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

NOTHING LESS THAN SUCCESS

WANT TO JOIN?

The Griffin Gazette welcomes any interested students to join our team of dedicated writers, editors, and photographers. Meetings dates are announced on the google classroom. Classroom Code: oaurp77



STUDENTS FOR THE ACADEMY

BY AARON COHEN

AI had the pleasure of interviewing a fellow student and friend Julius Berkowitz about his view of the shut down of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. As long as I can remember the Academy of Natural Sciences was a staple of my childhood. Similar to mine, it was a staple in Juluis's life as well, and I would like to give an introduction written by him to highlight the issue.

"My name is Julius Berkowitz. I am a former volunteer at the Academy of Natural Sciences. I have been going to the Academy for as long as I can remember and it has inspired me to pursue a career in Paleontology. When I heard that it was being shut down I was absolutely devastated. It acts as an important resource to learn about everything from dinosaurs to plants to bugs and more. (The rest of the article will follow a Q&A format.)

Q: Why is the Museum getting shut down to the public?
A: The museum is getting shut down because Drexel, who funds it, believes it is not making enough money. To my knowledge they intend to sell the current building and relocate all of the collections. The collections are incredibly old and many of them are fragile to the point of having to be kept in temperature controlled storage. To relocate such a collection would be massively risky and expensive, far more expensive than simply keeping the museum open. Additionally Drexel has said that the annual deficit is only around $900,000. There has been no campaign to receive money and Drexel has appeared to ignore or even reject offers to provide financial support such as an offer from the William Penn Foundation that has offered to keep it open for a year.

They also never reached out to the City Council that has said it would have been willing to help even though Drexel has done so in the past for their own projects. They also announced its closure on September 1st and it officially closed on September 30th which gives next to no time to try to save it. Also Drexel has its own financial struggles separate to the Academy and is likely shutting it down to sell the land which is prime real estate on the parkway. If Drexel's plan was to go through it would likely demolish the 150 year old building to replace it with more luxury condos.

Q: What can fellow students and citizens of Philadelphia do to help and or prevent the shutdown of the Academy?
A: Students can contact their representatives particularly the Mayor and Governor who have remained silent and the mayor's office even refused to send anyone to the first hearing even though they said they would, which led to a subpoena for them [someone from the mayor's office] to attend. Students can sign up to speak at the hearings and council meetings that have to do with the Academy. Students can become involved with the Save the Academy coalition, their instagram is 'savetheacademy.' I also am proud to be one of the first members of 'Students For The Academy,' a spinoff from Save the Academy that is assembling high school students under the same cause. Their instagram is 'students_for_the_academy.'

Q: Just to reiterate,why is the Academy so important?
A: It is important because it is the oldest natural history museum in North and South America that provides educational opportunities to people of all ages from all over the city and to try to shut it down for greed is unacceptable.

I would like to personally thank Julius for bringing this matter to my attention, because like many others I have heard about the closure but didn't know how I can help. While some information listed in this article may change at the time this paper is published, checking out the instagram '@savetheacademy' for information and updates is the best place to start.

WHEN SURVIVAL MEETS SENIOR COUNCIL

BY ANGEL OKEKE

What do you think of when you think of senior year? Most seniors would list every synonym for the word, "exhausting," or "a lot." In the gasps– not breaths– of senior year, seniors were looking for a heartbeat to hold us steady. Leading that charge is Senior Class President Catherine (Cat) and Senior Vice President Adam– a dynamic duo who are taking the reins of the class, and are already shining stars in the classroom. Cat and Adam are driven, natural leaders, balancing brains with charisma, making them the pair needed to turn big dreams into a living reality.

Joining them on the Griffin's Senior Council are our standout runners-up, a group of talented and creative energy: Angel, Meriem, Mia, and Caiden. This team is eager to make bold choices and put in the hard work required to make our final year an unforgettable one.



Alongside Mia's cheery spirit as a professional cheerleader, Caiden sits capturing every candid moment with his beloved lens, bringing a beautiful spark to the team. Angel is a youth advocate and was recently titled Philadelphia's "Youth Poet Laureate Ambassador," qualifying her for the national title of "Youth Poet Laureate," –beside her is her fierce ally, Meriem who is strapped with glowing ideas, a bright smile, and a past of dragon-boating that taught her resilience and leadership.

What even is a senior year without fun & school-spirit filled events/fundraisers? A Festive Christmas Catered Bake Sale: Sweet treats and holiday cheer to get us through a cold winter. The Return of Teachers vs. Students Basketball: After becoming a classic last year, the infamous matchup is back again, and the bragging rights are up for competition. Who will redeem themselves? The Senior Talent Show (Coming in 2027): A spotlight stage for every class to show skill, music, and have simple fun!

Catherine, Adam, Angel, Meriem, Mia, and Caiden are proving that senior year was never about survival, it was always about finding the moments to be present–the photographs that will one day greet us on our refrigerators.



MIDTERM ELECTION: BLUE WAVE RIPPLES

BY MELISSA GOLDING

Tuesday, November 3rd, were the 2026 Midterm Elections for the country. A “Blue Wave” surged as Democrats flipped seats in both the House and the Senate, gaining control of both chambers. As of now, Democrats will enter 2027 with at least 55 Senate seats. Alaska’s senate race is still undecided, as Democrat Mary Peltola is just short of a lead that would allow her to win outright. The Republican candidate Dan Sullivan, who is an incumbent senator, shares the name with another Dan Sullivan who ran independently on the ballot. If Democrats win Alaska, their majority could grow to six Senate seats. Democrats have won 257 seats in the House of Representatives so far, including 46 seats flipped from red to blue. 218 seats are needed to hold the majority. Republicans currently hold 171 seats, and nine races are unresolved.

The 2026 elections also resulted in many influential firsts, particularly within newly-elected Democrats. Georgia Democrat, Keisha Lance Bottoms, became the first Black woman elected governor in any state. New Mexico Democrat, Deb Haaland, became the first Native American woman elected governor, and Democrat Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan became the first Muslim Senator. These upcoming politicians also have varying career backgrounds, ranging from doctors and teachers to Paralympic athletes and Prada models.

In Pennsylvania, 11 out of 17 House members are now Democrats, with 4 seats gained. Democrat Josh Shapiro won Governor, beating the Republican candidate endorsed by Donald Trump, Stacy Garrity. In the State legislature, Democrats won a state Senate majority for the first time in 48 years while also holding their majority in the House. What was a 27-23 Republican Senate became a 26-24 Democratic majority.

Lastly, it can be a common thought, especially within younger people, that one vote won’t make too much of a difference. If this line of thought sounds familiar, know that multiple House races had differences of around 1,500 votes, some even with less. A race in North Carolina’s 3rd district was decided by fewer than 300 votes total. No matter how cliche it may sound, a vote is a voice. Wanting to see change is an important catalyst, but it can only do so much. Acting on that urge to make change through pursuing education, educating others, and sharing that knowledge is what will help move the country forward.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: MORRIS IMPACTS

BY KYLA SMITH

If asked Finley Morris would describe her life as a beautifully blooming indie coming of age film. One where the main character exudes enthusiasm and curiosity for the worlds around them. Similarly these traits can be seen when focusing on the enormous impact Finley Morris has made on the school's environment and student life of Academy at Palumbo.

In the beginning, Outreach club had only existed for a short while before Finley Morris, Yang Lin, and Sefanya Christian took charge branding it to the one we know today. Their touches of empathy and specific focus on funding certain community organizations bloomed into the club we now see in the halls doing bake sales and hosting school dances every year. Alongside the help of Mr. Kirby as the club's beloved sponsor they have been able to donate profits to many organizations.

Outside of being so involved in service work, Finley Morris used her passion for the arts to become the assistant director for the upcoming musical ‘Into the Woods’. While also being the captain of the Mock Trial team, currently preparing for the case that just hit the streets.



Assigning roles to other members, she still manages to be able to explore both the roles of an attorney and a witness. Amidst assigning roles for mock trial, doing table readings for the musical, and hosting amazing dances for the students of this school she also is an active student within the classroom setting. She excels well in class discussions adding deep insightful opinions to conversations and she is passionate about feminism. To her, engaging in such conversations comes naturally, and when placed in the environment the stress of clubs and outside ideas ease off of her shoulders allowing her to be front and present in conversations to give them her all in an attempt to feed the curiosity that lingers within.

Beyond her impact on the Academy at Palumbo, Finley Morris' prospective major in college is film. As of right now she is carrying her insightful thoughts and continuous enthusiasm to learn more onto the next stage of her life.

TIS THE SEASON OF FALL

BY BRINIA GRANILLO GARCIA





RIVALRY WEEK AND MAJOR WINS

BY JADE POTTS

Both girls soccer and volleyball have faced arguably our biggest rivals, Central High School, in some of the biggest games of the season. Soccer took a hearty loss in the semi-finals on October 26th, while volleyball won their rematch against Central in the PPL championship on October 28th. I had the pleasure of speaking with seniors Lexi Hoekzema and Casey Locker about their takes rivalry.

Lexi Hoekzema has played soccer for Palumbo for 4 years, taking on a captain position and leading the offense this year. In her final match of her high school career, Hoekzema felt extra determined to win given the history with Central. “They win so often that you kind of just get tired of it and you’re more determined to win and play better,” she commented.

Central is constantly compared to Palumbo within the entirety of the school district. Lexi Hoekzema compares her senior year to her past years as a Palumbo student. She mentioned how her freshman and sophomore year the girls soccer team constantly lost to Central, but that all changed just last year. “It was no longer a team we were gonna lose to, we’ve beaten them before and knew we could do it again,” Hoekzema exclaimed.

In my conversation with Hoekzema, she stated that the only thing that changes pregame is her mental focus towards the game. She consistently tells herself that they can beat this team and offers motivation to herself and those around her.

Winning and losing can feel much different when it comes to who it is against and the loss in the semi-finals was especially disheartening.

Casey Locker excels as a member of Palumbo’s varsity volleyball team, serving as an outside hitter and defensive specialist. She has acted as a mentor and support system for her teammates for 4 years. For Locker, it’s less of a rivalry and more of an expected matchup in the championship games. “We’re fighting our own battles and focusing on our side of the court rather than who’s across the net,” Locker said.

After being a Griffin from freshman to senior year, Casey Locker has seen the rivalry show up in both an academic and athletic standpoint. Undoubtedly, there is more hype around the games against Central. More tickets are sold, the stands are full, and the conversations regarding the two are heard all throughout the hallways. Locker emphasized this by saying “People seem to care more about the schools facing each other than the sport itself.” She sees this as a positive thing because it brings more school spirit and helps people get into the sport through the high-stakes games.

Senior year for Locker has her feeling relaxed in regards to the Palumbo Central stigma. Coming in her freshman year, she was constantly on the front lines, hearing about the competition and feeling intimidated when people spoke on the relationship between the schools. “It's not as intense for me anymore, regardless of who we won against the win would've felt amazing either way.”

Superstitions, or lack thereof, are a huge part of Palumbo volleyball. I asked Locker if anything changes during the pregame rituals when they play Central versus when they play another school. “If you change your pregame ritual then you're changing how you’re going to play and feel during the game.”

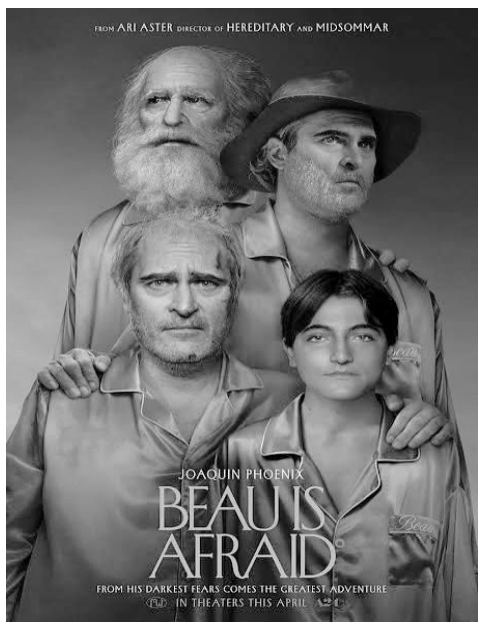
COHEN’S CORNER: ODYSSEY’S

BY AARON COHEN

For this edition of the paper I’m recommending my favorite movies that depict protagonists going on a quest that leads to a sprawling adventure.

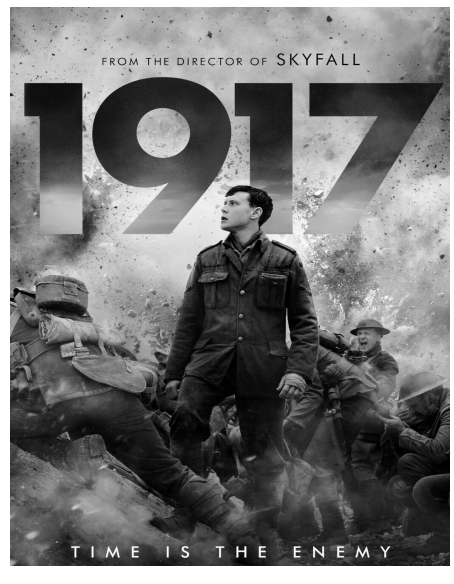


O Brother Where Art Thou?(2000): Directed by Joel Coen, O Brother, Where Art Thou? Was probably the most accurate version of The Odyssey before the 2026 movie was released. In the deep south three men (George Clooney, John Turturro, and Tim Blake Nelson) escape from prison to search for a hidden treasure while they are endlessly pursued by lawmen. On their journey they run into a recording studio, rival politicians, and incidentally ruin a cult meeting. The deep rooted racism of the south in the 30’s is also covered and avoids being portrayed in an ill conceived way. At a runtime of 1 hour and 47 minutes O Brother, Where Art Thou? Is currently streaming on prime video.



1917 (2019): Directed by Sam Mendes (Skyfall, Spectre, American Beauty) 1917 follows two freshly enlisted British Lance Corporals Will Schofield (George macKay), and Tom Blake, venturing into no man’s land across enemy lines to deliver a message that will prevent 1,600 men from walking into a German artillery trap. While the main mission and characters are fictional the backdrop of the film was a real historical event of the German withdrawal of the Hindenburg Line. To prepare for their roles the main actors spent 6 months before filming together which allows the seamless banter and comradery. 1917 is currently streaming on Netflix and Prime video at respectable for a war movie runtime of 2 hours.

Beau Is Afraid (2023): Beau is Afraid is a horror/comedy. The story follows our protagonist Beau(Joaquin Phoenix) as an anxiety riddled, and paranoid middle aged man traveling back home after the sudden death of his rich, dictatorial mother. During Beau’s nightmarish adventure plenty of colorful characters support and block his trip such as Amy Ryan, and Nathan Lane as Roger, and Grace, a couple who takes care of Beau after he is injured, Patti Lupone as Beau’s mother. Beau is afraid is a visually daring and striking film that explores generational trauma and corporation manipulation. What Ari Aster shines as in Beau is Afraid is how the 4 distinct acts follow a looping cycle where progress is an illusion, and the situation is inescapable, governed by an incomprehensible authority. The film itself is beautifully shot and scenes breathtaking. Despite its 2 hour and 59 minute runtime Beau is Afraid keeps you entertained or questioning what is real and what's fake.



GLOBAL NAVIGATORS

BY BIANCA ARNONE

Looking to join a new club? Want to study abroad?
Check out this Q&A from the club's president Joyce!

When does the club meet?

The club meets every Monday in Ms. Chen's room.

What is the Global Navigator Club, and what does it entail?

Global Navigator Club is a club where students who are interested in studying abroad can come and learn from those who wish to share their experiences and offer guidance on the application process. We help students with applications, scholarships, travel preparation, and tips for making the most of their time abroad.

What is the club's funding situation?

We aren't allowed to hold fundraisers like bake sales and give the money directly to students. However, we can help students raise money through platforms like GoFundMe or Double Good. CIEE also offers need-based scholarships that can cover a student's entire tuition, excluding flights and personal spending money.

Why did you want to start the club?

My experience abroad was amazing. I got to experience a different culture, take classes, and connect with my host family, all while receiving a CIEE scholarship that covered most of my tuition. I wanted other students at Palumbo to have that same opportunity, especially those whose families might not otherwise be able to afford it.

I also know that applying to study abroad can be confusing, especially when it comes to preparing for travel. Through Global Navigator Club, students who have already studied abroad can help others navigate the process, find scholarships, and feel more confident about the experience.



BY RIANNA YANG

COZY AUTUMN MORNING COFFEE & CATS

What was it like finding a sponsor?

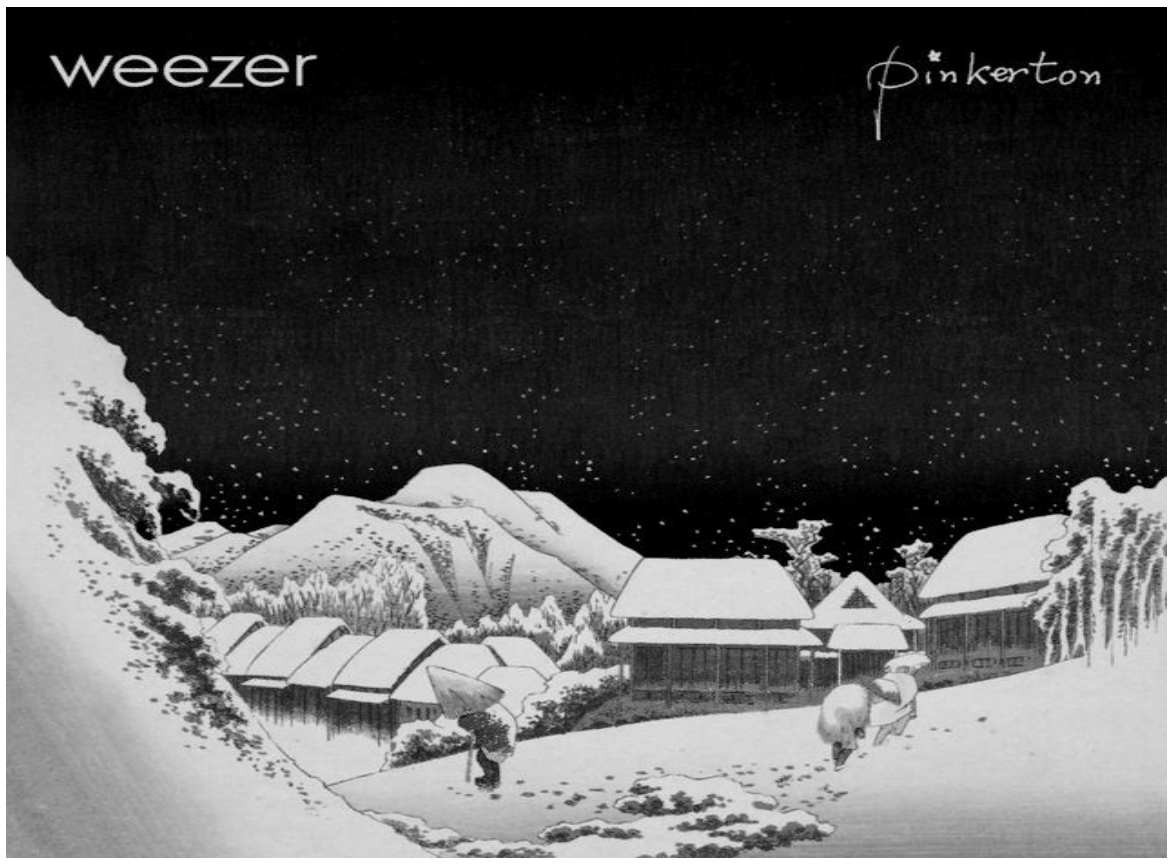
t was actually really easy! Ms. Chen introduced me to CIEE's High School Study Abroad program during my junior year and helped me through the application process. She was passionate about sharing this opportunity with other students at Palumbo, so we decided to work together to start a club that would help more students study abroad.

Why should people join the club?

Our club encourages students to step outside their comfort zones and explore opportunities to travel abroad. It's also a place to learn about different cultures, get helpful tips, and meet new people!

A goal from the Club's Cabinet member Minqin:

I'd like for this club to grow and encourage people to follow through their dreams of traveling abroad without having all the financial burden as the organization is very generous with giving out scholarships for students in need. I hope this club lasts for many years after graduation and that there are still students out there who may be interested in traveling and stepping up to leadership to share their experiences from a vast variety of countries.



ALBUM OF CHOICE: PINKERTON

BY VIO DOAN

As the fall leaves announce the start of Autumn and the anticipation of Christmas, it feels like the busiest days throughout the year. One album that really encapsulates this feeling is Weezer's Pinkerton album. Initially upon its pre-deluxe release, many critics did not like it due to its stray from their usual song theme and external controversies. However, I think they really fit this messy and teenage-esque sound upon knowing the context of this album even more. The frontman of the band, Rivers Cuomo, was at Harvard University to study music, and that definitely had an impact on the way he wrote this album.

One of my favorite and controversial tracks amongst this album is definitely Across the Sea. Its controversy stems from its suggestive themes with a particular Japanese fan. One particular thing about the history of the album is that Rivers was really into orientalistic music. This is definitely captured by the introduction of the song, which leads to this shift in the trashy sound. This song is one of the highlights that encapsulates that pathetic sound within River's vocals. It switches up around halfway to the song to this whiny build-up backtrack to the original theme but much louder. It's such a raw and unconventional sound, and the song's weird lyricism has this intriguing story-telling that is definitely not worth ignoring despite critics saying so.

'Pink Triangle' was another song that held similar controversies within the album. It entails a story of River's falling in love with a lesbian. A tragic story of Rivers trying to find love while almost being deceived from his point of view, which is the controversy. Beyond its controversy, It's super catchy and memorable, my specific niche thing I always remember is the harmonization in the chorus. One of my favorite sections comes from the isolated instrumentals, both the quiet and build up to the finish. The two part guitar solo is one of my favorites solos in this album.

'Butterfly' is a complete 180 and is the very last track of the sound. It is only just River's voice and an acoustic with minor banging as a percussive substitution. This song feels very vulnerable, a very simple and storytelling lyricism. It's such a beautiful song, but it's almost like an apology for the creation of the album before critics could ever say anything about it.
To say that tragedy creates the best works of art is true. It's a collection of "canon" events wrapped in trashy and catchy riffs all into one discography. At first it may seem a bit odd due to its lyricism, but I think the more you listen to it, the more you can appreciate the tales Rivers was willing to share. It's totally a keeper on my playlist and maybe yours too. Happy Listening!

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: GERBEC'S ROOTS

BY KAMANI ELMORE

After some deliberations with senior members of our press Ms. Gerbec was personally nominated and endorsed by a prized member. Celebrating a recent birthday and starting the year off strong as a raved capstone teacher I asked Ms. Gerbec a couple of questions to look deeper into.
(The rest of the article will follow a Q&A format.)

Q: Why did you come to Palumbo?
A.: As an alumni, I know how magical a place this is for students and teachers. I was excited to work with motivated students in a diverse environment. I have learned so much from my students since I started here, and even though there are 1250 of you and 80+ staff members, Palumbo feels like a small community where we all help each other succeed.

Q: You've mentioned that you went to Florida for college and taught in Florida for a little while. What was that like?



A: When I was a senior deciding what school to go to, my only criteria was warm weather. I ended up at the University of Tampa as they offered me the most amount of scholarships. I really wanted to go to school in California, but the option was to be in California and $56,000 in debt, or in Florida with no debt. I ended up loving the school and lived in Tampa and at the beach in St. Petersburg for 8 years after. Florida is very different from Philly, not only the political climate, but the way of life just moves at a slower pace. The middle school I worked at was in a rural town outside of Tampa -- there was legit a farm next to our school.

Q: As a counselor and capstone teacher, could you leave one positive message to your students?
A: I promise, everything is going to be okay!

Q: What's your favorite thing to do to decompress and rejuvenate after a long workday?
A: When it's nice out, I like to sit outside in the sun. I'm a flower, I need the sun to survive #photosynthesis lol I also love movies, add me on letterboxd @cgrbc

If you have never met her before, Ms. Gerbec is as fun as she sounds. As a capstone student in her class right now I can attest that everyday is a new adventure and you will never be bored.

PALUMBO PUZZLER

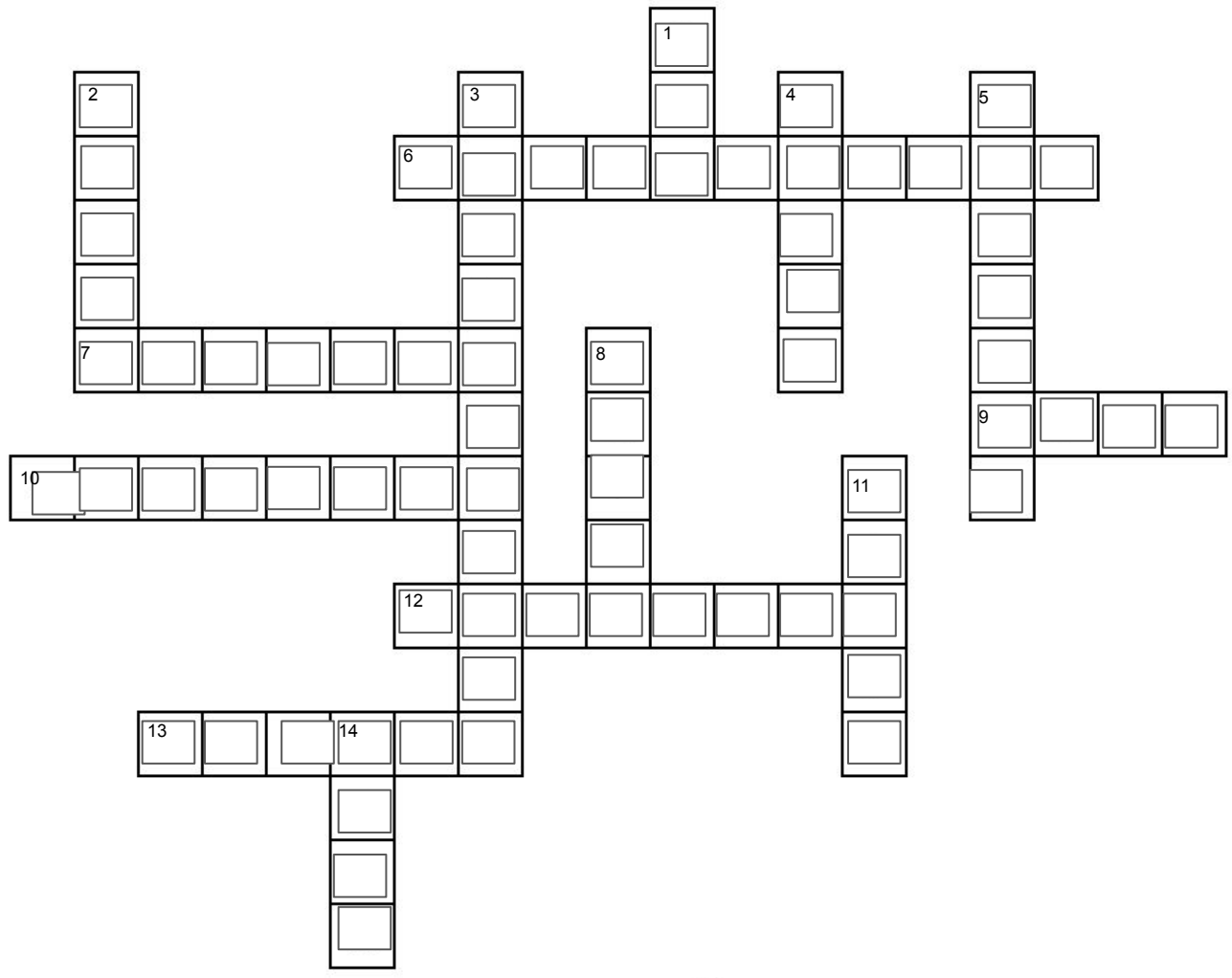
BY JADE POTTS

ACROSS:

6. Festival in chinatown where KPop club has performed
7. The school store is not open during this period
9. Senior class vice president _ Attanasio
10. Alternative snack sold next to the school store, occasionally
12. Host of the parade of horrors
13. Senior class president Catherine _____

DOWN:

1. Big test for Juniors
2. This years musical! "Into The _____
3. Class for aspiring directors
4. Financial aid form seniors must complete for college
5. School girls volleyball beat in the PPL championship
8. Coach of girls soccer
11. Junior class president ( ) Nguyen
14. Morning announcements done by Sophomore



HORROR FOR MANY YEARS TO COME

BY CHRISTA ROBINSON



Halloween is the one time a year where people can unapologetically dress up and wear astounding costumes.

Here at Palumbo, we cherish the well-thought-out expression behind every creation. For nine years, Palumbo has held a lively assembly, the Parade of Horrors. Although it is a mystery as to who or what exactly started this tradition, research suggests that it has been around since 2017 and possibly long before that.

Every year since then, there has been a wide variety of fun events and activities for both staff and students to enjoy in the spirit of Halloween. Teachers have silly categorized costume themes, with last year's being board games and this year their younger selves. Students are encouraged to participate in this, guessing what the staff's theme is going to be as well as signing up for costume contests. Awards are given for the funniest, scariest, or most creative costumes.

This year, there was an assortment of outstanding performances, ranging from ghoul-themed dances to a captivating play from Ms. Weinraub's theater class. The play was admirable as it held a very important lesson for the audience.

The protagonist in the play had a prominent fear of many silly things, one being a baseball bat and the other being the rapper known as Eminem. The protagonist's family introduced her to her fears and showed her that they were not big enough to overtake her. In the end, she came to love them as she learned that they were harmless and meant no wrong. Evidently, the play emphasized to the viewers the importance of conquering your fears rather than letting them define you.

As far as dances goes, the performances from Ms. Fisher's dance group were so engaging that they made the viewers, including me, want to jump out of their seats. The performers put on an amazing show to a very enjoyable and fitting soundtrack, dancing along to Michael Jackson's "Ghosts" and Andrew Gold's "Spooky, Scary Skeletons."

This annual collection of activities creates such a fun and exciting experience for the students, giving them something to look forward to at school aside from work. Not only are they able to dress up and act silly, they are also able to showcase their impeccable acting, singing, and dancing skills.

For years to come, Palumbo students can rest assured in seeing and being a part of this tradition, maybe even introducing new ideas of their own for things they may want to see to make their experience even more memorable.

With the Parade of Horrors, Palumbo strives to create and successfully creates a safe space for both talent and genuine joy.