

ABOUT THE GAZETTE

The Griffin Gazette is The Academy at Palumbo's student-run newspaper, dedicated to keeping our community informed about news and events in our school and across Philadelphia. We aim to amplify student voices and spark meaningful conversations.

The Griffin Gazette

WANT TO JOIN?

The Griffin Gazette welcomes any interested students to join our team of dedicated writers, editors, and photographers. Meetings are the first Tuesday of the month in room 329.

NOTHING LESS THAN SUCCESS



PALUMBO'S SOLO SERVE

BY ELIZABETH DORNEY

Palumbo is home to many varsity sports; plenty of students either play on teams or can be found cheering from the sidelines. However, there are some sports that go overlooked, and squash is definitely one of them. We decided to interview Palumbo's only Squash player, Jonah Pachikara, to ask him what being part of the squash team is like.

Jonah began playing squash four years ago during eighth grade at the Arlen Specter Center's free junior clinic. During his freshman year, he began playing on the combined SLA and Parkway team and has continued to play ever since.

When asked what piqued his interest in playing, Jonah explained that prior to learning squash he was enthralled by racquet sports in general, "I was playing ping pong in my basement, tennis at camp, badminton in gym class, and pickleball at Seger Park." It wasn't until a friend introduced him to squash when Jonah thought to himself, "gotta catch 'em all." and it soon became his favorite sport.

However squash is not necessarily a universally known sport, with Jonah telling us, "People at school think that I'm talking about a fruit when I tell them that squash is my sport." Jonah wishes that more people were aware of squash especially in his own community, "I feel like Philly students especially should know more about squash, since our city is the official squash capital of America. Despite this, the majority of people that I talk to at school have never even heard of Squash. I wish more people from Palumbo knew about the amazing

opportunity that school district students have to play squash for free, and I hope that someday we will be able to field our school's own team."

One of Jonah's favorite parts of playing Squash is competing in tournaments. "They're really fun, both because of the high level of competition and because of the incredible variety of attending schools." The team competes on the local level as well as nationally, and is even gearing up for nationals on February 22nd!

Jonah plays for the combined SLA and Parkway team, however, he is the only student on the team from Palumbo, which he explains can feel surreal, "it feels a little weird checking only myself out on match days at the front office, then traversing to Drexel in the cold while everyone else is still in class."

Despite being the only Palumbo student on the team his teammates quickly made him feel welcome, "Now I feel really close with my teammates. They're all really friendly and a lot of fun to be around. Having an opportunity to get to know kids from other schools is really fun!"

Jonah absolutely encourages any students who are interested in playing squash to try it out, "It's a great way to stay active in the winter, it is very beginner friendly, and of course it is very fun." Having the opportunity to play for free in America's Squash epicenter is something more students should take advantage of. "The team is always looking for more players and if anyone is interested in joining the squash team, or if you have any questions, feel free to contact me by email: 10060133@philasd.org."

THE HUMAN ELEMENT: MR. DYKE

BY AARON COHEN

Mr. Dyke, Palumbo's Chem Honors and AP Chem teacher, always knew he wanted a job related to chemistry. But, it wasn't until his sophomore year of college that he decided he wanted to be a teacher. Soon after realizing that he didn't want to spend his career cooped up in a lab, he got advice from his parents, who both were teachers, and he began taking education classes.

Since becoming a teacher, Mr. Dyke's favorite part of the job is having class discussions and being able to critically think about the world with his students. He particularly likes chemistry because of how it makes up everything. Through studying this subject, Mr. Dyke wants his students to be more informed about the world around them, and think about the small scale everyday things in life.



Mr. Dyke is also one of our longest serving teachers, as he has been working here since Palumbo's second year of operation. Since coming to Palumbo, Mr. Dyke has found that our school has changed a lot. When he first started working here, the student body was less than half its current size, and not all of the classrooms were used. Additionally, Mr. Dyke notes that Palumbo first started looking to bigger schools for inspiration on teaching methods, and today, Palumbo has grown into a shining example itself.

A fun fact about Mr. Dyke is that he taught in Hawaii, on the island of Oahu, for four years before he came to Palumbo.



AN UNSURPRISING DOWNFALL: WHAT'S TO COME?

BY ABRAHAM WRIGHT

The clock ran down to triple zeroes and the final score read 23-19. The Philadelphia Eagles lost to the San Francisco 49ers and were eliminated from the playoffs. Chances of repeating a superbowl win died. This wasn't too big of a shocker, though, as the writing was on the wall from the beginning.

In the 2023-2024 NFL season, the Eagles marched into December 10-1, looking like the team to beat in the NFL. How did it go? Finished 11-6 on the year, with an embarrassing wildcard loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 32-9. While it may sound shocking, the Eagles had a dazzling flaw: their defense. While the Eagles ranked 8th in total offense and 7th in points scored, their defense allowed the third most points in the NFL, and gave up the second most passing yards. It was inevitable that the season would end the way it did. Does that sound familiar?

The 2025-2026 season followed an alternate, yet similar path. The Eagles' defense was led again by defensive coordinator Vic Fangio, and pairing him with the star defensive players led to the Eagles allowing the 5th fewest points and 8th fewest passing yards. The offense on the other hand, ranked 9th lowest in the NFL. Just like 2023, when one side of the ball is good and the other is mediocre, you are left with a collapse that is not shocking.

As the Seattle Seahawks are crowned the new Champions of the

NFL, the Eagles have already made some changes during their offseason. Kevin Patullo was let go as the offensive coordinator, and to fill his spot is a new and young mind, Sean Mannion. With him being 33 years old and only having two years of experience as a Quarterback Coach, this will be his first time being a full-time play caller. In addition to that hire, the Eagles have also hired Josh Grizzard to be the new Passing Game Coordinator. He has more than 8 years of coaching experience, notably with the Buccaneers, a team that has constantly beat the Eagles.

The Eagles also have some decisions to make regarding who they want to bring back to the team. Players such as Linebacker Nakobe Dean, Tight End Dallas Goedert, and Safety Reed Blankenship are all on expiring contracts and have been staples for the Eagles within the last 4 years. Additionally, linebacker Jaelan Phillips is also heading into free agency, and was a huge asset to the defense this year, after the Eagles traded for him right before the deadline. Couple this with the draft in April, and the Eagles have some choices to make this offseason.

Ultimately, the Eagles have some work to put in. Jalen Hurts is working with his 7th offensive coordinator in his 7th NFL season, and he and the team are working to bring Philadelphia its third Super Bowl. So maybe next year is the year. Go Birds!

PALUMBO'S VOICES

BY BIANCA ARNONE

Do you love to sing? Well Palumbo's Choir might just be the place for you! No matter what skill level you are at, the choir's arms are wide open. There are two parts of choir, Concert Choir, which is a class students can take, and Palumbo Voices, an after school club.

Choir is the perfect spot for opportunities. They have a couple upcoming trips, one being a reschedule of their performance at a La Salle University basketball game on March 4th. The group will also be performing at McCall School's Black History Month assembly this month.



Our Choir teacher, Mr.Hoffman, intentionally teaches songs that showcase different skills and concepts throughout the year. Mr.Hoffman says he also aims to match the difficulty of the music with his students' growing abilities and the time they have available to rehearse. This helps to make sure that the music they sing has an appropriate level of challenge and reward. The Black History Month music, for example, was selected after winter break, giving students about 8 weeks of rehearsal time.

Mr.Hoffman is very passionate about Choir and speaks highly of his students. In high school and college, Mr.Hoffman found a safe space within the choir, and he hopes to give this to his students as well. As the Choir continues to practice for upcoming performances, his goals for his students are to build community, advance their skills, and gain confidence within themselves, both on and off the stage.

SIGNS OF SPRING

BY RIANNA YANG





PHILLY BOLT: A SPARK FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

BY KAMANI ELMORE

PhillyBolt was founded by Hilary Do, whose background in social science, civics, and business shaped the organization’s community-first mission. Growing up in an immigrant household, Do witnessed firsthand the resilience it takes to navigate complex systems, and the power of strong, supportive neighborhoods. That experience inspired her vision of a connected, thriving Philadelphia led by its own residents.

This goal fueled her towards a degree in Social Studies and Computer Science from Harvard University, and an MBA from Stanford’s School of Business. Despite Do’s elite academic circles, her heart stays in Philly. After graduation, Do teamed up with several partners, and together, they launched PhillyBolt with a clear mission: “Cultivate, empower, and support grassroots leaders in driving community-led change.”

PhillyBolt’s belief in community-led action stems from the idea that the neighbors know their own streets better than anyone else. PhillyBolt has two cohorts—one cohort is for adults, where they teach community members about different organization methods, and the other cohort is for youth, and it is designed to help young people tackle problems in their neighborhoods.

PhillyBolt’s current student cohort is being taught civic and community lessons based on the “Theory of Change.” Students are expected to share the lessons with their classmates at school and lead their classmates through progressive steps toward a larger goal focused on an issue in their collective communities. Thursday and Friday mornings, PhillyBolt leaders at Palumbo are expected to be at school early, so they learn a new lesson and practice presenting it to their classmates. On Wednesdays in Social Science Honors, these students teach their class a new part of the “Theory of Change” for the whole period.

Caitlyn Green, a current PhillyBolt leader and 11th grader, described the way she felt about seeing change in Philadelphia. She noted that it was initially hard to grasp how to bring people together to solve a common problem, such as insufficient funding for youth programs. However, by leading her class through PhillyBolt’s lesson, she has a better understanding of how to effectively initiate change.

Often alumni Bolt leaders teach current ones. Bolt intern, and Palumbo alumni, Faustine, was asked about the difference she sees in students that join, she says “I feel like [participants] confidence in many levels change, and their drive to organize and mobilize their peers to come together. [Participants begin to] feel that they are powerful enough to do what they want in society.” By reframing how students view their own influence, PhillyBolt turns frustration into a strategic mindset of navigating city systems and securing resources.

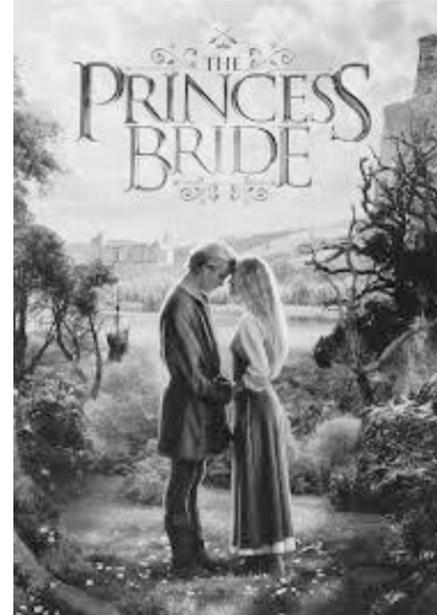
For those that are interested in working with PhillyBolt, talk to Mr.McGeehan for more information.

COHEN’S CORNER: VALENTINE’S DAY

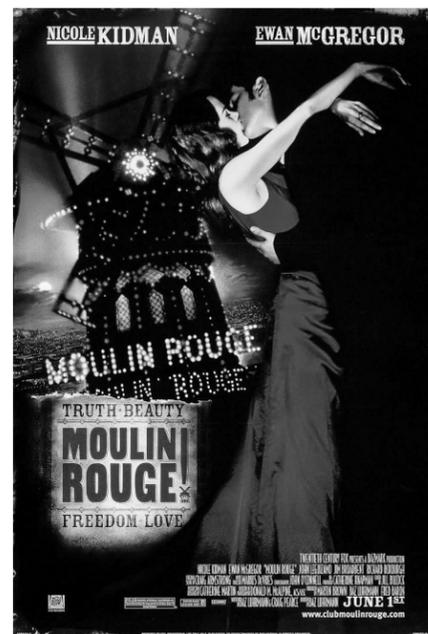
BY AARON COHEN

With Valentine’s season in full swing, here are a few of my favorite romantic movies.

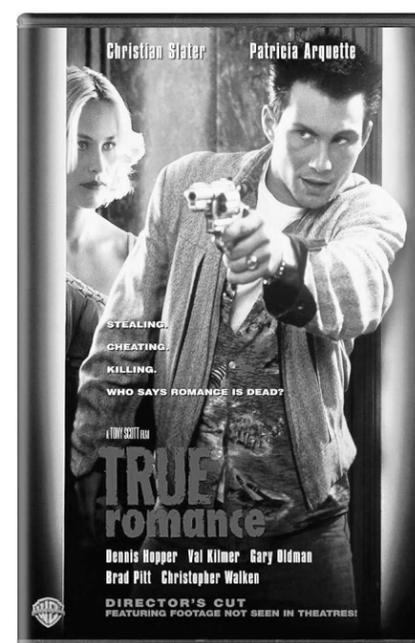
Princess Bride: A fantasy-comedy following a young woman who falls in love with her farm worker, who is presumed dead after being taken by pirates. Years later, she is forced to marry the evil Prince Humperdinck and is saved by a familiar face. The Princess Bride, directed by the late Rob Reiner, is a good hearted comedy-romance that reinvents the damsel in distress cliché. It blends romance, adventure, and fantasy quite well with memorable acting and spectacular set designs. If you haven’t seen The Princess Bride yet, it’s a perfect watch for Valentine’s day.



Moulin Rouge: In 1899 Paris, a young poet played by Ewan McGregor falls in love with the star courtesan, Satine of the esteemed Moulin Rouge. While pretending to be a rich financier, he meets Satine and their forbidden love begins. However, the real financier soon threatens their relationship as he is set to marry Satine. The film is directed by Baz Luhrmann, who is well known for his flamboyant cinematography. Moulin Rouge is colorfully vibrant, with a great cast to back it up. Along with great set designs and an even better soundtrack, the love story is memorable and entertaining.



True Romance: In a love story between a young comic book cleric, Clarence, and a call-girl, Alabama, the two hit the road to California to begin their new business. Throughout their journey, they are being tailed by both the Mob and the FBI. True Romance is a fantastic romance movie overall while also being action-packed. The movie’s screenplay by Quentin Tarantino sticks out with its memorable one liners and comedic timing. The movie also features a stacked cast featuring Christian Slater, Patricia Arquette, James Gandolfini, Christopher Walken, Brad Pitt, and Gary Oldman. The acting is very well written and the action sequences and shootouts are intentional. This isn’t the most traditional romance movie, but it is entertaining.



PALUMBO'S PULSE

BY SANTINA RAMUNNO

The National Honor Society recently wrapped up its annual blood drive, which our school has successfully hosted for five years in a row. This year, a total of 60 people signed up to donate, and 35 units of blood were collected, which matches our total from last year. While 35 units might not sound like a massive number, it is enough blood to help over 100 individuals in need!

Mrs. DiGiuseppe, who has been the NHS sponsor for eight years, explained why the event is so important for the community. "You can help more than one person with your blood ranging from a child, to someone with sickle cell, to a mother who just had a baby. You can't put a number on how important it is to donate blood."

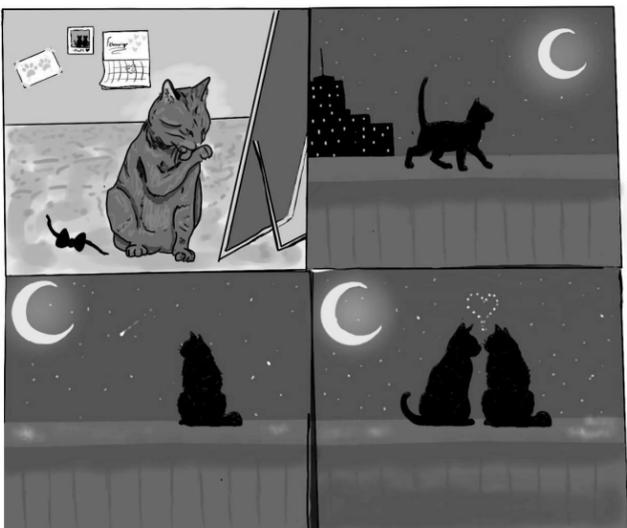


NHS member James Felix assisting student Olive Hoedeman-Eiteljorg donate blood. Photographed by Sidney Leach.

The NHS partnered with the American Red Cross to host this drive, an organization that has been around since 1881. Their work is imperative in making sure hospitals have the blood they need to treat their patients. If you didn't donate this time around, it is highly encouraged by the NHS that you donate next year if you are eligible. As Ms. D puts it, "for you, it's a little prick and some juice and a cookie after, and for someone else, it's their life."

TWO OF A KIND

BY CATHERINE DORNEY



Palumbo's track team photographed by Caiden Brown.

BEYOND THE FINISH LINE

BY SAHAR ABDUL KARIM & ZEINAB DOUMBIA

As the indoor track season comes to a close, the efforts and time spent by the athletes have created an unforgettable experience. Though track can be an individual sport, Palumbo's team values community, growth, and accountability. Practicing everyday after school, every minute was spent creating special bonds through veterans helping newcomers, cheering for each and every teammate, and celebrating each other's accomplishments.

Coach Stamps constantly makes sure to encourage her athletes. "You have sacrificed a lot of your time and energy over the past few months, and this is where you get to show up for yourself and your team," she says. Despite the cancellation of meets throughout the month, the track team still came prepared

and ready to do their best at champs. At the Public League Championship, the girls won second place in the 4 by 800. In individual sprint races, Nathan Prasetyo achieved a new personal best in 60 meter hurdles and won third place. In Jumps, Taiylor Johnson, who sprained her ankle, was still able to win 1st place in Triple and Long jump. Similarly, Jaye Mack won 1st place in long jump, and set a new meet record, despite a string of several injuries.

Finally, congratulations to Daijah Lopez, Kaiyah Connor, Harissa Banto, Zeinab Doumbia, and Jaye Mack for qualifying for States and Nationals. While the indoor track may be over, there is still an outdoor season to look forward to. We encourage anyone who is interested in track to come and join because it's not just about running, it's about teamwork and growth.

THE GRIFFIN GRID

BY AARON COHEN

Fill in each box with a Palumbo teacher that meets both qualifications. Answers can be found on the Griffin Gazette bulletin board outside of room 329.

	In their 40's	In their 30's	In their 20's
Has a beard			
Bikes to work			
Walks to work			



James Felix with student council member Adele Mebus.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT OF JAMES FELIX

BY SIDNEY LEACH

James Felix is a senior at Palumbo, and a notable, hard working member of our student body. As a member of student council and President of Palumbo's Public Health Initiative, James has been dedicated to helping the Palumbo community thrive.

One of James' passions is public health. Last year, as the Vice President of the junior class, he worked with the NHS, Ms. Stamps, and Nurse Stevens to bring menstrual products to our bathrooms. Additionally, after witnessing a family member experience a mental health crisis, James co-founded the Public Health Initiative, PHI, club in his junior year, with the goal of bringing more mental health resources to Palumbo.

"I wanted to create an open space for students and help provide mental health resources they may need." PHI has since collaborated with the Mental Health Association to put on the Social Emotional Learning day at Palumbo. James has also been a member of the superintendent student advisory council for multiple years, where he meets with the school district to represent and advocate for Palumbo on a range of issues, from curriculum requirements to health resources.

Outside of school, James participated in an internship doing lung cancer research through a lab with fruit flies. In college, James plans to continue studying science. But until then, James and the senior council are working hard to organize activities like prom and a poconos trip in order to create lots of memories before graduation.

ALBUM REVIEW: SEVENDUST'S HOME

BY VIO DOAN

Last year I was introduced to a song by Sevendust, an American rock band, that was in this album, *Home*. At the time, *Home* really stuck out to me because of its beautiful vocal melodies. For an early album, it's impressive and really shaped the trajectory of my music taste. It's a pretty long album, consisting of 13 songs, but here are my short highlights:

"Denial" is the most popular track on this album. Its high energy melodies are quite memorable, and the instrumentals match that especially well. The chorus lyrics are really catchy, and the contrast between dynamics in its introduction really draws you in. It's highly deserving of its popularity. "Crumpled" has some insanely low bass lines that add much weight to this track despite it playing

rhythm. It also has electronic beats within the instrumental layer of the introduction, which work well even with the heavy guitar. "Licking Cream" has an additional vocalist that accompanies Witherspoon, Skin from the band Skunk Anansie. I love the long and loud notes with the heavy guitar after the chorus. "Headtrip" has a unique instrumental intro, an arpeggiated guitar solo which follows up with the full band. It has an instrumental-profile that is similar to Deftones, but provides unique dissonance that sounds amazing with the vocals. The lyrics are memorably repetitive and compliment the melodies sung by vocalist Lajon Witherspoon.

Speaking of Deftones, the lyricism and partial vocals in "Bender" was composed by Chino Moreno, the vocalist of Deftones. Unlike "Licking Cream," Witherspoon actually acts as an accompanying part to Moreno, especially in the chorus. It's my favorite song out of this album next to "Licking Cream" and is a recommended listen.

Overall, these highlights show the many possibilities of musical masterpieces you can make with a few constraints. It's an album worth listening to all the way through, and an album I'd want to experience for the first time again. Happy listening!



¿TE GUSTÓ EL SUPER BOWL?

BY AHMED AHMED

Bad Bunny put on the performance of a lifetime during the Super Bowl LX halftime show, which racked up over 128 million viewers. During arguably one of the best halftime performances in recent years, Bad Bunny represented the pride, culture, and struggles associated with Puerto Rico.

Bad Bunny played a few of his most popular songs, like "Tití Me Preguntó," "DtMF," "Yo Perreo Sola," and "Safaera," to name a few. He also brought out guest appearances Lady Gaga, performing "Die With a Smile," and Ricky Martin, singing "Lo Que Le Pasó a Hawaii."

Every detail that Bad Bunny put into this show was intentional, between showcasing real Puerto Rican businesses, elderly men playing dice, and traditional dances. He even included a reference to electrical blackouts in the set design, which are persistent problems in Puerto Rico. And, it's clear that Bad Bunny's flawless ensemble was enjoyed across the world, as the performance generated over 4 billion social media views within only 24 hours.



PALUMBO PUZZLER

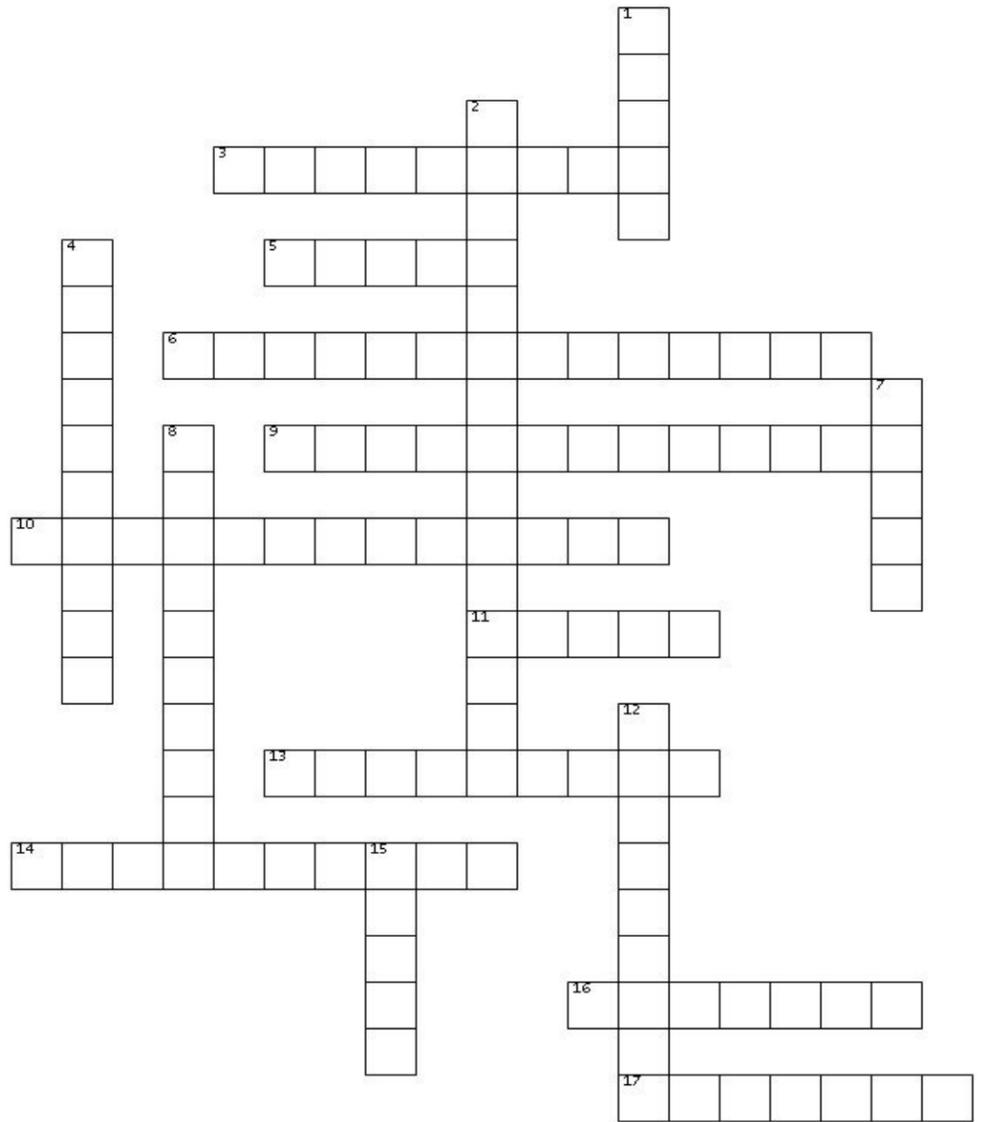
BY ELIZABETH DORNEY

ACROSS:

- 3. Palumbo's annual meal celebrating an autumn holiday
- 5. Mr. Brunden's team
- 6. What you are currently reading
- 9. Beeps when you accidentally leave your phone in your pocket
- 10. Sport coached by Ms. Stamps
- 11. ___ Chicken, Palumbo's continent named lunch
- 13. The only class Mr. Kirby teaches
- 14. Sport coached by Goldstein
- 16. Club ran by the only non-Spanish language teacher
- 17. Former Palumbo student turned Palumbo staff

DOWN:

- 1. Cafeteria Floor
- 2. Mr. Bouwman's money managing class
- 4. Mastermind behind Palumbo's musical productions
- 7. Former Principal of Palumbo
- 8. Freshman Class President
- 12. Google ___, and a place found behind most school hallway doors
- 15. Star Test password



JUNIORS' GUIDE TO COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

BY KAMANI ELMORE

We all know the college application process is pretty gruesome. Juniors now more than ever are experiencing all types of stress from AP classes, extracurricular programs, and family. That, combined with impending college applications, can feel extremely overwhelming. So as a fellow junior, I spoke to several seniors to help break down college applications, and tell you the do's and don'ts about the process.

Start early!

Every single one of the seniors I interviewed said if they could go back to the beginning of senior year, they would've started everything earlier. Between scholarships, essays, and grants, there is a lot to do in a short amount of time.

Be careful with early decisions because it is a binding contract.

An early decision is committing to a college even if they give you bad financial aid offers. It is nice to be able to compare different college financial aid offers. Seniors recommend only considering early decisions if you know for sure you want to go to that specific college no matter what.

Work at your own pace.

Don't compare yourself to others. Every college has different deadlines. Don't worry.



Consider other ways of getting financial aid for college.

According to seniors, lot of students don't know the abundance of financial opportunities other than FAFSA. Ada, a current 12th grader mentioned the CSS profile on college board as a way colleges and scholarship programs award students aid.

Get the most out of your choices by comparing schools to one other.

Seniors recommend picking the college that has good resources for what you want to study, as well as good financial aid offers.

Don't have your heart set on one school.

Explore your options! There are hundreds of schools across the country with unique offerings. Websites like

Niche are good resources for researching different colleges.

Don't beat yourself up after the first college essay draft.

You will have so many essay drafts and that's just how it is; don't try to be perfect on the first try. Leila, a current 12th grader shared that "it took 15 drafts" before hers was complete.

Thinking about a future after high school is scary, but getting a headstart on the thought process never hurts. For those deciding to get higher education, the application process will inevitably be stressful, but it is up to you whether it will be messy or not. The lesson a lot of seniors gave is to stay on top of things—without organization, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the pressure.