



North Shore Celebrates The Lunar New Year

By: Kaitlin Ho

North Shore High School's Asian Student Alliance (ASA) proudly hosted its 2nd Annual District-Wide Lunar New Year Celebration on February 4th, 2025, drawing an estimated 700 attendees—nearly double last year's turnout. Founded by club president Kaitlin Ho and led alongside co-vice presidents Nora Solomon, Sahana Gibbons, and advisor Cynthia Li, the ASA worked tirelessly to expand the event, creating an even more immersive and vibrant cultural experience.

The Lunar New Year celebration was first introduced in 2024, marking the largest Asian cultural event in North Shore history. This year, the event built upon that success, offering a dynamic lineup of traditional performances, interactive activities, and authentic cuisine to celebrate Asian heritage while fostering inclusivity and education. ASA advisor Cynthia Li said, "This event represents more than just a celebration—it's a testament to student leadership, cultural appreciation, and community connection. ASA is a highly student-led club, and none of our events could have happened without the dedicated effort of our leaders, Kaitlin, Nora, and Sahana, who share a passion for promoting Asian cultures. It was great to see students of Asian heritage and those who love Asian culture in different grade levels showcase their talent on stage, and I hope to see even more students shine their light in our community." Cultural performances included musical covers and dances to famous Chinese songs, a Taekwondo demonstration by the World Taekwondo Academy, and a grand finale with all of North Shore's beloved Mandarin Teachers singing the song "Climbing the Spring Mountains" together.

Besides performances, the evening was filled with engaging cultural activities, including lantern making, printmaking, sugar drawing demonstrations, and a variety of interactive games such as "Guess the Candy" and "Spin the Wheel." Attendees also enjoyed traditional Asian cuisine with contributions from parents and local businesses Zouji Dumpling and @Boba while capturing memories at the event's photo booth and souvenir stands. The hallways were filled with excitement as students and families participated in games like

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A Wagging Tail To Brighten Your Day

By: Lucia Cagno

Since 2023, the North Shore Schools' Dog Therapy Program has been a way for students to decompress and destress; and so, it recently expanded. The program, which was initially founded at North Shore Middle School, is now also a part of North Shore High School and Sea Cliff Elementary School. Dogs and their handlers visit the schools on a weekly or monthly basis, depending upon the school. Students and staff are invited to interact with the dog, ask questions, and learn about the program.

Dr. William Kitay, a psychologist at North Shore Middle School and the overseer of the North Shore Dog Therapy Program, says that the program has received a ton of support. It was in the works for some time, but began in 2023 after Dr. Kitay sought out approval from the District's school board. After reviewing it, parents received a letter home informing them of the program and allowing students to opt out from seeing the dog if desired.

For this program, North Shore has partnered with two animal therapy programs: Therapy Dogs of Long Island and Pet Partners. Combined, these agencies have around 20 dogs of all different sizes as well as hypoallergenic breeds that come to North Shore. The process for the dogs to become certified and visit schools is similar in both programs and quite involved. It includes course requirements, vaccine requirements, and age requirements for both the dog and handler. North Shore is also now listed on both of the programs' insurance plans, so all of the therapy dog interactions are as safe as possible.

The positive benefits, both mental and physical, from the therapy dog visits are undeniable. According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), a study published in 2019 by the National Institute of Health found significant mental and physical health benefits to having a dog present in a learning environment. Dr. Kitay explained that a therapy dog teaches a student responsibility. And, as the students learn about the dog's needs, and offer unconditional support, the therapy dog always seems happy to see them. Therapy dogs can also help improve students' attendance and provide motivation to go to school. Additionally, therapy dogs have proven to be useful to the staff at schools. Dr.

Kitay said that even when the dog is in the teachers' workplace, everyone near the dog seems to be in a more positive and calmer mood. This will then have a trickle-down effect in the classroom, he explained, as a teacher might feel better supported and can then better support their students. Last year, North Shore Middle and High Schools both made a point to have therapy dogs in the schools during finals week, so that students could feel more relaxed during a stressful time and perform better on their exams. I personally got to see the dogs during this time, and had a really enjoyable experience.

This year in the Middle School, a therapy dog comes every Friday and sometimes every Wednesday for one hour. There are two half-hour blocks when teachers can reserve a visit for a class or an individual to visit the dog. Dr. Kitay says that one half-hour is usually designated for bigger groups, such as a health class. The other half-hour block is typically reserved for individual students or a small group of students who might benefit from interacting with the therapy dog. These visits can also be a helpful reward for students who might have trouble in class or who have won some sort of contest.

In the High School, a therapy dog visits the Guidance Office on a biweekly basis.

The schedule is shared with students, and unless specific time is reserved for a visit with the dog, anyone can go and see the therapy dog. This loose schedule makes it easy for students to quickly pop in and see the dog, brightening their day within just a couple of minutes. Delilah McAuliffe, a junior at North Shore High School, has interacted with the therapy dogs at the High School upon passing by, and says that "it was such a nice experience and made [her] day".

The visits to Sea Cliff Elementary School are on specific days, and the schedule varies. Dr. Kitay hopes to soon expand to Glenwood Landing Elementary School and Glen Head Elementary School after seeing the success that the program has had so far.

Furthermore, Pet Partners has a program called Reading to Dogs, where elementary school students have the opportunity to read to the therapy dogs. This creates a non-judgemental environment where the student feels free to make mistakes and experiment with storytelling. Students are often excited to read to the dogs, motivating them to develop their literacy skills. When the therapy dog and their handler comes, students are also encouraged to ask questions, thereby developing their social skills.

Overall, the North Shore Dog Therapy Program has taken off. It has helped North Shore students of all grade levels feel more comfortable, safe, and motivated. From helping students get over their fear of dogs to increasing their attendance, the program has countless benefits. This program has brought so many smiles and wagging tails to North Shore, and everyone is excited to see what is coming next.



North Shore High School students Catherine Perciballi, Jack Chaitman, and Matthew Marinello get a few snuggles in before class from Nikko, a therapy dog.

Photo Taken By: Ellamarie Mitchell

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Behind N.S.H.S.'s Renovated Library's Doors: What Do Students Really Think?

By: Elsa Lanne

The North Shore High School Library is the most popular space in the building where students study, learn, and socialize. And so, the space was recently greatly changed in its overall feel and use of space as the recent renovation was looking to give it a modern, clean aesthetic. But what do those who use it the most think about it?

In 2019, a 39.9 million dollar bond proposed by the Superintendent at the time, Dr. Peter Gianrizzo, sought financial aid from New York State for improvements and repairs to the District's facilities and buildings. According to the *Long Island Herald* piece, "North Shore School District eyes \$39.9M bond" by Mike Conn, the bond was sorted into five parts: "instruction, infrastructure, safety and security, air conditioning and site work." One of the main focuses of the bond was to bring higher-quality air conditioning to North Shore Schools. However, to add appeal to the proposal, promises to modernize the buildings and their learning spaces, such as the libraries, were introduced to parents and community members. Ultimately, this bond was passed by voters, allowing the planning and renovations to begin (Conn).

The District utilized the architecture and planning firm MEMASI, which is located in White Plains, New York, to design many of the spaces. This firm's designs tend to incorporate bright colors, open layouts, and fresh modern looks. Therefore, some new elements in the High School Library include a library classroom, separate Writing and Math Center rooms, low bookshelves, and a wall of windows by the entrance. The construction took place between February and June of 2023, and there was continued assembly and organization of furniture and books over the summer until its opening in September of 2023. Ms. Donna Rice, the High School Librarian, was frequently updated throughout the design process, but was only able to request space for the existing collection of books, the amount of seating to be preserved, and an enclosed math center. No student or faculty input was asked for. The goal of the design was to support "casual and formal learning" and to create a "highly flexible space" (memasidesign.com). And so, there are now both independent and collaborative seating spaces with new chairs and tables on wheels, as well as plugs for students to charge their devices with. The space can seat about 80 students at a time, which is about 10% of the school's current population.

This year's current seniors are the final group of students that experienced the previous space. And, the last time a renovation occurred was in 1989 and it included wood elements, large stacks in the back of the library, and cozy hidden corners. The right wall of the library had sectionalized shelving, the left consisted of computers, and the middle had large wooden tables which seated 4-6 people, allowing for student collaboration. The seating arrangements in the previous library allowed for "congregation and teamwork," said senior Rishi Malhotra, while also including individual study spaces. Some individuals in the Class of 2025 preferred the previous library as it was "cozy and warm", said Youbin Jun. It had a rustic feel as it was an aged space that had been in use for many years.

The 1989 re-design heavily contrasted with the current renovated space, as the new design incorporates bright lights, and modern furniture. Although the new low-back round chairs are movable, they are uncomfortable and impractical. Junior, Ava Varasano expressed, "they feel like rocks and don't help me focus." If additional practical and comfortable seating were added, more students could enjoy the space. The new low tables also provide an awkward work area and are more frequently used as foot rests. In fact, the light colored chairs and tables are prone to dirty marks and stains from students' lounging and resting their feet on the furniture. Now, even though there are 80 seats, students reported that they often cannot find a spot to sit and work quietly. Ariana Bridges, a current 10th grader, stated, "I come in and there are simply no seats available," adding that there should be "more seating options that can accommodate the number of people who need to use the library." Youbin Jun remarked that she frequently sees students sitting on the floor. The current seating spaces are more oriented for a laid-back approach, where large groups can occasionally disrupt focused students who are working independently. "I think sometimes kids treat the library as a hangout space instead of a working environment during lunch periods," said junior Isa Guerrero.

Also, students have raised concerns regarding the bright updated lighting, which they find harsh and uninviting. The new floor to ceiling windows provide beautiful natural lighting, but when combined with large overhead white light, it prevents



Extremely low seating and counter-style seating in the renovated Library.

any cozy study spaces from being formed. And, although the added low wheeled bookshelves create an open environment and allow Librarian Rice to see the entire library, the movable functionality is challenging as they frequently get rearranged without her knowledge. Junior, Chloe Rowell added that, "the person who designed the bookcase layout, clearly never got lost in the stacks." That's half the joy of a library. Additionally, students have noted that the glass wall at the entrance of the library creates a "fishbowl" effect on the front seats, allowing everyone to look in while students are studying. According to junior Ava Varasano, the architectural firm may not have fully addressed all necessary elements for studying, noting that, "The Library's design seems to value aesthetics over functionality." The overall open airy feel of the space is refreshing, but unused space and awkward seating have not given the Library the potential of becoming a space that students will enjoy working in for years to come.

The one thing many students feel MEMASI got right is that it turned the Library's right side, which was once shelving units, into a learning classroom environment. Andy Ye, a junior at the High School said "the Library classroom feels calm and relaxing." With a long table and a Smartboard in the back of the room, teachers often utilize the space as an alternative teaching environment. The open feel and focused orientation of the seating there creates an environment for "research and learning," added senior Rishi Malhotra. Ms. Rice commented that the "classroom area is greatly improved, and overall feels like a college space." The teaching experience is much better." Plus, the Writing Center and Math Center have their dedicated private rooms where students can now seek help from teachers in a quiet environment.

While there are aspects of the design that require adjustment, students often utilize the Library space during their free time. Achieving a balance between the Library's role as a social hub and a space for independent study is still a work in progress, but it is one which needs to be addressed so that future generations of students can get the most out of it that they can.



Photo Taken By: Ellamarie Mitchell

The Asian Student Alliance Brought An Unforgettable Celebration To North Shore

(Continued from Front Page)

Pitch-Pot, adding to the lively and festive atmosphere. North Shore High School's Principal Eric Contreras believes, "Our second annual Lunar New Year celebration was a resounding success. The evening highlighted the cultural, linguistic, and artistic talents of our students, teachers, families, and community. I am grateful for our student leaders, teacher organizers, Ms. Ana Aguiar-Mady, our Director of World Languages, and our Central Office administrators for their collective support and leadership. We wish all our families a very happy Lunar New Year!"

The Asian Student Alliance expressed its deepest gratitude to all volunteers, performers, faculty,

administration, the Board of Education, the generous parents who donated food, and local businesses who helped make the celebration possible.

With such an incredible turnout and overwhelming amount of community support, the Asian Student Alliance looks forward to continuing

this tradition, bringing students, families, and faculty together again next year to celebrate the beauty and richness of Asian cultures. In fact, the Asian Student Alliance is currently training its next generation of club leaders to ensure that this will most certainly happen.



Thank you to all those who helped make this year's Lunar New Year celebration such a wonderful event.

Could Amazon's Delivery Service Get Any Better?

By: Mae Curiale

Thanks to the usage of Rivian's electric delivery vans, the trillion dollar company Amazon recently made developments in its technology. With these vans, Amazon aims to address safety concerns, increase the speed of deliveries, and decrease its carbon footprint.

There were over 60 reported serious crashes involving Amazon drivers from 2015 to 2019 (Tarasov). This number has since decreased by almost 50% due to the employment of the new electric vans. The change was brought about by the innovative technology that is found in the vans, such as lane assist, which prevents drivers from driving outside of their own lane, as well as "an embedded tablet with the driving route and a 360-degree view that shows all sides of the van" (Tarasov). Additionally, there are cameras positioned inside the vehicles that watch for any unsafe behavior on the driver's part. If drivers exhibit dangerous behavior such as distracted driving or running stop signs, a supervisor is alerted. Although there

were some initial concerns about drivers being under constant surveillance, Amazon claims to be equally conscious of privacy, so the cameras do not record any sound; plus, they stop recording if the vehicle is not in motion. The vans also have a feature that locks the vehicle automatically "when the driver is 15 feet away" and unlocks it "as the driver approaches" (Tarasov); they even have accommodations such as heated steering wheels to increase drivers' comfort.

In the past, there was evidence that drivers were not buckling their seat belts in order to conserve time; they were even urinating in bottles (Tarasov), which created an ethical issue surrounding their work experiences. The previous GPS software in the vans was also sometimes faulty, as it gave inaccurate driving routes, according to drivers in 2021. So, Amazon added an immense amount of detail to the software to fix the issue. Rest stops have also been added to the maps to encourage drivers

to take a break when they are able to (Tarasov). In addition, time is conserved as a result of new technology installed in the vans called Vision Assisted Package Retrieval which "works by shining a green light on packages so that the deliverer does not have to waste precious seconds reading labels" (Bensinger). If time constraints are less of a burden for drivers, their safety is more of a guarantee.

Another reason for the switch to electric vans is to dramatically reduce carbon emissions. Amazon's founder and ex-CEO Jeffrey Bezos' goal was to reach "net-zero carbon emissions by 2040" (Tarasov). Amazon aims to have 100,000 electric delivery vehicles in use by 2030, which would "eliminate millions of metric tons of carbon per year" (aboutamazon.com). In addition to the electric vans, Amazon has started using other vehicles such as electric cargo bikes and electric rickshaws for deliveries to more rural areas in order to expand the positive environmental impact to other regions of the world (aboutamazon.com).

To enact the aforementioned changes and get its new electric vehicles on the road, "Amazon has installed over 24,000 chargers at more than 150 delivery stations across the U.S." (aboutamazon.com). Other companies have even been inspired by the new technology, such as The United States Postal Service (USPS), which has ordered 66,000 electric vans that are set to be in use by 2028 (Tarasov). Electric vehicles from companies other than Rivian are also being purchased by Amazon to further enhance its delivery service. Amazon has set a precedent for other companies to follow in its recognition of employee concerns and environmental consciousness; hopefully positive results will follow.

Congratulations To: Mahiya Vira

Mahiya is a tenth grader who conducted a social science research project through her Science Research class this year to explore middle school students' understanding of the mental health impacts of food allergies.

Vira's research showed that grade level or familiarity of individuals with food allergies did not affect students' understanding of food allergies or their impact on mental health.

Overall, students were well versed on the risks of sharing food and social experiences, but had some misperceptions on best practices for the prevention of an allergic reaction in their peers.

Mahiya Vira's research earned 1st place in the Behavioral Sciences category at the Junior Varsity Long Island Science and Engineering Fair on March 13th.

'Return Of The Mac' (Miller)

By: Lucy Jackson

How many artists do you know that released one of their most popular albums after their death? Probably not many. Since the release of his album *Balloonism* on January 17th, 2025, Mac Miller, who died in 2018, sold over 41,000 copies in less than a month, making it one of his most successful albums.

Mac Miller is an American rapper who was born in 1992 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Throughout his life, Miller struggled with substance abuse and he died of an accidental overdose in 2018. It was said he always had a love for music and taught himself how to play various instruments including the bass, drums, piano, and guitar. In 2007, by the age of fifteen, Miller had the dream of becoming a music artist and released his first mixtape, *But My Mackin' Ain't Easy*. He later started releasing singles and, ultimately, his first studio album *Blue Slide Park*, in 2011. While some reviewers referred to the album as "...just crushingly bland and intolerable..." (Sargent), many thought of Miller's contemporary form of expression as groundbreaking. Miller has now released seven albums, winning "...twenty-six new platinum and gold certifications from the Recording Association of America" (Carraan 1). His music is loved for its poetic lyrics, calming melodies, and instrumentals, which he performed himself. His most popular songs include "Self Care", which won six platinum awards, and "Weekend", which won five platinum awards; and the albums *GO:OD AM*, *Circles*, and *The Divine Feminine* have all been certified as platinum.

Miller was nominated for an MTV Europe Music Award in 2012 and after his death, in 2019, he was nominated for a Grammy for Best Rap

Album. His music contains themes of his drug abuse, partying, and the negative effects of fame. It seems, to many, as if Miller was struck down in his prime.

Two years after his death, Miller's producers released his unfinished work in the album, *Circles*. Many were surprised by this release and astonished at how well Mac Miller's style and spin were preserved. This past year, Miller's second posthumous album, *Balloonism*, was released. The album has fourteen tracks, featuring R&B singer, SZA, on one of them: "DJ's Chord Organ". Music released after an artist's death is often seen as controversial because the artist didn't have a say and may have avoided releasing the music for a reason. Yet, this wasn't the case for *Balloonism*. David Saxum, a fan of Miller's, posted a review on *Northern Transmissions*, saying "...it's clear this project was carefully crafted from material Mac left behind, and it still feels profoundly, unmistakably him" (Saxum 1). This album seems raw and perfectly preserved. It definitely has an experimental vibe to it as it includes Miller's early music's lively feel as well as some alternative rap and hip-hop. *Balloonism* is an example of Miller's talent to express his situations and complex emotions. Songs reference Mac Miller's addiction, desire to go back to his childhood, and internal battles. Many songs on the album were even created and recorded "...within a two-week long 'jam session' in March 2014 that took place in Mac's Sanctuary studio..." (Lashton) during the making of his album *Faces*. Miller fell in love with these songs and even commissioned art for the album cover, as he planned to release it later. On an Instagram post made in late November

announcing the release date of *Balloonism*, Mille's family said that the album captured, "...both the breadth of [Miller's] musical talents and fearlessness as an artist" (Delgado 4). Many people are also noticing how ironic multiple tracks are because they include themes of death as Miller questions what's in the afterlife. In the song "Rick's Piano", Miller wonders if there's actually anything after death. His drug abuse is also mentioned throughout the album, but specifically in "Do You Have a Desentation" when Miller refers to how he has ruined his life with drugs and sold himself away to death already. In addition, some see the last track, "Tomorrow Will Never Know" as a final goodbye when it ends with a phone ringing and sounds of children playing in the background, symbolizing a disconnect or the desire for childhood innocence.

Overall, Mac Miller's posthumous album, *Balloonism*, is a complete success and satisfies the many fans Miller left too early. The album is a great example of how artists can live on thanks to their work even past their death. Hopefully more of Miller's unreleased music can be released in the future when the time is right.



The College Experience Is What You Make It

By: Allie Friedman

Now that the school year is more than half way over, college decision time is upon us. The nshscommits2025 Instagram page is blowing up as many seniors are now figuring out where they will be in the Fall of 2025.

When students decide where to apply, many aspects of a college are involved such as size, distance from home, cost, location, majors, programs, athletics, and simply what feels right to them; where can they see themselves going? However, there are certainly students all around the world who commit to a college simply for its prestige and ranking.

There is most certainly a certain amount of pressure that is put on high school students. They are often pushed to take the honors/AP/IB classes as soon as they can, and, even in many elementary and middle schools there are programs that put students in accelerated classrooms. Whether or not this pressure comes from the students

themselves, their parents, or their peers, in regards to working towards highly ranked and prestigious colleges, is a question that many wonder about. Mr. Shea, a guidance counselor at the North Shore High School stated “I think that many people are only familiar with the ‘known’, so the natural inclination is to look among those institutions; that’s kind of a default starting point”.

When a large number of students progress into their junior year of high school, SATs, AP tests and IB tests are then heavily weighing on their minds, because all of those lead to college, right?

Being granted admission into an ivy league school or even a “new” ivy league school, which includes Rice University, Vanderbilt University, Notre Dame University, the University of Michigan, Georgetown University, Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Virginia, Washington University, the University of Florida, and the University of Southern California among others (Forbes), is nothing short of impressive, but it should not be

expected of students to have to go to one of these schools, as it puts too much pressure on them at too young of an age.

There are so many amazing collegiate institutions that many kids simply look past because they think they are not praiseworthy enough. For instance, Nassau Community College, located in Garden City, is a SUNY two year college that allows students inexpensive admission and prepares them for admission to a four year college. “NCC provides a very high-quality education, with great facilities, sports teams, and much more.” Because NCC has to let everybody in, “people mistake that as a fault, when in reality, it is a prominent strength”, said Shea. In fact, North Shore has had many students earn their Associates there and then end up at an Ivy like Cornell.

In addition, Early decision (ED) has been around for years, but more recently, there has been a noticeable uptick in students applying to their favorite school using this method. ED ensures that if a student is admitted in to his first choice, he must go there and rescind all other applications. Applying early decision increases the students chances of getting into the school,

as he is competing against a smaller pool of applicants and not competing for scholarships. All opportunities to be admitted into what many deem a more reputable school is being taken these days.

What every student who is applying to college must remember though is that anyone can turn any situation into a good one. All students at North Shore go to North Shore and a large number of them made it a good experience. And so, Mr. Shea asked the following: “If you had grown up in Oyster Bay, do you think you would have had a good high school experience? Or Port Washington? Or Merrick? There are 57 high schools in Nassau County alone and do you think only one high school would have given you the most appropriate or positive experience? The truth is, you likely would have had good experiences elsewhere.” So, the bottom line is a good fit is what a student makes a good fit, and no matter where a student goes for college, good and bad experiences will be a part of that experience. College is what you make it.

Good Things Are Cooking At N.S.H.S.

By: Wyatt Snyder

As one of the “Best High Schools” of 2024 (#456 out of 18,000) in the nation, according to *U.S. News & World Report*, North Shore High School works hard to live up to its reputation. Along with our award-winning music and arts program, as well as our outstanding academics and athletics, North Shore also has an impressive lunch menu.

On February 2nd, 2023, North Shore Schools became the first district in New York to serve to its students fish that was caught locally. Although certainly not a best seller, this new meal on the menu is an undeniably impressive feat, adding to North Shore’s already lengthy resume.

But, Long Island fishermen are not the only locals supported by our District’s lunch program, as its purchases of “chicken, steaks, milk, apples and more” come from within the state (Sheeline).

Overall, North Shore High School’s very own food service workers have been working tirelessly to give their students “new flavors as they grow up, moving up from the Middle School to the High School” giving students a chance to “expand their palate”, said Christine Bordanaro, a member of the kitchen staff. Recently, our lunch menu has featured Ramen Noodle Bowls, Sliders, LI Breaded Porgy, Carne Asada, Butter Chicken with Basmati Rice, and with approximately 300 sold on average, the beloved Chicken and Waffles Brunch. Not to mention, now there is also the new venture of baked goods, including funnel cake, chocolate chip cookies, red velvet cookies, churros and donut holes fresh out of the oven at the Marché, from 1:10 pm - 3:30 pm on Fridays. With such a wonderful range of food choices, students have the opportunity to try new flavors from around the world, eating dishes that

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they may never have otherwise tried. This broad spectrum of worldly dishes in the District has had major impacts on the students, with one senior, Luca Korte, sharing that he has “rediscovered [his] cultural identity as a Greek individual” with dishes being served such as Greek Seasoned Fish, as well as the Souvlaki and Falafel.

When speaking to some of the star players of the kitchen staff such as Christine Bordanaro and Marcy Recine, it became evident that student interest plays a key role in lunch prep. Every time a new lunch is served, the kitchen crew takes into account how many dishes are served, which then becomes the deciding factor on whether or not that lunch is served again at a later date and how often it is put on the menu; this explains the reoccurrence of Chicken and Waffles on the menu. Student interest and activity with the school lunch plays such a big role in the menu that the kitchen staff has even considered doing some student polling for lunch ideas, which has the intent of pleasing the palates of the North Shore High School students.

Though school lunches often gets a bad rap in Western culture, with tales of chicken nuggets that are as rubbery as bouncy balls and mystery meat burgers, an exception can be made when it comes to the North Shore High School’s lunch menu, as student’s are enlightened and satiated daily in the Cafeteria, thanks to the hard work and open-minds of the kitchen staff.



A Play-ful Tradition At North Shore

By: Lucia Cagno

Among the traditions for North Shore High School’s seniors, is the Senior Play, which is one that is always highly anticipated. The Senior Play is a production that has been around for decades, and is written and run by the senior class; it often includes jokes and skits specific to that particular class’ experiences at North Shore.

This year, the Senior Play was written and produced by Caroline Winchester, Violet Ganzekaufer, and Ginger Sanborn. Together, they wrote the script for the play, held cast auditions, oversaw rehearsals and more.

Mr. Micheal Kleba, an English teacher at North Shore High School, was the faculty advisor for this event. He has advised this production for around 15 years and helps with scheduling, script writing, and the overall performance. However, despite all of his help, he says that the play is ultimately “for the kids, by the kids”. The production really comes down to the seniors who oversee the show, those who participate in it, and the students who support it.

Winchester, Ganzekaufer, and Sanborn were asked by Mr. Kleba to help write this year’s play due to their background in theater. Each of them has taken a theater class at the High School and is very active in the Viking Masquers’ community. Sanborn said that they “had never done such a large-scale project in terms of writing and directing before,” but were all “super excited about the entire process”. The process of writing the show began in December, as its performances occurred on January 24th and 25th. Winchester said that the play was originally supposed to be based on *The Crucible*, a play that many seniors had recently read in English class. However, as the play started to take shape and more inside jokes were added, it developed into something more original.

This year’s Senior Play was about the phrase “Be Here Now” that Mr. Joshua Knight, another English teacher at the High School, brought into his classes this year. He says this to remind students to stay off their phones and be in the moment. Students and

Mr. Knight even hung up little images of bees throughout the hallways, reminding students of this. The play brought humour to this phrase as it was about how Mr. Knight and other bald teachers felt insecure and alone about their shaved heads; so, they wanted others to also shave their heads in order to bring the bald teachers comfort. “Be Here Now” was a way for Mr. Knight and other teachers to convince students to shave their heads, as Mr. Knight told others that the phrase was the name of a wonderful club. Once students and faculty joined the “Be Here Now” club, Mr. Knight would shave their heads. He was slightly surprised, but very excited about his humorous portrayal. He knew about his general role in this play, but was not sure of the specifics. With a stromboli showdown, which stemmed from the stromboli cooking competition recently hosted at the High School, a huge amount of bald caps, and lots of niche references, the play ended up being creative and hilarious.

Performances and some rehearsals took place at the Glenwood Landing Elementary School, and the aim was for rehearsals to be as often as possible, said Sanborn, but unfortunately the conflicting schedules of the 61 person cast made it difficult for this to happen. Sanborn said that the rehearsals occurred before school, after school at Glenwood Landing Elementary School, at the High School when some cast members had an off-period, and even at her house when needed. All of this work ultimately led to an auditorium that was full of laughter and smiles for the entirety of the 45-minute production on its two-day performances. Kailey Popowitz, a senior who played a cafeteria worker in the play, said that it was “a super fun experience and [she’s] so glad that [she] did it”.

In general, The Senior Play is a tradition that brings the senior class and all those involved together. It provides an opportunity for all of the different social groups within the senior class to work together just before they head their separate ways after high school. Not only will the smiles and laughs that this production brought be forever cherished, but so will the memories of the Class of 2025 working together.



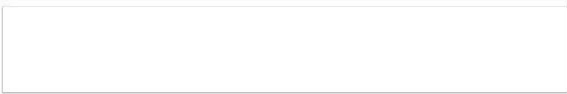
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Fast Fashion Is Slowing Down Our Planet

By: Ella Cleary

Fast fashion is slowly killing our planet. Although it is only one of the many contributors, it plays a big part. In recent years, there has been a higher demand for more affordable and popular clothing, and many brands have responded with a rapid production of lower-priced, lower-quality clothing. Urban Outfitters, Shein, Zara, Nike, American Eagle, and Free People are just some of the companies that have bought into this trend.

The drastic toll fast fashion takes on our environment is becoming more evident as time goes on. In fact, according to an analysis done by Business Insider, fashion production makes up 10% of global carbon emissions. This release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere has many negative results, but most significant is a rapid increase in global temperatures, which causes ice caps and glaciers to melt, sea levels to rise,

rivers and streams to dry up, drought, heatwaves, and disrupted ecosystems. As a whole, this is all slowly killing our Earth.

Along with deeply harming our environment, humans are also affected. Not only does this affect the land we live in, but it also pollutes what we consume. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, plastic-based materials shed fibers that end up into the ocean. This has become a large

source of microplastics that end up in marine environments, like the water sources in any community. Along with it harming aquatic life, it also pollutes the water that humans use for drinking and farming.

Though it presently seems so unimportant to us, fast fashion truly is a threat to our lives. Although it offers us cute and affordable clothing, fast fashion comes at a cost. By supporting more sustainable clothing, you can be a part of the solution.

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Will These Movies Be As Super As Their Characters?

By: Colin Davison

2025 is already well underway, and there are many exciting movies coming out this year to look forward to. What will be the next groundbreaking movie that defines the 2020s and cements itself as a masterpiece? Will one join the likes of *Oppenheimer*, *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, and the *Dune* movies to become a decade defining film? This year's releases are characterized by multiple big superhero and action movies, with both Marvel and DC coming out with new projects. So, let's explore them.

Superman:

The newest *Superman* movie, which is directed by James Gunn, is set to be released this July, with David Corenswet making his DC debut as Superman. The last *Superman* movie was 2017's *Justice League*, and after an eight year break, the hero in blue returns to the big screen with Gunn's interpretation. There have been nine *Superman* movies so far, and the beloved character continues to shine. James Gunn has directed notable movies such as the *Guardians of the Galaxy* trilogy and *Suicide Squad*, so his 2025 project may emulate the comedic, lighthearted style of these previous works. Personally, I am excited for this film because it is a fresh take on a classic superhero, and I am interested to see where Gunn takes it. *Mission Impossible- The Final Reckoning*:

Set to release this May, the final installment of the famous *Mission Impossible* series aims to end with a statement. As Tom Cruise returns to his iconic role for the last time, one may wonder how he will outdo his past daring stunts and epic scenes this time around. Cruise is famous for his large-scale stunts and entertaining action sequences within the *Mission Impossible* franchise, so viewers will come into the movie expecting to be impressed. The film has a budget of \$400 million, making large scale action sequences and special effects available. Will the production go all out

for the final installment?

Fantastic Four:

Marvel's newest adventure involves the classic comic-book quartet depicted in the modern lens, and features a new set of faces starring as the team. In 2005, the original *Fantastic Four* movie debuted, with Jessica Alba and Chris Evans featured prominently in the cast; critics can only wonder if the newest production will out-do its predecessor. The new cast includes Pedro Pascal as Mr. Fantastic, Joseph Quinn as Johnny Storm, Ebon Moss-Bachrach as The Thing and Vanessa Kirby as Sue Storm. Limited information has been released regarding this film, but it marks the beginning of a new era in the Marvel universe, as it launches a new phase of movies and introduces new heroes into the universe. The movie is set to release in July, and the new group looks promising with its star studded cast.

Minecraft:

The most popular video game of all time is coming to theaters this April as a motion picture with Jason Momoa and Jack Black starring as its leads. *Minecraft* is known for its lack of story, as it's an open world game focused on creativity; so, the transformation of the game into a movie will be an interesting watch. Jack Black will bring a hilarious portrayal of Steve, the game's protagonist, as he aids a group that is lost in his world. Hopefully Black and Momoa can bring to life a beloved game on the big screen; it will be interesting to see in what direction the story will go.

2025 brings with it many exciting movies to look forward to, with a lot of superhero and action movies set to release. While not mentioned here, there are also possible interesting films in other genres that at this point do not have much publicity behind them, but will ultimately impress viewers when they hit the theater. I encourage everyone to go out and watch some exciting films on the big screen this year; grab some popcorn, candy, and soda and enjoy the show!

Adults Love To Toy Around

By: Jenna Sasso

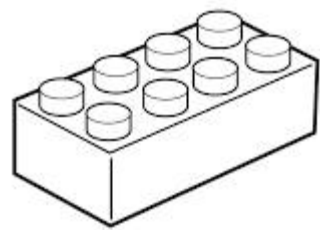
A 40-year-old mother sinks into the couch, savoring the ten quiet minutes that her newborn's nap allows her. She knows the peace won't last, but for now, she reaches for her childhood comfort, Legos. As the bricks snap together, she is more than just a mother. She is herself again. In recent years, there's been an interesting trend; more adults are buying children's toys, and these items are not for their children, nieces, or nephews. In fact, this group, which is now known as 'kidults', is responsible for one-fourth of all toy sales annually, around \$9 billion worth, and are the biggest driver of growth throughout the industry (cnbc.com). This interest in childhood toys can be attributed to the deep sense of nostalgia, comfort, and increased financial freedom that they bring.

One of the main reasons why adults buy toy-related items is to endure a sense of nostalgia, which ultimately makes them feel calmer. 'Kidults' have a "great fondness for cartoons, superheroes and collectables that remind them of their childhood (cnbc.com). They buy merchandise such as action figures, Barbies, Legos and the newest sensation, stuffed animals called Jellycats. Many adults today find comfort in revisiting the toys they played with as children as they offer a temporary escape from the stress of adulthood. 'Kidults' want to reconnect with their childhood. Sales have especially grown since the pandemic of 2020. That was obviously a stressful time period for adults and many looked for things that brought them comfort. There is a psychological comfort in revisiting an old favorite and these toys offer an emotional connection to a time when life seemed less complicated. The

emotional pull of toys like Barbie dolls, stuffed animals or Legos isn't just about the items themselves, but about the memories they evoke. The act of collecting toys from the past can provide a form of escapism, as they provide a temporary break from adult responsibilities and a reality that can sometimes be deemed scary or overwhelming.

Another factor contributing to this phenomenon of adults purchasing toys is that they now have the financial freedom to buy some of the items they could only dream of owning as a child (myjournalcourier.com). In fact, "Buying toys has become something of a status symbol for adults, a way to indulge in childhood fantasies they never could before" (Dintch). In previous generations, buying toys for themselves was out of reach and their parents often could not or would not buy them. And so, "Many adults find joy in collecting toys they could never afford as children, allowing them to fulfill long-held desires and create new memories with these toys" (Dintch). Plus, now, with the accessibility of online stores, these adults are finally able to experience the joy of ownership that they feel they missed out on in their younger years.

Unfortunately, nostalgia, comfort, and financial freedom aren't always easy to find, but childhood toys never fail to help a person feel them. No matter what an individual's age, their purpose remains the same. So, if you have ever longed for a toy just to relive a piece of your childhood, this is your sign to go and get it. Whether it's a beloved stuffed animal or an elaborate Barbie castle, it's never too late to embrace the joy of a childhood favorite. It's time to play!



The Battle Against The 2025 Norovirus Outbreak

By: Kalista Lin

This past winter, Norovirus cases skyrocketed across the United States, reaching record-breaking levels. Often mistaken for the flu, this highly contagious gastrointestinal virus causes severe vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. According to experts, there were 97 suspected and confirmed outbreaks by early January, with at least 128 the previous week (TODAY.com). This was more than double the cases recorded in the same period since 2023. By early February 2025, "there were 1,676 norovirus outbreaks reported by NoroSTAT-participating states. During the same period last seasonal year, there were 729 norovirus outbreaks reported by these states" ("Norovirus" - CDC). This sudden surge made the beginning of 2025 one of the worst norovirus seasons in over a decade.

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The norovirus, also known as the "stomach bug", spreads rapidly through direct contact, contaminated foods or surfaces, and shared spaces such as educational centers and cruise ships. The virus also seems to thrive in supermarket products, as contaminated foods that were sold this year led to people contracting the illness. The norovirus is also more likely to spread when people spend time indoors in close proximity. Experts warn that the norovirus is resistant to common disinfectants like hand sanitizer, and encourages the public to properly wash its hands with soap as this is their best defense ("How to Prevent Norovirus" - CDC). Additionally, wastewater surveillance data from WastewaterSCAN, a program that monitors viruses through local water systems led by

university scientists, shows a concerning trend which suggests that levels of the norovirus continue to remain high nationwide.

Symptoms of the "stomach bug" typically appear 12 to 48 hours after exposure and can be severe, though most people tend to recover within a few days. The biggest threat is dehydration, especially for adolescents, the elderly, and those with weakened a immune system. In the United States, norovirus is responsible for up to 21 million illnesses, 109,000 hospitalizations, and 900 deaths annually, on average (Snow). Once infected, individuals can spread the virus for up to two weeks, even after they feel better. The pathogen is especially resilient, as it is capable of surviving on surfaces for extended periods, making containment

challenging.

Experts believe the winter 2025 surge was fueled by increased holiday gatherings, travel, and the virus' natural winter peak. Additionally, norovirus strains mutate quite rapidly, and new variations can lead to an increase in widespread infections. While it remains uncertain how long the norovirus trend will continue, historical patterns insinuate that cases could persist into the spring season. Health officials urge proper hygiene practices, especially in high-risk environments. While the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will continue to monitor norovirus outbreaks closely, with numbers at a decade high, the public should brace for an extended battle with this relentless virus.

Astronomy 2024: A Stellar Year For Our Star

By: Anne Kelly

2024 was a big year for astronomy.

From an eclipse that will happen again in New York when the freshman class's students are 70, and a comet that orbits once every 160,000 years, professional astronomers and awestruck civilians alike were excited about what the universe offered for Earthlings last year.

1. *Total solar eclipse visible for parts of the U.S., including regions of New York:*

On April 8th, 2024, observers on Earth saw the Moon eclipse the Sun, and Americans saw the stars during the day. An eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the Earth and the Sun, with the inclination of its orbit in a rare alignment that allows the Sun to be covered to the regions on Earth blanketed by the Moon's concentrated shadow. When this occurs in totality, darkness envelops the terrain below. Additionally, during this particular eclipse, solar prominences, or loops of plasma tens of thousands of miles in size were visible at totality around the edge of the Sun. Unfortunately for those in New York who were counting on "catching the next one" instead, they will have to wait until May 1st, 2079 to see another total solar eclipse in the Empire State.

2. *Aurora borealis and solar maximum:*

As the colors danced across the usually barren expanse of New York's skies, Long Islanders were touched by a rare occurrence of the aurora borealis at this latitude. The aurora occurs when particles from the Sun are thrust out into space by the

solar wind and by the more extreme Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs). Yes, the Sun can have weather, too! The particles are then deflected by Earth's magnetic field and excite atmospheric gas, causing the gas to emit light and creating coveted and awe-inspiring shows. In October 2024, a rarity in that most solar particles, except in cases of strong solar activity, are deflected toward just the polar regions, the aurora became visible in New York and treated the North Shore School District to a dazzling display. Now, if you missed this one, more may be in store. In the 11-year cycle of the Sun's activity, we have reached the point of "solar maximum", or maximum magnetic activity, leading to increased solar weather such as CMEs and flares. So keep an eye out and up; you might just catch another show.

3. *Tsuchinshan-ATLAS Comet Visible (C/2024 G3):*

This is a lesser-known occurrence that, though reaching its closest point in 2025 and delivering striking views to the Southern Hemisphere, was a comet also visible to us Northern Hemisphere observers last year. It will unfortunately most likely never return, however, as the harsh conditions in its approach to the Sun are causing it to break apart into its gaseous and rocky components, creating a beautiful trail of innards for amazed skywatchers. This type of comet is called a sungrazer for a reason. If you're interested in seeing what its final encore looks like in the Southern Hemisphere, check out the archive of the Astronomy Picture of the Day, which posts a daily astronomy image that never ceases to

bring wonder to the interested viewer and has recently quite prominently featured the "Great Comet of 2025".

4. *The Parker Solar Probe makes the closest ever flyby into the Sun and also becomes the fastest human-made object:*

The Parker Solar Probe has, as Randall Munroe put it in his popular webcomic, *xkcd*, set "a new record for 'worst job avoiding the Sun'" (3029). This probe, launched in 2018, after already providing vital data that has helped greatly expand our understanding of the Sun and its properties, went where no probe has gone before and flew into the outermost layer of the Sun, known as its corona, reaching a mere 3.8 million miles from our star and collecting further data. It then transmitted a triumphant signal back to Earth signifying its survival two days later. This is a major moment in the field of heliophysics and its quest to help understand our cosmic home. Oh, and it also was traveling at a cool 430,000 miles per hour in the process, making it the fastest human-made object ever.

All of the aforementioned events are only a fraction of the astronomical storylines of 2024, with many other "stellar" advancements providing insight into the cosmos and intrigue around what may be to come. So buckle up, and keep looking up, because, as is the nature of science, we're just getting started.



Los Angeles Wildfires: What To Know And What You Can Do

By: Ava Varasano

Los Angeles is an iconic U.S. city that is home to some of the nation's biggest celebrities and wealthy people. The area is known for its notable landmarks, like Hollywood Boulevard; people travel from all over the world to visit the "City of Angels." It is the center of the American film and television industry, and the famous Hollywood sign is known worldwide for its appearance in great films and shows. With a population of 3.8 million people, L.A. is the second-largest city in the U.S.

Since L.A. is an integral part of the American identity, news of the wildfires that recently spread throughout the city shocked and horrified many people across the country. The fires began on January 1st, 2025, as a single brush fire, the Lachman Fire, in the northeastern Pacific Palisades area. By the end of the day on January 7th, they had expanded to cover over 3,000 acres—the equivalent of 2,200 football fields.

Fueled by powerful winds and dry California conditions, the fires seemed impossible to stop. The flames killed more than 29 people, some who

were firefighters or people trying to stop the fires from spreading. Thousands of structures, businesses, and homes were destroyed, putting L.A. in economic turmoil and leaving many residents homeless with no finances to rebuild their homes.

The biggest and most rampant of the seven wildfires in the L.A. area were the Palisades and Eaton fires, which, on January 31st were deemed 100% contained 24 days after they started. When all was said and done, the Palisades Fire consumed over 23,000 acres, destroying nearly 7,000 structures. The Eaton Fire spread to over 14,000 acres, taking down over 10,000 structures. These fires ruined everything in their path, destroying people's homes, businesses, and lives.

While some are criticizing the L.A. Fire Department for how it responded to the initial fires and the efficiency with which it was able to answer calls due to the sheer number of calls being made, it ultimately did the best it could to prevent the nearly unstoppable fires from spreading. Some of the more fortunate in the L.A. area even hired their own private

firefighters to save their homes. During the fires, L.A. needed as many firefighters as it could get.

New Yorkers can make a positive impact in L.A. by donating to charities that aid people in the area. Foundations such as The CA Fire Foundation are accepting donations to help those affected by the fires by giving direct financial support. The American Red Cross and California Community Foundation's Wildlife Recovery Fund are also good places to donate.

Lately, so many people have been impacted by climate disasters like this one, and in order to prevent future tragedies, the whole world must pay more attention to how our planet is changing. Disasters like the L.A. wildfires are becoming more frequent and catastrophic because of pollution and global warming. In fact, climate change can be blamed for around 25% of the eruption of the L.A. Wildfires according to studies done at UCLA. The correlation between natural disasters and the changing climate shows that we need to change how we treat our planet, or else many more disasters may occur in the future.

Dressing For A Better Planet

By: Mollie Regan

The equivalent of one garbage truck full of clothes ends up in landfills every second. According to Earth.org, the same source also states that the number of times a garment is worn has decreased by 36% in the last 15 years- the average piece of clothing is worn only seven to ten times. These statistics prove that clothing waste and pollution is a huge problem for our planet- one that is not talked about nearly enough. With the rise of fast fashion, or fashion that is unethically made in order to be cheap and trendy, also comes an increase in horrific work environments for millions of people across the globe. According to Earthday.org, out of the 75 million factory workers worldwide, only 2% actually earn a living wage. I personally am horrified by these statistics, and fed up with terrible quality clothing that falls apart or goes out of style within a year. And so, I began to look into brands that ethically source their clothing, give back to the Earth, and actually create comfortable, quality garments. Here are a few of my favorite brands.

Bird Collective:

This brand works with several organizations and groups, including American Bird Conservancy, HawkWatch International, Grassland Bird Trust, Delta Wind Birds, Center for Biological Diversity, and the Yurok Tribe in order to protect and advocate for birds and their habitats. Bird Collective sells everything from shirts, to puzzles, to binoculars and is perfect for any bird enthusiast.

BeCause:

BeCause is a clothing brand that is dedicated to making a difference in the world. It donates some of its profits to organizations such as Veritree, The Ocean Cleanup, National Forest Foundation, Pollinator Partnership, and SEE Turtles. BeCause has donated over \$400,000 to environmental non-profits, and has helped to plant over 1.2 million trees. If you want comfortable, good quality clothing that gives back to nature, then check out BeCause.

The Landmark Project:

The Landmark Project sells all kinds of clothing and other goods. It works with the National Wildlife Federation, The National Forest Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service, and Leave No Trace. These organizations work to protect national parks, forests, grasslands, and the environment as a whole. The Landmark Project also collaborates with many smaller local nonprofits, such as Carolina Mountain Club and I Hike for Mental Health, in order to care for both people and the world we live in.

Happy Earth:

Happy Earth makes beautiful and sustainable clothing, and is committed to making sure its products are created as ethically as possible. From the materials, to the sourcing, to the production, Happy Earth has a strict Code of Conduct to ensure that its products are good for the Earth, and that all employees involved in the production process are treated fairly. Happy Earth also strives to offset 100% of its emissions, and keep its products vegan and cruelty free.

As consumers, our choices in what we buy and where we buy from have an impact on the world. By supporting brands that prioritize sustainability and giving back, we can encourage a new era of fair labor practices, charity, and a more responsible fashion industry. This is why I choose to shop sustainable; I hope you will too.



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The Acquisition of Juan Soto:

Its Implications For The Mets' Success in 2025

By: Tyler Harding

"The New York Mets today announced that the club has signed outfielder Juan Soto to a 15-year Major League contract with a club option and contingent player opt-out after the 2029 season" (mlb.com). On December 8th, 2024, Juan Soto, a right fielder formally on the New York Yankees, created quite a stir as he signed a 15-year deal with the Mets. At just 26 years old, he is a 5-time Silver Slugger Award winner, a 4-time All-Star, and the winner of the 2022 Home Run Derby. Before the Mets, he played for the Nationals and won a World Series. Prior to that, he played for the Yankees and the Padres.

"In 157 games with the Yankees last season, the outfielder [scored] 128 runs, [and hit] 31 doubles, four triples, 41 home runs, 109 RBI and 129 walks ... He set career highs in runs, hits (166), home runs, total bases and extra-base hits (76), all while finishing third in AL MVP voting" (mlb.com). Acquiring Juan Soto made a huge impact on the Mets' offense particularly due to his strength and power, his plate discipline, and his ability to get on base. Due to his prior season with the Yankees, as he set career highs and was one of the best players in the League, the Mets hope he will do the same this year. To strengthen the possibility of a Mets World Series, Soto also has to learn to bond with his new teammates, such as Francisco Lindor, Pete Alonso, and Mark Vientos. Due to Soto's experience in big-game situations, he will take on a key leadership role, and will hopefully help guide the Mets to a deep run in the playoffs. Steve Cohen, the owner of the Mets, stated "Juan Soto is a generational talent. He is not only bringing staggering historical statistics with him, but also a championship pedigree. Our Amazin' fan base is very excited to welcome Juan to Queens. Congratulations, Juan" (mlb.com).

Will this move push the Mets closer to becoming serious contenders for the World Series? This is the question everyone is asking. If he accomplishes this goal, he could be named one of the best in Mets' franchise history. "Today's signing further solidifies our organizational commitment to consistent championship competitiveness," said Mets President of Baseball Operations, David Stearns" (mlb.com).

15 years to remain on one team is a very long time, and considering his

current age, Soto will most likely retire with the Mets. Technically speaking, Juan Soto can opt out of the Mets organization in five years. But "The Mets, according to a source briefed on the terms of his contract, can void Soto's opt-out by escalating his average annual value from \$51 million to \$55 million over the final 10 years" (nytimes.com).

The Mets do have a history of after-signing players as seen in January 2005, when they signed Carlos Beltrán to a seven-year, \$119 million contract. In 2006, Beltrán had a phenomenal season. Beltrán hit 41 home runs, had 116 RBIs, and scored 127 runs, while also coming in 4th in the National League All-Star voting. To many, this is considered to be the greatest season of his career.

In 2015, Yoenis Cespedes was traded to the Mets from the Tigers, on the final day players could be traded for the season. In only 31 games, he hit 17 home runs and drove in 44 runs. The average MLB player hits about 20-22 home runs in a full season. Cespedes almost hit that marker, in about 2/10 of the time, helping the Mets make the World Series. The following year, 2016, Cespedes won the National League Silver Slugger Award and played in the All-Star Game. If Juan Soto can pull off the same type of season that these players had after being picked up by the Mets, he could be named one of the best in the history of the franchise.

During Spring Training, Juan Soto did well. In his very first at-bat in a Mets uniform, he hit a 426-foot home run to left-center field to give the Mets the lead against the Houston Astros. Many think this is a sign that the Mets will go very far in the playoffs for years to come. The implications of his signing strengthen the Mets' offense and increase their championship hope; it also shows that the Mets are serious about building a real playoff-deserving team for years to come. Much like the memorable impacts of Mets additions in the past like Carlos Beltrán and Yoenis Céspedes, Soto's potential to boost the team in both leadership and performance is seemingly likely. If he can lead the Mets to their long-awaited World Series victory, his legacy will undoubtedly make him one of the greatest players the Mets have ever signed.

Say Goodbye To Home Insurance

By: Raymond Lin

The specter of climate change has long hung over America, but its effects have only recently begun to materialize. Characteristics of climate change like higher temperatures, rising sea levels, drought, and extreme weather have become more common. This has led to a steady increase in the number of natural disasters causing over \$1 billion in damage adjusted for inflation. Between 1980 and 2023, there was an average of 8.5 billion-dollar disasters a year. In the last five years, this average has increased to 20.4 billion-dollar disasters, with 2023 marking the highest number ever at 28 such disasters (Smith). Furthermore, the recent wildfires in California, exacerbated by climate change, are estimated to have caused somewhere between \$250 billion and \$275 billion in damages and economic losses (Escobar). Estimates forecast a dire future too as a report by First Street Foundation found 4.4 million U.S. properties are at risk from wildfires and 12 million properties are at risk of flooding. However, while one can glance at an image of a destroyed home to understand the threat climate change poses, he might not

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notice the underlying effects climate change has already had on the lives of Americans, especially in the world of home insurance.

Due to the increased risk and costs associated with climate change, insurance providers have increasingly struggled to turn a profit, forcing them to increase their premiums and leave regions. Between 2020 and 2023, nationwide homeowners' insurance premiums have risen by 30%, which when adjusted for inflation is 13% (Fowlie, et al). On average, this has resulted in an extra \$500 annual expense for households. In Florida, a state particularly exposed to climate change, home insurance costs have skyrocketed 42% in 2023 alone, matched only in severity by the dozen or so insurance firms that have discontinued operations in Florida in recent years, such as Farmers Insurance (Milman). In a similar vein, insurance giants Allstate and State Farm stopped selling insurance policies in California in 2022 and 2023 respectively, with State Farm reporting that it discontinued coverage for 72,000 properties. This withdrawal was motivated by a desire to limit

exposure to the financial risk of climate change and because California state law restricts insurers from increasing premiums dramatically, forcing insurance companies to choose between losing money or withdrawing from a region (Sherriff). New York has not been unaffected either. Insurance premiums spiked 6.4% in 2023, and two insurance providers have suspended policies in the last four years (Short). Since home insurance is required by most mortgage companies, these premium hikes have hurt the finances of many Americans, making it more expensive to own a home at a time when homes prices and mortgage rates are already at historic highs.

As a result of this increased insurance cost and decreased insurance availability, many Americans have been forced to forgo home insurance entirely or rely on insurers of last resort: insurance plans created by state governments that offer coverage for properties that otherwise cannot get insurance. California's insurer of last resort, the FAIR Plan, has seen its number of insurance policies increase from 140,000 to 333,000 between 2018 and 2023 (Sherriff).

However, even insurers of last resort are unviable in this new age of climate change. Unable to pay for the California wildfires, the FAIR Plan was bailed out by its private insurers, which provided \$1 billion to pay the FAIR Plan's customers (Flavelle). With Florida's Citizens Property Insurance, Florida's insurer of last resort, things are hardly any better. Florida's governor, Ron Desantis, has said that Citizens is "not solvent" and that the state government might have to bail out the insurance provider in the case of another major storm (Smith).

While legislators are still pursuing new policies to alleviate the home insurance crisis, the fundamental risks and costs associated with providing insurance have shot up over the years due to climate change, and it seems increasingly likely that Americans will have to accept this new reality. By not better combating climate change, we have made our bed, and it's unfortunately time to lie in it.