

# THE SPRESS

January 31, 2024

\*CHEERLEADING

\* SWIMMING

\* PRESCHOOL

## Festivus fun

Megan Beam



**Pickleball tournament champions, Jonah Jasek and Ryan Spitznagel**



**Students decorating cookies during Festivus.**

It was the most wonderful time of the year where happiness and cheer was spread all throughout South Park High School. Festivus was December 22 and it brought a few festivities along with it to kick off winter break.

There were many activities to partake in on Festivus such as cookie decorating, sign decorating, ping pong, sugar scrub making, and more! Students were free to do any of the activities, hang out with their friends, or help their favorite teachers. Ashlyn Morris, sophomore, explained “My favorite part of Festivus was hanging out with my friends, because during a regular school day we don’t get to hang out often.” Riley Burnett, junior, spent the day helping out one of her favorite teachers. Riley said “My favorite part of Festivus was helping Mrs. Rech in her room while she had a sign decorating activity.” However she also enjoyed hanging out with her friends throughout the day.

I’m sure everybody is probably aware of the pickleball competition that takes place every year whether they participated or not. This year’s winners are not new to victory. Jonah Jasek and Ryan Spitznagel, both sophomores,

took the gold once again! Their prize for all their hard work was a T-shirt and a Sheetz gift card. Pickleball wasn’t the only tournament that took place this year though. Mini-Thon tried something new and started a cornhole tournament to raise money to donate to Four Diamonds. The winners were Dawson Battista and Talan Glowa. Their prize was a Mini-Thon “swag bag” filled with gifts and treats.

Mr. Marvin, our new assistant principal, enjoyed his first festivus here at South Park this year. Mr. Marvin stated that his experience was positive and “It was a great way to start the Christmas break, and it’s nice to engage in activities outside of academics.”

beginning of the school day until 11:00. However some students believe the time should be longer or shorter. Of the students surveyed, 35% believe Festivus should be longer, and 19% believe it should be shorter. The majority of students, 46%, like it just the way it is.

After all the joyous activities of Festivus, students had 11 days to unwind from school. Now that it’s over, it’s time to begin the second half of the school year with good grades and positivity.

## Playing for the people

Callie Heynes



**7-9 grader participates in South Park's Junior High District Band**

When most people think of school pride, they may think of the more competitive and contact sports such as football or basketball. However, what most don't realize is that the arts can be just as competitive, even if there is not as much contact.

District band is an example of an amazing and competitive opportunity for students and teachers to be a part of a collaborative effort to bring music to the people. But what exactly is it? District band is an annual collaboration of the best musicians from different schools around our area. There are 12 designated areas which contain school districts from different counties. Students have to audition for a seat. After a certain number of weeks, these musicians will have a chance to perform together.

SPHS is proud to have a senior, Matthew Chekan, be accepted into district band. During the audition process, competitors are given a piece of music and only a few weeks to memorize it. For auditions, the students play in a room with three judges facing away from them and are given the chance to perform twice. Matthew was one of about 70 trumpet players who auditioned, most of whom auditioned before and knew the ropes. But Matt didn't let this deter him. As always, Matthew strived to go above and beyond. When asked what inspired him to reach for district band, Matthew said, "My biggest inspiration was the people in the past that auditioned were people that I looked up to,

not only musically but on a personal way as well. I also wanted to try something new, and this was a great experience to branch out into the musical world." Matthew concluded that the honor of participating and the chance to experience district band will follow him for many years to come as a one of a kind experience.

South Park is just one part of this event, but we have a bigger contribution than some. South Park High School had hosted the Jr. High district band (grades 7-9) during the week of January 15th. Not only are we hosting one of the age levels, but we also have a teacher directing the concert. Mr. Sisley, is a music teacher and marching band director who was welcomed to South Park earlier this school year. This year he is the host conductor for the junior age group that South Park is hosting. His busy week preparing for this event consists of finding a guest conductor, arranging schedules for students and their directors, choosing music and making sure that all students who are selected receive their music. Last but certainly not least, Mr. Sisley was given the chance to conduct the Star Spangled Banner with all of the students. He is most excited about it, commenting, "Getting to conduct a band of that size isn't something I get to do regularly so getting that experience for me is amazing."

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## Playing for the people (con't)

Callie Heynes

Music and arts are critical in high school environments. Along with sports it can be surprisingly competitive and can feed into students' ambitions, as seen with district band. Music can be a way to express students' creative minds and lead students to higher levels of playing and performing. District band is one notch to add in the long list of events that South Park gets to experience.



**Matthew Chekan performing at High School District Band**

## IMPORTANT DATES

February 1: Start of Black History Month  
 February 2: Groundhog Day  
 February 14: Valentine's Day  
 February 14: Lent starts  
 February 15: Bocce senior rec and faculty game  
 February 19: Presidents Day - School day for students

## Making a splash

Addi Yochum

The 2023-2024 swim season officially started on November 17, and the first home meet was on December 5th against Thomas Jefferson. Many people often think that swimming is an individual sport, but there's actually a lot of teamwork put into both individual events and relay events. Cheering on teammates who are swimming, and swimming as part of a relay team ensures that everyone is working together.

In individual races, swimmers do events by themselves and compete against other swimmers from different schools. On the pool deck, the other teammates stand and cheer them on. Some of the swimmers' favorite events are 100 breaststroke and the 100 butterfly, which are both four laps, and surprisingly, the 500 freestyle, which is 20 laps. Elliot Giusti, a junior on the swim team, stated that he prefers individual races, because he "gets locked in way more individually." In a relay, a group of four swimmers in the same lane swim after one another. When students were asked if they prefer relay races or individual races more, Josh Kosmach, a senior, says that he enjoys relay events more because there is less pressure on him. Meanwhile, some swimmers like Paisley Malacki, a freshman, enjoy both races. She said, "It depends who I am on a relay with, or what individual events I am swimming." When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of swimming in a relay, Josh said that "the strengths are that you can rely on your teammates. The weakness is that your teammates can let you down." Elliot said another strength and weakness of swimming on a relay team is, "if everybody's lightning fast and having a great meet, then it'll be a great relay, but if someone is having a great meet, and someone else is having a bad meet, then that's not good." Even though being on the swim team can be tough on them, like having practice six days out of the seven in a week, and having swim meets every week, it has benefits. Being active everyday can keep students in shape physically and mentally, and it's also fun to bond with the team during swim meets, practice, and at dinner after the meets.

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## Making a splash (con't)

Addi Yochum

The swim season is ending in February, and senior night is right around the corner on February 1st at the home meet against Ringgold. WPIALS will also be starting at the end of the February with a number of South Park swimmers surely to compete.



The girls swim team

## The richness of learning about African American Literature

Savannah Booth

For the 2023-2024 school year, South Park High School introduced a College in High School (CHS) literature course called African American Literature. The course was offered to junior and senior students looking to get out of their comfort zones and to test out a different kind of literature they aren't used to.

African American Literature is an important subject to learn about because it offers a unique perspective on American history and culture. It highlights the experiences, struggles, and achievements of African Americans throughout history, and helps to shed light on social and political issues that are still relevant today. By studying African American Literature, students gain a deeper understanding of the African American experience and develop a greater appreciation for the diversity of perspectives and voices that make up our society.

The CHS literature course is offered by the University of Pittsburgh and became available at South Park High School by Dr. Kolat, the Director of Curriculum and Innovation. Dr. Kolat was able to acquire a grant for this course to see if students would enjoy a higher-level English class. The grant covers the cost of the credits from Pitt and the texts. Although the grant will not be available next year, the cost of the course in high school is a fraction of what students pay as a traditional student at the University of Pittsburgh. This course is weighted at a 5.0 GPA which many students found very encouraging when being offered to take this course.

Students who decided to take this course all agree that the course wasn't just useful in college terms, but helped them become more structured and gain very important time management skills. Alex Stringe, junior, was asked how this class compares to other English classes and stated, "It's definitely more relaxed in my opinion. I feel less stressed and genuinely enjoy my time here." Caxias Gaiter, junior, explains that the class is "discussion-based, unlike other English classes." Students in this class learn to break away from high school standards and move into a college setting where they will learn how to expand not just their knowledge but their ways of speaking and thinking as well.

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## Birthday corner

### January

Makayla Kelly- 15  
 Zackery DeLong- 15  
 Kenya Linton- 16  
 Melia Petrello- 16  
 Kimberlin Ernst- 16  
 Justin Payne- 18  
 Patrick Quinn- 18  
 Elijah Rorabaugh- 18  
 Harmony Henry- 18  
 Ridvan Karakoca- 19  
 Owen Sabatini- 20  
 Morgan Pastorik- 20  
 Casen Costantino- 21  
 Brenden Holland- 23  
 Giovanni Bakos- 23  
 Bailey Rorison- 23  
 Christian Jacobson- 23  
 Alexzander Parise- 25  
 Brady Cox- 26  
 Sophia Cox- 26  
 Amelia Tabak- 27  
 Aubrey Tabak- 27  
 Bobbie Palmer- 28  
 Andrea Stoyanova- 28  
 Libby Cassidy- 30  
 Kristopher Lamp- 30

### February

Keira Mitchell- 1  
 Bryce Berzansky- 2  
 Isabella Bracco- 2  
 Cameron Loveland- 2  
 Baylee Manning- 2  
 Sudesh Neupane- 2  
 Camryn Scott- 2  
 Jarret Thompson- 4  
 Aidan Battista- 5  
 Mariya Nepal- 5  
 Keith Vodzak- 5  
 Erika Filous- 6  
 Logan Hickey- 6  
 Noah Pawlowski- 6  
 Nicholas Ference- 8  
 Jack Ozimek- 8  
 Josh Kuczma- 9  
 Nick Latona- 9  
 Bryan Chapman- 10  
 Christian Hunter- 10  
 Macee Peterson- 10  
 Daisha Briscoe- 12  
 Bryce Dschuhan- 12  
 Nicholas Danzuso- 13  
 Julian George- 13  
 Emma Ferguson- 15  
 Jace Tomasek- 15

## Understanding children

Caelyn Robbins

Understanding Children I and II is an elective course for seniors at our high school. In this class, students help teach preschoolers. At the beginning of the school year, students will be given topics to create lesson plans alongside an activity such as: a video, a craft, or a book. Students will get to pick which preschooler they would like to have as their buddy for the week and help them throughout the period.

Alongside the students, the class is run by Ms. Stull. Ms. Stull states that her “favorite part of teaching the class is seeing the smiles, excitement, bonding and growth in both the seniors and the little ones.” She recommends seniors take this course because “it opens up a side that some may not think they have. Many seniors take this course and then change their college major, deciding education is their passion. Those students who get nervous about

presenting in front of others also gain confidence and overcome something they have always faced.” This course has helped students in so many ways, not just by helping them grow but learn about themselves and their future, all while having fun with the preschoolers. In an interview with Libby Cassidy, senior, she states that while taking this class one thing she learned about herself is she “needed lots of patience and creativity.” Taking into consideration the amount of time students spend with the preschoolers, this is very important.

Understanding Children is a great course for seniors who plan on working with children in their future. The class is also important because it helps students better understand children and can help prepare seniors for their future. When asked why seniors should take understanding children, Kaiden

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## The richness of learning about African American Literature (Con't)

Savannah Booth



**African American Literature students working in small groups**

To teach this class, teachers need to be very open-minded and understanding, which is exactly what SPHS’s librarian is. Mrs. Finberg teaches African American literature to students twice a day and is very good at breaking down the literature and connecting with her students in ways that they will learn the best. Mrs. Finberg was asked why she decided to teach the class and she exclaimed, “I wanted to teach this class because I remember reading Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* in college and how it completely changed my trajectory as a reader and love of literature. Also, historically public education has left out many voices that make up the complexity of American literature, including African American voices. I hope this class will amplify those voices and give other students the same chance I had to fall in love with African American literature.” Many of her students believe this is one of the most useful and enjoyable classes for them and that they hope to see more classes like this one in the future.

This course can help students to become more culturally competent and empathetic individuals, which are important skills in today’s world. Students should take African American Literature because it offers a unique perspective on American history and culture. By studying African American Literature, students gain a deeper understanding of the African American experience and develop a greater appreciation for the diversity of perspectives and voices that make up our society. Moreover, this course can help students to become more culturally competent and empathetic individuals, which are important skills in today’s world. Additionally, this course provides an opportunity for students to test out a different kind of literature they aren’t used to, and get out of their comfort zones.

## Playing in pottery!

Khai Brown

Why should you care about pottery? Because you don’t already! If you feel like you don’t thrive off of sitting in one spot while learning, perhaps you need to try pottery! Pottery is hands on all the time, you can build anything you think of and nothing stops you! You have to use your upper body muscles, your mind, and of course your hands to participate. Some people think being messy is childish, it’s simply freeing your mind from class stresses around you. Pottery will be one of those classes you think about after graduation, don’t believe me? Ask graduates Josef Wolfgang and Molly Blum and senior Mikaela Mahoney who when interviewed, all stated that they think about and do wish they could come back to pottery.

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**Playing in pottery! (con't)**

Khai Brown

Speaking of our graduates and soon-to-be-graduate, they all had noted positive benefits from pottery. All of them answered similarly. They all stated they gained a new skill and widened their knowledge and abilities. Josef even benefitted at work since he hadn't received training at his job at the Pottery Place. He got his training from Ms. Rech. Now, with all fun, there is a demanding part. Josef said waxing the footrings and glazing was literally the worst to him but at least he could make cool combinations. Mikaela thinks leaving the clay to dry before it could be fired was the most difficult part. Molly was a bit different. She said every part of pottery could be demanding. Pottery is fragile but she doesn't think one part is more difficult than the rest because it could and does change everyday.

Now, even though you could read that it's a demanding class, every person interviewed clearly wanted to come back and do it again. That's why you should give it a try, because it can become your new favorite hobby.



**Josef Wolfgang (class of 2023) works on the pottery wheel**

**Understanding children (con't)**

Caelyn Robbins



**High school buddies helping the preschoolers with their crafts**

Fischer, senior, says any future seniors should take the course “because Ms. Stull is awesome and the kids will make you laugh and smile so much!” Kaiden also said the class will benefit his future, “so when I have kids I know what to do in some situations.”

This course is open to all seniors and the current seniors in this class recommend that future seniors take this course because it helps teach and prepare for the future.

## Yearbook

Noah Fiscus



**The Aquila staff learns more about the complexities of making the yearbook.**

The Yearbook class this year has been a unique experience in many ways. From a new yearbook advisor, to new members and new roles for the staff, this year has been a conversion in the Aquila class. As any year would have, deadlines are apparent and approaching, and have made an impact on the staff. However, hopefully this stress will be worth it in the end with a delightful finished product in the form of a yearbook.

As any class would be, the classroom was much more tranquil and relaxed at the start than it is now. The beginning of the year saw the Aquila staff selecting things such as certain roles or spreads they wished they could work on. When asked why she chose her role, Marketing Head, Elisabeth Henrich, senior, said, “I enjoy media and marketing aspects of business, it’s good for gaining experience.” Photo staff member Megan Bero, freshman, said she chose her role because, “I like taking pictures.” Megan said that at the beginning of the year, “it was a bit awkward, but everyone got used to each other.”

Each spread in the book needs quotes, pictures, captions, writing, time, and effort put in to become a complete spread. The class requires

lots of communication and teamwork. Shortage of such qualities can result in a spread seeming biased, empty, or out of touch. Each student has to put in work and effort to complete their spreads.

The aforementioned transitioning step soon came, affecting students and the class advisor. With this deadline transition comes an incoming stress that affects the staff. Elisabeth states that she is most stressed about “getting a spread done in two weeks.” Megan says that she’s stressed most “that we won’t hit our deadlines perfectly.” While the yearbook won’t come out until May, certain deadlines are apparent to ensure the perfection of every page.

As one can see, the Yearbook class is a lot of work. There are many pieces and steps that come together to reach the ultimate goal in producing the yearbook at the end of the year. Despite this, a student could view that the hardships and struggles in this class can teach them how to navigate future endeavors in their lives in the future and may even lead into potential careers in journalism or publishing.



## Spanish class

Jessa Harmer

Everybody should take a language in their high school experience, especially Spanish. There is a lot with Spanish culture like the language around it, what they celebrate, and just the overall culture. Spanish is a hard language to learn and it takes a lot of practice, same with learning about the culture and everything about it. Taking Spanish in high school helps teach all of that in an easy fashion.

Learning the Spanish language is fairly fun but difficult. It takes a lot of time to learn and understand. A couple of students, Erika Filous and Ashlyn Giles, both freshmen, said they like learning about the Spanish language. Erika said, "I love their culture and I love learning a new language." Ashlyn said, "I want to be able to know a new language besides English." Señorita McCaig, a Spanish teacher, said, "My favorite part of being a Spanish teacher is seeing students grow in the language from beginning to end." The language has a lot to it, but it's so much fun to teach and to learn. There are a lot of fun things that come with learning this language, and knowing a new language can be super useful.

Along with learning the language, students have to learn the culture too. Learning about the culture is just as enjoyable as learning about the language. Erika Filous said, "I think learning about the culture is super fun and can be helpful in the future. I think the celebrations they do for holidays are so

cool." There is so much to examine about the culture from the holidays, foods, songs, and religions.

If students take Spanish, they can also go on a trip to Europe or maybe somewhere else. Using their knowledge of the language and culture can be so helpful for this trip. Señorita McCaig said, "I am so excited for us to bring a group of students to Europe and experience different cities, foods, and people. When I was in high school. I took a trip to Europe and I had so much fun. Traveling creates so many opportunities and experiences. It may even spark interest in future educational and career options you never know. Being a part of this is what I am most excited for!" Being given the chance to travel to a different country would be an exciting and memorable experience. Ashlyn Giles, a student taking Spanish currently, said, "I would love to travel to Europe because it looks very pretty and it would be amazing to travel somewhere I've never been." The next trip will be this coming summer, but hopefully there will be another one in a couple of years.

In all, students should take Spanish or the other language offered at South Park: German. They can get the chance to learn a different language, the culture, and maybe even go on a trip to Europe!



Erika Filous & Señorita McCaig

## Here we go eagles, here we go!

Erika Filous



**The cheerleading team after their last game before playoffs on October 27, 2023**

The cheerleading team has been going for a strong 37 years. Throughout all the years, the team has impacted so many people. With practices or games, the 2023-2024 team has bonded over the months.

Something that has been noted is that most cheerleaders like football season more because of various reasons. Cheerleaders were disappointed about the football season ending. A cheerleader, Ashlyn Giles, a freshman, expressed her thoughts about not being able to cheer for football. "It was upsetting because football was fun to watch and our team got a lot of bonding time." Another cheerleader, Julianne Powell, a freshman, expressed how much she liked cheering on the sidelines "because the FNL is fun and I like the environment." Cheering for football includes, dressing up to go along with themes, dancing, running out onto the field with the football team, screaming, and especially, bonding.

Along with the cheerleading team in school, there is also outside of school bonding. In the summer, the cheerleaders did fundraisers to help raise money for the team. They washed cars, danced in a parade, and did a special camp for little kids

that wanted to be cheerleaders. The cheerleaders loved team bonding. Hope Rathbun, another freshman cheerleader, said the cheerleaders like "Supporting each other through everything we do."

In all, the cheerleading team has so many things to offer to anyone welcome. Everyone that has been on the cheer team only has positive things to offer to anyone welcome. Everyone that has been on the cheer team only has positive things to say about it. All the girls get together so well and they would love to see new faces. Coaches Dawn and Danielle send out tryout forms in April. Make sure to check out the SPHS Cheerleading Instagram page if you're interested!