



# THE SPRESS

## SOUTH PARK HIGH SCHOOL



Photo by Tessa Lettie

### Drama club's new film venture

TESSA LETTIE

This year has been a hard time for our Drama Department. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and split groups for hybrid learning, it has been very hard to pull through and get things running once again. Although all of this is happening, Mr. Baker and our Drama Club this year are bringing something to the audience that not a lot of people have done in a high school drama club setting. This year they have decided on filming a movie. They ideally thought it would be done by Christmas, but due to COVID-19 and the recent school shut down, they aren't so sure. They are doing a rendition of "Night of the Living Dead," originally directed by George A. Romero and filmed in 1968. The movie was the first movie brought to the screen that showed true bloody gore and is under the drama and sci-fi categories.

This definitely will show us the Drama Club's potential on the screen as well as the stage. I don't know about you, but I can't wait to see what Mr. Baker and our lovely actors have in store for us! Will you be watching it?

### Holiday cheer for a COVID-19 year

NOAH FISCUS

With COVID-19 rates now at an all-time high, how will this translate to celebrating holidays? How will it affect our annual holiday traditions?

Because people are being instructed to stay home by health officials due to the pandemic, holidays have turned in a whole new direction. Per the CDC, in-person gatherings that bring together family members or friends from different households, including college students returning to home, pose varying levels of risk. However, people now, more than ever, desire to be close to their loved ones. In lieu of a large family gathering at Thanksgiving, people are having smaller celebrations with their immediate families. Other families have decided to share recipes with each other, so their favorite dishes will not be missed at the

dinner table. Some are also doing Zoom calls or FaceTime with family members to achieve a similar sense of connection.

Many companies are catching on to the changing dynamic. Holiday advertisements feature socially distanced gatherings balanced with holiday traditions. McCormick & Company, whose spices are ingredients in many holiday dishes, states, "Even if your loved ones can't make it for the holidays, their dishes can still make it to the table." Although COVID-19 hasn't been the best time of our lives, most have accepted the change and even found new ways to enjoy the holidays.

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**SPORTS - VOLLEYBALL**

## Girls volleyball section champs

TESSA LETTIE

On October 22 our girls volleyball team claimed the title of 2020 section champs. This year the girls didn't just become an amazing team with big goals, they pulled together an amazing group they now call family. Their coaches, Chad Farrington, Emily Correia, and Micheal Duffy, started the season in August. Due to COVID-19 and WPIAL guidelines, originally they weren't able to use volleyballs in order to practice. Over the course of time as the pandemic carried on, they were then allowed to practice and actually get their hands on a volleyball.

At the end of their season, they were in the final four and their standings for the year were 11-1 for in section play, and out of section play was recorded to be 12-1. Junior Varsity did very well this season as well. Also, at the end of the 2020 season, Faith Fetsko was titled best offensive player of the year, and Lanie Schultz was titled best defensive player of the year. Overall, the work put in by this team is outstanding, and we now have another year embroidered into our girls volleyball section champs banner in our gymnasium.

**SPORTS - FOOTBALL**

## Eagles end with winning conference record

DAN PEPKE

The South Park Eagles ended this season with a 4-2 record in their conference. At the end of the year they ended with a 4-4 record. They lost in the first round of the playoffs to Keystone Oaks.

South Park's Eagles schedule consisted of six games. In their regular season games they played Southmoreland, Yough, Brownsville, Elizabeth Forward, North Catholic, South Allegheny, and Mount Pleasant. In the first round of the playoffs the Eagles lost to Keystone Oaks on a score of 28-24. When asked about next season Coach Rieck states, "We were a very young team this year and the fact that we made the playoffs is a hopefully a good indication that these guys will keep improving and learning the game." Coach Reick also says for anyone who would want to join the football team next year, "Everyone is welcome. We do not haze, we take care of our own, and we do our best to show support to all of the other programs in the school. It will not be easy, but nothing worthwhile ever is."

**STUDENT CORNER**

## Digital photography



**EDITORIAL**

## *Jazz band is still as strong as ever*

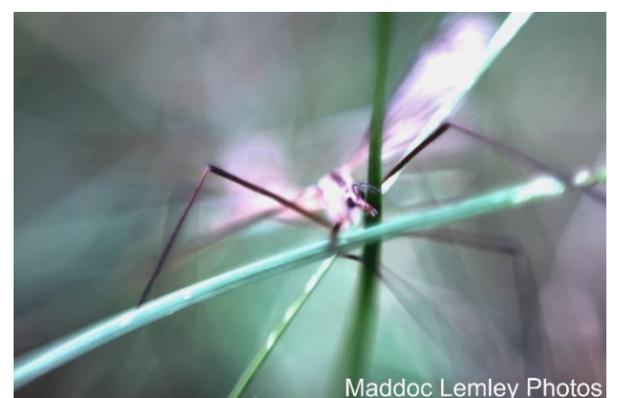
LUKE FURMAN

While there are many changes to our music program this year, our jazz band is still dedicated to performing the same innovative music it has been for years. Despite the late start, we have started working on a few pieces for a Christmas concert we hope to put on, if our situation improves.

The first piece we received was "Go Tell it on the Mountain," a rendition of the well-known classic that many only recognize by the melody. After that, we started working on a version of "Jingle Bells" and Donny Hathaway's "This Christmas," which we videotaped a performance of just before the High School shut down.

As a baritone saxophone player, my job for the last three years has been to help the rhythm keep the time, so the rest of the band can feel the beat without needing to look up at our bandleader. When we do it correctly, the bandleader can actually walk away, and the band can still play together!

Being in the jazz band has been such a wonderful opportunity for me to grow as an instrumentalist but also as a music lover in general. My appreciation for this genre would not be what it is today if I wasn't in this group.



## PROFILE - TEACHER

*Mrs. Surovchak*

SOPHIA DEMATTEO

There's no denying that 2020 has been a taxing year for everyone, but beloved South Park High School English instructor Mrs. Surovchak has been juggling a great deal over the past few months. Since February, when she and equally-cherished calculus teacher Mr. Surovchak tied the knot, she and fellow educators have had to adapt to a challenging learning environment *and* she's been excitedly preparing for the arrival of a new addition to the family.

**SD:** How has COVID impacted your year, personally?

**Mrs. Surovchak:** I think personally it's made me a bit more distanced from the people that I love. It's really kind of depressing because you're so distant.

**SD:** As an educator, do you feel that there are setbacks to virtual learning?

**Mrs. Surovchak:** The thing that I love most about my job is the rapport with students, but you only see students 40% of the time, at least in the hybrid model. They're very distant from the educational process, and that rapport is lost.

**SD:** How have you been preparing for the baby's arrival?

**Mrs. Surovchak:** Baby Surovchak is due in December! The biggest thing is probably getting used to changing our lives in general. We have to leave work at a reasonable time for the dog, which I think is a good transition for baby.

**SD:** Do you think that spending time around children in your career has helped prepare you for motherhood?

**Mrs. Surovchak:** I think with teaching there is empathy and interactions that you learn. The nurturing and understanding that you have as a teacher is able to be translated into parenthood. I hope!

**SD:** How have you managed to prepare for a baby, instruct students, and lead extracurricular clubs?

**Mrs. Surovchak:** Every teacher you talk to will tell you that it's just very time-consuming, more so this year than any other.

**SD:** Have you thought about a baby name list?

**Mrs. Surovchak:** Honestly, I don't even want to have a list for the name, I want to meet the baby first.

**SD:** Will this baby be a South Park student?

**Mrs. Surovchak:** The baby is a South Park resident. The poor kid's going to have to deal with both parents in the high school... the poor kid isn't going to get away with anything!

## In Memory of the empowering RBG

CHLOE BYRON

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was not only a role model for younger generations but an asset to the world we are living in. She showed that not everyone has to be a certain way to be accepted.

RBG spoke volumes to those who struggled with gender equality, women's rights, and to any other marginalized group. "When daughters are cherished as much as sons" she said. She proved that not everyone has to fit the definition of "perfect," whatever that is, and that you are allowed to accept and improve the world around you.

She was the first female Jewish Supreme Court justice, which showed a lot of power. Ginsburg founded the ACLU's Women's Rights Project in 1972. This empowers poor women, women of color, and immigrant women who struggle with bias and barriers to equality. She was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on September 29, 2020. She will always be remembered as one of the most powerful women in history.



Photo by Lukas Bichler

## A fresh year for freshmen

NOAH FISCUS

With freshmen approaching one of the most important years in their lives, what are some tips they can follow to kick off these important four years?

Learn to manage your time effectively. High school is a lot different than middle school. There is way more work to do in a shorter amount of time since block scheduling no longer occurs at the high school level.

Write down all of your assignments. Each class has a number of requirements and dates that they are due. Keeping track of assignments in a book or on a whiteboard is an effective way to ensure that all of the work gets done.

Do your homework. If you don't do it, you will not learn, and therefore not do good on assignments like tests. Also, homework grades can lower your entire grade very quickly.

Pick fun electives that aren't too hard. If you pick electives that are not hard and ones you enjoy, then it will make your high school experience much easier. Nothing's worse than dragging through classes that you don't enjoy.

If you accomplish tasks like these, you can achieve greatness in your later years. All the effort will be worth it in the end.

## EDITORIAL

*Hand sanitizer*

DAN PEPKE

Remember at the beginning of the pandemic and hand sanitizers were in high demand? They were sold out in stores and you were only able to purchase one. Well, how often are you using hand sanitizer daily?

During this pandemic, things have changed, but one thing we need to do is keep our hands clean. That's why we should use hand sanitizer more often. When I've been in school lately, I have noticed many of my classmates have not been using hand sanitizer. I conducted a survey among classmates to see on average how often they used hand sanitizer in school. In the context of the

survey I used a number based system 1(not being very often), 2 often) and 3 (very often). The results of the survey showed that a majority of the students leaned towards number 1, not using it often.

How can we change this you may ask, well the CDC and FDA say wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, but if not available use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The reason it should be 60% alcohol-based is that the alcohol kills all the germs and bacteria on your hands.

In our school, we should try using it more

often. If you have a personal hand sanitizer use it after every two periods and if you don't then use the ones in the classrooms provided by the school district. In class next time you see a bottle of hand sanitizer or when opening your book bag for your book grab your bottle and don't be afraid to apply some to your hands.

# COVID-19 is taking a toll on students' work

CHLOE BYRON

Looking at all the new ways students are learning in their classes, it is not working out for a lot of them. How is this affecting their experience and grades?

Many students around the world are struggling with getting an education during this school year. Parents and students are trying to figure out what days they go to school, how to join Zoom calls, what assignments are due at 3:00 PM, and which are due at 11:59 PM. They are having a hard time communicating back and forth with their teachers, and trying to get the most out of each lesson. Izzie Pasquale, a freshman at SPSH, explains how this has been her biggest struggle, "It is hard to communicate

with the teachers virtually opposed to in-person."

Everyone is trying to adjust to the new schedules, but it is difficult. Many grades are dropping because of lack of motivation and misinformation. "I was a straight A student, and now my GPA has dropped a lot," she says. It is hard to focus and complete your assignments while having your phone and other distractions available. Although this is a large obstacle, everyone is making the best out of it and finding what works for them.



Ava Simone Photo

# AP students face unique courses

LUKE FURMAN

In this new normal, where people must be distanced and institutions are losing valuable time due to lockdowns, it comes as no shock to see that Advanced Placement classes at South Park High School look quite different. Only being at school two days a week is detrimental enough for standard courses, those teachers who take on the highest level of classes we offer must provide a college level education in the same amount of time.

Hannah DePra, longtime student at SPSD and AP student, shared that "Sometimes when we're online, we don't have direct access to a teacher, which can make getting help difficult."

Despite this, DePra remained optimistic and level-headed. She explained that despite the difficulties, "There's less stress in being home when taking quizzes," a welcome change for any student. She was also pleased with how "These classes have significantly less homework. I'm sure if we were on a normal schedule I'd have lots more to do."

DePra made it clear this year will be harder on teachers, who must make their own Canvas webpages, and adapt to a whole new method of teaching, so that students can have the same chance at a college level education.

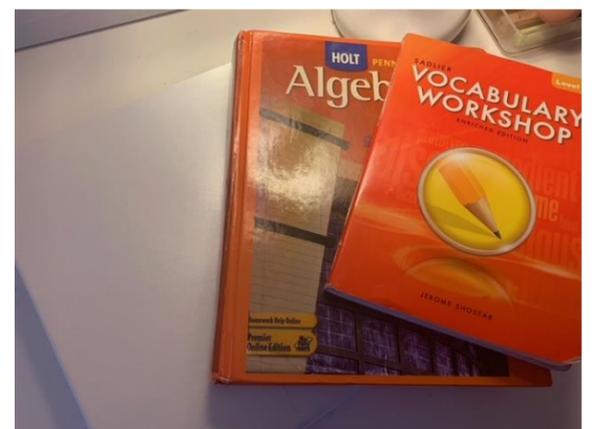


Photo by Tessa Lettie

## CREATIVE WRITING

## The monster

CORA SMITH

I have never been fond of cloudberry, it's unique mixture of sour and sweet always leaving my tastebuds confused. However, with every day that pass, here I stand, brown eyes solemnly observing the apricot-colored berry.

"You should eat it."

I looked to the small boy who stood beside me, his blonde hair reflecting the soft glimmer of the sun. He returned the look, pale irises filled with a youthful spirit.

"I do not like them." I answered simply, the boy's eliciting enough to settle my disputed conflict. Turning slowly, I began to amble away, large tail meandering behind.

"Mom use to say that if I don't eat my cauliflower, I won't get ice cream," He continued, following me closely, "So you should eat your berries too. To make it fair."

"I can do what I like."

Leisurely, I moved a branch away from the path, allowing the boy to strut pass first before ducking under myself.

"Shouldn't you be waking up soon?" I said, watching as the child picked up a stone and callously tossed it as far as he could into the dense treeline.

"I like sleeping." He answered, turning and grinning deviously. I frowned.

"You still should get up, it's not good for a kid your age to be sleeping this long." The response was enough to garner disapproval from the boy, his eyelashes battering and brows low.

"Do you not want to see me anymore?" He said quietly, looking down at his feet in a dramatic expression of sadness.

"You and I both know that's not true." I looked up to the clear sky, the portrait mixture of soft blues and yellows, pondering for a moment before returning the glance, "Tell you what, you go out and hide and I will come find you." I suggested, the game of hide and seek always piquing the interest of the kid.

He didn't have to vocalize his acceptance as the wide smile that pinned his features did instead, small feet turning quickly as he shot off into the forest. I sighed as the atmosphere grew quiet, the buzzing of bugs and chirping of birds seeming to follow the boy off into the distance.

"One... two..." My voice echoed off of the trees, a silent wind swaying the vibrant leaves. Each had a streak of marigold, the sun always seeming to be stuck at its highest point.

I knew what the boy didn't, understood the urgency in awakening him. Though I had tried for days to send him back to his own world, he had sourly rejected the idea. I stopped counting at ten, feet beginning to walk in the direction of which the boy had ran. For the entirety of his time here, he had never changed hiding spots.

I knew what I would need to do to wake him; though it was difficult to summon enough valor to finally carry it out.

The thick forest opened into a golden field of wheat, the soft mellow grains gaining a hushed whisper as I neared the child's location. I could see him now, his light blue shirt like a beacon among the tan plain. He was crouched in the grain, a large grin decorating his visual as he eagerly awaited to be found. I could feel a tug at my heart knowing he would eventually realize I was not coming to find him.

Exasperated, I took a seat on a small boulder, horns lowered as I observed from a distance. Though my looks were rather ugly, that child had never judged me. Alas, the creator always finds a love for his design.

I knew the boy would wake if I was no longer here.

I glanced to my sizeable palms, a lonesome cloudberry still ripe within its grip. Without hesitation, I tossed the fruit into my mouth, cheeks pulling as I chewed it to a liquid. It was the exact taste as when I first tried it, mixture of sweet and sour growing tangy on my tongue. I'd be lying if I had said the boy's provoking hadn't led to a temptation; however, I had wanted to give it a second try before I left. Quite honestly, I hadn't minded its taste this time.

Glancing to the kid one more time, a sad feeling pooled in my chest, a longing to stay growing desperate. Though, I knew better. It was time for the boy to return home.

Without another word, I closed my eyes slowly; and the world fell silent.



Lyda Maffei Photos

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