Merion Shows Generosity

By Alessandra Cahill and Sofia Viator

Mrs. Popko recently told 4DP that they are going to do a special project for the people of Houston, Texas and Puerto Rico. The class, partly awed and partly excited, erupted into cheers. They would be using Merion’s new 3D printer to make toys and tinkets to sell to Merion students to raise money to support the people affected by hurricanes Harvey and Maria.

A regular printer is a machine that copies anything 2D onto paper in any color. A 3D printer prints in three dimensions instead of two and uses plastic melted into a goop called filament. Everything it prints is hollow. On December 13, 4DP saw Merion’s new printer in action for the first time. So far, it has printed random white chess pieces, and a white frog. Maybe by the end of the year, we’ll have a chess set!

We found Mrs. Popko at Physical Activity time and asked her a couple of questions about the project. “When will it start?” we asked. “When the 3D printer is set up,” she told us. Then we asked, “What takes longer in the process, designing or printing?” She answered, “Definitely designing, because it takes a long time to plan the pieces on the software and take all the measurements.” Finally, we asked her what we will do with what we make. “We’ll sell the items in the cafeteria,” she explained.

The 3D printer is controlled by a program called Tinker CAD. Ms. Goldberg, a technician, described what Tinker CAD is and how to use it to 4DP. Tinker CAD is an app that excels in measurement and precision. When you design something, you can build it out of solid shapes, or empty spaces. If you want your creation connected, all the pieces must be touching each other. You must also mind the thickness of your creation. If it’s too thick, it will take a long time to print, and use too much filament. Finally, you must check to see if the bottom of your creation is touching the workspace just enough. If it goes any lower, the printer will cut off that part of your creation when printing.

Maybe you’ll get to use the 3D printer sometime soon! It is now in the library, waiting for 4DP’s project.

The "No Food Policy:" What’s it All About?

By Pipper Slogoff

There was a time, not long ago, when food at classroom parties was not prohibited. Cookies and cake were distributed throughout the class for birthdays. Chips and crackers were enjoyed and munched on at parties. But times are changing, and recently Lower Merion School District adopted a new “No Food Policy” at elementary schools.

I’ve been at Merion for six years, and over time I have seen many things change, but the No Food Policy is one of the biggest. For five of my years here, this policy did not exist but most people knew the standard rule of no sharing snacks or food at lunch. One question you might have is, “Why did they make this policy and how has it changed the school?” Here are some of the details.

The Merion Elementary School Guidelines state, “Aside from the fact that many children have food allergies, cupcakes/food take time away from instruction and may place an unnecessary burden on some families.” These guidelines suggest the reasons for this policy are due partially to food allergies, but also some families may not be able to contribute food for a variety of reasons.

After doing more research, I found an email from September 2017 that explains the reason for the policy.

(Continued on page 7)
Getting to Know Ms. Chen
By Alison Badicher

Most of you probably know that Ms. Chen is a 4th grade teacher who loves donuts, but do you know why? Do you know what her favorite sports team is? Or if she is staying at Merion as a 4th grade teacher? Read more to find out!

Why do you like donuts?
When I was little, I hated icing but then I found donuts, which are delicious and don’t have icing.

How many years have you been teaching at Merion?
This is my 3rd year teaching.

If you couldn’t be a teacher, what would you be?
I was going to be a lawyer but at 21 it felt off. I would probably be a wedding planner because I enjoy parties, dressing up, and making people happy!

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
I would go to Taiwan because my family grew up there. It would be cool to see my family history. Also Taiwan is where my mom was born.

Are you staying at Merion as a 4th grade teacher?
I don’t know but I would love to. I love Merion and all the kids in it.

What’s your favorite sports team?
The Philadelphia Flyers.

What do you enjoy most about teaching?
There are many reasons I love being a teacher, but my favorite thing is being able to share my love of learning with my students. I am also constantly learning new things and enjoy the process. I want my students to know and appreciate that learning is a lifelong effort.

What do you like most about Merion?
What I like most about Merion is its warm and supportive community. I will always remember how welcoming and encouraging everyone has been and I feel so lucky to have worked on different teams and with so many staff members in my short time here. I also appreciate the care and dedication of the Merion families and know how much they support their children’s education and growth as students and individuals.

I hope you learned more about Ms. Chen from this interview and that it helped answer some of your questions. I for one now know not to give Ms. Chen a donut with frosting on it!

Merion Students Have Their Pick of Video Games
By Yijia Mao

Today, in the world of fancy electronics, people can see their days rush by in a blur of video games like Undertale and Madden. Many at Merion have a favorite video game. So why do people play video games? What are the favorite video games among Merion students?

To find out, I passed out survey sheets to 36 students in Merion. When asked why they play video games, some say, “Oh, that’s easy; it’s for fun.” But if you think a little harder, there are also different reasons. For example, you can play Minecraft to improve teamwork, or playing coding games to learn Java. But they are right in that video games should be fun.

What games do they play?
Intense games prefer games where players get attacked every two seconds. Leisure games prefer games like Cat Goea Fishing. There are almost as many opinions as the number of gamers. Here are the favorite video games:

1. Minecraft
Also my favorite, Minecraft won with a total of 9 votes. Minecraft includes a variety of games, from a basic survival to a crazy world with thousands of players dodging burritos.

2. Roblox
With its high action and likeness to Minecraft, Roblox came short of first with a total of 5 votes. With many settings and server choices, Roblox is a great game.

3. Undertale
Popular for its great theme song, Undertale was made by a small team with Toby Fox doing most of the work. Undertale came in 3rd with 3 votes.

What do Merion teachers think about video games?
I interviewed three teachers to find out. Mrs. Barber, a 4th grade teacher, thinks students should play under 30 minutes of video games every day. Violence separates bad games from good ones, and parents can decide what games kids can play. Mrs. Raszenahn, the challenge teacher for 4th and 5th grade, thinks 30 minutes every weekend is appropriate. Students should avoid bad games with the risk of hacks and avoid multi-player games until high school. Both teachers said that we should have tasks done before playing video games.

Mrs. Heffron, our principal, thinks video games are not all terrible, and some can be educational and fun. The amount of time kids play should be decided by their parents. She does not like violent content in video games as it isn’t helpful or appropriate.

That’s the Merion view on video games. Now enjoy your games…after getting your tasks done!

Merion Elementary and Hongshan School: Perfect in Different Ways
By Yuqi Zheng

Smelling the fresh, green grass, learning English and Spanish, playing with new friends…Oh, I cannot believe I have been at Merion Elementary School for four months now! It is so different from the Hongshan School of Foreign Languages, my previous school in China—a big, crowded place.

Hongshan School is located in Wuhan, a city in the middle of China beside the Yangtze River. There are nine grades with about 1,700 students and 300 teachers. Each class is composed of about fifty students. The school starts at 8:00 AM and ends at 5:30 PM. There are nine classes each day. Each one lasts forty minutes and there is a ten-minute recess following each class. The major subjects—Chinese, Math and English—are taught every day. There are also three sessions of PE, two sessions of Music and two sessions of Art each week. All the students have the same classes, recesses, and lunches together. We are very occupied, yet happy in school.

P.E. was my favorite. At Hongshan School, we practiced short and long-distance running, played baseball and Ping Pong ball, and jumped the long ropes together. My favorite game was “Be Careful of the Blind Man” taught by Mrs. Chen. In this game, one person is chosen to be the “Blind Man” and his/her eyes are covered. While The Blind Man is counting from one to ten, everyone else finds a place on the big playground to hide. When the counting ends, everyone except for The Blind Man is “frozen” and cannot move anymore. Mr. Chen gives The Blind Man some hints and if the Blind Man touches you, you’re out!

Hongshan School offers delicious Chinese food for lunch. A set menu includes rice, two vegetable dishes, one meat dish, and soup. The cafeteria is a two-floor building with about 800 seats. Since all the students and teachers have lunch at 12:00 PM, there is not enough space for everyone. So all the grades except for first and second eat lunch in their classrooms. The students can go out for recess after lunch, so we try to finish our lunches as quickly as possible.

There is also a nap time in the afternoon. We put a pillow on our desks and take a nap, or do whatever we want (except for talking with others).

Merion Elementary School is like a new world to me. School starts later and ends earlier without the daily three-hour homework! There are hobby groups for chorus, football, hockey, and writing before and after school! How perfect the two schools are—full of fun in different ways.

MLK Day of Service
On January 12, 2018, Merion Elementary joined other Lower Merion schools for Martin Luther King Day of Service. At Merion’s table, Carly Greyen (pictured above on left) and Lauren Johns (right) shared their ideas for how to make the world a better place. Pictured below are samples of students’ projects.
Behind the Scenes of Hurricane Maria

By Ellenice Delgado-Quiles

Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017 as a Category 4 hurricane with winds up to 155 miles per hour. At the time, the whole island lost all power and was trapped in darkness. The eye of the hurricane hovered over Puerto Rico for eight devastating hours.

My parents and older brother were both born and lived in Puerto Rico. In 2005, they moved to Florida, where I was born. Seventy-five percent of my family still lives in Puerto Rico, and fortunately they all survived. All of my relatives on my mom’s side were hurt in my aunt’s house because it was the most sturdy and secure. But they could still hear the wind howl and feel the house shaking. When they came home, they saw branches and trees blocking their way, and even houses without roofs! My grandmother’s house, the wind pushed the rain through the windows and soaked their mattresses and clothing. For days afterward, they didn’t have tap water.

It was really hard for us not knowing if they were okay and if they needed anything. It felt like our hearts were breaking into pieces. We didn’t hear from some of them for days, and some for weeks! As soon as we could, we sent them portable solar lights and rechargeable fans that are still using, even now after months have passed.

As of January 23, 2018, around one million Puerto Ricans, including my family, still don’t have power, and more than 200,000 don’t have potable water. Fifteen shelters remain open and house more than 274 people. Fortunately, all 68 hospitals are back in operation. But daily life has been so disrupted that stores are closing all over Puerto Rico, including Sam’s Club, which caused 950 employees to lose their jobs.

Even so, my family always looks on the bright side. One of my aunts said, “If it wasn’t for Maria, I would never have experienced what it is like to go to bed really early at night and wake up really early in the morning. Also, to make coffee and do laundry the old-fashioned way.”

Another aunt told me that after the hurricane, “Children forgot all about their cell phones and Xboxes and played with other children outside. Neighbors that barely talked before raced outside to hug each other.”

It will take years to rebuild the damage that Maria has brought, but I am counting down the days until I can go back to my island for a visit. Hurricane Maria is truly a hurricane that will mark Puerto Rico’s history.

In My Opinion

Starting Times in High Schools and Elementary Schools

By Sophie Krivitsky

Many high school students’ parents think that the start times for high school and elementary school should be switched, and I do too. They say it will be beneficial to everyone in several ways.

High school students need to wake up the latest because of their “Body Clock.” A body clock determines when you get sleepy at night and when you wake up in the morning. Hormones and biological factors influence your body clock. As you get older, your hormones change, and that makes your body clock shift an hour or two.

Ariel Williamson, a sleep expert at CHoP (Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia) and Penn, says, “Instead of feeling sleepy at 8:00 or 9:00 PM, teenagers tend to feel sleepy around 10:00 or 11:00 PM.” On the other side, elementary school students feel sleepier earlier (about 8:00 or 9:00 PM) and also wake up earlier because of their body clock.

The parents of high schoolers are the ones who want to change the times. At a boarded meeting, Amy Norr, a parent of a high school student, said, “I’m here to talk about the stress level of our high school students, which is high and disturbing.” Research shows that not having enough sleep impacts your learning, concentration, memory, and academic achievement. In short, it makes it harder to pay attention in class and learn new things. I think this might, just might, impact test results or grades, which could in turn bring stress to everyone.

Research shows that how much sleep you get also impacts how you act during the day. If you go to bed later at night and don’t get enough sleep, it will be harder for you to control your emotions and behavior. Teenagers need to wake up later in order to have full control of their emotions. Since children already go to bed later, they get more sleep, and can handle the earlier start time. It will be easier for them to get through the day.

Switching start times would also help prepare elementary school students for middle school. Instead of buses leaving at 8:30 AM, middle school buses start leaving at 7:30 AM. That’s a lot earlier than what we are used to, and everyone will be rushing to get ready. If we switch the times, elementary school students will get used to waking up early. And, as they get older, they will get to wake up later and later, which is what they biologically need. If you have an opinion about this, or if you have a reason why LMSD should or shouldn’t change the school times, you can write to the Lower Merion Board of School Directors or attend one of their meetings. I think that it would be good to hear the opinion of those of us who will be affected by this act. I personally think that it would be a good decision and that everyone (including me) would be affected in a positive way.

“Swoosh!” Have you ever thought of what might it be like to be in the middle of a hurricane? Well, my uncle recently went through 2017’s Hurricane Irma and experienced it first-hand. So I interviewed him and asked him what it was like.

“My first thought was for the safety of my family, my wife and my two kids,” he said. “Initially I was very worried because thegrunt of the hurricane was supposed to be over my house in Boynton Beach, Florida. Then the hurricane changed course and headed for the west side of Florida, so we only got the over the storm.

Florida’s location makes it prone to hurricanes, so Florida homes have special, impact-rated windows that can stop a projectile object flying at 150 mph. Fortunately, the damage to my uncle’s house was minimal: only two screen doors blew out.

Hurricane season runs from June through November, and in 2017, hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria brought devastation to the United States and the Caribbean Islands. That hurricane season was particularly disastrous, and scientists are trying to find out why.

There are a few reasons why hurricanes have become more frequent and severe. Climate change is one key factor in the rise of these big storms. Scientists suggest that climate change increases the ocean water temperature, which helps the hurricanes to form. Climate change also affects the amount of rain in Africa, and believe it or not, this affects hurricanes in the U.S.A. The less rain there is in Africa, the more dust storms develop over the Sahara Desert. This dust can be blown 1,000 miles and reach as far as the Virgin Islands. The dust can help refuel a developing hurricane. This is a good thing—but there’s a catch. The dust can also alter a hurricane’s direction, bringing it toward the U.S. and Caribbean Islands.

Similar to Saharan dust, the Bermuda High, a semi-permanent subtropical area of high pressure in the North Atlantic Ocean, can alter a hurricane’s direction. If the Bermuda High is close to Bermuda, the bigger storms will move up the Eastern coast of the United States or out towards the Atlantic Ocean. Otherwise, storms will be pushed westward towards the Gulf of Mexico.

This past year also had a weak El Nino, a climate cycle which impacts weather patterns. El Nino brings warm water needed for a hurricane, but with weak storms, it often doesn’t. The vertical wind shear—that is, the changing of the wind’s height—can help disrupt the development of storms. So a weak wind shear caused by El Nino may allow more hurricanes.

Now that the 2017 hurricane season has come to a close, scientists are making predictions for the 2018 season. Guess what, Merion? Current predictions indicate that the same factors remain in place to produce another very active hurricane season.

A Hurricane Season to Remember

By Jack Hollowell
Let the Games Begin!

By Swoobin Ahn

Did you hear that the 2018 Winter Olympic Games will soon begin in Pyeongchang, Gangwon-do, South Korea? It will be the first time that Korea has hosted the Winter Games and the first time since 1988 that the country will serve as an Olympic venue. The Pyeongchang 2018 Organizing Committee, local governments and residents, have all worked very hard to prepare—building stadiums and other facilities.

Events will feature athletes from roughly 90 countries and will be held throughout Gangwon province in the northeastern part of the country. Skiing, biathlon, bobsled, and other snow sports will take place at the Pyeongchang Mountain Cluster. Hockey, curling, and other ice events will be held at the Gangneung Coastal Cluster. There will also be six new sports making their debut, including snowboard big air, mass-start speed skating, Mixed Doubles Curling and an Alpine team event. With a total of 102 events, this will be the first Winter Olympics to award over 100 gold medals.

I am really proud that the Olympic Winter Games will be held in South Korea. Having a chance to host the Olympics means that Korea is very important in the world. It also means that all of the athletes and visitors will see how many things Korea prepared for the Winter Games and learn about Korea’s wonderful culture. Yuna Kim, who won the Gold medal in Figure Skating at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, is Korean. She said, “My dreams used to be difficult to achieve. It’s the opportunities I had with other athletes, and Pyeongchang 2018 can help achieve that.”

This year South Koreans and North Koreans will form a unified team for women’s hockey in Pyeongchang. Many people want South and North Korea to be a unified country. I hope that the Winter Olympic Games will bring us one step closer to this goal.

I wish that I could go to see the games. There is a train called KTX, the high-speed train system, that can take visitors directly to Pyeongchang. It would be fantastic to watch the ice skating and other events, and Skating to see the players from around the world.

Now, Pyeongchang is the starting line for many athletes. Preparations have been completed, and it’s time for dreams to come true!

Sing it, Loud and Proud

By Jack Hollowell

Most people know about extinction—an animals no longer find alive, known about only by fossils or things—but how many know about de-extinction?

Many animals from long ago like the Wooly Mammoth, or more recently the Gaster Brooding Frog and Pyrenean Ibex, have become extinct. But with the help of well-educated scientists, some of these species may live again. De-extinction is the process of reversing extinction or bringing a dead species back to life.

The first major attempt of de-extinction was 15 years ago with a Pyrenean Ibex, a type of beige mountain goat. The Ibex lived in France, Spain and Portugal since the Middle Ages. The species became extinct in the year 2000. Scientists took DNA from the Ibex, and implanted it into a female from a closely related species of goat. The result was that one embryo survived, but it only lived 10 minutes as a newborn. Biologist Helen Pilcher says, “The newborn was short lived. Yet it showed that de-extinction was technically possible.”

Another effort at de-extinction happened with the Gaster Brooding Frog. It went extinct in 1987 and the reasons why are unclear. Possible explanations are loss of habitat, pollution, and some diseases. Scientist Michael Archer from the University of New South Wales used a refined version of the techniques used to restore the Pyrenean Ibex. He believes that people “have a moral obligation to bring back animals that have gone extinct because human activity.” The resulting frogs survived a couple of days instead of only minutes like the Ibex.

Currently, one of the most exciting attempts at de-extinction is to bring back the Wooly Mammoth. Since Mammoths disappeared 4,000 years ago, the DNA found in the wild is damaged and decayed. To bring back this beast, Harvard University’s “Wooly Mammoth Revival project” led by George Church, will insert Mammoth DNA into an Asian elephant, the closest living relative of the Mammoth. Church developed a technique, known as CRISPR, which allows scientists to “cut and paste” strands of DNA with a high degree of precision. Soon, they hope to achieve a Mammoth-embryo, an elephant with Mammoth-like features including thick blood and hair that can tolerate cold weather. Church says that we could possibly have a Wooly Mammoth embryo in the next two years. Harvard University’s plan is to locate and study the Mammoths in the arctic where they are isolated from human populations.

Although their early success was limited, many scientists continue to refine their skills and methods for future experiments in order to bring back extinct species. Still, others argue that the time and money is better spent saving the animals that are endangered now. Who knows? Maybe Merion students two years from now will be able see and learn about a real Mammoth and get an awesome peek into the past.

De-extinction: Bringing Back the Past

By Sara Donagi

More than a billion years ago, two black holes circled around each other. Black holes are basically dead stars that have imploded. They suck matter in, and nothing can escape them—not even light. These black holes were huge—even the smaller of the two was 29 times the mass of the sun! The black holes spun around each other, first incredibly slowly, and then, a couple million years later, faster. As they circled round, they drew closer together—until one day, zap! In a fraction of a second, the two black holes merged into one. When they collided, an incredible amount of energy was released. That energy was released as gravitational waves.

You’re probably thinking, “What in the world are gravitational waves?” Just keep reading, and I’ll tell you. Until now, everything we know about space has come from electromagnetic waves. These include visible light, radio/vl waves, x-rays, and more. Sound waves are different, but we can hear those on Earth, so don’t help our understanding of space. Einstein predicted gravitational waves, which are ripples in the fabric of space-time. Like sound waves, they can be “heard” through space—they squeeze and pull, squeeze and pull, on the universe as they pass. Everything creates gravitational waves.

The only problem is that gravitational waves are extremely weak. So weak, in fact, that only the biggest, most powerful, gravitational waves from major astrophysical events can be detected on earth, and only by the most precise, high-tech equipment. This brings me to the LIGO project, which is the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory. LIGO is designed to measure gravitational waves. Here’s how it works:

There are two 2.5-mile long tunnels that make a kind of “L” shape. At the ends of each tunnel, there is an incredibly sensitive mirror hanging on silicon threads. A laser is shined into the tunnels, and scientists measure the time it takes for the light to get to one end of the tunnel, hit the mirror, and bounce back. If a gravitational wave comes through, it will squeeze and pull the mirrors so the light takes more or less time. There are two LIGO detectors in different locations to check for accuracy. If both detectors pick up a difference in time, then the scientists know that a gravitational wave passed through. This happened for the first time on September 14, 2015. Now you know what they are and how they’re detected, but why should you care? Well, gravitational waves prove Einstein’s prediction, and they

(Continued on Page 9)
London and Paris Memoirs

By Hafsaa Kanchwala

Have you ever been to London or Paris? I went to both on one everlasting adventure with my family in the summer of 2017. London and Paris are two diverse cities with distinct people and cultures. If you haven't been to these extraordinary places, here's what makes these places special!

Luxurious London

London was my pit stop before I went to Paris. London is home to some of the most famous attractions you'll ever see. One of those attractions is Buckingham Palace, which is a majestic mansion where the monarchy lives. Buckingham Palace has an enormous garden where tourists can take pictures with the beautiful landscape and flowers arranged in a colorful way. Also, if you want to go inside this palace to explore the treasures it holds, book a tour well in advance because it is very popular. Another attraction is Big Ben, a tall and iconic clock tower located in the historic Westminster palace. It was built in the nineteenth century.

Another thing that fascinates people about London is their underground railroad system, known as the “tube.” London probably has the most railroad stops in the world because it has so many central stations and underground lines.

Exquisite Paris

Paris is an experience of a lifetime. It attracts lots of tourists because of the beauty of the city and because of the history behind this City of Love. Let’s explore its attractions. The Eiffel Tower is a world-famous structure that has been standing since 1889 when it was built for the World’s Fair. If you go up to the top of the Eiffel Tower, you can see the entire layout of this vibrant city. From the top, you can tell that Paris was a planned city, whereas London is a maze of streets. Back then, the people of Paris thought that Alexandre Gustave Eiffel’s magnificent tower was going to collapse, but they were wrong. Now, the Eiffel Tower is admitted by lots of eyes. Another attraction is called the Louvre, and it’s the biggest art museum on this planet! The entrance is a transparent pyramid. It holds the Mona Lisa, which was painted by the talented Leonardo da Vinci. It is a famous portrait painting of a woman smiling, or is she? I thought that the original painting was pretty small.

I adored both London and Paris because of the way they enchant tourists with their history and attractions. I hope you all have a chance to visit both. Merci and good day!

In Paris, Hafsaa touches the top of the Louvre, or does she?

The Ultimate Switch

By Ana Byler, Libby Coyle, and Ella Milby

Starting with a whole new class each year is a challenge for teachers. But starting with a whole new grade and team of fellow teachers, a bunch of new kids of a different age, and new curriculum? Now that’s tricky. In this article, you will find out how some of your favorite teachers who switched grades feel about their new assignment.

We asked Mrs. Doran, Ms. Chen, and Ms. Sunderland how they feel about the switch. Here are the questions and their answers.

Why did you want to switch grades?

Doran: I have always wanted to do a loop year (where the same students stay with the same teacher for two years in a row) and switching grades was the closest thing to doing that.

Chen: When Ms. Heffron asked if she wanted to switch grades, I thought, “I will absolutely do it!” (Ms. Chen loves it here at Merion!)

Sunderland: I also enjoy working with older students who have more responsibilities.

What is your #1 pet peeve that a student can do?

Doran: Yelling out the answer. I call them thieves, because they steal other students’ think time.

Chen: Not listening to the person who is talking and not following directions.

Sunderland: When students don’t do their work when they are told.

What was your favorite thing in your previous grade that you would like to repeat now?

Doran: Read aloud. I love how it lets students listen to different genres of books.

Chen: I would like to repeat the Heritage Project. I love seeing how we all are different.

Sunderland: I would like to repeat Literature Circles.

What’s the most embarrassing thing that you’ve done in front of your class?

Doran: When the rooker broke during read-aloud last year. (It broke right underneath her!)

Chen: I often misplace my water bottle and sometimes I have to ask the students to help me find it.

Sunderland: When I make a mistake in front of everyone, it can be embarrassing.

Well, as you can see, these three teachers appear happy and satisfied with their new grade. While the teachers made the switch for different reasons, they have different pet peeves, and miss different things from their previous grade, two things in common remain: they are glad they switched and they are still great teachers.

Girls Scouts Visit Harrisburg

Merion Fifth Grade Girl Scouts visited the floor of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in Harrisburg in November 2017. Pictured left to right: Eliza Himebauch, Aeslin Gallagher, Ella Milby, Libby Coyle, Nora Whalen, Avery Fallett, Sara Donagi, Aurora Soosar, Wren Purcell, and Maggie Milby.

Christmas in the Philippines

By Samantha Torrcampo

Christmas is a big holiday in the Philippines and Filipinos really go out of their way to celebrate. As early as September, people started to decorate their houses with Christmas decorations. A Christmas lantern, locally as “Parol,” is very common everywhere from shopping malls to offices. “Parol” is an ornamental, star-shaped lantern, originally made out of bamboo and paper that comes in different sizes and shapes. By December, some children go from house to house to ring Christmas carols.

Spending Christmas in the Philippines is one of the best experiences I ever had. I got the chance to be with my grandparents and cousins. We went sightseeing to check out the great light decorations and Nativity displays in various places.

My grandparents and I also attended “DOCUMENT’S CHRISTMAS,” a Philippine Catholic tradition where most people attend mass from December 16-24. After hearing Mass, families then participate in a holiday fare for breakfast. Vendors outside sell native delicacies, including bibingka (rice flour and egg-bread cake, cooked using coal burners), puto bumbong (a purple, sticky rice delicacy steamed in banana leaves, buttered and spiced with brown sugar and shredded dried coconut). Drinks include coffee, ginger tea, and ube halaya (Spanish-style hot chocolate).

On Christmas eve, my family and I attended Christmas Eve mass and enjoyed Christmas dinner. This tradition is called “Noche Buena,” a traditional yuletide fare that includes queso de bola (“ball of cheese” made of edam sealed in red paraffin wax), fruit salad and hamon (hams from the Philippines). The feast is not complete without my grandmother’s specialty foods. The Filipino-style chateaubriand consists of a slice of beef, roll stuffed with hard boiled eggs, sweet pickles, hot dogs and chorizo slices, and embutido (a Filipino-style meatloaf). We even ordered a whole roasted pig!

After we ate, we gathered to exchange gifts. On Christmas Day, some other relatives came over to pay respect to the elderly. The custom of giving respect is enacted through the “Parol.” A young one takes the back of an elder’s hand and places it on the forehead, while giving the greeting: “Mano po” (“Your hand, please.”) An elder responds by reciprocating blessing and giving presents. My family prepared even more food and gave the children presents. Of course, no Christmas celebration would be complete without singing a karaoke! In the end, a Filipino Christmas was about being cherished being with each other and wishing everyone good tidings.
Winter Concert Was Snow Wonder-ful  
By Alessandra Cahill  

Who wants some warm hot chocolate? Or maybe a candle on a long winter’s night? Merion teachers and families found all of these things—along with a bullfrog named Jeremiah—at Merion’s Winter Chorus Concert!  

Every winter, Chorus students, along with teachers Mrs. McCarthy and Mrs. Haley, host a concert. This year it was on January 17. Students and teachers got to watch it in the afternoon, and families attended a second performance in the evening. Merion has had a Winter Concert as long as it has had Chorus, and Mrs. McCarthy has been organizing it since 2006.  

“Why do we have Winter Concert?” I asked Mrs. McCarthy. She replied, “It is fun for Chorus students to come together to sing for an audience. The Winter Concert gives them a goal to focus on throughout the fall.”  

Mrs. McCarthy takes a lot of time to pick out the special songs for the concert. She usually starts planning the songs in the spring before. Some factors she considers when picking Winter Concert music are style, tempo, solo sections, and whether or not it is easy to add instruments.  

There were six songs this year. “It’s Snow Wonder,” the theme of this year’s concert, was very appropriate due to the snow and the two-hour delay that happened that morning!  

Ms. McCarthy says that the thing she loves most about Winter Concert is that the Chorus gets to perform in January. “January,” she says, “is a calmer time of year. I feel like the concert is always appreciated by the school, since it comes at a time when we are all getting back to work. I enjoy watching students perform and be part of something that is bigger than themselves. We all work hard to create Winter Concert, and I like that Chorus members get to feel special for the day due to the hard work they put in from October.”  

Fourth and fifth graders, you rocked the concert! Hope everyone enjoyed it!  

Broadway Beat, First Hand  
By Felix Kohler and Elijah S. Nichols  

Every year, after about two months of hard work, devoted time, and effort, the Merion Fifth Grade goes on stage and performs their play. Of those who were watching, many of you might have asked yourself many questions. One of which could’ve been, “What is it like to be in the Fifth Grade play?” Here’s what it’s like behind the scenes and performing.  

This year, the Fifth Grade put on a production called Broadway Beat.  

It’s exhilarating from the part when you walk on stage to the end of the show and you can’t help but smile. Besides the difficulties, you experience the thrill of performing in something everyone in the school will see. First, we performed the introduction song called, “You Can’t Stop the Beat,” which sets the tone for the show. Then everyone except the class doing the second song goes to their spot on the risers. The classes switch, and so on and so forth, until each class has had a turn. It’s exhilarating from the part when you walk on stage to the end of the show and you can’t help but smile. Doing the same motion as everyone can be fun, especially during a fast song. Before the show ends, everyone gets on stage for the concluding song and then we all take a bow. That’s when you notice how everything you did to prepare pays off!  

Along with, all of these parts mastered, you put on an amazing show for everyone. We enjoyed it and by the way, it’s not as hard as it sounds.  

Behind the Curtain: A Look at the Merion Orchestra  
By Brian Hsieh  

For many 4th and 5th graders, the Merion Orchestra is a fun place to be, especially with Mrs. McCarrick running the show.  

You might be interested to learn that Mrs. McCarrick can play all the instruments in the orchestra. She really enjoys playing the string family. She likes the flute because it takes the part of the high notes and melody of an orchestra. Meanwhile, the viola fits the harmony part in an orchestra. The music from the cello sounds like singing voice. Lastly, the bass builds the foundation of the orchestra’s music and holds everything together.  

Mrs. McCarrick finds the music pieces for her students on a website called, “JWpepper.com.” Some of the songs that she has picked for the upcoming 5th grade orchestra concert are Ninja, Stone Mountain, Stomp, Hallelujah and Sinfonia. The 4th grade orchestra members are progressing with their posture and the position of their bow as they make progress on the songs they will play in the 4th grade concert.  

Mrs. McCarrick told me that since her very first concert here at Merion, she has felt very proud of the orchestra players. She said even as a child, she wanted to be a teacher. When Mrs. McCarrick thinks about her career as a music teacher, she remembers this quote from the book, The Little Prince. “All grownups were once children... but only few of them remember it.” Among the other things that make our orchestra unique is that we have a wonderful pianist, Mrs. Haley. Also, we only have a string orchestra while other schools have a full orchestra with woodwinds and percussion. That’s because beginning band and string students don’t know enough notes to play together—but that will change soon enough.
At the Theater

All About Hamilton

By Amelia Dennis

There is slight chatter in the theater. Then, suddenly, the lights dim. The audience falls silent. But the space won’t be quiet for long. The actors slowly creep out on stage, and the room fills with warm applause. The spotlight shines on the rotating stage. And now, the amazing show Hamilton has begun.

Have you seen the musical Hamilton on Broadway? If so, you are very lucky. Almost every showing of Hamilton is sold out. Some people must buy their tickets years in advance. When I went to Hamilton, every seat in the theater was filled. You could tell the whole audience was really into the show. My personal favorite aspect of it was the choreography, meaning the dancing! When is Elbert about, exactly? Well, Hamilton is a rap musical that tells the story of a forgotten man in history named Alexander Hamilton. Through rap and song, the cast jumps to different times in his life and explains different events. For instance, the first song, which is called ‘Alexander Hamilton,’ is about how Hamilton traveled to America by ship. The rest of the play continues his life after he travels to the U.S.

You may be asking, “Does everyone like Hamilton?” Well, I can’t speak for everyone, but the answer is no. People have said they didn’t like the show for many reasons. Some thought it was too long or too boring, others didn’t like the cast. It’s challenging to find something that everyone likes, so I’m not surprised to find that some folks are not fans. For people who do want to see it, though, one of the main obstacles is money. Do you know that Hamilton is the most expensive Broadway show ever? It can cost thousands of dollars in total for an average-sized family to go. To give some perspective, you could fly to a fancy hotel in Florida and then fly back for the price of one Hamilton ticket!

However, despite its flaws, I believe Hamilton is a one-of-a-kind show. There has never before been a Broadway show that combines rap and song with history. So, if you get the chance to go to this Broadway phenomenon, do not throw away your shot!

Wonder: Movie vs. Novel

By Eden Carlson

Have you read Wonder by RJ Palacio? Or do you want to see the movie? I saw the movie and read the book, and I’m going to review both.

At the beginning of the movie, Auggie tells us about some of the many surgeries he has faced including facial surgeries and also one that helped him hear without hearing aids. While the book walks us through him getting hearing-aid during his 5th grade year, the movie doesn’t show him wearing a hearing-aid headband, which is different. The creator of the movie also took away some action, like the scene with the fight with the 8th graders. Also, being able to see Auggie’s face in the movie changes the way I experienced the story because for the movie I didn’t have to use my imagination.

Although some things were different, there were a lot of things I really enjoyed. I thought it was great that the movie makers still incorporated the different points of view of the characters. The movie was separated into different segments with the points of view for each character. I also liked that there were a lot of great actors in the movie, including Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson. And, if you’re a big Hamilton fan, you’ll be excited to know that Daveed Diggs from the Broadway show plays Mr. Browne!

I also enjoyed how there were so many different strong emotions in the movie. From the most joyful times of friendship to the saddest moments of life, the movie is packed with many highs and lows. If you’re a crier during movies like me, there is one part that will leave you in a waterfall of tears. Now, I don’t like being a spoiler, but there’s a sad scene when Mr. and Mrs. Pullman have to put down Auggie’s dog. It was heartbreaking!

Although I loved the movie overall, I wish Summer had a bigger part. She is a sweet and powerful character in the book, and there just wasn’t enough of her in the movie. Also, I didn’t enjoy that Charlotte seemed vain, because she was a nice character in the book.

The last thing I wanted to talk about is the book. Auggie tells us about some of the many surgeries he has faced. I think the book is more descriptive, but the movie is more emotional. I wish they had incorporated more of Auggie’s face in the movie. Overall, I think the movie is a great adaptation of the book.

Book Review

Ella Enchanted

By Sally Cho

Ella Enchanted is a Newbery Honor book written by Gail Carson Levine, based on the story, Cinderella. If you’re looking for a great book including adventure, danger, and romance, this is the perfect book for you.

The main character, Ella, has been under a spell since Lucinda, the fairy, touched her nose and said, “My gift is obedience. Ella will always be obedient.” It means Ella must do whatever she is told. First, Ella thought that she lived with a perfectly normal family until her mom died, and then she figures out that both she and her mom have a bit of fairy blood. She also figures out that she has a fairy godmother, who happens to be her cook. Mandy Mandy tells Ella about her spell, and that only Lucinda can undo it, or she can break it by herself but, no one knows how.

After her mom died, Ella lived with her dad, but she was sad and full of despair because her dad was mean and she missed her mom. She decides to find Lucinda and break the spell, but fails. Her father sends her away to school where she meets Hattie and Olive, who take advantage of her when they find out that Ella does whatever she is told.

When her father loses his money, he decides to marry Hattie and Olive’s mom, who is rich. Hattie, Olive, and her mom order Ella to be a servant, and because of the spell, she has to do what they say. Throughout the story, determination, love, and the courage that comes from Ella shines.

Even after reading only the first chapter, Ella Enchanted became one of my favorite books of all time. I highly recommend this book if you love fairy tales and are age seven or older. I hope you read and enjoy, Ella Enchanted.

No Food Policy

As shared in the letter, “LMSD and other districts who participate in the National School Lunch Program are required to comply with the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHSKA). The goal of this law is to improve the health of children through better nutrition. Since this new law applies to all schools in the National School Lunch program, Merion was required to change the policy around food during the school day.

You should now have a better understanding about this policy, and maybe it has sparked an opinion about it. What do you think? Feel free to share with your friends and family, and see what they have to say too!”
Eagles Triumph, Merion Goes Wild!

By Alessandra Cahill

Pass! Catch! TOUCHDOWN! Who knows what could’ve happened if Nick Foles, the back-up quarterback, hadn’t stepped up his game for the Super Bowl? As the announced MVP, Foles led the Eagles to a 41-33 win with help from Zach Ertz, who scored the winning touchdown. This win really brought Merion community together. Everyone talked about the dramatic game throughout school day. Even my teacher, Ms. Popko, had her green jersey on and asked, “Okay, who watched the game last night?” as soon as we sat down for morning meeting. Almost everyone hand up. Then someone said, “I think we had a two-hour delay this morning because of the Eagles’ win. I didn’t see any ice on the roads!” We all murmured in agreement. Maybe the school district secretly thought that since everyone was up so late celebrating, we needed an extra two hours in the morning to sleep in!

One of my classmates is a New England Patriots fan (don’t gasp). She looked a little down, so I decided to congratulate her on having her team play well, because Ms. Popko had said that we should respect whichever football team our friends were rooting for. My friend thanked me and smiled. Even if she wasn’t happy about the Patriots’ loss, I still wanted her to feel included. I think that the Eagles’ win in Super Bowl LII has brought Merion together through love, support, and the determination for our team to, well, Fly.

After the game, Nick Foles said, “This win isn’t just for us. It’s also for all of our Philadelphia fans for believing in us.” As one of those fans, I agree.

A Parade, Long Overdue

By AJ Higgins and Anna Schmittidie

A Parade, Long Overdue

By AJ Higgins and Anna Schmittidie

When the Eagles won the Super Bowl, we thought we should interview none other than our gym teacher, and longtime Eagles fan, Mr. Davis. He had a lot of thoughts on the Super Bowl win and the team itself. Enjoy!

What does the Eagles winning the Super Bowl for the first time mean to you?
I was so happy because it was their first championship win since 1960, when the Super Bowl was not even a thing! I’ve been waiting my whole life for this moment.

Who’s your favorite player on the Eagles and why?
I like Chris Long because he is very humble and a great player. He also gave a lot of money to charity. He actually donated all the game checks he earned this year.

Why do you think this win is so important for Merion Elementary and Philadelphia?
Before this year’s Super Bowl, kids at Merion would say, “Oh, I’m [like] Tom Brady!” or players on other teams. Now kids are saying, “Oh, I’m Nick Foles!” or “I’m Carson Wentz!”

And for Philly, the parade says it all. The Eagles are role models now.

What did the Eagles do best defensively and offensively?
Defensively, they get a lot of sacks and they get to the quarterback well. Offensively, we protect our quarterback so we can score. We run the ball well, too.

What was the parade like?
It was exciting, and like a breath of fresh air. No tension or anticipation. I got there at 7:30 in the morning, and there were already people on Broad Street throwing and catching the football back and forth. It was a great feeling.

Mr. Davis had so much to say from winning the Super Bowl to the exhilarating parade—it’s no wonder he’s such a devoted fan!
Fly, Eagles Fly
A Super Bowl of Life Lessons
By Libby Coyle

Fly Eagles, fly! That catchy song could be heard all over Philadelphia on Sunday, February 4, 2018. That was when history was made. The Philadelphia Eagles won Super Bowl LII. Most people thought it was merely good luck, hard work, and effort, but I think it was a bit more than that. Watching the team’s historic road to the Super Bowl, I saw five traits that made the difference between winning and losing—traits that should remain with us long after the game ends.

Equality
The Eagles team couldn’t have made their victory without all the players working together. There were no stand-outs; it was a team approach—a team mentality. At Merion, we also take a team approach with school families and classroom activities. We work together so that everyone can feel safe and valued.

Gratitude
Some of the players had a rocky ride to the Super Bowl. Several of the players were just thankful that they had this opportunity and that they had family to support them and teammates they could rely on. At Merion, we are grateful for the opportunity to learn, for our family that supports us, and for the friends we can count on.

Being Present
Thinking about the past and/or the future can ruin the moment. So make the present moment the best it can be. For 5th graders, we know this is our last year at Merion. Instead of wishing for middle school, we need to enjoy our time in this special community.

Embrace Failure
Most people’s greatest fear is failing, but look at the Eagles. They were in last place in their Division last year, but they made the biggest comeback possible by winning the Super Bowl the very next year. When you fail it can mean that you are growing. At Merion, we might forget our homework or do poorly on a test, but that is ok. We are learning to be learners, so mistakes are the key teachers.

Believe
If you don’t believe in your dreams, then why dream at all? If you believe in yourself, believe that with hard work and with the support of your teachers, family, coaches or friends, than you can achieve anything, then you, too, can believe anything is possible—even winning the Super Bowl.

Party on the Parkway

Super Bowl VII Trivia
By Sofia Viazur

February 4 was the Super Bowl when the Eagles played the Patriots. I imagine most of you watched it, but some of you come from different countries like me. So it can take time to figure out how the game works.

I come from Belgium where we don’t play football. Belgium is a little country that specializes in chocolates and waffles and the main sport played there is soccer. One of the most important rules in soccer is that you cannot hit or tackle, which is very different than football. In fact, that part was shocking for us at the beginning. Also shocking for us is the difference in size between soccer and football players!

On the day of the game, the streets were full of energy! Some wore T-shirts and hats, and others had flags on their cars. Green, green, green, everything was green! As we listened to the radio in the car, all we heard was about the upcoming game.

At six o’clock, we turned the TV on to watch the game. At the beginning, it was only ads, so I went to the kitchen to help my mom prepare our feast: A lemony salmon and salty Italian ham, and one American favorite—pizza!

We sat down on the couch just when the game started. The commentators first talked about the players histories, which I didn’t really understand. At the time, I only really understood one thing: The team with the most touchdowns wins. Then the game started! Every time the Eagles scored, we heard our neighbors scream 10 seconds before us (they watched the game on cable and we were watching it on our Roku TV on the internet). So we knew in advance when the Eagles scored. Still, when I saw them score a touchdown, I pounded my hands on the sofa and cheered for my team. My voice turning into a scream that showed my happiness and loyalty for my country’s team.

I watched until ten o’clock when we thought the Eagles had secured their win. I tried to sleep but the neighbors continued screaming a couple of more time so I knew the Eagles were still scoring! It was impossible to sleep, so I stayed awake until the game ended. After the game, people lit fireworks outside to celebrate the Eagles’ victory! As fireworks faded, I fell asleep.

Find the answers on page 16.

1. Who was the Super Bowl LII MVP?
   A.) Alshon Jeffery
   B.) Fletcher Cox
   C.) Nick Foles
   D.) Trevor Burkehead

2. What was the most unlikely winning play in this bunch?
   A.) Foles/Burkehead touchdown
   B.) Ajayi 67-yard drive
   C.) Brady/Gronkowski touchdown
   D.) Jake Elliott 46-yard Field goal

3. How many touchdowns did the Patriots score?
   A.) 2   B.) 6   C.) 4   D.) 5

1-3: 16
A Dream Come True: The Kawaii Kitty Cafe

By Delphine Reid

Did you ever dream of a cozy place to sit down and relax while drinking the most amazing drink you ever had and cuddling a fluffy fur ball? Well, at the Kawaii Kitty Cafe in Queen Village, your dream will come true!

In Japanese, the word "kawaii" means "cute." The Kawaii Kitty Cafe has cute things everywhere—the fluffy furniture, the menu items, and the kittens themselves.

What is a cat cafe, you might ask? Cat cafes have been around in Tokyo for over ten years, but the Kawaii Kitty Cafe opened in Philadelphia in 2016. It’s a place where adoptable cats get to play cage-free, and humans can relax with a book, snack, and a sweet kitty in their lap. You can play with the cats, and even adopt one and take it home.

Ordering from the Kawaii Kitty Cafe menu will be one of the best parts of your visit. The menu has adorable kitty-themed ice cream sundaes and hot chocolate drinks. One of the most popular drinks is the Unicorn Hot Chocolate, which is made with whipped cream, animal cookies, sprinkles, pink marshmallows, Hello Kitty candy, and their secret ingredient: "unicorn magic!"

What if you have allergies? You can still visit the cafe, because the coffee shop is separate from the kittens, and you can watch the kittens through the window.

You can visit the Kawaii Kitty Cafe at 759 S. 4th Street in Philadelphia. Reservations are recommended. I think that you will have the time of your life, and maybe even take home a new friend. And I guarantee that you will leave covered in cat fur.

The Inside Scoop on Kawaii City Cafe

By Acryanne Cannan

Located at 759 South 4th Street in Center City, the Kawaii Kitty Café is a great place to have parties, meetings, adopt a new friend, or just have fun! I came across it at a birthday party and since I wanted to share the experience with Merion readers, I set up an email interview with one of the cafe employees.

Where do you get the cats from?

All of the cats come to us through PAWS, the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (philpawso.org).

What do you do with the cats at night?

They stay overnight in the cat lounge. Mostly they sleep, some nights they party. We know this by the mess they leave in the morning.

Was there ever a day when all the cats were adopted in the cafe? Yes! We even had to close the cafe once because we didn’t have any cats.

Quebec City, Canada: North America’s European City

By Marcus Schundler

Quebec City is a city with some of the most amazing stores, food, and culture in all of North America. Last summer, I took a road trip and stayed in this city for five days. Here’s what I found.

Quebec has an amazing history described in detail at the Quebec History Museum, which kids can visit for free. It has history about the Native Americans living in Canada. In fact, there is even a part of Quebec City that’s called “Old City.” It’s really worth seeing to get the feel of a European city.

There are many restaurants in Quebec that serve delicious food, too. We often ate at Cosmos’s and it had really good food. Some menus are in French because French is the main language in Quebec City. Signs are in French, too. In fact, there is even a “language police!” the Quebec Board of French Language, which makes sure French remains the main language of Quebec.

We visited the “Plains of Abraham,” a section of grass where you can see the sparkling Lawrence River. From there we saw an amazing waterfall near Quebec City called Montmorency Falls. There are a lot of steps that lead to the foot of the waterfall where you can see a big rainbow and feel the mist from the falling water—a nice feeling if you visit during the summer. There is also a path called the July 31st Trail, which is pretty steep with lots of rocks along the way. After walking back, you can get lunch at a nearby restaurant that sells great fries.

There is also a mall close to the city if you want to shop. If you want something really special, look for a Dream Catcher. It is a circle hoop with a string inside. According to Native American mythology, it catches bad dreams in the web and lets good dreams through the web. There are many other stores that sell special items like books, flags, and other Canadian things you could bring back as souvenirs.

If you plan to visit, the best way to get around is walking. It’s a chance to take in all the history that makes Quebec City what it is today.

Recipes

Leche-Flan

By Samantha Torrecampo

Leche Flan is one of the most famous Filipino desserts of all time. In every celebration or gathering, the meal is not complete without it. My mother’s Leche Flan tastes so rich and smooth that family and friends ask her to make it for special occasions.

Ingredients

12 raw eggs
14 ounces of condensed milk
14 ounces of evaporated milk
1 cup brown sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract

Instructions

Using all the eggs, separate the yolk from the egg white. Place all the egg yolks in a big bowl and beat them with an egg beater (discard the whites). Add the condensed milk and evaporated milk. Add the vanilla extract and mix thoroughly.

On the stovetop, heat a non-stick frying pan and add the brown sugar. Stir until the sugar turns into caramel. Pour the caramel into a small cake mold. Spread the caramel evenly on the bottom. Wait 5 minutes, then pour the egg mixture into the cake mold. Cover the pan with aluminum foil.

Arrange the cake mold in a wide, oven-safe dish with two inches of water. Bake at 375 degrees for about 50-60 minutes. To check if it’s done, insert a toothpick in the middle of the custard and see if it comes out clean. Remove from oven, let the pan cool, and refrigerate to set.

To serve, turn the flan over on a serving plate so caramel comes out on top. Enjoy!

Fluffy Rich Chocolate Chip Cookies

By Josephine Cini

These cookies are so important to me, and they are super fun to make!

Wet ingredients

1 stick soft butter
1 cup white sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
2 large eggs
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Dry ingredients

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 cup chocolate chips
2 large baking pans

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. First, the butter in the microwave for 30 seconds. If it’s not fully melted, stir slowly until melted. Next, pour in white sugar and gradually stir in the butter. When the sugar is fully dissolved, add the brown sugar and continue stirring. When you get a "moody mixture," add the vanilla extract. Add the eggs and stir. In another bowl, mix the flour, salt, and baking soda. Then, combine both wet and dry mixtures and stir. When you have a thick dough, add the chocolate.

Cover your pans with parchment paper. Place a spoonful of cookie dough onto a 3 by 4 formation on each pan. Bake for 15 minutes until golden brown. Enjoy!
A Frightful Elf Story

By Jack Kwiat

Gravitational Waves

(Continued from page 4)

also are going to help our understanding of two incredibly interesting and important fields, physics and astronomy, or the study of space. We might be a little young to understand physics, but I’m sure you know about space. It is vast, infinite, and expanding, and our knowledge of it is, in comparison, minuscule. That’s the importance of gravitational waves. Far more than proving some crazy-haired, old-man’s theory, they will help our understanding of the unknown. LIGO will let us detect black holes or the Big Bang or the birth of a star. We can now not only see the universe, but truly hear it, and we can finally begin to dive deeper into its mysteries.

Texture

By Jed Van Dusen

Hard, spiky, soft, smooth, bumpy, sharp. Hard is the gray rocks in a stream. Spiky, soft, smooth, bumpy, sharp. Spiky is a rose bush in a garden. Soft, smooth, bumpy, sharp. Soft is a warm pillow on a bed. Smooth, bumpy, sharp. Smooth is the cold, shiny tile floor. Bumpy, sharp. Bumpy is seashells sitting all over the beach. Sharp. Sharp is the pointy edge of a pipe cleaner.

Spring Acrostic

By Amelia Dennis

Slowly, the sun rises
Raccoons awaken from a frosty winter’s sleep
Ice and snow have fled, leaving a soggy ground
Now, flowers stand tall and proud
Grass is greener, and spring has begun

This year’s Lego First League Challenge on March 17 will include seven teams from Lower Merion, including three from Merion Elementary. Over the course of eight sessions, the teams will program Lego robots to navigate a water-distribution themed course. They will also prepare a presentation on teamwork and create a solution to a global water problem they have identified. The teams will visit the Belmont water purification facility where they will have the chance to discuss their solutions with the engineers who work there.

Says Merion 4th grader Leo Walls, “In LEGO League you have to solve a problem in the world. The problem this year is solving the water issue, like we are using too much water in ways that we don’t even think about. We also use robotics to display a problem with the water that we use.”

Shown here are the three Merion teams. The first team (upper left): Simon Nickerson, Jesse Barlow, Leo Walls, and Garrett Saxhouse. The second team (top right): Theo Gordde, Jacob Sipes, and Brandon Park. The third team (bottom left): Nate Promer, Elliot Bayer, Dylan Khan.

Lego Robotic Teams Tackle Water Challenges
Homework Yes or No? The Debate Rages on

By Aelen Gallagher

In the 1980’s, Ladies’ Home Journal started a campaign against homework, saying it was damaging kids’ health. Since then, the debate of homework has raged on.

For those who say homework is the worst, most disastrous thing in the world, the argument is clear. Homework can be stressful for kids. In my opinion, time at home and time away from school is not time for more school, but a time to spend with family and to practice things besides math or language arts, like riding a bike or learning a new card game. When kids just did 5 or 6 straight hours of learning, it isn’t fair to send them home with another 30 minutes to an hour of work.

For those who say homework is the gloriously most magnificent thing in the universe, they also have a strong point. Most of the time, homework is practice for what you learned in school that day. Sometimes homework can be activities that you didn’t have time to complete in school. Many people in the United States think American children don’t go to school nearly enough as compared to other countries, and homework can help make up the difference.

I interviewed 4th grade teacher Mrs. Popko on her opinion on homework. I asked her if she would give homework if she didn’t need to. “Well, I like weekly homework because it gives kids an opportunity to plan out their times,” she responded. “I think that’s an important skill, especially right before middle school. But also like when I don’t give homework because kids need to break sometimes.”

Some students extremely dislike homework because it’s boring or they feel it’s not needed. Some students must love homework because it occupies time at home or they know they need more practice on things they learned in school. But most students are in the middle. The homework debate has been raging for over a century and, as we continue to learn more about what is better for children, hopefully, the argument between YES homework vs. NO homework will be solved.

Dynamic, Natural, and Sustainable: Aquaponics Live in Third Grade

By Sasha Grollman

Imagine creating your own special environment where plants and fish can thrive. Well, with aquaponics, you can do it in a bottle or even in your backyard. At Merion, two third grade classroom teachers have aquaponics tanks that combine aquaculture (raising fish) and hydroponics (raising plants without soil). It’s a great way to learn about science first-hand.

Aquaponics is very popular. Why? For starters, students get to have the fun and unusual experience of growing plants and observing fish. Aquaponics tanks have also become popular because of their water-saving features. They recycle their water, so people can grow plants while using far less water than they normally would. A pump pulls the water from the tank to filter it, and the water only gets out if it evaporates. Also, plants eat mostly nitrates, so the fish in the tank help with fertilizing.

Aquaponics is a part of third grade because it matches up with third grade’s three science units: water, measuring mass, and life structures.

I asked two third grade teachers, Ms. Dion and Ms. Whalen, what they like most about aquaponics. “It’s a great hands-on experience for students that shows them what we are learning in a real life setting,” they said.

Throughout the day, students do fish observations and measure the water and plant growth. They also get to do some tank maintenance like changing the water and vacuuming, while the teachers clean out the filters and prune, or pull dead leaves off, the plants. The fish don’t have names yet, but the students are doing a writing assignment to convince their teachers of what they think the names should be. In May, all third graders will go to Riverbend, the environmental education center in Gladwyne, to see their aquaponics tanks.

Best of all, students really enjoy it. Faith Coyle in 3D said that her favorite part is having fish in the classroom and growing mint, basil and cilantro. In the spring, the students will get to eat the plants! I also asked Linc Kramer in 3D about what interests him most. He said that when the fish leave waste, it turns into fertilizer, which helps the plants to grow. All in all, the 3rd graders are getting three science units, all in one tank.

The Flash Lights it Up

By Anaia Goodwin and Nika Altman

Speeding down Central City, searching for a most wanted villain, you’ll find The Flash. From his red suit to the lightning bolt on his chest, this TV show will put you on the edge of your seat. If you like adventure, action, and exciting thrills, you will love The Flash.

The show is about a 27-year-old man named Barry Allen. After chemical explosion causes a thunderstorm, Barry gets struck by a lightning bolt that gives him a special power: super speed. At first, Barry is freaked out by his cool, new powers, but then he starts getting the hang of it. Barry’s mission is to find those who murdered his mother and ask them why they did what they did. Barry tries to protect his identity from the outside world but he finds other metahumans who have been affected by the same chemical explosion that turned Barry into The Flash. It becomes a big plot twist that you definitely will be binging on season 1-3.

If you want more of The Flash, fear no further! The TV channel “CW” is coming out with new episodes of The Flash in season 4! In this season, Barry Allen will be taking on some new, tough metahumans. Some metahumans are evil and some can be good just like Barry. Start watching and you’ll find out who killed his mother and other mysteries that you will solve along the way of The Flash!

Ten Things You May Not Know About Harry Potter

By Eva Boufadel

When you think of magic, you might think of Harry Potter. Here are some new historical but interesting facts about Harry Potter taken from the books, the movies, and the elsewhere.

1. Shirley Henderson, the actress who played Moaning Myrtle, was 37 years old when The Chamber of Secrets came out. She is the oldest actor ever to play the role of a student.

2. Allan Rickman, the actor who played Professor Severus Snape, was the only actor who knew his fate before The Deathly Hallows (book) came out.

3. Tom Felton, who played Draco in the movies, had to get his pockets of his robes sewn shut because he kept on sneaking food on the set.

4. In the movie The Deathly Hallows, 40 versions of Salazar Slytherin’s locket had to be made to accommodate Harry and Ron’s failed attempts to destroy it.

5. The Harry Potter books have been translated into 77 different languages including Latin.

6. In Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone, Fred and George threw snow at Voldemort’s face, or should I say, at the back of Quirrell’s head.

7. Hero Fiennes-Tiffin, who plays the 11-year-old Voldemort in the movie, Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince, is the nephew of the actor for grown-up Voldemort, Ralph Fiennes.

8. Emma Watson, who plays Hermione, often brought her hamster Millie on the set of the movie, The Philosopher’s Stone.

9. Johnny Depp and Aaron Burr are both Slytherins. Beyonce is a Gryffindor. Lin Manuel Miranda and Ryan Gosling are both Ravenclaws. Kristen Bell and Justin Timberlake are both Hufflepuffs.

10. Hogwarts is named after a flower.
State License Plates
By Sarah Nam

Across
1. Spirit of America
2. Sunshine State
3. Land of Lincoln

Down
1. The Lone Star State
2. The Golden State
3. Bluegrass State
4. Show Me State
5. The Last Frontier
6. Constitution State

Find the Animals
By Sophia Mamo

R H I N O T Y Z B M F P K S B Q Y T
B P U Q G P V C A T H K L N E Z S U
E E B P D IO H H Y B P H A Z E F R
A S I G X W R M E X I G W K M J Y T
R U Y I H U L A Q P R I Y E E H P L
I O W P H A F L F K D X S Y M X R E
X M R O P K M U A F S N A J P O O Q
B Z R X C D R S E M E E H I T N O W
Q S V W W R T H T R A P Q A C W S N
E H P P M I K Y C E V W G F I D T G
J A G U A R P B V P R I J O P I E H
C I H W Z H C W H A L E Y D L P R W
Q P C F V Q Y Z F L Q Y W O Z Q W X
Z B X I P U K L A D Y B U G P Q B H

Hamster
Horse
Jaguar
Ladybug
Pig
Whale

BEAR
BIRD
CAT
COW
DOG
GIRAFFE

M P H N A N D P G R L V J D M
D O E O Z A I R E E O P I W
X P R T N M O O G E H B E V S
Y K S R E R N A U N S H R E U
D O H O I E F P S A N S N A P
J N M M T T W O M E G I L G B
A N A M A T N B P D A M P E Q
N N N L O I O P L G R E N Y
R T I O R R O K A U F M A N N
A F I Z L E A S N I G G I W M
R E D N A L D E I R F J F I L
T J Q F K R U N M U L L I N L
N A R O D E B R U N E H C L L
N O L A H W R I U S E Y G C E
A B O Y E R X U H F I Z V P R

Merion Teachers
By Kenny Mellon

MPHNAANDPGRLVJDMD
DOEOZAIREEOPIW
XPRTNMCOGEHBVES
YKSRERNANUSHERU
DOHOIELFPSANSNAP
JNMMTTWOMEGILGB
ANAMATNBPDAMPEQ
NNNOIOPLGRENY
RTIORROKKAUFMANN
AFIZLEASNIGINWM
REDNALDEIRFJFLI
TJQFKRUNMULLINL
NARODEBRUNEHCLL
NOLAHWRIUSEYGC
ABOYERXUHFIZVPR

ATIENZA
BARBER
BOYER
BRAZINA
CHEN
DION
DORAN
FAEGEL
FRIEDLANDER
GAINES
GREEN
HERSHMAN
JOHNSON
KAUFMANN
MORA
MORTON
MULLIN
OPPENHEIM
PRESSLEY
RITTERMAN
RULLO
SAMBOR
SUNDERLAND
TINKER
WHALON
WIGGINS

Five Things You Should Know About Merion School
By Garrett Saxonhouse

How well do you know our school? Take this quiz and find out!

1. When was Merion School founded?
   A. 1776
   B. 1925
   C. 1897

2. Which teachers moved into another teacher’s classroom in the order listed?
   A. Ms. Ritterman -> Ms. Chen -> Ms. Doran -> Ms. Lawson
   B. Ms. Porter -> Ms. Sunderland -> Ms. Ritterman -> Ms. Dion
   C. Ms. Chen -> Ms. Lawson -> Ms. Porter -> Ms. Sunderland

3. What is the mascot of Merion School?
   A. Merion Mules
   B. Merion Monkeys
   C. Merion Mustangs

4. How many kids go to Merion School?
   A. 620
   B. 1,000
   C. 500

5. What year did Merion win the Blue Ribbon Award?
   A. 2012
   B. 2004
   C. 2014

Look for the answers on Page 16.
A-Day: Too Short by Jack Kelly

How Owls Keep Hot Chocolate to Themselves by Sasha Romanski

The Science Lesson by Devin Pettit

The Terrible Employee by Devin Pettit

The Secret Life of Alex by Devin Pettit
More Comics

**The Dog Days of...** by Jack Hollowell

**Avalanche** by Lucy Thoen

**Irregular Shopping** by Kyle Par

**Awkward Conversation** by Anaia Goodwin

**The Race** by Calvin Rendle
Answer Keys

From page 13

**Animals**

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<td>3. Illinois</td>
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<td>4. Missouri</td>
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<td>5. Alabama</td>
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<td>6. Connecticut</td>
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**License Plates**

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**Merion Teachers**

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**Five Things You Should Know About Merion School**

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. a

**Super Bowl LII Trivia**

(page 9)

1. C
2. A
3. D