



Annual Military Inspection Gives Cadets Chance to Shine

By Juan Orozco

If you noticed that our NJROTC students were looking especially spiffy recently, there is a reason for that. They were preparing for and taking part in the annual military inspection. The entire PHS-NJROTC Regiment, consisting of 380 cadets, put on an outstanding show on Thursday, February 28, as they completed their inspection.

What many people may not know is just how much it takes to prepare and execute this inspection. The cadets got a chance to demonstrate the proper wear of their naval science uniform, their skills in military drill, both armed and unarmed, and their level of military knowledge.

Senior Chief McMasters, the Senior Naval Science Instructor of the Program said, "This is the one time during the school year when the cadets get the opportunity to show what they have learned throughout the year to visiting inspectors. It is always very satisfying to see each and every cadet, for the most part, rise to the occasion."

This inspection is the most important inspection of the year for the ROTC program.

Held once every year, AMI is a chance for all cadets to show their best. Cadets are organized into perspective platoons, of about 15 people each. AMI is one of just a few events that the entire regiment meets together. Seeing every cadet in the ROTC

dressed perfectly all in one spot is a spectacle.

One can feel the pride of belonging to something important. Junior Juan Orozco said, "I feel like I belong to something larger than myself and it inspires pride."

The military unity demonstrated at the AMI does not happen by accident, and we usually practice for the entire week before inspection. There is a lot of preparation that goes into AMI. All cadets have to make sure that their uniform is the best it can possibly be. Not only cleaned and pressed, but every patch and pin needs to be placed perfectly.

AMI begins with a ceremony, where one of our chiefs welcome everyone and instructs what we are going to do. We also have the presentation of colors, along with the Pledge of Allegiance, and the singing of the national anthem. What makes this inspection more important than any other is that our peers or our instructors do not grade us.

We have special guests from the Navy that come and inspect us. This year we were fortunate enough to have the Area 4 Manager, Commander Jimmy Miller, inspect us.

After inspection, we "Troop To Line." Commander Jimmy Miller, Cadet Captain Jessie Pimintel, and Cadet Commander Ariel Aguilar walk in front of every platoon, standing at full attention, and the platoon commander will snap a salute to those three



PHOTOS BY JUAN OROZCO

Above: Cadets snap a sharp salute during AMI opening ceremony. Below: NJROTC Cadets "Troop to Line" for annual inspection.

officers. After the inspection, we had both Unarmed and Armed Platoon do a performance to demonstrate the expertise of the drill team.

As we approach the close of this school year and bid "Fair Winds and Following Seas" to our senior cadets, we are very excited about recruiting new students from the middle school to join our ranks. The new students will be introduced to the program during the NJROTC Freshman Orientation Program scheduled to be held for one week during the summer break.



PHS Opens B.E.S.T. Store

By Jorge Rosemond

April is Autism Awareness Month, and while the signs of this event are everywhere, what is really known about autism? What can be done about it? And most importantly, what are we at PHS doing about it?

First, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a proper name for this developmental disorder. It affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others.

According to the Autism Soci-

ety, there is no single cause of autism but increased awareness and early diagnosis and intervention, with access to appropriate services and supports, will lead to a significantly improved outcomes.

Next, Autism Awareness Month is to try and provide a new perspective for the society at large, that encounters ASD individuals. The best thing is for society to accept and include individuals living with autism.

The PHS family includes all

individuals, to come and learn and be accepted. The B.E.S.T. retail shop's purpose is just for that. Now the PHS family can not only celebrate autism awareness but truly appreciate the unique aspects and diversity of all people in our school.

The students of Mrs. Ackerson's class selected the name for vocational and career readiness program. B.E.S.T. stands for Building Essential Skills Training.

As the program took shape

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY NJ DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testing Season at PHS

By Yeni Hernandez Flores

For as long as we can remember, as students at PHS we have been preparing for the PARRC test. Then every March or April we spend a week or two taking this battery of tests, being stressed and trying to keep up in our regular classes. However, this year something is different.

The PARRC is gone, but does that mean we are not testing? Unfortunately no, there will always be a test, but now it is called the NJSLA. This is not some new summer side dish, sort of like cole slaw, but the new high stakes graduation test that all PHS students must pass to graduate.

What is NJSLA test? The NJSLA stands for NEW JER-

SEY STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT these assessments are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and are intended to test for students' ability to apply their knowledge of concepts. We are taking this test on April 8-12. The New Jersey state website says that the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments for English Language Arts/Literacy (NJSLA-ELA) and for Mathematics (NJSLA-M) measures the extent to which students are, or on track to being college or career ready in each of the two respective areas. Therefore, the test is given to see if we are ready for the real world or college.

The test in English Language Arts/Literacy assesses student

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BOOK FAIR



PHOTO BY JORGE ROSEMOND

Students make their final selections at the successful book fair held in the media center.

How to prepare for 'Avengers: Endgame'

By Daymien Barreiro

It has been over ten years in the making, 22 movies and lots of popcorn, and finally, the finale.

April 26 marks the opening for the conclusion of the Marvel cinematic universe "Infinity War" series. This moment has been coming for a long time and before you go to the theater (if you were lucky enough to score a ticket) you will need to be prepared.

Here is a list of the things you will need to do to be prepared to watch the biggest blockbuster of the decade, *Avengers: Endgame*.

You will want to be prepared with all of the details of every movie that has come out since *Ironman* in 2008. Don't just try to get away with watching all the post-credit scenes, because Thanos is crafty and might test you on some minute details from a movie that many have overlooked. So here is the film list, in order, so you get it right.

First you'll want to watch *Iron Man*, the movie that started it all. When it came out in 2008 we were children, but this movie is totally magical. It is worth it to see Toni Stark build the Mark I in a cave and emerge as Iron Man.

The same summer *The Incredible Hulk* was released, but it was overshadowed by *Iron Man*. When watched now, it becomes obvious how far CGI has come in eleven years. However the relationship between Bruce Banner (Edward Norton) and Betty Ross (Liv Tyler) is worth the watch.

Marvel executives must have been floored by the popularity of these films because it was two years before *Iron Man 2* was released. This film is where the universe starts to emerge through various Easter eggs, like Captain America's shield in Toni's workshop, and the Avenger's Initiative admitting Iron Man but not Toni Stark. Black Widow and War Machine appear on the scene as well as a very young Peter Parker, and Thor's hammer.

Then *Thor* was released a year later, to the cheers of female Marvel fans. It takes place in rural New Mexico (well, and Asgard). Thor (Chris Hemsworth) comes to Earth to prove he is worthy to reclaim his beloved hammer. Once he is deemed worthy as a true hero by sacrificing himself for others, then he will get it back. While on Earth he meets a scientist Selvig (Stellan Skarsgard) who begins to study the Tesseract, an object of incredible power. Oh and by

the way, he falls in love with Jane Foster (Natalie Portman).

Things were really ramping up for the first Avengers movie, but the team needed one more character to make it complete, and lead them.

The first (and best) avenger is *Captain America*, and is set during World War II. Steve Rogers is a little guy with big courage, the epitome of American bravado. He joins the service to help defeat the Nazi Reich and encounters the Red Skull who was defeated but then appears later, much to everyone's surprise.

Finally, after five films and five years, it was time for Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), the director of S.H.I.E.L.D., to assemble *The Avengers*, including the key members, Captain America, Thor, Iron Man, and of course the Hulk, and some lesser members (people without superpowers, just super talented like Black Widow and Hawkeye).

This film completed phase one. Thor's brother Loki (Tom Hiddleston) steals the Tesseract and uses it to try and take over Earth. The Avenger's team needed to put aside their differences and come together to defeat this common threat, and learn to respect each other in the process. The battle scene in New York at the end of this film is worth watching it by itself.

Now that you have watched about 11 hours of movies, you may want to take a break and work on phase two on another day. This is a marathon and not a sprint. You need to be fresh for the three hour *Endgame*.

Some may have thought that after the action of *The Avengers* that *Iron Man 3* would be anti-climactic. Toni Stark battles post-traumatic stress disorder as well as the Mandarin (Ben Kingsley).

The movie feels more like a detective story than an action flick, but Robert Downey Jr. is always good as the Iron Man. This movie sets up the fact that Toni Stark is having troubles dealing with the real possibility that there are overwhelming forces in the galaxy that the Avengers may not be prepared or able to defend against.

Thor: The Dark World had Malekith and his army of Dark Elves trying to get a supremely powerful weapon, known as the Aether. Thor needed Loki, who fakes his own death, to escape imprisonment and also defeat this evil in the galaxy. Thor and Loki lose their mother, to the army of Dark Elves and this fact doesn't bring them closer.

Things get really serious when



It has been over ten years in the making, 22 movies and lots of popcorn, and finally, the finale.

S.H.I.E.L.D. is infiltrated by Hydra, and Captain America is forced to choose between his loyalty to his friend Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan) and the oath to serve in S.H.I.E.L.D. It doesn't end well. S.H.I.E.L.D. is shattered, Bucky Barnes disappears after nearly killing Steve Rogers, and the world is left unprotected. It is a good time to get off Earth and go to somewhere else in the galaxy. The Falcon, Sam Wilson (Anthony Mackie)

The surprise of the summer of 2014 was *Guardians of the Galaxy*. The last three films were pretty dark. *Iron Man*, *Dark World* and *Winter Soldier* all had dark themes of mental illness, galaxy destroying weapons resurfacing and even Asgard is not safe, and finally the destruction of S.H.I.E.L.D., because it was infiltrated by Hydra. Nothing was as it seemed and some comic release was necessary before the second Avengers movie arrived.

The Guardians are comprised of Peter Quill/Star-Lord (Chris Pratt) and his misfits, including Gamora (Zoe Saldana), Rocket Raccoon (Bradley Cooper) – just don't call him a raccoon, Drax the Destroyer (Dave Bautista) and of course Groot (Vin Diesel).

They fight Ronin (Lee Pace) a Kree who makes a deal with Thanos to get a powerful orb (yes, an infinity stone), so that Thanos will eradicate the Xandarians. However, it is stolen by Star-Lord (who?), and in a dance-off is defeated by the Guardians. Star-Lord has some special powers that he didn't even realize by holding an infinity stone and not dying.

Avengers: Age of Ultron reunited the now larger group of Avengers including Captain America (the best Avenger), Iron Man, Thor, the Hulk, Black Widow, and Hawkeye, and now Fal-

con, to defeat Ultron.

Ultron is a technological enemy created by Toni Stark to protect the world, but who gets bent on the destruction of humanity. They also encounter the Maximoff Twins, Pietro and Wanda. While Pietro (Aaron-Taylor-Johnson) as Quicksilver is fast, he really didn't see that bullet coming and doesn't survive this movie. Wanda (Elizabeth Olsen) however, becomes the Scarlet Witch and returns in future films. Vision who was J.A.R.V.I.S. (Paul Bettany), is created using the mind stone out of Loki's scepter.

Even though S.H.I.E.L.D. is no longer around Nick Fury arrives just in time with a helicarrier to save the day, while the rest of the Avengers battle a hoard of Ultron robot machines. There is an uneasy ending to this film because we know Thanos is coming and there still is no real defense against him.

Ant-man is the last film in the phase two series, so you can't get another bathroom break yet. It is a more light-hearted movie, where Scott Lang becomes the Ant-Man (Paul Rudd), by protecting Dr. Hank Pym's (Michael Douglas) technology for shrinking and enlarging things from the new president of Pym Technology Darren Cross (Corey Stoll), who becomes Yellow Jacket. The best part of this movie is Ant-man's friend and side-kick Luis (Michael Pena), the plot is moved along with his hysterical voice overs, and no one could have done it better than Pena.

Now, take a moment, rest up and get ready for the huge phase three homestretch to *Endgame*. Get a good meal because there are nine more movies to enjoy before the finale.

Phase three begins with *Captain America: Civil War*, and it is a great film. The Avenger's are splintered into two opposing sides. Helmut Zemo (Daniel Bruhl), who survived Sokovia being destroyed in Age of Ultron, now wants revenge on the Avengers by turning Captain America and Iron Man against each other. His master plan is to get the world to adopt the Sokovia Accord, which is a law regulating superhuman activity, with government oversight and accountability over the Avengers. Toni is for it and Steve is against it.

As the civil war between these two sides comes to a head, each side recruits extra members. Team Iron Man recruits Spider-Man (Tom Holland) and Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman),

as well as War Machine and Black Widow. Teach Captain America gets Ant-Man, Hawkeye, Falcon, Scarlet Witch, and the Winter Soldier. The battle is amazing with loyalties and betrayals overlapping. When Toni learns that the Winter Soldier was responsible for his parents' death, he has a final break with Steve Rogers, who is still loyal to his friend, because he was under Hydra mind control.

The film ends with Steve Rogers offering an olive branch, by sending Toni "Stank" (as Stan Lee dressed as a Fed Ex driver calls Toni) a cell phone with his number in it. Rogers and Barnes are offered asylum in Wakanda from the Black Panther. Now the Earth has no real defense at all.

There is still a lot of room for more heroes and characters to fill the Marvel Universe, and so enters *Doctor Strange*. Stephen Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) is the world's best neurosurgeon, but he gets into a serious car accident that leaves his hands ruined. Unable to do the one thing that he always wanted to do he goes to Kamar-Taj, to learn about the mystic arts from The Ancient One (Tilda Swinton) who is the Sorcerer Supreme.

After he master's the arts he is forced to take on Dormammu an evil entity from another dimension, who grants power to his followers but is intent on taking over our dimension for himself. Strange defeats Dormammu with the use of the Eye of Agamotto (which is also the infinity time stone). After the death of The Ancient One, Doctor Strange is the new Sorcerer Supreme, and is responsible for protecting Earth from all mystical threats. He even gives Thor a cool refilling mead stein.

Now it is time to take a moment to see how life on the other end of the galaxy is going, with *Guardians of the Galaxy, Volume 2*. Peter Quill discovers who his father is. It turns out that his father is Ego (Kurt Russell) (or maybe David Hasselhoff) who is a planet who gave Peter's mother brain cancer and is trying to remodel the entire galaxy with the help of Star-Lord. He is forced to kill his own father to save the galaxy but learns that Yondu Udonta (Michael Rooker) is his daddy.

While this may seem like a pretty dark film, it is actually still the Guardians, so Baby Groot and the rest of the cast is still hysterically entertaining. This is a great film, that at the time

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"You know your teams, you know your missions." Captain America (Chris Evans) gives an inspirational speech to his teams, ahead of a mission, in "Avengers: Endgame."

Preparing for 'Avengers: Endgame'

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doesn't seem to fit in with the rest of the Marvel Universe, actually does.

After his debut in *Civil War*, Peter Parker got his own movie in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, because everyone has a gimmick these days. Spider-Man faces off against the Vulture (Michael Keaton), who leads a crew cleaning up after the battle of New York. When he loses his government contract to do the clean up he turns his crew to crime, partly to provide for his family and partly for revenge at being fired in the first place.

Spider-Man is just learning about his abilities and the suit that Toni Stark has created for him. He saves the day as his classmates are almost killed at the Washington Monument.

He then realizes that his girlfriend's father is Adrian Toomes, the alter-ego of the Vulture. Talk about pressure of meeting your girlfriend's father. He finds the courage within himself to wear the suit and not have the suit wear him, growing as a hero in the process. Remember, "With great power, comes great responsibility."

2017 was a very busy year, and a great year for Marvel fans, because it was filled with three great movies. *Guardians 2*, *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and lastly, *Thor: Ragnarok*.

Thor witnesses the death of his father Oden, and then is trapped by his evil sister Hela, who also destroys his hammer with one hand, on a garbage planet Sakaar to survive as a gladiator. He must fight Hulk, who hasn't been Bruce Banner in two years. He has actually been living as the Hulk, as the champion gladiator for the Grandmaster (Jeff Goldblum). While many think that Ragnarok is just too funny, I think that this is the greatest strength of this film.

The end of Asgard is serious and the fact that we can be



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Avengers: Endgame is the conclusion of the Marvel Comics cinematic universe "Infinity War" series.

entertained by these catastrophic events shows how great the Marvel Universe is. At the end of this movie, Thor and all the survivors of Asgard (including Hulk and Loki) are left on a large ship heading for Earth as refugees. Hela is killed by Ragnarok.

The last film before *Infinity War* is *Black Panther*. T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman) returns back to his home of Wakanda, a fictional African nation. He is crowned as king of Wakanda, but he is soon challenged by his cousin, who grew up in America, and seeks to use Wakanda's technology to create a world-wide racial revolution. This nation has remained hidden for centuries to protect its stash of vibranium, that fell there as an asteroid. It is where all of the world's vibranium comes from, like Captain America's shield.

Finally, it was time to see the first part of the Avenger's, which is called *Infinity War*. The list of characters is huge, so let's say everyone is in this film except for Hawkeye and Ant-Man.

The film begins with Thanos taking the Space Infinity Stone from the Tesseract from Thor's ship of refugees. We also learn that he has already taken the Power Stone from Xandar. Then Thanos sends his evil henchmen to Earth to retrieve the Mind Stone

from Vision's head and the Time Stone from Doctor Strange's chest. They fail because there are enough Avenger's around to help save the Earth. Strange is taken prisoner because the Eye of Amamotto is protected by an enchantment, and because Spider-Man, Iron-Man, Wong, and NOT Hulk fail to stop the intruders. While Peter Parker and Toni Stark stowaway on Thanos's henchmen's ship, Wong goes back to the Sanctum to protect Earth from there, and hopefully gets his tuna sandwich, while Bruce Banner calls Steve Rogers from the phone that he gave Toni Stark at the end of *Civil War*.

If this sounds complicated, it is. You'll probably need to watch this film twice. Captain America, Black Widow, and Falcon show up just in time to save Vision and his new girlfriend, Scarlet Witch, from Thanos's forces trying to get his stone. Then they go to Wakanda to secure that stone.

Meanwhile, Thanos is off to get the Reality stone from the Collector, on Knowhere, and the Guardians of the Galaxy, minus Groot and Rocket, go to stop him, but they are too late. Thanos also kidnaps Gamora because she knows the location of the Soul Stone. Groot, Rocket and Thor go to get a Thanos killing weapon.

Eitri, the king of the dwarves, helps Thor by creating Stormbreaker and ax forged in the heart of a dying star.

Thanos sacrifices his adopted daughter (and the only thing he ever loved) to gain access to the Soul Stone. He then goes to his dead homeworld, Titan, to get the Time Stone from Doctor Strange. Strange uses the stone to see millions of possible outcomes and finds only one way to defeat Thanos (which of course we will not see until the Endgame). Thanos gets the Time Stone from Doctor Strange in return for sparing the life of Toni Stark, which is part of the Endgame plan. This leaves Earth as the location of the final stone and the location for the final battle between the Avengers and Thanos.

Wakanda is the location for the final battle on Earth, with Captain America, the Winter Soldier, the Black Panther and Banner, who cannot turn into the Hulk, but wears the hulkbuster armor. Thor, Rocket and Groot arrive during the battle and Thanos's army is beaten, and his henchmen are killed.

However, Thanos arrives, and even though the Scarlet Witch kills Vision by destroying the stone in his head, still loses the stone to Thanos who now has the Time Stone to get Vision's stone. With all the stones on the Infinity Gauntlet, all he has to do is snap his fingers and half the universe will die. Thor uses Stormbreaker to kill Thanos but because he hit the chest and not the head (always aim for the head), Thanos snaps his fingers.

Even Nick Fury turns to dust and blows away, but not before he sends a call out on a dated looking pager, with the symbol of Captain Marvel on it. Then he presumably curses and disappears. This is a serious movie, but it is necessary to set up for the final ENDGAME.

Ant-Man was conspicuously

absent from *Infinity War* and there had to be a reason. In *Ant-Man* and the Wasp, we get that reason. Scott Lang is broken out of house arrest, due to his role in *Civil War*, and is used to help rescue Hank Pym's wife from the quantum realm. After they do this, they work together to research this realm and while *Ant-Man* is in that realm Thanos's snap heard across the universe kills all of his support team (Hank Pym, Janet van Dyne, and Hope van Dyne) leaving Lang trapped in the quantum realm.

The last piece of the puzzle before you get to watch *Endgame* is who was Fury paging at the end of *Infinity War*? The answer to that was found in *Captain Marvel*. Carol Danvers (Brie Larson) becomes Captain Marvel in this origin story, set in 1995 (there is a Blockbuster and everything). As a test pilot, she destroys a light speed engine to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Kree. However the energy from the explosion is absorbed by Danvers and she becomes one of the most powerful beings in the galaxy, but she lost her memory.

Over the course of the movie she regains her memory, stops a Kree invasion of Earth and gives Fury her Air Force call-sign "Avenger" and a pager so S.H.I.E.L.D. can call her back to Earth if needed, which she was at the end of *Infinity War*.

Now you have what you need. I recommend that you actually do the hard work of watching all these movies for yourself. It will take about 2886 minutes (give or take a few) to watch all these, but someone has to do all the hard work.

There are many theories about how this will all end, and none of them are credible. Marvel is very good at keeping their secrets. So, all we can do is be prepared. Hopefully, you got a ticket for the first weekend; they are SOLD OUT. Enjoy the movie, I will.

Is 'Captain Marvel' Marvelous?

By Eduardo Ramirez

The last movie to come out before the release of *Avengers: Endgame* is *Captain Marvel*. Even though *Wonder Woman* from the DC universe has already been a success and should have put to rest the fact that people will go to a superhero movie that stars a woman, *Captain Marvel* had to overcome much of the same social justice hype.

Brie Larson the lead of this movie, playing Carol Danvers, did not help the cause by stating in an interview, "I do not need a 40-year-old white dude to tell me what didn't work for him about *A Wrinkle in Time*. It wasn't made for him."

Many thought that this would hurt the sales of this film, but it did make a killing in its opening weekend and has already turned a good profit. Hopefully, we can get back to the point where people can watch a movie and not have to worry about what category the lead falls into.

For now, this is a good movie. It is not the best Marvel movie, but it is entertaining. The action sequences are good, and Samuel

L. Jackson, as a younger Nick Fury is great. We even learn how he got the eye patch. Be careful when you are down at the shelter picking out a new cat for the family.

We also find out another loose end that had to this point never been explained: what S.H.I.E.L.D. was doing for all the years in between *Captain America* and *The Avengers* with the Tesseract. It was given to Dr. Selvig at the end of *Thor*, and he used it to help Loki invade New York, but in this movie, we actually see how it came to be part of their stockpile of stuff.

Actually, in *Captain America: The First Avenger*, the Red Skull found it in Norway and used it to power his evil Hydra weapons. Then Howard Stark found it at the bottom of the sea when he was looking for Captain America. But, then it was lent to Mar Vell a scientist who wanted to use it to power a light speed engine. When that engine was destroyed by the Kree, Carol Danver's call sign, "Avenger," became Captain Marvel. That is one busy infinity stone.

Watching this film did not make me think that I was watch-



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Captain Marvel stars Brie Larson, left, Samuel L. Jackson, right, and a cat named Goose.

ing a woman hero and that this would have been played better by a man or some other identity group, I just watched the movie, enjoyed it, and placed it in the larger picture of the Marvel Universe.

These stories have already been printed in comic books for decades, so the controversy of who is a hero and who is not should not even be a question

at this point.

This is a good movie. You should check it out, especially if you are going to *Endgame* on April 26. But if you are thinking that this is a great movie for you because Larson is a woman then stay home.

The plot of this story is about a woman who loves her home and her country, who has overcome adversity of galactic pro-

portions, and now is a defender of Earth, as a soon to be Avenger.

Brie Larson should not worry about who is going to see her movie, just that there are enough fans to support a wide range of heroes and heroines in the Marvel Universe.

Maybe one day this will just be a good movie instead of a good feminist movie. Now let's see what she does in *Endgame*.

Venezuela's Economy: How Did It Get To This Point?

By Christopher Ochoa

Today the news is filled with the horrors of the Venezuelan economy, the suffering of the people there and the collapse of that society. However, this did not just happen. It occurs over a period of time. So how did Venezuela go from one of the wealthiest countries in the western hemisphere to the poorest?

Heritage.org ranks all the world's economies and with a 2019 economic freedom score of 25.9, it is ranked 179 in the world, right after 178, Cuba and 180 North Korea. That is not good company to be in. Things are pretty bad there now.

If the situation there was summed up in a phrase it would be state interventionism. In the last couple years, the centralized government there decided to try and stop the horrible contraction of that economy by removing five zeros from the currency and giving a large increase in the minimum wage.

This is supposed to be a way to improve the lives of the people there, but it is just contributing to hyper-inflation. Inflation has been as much as 700 percent which is double of the second

highest inflation on the planet, South Sudan. The problem is that the government has spent way too much for way too long. They monetized large government debt, which means that everyone's money was not worth anything. With more money comes less value.

So how does a country with the world's largest proven oil reserves become one of the world's poorest economies? It just does not seem right. Like many South American countries, Venezuela was under military rule. This lasted until 1959 when a modern democratic era began. Then, forty years later, Hugo Chavez was elected in 1999. The election of Chavez began a period of the destruction of democratic institutions.

Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chavez lead a military coupe against the government in 1992, but it failed. He was imprisoned, but released later. He was elected in 1998 and the end of the Venezuelan democracy was assured. He instituted many changes to the government and their constitution. Eventually, when business leaders objected to some of his plans, Chavez declared them "enemies of the

people's revolution."

By the late 2000's, Chavez ran the oil industry, but the government could not run that industry and production went down, accidents went up and costs went up. When oil prices fell, Venezuela was finished.

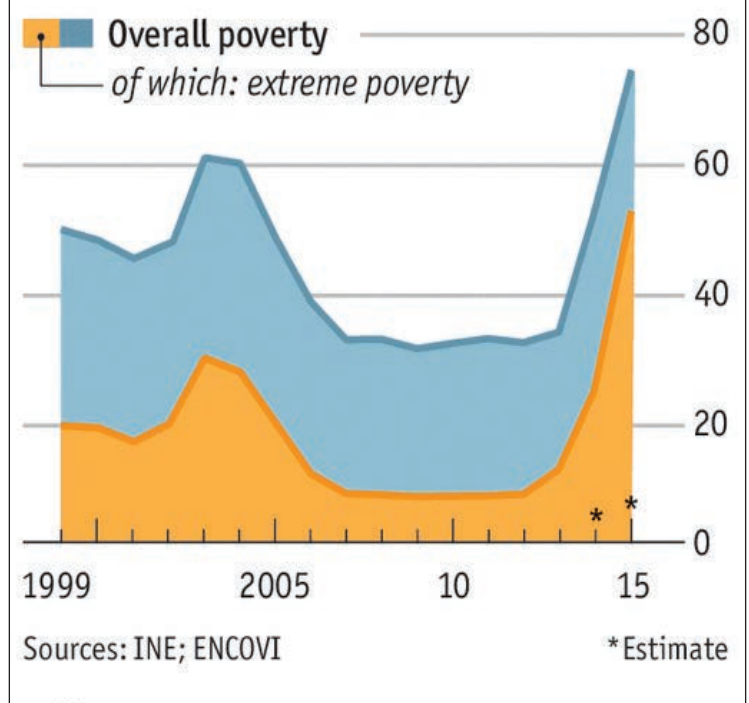
Things were already bad when Chavez died in 2013 and his hand-picked successor was Maduro. He was "elected" again in May 2018, and Venezuela has continued to fall into a bad state. Poverty, starvation and crime is rampant. The problem is the dictatorship government there, and the people have no way to stop it.

So, to sum things up, the problem of Venezuela is that their economy was based on the rise and fall of oil prices, which is bad enough. Their economy has handled that. But, the people followed a leftist-populist leader in Chavez, who took away their economic freedom first, and then the rest of the freedom eventually went with it.

It is sad that a people with a beautiful country and a great deal of natural resources have been reduced to starvation. Hopefully, freedom can be restored and then the economy.

Pushed to new extremes

Venezuelans living in poverty
% of population



ECONOMIST.COM

The level of poverty and extreme poverty are at record highs in Venezuela.



Nearly empty shelves at a store in Caracas, Venezuela, left, are a stark contrast to a Shop-Rite supermarket in Pennsylvania, with fully stocked shelves, opposite page.

VENEZUELA PHOTO COURTESY OF BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES

SHOP-RITE PHOTO COURTESY OF POCONO RECORD

Naughty or Nice: Why is Cuba Helping Venezuela?

By Dana Flores & Patricia Morales

Back in February, the United States (and other allies) sent humanitarian aid to Venezuela to help the people there who are starving. Maduro, the dictator there would not allow any aid to enter his country.

At the same time as he was denying food and medicine to his own people, a ship of aid to Cuba, who had recently had a hurricane, was loaded to help Cuba.

How could Venezuela, a country that was starving, help Cuba and what does this say about their relationship?

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said that the plans to ship humanitarian aid to Venezuela were part of an attempt at "imperialist intervention." From his point of view, the United States will only help in Venezuela to help get richer. It is clear that he does not like the United States, but what interest does Cuba have in Venezuela?

The people of Venezuela and especially the military still seem to support Maduro. Florida Senator Marco Rubio has said, "They are loyal... because the Cubans are spying on them. The Cuban intelligence agencies quickly pick up any of these military officers who are being disloyal or expressing doubts - and they are arrested."

Rubio is of Cuban descent. Therefore, the Cuban government wants to keep Maduro in power in Venezuela.

Cuba is under sanctions from the United States as well as many other free countries. Therefore, it is likely that they want to keep Venezuela as a trading partner, especially since they have a great deal of oil. They can trade more easily with another dictatorship than with the free world.

The relationship between Cuba and Venezuela can be beneficial to both countries. However, it can be bad for the people who live in those

countries.

From Cuba's point of view, America is only helping to influence that country because we are imperialists, and they are there because they share a cultural heritage against U.S. intervention.

However, it is hard to imagine what America could get out of a country of starving people, who need billions of dollars of infrastructure, and who only want some freedom and bare minimum essentials of life.

What is going on with Venezuela?

By Yeni Hernandez Flores

There is a crisis going on in Venezuela right now. It is not a natural disaster like a hurricane or a tornado, a fire or a flood. This crisis is a human created and the people there are really suffering.

The people need food, medicine and all other necessities. When they cannot get the things they need to survive, they are forced to try to get it by any means necessary. Already, one of the most violent places on Earth, someone is murdered every 21 minutes. There were roughly 24,700 violent deaths last year. Clearly, Venezuela is having serious troubles.

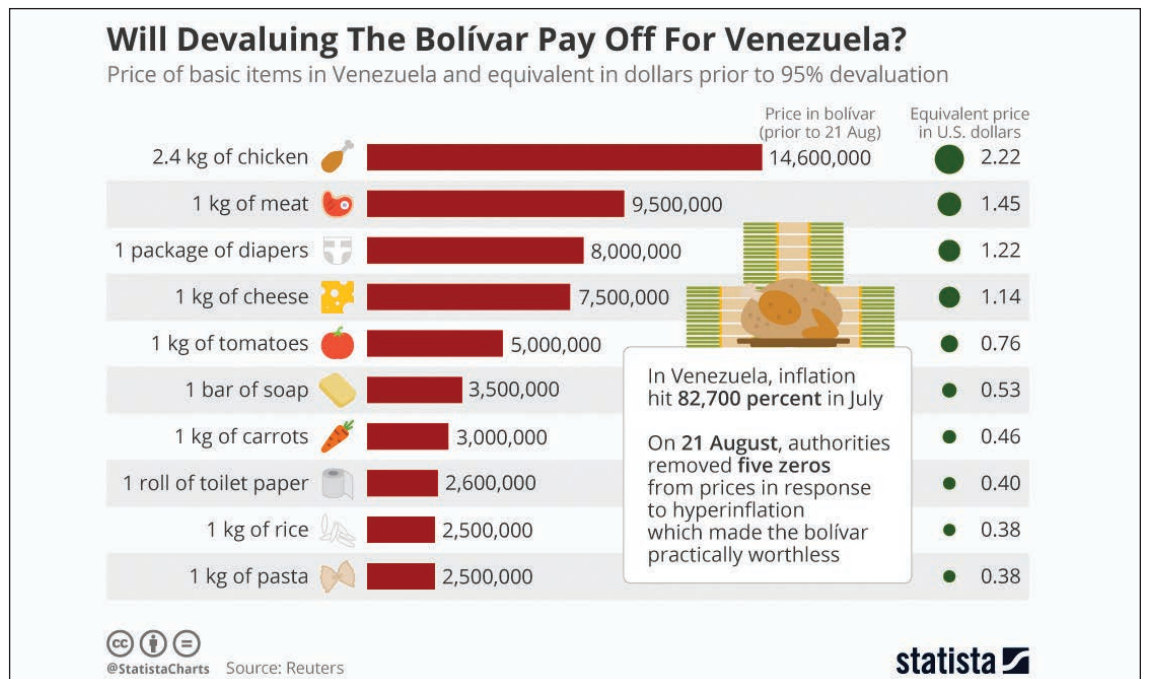
For the past few months, Leopold López has led an opposition movement against President Nicolas Maduro's government, which has been running the country into the ground. Since taking over for the deceased Hugo Chávez in April 2013, Maduro has led Venezuela to 56 percent inflation rate and a 50 percent increase in the budget deficit. The government is just printing money to pay government debts and the money is therefore not worth anything. People cannot afford to buy the basic necessities of life. China cut back on its \$20 billion

loan, and Moody's, Standard & Poor to downgraded Venezuelan bonds to "junk" status. No one wants to invest in Venezuela.

Venezuela's dollar has traditionally been consistently strong because it was linked to their oil exports and the price of oil kept their dollar strong. To give you an idea of just how far their dollar has deflated, it has dropped from an 8 to 1 exchange rate relative to the U.S. dollar at Chávez's death, to 87 to 1. That means that it takes 87 of their dollars to equal an American dollar.

In response, Maduro has stated that the U.S.-backed "fascists" and the "parasitic bourgeoisie" are responsible for the trouble in his country. By blaming the U.S. he has also called for more state intervention. He wants to have more direct control over the country, which means that his people will have even less freedom. This has only made things harder for the private sector, which has since made it nearly impossible for Venezuelans to get food and other basic material necessities.

Due to its massive oil wealth, Venezuela used to be Latin America's richest country per capita. Under Chávez's "vision for the nation," as a more socialist country, industries were



The cost of common necessities becomes prohibitively expensive when money becomes valueless.

nationalized, and government handouts increased. This plan was supposed to make the people richer and therefore happier, but after Chávez's death and a global collapse of oil prices, that vision no longer worked. Cash dried up, and the corruption-ravaged oil industry produced less and less. The government that took control over the oil industry to make it less corrupt than the private sector, produced less

and less every year, and accidents from poor maintenance, also increased. Then, runaway inflation set in.

People like López have been leading dissatisfied Venezuelans in protest. But it wasn't until Venezuela's Youth Day that things really took a bad turn. Swarms of young people mostly aged 18 to 25 took to the streets to peacefully protest Maduro's poor governance, but state

police quickly tried to corral them. At least three protesters were shot dead and many more were injured. Maduro has since charged López with terrorism and murder for inciting the riots where Maduro's government killed people.

Maduro is just the latest in a line of poor leaders, Venezuelans need help, and the world will help. However, the government there just needs to allow it.



What Does China Want in Venezuela?

By Jorge Rosemond

With the recent troubles unfolding from the streets of Venezuela, one might think that every country around the world would want to try to help the people suffering there. However, China's relationship with Venezuela is complicated and they are acting there for a few reasons, not all of them are helpful to United States' interests or even to the Venezuelans.

China is in Venezuela to pro-

tect its own national investments. They have a lot of money invested there and they want to protect their sources for all kinds of raw materials like iron, copper and soy. China is the number two trading partner of Venezuela. The United States is by far the biggest trade partner. Venezuela and other South American countries wanted to get away from their dependence on the U.S., and toward other countries, like China and India. Therefore, they started selling one of the world's

largest oil reserves to countries around the world, especially China. China lent over \$55 billion to Venezuela for their guaranteed oil sales, but the amount of oil that was promised has never been produced.

China needs oil, and so their leaders have been supportive of the current Maduro regime in Venezuela. They think that they will get their oil eventually. Since China needs a lot of oil and Venezuela needs a lot of money, their relationship should

be good for the foreseeable future. This arrangement is called "Complimentary Development".

Now China is staying true to the Maduro regime, mostly to protect their own investments and not so much to help the people there. They are hoping that by riding this situation out that they will be able to get the reward of oil deals.

It is unfortunate that the people of Venezuela are caught in the middle of various countries trying to get access to their natural

resources. Their own government should have the resources to help bring prosperity to the people. However, Maduro's hold on power has prevented it.

<https://www.cnbcc.com/2019/02/07/venezuela-china-and-russia-owed-debts-as-presidential-fight-rages.html>

Ferchen, Matt. "Why Did China Stand By Maduro in Venezuela?" The Washington Post, February 5, 2019.

Making a Difference in the Interact Club

By Deshani Hendley

The Interact Club is sponsored by Rotary, with over 20,000 clubs in 159 countries; there is definitely one close by. In PHS, we are lucky to have this club for students to join, but what do they do?

Interact clubs is for students from 12-18, so that they can learn to develop leadership skills, while they are serving their communities. Interactors serve their local community, like the school or Passaic. They also serve the world community as well, trying to make the world a better place. They do this in an atmosphere that is seriously fun.

Members of this club get to make a difference in the community, discover new people and ideas, and have fun making new friends. Each club is supposed to organize at least two projects every year. One should concentrate on helping the school or community, and another that promotes international understanding.

Our Interact Club is just went to different Passaic elementary schools, to work



with students there. Interactors encouraged them through leadership to make sure they do their schoolwork, follow the rules, and just try to be smart. We told them that they should do their homework all the time and that they should try to be smart by completing everything.

This way, when they grow up they will be smarter and better prepared. It is important to make sure we do everything in our power to help these kids, to be all they can be.

The Interact Club at PHS has about nine members now who try to make a difference in the lives of students in another school.

Why should you choose to join Club Interact? I joined to be a better person. I have learned that to make a difference means that I need to help and lead others, deal with their differences, and learn about them. I want to make this change for others.

Now they can be smarter about the choices they make as they grow up. Then they can make something of themselves, and learn how to respect each other. What better goal is there for a club?

INDIAN FOCUS:

Senior Jesus Luchetti

By Sandy Sanchez

Students graduate from PHS every year and they go out to make their mark on the world. This recurring column will feature students who have a plan for the future, and who will make us proud. Whatever they do, they will always be Indians!

Senior Jesus Luchetti is proud to be graduating and has already signed up for the military. The military had everything he was looking for in a post high school career path.

Jesus said, "The good pay, the free time, and of course the many future benefits that come with a career in the military."

From a young age, Jesus had an interest in mechanics, especially airplane mechanics. He flew often to and from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, where he has family. He liked visiting with his uncle who works on cars. It is from this uncle that Jesus learned about the basics of being a mechanic and how mechanics work.

However, he was especially interested in the way the planes that took him to and from the islands worked.

"It's amazing to think of that big plane working to keep us in the air and going places," he said.

By his freshman year at PHS, he knew that he wanted to be some kind of mechanic, and he knew that he loved traveling as well.

Knowing what you like is only part of the way to make a plan for the future,

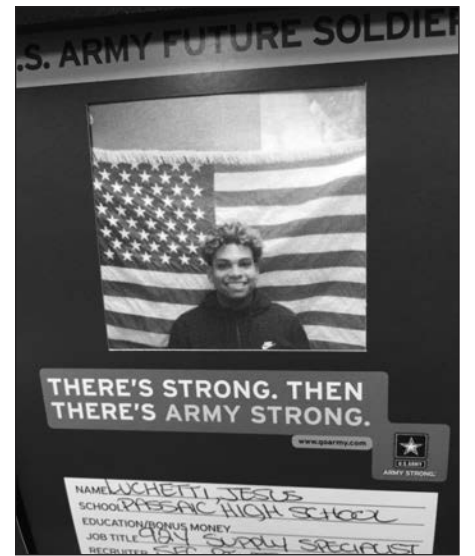


PHOTO COURTESY OF JESUS LUCHETTI

Jesus looks with pride at the photo that hangs in the recruiter office, signifying his commitment to becoming a soldier.

so by senior year, Jesus knew he wanted mechanics, but was not sure how to get there.

All this changed when a recruiter from the army asked him if he might consider joining the military. "It was really not something I was thinking about," he said.

When he learned about a career in aviation maintenance, from the recruiter, he was hooked. "Now I get to be paid to learn from the best," he said.

While he will always have fond memories of PHS, he is on to bigger and better things.

Teen Pep Class Goes on Retreat

By Yaneli Liranzo

Teen Pep is a handpicked class of juniors that interview to be a part of Teen Pep Class 1. To be selected for Class 1 is a quite an honor and a responsibility.

This class provides us with valuable information regarding pregnancies and the great benefits of birth control. It shows how young people should be responsible for their own lives.

Once we have learned all we need to be good counselors, we share this information with underclassmen in workshops. Each year, the Passaic Board of Education allows the Teen Pep class to participate in what we call our "Teen Pep Retreat."

This event takes place in a five-star hotel located in Princeton. This is the most beautiful hotel I have ever seen.

Why do we get to stay in a hotel for three days? The purpose of this trip is to form a bond with our other teen peppers. To deal with the sensitive topics that we do, there needs to be a close bond and comradery.

The Princeton retreat was amazing. Every day we awoke to a well-served breakfast buffet, lunch and dinner with unlimited snacks in between. It was hard not to gain a few pounds on this trip.

We spent the days getting to know one another more and more through various planned activities. We performed activities dealing with our personal views and



experiences. This helped us see the best and worst of each other, and especially in ourselves.

We learned darkest and greatest parts of each other, and in the end we gained a new and deep respect for each other.

Truthfully, they have all grown to be like my second family. Whenever I happen to feel like I have nobody to talk with, I know my teen peppers are always there for me.

Now, whenever we work as a group we feel comfortable to work with each other and with anybody else, we work so much better this way. We work as a team. Furthermore, by getting training and working together, allows us to perform at our best for the incoming freshmen.

One thing truly amazing about this class is that I trust all my club mates so much, I feel comfortable speaking about anything because we learned to deal with each other and also because it is all confidential. What happens in teen pep, stays in teen pep!

And this class gets better and better, which helps our fellow Indians!

PHS Opens B.E.S.T. Store



PHOTO BY JORGE ROSEMOND

Students learn important skills by running a store.

Continued from Page 1

these students collaborated and then selected this name as the name for the store.

Selecting the name is only the beginning because the purpose for the store is to have students build life and career skills. By running a store these students get the opportunity to manage money and develop customer service interpersonal skills.

Students also develop office working, cooking, food service, inventory, teamwork, and packaging and distributions skills. Basically, anything that has to do with entrepreneurship and running a store is done and learned by

these amazing students.

This year they have also been busy producing some custom-made products, in art classes with Mrs. Ware-Morin. By selling the items that they themselves created, a new level of pride and ownership can be felt by these students.

The store opened on April 1, to coincide with the beginning of Autism Awareness month. By supporting this store and the fellow students who work there, we can get one step closer to a school and a society where those with ASDs are valued for their unique talents and gifts. Now that is diversity.

NJSLA Testing

Continued from Page 1

proficiency in reading and comprehending a range of grade appropriate material independently. It also provides a measure of how effectively a student writes when using and/or analyzing sources.

The test in Mathematics measures student competencies in the major and additional/supporting content in mathematics for grade or course, as well as student grade-appropriate mathematical reasoning and modeling skills.

Sophomore Elisa Matos said of the new test, "It is so stressful taking both English and the math portion of NJSLA." She is confused on why she is taking the NJSLA. She added, "The governor promised to take PARCC away when he announced his plans in 2018. So now that test is out and this test is in?"

Yes, the old and controversial PARCC exam is out. However, the new test is in, and it is called the NJSLA. Good Luck!

**College Fair
Thursday, May 2**

**Please serve your centrals
prior to buying prom tickets.**

Why school uniforms?

By Astrid Gonzalon

We have been wearing the uniforms at PHS for a number of years now, so it might be time to look at the pros and cons of this policy. While if you asked the average student in the halls they would tell you they hate it, there are a few reasons for and against having a school uniform.

Uniforms mean that students do not need to worry about peer pressure when it comes to their clothes. We are all wearing the same thing. When everyone is dressed the same, worrying about what you look like is not

so important.

Before students think that they are being forced to do something that they just do not want to do, consider the fact that uniforms are much cheaper than wearing the latest styles. Less privileged kids, of which this school does have some, would feel embarrassed and maybe would not even want to show up to school.

So uniforms do help keep kids in school, and they help kids feel more comfortable at school. We can concentrate on the work rather than what we are wearing.

Another concern about getting

rid of uniforms is the fact that all schools need to be secure these days. Teachers, security guards and school resource officers can easily see who belongs in school now, at a glance. If everyone were dressed differently, school authorities would need to rely on small id badges.

By wearing uniforms, gang colors and other gang affiliations are not a concern as much, because everyone wears the same colors. So, by keeping the uniform policy, the school is safer.

Lastly, our parents and the school board both agree that it is

what is best for us. The school board highly approved of this policy without hesitation, and our parents agree. It so much more affordable for them, and less of a headache trying to get us clothes for school. We know what to wear each morning, and seriously, it is one less argument to have with our parents.

Yes, students think the uniform policy goes overboard. I would like to be able to wear a hoodie on the cold days too. Some students would like to have a chance to express themselves in the clothes that they wear. Clothes do define the person

who is wearing them.

Perhaps, a solution could be to keep the uniforms and offer dress down days for students to wear what they want as a reward or treat. Some students do the wrong thing but most of us strive to do what is expected. I think those students should be rewarded for their work.

Most of us want to learn and prepare ourselves for the future, so why not give us a little incentive to find a reward for our hard work. It would not cost the school anything to have a few days a year where we can wear what we want.

Passaic High School's Response to Notre Dame Fire

At the time of printing, the investigation is just ramping up on just what happened to start the blaze that has destroyed much of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, France.

Just in case you have not heard, the fire began on Monday, April 15, at 6:20 p.m., (that is 18:20 if you are in ROTC). Just as they were closing the cathedral to visitors for the day, a fire alarm rang out. When they checked the attic, which is nicknamed "the forest" because it took a forest of trees to build it, they realized that they had a major problem; the church was on fire. Within a short period of time, the entire roof and the beautiful spire was engulfed in flames.

Luckily it seems as though much of the priceless art and artifacts have been spared, but this is an event and a loss for the city of Paris, the French people and all of Western Civilization. What does this loss mean to us, all the way over here in Passaic, New Jersey? Let's find out.

"The burning of the Notre Dame is devastating. To think that a big monument for the world would burn in 20 minutes. For me mean only a monument that became famous for the oldest and some movies use in the settings. For the world mean, it is a holy relic and being lost; people even cry for that loss. In my opinion about this catastrophe is that people worried more about a monument than the hunger and poverty around the world. People



PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES

Firefighters battle flames on the roof of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, France.

should be less worried about a new Notre Dame and more worried about humanity today. It is sad to me that people are more worried about a monument, than for the safety and hunger of those around them.

– Margarita Lino-Vanegas

I think it was such a tragic incident to what happen to the Notre Dame. The Notre Dame was such an iconic & monumental place from the history of Paris. For most people it must be a sad thing because it was a Gothic Cathedral build in 1163 that a lot of religious and anyone else would go to.

– Charly Pelaez

The building was really important for lovers of history, architecture, and art. So it is a very sad and tragic, because many people admired it and liked visiting it.

– Jocelyn Ramirez

The Notre Dame Cathedral, is a very important piece of art. I honestly want to visit the Cathedral so when I found out that it was on fire it, I was sad about it.

– Diana Rivera-Cala

The burning of Notre Dame was an unfortunate event that happened on Monday. I was brought up in a catholic school and went to church for that school on a regular basis, I was always amazed looking at the art work and the color stained glass. I would do the same if i was in Notre Dame.

– Alyssa Perez

What I think about the burning of Notre Dame which means "Our Lady" and refers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is that its a great loss for humankind. This building held a lot of valuable art that was fortunately saved. It was also an important loss for human kind considering it was

Is School Stressing Us?

By A Stressed Student

For our entire time here at PHS we have been told that all the work we are doing is so that we will be able to perform in college and beyond. It is a fact that as the years go by, the workload will never just ease up. Every year seems to get harder.

Our teacher also do a great job, reminding us that even though the work seems hard now it will only get harder in the future and that this will help prepare us for it. But, when is it just too much?

Every student can recite the mission, vision and focus, because we have been hearing it for years now. Every student knows that he or she can and should graduate with a minimum of 15 college credits. One thing that this new policy has not taken into account is



PHOTO BY ELISA MATOS

the added stress that AP classes carry.

I have bought into the fact that we will be the best urban school district in New Jersey, and I want to do my part. I have many AP classes. However, the workload, the reading, the memorization, and most importantly the time you have to put in, is substantial.

Some students just do not have the time because they are involved in other activities. The

push is on to take as many AP courses as possible and I for one appreciate the opportunity, but I feel like these classes have taken over my life. There is no time for anything else. Anything extra-curricular has suffered, and to try to do it all makes my classwork suffer.

Lastly, I have friends who are expected to pitch in at home, some even work to help support the family, and they cannot balance the schoolwork and the home life. It is difficult.

While I know that we will be the best district, based on the hard work of the students and teachers, this job is not free. There will be costs. Work for the sake of work is not enough.

We need to all realize that we all have lives outside of school. We have other classes; we have other interests; and we have other lives as well!

built at least 800 years ago, it showed us that you don't need a lot of modern technology to build a great structure, just some wood and stone.

– Eduardo Ramirez

I personally think the burning of Notre Dame was a tragedy because this was a historic landmark being destroyed. This is like if someone took a wrecking ball and destroyed the Pyramids of Giza. It's a great loss for the entire world just because this landmark has been up for a century.

– Erik Torres

I think what happened to the Notre Dame is terrible because they lost important stuff and it could of ended worse no one got injured we can look at it like that I guess but they are going to fix it but they can't get back what they lost but at least they are well.

– Brenda Villares Tellez

I think that Fire has held a certain mystical power in the human mind since Prometheus stole it from the gods. (Learned this in English) For the world it means that When it burns down the spire of Notre Dame—one of Christendom's great churches, resting at the heart of the

French nation—the emotional effect can be tremendous.

– Luisa Fernandez

I think the burning of Notre Dame is awful and a great loss for Paris. Personally, to me Notre Dame was a popular tourist site to pay their respects and a terrible loss to the community. For the world it is a terrible loss where the cathedral was burning and there was no turning back and they couldn't help and stop it.

– Irais Rojas-Ahuatl

I think the burning of Notre Dame is a tragic event that will go down in France's history forever. To me, I believe the burning could have been planned and the France government are covering it up to prevent more riots. To the world, this is a tragic loss of human history that has been a part of generations after generations and will be sorely missed.

– Stephen Mejia

I think the burning of Notre Dame is really sad, and very unnecessary. As a believer, this makes me angry and worried. This shows us that in this world there are crazy people, even if this was just an accident, and we should always be careful.

– Nelcy Reyes



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Hilltop Logo Banner by Danny Rivera

Thank you to the members of the PHS community who have contributed photographs, information, and articles to this issue of The Hilltop Star. Without your help, this publication would not exist. We look forward to working with you throughout this school year! Reach out to Mr. Harris or a newspaper staff member if you would like to join, contribute information, or respond to newspaper content.

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Spring Break? No, Spring Training!

By Henry Hernandez

PHS has a history of great baseball and softball teams. Excellence in this sport is not hoped for every year, but an expectation. While the players love to win many just love the sport. “My favorite part is when I am on the field. It doesn’t matter if it is a game or just practice,” said Joan Santana.

Both the baseball and softball teams did their annual spring training at Daytona, Florida. Just like the big league teams, our Indians work hard to get ready for the season.

“Every girl got to play in a scrimmage. The coach saw everybody’s strengths and weaknesses, so that when we got back to Jersey, we got right to work,” said Heavenlie Sylvester.

Joan Santana added, “Because we get the chance to play in Florida, we are way more prepared because practices are not the same as the games we get to play there.”

Therefore, the time spent in Florida does help our teams stay on top.

However, there is time to just have fun as well.

“Florida is a great experience. Not every sports team is lucky enough to travel like that, so I’m extremely grateful for the oppor-

tunity,” said Chanelly Diaz.

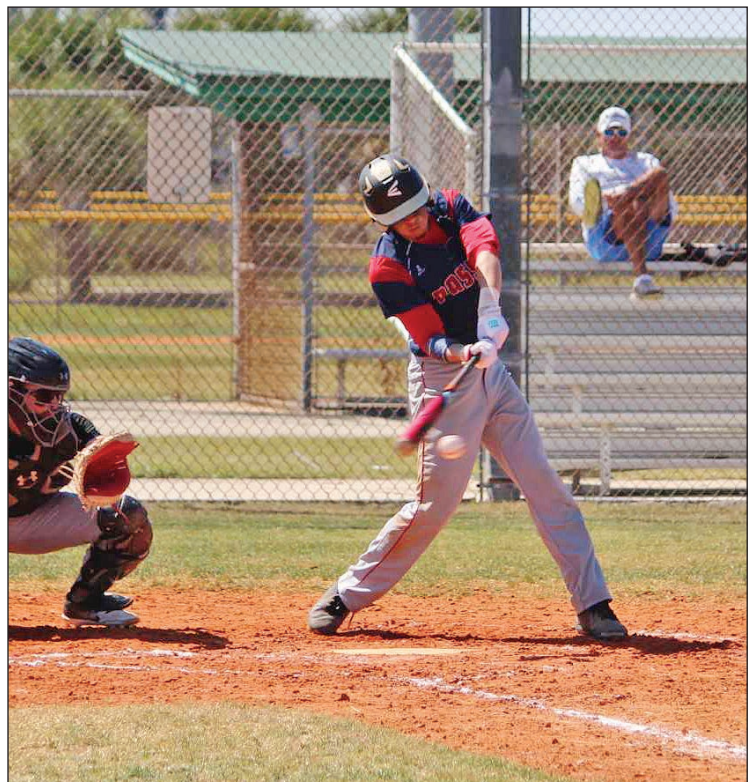
Now that the teams are back home, they continue to prepare for their games. They have big shoes to fill, because the teams have done so well in the past. They are up to the task. “I expect to win regionals,” said Joan Santana.

Others want to enjoy the game and continue to win. Chanelly Diaz said, “I want to win as many games as we can and go all out for my senior year.”

Many of the players are moving on by graduating this year. They encourage underclassmen to join the team, work hard, and share in the success that comes with personal hard work and teamwork. Heavenlie Sylvester said, “It is a lot of hard work, but it definitely pays off in the end.”

Chanelly Diaz added, “You start off as friends, but leave the team as sisters.” Joan Santana also added, “Trust the process, your moment will come, and when it does, show it off. Stay focused.” That is good advice.

The baseball and softball programs at PHS are a success story. Chanelly Diaz provided the best quote about someone’s decision to play or not play. She said, “My favorite quote comes from Babe Ruth, ‘Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game.’”



PHOTOS BY COACH DIAZ

Clockwise from top of page: The PHS Baseball team at spring training in Florida; Joel Matos swings solidly for a deep hit; Cesar Morilla and Miguel Leocadio, practice fielding for the Indians; the team takes some time off from practice to take advantage of the warm Florida weather; Xavier Valentin hits as well as pitches for the PHS Indians.