

# ♥ Happy Valentines Day! ♥



# THE HILLTOP STAR

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## PHS Takes a Day to Play

By Julian Munoz

While this may be the first time many PHS students were actually encouraged to play during the school day, the program, Global School Play Day, has been around for eight years. The purpose of this day is to give kids (both big and small) the ability to have some unstructured time to just play.

As the use of technology has increased, especially in the last couple years of distance learning, the ability of students to get off their devices and just play has disappeared. The lack of playtime has made students more stressed.

The idea of a play day began in 2015 when six educators got over 65,000 children to participate. Dr. Peter Gray, who did a TedX talk program, called attention



Students had to use math formulas to progress in this game.



When a student got a question wrong, they had to remove a Jenga block.

to the problem of kids being unable to explore relationships and develop through play, rather than just be connected through devices.

Since 2015 the program has exploded in popularity, and this year over one million students in over 75 countries participated, including for the first time, Passaic High School.

Teachers were encouraged to allow their students to have time to play academically focused games during the day. This took many forms as students played cards, games and puzzles to not only challenge their minds and thinking skills, but also to interact with others students in a different way.

About the only rule was that there were to be NO SCREENS. It appears that many in the world have found that being at-

tached to a screen all day is not healthy, and that a face to face encounter is more fulfilling and more healthy than only interacting with others through a device.

While many students were a little concerned at first about a play day, we never did anything like this before, they quickly caught on and had some fun, as unplanned.

"I thought it was weird at first, but then I just had fun. We should do this again," said sophomore Itzel Ramos.

That sentiment was repeated by many other students as well. "I can't believe the let us take a day to play. It was such a de-stresser," said freshman Suzette Ramirez. She added, "The idea that we could take time to play is really fun."

Mrs. Carter and some other teachers  
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PHOTOS BY MRS. CARTER AND MR. CONVERY

Students taking advantage of Global Play Day.

## Celebrating Valentine's Day in 2022

By Mylene Laluz

The coronavirus has taken a lot from us over the last couple years. However, it looks like we have all just figured out how to deal with this and it is time to be together again. What better time to get to know others than Valentine's Day?

On a day dedicated to love and affection to your boy or girlfriend, with gifts or some other token, many do not know where this holiday actually comes from. Even though many

countries around the world celebrate Valentine's Day, most do not know the dark and bloody origins of this holiday.

According to History.com, the Catholic Church recognizes the martyred Valentine (or Valentinus). As the legend goes, Valentine was a priest who performed marriages for Roman soldiers. Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers because they did not have to worry about wives and families at home, so marriages were outlawed for the

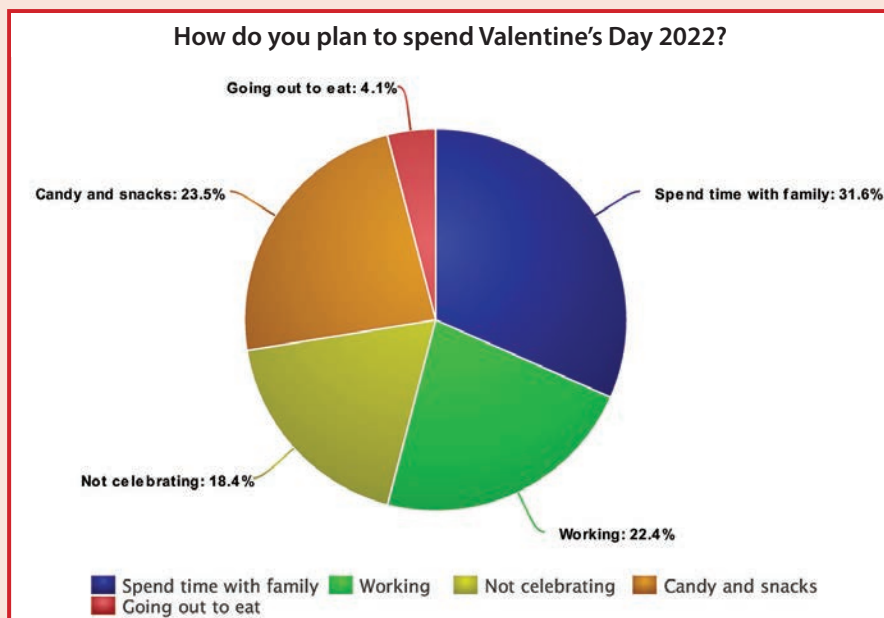


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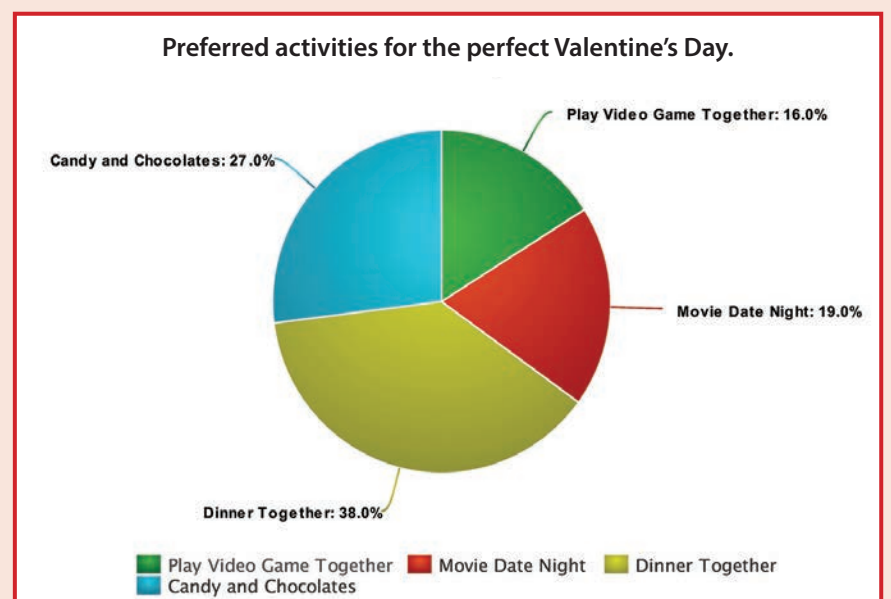


ILLUSTRATION CREATED AT META-CHART.COM

young men.

Valentine defied the Emperor and performed marriages, knowing that love conquers all. Eventually when his deeds were revealed he paid the price and was killed by the Romans in the third century.

His martyrdom, that is being killed for a cause, was honored by the Catholic Church with the celebration of St. Valentine's Day. People think this is about love and affection, but the truth is this day for the Romans was a blood feast, a day that they killed.

People celebrate this holiday in many

different ways and there are some who do not celebrate and believe that there is no need for it. An NPR article states that, "Valentine's Day is a time to celebrate romance and love and kissy-face fealty. The origins of this festival of candy and cupids are actually dark, bloody — and a bit muddled."

While we do not have to worry about being executed today, thank goodness, we do have to contend with the COVID pandemic. In the past, being romantic meant going out to eat, exchanging gifts, and maybe even exchanging

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# Omicron: New Wave Hits PHS Two Years On

By Kaylyn Amigon

Just think about how much better everyone has become at stopping the spread of COVID since the pandemic began. However, the pandemic keeps striking back at civilization by developing new variants of the disease. It has evolved itself and created a new variant to attempt to stay one step ahead of the doctors and scientists.

Of course the new variant now is Omicron. Some have also called it “stealth omicron” because it is so infectious, making it more easily spread. The good news is that this variant is more contagious but less deadly.

Coming back to school after the Christmas break was sketchy because so many teachers and students were absent, either because they became sick or were exposed to someone who was sick. Omicron definitely changed the way school looked

for the weeks upon returning from break.

Even though many staff members and many students were absent, school proceeded as normally as possible. Everyone followed the protocols of masking, hand washing and sanitizing and also making sure that daily health check form was completed.

Passaic was not the only school that was affected. The New York Times reported, “many principals have reported large numbers of staff members calling in sick, because they are infected with Covid-19 or other illnesses, caring for sick family members or fearful of the conditions within school buildings”. (“How has Omicron Affected you School and Community?” Nicole Daniels. New York Times. January 22, 2022).

The article went on to say, what we all saw here at PHS—administrators scrambling to

find where to put students without teachers and teachers jumping in to cover each others’ classes. The situation was not ideal but there was nothing that could be done.

The positive result is that the learning continued even though it was more difficult. Students, teachers, staff and administrators all pulled together to make the best of a bad situation.

Another success story is that the school was not forced to go back to virtual learning, which everyone agreed is not the best situation. The guidelines implemented after PHS returned to in-session learning seems to be doing the trick in keeping everyone from spreading the virus.

Classrooms are still arranged for maximum student social distancing, the custodial staff has done an amazing job of keeping the hand sanitizer stations full and operational, students have stepped up by wearing masks

and keeping clean, and PHS has generally pulled together to beat this thing. It is that team spirit that kept the schools open during this latest wave.

Although the hallways still get a little crowded (it is PHS after all) students do get to class and keep it moving so there is not a lot of congestion. This also helps keep everyone from getting sick and keeps us going to school in-person and not virtually. Keep up the good work.

“It affects the way you see everything around school,” said senior Julissa Barrios, adding, “it makes you think about the things you touch, the way you get to class, like taking a less crowded route.”

One thing PHS seniors seem to agree on is a fear that if the variant gets serious that virtual learning will ruin senior year activities. Seniors want to have a prom, and especially a real graduation.

Janelly Caceres, senior said, “I remember never caring about other people and only caring about my work but now with the variant and just Corona in general, I keep thinking about how not to get sick and staying away from others. It makes it harder to keep my mind on my studies.”

The Omicron variant has affected many schools around the world, but PHS has handled it well, staying open, with students learning and teachers working, as normally as possible.

Mr. Garcia, assistant principal said, “As long as students and staff follow the rules implemented to keep them safe there should be no worry about the spread of the new Covid variant.”

Since the wave of Omicron seems to be passing, with school staying opened throughout, we demonstrated that we are able to pull together to do what is right. Good job PHS!

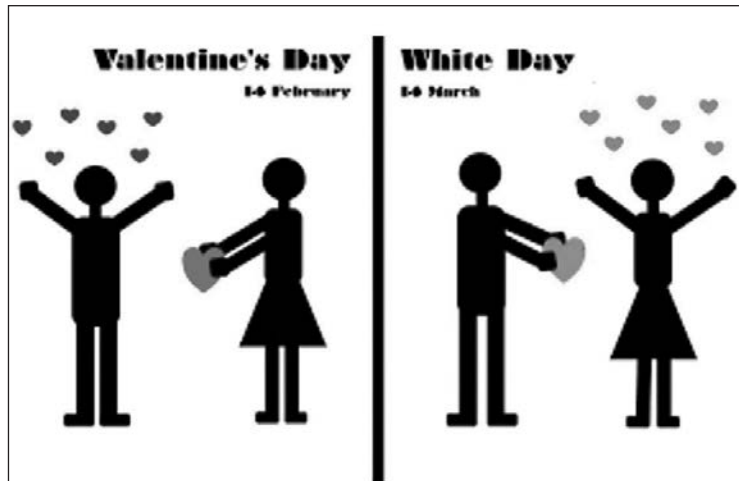
## Japanese Culture Club Learns About Japanese Holidays

By Anastasia Tangarife

One of the ways to learn about cultures is to understand their holidays. Holidays shows what kinds of things are important to a culture and what is important to them. The foods and traditions of any culture are represented by their holidays. The PHS Japanese Culture Club, to help gain a better understanding of the Japanese Culture, spent their last meeting learning about many of the holidays celebrated by the Japanese and how and why they do it.

Some holidays are similar to their American counterparts, like New Years. They celebrate Shogatsu, in much the same way as Americans, except that they put a premium on getting duties done and out of the way before the year ends. They also go to bonenkai parties, a forgetting party. They forget the troubles and worries of the previous year so that the new year is that much better. Can you imagine not going on to the next year until the resolutions of the previous year were completed?

Then on the second Monday in January, everyone who turned twenty during the previous year is celebrated. It is like a coming of age party, because at age twenty in Japan, people can vote, drive, drink and do all



Valentine's Day is two holidays in Japan one for women to men and the other for men to return the favor.

the other adult things. Seign No Hi sounds like a great idea, though eighteen sounds like a better age.

Valentine's Day is a recent addition to the Japanese, but they got that one from us. It was introduced to Japan in 1958 but there it is the men who get chocolates from the women. Then on March 14, men return the favor to their women and give them marshmallow type candy, though flowers and other tokens have become more popular over the years. Interesting that Valentine's Day is actually two holidays in Japan.

Another holiday imported into Japan is Christmas. Even

though it is not as huge as here in America, their malls are decorated and they have traditional foods with family, like chicken dishes and Christmas cakes. The national religion of Japan is Shinto, and they celebrate a national holiday on February 3, called Kenkoku Kinenbi, which commemorates the crowning of the first emperor of Japan in 660 B.C. Even though this is not a state sponsored holiday everything is closed. Many go to Kenkoku-sai festivals held at either Shinto Shrines and Buddhist Temples.

“It is so interesting to see how different, but actually the same, many of the holidays of Japan



Kenkoku Kinenbi celebration at Shinto Shrine.



Chocolates are a favorite gift in Japan for Valentine's Day, though they look a little different.

are. They do a lot of the same things, but also some things that are a little different,” said one member of the club. Mr. Barbara, club advisor, said of the holiday event club meeting, “I like how students get the change to learn about another

culture that respects tradition and learning.” Want to learn more about Japan and experience the cultural elements that give us so many cool games, movies, comics and more? Then join the Japanese Culture Club!

### Valentine's Day

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some hugs and kisses. How will PHS students celebrate this year, when it is impossible to know if someone is sick or not?

In an article in Vanity Fair, “Approximately half of consumers celebrating this day...plan to stay home or limit their time in public due to COVID-19.”

Many also plan on limiting their spending because it just costs too much. So COVID

has affected the way we are spending and celebrating this holiday. However, just as the original Saint Valentine would advance the idea of sacrificing for love, perhaps we should all take a moment to enjoy a day with loved ones.

Alayna, a junior, said that it is just sad that we do not have the ability to celebrate as we once did. It is hard to be romantic with a mask on. She said, “It is a tragedy in the world today that people can't be close like they used to be.”

It was fun having a nice day of romance, but now it is just

scary because no one knows who is sick. Alayna added, “I used to be a very big fan of Valentine's Day, not because of receiving gifts, but because seeing loved ones smiling. It is not like that anymore.”

Another junior, Nathalie, said that even though she always loved Valentine's Day because of all the happy couples, but now with COVID she said, “Even though COVID has been a big impact on our lives I do tend to make the best out of it. I will be going out on Valentine's Day with my boyfriend because it is still a happy loving

day even if we have to have our masks on.”

She added that even though there is an illness out there that we all need to just do the best we can to make life as normal as possible.

A lot has changed since the third century, but one thing that has not changed is that people need to love each other. Maybe by sacrificing for love, we are actually closer to the original meaning of the holiday, the true meaning of Valentine's sacrifice, than just spending some money and having a chocolate, even though chocolate is awesome.

### Game Day

Continued from Page 1

found this idea and wanted to share it with the rest of the school as a way of making the climate and culture of the school more fun and inviting.

One senior added, “I can't believe they let us do this. I never thought I would see something like this at PHS. It was fun.”

That seems to be the thought that students had of this first-time trial, which was the point of the whole event. Students had the time to just have fun. Hopefully, this can be an annual event.

# After long battle with COVID pandemic, PHS hosts first in-person winter concert

By Axel Lagunas

Passaic High School hosted its first in person winter concert after a year and a half of doing virtual learning. This winter concert showcased the Passaic Concert Choir, String Orchestra, Concert Band, as well as the Passaic High School Dance Department. It has been a long time without in-person learning and practicing. Nerves were on edge and tensions were high, but the performing arts department pulled through and put on a great show. After a long period of not being able to practice properly, that was a great achievement.

The winter concert took place on December 22 in the Shirelle's Auditorium. It kicked off with the great choreography performance from the dance department "Sleigh Ride."

The District Choir followed soon after, performing a variety of songs which included "Heaven Everywhere" and "I'll Be Home for Christmas" featuring soloist Hanelly Rodriguez and Kelly Vargas. Both the District Choir and District Orchestra collaborated

in order to perform the famous "Carol of the Bells."

The attention was then shifted to the District Orchestra which performed "Crazy Jingle Bells", "Ukrainian Bell Carol" and "Feliz Navidad" which was performed by the advanced String Orchestra. Last but not least, the finale was the Marching Band and Concert Band.

Mr. Rusca is proud to announce that the PHS Marching Band won 1st Place US Band Group Open NJ State and National Championships. The Marching Band presented their 2021 show "BOUND" directed by Saul Carrillo.

The Winter Concert ended with the performance from the Concert Band "Dashing Through the Snow," "Winter Holiday" and "Ukrainian Bell Carol."

"The students worked extremely hard to prepare for the concert after an extremely successful but tiring marching band season," said Mr. Rusca Band Director.

Like the rest of the school community, during this pandemic the music program faced challenges in order to prepare to perform for this winter concert. The main

issue was being able to prepare, to practice and become ready to perform. For example, the band was challenged with finding space to practice while implementing social distancing and maintaining safety protocols.

The Dance Department was able to overcome this challenge by inviting and promoting the participation of performance opportunities regardless of whether or not you are in the program. They were able to gain new performers and more students were able to showcase their talents.

Another issue that seems more obvious is the use of face masks. Programs had to adapt to the use of face masks in order to avoid it affecting their performance. Nevertheless all programs were able to successfully perform following safety protocols and maintain a safe environment for them and the audience. Regardless of the issues the programs had to face, they were able to produce a spectacular performance.

Mrs. Rusewicz, Orchestra Director said, "It was definitely very challenging to revive the string orchestra and prepare a

quality repertoire to put on stage; having over a year gap between in-person instructions impacted the size of our ensemble and the choice of music that I had to determine. Regardless of all the obstacles, our winter performance was successful, and I am very proud of every single student who took part in it."

Everyone pulled more than their own weight, helping each other and rising to the occasion.

The music department is already working on the next performance. The next concert is going to be a May Spring Concert, and it will feature a great variety of selections.

Mr. Rusca said, "You will hear various genres of music... from classical to jazz to percussion and maybe even a little current day music. The annual spring concert will be held some time in May. Stay tuned!!!"

The Orchestra is also working on new selections.

"You will hear very powerful excerpts from Mozart's Requiem, Beethoven's Symphony No 5, a beautiful medley from *The Phantom of the Opera*, an energetic

piece from *The Avengers*, a very cool arrangement of "Rolling in the Deep" and more," said Mrs. Rusewicz.

The dance department is working on some performances in February to celebrate Black History Month. "We hope to perform for Black History month, and to participate in the Spring concert as well. I would like to present even more student choreography in future performances, as many students aren't just talented dancers, but are skilled dancemakers as well," said Mrs. Baechle, Dance Department Director.

With all the talent featured together at the Winter Concert, it was a great success and left the audience wanting more. The Spring Concert is well into production and the teachers and students in performance arts would like to thank the school community for their support of their hard work and performance. Thanks to the audience and to all of those who help to keep these programs alive. Congratulations to all of those who made this concert such a great success and we hope to see you at the spring concert this May.

## PHS Bowling Team Knocking Down All The Pins

By Jan Ramos

The Passaic High School bowling team is glad to be at the alley, striking their way into another year full of excitement. They are ready for any competition standing in their way and knocking down the competition and all the pins.

The PHS bowling team is happening again with a new year and it is time to take and appreciate every student participating in sports or clubs in PHS like for

example the bowling team. There are so many good things that surround the team and even the sport of bowling in general.

The PHS Bowling Team consists mostly freshman and sophomores but there are also some juniors and one senior. Having so many younger athletes means that the bowling team will only get better, building a tradition of excellence that future students will certainly want to be a part of. These student athletes are learning from their experiences

and learning the fundamentals of bowling, and having fun too!

The coach of the PHS bowling team is Mr. Vogas and he is very committed to improving all the students in the team every single day. According to Mr. Vogas he believes that our bowling team is building a foundation and striving to improve in all aspects of bowling and that the student athletes are hard working and dedicated to reaching their goals.

Mr. Vogas statements are very motivating and helpful because

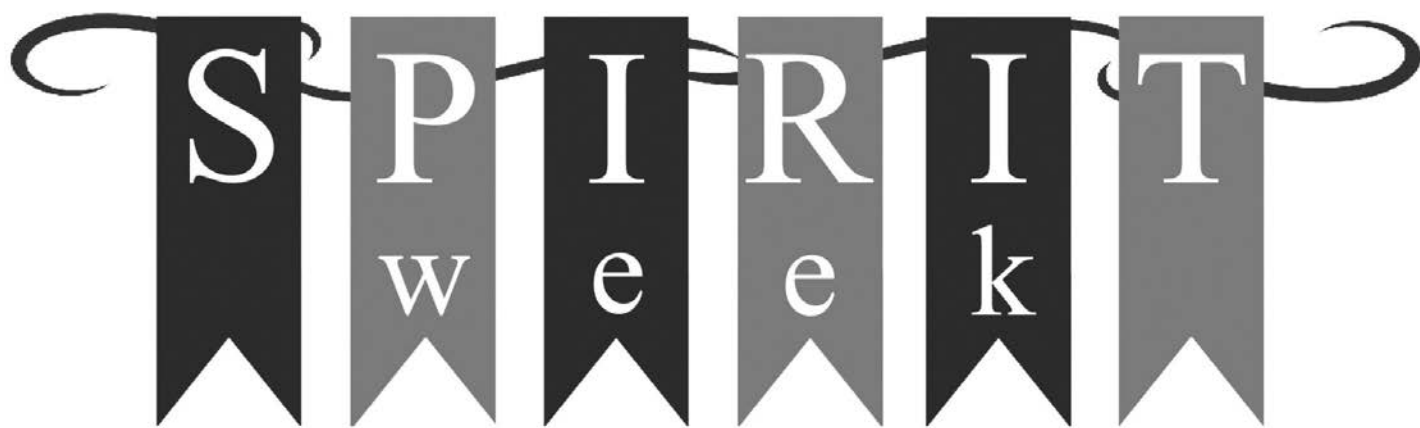
it explains how he is determined to help the PHS Bowling Team become good at the sport, having fun, being part of the team, and being motivated to play this sport.

Like any sport, bowling consists of many things that need to be learned, practiced and perfected, and it takes time to get the hang of it. Bowling is a target sport and it has a lot of history such as it was originally called ninepins and the modern sport of bowling pins probably originated

in ancient Germany, but not as a sport but as a religious ceremony. Also a random fact about bowling is that the largest bowling center in the world is located in Inazawa Japan and it has 116 lanes.

But in bowling as in any other sport there are rules to follow in the sport. Some rules for bowling is to make sure you release the ball behind the foul line or its an automatic zero, for each round each player gets two throws, and switching lanes after each

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### Spirit Week Schedule!

Let's have some fun while we show our spirit!

Monday 2/14 - Dress to impress day!

Tuesday 2/15 - Fun Mask Day

(You have to wear the mask, let's have some fun with it!)

Wednesday 2/16 - Wacky hair Wednesday

Thursday 2/17 - Spread kindness day!

Friday 2/18 - PHS Pride Day



## Let's Go Back to the Days When Cursing had Shock Value

By Anastasia Tangarife

It was not that long ago when someone would curse, but everyone would recognize that it was disrespectful to everyone around them. It was commonly accepted that cursing in public was wrong and people would try to limit the use of bad language. However, today not only has bad language become more acceptable for adults to use in public, but younger kids are learning to speak with offensive language. This language has become so common that it has lost its shock value.

How sad is it to hear eight-year-olds cursing at their siblings and friends. Many do not even care if they use that language in school or to their parents. It is sad to hear children cursing because growing up we were all told that those words were not to be used. It was common knowledge that cursing reflected poorly on the speaker and was rude to all those around you. I was told that those words were never to be said to anyone you love.

In a new world today, most people have normalized the use of cursing in normal daily language, to the point where it is not even recognized anymore. Many think that hearing little kids curse is cute, but it is not.

Where do these kids hear the language and why do they think it is okay to use it? Perhaps television and the internet are to blame.

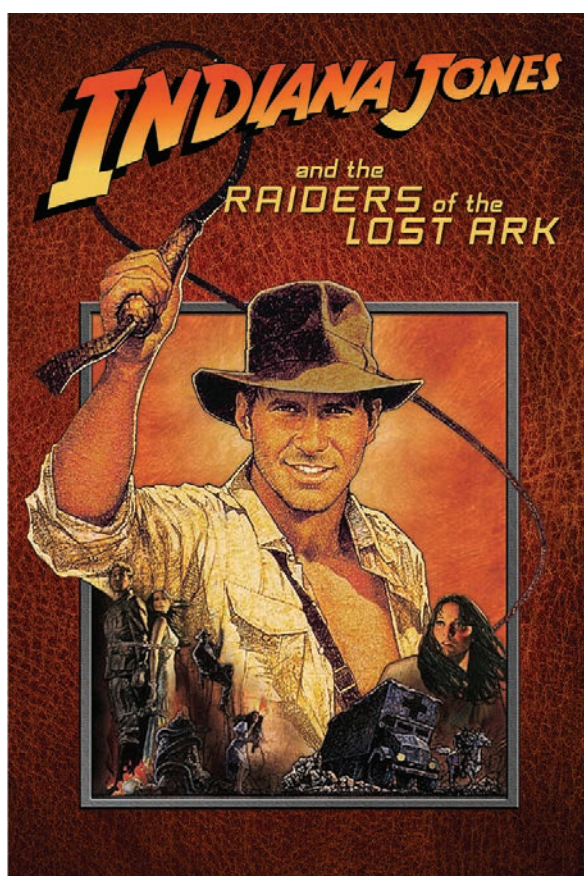
Watching shows from back in the day, (let's say the 80's) meant that language was not a problem. Parents could turn on a show and not have to worry about what their children were seeing. Now with the internet kids can see literally anything.

It appears that parents have just given up on trying to get their kids to use proper language, teachers are also overwhelmed (though some more than others). It is just allowed now. It is just accepted now. That is sad. So now a whole generation of kids are believing that it is okay to say these things and will likely continue this language in the future. The words and language that have lost their shock value today, will be continued to be used in the future.

Music and movies have also become examples of the worst kind of language. Now movies from the eighties had curses in it too, but it was not like today. When Bruce Willis said, "Yippy Kayah Mother f'er." That was a climax of the movie. Now it would be lost because of the language throughout the movie, and that is just sad.

So let's try and watch our own language in our own lives. We can all be better. This might not seem like the most important issue going on in the world today, with Covid, and tensions, crime and world events, but it is important. We all need to be better.

# 80's Nostalgia



## Old Music is Better

By Paola Navarro

The only constant in popular music is that nothing is constant in popular music. Tastes change radically between generations, with new genres appearing and disappearing in a never-ending cycle. Acts appear out of nowhere to become huge, while performers that seem like sure things have one hit and fade. Every generation of parents complains about the music of their kids, and kids think their parents' music is lame.

Music has changed so much over the years but today's generation should agree that music from the 80's and even some 90's music has a special place in our hearts, even though we were not alive back then. Songs like "Billie Jean" by Michael Jackson, "I Wanna Dance with Somebody," by Whitney Houston, "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun," Cyndi Lauper, "Another One Bites the Dust," by Queen are songs that when you hear them, even though they were popular before we were born, that we can share in the fun and nostalgia of the 80's.

It sounds weird that we would want to hear songs that are almost 40 years old. Even though these songs are old they are still used in movies and commercials and we are lucky to be able to find any song on the internet.

The younger generation has been brought up to notice just how much music has changed. However, the new music has lost something that older music had. Old music has fun, love and passion, that newer music seems to have lost. Music has changed over the years, but has it improved?

When SoundScan debuted in the early '90s, it gave a realistic depiction of what people were buying in stores (that was back when people went to stores to buy music). Gone were the days when music sales totals were delivered by estimate; this was concrete information based on bar codes, and it painted a much more diverse picture of what Americans listened to and bought.

From 1991 to 1992, the country again surged across all demographics, alternative rock (led by the Seat-

tle contingent) went through the roof, and hip-hop cemented itself as one of the dominant sounds. As a counterpoint, regular pop music thrived on the backs of talent like Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey, with a mid-decade boost with talent like the Spice Girls and the teen pop revival that finished the decade.

While the various genres still existed in a somewhat stratified way, regular mainstream success became sustainable for artists from hip-hop and country and alternative rock, among others; pop was still pop, but pop was a much bigger tent. There were so many styles and they all were expanding.

Teens all over the world have expressed just how a much better songs by all artists, who are not making music any longer, where back in the day. @yesjenly on TikTok posted a video saying "If you know of a party where they playing all 80's music plz hit me up." All the comments to that video responded to her saying, "yeah, music doesn't feel the same, THE ARTIST THAT I USED TO ENJOY LISTING DOWNGRADED."

Music affects everyone's lives and the fact that most artists today, either sound the same or just try to make songs that disrespect women is disgusting. It is sad that teens today will likely not have the nostalgia for our own generation of music, because it is not worth remembering.

"Kids these days are not listening to new music because today's music is garbage," said Ethan Wallen of Quora. He said, "80's music is music you can dance to, music that feels epic, er stuff you can headbang to, depending on the genre." Another music critic, Robert Redline said of 80's music, "It's very catchy. VERY danceable. Great songs. Entertaining. And a hell of a lot better than the GARBAGE CRAP that is out now. Today's music SUCKS."

Teens today still find the music of the 80's interesting. Maybe this is the generation that can agree with their parents. Maybe our parents (and grandparents) can hear us listening to Michael Jackson and say, "turn it up!"

## Ghostbusters: Afterlife

80's nostalgia or great modern movie?

By Henry Hernandez

Those who have lived through the hype of the first Ghostbusters phenomenon in 1984 will certainly remember it. For many of us that means a parent or even a grandparent. So, what made that first movie (and then the first sequel) so popular then, a cult classic now, and who was this new movie made for?

The forgettable 2016 Ghostbusters reboot was a sad example of what happens when the sole purpose of the reboot is the reverse the gender roles of the key characters. It just did not work. The nostalgia of the first movie was lost, and the characters from the new movie appeared to just be a cheap copy of the original. There was still a call for a proper sequel, and the original cast was not getting any younger. While Rick Moranis said he was done with the franchise, I guess he is taking himself too seriously. Sigourney Weaver is 72, Dan Aykroyd, 69, Bill Murray, 71, Ernie Hudson, 76, and Harold Ramis passed back in 2014 at 70. Even with multiple delays due to casting issues and pandemic restrictions, this movie was able to come to the big screen. Much like the ghosts they fight, this movie just would not stay buried.

Was it worth it? One thing that many of the movies from the eighties had was a fun factor. Yes, many were far fetched, but they were fun. The family could watch it together without being embarrassed. There was a little pride in American culture and that does carry into this movie.

While it does not have the Statue of Liberty helping to fight evil, it does have a Walmart that gets destroyed by marshmallows and a dog-like beast. Set in a small town called Somerville in Oklahoma, teenagers work at a drive in burger joint, kids go to a small town school with no standardized testing, and everyone in town knows "the dirt farmer." It seems like a great place to live.

The original cast (minus Moranis and

Ramis) are all present in this remake/ sequel. However, the story centers on the granddaughter of Egon (Ramis). Phoebe (McKenna Grace) is a genius who discovers who her grandfather really was, and uncovers the truth of what he moved to Somerville for. The coming of age story of Phoebe and her older brother Trevor (Finn Wolfhard) who try to make the best of their situation, being completely broke in a new town in the middle of nowhere, is at the center of the plot. It quickly turns from basic coming of age to a detective story, the suspense of these kids finding out who they really are, who the Ghostbusters were, and then what is going on in this town, keeps the action moving and their charm keeps the movie compelling. The charm of this movie though is not in the original cast, though their entrance is epic, or the original Ecto-1 Cadillac hearse, which was awesome, but the new characters who were not even born yet when the first movies came out. The children who discover what lies beneath the town and what is trying to emerge are like other classic eighties movies, like The Goonies.

Ironically, the character who could not be in the movie was the one that the entire movie was about. What an homage to a great and funny writer, actor, producer and director. Ghostbusters: Afterlife is dedicated to the memory and contributions of Harold Ramis. Through some modern CGI movie magic, Ramis is in this movie as well. (Think Carrie Fisher in Rogue One).

In the end the nostalgia for the original eighties movie was not in the characters who came back, but by something better, that the fun, action, comedy, and movie magic was very eighties like. It is a fun movie, and for that it was worth the watch. It is not about the proton packs and ghost traps, but about the fun that comes from good movie making. I wonder what is next? Let's hope that the same formula for success is carried over to the new Raiders of the Lost Ark sequel.



Passaic native Paul Rudd is key character in new Ghostbusters movie.

# Art Imitates Life in Anime

By Paola Navarro

If you are like my father you would ask, "Why are you watching anime? What can you get out of that?" These popular Japanese films were initially intended for the Japanese market and employ many unique Japanese cultural references.

However, anime has expanded well beyond the borders of the Japanese home island and is now a worldwide phenomenon. So what can you get out of watching anime?

First of all, the plots of Japanese anime are awesome. The music is also unique and fun. Yes, these are cartoons, but they are also so much more. There are actually many genres within the anime culture. Before everyone gets uncomfortable about someone getting excited over cartoons, not over the age of ten, let me say that these are not cartoons for little kids.

There is a connection across members of the anime community. I have experienced moments when meeting a fellow anime fan that there is an instantaneous bond as we discuss a new technique Naruto learned or by finding out that characters

on Attack on Titan are, well, titans. There is also a message to anime and it has influenced me. There is a lot to learn from anime.

## 1. Never give up:

Whether the protagonists are orphaned or outcasted children like Naruto or even immature and weird like Luffy, one thing all these characters have in common is that they will never give up. These characters come face to face with death and danger and they overcome these challenges by training and learning to be stronger every day.

They may start off being mediocre, lacking the skills they need to fight the strongest villains, and they may lose a lot, but they keep working towards a goal. As episodes progress the plot, the best anime characters continue to learn and grow, eventually overcoming the most powerful villains.

There are dramatic monologues and sad scenarios, but these characters taught me how to keep striving higher and trying my best to overcome the challenges of life. This can be done with a smile on your face.

## 2. We are stronger when we work together:

It is expected that these characters will grow to be very strong, or have a very strong ability at a young age, like Gon and Killua from Hunter x Hunter. However, these heroes cannot develop without the help of others. They always succeed when they go on their adventures with help along the way.

Naruto's desire for friendship after being alone during his childhood taught him to fight for his friends regardless of how hard it is. Luffy admitted that he cannot steal like Nami or lie like Usopp, which teaches viewers that it is okay to stand up for yourself, and yet still remain friends with those who have personal flaws. The strongest people seem to have a good team supporting them. Even sidekicks can rely on and contribute to a goal.

Whatever the case no protagonist will be strongest until they work with others. They cannot do it alone. No one can. These characters laugh with each other during tough times, and support each other in times of need. If Naruto can befriend everyone in his village after being an outcast by the same people, then anyone can. We all need to work together.

## 3. It is okay to be yourself:

Now for my favorite characters. In Bleach, Urahara Kisuke is a goofy shop owner who does not seem to take life very seriously. However, this character stands out for his mask of mystery as well as some interesting fashion choices. He is completely himself and does not care what others think.

In Attack on Titan, Sash is a stand out for a love of potatoes, (almost as much as me). These may seem like unimportant quirks, but as a fan, I can see myself in these characters. Even



IGN.COM

Shonen anime characters are known for their intensity and character development.

though they are unique, they demonstrate that it is okay to be different and it is okay to be true to yourself. Maybe you dye your hair four different colors at once, or eat a Jammie Dodger and an Oreo jammed together in one bite, that is okay too.

It may seem silly to take life lessons from a cartoon, but there are things to be learned all around us. I have grown up alongside these characters and actually learned about life from them. Hopefully, one day when I get old I will be watching the one millionth episode of One Piece and still smiling to myself about still being myself, just being happy to be me, with friends and the determination to never give up.



IMDB.COM

Attack on Titan is a popular anime in Japan and in the United States.



NARUTOFANDOM.COM

Naruto from Hunter x Hunter, never gives up on his friends.

# De-Stress with Pets

By Arnold Flores

There are so many people suffering from stress these days. Stress can lead to other issues like general anxiety and even depression. Studies have shown that many high school teenagers suffer from many of these illnesses. The American Psychological Association recently conducted a survey and concluded, "teens reported that their stress levels during the school year far exceeded what they believe to be healthy and topped adults' average reported stress levels."

So teenagers are feeling more stressed than adults. Over thirty percent of teens also reported feeling overwhelmed and depressed because of their stress levels.

It may seem insane that teenagers are generally more stressed than adults. Adults have to deal with job stress, paying the bills, taking care of children, and other issues. While teenagers have to go to school, which should be easier. But there is stress for kids and worrying about school and life is part of it.

Although stress cannot be eliminated or cured there are things that can be done. Sometimes a simple solution is best for a complex issue. A dog in your life can make a huge difference. Studies show that dogs help with depression, stress, anxiety, alleviate loneliness and they can lower blood pressure.

Hopskinsmedicine.org states that "simply petting a dog lowers the stress hormone cortisol, while social interaction between people and their dogs actually increases levels of the feel-good hormone oxytocin."

This is the same hormone known to bond a mother to their baby. There are many benefits to owning



PHOTO BY ARNOLD FLORES

My dog Ralphie, a Jack Russel Terrier, even makes a snow day better.

a dog that will help everyone in the household keep their spirits up.

I can state firsthand that having a dog to play with and love will help with the stress of school, worrying about grades and pressure to succeed. I felt happier every time I would play with my dog. The entire household environment changed for the better once we got a dog. So make the simple choice for a complex issue. Get a dog.

# What Can Jiu-jitsu Do for You?

By Leland Rodriguez

As many of you know, I am really dedicated to studying Juijitsu. Many have asked, "what do you get out of it?"

Even though many may wonder what you could gain from rolling around and working out, the greatest thing that anyone can get out of dedicating themselves to the art of Juijitsu is perseverance. It teaches a life lesson about overcoming obstacles and then turning weaknesses into strengths. Many drop out though, before they learn this lesson.

I have seen grown men who get destroyed in a roll (a fight) by a teenager who has been training. They drop out thinking, what do I need this for? However, if they continued, work hard and learn, they will get better. Then with time and dedication, and keeping an open mind, within a year they would be able to hold their own and win.

The thing is that no one needs to do it alone. Everyone in Juijitsu is helpful and pulls together to support each other in the art.

The main lesson about this sport is that it is not really fighting, but by gaining the knowledge and skills, then you can become more confident. By rolling aggression falls away and is replaced by calmness that comes from confidence. By knowing that you can take care of yourself, then you are less likely to try and prove it.

Another thing that you get from learning Juijitsu is supportive friendships. You create bonds with complete strangers, even though you never would have expected it. The fact that these guys are all learning together, sparring and competing together, fighting and sweating together, turns strangers into friends, and then into family.

Five minutes seems like an eternity, and those who persevere are changed forever. They work together and become close friends. There is just something that is shared.

Self help begins with working on yourself. A great way to build confidence, learn about yourself, make some lifelong friends, and gain the skills that could actually save your life, or the lives of others is by taking up Juijitsu.



**JIU-JITSU**

# Spiderman No Way Home Is Spidey Nostalgia-Fest

By Victor Carpio

It is not a spoiler anymore to reveal that the Spiderman Multiverse is assembled in the recent release of No Way Home. There are three different Spidermen in this feature and the complex storyline is brought together in a way as only Marvel can. Many were thrilled to have all three Spiderman universes brought together into one canon. This means that there is no official Spiderman, they are all part of the Spideverse.

The way to bring three movie series together and remain true to all of them was a monumental task, and it was not flawless. The storyline has some pot-holes like for example, Norman Osborne, The Green Goblin, from the first series and played by William Defoe, came alive in their own timelines, yet they were all sucked into the MCU universe timeline when battling with their respective Spidermen. This is a small price to pay for linking seven movies into a single unit.

Mr. Barbara said, "It is all canon, Toby Maguire, canon, Andrew Garfield, canon, Tom Holland, canon. It is great how they brought it all together." The movie was great even if at times I had to think of things



MARVEL.COM

Bringing all three Spidermen together into one film is an amazing concept.

that "just didn't make sense." Another critique, though small, is that in an attempt to cash in on the nostalgia of previous movies, the action elements were sacrificed, and viewers might not be sucked into the story completely.

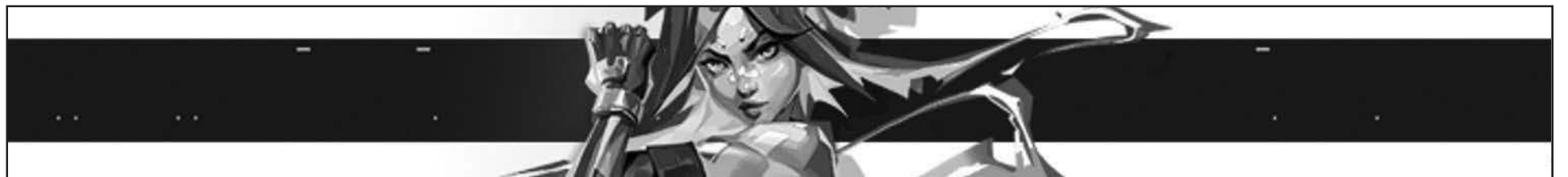
This is not to say that No Way Home was not a great movie. It was. This was a great film that should not be overlooked. Bringing all three Spidermen

together into one film is an amazing concept and as usual Marvel nailed it. Seeing the other Spidermen in action brings back the memories of those other universes. There is suspense and enjoyment seeing them come together for the first time. This movie should only be watched if you are a fan and you have seen the other movies. Otherwise, it just will not make sense. Go team Spidey.

The supporting cast is also noteworthy, Ned, MJ and Aunt May are all present. They help keep the story grounded and provide the context, laughs and plot development. William Defoe is an amazing actor, and he captures a lot of attention throughout the movie. Alfred Molina is back as Doctor Octavius (or Doc Oct), Jamie Foxx is back as Electro, and Tom Hardy is Eddie Brock. The

villains bring as much to the screen as the Spidermen.

This movie is definitely worth watching. However, you should check out the previous movies, especially if you never saw them. There are so many jokes and references that would not make sense unless you are a fan. But that is what nostalgia is about, referencing and remembering the previous movies.



## Valorant Patch 4.0: Why it's changing the meta

By Nitay Gonzalez

Riot Games has shipped out the new VALORANT patch 4.0, giving us a first look at the newest Duelist in the game, Neon, along with some competitive tweaks, important map and weapon updates.

The arrival of the long-awaited introduction of the newest agent, Neon, an electric agent with powerful movement capabilities. Neon is a duelist with an imposing kit that is ideal for those looking to execute onto sites, and get around quickly.

Neon's Relay Bolt ability is an energy bolt that bounces once. Upon coming into contact with a surface, it electrifies the ground and deals a concussive blast making it a good way to punish enemies looking to take advantage of their timing.

Her High Gear ability channels her power for an increase in speed. Pressing alt fire triggers an electric slide to help you outmaneuver enemies and is reset every two kills.

Her Fast Lane ability allows her to fire two energy lines forward on the ground that creates an opportunity for her team to use as a protective measure. The enemy's vision will be blocked and they'll take damage if they come into contact with her walls, but they have the ability to shoot

through them.

Neon's Overdrive ultimate ability discharges a fatal concentrated lightning beam with high movement accuracy. You get an increase in speed, and the channel bar along with her electric slide is reset with every kill.

In this patch we are given a few thrilling weapon updates. The Spectre was over-performing in long range duels and was overpowering even in close range and mobile scenarios. To combat all of this, the firing error occurs earlier. It is now harder to spray down targets at a medium to long range distance and you'll find it more troublesome to control your spray pattern at closer ranges. The other guns received slight buffs making them viable in save/eco rounds.

We have also received an update for competitive. Players will have to have their account at a minimum of level 20 before they are able to queue this mode, and this is to let newer players get used to the game a bit more before they hop in to a ranked match. This is also to combat the games growing smurfing problem, that has caused many issues for the general player base. Note: Players who have queued comp before and are not yet at level 20 are exempt to this.

Map randomization has been increased with the new map weights leading to an increase in map variety eliminating back to back map duplicates, adios Split.

Lastly, there have been some changes to the maps, mainly on Breeze. The boxes in A Main on Bind have been altered to prevent players from using the infamous one-way smoke that has always given attackers a headache. Attackers have also been given a new way to execute onto site by box being replaced with a bench.

Breeze has been significantly

changed which has balanced out the playing field. The width of the A Main choke had been increased, effectively removing the 50/50s where you'd be unsure of where an enemy can be located. This gives defenders more versatility in playing an A Main position, and you can get onto a site more effectively as an attacker with the addition of two crates in A Caves.

The back of A site has been adjusted, extending the pool to the far wall, and giving defenders and impenetrable crate to play on and around giving them a secure place

to relocate to in retake situations. The area where you can plant has also been extended to match the new pool area.

Over on B site, B Pillar has received more cover with the addition of a crate giving attackers more security when planting. Back site has also been blocked off and this allows both sides to utilize this as a means to fall back and take cover. A stack of crates has been added to B Wall, cutting off some angles from B Main.

The patch is live, so open your client and get ready to queue!



VALORANT patch notes 4.00 highlights

RIOT GAMES

# Military Ball a Great Success



PHOTOS BY CHIEF MCMASTER

By Simon Quispe Aguirre

While many students cannot wait for the end of the year activities, especially the Prom, the PHS NJROTC sponsors an event with the same glamor and students take it very seriously, getting dressed up and representing the best parts of PHS during a fun evening.

Being at the Ball is a lot like going to prom, but it is only for NJROTC students. It gives them a chance to show off their full dress uniform, as well as have some fun with music, great food, and their friends and classmates. This

year was no exception.

Senior Chief McMaster said of the event, "I am so proud of all the cadets. They represent the best that PHS has to offer and make us all proud." Chief Constant supported that statement as well, and said, "the cadets always have a great time and honor the program."

While going to the military ball is not a reason to join the NJROTC, it is one of the perks of undertaking this program. It is just one more thing that makes PHS NJROTC one of the best programs in the whole country.

## Bowling

Continued from Page 3

round is also important. To win a bowling game you have to knock down as many pins as possible. The more pins you knock down, the more points you score in which gets compared to the other team's score which decides if you win or not.

Ashtha Rana, the senior on the bowling team, said, "I love being part of this team."

She wasn't aware about the bowling team until she heard that there was going to be a meeting on the daily announcements and she decided go and see if it might be fun. She wants everyone to know that deciding to be a part of the bowling team was a great decision because she feels like

it is a second home and a great place to be with friends and have fun.

Ran is glad that she joined the team because it is so fun to play the other team members, and the competitive spirit that is developed here can be translated to other aspects of being a good student. As a senior Rana's advice for younger students is to join the bowling team. She said, "joining with no experience and I have learned and become so much better since day one. So, just about anyone can develop certain skills and become good at bowling".

This shows that anything can be possible with practice and time especially for the bowling team.



PHS Bowling team

PHOTO BY COACH VOGAS

**PHS PATHWAY FAIR**  
**March 7-11!**

**The many career choice pathways that PHS  
has to offer will be highlighted at the upcoming fair.**