

GOOD LUCK ON FINALS



Stay-At-Home Issue #6



THE HILLTOP STAR

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June 2021

PHS ROTC Receives Distinguished Unit Award

By Avi Rana

The PHS ROTC program has always been a great place to learn and grow, but it is being recognized by those outside Passaic as well. The Distinguished Unit Award is the highest unit commendation that can be earned by any NJROTC Program. Earning this award at any time is a great accomplishment, but earning it during 2020-2021 is a major feat because of the distance learning and the challenging times this year.

“The Cadets are the backbone of our program,” said Senior Chief McMaster. We have all seen the pride that the Cadets of the ROTC exhibit

during the year and they have continued during the pandemic lockdowns. The Cadets have continued to work and thrive during the lockdown and during this entire school year, causing as little disruption as possible to the program.

Senior Chief McMaster, Chief Constant, Chief Diaz and Chief Quito would also like to recognize and thank the school administrators, faculty and staff for supporting the program and making it as welcome as possible at PHS. The ROTC certainly contributes to the culture of PHS and we are proud to have them.

“The program has given me a lot over the years and I am

proud to be a part of it,” said senior Steve Cedeno.

Other student leaders are Cadet Jocelyn Pimentel, Cadet Juan Orozco, and Cadet Jocelyn Carpinteyro.

Congratulations goes to them for leading their fellow students and helping to achieve this honor. It would not have been possible without them.

If any student is interested in being part of something special, learning a lot and having some fun doing it, then join the ROTC at PHS. If they can win the Distinguished Unit Award during the pandemic, imagine what they can do next year when we are all meeting back in person.



PHOTO BY AVI RANA

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stories

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Why are Scholarships Important?

By Evelin Cabrera

Any student interested in going to college needs to be interested in scholarships. Unfortunately, hardly anyone has a parent so wealthy that they can just pay the entire tuition bill for us, making college too expensive. If you do, that's a blessing but if you don't that does not mean college is going to be expensive. While there is financial aid out there, scholarships are also available.

Think of scholarships as a rich relative that will help you get some money to help you go to school. You don't have to be a full time athlete or an A+ student to get a scholarship. Honestly, there are scholarships for almost anything. You just need to go out, find them and apply! You can get a scholarship for the smallest things and many students do not realize that.

Ever since we walked into PHS as freshmen we have been dreaming of graduation and then going on to college. We have not been thinking about how to pay for it, or how to go about getting a scholarship. Now it is our senior year and we see how much our dream school costs. The sticker shock of college is heartbreaking.

Luckily, you can apply to college for as long as you are in

Applying for scholarships early gives you more chances to get more and more scholarships. It is important to do research. It is not worth going to college and being in debt when you could have applied for scholarships.

school but sadly not many students get a head start in scholarships when they are freshman. Some students realize while others don't care.

Getting an education is an expensive proposition, but it is not impossible. Students also do not need to be in debt for the rest of their lives. Financial aid is out there, make sure you get that, but you must also take it on to get as much free money as you can. Scholarship possibilities are limitless and, who would not want a free or lower cost tuition to college.

Now that your interest in getting a scholarship is piqued, you are probably asking, “Now what do I do?”

Luckily there are a great many resources provided by PHS to

help you get through this complicated procedure. Counselors are there and are happy to help you apply to schools, get the financial aid you need, and also help you get any scholarships you qualify for. They live for that.

If you are already accepted to a school and know you are going there, good for you and congratulations! Talk to the financial aid office there about aid and scholarships that might only apply to that school. Every school has this service.

Applying for scholarships is not a hard process and it will be worth it at the end. There are some scholarships that you may have to write an essay, but that is not the end of the world. There is also tutoring to get

help writing it, and your English teacher can help you out.

Others request that you do community service and still others that you do not have to do anything to qualify for. Reality check, we are doing essays in school all the time, why not put one of them to good use and get some money for college?

As a high school senior, I wanted to go to college out-of-state, however, even though getting accepted, I realized that I wouldn't be able to afford it and I did not want to risk going and not getting any scholarship money. This made me regret not applying for scholarships sooner, because I decided to leave it at the last minute or did not really care to do it.

Now I am still going to go to a great school and it is more affordable, but that's not stopping me from applying for scholarships. Nobody wants to pay for school and you should not have to.

If college is your plan after high school, realize that it is an expensive proposition. Additionally, parents will not or cannot pay for it. That means that college will be full time as a student and possibly working at the same time. The more you get in aid and in scholarships, means the less you will have to work during school.

So by getting scholarships it is kind of like working a job. So, put in the time, punch your time card, get that money, so that you can study harder and longer in college, and spend less time working a job.

Applying for scholarships early gives you more chances to get more and more scholarships. It is important to do research. It is not worth going to college and being in debt when you could have applied for scholarships.

So if you have not started already, I suggest you start now, search up any scholarships and apply, apply, apply. Maybe you'll get lucky and get half of your tuition free or maybe your whole tuition free.

OPINION**Self Improvement**

By Avi Rana

Everyone strives to be a better person, or at least they should. This idea of making yourself a better person does not apply only to boys or girls, kids or adults, or even wealthy or poor. Self-improvement should be the goal of all of us. The person you are today comes from who you want to be tomorrow, and it does not matter at all what you look like, what your personal history is, or anything that happened yesterday.

If you are still reading, good for you, the fact that people always want better for themselves is a fact. How do you go about doing it? That is the real question. No one is perfect. No one. We should all trying to be better today than we were yesterday, and better again tomorrow than today.

As a caring human being we should all want and pray for better understanding and knowledge of the world around us, be a better person of character and wisdom for those around us, which is really just striving for wisdom.

All of this comes from experience, so get out there and do whatever you can to have as many experiences as possible. Just from personal experience I have had a much better time since I made the decision to continually improve myself. There is still a long way to go, but having a goal helps.

Having experiences and looking towards the future will allow you to find a purpose in life. We all want to know what our place in the world is and it will not just come to you unless you go out and find it.

You find your purpose in life by getting at all the experiences you can, learning what you like and what you do not, what your are good at and what you are not good at. Try to be responsible in our relationships with others, in school, at home and at work, just anyone that you know and meet.

Maybe learn a new language, which we can do by taking a class here at school, either Spanish or French, or learn about a different culture, which we have many clubs like French Culture Club or the Japanes Culture Club, both are really fun. At the very least you will be with others and make some new friends.

In the end, we are in school by law through twelfth grade, make the most of it. Take classes that are interesting, so many are offered. Do well to open up more opportunities, and finally get involved in as many extracurricular activities as you can (without losing site of your schoolwork) so that you can make friends, have new experiences, and, wait for it, have fun.


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The Student Newspaper of Passaic High School

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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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SCREENSHOT BY ANGEL LOPEZ BELLO

Newegg.com is a good website to use when building your own computer.

Building Your Own Computer? You Can Do it!

By Angel Lopez Bello

Welcome to the 21st century and anyone, and I mean anyone, can build a computer. This is not your dad's or even your granddad's computer either. It is easy because so many companies have sprouted up to make it easy to get the equipment you need and the skills you need to assemble a computer at home.

Why build your own computer? That is easy too. There are two main reasons and one that is just cool. First building your own computer means that you can make it just the way you want it. You can customize your hardware to what you are going to do with it. If you are just using it for school work, then you can get by with some cheaper components. If you are going to use it for graphic design or gaming, then you need to upgrade.

The second reason that building a computer is better than just going to Best Buy, or even worse, Walmart, is because it is actually cheaper. You can save money by only putting in the components you actually need to get your job done, and assem-

bling a computer with parts is just cheaper than having someone else build it for you.

Be careful of that pre-assembled computer that someone is offering at a great price, because it means that they skimped somewhere. You will usually not get what you think, and then

your own computer is selecting the components that you want and then making sure that they are compatible with each other so that your machine works and works smoothly. That would require a lot of reading and research, but online sites have taken the guesswork out of this step as well.

A favorite, and in my humble opinion the best site is Newegg. They allow you to customize different machines, take all the guesswork out of building that machine and finally ship it all to you for a great price. You can select an economy machine with a few upgrades, or a gaming computer, or a money-is-no-object space alien machine. Prices range from

less than a thousand to as much as you want to spend and everything in between.

Finally, the best part of building your own computer is the feeling you get when you are using it, knowing that you built it all by yourself. You get a sense that you can do it. That is the just cool part. You designed it, built it, and use it. That confidence really matters whether you are gaming or just doing homework.

The best part of building your own computer is the feeling you get when you are using it, knowing that you built it all by yourself.

it is often too late. So cheaper is good, build it yourself!

You can also spend more money on the parts that you will really need to get the most out of your machine. By saving on a smaller hard drive which you would not need for online gaming, then you can spend more on the graphics card and processor, which you most certainly will need when building your gaming computer.

The hardest part of building

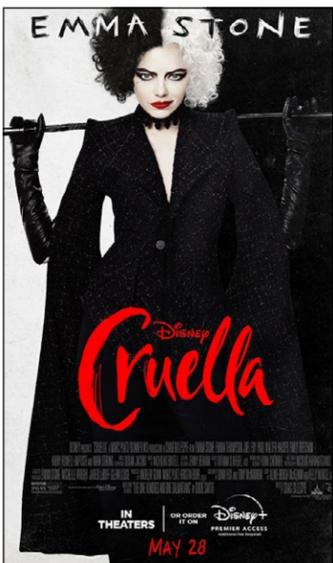
**Coming soon: Senior Edition
of The Hilltop Star.**

Movies Are Back!

By Emmanuel Perez

The pandemic killed the 2020 summer movie season. It was for many of us the biggest loss in our personal lives, not being able to see the new movies as they come out during the summer. Just as the pandemic closed the theaters many of us were waiting to see *Godzilla versus Kong*. The studios kept pushing back the release dates of blockbuster movies, but in the end they never came, and the couple that did arrive were released on home streaming devices. Let us be frank, it is not the same. There is no substitute for going out to the movies with your friends or that special someone.

Now that movies are back for this summer, let us take a look at the best of the best. Already released is the Disney movie, *Cruella*. If you are a fan of the *101 Dalmatians* movies, then this is for you. If you have not seen the trailer, it looks like a really fun and stylish movie. Emma Stone plays a young Cruella who is just getting her start in the fashion industry in the 70's.



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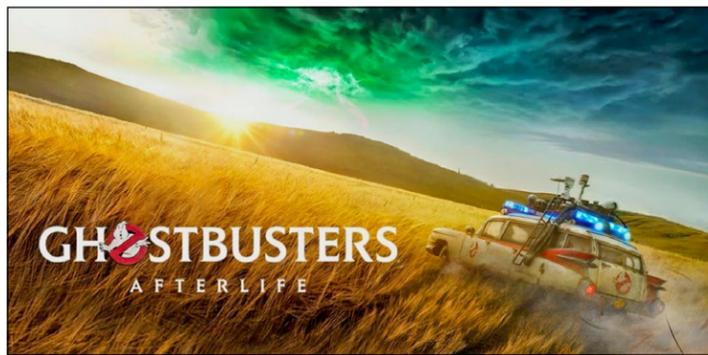
"Cruella"

If *Cruella* is not creepy enough for you, another movie released the same day is the long-awaited sequel to *A Quiet Place*. The first movie made \$340 million, and so a sequel was never in question. The sequel already made \$60 on its first weekend. It is great to see people finally going back to the movies. The first one was great and the second one looks as good.



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"A Quiet Place, Part 2"



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"Ghostbusters: Afterlife"

A personal favorite is the new *Ghostbusters* movie. It has the potential to be really good or really bad, but the trailer suggests the former. The original cast of Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Sigourney Weaver, Ernie Hudson, and Annie Potts are back in this sequel from the first two 80's movies. The only ones who are not present are Harold Ramis, who has passed, and Rick Moranis, who is retired. It is not clear from the trailer how big a role the original cast has, but it certainly looks like a fun action ride. Strap in on June 11.

The action continues in June because on the 25th the *Fast and Furious* franchise gets its next installment. *F9*, yes there have been nine of these movies, promises to be an explosion-filled action storm with Vin Diesel and his team. Even though John Cena is not sure if Taiwan is a country or not, he is in this movie, playing Dom's Brother, and the battle looks awesome.

One of the first movies to be postponed and then canned in 2020 was *Black Widow*. Has it really been over a year without a new Marvel movie? It is set



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"Black Widow"

to release, again, on July 9. One has to wonder if the movie will not be hurt by the long-awaited release. As Natasha Romanoff (Scarlett Johansson) figures out the secrets of the KGB Red Room. The rumor is that Iron Man is in it. Let's hope so.

Basketball fans and cartoon fans will have another installment of the *Space Jam* series. The competition between team Michael Jordan and team LeBron James will have film as well as the court to support their favorite. On July 16, *Space Jam: A New Legacy* is released with

LeBron James leading the Toon Squad against the Good Squad in an alternate universe.

July also gets another Disney movie, when The Rock, with Emily Blunt explore the Amazon on the 30th, in *Jungle Cruise*. Jesse Plemons plays a crazy German villain who drives a submarine up the Amazon. This is unlikely but it will certainly make for a great ride, as well as an amusement park ride.

For those of you who are always disappointed with the DC Universe movies – and there are a lot of you – there is hope. They have decided to take a cue from Marvel, hiring one of their best directors, James Gunn, who directed *Guardians of the Galaxy*, to helm *The Suicide Squad*. This movie is not for young kids, but for the rest of us this movie looks like a total blast. The conflict between Peacemaker (played by John Cena) and Bloodshot (Idris Elba) is worth the price of admission. Of course, Margot Robbie's Harley Quinn will be there too, leading the *Suicide Squad*. This is certainly gory and off-color so don't bring your little brother.

On August 13, *Free Guy*, starring Ryan Reynolds, who is a bank teller in a video game, who gains self-awareness and decides that he will be a hero. Sounds pretty interesting, but with Reynolds's humor it will be great. Look to laugh out loud in August.



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"Free Guy"

That brings us to the end of the summer and hopefully the start of a new school year, where we go to movies, go to class in-person, and get back to some sort of normal.



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"F9"



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"Jungle Cruise"



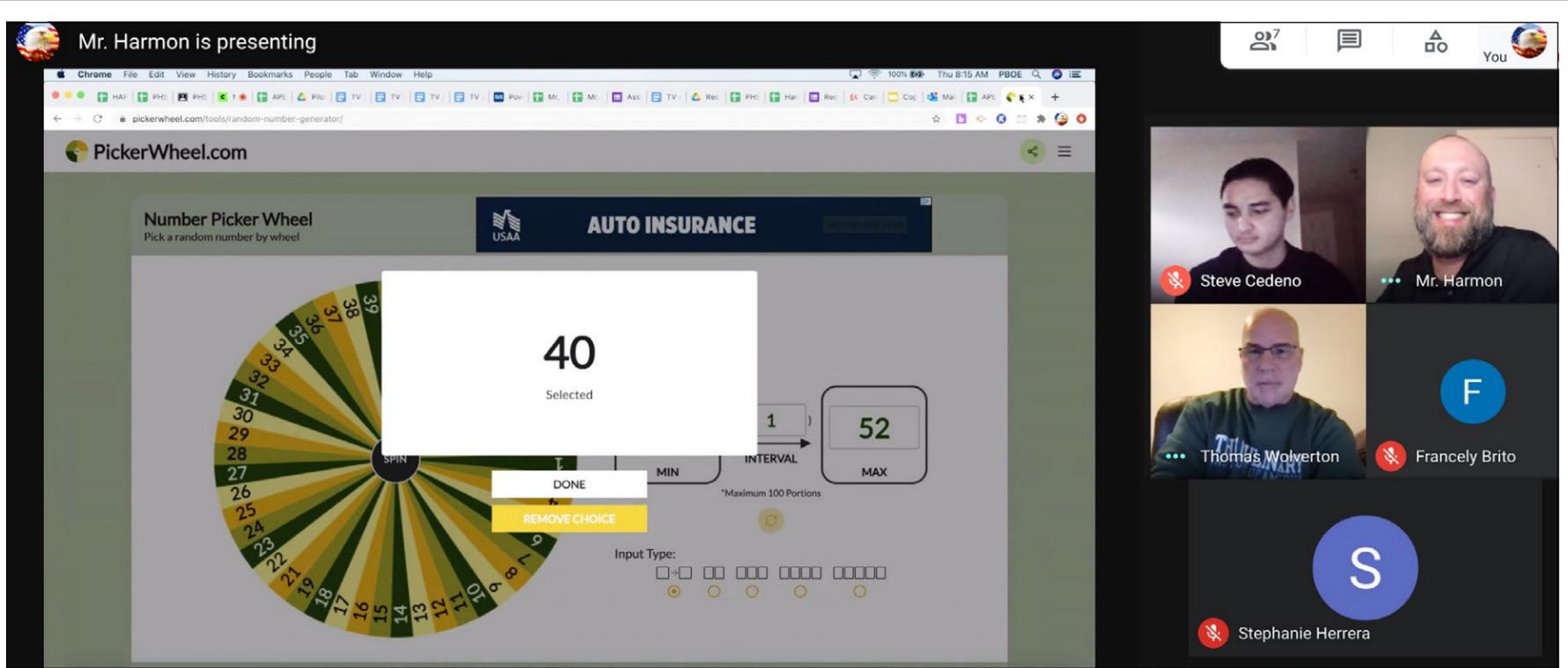
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"Space Jam: A New Legacy"



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"The Suicide Squad"



SCREENSHOT BY JOEL SOTO

A prize raffle was held during the Kahoots Challenge.

AV Club Kahoots Challenge a Success

By Joel Soto

We have all been trying to find new and interesting ways to make this distance learning thing work, but many have also been able to make this bad situation even fun. One such example of this is the AV Club and their brand new Kahoot Challenge!

What is the Kahoot Challenge? Glad you asked. It is a competition open to ANY PHS student who wishes to place their trivia skill against all comers. There have been many challenges so far, with movie trivia, sports trivia, Christmas trivia and many other topics. The best part is that there are prizes!!!
 “It is a fun way to keep our

students engaged and emotionally healthy during these tough times,” said AV Club Advisor and Television Broadcasting Teacher, Mr. Harmon.
 Students log into the Kahoot Challenge through the Club page in Google Classroom (<https://classroom.google.com/u/0/c/MTc2MTAwMjUwMjAx>). Students have won gift cards

for food and fun and the most important part is they are having a great time doing it.
 “It is funny how much knowledge kids have on different topics,” said one participant.
 The Christmas Kahoot! Challenge was particularly fun because everyone has seen these movies since they were little and remembering some details

about these favorites is just fun. For those of you that played Kahoot in class, you know how fun it can be. Mr. Harmon makes great questions, and the students all have a great time. So, watch for this on the AV Club site and maybe you can win a gift card, or even better, you might just win bragging rights.

Microchip Shortage Affects All Aspects of Life

By Angel Lopez-Bello

Microchips are in everything we use these days. Even a toaster has chips in it. Currently there is a semiconductor shortage and it is affecting the businesses you might expect, like computer manufacturers but it is also affecting automobile manufacturers. Some products will be much more expensive and others will be unavailable.

Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger said that it could take a couple of years for the problem to be resolved. The shortage of semiconductor microchips was caused by dislocations from the pandemic. This demonstrates just how interrelated these world's industries are.

The issue for American manufacturers is that our share of the microchip production capacity has fallen to 12%, from 37% in 1990, as reported by Fox Business. This means that we do not have the ability to manufacture all the chips we need for things like laptops, cars and trucks, or anything else we make.

Those companies that can make the chips that the world so desperately needs, are making money faster than ever. Even though there are less chips being made, the manufacturers are making more money. All combined total revenue of chipmakers rose to \$22.75 billion, just in the first quarter of 2021. Over half, about 57% of the chip revenues in that same time period was generated by on maker, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp. Over half of the world's chips comes from one place.

So what does all this mean for us at PHS? Well, if you wanted a new laptop computer to get that homework in, or go off to

college, then they many not be available and the ones you do see are going to be much more expensive. Aceer CEO, Tiffany Huang said that they can only meet about half of the demand on any given day. The half that they make will certainly be much more expensive. So take care of the laptop you may already have.

Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger said that the loss of chips will hurt the growing popularity of electric vehicles (EV) too. Tesla has already raised the price of their Model 3 by \$2500.

While all electric cars having trouble without microchips seems logical, the reality is that all cars are rolling computers these days. Ford CEO Jim Farley said that this was the biggest interruption of a supply chain that he has ever seen. This interruption of supply is halting the production of cars and in places like Kentucky they are using the parking lot of a NASCAR track to store F150's until they can be finished with various computer components.

While most of us in PHS are not in the market for a brand new car, because buying new cars is more expensive and harder, used car prices are shooting up as well. While that is good if you want to sell a car, it is bad if you want to buy that first hooptie of your dreams. There just are not any cheap cars out there.

One aspect of this shortage that is hitting students harder than any other is its impact on video game and gaming computer consoles. Even as more people are playing online video games than ever before, the chip shortage has made getting a new console or building that new gaming computer much more expensive and much more difficult. So,



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President Biden holds a microchip while discussing the ramifications of the shortage to American manufacturers' supply chain.



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A sea of F-150 trucks, parked at the Kentucky Speedway NASCAR track while they are awaiting critical microchips to be completed.

when you lose that hot round of League of Legends or Call of Duty, do not take it out on your console. It has to last a bit longer.

Hopefully, this shortage will end sooner than later, but the problem that it brings up is that there is a need for more compa-

nies, and more American companies to manufacture these chips so that issues like this can be avoided in the future. Good luck!