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THE ROUNDUP

BY AND FOR THE STUDENTS OF HALF HOLLOW HILLS HIGH SCHOOL WEST

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First Place Winner!
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Alif 2016

Databases – A Fundamental Tool for the Success of a Student

By Quinn Pearson | Staff Writer

The works cited page is perhaps the most vital page in any research paper, argumentative essay or informative article. The most well-crafted argument is useless without cred-

packaged together and vetted. It is good and credible information.” Unlike common search engines such as Google, Yahoo or Bing, information collected from databases is al-

keep and which to discard. However, they are not a complimentary gift to our school; the district invests around \$150,000 on databases annually. Recently, the district has

things in mind. For one, they consider the amount of resources available. Secondly, they examine the variety of the resources. In addition to providing students with an

ent databases. Each of which come with a unique set of research and information. From health and wellness to geology databases that contain a myriad of resources.



ibility. The works cited page is instrumental in producing legitimacy. Thankfully, the students of High School West are given an abundance of resources through the library and their databases.

According to Mrs. Lennon, the librarian at High School West, databases are “pieces of information neatly

ways reliable. Also, they neatly package information together allowing for easier research. This information consists of sources such as encyclopedias, books, scientific studies, and academic journals.

Our librarians mainly select our databases. Based on their recommendations the district decides which to

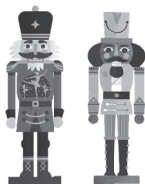
been pushing to dispose of the expensive Gale Student Resources database, which costs approximately \$15,000 per year. But, librarians like Mrs. Lennon who believe this database is particularly beneficial, have been encouraging the district to keep it.

When selecting databases, librarians keep many

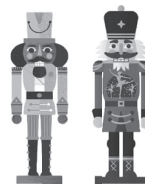
abundance of knowledge, it is necessary that the material is diverse in content. Thirdly, they emphasize the value in having relevant resources. It is imperative that the information is recent and contains material that is readily researched by students and teachers.

In total, our school district has access to 65 differ-

cate them visit the Half Hollow Hills website, go to High School West and click on the library and media center tab. From there, click on the database collection link. If you wish to access these resources refer to the librarians, they can provide you with the proper login information.



Winter Is Here



By Samantha Lange | Political Editor

The mornings are arctic, the days are short, and the common cold sweeps the halls of High School West.

Whether you are among the many who detest the winter season or are one of the rare few who prefer its frigid charm to the much gentler beauty of spring and summer, there is no excuse not to get the fullest experience possible from the next month or two ahead.

The warmth of the holidays more than makes up for the bitter cold of the season. Whether it's Christmas, Chanukah, Ramadan, or Kwanzaa, there are plenty of activities that each and every person can participate in to brighten up their holiday experiences in the upcoming winter season.

Most popular among holiday tradition, perhaps, is the countless ballet schools' yearly performances of The Nutcracker, a classical ballet that relays the story of a young girl named Clara as she is thrown into a dream world in which her beloved toy nutcracker comes to life. Although The Nutcracker is performed by a variety of dance studios in different fashions, one of the most highly acclaimed renditions in the state is performed just twenty minutes away at Hofstra University, courtesy of the prestigious Ohman's New York Dance Theatre. Presented at the John Cranford Adams Playhouse on both December 17th and 18th at 12:00 pm and 5:00 pm each day, the performance is a must-see. The fact that this year will be its thirty-

fifth anniversary is a telling testament to the show's quality and popularity.

Another thing that is extremely popular among people not only on the island, or even in the state, but all over the world is coming to New York City to take a whirl around the famous ice skating rink in Rockefeller center. Many a classic holiday movie has taken place under the soft lights of the city shining down on this iconic rink. Around \$25.00— \$32.00 for adults and \$15.00 for children, not including a \$12 skate rental for each, the experience may be expensive, but it is well worth it to enjoy this classic holiday experience that people from all over the world travel to partake in.

Also very popular in

the city is the highly intricate window displays that can be found in multiple high-end department stores, including Macy's, Bloomingdale's, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Barneys. This year, Macy's will be displaying Santa's "Communication Station," designed by Roya Sullivan, in which Santa's headquarters are depicted in the North Pole. Saks Fifth Avenue will have a display reflecting the aforementioned holiday favorite The Nutcracker. However, if Christmas decorations do not quite fit your definition of the holiday times, you need not worry because the equally famed Bloomingdale's and Barneys have chosen to go with more universal themes this year, focusing more on the spirit of the season rather than any specific holiday. Barneys,

for example, is exhibiting a display that attempts to catch the very essence of light through fireworks, planets and abstract, bright faces. Bloomingdale's display focuses on the theme of "Love, Peace and Joy," depicting a not so wintry holiday season, challenging the northern perception of what we consider to be the stereotypical holiday atmosphere.

Regardless of what holiday or where you decide to celebrate, there is always plenty of entertaining activities to participate in as the holiday season rolls around, especially here in New York. So, even if you're not a fan of all this brittle winter weather, don't let it distract you from making your holiday season the best it can possibly be.

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HALF HOLLOW HILLS
HIGH SCHOOL WEST

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Christine Seo.....Website/School News Editor

Julia Camina.....Asst. Design Editor
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We encourage the entire student body to contact us.

Pokémon SUN AND MOON REVIEW

By Mark Negron | A&E Editor

From the moment you step onto the tropical islands of the Alola region in *Pokémon Sun* and *Moon*, there are two different questions you could be asking yourself. If you've played previous games, that question is probably "Is this like what I remember growing up with? Is it something more? Is it something less?" If not, and say you've only played the recently released *Pokémon GO*, your question might now be "How does this *Pokémon* game compare to *Pokémon GO*?"

And no matter who you are, there's a different question that's really running through your minds: "Does it live up to the hype?" Let's find out now.

Pokémon Sun and *Moon*'s biggest strength is what it improves on from past games: there's obviously still battling and catching *Pokémon* to add to your team, but now when you fight a *Pokémon* you've fought before, the game shows if your moves are effective against the opponent's type. Additionally, the game

allows you to catch *Pokémon* more efficiently with just a button press. With a push of the Y button, you can scroll through your *Pokeballs* and pick any of them to catch a creature.

Another thing the game has improved on is Hidden Machines, or HMs. HMs are moves that a *Pokémon* can learn and can be used outside of battle, such as Surf, which allows you to sail the seas, or Cut, which allows you to cut down small trees that are blocking your path. A new feature called Ride *Pokémon* handles all of your needs for transportation in the Alola region. These Ride *Pokémon* aren't like others, where they're caught. Whether you're charging on the back of a Tauros or flying across Alola on a Charizard, this is definitely one of the coolest features in the game, and I hope it makes a return in future games.

Not only were old mechanics improved throughout the game, but there are added features that break new ground for the series. One of these is the Island Challenge, which

replaces the famous *Pokémon* gyms. In older games, trainers would take on eight *Pokémon* gyms that are filled with battles against *Pokémon* of a specific type, followed by a Gym Leader, who would be extremely powerful compared to his underlings.

Now, there is the Island Challenge, where trainers in Alola take part in trials in which they need to complete a specific task, like searching for items or taking pictures. This is followed by a battle with a Totem *Pokémon*, who is a stronger *Pokémon* than usual with increased stats. After any given number of these, a Grand Trial takes place where you fight against the Kahuna, who is essentially the gym leader of one of the four islands. This is a really cool idea, and seeing it in execution is fun and exciting. While the concept of Gym Leaders was enjoyable at first, it quickly became predictable as you face wave after wave of trainers.

The region of Alola is vast and beautiful in the amaz-

ing graphics of the 3DS, which also makes the *Pokémon* here look the best they've ever looked. Speaking of the *Pokémon*, there's not too many of them, with only 95 *Pokémon* added to the roster, including the new Alolan forms of old *Pokémon*, which change the appearance, stats, and abilities of old favorites in new and interesting ways. Thankfully, of the list of new *Pokémon* added to the roster of now 801 creatures, many are interesting and have cool concepts behind them. One of them is a Water-type named Wishiwashi, which starts out as a small fish that doesn't make much headway in battle until it hits a certain level when it changes forms as a school of Wishiwashi joining together to make a giant monster. Overall, with interesting new *Pokémon* to discover and catch, it makes the small number of new creatures to catch bearable.

There are other great aspects about *Sun* and *Moon*, like the story and the music, but the major feature

that *Pokémon Sun* and *Moon* brings is the Z-Moves, which takes battling to a whole new level. Using a Z-Crystal and Z-Ring, one can unlock the power of your *Pokémon* by pushing their moves to their limits. Each move has animations and sequences that make things intense and exciting, and having them be the ending beat to a long, tough battle is one of the most satisfying moments I've ever had playing a *Pokémon* game.

Overall, *Pokémon Sun* and *Moon* might be the best *Pokémon* game ever made. Almost everything, from the *Pokémon* to the battles to the new features added, are tuned to perfection. The game took me about 20 hours to beat, and with an extensive aftergame that puts *Pokémon X* and *Y* to shame, I'm still trying to find everything there is to see in the Alola region. There's so much in this game I couldn't write about it all in this article. Check in soon at <http://hillswestroundup.com/> to see more of this game!

A YEAR IN REVIEW: WHAT 2016 BROUGHT US IN THE WORLD OF SPORTS

By Nick Steele | Asst. Sports Editor

I'd have to say this is definitely my favorite time of the year.

This is the time of year when we get to reflect on what we've seen, examine what we are seeing, and predict what we hope to see from our favorite professional sports over the course of this calendar year and into the next.

2016 brought us highs and lows, crazy surprises, and a great couple of weeks in Rio for the Olympic Games that we all, as Americans, came together to watch.

The year began with a finish; that is, a conclusion to the 2015 NFL season when the Peyton Manning-led Denver Broncos outplayed Cam Newton and the 15-1 Carolina Panthers in Super Bowl 50 by a score of 24-10. Denver's dominant defense carried them through the regular season with a 12-4 record, despite Peyton Manning's struggles with injuries and interceptions. Throwing just 9 touchdowns and 17 picks, the aging Hall of Famer didn't exactly play like a Super Bowl winning QB, but

he, along with defensive stud and the game's MVP Von Miller, lifted the 50th Lombardi Trophy with pride that night in Santa Clara.

As March rolled around, everyone's brackets were filled and the highly anticipated NCCA Men's Basketball Championship was kicked off with a bang. First round losses by Michigan State and West Virginia left fans in shock (including myself) as they watched their brackets crumble right from the start. Syracuse became 2016's surprise team in the tournament. Originally ranked 10th in the Midwest, they managed to take out Gonzaga and Virginia among others to reach the Final Four. In the end, it was Villanova who took home the trophy for the second time in school history.

The summer brought sports fans across the country some stories that even our parents may not have yet experienced in their lifetimes. We got to see the first NBA team ever to win 73 games out of the

season's 82. We then got to see that team, the Golden State Warriors, lose their championship bid to a team from a city that was in a 52 year championship drought in ALL sports, becoming the first team to give up a 3-1 series lead in the Finals. LeBron and the Cleveland Cavaliers sent Steph Curry and the record setting Warriors back to Oakland as the only team not only to win 73 games, but to lose in The Finals after reaching that win total.

The team with an even larger championship drought, the Chicago Cubs, were able to win the World Series over another Cleveland team as the summer drifted into fall. The Cubs outlasted the Indians in 7 games to win their first championship since 1908. Led by the bats of Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo, and the arms of Jake Arrieta and Jon Lester, the Cubs denied Cleveland another 2016 miracle with some history of their own.

As the final quarter of the year is here, the NFL, NBA, and NHL have all started their

2016-2017 seasons, and things are getting interesting. In the NFL, 7 teams who were not part of the playoff picture last season have spots locked up if the season were to end today, 5 of which come from the NFC. Detroit, Tampa Bay, NY Giants, Atlanta, Dallas, Oakland, and Baltimore all have a shot at competing in January, with Dallas already punching their ticket in Week 13.

In the NBA, the Knicks offseason acquisitions have arguably worked out, as they hold the 6th seed in the East already winning a third of their total games won last season. The Warriors and Cavs continue to dominate, but the Spurs, Raptors, and Clippers aren't far behind in the early going. As far as the NHL goes, not many New Yorkers were happy with a Pittsburgh Stanley Cup win over the Sharks in June. This season, some of those fans still aren't happy, as the Islanders sit at the bottom of the Metropolitan division. However, the Rangers are

holding their ground, tied with Pittsburgh with 37 points thus far atop the division.

2016 was definitely memorable in the world of sports. We got to see another Olympics with some aging (but still incredible) athletes in their final games of their careers. And in 2017 we'll see a new NHL team from Las Vegas.

Whether your inner front-runner has you changing out of Von Miller jerseys to rock Khalil Mack t-shirts, or if you're a genuine sports fanatic waiting anxiously for what's to come, you won't be disappointed. 2016 gave us a new look at sports, letting us know that good teams don't stay good forever (except the Patriots, sorry Jets fans but at this point Tom and Bill might as well buy the franchise), and new teams rise to the occasion, piquing our interest with immense enthusiasm. 2017 looks to be just as promising, but we'll just have to wait and see for ourselves.

DOORWAYS TO COMMUNITY {AND CONTROVERSY}

By the Editorial Staff of The Roundup

Soft, entrancing music could be heard exuding from the depths of the twinkling lights and decorations. The sense of wonderment and joy overflowed hallways as students passed each unique door. The holiday spirit, always working its magic, had clearly made its way into the halls of Hills West. Opportunities for each blank door seemed endless as the scenes of winter shouted their ideas in hopes of making the most welcoming entrance.

However, the light and festive mood of the holiday door decorating contest quickly turned sour as sentiments of disunity and controversy began circulating around the school after rumors that the contest would not allow any trees or forms of certain symbols essential to the celebration of the holiday season. "The things that are banned are references to non-secular holidays, so like I have a giving tree in the front of the school and that's a tree," continued Mrs. Reynolds. "That's allowed. You know, but it is all about how each individual views the decoration. It is kind of a grey territory ... [the contest] was really just something to bring students and faculty together."

The Holiday Door Contest first developed through ideas of fellow students from the Student Executive Council. With guidance from Mrs. Reynolds, the committee put together a list of rules to keep the contest fair, fun, and safe. "The limitations were only the decorations were not to expand outside of the door frame, not be a fire hazard and stop someone from leaving the room if they needed to, the window needed to be showing if there was a window on that particular door, and no references to religious or secular holidays," said Mrs. Reynolds. "I was running the contest with the hopes that everyone would abide by the rules ... It really was just to do something fun, to bring something different to the school and to get teachers and students excited."

Still, others have expressed that the effects of the contest resulted in discord rather than the unity it was intended to bring. One such student that has vocally expressed his opinion on the debacle is Junior Gilbert Spencer. "There is a petition being signed for Dr. Catapano to lift the ban on trees," Spencer continued. "Hopefully, it might work, but the issue is more

about administrators being more open to limiting students' expression and freedom of speech, whether it was the ban on discussing the election or now with the whole tree scandal."

The Holiday Door Decorating Contest has illustrated the fine line between "political correctness" and the amount of freedom of expression in schools. Some argue that the large variety of cultures are not being fairly represented in school hallways while others refute that, so long as students come up with the door design, students should be able to decorate however they want. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, "Students may express their religious beliefs in the form of reports, homework and artwork, and such expressions are constitutionally protected. Teachers may not require students to modify, include or excise religious views in their assignments." In other words, teachers may not be permitted to assign the crafting of a paper mache christmas tree as an assignment, but students are allowed to create such depictions (deemed as artwork) so long as they come up with the idea.

"The SEC started this holiday door contest

to add more festivity and joy to the school," said SEC Junior Vice President Morgan Grant. "Teachers were notified before the contest began that religious aspects of decorations should be restricted and strayed from. Some teachers went against that which has started an issue. We purposefully made it more restricted because we were concerned about parents who might complain that don't want religious affiliations in the school. Of course, we wanted to have more holiday spirit, but it is because of the issue of complaints and the offense it could bring."

The prohibition of religious symbols in the contest undoubtedly sparked a debate within the school over whether students can or cannot display their own views of the holiday season in school. Every student should be included in the door decorating contest so that the school reflects the diverse group of students at Hills West. While the contest was clear in stating its rules in which no religious symbols were permitted, Christmas trees, menorahs and the like are more closely associated with the holiday spirit rather than strict religious practices.

Instead of limit-

ing our freedom of expression, we should simply encourage the opportunity to become versed in the cultures of the student body through creative outlets. The Holiday Door Decorating Contest is a unique opportunity to display the diversity that exists throughout the Half Hills Central School District, and this diversity is what truly makes us great. An inclusive environment can facilitate and foster a sense of community, understanding, and education of the diverse backgrounds and cultures of our student body. Imagery shouldn't offend -- instead, it should spark an opportunity to bridge the gap between cultures and promote understanding. Our individualities should be openly expressed without restrictions. This is the way we promote unity within our community: through education.

According to the Religious Freedom Center, "The high court has ruled ... that the government may not erect an explicitly religious symbol (such as a creche or menorah) unless it is part of a larger "secular" holiday display ... Interestingly, a majority of the justices has stated that Christmas trees, unlike creches,





and
m e -
norahs,
attained a
have
secular
status in our society and
can be displayed stand-
ing alone. This does not
mean that schools should
erect Christmas trees dur-
ing the holiday season, but
only that they probably
can. Many Americans con-
tinue to view Christmas
trees as religious symbols,
and for this reason schools
may wish to be more sensi-
tive than the law requires.
The Court also has ac-
knowledged approvingly
that Christmas carols are
frequently sung in public
schools."

Even students who
do not subscribe to the
Christian religion still de-
corate trees at home in the
spirit of the season. One
such student is freshman
Cole Silber. "We call it a
Hannamas tree," said Sil-
ber. When asked about the
controversy over trees be-
ing used in a holiday con-
text, he was unmoved. "It
gets the class involved in
something. It doesn't mat-
ter, it's just about the entire
holiday season."

Chemistry teacher

Mrs. Lyons is
one such teacher
that has experienced
problems due to this con-
troversy, which ultimately
resulted in the removal of
her decorated door. "We
were not allowed to have
anything that was repre-
sentative of religious opin-
ions," said Mrs. Lyons. "It
said 'O, Chemist-tree' and
it was a tree: it had lights
and glitter on it with a glit-
ter molecule at the top and
the students were working
to make other molecules to
attach to the tree. It wasn't
intended to be a Christmas
tree, but it was taken that
way by some people. I took
it down last Friday. I've
kinda given up on doing
the door decorating project
because it was just a lot of
work and I don't want to
start over."

This dilemma has
turned some teachers away
from participating in what
was supposed to be a fun
activity. But for some, it has
only spurred their motiva-
tions to go above and be-
yond in creating a diversif-
ied door. "My true design
is supposed to be an eclec-
tic view of all the holidays,
little known facts, and little
known holidays for all four
seasons, this way we can
have a dynamic approach

to
the
h o l i -
d a y s ,"
said AP
World teach-
er Mr. Cascio, who
utilized both his door and
neighboring Ms. Mills' door
as a canvas.

"People are very
concerned about holidays
not being represented so
we figured we would try to
work on all four seasons of
holidays together. My sev-
enth period AP class brain-
stormed with me for the
design. I like the contest,
and I think that the people
that are offended should re-
lax. I do anticipate negative
feedback because you can't
please everybody in this
world."

The Advanced
Placement World History
curriculum, for the past few
years in which it has been
in place, has certainly tak-
en strides against promot-
ing euro-centric learning.
Instead, the curriculum
(which replaced the Euro-
pean History curriculum
back in the Fall of 2013)
focuses on the extensive
history of cultures outside
of the Western sphere. AP
World History has certainly
opened up doors to knowl-

edge of dif-
ferent philoso-
phies and religions,
which ultimately pro-
motes understand-
ing within students.

Immersed in the di-
verse cultures around the
globe, AP world students
have united to represent as
many holidays as learned
about in their curriculum.
"They should not be sup-
pressing religions but in-
cluding them more in the
school setting to spread
knowledge of other cul-
tures," said AP World stu-
dent Steven Secreti. "We
should use this holiday
time to inform students of
religions we have incorpo-
rated into our lives."

"It reminds me of
the Starbucks debacle last
year about, you know, you
weren't allowed to allude to
trees," said English teacher
Mrs. Benson. "[The holiday
door decorating contest]
is very similar to the Star-
bucks cups. We're read-
ing Fahrenheit 451 [in the
freshman English classes],
and -- remember when
Captain Beatty explains to
Montag that one of the rea-
sons the public stops read-
ing on their own is for cen-
sorship! If a book offends
somebody, burn it! If anoth-

e r
book
offends
somebody,
burn it! We
don't want to
have conflict, we
want everyone to be
at peace. We want every-
one to be happy...I think we
should all find out about
each other's heritage and
religions because then we
will see similarities that it's
the same God. As Calpur-
nia says to Lula in *To Kill A
Mockingbird*, "it's the same
God, ain't it?" said Mrs.
Benson.

The Roundup staff
agrees: Instead of limit-
ing conversation, let's talk
about our differences. Let's
continue to build our com-
munity. Let's not ignore the
cultural harmonies that
make Hills West great.

UNDERAGE DRINKING UNDER PARENTAL SUPERVISION: PERILOUS OR PREVENTIVE?

By Sephora Ferjuste | Opinion Editor



It is expected that many families will be sharing a drink with their children during the upcoming holidays.

The holidays are a perfect time for relaxation, enjoyment, and appreciation for the things we are fortunate enough to have. Stepping away from our hectic lives and daily routines allows us to refresh, rejuvenate and reduce stress during the much-anticipated week of winter recess. Eating, exchanging presents, and reminiscing over past holiday memories are a must, and for many, drinking alcohol is a must as well.

Alcohol is prevalent during the holidays as many adults indulge in wine, cider, champagne, eggnog, and even fruit cake. While it is common for minors to attend the same functions as adults during the holidays, such as family celebrations, underage drinking has become a highly controversial source of contention. Despite the rhetoric of critics, many parents welcome allowing teenagers to drink under close parental supervision during the holidays, while opponents argue that underage drinking of any kind is dangerous and illegal, even on a special occasion or holiday.

Skeptics of underage drinking, even under

the supervision of well-intentioned parents, believe that early consumption of alcohol increases the likelihood of harmful effects in the future, and that there is no safe way for teenagers and underage kids to drink alcohol. Hills West junior Sarina Singh agrees. "The legal drinking age is 21 for a reason," Singh said, "and even if their parents are watching them, it will still be irresponsible and have negative effects."

When asked her position on this highly controversial topic, Hills West AP Psychology teacher Mrs. Pastorella firmly stated, "Absolutely not. I don't think parents have the right to give a child the permission to do something that is potentially harmful to themselves and other people. The young brain has impaired judgment and is not fully developed. I think that a parent who allows their child to drink is harming their child physically and that is essentially child abuse. A sip of eggnog at the dinner table is not a big deal, but allowing a party or excessive drinking to occur in their presence is incredibly irresponsible."

Small amounts of

alcohol do not show a significant effect on adolescent's health or well being. However, large amounts over a prolonged period of time can cause irreversible damage. A young person's body cannot cope with alcohol the same way an adult's can. Drinking is more harmful to teens than adults because their brains are still developing throughout adolescence and well into young adulthood.

In fact, a 2010 study at the University of Southern California compared the brains of minors who drank alcohol frequently and those who didn't, and the results were shocking. The team of scientists who led the study discovered damaged nerve tissue in the brains of the teens who drank. The researchers believe this damage negatively affects attention span in boys, and girls' ability to comprehend and interpret visual information.

In addition to irreversible damage, an excess of alcohol in proportion to the child's age and weight can lead to alcohol poisoning, which means that the threshold for alcohol consumption varies per person and one should always

be aware of their own limitations. Proponents of supervised underage drinking contend that parental supervision and guidance will allow the teenager to learn how to drink responsibly earlier, and prevent experimentation and binge drinking in the future. Prohibiting teenagers from drinking makes alcohol consumption even more appealing to teenagers, who naturally engage in risky behaviors due to underdeveloped frontal lobes.

A survey of 6,245 U.S. teens, published in the Journal of Adolescent Health in 2004, found that teens who drank along with their parents were only one-third as likely to binge and half as likely to be regular drinkers. So, if the argument is that underage drinking with parental supervision is dangerous, this evidence suggests otherwise.

The controversial act is also not illegal, in most states that is. Federal and individual state laws make it a crime for friends or store clerks to supply alcohol to minors; however, although the minimum drinking age nationwide is 21 years old, and it is ille-

gal for adults to host parties and supply alcohol to a slew of minors, it is not illegal for a child aged five to 16 to drink alcohol at home or on other private property.

In fact, in New York State, being in possession of alcohol as a minor is considered a crime, unless supervised by a parent or guardian. Hills West sophomore Makaela Jackson expressed her confusion over the distribution of responsibilities for adolescents. "I find it weird that we can have jobs, vote, fight for this country, and have so many responsibilities," Jackson said, "but we can't drink a glass of wine at a party."

The question is, is drinking a glass of eggnog in the safety of your home a crime? The issue has cultural implications, and these drinking laws for minors vary by country, state, and culture, where some countries allow underage drinking, even in public areas, and other cultures condemn it all together.

As the holiday season gets under way, we would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season with your family and friends.



Hills West sophomore Makaela Jackson questions "[why] we can't drink a glass of wine at a party?"

STUDENTS IN UPROAR OVER RACIST GROUPME

By Alyssa Ng | World News Editor

“Higher education must lead the march back to the fundamentals of human relationships”, stated John A. Hannah, “to the old discovery that is ever new, that man does not live by bread alone.” It seems a student at the University of Oklahoma has undermined the meaning of this quote, at the expense of black students studying at the University of Pennsylvania, one of the most prestigious institutions in America. This cyber attack on students taints the reputation of the Ivy league schools and universities in general as higher education is usually equated to open-mindedness and building connections to solve the issues of the world, not exacerbate them.

It has recently come to light that a number of black UPenn freshman felt victimized when added to a GroupMe account entitled, “Mud Men,” overflowing with disparaging comments and pictures, racial slurs and a calendar of lynchings. No one was physically hurt, but the same can’t be said about the student’s emotional state. Feeling scared and attacked, many students rushed to their admission counselors in tears. The brazen actions of the perpetrators were traced back to the University of Oklahoma. In November, a student from that college was temporarily suspended- evidence is still being collected against him. Two other

Oklahomans are also being investigated for their involvement.

The incident has provided the reality of college campuses. “College campuses are known to be generally liberal, being regarded as a safe haven for all races, sexes, and sexual orientations,” stated a UPenn student

in support; students have to go through much more hardships than people expect.

Countless seniors from High School West have applied or are applying to Ivy Leagues, especially UPenn. Although the event is shocking and repulsing to say to least, it does not seem to discour-

who have no affiliation with the school, so it is not representative of the community that exists at Penn.”

Indeed, the University of Pennsylvania president, Amy Gutmann, quickly issued the following statement to denounce the matter at hand: “This is absolutely

Photo: Genevieve Glatzky



Outside Van Pelt Library, students hold signs and spoke in protest of racist GroupMe messages.

who wished to remain anonymous. “Being a minority, this is the first time ever that I have felt a hint of fear of being harmed due to my racial identity. Being in the University of Pennsylvania doesn’t mean you are protected from hate.”

It is events like this that prompt some colleges to have “trigger warnings” and safe spaces that extend beyond racism and into politics and offensive classroom materials. An immense amount of criticism has been directed at these methods to coddle college students, but there is a valid argument

age prospective students from applying. Two students, who will go by ‘A’ and ‘B’ for reasons of anonymity, explained why- “A group of students doesn’t represent a college completely,” stated A, “the bad groups and events stand out more than the good ones.” B agreed, stating, “Upon hearing that this happened, I was shocked. I couldn’t believe that some individuals are so hateful that they would target and attack people that they truly know nothing about. Although UPenn students were targeted, this attack was orchestrated by individuals

vile material and completely offensive to everyone on our campus. We are both angry and saddened that it was directed to our students or to anyone. The people responsible for this are reprehensible. We have increased campus safety and are reaching out to support the affected students in every way we can, and want them to know that the entire Penn community stands with them... We must reiterate how absolutely essential it is to the core values of our community, and also to the well-being of our society and world, that all

persons be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.” Clearly, she is enforcing the need for a sense of community and unity in these difficult times.

Racism is quite prevalent in academic environments, despite the fact that colleges are supposed to protect their students from harassment. They are also inclined to promote open discussion. When asked about how it reflects on other schools, B responded by saying, “I think that this does reflect what’s happening on college campuses and in our country as a general whole. There is a lot of hate that has recently resulted in attacks and tensions among different groups of people. Hopefully we’ll see these tensions and racial divides clear up in the near future, but as of now it seems that, although horrible, events like this are the norm.”

Current students and prospective applicants were incredulous at the cyber attack that unfolded at UPenn. It is an understatement that attacks were unorthodox and all students are undeserving and repulsed by this type of behavior. However, this racial attack is not going to foster fear for future students in all universities; if anything, it is evident that they are determined to work harder to find a better sense of community in their academic environment.

REALISM, NOT RESOLUTIONS!

By Julia Jassey | Staff Writer

After a month and a half of binge drinking Pumpkin Spiced Lattes and having just one more slice of pie, once New Year's comes along, we've all had enough. We grab our new Roshe Runs from under the Christmas Tree and head out to the gym, resolved to finally maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We tell ourselves that we're going to spend every single afternoon pumping iron, we chronicle on Facebook our steadfast plan to run five miles a day.

But (shocker), 80% of gym memberships made in January don't make it past five months. Then schoolwork piles up and life gets in the way. Seven days a week turn into three. Five miles turn into two. Next thing you know, we're back on the couch finishing an entire season of *Game of Thrones* (not to mention a full jar of Nutella) in one sitting. Not that I'm judging.

If you're not fulfilling your goal, you might as well quit, right?

How many of us set resolutions that are practical and pragmatic? How many of us resign ourselves to the confines of failure before considering the pursuit of a less daunting track that leads us to ultimate success? How many of us simply set ourselves up to fail?

The answer, in short: A lot of us. As freshman, Erica Chen, explained, she no longer sets New Year's resolutions because, "I never keep them." Knowing that failure is eminent is a significant deterrent in and of itself. This is a trend throughout the student body, sophomores Dan DiGangi and Frankie Caputo agreeing that they, too, do not follow through on their resolutions because they simply aren't feasible.

Junior, Nick Perry, has found a different problem when attempting the execution of his goals. Last year, he was resolved to, "get swole" as he put it. However, as he explained, "school and sports take up my entire week

except for Sunday, and Sunday I end up just being lazy and resting... [the] Fencing season and ACT prep took away all my time and energy." With the often overwhelming expectations and schedules set for students today, finding time to make productive changes in lifestyles becomes increasingly difficult. If we are barely finding the time to finish our homework in between our copious collection of clubs, hours of sports practice, all while maintaining a healthy social life, where is the time to make constructive change?

But don't worry Nick, you're not the only one who was resolved to, "get swole." In fact, as Barbara and Brynn, two employees of the local New York Sports Club in Deer Park explained, gym usage increases approximately 50-55% in the weeks following the New Year. There is a spike of new members and an increase in the number of stagnant members who pop in, resolved to turn the pounds they'd gained over the holidays into massive gains. However, of those new gym rats, approximately 30% maintain a steady commitment past February or March. After then, their attendance becomes increasingly more sporadic and eventually dwindles.

But this phenomenon is not confined simply to the New Year. In fact, according to Barbara and Brynn, there are typically three significant surges throughout the year: January, April to May, and September. January, clearly, is due to New Years. April and May bring new gym-goers in a faithful attempt to reach that Pinterest-perfect "summer bod" that we all dream of. September rolls around, and school starts, typically giving mothers a chance to hit the gym after sending their children off for the day. But, just as they explained for the New Year's rise, the increase in gym attendance dies down a mere month or so after it begins. What does that say about our motivation as a people?

Does that mean that setting resolutions is as trivial a practice as asking a groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil how long winter will last? No. In fact, practical intentions are often met with genuine results. Junior, Dan Lee, is the quintessential example of this. In years past, his goal was, "Get over a ninety in one of my classes." Not improbable or impractical, but enough to motivate a good student to attain good grades. Lee explained that the fact he knew he could reach his goal drove him to see it through.

Sophomore, Joe Bender, found the same to be true for him. He told, "My 2017 New Year's Resolution is to begin recycling more often... I can set up a timeline of which dates I want to have a certain number of water bottles collected, and also plan on putting a recycling container in my room to remind me every day."

Looking around at the world today, countries in turmoil, leaders bombing their own people, and a global population teeming with unrest, gym attendance seems quite insignificant in the grand scheme of things. That being said, it serves as a perfect microcosm of the society in which we exist today. We set our sights on the stars, imagining ourselves achieving nothing short of perfection. Then, the moment that we are met with any sort of resistance, and our hope begins to dwindle, we think it's over, and we give up.

But, just as we are shown by Dan Lee and Joe Bender, fulfilling our goals is far from an impossible feat. All it takes is practicality and determination. Both students chose goals that meant something to them and offered motivation, without setting the bar unrealistically high. As Bender described, "Recycling helps save the Earth and our environment so it feels like the perfect way to give back and start fresh in this upcoming year."

