

The Record

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Fieldston streets close to outsiders to combat recent trespassing

JAMES ZAIDMAN
Staff Writer

Responding to unknown individuals trespassing and taking photographs, last Wednesday, the Fieldston Property Owners Association (FPOA) made the decision to close or guard all entrances to their private streets, Head of School Dr. Tom Kelly announced in an email. While guards were posted at some of the closed entrances to allow entry on a case-by-case basis, others were closed completely.

The trespasser in question took photographs of private homes and two synagogues in the Fieldston area before being escorted out of the FPOA area, Kelly wrote. When individuals approached the trespasser, they reportedly acted in a rude and aloof manner, sparking further concerns, Kelly wrote. "In light of the information before them, the organization needed to do whatever it could to gain a better handle on what these individuals were doing," he wrote.

Kelly believes that regardless of any minor inconveniences caused by the FPOA's decision to close their entrances, the school community should feel safer knowing that the association always acts with the safety of their neighborhood in mind, he wrote. "Knowing the FPOA will not shy away from taking reasonable steps to protect its residents when feeling threatened should be a source of comfort for everyone at HM," Kelly wrote.

There are 11 points of entry to the FPOA private streets, all of which the FPOA maintains full control over year-round, Director of Public Safety Michael McCaw said.

This control allows them to close the entrances at any time, he said. Luckily, the closures did not affect the school's bus routes because of an agreement between the school and the FPOA that was made ten years ago, he said. The agreement ensures that school buses will not be restricted at all as long as they travel along the perimeter of the FPOA's privately owned streets as opposed to cutting through the area, McCaw said. "We reaffirmed with the bus companies that all of the bus drivers are on point and would not take shortcuts through the community," he said.

Unfortunately, the situation was not as simple for students whose transportation to school involves private vehicles, whether they are driven by a parent, take a car service, or drive themselves, McCaw said. Since these vehicles usually transit through FPOA streets on the way to school, as opposed to going around the perimeter, they would have to pass through the guarded entrances, he said. To ensure that all students would still be able to come and go from the school without any problems, McCaw and Kelly worked with the FPOA to confirm that parents and students would be allowed entry into private streets as well as car services, McCaw said.

To aid the FPOA in protecting the neighborhood from trespassing, the school decided to limit the amount of unknown individuals entering their property, McCaw said. To achieve this, between last Thursday and Monday, food deliveries to campus were prohibited and off-campus privileges were suspended for students, McCaw said. "The best thing that we could do in the sense of cooperation and safety was to suspend all of the additional traffic



PATROLING THE STREETS

Photo by Evan Contant

that comes to the area from [food deliveries]."

Suspending off-campus privileges came hand-in-hand with prohibiting food deliveries during the period of closure for similar reasons, McCaw said. "Our students typically go to local businesses when they have their breaks, so we wanted to keep everybody close because we don't really know what exactly is happening," he said, "and we want to ensure the safety of our community."

Since the closures did not affect school bus routes to and from the school, most students did not see any differences from their normal routine. However, students like Etta

Singer (12), who take private cars to and from school, found that their transportation was often impeded by the gate closures, Singer said. "It was annoying when I had to take a ride home," they said, "because [we] couldn't get out [of Fieldston] — they had to go around in circles to find their way out."

Celia Stafford (12), who takes the bus to school, was unaffected by the changes, she said. Since she does not usually leave campus during the school day to go down the hill, Stafford was able to go about her day as usual, she said. While she understands that the closure could have been an inconvenience for some students, she believes that

the FPOA should take what steps it believes are necessary to ensure the safety of its residents, she said.

On the other hand, Henry Gill (10), who often goes down the hill for lunch, was disappointed to see that these privileges were suspended, he said. However, after reading Kelly's email, Gill understood that, to help the FPOA combat the trespassing, the school and its students also have a part to play by remaining on campus during the school day, Gill said. "I appreciate how Fieldston and the school are working together to be more safe," he said.

Letter to the Editor: Brenda Cohn in response to last week's op-ed

Dear Editor of The Record,

While I enjoy reading The Record each week as a member of the HM community, I have to disagree with the first sentence in the "To promote healthier eating, the school should build Urban Farms" article in the Opinions section of Issue 12 published on December 8, 2023. It is simply not factual to say that "our school... offers its students foods that have no nutritional value or health benefits." The truth is quite the contrary.

Members of HM's food services

team, also known as FLIK, love what we do: nourishing the mind, body and soul of the people we serve and the people we grow. We procure the freshest foods and work daily to create an environment that promotes even fresher ideas. A simple focus, we cook FIT. We are committed to foods that are fresh, wholesome and safe to eat.

Did you know that produce is delivered fresh every morning to all of our divisions, and that our purveyor, Baldor Foods, sources produce from local farms like Red Jacket, Satur Farms, and Eva's Farm

in New York and Jersey Fresh in New Jersey, to name a few? Yes, we have traditional chips and candy, however, you cannot miss the healthier options that are there for every single type of snack. I do believe that students at HM know that consuming a large number of foods high in salt and sugar is not a healthy diet. If not, and as per past practice, I'm always here to help students, N-12, learn healthier eating habits, even if it means securing and serving highly proscriptive meals, all with the school's approval, of course. In a well thought out effort to keep

UD students on campus, and to provide options for MD students who are not permitted to leave campus during the day, we offer items that are available down the hill. These are items students want and like, and sometimes request. Additionally, I would argue that Horace Mann School students are mature enough to make wise choices and they do! In fact, I witness this, daily and remain forever impressed with the capabilities of this talent-rich student body.

While I disagree with the statement discussed above, I welcome

constructive criticism and I love the idea of growing produce. We have done it in the past at Dorr and in the Upper and Lower Divisions. Whether discussing urban, hydroponics, raised beds or empty plots, I would welcome the opportunity to talk about and brainstorm ideas with any interested students. As many of you know, my office is in the Cohen Dining Commons and I can always be reached at my email address: brenda_cohn@horacemann.org.

Students share artistic talent at showcase assembly

RENA SALSBERG
Staff Writer

From student-made films to musical performances to dance numbers, talented students took to the stage during the Student Showcase Assembly on Tuesday.

Student showcases are a great way to show off student talent in our community, Manager of the Department of Theater and Dance Jonathan Nye said. "We want to see the students performing. We want to see their talents. We have a lot of talented kids, and we don't always have that opportunity to watch them," he said.

To determine the structure and performance of the assembly, Nye sought out members of the school community to suggest either students to perform or to display their projects for the assembly. "Walking through Olshan lobby, I would walk up to students playing the piano and asked them if they would be interested in participating in the assembly," he said.

Although some aspects of the assembly, such as student films from

Visual Arts Teacher Jordan Rathus's Directed Study in Filmmaking class, had been planned out since the fall, other performances such as Eva Woodruff's (9) singing performance, were organized last Friday when members of the Community Council sent the student body a signup sheet, Nye said.

William Woodruff (11) performed Toccata in D Minor by Sergei Prokofiev on the piano. He decided to perform mainly because he wanted to practice being on stage, as performing is an important skill to have, he said.

Like many performers who practice their pieces often, Woodruff was slightly nervous that he would mess up, he said. "I think when you perform a lot, that usually happens beforehand. You always ask yourself: 'What if I just forget the piece while performing?' But in the end, it goes fine, and you question why you were even worried," he said.

Woodruff performed his piece from memorization, he said. "When you play a piece enough times, you start to automatically, mentally



SLEIGHING STRINGS

Photo by Nicole

break down the structure of the piece and when you're very familiar with harmony and theory [of the music] everything, it all sort of just

kind of clicks," he said.

In addition to his solo piano performance, Woodruff accompanied his sister, Eva Woodruff, on the piano as she sang Requiem from the musical Dear Evan Hansen.

Eva's experience with musical theater and performing helped ease some of her stage fright, but she was still nervous about her performance as she is a new student. Additionally, she was performing in front of many of her classmates whom she has not met yet, she said. "I think I appeared more confident than I felt," she said.

During the assembly, two student-directed films were shown, including one of Jack Chasen's (12) productions. Although Chasen felt slightly embarrassed to have his face shown on the big screen, he enjoyed being a part of the assembly, he said. "I'm really glad my peers appreciated my work," he said.

The showcase assembly is unique compared to the typical assemblies that the school organizes, and it is arguably one of the best of the year, as students can recognize the capabilities of their peers, Chasen said. "In general, the school has a pretty talented student

body, so it is cool to see what they can do outside of academics," he said.

As a participant in the assembly, Eva felt that performing was a rewarding experience. "It's gratifying to walk on stage with something you have been working on for a while, even if you only perform it once. I think student showcases are a great way to enjoy that gratifying experience," she said.

As an audience member, Eva enjoyed the assembly, especially because she knew many performers. "I think it's fun to see your peers perform something as opposed to someone you might not know. It's always nice to watch talented members of our community."

The assembly allowed students to reflect on and better appreciate the hidden talent in the school's student body, Kayla Choi (12) said. "I enjoyed watching my classmates and friends showcase their talent at the assembly," she said.



STRIKE A POSE

Photo by Nicole Au

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About Founded in 1903, The Record is Horace Mann School's award-winning weekly student newspaper. We publish approximately 30 times during the academic year, offering news, features, opinions, arts, Middle Division and sports coverage relevant to the school community. The Record serves as a public forum to provide the community with information, entertainment, and an outlet for various viewpoints. As a student publication, the contents of The Record are the views and work of the students and do not necessarily represent those of the faculty or administration of the Horace Mann School. Horace Mann School is not responsible for the accuracy and contents of The Record and is not liable for any claims based on the contents or views expressed therein.

Editorials All editorial decisions regarding content, grammar, and layout are made by the senior editorial board. The unsigned editorial represents the opinion of the majority of the board.

Opinions Opinion columns represent the viewpoint of the author and not of The Record or the school. We encourage students, alumni, faculty, staff, and parents to submit opinions by emailing record@horacemann.org.

Letters Letters to the editor often respond to editorials, articles, and opinions pieces, allowing The Record to uphold its commitment to open discourse within the school community. They too represent the opinion of the author and not of The Record or the school. To be considered for publication in the next issue, letters should be submitted by mail (The Record, 231 West 246th Street, Bronx, NY 10471) or email (record@horacemann.org) before 6 p.m. on Wednesday evening. All submissions must be signed.

Contact For all tips, comments, queries, story suggestions, complaints and corrections, please contact us by email at record@horacemann.org.

All I want for Christmas is ... to keep holiday music for the holidays



Ciana Tzuo

Winter is the season of snow, hot chocolate, and of course, Christmas. Families hang lights, decorate Christmas trees, bake with friends, ice skate, and listen to Christmas music. Christmas music is ubiquitous throughout the holiday season, playing in retail stores, homes, and even on your “for you” page on TikTok. When played frequently during the holidays, Christmas music significantly enhances the holiday spirits. However, to preserve its uplifting effect, we should only enjoy the tunes during the December season, considering its repetitive nature.

Love it or hate it, Christmas music has the power to stir up a range of emotions. The opening chords

of Mariah Carey’s “All I Want For Christmas is You” are familiar and festive—they are practically the epitome of Christmas spirit. Holiday music causes some to belt into song and others to groan in annoyance. Well, the haters can say what they want to say, but Christmas music sets the tone for a cheerful holiday. Most Holiday songs are in major keys, giving them a happy and resolved sound. With lyrics about joy and happiness, these songs get people in the mood for Christmas and quality time with family and friends.

There’s a reason why we return to Christmas songs every year. As composer Irving Berlin said after writing “White Christmas” in 1940, “Not only is it the best song I ever wrote, it’s the best song anybody ever wrote.” The song ended up being the best selling single of all time and is still played during the holidays more than 80 years later. We listen to the same holiday music every year, over and over, so what’s the appeal? Well, the answer is simple: nostalgia.

Music is crucial to reliving memories and evoking emotion. People seek comfort and familiarity in music, and holiday music is a reliable staple. According to Professor Joe Bennett, a forensic musicologist at the Berklee College of Music, Christmas “is a time for

returning to where we came from.” Every year, we return to our familiar traditions and music to celebrate loved ones and family.

Christmas music also boosts productivity. Because it is associated with hectic times and usually puts

effective work environment. The tempo range of Christmas music falls right between that range, making it the perfect background music.

However, Christmas music can also be associated with unpleasant experiences, such as the hassle of holiday shopping, preparing for family gatherings, and the end of the year. As such, many people feel stressed when they hear holiday music. According to a survey by Statista, 32 percent of adults believe Christmas music is just “okay,” 5 percent believe it’s “bad,” and 8 percent never want to listen to it.

While Christmas music may incite different reactions, most people still find the holiday season, and as an extension holiday music, to be a joyful affair. From a LifeWay survey, 70 percent of Americans enjoy hearing Christmas songs in December and 86 percent believe school choirs and bands should be allowed to perform religious Christmas music.

So here comes the real point of contention: when should we start playing Christmas music?

People’s opinions vary greatly, from never to all year round. I think the truth is somewhere in between. I admit, holiday music can get repetitive. Listening to the

same songs years in a row can cause someone to become irritated and develop an aversion to holiday music. However, there are always new songs, new remixes, and new covers every Christmas.

Christmas music has its time and place, and that time is December. With so many celebrations close to the end of the year (such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas), it is best that we separate these holidays from each other to avoid the anxiety of constant holiday planning. Holiday music should stay in December and not bleed into November, over 40 days before Christmas day. I would rather not walk into a shop to hear the booming first few notes of “All I Want For Christmas is You” before Thanksgiving has ended. Holiday songs are good in moderation and at the right time. The music is not bad, but there are many better song choices for life outside of the holidays.

While Christmas is a joyful season, I believe that limiting Christmas to the month of December is what’s best. These songs can bring joy during the holidays, but they can also cause anxiety for the many upcoming due dates and plans. By limiting Christmas music in public to a couple weeks before the big day, we can find a balance in enjoying the holidays and going about our day to day lives.



people in a good mood, holiday music causes people to work more efficiently. Research done by Spotify and clinical psychologist Dr. Emma Gray shows that songs from 50 to 80 bpm create the most

An early end to first semester benefits students & faculty alike



Evelyn Gross

This year, the first semester, lasting 74 teaching days, will conclude concurrently with the start of Winter Break. The second semester will begin on January 8, and will last for 87 teaching days. This uneven divide between semesters occasionally occurs, as Dr. Kelly would have had to conclude the first semester on Tuesday, January 16th to achieve an equal amount of teaching days across both semesters. However, this alignment of holiday timing and the school calendar is fortunate, benefiting faculty, students, and their families. The scheduling provides students a stress-free break period,

fostering improved mental well-being, sleep, and family connections, ultimately enhancing overall academic performance.

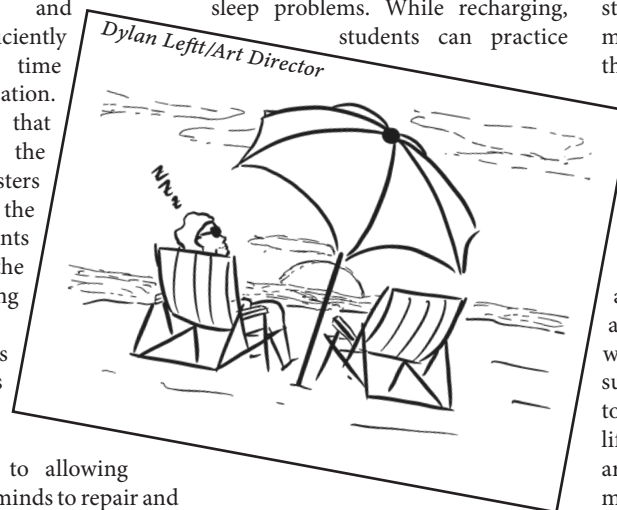
While scheduling the testing period for before Winter Break isn’t unusual, several recent years have witnessed a mere three-week gap between Thanksgiving and Winter Break, pushing the testing period to the new year. With a testing period before break, students can now enjoy a break unaffected by the knowledge of a return to tests and exams relating to the first semester. The vacation period is perfectly positioned to allow everyone to start the new calendar year with a clean slate.

The guilt that often accompanies unfinished work will evaporate during this break, allowing students to unwind without fearing academic responsibilities. All assignments and assessments must be completed before the break begins. Upon returning from the break, a fresh semester begins, filled with new promise and peril. Grades will be reset, and prior assessments will be in the past, enabling us to move forward. For students like me, this timing brings significant relief. Unlike Thanksgiving break, where I had assessments and assignments awaiting my return to school, this change eliminates the anxiety that

can impair enjoyment and flexibility during what should be a period of decompression. Many of my friends also expressed that they could not enjoy their Thanksgiving break because they were preoccupied with concerns about upcoming assignments and stress about efficiently managing their time during their vacation. This indicates that school breaks in the middle of semesters don’t provide the relaxation students desire due to the workload awaiting their return.

Over this break, students can finally get sufficient sleep, which is crucial to allowing young bodies and minds to repair and grow. Catching up on sleep over the two week break can positively impact mood and stress levels, enhance physical and emotional well-being, and enable students to return to school feeling more composed. This enhanced mental state can improve academic performance, athletic capabilities, creativity, and social development, resulting in a more positive school experience. The break

from studies also reduces burnout amongst the student body. The American Psychological Association reports that when people detach after work or engage in relaxing activities such as yoga, walking, or listening to music, they report fewer sleep problems. While recharging, students can practice



mindfulness, read for pleasure, or learn a new skill such as photography, programming, or baking. Over the past few months, I haven’t been getting a consistent nine hours of sleep due to sports, studying, or completing homework late into the night. As a consequence, I often feel drowsy during the school day, taking a toll on my concentration in class. Over my break, I plan to get

nine hours of sleep every night and dedicate quality time to dining out and traveling with my family. These opportunities will help me return to my academic responsibilities with renewed purpose and resilience.

The time free from stress allows students to dedicate meaningful time to family, allowing them to better connect with the people they love. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, and parents are integral parts of students’ lives. Without the time commitment, let alone the stress of school, family spaces can take on a more calm and peaceful atmosphere free from the stress of academic demands. Conversations with family can delve into new subjects rather than those related to academics or the stresses of daily life, and discussions can revolve around personal interests, cherished memories, and varied topics of interest. Over one of my breaks, I discussed with my dad our family history, and he shared stories from his childhood, giving me a deeper understanding of my roots, and creating a lasting memory with my father. Winter break allows students to focus on well-being, strengthen family bonds, and return to the new semester with determination to succeed.

Lions behind the wheel: Benefits and drawbacks of driving to school

OLIVER KONOPKO
Staff Writer

While driving across the George Washington Bridge on her way to school, Elise Kang (12) was cut off by a reckless driver, she said. “The driver was cutting lanes and passing in ways they really shouldn’t be,” Kang said. “I like driving though, because I’m in control and have agency – my mom obviously does not have that agency when I’m driving, and that sometimes stresses her out.”

Kang is one of the 10% of students who drive to school every day according to an anonymous Record Poll with 201 responses.

The majority of the student drivers are seniors since they are the only ones granted parking permits by the school, according to the Family Handbook. Typically, towards the end of the school year, Juniors begin driving to school and parking in nearby public parking, Head of Public Safety Peter Clancy said.

Kolker began driving the summer after his sophomore year, he said. He wanted to get his license because his dad often took him driving when he was younger. During the COVID pandemic, Kolker’s dad would explain the fundamentals of driving, he said. “He almost pre-prepared me for my driver’s test, and once I got my permit, he would take me out in the mornings and I would practice basic stuff with him, like driving in

a straight line or parking in an empty parking lot.”

Although the school does not offer driver’s education, Gabe Jaffe (12) enlisted in the driver’s education program at The Dalton School in Manhattan, he said. While the school’s lack of driver’s education was inconvenient, even if Dalton did not offer a program, Jaffe is confident he would have still gotten his license. “I certainly think that if Horace Mann had driving lessons, I’d take them, and it’d be easier – but at the same time, it’s not that hard to access lessons because we live in New York where there are all

really expensive, so having a potentially cheaper, or even free, option would be really helpful,” Moreira said. “I would love to get my license as early as possible, but at the moment I can’t.”

Aside from the cost, outside-of-school driver’s education programs are very time-consuming, Bethany Jarrett (12) said. Jarrett began driving when she was 14 in Antigua with her grandfather, which gave her a lot of experience. Since then, she has not had the time to take a driver’s education course, so she can’t drive to school. “With the Horace Mann schedule and extracurriculars, I haven’t had the time to complete the 50 hours required to get your license,” Jarrett said. “[Drivers ed] helps a lot of students grow up, gain independence, and learn this skill that they may not otherwise have the time to do.”

Despite the overwhelming student interest in driver’s education, the parent and student body have not expressed their desire for the school to add it to the administration, Head of the Upper Division (UD) Dr. Jessica Levenstein said.

Since her appointment as Head of the UD in 2016, the year the school removed driver’s education from its offerings, Levenstein has heard very few requests for the school to bring it back. “First of all, it was very inconvenient to have driver’s ed during the day because students then had fewer free periods to meet with teachers and they were coming late to class because of it,” Leven-

stein said.

Even after taking driver’s education and passing their driver’s test, student drivers are often careless, Levenstein said. Several years ago, for example, a student started backing up without checking their rearview mirror and crashed into Levenstein’s car. “He might have seen a parking spot behind him and put his car into reverse to get to the

“Driver’s Ed is really expensive, so having a potentially cheaper, or even free, option would be really helpful,”

- Karla Moreira (11)

parking spot, but he did not look to see if there were any cars behind him and crashed right into my car,” Levenstein said. “It became a joke between us, but it was not funny at the time – I had my children in the car and they were young,” she said. “It was something no experienced driver would have done.”

However, this does not mean students should not drive, Levenstein said. In fact, driving to school can be beneficial for many students, she said. “Our students who live in Connecticut or in deep New Jersey, often find it convenient to drive to school and it saves their family a lot of headaches and money because they don’t pay for busing.”

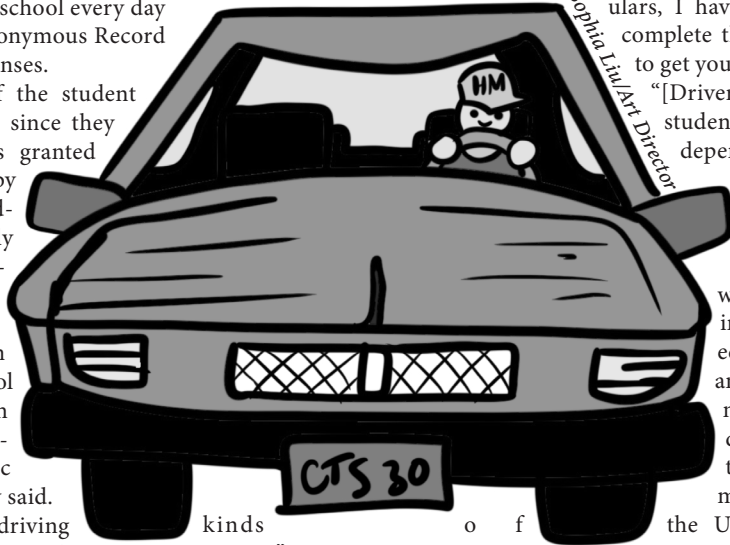
This situation is true for Kang, she said. Since Kang lives in New Jersey, the school bus did not pick her up or drop her off near her house, so she would have to drive anyway to get to the bus, she said. “I remember this time when the bus passed within two blocks of my house, but didn’t drop me off because it wasn’t the route – we ended

up going in a huge circle before I finally got home.”

Despite the risks associated with young drivers, the school and the local Riverdale community have noted few accidents from student drivers, Clancy said. Additionally, student drivers do not pose a big issue for public safety during dismissal and arrival because they are just like any other drivers, such as local community members or teachers. “We’re dealing with a lot of incoming buses, parents dropping off, vans, students walking in, and general traffic already,” he said. “[Student drivers] are part of the recipe, part of the equation of arrival and dismissal.”

Even with a dedicated student parking area, finding a parking space is the most annoying part about driving to school, Jaffe said. “For the [first] few weeks of school, parking was absolutely brutal – spots were getting filled up by 8:02 [am] every day and you’d [have] to go to Fieldston Terrace,” he said.

Jaffe’s favorite part of driving to and from school is bringing his friends along for the ride, he said. Jaffe often drives one to two friends to school with him, which gives him another opportunity to connect with them. “If I’m having a bad day or stressed about something, having that time to talk to friends is great – it can also be an equally great time to celebrate something good with my friends,” he said.



Sophia Liu/Art Director

kinds of courses.”

Similarly to Jaffe, 81% of students, according to the poll, said they would be more likely to get their license if the school offered driver’s education.

This is due to the high costs of driver’s education programs, Karla Moreira (11) said. While driving programs greatly vary in quality, they all typically cost thousands of dollars, she said. “Driver’s Ed is

Holiday movie review: Home Alone

CLARA MEDEIROS
Staff Writer

Although the official release of the first “Home Alone” movie was long before our time, the image of Macaulay Culkin as he slaps his palms to his cheeks will forever be ingrained in our memories. This unforgettable scene speaks to the movie’s underrated ability to carefully weave comedy with the holiday spirit. Contrary to the dismissive notion that “Home Alone” is just another seasonal flick, its unique blend of slapstick humor, heartwarming moments, and the creation of lasting childhood memories establishes it as a unique Christmas masterpiece.

“Home Alone” masters the delicate art of slapstick comedy throughout the heated battle between 8-year-old Kevin McCallister (played by Culkin) and the “Wet Bandits,” Harry and Marv (played by Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern), without sacrificing the presence of

holiday spirit. Kevin’s clever antics turn his battles with the two burglars into a side-splitting ballet of tumbles and paint cans. But beneath its absurd surface, “Home Alone” is a story of family, forgiveness, and the magic of the holiday season—a combination that embodies the Christmas spirit.

The original production, directed by Chris Columbus, chronicles the adventures of McCallister, whose family inadvertently abandons him when they go to Paris for the holidays. Throughout the film, McCallister hilariously and successfully defends his home from the Wet Bandits and, in the process, the Christmas spirit. In light of his newfound freedom, McCallister transforms his house into a suburban fortress of booby traps, mayhem, and Christmas spirit, as any responsible child would do when home alone.

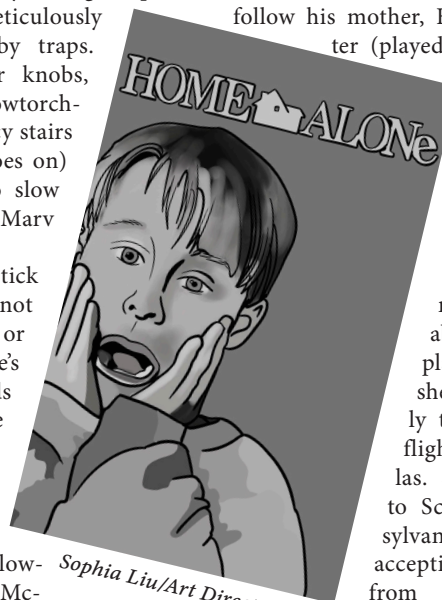
At first, McCallister is delighted that his family departed without him. Though, he soon finds that fending for himself is not what he expected when the burglars attempt

to rob his house. McCallister protects his home the only way he can think of — not by calling the police — but by meticulously arranging booby traps. Hot iron door knobs, paint cans, blowtorches, sticky and icy stairs (and the list goes on) are all used to slow Harry and Marv down.

While slapstick comedy is not among my or many people’s favorite kinds of humor, one cannot help but laugh when McCallister burns Harry’s head with a blowtorch when McCallister opens the door, or when Harry and Marv miserably fail in breaking into Kevin’s house. Many criticize the movie’s overuse of gags and pranks, but I believe that it

just adds to the audiences’ feeling of nostalgia and holiday spirit. While McCallister battles the burglars, we follow his mother, Kate McCallister (played by Catherine

O’Hara), on her long and exhausting journey back home. After realizing Kevin was missing while aboard the plane to Paris, she immediately takes the next flight back to Dallas. She then flies to Scranton, Pennsylvania — before accepting a lift home from Gus Polinski (played by John Candy) in his polka band’s van. Finally, her journey ends with her reuniting with her son on Christmas morning.



Sophia Liu/Art Director

UD choirs and orchestra embody holiday spirit with festive performances

DIYA CHAWLA
Staff Writer

“Performing the Christmas carols with both Choir and Orchestra was very heartwarming and got the Christmas spirit going,” Concert Glee and Treble Choir member Molly Goldsmith (12) said. The school hosted its annual Upper Division (UD) Holiday Concert featuring Concert Glee, Glee Club, Treble Choir, UD Orchestra, and Sinfonietta on Tuesday. The ensembles each performed their pieces, and the concert ended with the Orchestras and Choirs performing three John Rutter Christmas Carols: I Wish You Christmas, Star Carol, and Shepherd’s Pipe Carol.

When selecting the songs for each ensemble’s performance, Head of Music Department and Choir Director Timothy Ho chose songs that matched each ensemble’s unique vocal qualities, he said. Ho immediately knew that he wanted Concert Glee to perform Et Resurrexit, a composition by Franz Joseph Haydn, he said. “Concert glee hadn’t tackled a hardcore classical piece in a while, and the members of this year’s group definitely had the skill set to take on this challenge.”

Concert Glee member Isabel Melián (12) performed the solo for Haydn’s piece. “At the beginning of the year, Mr. Ho told me that we were going to do this piece and suggested that I should audition,” she said. Melián listened to her part on repeat to prepare for the concert, she said. “Overall, I really liked singing the part, as classical is one of my favorite musical genres to sing,” Melián said.

Ho selected Lakeside Lullay and a Hanukkah tribute titled Hanerot Halalu for the Glee Club, as he felt that they did not need to work on their vocal technique since each member was already highly skilled,

musically, Ho said. Instead, his focus was on choosing songs that were expressive, he said. “Glee Club’s set focused on musicality, enabling them to narrate a story within the song through their —a concept at a very high level in music,” Ho said. The pieces were intense yet infused with a warm, holiday feeling, he said.

Treble Choir performed two pieces by the Andrews Sisters: Jing-A-Ling Jing-A-Ling and Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy, Ho said. He paired these two pieces together to complement one another because of the up-beat feelings to them, he said.

Jojo Mignone (12), a soloist for Jing-A-Ling Jing-A-Ling, collaborated with music teacher Carmen Keels, to get ready for her solo. The piece was very fast and technical so she had to prepare a lot for it, she said. “We don’t usually do these types of pop and peppy pieces for Treble so it was definitely really a good experience to sing it,” she said.

UD Orchestra Director Nathan Hetherington also chose his pieces in hopes that they would radiate a holiday feeling to the audience, he said. Sinfonietta played a piece by Léo Weiner, and Orchestra played two pieces by John Ireland and the Toy Symphony by Romberg.

For the finale, Ho and Hetherington put on the same John Rutter carols that they previously performed in the Holiday Concert in 2013 together, Ho said. “We wanted to bring these carols back because we knew we had the right people in each ensemble, as well as them being fun and light-hearted,” he said.

Prior to the pandemic, Choir and Orchestra often collaborated and performed together at the annual Holiday Concerts, Hetherington said. “We wanted to continue that tradition and also bring back some of the Rutter Carols that we’ve done before,” he said.

Overall, Ho was satisfied with



GLEE CLUB IN HARMONY

Photo by Ari Palla

how prepared and consistent everyone was during rehearsals, noting that it came through during the concert, he said. “Everyone did such a fantastic job, and took it professionally and seriously, but also enjoyed themselves on stage,” he said. In particular, Ho noticed how well each Choir was able to master the Christmas carols after having learned it the day before, he said.

Similarly, Hetherington felt very relaxed when the ensembles were performing, he said. “It was one of the more relaxing concerts we’ve had and everyone just had a good vibe.”

Treble Choir member Liliana Frangenberg (11) appreciated the choir’s lively spirit when performing the Anderson pieces, noting their contagious effect on the audience, she said. “I also thought the other

performances were well done and contrasted ours, as our pieces were at a fast pace, while others were slower,” she said. Frangenberg felt that collaborating on the Christmas carols with the Orchestra fostered unity between the choir and orchestra, allowing everyone to have fun while embracing the holiday spirit.

Sinfonietta and UD Orchestra member Ella Shaham (12), had been preparing for the pieces in the concert since the previous performance in October, she said. “We also had to work on some of the pieces outside the school since some of them were a little more difficult,” Shaham said. Throughout the concert, Shaham had a lot of fun with her peers, especially playing the instrumental Toys during the Toy symphony, she said. “Seniors get to play with the toys during the piece so it was real-

ly enjoyable, and we all had a close knit bonding moment there.”

Similarly, Goldsmith enjoyed performing in her last UD Holiday Concert, she said. “I really like the songs that we sang. In treble choir, we got to perform Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy, which is an iconic piece,” she said. Furthermore, Goldsmith found Et Resurrexit, sung by Concert Glee, challenging yet rewarding when they finished, she said.

UD orchestra member Nathan Robertson (11) was the only bassoonist performing during the carols, making it a unique experience for him as he usually plays the violin for school, he said. Furthermore, Robertson noticed a confident atmosphere among everyone in the orchestra, creating a light-hearted and enjoyable experience.



A MEDLEY OF MUSIC

Photo by Ari Palla

Beats & blues: MD Ensembles take the stage for holiday concert

MATTHEW BRAND
Staff Writer

“You need to work in a team and sound good yourself,” choir member Rahul Lal (8) said about keys to success in an ensemble performance following Wednesday evening’s Middle Division (MD) Holiday Concert.

The 90-minute concert consisted of five ensembles, including winds, strings, and choirs. The concert kicked off with the Horizons ensemble and MD Concert Band playing selections from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* and Vince Guaraldi’s *Christmas Time With Charlie Brown*. Then, the String ensembles took the stage with pieces by Elliot Del Borgo and Gustav Holst. The choirs finished the program with *Windy Nights* by Greg Gilpin, a choreographed song in Hawaiian entitled *Ho’i Ke Aloha i Ra’iātea*, and a Christmas carol medley *Christmas...in About Three Minutes*.

For the bands, the most important learning experience leading up to the concert was learning how to play a supporting role in an ensemble, Director of Bands Michael Bomwell said.

Summer Yao (6), a flautist in the Horizons ensemble, noted that the musicians have been working to overshadow each other with volume, she said. “The trumpet section plays too loud, but we’re working on that in rehearsals,” Yao said.

Bomwell addresses the goal of achieving a balanced sound in rehearsals through dynamic exercises. For example, the bands practice sections of pieces as quietly as possible so they know when to increase their volume. “I want the students to know when they’re the main voice and when they’re the supporting voice,” Bomwell said.

Locking down the notes and fingering on the pieces was also difficult, Horizons trumpet player Franzi Bolsinger (6) said. “Com-

bining the notes, fingering, and the dynamics was hard to do simultaneously,” she said.

Both the bands and orchestras have two ensembles: one for younger instrumentalists usually in sixth or seventh grade, and one for older or more experienced musicians. The beginners’ ensembles, Horizons Wind Ensemble and Chamber Orchestra, have a lot of musicians where it’s their first time performing. Although there are nerves amongst the musicians, Bomwell has a strategy to help the musicians feel comfortable performing in front of an audience. “I tell them to rehearse as if it’s a performance and to perform as if it’s a rehearsal,” he said.

Declan Withers (6), a trumpet player in the Horizons ensemble, finds that Bomwell’s advice is beneficial to the group because it helps keep the musicians relaxed. “If we perform just like a rehearsal, there’s much less pressure to do well,” Withers said.

The sixth graders in Horizons deal with their nerves in various ways. Withers and Yao deal with the nerves by stress-eating, while Bolsinger listens to her favorite playlist to ease the stress. “I just listen to my music and hope for the best,” Bolsinger said.

Dealing with nerves, excitement, and keeping focus has been a theme that dates back to rehearsals for the string ensembles, Director of Strings Nathan Hetherington said. Before they could focus on their pieces, they had to learn the proper pacing and preparation that leads to a good rehearsal, he said. “Being in tune, having your music ready, and holding your instrument in playing position at the appropriate time is the way to learn the most in a rehearsal,” Hetherington said.

Cellist Adam Hallak (6) in Chamber Orchestra was composed and ready for the performance. Hallak had two years of experience performing outside of school, so there



MD CHORUS BELTS IT OUT

Courtesy of Jack Chasen

was more excitement than nerves, he said. “I’m mostly just looking forward to playing for the big audience,” Hallak said.

The biggest part of the choirs’ preparation process was ensuring that everybody was at the same place by the night of the concert, Music Department Chair and Choir Director Timothy Ho said. The sixth, seventh, and eighth graders rehearse during different periods, so Ho had to balance each ensemble’s respective learning paces to prepare for the three songs they sang as one larger choir, he said.

Specifically, Ho finds that eighth graders learn music fastest because they have experience being in a choir, so they don’t need to spend time reviewing the basics like learning to read a choral score, he said. However, the sixth and seventh graders spent more time learning how to be in a choir and how to work as an ensemble. Ho taught them how to warm-up, how to read music, and how to sing harmonies, he said. Just like the bands, the singers had to learn when they should stand out, and when to step back. “For students new to a choir, they may come in only knowing how to sing the soprano melody. With

more experience, they learn how to take on a supporting role in the choir, singing harmony.”

The most difficult song for alto Hugo Ha (7) in choir was *Ho’i Ke Aloha i Ra’iātea* because it was difficult to learn the pronunciation of the language while performing the dance at the same time, he said. “It was difficult to get used to, but once we memorized the hula, it became easier to sing at the same time,” Ha said.

Despite these challenges, the sixth and seventh graders caught up to the same level as the eighth grade choir so they could unite for the three all-choirs songs, Ho said. “When we perform songs as a larger choir with all three grades, it’s important that we’re all on the same page,” he said. Their first time rehearsing as a large MD choir was right before the concert in the atrium.

Assistant Director of Choirs and Accompanist Dr. Amir Khosrowpour, who works with the choirs as a piano accompanist, was impressed by the students’ ability to adjust their singing from smaller grade choirs to a joint MD ensemble. “Although each grade rehearses separately, and we throw them all together at once,

they rise to the occasion and blend together perfectly,” he said.

The MD Holiday Concert is so special because of its timeliness, Khosrowpour said. The Holiday concert is the first MD performance of the year, so it’s a major event that students look forward to in their ensemble preparation, he said. The concert not only celebrates the students’ talents but also celebrates the December holiday season, he said.

Ho loves that all MD ensembles perform in the same program, he said. “It is a culmination of all the work students have put into their ensembles thus far, and it’s also the first time they’ll get to see each other perform, he said.”

After the performance, Bomwell is most proud of the musicians’ focus and balance, challenges that they’ve been working through all year, he said. “There was a really strong sense of ensemble that’s starting to form among [the musicians].”

Looking back on the performance as an eighth grader, Lal is most proud of his growth in the choir through all three years, he said. “From sixth to eighth grade, performing felt like the triumphant end of a journey.”



A SYMPHONY OF STRINGS

Courtesy of Jack Chasen

No snow, no problem: VST practices at American Dream Mall

HANNAH BECKER
Staff Writer

“[The indoor ski park] was unlike anything I have ever seen before and was a really cool experience,” Francesca Finzi (10) said. Last Friday, the Varsity Ski Team (VST) shredded the slopes at the American Dream Mall in New Jersey for their first on-snow practice of the year. The team was able to get back on their skis despite the lack of snow on their usual ski mountain, Thunder Ridge, she said.

The American Dream Mall features an indoor, real-snow skiing slope with three sections: one for beginners, one for experienced skiers, and one with jumps and ramps for trick skiers, Finzi said. “While the snow felt a little bit sticky and skied-out, the indoor park was something completely new to me, and it was a super fun and effective way for us to all practice skiing since the real mountains do not have snow yet,” she said.

Once they arrived, the team trudged through the mall carrying their skis and equipment to arrive at the indoor ski section of the building, Ashley Kuo (10) said. After checking in and putting their gear on, the team members split up into multiple groups and headed to the chairlift, she said. “It was a little awkward when we were walking through the mall with our skis because we were such a large group, and everyone was staring at us,” Kuo said. However, once the team reached the slope, each member got ready at their own pace, she said.

While the slopes at the mall did not include gates—pairs of poles



HITTING THE SLOPES

Courtesy of Ariella Frommer

topped with flags that the racers ski around in a course—the team was still able to practice their skiing skills, Kuo said. “I feel like we have not really gotten to experience what an actual race will be like since there were no gates or anything to ski around at the mall, but I think

just learning the basics first and getting the gist of it was good.”

The team alternates between dry-land and on-snow practices, depending on the amount of snow on Thunder Ridge, Finzi said. “We really needed an on-snow practice since we only had land practices

so far this season, because we have a race shortly after winter break,” Finzi said. “The coaches needed to see who actually knows how to ski well since a lot of inexperienced people often sign up in hopes that the school will teach them how to ski.”

During their dry-land practices at the school, the team either practices drills on Four Acres or does conditioning in the Fitness Center, depending on the weather, Finzi said. On Four Acres, the team does dynamic stretches, such as high-knees, skater jumps, and butt-kicks, she said. “We also spend a lot of time running, specifically around a set of cones in a zig-zag pattern that mimics the format of a ski race, to help get our bodies used to that pattern.”

In the Fitness Center, the team focuses on building stamina and core strength by doing sprints, cycling, and abdominal workouts, Kuo said. “The running and biking exercises are good at building muscle in your legs, which is really important for skiing,” she said. “Jiwan [Kim (11)] and I made our own core workout that we do every practice, which consists of 50 Russian twists, a one-minute plank, 25 leg lifts, 25 toe touches, and then 50 Russian twists again. It is short, but is really fun to do together,” Kuo said.

VST Head Coach John Eckels brought up the idea of going to the American Dream Mall after postponing the team’s annual ski trip to Killington, Vermont, from Decem-

ber to January, he said. While the team usually takes the trip in early December, Eckels and Athletic Director Matthew Russo decided to delay it this year due to the mountain’s lack of snow and students’ stress about missing school during a testing week, Eckels said. “The trip is a great time to see how experienced each skier is before deciding our first race roster, so going to ski at the mall helped us gauge the skill of each member before the first race,” he said.

Although ski racing is an individual sport, the practices have fostered a tight-knit community amongst the team members, Andrew Ziman (11) said. “Doing workouts or riding chairlifts together every day really gives each team member an opportunity to talk to each other and make new friends,” he said.

The Department of Athletics supported the shift and helped arrange the entire trip, making it a smooth and easy process for the team, Eckels said. VST is unique in that they cannot practice sport-specific skills every day, like sports such as soccer can, so being on the snow was ideal for the team, he said. “While running and conditioning is helpful, it’s not really practicing the sport, which can be frustrating, so I think it was really great to get everyone actually skiing,” Eckels said. “Once people got on their skis, they loosened up, and I watched all of them have a lot of fun.”



SNOWY SMILES

Courtesy of Ariella Frommer

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Girls Varsity Squash defeats Grace Church to continue winning streak

GILLIAN HO
Staff Writer

On Monday, the Girls Varsity Squash (GVS) team secured a 4-2 victory against Grace Church in a fierce match. The team's victory added to their recent success after beating Poly Prep 4-3.

The team prepared extensively leading up to the game, team member Lily Sussman (10) said. "During practice, we focus on different drills and strategies to help defeat our opponent," she said. "Some basic strategies involve hitting where your opponent is not."

Practices leading up to games always begin with queen of the court, a game where players compete individually to maintain their position as the 'queen' by winning points and fending off opponents in continuous and dynamic gameplay, team member Annabel Eder (10) said.

These practice sessions were crucial, involving a range of drills aimed at refining their game plan, Sussman said. "Squash involves hitting where your opponent is not," she said. "Tactics to make opponents run or execute almost impossible drop shots are pivotal strategies in squash."

The training regimen included line drills, commonly known as rails, that focus on perfecting forehands and backhands straight down the line, Sussman said. These drills aimed to sharpen the players' precision and technique for the game, she said.

Prior to the match, the team's coach provided guidance and motivation to improve their self-confidence, Sussman said. "Like every game, we always have a pep talk to ensure we are in the right mindset," she said. Post-game, the team analyzes areas for improvement and reinforces successful strategies.

A squash match consists of five games, and the winner of the match is determined by who wins more games out of five. "In between the games, our coach Femi tells us how we can perform better for the next game," Eder said.

The bus ride to and from the squash match also created a lasting and humorous memory, co-captain Mira Bansal (12) said. "[The meet] was at the very tip of Manhattan, but the athletics calendar said that we were supposed to play at courts in Midtown," Bansal said. "We first went all the way down to where we were supposed to go, went to Midtown, and then went back to those courts. We spent probably two

hours on the bus," she said.

Additionally, with nine players on the team and only seven playing in games, there's a regular challenge among everyone to move up and qualify to play, Eder said.

GVS team coach Olufemi Salako provided some general advice to the team since team members did not know the strategies of Grace Church. "The advice I gave them was to be calm and study the pattern of play the opponents were playing, since we had never played Grace Church before," Coach Femi said.

The team's coach provided sufficient advice that helped the team, Sussman said. "Our last game was a close loss, for this game, his advice and motivation to us was good enough for us to win."

The school's team had a notable advantage going into the game as the Grace Church team was down one player with six players instead of their usual seven, Eder said. She said this victory marked a significant achievement for the team, showcasing their strategic understanding and competitive spirit. "I had suspected we would win be-

cause their team was not very strong and seemed to be on the newer side," Eder said.

The best strategy in squash is to have a good mindset and stay focused, Bansal said. "When you stay calm, you're able to hit better shots," she said.

Salako was ultimately satisfied with the team's performance in the match. "[The players] were taking my advice during the game despite [the fact that] they were under pressure," he said.

One player who stood out to Eder during the match was team mem-

ber Anya Mirza (11), who made a comeback during the match. "She lost a game, but then won 4-1."

Looking ahead, the team remains enthusiastic about the season, Sussman said. With this win, the team maintains a positive outlook, drawing inspiration from their past successes and aiming for a strong season ahead. "I am very excited going into this season, after last year we ended with a big win at nationals, but with close losses and wins, we are on the road to a good season," she said.



SQUASH SQUABBLES

Courtesy of Mira Bansal