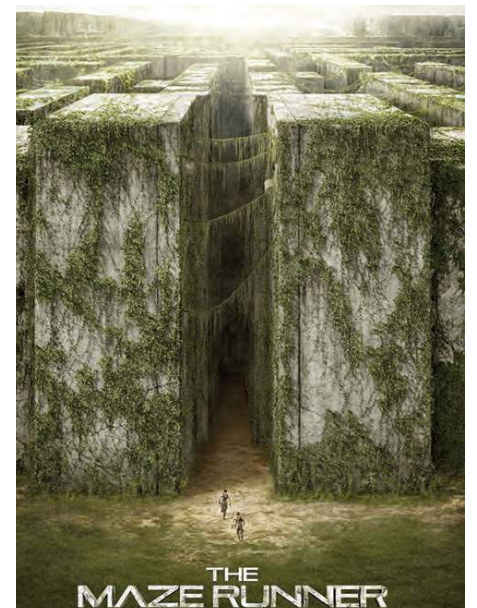
If a slightly depressing movie about

the destruction of a marriage is too much going into winter, then perhaps a movie about a group of boys who realize that they have been trapped in a maze and must try to escape with the help of his new associates. **The Maze Runner** is actually a smart and well-acted science fiction movie. There are many computer generated effects, especially the Griever, which is truly terrifying.

However the best part of this movie is that the story is so good. A group of boys, who only remember their first names, have no memory of their previous lives before the maze. They can only get out by trying to map a route through the maze, which is full of danger at every turn. The sum effect of this movie is a very satisfying escape (no pun intended) from the colder weather.



Gone Girl



## CREATIVE WRITING CORNER

*The Doll and Her Silhouette*

By Michelle Pardo

Pure blood and a perfect doll doing what she's told,  
With hands shackled to a reality she can't hold,  
A mind that doesn't have feelings or plans to be bold,  
Porcelain skin powdered with blush but ever so cold.  
The softest voice that mumbles sounds and not her views.

White teeth that smile and chewed but didn't bite,  
Emerald green eyes that admired the world without sight,  
Her life was always gray except for everyday after tonight,  
Looking at the boy with raven black hair and eyes so blue and bright,  
His presence was to see the obscure mind of this maiden.

Suddenly our doll was gripped into his arms but safe in her secret garden,  
Swaying around and telling him how she used this as her own den,  
Where she hid from lectures of rich, "wise," old women,  
Or the ogled looks of wealthy, sleazy, old men,  
Concealing books and reading them in this corner of her world.

There was an unknown trust that gave him her hidden notebook,  
How for days on end she wouldn't talk but stay and look,  
Turning blank pages into poems of what her parents took,  
Her elders not knowing of the secrets she found in every nook,  
But they had forgotten that the sun, moon, and truth are never hidden.

There was a 'good man' in her dad that she would always miss,  
So many pieces of her childhood had been erased and left amiss,  
She remembered the 'medicine' given and gave a sigh of bliss,  
Already she knew him as he reassured her with more than one kiss,  
After all, what daddy didn't know wouldn't kill him.

Caressing her blonde hair and staring at a sky with a midnight hue,  
Only then did he ever tell her about his life and all that he ever knew,  
That he was an orphan and there were things that he would always rue,  
His parents had left him a map to a fortune that with each year grew,  
It was hidden here inside the attic of this Victorian mansion.

Suddenly, his whole reason for coming deeply sank in,  
He didn't come for her, just the money and what he could win,  
Quickly her head was clear and her heart started to get dry and thin,  
She would forget him and retrieve the book and hair pin,  
Hating him but believing that this night was real and true love.

Yes, there was deceit but when she left, in her hands was his heart,  
And she was running away with hers injured by his dart.  
Blushing with shame as daddy had seen them before depart,  
Under his control she was forced to leave from her love apart,  
Guards grabbed and beat him while she was brought to grandma.

A few months and she could forgive all that she misunderstood,  
He only wanted to get what was his and live as he should,  
He was let loose after two weeks, looking since then for a love pure and good,  
Imagining whisking her off her feet to live as best as they could,  
But as if on cue they met at the garden and fell into the others arms.

Both knew that their love grew stronger through brevity,  
He was the contour lines and she was the face of love's eternity,  
All her hopes and dreams he would make reality,  
Time made their separation extend but their hearts were pulled by gravity,  
Alas, was Robin Hood married and escaping with his Maid Marian.

They recovered and left to get the fortune in the attic,  
Him breaking the lock and her tearing through the porcelain and plastic,  
Leaving her dungeon poor with family but rich with love and ecstatic,  
Seeing her father stricken and her mother acting so dramatic,  
A letter was left saying, 'the doll and her silhouette.'

## NEWS

## New Class Offerings at PHS

By Teresa A. Luis

To be the best urban school district in New Jersey, PHS will need to offer rigorous classes to challenge students. New for this year new classes are being offered, more difficult classes have been initiated and easier access to AP classes has been

This year Passaic High School opened up new classes for students to take, many of which being advanced placement. Students can get college credit for taking a course here at the high school.

In the sciences new classes were added in zoology, (or animal biology), which is the branch of biology that relates to the animal kingdom, including the structure, embryology, evolution, classification, habits, and distribution of all animals, both living and extinct. Also related to biology is a new class in genetics, which is the study of genes, heredity and variation in living organisms. Finally, and also a biology class is biochemistry which is sometimes called biological chemistry, and it is the study of chemical processes within and relating to living organisms. So far student interest in these new

offerings has been high, so more classes should be added soon.

The greatest additions have been in more offerings and expanded acceptance to advanced placement courses. These classes will help PHS students broaden their learning horizons and help them in their future as they plan for college. Some of the benefits of taking advanced placement is that the curriculum is nationally recognized. It is college level so it will help students prepare for the rigorous work load of college courses. Also, if a student can pass the standardized test for the course then they will receive nationally recognized college course credit.

Guidance counselor, Mr. Gilbert encourages students to sign up for any opportunity PHS has to offer. "There are many new and exciting opportunities here at PHS this year. All students should contact their guidance counselor and organize their plan for PHS and beyond. We are all here to help," said Mr. Gilbert.

Honors and advanced placement are great opportunities, but some students still need to make up a class from past years. If coursework needs to be made up, then there are opportuni-

ties to get missed credit as well. Back On Track is a Saturday and after school program for online classes. There are four cycles allowing four opportunities to take class for credit per year. The first cycle started November 12 and ended by Christmas break; the second cycle begins January 2 (the first day back to school) and goes through February 3; the third cycle begins February 10 and ends March 19; and the fourth and last cycle runs March 20 through May 6. There are many courses and opportunities to make up any missed credits, so that students can still graduate on time, even if they have failed a class in the past.

There is also after school tutoring being offered for math and English classes. Running from 2:40 to 3:40 each subject has its own room. For Algebra I go to room M327, Algebra II room M324, Geometry room M326, Bilingual Math M229, ESL/English/SRA room M57. There is no excuse to fall behind and lose credit.

PHS students now have all the tools they need to pass classes this year, make up credit from past years, and make plans for all their future goals.

## Ask Aida

Dear Aida,

I have a problem. I am supporting my ex-girlfriend with whom I have a kid. I usually pay for the diapers, clothing and any other things the baby needs. My problem is that she is trying to file papers to start child support. Will the judge make me pay child support even though I'm supporting her with our baby? Help me Aida.

Sincerely, K.V.

Dear K.V.,

First, you should make sure you have a job to show the judge you are serious about supporting your child. I am not talking about odd jobs either like shoveling snow, lemonade stands, or selling baked goods around school. You go out and get a solid part time, even if you are a full time student. If you really had time to make a baby, you better have time to support the baby. If you do have an actual job, you should keep the receipts of

stuff you have bought for the baby to prove you're doing a good job supporting them. In the end, you should really be communicating with your ex-girlfriend and someone with more legal expertise than a high school advice column.

Dear Aida,

I have a particular problem. I have a friend who is being bullied. I'm not sure whether or not to tell someone because I'm scared of being a tattler. What should I do?

- Scared to tell in S-wing

Dear Scared,

You need to go to the guidance counselors and spill the beans. The whole idea of "snitches get stitches" is ridiculous. If we held ourselves and each other to a higher standard by not allowing blatantly immoral actions to happen all willy-nilly, such actions wouldn't be as common because wrongdoers could be certain they will be held accountable. Also if your friend gets badly hurt, you

as a bystander would be as problematic as the bullies. ("The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." - Edmund Burke) You shouldn't have that on your conscience and your friend needs to know that you're there for them in a way that's not going to get you bullied too. Your friend will thank you in the end because the school will take this seriously, and the problem will end.

Dear Aida,

I have a friend who is not a very good friend. One day she wants to be buddy-buddy and the next she's ignoring me. I don't know how to address the situation, please help.

Sincerely, A.G.

Dear A.G.,

Sometimes people can be moody. This isn't pleasant, so if it's really bothering you that much tell her that. Either she is consistent with you or she can look for a new friend.

## SPORTS

## Winter Track

By Alex Arce

The indoor track and field team shows great promise this winter season. PHS has many talented and experienced seniors who are motivated to win. The whole team seems ready to go all out and give it their all, to show what Passaic has to offer. The promise of success this winter is warranted by the great cross country season.

Seniors Maurisio Narzario and Katherine Rodriguez are coming off a fantastic cross country season. Both of them made First Team All-County. Katherine came in second and Maurisio came in fourth. Furthermore, Maurisio was the Liberty Division League Champion.

It is not easy to find success in this competitive division. However, Katherine is up to the task.

To stay in top condition Katherine does not eat fast food or soda. She drinks lots of water, and works hard. "I always challenge myself, that means I even run practices with the boys team," said Katherine. Her advice to other competitive runners is "Do not get intimidated by other runners who have been running for a longer time." There is always a way to improve, she said, "As coach Matos always says, 'Consistency is key.'"

Maurisio Narzario shared his excitement for the upcoming season, by stating, "I am planning on breaking the school record for the 3200 meter. The record is currently 9:31 and was set by Curtis McNair. His plan for success is to do what his coaches say. "Mr. Matos is like a second dad to me," he said, adding, "he showed me what I needed to improve on and motivated me throughout the workouts." Maurisio advises all his classmates, "to work hard and always give it your all. When you want something, keep chasing the

pavement, even when times get hard."

There are other seniors on the track team whose 2014-2015 season will be their last of their high school career. For some, participating in sports at PHS has changed the way they think about success and how to achieve it. For others it changed the way they behave in school and in their personal lives.

Senior Ariel Pereyra joined sports for something to do after school, but it motivated him to get better grades and keep in shape for competition. He said, "Track changed my life, because I stopped acting up in class and I started attending classes all the time."

Neel Patel agrees with Ariel, stating, "I've become more determined and motivated by joining track, not only on the field but in class as well." He added, "The lessons learned on the field about competition will be carried with me for the rest of my life."

Another reason to join track is

to make and develop great friendships. Mitchell Blancas said, "Throughout my time in track I have made good friends, who have been there for me during every situation, even personally. We all support each other."

Akshay Nadiyadhara, who has lived all around the world before settling in Passaic, has found a home on the track team. "The track team is a place where students help and support each other. I am proud to say that the team is like a part of my family," said Akshay. He added, "Track is where I found my sanctuary and it will always be close to my heart."

The Girls Track team is no different. Senior Leslie Castro said, "Track has made me a more focused and determined person on and off the field. I give 110% in everything I do." Stephanie Espinoza says that joining track has toughened her to the challenges of life. She said, "I have never endured so much in my whole life

Continued on page 8

## THE HILLTOP STAR

Student Newspaper of  
Passaic High School

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## Varsity Tennis Leaders Share Secret to Success

By Katherine Rodriguez

Part of the nature of high school sports is that there is a constant turnover of players, after the senior players graduate. The girls tennis team lost a number of superlative players for this year. However, seniors, Mona Patel and Salini Jariwala were committed to not letting the advancements made in past years fall apart this year. They stepped up to the net to lead PHS's Varsity Tennis Team.

While both of these players have the same goal in mind they did not travel the same road to team leadership. Patel did not start playing tennis until the age of 13, and as a freshman thought, "When will I ever play like them?" as she watched the varsity tennis players practice.



PHOTO BY KATHERINE RODRIGUEZ

Seniors Salini Jariwala and Mona Patel

Jariwala began at the age of 10 and wanted to use and hone her talent in high school and later when she plans on playing tennis as she attends college. She ended her freshman year on the junior varsity team.

Both of these talented players gained the necessary skills and conditioning quickly, especially with the help of their excellent coaches, Mr. Contaldi and Mr. Major. Patel and Jariwala made honors at the league and county level. Patel earned First Team All-County and Jariwala earned First Team All-League.

Both ended their senior high school season on a high note with a winning record of 12-4. Going into college both Patel and Jariwala look forward to play tennis at the collegiate level whether in the NCAA or club.

The success of this year's team was not a forgone conclusion. Jariwala said, "There were very few returning players. We wanted to build a strong team."

Individually, each of these special seniors wanted to win a title at the county level and compete

in state sectionals. Patel wanted a personal record of 13-3 just a shy off her final record, 12-4.

Patel and Jariwala agreed that the team is looking at a tough road ahead but know they can pull through by learning from their mistakes, and especially by practicing consistently on and off season in order to succeed.

Patel's likes the challenge. She said, "I always play opponents better than me, so I can make mistakes and then learn from them to get better."

Both, Patel and Jariwala commented that they learned throughout the four years playing for PHS that it does not matter if you come from an urban city.

While Passaic only has a team at the high school level, other schools have tennis programs that go from elementary school through high school. That does not matter to the PHS Varsity Team.

Patel remembers a significant moment in her tennis career, where she defeated an opponent from Livingston who had believed it would be an easy win against Passaic. When Patel pulled off an upset, all of Livingston was in shock. "That felt really good," said Patel, "I was proud to represent PHS."

However, as the 2014 season came to an end, Patel and Jariwala remained humble, knowing where they started from and where they ended in their senior year.

This team feels as though they accomplished a great deal during their tenure playing as Indians. They are passionate about the sport and honored that they have been given the opportunity to wear the blue and red. They encourage all students to go for their dreams and try new things while they are at PHS.

"Take advantage of all that PHS has to offer. You never know where it might lead," said Jariwala.



PHOTO BY KATHERINE RODRIGUEZ

PHS Soccer Team, left to right, top row: Anthony Alvarez, Saul Linares, Diego Ruiz, Antonio Bello, Angel Hernandez, Miquel Ramirez, Rodrigo Flores, Dante Motta, George Flores, David Acevedo, Miguel Martinez, Coach Fazio. Bottom row: Aldair Velasquez, Chris Juarez, Michael Tepale, Ivan Tepale, Fernando Calixto, Rodney De Dios, Jesus Hernandez, Luigi Ramos, Trainer Mike.

## Underdog Varsity Soccer Team Has Winning Season

By Katherine Rodriguez

Going into the 2014 season, the varsity soccer team had one goal: make it to the semi-finals in the Passaic County Tournament and participate in the New Jersey State Tournament. Senior captains Fernando Calixto and David Acevedo lead a new breed of Passaic Indians along with the help of junior captain Aldair Velasquez.

Personally, Calixto wanted to beat last year's record of 3-15. Acevedo wanted to beat both Clifton High School and Passaic County Tech. Aldair aspired to become a role model for the rest of the team, being the only junior captain.

These goals motivated the team to work harder during practices, focusing on playing better than ever before. During the Passaic County Tournament, they made PHS history, making it to the quarter-finals. They are ending a highly successful season and even played Hawthorne Christian in the NJSIAA Tournament. This was quite a change in just one year.

The most memorable moment

for the team was beating Pompton Lakes in the Passaic County Tournament, 3-2. Acevedo and Calixto both agreed that it was great to win after losing to them since their freshman year.

"This was a great way to end my senior year season, by beating Pompton Lakes. I really feel like we have accomplished something," said Calixto.

The dramatic success, especially given the troubles of the past, is attributed to the many hours of hard work logged over the summer. Coach Fazio used that time to forge the individual players into a team. The team used that time to become a tightly knit family.

Everyday during summer practice the team worked together, pushing, challenging and encouraging each other to grow. The hard work paid off, because the final record for the 2014 season is 8-8-1, a great improvement over the past several years.

Most of the Varsity Soccer Team had played soccer nearly all their lives. For example, captains Acevedo and Calixto. Both began playing soccer at the age of 5

and are currently playing in club teams during the off season. Aldair, a late bloomer, did not start until 12 but proved to be a forced reckoned with, stepping up to the demands of the team. Aldair travelled to Florida on December 7, to compete with his team, The New Jersey Stallions, in a national tournament.

Although most of the Varsity Soccer team is made up of seniors which include: David A. (Midfielder), George F. (Defense), Fernando C. (Defense), Luis R. (Defense), Miguel R. (Forward), Ivan T. (Midfielder), and Rodrigo F. (Goalkeeper), Aldair believes that there is a potentially great team next year.

The 2014 season can be summed as the year the underdogs defeating Pompton Lakes, made it to the quarter-finals in the Passaic County Tournament and competed in the NJSIAA Tournament. As these Indians prepare for the 2015 season one thing is for sure, the underdogs are barking for a chance to do even better next year.

Congratulations on this year's success and good luck next year!

## Volleyball Serves Up Great PHS Experience

By Oscar Perez

Volleyball may not be the first choice for students who want to join sports. There are not any beaches around, so it might not be the foremost in the minds

of prospective students. Senior Jeanice Rivera wants to change all that. Indian volleyball is a great place for students to work together for a common cause. Getting a win as a team is key to being able to have a successful

season in volleyball.

"We work hard at every practice, so that we can get many wins during the season" said Jeanice. However, joining the team is not all hard work. Jeanice said, "Players are motivational and encouraging to each other. We come to work but we have so much fun." These players bring intensity to every practice, so that they can be competitive on the field.

The motivation for success is important on the court, but it also takes place behind the scenes, during classes and in the personal lives of the players. Motivation is the most important thing to lead to victory on the court.

Schools like PCTI and Clifton present the most challenge because those schools are our rivals. The team strives for wins against those schools. Jeanice said, "We work to win over all challengers but these schools are our personal rivals, so we work even harder to beat them."

Representing PHS on the court is an honor the volleyball team takes seriously. Putting their best foot forward is not always easy. It takes commitment and practice. However, striving for excellence means that these Indians never give up. Support the hard work of these students as they represent PHS.



PHOTO BY KATHERINE RODRIGUEZ

The PHS Winter Track Team, Top Row, left to right: Coach Richardson, Jose Negrete, Coby Pardo, Alex Arce, Brian Enriquez, Kevin Calixto, Dev Patel, Brian Adomen, Max Ramirez, Angel Lora, Keeshawn Brown, Elijah Perez, Christopher Vega, Coach Matos. Top Middle (left to right): Amber Rutherford, Coach Pritchett, Ritesh Rana, Jason Hernandez, Maurisio Nazario, Lionel Medina, Joel Garcia, Mitchell Blancas, Darshak Rana, Akshay Nadiyahara, Neel Patel, Emmanuel Linares. Bottom Middle (left to right): Felichia Richmond, Des'ree Robinson, Lishayra Torres, Ayana Simms, Nastasha Valdez, Ashley Perez, Maria Abarca, Giselle Martinez, Vanessa Garcia, Chantal Sanchez, Rogreka Clayton. Bottom (left to right): Katherine Rodriguez, Joan Pimentel, Stephanie Espinoza, Karen Correa, Sarai Mejia, Leslie Castro, Erika Candia, Markiah Holmes, Daniela Tlamintzi, Angeliqve Chavez.

## PHS Winter Track Anxious to Compete this Season

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than I have in track during one season. I have learned to stick to my goals and dig deep, keeping my head up. I hope to use this lesson throughout my life." Natasha Val-

dez seconded those sentiments, adding, "When I feel like giving up, I now push forward even harder, like at the end of a tough race. Track has taught me to keep going even when it gets tough."

Track does become like a family. "Even though track is not an easy sport I have learned to never give up. It is my second family, whom I adore," said Giselle Martinez.

The track team is a place to strive

to be number one. Working together for a common goal and supporting each other in good times and bad is at the core of what makes track a great part of the PHS experience.