

the CLASSIC

Townsend Harris High School at Queens College

Grace Meng discusses election victory

by Katherine Maradiaga

Grace Meng is a name that Harrisites might link with the nostalgia of the Election Simulation. But to the rest of the country, she is now the first Asian-American elected to represent New York in the U.S. Congress. In the week after attending congressional orientation, Ms. Meng discussed her past and future with members of *The Classic*.

Born and raised in Queens, the Stuyvesant graduate described herself as a “late bloomer” who was shy and did not get involved in politics until later in college. “I began to think that I wanted to work in a government agency or for a politician. I never thought I would run for office.”

Nonetheless, public office ended up being in her future. Meng has served as a member of the State Assembly since her election in 2008.

This fall, while certain seniors depicted her cam-

paigned in the simulation, Ms. Meng herself stirred voters with Democratic views on jobs, health care, civil rights, and education. She emphasized the need to improve Queens’s mass transit and infrastructure and supported

the idea of a stronger domestic workforce. That’s not to say that the simulation campaign and the real campaign remained entirely separate from one another.

Speaking of Nily Rozic, Townsend Harris alumna and Assemblywoman-elect, Ms. Meng said, “she one day e-mailed me with a Grace Meng commercial” from the simulation. Ms. Meng described the commercial as “really cool” and posted it on her Facebook profile.

For the next two years, Meng will represent New York’s 6th congressional district, comprised of Northeastern Queens. She will still represent the community, albeit a larger one, and she

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Classic writers pose with Congresswoman-elect Meng.

photo by Brian Sweeney

Classic meets Assemblyman-elect Ron Kim

by Ashley Ahn, Chris Artun and Michael Sanchez

On November 6, Ron Kim was elected as the first Korean-American state legislator in New York history. The assemblyman-elect sat down with members of *The Classic* to detail his agenda and share his story.

Elected to the 40th State Assembly District Seat, Mr. Kim is currently in the “transition period,” the time in which a candidate learns about the concerns of the community in order to effectively take action from the first day in office, beginning in January.

“It really hasn’t sunk in,” he said in regard to the historical nature of his victory. “I never strived to be something, but to do something. I’m more issue driven and vocation driven. Still, I’m proud for this opportunity, and the massive support from the community.”

While in the process of vacating his campaign office to prepare for his new position, Assemblyman Kim shared stories from his life that led to his November win. “I immigrated to the United States when I was seven years old,” he said. “My parents were looking

for more economic opportunities in America. I grew up helping my parents in their grocery store. It was a small business, but it got us by.” Politics quickly became an instrumental aspect of Mr. Kim’s youth. He said, “My father had a notion that American democracy is better than South Korea’s. As a young kid, I’ve always been fascinated by democracy and politics.”

Mr. Kim graduated from Hamilton College in 2002. Though he majored in political science, he also discovered a passion for sports. Mr. Kim had played tennis in high school, but he “found an affinity for football” at Hamilton and joined its

team. Politics, however, remained at the forefront both during and after college. Mr. Kim explained, “You have to be relentless about pursuing what you want to do.”

After Hamilton, Comptroller John Liu helped launch Mr. Kim’s career. “John Liu has been my mentor for ten years,” said Mr. Kim. “When I first got involved in politics, there weren’t many Asians. But John Liu set

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Staff members stand with Assemblyman-elect Kim.

photo by Brian Sweeney

Semores win SING! event

by Juliet Monclova

With interlocked hands and bowed heads, the Freshiors (a team of freshmen and juniors) and the Semores (sophomores and seniors) stood on opposite sides of the auditorium, waiting for the scores to be tallied. Within half a minute the spotlight shone on the Semores and they roared with elation.

The SING! 2012-2013 theme was developed by last year’s winning directors of Semore SING!, Victoria Baamonde and Avalon Galioto. The Freshiors production was called “Laid Off” and the Semores production was “160 Hours.” Both had to begin and end with the same line and setting. The first line had to be “How was your eye exam yesterday?” spoken in a park. The final line had to be, “That’s not what your brother said,” spoken in a grocery store.

Directing for the first time, the juniors led the freshman through their debut performance. Co-director Nathaniel Cheng, junior, expressed the difficulty of directing the freshmen and juniors. He said, “One of the biggest struggles was getting my peers to listen to me and getting people to consistently come to practice. But over time it started to feel less awkward and more normal.”

Freshior co-director Anna St. Clair, junior, affirmed her partner’s feelings. She said, “Some challenges were getting everyone to work together. In the end I think we achieved that and that was one of our group’s strengths.”

The Semores, on the other hand, had more experience directing the production.

Catherine Moskos, senior, has directed SING! for the past two years. “Directing was definitely easier this year because I felt a little more prepared and was able to avoid problems that presented themselves last year.”

She added, “This year’s SING! was a bit challenging because we had an incredible drive to win. We pushed ourselves harder than we ever did before. Thankfully we had a beyond amazing cast.”

Her co-directors, Ella Leviyeva and Gabriella Niyazov, seniors, were new to the role. Ella, senior, said, “Although it was my third year as a member of SING!, it was my first year as a director. All of a sudden I was responsible for so much more than I used to be. At first it was a weird transition, because for the past two years I would come to SING! and spend the entire rehearsal dancing. This year I had to split up my time in order to fulfill all of my responsibilities.”

Gabriella added, “A great show takes a lot

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No longer a simulation, Grace Meng meets Harrisites

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will be more involved with proposing new laws. Meng notes that she'll have more limitations being in Congress's Democratic minority.

The new group of "freshman" Democrats in the 113th Congress is the most diverse in American history, having, for the first time, more women and minorities than white men. Describing her congressional orientation (a weeklong introduction to her new job), Meng said, "I felt like a high school or college student all over again." She attended seminars, met new people, and went through procedural matters like choosing an office and learning about how the technological equipment worked. Regarding the new members, she said "I was pleasantly surprised about how down-to-earth they were. You read about a body like Congress and in some ways are intimidated, but to meet the freshman class and see that they all have varied backgrounds that you could relate to is very inspiring."

Meng, as New York's first Asian-American in Congress, recognizes that Asian-American candidates are on the rise, but she hopes that her demographic continues to turnout for voting as highly as they did for her when Asian-Americans are not on the ballot. The "real indication" of a demographic's influence, she believes, lies not in population but in voter registration and voting frequency.

On education, Meng holds the view that our system is "not as strong as it should be," adding that a child in an underprivileged school is in "a very tough environment to learn in and be proud of." She criticized Mayor Bloomberg's creation of smaller schools within larger schools. In particular, she described how hard it is for parents, especially nonnative speakers, to aid in their children's education. Given the choice, Meng says she would place more emphasis on elementary education.

In recent years, Congress's approval rating has been steadily decreasing. Meng says that "Washington is like a world upon itself and it's easy to get caught up in the glamour of it," but "none of the fancy stuff necessarily allows you to continue the privilege of representing a district." Regarding her new "classmates," she says "when you get to know people and really understand where

they're coming from, it's harder to be hostile towards them," and that it doesn't help for Congress to be at odds. One person's bad standing is not celebrated, but disapproved, because it affects Congress as a whole. "The American people want to see us get the job done."

Travel often occupies the time of both assembly members and congress members going back and forth from their respective capitals. Meng, who also has to balance her family life (she is married with two young boys), says that living near the airport and having access to hourly shuttles allows her to be home regularly, despite the long hours she'll spend in Washington D.C. But for representatives that live in rural districts, the tradeoff of working for Congress could entail not being home for weeks. Speaking about her family, Meng says that they "help her a lot with babysitting. If I didn't have that system, I wouldn't even have run."

When discussing students at Townsend Harris, Ms. Meng called for students to look into politics as a career only if they actively and passionately wanted to make it a profession. With the rise of social media and the scrutiny it places candidates under, she could not recommend political professions to anyone who didn't feel they could handle being recorded and followed at all times, saying "it's not something that everyone is willing to go through." On the whole, however, Ms. Meng believes that most political figures are in the profession to help the greater good, despite the fact that "people always assume the worst of politicians."

Even if students decide political careers are not for them, Ms. Meng strongly recommends that young people "get some experience in politics, because everything ends up being political, no matter what your field is." Whether it involves volunteering, campaigning, registering voters, or spending time in a politician's office, such activities, she believes, benefit all involved. "As a high school student, you sometimes think you're too young, but you really have the capability of doing that right now."

Additional reporting by Amy Hao

February break cut short for NYC schools due to Sandy

by Fran Horowitz

New York City's Department of Education has decided to take three vacation days away from the February break due to the loss of school days caused by Hurricane Sandy. The vacation will now only be two days: February 18th and 19th.

New York State requires public schools to have 180 days of school and most districts plan for more than that in case of potential snow days. This school year is already short by 5 days, so to avoid any more days lost, vacation was cut.

During the storm, students were wondering how Mayor Bloomberg was going to compensate for this unexpected week off from school. "I thought we

would have to come in for a few days at the end of the year, but I never expected him to actually take days away," said Junior Aman Kaur. "I'd rather go to school in July. The summer is a much more relaxing time," said Freshmen Belinda Wong. "He should add days instead of take them away."

Students were shocked and disappointed to hear that their break was reduced to only two days. "This was a time for my whole family to go on vacation," said Junior Brian Shtab. "I know we have other breaks but this was the most convenient for all of us and they just took it away." Freshman Aqib Sadique said, "It's not fair. We were so bored with no electricity and Internet

during the hurricane and we weren't having fun. Now we aren't allowed an opportunity to actually enjoy days off until Spring Break."

Others were indifferent towards the change. "I wouldn't mind going to school during the break if school ended at 1:46 and all bands met," said Junior Joshua Merai. "I think a lot of students aren't going to take these days seriously so it would be smart to make them shorter."

Some students questioned how inconsiderate this decision was. "I thought Obama declared the storm a natural disaster. People lost their lives and homes. We shouldn't be punished for something that was not in our abil-

ity to control," said Sophomore Sandy Zhu. "Losing vacation days in February is devastating because its not fair that we have to go to school for something we didn't cause," said Sophomore Saad Ahmed. "I don't believe three extra days will help the teachers get up to where they are supposed to be in the curriculum especially since it's a new semester."

Seniors, on the other hand, aren't as affected by this sudden change. "Honestly, it doesn't really matter to me," said Fariha Hussain, "We have college classes anyway and seniors don't have much to do in February except wait to be accepted into college, so it wouldn't make a difference."

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New school lunch policies stir cafeteria controversy

by Genna Mastellone and Suswana Chowdhury

Eating your vegetables is no longer a dinner table rule: it's the law.

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requires public schools to follow nutritional guidelines to ensure that students are getting the proper nutrition. This academic year, schools are required to include at least half a cup of fruits or vegetables in their lunches.

Marge Feinberg, the deputy press secretary for the Department of Education, told us, "We took steps that put us in the lead nationally in school food reform, ahead of many of the federal guidelines. We redesigned our food service areas with appealing displays of fresh fruit, attractive posters, and now salad bars. Under the new USDA regulations, there are specific portion sizes based on age of students."

Eric Goldstein, the Chief Executive Officer for the Office of School Support Services, said in a letter to principals explaining the changes, "These new standards, however, will also limit the number of choices that your students will have in the cafeteria. The new standards are very strict and the money that SchoolFood receives from the federal government depends on strictly adhering to them. Failure to meet the requirements for just one meal could translate into the loss of millions in federal reimbursements for New York City schools."

Students at Townsend Harris, however, are seen throwing away the vegetables completely untouched.

"I don't understand how forcing people to take fruits and vegetables helps anyone," said Anthony Chiarenza, junior, who likes vegetables but reported seeing the garbage can "filled with food everyday!" "Just the other week the apples offered at lunch were fermenting in the bag and smelled like alcohol."

"They don't taste good...I think it's a waste of food and government funds," said Joyce Wong, freshman.

Principal Anthony Barbetta said, "I have mixed emotions about it. On the one hand, you want to say you're giving kids something nutritious for lunch but on the other hand, when you see so much food going to waste, is it worth it? Look at all the food being thrown out, and we are only one school."

Freshman Yasmeen Ally agrees, saying, "There is no point in taking the vegetables that are going to waste, especially with all the starving children in the world that need the food that we're simply throwing away."

Still others think that with a little bit of patience, it will be worth it.

Tahsin Akanda, junior, said, "It's unfair; the part of the lunch that students are most concerned with is the entree and having it shrink leaves them hungry and snacking on other food throughout the day, spending even more money to feed their hunger."

"The food is never enough for me which is why I bring extra money to buy granola bars from the vending machine," said Yasmeen.

"If children are still hungry most of them resort to a bag of chips or so, which defeats the purpose of the healthy lunches," added Yasmeen.

Kajol Shah, freshman, thinks the "lunch is pricey and the quality and serving size do not match it."

Mr. Goldstein said in his letter, "As you know, in the past, if certain students expressed that they were still hungry after completing their meal, SchoolFood workers were permitted to give them additional food (often called "hungry" or second meals). Under the new federal regulations, hungry or second meals will no longer be permitted."

The reason for all the waste seems to be that the vegetables are unappealing.

"The vegetables should be given more preparation so they are more visually appealing than they are now - the boiled spinach soaking in a solution of what looks to be oil water is a primary example,"

said Tahsin. "More raw vegetables should be incorporated into students' diets by offering nutrient-rich dips such as hummus and sour cream," she added.

Elizabeth Bitis, senior, said "It would be better if they gave something like baby carrots or pieces of broccoli, but not steamed veggies."

"Sometimes I wish we had a bigger selection of healthy foods," said Anthony Chiarenza. "Maybe if they appeared flashy and interesting, we would try the healthy stuff."

Note: As this article was going to print, the USDA confirmed that it will be 'relaxing' its school lunch policies in response to the controversy. Though calorie limits remain in place for meals, schools will now be permitted to serve larger portions of proteins and grains rules permitted.



The vegetables in the cafeteria.

Physical Education teacher and Athletic Director Keith Hanson, said, "I think people could get used to it. Kids in my health class get used to the idea of eating their vegetables."

Ellen Fee, Assistant Principal of Organization, Health, and Physical Education, said, "As a mother, if I put stringbeans on the plate, even though I know they may not eat them, there's a better chance that they will."

Hannah Jang, sophomore, said, "If it's on their plate, they might give it a second thought."

Lunch costs, at full price, have increased since last year, going from \$2.50 to \$2.60.

"If the price of lunch is going up, why is the serving size going down?" said Yash Sharma, sophomore. "That doesn't make sense. They're taking more money to give us less."

Kim discusses history-making New York State election

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a pipeline; he is truly a trail blazer. Then I realized that a person like me can also enter the field. My goal was to be a public servant, to give back to the community, and now, I want to help those who want to give back to the community too."

Mr. Kim laid out his planned approach to community issues. "I believe that we need good relationships with local decision makers as well as the local police and the fire departments. It takes a collaboration of people to identify problems within the community. Together, we can navigate through bureaucracies to find the best way to improve the quality of life."

Mr. Kim also discussed the diversity of the local area. "I am going to focus on immigration issues," he said. "I want the new wave of people who come

here to have the same opportunities as I did. I will make sure to provide the best policies for immigrant families. I want to improve the businesses structure and tax benefits, raise the minimum wage, give consumers more power, and create more jobs for local businesses."

Expanding upon his views on immigration, Mr. Kim mentioned the Dream Act and his support for child immigrants on their path to citizenship. "It is a very progressive policy. There are talented students who want to pursue the American Dream. Losing talented students would be detrimental to the community, and all students who want to give back to the community deserve this chance. I feel that it is an important investment to turn these students into productive citizens in the future."

The assemblyman-elect also called for improvements in education. "For the last ten years, the mayor has taken control," said Mr. Kim. "He has not met the goals that he had set. There are not enough talks about engagement and focus on smaller class sizes but there are plenty of talks about charter schools. Limiting resources for teachers was too much of a risk. We need more funding to build on what we already have."

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, Mr. Kim advocated new preventative measures. "In order to improve our environment, we must endeavor to rethink the way we build our infrastructure. Studies have shown that damaging floods are possible and are becoming more frequent, it is something we must act upon."

Many students from Townsend Harris volunteered for the Ron Kim campaign, and some live in his district.

Mr. Kim offered a few words of wisdom for Townsend Harris students. "You guys have a lot of talent," he said. "You need to be socially responsible and move forward. If there are others in the community who are not as successful, you need to work collectively to solve the problems in society. We always have to think about the next generation by being open minded and by embracing diversity. Sometimes, people don't take enough advantage of what they have. You can learn so much from each other. That way, we will get to where we will need to be."

Harrisites share their stories of immigrating to the USA

By Ella Leviyeva

In a heated debate about the Dream Act in his US Government class, a student described his own experiences as an immigrant, to which the class replied in a surprised clamor, "You're an immigrant?"

When you hear the word "immigrant" today, it is usually in the context of a political debate over its legality. What people fail to realize is that immigration isn't simply a political issue; it is a difficult process that all of our ancestors, at some point, have gone through. For some Townsend Harris students, immigration isn't in their family's distant history; it's part of their personal experience.

The Townsend Harris community is known for being especially diverse, with the student population consisting of 6% African Americans, 13% Hispanics, 1% Multi Racial, 56% Asian, and 24% White students. Overall, 49% of all students speak secondary languages at home.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 720,177 people obtained legal permanent resident status in 1995. This number increased to 1,062,040 people in 2011.

With diversity so prevalent throughout the halls of THHS, one begins to wonder how these statistics apply to the student body.

There are different types of immigrants. Second generation immigrant children are US born children with one or more foreign-born parents. First generation immigrant children are foreign born children with foreign-born parents. Those students that fall under the first generation immigrant category carry more than just their Latin textbooks through the halls of Townsend; they carry a personal story of their transition into American life.

Senior Jaime Abbariao said, "Well, I was born in the Philippines where I spent seven years. Then, I moved to Singapore where I have the most memories of my childhood. Finally when I was 13, I moved to New York. The reason I moved from country to country was my parent's work. My dad moved to Singapore first, then the rest of the family came along after a year. After a good six years, we moved to America. There were two reasons for why we moved to America. In Singapore, since we held citizenship, my brother and I had to serve in the mandatory military service when we turn 19. My parents didn't want that to happen so we moved to America. The other reason was again work related."

"I believe that school in Singapore is much harder compared to American schools excluding THHS," Jamie continued. "In Singapore, they ranked their students according to test scores and would be placed accordingly in classes A-J. In each class, they would also be ranked among their peers. This caused a lot of stress in the students to get better grades so that they can avoid being bullied or thought of as stupid. Entrance exams to secondary schools were based on how high one scores on the PSLE, which is the equivalent to the SHSAT, but the student doesn't really get a choice to which school they are accepted. This test, however, is unlike the SHSAT. It covers most biology, chemistry, and physics. The mathematics portion varies from year to year, but usually involves algebra. These exams are taken by sixth graders nationwide. So when I moved to America, it was a drastic change for me. I was relearning topics I covered one or two years back," Jaime continued.

Junior Mateusz Chrobak recalled his experience as an immigrant, saying, "I came to the United States from Poland in 2002; I was 6 years old while my brother was 8 and my sister was 1 1/2 years old. When I lived in Poland my dad was often away from home in order to work abroad in countries like Austria and Germany. When my parents found out they won the lottery for a green card, they risked everything and we came here, and now we are all U.S. citizens through naturalization."

Students' stories varied, for each of their immigrations were ignited by a different force.

Senior Teodora Maftai said, "Luckily we won the lottery visa back in Romania so we were able to leave but that meant selling all our possessions to have enough money. My parents had no connections in America so the first few years were very rough since they barely knew enough English to decently communicate with others."

"I immigrated from Russia to America at the age of 4," said sophomore Igor Portnoi. "Although in the area of Russia I lived in my mom was famous for her musical talent, she was still discriminated against for being Jewish. There used to be signs on the apartment where my family lived in saying 'We don't want Jews' and so then we moved to America with my family."

Senior Katie Kang said, "Well I came here from Korea when I was 9 and I specifically remember

crying because I didn't want to leave my friends. I thought of it as more of a trip. I loved plane rides so that was a plus. My parents wanted me to get another perspective in life I guess. It wasn't really because of education or a job, my family just moved."

After the physical process of immigrating here, the next challenge for these students was the transition into American life.

"I was born in South Korea," said senior Yerim Jee. "I finished 1st grade there as well, until I immigrated to New York. I started school here during the middle of 2nd grade, and went to ESL class to learn English since I had that language barrier. I could say that I initially had trouble in the beginning of my years in America in terms of language and difference of culture, but I think the experience of blending into another culture was a bit easier for me than for others because of New York's diversity. I had many friends from different parts of the world when I first came here, as well as Korean friends who helped me cope with the language barrier. People were more understanding. I am glad that I had immigrated here around the age of 9 because although I was not completely set and established in one culture, I was still hugely influenced by my Korean background from my birth. Therefore, I was able to incorporate American culture into my being as well as hold onto my Korean background. I especially enjoy being able to speak both languages fluently."

Junior Kseniya Davydova said, "Transitioning was hard. I remember I hated America at first because I didn't understand English, I hated American food and everyone was so diverse. But then I obviously assimilated and now I'm a proud member of the American society."

Senior Anna Parashak recalled, "It was tough at first, my parents had a hard time since they didn't know English, and even though basically my father's entire family lives here in New York, we didn't really get help. I still remember our first apartment back in Jamaica, we couldn't even afford beds. We slept on a mattress on the floor, there was no heating and it was really dirty. Eventually, we moved out and into my current apartment building, and I guess from there things got easier."

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CLUB spotlight

Free the Children works to better lives of kids worldwide

By Magdalena Grabos

In an attempt to better the lives of children around the world, enrichment club Free the Children set a goal to rebuild a school in Haiti after Hurricane Isaac's devastating impact earlier this year.

Every year, Free the Children selects or continues to support a campaign to fundraise for. Last year they completed their three year long Water for Ecuador campaign after raising a total of five thousand dollars. Instead of continuing this project for another year, Free the Children refocused their efforts on Haiti, which was affected by Hurricane Isaac in August.

Before Hurricane Isaac hit, the children were attending classes in tents because their school was destroyed in a previous earthquake. However, the hurricane blew away the tents, leaving the eager children with no school to attend.

Charlene Levi, Free the Children Club Advisor, said, "Our goal is to raise 8,500 dollars by the end of the school year. We've been getting a lot of support from the wrestling team, especially Mr. Adamkiewicz who actually went to Haiti to help out, and Amnesty International who has given school supplies. All the support that we are getting is incredible."

Free the Children supports numerous fundraising campaigns, the proceeds of which go to the rebuilding of the Haiti school. Since the beginning of the school year, the club has done a combined fundraiser to support the We Scare Hunger Campaign and the We Create Change campaign. They plan to collect more donations around Valentine's Day, and there is a possibility that they will host a talent/fashion show later on in the school year.

Suswana Chowdhury, Free the Children Club President, said, "I think that what we're doing is inspirational and touching. I love to help others and have a chance to impact and change the world. This club is the perfect way to accomplish all of that."

Ms. Levi concluded, "Our final goal, aside from the money, would be to have Townsend Harris sponsor this school in Haiti like a sister school, similarly to how we're doing it in Japan."



Free the Children club meets to discuss ways to help.

From the Editors

Remove the bias

SING! is not only a time for students to put themselves onstage, display their talents to their friends and family, and spend countless hours rehearsing in the cafeteria; it's also the time to call up your mother's best friend's son, who happened to graduate from Townsend Harris in 2008. "Ask him to come judge! We need alumni on our side."

The practice of allowing former THHS students to judge the SING! performances is inherently biased and forces the performers to shift focus from their shows to the people sitting in the audience. Each student in SING! spends hours creating every detail of their shows, trying to make them the best that they can be. But during that final week before the performance, performers become focused on which alumni will be attending and hope that those attending aren't the ones that they had altercations with the year before, or the one whose son is starring in one of the shows. Oftentimes, it does not come down to which show was better, more rehearsed, or more enjoyable - it comes down to how the alumni feel about the people in each show.

Granted, we are not saying that every former student of Townsend Harris High School harbors grudges against our current student body. Many alumni probably come to SING! to enjoy the performance and to see what their alma mater is up to. But more often than not, alumni come in with preconceived notions about the shows and the grades that created them, and they judge accordingly.

When people judge a show based on preferences other than the actual show, they judge unfairly. They give scores so low that a five minute slideshow of horse photos wouldn't deserve them. They might not clap or might spend the evening staring at the stage in stony silence, even while the rest of the audience is laughing out loud. And it is of course nobody's fault if your mother or older brother went to Townsend Harris and wants to come support their family. It is to be expected that a family member or close friend would want to see you win. That's not the problem. The problem is allowing people who could not be expected to be unbiased judge a competition. This system turns SING! into a war of who can bring the most siblings to the show, and the results rarely reflect the actual performance.

There is no easy way to select people to choose the winner of SING!, but there are ways to remedy the problem. Teachers could become the main judges alumni who have been out of the school for four or more years (who are more likely to be impartial) or alumni who have no relatives in the show could join in as well. There is no need for politicking in our artistic expressions. Until this is fixed, SING! isn't about what you do, but who you know.

Sandy should be a wake up call

by Stephanie Geier

164 all-time high temperature records were shattered across the nation during last June's sweltering heat wave. Record-breaking droughts destroyed U.S. crops in August. Seventy ruthless wildfires, the largest in thirteen years, roasted western states for weeks. To top it off, October brought Hurricane Sandy, the largest storm ever formed in the Atlantic, which left thousands homeless and without power in an area where such weather is rare.

All of this occurred in the past seven months. Coincidence?

No. I'm talking about something based on substantial evidence that has been taking place for a while, and may very well turn into an apocalypse if we don't act soon: global warming.

Global warming is caused by carbon dioxide and other gas emissions from human activities being trapped in Earth's atmosphere as part of the greenhouse effect. These gases allow sunlight to enter the atmosphere, but prevent it from radiating back into space, trapping the heat and increasing temperatures.

Because of global warming, average temperatures have increased by about 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit over the past century. Higher temperatures cause more evaporation and thus drier land, which in turn instigates drought and wildfires, as seen this past summer. Ocean temperatures have also increased, by about 0.18 degrees Fahrenheit. As hurricanes feed on warm water, this encourages the formation of violent storms like Sandy.

However, the most alarming part of global warming is the drastic rise in sea levels. While high temperatures melt glaciers, ocean levels rise, increasing by about seven inches in the past century. Sea levels will rise at least three feet by 2100. As a result, coastal nations such as Bangladesh are already being inundated (18% of its coastal area may be underwater by 2050), and of course, polar bears are losing their homes. In fact, the Arctic Ocean lost an ice mass the size of the U.S. in 2012. The Northwest Passage sailors sought years ago now exists.

Despite all of this, only 54 percent of Americans believe global warming is caused by human

activity. The other 46 percent need to wake up.

Yes, our climate has naturally and dramatically fluctuated in the past and we've had worse disasters, but never at this rate. 2012 was the hottest year on record. It's proven that there is more carbon dioxide in the air from the burning of fossil fuels and that carbon dioxide traps heat. Therefore, Earth has logically become warmer.

But behind all the excuses lies the inner desire to pretend it isn't happening. Why worry about awful consequences when we can sit back in our comfortable heated homes and stare at a flat-screen TV? Even if anything does happen, it'll happen after our generation, right? It'll be their problem, not ours.

Of course not. Our actions, which have provided us with energy for well over a century, are backfiring. We can't keep procrastinating on the problem - it's already too late to do that.

Both President Obama and Governor Romney clearly avoided the topic during the election season. Although Obama mentioned something about investing in green energy and reducing emissions, I doubt the government is really putting in their best efforts. The U.S. is responsible for 25 percent of global emissions, although it only accounts for 5 percent of the world's population. Thus, we're one of the least, if not the least, eco-friendly nations in the world. Global warming must be made a priority by our government, since it is by far the most fatal problem we face.

We ourselves can start by turning off the light when leaving the kitchen, or walking that extra mile instead of driving. These actions may seem small, but imagine if every single person did it?

Humanity has a tendency to create problems it can't solve: wars, poverty, and now climate changes. However, humanity also has a certain resilience and determination that manifests itself during times of great need, as seen from the past. With enough commitment, we can find alternative sources of energy and reduce emissions.

So for all the skeptics out there: Don't wait for things to get worse, because they already are. While it may be nice to ignore the consequences, that ignorance is no longer blissful.

Who complains when Christmas comes early?

by Magdalena Grabos

Right about now, just days before Christmas, everyone is blissfully anticipating the start of the long-awaited break. Yet, before all these happy smiles found their place, many walked around with frowns, grumbling and complaining about the early start of the holidays. They wondered whether everyone decided to completely skip Thanksgiving this year and jump straight to Christmas. The root of the problem, for those people, seemed to be the Christmas music.

Christmas music starts streaming out of radios, and you hear about Rudolph and Frosty before the turkey is even in the oven. It seems that Santa's coming to town a little too early. But who's complaining? After all, it's the most wonderful time of the year.

Yet many still argue that it's "not fair" or it's "too early" to bring out the Christmas spirit when Thanksgiving didn't even get a chance to make

a lasting impression. Well, who said they were competing, and who said Thanksgiving would win? What's so wrong about enjoying the music if it brings a smile to your face and adds a hop to your step?

The truth is that this country is made up of immigrants who just might not celebrate Thanksgiving. Some jump over the holiday and start preparing for the next one in line, which just happens to be Christmas for a percentage of them. The music does no harm. Why make such a big deal about it?

Of course, for some families Thanksgiving is about the turkey, family, and everyone coming together. It's about kids coming home from college and about the football game after dinner. But that's only for some families. Others don't celebrate, don't care, or don't want to partake in something that's not part of their culture.



Santa takes on Turkey Day.

To many people, Thanksgiving is nothing more than a kick-off party for the holiday season. Isn't the whole point of Black Friday to buy gifts for

people for Christmas? Doesn't the four day weekend beg for people to put up their tree and decorations? No one can complain that Christmas music is taking away from the holiday, when Thanksgiving has been a means to advertise Christmas for quite some time.

For some, Christmas music brings happiness to those that don't find it in filling themselves with turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing and pumpkin pie. It's for those that want to feel the childish excitement of knowing that the tree will be decorated soon and twinkling lights will illuminate all the windows. The music is a sign that life is good and everyone will be happy and giving. If you have a problem with the music, then don't listen to it. As a matter of fact, remember to steer clear of the TV too, because you might not want to watch a Christmas commercial until after Thanksgiving either.

Can you eat well for six dollars or less in Flushing?

by Andrew Mitchel

After school, have you ever found yourself on Main Street wondering, “Hmm, what should I have to eat here?” You reach into your pocket and realize you only have about 6 dollars, and you immediately assume that this couldn’t possibly be enough for a good meal. This was my mentality when I was younger and inexperienced, but never fear. I have found 3 inexpensive places that fit right into my criteria: cheap (6 dollars or less spent), quick, and easy to get to and find.

**Lan Zhou Hand Made Noodles:
136-20 Roosevelt Ave**

This noodle joint with a small façade and a fancy sign lies in the heart of the highly popular New World Mall food court on Roosevelt Avenue. It offers up, as the name suggests, handmade noodles with a choice of meat on top; there are also different styles of noodles, including thin and cold varieties. You can watch and enjoy the gentleman in the front of the store making the noodles while yours cook, noting how difficult the task truly is.

For the food itself, my noodles came out perfectly, showing that the cooks truly know how long it typically takes for their noodles to be just right. The noodles were in a meat-based broth that was a little salty, but very tasty. The noodles I ordered were topped off with beef and bok choy, garnished with cilantro and scallion. They had available both hot sauce and soy sauce, if you enjoy additional flair and spice like I do, as well as cans of soda for a buck.

Amongst its competitors in the food court, it’s definitely the best noodles I’ve had. I was able to get beef soup noodle and a can of Coke there for only \$5.50.

Food: A Décor: B-
Service: B+ Overall: B+



Lan Zhou’s Hand Made Noodles.

photo courtesy of Serious Eats

**Madina Halal Food: 136-54 39th Ave
(38th Ave and Lippman Plaza)**

Out of the many halal carts one might find in Flushing, I feel very strongly that this one leads the pack for quality, quantity and speed. When I went, I got the chicken over rice platter, but this cart also has lamb, and you can get a gyro sandwich in lieu of the rice platter, which comes with salad. The chef and lone employee is one of the nicest people I’ve ever met in the restaurant business. He calls you “buddy” and has a nice chat with you while asking the standard question: “white sauce hot sauce?” I was able to get chicken over rice and a bottle of Poland Spring for only 6 bucks.

Food: A Décor: B
Service: A+ Overall: A

Barone Pizza: 40-27 Main Street

While pizza may be a very cliché thing to eat as a teenager in New York City, this pizzeria, which is right on Main Street next to where the LIRR passes over, is a great option. It was much more relaxed and calm than most other busy pizzerias around, but it isn’t like they don’t have a lot of customers buying their food. Their pizza was not incredibly greasy, but there was a large amount of cheese on it. The interior was like stepping back in time into a pizza joint from 30 years ago, a place where older folks probably reminisce about their younger lives. The service was extremely fast, and the pizza that I got had just come out of the oven, so I didn’t even have to wait for it to get hot. When I went, I had already bought a bottle of water for a dollar, so I only bought two slices of regular. I was able to have all of this for \$5.50.

Food: A- Décor: A-
Service: A- Overall: A-



Logo by Jenner Chen

For many students at THHS, watching shows and movies online is a favored pastime. We are the Netflix generation, and for those of us who come into school and talk at length about the great shows we’ve spent our online time watching, we are very much a part of a growing ‘Net Clique’ of instant video watchers. Sometimes, however, it’s not easy to dig through the endless programs available online to find something really worth your time. “Net Cliques” is a column devoted to guiding you to the shows and movies that you might not find on your recommended list.

Stream a personalized lineup of holiday specials

by Amy Hao & Joanna Wong

For our first column, we want to advise you on how best to program your online holiday viewing ‘queue.’ Why let television networks decide what cheesy holiday shows you want to watch when the Internet is full of cheesy holiday goodness? One of the best things that online video services (like Netflix, Amazon Instant Video, iTunes...and whatever else you may use) offer is the ability to watch nearly any episode in a TV series. While networks usually show big holiday films or made for tv holiday specials, you might be missing out on some of the classic “very special Christmas” episodes made by some great shows during their runs.

Take *The Simpsons* (available on Amazon Instant Video, iTunes, and ... elsewhere). Did you know that the first episode ever aired was a Christmas special? In “Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire,” Marge is forced to spend the family’s holiday savings on removing Bart’s first tattoo, while Homer discovers that he isn’t receiving his Christmas bonus. Left with no gift money, Homer goes on a quest to

earn as much cash as he can, becoming a department store Santa and betting on dogs at a racetrack. Though this episode may seem much different from today’s Simpsons episodes, the heart and humor are there--and the holiday spirit is certainly given the Simpsons spin you’d expect.

During its ten season run on NBC, the popular comedy show *Friends* never failed to disappoint when it came to Christmas-themed episodes, but what about Hanukkah? In Season 7’s “The One with the Holiday Armadillo” (available on Amazon Instant Video), iTunes, and ... elsewhere), Ross decides he wants to teach his son Ben about the Festival of Lights. Unfortunately, Ben only cares about getting presents from Santa and, in a desperate attempt to reach his son, Ross dresses up ... as a holiday armadillo, a half-Jewish friend of Santa.

However, you don’t just have to turn to old-time American favorites to enjoy holiday-centric shows this winter break. Some television imports from across the pond have the tradition of running “Christ-

mas specials” every year on Christmas day, focusing their storylines around the magic of the season.

If you’ve never seen *Doctor Who* (BBC America), one of the longest running television programs in history, revolving the adventures of a 900 or so year old alien “time lord” known as the Doctor, try the latest Christmas Special “The Doctor, the Widow and the Wardrobe” (available on Netflix). Inspired by C.S. Lewis’s Narnia adventure, this special takes place during World War II and features the Doctor attempting to bring some war weary friends to a winter wonderland world through a portal he placed under the Christmas tree. Mayhem, of course, ensues.

The first *Downton Abbey* Christmas Special (available on Amazon Instant Video) is also not to be missed. Since this episode should be seen in sequence, we recommend that you watch the first two seasons (only fifteen episodes total) before this Christmas episode, where multiple plotlines are fully paid off amid the beauty of an early twenti-

eth century Christmas at Downton.

Now for those of you who aren’t television junkies, consider making your vacation more interesting by watching some movies that aren’t related to angels or Santa. (Not that the classics like *A Christmas Carol* or *It’s A Wonderful Life* are bad; they’re just repetitive to watch all the time!) Consider *Edward Scissorhands* (available on Amazon Instant Video and iTunes), a tragic tale of a modern Pinocchio who struggles to find love and acceptance as Christmas draws closer. More than anything, however, we recommend *Gremlins*, a deliciously dark horror-comedy film that revolves around a last-minute holiday gift with deadly repercussions. Not readily available on many instant video sites, this fine holiday film (often shamefully left off of best Christmas-themed movie lists) is this month’s pick for ‘most worth going out of your way to find’ for your online viewing pleasures.

Don’t be bored this time of year; you don’t have to gamble when it comes to your entertainment!

Semores SING their way to top

continued from page 1

of practice and time to evolve and reach its full potential. Every single person involved really has to give it their all, even if their role is small.”

Freshman Yuriy Markovetskiy, who played Ben in “Laid Off,” spoke about his first year in SING!. “The most memorable experience would most likely be the Juniors and the Freshman getting together. At first, we come in and try out with people that are older, which is a weird experience. It’s amazing how we come together from acquaintances to best of friends. Of course your grades will get lower, but in the end of the year it’s not that one test grade you think about, it’s the fun and new friends that you made,” he said.

Junior Kseniya Davydova, actor, also stressed the community that formed between the Freshmen and Juniors. She said, “The best experience was seeing how the cast bonded throughout the two months. We went from barely knowing each other to getting extremely close, coming together and putting on an amazing show.”

Ameer Kazmi, senior, who played Eric in “160 Hours,” spoke about the many memories he will have from the production. He added, “This was my first year doing SING! and I’m proud to say it’s one of the greatest experiences I’ve had. Preparing

asked for better directors or a better cast to work with.”

Chris Jordan, senior, spoke about his role. “I’m going to miss coming to practice after school every day the past couple of months. It was one of my best high school experiences that I would never have really expected to be a part of.”

Sophomore Nina Leeds already has plans for next year’s SING!. She said, “It was



Freshior SING! in action.

great to be able to pull off a win this time. I certainly hope to continue with SING! and possibly direct and write next year.”

The audience, which was comprised of teachers, students, alumni, and family members expressed how much they enjoyed the entire production. Caitlin Ortiz, junior, said, “I thought that the Semores deserved to win. Their act had amazing dancing and singing.

It was also really funny, so I enjoyed it a lot. The Freshiors of course put on an amazing show as well. Their act had amazing acting and a great story line.”

Jason Mills, senior, raved about the Semores. He said, “I think that Lawfanduh [played by Nazifa Nasim, senior] was definitely a show stopper, and pretty much kept the laughs going. The singing and dancing on the part of the Semores was also incredible.”

Alexa Luciano, sophomore, said, “The Freshiors had amazing actors. I loved the three old ladies in the Semore show. They were so funny in every part.”



Semore SING! explores Costco.

was scary but in the end we pulled through and everyone was amazing. I couldn't have

Rowling's Latest

by Anna St. Clair

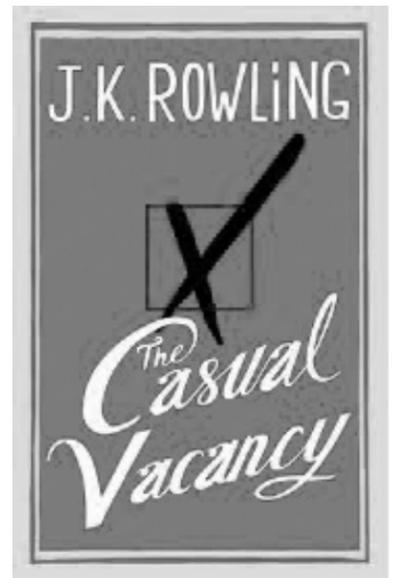
Five years since the last *Harry Potter* book was released, JK Rowling has made a strong return with her rich novel, *The Casual Vacancy*. Although it may not be the cure for post-Potter depression that many fans were hoping for — it takes place in the Muggle world — the book is a satisfying portrayal of a small, dysfunctional English town and its selfish and inconsiderate inhabitants.

Vacancy opens with the natural death of Barry Fairbrother, a town leader with a passion for reforming the Fields (the town's poor and crime ridden district). In his death, he becomes something of a religious figure, with part of the town preaching Barry's message and part seeing him as a radical nuisance.

After his death, the town erupts into a web of social wars. Nasty accusations are posted on the town's website, relationships crumble, and the pleasant quaint town is revealed to be hostile behind its ominously closed doors. Most characters lack the ability to think of anyone but themselves, or to imagine any situation but their own. The selfishness and cruelty of these people is so potent that more than once I found myself thinking, “What's the matter with you people?”

Rowling uses a third person limited omniscient narrator and switches between the minds of various characters (a change from her *Harry Potter* days). This works very well for the book, which is essentially a study of these very private small town dwellers. Characters' true natures are revealed not through their actions but through their inner thoughts. As the book winds on it becomes clear that everyone has built up a social facade.

But for one character the equation seems to be flipped. Krystal Weedon is unloved by most of the town. The only people she ever had were Barry



Fairbrother, her crew coach, and her grandmother. She gets into fights, sleeps around, and is rude to everyone she comes in contact with. Rowling unfolds Krystal's story beautifully and we see not only why Krystal acts the way she does but that her drive in life is rooted in love and hope — in direct contrast with the other characters. It is in Krystal that we recognize some of the Gryffindor spirit we know so well.

The book was tagged as a dark comedy but I could not spot the comedy amidst all the darkness. Multiple characters die and the issue of extreme poverty — and the violence and drug use it brings — is central to the story. While the switching between narrators benefits the story overall the transitions are sometimes ungraceful. Before the characters become developed with their own unique voice it can be confusing to keep track of who is narrating.

Such minor issues are not enough to deter new readers or loyal fans of Rowling's writing. With *The Casual Vacancy*, J.K. Rowling has shown us the ugliness of a small town and its values. In this fictional British town we can see our own hometowns and the values that people around us hold dear — and we might not like what we see.

Discovering the immigrant experience inside our halls

continued from page 4

Andreea Birtan, senior, said, “I was born in Romania but I first came here when I was about 2, although I immigrated here when I was 7. It wasn't that difficult for me coming into 2nd grade having gone to school in Romania because I already knew English so the language barrier wasn't an issue. People didn't even realize that I was an immigrant, so I was treated just like everyone else. I guess reading and writing were the hardest subjects to adapt to considering they weren't in my native language, but math was really easy because the curriculum in Romania was a lot harder, and it took about a year for me to learn something new in math class. I wouldn't say I ap-

preciate America more than most because I still have strong cultural ties, but I am glad the government is far less corrupt here, and I like how culturally diverse my environment is.”

Assisant Principal of Humanities, Rafal Olechowski, discussed his experiences as well. “I came here when I was 16 years old from Poland. I initially came here to stay with my sister, and ended up staying here. I went to Forest Hills High School, where I was part of an eight semester ESL program, which I finished in a semester and a half. The transition was easy because in America everything is just better and nicer, but it was also demanding in that I didn't know anyone, I didnt have any money or friends, and I barely knew

English. I viewed this as an opportunity; for once school emphasized what I can do, as opposed to what I cannot do. What really helped me was that I didn't isolate myself to only Polish friends, I surrounded myself with English speakers and I really learned a lot from just being in that environment.”

Mateusz later continued by saying, “I guess being an immigrant I don't really feel that it is harder on me because I was young when I came. I can see it is harder for my parents though because it is not as easy for them to master the language. Coming here I was raised at home to always remember and honor my native culture and language, to always be proud of my roots. Meanwhile, outside of school I was influenced by

the American culture and society. Due to my young age I learned to find a balance between the two. My parents, however, came here as adults and did not adjust to the American way of life as easily. In that sense it is harder being an immigrant, but that can be said for anybody who moves. I think I appreciate America more than others because I distinguish the opportunities that are available for me here, to which I would otherwise not be exposed. My dad always tells me and my siblings that he wants us to take advantage of school and to get a good education in order to be better off than he is right now. This is my goal, and as a result I appreciate the opportunities before me.”

Bowls-eye! Andrew Eichenholz wins City Champs

by Dimitri Theofanis

Townsend Harris doesn't need a football team to have a super-bowler.

On Monday November 19, senior Andrew Eichenholz became City Champion in bowling at the Boys 2012 NYC individuals. Andrew had a whopping 254 points in the first game and 245 in the second. He finished his championship day with 222 pins in the final game. In total he finished with a score of 721 after three games, 23 points ahead of the bowler who came in second place.

"The toughest part of City's was probably mentally knowing that with a pretty big lead that it was more of bowling against myself than the people around me," said Andrew.

To get to the City Championships, Andrew had to make it to Borough's first. To make it to Borough's, Andrew had to have an average of 160 points per game throughout the season, and once at Borough's, he had to place high to make it to the City Championship. Andrew had a season average of 191.44, earning him a spot in Borough's. He finished fifth at Borough's, advancing to the



Andrew Eichenholz holding his award.

City Championship. "The conditions were really tough at Queens Borough's, so I had to pull 7 good games in a row to jump from not making City's at all to coming in 5th in Borough's."

"I've been bowling for thirteen years, and I started because I would have to go with my brother when he had a league on the weekend. I honestly never cared about bowling until I started bowling in high school and from then on I dedicated myself to do the best I can to represent our school," said Andrew, who is also captain of the Boys' Varsity Bowling team and Boys' Varsity Tennis team.

"Depending on the school I go to, I might want to join their team so I can be able to travel the country and have an opportunity to compete on a bigger stage," said Andrew on his future bowling plans.

"Andrew was a great captain. He led the team very well and we're all very proud of him," said junior teammate Daniel Wuest.

For conquering New York City as a bowler, Andrew Eichenholz is December's Male Athlete of the Month.

photo by Lou Demarino

Klaudia Garncarz garners success in Indoor Track

by Andrew Eichenholz

Sprinting up hills in the fall and enduring the heat of the spring sun has prepared senior Klaudia Garncarz for huge performances for the Lady Hawks of Indoor Track.

One might think that a top ten performance is something to struggle for in any sport, yet Klaudia has made it look easy this winter. She has had at least a top ten performance in every race she has participated in this Indoor Track season. Building on a strong performance in the Mayor's Cup Cross Country Championships, Klaudia is looking to end her Indoor career with a bang.

Discussing this year's Indoor Track season, Klaudia said, "I am definitely a long distance runner and my favorite races differ with season, but during the current Indoor season my favorite race is the 1500 and 800 meter race." Her preference for these two events is evident, as Klaudia led the Lady Hawks to two top five and a seventh place finish in the 4x 800 meter relay event. In addition, Klaudia placed second twice in the pole vault this season, already accomplishing a mile's worth of accolades with more of the season still to come.

Fellow senior captain Katie Kang had nothing but praise for Klaudia. "I'm so glad that she's part of our team and it's wonderful to be captain with her. She's so helpful when trying to get 50 plus girls to do something as a team. Our team wouldn't be complete without her."

Klaudia's work ethic and leadership have inspired the underclassmen on the team to perform at the very highest level. Sophomore Yelena Dzhanova said, "She's really supportive of everyone on the team, and is one of the best pole vaulters you will ever meet. Klaudia is one of the most determined people I've ever met, and she's always there for you when you need her, as a captain, as a friend or as a person."

From the hills to the arenas, Klaudia Garncarz has earned the honor of December's Female Athlete of the Month.



Senior Klaudia Garncarz at one of her races.

photo by Stephanie Loo

Think you have what it takes to be Athlete of the Month? Contact us at thhsclassic@gmail.com

GAMES TO WATCH

1/4 4:00PM Boys Varsity Wrestling vs. Benjamin N. Cardozo High School @ Townsend Harris

1/8 4:30PM Boys Varsity Basketball vs. Robert F. Kennedy @ Townsend Harris

1/11 4:30PM Girls Varsity Basketball vs. Benjamin N. Cardozo High School @ Townsend Harris

1/16 4:30PM Girls Varsity Basketball vs. Richmond Hill @ Townsend Harris

1/17 4:30PM Boys Varsity Basketball vs. Flushing International High School @ Townsend Harris

1/31 4:30PM Boys Varsity Basketball vs. August Martin High School @ Townsend Harris