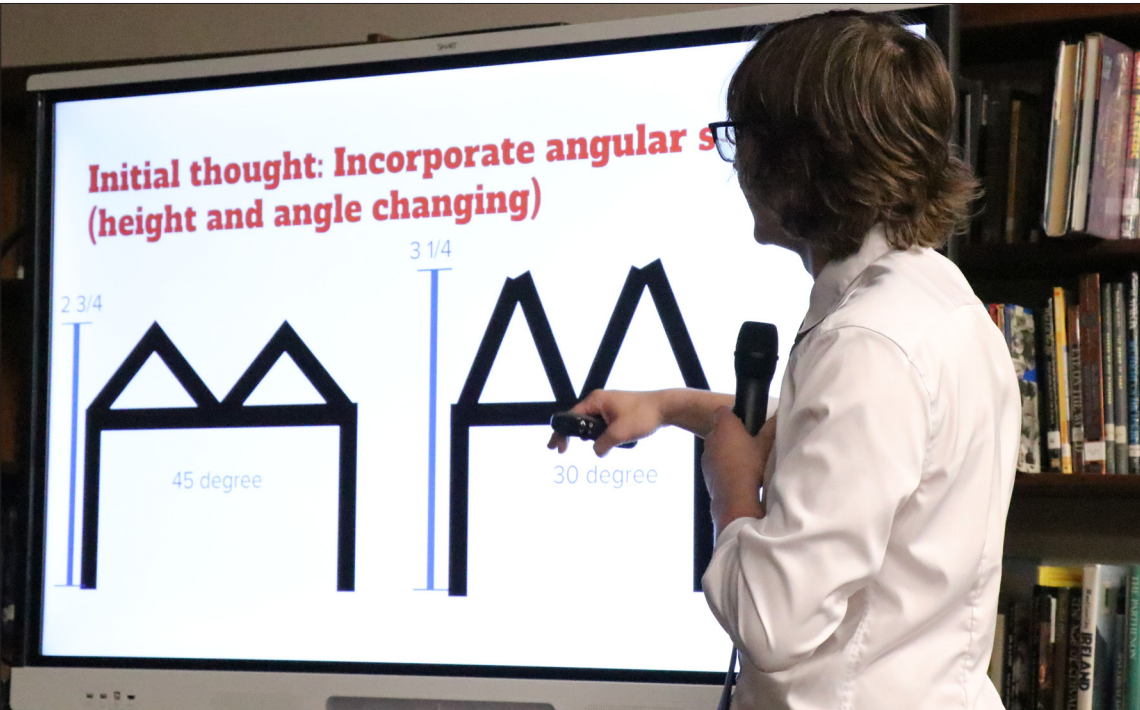




## Students, alumni present during Science Conference



Calla Reynolds/FHS Press

**Keeping it steady:** In the high school library, Arthur Evans (11) presents his long-term project to a group of students. Evans' project analyzed what height and angles were prime for designing a functional bridge.

**REESE NEELY**  
News Editor

This year marked the ninth year of the Science Conference, an annual event where students gather to learn more about science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This also

allows physics students, and even sixth grade students, to present their long terms in front of an audience.

On May 2, the day started out with physics teacher, Dr. Brain Wargo, introducing the agenda for the day. Long terms would then be sprinkled in with a mix of alumni and S.T.E.M workers

sharing their experiences. This year, presenters either presented in a classroom, or on the stage of the auditorium, with classes assigned to each room to switch areas to watch.

Students that take Physics I, II and III are required to create a longterm that stemming

from experimentation from areas they are interested in. This includes their trials and errors, and what they could have done better in the process. Through the beginning of the year through April, they work hard to perfect their presentation and to thoroughly explain the process they went through when experimenting to be able to explain it during their time at the science conference.

"My long term helped me grow by being able to get over nerves and present in front of an audience," Trinity Vojtko (11) said. "I love hair care and it was a fun experiment to learn something new with different hair textures and what the outcome would be."

The sixth grade students that were interested in creating a long term did so with the help of Dr. Wargo, sixth grade science teacher Ms. Jeanine Ging and Physics students. They also presented during the science conference along with the Physics students and speakers.

Freedom Alumni went on to talk about their life experience and working in S.T.E.M. or having the critical thinking that comes from S.T.E.M., especially addressing how taking physics at

Freedom has impacted their life positively.

Last but not least, the workers in S.T.E.M. Fields gave a presentation on what aspects led them to decide to work in their field and what degree they obtained from the school they had gone to. They also spoke about how they enjoy their jobs, and how it makes them face everyday challenges at work.

This conference has made lasting impacts on students not only in a Physics class but the students who want to pursue a career that work with science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics. It shows all of the students throughout the school that there can be great opportunities through this kind of career, and with hard work, great things can happen in their future.

"It is always an honor to be able to manage this event and show my students how much they can grow throughout the year," Dr. Wargo said. "Hopefully from seeing this event, students that did not take this course will see the importance of it."

## Seniors interview, present new-look graduation projects

**ANNA MAJORS**  
Asst. Features Editor

Every year, graduating seniors are tasked with doing a senior project. Even though these projects are no longer a state requirement, the school enforces them to prepare students for their future.

Leading up to their senior year, students did different assignments that were included in these projects. Freshmen must complete a presentation on their goals and future careers. Sophomores are tasked with creating a resume and doing a mock interview. Juniors and seniors must turn in two samples of their work from that school year to add to their portfolio.

There are two pathways seniors can choose to best fit their needs, a post-secondary education pathway and a workforce pathway. The main difference between the two pathways is that the post secondary education

pathway requires students to tour a college while the workforce pathway requires two job shadows instead of just one.

This year, the requirements have changed to reward the students who have passed their Keystone tests. Previously, all seniors had to have an advisor they met with regularly. They also had to give a 15-minute presentation to a group of teachers for a grade. This year, all students who have passed all Keystone tests were exempt from having an advisor, attending a government meeting and giving a presentation. Instead of giving a presentation, students participated in an interview with a panel of teachers.

"I think the changes need to be altered a little because the people who finished the keystones have no advisors so they are slightly lost on their own," Trista Somerville (12) said.

Seniors came to school



Photo Submitted

**New and improved:** Speaking proudly, Sara Aland (12) is interviewed by teachers for her senior project. This is the first year that students who passed their Keystone exams did interviews instead of presentations.

on May 16 to have their interview or presentation. Students in the high school and middle school did not have school on this day, so teachers were free to grade

the projects. Each senior had a designated time slot for them to present or have their interview.

Presentations were graded out of 150 points.

Students were graded on professionalism, technology, presentation and content. In the presentations, students talked about their educational

**SEE SENIOR PROJECTS, PAGE 10**

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Baseball team secures second consecutive playoff berth

# Beaver County CTC holds graduation

ALEX MICON  
Asst. Sports Editor

The Beaver County Career and Technology Center (BCCTC) is an important part of the district's career pipeline, serving as an entryway into the trades for a number of students within the district.

The school offers a total of 18 different programs for junior and senior students across the county to participate in. These programs range from fields like Graphic Arts and Printing to a Veterinary Assistant program to Automotive Technology. The BCCTC separates these programs into seven categories: Advanced Manufacturing, Art, Design & IT, Construction and Building Trades, Healthcare Medical, Service, Transportation and Distribution and Adult Education Programs.

**"The Career and Technology Center led me to finding my career by giving me opportunities to get the certifications I need to work in the field and overall taught me enough to land me a job with an HVAC company."**  
—Isaiah Leasha (12)

Students who attend the BCCTC travel to the Monaca campus each morning to take classes. These students miss what the district allocates as first and second block each morning.

Although the district will wrap up the school year in the first week of June, BCCTC students have already felt the payoff of all of the hard work that they have put in all year long. The BCCTC wrapped up their spring semester—and thus their year—in late May, with graduation marking the end of the school year.

"I am sad about graduation for CTC being in less than a week, since this was an amazing experience with new opportunities and new friends," Harmony Martin (12) said.

The BCCTC held their annual graduation ceremony for their senior students on May 23. During this ceremony, which took place on the BCCTC's campus, students were called up and handed the certificates that they worked hard to earn over the past two years.

These certificates permit students to work in the fields that they have studied. With these certifications, students can now go out and find jobs and begin their careers.

"I am a little upset that we will be graduating, but I am also excited to start my future in this career," Trista Somerville (12) said.

In order to graduate from the BCCTC, students must complete a final exam entitled the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute, otherwise called the NOCTIs, that covers all the material that they had learned during the course. This ranges from things like the fundamentals of the course, real-world applications and safety measures



Alexander Micon/FHS Press

**Sea of color:** Waiting anxiously for their names to be called, the CTC graduates await receiving their official credentials which allow them to work in their respective fields. For the 2024-2025 school year, the BCCTC graduated over 300 senior students.

that they must take and why they exist. Students must also complete a hands-on project to graduate. Students in the welding program were required to complete a project that incorporated different styles or techniques of welding.

With new experience and certifications, many senior students plan to look for jobs in the fields that they studied, and some even beyond. Somerville plans to go into the workforce for a year before attending Pennsylvania Technical College in Williamsport. After college, she plans to become a certified welding inspector. Isaiah Leasha (12) plans to continue into the

workforce for HVAC work after graduating from the BCCTC. Martin, who trained to become a veterinary assistant, plans to attend CCBC to become a veterinary technician.

"The Career and Technology Center led me to finding my career by giving me opportunities to get the certifications I need to work in the field and overall taught me enough to land me a job with an HVAC company," Leasha said.

The BCCTC also offers programs outside of the typical trades such as welding or HVAC. For example, Martin was enrolled in the veterinary assistant program, where she was taught how to

become an OSHA-certified and approved veterinarian, ready to take up job opportunities in the real world.

Among Somerville, Leasha and Martin, many other senior students have now received the credentials they need to establish themselves in the workforce and set themselves up for greatness. The BCCTC permitted students to get the experience and knowledge they needed to do so.

"I'm expecting more opportunities in the field to make the best life possible for myself," Leasha said.

# Chorus brings spring cheer through concert

ELIZABETH MOONEY  
Opinion Editor

On May 14, the middle school auditorium was filled with the sounds of music as the 9-12, 7-8 and 5-6 grade choruses took the stage in their annual spring concert. From 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Jennifer Newman, choir director, led the various groups in song accompanied by Cindy Cotherman on the piano.

Students began practicing for the concert soon after performing their winter concert, and songs were picked according to each member's strengths. Chorus members need to be able to sing their parts strongly and confidently due to the small size of the chorus.

Much of the choir's repertoire consists of harmonizing between each vocal group. Though the chorus is small in size, they still manage to utilize multiple-part harmonies with their alto, soprano, treble and baritone sections.

"I think my favorite part of preparing for a concert is watching how the individual students develop and how we grow in our musicianship as a whole in chorus," Newman said. "We are all there for one common goal, which is to be the best ensemble we



Elizabeth Mooney/FHS Press

**Spring is in the air:** Standing on risers, the high school chorus performs its final concert of the year. The spring concert was a great way of showing how far the chorus has come and allowed the members to showcase their talents and hard work.

can, representing our school with pride and enthusiasm and excellence. In order to achieve this goal, we must work together and learn to understand each other to get the best result."

The 5-6 grade chorus took the stage first and sang three songs for their performance: "Solfege Mambo" by Cristi Cary Miller, "Ubi Caritas" by Sally K. Albrecht

and "Build Me Up Buttercup" by The Foundations. The 7-8 grade chorus followed, singing "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars, "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen, "Popular" from Wicked and "Stand by Me" by Ben E. King.

The 9-12 grade chorus took the stage after and sang "How Can I Keep From Singing" by Enya, "Cantate Domino" by Sally

K. Albrecht, "Both Sides Now" by Joni Mitchell and "Gonna Sing" arranged by Andy Beck. Charlotte Rywolt (9) performed a solo in "Both Sides Now," and unique instruments were utilized in "Gonna Sing."

The songs that were chosen for the concert leaned more toward a cultural side. "Cantate Domino" is a Latin piece, "Gonna Sing" is an

African-American spiritual song, and "How Can I Keep From Singing" and "Both Sides Now" are folk-style songs.

"I really like 'Cantate Domino' and 'Both Sides Now' for this concert," Rywolt said. "The Latin in 'Cantate Domino' was fun and fairly easy to learn and in 'Both Sides Now' the low harmonies and my solo were a lot of fun to learn and practice."

Seniors Cholayna Johns (12) and Alana Krepps (12) were recognized during the concert for their performance over the years. As it was the last concert they'd get to experience, it was a meaningful time that they would all want to cherish, and recognition was delivered where it was due.

To finish the concert, all of the choirs combined and sang one final song as a group. The song was "Defying Gravity" from Wicked, with soloists Phoebe Smith (11) and Juliet Pivik. The final performance of the 24-25 year ended with the trending riff that many will remember.

# Annual band concert hits all the right notes

COLTON BLANK  
Social Media Director

On May 21, the Freedom Area Jazz and Concert Band took on their annual challenge of performing their spring concert. The concert was held in the high school auditorium, where the doors opened at 6:30 p.m. Walking in, parents were met with the gleaming look on their children's faces, as they prepared to show off all their hard work throughout the year. Each year, this concert is not only a final hurrah for all the seniors but also shows off the hard work, grit and determination the band puts into its program.

The event started with the jazz band performing the classic Latin tune, made popular by Michael Buble, "Sway," and followed it with "Brown Eyed Girl." After this, the 7th and 8th grade band performed three pieces. Students were able to introduce each song before performing. After the middle school performed their segments, the high school band ended the night by playing "English Folk Song Suite," "Parting Glass" and an arrangement of three Arabian dances. "Parting Glass" was performed to honor the graduating seniors and the recent passing of a former band director.

"I really enjoyed the concert this year, and got the chance to spend my last time with the band. Even though I



Mia Roncevic/FHS Press

**Masterful melody:** At the annual spring concert, **Ashley Benavidez-Martinez (9)** diligently watches the director. To stay in tune with one another, instrumentalists must continuously listen to their peers and adjust their own sound from there.

am graduating, the band did a lot for me, and I was super happy I got the chance to do it," Ryan Fessler (12) said.

In the process of performing, students were given solos to shine a spotlight on their talents. Students like Calla Reynolds (11), Jonathan Bruce (11), Charlotte Rywolt (9), and Phoebe Smith (11) were given solos to highlight their growth and improvement in their respective sections.

Along with the recognition of students, the band director, Ms. Lawrence, also

highlighted the graduating seniors. During the concert, the director gave a speech about every senior and highlighted their accomplishments during their years at Freedom. Along with speeches, senior Jesse Reinhardt (12) was awarded the Tom Taverna scholarship. He wrote an essay about how the band had changed his perspective on life and helped him get through high school.

"Getting to say goodbye to everyone was nice, especially since I've been doing the band forever. I am really

gonna miss the atmosphere in the band, and hopefully I will get the chance to see them in action at the football games or at concerts," Elias Boyd (12) said.

Near the end of the night, Hailey Stinar (12) gave a brief "thank you" speech to Lawrence and highlighted all her hard work for the students. The band boosters gave Lawrence flowers in appreciation for her work, and had Fessler and Boyd announce the fifty-fifty. The director catered a cheesecake for the students before the

concert.

With a fun-filled night, a lot of memories and tears like no other, the band once again orchestrated a concert like never before. Turning heads and making noise is more than just a hobby; it is a life, and to many, something that means the world to them.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

REESE NEELY  
News Editor

&

LAINY TUSZYNSKI  
Asst. News Editor

DEAL NAMED 2025 MR. BEAVER COUNTY

This year's Mr. Beaver County Event was held on May 15, 2025. Each contestant was required to submit a reference from a school faculty/staff member, a video presentation showcasing a talent, an anti-drug poster and an introduction of themselves. At the event, they were then asked a random fish bowl question in which they had thirty seconds to answer. At the end of the night, this year's Mr. Beaver County and \$1,000 winner was announced as Freedom's own Bryson Deal (11).

KREPPS, BAUCAN NAMED STUDENT OF THE MONTH

For the month of May, two students were awarded student of the month for the Beaver County Career and Technology Center. Those students were Robert Baucan (11) and Alana Krepps (12). Baucan is a Culinary Arts student and Krepps is an Electrical Occupations student.

FACULTY SELECT STUDENTS OF THE YEAR

For the 2024-2025 school year, two pervious student of the month winners from each grade level were awarded student of the year. The students were Nora Powers (9), Wyatt Miller (9), Edelyn Gonzalez-Reyes (10), Charles Powell (10), Mackenzie Mohrbacher (11), Colton Blank (11), Lainey Tuszyński (12) and Christopher Denkovich (12).

JOURNALISM STUDENTS RECEIVE AWARDS

Judging for the remaining Pennsylvania School Press Association Student Journalism Contest State Finals finalized in early May for the digital submission

categories. Christopher Denkovich (12) won the state title in the Newspaper Photography Category. This win marked the first state title for Denkovich and Freedom Focus Media's first state title in a photography category. Additionally, Kara Aland (12) and Riley Tokar (12)'s Cafe 116 submission, which qualified them for the state competition as well, earned them an honorable mention for the National Federation of Press Women.

SENIOR EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR JUNE

As graduation approaches, the guidance department has made seniors aware of the following upcoming senior events. On June 2, the top 10 dinner will take place at 4:30 p.m. at the Springfield Grill. On June 3, the Senior Brunch will take place at 9:30 a.m. in the high school auditorium. Later that evening, Circle of Scholars will take place at 6:30 p.m. at Javy's. On June 4, graduation practice will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. with the senior class picnic following at 12 p.m. Lastly, commencement will be held at 7:00 p.m. at Bulldog Stadium with the Senior Send Off following from 10:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m.

SHAWNEE YEARBOOKS ARRIVE

The 84th edition of the Shawnee yearbook has arrived on campus for the high school. Distribution began on May 22 and ran over the course of the following days. Supplements will arrive over the summer and will be distributed to students during the 2025-2026 school year. Seniors, you will need to visit the high school office at this time to pick up your supplement. More information will be available closer to the distribution date.

# More than a summer break

## Students plan to enjoy summer in many ways

**HANNAH SHAFFER**  
Digital Content Director

As students prepare to close their Chromebooks after enduring the long months of the school year, many excitedly look at what their summers will look like. Underclassmen are able to use the three months to relax or do whatever they may please, while seniors are able to use the time to prepare for college, begin their future careers or experience the world around them. While there are many ways students are able to spend their summer break, the break looks different for each student.

“I plan to gather any and all dorm necessities and/or school materials,” Payton Bickerstaff (12) said. “Though I mainly plan to spend time with my family and make sure I go to graduation parties before we all go on our own path.”

While quite a few seniors plan to spend their summer preparing for their secondary education, others prepare for their future careers.

“I want to utilize my summer to work and earn money,” Jake Hilberry (12) said.

Summer is the perfect time for students, both



Photo submitted

**Friendly faces:** Spending her break working at the Skybacher “More Than Sports” camps, Farisa Roberts (11) talks to one of the children in her group. Many students enjoy volunteering at these camps as a way to stay productive during the summer.

graduated and still in school, to earn money. As students are no longer obligated to go to school for the next three months, many are able to be more flexible throughout the day, depending on transportation availability.

Throughout the summer, the community offers a vast amount of activities that students are able to participate in, one of the biggest

being the Skybacher “More Than Sports” camps. The camps are available for students from Kindergarten through sixth grade to participate, while older students have the opportunity to volunteer.

“I enjoy working with the kids [at the Skybacher Camps] while also doing things I love and staying active,” Farisa Roberts (11)

said.

While many students fill their schedules with volunteer hours, jobs or preparation for college, others plan to spend their break exploring the world and all of the beauty it has to offer.

“My family and I plan to go on a cruise this summer, we will get to stop at places like Bermuda and many

other countries as well” Trinity Vojtko (11) said.

“I plan to gather any and all necessities and/or all school materials. Though I mainly plan to spend time with my family and make sure I go to graduation parties before we all go on our own path.”  
– Payton Bickerstaff (12)

Although students are commonly seen packing their schedules with a variety of activities, whether that includes things such as jobs or volunteering, a large number of students also plan to spend their summer days relaxing. The time given allows them to provide themselves a break from school and other responsibilities.

“I plan on going out with my friends and having as much fun as I can,” Ashley Benavidez-Martinez (9) said.

Summer gives students a vast amount of opportunities. While some pack their schedule and while others use the time to relax, for many it is a much-needed break from school and the challenges that the year throws each student's way.

## Guidance Counselor nears retirement

**BRODIE FALK**  
Business Manager

At the end of the 2024-2025 school year, long time Guidance Counselor Mr. Christopher Bennett plans to retire from his position. Bennett had been at the school since 2001, where his impact on students has affected the lives of countless students.

Bennett worked in the schools’ Guidance Office, where his work spanned throughout multiple topics and agendas. One of his most prominent involvements was scheduling. After students returned from Christmas break, Bennet began holding curriculum meetings, where he figured out what classes would be offered at the school and if there were any new courses that would be available for students in the following year. After that, Bennett began going to classes to show the students the curriculum and began to form the master schedule for the following year. Bennett then met with students individually to fix any scheduling issues, or change the schedule if the student wished to change their schedule.

Bennett also met with students to ask questions about their future plans after leaving high



Brodie Falk / FHS Press

**Final farewell:** Mr. Bennett helped hundreds of students with their college decisions. The college flags rest along the walls of his room.

school, so he and the rest of the guidance staff could help prepare each student for their unique life plans.

Bennett also met with students with 504 plans, helping students tailor their schooling to help them learn better. Bennett was also in charge of preparing students for standardized tests like the PSAT, SAT, AP tests, and Keystone exams.

Bennett said that a main part of his job is dealing with issues that randomly pop-up as the day goes on. He has to do his required work but also has to make sure that he is there for the students if they are having a hard time or going through something.

“I really like that the job is a different day every day. You got a few things you have to do, but you really have to work on everything else that comes up too,” Bennett said.

After his retirement, Bennett plans on taking some time to relax and enjoy his retirement. He is in the process of moving, so a bulk of his time in the next few months will be taken up by that. After he is done moving, he wants to spend his time playing golf and drinking coffee. He hopes to take some vacations down to Florida in the winter and enjoy the warm weather and beaches.

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# End of school year blues affects students

CADEN BERINGER  
Copy Editor

At the end of each and every school year, students may begin to feel sadness, anxiety or even emotional exhaustion. This could be due to the end of the year blues. This occurs at the end of the fourth quarter, as students prepare to depart from the school for the summer months. Whether they come back next year, or move on to the bigger things in life, this is common for students to experience.

Students may begin to have these feelings for a couple of different reasons. They may have difficulty saying goodbye to their teachers and especially their friends. They may be under extreme stress for their final projects, exams and any work that has accumulated throughout the course of the year.

While difficulties saying goodbyes and academic stress may be the case for some students, the broader reasoning for these feelings is the fear of change and loss of routine. Some do not know where to start after leaving high school forever, or even leaving for a few months for summer. With all of these different reasons promoting the end of the year blues, it has a real effect on students. This can cause some to lose all interest in their school-work. The loss of work ethic can cause students' final



**Springtime sadness:** As the end of the fourth quarter approaches, students may begin to experience different attitudes towards the completion of homework assignments. This may be due to a variety of different reasons, but staying positive is an important part of getting in the correct mindset.

grades to plummet during the fourth quarter, as motivation is sparse, and most begin to not care anymore.

"The year is coming to an end and most people give up because they have either already gotten into college, or are just checked out. My personal motivation with schoolwork has stayed constant," Payton Bickerstaff (12) said. "The main reason is because the finals that I have for college courses are coming up and the pressure of passing the class in order to not have to take it in

college."

While some students have taken the harder route to finish the year off strong, that is not always the case with some students. Students who tend to slack off due to these strong feelings of emotion towards the end of the year can be seriously affected emotionally and mentally. There are different signs that can show when a student is being affected by the end of the year blues. The main signs can include lack of motivation, sleep problems and academic performance

dropping.

"Knowing that I am a senior next year makes me filled with disbelief and it feels like just yesterday I was introduced to high school," Alyssa Bearer (11) said. "Also knowing that the school is coming to an end makes my motivation plummet, but I am looking forward to next year and all that it has to offer."

While the end of the year blues may seem like they may never go away, there is always hope. In fact, there are also ways to help pass this

sense of emotions quicker. Encouraging conversations with other friends help hide this sense of loneliness and stress and can help foster a better sense of self. While the end of the school year may seem like it is extremely hard, it is always important to remember everything that was accomplished in order to get to that point.

## GLITZ, GLAM, PROM

### STUDENTS RECALL FAVORITE ELEMENTS OF PROM NIGHT

CALLA REYNOLDS  
Managing Editor

Colton Blank / FHS Press  
Prom Royalty: Lainey Tuszynski (12) & Christopher Denkovich (12)

#### HOW MANY SENIORS WENT TO PROM?

DID NOT ATTEND

ATTENDED PROM

#### FAVORITE DRESS

"Phoenix Richards' (11) black and gold dress."

- Madison Fehir (10)

#### FAVORITE SONG

"Get Low' by Lil' Jon and The East Side Boyz."

- Farisa Roberts (11)

#### FAVORITE EVENT

"My favorite part was honestly just dancing with my friends."

- Megan Ellis (12)



## Senior Editor-in-Chief writes final farewell

**CHRISTOPHER DENKOVICH**  
Editor-in-Chief

I have spent the past seven years of my educational journey within the confines of the Freedom Area School District. All seven of those years were spent in student journalism, writing for every Freedom Focus Media publication. In my time here, I have had the pleasure of working with so many outstanding designers, photographers and writers. I can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is no environment like that of Room 226, and no work as gratifying as writing for the FHS Press.

I started writing for the Bulldog Barker in sixth grade. My first article — not including quotes — was a whopping 50 words in length and almost entirely consisted of opinions. From there, I continued writing and found myself on a panel interviewing U.S. Rep. Conor Lamb just one short year later. In eighth grade, I served as Editor-in-Chief of the Bulldog Barker, when I was named the 2021 JEA Aspiring Young Journalist — an accolade that helped land me an invite to join Print Media Workshop (PMW) as a freshman. The invitation to be the fourth student to ever tackle PMW as a freshman came with the promise of pizza during late-night edits, and while I can attest that the pizza was far less prevalent than I was initially led to believe it would be, joining PMW was the best decision I have ever made.

Our mission at the FHS Press is to serve our community honestly, fairly and consistently. We stand as the paper of record for our district, covering every sport, school board meeting and day-to-day community life. Journalism is writing with a purpose. It has taught me the power of a well-asked question and, more importantly, the power



Photo Submitted

**The look:** Smoldering behind the newspaper, The FHS Press Staff recreates Mr. Fitzpatrick's iconic profile picture. The newspaper photo is not needed for publication, which allows the staff to have fun with poses.

of listening. PMW forced me to learn journalistic integrity, curiosity and how to handle the pressure of strict deadlines (Mr. Aaron Fitzpatrick might disagree with the last one). Every student who enters Room 226 leaves as a better writer, a sharper editor and a more thoughtful friend — I am no exception.

I don't think there is any class or any sport that requires more teamwork than PMW. Our 17-person staff wrestles with producing nine monthly 12-page issues of our newspaper — deadlines that completely overlap with the production of our 212-page yearbook, a task that would be impossible without such an incredible team. I'd like to thank all of the editors who made this volume of the FHS Press possible: Caden Beringer, Bryson Deal, Addison Freeman, Audrey Mooney, Elizabeth Mooney, Reese Neely and all of the

assistant editors. Thank you to my absolutely wonderful Managing Editor, Calla Reynolds, who is always there to clean up my mistakes, which I know can be a hefty task.

Next, a most special thank-you to my adviser, Mr. Aaron Fitzpatrick — or Fitz, as the cool kids call him. Thank you for being a supportive adviser, a knowledgeable teacher and someone I am proud to call a good friend. I couldn't have survived high school without you. There are many more thank-yous to go around, but I would need a much higher word count to list them all. It has truly taken a village to make all of these papers possible. Lastly, thank you to all of the readers of the FHS Press. Your readership gives purpose to our writing, a community to write for and lots of stories to tell.

There are simply no words to fully describe my experience with

student journalism, PMW and all of the people in Room 226. I hope that after I leave, all of our writers continue to chase the truth and find passion in each story they bring to the budget meetings. Though my byline will no longer be found among its pages, and my name will no longer live in its staff box, I am confident that the FHS Press will continue to be a gold standard of high school journalism. It's a privilege to see that the dorky — some say cult-like — culture will live on in Room 226. I have a very good feeling that there are a lot of memories still left to be made and a lot of stories left to tell. Thank you again to everyone who played a hand in my journey. It has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I will absolutely never forget.

"From the bottom of my heart, thank you," Christopher Denkovich (12) said.

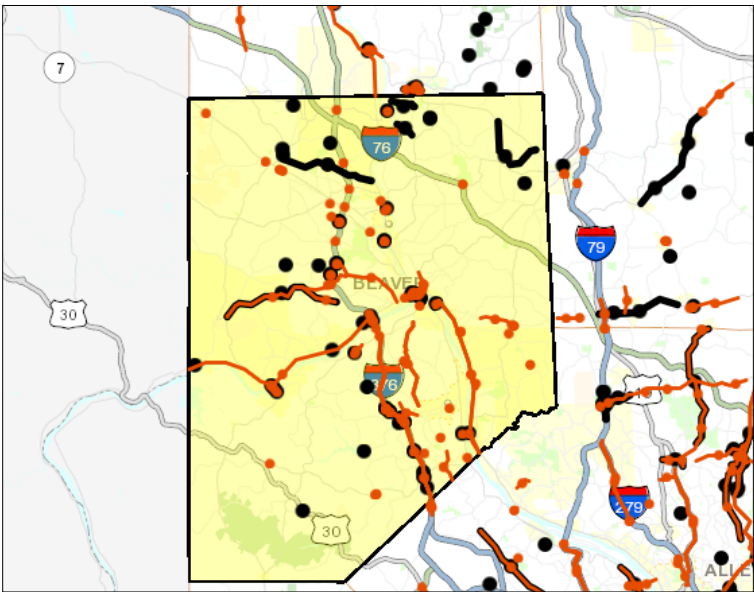
## Road work does not work

**NOAH BRANDON**  
Digital Platform Coordinator

Every time one goes for a drive in Beaver County, or even Pennsylvania as a whole, it seems there is always some sort of road work going on. Even though they are supposed to be fixing the road, it creates other issues that become a burden to drivers.

Monaca is one of the main surrounding areas that often has construction, and is on one of the busiest roads. The main street seems to constantly have congested traffic because of road work. There are usually some road plates on the ground, causing people to slow down before driving over them, creating even more congestion. There is also usually some sort of flagger holding a stop or proceed slowly sign. Even though it is a good thing that they are trying to put the roads in better condition, it creates all sorts of time issues. People running late for work, or even someone just wanting to go for a drive, may encounter these issues that make the trip more stressful and time-consuming.

Road work should be done



**Roadwork ahead:** A map of the current and expected road work to occur in Beaver County. The amount of road work is burdening to commuters.

only when necessary, not just as something to spend tax money on and create mediocre work. More times than less, it seems that road work always results in an increasingly bumpy road. All of the time spent and wasted by workers and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)

usually still ends up putting the road in even worse condition.

Cranberry is another place that always seems like it has construction going on. The road entering Cranberry from the West has been under construction for quite some time. The conditions constantly change, with the

lanes remaining open switching often, causing the traffic to get congested, because drivers have to figure out which lanes to navigate depending on what is open.

It becomes annoying having to sit behind an endless line of cars because the flagger holding the sign on stop for what seems like forever. This is even worse in places like Monaca, where there aren't many side streets to take to effectively avoid the construction. Work in Cranberry is more avoidable, because there are many different ways to navigate, but it still becomes time-consuming, having to take a detour from the expected route.

While some road construction, like the opening of Crows Run road, created very effective options for transportation, it still caused the original road to be closed for a very long time. This is about one of the only examples of good use of road work; all the other instances are negative, as they create time-wasting, bumpy roads that no one asked for.



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### MISSION STATEMENT

The FHS Press is the official student newspaper serving students and staff at Freedom Area High School, in Freedom, Pennsylvania. The principle goals of this publication are to thoroughly and accurately inform the Freedom Area School District community and to document and preserve the history of Freedom Area High School.

### DISTRIBUTION

The FHS Press is a monthly print publication, distributed to students and staff on the Freedom Area School District campus and to the community at a number of local businesses. If you would like to display or distribute the FHS Press at your business, please submit your request via email to [fhspress@freedomarea.org](mailto:fhspress@freedomarea.org), and our staff will do its best to accommodate.

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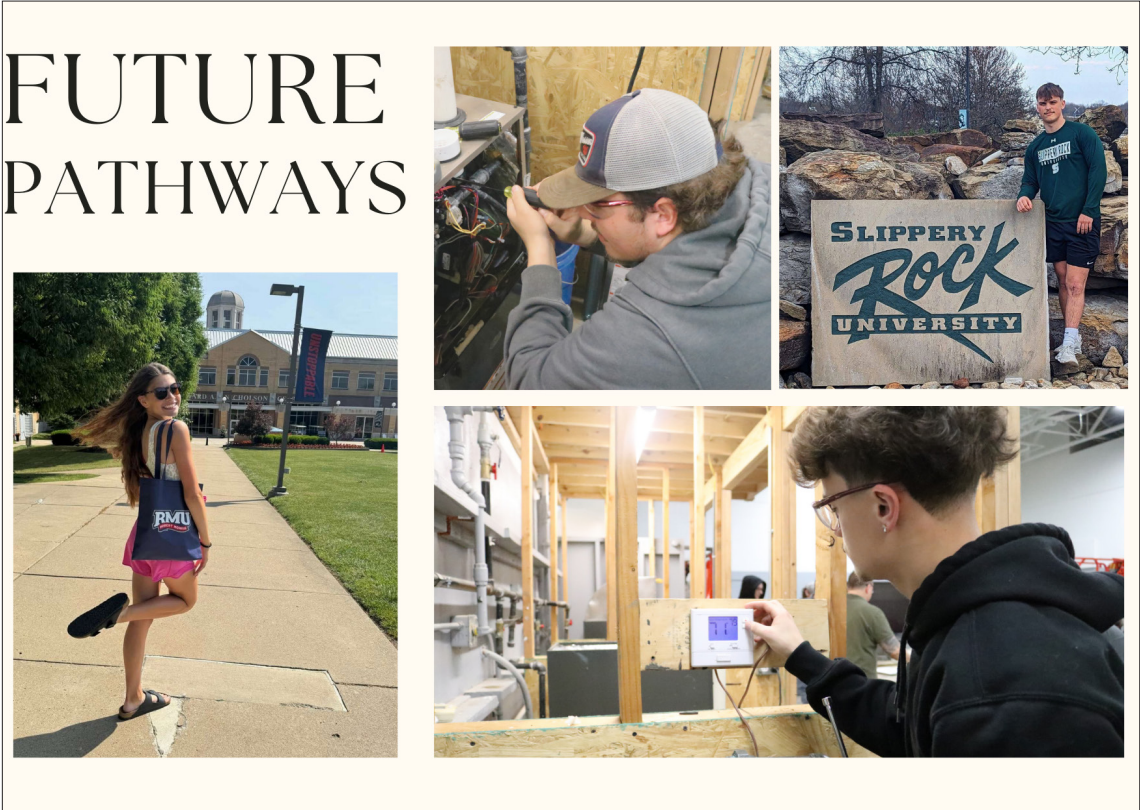
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### AFFILIATIONS



# Seniors' next steps to growing up



**Follow the right path:** Seniors are given the difficult choice on what to do after high school. The most common choices in order are four-year universities, military and or entering the workforce.

**BROOKE STRAGAND**  
Social Media Director

There are only a few short days until graduation, and seniors are finalizing their career plans. Graduates are faced with the difficult decision of whether they go to college, the workforce, the military or even take a gap year.

Seniors' final days are not only an accomplishment, but also a way to start their adulthood. There seems to be a lot of judgment going around if students choose not to go to a huge university.

No one appreciates those who choose a different career pathway. The important thing to remember is that every student is different. All seniors have different interests and goals that persuade them to make these final decisions.

It should not matter if a student chooses to go to a community college rather than attend a state college. There are many reasons why a student could choose a smaller college over a big one. For example, the tuition is often much more affordable. It is harder for students to financially support a

state college tuition over a community college. Students can save thousands of dollars while obtaining the same degree. So, those who continue to judge students who go to a community college are not looking at the bigger picture.

Seniors who choose to go to a smaller university also have many reasons contributing to their choice. It is a great way to branch out and live on their own. Being able to experience new things as an adult is very beneficial for college students.

Some seniors do not plan on attending college at all, but

they do have jobs lined up for them right after graduation. They have been prepared to join the workforce due to their skills and determination. It shows that one does not need a degree to get a decent-paying job.

Apart from college or the workforce, there is also the military pathway. This includes the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard. Some students strive to serve their country, which is inspiring. Not everyone was made for college, so the military is a great choice for those interested.

Sometimes seniors need a little more time to figure life out, which is okay. Young adults, especially 18-year-olds, are still trying to get their lives together. A great option for students in this situation is taking a gap year. Gap years are usually taken by students who have just graduated from high school and need time to explore personal growth. If a student does not have their career figured out, they can take a break from school and focus on things that interest them.

There are multiple career pathways seniors can choose from. No matter what they choose to study or work, they will all have outstanding careers. Figuring out a career that is fitting for each student seems to be impossible, but there are so many ways students can make a living. Whether students go to college, the workforce, the military or take a gap year, they will accomplish great things.

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# Zoos pose ethical concerns through animal mistreatment

**MIA RONCEVICH**  
Asst. Opinion Editor

Chimpanzees, one of humans' closest relatives, require around 12 square miles to live in the forest. Chimps who live in the desert require more space. The average enclosure for a chimp is only around 250 sq. feet, according to ZooChat.

The average American house is around 2,350 square feet. If the same logic were applied, it would be as if your house were only 1.128 square inches.

Animals that are domesticated are bred and genetically changed to be able to live with humans. It is okay for animals like domestic dogs, cats, hamsters and guinea pigs to live in a smaller enclosure. It is not, however, okay for a wild animal to live in a tiny enclosure, somewhere they are not meant to be.

According to World Animal Protection (WAP), tigers' roaming space can be quite variable, ranging from as small as five square miles to 60 square miles, but the average enclosure is only 11,500 square feet (0.0004 square miles), according to ZooChat.

If someone went to a zoo and closely observed enclosures, they could



**Trapped:** Without instincts being met, captive wild animals' mental health suffers. Humans should not subject animals to cruelty by holding them captive for entertainment.

see that the animals are distressed. Parrots pull out their feathers, tigers pace back and forth endlessly and polar bears swim in circles.

Zoochosis is a psychological condition similar to psychosis in humans, which is when a person loses touch with reality and cannot tell what is real and what is a

hallucination. Animals can get this too when their needs are not being met.

According to In Defense of Animals (IDA), some symptoms of zoochosis in animals are: pacing, bar biting, bobbing, weaving, swaying, rocking, self-mutilation, over-grooming—such as parrots pulling out feathers

or chewing skin—regurgitating and re-ingesting food.

Also according to the IDA, many zoos need to give animals antidepressants or antipsychotic medications to manage symptoms.

Zoos do not allow animals to live their lives instinctually, or as they are designed to live based on their

species. Humans choose for themselves how animals live, like which animal they live with in captivity, who they mate with or even allow them to mate. They cannot hunt for food or eat when they are actually hungry, as they are fed on a schedule. This is very different from the wild, where animals make their own choices.

In the wild, animals can choose to live alone or to live in a group, and which group they want to live in, depending on the species. They can roam and eat wherever they want, whenever they want. Wild animals are meant to be wild.

Some may think that it is better for wild animals to live in captivity because they do not have to hunt for food and they do not have to live in the wild. This is both inconsiderate and ignorant, because these people think that animals would like to live the same way humans do, or how domesticated pets do.

Wild animals are not the same as humans or pets. They are meant to live in the wild. They are meant to find their own food. It is not cruel to let a wild animal be wild; it is letting them be as they are meant to be.

Baseball team advances to playoffs

ADDISON FREEMAN  
Copy Editor

The cracking of bats and the excitement from the crowds have been constant this season as the baseball team continues to refine their game. With several wins and few losses already in their bags, the team has been working hard to make it as far as they can in the postseason.

After their win against Neshannock, the team continued their streak the next day against Sewickley Academy. They gave up the first runs but bounced back quickly, winning the game with a score of 13-11 against the Panthers. Later, on April 14, they played against Laurel. They were defeated by three runs, ending the game 0-3. The next day, however, the team managed to pull through a win, defeating the Spartans 5-3.

On April 17, the team faced off against New Brighton and defeated the Lions in a close game of 3-2 by the final inning. Four players ended up with at least one hit during the game, one being Colton Blank (11), who scored his first double of the season. On April 22, they played Bethlehem Center and lost in yet another close game by 8-7. They continued on April 24 to play against Highlands. Luckily for the team, they defeated the Golden Rams by 10-7.

On April 28, the Bulldogs

hosted Aliquippa for their senior night. They created a season high-score, dominating the Quips 18-0. Mason O'Donnell (10) notably contributed to the game with three runs and one double. They ended the game with a high on-base percentage, not allowing the Quips on the board.

After the successful game, the spirit continued with the senior night ceremony. The team honored three seniors: Elias Boyd (12), Ryan Fessler (12) and Thomas Ward (12). The baseball boosters worked to put together the events, bringing in a food truck in addition to the concessions table. They also had large decorations that they used at the end of the game, when their ceremony took place. The seniors were presented with gifts from teachers as well as signs and flowers, which they presented to their guardians during the ceremony.

"My favorite part [of the ceremony] was finally getting to be a senior and do it," Boyd said.

The boys faced off against Shenango on May 5 and won by a score of 1-0. Unfortunately for the boys, their opponents bounced back against them on May 7, causing the Bulldogs to fall short by a close game of 5-4. Determined to win a game again, the Bulldogs faced off against the Quips on May 8. This time, they conquered yet another game, winning 29-1. During this, the



Lainey Tuszyński/FHS Press

Team effort: Smiling, the baseball team honors their seniors during a post-game ceremony. During the ceremony, there were decorations set up and signs made for the seniors to hold.

boys dropped another season high-score for the season.

The turnout of these games paved a pathway for the boys to continue their season and advance into playoffs, their first game occurring on May 13 against Apollo Ridge at Plum High School.

As the season continues on, the Bulldogs have proven

themselves to be a team that refuses to back down from a challenge. With successful wins and few losses, they've shown resilience on the diamond. With more games from the playoffs to come, the team is remaining focused on building their momentum and finishing strong, making every inning count.

"In the future this season

we have the potential to win the WPIAL championship and go into the state playoffs. When we play as a team and trust each other, we can beat any team we face," Anthony Taddeo (10) said. "If we play the way we're playing right now, we're going to be a team that is scary to play."

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# Track season ends, individuals place



**Stepping up:** Beginning her stepping sequence, **Kendall Climo (10)** prepares to pole vault over her starting height. This was Klimos' first year doing pole vault, and her PR was 7'.

**COLTON BLANK**  
*Social Media Director*

With June slowly approaching, the Track and Field team leaves their lanes with their heads held high. A season with solid improvement, good performances and a plethora of memories is a good way to wrap up a sport. For many, this season is the last, but for others, this was their first, marking a journey that one has finished and another has started.

Aurea Hickenboth (12) was one of the team captains for the season. Committed to bettering

themselves and the team, the captains worked diligently to challenge themselves and others. Notably, Hickenboth had a huge impact on the pole vaulting section. Hickenboth started pole vaulting during the winter, where she competed for the indoor track team. This success set her up for a great senior season, getting her second place in the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League. Along with Hickenboth, Noah Chaousy (11) clinched a ninth-place finish in the hurdles, and Trinity Vojtko (11) got sixth in discus at the

WPIAL meet.

“This has been my third year doing throwing events, and this year it feels like I really did my best work. During the Pine-Richland meet, I [got a personal record] in discus, and got sixth overall,” Vojtko said. “Next year, I’m really looking forward to my senior season and getting the chance to compete at States this year.”

With the team in an overall good standing, they wanted to reflect on their season. One of the biggest parts of sports is to see improvement among the players. Along with new members, the

team faced new challenges and new difficulties. Even so, the teamwork and atmosphere shared among the team allowed them to reach their personal goals.


“My team wasn’t able to make it to States, but we still performed extremely well, which I am very proud of. Next year, I hope to continue to lead the team in a good direction.”

– Mackenzie Mohrbacher (12)

Whether it be the tedious practices after school or the long runs, each player had an essential part in the team. Along with the increased internal competition, external competition also increased. The meets provided good insight on where the teams stood; some meets had more than 50 different schools. Even so, players still broke their personal records and finished close in competitions, with three athletes making appearances at WPIAL podiums. With remarkable records and mental improvement, the team was consistently working, both mentally and physically.

“Now that my junior season is done, it’s a really good time for me to reflect on my overall personal improvement. My team wasn’t able to make it to States, but we still performed extremely well, which I am very proud of,” Mackenzie Mohrbacher (11) said. “Next year, I hope to continue to lead the team in a good direction and welcome any new players to my family.”

With every jump, the season was more than just a competition; it was a test to see what community, unity and grit can really achieve. School is closing, and the track team runs proudly as they set another Legacy for freedom.



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# Softball ends season with 2 wins



**Smiling proudly:** Holding flowers, the softball team poses for a picture before their last home game against Aliquippa on April 28. This game would be the girls' second win.

**AUDREY MOONEY**  
Features Editor

After 16 games and one scrimmage, the softball team concluded their season with two wins. Despite their losing streak, the girls made strong plays throughout their final games.

On April 18, the Bulldogs played a double-header away against the New Brighton Lions. During the first game, the outfield was working hard in the first inning to get batters out. Caitlyn Costanza (10) and Mackenzie Mohrbacher (11) made two catches. At the bottom of the first, the score was 0-0.

In the second inning, Charlotte Rywolt (9) stole second base but was unable to make it to third. Throughout

the next three innings, New Brighton scored multiple triples, making it difficult for the Bulldog gang to catch up. The final score of the first game was 0-14.

The second game against the Lions featured a similar outcome as the first. New Brighton took the lead in the first inning, getting multiple singles, walks and steals. The Lions were up by 10 at the bottom of the first.

In the second inning, the girls scored three runs. The first was by Emily Lawrence (9) running a triple and reaching home plate on a defensive error due to Rywolt's single. With Rywolt already on first base, she was advanced to second, stole third and was brought home with

a single from Rylie Vojtko (10). In the third inning, Mohrbacher drew a walk to first base and stole second base. She made it to home plate with a single from Haydan Baucan (12). The final score was 24-3.

The ladies took a week off until April 25, when they traveled to Aliquippa to their first win of the season. In the first inning, Mohrbacher and Baucan scored in-park home runs. The ladies kept the pressure on the Quips with constant runs, which led the Bulldogs to be ahead by 10 points at the bottom of the first.

The following innings kept the Bulldogs in the lead, with another home run by Baucan and multiple steals. The game featured

many pivotal players, with Jaylyn Gaiton (9), Costanza and Harmony Martin (12) all scoring three runs, and Mohrbacher and Baucan scoring four. The final score was 29-11, a large win for the Bulldogs.

"This was one of our longest games. Everyone was thrilled that we gained a win," Janna Kline (11) said.

On April 28, the squad hosted Aliquippa for a second game. Before the first pitch, a senior night ceremony was held, as this was the squad's last home game. Three seniors were recognized: Trista Somerville (12), Baucan and Martin, and they were presented with flowers. After the ceremony, gameplay followed as usual, with the Bulldogs picking up an early lead. After five innings, the final score was 19-8, the second of the team's two wins.

"I loved playing with the girls on the team and how supportive and comforting they were when [the coach] took me out [of the game]," Somerville said.

The team had their last game of the season against Shenango on April 30. Shenango scored 11 runs in the first inning, enough to keep them in the lead for the rest of the game. The Bulldogs could not end on a high note, with a final score of 16-0.

With a final record of 2-14, the team hopes to do better next season, especially with several new players coming up from the middle school. As for the rest of the year, the team can look forward to their banquet at Ichiban Hibachi and Sushi Bar to commemorate the end of the season.

## Team Besties



Chomping down on pepperoni rolls, Charlotte Rywolt (9) and Harmony Martin (12) fuel up for the next inning. Concessions were provided at the games for both the players and the crowd.



Grabbing her friends, Rylie Vojtko (10) stands with Emily Lawrence (9) and Hannah Houy (9). Between innings, players were able to chat with their friends in the dugout.



Standing in a line, Haydan Baucan (12), Trista Somerville (12) and Harmony Martin (12) sing the Star Spangled Banner on April 28. Before the pregame ceremony, the speaker broke, leaving the whole team to sing loudly and proudly.

## OLYMPICS overview

**LAINY TUSZYNSKI**  
Asst. News Editor

On May 15, the Freedom Special Olympics took place. Students with an IEP worked with middle and high school volunteers as they experienced events that required them to run, kick, jump and throw. According to Ms. Abigayle Pritchard, the day provided an opportunity for the special education students to participate in athletics in a fun, engaging and inclusive environment.



### SENIOR PROJECTS, FROM PAGE 1

and personal history, service project, government meeting, career path, personal and educational reflection and their future plans.

Interviews were not graded on a rubric. The panel of teachers ensured that the students completed their job shadow and community service. Interviews lasted 15 minutes like the presentations. During this time teachers checked for basic

understanding and completion of their projects.

Since they are more tailored to individuals, classes such as Personal Finance and English 12, have done little class work dedicated to the projects. In senior English classes, they worked on resumes that were submitted for the project. Other than that, students were expected to complete the projects independently. In previous

years, classes would do parts of the project in class, since everyone had to complete the same presentation.



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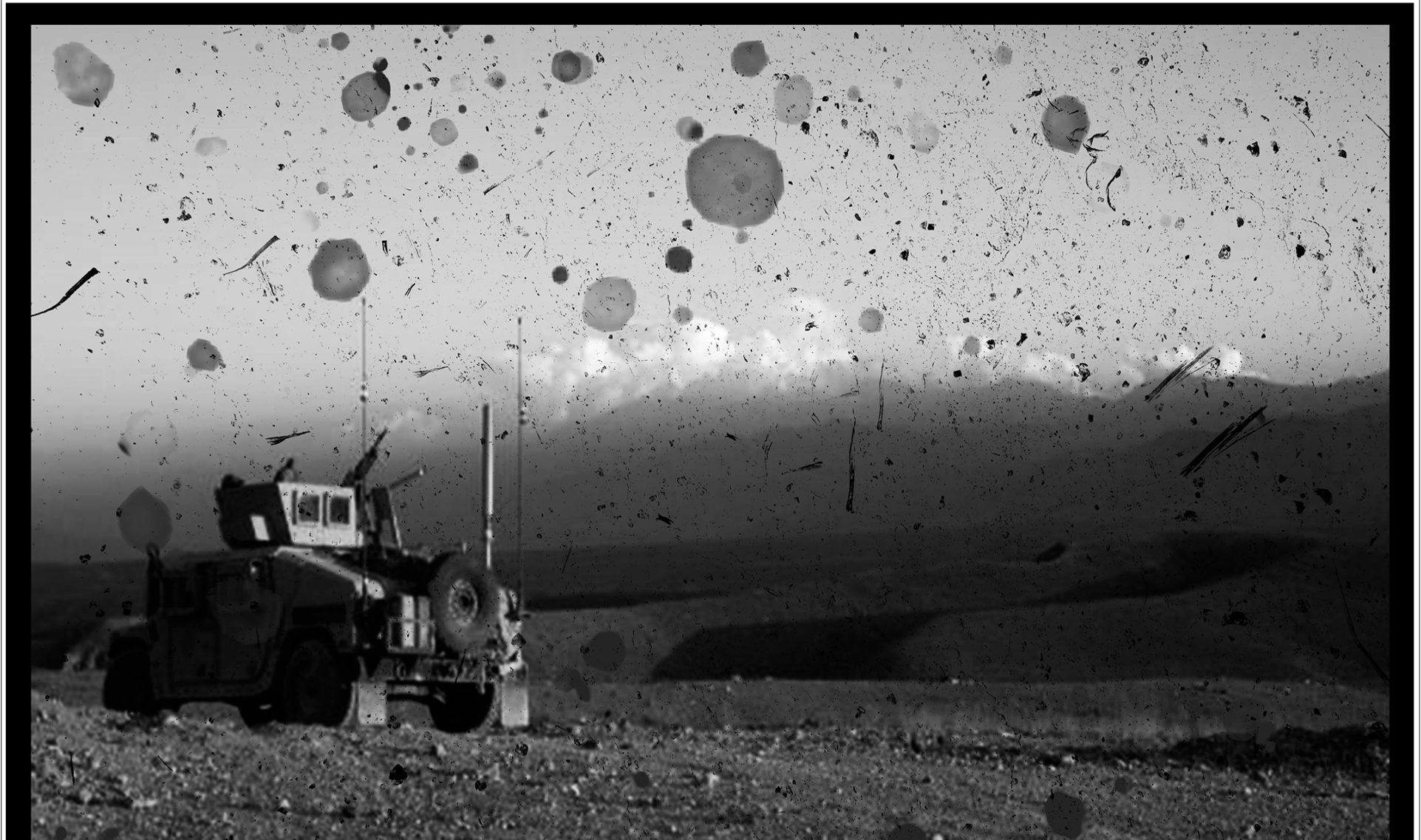
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