

# THE AMITY TRIDENT

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Amity Regional High School

Woodbridge, CT 06525

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## Recent Alumni Return to Participate in Annual Panel on the College Process

by Aachal Gupta '25

Amity welcomed back eight recent graduates on November 27th for its annual Alumni Panel, an event organized by Lynn Cocco, Paula Vallie, and the Career Center. The panel, held during second period for juniors and third period for seniors, provided students with post-high school advice on navigating college life. Events like these are often a great way for those that have gone through the college process to pass down valuable knowledge to those just about to embark on this journey.

The participating alumni represented a range of schools, including UConn/Storrs Campus (Piyush Bahel '23), Indiana University (Anchal Bahel '23), Syracuse University (Mike Crisci '24), Norwich University (Connor Hallstrom '22), UConn/Stamford Campus (Eyad Kamel '24), Quinnipiac University (Harrison Rosenay '23), Bentley University (Katie Sim '23), and Northeastern University (Aarushi Trivedi '24).

The idea of how important it is to participate on campus was reinforced throughout the panel. Katie Sim highlighted how her first year was changed by joining organizations and clubs, stating, "Being involved was the best

decision I made."

To create a feeling of community that helps freshmen adjust to college life, many alumni urged students to take advantage of unexpected opportunities and develop connections with the student body. The panelists also shared helpful advice on how to get through the first semester. Anchal Bahel advised students to determine their most productive periods of time and take advantage of them, stressing that time management is a helpful skill.

Another piece of advice that was shared regarding making friends was stated by Trivedi, who urged students to be positive and proactive, advising, "Introduce yourself to everyone, and always try to say hi first, it can go a long way."

Similarly, Connor Hallstrom emphasized the value of asking for help when needed, stating that many freshmen struggle just because they are unsure of how to ask for help.

College freedom has its dis-

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Photo contributed by Aachal Gupta '25

The 2025 Alumni Panel on November 27th in the Brady Center.

## Feeling Connected School Spirit Makes a Comeback

by Aryan Shrivastav '27

This year, Amity High School has embraced the theme of Celebrating All Students' Success. This

theme guides the school's efforts this year to elevate school spirit, ensuring that every student feels valued and included. Principal Andre Hauser shared his vision and the approach taken to foster a stronger sense of community and pride within the school.

According to Hauser, school spirit is more than just events and decorations; it is about nurturing a sense of belonging. "School spirit is when every student feels there's something here that is valued and appreciated

and that they're a part of," he explained. This is reflected in the year's initiatives to ensure students feel recognized and celebrated.

The year began with a feedback initiative during Spartan Seminars, where students were asked what the school could do better to celebrate them. This input has guided changes in classrooms and events, focusing on personalized and meaningful recognition. Teachers have embraced this shift and have set goals to boost student recognition, allowing individual efforts to be valued daily.

As the year progressed, the administration implemented several new programs to celebrate students' successes. Weekly and monthly recognitions across departments – like the Culinary

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Photo contributed by Trident staff  
Amity's dinosaurs prepare for competition during the November's Pep Rally.

## New Department of Education Head May Affect Millions of American Students

by Sarinah Zamir '27

Since Americans voted for former President Donald Trump to return to the White House, he has been busy filling his cabinet, which is the heads of the 15 executive departments of the federal government. This includes, for example, the Departments of Defense, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Commerce, and many others. After Trump nominates people to head these departments, the United States Senate must approve his picks after his inauguration in January.

Following his election, Trump has chosen these nominees with unprecedented speed, appointing all of the department heads and

most other key leadership positions since November 5th. Analysts have noted most of these appointees are people who have worked for, with or donated to Trump in the past. According to PBS, "the nominees share a common theme: Loyalists." Recently, according to PBS, some of his nominees have been met with scrutiny. One pick, who was Trump's choice for attorney general, Matt Gaetz, has already withdrawn from the nomination process due to sex trafficking allegations.

One department that directly concerns Amity students and the education of students nationwide is the U.S. Department of Education. Trump recently announced his pick of Linda McMahon to head up this department. She is a long-

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## Ping Pong Tournament Encourages Socialization and Fun



*Photo Contributed by Lance Mahon '25*

**The Chinese National Honor Society hosted a ping pong tournament on December 11th. Many students came to this event to socialize and compete. World Language Department Chair Xia Feng said it was a success due to all the “interest and excitement people” had.**

## Education Head May Affect Students

*Continued from page 1* time supporter of President-elect Trump and has donated more than \$28 million to his two presidential campaigns, according to The New York Times. McMahon is the former CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) which she co-founded with her ex-husband. Her education experience, however, is limited to her serving on the Connecticut State Board of Education from 2009-2010, which The New York Times recognizes as “worrisome.”

As the next Secretary of Education, McMahon will have the ability to influence education policy that will have an impact on millions, including Amity students. When asked about the federal government’s role in education, according to NPR, Trump said, “One thing I’ll be doing very early in the administration is closing up the Department of Education in Washington D.C.”

Many directors of education centers have responded with concern, including Jon Valant, director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution. He remarked that the federal government plays very important roles in education. According to NPR, this includes “protecting students’ civil rights, disbursing Title I funds for students in poverty, and administering federal student loans for higher education.”

The idea of closing the department is unlikely to gain traction due to economic

reasons, but it’s an idea that has been in the works for a long time as many Republicans continue to vow for the removal of federal involvement in education.

It is also a pledge that concerns Amity students who seek financial assistance, as students tend to make decisions on higher education, “based on what makes the most financial sense,” said guidance counselor John Mezzo.

Without federally funded financial aid, students would be much more limited in their post-high school education.

Now where does McMahon stand on this issue? According to the National Education Association, McMahon has pledged to push an agenda with her chief goal for education being to promote vouchers. The NEA calls this “extremist,” saying it would drain money from public schools and send taxpayer money to private schools. The policies she promotes are aligned with Trump’s Project 2025 plan, which aims to give the power back to the parents.

In response, NEA has begun calling upon the Senate to reject the nomination of McMahon as Secretary of Education. In addition to this, McMahon has recently been accused of failing to stop child sexual abuse in the 1980s within WWE, which has prompted even more concerns about whether she would be equipped as education secretary to, as The New York Times says, “enforce laws like Title IX, the federal law that protects students from sex discrimination and harassment.”

## Alumni Return to Participate in Annual Panel on the College Process

*Continued from page 1* advantages, and recent graduates addressed the importance of responsibility as a college freshman.

While Katie Sim suggested using the syllabus to keep organized and work ahead of time, Eyad Kamel encouraged students to create a calendar and stick to it.

Harrison Rosenay, meanwhile, praised the abundance of options on campus and said that he often discovers events he might otherwise miss thanks to his college’s event app. He also added that students attending schools close to home can be offered

unique benefits.

He reflected on the comfort of having family nearby, explaining how being able to go home before big exams to study peacefully or enjoy a home-cooked meal occasionally has provided him with some much-needed support.

The discussion also addressed student dorms, another important aspect of college. Connor Hallstrom stressed that an optimistic mindset can make a huge difference and encouraged students to maintain an open mind while dealing with roommates.

When it comes to picking a

school, which many juniors will start to think about soon, Aarushi Trivedi advised considering the number of years of guaranteed housing the school offers, a detail that can sometimes be forgotten during the decision-making process.

She remarked, “I loved the Alumni Panel! My first semester of college has taught me so much so the panel was such a great way to share my experience and advice in hopes of helping current Amity students. Plus, catching up with my old teachers was an added bonus!” as she reflected on her brief return to Amity.

Many students also found the panel both educational and encouraging. “The panel was extremely informative,” said Olivia Cummings ‘26, a junior attendee, “It was helpful to hear the advice of people who had been in our position and see options for the future.”

As students start to think about life after high school, specifically life in college, the Alumni Panel is an invaluable resource. This year’s program, not only provided students with answers to their questions but also urged them to face the future with joy.

## Feeling Connected: School Spirit Makes a Comeback

*Continued from page 1* Department’s “Chef of the Week” – highlight individual achievements more frequently than traditional end-of-year awards. This change ensures that students are celebrated every single day. This marks a major shift, as the school is now focusing on giving students more immediate recognition, which allows the community to recognize more student accomplishments.

Amity’s calendar has also been packed with events designed to unite the school body. The recent homecoming dance was a resounding success, with over 800 students in attendance. Students and parents praised the event’s organization, music, and atmosphere. Student Government has also made a great effort to have the Spartan mascot make more appearances at sports games this year. They are looking to expand to more in-school appearances and club meeting drop-ins to ensure that students in all of Amity’s groups and communities get a chance to interact with Sparty.

“It’s not about the adults here deciding what to do,” Hauser noted. “It’s about peers saying, ‘These are the things we want to do to make school a fun place for one another.’”

Another approach to build school spirit has been pep rallies, with dynamic student-planned activities like Dinosaurs vs. Spartans dodgeball and air mattress surfing. These events create memorable events and stimulated the spirit of

togetherness and comradeship. It was also an important event to recognize Amity’s accomplishments in the school’s Unified Sports program, as at the beginning of the pep rally, it was announced that Amity Regional High School was named a National Unified Champion School.

The Health and Physical Education Department also restarted Fun Fridays this year, playing music and offering snacks and interactive activities. To make this program more sustainable, they recently started to invite other departments to join in, including Special Education, Counseling, and English, further enhancing the collaborative spirit.

Hauser observed, “When students get to see us being people and being a little bit silly, it helps them connect with us. The more connected students feel to the school, the more it builds school spirit.”

On top of these changes within the school building, Amity’s fall sports teams also made history this year, with every team qualifying for the state playoffs. This milestone has generated enthusiasm and pride, encouraging more students to attend games and support their peers. Additionally, the school has celebrated achievements in other fields, such as recognizing students selected for prestigious art shows.

As the year progresses, the administration is already planning how to build on this momentum. Awards nights are being reimaged to honor a

wider range of achievements, including qualities like grit and effort, alongside traditional academic success. Reflecting on what works and what does not will shape future initiatives to ensure school spirit continues to thrive.

“At the end of the year, we’ll look back and take the best of what worked to keep for next year,” said Hauser. “Anything that didn’t work as well, we’ll replace with something new.”



*Photo contributed by Trident Staff*  
**Sparty gives a thumbs up at Pep Rally**

*Editorial*

# My Confession

by Hannah Guo '25

We're all going to die soon; what's the point?

Tolstoy, in an essay titled 'My Confession,' paints a vivid picture of this idea—a man clings to a branch over a pit that symbolizes death, an abyss that awaits us all. Above him, black and white mice—representing the passage of night and day—gnaw away steadily at the branch, symbolizing time's relentless march toward the inevitable. For Tolstoy, everything fails to mask the despair and futility he feels about life's grim transience, as he states, "I want to know the meaning of my life, but the fact that it is a particle of the infinite not only gives it no meaning, but even destroys every possible meaning." He mourns the fact that we get so little time—the fact that, in his eyes, we are insignificant in comparison to the centuries that will follow us. He reminds me a little bit of my sophomore-year self . . .

because the odds of being born are one in four trillion, and I do have time, and how lucky am I to have that in the first place? And how unfair is it to reduce one's life merely to a beginning of an end, when we have the capacity to feel so much?

I think of my favorite memories, and they are all fleeting—I think about watching a boy chase after the train to New York for as long as he can, his boots trying to leave the earth as a giggling girl presses a palm to her window and blows a kiss to him. I think about the day I taught my brother how to ride his bike without the training wheels, having to let go of him, and watching him sail down the pavement. I think about being seven, about being cradled in my mother's lap, her nimble fingers braiding my hair.

I think about one of my favorite songs, "Everything Ends" by Leith Ross, about her murmuring, "Everything ends / That's the saddest thing I think I'll ever hear / But everything ends / Bad dreams and sorrow / Everything ends / The ache that life has left / Everything ends / That's the sweetest thing I'll ever hear again / That everything ends."

The universe will get to know all of me for all of my life, and I've spent my life (thus far) trying to know it back. Tolstoy's right—I will never know it back, and it really doesn't care about me, but I can find meaning in the process of learning, failing, loving, and trying to know it back—and I have, and I will.

But now, I think the opposite; the ephemeral nature of life makes everything more poignant and tender because every fleeting moment is something to suck the marrow out of. (Hi, Henry David Thoreau!)

It's true. This is all we get. We live in moments of time. That time will inevitably end, and the world will spin on. But I think about these moments every day, and intense love and hope rush to my heart, and it's big to me, big

# AI: Our New Best Friend?

by Chloe Chang '27 and Armaan Shrivastav '27

"Of Course! Here's a 600-word essay about the use of AI . . ."

This greeting looks so familiar to us now, in a world where millions to tens of millions of people use ChatGPT. Although many negative comments about AI stem from the use of Generative AI, many people may gloss over the many other types of AI: APRAnet, Siri, and even social media, which are all built off of the foundation of AI. The basis of this all? The internet.

The internet traces back to the APRAnet, which protected the flow of information between military installations by creating a network of computers that could exchange information via a newly developed technology called Network Control Protocol. This development was influenced by the Cold War and the imminent threat of a Soviet attack on military and communication. It used packet switching, which breaks data down into blocks, before sending it to its destination, reducing the vulnerability of the APRAnet.

As packet-switching computers grew, the APRAnet evolved with Vinton Cerf developing the Transmission Control or the Internet Protocol, which led to the development of the Internet.

The rapid expansion of technology in the late 20th century led to the development of the World Wide Web and its introduction to the public. This sparked a frenzy among the public, leading to a rapid increase in online activity with more websites, transmission of visuals, and the establishment of political establishments and industries.

This rapid growth showed the rather too-quick adaptability of humans to technological changes, as the 'craze' over the internet took over the world. Social media developed, along with a growing popularity in Artificial Intelligence.

The development of AI from the 20th to

the 21st century showed humanity's boundless ambition and potential, going alongside rapid technological change. Early efforts in Symbolic AI, which tries to imitate human intelligence through rules of reasoning, laid the groundwork and success for future AI models like IBM's Deep Blue, which defeated the world chess champion, Garry Kasparov.

In the 21st century, breakthroughs in machine learning (a subset of AI), have brought tools like Siri and Alexa to the public and the development of autonomous vehicles like Waymo's taxis.

While AI like Siri and Alexa have helped the public and made their lives more efficient, other developments like autonomous vehicles spark ethical debate on the safety and its mass production, despite the multiple fatal accidents it has caused.

It is difficult to evaluate the extent to which AI has impacted humans, and how it will affect us in the future. Currently, issues that people have with AI stem from the privacy policies that companies have, and how companies walk the line between progress and ethical and safety concerns. The many benefits of AI include improved access to information and global connectivity and global connectivity, however, there are just as many detriments (reduced attention spans, over-reliance on digital interactions, and increased anxiety).

Although it is hard to predict the direction that AI is going to expand in, we can make an effort for AI to be a plus for us by using AI responsibly and to help us learn.

In conclusion, there has been a long journey for AI to come to what it is today. From the invention of the ARPAnet to now, AI has changed almost everything about our world, our societal norms, the way we think, and the way that we act. AI has endless possibilities; we just need to keep it ethical, not stop its progress.

Using AI correctly can lead it to be a tool for growth, learning, sustainability, and even become our greatest invention.

# The Amity Trident

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## WRITE FOR THE TRIDENT

Great opportunity to get involved! Join us in the new year to plan for our next issue in February which includes the always popular Lines of Love!

*Get involved. Write for the Trident!*



# An Irreversible Injustice or a Just Deterrent? A Discussion For and Against the Death Penalty

by Janet Fan '26

“The death penalty is not about whether people deserve to die for the crimes they commit. The real question of capital punishment in this country is, do we deserve to kill?”

This is the way lawyer Bryan Stevenson frames the debate about the death penalty in *Just Mercy*, his memoir recounting his work with the wrongfully convicted and killed. Stevenson challenges the readers to look beyond the established preconceptions of punishment and addresses the moral implications of state-sanctioned execution.

The argument that the death penalty delivers justice “eye for an eye” ignores the very real flaws of the American justice system and human fallibility. A 2014 study from the University of Michigan estimates that at least 4% of those sentenced to death are innocent. While this might seem like a small percentage, we must remember that every single number represents a life.

As of 2021, the Death Penalty Information Center recorded 2,382 incarcerated people sentenced to

death in the United States. Based on this statistic, almost 100 of them will die having never committed a crime.

Killing is irreversible. A human life, once taken, is gone forever. It is easy to remove ourselves from the situation, to argue that the justification for the death penalty is just a numbers game of comparing rates of right and wrongful convictions. The justification for taking a human life demands an exceptionally rigorous moral standard.

You can argue this from many different ethical and even practical perspectives. Death of a loved one shatters families and communities. Death of a worker economically costs a capitalistic society greatly. One innocent person killed is one too many. To kill any innocent person for justice defeats the purpose of the death penalty in the first place. When this happens, the same system that was meant to serve justice creates injustice. Where does an ambiguously just system derive the power to make such serious decisions on life and death?

by Bryan Lin '26

When someone commits murder, they’ve already shown they’re willing to take a life, so should we really risk them doing it again? Even in prison, violent inmates can kill other inmates or guards, and nevermind the countless cases of murderers who got out or escaped and killed again. Some might argue that the death penalty takes innocent lives. However, when prisoners reoffend, it risks the possibility of even more innocent lives lost. It is not logical to disregard the efficacy of a system that prevents these greater tragedies because it is imperfect.

Murderers like Ted Bundy, who escaped twice from custody in Colorado, and Kenneth McDuff, who had been released due to overcrowding prisons, continued to kill even after they had been convicted the first time. Clarence Ray Allen, who had been serving a life sentence for murder in California, orchestrated three more murders while in prison. According to the Sentencing Project, 22% of people who were initially convicted of murder commit another violent crime within 5 years after their release.

While it is true that the cost to execute an inmate is more than to imprison for life, is it worth it to keep a prolific criminal alive just to save a couple of bucks? I agree that the death penalty is a serious conviction but outlawing it completely restricts the options that we have when dealing with these dangerous criminals. In 2015, the FBI reported nearly 15,700 homicides nationwide. A 2007 study suggested that for every homicide victim, 6 to 10 family members are “indirectly victimized.”

When individuals lose someone they love, depriving them of justice, of seeing appropriate retribution for what has been taken from them, is cruel. If we’re worried about wrongfully committing innocent people, shouldn’t we focus on fixing the justice department instead? As stated by the Harvard Law Review Association, “Does not life imprisonment violate human dignity more than execution, by keeping alive a prisoner deprived of all autonomy?”

And what matters more - showing mercy to murderers or justice for their victims?

*The topic of capital punishment vs. lifelong incarceration is very nuanced and requires being able to listen to both sides with an open mind. Each perspective offers important insights and it should be acknowledged that no single perspective holds the exact truth. True understanding comes from carefully considering different viewpoints as the goal is not to declare a definitive winner but to grow our empathy, enhance our critical thinking and to value both accountability and human life. The Trident encourage you, the readers, to form your own opinion on this matter while taking in account both sides of the argument.*



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## Christmas and Hanukkah: Long Lost Brothers

by Aitan Herman '28

This year’s a special one because Christmas falls on the same day that Hanukkah begins. The last time this happened was 19 years ago in 2005 and it won’t happen again until 2035. Since this is the case, it is important to know how similar they are in their core values.

The first similarity is how they value spending time with family. During Christmas, families come together to exchange presents, have a nice meal, and spend time together. During Hanukkah, families also come together to light the Hanukiah, play games, and eat good food. Though these are different holidays, Familial love is shown to be

The next major similarity between these two holidays is the tradition of exchanging gifts. Those who celebrate Christmas usually get a few gifts on the day of, and people who celebrate Hanukkah might get one each night or one big gift. During Christmas, people exchange gifts to show connection, generosity, and love. For Hanukkah, most people also give gifts, but there is not one specific reason people give gifts, rather there are the 8 “gifts of Hanukkah,” which are the gifts of togetherness, tradition, loving, self-care, learning, justice, connection, and joy. In tradition, each gift should be given once each night.

The final key similarity is that both holidays have a central meal around them. Christmas meals usually have turkey with stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, and vegetables, which is similar to Thanksgiving. There’s also Christmas pudding, which often includes 13 ingredients to represent the 12 apostles and Jesus. For Hanukkah, people eat foods like fried potatoes, jelly donuts, and fried meat to symbolize the miracle of the oil miraculously lasting for eight days, which is why these dishes are cooked in oil.

Though Christmas and Hanukkah have distinct traditions and meanings to those who celebrate them, they also share many core values. So as 2024 comes to a close, maybe we can connect with people who celebrate the other holiday and realize we’re more similar than most think.

*Merry Christmas &  
Happy Hanukkah!*

# High School Hustle: Seniors Share Their Job Experiences

by Catherine Kohncke '28

The seniors at Amity are less than a year away from going off to college and as they become inde-

pendent individuals, they will have to make money to pay for things they want and need. One way to achieve this is by working. Having a job isn't the easiest thing, however. That's why it is important to experience working during high school. Let's look at a few upperclassmen who have already joined the workforce.

Gabi Restrepo '25 is an employee at the Merry Mountain Farm Stand in Woodbridge. She works there throughout the summer and into the fall as a cashier.

She says, "I enjoy my job because it allows me to interact with many people and be social. Also, the stand has open doors and windows, so when the weather is nice, like in the summer, it's great being outdoors and surrounded by fresh air and nature."

Restrepo said she likes to have the extra money for when she is hanging out with friends, shopping or getting a bite to eat.

When asked about the importance of having a job during high school she said, "I think that it's important for high school students to experience having a job to handle real-world responsibilities and prepare themselves for the challenges and setbacks of the future."

Daniel Mowerman '25 also has an interesting job. He works for the Woodbridge Government Access TV, in the position of Productions Assistant. He films meetings for the town, capturing groups like the Board of Education or Board of Finance.

One downside of the job according to him is, "Sometimes the hours are pretty terrible depending on how late meetings go. For example, I've stayed there until 10 or 10:30 PM on school nights before."

Mowerman does enjoy his job, though. "I like filmmaking and photography so it's almost not even a job for me, especially when I get to film more fun town events," he said. He adds that most of the money he makes is put towards saving for college, but he also uses it as gas money for driving.

He acknowledges the benefits of working during high school, saying, "No matter how easy your job is, it teaches punctuality and having the responsibility to show up, report to a boss, and have deadlines."

Another senior, Molly Emmens, works at Turkey Hill Elementary School in Orange in their after-school program called 21st Century.

"The main challenge is keeping the kids focused sometimes since it is K-6 so they can get distracted or off focus pretty easily," she said.

Emmens enjoys having this after school job because she likes to have some

pocket money to buy things for her friends and herself. This also allows her to help save up for college and other expenses.

She commented on job experience by saying, "It is good to get the experience of working when you're still young where mistakes you make aren't as serious."

Erik Jiang '25 works as a salesman for the company Renewal by Andersen, selling windows and doors at events such as farmer's markets and pride festivals.

His job is to convince people to schedule in-home consultations for their windows and doors. The way he found this job was

through an app called Indeed. He applied online, had an interview and then got the job.

Talking about his job, he said, "I enjoy talking to people and learning about their home improvement goals. It's rewarding to help someone find a solution for their home and know I've contributed to a decision that could make their space more comfortable or energy-efficient."

One reason he chose this job is because he wanted to do something that could help him in the future. He uses his money to save for personal goals, such as photography equipment and likes not having to rely on his parents for everything.

From the stories of these upperclassmen, there are many great reasons to gain some work experience in high school. It's a good idea to reach out in the community if you are looking for a job!

*"It's rewarding to help someone find a solution."*



Photo contributed by Erik Jiang '25  
Erik Jiang (left) and a coworker selling windows and doors.

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# A Holiday Tradition: Exploring the Charm of Shamrock Farm's Christmas Tree Sale

by Shreya Viswanathan '27

A great way to get into the festive spirit of the season is with a visit to Shamrock Farm for a Christmas tree. Nestled at 621 Lambert Road in Orange, Shamrock Farm is a beloved local business managed by Jim Zeoli, the town's first selectman

This farm is a proud spinoff of the historic Andrew-Ewen family farm, which was established way back in 1830. Over the years, Shamrock Farm has become a community favorite, offering a unique blend of traditional and modern farming practices.

Open daily from 10 am to 6 pm, Shamrock Farm Stand is more than just a place to buy a Christmas tree. It's an experience that brings the warmth and charm of the holiday season to life. The farm specializes in small ornamental nursery products and vegetables grown the old-fashioned way, ensuring that everything you purchase is of the highest quality.

During the fall, they also offer a variety of decorations, including pumpkins and mums, making it a year-round destination for seasonal delights.

At Christmas time, Shamrock Farm

transforms into a winter wonderland, offering a beautiful selection of Christmas trees, wreaths, and greenery. Each tree is carefully nurtured to ensure it brings joy and festive cheer to your home. The wreaths and greenery are handcrafted, adding a personal touch to your holiday decorations.

Monica Chen '27 says, "The best part of the Shamrock Farm Christmas Tree Sale is the simple joy of walking among rows of trees, breathing in that fresh pine scent, and knowing your family will gather around it for the holidays."

Zeoli and his team are dedicated to providing exceptional service and a memorable experience for all visitors. Their commitment to quality and community is evident in every aspect of the farm. Whether you're picking out the perfect tree or simply enjoying the serene farm atmosphere, a visit to Shamrock Farm is sure to

become a cherished holiday tradition.

Emma Imanov '27 says, "There's something about being at Shamrock Farm Christmas Tree Sale — the chatter of families, the amazing hot chocolate, and the sense of community that makes it feel like the holidays are already here."

For more information, reach out to them at 203-795-9679. Also, don't forget to visit their Facebook page at TheShamrockFarm



Photo from the Shamrock Farm Facebook page

Christmas trees at Shamrock Farm

# Chocolate Crackle Cookies Are Always a Classic Favorite

by Claire Theiss '26

With the holiday season comes cookie swaps and family get-togethers, and for these events it can be stressful to decide on the perfect dish to bring. However, these chocolate crackle cookies are sure to be a hit. They are a classic holiday cookie for a reason - they are delicious, yet easy to make.

The recipe is also so easy to modify! Chocolate lovers can add chocolate chips to the recipe. You can also add peanut butter chips. Or, for a peppermint treat, you can crush up a candy cane and add that.

Regardless if you make alterations to the original recipe, you're sure to be rewarded for your time, baking a treat that family and friends will love.

The following recipe makes about 30 cookies

## INGREDIENTS

1 stick unsalted butter, soft  
2 cups granulated sugar  
4 large eggs  
2 teaspoons vanilla  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
½ cup confectioners sugar

## DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F.
2. Cream together the butter and sugar.
3. Add eggs and vanilla then mix until completely absorbed.
4. Sift all dry ingredients (except the confectioners' sugar) together.
5. Slowly add the dry ingredient mixture to the butter mixture until smooth.
6. Put the confectioners' sugar in a small bowl and roll each piece of dough into a ball (small - about 1.5 tablespoons). Then roll each piece of dough around in the powdered sugar until completely covered.
7. Place onto a cookie sheet and bake for 9 - 10 minutes.
8. Enjoy this chocolate crackle cookies right out of the oven - or anytime this holiday season!



## Interested in Becoming a Trident Writer?

Contact Mrs. Clark or any of the editors for more information on how to get involved or with any questions!  
Our next issue will be February 14, 2025.



# Block Blast Fever Game Takes Amity by Storm

by Karishma Balamurugan '27

There's a new sensation sweeping the halls of Amity Regional High School, and chances are, you've already heard of it: Block Blast!

What began as a casual pastime during breaks has exploded into a full-blown phenomenon. Students can be spotted glued to their screens during lunch, in the library, and in passing periods before classes. So, what is the secret to Block Blast's popularity?

Its massive appeal lies in its simplicity and addictiveness. The game offers a perfect escape from the rigors of the school day, providing a fun, yet challenging way to unwind. Developed by Hungry Studio, Block Blast has not only captivated our school, but millions worldwide. As of 2024, Block Blast has reached over 40 million daily players and 120 million monthly.

Putting a modern twist on Tetris, players strategically place blocks to clear rows and columns, racking up high scores. Additionally, the Adventure Mode adds a fun challenge and an element of storytelling to the mix, catering to a variety of players.

Sophomore Anaya Kaoroptham has a high score of 220,782 and said, "I love playing Block Blast! Figuring out where the blocks go while trying to maintain my streak and beat my friends' high scores is both fun and relaxing. It is an enjoyable escape from the school day."

However, Block Blast has been known to take up an unnecessary amount of free time.

Tyler Frantz '26 with a high score of 126,000 remarks, "I feel like I'm on it a lot at home when I could be doing other things."

Though the app is time consuming, Block Blast has connected many students together via a common interest. Students are bonding over shared strategies, friendly rivalries, and the endless battle for the highest scores.

From the quiet corners of the library to the buzzing tables in the cafeteria, Block Blast fever shows no signs of



**Block Blast: The Classic Puzzle Video Game**

slowing down. Whether you're an experienced player or a curious beginner, one thing is certain—Block Blast is here to stay. So, grab your phone, take a break, and see what your highest score will be.

# Top Gifts to Give or Receive During the Holiday Season

by Shriya Garg '27

Holiday gift shopping can be difficult, especially when you can never seem to find the perfect gift to give or request. To ease your mind during the holiday season, we have compiled a list of the top gifts of 2024.

Considering the weather in Connecticut, especially during winter, warm shoes seem to be the way to go for many. "I think a pair of fun slippers are perfect for the holidays, especially for keeping warm during the winter season!" says Jordan Chen '27.

If you are looking for a warm and cozy gift idea, slippers or even a blanket may seem like a good choice. However, many want something they can wear outside of the house that still contributes that same comfort.

Julia Nickle '27 says, "The best gift for the holidays during the seasons would be shoes like UGGs or Birkenstocks because you could use them for many more years, and they are super cute."

UGGs are a very popular item on the wishlists of many teenagers, so what better gift to pair them with than a pair of socks? With a wide selection of designs and prices, socks are, according to Addie Ahmed '27, "The best gift. They are practical and the variety

is endless." This season, it seems that many are going for comfort when curating their wishlists.

Some of the most fun and thoughtful gifts truly depend on knowing the receiver. For those who are artistic, try finding a digital doodler, sketchbook, supplies, or even a handmade piece if you have the time! Readers always appreciate a good book, also book lights or a comfy pillow



Photo courtesy from shoptherusticmarket.com

**Fun Holiday Slippers**

would be a great gift as well. Music is a passion shared by many, so typically items such as speakers, instruments, headphones, or airpods are popular and loved.

"In my opinion, the best gift are Airpod Pros," says Teesha Godawat '27.

However, a gift does not have to be physical. Something from the heart such as a song is a wellfitting gift for music lovers. A great gift for athletes whose passion resides in a certain sport can include equipment such as a bag, shoes, a water bottle, clothing, jerseys, or a foam roller.

Knowing the recipient well is important in crafting a gift, but if you are still unsure, there are plenty of popular options. Perfume or cologne is a fan favorite that many love to receive. Snacks and other treats are also well-loved.

This year, some of the most popular gifts seem to be hoodies, skincare, cameras, candles, legos, and jewelry. If you are looking for a safer gift, you can not go wrong with a gift card. It is the top gifted item for a reason!

This holiday season, spread cheer and take some time to give to those you love. Simple appreciation goes a long way. Remember—the best gift is not always physical, but if you are having trouble brainstorming, we hope these suggestions helped!



# “In Love with Music for as Long as I Can Remember”

## Drummer Ben Sachar Relieves Stress through Sound

by Jake Ricciardi '26

Benjamin Sachar '26 a remarkably talented drummer and music producer. Sachar uses the

software “FL Studio” to create and record his own music, including drum performances. Under the name “thxxx” on Spotify, his song “Kurxxed Emeraldz - XXVIII Remix” has garnered over 174,000 listens.

While Sachar was a star drummer in Amity’s Concert Band during his freshman and sophomore years, he now plays in the Connecticut Music Educators Association (CMEA), Southern Region Jazz Band, the Neighborhood Music School (NMS) Premier Jazz Ensemble, and the Educational Center for the Arts (ECA) Jazz Combo. His passion for music began in second grade when he got his first drum set.

Reflecting on his musical journey, Sachar said, “I started producing electronic music in eighth grade, but [have] been playing drums since second grade, and piano since fourth.”

When asked what inspired his love for music, Sachar said, “I have been in love with music for as long as I can remember. Even when I was a very young child, my parents told me I was always inclined towards music.”

Seeing and hearing great drummers further motivated him to practice and improve. Looking ahead, Sachar hopes to pursue jazz drumming in college and turn music into a career.

Sachar encourages aspiring all musicians to dive in and believes that everyone should have an artistic outlet. His advice is straightforward: “The only way to improve is to practice and believe in yourself consistently. If you do that, you will see improvement,” this junior commented.

Music holds a deep meaning for Sachar. “Playing and making music brings me a peace that I have not been able to encounter in any other part of my life,” he explained. “It feels like a way to relieve stress and express my emotions through sound.”

Benjamin Sachar’s talent and dedication to music are inspiring; we are all eager to see where Sachar might end up in his journey of life.



Photo contributed by Benjamin Sachar '26

Benjamin Sachar on his drums.



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## From Poems to Vignettes, Imaginative Voices Abound in the Creative Writing Society

by Sabrina Osowiecki '25

*The last notes of the dusty, chipped*

*grand piano had echoed through the cavernous halls decades before. It had not been played since the last of the manor’s residents had died. Years had passed, changing the weeping willow’s silvery curtain and marring the intricacies of the painted ceiling, but never the constancy of the keys or the ever-present “almost” of the music. Sunlight streamed into the still glossy hardwood floors, and somewhere in seemingly endless halls, music began to play.*

The creation of vivid short stories like this excerpt from a writing game is characteristic of a Creative Writing Society (CWS) meeting, a club dedicated to engaging students in the joy of creative writing in all forms, from poems to vignettes. During a typical meeting, students write both independently and collaboratively, participating in a variety of prompts and activities. They also learn new skills through workshops centered around a wide assortment of styles and types of creative writing.

From historical fiction to dystopian sci-fi, members are given free reign to experiment as much as possible.

An environment available to all students no matter their experience with creative writing, members are encouraged to share their work with others. The club’s advisor, English teacher Jennifer

Pascale, said, “It really encourages creativity and bonding over the shared experience of writing.”

CWS is a collection of many imaginative voices expressed through a common medium.

Members of the club feel that their writing is an important part of their lives, often from an early age.



Photo contributed by Sabrina Osowiecki '25

Members of last year’s Creative Writing Society

“I started writing narrative stories in elementary school and I found a thrill in writing,” says Evelyn Kim '27. “That’s how I continued to write and improve my creative writing skills.”

CWS provides its members with the opportunity to do just that—hone their own writing

through the input of others interested in the subject. As the club vice president,

Remmy Ciambriello '26 enjoys her involvement in CWS due to her long-standing passion for literature. “I got into creative writing because I’ve always loved reading and writing in general,” she reflected. “It’s a dream of mine to write a book someday.”

Sarah Fortin '24, a recent Amity graduate and former president of CWS, is now taking her creative writing a step further. Throughout her high school career and previously, she often turned to writing as a creative outlet. As a leader of the club, she was motivated to encourage other students to get involved.

“I loved the activities and prompts that allowed me to find inspiration in my writing and in my life, and to truly put the idea of being an author into my mind,” she recently commented.

Fortin considered writing as a potential career path in middle school after entering and winning numerous writing contests. Now, as a college student at the University of Rochester, she is double majoring, with creative writing as one of the majors. “I’m really looking forward to continuing my education and practice of the craft,” she said.

CWS welcomes new members and meets biweekly at 2:30 p.m. in Room 108. As an ever-growing organization, CWS and its members share their writing in a friendly community and enjoy a shared excitement for the value of a good story.



# The Little Mermaid Auditions Planned for January

by Grace Millard '27

ARHS has been buzzing about this year's musical. Originating as an iconic 1990s animated film, The Little Mermaid is a household name. It immediately brings to mind fantastical underwater wonders, lively musical numbers, and magical childhood nostalgia.

It's not only a silly and fun show, but also a powerful coming-of-age story about a teenage girl learning to walk on her own.

Auditions for the teen musical adaptation will be held on the second and third days of the new year, kicking 2024 off with a myriad of anticipation and excitement. Initial try-outs consist of a 60-second, student-chosen song, as well as a brief dance. Both the callbacks for principal characters and the posting of the cast list on the Amity Creative Theater website will be on January 4th.

Overall, it will be a whirlwind back-to-school week for every Amity theater enthusiast.

Each year, dozens show up for auditions with only 25-35 available roles. The ARHS theater program is extremely competitive, making it one of the best in the state. But it's not only the cast that makes them so dazzling. From the brilliant costume crew, to the ingenious tech crew, to the wonderful directors and administrators, there are so many people that go into making Amity's theater phenomenal.

As for interested students who want to join the cast of Amity Creative Theater (ACT), Anna Edwards '26, who played the leading role of Cady Heron in last year's play Mean Girls,

has some advice. Edwards said, "Some advice for anyone looking to audition [this] year is to just not overthink it. The idea of auditioning can sometimes seem a little scary, but in reality, everyone is rooting for you."

Edwards admits that even she herself "was a little nervous about the outcome" but "going in with a positive

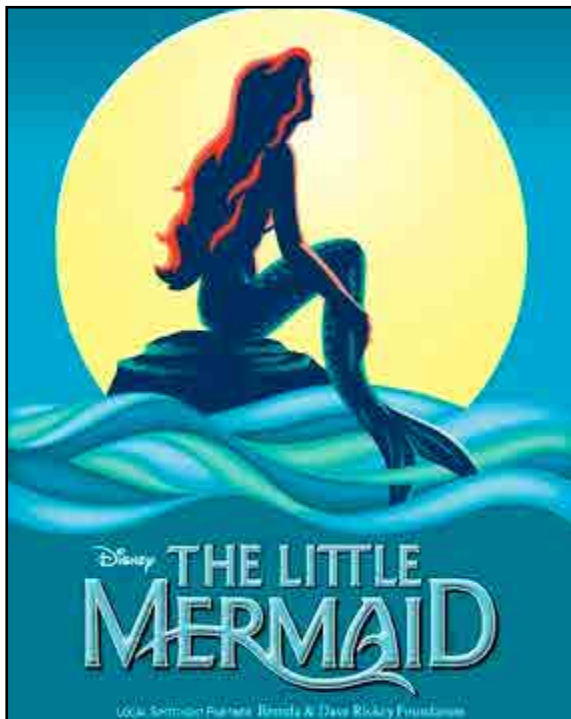


Photo accessed via [disney.fandom.com/wiki/The\\_Little\\_Mermaid](https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/The_Little_Mermaid)

outlook worked wonders for me." Still, she reminds everyone that "most of the casting process is out of our hands, so don't worry too much. Just go in and do your best!"

For those interested in tech, costume, and stage crew, the ACT Band App will help you find the resources you are looking for.

Ultimately, the directors have a vast talent pool to choose from, and everybody at Amity cannot wait for this year's show!

# Holiday Crossword

by Nicholas Lu '26

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10					11				
12					13				
			14		15				
16	17	18			19				
20				21		22			
23					24				
25					26		27	28	29
30					31				
32					33				

### ACROSS

- 1. "He's making a list, and he's checking it twice"
- 6. Like a thick soup, great for a cold winter night
- 10. "Save me a \_\_\_\_ (of pie)" not slice
- 11. Economic Recovery Tax Act (acronym)
- 12. First sign of winter
- 13. Late Middle English term for "royal"
- 14. Spinning top usually played with during Hanukkah
- 16. Whilst or during (starts with a)
- 19. Pace of a song
- 20. Members of an ancient Germanic tribe... or those wearing lots of black makeup and clothing
- 22. The white in a "white Christmas"

- 23. Repeating or reverberating (of a sound)
- 25. Close by
- 26. Mariah, singer of holiday "All I Want for Christmas Is You"
- 30. Dessert similar to pie, name means "sour taste"
- 31. To awe
- 32. Christmas, for short
- 33. Plural form of eon (in Britain)

### DOWN

- 1. Most important sunscreen quality
- 2. What you breathe
- 3. "New" or "re-vived," \_\_\_\_ classical
- 4. TCSDDHORTS
- 5. Applied Economics Teaching Resources acronym
- 6. Critical postseason game (two words)
- 7. (two words) "Give

- it a \_\_\_\_" + Default Mode Network acronym
- 8. (two words) Seventh greek letter + European Patent Office acronym
- 9. Indulge or roll about
- 15. Extraterrestrial for short
- 16. Covert name for a spy
- 17. New York swimwear store (contains "ocean")
- 18. Desert world in Star Wars, namesake of the Ithara system
- 21. "If" in Spanish
- 24. US collegiate sports governing body for short
- 27. Namesake of a popular NY restaurant and pasta sauce
- 28. Pronounced "Ee Zee En"
- 29. Not No

# 8 Crazy Nights: An Unconventional Holiday Film

by Darianna Singh '26 and Isabelle Delgado '26

Seth Kearsley with voice actors like Adam Sandler, grossed 23.8 million dollars. It lost approximately \$10.5 to \$44.6 million, making it one of many box office bombs. Despite the reviews from movie critics, the film is a holiday classic to many.

Seth Kearsley, also known for directing movies such as Sing and The Secret Life of Pets, aimed to create a deep musical mixed with deep undertones such as alcoholism and depression.

By having someone such as Adam Sandler as the main voice actor, known for acting in movies like The Waterboy, Hotel Transylvania, Grown Ups, and many more, the movie also has some tones of comedy playfulness mixed into it as well.

This animated holiday movie centers around Davey Stone, a 33-year-old alcoholic with a criminal record who avoids jail by agreeing to do community

service as a referee for a youth basketball league, coached by an elder man named Whitey. Whitey used to coach Davey when he was younger as well, leading to his belief that he can change Davey back into the cheerful person he used to be.

Throughout the movie, Davey displays careless behavior and bitterness toward others during Hanukkah. This is reflected in the title 8 Crazy Nights, as he mocks Whitey, causes chaos, and even puts him down as Whitey speaks about his longing to have the Dukesberry All-Star Patch, an annual award recognizing a positive community member.

Through flashbacks, we see that the real reason behind Davey's behavior comes from losing his parents in a car accident when he was a child during Hanukkah. Spending time with Whitey and his sister Eleanor helps him confront his long-ignored past and embrace the warmth of the holiday spirit, while also reconnecting with an old love he had as a child named Jennifer.

The movie has a heartwarming ending as Davey heals from his past and reconciles with the

townspeople while also helping Whitey finally achieve his sought-after Dukesberry All-Star Patch.

The movie's animation captures a vibrant winter landscape including an emotional tone of Davey's past with musical elements. It balances humor with melancholy, especially in scenes like Whitey's heartfelt monologue about his desire for the award and Davey's moments of self-reflection, setting it apart from more traditional holiday movies.

8 Crazy Nights delivers a heartfelt message about redemption and community with holiday humor as they embrace the spirit of the holidays. While the filmmakers showcase Adam Sandler's signature humor with a musical twist, they can still convey the deeper themes of growing, forgiveness, and finding joy in the winter season.

While the film's crude humor may not appeal to all audiences, it has genuine moments to resonate with everyone looking for something different from typical holiday movies. The film combines meaningful lessons and laughs with a reminder of the season's values making it an easy, memorable watch.

Enjoy a few holiday movies of your own over the break

# The Blades: Girls Hockey Becomes One of the Fastest Growing Sports in the World

by **Maybelle Caron '26**

Last year, the Blades hockey team won an overtime game that turned their season around and propelled them into the state tournament. As a consequence of it being an overtime game, they had a packed rink. Spectators and teams for the next game lined up along the edges of the glass and filled the stands as the game-winning puck soared into the goal.

As the team celebrated, there was a feeling of energy and a buzz in the arena. Spectators can expect many things from a match; the girls' hockey games are full of high speed, high skill, and high physicality.

Sophomore Maura Lebreck, who plays defense, said, "It's really fun hockey to watch with the [high] competition level."

Although checking players is against the rules, a new observer can still enjoy a scrum in front of the net. Amity goaltender Ivy Massicotte '27 says, "We skate on the ice really well together...our team has bonded."

The game is growing. The Girls' Hockey team now has a professional league with proper marketing that, as seen in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), is an effective strategy to get eyes on the game.

The Blades are ready to show their spirit to the community. They are a joint team of three high schools (Amity Regional High School, Cheshire High School, and North Haven High School), which allows them to get a full team of talented girls who are dedicated to the year-round game of hockey.

North Haven defenseman Bella Criscuolo '27 says, "Our team has what it takes to win this year."

The Blades want to show how incredible the sport is. Their season opens the week of December 9th and future games consist of the following times at Louis Astorino Ice Arena: December 28th at 12:00 pm, January 4th at 8:15 pm, and January

8th at 6:00 pm.

Cheshire Winger Taylor Higgins '26 said, "By the looks of our team, we can get really far this year. We're really excited."

Despite the challenging schedule this season, they hope to win every game they can get. Go Blades!



*Photo contributed by Dave Rothfuss*

**The Blades after scoring the game-tying goal in SCCs versus West Haven.**

## Running into a New Season

by **Rohan Hebbar '27 and Tyler Kingston '27**

Indoor track is one of the most popular sports at Amity. The runners are extremely excited for this upcoming season, setting high expectations for themselves and each other.

Truman Kaczmarczyk '28 is among many ambitious athletes this season. He states, "The main challenge for track is a person's ability to push themselves to get better. I think that we can get top three in SCCs [Southern Connecticut Conference] this year and our team is working hard to get there."

Charlie Stabach '27 agrees with Kaczmarczyk, saying, "Expectations are definitely high this year. I know a lot of the guys who have been working hard and are in great shape to PR, and our coaches will definitely help us perform well."

The indoor track team is full of dedicated members who endure the bitter winter cold in order to train and progress as runners.

Additionally, they are not just a sports team but a connected community full of support. August Tullo '27 describes the team as a whole, stating, "I'm feeling confident about this season. I think we have a

ton of great talent and I'm excited to see what we can do as a team and as a community."

Earlier this year, the team had received some exciting news. Because of Amity's outstanding performances in the past few years, they will move up from Class L to Class LL in the state

*Continued from page 11*



*Contributed by Ian Stoltenberg '25*

**Captain Ian Stoltenberg '25 running at a cross country meet in the fall.**

## Senior Athletes Prepare to Step Up and Move On

by **Scarlett Zhai '25**

In the halls of Amity High School, another graduating senior prepares to turn the page on a chapter of life marked by athletic camaraderie and growth. The impending departure brings a complex mix of emotions—a precarious balance between the melancholy of leaving behind familiar faces and the anticipation of new horizons. Team dynamics, carefully crafted over years of shared experiences, now face an inevitable unraveling.

However, beyond the emotional landscape of departure, these seniors' journeys are marked by a significant milestone: a collegiate athletic commitment. The transition represents more than an emotional passage—it's a professional leap into competitive collegiate sports. Years of dedication, after school practices, and countless hours of training have culminated in this moment of recognition and opportunity.

A four-year varsity player and team captain, Addelyn Maxwell '25 has made a huge contribution to Amity High School's lacrosse program. Throughout her high school career, Maxwell has not only demonstrated exceptional athletic skills but has also been a pivotal leader on and off the field.

Maxwell said, "The thing I will miss most about playing lacrosse at Amity is the close bonds I have made with all of the girls on the team, but I am very excited to go to college and make new bonds with my teammates there!"

Maxwell will continue her lacrosse career at Kennesaw State University, where she has been recruited to play collegiate lacrosse.

The transition from high school athletics is a poignant moment of reflection and anticipation for Soumya Wijesekera '25, another 4-year varsity and current captain of Amity High School's girls' tennis team.

Wijesekera explains, "Something that I'll miss about Amity is our tennis team and all of my friends on the team. I'm looking forward to getting the opportunity to compete in a different environment with a new group of teammates, though!"

As Wijesekera prepares to move on to Colby College, she highlights the bittersweet nature of high school athletics—saying goodbye to familiar teammates while embracing the excitement of new athletic challenges and opportunities.

While the bonds formed on athletic fields and in locker rooms may be stretching, they are far from breaking. Stay tuned for the future, as more Amity athletes begin their journeys toward collegiate athletics and beyond.

# Boys Basketball: A Thrilling Upcoming Season

by Akshay Bulsara '26 and Tyler Frantz '26



As winter sports begin, the Amity Boys Basketball Team begins practicing and is looking to improve its past record. Last year, the Amity Boys Basketball team finished with a record of 9-11.

Led by captains Alex Cuzio '25, Lance Mahon '25, and Collin Tenney '25, the team has an exciting season ahead of them.

The boys are feeling confident coming into the 2024 season. When asked how he's feeling about this upcoming season, Captain Alex Cuzio '25 responded, "The boys are looking forward to a great year, we have a lot of returning roster pieces and we're looking to have a huge season."

We're going to make huge strides since last season. Lots of improvements are on the way," he continued.

When Clyde Stolzman '26 was asked the same question about his feelings about the upcoming season he showed similar optimism and ambitious goals.

Stolzman stated, "I think we will make states this year. We have the

same lineup as last year and we hope to make a deeper run into the playoffs this year." These boys are just a few players on a team that all share the same level of optimism and ambition for their upcoming season.

When asked about his upcoming season and his goals for the team, Coach Nielsen responded very similarly to his players.

"I'm looking forward to a very competitive season. I like the experience we have coming back from last year, and I like the energy the younger guys are bringing this year," Coach Nielsen said.

The coach believes that the boys basketball season will be a very positive one, hopefully advancing them in the playoffs.

Overall, the team looks to improve their last year's record and all the players and coaches share similar ambitious goals for the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference State Tournament.

Time will tell how these boys will perform and all students are encouraged to support the Spartans on game days.

## Girls Wrestling Skyrockets in Recent Years

by Avery Ketchian '26

You may have seen posters for the Amity Girls Wrestling team hung up trying to recruit new members. Girls wrestling has been growing throughout the years but not only at Amity. Benedict News Online says, "With more than 28,000 female high school wrestlers in the United States, women's wrestling has experienced tremendous growth in recent years."

To add onto this, Tom Patterson, the coach for Amity Wrestling explains, "We have had a significant increase in girls joining our wrestling team. I think it's a great example of representation mattering, the first time female wrestling was an Olympic sport was 2004, and ever since then we have seen an explosion of female wrestling making it the fastest growing sport in the country."

Wrestling is a winter sport that ends in March. Currently, six girls are on the team; because of the limited number of girls, wrestling is considered a co-ed sport.

Coach Todd is excited about the increase of interest in girls wrestling. He comes from a long line of male and female wrestlers in his family and brings that knowledge to Amity. Coach Todd joined Amity Wrestling in 2011 and was promoted to head coach in 2018. He is looking forward to sexist stereotypes being erased regarding the public's view of female wrestling. Coach Todd is confident in the strong female wrestlers and the program will continue to grow. Last year,

five girls got the opportunity to go to States.

Cristel Miguel '27 had many extraordinary wins including placing second at states and sixth in New England. Abby Pallotto '25 advanced to freestyle nationals with the Connecticut team in Fargo, North Dakota. They both emphasized the community and friendships they've made within this industry and team.

Wrestling is physically demanding with the training routine and diet. The training routine includes warming up on the mat, splitting up into partners, wrestling each other, and conditioning. This sport is not only physically demanding, but it's also mentally challenging.

Miguel opens up about the mental challenge, saying, "I definitely could not step on the mat before having a pep talk with my coaches and receiving some support from my teammates to help calm down my nerves."

As much as an individual sport this is, it's still team-oriented and inclusive. The girls push each other to do their best and leave it all on the mat. Pallotto mentions that no matter what team a girl is on, there's a sense of community because



Photo contributed by Juno Alicea '25

Members of the Girls Wrestling Team, including, left to right, Eliana Selearis '27, Cristel Miguel '27, Abby Pallotto '25, Jess Smokes '26, and Zeynep Kilic '26.

of how few girls there are. An example of this is Miguel, who stayed for workouts one day after school and fell in love with the community and wrestling, leading her to join the team. As the sport becomes more popular, Pallotto and Miguel desire more tournaments and more girls joining this industry.

Anyone interested should sign up on PowerSchool and come by the Wrestling room at 2:30 pm. The team's schedule is available on the Amity Athletics page. Girls wrestling is all about heart and determination to not give up. Let us wish the team the best of luck in their competitions!

## Running into a New Season

Continued from page 10

tournament. This will be a new experience for the boys because they will face more competitive schools.

When asked about the jump in level, the team's head Coach Gary Pope responded, "I am confident that the boys will be able to compete with long-time powerhouses in the new division, such as Danbury and Hall."

On a more local scale, the team is looking to put together another strong run in the Southern Connecticut Conference. Last year, they finished in the top three in their group and once again Pope expects the boys to place very high in the SCC.

Regardless of any expectations, the team and coaches are certain that this year will be a great one.

When asked about his feelings about the 2024-2025 season, Pope responded that he is looking forward to the season.

"I am very excited about it because this year we have a special group of returning runners that should help the team do well in both SCC and Class LL," Pope said, "as well as a great group of freshmen who are motivated to follow in the footsteps of the leaders on this team."

# Six Seniors Honored with CAPSS Awards

## Prestigious Award Highlights Service, Academics, Leadership

by **Ziyan Zhang '27**

Last night, Principal Andre Hauser took the stage at the Board of Education meeting to recognize an extraordinary group of six seniors whose remarkable achievements have elevated their school and made a significant impact on the community. These students received prestigious awards from the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), highlighting the values of service, academic progress, and leadership—essential for inspiring future generations.

While the awards were not officially presented at the Board of Education meeting, it's important to note that the board itself does not grant these accolades. Instead, nominees are carefully selected from the high school and two from the Bethany and Orange middle schools, ensuring a comprehensive representation of outstanding students. Each middle school contributes two nominees, alongside the seniors, all of whom have been chosen for their unwavering dedication to their academic pursuits and community service.

According to Hauser, "It is more important that the students stay well-rounded and not focus on one thing and not branch out."

Students are not only evaluated based on their academic achievements, but also on their active engagement in extracurricular activities and community involvement. This year's honorees have demonstrated remarkable leader-

ship in various capacities, embodying the spirit of giving back and uplifting those around them. For instance, Shane Johnson stands out as an Eagle Scout, committing time and leadership to community projects that benefit residents. Similarly, Nathan LaPlante's active involvement in the Civil Air Patrol showcases his dedication to public service and leadership at a young age.

The following are the six distinguished seniors who were honored.

Aachal Gupta '25: As one of the Editors-in-Chief of The Trident, Gupta has showcased her leadership skills and commitment to journalism, providing a platform for student voices and issues that matter within the school community.

Shane Johnson '25: Not only an Eagle Scout, Johnson also takes on the role of a community leader, organizing projects that address local needs and promote civic engagement among his peers.

Alexander Klee '25: Serving as both the News Editor of The Trident and the Student Body President, Klee exemplifies a commitment to academic excellence and student leadership, uniting the student body on various initiatives.

Taraji Carter-Gore '25: As the President of the Black Student Union and a Link Crew Leader, Carter-Gore uplifts her classmates, fostering an inclusive environment while addressing important multicultural issues within the school.

Eleanor Cheng '25: A Link Crew member, soccer player, and participant in the National Honor Society, Cheng balances her academics with athletics and a commitment to

service, inspiring her peers with her work ethic and leadership.

Nathan LaPlante '25: Recognized with the Hugh O'Brien Leadership Award and an active member of the Aviation Club, LaPlante pursues his passion for aviation and promotes leadership and collaboration among students.

These six exceptional students excel academically and embody the spirit of service and leadership that the CAPSS awards seek to recognize. Their accomplishments reflect the diverse talents and perspectives found within the senior class.

The nomination process was thorough and insightful and included school counselors, the associate principals, and Hauser, collaborating to review a broad list of potential candidates. They emphasized the importance of identifying students who not only shine academically but also actively engage in service to their school and community. This holistic approach ensures the awards honor the true essence of student leadership—one that embraces involvement in all facets of life.

The seniors' collective achievements highlight a profound theme: the celebration of success in all its forms. Their commitment to community service, academic excellence, and leadership is a powerful reminder of students' vital role in enriching their communities. Their accomplishments will inspire other students to pursue their passions and contribute positively to the world around them. In applauding their achievements, we pave the way for future generations of leaders who will continue to make a difference in their communities.

## Holiday Magic in the "City That Never Sleeps"

### Exploring New York's Christmastime Charm

by **Teesha Godawat '27**

Not too far from home lies a place where magic of the holiday season fills the air. New York City is booming with festivities. Many attractions will complete an itinerary for the beautiful Christmas inspired day in New York!

After stepping off the train, travelers can warm up with cocoa from Serendipity on the Upper East Side. There is brunch on the weekends, and later in the day, the menu offers hamburgers, ice cream sundaes and waffles.

The Bryant Park Christmas Village is an enticing place for visitors. This European inspired open-air market designed by Urbanspace features artisans from NYC and around the world. Located behind the New York Public Library in Midtown Manhattan, all shops are given custom-designed, "jewel box" kiosks to showcase their merchandise. Shopping for holiday gifts while experiencing winter wonderland from over 170 vendors with products like apparel, accessories, artwork, home decor, jewelry, and games.

"The wide choice of options made it hard to pick what I wanted to get, but it was interesting to see all the different kinds of things from all over the world," says Emma Fotjadhji '27 who had recently visited the village.

After you're all shopped out, drop by Santa Claus for a visit. With an impressive 17,000 square foot ice skating rink, Bryant Park rents skates from \$25 to \$40 depending on the time of day. Approximately 55 food vendors will satisfy

every craving from delicious crepes at the Crepe Café, Margherita Burrata Pizza from Pizza by the Truffleist, and warm, fresh donuts at Doughnuttery.

Another market worth visiting is The Union Square Holiday Market. This market, also curated by Urbanspace, houses 185 vendors this year and is even open until 4pm on Christmas Eve. Similar to



Photo contributed by rockefellercenter.com

#### The Rockefeller Christmas Tree lit up at night

Bryant Park with local and international entrepreneurs bringing different cultures all into one place. Numerous food options such as birria tacos, dumplings, and mochi are available. In the shopping department, there is jewelry, candles, home goods, clothing, and artwork. Bryant Park and Union Square markets do share many of the same vendors, so maybe just pick one to visit.

Rockefeller Center holds a special place in the heart of Manhattan. This year's remarkable Christmas tree is 74 feet tall, 43 feet wide, and weighs roughly 11 tons. Every year, it is topped with a breathtaking 900 pound Swarovski

star. This year, the tree came from West Stockbridge, Massachusetts. It was lit in a festive ceremony on December 4, 2024. On Christmas Day, the tree will be lit for 24 hours, and on New Year's Eve it will be lit from 5am-9pm.

"Christmas in New York is very colorful and festive, and the Rockefeller Center perfectly carries that theme," says Rudra Trivedi '28 who paid a visit last December.

It is typical to find big crowds at the Rockefeller, but it is definitely worth a visit.

To feel like a true New Yorker, one of the best ways to spend your time is the Macy's Herald Square. Many often visit and reserve photos with Santa in Santaland, or just enjoy the Christmas decorations. Other department stores such as Bloomingdales and Cartier also decorate their windows. These give the city a warm, cozy atmosphere during the cold, holiday season.

Who doesn't love a classic show from the Radio City Rockettes? This is perfect to get your Christmas spirit! The Rockettes perform daily until January 5, 2025; tickets are available through Ticketmaster from \$125 to \$485 depending on the seats. American icons for nearly a century, the Rockettes add extra sparkle to the New York Christmas experience.

Spending a day in NYC during December is the perfect way to access Christmas spirit and spread holiday cheer. The lights, trees, and decorations make the city a magical and unforgettable experience. NYC is a special place to make memories, and spend the holidays.

## Word Mash

by **Olivia Cummings '26**

Two clues are provided that lead to two specific words or phrases which can be combined phonically. The clues are in order of which phrase goes first.

#### Example

**Clues:** Small furry mammal + capital of the Netherlands

**Answer:** Amsterdam

Darth Vader's first name + Amazon reading device

Official language of England + narrator of Moby Dick

Chemistry category for metal + character in the Peanuts that carries a blanket

Material hair is made of + character from The Wizard of Oz

Yellow Nickelodeon character + popular 70s Jamaican singer/songwriter

Answer key will be provided along with more Word Mash in the February issue.

## Word Mash Answers from November! How Did You Do?

1. Loch Nesquik 2. Asbestostitos 3. I love Lusitania 4. Barticles of Confederation 5. Cadaversace