

The Westword

Student voice of the Westhill Community

The test of good journalism is the measure of its public service.

Westhill Boys Tennis Takes FCIACS Gold

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Students Face More Competitive Admissions

**Laasya Kasaru and
Arleny Flores**
Reporters

The 2021-2022 college admissions have been more competitive for students this year. As a result of the pandemic, college application changes have been made to adjust to the global situation. For example, many universities have temporarily suspended their submission requirements for standardized test scores from applicants. This new policy led to a surge in applicants at these schools. Another factor that contributed to this rise in applicants, was that many students who had taken a gap year because of the pandemic began applying for schools. Along with a record number of college applicants, 2022 saw a record number of rejections.

Instead of standardized test scores, schools mostly

relied on student's GPA, attendance, and extracurricular activities to help them make a decision on whether or not to accept them. This played a significant role in the competitiveness because it opened the door to a larger number of applicants. This was no secret to anyone, making an already stressful process even more stressful for this year's graduation class.

"It definitely was really stressful. I applied early to my dream school (NYU), and while waiting for my decision I kept seeing social media posts about early decision people getting rejected, which without a doubt crushed my spirit. I know that I and many others got rejected from our top schools, which was definitely very hard because the anxiety waiting for an acceptance is very debilitating but it was

so relieving to finally know where I'm going to go despite rejection," Krystyna Cooney ('22) said.

"I feel like the college application process was definitely a surprise, especially because we didn't expect that it was going to be this competitive. For many schools, the acceptance rate dropped by a lot resulting in many rejections and waitlists. Personally, I was disappointed that I didn't get into or was waitlisted by some of the colleges that would be considered my "target" schools," Anika Tandon ('22) said.

Stanford rejected almost 96% of their applicants, even those who had submitted perfect SAT and ACT scores. Coming to the low acceptance rates this year, Harvard, Columbia, MIT, Yale, and Brown have less than a 5% acceptance rate. This year, though the stress

of the SAT's was lessened for some, the pressure was on for these students to make themselves stand out even more than ever before. Students were putting their main focus on their grades, college essays, attendance and extracurricular activities. Students who planned on applying to 5-8 schools were now applying to almost 10-15 schools.

"The college admissions/application process this year- as per usual I'd say- was incredibly competitive. It is difficult for students to find ways to differentiate themselves in a pool of similarly talented and intelligent peers. In my own experience, through my application to Columbia University, I aimed to highlight my passions and community work and their impact on my identity. I found the community at Westhill- my teachers and guidance counselor

especially- could serve as an important resource for feedback and reassurance during moments of insecurity. I'd tell other students that while the process is hard and competitive, it is not impossible. There is a place for everyone!" Zara Williamson ('22) said.

The 2022 college acceptance rates were competitive without a doubt. Students were held to even higher standards because of comparisons to a larger variety of applicants. Regardless of how great someone's application was, there was no telling on whether or not they would make the cut for their dream school. This year's admissions left students feeling nervous, overwhelmed and anxious. There's no telling what the next year will look like for the class of '23, but students are hopeful for better chances.

Senior Prom is a Hit at the Loading Dock

Hailey Baloutch
Editor-in-Chief

On Friday, June 3, Westhill's senior prom was held at the Loading Dock in downtown Stamford. Prior to the prom, a public pre-prom was held at the Bartlett Arboretum, and afterwards, there was an afterprom at Westhill.

Sunny weather and blooming flowers combined to make the Bartlett Arboretum pre-prom a success. Students went with their dates, friends, and entourage of photographers to get group photographs in a scenic location. While not everyone opted for the public pre-prom, many found it was a good opportunity to get photos with people they wouldn't have seen at a private pre-prom. Putting everyone together allowed students to get group photos with people they wouldn't have seen at separate venues.

After pre-prom, students had the option to either drive to the venue or take buses from Westhill. The buses allowed students to get direct transportation to prom, and then back to Westhill for the afterprom, without having to worry about parking.

At prom, students were met with a stunning venue, complete with photo backdrops, a huge dance floor, and a game room. Servers bustled appetizers around

tables and the entrance room.

The DJ for the event was none other than DJ Jumo, Westhill senior Justin Morhunsky.

"Being a DJ for my class at prom was something I wanted

to do since I first started high school. Mr. Rinaldi will be the first to tell you about how I approached him asking for that position as a freshman and the steps I took to build up the trust of the faculty and students to accom-

plish it. Throughout my time in high school I've played at over 50 proms so I definitely felt at ease going into it, although the pressure was just a little higher because I was going to be playing

the dance floor up until the very end of the night. I must say, Westhill did not disappoint me (although I do wish the venue let me use confetti cannons). I'm hoping to bring even more fun to Stam-

ford this summer. If you want to find out when and where, make sure to follow my Instagram and Snapchat @djjumo," Justin Morhunsky ('22) said.

ford this summer. If you want to find out when and where, make sure to follow my Instagram and Snapchat @djjumo," Justin Morhunsky ('22) said. Many students stayed in the mosh pit for hours while Jumo kept the crowd energetic with hits both nostalgic and current.

Meanwhile, students who needed a break could find one in the game room, where there were two basketball hoops, Mario Kart consoles, air hockey, ping-pong, and more. In the entrance hall, students sprawled on white couches to eat sliders and other foods served at dinner.

"The Westhill prom was very fun. From the dance floor to the game room there was always something to do," Jairon Herrera ('22) said.

The party continued until 11pm, when the buses began to bring students back to Westhill for the afterprom hosted by the PTA. A Hawaiian theme, students entered the courtyard to find beach umbrellas and kiddie pools full of beverages scattered on the lawn. The PTA grilled burgers, hotdogs, and grilled cheeses for students to eat under the fairy lights. Beyond the scenic setup, there were four bouncy castle attractions inside the gym. One was a wipeout-style attraction which knocked students off their feet, while another was a race course. From 11:30 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. students enjoyed all the Westhill afterprom had to offer.

Overall, the event was a success, from the pre-prom to the afterprom.



PROM Students pose for the camera from the center of the mosh pit.

Photo by MCP.

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SPECIAL REPORT

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News Analysis **Uvalde Elementary Massacre**

By: Grace Tolla
Reporter

On Tuesday, May 25th, in Uvalde, Texas, 19 children and 2 adults were shot and killed by 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, who entered Robb Elementary School with an AR-15 assault-style rifle. An additional 17 people were injured, but survived.

"As a student, it gets me scared that there's been so many things going on with gun violence recently. It just shows how easy it is to get possession of a gun, and makes me scared to go to school when I shouldn't need to worry about that," Isabella Rincon ('23) said.

The shooting in Uvalde has resurfaced decade-old arguments about gun control laws. The gun used in the shooting, an AR-15 assault-style rifle, was the same kind of weapon used in the Parkland massacre of 2018, the Las Vegas massacre in 2017, and the Sandy Hook massacre of 2012. In these four shootings alone, the AR-15 rifle claimed 123 lives. They are civilian versions of military weapons, considered highly dangerous and unnecessary for regular citizens to wield. President Bush assisted in the banning of these weapons, which lasted for ten years and expired in 2004. During that decade of ban, mass shooting became far less common, but rose again in the following decade from 2004-2014. Referred to as "America's Rifle" by the NRA, this gun is intended to be used for sport, such as hunting, target practice, and shooting competitions.

However, tragedies like Uvalde show us that this is not the case.

"I wish that parents who have guns at home would do a better job of securing them and would realize that their kids are not stupid. They know where the guns are. They know where the ammunition is. In general, we all need to be kinder to one another to forestall some of the rage that is infecting our country. More attention to the kid's mental health. I feel relatively safe at Westhill and I am thankful for the drills we practice," Jay Pincense, an English Teacher, said.

In addition to the weapon used, the shortcomings of the police officers on the scene is a major topic of debate as we continue to uncover what went wrong in Uvalde. On May 25th, over 140 officers were sent from 14 different local, state and federal agencies. However, despite police presence, officers were not able to prevent 21 lives from being lost. Some officers were even reported to go into the building to remove their own children, never engaging with the active shooter. Officers were inside the school building starting at 11:35am, and did not act until the shooter was killed at 12:50am. As the children were calling the police, they did not move. As more gunshots were being heard, they did not move. Students from both classrooms, rooms 111 and 112, called 911 and asked for police to be sent to the scene, but received no help. The officers that did

enter the scene were federal agents, who although should be applauded for their bravery, were not trained to deal with this specific type of violence. It was these agents that told the children to "yell if they need help", which caused a child to yell out, and then be shot and killed by the shooter.

"The biggest thing that has resonated with me through this is a statistic that I read that "more students have died by gun fire in schools than active duty police officers killed by gun fire," and that is a really scary thought. I don't know when people are going to start taking gun regulation seriously, and how many more lives have to be lost," Danielle Marenholz, an Agriscience Teacher, said.

In the wake of this tragedy, the international community who remains concerned about this issue has continued to receive more information about the victims. Alexandria Aniyah Rubio, age 10, was an up and coming feminist. Eliahna Torres' own father was denied release from jail to attend his daughter's funeral, imprisoned for a drug related crime. Her grandfather, Victor M. Cabrales is quoted saying "She was my love, she was one of a kind." Irma Garcia, the 48 year old co-teacher taught at Robb Elementary School for 23 years, and was co-teachers with Eva Mireles, 44, for 5 years. She loved to barbecue, listen to music, and go on cruises. Her husband died of a heart attack just two days after her death.

They were married for 24 years, and left behind four children, the youngest in only 7th grade. Several of the young boys in the class wanted to be police officers when they grew up, because they wanted to protect people. Jose Manuel Flores' (age 10) sister, Andrea, was also at the elementary school during the attack but escaped through a window. Maite Yuleana Rodriguez, age 10, taught herself how to sew, and learned how to make pillows. Layla Salazar's (age 11) grandfather said "My granddaughter was one that loved everything about life, and they took it away from her. They took her away from us. How do you mend a broken heart from a family as close as we had?"

One survivor, 11-year-old Miah Cerillo, has shared a particularly horrific experience. She was in the first classroom of students to be attacked by the shooter. She watched her teachers die, as well as many classmates. She was brushed by several bullets, and later needed to be treated for close contact. Miah remained alive as the shooter moved on to the second classroom, hearing gunshots, and later telling CNN that she heard the shooter playing loud, sad music. She and her friend were able to call 911 on their teacher's cell phone. In fear that the shooter would return, Miah covered herself in the blood of one of her dead classmates and pretended to be dead. She says it felt like three hours she lay there, assuming that the police had

not yet reached the scene. As she later learned, that was not the case. Money is being raised on platforms such as Go Fund Me to pay for Miah's therapy.

The memorials for the victims will continue until June 16th, including some families who have chosen to hold open casket funerals. The decision to hold open casket funerals acts as a call to action to end gun violence. The families intend to show the world what the freedom to use deadly firearms can do to innocent children, with the knowledge that some of the children required DNA evidence provided from the families to be identified.

This tragedy, just as all school shootings are, is heart-breaking. Twenty-one families will never be the same. Nineteen babies who will never come home to their parents and siblings, and two educators who will never teach again. There have already been over 240 mass shootings in the United States in 2022, and we are only six months into the school year. Every time a tragedy such as Sandy Hook, Columbine, Parkland, and now Uvalde occurs, we promise to never let it happen again. We beg our senators and representatives to pass legislation to restrict the use of assault rifles, and mourn for the children and adults who should have been safe in their schools. Enough is enough. Something must be done, no matter who is economically affected by the gun restriction policies, and no matter how much work it requires from our politicians.



Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Trial

By: Laasya Kasaru
Reporter

On April 11, Johnny Depp and Amber Heard were back in court for another court case since 2016. Actors Depp and Heard met in the set of "The Rum Diary" in 2009 and were married 2015-2016 before divorcing. In 2019, Depp filed a \$50 million defamation lawsuit against Heard for the 2018 op-ed published in the Washington Post where she described herself as a victim of domestic abuse. Heard's allegations impacted Depp in a tremendous way. When Depp was asked what he lost as a result of Heard's allegations against him he said, "Nothing less than everything. Because when the allegations were made rapidly circling the globe, telling people that I was a drunken, cocaine-fueled menace who beat women, suddenly in my fifties... it's over, you're done."

Accusations of abuse against Depp resulted in him losing his reputation, his career, movie roles and more. In 2020, Heard countersued for \$100 million against Depp and as of April 2022, the defamation case is now on trial in Virginia. Depp's legal team includes Ben Chew, Camille Vasquez, Stephanie Calnan, Rebecca MacDowell Lecaroz, Yarelyn Mena, Jessica Meyers, and Samuel Moniz. The trial has been circling all throughout social media allowing fans to also state their opinions while also making Johnny's legal team celebrities, especially Camille Vasquez. Heard's legal team in-

cludes Elaine Bredehoft, Benjamin Rottenborn and Adam Nadelhalt. With the trial being publicized, the #JusticeforJohnnyDepp has passed ten billion views and memes are being created with Heard's testimonies. As the trial recently concluded, here are the most noteworthy moments.

Depp took the stand to

abuse. Even Depp's children testified they refuse to be around her.

Heard's former assistant testified how Heard would make her do so much at a low pay and also had a temper towards her and Depp.

Heard stated in her testimony that Depp abused drugs and alcohol which

Heard also has a record of being arrested previously for allegedly assaulting her former partner, Van Ree. There was evidence, including witness testimony, of how Heard lied about paying \$7 million dollars to children's charity from her previous win in court. People believe that Heard is just trying to get more

even if justice was served in court, he would suffer from Heard's accusations for the rest of life.

"I've lost everything. No matter the outcome of this trial, I've already lost. I lost when these allegations were made, because they will stay with me forever. My life is ruined forever," Johnny Depp said.

Toward the end of the trial, Depp's former girlfriend Kate Moss testified against Heard's statement that Depp pushed Moss down the stairs and called him a monster. Moss however testified that Depp had never pushed, kicked, or thrown her down the stairs and instead said that she fell down the stairs and Depp picked her up, took her to her room, and called medical assistance. Many of Heard's other statements did not match up with those of other witnesses.

She claimed she was abused and assaulted and had pictures of "bruises" on her. There was no evidence or medical records of Heard's injuries presented at the trial.

On May 27 both lawyers made their closing statements. The trial came to a close on June 1, 2022. The jury rewarded Heard two million for defamatory statements made by Depp, and Depp 15 million for defamatory statements made by Heard. The trial ultimately favored Depp by a margin of 13 million dollars. The publicity of the trial also changed many people's opinions of Depp for the better, and Heard for the worse.



THE TRIAL Johnny Depp and Amber Heard in court.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images.

state Heard's abuse towards him during their relationship. Evidence had been collected showing pictures of injuries and bruises on Depp. With Depp off the stand, Heard was cross-examined by Depp's lawyers. One of the pieces of evidence was an audio recording of Heard admitting she hit Depp. Nonetheless, she continued to deny any sort of assault towards Depp.

Many witnesses were called. Heard's former assistant, Depp's friend, and Heard's therapists were all in support of Depp and confirmed Heard's temper and

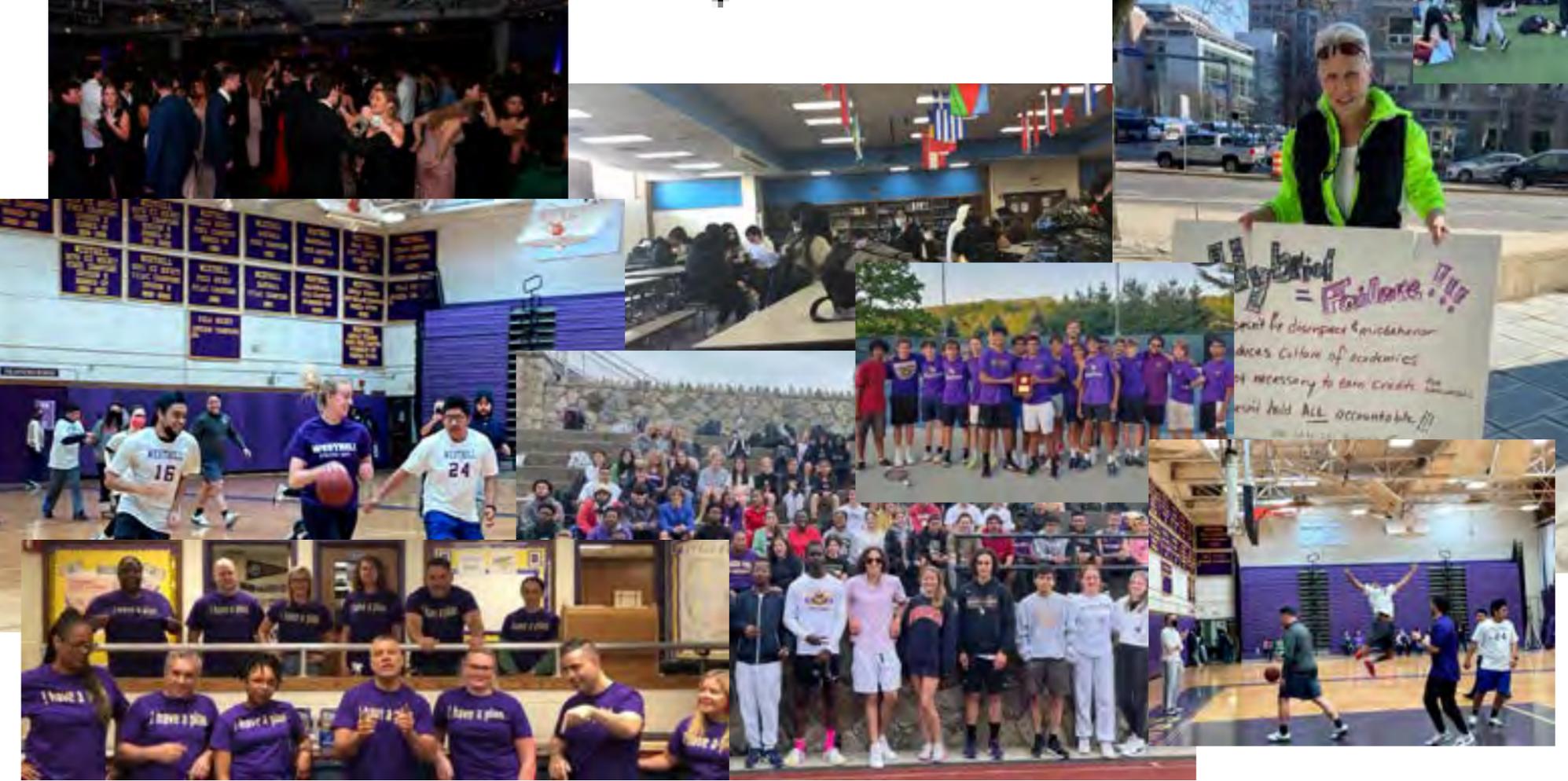
lead to abusive events. Heard's lawyer, Rottenborn, mentioned Depp's abuse of alcohol and drugs as an explanation for Depp's alleged abuse. Depp accepted and agreed to his alcohol and drug usage in the past but denied any sort of abuse towards Heard. She even ordered a restraining order. She testified to have applied makeup to cover up her bruises. This was later disproven when a representative for Milani testified that the foundation in question had not been invented at the time Heard claimed to have used it.

money from Depp and is using her false allegations about the abuse to achieve that.

"Everybody is talking about the case. It's crazy to me the lengths Amber will go to ruin Johnny's life," Jake Davidson ('24) said.

Depp testified how Heard saying he was an abusive man to the press ruined his reputation, causing him to be dropped by the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise and not receive calls from agents. He said this changed his life and negatively affected his career. He claimed that







Christie Blonkvist

University of Virginia 2026

I, Christie Blonkvist, of fast body and slow mind, hereby leave...

Will Silkowitz: Endless socks, neighbors' shirts, twin workout times, and terrifying high knees. **Zara Williamson:** Homemade stuffing, health song, poetry tiktoks. **Andrew Hicks:** Captainship, covid, and shoes that don't fit. **Daniel Goldberg:** Eggs. **Gil Vadel:** Sunglasses, matching hokas, endless baked goods, experimental efficacy. **Coach Kubick:** Plank you may I have another, 10 day workout cycle, Jack Daniels, a functioning split calculator, 3x3mile. **Aaron Eben and Marissa Crevecoeur:** My CSA and Data Structures grade. **Ms Calandro:** Gossip time, AP Daily Videos. **Coach Lane:** 20 minute extreme sexy bikini workout. **Timea Strukova:** Completed AP spanish assignments and trips to Mr Marchesani. **Enviro class:** Incoherent yelling. **XC and Track Team:** Sprint finish warmups, 90 degree turns, dark chocolate, and my entire heart.

Kirsten Hallinan

The George Washington University 2026

I, Kirsten Hallinan, of fun-sized body and coffee-addicted mind, hereby leave...

All My Coaches: You helped me to grow to who I am today. Whether it be my personality or my athletic talent, you have all contributed to me in some way. My greatest high school memories were made on all of your fields. Thank you for helping me become who I am today as a person. **Ruthie Price:** All our late night boba drives. The ranting and raving about school and our problems. You helped me get through my last year of high school and I will forever be grateful for that. Thank you for always being there when I need it. **Kate Glatzhofer:** Ms. Grants room during lunch has taught me how to relax and take a break when I need it. Our adventures will forever hold a place in my heart from the donut delight runs to going to Ruthie's. Our last minute plans will always be the best plans. Thank you for teaching me the simple things. **Cadence Jagodzinski:** All the work I help you with hopefully will take you to somewhere you will enjoy. I will forever remember the rants and raves you tell me about and your field hockey experience. Keep being a wall in the goal and I know you won't disappoint me next year. Thank you for teaching me how to let go when I need to. **Ava Smeriglio:** To ALL the times that you ask me to drive you that would leave me without gas. Your unstoppable laugh would have me dying of confusion. I hope to never forget the memories we have made together. **Ms. Grant:** Make sure to always remember to giggle! **Mr. White:** Keep on lecturing people to sleep! They won't realize it's important until the test! **All My Teachers:** The life lessons you have taught me will never be forgotten. The endless memories that we have all made will hold a place in my heart. Thank you for helping me get through these chaotic years.



Sara Miranda Gomez

Norwalk Community College 2024

I, Sara Miranda Gomez, of short body and a really open mind, hereby leave...

Mrs. Leary: All the late passes I never gave her. **Amairany Medina:** The times where I would sleepover at her house and the funny Face-Time calls I leave. **Cristina Contreras:** The times where she saved me from failing math. **Grazelle Soto:** All the times she made me laugh and for telling me that I wasn't cutting an apple right. **Surovi Das:** The times where I was still this shy girl and I didn't really wanna talk I leave her the times where she brought me out of my shell and I will forever be thankful for that. **Dalia Adams:** The time in English where we would just get off topic and get distracted and in science too. **Saniah Mills:** All the times we have had together since the 5th grade and all the times where she would call me out on my salad. **Deborah Lyra:** All the times we would play fight and make fun of each other. **Robert Dierzen:** The times where he was there for me and always knew what to say to make me laugh or feel better. **Nowah Shaw:** The times where we would annoy each other so much we wanted to rip our heads off and also the times where he listened to my dilemmas there are a bunch more but these are all that I could think of.



Ryan Chester Basile

University of Connecticut 2026

I, Ryan Chester Basile, of average body and thorough mind, hereby leave...

My teachers: Thank you for teaching me lots of stuff. **The school bell:** Its kindness for ringing 2 minutes early each day. **Those annoying girls who wouldn't stop talking in my study hall:** Good riddance! **Quizlet:** Thank you for being one of the studying underdogs. **Google:** Thank you for making searching easier.



Nichole Samaniego

University of Connecticut 2026

I, Nichole Samaniego, of short body and sleep-deprived mind, hereby leave...

My best friends and family: My greatest memories and laughs. I'm so glad you are in my life. I shall see you soon <3



Andrew Choi

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute 2026

I, Andrew Choi, of steely body and unwavering mind, hereby leave...

Gavin Stops: My greatest memories of playing showdown together in CSP. Thank you for making that year memorable. **Aryan Donikena:** The memories of getting together and having heart to hearts. **Jason Busch:** The very appreciated rides and making everything more fun. **Gregory Lebedev:** For keeping me and the others in check even if we get mad. **Navin Ponnusamy:** For unfortunately being at the end of most of our jokes. We love you! **Arjun Batra:** For being there and willing to support me through my decisions. **Sam Leone and Jairon Herrera:** For being the best Valorant buddies I can ask for. There were a lot of other people that haven't been listed, but just know I appreciate all that you have done for me!

Cristina Contreras

Eastern Connecticut State University 2026

I, Cristina Contreras, of hard-working body and fearless mind, hereby leave...

Surovi Das: Late-night FaceTime calls every day to talk about homework and other life issues, our spontaneous car rides, our moments of laughter, and for continuing to be my best friend throughout our high school experience. **Grazella and Sara:** My endless talks about how country music is the greatest kind of music, dealing with my laughter, my lame jokes, constantly making both of you listen to Taylor Swift, and for being good friends I could talk to about life. **My parents:** For coming to my high school ceremonies, encouraging me every day to keep on trying, believing in me during my highest and lowest moments, and dealing with my quiriness. **My teachers:** Endless memories of all the notes I have written that will probably be used as examples in the future, and for believing in me as a student. **AP Literature:** The constant paragraphs I have written, being the first and last AP class I will ever take, the stress you made me feel at times but eventually got over, and being the place I could challenge myself. **Westhill High School:** A big thanks for being the place I could be myself, the funny memories, and the people in my life that reminded me to keep going no matter how hard life got.





Dalia Hope Adams

Norwalk Community College 2024

I, Dalia Hope Adams, of God-fearing body and imaginative mind, hereby leave...

Cristina Contreras: Our little conversations before class starts. **Ms. English:** Who always makes the class more lively. **Sara Gomez:** Who has been friends with me since freshman year. **Westhill Youth Alive:** For helping other Christians to be open with their faith and morals. **Mrs. Cahill:** Who always welcomes you with a "Good morning." **Surovi Das:** being one of my "mature friends." **Mrs. Melfi-Smith:** Who always showed me kindness and helping me grow as a student. **Westhill High School:** Gave me my high school "experience" and chaotic times. Thank you!



Elia Rubie Hernandez

Community College 2024

I, Elia Rubie Hernandez, of strong body and peaceful mind, hereby leave...

Westhill High School: All the amazing memories I made here.



Jennifer lobo

Buscar un Trabajo

Yo, Jennifer lobo, de mente audaz y de cuerpo energético, por la presente deajo...

Ms. Calandro: Ha sido una muy buena maestra. **Mis compañeros:** Han sido muy buenos.

Dilyn E. Hartnett

High Point University 2026

I, Dilyn Hartnett, of positive body and silly mind, hereby leave...



Ms. Kenyhercz: My 115 absences in her class are due to my inability to get up for first period in the morning. Surprisingly, I got a B+. Mom and Dad, Please accept my heartfelt apologies for my absences. :) **Mrs. Cahill:** Every day, she radiates positivity and smiles! She never failed to give everything she had in every class. I appreciate all of her extra assistance in making me feel more at ease with all of my tasks. Mrs. Cahill is one of my favorite instructors because she is not only a fantastic teacher, but she also listens when you speak and require assistance, even if it is not related to education. I'm going to miss big time Mrs. Cahill! **Meadow Gilchrist:** Thank you for the countless memories from Stillmeadow, through Rippowam, too Westhill. You are the best thing that has ever happened to me. Thank you for being there for me at all times. New Hampshire and North Carolina got nothing on us! I love you endlessly Meadow. **Rattlin Bog:** To the group of friends I can refer to as family! #RBFL **Sr. Yr Fit Check:** To our nightly texts about what we're going to wear the next day! **Julia Lombardi:** Thanks for never failing to make me laugh and smile every day in English class. **Mr. Kaminsky:** Thank you for never quitting on me when times we're tough. **Mrs. Nichols, Mrs. White, and Mrs. Mitchell:** To the three lovely ladies that assisted me in succeeding throughout my four years of high school. I can't thank you enough for leading me through my most difficult years in life. I'm going to miss being able to go into your classes and chat up random conversations, Spilling all of my problems and secrets, and complaining about how much schoolwork I didn't want to do that day. Thank You!

Zara Williamson

Columbia University 2026

I, Zara Williamson, of sleepy body and ambitious mind, hereby leave...

Dilian Cantrell and Julieta Kuri: The future of LPAC, Jimmy time, long rehearsals, walks to physics (even if you left me sometimes), mother/children love, and so much pride. **Ishita Sujan:** Tired mornings in CSP and moral support as your former partner in CS. **Yuliia Kuzmyn:** Harry Styles updates, sad song recommendations, drives in the red Toyota, random memories from Scofield, long hugs and a flight back to see DWD. **Anupriya Lulla:** Private story updates, always asking you about your hw schedule, fun earrings, your basement, dance parties in your kitchen and ears for anything you need. **Chris Blonkvist:** Dinner dates, long runs (because for some reason you enjoy that), poetry and the Lumineers, hyperextended fingers and hugs in the hallways. **Andrew Hicks:** Late night texting, turning around to ask you questions in macro, lunch with you (with you on the LEFT SIDE), our one hug in history, and a plane ticket because Toronto. **Mandy Wainwright and Kara Sciglimpaglia:** The Zara Support Group, crying through math and various other subjects, One Direction phase, "negotiating" with Cap, Aquariums, stealing your things to fiddle with, and so so many hugs. **Mr. Marchesani:** Many emails and office visits, stress, All Too Well (10 Minute Version) on a sticky note, that awful picture of me on your wall, you being right usually, and maybe some peace and quiet (but less fun) without me. **Ms. Grant:** Groundwater, environmental justice, toilet water and babies, sitting on your desks in study hall, calming down and so much love. **Kayla Williamson:** Our room (which will now be a lot cleaner), an empty plate for all the food I will not be eating, a lot of dishwasher space, many hours for duo-naps, thousands of tik tok dms, inside jokes, hugs you don't usually want and a space for you in my dorm.



Charlie Schwartz

University of Maryland 2026

I, Charlie Schwartz, of caffeinated body and creative mind, hereby leave...



Ruthie Price: Late night calls, pick me up texts, my hotline and go to, second family, dunkin and boba runs, blasting country music I don't know, always being there for me. **Emma Romaine:** My personal donut delight uber eats driver, almost missing deadlines, talking at the back of class, and a life long friendship. **Audra and Anna Hansen:** My first high school friends, sportiest people I know, crying over algebra midterm grades, long walks, and being super far and super close to the both of you next year. **Madison Goldstein:** Honors bio, daily selfies we never finished, an honorary yearbook member, acting out Othello on the heater, and coming into school for 1 period only. **Ella Cognetti:** My personal ap biology and ap statistics tutor, friend since stillmeadow, going to see the set of the movie at our school, props from the set, lunch dates, and taking so many photos. **Annabelle Raz:** Harry Styles, DTLA memories, picnics, social distancing, the best N'siah S'ganit duo, fear the turtle, live love college park, and the next four years with you. **Yearbook SAGA:** private little office, "which room are we in today," dear Vikings, triple threat, hitting our deadlines, and my best memories. **My DTLA Friends:** Google Meets constantly not working, not meeting last minute, getting an education online, having both Westhill and Stamford High Teachers, online AP exams, pets across the camera, cameras on or off, and edge-nuity.

Brandon Monies

University of Connecticut Storrs 2026

I, Brandon Monies, of ambitious body and determined mind, hereby leave...

Sam Leone and Jairon Herrera: Our legendary late nights during the summer of 2020, our freestyle sessions, and our many adventures and memories since Freshman year. **Andrew Choi:** Our debates over "who would win" between two completely random things. **Rushit Chuahan:** The many jokes we made while Dr. K yelled at us in Robotics. **Axell Oliva:** The crazy freestyles, random jokes, and classic "Black Ice." **Aryan Donikena:** The best partners in Data Structures. **Wayne Johnson:** The many memories since the middle school days.



John Kulis

University of Connecticut 2026

I, John Kulis, of tall body and intelligent mind, hereby leave...

Ms.Cahill: Thank you. **Jamal Mahmood:** It was great to meet you and talk about shows.

Westhill Boys Varsity Tennis Wins FCIACS

Hailey Baloutch
Editor-in-Chief

For the first time since 1978, the Westhill Boys Varsity Tennis Team took home gold at the Fairfield County Interscholastic Conference, commonly known as FCIACS.

Led by captains Arjun Batra and Arjun Anand, the team began the regular season with a 7-0 win against Trumbull. In the regular season, they had a record of 13-2. They closed out the regular season with a 5-2 win against New Canaan. This win advanced them to FCIACS. With only two losses under their belt for the regular season, the team was confident in their ability to sweep the competition.

In FCIACS, the boys began by beating Wilton in quarter-finals. Then in semis, they beat Greenwich 4-1. The semi-final win alone was historic, as it was the first time the tennis team would be going to FCIACS finals in decades.

In the FSIAC finals, Westhill faced off against rival team Staples. Last year, a defeat from Staples had prevented them from achieving FCIACS glory. This time, they were determined to win. In a 4-1 match, the boy's team defeated Staples, winning gold at FCIACS.

"FCIAC CHAMPS. THE BOYS WON IT FOR THE HILL FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DECADES. THEY CRUSHED STAPLES 4-1," @Westhillboystennis on Insta-

County tournament against teams with greater funding and resources. Their win at FCIACS wasn't just a win for Boys Tennis, but for Westhill as a whole.

FCIACS twice and brought home gold. The change may have been unexpected from an outside perspective, but for the boys who've been working hard in the team, it was inevi-

throughout Westhill Tennis. These last two years we were all also very disciplined and committed to giving 100% every practice, every shot, and every match no matter what the outcome would be," Arjun Batra ('22), Tennis Team Captain, said.

The overall team record was 18-3 for the season. It was a historic victory for the boy's tennis team. With such a legacy, some players are equally apprehensive and excited for what the future holds for Westhill Tennis.

"This year our team had 8 seniors who all started. Next year is gonna be hard to recreate because of all the people we are losing. But we also had a lot of freshman that have a bunch of potential. This year was definitely a memorable one, but if we train hard over the summer we can definitely recreate what we accomplished this season," Vishal Nayak ('23), a Westhill Tennis player, said.

Although the team is losing many seniors and two dedicated captains, it is doubtless that the younger players will step up to bat to continue their successful legacy. With the dedication of younger team members, the team could continue their winning streak many years into the future.



CHAMPIONS The Westhill Boys Tennis Team shows off the FCIACS trophy, held by captains Arjun Batra and Arjun Anand, after defeating Staples in the final match. Photo via @Westhillboystennis on Instagram.

gram said.

Westhill Boys Tennis carved itself out as one of Westhill's most successful sports teams. With sheer determination and skill, they took home gold in a competitive Fairfield

The Westhill Boys Tennis Team has been on an upwards spiral in recent years. For decades, they won and lost matches without attracting too much attention. But in the past two years, they advanced to

table.

"I'd say we were better in the past two years because we gained a lot of depth throughout our lineup with getting new players that have adapted to our family and sport

Track and Field Competes at City Championships

Andrew Hicks and Hailey Baloutch
Guest Writer

Westhill Track and Field faced off against Stamford High at the city championships.

The boys athletes won almost every event against their Stamford High opponents. The boys won 10 out of 11 track events. They won the 4x100 relay, the 4x400 relay, and the 4x800 relay. They also took all three top places in 5 solo track events, earning all possible points.

Unfortunately, girls fought hard but were outcompeted.

In sprinting, Alex Midy ('23) and Richard Augustine ('22) qualified for states in the 100m, joining teammate and previous qualifier David Moodie ('23). All 3 also qualified for states in the 200m later that day.

In distance, there were some impressive personal records, including Gil Vadel ('23) finally breaking the infamous 5-minute mile mark, paced throughout the race by teammates and previous state qualifiers Andrew Hicks ('22) and Daniel Goldberg ('23).

Meanwhile, there were

several impressive milestones in field as well.

David Jahaj ('22) took first place in shotput, pole vault, and discus. Stamford High secured first and second place in javelin.

David Jahaj took home the trophy for "Best in Field," Andrew Hicks for "Best in Track," and Daniel Goldberg for "Best in Track & Field."

To celebrate their senior captain Andrew Hicks and their triumphant victory, the underclassmen, led by Standley Cenus ('24), circled Hicks and dumped and sprayed dozens of bottles of Gatorade on him.

"It really was the best possible way we could end off the season as a whole team before we split up for the championship season. Our team had been through so much over the past 3 years between canceled seasons due to COVID and infection outbreaks that took out some of our best runners. It really was nice to have some dumb fun and team bonding after all the hard work and uncertainty. I'm going to miss this group of teammates the most," Andrew Hicks ('22), Track Team Captain, said.



CITY CHAMPS The entire Track and Field Team poses together for a photo. Photo by the Track Team.

The Meaning Behind “Taylor’s Version”

Arleny Flores
Reporter

When Taylor Swift signed her first record deal with Big Machine Records in 2005, she gave up the ownership to the masters of her first six studio albums. At just 15 years old, Swift could have never foreseen what kind of problems it would create for her in the long-run. 14 years later, her masters, the original recordings of her albums, would be sold to Scooter Braun without her knowledge. This meant Braun now had full control over what was to be done with those recordings. It also meant that Braun would make profit off of her recordings, despite not ever having worked on them. For years before the sale, Swift begged for the opportunity to buy back her masters, but her record label denied her that opportunity. Instead, the label’s CEO, Scott Borchetta gave ownership of

Taylor Swift’s discography to someone who had long-worked to destroy her musical legacy.

“I learned about Scooter Braun’s purchase of my masters as it was announced to the world. All I could think about was the incessant, manipulative bullying I’ve received at his hands for years...Never in my worst nightmares did I imagine the buyer would be Scooter. Any time Scott Borchetta has heard the words ‘Scooter Braun’ escape my lips, it was when I was either crying or trying not to,” wrote Swift on Tumblr on the day news broke out.

A few months after this, Swift made an appearance on Good Morning America, where she revealed her plans to re-record her music. According to her contract, Swift would be allowed to begin re-recording her first five albums in November 2020 and her sixth beginning in November 2022.

However, many did not take her seriously. Re-recording music is an expensive and time-consuming process, but Swift was determined to get it done.

In the meantime, Swift released three studio albums, *Lover* (2019), *Folklore* (2020), and *Evermore* (2020). She referenced the situation with her masters at least once in each album.

“And when you can’t sleep at night, you hear my stolen lullabies,” sang Swift on *Folklore*.

“Fifteen years, fifteen million tears, begging till my knees bled. I gave it my all, he gave me nothing at all, then wondered why I left. Now he sits on his throne in his palace of bones, praying to his greed. He’s got my past frozen behind glass but I’ve got me,” sang Swift on the deluxe version of *Evermore*.

Before this, Swift made a reference to the situation in her music video for “The

Man.” In the video, she stood in front of a wall that had been spray painted with the names of her first six studio albums, *Taylor Swift*, *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, *RED*, *1989*, and *Reputation*.

“MISSING IF FOUND RETURN TO TAYLOR SWIFT” read a sign on the wall in the music video across from a sign prohibiting scooters.

After these albums were released, enough time had passed for Swift to legally begin re-recording.

Of course, this did not come without more conflict. In October 2020, Swift’s master’s were sold for the second time in less than 18 months. They were sold to Shamrock Holdings, a private equity firm owned by Disney, for somewhere between \$300-450 million dollars. Under the agreements made with Shamrock Holdings, Braun would profit off of the recordings for years regardless of the fact that

he was not their owner. Because of this, Swift did not feel comfortable entering partnership with Shamrock Holdings, as she had hoped to do.

In February 2021, Swift announced she would re-release her album, *Fearless*, on April 9th. This time to be called *Fearless (Taylor’s Version)*. The addition of “(Taylor’s Version)” to the album’s title is meant to help fans distinguish between the original album and the version that she owns, when going to listen. Swift made the same addition to the title of *RED*, when she re-released it in November. As of May 2022, those are the only two albums that Swift has completely re-released, and they both have amassed a great deal of success. Additionally, Swift has re-released two songs from *1989* and one from *Speak Now*, leaving many fans puzzled: Which album will come out next?

Album Review: Harry’s House by Harry Styles

Viharika Penmetsa
Reporter

Harry Styles is a pop artist who used to be part of the very popular boy band One Direction. He debuted at age 16 and gained an immense fan following.

He has released two albums after becoming a solo artist. He released *Harry’s House* two years after the release of his hit album *Fine Line*.

Harry’s House explores the themes of love, navigating through relationships, his journey of finding the perfect home and moving on from the past. The album showcases 13 songs combining familiar pop rock songs with a modern-day homage to funk.

He kicks it off with a fun light song “Music for a Sushi Restaurant”, Singing about green eyes, fried rice, sweet ice cream, and blue bubblegum twisted ‘round your tongue. Which then goes on to late night which has a fun vibe that makes you want to dance on the street. It talks about already missing his date and how he wishes to spend more time with her.

As the album contin-

ues to play on, the songs get progressively sadder until they reach the bottom with “Matilda.” It’s a song filled with reassurance and comfort for those who had a tough time. Similar to a hug, this song validates the listener’s struggles and essentially tells them that they are enough, that they are doing well. Connected with the movie *Matilda*, it’s a tear-jerking song for those hurting, for those who need to take a moment’s rest in this hectic life.

“I love how this album has that nice summer vibe. It’s nice to have an album that’s light, playful and that has a nice playful summery vibe after Harry’s last album,” Ariana (‘23) said.

If you listen to the lyrics closely, its hard to miss the references to Styles’ current girlfriend and filmmaker Olivia Wilde. “I dig your cinema,” he sings in one track, as well as, “If it’s Hollywood or Bishopsgate, I’m coming too...”. But just as this album is a celebration of love and obsession, it is bookended with the ebbs and flows of a personal discovery.

Abruptly breaking



away from all the sad songs is the track “Cinema.” It has a sensual vibe with the lyrics to back it up.

There’s just something that makes the whole album feel so pleasant and relaxing. It’s an album that you could listen to while traveling. It isn’t an overly upbeat album that makes you

really happy but instead hints at a vague cheerfulness while diving through the stages of relationships.

Styles’ voice is sleek and nimble throughout, favoring a looser delivery, much different from his One Direction days and his previous albums.

Harry’s House is a

light, fun, summery pop record, but there is a gaping void as its center; by its end, the listener is inclined to feel more intimately acquainted with the stories behind his songs.

Harry’s House is now out on all platforms if you would like to give it a listen.

Westhill Vikings

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