



# Congratulations Class of 2022!



# THE HILLTOP STAR

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June 2022

## PHS Bids Farewell to Mrs. Torres-Gomez

By Paola Liriano Navarro

Mrs. Torres-Gomez has been principal of PHS for the last three years, which means that during the crazy times of Covid lock-downs, concerns about school security, restarting the school in-person learning this year, and ensuring that students are getting the best education as well as the social and emotional supports, was all part of the time that she was our principal. These crazy times have given us the leader that helped us get through the tough patches as well as helping students and even staff overcome the challenges of distance learning and restarting in-person learning.



Mrs. Torres-Gomez

Mrs. Torres-Gomez said, "I want to thank you for the kindness and love felt from everyone." She recalls many of the memories that she has made in her years here at PHS. She wants to express that she has learned as much from the stu-

dents of PHS as she hopes they have from her.

While many of us would describe Mrs. Torres-Gomez as kind and understanding, she wants to remind students that "words and deeds do matter", and that it is important to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Of her stay here at PHS Mrs. Torres-Gomez has some words for the PHS community. She is proud of her part in the great work done in this school and that there is a great thing starting here, but even though there is still so much work to do to become the best, that we are all up to the task, students, teachers, staff and administration.

Mrs. Torres-Gomez wants to sum up her time here and her experience here with a quote from Maya Angelou, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

## Passaic H.S. Students Earn NAFTrack Certification

By Kaylyn Amigon

Designed by both education and business leaders NAFTrack offers a certification for special high school seniors who demonstrate that they are ready for college and careers. Why should students bother with this?

A NAFTrack certifications is designed to demonstrate to possible employers and colleges that a student is career-focused and ready to get to work. They assess student performance through the completion of courses, internship assessments and high school graduation.

Four PHS seniors have completed this certification and will certainly stand out from the pool of possible job candidates.

Anuj Gandhi, Abigail Huitzil, Ashley Rivera, and Axel Lagunas have all completed this finance certification this year. They had to take four semesters of NAFTrack approved career-cluster courses and a required performance-based assessments, that thankfully have

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HILLTOP STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/SIMON QUISEPÉ

Axel Lagunas, Anuj Gandhi, Abigail Huitzil and Ashley Rivera (clockwise, from top left) all completed NAFTrack certification this year.

## Passaic High School Spring Concert Returns After 2-Year Absence

By Axel Lagunas and Diana Europa

As the 2021-2022 school year comes to an end, a tradition that has not been able to be upheld because of the virtual learning over the last two years – the Spring Concert – is back. It was a chance for the class of 2022 to bid a musical farewell to the PHS, PREP and PACE. What better way to say goodbye to the senior year for musicians than to host their last Spring Concert?

The Spring Concert was held at the Shirelle's Auditorium on June 1, 2022. The concert introduced a new concept of performing music as it was considered a "mixture" with the spotlight being handed back and forth between the District Orchestra, Choir, and Passaic High School Band and Marching Band. The reason for this new change was to keep the presentation moving and exciting with one song being performed while the next groups was preparing, and therefore less time inbetween sets.

The spotlight was first handed over to the District Orchestra which performed "Rolling in the Deep" and "My Heart Will Go On." "My Heart Will Go On" which is from the popular movie Titanic and featured a wonderful solo by Jonathan Flores-Rugerio. After their performance the District Orchestra transitioned the audience's attention to the District Choir which performed "If You Can Walk You Can Dance."

The spotlight was then hand-  
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Orchestra rehearsing for Spring concert.

PHOTO BY XXX XXX

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# Thinking about what to sign up for next year? Go ROTC!

By Simon Quispe

Some classes are taken just to get a credit or satisfy a requirement. Then there are the classes that can change the way you look at and conquer your life. ROTC is one of those adventures.

We would like to invite you to join the NJROTC program here at PHS. As a military-based organization, we offer a competitive environment, where students can develop leadership skills and discipline. This is accomplished through classroom instruction, of course. But it is also accomplished through simulation training, each Friday.

The program is an excellent way for students to get their college paid for as well. They have the chance to achieve higher grades in and have fun doing it. I don't want to leave that part out. It is work, but it is also fun.

One of the best and major reasons for students to join is NJROTC Nationals. "This is something your cadets will talk about for decades!" says the nationals website. They remain the most comprehensive test of overall NJROTC training and performance in existence today. No competition in the world provides a better test of all-around program quality and esprit-de-corps than the "Navy Nationals."

This year, PHS came in fourth overall out of a great number of schools. These events boost confidence and demonstrate that PHS is not only becoming the best, we are already there in so many ways.

A week after the 2022 Rancocas HS Drill Meet, the newly-formed Two-Manned Armed Exhibition team, with less than a month of practice, managed

to place second in that category. This was not an accident, however; this was due to the intense work and dedication of the team members and leaders.

The New Cadet Squad, having not placed previously for this 2021-2022 Drill Season, also brought home a trophy. That is how we become the best, by continuing to try and improve over time.

"I am very proud and I think it was well deserved," said Chief Quito. He added, "I feel we're on the right path, as we competed against a very challenging group of schools in those categories."

PHS outperformed eight other high schools. This year's strong placements followed the unit scoring outstanding in every category for the virtual Annual Military Inspection. Even with the lack of competitions

due to the cancellations during the Covid-19 distance learning, the PHS cadets didn't lose hope and showed resilience in their excellence.

Senior Chief McMaster said, "It was a gallant performance because this was the second meet we competed in for this drill year. Despite all the difficulties we faced earlier in the year, our cadets managed to pull through. I am so proud of our cadets."

Despite this being Cadet Christopher Meraz and Cadet Jose Vasquez's first time competing in the Two-Man Armed Exhibition category, they managed to make us all proud. Meraz said the help from former cadets definitely helped them get far. Above all, their willpower and determination paved the way to success.

That is the best part of joining

ROTC because the team spirit is with those who are performing. Even if you are in the two-man competition there is a whole support team of cadets behind you.

Cadet Petty Officer Laura Urtarte also brought back an individual award, but we are all part of the success of this individual. She beat out over 200 cadets and earned first place in knockout.

Chief Quito said, "We prepared for this very moment, and we were excited to see our work pay off. We will continue to improve in hopes of placing in more competitions next year."

So with more competitions to compete in next year, think about what you should do and how you can be a part of something bigger than yourself. Have fun, enjoy your time here at PHS and be a part of the group that is helping to make us the best!!

## Credit vs. Debit: Some Helpful Hints

By Abigail Huitzil

Last year, I opened my first checking account. I didn't really think I needed one until I applied for my first job position. Pay day was right around the corner and they weren't going to give me my paycheck in cash or check. Instead, the company I was working for was very fond of direct deposit, which is the simple process of making electronic payments directly into your bank account.

Crazy, huh? You don't have to go through the hassle of waiting for the bank to open to cash out your paycheck or worry about losing your cash!

I'm currently in the process of applying for a credit card. It's kind of a struggle for me right now, since I'm getting ready to go to college and I'm not sure whether or not I need a federal loan. Loans will eventually influence your credit score and for someone who doesn't have cred-

it history yet, this could greatly damage me in the long run. Having a credit card is not a bad thing at all. You just have to be aware of what you're getting yourself into.

Both are 16-digit card numbers and have expiration dates. Both have magnetic strips and EMV chips. So what's the big difference here? Debit cards enable you to spend by using the funds that you have deposited to the bank. On the other hand, credit cards allow you to borrow money from the bank up to a certain limit.

So, what are some of the pros and cons of debit cards? First off, these beautiful cards will prevent you from accumulating unnecessary debt. You're only using the money that belongs to you, which can force you to stick to your existing budget. Of course, you don't want to spend all of



your money in a flash! Next, debit cards are beginning to offer more fraud protection when it comes to your card being stolen. It is all about immediately reporting the incident in order to avoid being held responsible for the losses. Best of all, debit cards have no annual fee!

You may think this sounds too good to be true. What are

some of the downfalls, though? Well, I got you covered on this one too. Debit cards don't usually offer rewards, unless you have a rewards checking account. Also, they don't help you build your credit. Debit cards are the wrong way to go if you're looking to earn a 850 credit score! Although there are no annual fees, there may be other fees associated, such as monthly maintenance fees, overdraft fees, and ATM fees.

As you can see, debit cards are an amazing thing to have, but let's now dive deeper into the good side of credit cards. Again, credit cards help construct your credit history. A credit score usually comes into play when applying for a mortgage or buying a car. You definitely want to have the best score possible in order to be able to have these wonderful things in life! They also have warranty and purchase

protection when sketchy activity is detected. Not to mention, they offer more fraud protection than debit cards!

Well, what are the cons? The first one is that too much spending can lead you to a very deep hole: debt. The money that you spend has to be repaid with interest and you are obligated to meet the minimum payment every single month. Also, if you are incapable of paying your bill, this will eventually bring your credit score down, which is a very bad thing. Last but not least, it is important to keep an eye out on your annual percentage rate or APR. This percentage could really eat you up when it comes to paying your balance.

Now you know that credit and debit are both two different worlds. Do you think you'll be able to handle one or both? I say having at least one at an early age gives you a head start on your finances. It is all about being cautious.

## THE HILLTOP STAR

The Student Newspaper of Passaic High School

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The staff of the *Hilltop Star* would like to recognize and report on all the great happenings at PHS. Please make use of the scoop box in the main office or contact any staff member or Mr. Zeiler directly. Let's get the word out!

If anyone would like to join the staff of the *Hilltop Star*, please see Mr. Zeiler (S310). We are always looking for writers, photographers and even editors for the student newspaper. We need your talent!

[www.hilltopstar.com](http://www.hilltopstar.com)

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## Catching Up with APEX Learning

By Dexter Ramos

For many of us, the need to recover only one or two course credits is all that stands between us and walking the grass. We all want to graduate and show some pride. PHS offers many alternative options and support for every student to succeed. Students who need it can take advantage of APEX Learning Comprehensive Courses and make it possible to address the learning and credit needs of students.

With APEX Learning, students are supported while challenged to succeed. Students taking APEX Learning courses for credit recovery use the same rigorous, standards-based content as regular classes and so they get the same credit as a regular course. Once you are in the program there are different ways to get support while taking the course. It is great that once you start an online course you can get help. They don't just leave you hanging to figure out a problem or a project, you get the



support you need to complete each task in the course.

So if you get into this program to get on track, make sure you put your effort into it, learn what you need to learn and succeed. The little pretests make it so your lessons are tailored more to your own learning level. I have found it very helpful. Do not let a course or two stand between you and the pride of the grass. There are many options for us, luckily here at PHS, to get caught up and get the support and learning we need to graduate.

So, students who are not on track to graduate on time should

take advantage of this program as soon as possible. Talk to your guidance counselor. You can sign up for a maximum of three courses and you can meet in the morning from 7:15 and again after school. There is even one course on Saturday (not my choice, but it is there) which runs from 8:00 to 1:00.

Signing up for Apex credit recovery is one thing, committing to the program to get the most out of it is another. You have been given a great opportunity to make up for a past mistake, so don't let the opportunity pass you by. Good luck and we can meet on the grass in June.

**Congratulations to all PHS Graduates!**

# Student Entrepreneurs Turn Dreams into Businesses

By Abigail Huitzil

Money makes the world go round, but how can you start making money at such a young age? Have you ever thought about starting your very own business? Perhaps, a side hustle? Ms. Aristy's Period 1-2 Entrepreneurship class is making this dream a reality! Her seniors are currently turning their passions into real-life business ventures! They are investing real money into businesses that will potentially grow and expand!



**Have you ever thought about a jewelry business? They say jewelry makes a very big impression when you meet someone!**

Naydelin Huelitl stated, "Angelix Jewelry is all about having dainty and unique jewelry for both women and men. I wanted to include high-quality, hypoallergenic, tarnish-free, and no green-skin jewelry. I've always wanted to start a business, but never found the motivation to do so. Now that I know about what it is like to run a business, I feel better prepared and eager to continue learning. I can't wait to release my first drop for my jewelry business. I really hope everyone finds a piece of jewelry that they truly love and matches their style."

Instagram: @angelixjewelry  
TikTok: @angelix\_jewelry  
Youtube: Angelix Jewelry



**Have you ever thought about a customization business? Whether it be shoes or clothing?**

Anuj Gandhi said, "Horizon Apparel is a clothing brand. It focuses on creating

unique and customized clothing. I wanted to start a business to generate a side income. My dedication to making designs also pushed me to establish my clothing brand."

Instagram: @horizon\_apparel\_

Melanie Naulaguari and Ronald Pena Bello described their business: "Kixs Universal is a resale and restoration service. Customizations will be available for customers that want to make their shoes unique. Not only do we sell new and old sneakers, but we also sell vintage clothes. We wanted to start a business to make a strong impact in both the sneakers industry and vintage aesthetic community."

Instagram: @kixs\_universal



**Have you ever thought about a fitness business? Not only will it keep you fit, but it will help others to lead a healthier lifestyle.**

Elvis Ramos Flores said, "Alphatraining.30 is about fitness and powerlifting. I wanted to start this particular business because the gym is something I like to do and have a passion for."

Instagram: @alphatraining.30



**Have you ever thought about a candle business? Candles definitely make your home feel warm and cozy!**

Ashley Rivera stated, "Lush Melt Scented offers handcrafted wax melts for candle warmers. There will be a variety of colors and breathtaking shapes. I wanted to start this business because I feel passionate about creating my very own candles and pleasant smells that every single individual can enjoy."

Instagram: @lushmeltscented  
TikTok: @lushmeltscented

Coral Sanchez said, "ScentsByCoral is about to have your house smell very welcoming. I wanted to start a business in order to see how it feels like to be your own boss."

Instagram: @scentsbycoral\_



**Have you ever thought about a nail business? Nails are truly a work of art!**

Ana Guerra stated, "The purpose of nailsbyagsxo is to create more confidence in girls. I wanted to start this business because I like designing and the aesthetic of nails. Not to mention, colors as well."

Instagram: @nailsbyagsxo  
TikTok: @nailsbyagsxo  
Youtube: nailsbyagsxo

Estephany Tellez said, "ETVNails is a nail service. It will give customers the opportunity to get their nails done by booking an appointment. I wanted to enter the nail industry because when I get my nails done, I gain confidence. I want to be able to share the same experience with others and help them gain confidence within themselves."

Instagram: @ETVNails

Stephany Gonzalez stated, "Stephany's Lavish Nails is a business where I would be able to go to my ladies and they would be able to come to me. I believe that nails represent a lot about you and everyone loves sexy, dramatic, sassy, and lavish nails. I want to start a journey in the nail industry and would love to share it with my ladies. Doing nails is my cardio!"

Instagram: @sglavishnails



**Have you ever thought about a beauty business? Who doesn't want to**

**be glammed up?**

Catherine Librado said, "Glambylibrado is a business that provides hair and makeup services for any type of event. For example, weddings, proms, birthdays, etc. I started my business because I wanted to be able to get everyone glammed up for their special event and feel more confident, sociable, and assertive!"

Instagram: @glambylibrado



**Have you ever thought about an eyelash business? False eyelashes really do make your eyes stand out!**

Yoselin Ramirez said, "Blessing Lashes is about lashes. I sell lashes to make my lovely customers look stunning and make them feel lovely with themselves as well. I started my business because I was always interested in lashes. Why not start a business of my own? Even better if I can be my own boss!"

Instagram: @blessinglashes

Abigail Huitzil stated, "Abbyrose Lashes is all about false eyelashes! Both natural-looking and dramatic eyelashes. Later on, I hope to expand into magnetic eyelashes. In the meantime, I am very excited to release my first eyelash styles. I've always loved putting false eyelashes on and it is absolutely a dream to be running an eyelashes business."

Instagram: @abbyroselashes  
TikTok: @abbyroselashes

The clock is ticking. Are you ready to start your very own business? Do you have what it takes to be your own boss? Join Ms. Aristy's Entrepreneurship class next year! You will not regret it!

## What do students think about skipping class?

By Axel Lagunas

Cutting or "skipping" classes is as old as, well, class itself. I would bet that there was not one hundred percent attendance in the first class ever given. There are many reasons why students would miss a class. Sometimes they are actually sick, sometimes they just need a break. It all comes down to the happiness of students who attend PHS.

This year especially, we all needed a mental health day. Dealing with the pandemic, masking in school, the work of catching up and working hard in school, all contributed to the occasional student skip.

I asked students around our school, why they might skip a class or a day of classes. The goal is to show why students skip, based on my limited pool of students who were willing to respond. Teachers and administrators are concerned about students coming to class, which makes sense, but it is also important for everyone to see the reasons behind a cut. Maybe better understanding of the reasons will lead to rules that are fairer.

The following are opinions of various students from PHS and their reasons for skipping class. To make this as detailed as possible, students of all grades were

asked the questions. Some responses might surprise you.

Students were asked: Whether you or someone else you know skips class, what is their reasoning for this? Here are some of the responses:

"We want to be able to enjoy life and not be stuck in a boring class. You only live once, why spend it in a class." (sophomore)

"You may not like the class, you may not like people that are in the class. It can also depend on their mood." - (junior)

"They don't like the temperature, or the amount of homework that is given, it has also become a trend to not go to class and not do work, they'd rather be with friends." (freshman)

"From what my friends have told me, they skip it's because they either have friends they want to hang out with for certain periods or simply do not like a certain class and want to avoid the work and anything related to the class." - (senior)

Additionally, another question was thrown at students. "Do you think it is the teacher's fault or the student's fault or both for why student's skip?" Here are their responses:

"Some students don't like teachers, sometimes there is no reason. It is both their faults but have a fun environment for students to want to learn would

help." (junior)

"Some students do not like teachers because they give too much work or they don't like the way they teach. They also may just not like the teacher personally. It is both of their faultsw though because there are also students who are uncooperative." (freshman)

"Teachers, they are stressful, drama between students. It's both." (sophomore)

A striking conclusion was just how many students owned up and took responsibility for their own cutting. They know it is wrong, they do not just blame the school or teachers entirely, but they did it anyway. This is not a scientific study, just asking some of our classmates about their behavior.

Now that the voice of the student's is shown it reveals reasons for why skipping occurs and may provide certain alternatives for solutions to these issues. Hopefully we can develop some rules that will make students feel more involved with the school, and maybe they would not cut.

In the spirit of becoming the best, there should be some input from students, enticing them to learn and part of that is coming to class regularly. Though, everyone needs a mental health day sometimes.



HILLTOP STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/SIMON QUISEP

NAFTrack certificates that were presented to the students. These certificates are designed to demonstrate to possible employers and colleges that a student is career-focused and ready to get to work.

## Certification

Continued from Page 1  
been offered here at PHS.

They also had to complete a qualifying internship. This experience of 80 hours is under the close supervision of a supervisory adult who must certify their ability. Last but not least, they must complete all work to graduate.

Many students find difficulty completing the career-focused courses, but due to PHS's mission to provide dual enrollment course, these students were able to complete the program.

Now that they have the certification, Anuj, Ashley, Abigail and Axel will rise above other students without certification and through corporate partners,

begin a new journey. They will certainly make us proud as they go on to succeed in their future careers.

NAFTrack alumni get the benefits of paid college internship opportunities, an email publication (Career Insider) that shares opportunities from NAF corporate partners, exclusive programs for this young talent, and even local NAF events to help foster networking of business professionals.

Axel Lagunas, a senior, said, "I am glad that I have this opportunity, I feel like I have really accomplished something here."

Students and faculty of PHS think so too.

## Gun violence has been getting out of control

By Anastasia Tangarife

With the amount of mass shootings that have been going on you would think gun violence would start to be controlled. Little kids who haven't gotten to experience the full extent of life suffer because our government can't control the people who purchase guns.

Guns are being used for hate crimes and self satisfaction instead of protection and that is the issue we are having in today's world. Lots of people disagree with not having their own firearm which is why we're going back and forth with gun laws. There is the argument of only having it for self protection, and there is the argument of not needing one at all.

Gun violence has been affecting communities for years. Nothing has been done about this and it's only getting worse. If we don't get guns under control it will continue getting worse and people will keep dying for no reason.

Recently because of gun control not being handled there have already been 12 shootings in the month of June and it will only continue to grow. It's almost becoming normal to hear about all these shootings. They are happening more and more often.

There's the argument that people need guns for protection but in the end it looks like it's only backfiring on itself. People are instead using them for their own sick ideas. If guns were used in the correct way they are meant for, we wouldn't have shootings every other week.

Guns have been getting into the

wrong hands and it's not necessarily the way the laws are set. People can get through gun checks easily then resell them on the streets for more. Even if guns were to be banned, they would be sold illegally anyways.

I personally do not believe the background checks performed are good enough to stop the people who don't have good intentions. If the background checks were reliable, I feel guns wouldn't be getting into the wrong hands as often as they do.

People change over time. Just because when they got their check they were good doesn't mean in 2-5 years they won't have different intentions. I feel like if these background checks obviously aren't working why do they continue with the same system? Things need to start changing before everyone starts killing each other.

In summary, gun laws need to change. If things don't start changing now things will only get worse. I'm not saying guns have to be taken away completely but they should have higher security behind them. There needs to be a way of knowing who exactly possesses them and who is trying to resell them illegally.

People will continue to die if negative people keep getting them. Not everyone has good intentions when purchasing a gun and there needs to be a way of pointing these people out and stopping them before it's too late. Guns can be used for protection, but they can also be used for mass murder and we can't have both.

## There are a lot of gun owners out there

By Nathaly Vargus

Gun owners make up about at least 50% of Americans, from 18 and older. The debate about gun control and gun rights in America is wrong and they are getting out of control. If we have guns it is to protect yourself not to run around shooting people in the streets, or especially at schools.

In America you can't buy an alcoholic drink until 21, but you can buy a dangerous weapon at 18, which makes no sense. The state also doesn't do anything about it, people don't feel safe even at their own home because of someone having a dangerous weapon and threatening them. People don't think twice when buying something dangerous, they think that they look cool when they are ruining innocent people's lives.

The United States has about 393,347,000 guns, which is the highest total number in the world (35% of men and 12% of women

in America own a gun). Guns were intended for militaries, not people that don't know how to use them. Guns are used anywhere and anytime, even though we don't see them, like someone coming into a store to steal money or rob people. You have the right to own a gun at 18 but don't have the right to drink.

Gun control laws target mostly black people, for example, the shooting from a month ago at Buffalo supermarket. Ten black people were killed and the shooter was white, what they did was grab him and put him in jail. What about the one that happened four years ago at Stoneman Douglas High School, he was also white, and a police officer also grabbed him and put him in jail. But if it was a black guy, they would kill him right there without any hesitation.

Gun control should be a good start to start saving lives for our women, little children and anyone living in America.

## My two cents on gun control

By Eddy Fortuna

My opinion about gun rights is just a big ball of mixed emotions. Yes, some people in the world have guns to defend themselves in case of emergency but some do it to hurt others. You never know a person's intentions.

I personally don't think it is safe, the past few incidents that have taken place have been shootings. It isn't fair to all the innocent individuals and families having to go through the pain of losing a loved one.

On the other hand, I can understand why people have guns because they do it for their own safety. There's a lot of pros and cons

when it comes down to the gun control argument. The main pro that stood out to me was "Legally owned guns are frequently stolen and used by criminals."

It's another reason why gun control should be taken more seriously. It is so easy for a gun to be carried away and sold at a relatively high cost.

We have gun rights in America because the people have the right to keep and bear arms. Personally, it should be controlled more for everyone's safety. Not everyone in this world wants to think of the positive and do it for defense, some individuals in this world want to be malicious and cruel.

# The Gun Control Debate in America Today

By Kaylin Amigon

Having the right to own a gun in America stems from the Second Amendment that states "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed" which Americans nowadays use this amendment as a way to protect their right to be able to have a gun. As times have changed and we see guns being more easily accessible and with different ones to choose from, more and more bad things have started to happen as a result of people owning or being able to get their hands on guns, because of this I believe that the right to own guns and the Second Amendment should be reviewed.

The Second Amendment which states that the people have the right to bear arms is the amendment that is used by the people who still support that right today. With how much guns have developed, how much you can actually modify one, and how many different types there are, there should also be stricter gun laws that develop alongside all these guns that now exist.

The Second Amendment was ratified in 1791 and was proposed by James Madison to allow the creation of civilian forces that can counteract a tyrannical federal government, what this means is that this amendment was made to give the people from back then the right to own a gun, protect themselves and fight back in case the government were ever to attack the citizens themselves, who, if were unarmed and unorganized, would be unable to fight back.

These days however this amendment is being used as the sole excuse as to why people have the right to own guns, which I believe should also mean the amendment be updated to match the type of weapons that now exist. Using that reason as the only argument as to why you should keep your gun is unfair to those who simply want to make countries safer and lower the rates of deaths associated with guns. The Second Amendment's purpose is very different from how it is being used today.

The main reason people are asking for more gun control is due to the sheer amounts of deaths related to guns. In the article "What the

data says about gun deaths in the U.S." by John Gramlich, it states "In 2020, the most recent year for which complete data is available, 45,222 people died from gun-related injuries in the U.S according to the CDC." A mass shooting supporting the amount of deaths related to guns would be the one that occurred in Buffalo, New York, at a Tops Friendly Markets store, a supermarket in the East Side neighborhood where 10 people were killed at the hands of an eighteen year old with a gun.

The saddest deaths related to guns or gun violence are often children, from school shootings to accidental gun discharges, small children are often innocent victims that a bit more of gun legislation could have helped keep safe.

In the article titled "Should More Gun Control Laws Be Enacted" by ProCon.org it states, "A study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that firearms were the second leading cause of deaths for children, responsible for 15% of child deaths compared to 20% in motor vehicle crashes."

A big chunk of children deaths related to guns are school shootings, which are carried out by disgusting people who decide to prey on innocent children, as we saw in the recent shooting at Robb Elementary School Uvalde, Texas where a recently turned eighteen year old shot nineteen students and two teachers and wounded seventeen others with the use of a gun he had purchased just days before when he turned eighteen. This shooting was the third-deadliest school shooting in the United States, after the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, and the deadliest in Texas.

Stronger laws pertaining to gun control, as simple as raising the age limit to be able to legally purchase a gun could have stopped this from happening. And although you could argue this killer would still find a way to obtain a gun, it would be much harder for him to do so and might have deterred him from doing so. When the right to bear arms is more important to certain people than the thousands of lives lost each year, there needs to be some degree of change on these rights whether they agree to it for the overall well being of society.

Those fighting for gun control and stricter

laws aren't trying to take away people's rights, they are only trying to make places safer. A simple law where the legal age for buying a gun is raised to at least 21 for any type of gun could have prevented multiple mass shootings, including the ones mentioned above, from happening. Stricter, more rigorous background checks or even mental health evaluations could also be a way for gun control to be safer.

According to a Mar. 10, 2016 Lancet study, implementing federal universal background checks could reduce firearm deaths by a projected 56.9%; background checks for ammunition purchases could reduce deaths by a projected 80.7%; and gun identification requirements could reduce deaths by a projected 82.5%. An eighteen year old's brain is still developing and the fact that an eighteen year old can't drink a beer legally in their own home without going anywhere after, but is able to legally purchase a weapon capable of killing hundreds does not sit right with many people, (though this of course in no way promotes underage drinking either).

Another legislation that can be added to further have more gun control, though considered much more "right violating", would be to ban assault/automatic rifles. I believe there should be no reason why a regular civilian arguing about not being able to have a self defense weapon, would want to or be able to obtain an assault or automatic rifle, as opposed to a handgun or other small gun which they would be able to discreetly carry and actually use as a gun for self defense.

Having assault/automatic rifles banned would also lessen the chance of these guns being the weapon of choice in shootings, possibly lessening the amount of people who die.

Data reported by Statista.com states "Since 1985 there has been a known total 50 mass shootings involving rifles, mostly semi-automatics. This figure is underreported though, as it excludes the multiple semi-automatic (and fully automatic) rifles used in the 2017 Las Vegas Strip massacre - the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, killing 58 and wounding 546. In fact, semi-automatic rifles were featured in four of the five deadliest mass shootings, being used in the Orlando nightclub

massacre, Sandy Hook Elementary massacre and Texas First Baptist Church massacre."

I believe there should be stronger laws pertaining to gun control, since having simple things such as more rigorous background checks or a higher age limit to purchase a gun could potentially save thousands of lives. These things in my opinion don't really violate a person's right to bear arms since it's just extra or more rigorous safety measures added on to buy one, compared to banning all guns all together.

I also believe that the people arguing against these types of simple extra safety measures being added while buying a gun are selfish. Their rights are not being violated, they just don't like the idea of being told what to do with their many weapons. In a day and age where you can stroll into a Walmart and purchase a gun I think these extra laws should be necessary. There should be no reason why a person would need a gun like an AR-15 as a self defense weapon when a pistol can do the job.

As a student, hearing about all these mass shootings going on and occurring because of young or mentally unwell people (usually both) so easily obtaining a weapon capable of mass killing scares me and baffles me as to why obtaining these types of weapons is so easy.

No longer being able to go to places like grocery stores, malls, churches, and even school, a place where I should be learning and not having the idea of possibly dying towards the back of my mind, should not be what kids think about. Especially small children who don't even understand the concept of dying, having to experience or witness it first hand like the students at Robb Elementary or Sandy Hook elementary, is not fair when these tragedies could have been prevented had there been stricter gun control laws.

I and many students agree with the idea that there needs to be more gun control legislation present in order to stop mass tragedies from happening. And as a student and human being I think I also deserve "the right" to live and live without the fear of a gun taking my life or any of my friends or family's life.

Read more opinions about gun control on [www.hilltopstar.com](http://www.hilltopstar.com)

## Is it guns or do people just need a good whooping?

By Simon Quispe

The right to bear arms, found in the Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights created in 1791 states the right to any individual to buy, or carry firearms. "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." Shortly after the constitution was officially created, James Madison proposed the second amendment as a way to empower these state militia.

Having said that, after 231 years, there are around 100,000 victims of gun violence each year. Action needs to be taken so Americans don't feel unprotected going into a public place. America can become a safe place for everyone by keeping guns out of the hands of people tempted to make bad choices.

Tightening gun laws is essential for the US to save lives. There are gun control laws to try and reduce the number of violent shootings that happen on a daily basis. They are trying to put limits on weapons that Americans can own. The government is trying to take our guns away mainly because of people that are criminally insane.

For instance, for a long time, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Second Amendment applied only to the federal government. In District of Columbia v. Heller, the Court extended Second Amendment protection to individuals in federal black sheep. Justice Antonin Scalia's majority decision in

that case had weight to the idea that the right of individual private gun ownership was for only self-defense purposes.

This isn't the only debate, video games also play a big role in this as well. On March 8, 2018, President Trump discussed "violent video-game exposure and the correlation to aggression and desensitization in children," according to a statement from White House Deputy Press Secretary Lindsay Walters.

"I'm hearing more and more people say the level of violence in video games is really shaping young people's thoughts," Trump said after the Parkland school shooting, according to a report by the Washington Post.

On the other hand, Mark Appelbaum does not think the same. But blaming violence on video games just doesn't solve the problem. "The short answer is there is virtually no research" on whether or not video games cause violent acts like school shootings." An emeritus professor of psychology at the University of California San Diego and the chair of a 2015 American Psychological Association Task Force on Violent Media. "There is no scientific evidence that confirms or disconfirms that speculation."

In conclusion, this amendment and right should not be revoked but what should be taught is that being a good member of society is the goal, with good parents and neighborhoods, so perhaps a good ass-whooping should do the trick.

## What gun control is necessary?

By Hendi Solis

Do you think it is ok for an 18 year old to be able to gain an assault rifle legally? Since the beginning of 2022 there have been at least 246 mass shootings in the US. This statistic includes the mass shooting of an Uvalde, Texas elementary school in which 18-year-old Salvador Ramos was able to purchase a rifle and commit a mass shooting.

This number should be deemed unacceptable. There are many ways to combat this number and the people should start taking this into consideration. Gun laws need to be upheld with greater precaution or even limit the power some of these laws grant gun users. Gun control is a set of laws that allow the manufacture, sale, transfer, possession, modification, or use of firearms by civilians.

The Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms. The right to bear arms is a right but a right that should be very limited such as creating a way to lessen the number of weapons given out. They can also make stricter rules regarding how to get a gun legally. These rules should also be able to take a stricter look on backgrounds as well as other precautions before releasing guns to citizens.

Ways to combat mass shooting numbers or shootings at all is to ban high-number magazines as well as assault rifles in general. A Mother Jones investigation found that high-capacity magazines were used in at

least 50% of the 62 mass shootings between 1982 and 2012." Using that statistic, we can infer that these numbers have only increased with the amount of new technology. In 2020 there were more than 45,000 Americans who died from guns which was a 43% growth since 2010.

In general, a situation in which a gun can potentially become involved can be considered a more dangerous situation. In Australia they had banned all semi-automatic rifles and took back most weapons from the public.

Nicholas Johnson's research implied that this would not work in the US because of the sheer magnitude of weapons of about 325 million guns and if the plan to ban all guns were to go through there would still be about 200 million guns not returned.

These numbers should ring alarms and imply that there are too many weapons and there should be a greater attempt to stop these weapons from being given out as well as stop such a mass production of the weapons.

Although some people may feel that guns are a necessity, there should be stricter gun laws. If people want weapons they should have to go through a stricter and lengthier process. If there isn't any way to stop the mass production, the stricter release of weapons to the public should be the solution. They should never allow any assault rifles or bigger magazine weapons out to the public.

## Why do we have gun rights in America?

By Nitay Rodriguez

According to the Constitution, the supreme law of the United States, it states "A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed." This amendment was adopted in 1791. It has been over 200 years since, and much has changed since then. The Second Amendment is why we are unable to send our children to school, go to work, go on a night out, etc. The Second Amendment is why hundreds of kids won't be graduating.

Currently, none of the gun proposals would change anything. Gun control laws won't stop criminals from obtaining a firearm. It won't stop people with ill intentions. According to an article "I'm a Black gun owner. I have mixed feelings about gun control," we have to look at the Virginia Tech shooting, the deadliest school shooting in the history of the US. The shooter went through the entire process like any normal person.

What does this mean? This means that the system is flawed. If from 2019 to 2020 the increase in the rate of firearm related deaths overall (homicide, suicide, accidental, etc) among young people was 29.5% which is double that of the increase in the general population. If that is not seen as a problem, I don't know what would.

Guns are rarely used in self-defense, as stated by ProCon.org at 0.79% of victims claiming they protected themselves with threat or use of a gun. Background checks, assault weapon

restrictions and/or bans, bans on high capacity magazines are all supported by a majority of individuals including those who own firearms. However, in the current system and including recent proposals for gun control all it would do is make it harder for minority communities to arm themselves in order to protect themselves.

Gun control has a history riddled with racism, and it continues to follow that trend by labeling "poor black communities who are perceived as more dangerous than white gun owners... Whites walking down Main Street with an AK-47 are defenders of American values; a black man doing the same thing is Public Enemy No. 1."

To handle mass shootings honestly we must be willing to have complex conversations about the difficulties of the situation along with realizing that most solutions will require societal transformation. The fact of the matter is that there is a possibility that stricter control will leave people afraid and at the mercy of those with one.

So why do we have gun rights in America? Because we lived in a flawed society. Gun control is definitely a social issue. We are still following what was written down into the Bill of Rights, adopted over 200 years ago. This leads me to believe that instead of somewhat stricter gun control, we restrict them heavily. Looking at our G7 counterparts and their firearm laws, they are heavily restricted with an extensive list of banned weapons. Take notes Uncle Sam.

## We need stricter gun laws

By Eric Rios Jr.

This current situation concerning gun control has been preposterous. During the last few years, especially as of recently, with all the shootings that's been going on. Having gun control laws would not deter crimes; instead, gun ownership would deter crimes.

Anti-gun people state that the assault weapons ban in the nineties would help to deter crime, except that it didn't then and it wouldn't now. Assault weapons bans did not significantly affect murder rates at the state level and states with restrictions on the carrying of concealed weapons had higher gun-related murders. New Jersey and New York already have assault weapons banned, and there is not a difference in the amount of murder here, and it is actually worse.

One thing that might be considered is the federal universal background checks that could reduce firearm deaths by a projected 56.9%; background checks for ammunition purchases could reduce deaths by a projected 80.7%; and gun identifica-

tion requirements could reduce deaths by a projected 82.5%.

We have gun rights in America for our protection, but the US government is prioritizing gun ownership over basic human rights.

Roughly half Americans favor stricter gun laws, a large majority of Democrats and Democratic leaners say gun laws should be stricter, though this share has declined slightly since 2019.

Personally, I feel like certain states should have stricter gun laws, this is because certain states might have more gun violence than others and those states should be background checked before purchasing a weapon. This could possibly decrease gun violence going on in those states and create less conflict.

This issue is not going to be solved by making guns illegal, and it will not be solved with many of the other suggestions, but it may have an affect with certain specific law changes that do not hurt the average gun owner, but would restrict those who are buying a weapon to do harm.

## The gun control debate

By Hendi Solis

Did you know there have been up to 27 school shootings in the US since the beginning of 2022? The mass shooting in an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas is one of the 27. The suspect was 18 year old Salvador Ramos. On May 24 2022, Ramos killed 19 children and 2 adults during this mass shooting.

The Texas department of public safety said that the shooter was wearing body armor and carried a rifle. The officers on duty had received active shooter training just two month prior. It took more than an hour for police to enter the building and stop the gunman.

From this experience schools all over the US seemed to add more security precautions as well as add

more safety procedures. In Passaic High School while speaking to one of the SROs we learned that "security measures are not to be taken lightly as the safety of their students is most important."

There was also an increase in SROs as well as police officers. Procedures such as occasional bag checks were also put in place. Schools all over the US are doing their best to create the safest learning environment for their students.

This is also causing people to question whether or not the right to bear arms is a positive. Many people are protesting that weapons of that size shouldn't have gotten in the hands of the culprit, and there should have been plenty of ways to prevent this.

# Making Friends: Is It Harder Than It Seems?

By Axel Lagunas

Many people see having friends as something normal and don't have to try too hard to create many of them. But for others this may result in a difficult task and may struggle to have few if any friends.

*Komi Can't Communicate*, a series released by Netflix this past October has gotten the attention of many anime fans by its simple yet interesting plot. The Netflix series is based on the original manga "Komi Can't Communicate" which was written by Tomohito Oda who recently released the 24th volume of the manga this past January.

The series centers around the main characters Komi Shouko, Tadano Hitohito, and Najimi Osana who are second and third year students at Itan Private High School. Komi has extreme social anxiety disorder which causes her to face irrational anxiety with daily interactions limiting her speech. Throughout the anime we see Tadano and Najimi helping Komi communicate with people and ultimately reaching her goal of making 100 friends.

*I can't even say 'Hi' to people, even though it seems so simple for others"*

— Shoko Komi

The 12 episode series starts out with Tadano taking us to his school where he explains that all he wants to do for the school year is to not be noticed by anyone and generally be under the radar. However this plan is ultimately cut short. Tadano sees Komi who is considered the prettiest girl in the entire school and due to her not speaking is taken as a serious person. Tadano soon realizes however that Komi does not necessarily want to talk to anyone but is too afraid and scared to do so. He is able to communicate with Komi via chalkboard, which is when Komi reveals her dream is to have 100 friends. Tadano sees this and offers Komi to be her first friend and to help her make other 99 friends.

*"I'll be your first friend and help you make the rest."*

— Hitohito Tadano

Tadano is not popular himself, so he talks to Najimi who is a social butterfly and asks for their assistance to help Komi find new



PHOTO BY NETFLIX

**Komi Can't Communicate, is an anime a series on Netflix**

friends. Together the trio make their way through school life and events helping Komi find friends and helping her fight through her social anxiety. She does this by writing on a notebook and showing it to the people she intends on saying it to.

Throughout their adventures in school they meet Ren Yamai, Himiko Agari and many other students. After school ends Tadano sees how successful Komi has become at making friends as they hang out during summer vacation. After a few episodes school is back in session and Tadano and Komi are able to expand their friend group with after and on school activities. We can see throughout the anime the joy that is brought to Komi as she becomes slowly more comfortable talking with people and making new friends.

*"I have my problems, but I have many friends and am happy."*

— Ren Yamai

Throughout the anime, the topic of social anxiety is the main focus. As described by viewers the anime does a good job at portraying what social anxiety is and how it can affect the life of a person and in this case a teenager. With humor and friendship Tomohito Oda passes on the message that social anxiety is not something that is made up and that may be overlooked by many people by being considered shy or serious but may in fact greatly affect the life of a person struggling with the disorder. In every episode of the anime we hear the narrator state "When a person has extreme social anxiety, they struggle to communicate with others. Bear in mind, they only struggle to form connections. It doesn't mean that they don't want to."

This short but repetitive mes-

sage is in my opinion one of the best quotes in the entire anime. As a viewer hearing this quote after one of the funny scenes of the anime is just a helpful reminder to be social with people and in general to not judge a book by its cover.

With Tadano and Komi as the main characters we see a great duo with Tadano wanting to be undercover and have a quiet school year and Komi who is quiet but wants to have a fun year and make friends. Komi's joyful attitude motivates Tadano to be out and about in school in search of friends for Komi. With the addition of Najimi the social butterfly this allows everyone to be able to learn from each other and form a great friendship between them and other friends' groups.

*"What if I can't become friends with them? What if they ignore me? Or think I'm weird?"*

— Shoko Komi

In my opinion I believe Komi Can't Communicate is a nice anime that can be enjoyed not only by teenagers but also by adults and children. It goes through everyday activities and interactions and has something for everyone. It is also a very helpful example as we get to see in perspective the mind and actions of a person with social anxiety and we see the challenges that they face in everyday activities that we may consider not difficult such as asking a question. In all it is a great watch for anyone who enjoys the Romantic comedy Slice of life. And with this I'll tune out with this last quote.

*"Just because a person has problems communicating doesn't mean that person doesn't want to communicate with others."*

— Tomohito Oda

# Summer is here, time to catch up Anime style

By Paola Navarro

In the 1980's Mobile Suit Gundam came out with anime in Japan. In the 1990's Dragonball Z broke the mainstream wall while Neon Genesis Evangelion opened the door to the late-night in Japan. In the 2000's Fullmetal Alchemist marked the peak of manga-to-anime while Code Grass and Death Note headed to the front of the class with a new anti-hero genre.

Then in 2013, Attack on Titan was realized and had shaken the industry for its increased reach into the market.

Unless you have been living under a rock, this story should already come to mind, but for your rock dwellers, here is a brief recap. Attack on Titan takes place in a world where humanity lives inside cities surrounded by three enormous walls that protect them from the gigantic man-eating titans.

The storyline follows Eren Yeager, who vows to exterminate the titans after a titan brings the destruction of his hometown and the death of his mother. There is a lot of tension and a lot of pain and emotional baggage to contend with in this series.

However, it is such a well done work that there are many points that are just awesome. The means of telling the story, the character development, openings and closings, the art and narrative are all part of the anime "it factor. This

work has it all. The series gains momentum and continues its tension throughout the entire series, which is no small feat.

One thing that can also be said of this series is that you can watch it with your little siblings. So, if you are stuck babysitting, maybe watch Titan so you can enjoy a show as much as your babysitting jobs. There is no sexual references at all in the show. Even though the titans are completely naked, there is nothing to be seen and it doesn't seem weird. It is like watching a naked Barbie doll, a little weird but not obscene.

Every part of the show from my point of view is really good. The show is clean and the animation just works. The intense part of this show is that there is some violence. The show is about giants eating humans, so there will be some violence. Also, a lot of characters die in this series, and I mean a lot. It is like, who is getting eaten this week. The violence is intense but not gory. Even though, if you have some really young babies to sit, I would steer clear of this because there are a few parts where humans get stepped on and there is some blood. You don't want that getting back to your boss.

So if you can handle a little graphic violence, then this show is totally for you. If you can't just fast forward through those parts because it is still worth it.

Enjoy.

## Spring Concert

Continued from Page 1

ed over to the Passaic High School who presented its Sax Ensemble who performed a very groovy "Take Five". The spotlight went back to the District Orchestra which had only senior musicians perform "Fields Of Gold" dedicated to all of the senior musicians who performed in the Spring Concert as well as the the seniors in the audience for their years in High School. It was an emotional scene as members of the audience and the seniors in the performance were featured and remembered their time here in PHS. The Choir followed up with the classic "Pure Imagination" from Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory as well as "Almost Is Never Enough" featuring an amazing soloist Itzel Ramos. Itzel, a sophomore, is excited to continue in Choir and hopes to continue performing in the music and theatre departments. She said, "I never knew before now just how much I love to perform."

Next was the bold sound of the PHS Marching Band who performed "Armed Forces on Parade" and "Celebration for Wind and Percussion." The loud and rhythmic sound of the Marching Band contrasted the more subtle sound of the Orchestra. The Orchestra performed "Pirates of the Caribbean." Then it was time for the Choir to take the spotlight featuring two more great soloists Jasiel Gerena and Nicole Tepo who provided heartfelt solos in "To Make you feel my love." The Choir was not done.

The girls ensemble sang, "Nine Hundred Miles." The District Orchestra given the spotlight one last time gave their last performance "Avengers" ending their portion of the program. Last, but not least, the Marching Band was honored with the finale song of the Spring Concert and the last performed song of the school year, "Pulse" and gave the Spring Concert of 2022 a spectacular overall ending.

This was a trying year, coming back from the pandemic lock-downs, but the Band, Orchestra, and Choir are all back in full swing and better than ever.

Mr. Rusca said, "I would like to thank parents, family, friends, teachers and staff who took time to come and hear our performance this evening. We would like to thank the Administration at PHS, PREP, and PASE for your constant support of our music department."

Mrs. Gauthier added, "A special thanks to Mrs. Latasha Casterlow-Lalla our District Music Supervisor and a very special thanks to Ms. Godovanik and Mr. Keith Place for accompanying the choir. I would like to thank Mr. Rusca for all his help with the auditorium and the audio-visual."

Mrs. Rusewics added, "I would like to recognize and thanks the students. You have to put countless hours of rehearsal into ensuring that this performance was excellent. Also, all of the music teachers want to say that you should have a great and restful summer!"

## Cat lover? Try a trip to Aoshima Island, Ozu Japan

By Kaylyn Amigon

Know a cat lover or are one yourself? Then this is the perfect place to meet some new feline friends. Aoshima, also known as Cat Island, is an island in Ehime Prefecture, Japan, known for its large number of feline residents.

They were first introduced to combat rodents on fishing boats, but remained on the island and reproduced in large numbers. This is a very popular tourist island that has also been named cat paradise due to its overwhelming residents being felines with a ratio of 36:1 humans to cats. It's the perfect place for cat lovers and those looking to make furry friends since most of the cats are friendly and always come up to tourist looking for scratches, pats and treats.

The island itself is around roughly one mile long and had lovely scenery and a wonderful view from the port that brings you to the island



along with a feline population of the island being reported as between 120 and 130 between 2015 and 2018. Aoshima is accessible via a ferry departing from in front of JR Iyo-Nagahama station in Port Nagahama, which takes around 30 minutes.

## AUDIO REVIEWS

## You need a good set of headphones for summer break: Beats are the best

By Edwin Bello

The Beats Studio 3's have proved time after time that this pair of headphones have been one of the best to ever be released. Despite being released five years ago, in October of 2017, the headphones are still top quality. Technology moves fast but a good set of headphones are forever. (Well, almost).

The noise canceling headphones make a great experience if you're really

trying to focus and get things done. (Or they work well if you need to ignore you family or siblings.) This was a great feature that was added to the pair of headphones. Year after year it has been debatable if the Beats Studio 3's (image on the left) or Solo 3's (image on the right) are better. Noise canceling on the Studio 3's make them better than the Solo 3's, because the Solo 3's don't have this feature built in.

Apart from that, the Studio 3's are

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## Movie Review: 'Encanto'

By Kaylyn Amigon

The movie "Encanto" tells the story of a magical Colombian family living in a magical home dubbed "casita," who live in a small town hidden in the mountains. The word "Encanto" can be translated to many words but is most often used to describe something enchanting, charming or something that you deeply enjoy and at times is used by the family to describe the entire valley where they live, including Casita and the town, as a place of wonder, or an "encanto."

The movie follows the life of a girl named Mirabel (protagonist) who belongs to a family called the Madrigals, as she battles with her self-worth and the need to prove herself. The family is unique to the others who live in their small town, because when anyone in the family comes of age on their fifth birthday, they are bestowed with a magical gift from a magical candle dubbed the "encanto" that appeared after a family sacrifice and saved her life.

Mirabel however was the only Madrigal who did not receive a gift when she reached the age when it would be bestowed upon her (as seen in the trailer and said within the first 10 minutes of the movie in the form of a song). Her grandmother is one of the other madrigals with no gift since she was the person who found/received the candle in the first place and is considered the matriarch of the family, and also started the town in the first place. Those that marry into the family, like Maribel's father and uncle, also do not receive a gift.

This movie fits in the genre of a coming-of-age story because it focuses on the protagonist's growth from her childhood to adulthood and how it affects the decisions she makes when she finds out that the "encanto" is in danger and what she learns about herself along the way and teaches others. Since this is a film by Disney it includes many lessons

that can be learned by children, one of which would be that no family is perfect, but they can always rely on their family as a strong foundation in times of crises.

A reason to see it or show it to your kids would be because of its diverse cast and characters of color. It can help children see themselves as more represented, as seen with one of the characters named Isabella who has a much darker beautiful skin tone than the rest of her family, who is regarded as the perfect and beautiful "flower" of the town who is adored by everyone, which in this case can help girls with similar skin tones feel beautiful and represented.

Another reason to enjoy the movie is its very catchy music that serves as a way to move the plot along in a fun way that keeps the audience entertained. With songs such as "The Family Madrigal" which introduces us to the family and how it started including what kind of gift each family member was gifted; "Waiting On A Miracle" which reveals to us how Mirabel really feels about not receiving a gift like the rest of her family and her insecurities; and the most popular song "We Don't Talk About Bruno" which is where the family tells Mirabel about her uncle Bruno who had the gift of being able to tell the future and how one day he left the family. This was the No.1 song in the U.S for the first three consecutive weeks of January in the Billboard Hot 100 records, surpassing songs that were in the charts at the time by popular artists such as Dua Lipa, Adele, and Ed Sheeran.

The voice actors in "Encanto" are also popular actors or singers themselves. Singer Stephanie Beatriz who voices the main character Mirabel Madrigal was in another popular and successful movie that is also inclusive and has great music called "In the Heights" as a character called "Carla."

Coincidentally some songs in "Encanto" and "In The Heights" were written by Lin-Manuel Miranda who is an award winning composer and is responsible for movies/musicals such as "Hamilton" and "Tick Tick Boom" which are very recognized in the musical industry. Another very well-known singer in the Spanish world who is responsible for singing "Dos Orugitas," one of the many emotional songs in the movie, is Sebastian Yatra who has received 23 platinum singles and two gold singles for digital sales in Central America. The voice actor for Mariano who plays the man who Isabella, the town's "flower," is later on betrothed to, is voiced by another popular Colombian singer called "Maluma" who has won a Latin Grammy award.

The directors of Encanto, Jared Bush and Byron Howard, also directed popular movies such as "Zootopia" and "Zootopia 2", "Tangled", "Bolt" and many more.

The animation in the movie is colorful and full of life with details in the Madrigal home added from Latin places like Columbia, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. It's very catchy music and beautiful animation earned them a nomination in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) awards for best animation and best music. Although the movie can no longer be viewed in the theaters and is only accessible to those with a Disney+ account, it is still very possible to watch it on other websites with a quick Google search.

However, it might be hard for some viewers who don't understand the Spanish language to understand certain heartfelt moments/songs which are in Spanish. For example the song "Dos Orugitas," which plays as a background song for abuela's (Mirabel's grandmother's) backstory and how she receives the gift which could be considered one of the most heart-

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## Discover The Eccentric Tones

By Dexter Ramos

### Bladee and ECCO2K

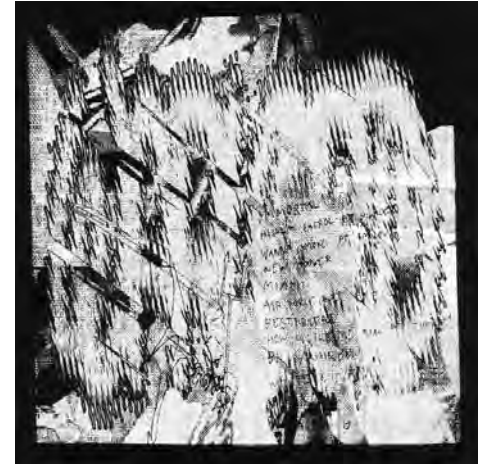
One thing to love about Bladee and ECCO2K is that they constantly immerse themselves in every detail of their work. One look at the cover art for the album, and you'd know it was designed by none other than one of the duo.

Before the "Crest" album's release, Bladee and ECCO2K released the first single from the project (unexpectedly) titled "Girls Just Want To Have Fun." Before the song dropped, we had no idea that they'd been working on anything together.

Like many of their previous efforts, fans did not see the "Crest" album coming. It was the same story as the album's first single. Although the project dropped unexpectedly, it has proven to be some of their best work together. Bladee and ECCO2K make themselves comfortable around Whitearmor's production and give their fans enough new music to leave on repeat. You should hear it.

### WARLORD by Yung Lean

Jonatan Hastad Leandoer is a Swedish rapper who has been making music with his friends for years now, I have enjoyed



INSTAGRAM/YUNGLEAN2001

Warlord album cover.

projects from Ecco2k and Bladee but I have never really been blown away by a Yung Lean project. Starz was just a little bit too long and the last three tracks are easily the weakest tracks on the record, but Warlord is just... perfect.

Yung Lean makes a beautiful, messy collage of himself on "Warlord." A 19-year-old that's on top of the world - fulfilling his childhood dreams. But at the same time watching that world crumble -

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## MOVIE REVIEW: 'Antlers' is a good way to spook your summer

By Sebastian Hernandez

Antlers is a movie which deserves your attention. You can catch it on multiple streaming services and you should not skip past it. Overall it is a good movie to watch. Just make sure you are in the right mood. Written by Scott Cooper and Henry Chaisson, it will have a good and believable dialogue and suspenseful plot.

Antlers is filled with thrilling scenes that left me in shock. It's something I would expect from a good film. Each cast member played a perfect part since they were able to play their characters perfectly. Not only did I enjoy the movie but friends who watched it with me also enjoyed the film. They saw what the movie had and what the film needed. The two actors, Keri Russell and Jeremy T. Thomas, made a huge impact on the how they played their parts. Keri is the school teacher who has a horrible past with her father and Jeremy plays the mysterious kid who is hiding his dad and brother who were infected by a creature.

Antlers does well with how it looks, such as the scenes that were covered with darkness which gives the scene set against the vastness of Oregon a feeling of having claustrophobia. This gives the film a moody and saturated look that helps create a good atmosphere. The cinematography was a great part of the film, so that you feel the tension and horror of the characters.

Talking about the bad things about the movie would be the parts of the film where each character had a bad past, but does not complete the full story about what exactly happened, because in the film the teacher had a horrible past with her father but I never really know how bad it was although according to how she acted and had constant flashbacks, I can see that it was bad.

The ending of the movie was not as surprising, it was more



about them realizing that they are probably going to keep making another movie since at the end of the movie one of the characters gets infected too which gives me a foreshadow about what the second movie is probably going to be about.

So would I recommend this movie? Yes, I would. It is an overall good movie for anyone to watch. You might not notice anything bad with the film. If you are a type of person that likes to get scared this movie won't provide a lot of that but it does include bloody gore scenes and that's something we should be aware of. I wouldn't say the movie was great and perfect but it was an overall good movie. This all depends on preferences on the movie but for me it was a good film. You should definitely make sure that you are ready to be scared and suspend your criticism until you get into it.

This movie had its aspects and the climax to the film and most of the film was good. It depends on what type of movie you are looking for and I'm here to give a review about the film to see if it is worth watching and if they meet each aspect to make the film good. It did have some downfalls but its something I don't think would be noticeable because as a watcher you kinda just focus on enjoying the film which is enjoyable. It is summer vacation, so take some time to enjoy getting a little spooked, especially with some friends. It makes it so much better.



PHOTO BY CYNTHIA RODRIGUEZ

The 2021-2022 PHS Girls Soccer team.

## Passaic Girls Soccer: Together We're Stronger

By Cynthia Rodriguez

When playing on a new team it can be very nerve wracking. Some rules I go by are to always be yourself upon meeting your teammates and always try your best regardless of skill. These will be the guys/

girls you will compete next to and soon will become closer with. It is important to show you are eager to learn about the sport and improving your skills everyday. Good teammates will never judge you based off skill but will definitely notice a strong minded player!

My advice as I graduate and leave the team to the next generation of players is to work hard and also learn to work together as a team. These players are all here to do the same thing. Play the sport they love, compete, make friends and especially have a wonder-

ful experience in high school. Even though it is always awkward at first, that feeling passes, and the fun that replaces that is worth it. The whole thing is totally worth it. These will be the best memories of school, so do not miss out on them.

## Neutrogena Hydro Boost Gel-Cream: Is it worth the hype?

By Abigail Huitzil

Neutrogena is a brand of the Johnson & Johnson Family of Consumer Companies. It is considered to be the number one dermatologist-recommended skin care brand. Not to mention, it offers some of the world's most favored beauty and skincare products. The Neutrogena Hydro Boost Gel-Cream is one of the products of the Hydro Boost line, which promises to provide lightweight but extreme hydration.

The Hydro Boost Gel-cream is non-comedogenic, which means it will not be able to clog your skin pores, resulting in no acne breakouts. This moisturizer is also fragrance-free, which means there is no type of scent or fragrance in it, resulting in no irritation. As noted, this is definitely perfect for sensitive skin. It is dye-free, so there are no artificial

colors in it. Remember that a color usually has a mix of synthetic chemicals, which can be harmful to your skin. Moreover, you can wear it alone or under makeup. It really doesn't make a difference how you use it.

Furthermore, the purified hyaluronic acid it contains binds to water and holds it within the skin's surface. Glycerin helps penetrate the skin 9 surface layers deep. Last but not least, its gel matrix formula with liquid crystals spreads on the skin to deliver water and humectants to lock in hydration for 48 hours.

On the other hand, the full ingredients list of the Gel-Cream shows preservatives and additives listed before the vital



ingredients. This moisturizer can cause side effects such as skin irritation and allergic reactions due to the included silicones. In addition, damage to the extracellular matrix due to contact of the skin with chlorphenesin, which is a synthetic preservative. Not to mention, risk for nerve damage and brain-related complications due to phenoxyethanol, which is a neurotoxin utilized as a preservative.

Moving on, it is packaged in a transparent jar, which can degrade the product due to the exposure to air, heat, and sunlight. Maybe an airless pump bottle would be a better fit for the moisturizer. Last but not least, it is slightly overpriced. \$23.99 for

1.7 ounces! The current inflation issue doesn't even play a role here. That's too much for a silicone-heavy and low-active ingredient product.

All in all, the Hydro Boost is targeted for those with dry skin, but it can also be used by those with oily skin due to its weightless formula. Most of its ingredients are simple, but it is important to consider its questionable preservatives and additives, which can cause serious side effects. Did you know that we shed skin cells throughout the day? Having good skin care is a must to maintain glowing skin. Why moisturize oily skin too? Without moisture on your skin, dehydration comes about and starts to produce even more oil. You definitely want to avoid that. Skin is an important aspect of our health, so why not take good care of it?

## Beats Studio 3 Headphones

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over-ear headphones, unlike the Solo 3's that are on-ear. This gives the headphones a better grip and feeling on the ears. The Beats also have a good grip to prevent it from slipping off at any time while doing any activity. The ear cushions get a good grip on your ears and they make it extremely comfortable to wear. The rubber on the top also give a good grip on the top part of your head.

Some pros I'd like to point out are:

- Covers your whole ear which is more comfortable than the Solo 3's which are another extremely successful pair of headphones from Beats.
- Has a good visual look (doesn't look old, outdated, or out of style).
- Adds character to you, can be worn with any fit you got on.
- Over ear headphones.
- Buttons on the side if needed. The buttons on the headphones pause/start music, volume buttons and noise canceling activation.
- Cancels out noise for

extreme focus

- Super lightweight
- Great bluetooth range
- Charges fast

Some Negative points:

- Battery Life
- Very expensive (\$300-\$350)
- Bluetooth isn't that good for devices other than Apple ones
- Somewhat fragile

The Beats Studio 3's have been consistently good for casually listening to music for years and many more years to come. This pair is very versatile with the activities you're doing because it's an over ear headphone. This gives it a better grip to stay on your head and even has rubber on the top part to prevent any slipping.

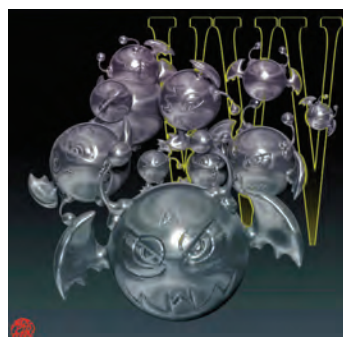
Overall, these headphones are just amazing for doing homework, exercising, casually walking, jogging, and if you just want to relax and sit down while listening to good quality sounding music these are great. Give these headphones a shot and you won't regret it.

## Discover The Eccentric Tones

Continued from Page 7

through his friends dying, drug abuse, strained relationships and heartbreak.

"Warlord" contains Lean's best lines, Bladee and Ecco2K's best verses some of Whitearmor's finest production.



### VVV by SEBii

Let's start off with this trap beat fire intro. Starts slow, SEBii fully self aware with the lyrics; it flows rather well. Pretty solid way to start off the EP, IMO.

"Winter," I don't know how SEBii did it, but this song is like a 5 for me. I LOVE this song, the seasonal vibe of winter, with the amazing beat and the calming flow makes this a really relaxing song to listen too – even

for SEBii's more glitchcore hyperpop standards.

"Data Looting" is pretty good – I kinda like this one actually. It starts off with the experimental glitchy synths that SEBii is otherwise known for, and it flows well into his verses. Both of these go hand-in-hand and create a listenable, enjoyable, colorful banger. Like 3.0/5 for me.

"VVV" is how you set an outro for sure. Longest track on the EP – and it does in fact go pretty hard. SEBii's vocals on this one really stood out, and the flow continues throughout the song without anything ruining it. Really good for my ears, I'm sticking this into my playlist.

### E by Ecco2K

It's been nearly two years since the release of the highly anticipated "E" by Drain Gang member Ecco2K, and to this day it's still as abstract and interesting as when I had



## 'Encanto'

Continued from Page 7

felt scenes in the movie. Those who don't understand the song might not feel the same impact as someone who understands the meaning behind the words of the song and how it correlates to the scene.

The movie is great at delivering other many heartfelt moments because you can literally feel the emotions through the screen as well as see it on the characters faces, whenever something big happens or a sincere moment occurs, the movie does a great job of portraying what a character is feeling. What makes these scenes so good are these scenes shown between families that you can experience yourself as well or have experienced with your own family, making it that more relatable and easy to understand the characters emotions.

The ending of the movie, although happy, is not the typical "happily ever after" Disney is known for. There is no definitive villain in this movie, which I actually think is a great thing because it helps add more focus and depth to the characters and less focus on villainous characters.

What the broadcasting of this movie means to the Disney industry would be the release of a more diverse movie which had immense success with a great story and characters. It would be another great movie added to the Disney roster that represented the Latin community and people of color, instead of the cookie cutter princess movies that Disney is often associated with.

I truly think this movie's success is well deserved with a story full of fun and great characters, great animation, songs that are so catchy you'll find yourself singing them in the shower, and a great story that shows how strong the bond of a family is, fue un encanto verlo (meaning it was a wonderful movie to watch) and I believe others should take some time with their family to watch it and enjoy it.

my first peek all those months ago. With each listen, I seemed to learn more about the illusive figure and their intentions in this album.

I'll admit, I was initially hesitant to check out music from the quiet kid of the group, Ecco2K. I'm not sure what put me off at first, perhaps it had been the abstract and confusing posts from the "aloearten" instagram account, or just the name of the album, an estimated symbol that was read as "E.."

I had friends that were quite engrossed in the collective Drain Gang, like I was, but none of them shared the fascination I had with Ecco2K.

While being a huge fan of "E," I do not believe that it's a concept album of any sort, especially not one about being on ketamine. I'd describe it as an album that's just a whole out of body experience, as it discusses topics of disassociating, dysmorphia, and the feeling of not being accepted based on multiple reasons that are often uncontrollable. Anyway, if you couldn't tell, Ecco2K's "E" is a masterpiece.