

#### 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



## SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: CLASS OF 2026

BY UNA CUTRONE AND SIDNEY LEACH

As the Class of 2026 prepares to graduate, Seniors are reflecting on their past four years at Palumbo with a range of emotions and gratitude. In an interview with the senior class, students give insight on the skills they've developed, communities they found, and people who shaped their time in high school.

Many students cited Palumbo as a cornerstone of their personal development. "During my time here, I have become better at making friends," said Raines Draugelis. "Speech and debate helped me with my public speaking, and let me network with other schools," shared Xavier Rivera. "Palumbo taught me to never stop learning," noted Ahmed Ahmed.

Appreciation for community was another common theme mentioned by several students. From Aster Chau, the Senior Class President, "Palumbo's diversity has taught me to broaden my horizons on different perspectives and ways of life." "I have loved the emphasis Palumbo has put on the arts," said Lily Dominus. "Palumbo is my first home," shared Ekash Kulasekaran.

When asked to consider the people who had the greatest impact on their time in high school, many students shared gratitude for their teachers. "I appreciated Mrs. D and

Mr. Burwasser for challenging my critical thinking and teaching me to never stop learning," stated AJ Naples. "Mr. Langford will always help his students—his class is really structured and taught me so much about writing," notes Yinle Chen. A similar sentiment was echoed by student council member Rose Semmel, who said, "Ms. Tompkins is really supportive and taught me to not take things so seriously or beat myself up."

With graduation on Tuesday, June 8th, seniors are feeling many emotions, including pride, joy, and anxiety. "I'm super excited to graduate, but also sad to leave Palumbo and my friends," said Rose Semmel. "Graduation is very surreal. It's the culmination of everything we've been working towards these past four years," added James Felix.

Many seniors are also determined to leave their last mark. Several students will be speaking, singing, and performing poetry, making them integral pieces of the ceremony.

As the Class of 2026 prepares to leave Palumbo, it's clear that students are carrying with them more than memories—they are taking the lessons, relationships, and experiences that shaped their high school years.

## FLAG FOOTBALL WINS DISTRICTS

BY ELIZABETH DORNEY

As the girls' flag football season comes to a close, we wanted to highlight one of our school's most unique teams. Not only is Palumbo one of a few schools to have a girls' flag football team, we also happen to be home to one of the best in the city.

In an interview with two players on the team, captain Bea Kaeli and senior Ava McKee, both mentioned winning the district championship as the highlight of the season. This year, Palumbo brought home the championship in districts, and was the first public league team to ever do so in flag football, which garnered much excitement among Palumbo fans alike. Ava McKee described the crowd by saying, "The energy from the sidelines to the field was amazing. That's honestly what contributed to our big wins overall."

Both Bea and Ava told us that their favorite part about being on the team was the community. Ava specifically shouted out to the underclassman on the team for "making practice so much fun and exciting to watch them grow and learn the sport."



When asked about common misconceptions about girls' flag football Ava explains, "Many people think that it's not as legitimate as regular tackle football. Although the methods of playing are different, girls' flag football can be just as aggressive and entertaining, and shouldn't be undermined or underestimated."

Ava wants students to know that the girls' flag football team should be one of Palumbo's proudest achievements. It's a newer sport, but we've made history, especially as a team in the public league." Additionally, Ava noted that she is, "proud to be on a team that contributes to the visibility of girls' sports that have previously been reserved or limited to men."

Lastly, Ava encourages students to join next season. "Flag football is an amazing experience with a great coach and team. I think with the current underclassman those bonds will continue to form easily, and I'm excited for the future of the team."



# BOYS BOUND FOR STATES

BY BIANCA ARNONE

The Palumbo boys' volleyball team has proven that hard work pays off. Although the season started on a rocky note when senior captain Andy Le suffered an injury during their fifth game against Central, the boys fought through the adversity to secure a spot at states. Now, Coach Goldstein, along with captains Kingston Insixiengmay and AJ Naples are confident that they are ready to compete against the best teams in Pennsylvania.

Competing in the state championship is a major milestone, and the players are treating the opportunity with immense pride and gratitude. Insixiengmay, who is making his fourth consecutive trip to the tournament, emphasizes the significance of the moment: "It's a blessing to represent Philly in this tournament. Other areas are not used to seeing Philly as a big volleyball area, so it's a great opportunity to showcase what we're capable of doing." Naples echoed that pride, noting how rare this level of consistent success is for a local program. "There's less than a handful of schools in the entirety of Philly that are able to say they've ever been to States," Naples said. "And here we are making it repeated, so it's something our team takes pride in."

Leading up to the state tournament, the boys faced several challenges. The trouble started early in the season when Le, a vital player of the lineup, suffered a broken leg. "The boys were looking like a beast of a team coming into the season and set expectations high, until Le broke his leg," Naples said. "The loss was detrimental and has been something we've been trying to compensate for all season." That adjustment period led to a mid-season slump that tested the team's mental toughness. Insixiengmay admitted, "there was a stretch of games where our team was losing a lot and we were in our

heads." Instead of fracturing, the players leaned on one another, rebuilding their confidence just in time for the postseason. Through an unbroken bond, the team rallied through the playoffs to secure a well-earned spot at states.

For Coach Goldstein, navigating the fallout of Le's injury required emotional leadership and restraint. While the players scrambled to redefine their roles on the court, Goldstein privately processed his own disappointment. "Losing Andy was really tough because I felt like [this] probably could have been one of our best teams in a long time," Goldstein shared. "As a coach, you've got to hide your emotions to try and get the best out of them. My biggest challenge was to make sure that everyone still believes that we can still win districts, win the public league, and go to states."

Beyond the tactical hurdles of a reconstructed lineup, Goldstein was also carrying a personal secret throughout the season. Before the very first whistle blew, he had already decided that this would be his final year coaching the Palumbo boys' volleyball program. Fearing it would derail their focus, he didn't share the news with the team. "I didn't want to add more pressure," Goldstein revealed. Keeping the secret forced the veteran coach to practice exactly what he preached to his players daily. "I was trying to not put a lot of pressure on myself to win, and just keep it about the process... I was trying to listen to my own advice." By centering himself in the process rather than the outcome, Goldstein managed to guide his team through their darkest mid-season moments, turning a bittersweet final chapter into a triumphant march to the state tournament.

Ultimately, the Palumbo boys' volleyball team has proven that a season is not defined by the hardships a team faces, but by how they respond to them. By transforming the loss of a star player and a grueling mid-season slump into a catalyst for leadership and accountability, this squad did not just salvage their season, they elevated it. No matter the final score at states, the Palumbo boys have already achieved something far more enduring: a resilient, caring family that refuses to back down when the stakes are highest.

# DEAR NAIM DEBUTS

BY SIDNEY LEACH

Palumbo junior Angel Okeke has created a documentary about youth in Philadelphia and third spaces. She created this in conjunction with Ewdi Rosario, a junior at Central High School. This documentary is called *Dear Naim* and came after her best friend's brother, Naim Castleberry, passed away in a car accident on December 14, 2022.

The film explores the lack of spaces and support for youth. Their experience in neighborhoods impacted by substance abuse and violence informs their perspective on Philadelphia. Through use of poetry and experimental filmmaking, Angel and Rosario explore an important story, and the issue of young Ewdi having no productive places to spend their time in. Angel, an advocate for youth expression, said, "everyone has a different perspective and background that leads to their actions—learn to not judge others."



In addition to filmmaking, Angel is a member of Philly Bolt, which is a nonprofit organization focused on youth-led change in communities and in Philadelphia as a whole. Angel specifies groups like Philly Bolt as an example of what more young people need, because it provides youth with the opportunity to express themselves and the differences they want to make in the world around them.

The film will be shown at Palumbo on June 8th. The screening is invite-only, and students who are interested should speak to Mr. McGeehan.

"My voice is my power, in every action possible"  
-Angel Okeke

## WADING WATERS

BY RIANNA YANG





Design plan for 1101 Christian St, sourced from Realtor.com

# WHAT A WIFI BLACKOUT REVEALS ABOUT GENTRIFICATION

BY KAMANI ELMORE

On the morning of May 12th, Google stopped loading, the electronic sign-in machines disconnected, and Palumbo was officially offline. This has serious consequences, as the blackout was on the day of the AP Precalculus, AP Psychology, and Keystone exams. Some students taking the AP Precalc exam had just submitted in the nick of time, but other students were forced to use their phone hotspot, or had to retake the test entirely. AP Psych students had their exam rescheduled.

Kyla, a junior and AP Psych student, said she was “relieved as well as stressed because of test anxiety and knowing that [her] dream career depended on this exam.” This was a common feeling among the students forced to take the make-up exam. I, on the other hand, like many AP Precalc students, felt stunned when I finally finished the exam to find out that I was unable to submit it. At that moment, I felt that all my year of hard work would be erased by a wifi outage.

But what caused the outage? It was rumored that it may have been caused by strain from the large number of students who were testing that day. Although this might have been a factor, the answer to the may be found at the luxury homes on 1101 Christian St. After the blackout, technicians inspected the outage and concluded that construction workers building luxury homes next door to the school damaged a vital wifi cable that serves our school. However, the construction workers denied any wrongdoing.

This wifi outage serves as a powerful reminder for the consequences of gentrification. The new luxury homes take up space and create noise outside of our classrooms. These homes are being sold for over 1.5 million dollars. What’s worse, Cherelle Parker offers these homebuyers tax abatement, meaning the buyers do not have to pay property taxes for 10 years if their house is newly built. All in all, our mayor is allowing the wealthy to pass on paying over 140,000 dollars in taxes that could help fund our schools.

In an attempt to get more answers regarding the wifi blackout, I reached out to KW Empower, the builders of the homes and a prominent agency known for their modern work in many low income areas of Philadelphia, Delaware, and New Jersey helping to raise the market prices in those neighborhoods. I received no answer and was hung up upon my introduction. When contacting the two realtors in charge of the sales of the houses about the alleged cable damage, realtor Jim Onesti terminated the call immediately upon introduction and Jim Roche did not return requests for comment.

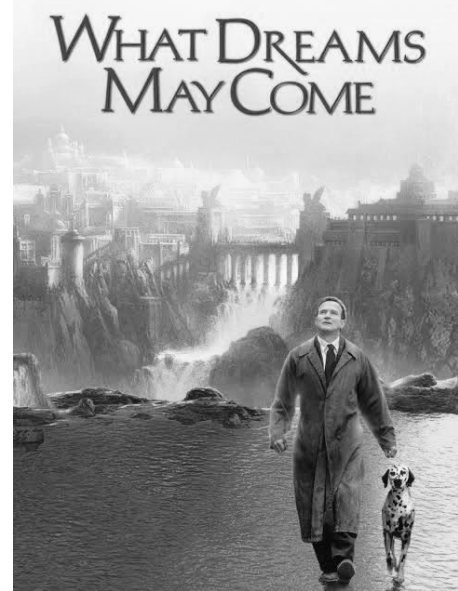
While wealthy developers are receiving a tax abatement, public school students next door had their exams derailed due to construction complications. The internet blackout didn't just disrupt a test—it exposed the stark difference between two groups sharing the block. As Philadelphia's neighborhoods change, the stakes are rarely in favor of the community existing there first.

# COHEN’S CORNER: SUMMER SPECIAL

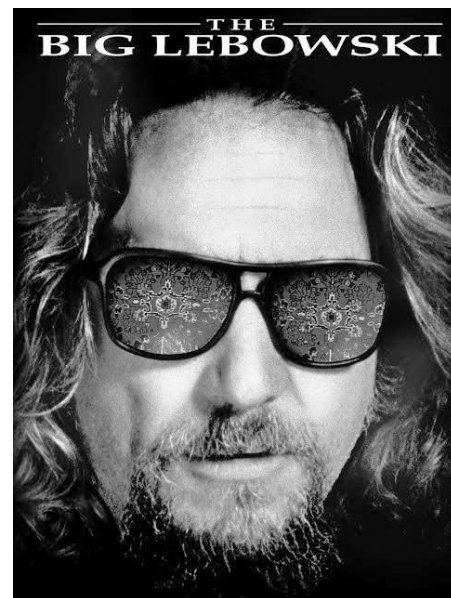
BY AARON COHEN

With summer right around the corner, here are four movies that are perfect to watch on a sweltering day.

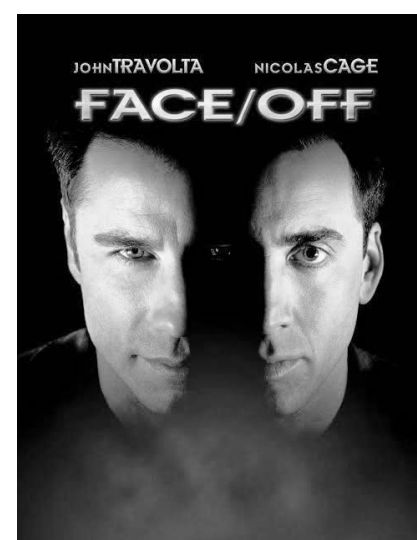
**What Dreams May Come:** Directed by Vincent Ward, *What Dreams May Come* is a visually stunning masterpiece. Starring Robin Williams as Chris Nielsen, a pediatrician who dies navigates heaven with his long time friend Albert. Made in 1998, the movie is a fantasy/romance/drama that explores themes of death, love, and overcoming grief. This movie is very emotional as Robin Williams and Annabella Sciorra deliver great acting and have amazing chemistry. The movie is also striking—the depictions of heaven are beautiful and resemble a painting. Robin Williams' performance is incredible, and more emotional now as the actor passed away in early August, making his portrayal of a man living peacefully even more impactful.



**The Big Lebowski:** I’m ending off the school year with one of my favorite comedies of all time. *The Big Lebowski* follows our protagonist, Jeffrey, “The Dude,” Lebowski, as he is drawn into a convoluted ransom scheme involving a philanthropist Jeffrey Lebowski’s (not the same guy) wife who owes money to kingpin Jackie Treehorn. Jeff Bridges is a memorable and likable protagonist as The Dude, and John Goodman plays a great vet with ptsd who is an avid bowler. Some other notable cast members include Steve Buscemi as Donny, and John Turturro as a rival bowler who somehow got a terrible spinoff movie 21 years later after *The Big Lebowski*. What this movie does best is the dialogue and witty humor between characters. One of the best actors in this movie is John Goodman as Walter, who has unforgettable scenes. *The Big Lebowski* is a great time and stays in viewer’s heads. *The Dude* abides and so does the movie, have fun with it and enjoy the film.



**Face/Off:** *Face/Off* couldn’t be any more different than *What Dreams May Come* but it might be one of the greatest BlockBusters of the 90’s. John Travolta plays Sean Archer, an FBI agent obsessed with catching terrorist Castor Troy (Nicolas Cage). After a massive operation brings Castor down, Sean goes on a mission to diffuse Castor’s bomb before it goes off. Directed by John Woo, who is no rookie with blockbusters, the movie showcases intense action, fight, and chase sequences. Besides the one liners and cheesy fight dialogue, *Face/Off* is a timeless movie that anyone can enjoy. Nicholas Cage is also wacky and fun to watch. *Face/Off* is nothing short of absurd but that's why it's gold.



# MR. PAULUS RETIRES

BY AHMED AHMED

2026 marks the 30th year of Mr. Paulus' career in the School District of Philadelphia. In an interview, he discusses his years spent teaching English 4 Honors at Palumbo, and reflects on his final year before entering retirement.

Mr. Paulus first began teaching as at Pennypack House School, and then moved on to work at Masterman for a completely different experience. Teaching at a school like Pennypack House was much more difficult for Mr. Paulus when he first started in 1996, as it was very emotionally draining. However, Mr. Paulus has also found his job to be extremely rewarding. He notes that watching seniors improve, cross the stage at graduation, and later come back to visit has been one of the greatest joys of his career.

Mr. Paulus has experienced both the highs and lows that come with education, from students succeeding in the classroom to going through some of the toughest moments in learning. When asked what the most challenging part of teaching has been, Mr. Paulus said, "Learning where I fall short. It's not easy for most of us to recognize areas where we need growth. However, when we do, it always pays off."

As Mr. Paulus wraps up his teaching career, he says he will miss his daily interactions with students. Absorbing the intellectual energy of a classroom, especially after dissecting a difficult text or a complex social issue, is one of the things Mr. Paulus says he will miss most about teaching.



*Fun fact: Mr. Paulus has amassed a collection of over 1,000 Funko Pops*

When asked how he wants to leave Palumbo, Mr. Paulus said, "I want to be remembered as someone who cares. That said, one of the best legacies I leave behind is in the form of teachers I've mentored." Mr. Paulus has mentored many teachers, including Mr. Langford and Ms. DiGiuseppe, who were once student teachers that he supervised. While Mr. Paulus himself won't be joining us in the fall, evidence of his hard work and dedication certainly will be.



# MUSIC OF THE REVOLUTION

BY VIO DOAN

Music is intertwined with politics. Take Fela Kuti, a Nigerian artist who pioneered the afrobeat jazz sound. Consisting of 3 tracks with afrobeats, jazz, and meaningful lyricism, Kuti's album, *Underground System*, is a powerful reflection of political unrest within Nigeria at the time.

The title track, "U.S. (Underground System)," caught my attention because of its historical context (also because it's nearly 30 minutes long). It was written as a tribute to Thomas Sankara, the President of Burkina Faso, as his reign was short-lived due to a military coup backed by western powers. The piece initially doesn't give you the impression of that intense theme however, starting off with pure instrumentals of a funky bass line, guitar, piano, and percussion. The energy builds up as brass is added into the mix, with unison vocals. It continuously adds on, with solos from saxophone. The attention to the

lyricism really is catchy in this one—it's both storytelling and fitting for the energy.

"Pansa Pansa" opens with a more usual keyboard line for this genre. It's accompanied with a simple, yet quick drum beat which transitions to this catchy saxophone solo. It's backed with continuous brass accompaniments like a call and respond, while the guitar plays clean chords in the background. It really shines as a protagonist within this piece until about 7 minutes in, where the keyboard takes over to transition into Kuti's voice. The phrase, "Pansa pansa" is very repetitive, and acts as a call to action.

The last song on the album, "Confusion Break Bone," does not have the same energy as "Pansa Pansa" and "U.S." Instead, it starts with a bit of melancholy expressed through the keyboard. The brass slightly changes this feeling, and introduces the vocals, which makes it comfortably unsettling. The polyrhythmic percussion break then changes up the mood, and it moves away from the melancholy. The saxophone solo then takes over almost as a vocal, and it's a very relaxed free-flow style with a bit of western influence.

This album, which was one of the last Kuti wrote before his death, is an underrated treasure full of unique instrumentals and powerful lyrics. Beyond just checking out the album, I'd also recommend exploring the history behind this album to truly understand its beauty. Happy listening!

## 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.

	Gym Teacher	English Teacher	STEM Teacher
10+ Years Teaching			
First Year Teacher at Palumbo			
Last Name Begins with D			



# POETS CLAIM SEVENTH TITLE

BY SIDNEY LEACH

Palumbo’s poetry club has taken home their seventh consecutive win at the Philadelphia League’s championship slam this year. Our poets have worked tirelessly to improve their craft every day awaiting this competition, and have been undefeated this season.

Senior poet Kyle Dailey shares, “every time we win, it makes me feel proud of all of us coming together.” But winning is not the only thing that keeps students coming back to this club. Many poets say that it has played a big role in improving their confidence and public speaking abilities over the years. Lily Dominus, a senior who joined the club her freshman year, said, “having a set time to sit down and actually write has definitely helped me improve as a writer.”

Members of the poetry club often perform at school wide assemblies, and for many this is their first experience performing in front of a large audience. The art form of poetry allows students to express themselves in new ways, while improving confidence and public speaking skills. Lily also explained that it helped her learn to collaborate with different types of people.

Ms.Kay, the staff sponsor of the poetry club provides unwavering support to many members. Simone

Shackleford said “I’ve definitely grown as a poet. I’ve evolved my view on poetry to become less rhymey. Ms.Kay pushed me to be better every day and stop beating myself up.”

Jason Edmondson echoed this gratitude, saying, “[Ms.Kay] is a great person who believes in us and supports us in and out of poetry. She hasn’t just helped me with my poems, but she also helped me apply to college.”

Members applaud her patience, care, and willingness to help her students. “She can always find your talent,” says Kyle. Through years of dedication and hard work, it is clear that Ms.Kay has created an incredibly warm and supportive environment focused on improving each and every student. “A lot of students see poetry as a family and really trust Ms Kay,” Lilly added.

Poetry has also cemented itself as a cornerstone of Palumbo culture. “Poetry is a big part of our school culture. As an audience member, I’m always looking forward to hearing new poems at assemblies,” said Rose Semmel.

Congratulations to all of the poets for their seventh consecutive win. With each year of experience comes another year of growth and support for more and more young poets.

# PALUMBO POLL WORKERS

BY SANTINA RAMUNNO

For several years, Palumbo has been proud to be a part of Involved at 17, an initiative that allows high school students to serve as poll workers. The program is led by Mr.McGeehan, who has encouraged numerous students to participate in their local elections despite not being old enough to vote. He stated, “I think it’s a really wonderful way for students to get involved in elections and to get them comfortable with how elections work.”

In the May 19th election, over 70 Palumbo students were poll workers. One Senior, James Felix, was surprised when he was nominated to be the judge of elections in his ward, despite it being only his third time pollworking. “Stepping in as the judge of elections very eye opening,” said James. “I really got to participate hands-on in the election process. Although it was a privilege to work as the judge of elections, certain conflicts came along with it. I found myself responsible for preventing electioneering and others trying to access election results, which is unusual for a high school position. Overall, the experience was stressful, but I would do it again!”



# EDITOR’S NOTE

Looking back at my four years in high school, I can confidently say that my role as Editor for the *Griffin Gazette* has been my most rewarding commitment. Writing, editing, and interviewing my peers has enabled me to amplify student voices and find my own place within our school.

I’d like to extend my sincere appreciation to Mr.Pedone, who has provided the Gazette with the resources and support necessary to print each month. Finally, I’d like to thank each member of the Gazette for trusting my leadership and coming to each meeting with enthusiasm to learn, question, and create in each other’s company. The team’s unwavering commitment is evident on every page.

I’m beyond excited for the future of this paper under the guidance of next year’s Editor, Kamani Elmore, a dedicated writer who cares deeply about covering the events and issues that shape our community. May the Gazette always remain a place for bold ideas, honest storytelling, and student-led journalism.

– UNA CUTRONE

# PALUMBO PUZZLER

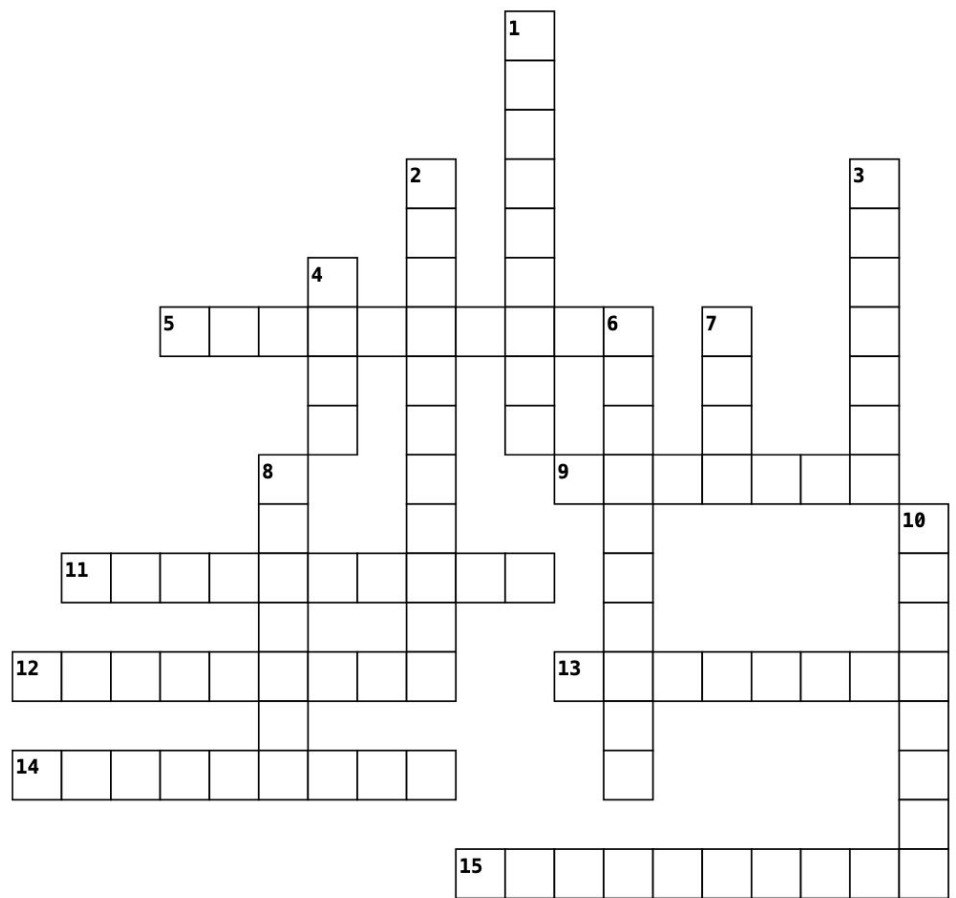
BY ELIZABETH DORNEY

**ACROSS:**

- 5. Where graduation practice takes place
- 9. You apply here using the Common App
- 11. What graduates wear
- 12. Name of the park across from Palumbo
- 13. Only teachers can use it, unless you have a pass
- 14. Sophomore year science class
- 15. The type of computer every student uses

**DOWN:**

- 1. Monthly evacuation practice
- 2. Ms.Stamps' market
- 3. Anatomy teacher
- 4. Freshman that reads the school announcements each morning
- 6. Staff member who organizes graduation practice and parade of horrors
- 7. From bell to bell, there is no \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. What the class of 2027 will be next year
- 10. It features class photos and superlatives



# THE FIGHTIN' PHILS: A MASSIVE TURNAROUND

BY ABRAHAM WRIGHT

Two days after a loss to the Atlanta Braves on April 26 that dropped the Phillies' record to 9–19, manager Rob Thomson was fired and the Phillies moved forward with Don Mattingly as their interim manager. What many expected to be a disappointing season quickly changed. Following the change, the Phillies won 11 of their next 15 games, and as of June 1, they sit at 30–29. With roughly 100 games remaining and room for improvement, the Phillies have built a strong foundation to keep their momentum going.

At the start of the season, the Phillies' offense struggled to produce runs, but the bats have come alive during their recent stretch of success. The team's leader in batting average is left fielder Brandon Marsh, who is batting .317; he has recorded 60 hits through 54 games, and his consistency has helped the offense create more scoring opportunities. Another player who has performed well is designated hitter Kyle Schwarber. Although his batting average sits at a below-average .234, his power has more than made up for it. Schwarber leads the league with 22 home runs and owns a .940 OPS, which ranks fifth in baseball. Combine those numbers with Bryce Harper's production, batting .261 while leading the team with a .361 on-base percentage and it becomes clear why the Phillies' offense has improved so

dramatically. However, the hitting alone does not tell the entire story.

The Phillies' pitching staff has also played a crucial role in the team's turnaround. Left-handed starter Christopher Sánchez has made his case for being one of the best pitchers

in baseball. He owns a 6–2 record, a league-leading 1.47 ERA, and ranks second in the league with 95 strikeouts. Since returning from the injury that sidelined him last season, Zach Wheeler has also been outstanding. He has posted a 4–1 record with a 2.27 ERA. Wheeler's strong performance is an encouraging sign for the Phillies, as he appears to be settling back into form with ease and could become even more dominant as the season progresses. Along with the other pitchers, closer Jhoan Duran has been dependable in high-pressure situations. He has recorded 12 saves with a 1.53 ERA and has consistently delivered in late-game situations. His reliability at the back end of the



bullpen has helped secure several important victories for the Phillies.

There are still players who need to improve. Trea Turner is batting .223, J.T. Realmuto is hitting .220, and Jesús Luzardo owns a 4–4 record with a 4.30 ERA. The Phillies will need more production from these players if they hope to remain competitive throughout the season. While their struggles are concerning, some of baseball's biggest contributors often find their rhythm later in the year. For now, the Phillies have positioned themselves well after a difficult start. If they can continue to receive strong performances from both their lineup and pitching staff while getting more production from their struggling stars, a World Series opportunity is still possible, and Phillies fans have plenty of reasons to be optimistic. Go Phillies!