

# Comet News

## A Battle of the Classes to Remember

By Zahel Nasari

School events are a great way to boost school spirit, bring the school community together, and promote a sense of teamwork and healthy competition.

At the recent Battle of the Classes Volleyball Tournament, the atmosphere was electric. Students from all grades were present, eagerly cheering on their fellow classmates. The game was highly anticipated and had been heavily promoted throughout the school leading up to the event, with students expressing their support through the display of their team color.

The first Volleyball Tournament took place on March 6th and consisted of three games. Initially, the Freshmen and Sophomores, and the Juniors and Seniors versed each other, with the Freshmen and Seniors taking the lead. From these two divisions, the Seniors went on to battle the teachers.

On March 9th, as the game began, the energy was palpable. The students were fired up and were determined to show the teachers what they were made of.

The teachers, on the other hand, were focused on putting their experience and skills to good use. The game was competitive from the start, with both sides battling hard for every point.

Despite the intensity of the game, there was also a strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork among both teams.

The crowd roared with excitement as the Seniors scored point after point, and it seemed as though victory was within their grasp, but the teachers were not going down without a fight. They rallied together and put in a valiant effort to turn the tide of the game. The teachers made a comeback, and the students found themselves having to work even harder to maintain their lead.

In the end, the game was decided by just a few points, with the teachers emerging as the victors, but regardless of the outcome, the game was a huge success. The competition was fierce, and most importantly, the school spirit was through the roof. It also provided an opportunity for the students to show their appreciation for their teachers and for the teachers to connect with their students outside of the classroom.

To offer some perspective on the event, Hicksville High School Principal, Mr. Raymond Williams, kindly took the time to share his

thoughts and opinions on the Volleyball Tournament. He observed that this gathering was an excellent means of reestablishing connections following the COVID-19 lockdown, as it was the first major event since then. Not only did it foster a sense of community within the school, but it also generated excitement and zeal among the student body.

The triumph of the Volleyball Tournament foreshadows the organization of many more such activities in the near future.



Photo Courtesy of @hicksvillehigh instagram

# Creating a Comet Connection

**By Gia Rangi**

With the many clubs accessible to students at Hicksville High School, it may be difficult to keep track of each one.

A new club recently introduced, the Comet Connection Club, which many people may not have heard about, has its primary focus on mental health, and strives to provide to the school to benefit the mental health of students. Advisors, Ms. Kalman and Ms. Bocchicchio originally started this club as a way for students to connect with one another and build relationships.



The Comet Connection Club bringing joy to the halls during the holidays

However, with the rise of new members, the club was pointed in a new direction, having its main focus on mental health.

This year, this club has been working hard to raise enough money to participate in events and provide the students with mental health items. For instance, before the holidays, the members of this club distributed a candy cane along with 99 coping skills to spread positivity before the holiday season, in which most people tend to experience a change in mood.

Comet Connection attempts to raise money through various pizza sales held after school before their general meetings.

They have been working diligently to spread publicity and increase involvement. There are many goals in mind that this club has for the future, which are to increase the overall positive mindset of students in the school, and advocate for greater attention to mental health. If you take an interest in mental health awareness, be sure to reach out and take part in our activities and attend meetings!

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# Hicksville's Diversity Shines at International Night

**By Taznuba Chowdhury**

International Night was hosted by the International Outreach Club on March 16th and it was well attended by the school community.

A few alterations were made from International Night last year, but they only served to enhance the event. All the performances were in the auditorium instead of the gym. Personally, I thought holding it there was a really wonderful idea because there is a large stage for the performers to utilize and there were nice lights set up that just made the whole thing feel more festive.

There were up to 22 performances, big groups, small groups, and solos. Many thanks to everyone who participated; they all put in a lot of effort.



These performances went extremely well. There were songs in English, Spanish, and Hindi. Everyone presented us with a beautiful dance from their culture to show who they are.

Many brought their flags and danced with them as well, which was just so much fun. I do believe that there was potential for improvement, such as adding additional props and lighting towards the rear of the stage.

Everything was flawlessly planned, and the Comet Chamber Players provided a wonderful opening performance, performing a small snippet from a piece called Lion City. Following that, all of the performances got rolling.

In the cafeteria, there was a variety of cuisine available, including rice meals and sweets like jalebi.

At the end of the night there was a very short open dance floor which really got everyone excited. People came onto the stage and had a blast and it gave everyone an opportunity to dance along to their favorite songs.

Overall, International Night was an amazing and beautiful night and it wouldn't have been this great without the help of the advisors, Ms. Pavon and Ms. Dixon.





# Hicksville High School's International Night



Photo Courtesy of Sahej Lehal and Ms. Jacqueline Dixon



# International Spirit Spreads Through the Halls

As a way to kick off the week leading to International Night, teachers and staff volunteered to decorate their classroom doors to spread awareness of different cultures and traditions.



Photo Courtesy of Taznuba Chowdhury and Ms. Jacqueline Dixon



## Battle of the Bands: From Alternates to Winners

By Danna Taboada

During the week of midterms, when students were studying day and night, Mr. Shmuel, the director of the Hicksville High School's Jazz Ensemble, along with its members, all dressed in formal attire, were playing a classic in the school's auditorium: *Sir Duke* by one of the most famous jazz musicians to ever walk the earth, Stevie Wonder. With the camera of an iPhone, they hoped to record their performance and submit them to MADD's (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) Battle of the High School Jazz Bands in hopes to be one of the five selected high schools to perform at NYCB in Westbury live.

After patiently waiting for weeks, the students watched their phones light up during class with a notification from Google Classroom; it was a post from the official Jazz Band classroom. It was *the* announcement that ...they were not selected.

Instead, the Hicksville High School Jazz Ensemble was selected to be first-alternates which wasn't terrible, but not quite what they had hoped.

To their surprise, only a few hours later it was announced that somehow they were now among the top five high school jazz ensembles in all of Long Island chosen to perform.

The Jazz Ensemble performed at the MADD's Battle of the High School Jazz Bands on Wednesday, March 1st at 6:00 pm along with other outstanding Jazz Bands from Ward-Melville, Uniondale, East Meadow, and Harborsfield.

The Hicksville Jazz program included *Sir Duke* by Steve Wonder and *When the Saints Go Groovin In*, arranged by David Samuel, with solo performances by Nisarg Shah (tenor saxophone), John-Ryan Chaplin (clarinet), Aster Cayabyab (trombone), Vincent Melish (trumpet), Dominic Accardo (drums), and Andrew Fontanetta and Miguel Ortiz (trumpet).

After a day of jamming out on stage and being completely stunned by their competitors, the Hicksville High School Jazz Band placed third overall out of five schools with senior Nisarg Shah receiving the Best Soloist for his performance in *Sir Duke*.

Overall, the Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of Mr. Shmuel, has proven once again the immense talent that they have to offer. It's just another achievement to add to the long list of achievements the music department of the High School has accomplished over the past couple of years. From being alternatives to placing in top three schools, they highlight the power of practice and dedication.



Photo Courtesy of Mr. Jonathan Shmuel



## Teacher Feature: Who's Who in the High School

**By Stephanie Dolan and Sabrina Bishnu-Klat**

In this edition of Teacher Feature, we interviewed faculty from a variety of departments. If you don't have these teachers this year, you may in the future!

### **Dr. Maxeiner - Social Studies**

1. *What high school did you attend?*

I attended Hellgate High School in Missoula, Montana.

2. *How long have you been teaching at Hicksville High School?* I have been teaching at Hicksville High School for over 20 years now, but I have been a teacher for over 30 years.

3. *What subjects do you teach this year?* AP U.S. History, AP Human Research, and Regents Economics and Government.

4. *What is one or more of my favorite hobbies?* My favorite hobby is gardening.

Thank you, Dr. Maxeiner, for all of the years you taught at Hicksville High School. You are an amazing teacher. You have helped so many students in your years of teaching and so many have loved having you as their teacher. It is sad to see you leave Hicksville, but we all hope that in your retirement you do all the things that you love and enjoy it.

### **Mrs. Weiss - Orchestra**

1. *What high school did you attend?*

I went to Centreville High School in Clifton, Virginia

2. *How long have you been teaching at Hicksville High School?* I have been teaching at Hicksville High school for 6 years, but I have been teaching for a total of 10 years.

3. *What subjects do you teach this year?* This year I am currently teaching Orchestra and Survey of Music.

4. *What is one or more of your favorite hobbies?*

Some of my favorite hobbies are baking, decorating cakes, traveling, exploring new towns, and introducing my son to new things.

### **Mrs. Cummo - Math**

1. *What high school did you attend?*

I went to Mephram High School in Bellmore.

2. *How long have you been teaching at Hicksville High School?* I have been teaching at Hicksville for 19 years, but I student taught at Hicksville so technically I have been teaching for 20 years.

3. *What subject do you teach this year?* I teach Intermediate Algebra I and II.

4. *What is one or more of your favorite hobbies?* I love cooking. It is my jam.

### **Mrs. Anastasopoulos - Business**

1. *What high school did you attend?*

I am an alumni of Hicksville High School

2. *How long have you been teaching at Hicksville High School?* I have been teaching at Hicksville for 7 years. But I have been teaching for over 20 years at the high school and college level.

3. *What subject do you teach this year?* This year I am currently teaching 5 different Business classes - Business Ownership and Marketing, Web Design, Financial Literacy, and Computer Applications 1 and 2.

4. *What is one or more of your favorite hobbies?* I like reading a good book and watching a good movie.

Our school has such a wide range of talented faculty and it's always great to learn a little bit about their life outside of Hicksville as well as their path to becoming educators.

# Earthquake Devastates Turkey-Syria

**By Sadaf Ahmad-Farid**

On February 6, 2023, at approximately 4:17am, the lives of many civilians in Turkey-Syria were devastated and severely impacted by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake.

The impact of this earthquake was tragic for many people, as they were sleeping in the comfort of their own homes only to be terrified and praying for their safety.

This was very upsetting news for many, as over 40,000 people's lives were taken by this earthquake. Over 110,000 people experienced non-fatal injuries, and 6.5 thousand buildings collapsed due to this unfortunate event. It was a heartbreaking scene, and as someone who personally knew someone in the earthquake, it makes it all the more saddening.

A family friend of mine had family members in a small town in Turkey. It was his brother and his wife with their four children. The day after the earthquake, devastating news was delivered to him, finding out his brother and two children had passed away. His other two children and wife were rescued; his wife going into a coma and one of his children needing an amputation. Fortunately, one of the children was unharmed.

Following the initial 7.8 magnitude event, two more earthquakes occurred; one 6.4 magnitude hit the borders of Turkey and Syria, as well as a 5.2 magnitude on Monday, February 27, 2023.

## How to Help

There are currently ways of donating to this cause to help people who have gone through this. Whether it is through a direct family on gofundme, or an overall organization, anything helps.

On the brighter side, there have been many people who were rescued. Even after 11 days after the earthquake, two people were rescued and found alive.

There were also rescue dogs currently in search of any people who have survived. For those who are consistently searching for any survivors under the rubble, the focus is hope, even in these dark times. This is nonetheless upsetting for those who have lost family members and friends.

It is very important to stay updated on these topics and world events, and to be aware of what goes on around us. The harsh realities of life wake us up and allow us to be grateful for what we have. Everyone goes through pain and suffering, but it is always important to pay respect to where it is due and to acknowledge others' pain. There are those who are not as fortunate as others, and they should be heard as well.





# The Willow Project to Impact the United States

**By Tasmiya Rahman**

The amount of fossil fuels and gas that is available to the world for use is declining by the day. Fossil fuels are used to produce electricity, heat up homes, power engines, etc. We practically depend on fossil fuels to live our lives. When fossil fuels are burned, they release carbon dioxide which traps heat in our atmosphere. However, the consequence of this extreme dependence on fossil fuels is global warming.

Global warming affects the Arctic more than it does any other place in this world.

The Willow Project is a 30-year plan proposed by ConocoPhillips, a petroleum company, to

drill in many regions in Alaska near native communities to get large amounts of oil and gas.

ConocoPhillips plans to spend \$8 to \$10 billion on this project, far more expensive than any other oil plan ever proposed.

It is estimated that 250 million metric tons of carbon dioxide are going to be released into the atmosphere over the next 30 years if this plan is implemented.

The oil infrastructure is going to destroy the ecosystems, wildlife, and societies of Alaska. Environmental specialists have expressed that the project can be more protective of wildlife by shrinking the project.

Although known for having extremely detrimental effects to the climate of Alaska, the

Willow Project will produce 614 million barrels of oil over the course of 30 years. That much oil is enough for the entire United States of America for a month.

The Bureau of Land Management advised to shrink the plan by 12% its original size, making it about 550 acres, which would keep the development out of major wildlife locations.



Photo: Google Images

There are environmentalists who want to make sure that the Willow Project will never happen, and there are also oil supporters who believe that it will help the United States economy.

President Biden has always advocated for climate change and was opposed to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and was

successful in temporarily stopping the oil and gas drilling projects. However, federal courts overruled the decisions and still permitted the projects.

Once it begins, the project will affect wildlife that rely on Alaska and also indigenous communities that live there.

If you would like to voice your opinion on The Willow Project, you can contact your local representative, contact advocacy groups like Sierra Club, the Alaska Wilderness League, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Earth, and speak out on social media.

# Editorial: How Social Media Changed Our Generation

**By Kiara Rakhar**

Many teens in Generation Z have issues with figuring out who they are. This is an effect of social media and the content inside it and how it's shaped our generation. There are many differences on how today's teens live and view the world. Teenagers' lives are now all online; everything they know comes out of a smartphone, separating them from the world itself and creating a whole new world in that one handheld device. Being born into a hi-tech world everything has changed for Generation Z.

We all don't have to be the same person; standards have minimized our growth. When you feel like you have to fit in with the rest of the world, it never made someone feel better about themselves. It'll all be unbearable pressure and added weight on our backs. Everyone collectively trying to look, dress, and act the same, it's like social media is making us into clones and we're feeding into it.

Trends and comparison, unrealistic expectations and looks, all these things that are merely made up from our own minds because of social media and its lofty projections. Many teens now seek happiness and gratification online since it's all they've known. Our phones are the only way of communicating, or it might just seem like it to us.

Yes, some say it's our fault because we're the ones creating these trends and standards. We downloaded the apps, we chose to give in to the trends. We dyed our hair, changed our face, bodies, personalities, and adapted to this way of living.

Yet, some fail to see that it's always easier joining the crowd rather than leaving it. When this is what you grew up with it's hard to break these cycles. Which comes to another point being that setting these unreasonable standards never "fixed" a person. When we diminish a person's whole look, watering down their personalities just to fit into what we think is ideally prepossessing, it only exacerbates and perpetuates the cycle. Yet, in the end that person they used to be is still inside somewhere.

From the article "How Using Social Media Affects Teenagers" by Rachel Ehmke, it reads, "It is also common for kids to feel bad about themselves when they see everyone online looking perfect. Teens often

try to compensate by sharing pictures that make them look perfect, too. Then, when their social media identity doesn't match how they actually feel, they can end up feeling worse."

Comparison is something that has completely altered our spirit and desire to live a life that was designated for us. Seeing others that fit our social/beauty standards leads to comparison, knowing that we cannot change who we are leaves us feeling defeated. Standards like, being skinny but not too skinny, curvy but not too thick, pretty, less makeup, everything being analyzed and roughed around the edges just so we can all act and look the same. Not to mention the bland racism, teens of color have an immense load to carry because the standards are even worse. Things like ethnic features are now deemed "ugly" just because it doesn't fit into the list of attributes the social patriarchy perceives to be beautiful.

Though social media has brought us together as a community, or communities, teens are able to interact with basically anyone just by the push of a finger. It has brought us together to make friends, develop relationships, to learn and create, but that is just one side. Getting to know someone without seeing their face is much easier, and when you get that "Wyll?" (What do you look like?) text from someone, you know that the high unreachable standards could make or break that connection. It's simply just a horrible thing; we could treat someone so well and still get shoved off to the side. Social media has made us so connected, yet it's so contradictory; it's here to bring together all different types of people, but it deflects change.

Remember that change can be good, and not only that it will bring you together with others but it will make you connected to the people who see you and accept you for who you are. There was never a need for physical change, the way you look is not an issue. The issue is not letting people be people, not letting us grow into what we were meant to be. The next time you open a Social media app, think before making a rude comment, realize that standards may have altered your brain too, for it has for everyone.



# A High School Journalist Becomes an Award-Winning Reporter

By Samantha Castro

Thomas Maier, a journalist with Newsday, was a featured speaker during our Career Day assembly in December. Like many who signed up for his presentation, he states that his interest in the field of journalism began in high school, discussing how "As a freshman, I delivered copies of the newspaper to my neighbors after school. It was my first job and piqued my interest in the news."

Like our school, Thomas Maier's high school also had a school newspaper and he joined as an editor and columnist. Other aspirations, such as being a lawyer or politician captivated him for a while, but he combined his passion for public service and politics with his innate ability to express himself creatively and the opportunity to meet new people as a journalist.

Many aspiring writers and journalists face the same, taxing question of what happens post-college. For many who appreciate the arts, entertainment, or related fields, this is often what deters people from careers related to their passions. These industries are competitive, and Maier remembers how print journalism was a "particularly difficult place to find a job". Maier graduated from Fordham, and discussed these concerns with a distinguished alumni colleague who was a top editor at the Associated Press in Manhattan.

He followed his advice exactly, which was to start small, and get a graduate degree from Columbia University, the best school for journalism in the country. This advice led Maier to receive the alumni award from his alma mater 40 years after graduating for his distinguished and accomplished career in writing and journalism.

However, his path to Newsday wasn't straightforward. Before becoming an awarded and accomplished journalist who made history at Newsday, he unsuccessfully applied after graduating from Columbia. He worked at a larger newspaper, the Chicago Sun Times, but in 1984, Maier was hired by Newsday and never looked back.

Throughout this time, he notes that he looks up to the late Bob Greene, Newsday's legendary investigative editor, who brought him on to the paper and became a mentor of his. Another strong influence on him has been Laurie Garrett, a colleague of his who won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting on infectious diseases and the dangers of pandemics before Covid-19.

In addition to being an accomplished and awarded journalist, Thomas Maier has written three books

about the Kennedy family; the latest of the sequence is scheduled to be made into a Paramount+ documentary scheduled to appear in 2024. Similarly, his biography of psychological researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson was made into a Showtime television series, which ran for four seasons.

When asked about his favorite branch of journalism, Maier recalls a 2001 investigative reporting series which led him much further than Long Island, but to testify in front of the US Senate, and even to El Salvador. After writing this article, Thomas Maier won the top award from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. In nearly 40 years, he has done more investigative reporting than anyone in Newsday's history. However, he does write the occasional feature story, noting one he wrote last year about *The Godfather* and its Long Island connections. Maier loves to interview people, because he's "always surprised by what they have to tell (him)". As a book writer, he always enjoys finding bits of history previously ignored.

Maier notes that, "There is a crisis in modern journalism right now where many longtime newspapers around the nation are collapsing." Whether it's the state of our nation, the transition to online reading, or additional factors, "Finding a way to pay for well educated journalists, and a news site that responsibly informs the public, will be a great challenge for this new generation." After The 2017 struggle of fake news and extremely biased reporting, education and truthful news is more important than ever.

Despite this depressing news, Maier advises those who are passionate about journalism to pursue the field, and "...To seek out advice from the very best people you can find and make sure you follow it.", as well as to "Read and write-a lot! Join the school paper." Keep a personal notebook of your observations and experiences.

Make sure to read as many magazines and news sites as possible. The key idea here is, to be a good journalist, writer, or person, is to read and write more (and join the school newspaper).

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If you're interested in joining Comet News, check out our Instagram, @hicksvillecometnews, or talk to any officer or our advisor, Mrs. Civello, for more information.)



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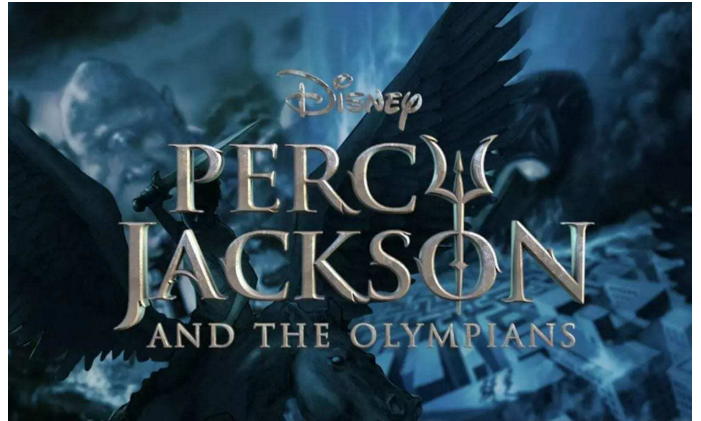
Ms. Civello

# Coming Soon to Disney Plus: *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*

By Yaritza Menjivar

Back in 2022, the announcement of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series being adapted to a live TV show on Disney Plus sent a buzz all throughout the internet. *The Lightning Thief*, which is the first book of the series, was one of those few books that actually kept the attention of middle schoolers (sorry English teachers).

*The Lightning Thief* focuses on Percy Jackson, son of Poseidon, and his satyr and demigod friends, Annabeth and Grover, as they embark on a dangerous quest to bring back Zeus' lightning bolt that had been stolen. After the huge inaccuracies that plagued the previous film adaptations, like the storyline itself and the characters' ages, people are excited to see how Riordan will bring the story to life.



Cast as Percy Jackson himself is Walker Scobell, who played a younger Adam (Ryan Reynolds) in *The Adam Project*. Leah Sava Jeffries, who will play Annabeth, and Aryan Simhadri, who will play Grover, are relatively newer actors. Fans are excited to see the final product of this show, especially with the author of novels being a big part of the creative team this time around.

The production wrapped up in January 2023, and the series is expected to come out in the earlier months of 2024. We all wait anxiously for the premiere date to come!

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