

# THE PULSE



December 2025

THE HEARTBEAT OF SYOSSET

## Unrivaled: Syosset's #1 Ranking

The Syosset Central School District is ranked the number one school district in New York by Niche.

By: Ridyansh Agrawal

True to its reputation, and no surprise to those who revel in its communal PRIDE, Syosset Central School District has been ranked by Niche as #1 in New York state and #2 in its national rankings. Principal Dr. Giovanni Durante reflected on Syosset's living legacy: exceptional teachers, ambitious students, and a community wired for excellence.

From the warm smiles at the front door that greet students each morning to the music that fills the halls and lifts spirits daily, every gesture, big or small, reflects a community that values empathy as much as excellence. Dr. Durante said, "Cultures are made in 30 seconds. We try to make every interaction a positive one."

Syosset's culture of achievement is fueled by the unwavering collaboration among teachers, families, and administrators, all striving toward the shared goal of student success, both inside the classroom and beyond. "We have something for everyone, and if we don't have it, let's have a conversation about how to make it available," said Dr. Durante. From independent study options to more than 100 student-led clubs, Syosset ensures every student can find their path. From award-winning research and robotics to the arts and business programs, the district brims with innovative and diverse opportunities for discovery and achievement.

Whether in physics labs or theater rehearsals, students are encouraged to think independently, embrace creativity, and view mistakes as growth. This begins with "hiring the right teachers," those who spark curiosity and "elevate programs to the level where students will want to learn more and ultimately thrive," said Dr. Durante. The lasting impact of Syo-



Photo provided by SCSD

set's teachers is clear every day, supported by the district's unwavering belief in supporting educators. Dr. Durante said, "There's nothing more important than hiring the best teachers, mentoring and supporting them at every step, both inside and outside the classroom."

Always at the forefront of innovation, Syosset continues to shape the most progressive and memorable experiences of high school life. Dr. Durante described AI as an essential tool for education and the future, urging that students be taught not just to use it, but to use it wisely. "We're a school that doesn't wait to be told what to do by the state; we're ahead of it," said Dr. Durante. He compared Syosset's pursuit of excellence to "playing for the New York Yankees in the 1990s," where success was never final; it was fuel for the next win. With humility and ambition, the principal of Syosset High School has a clear message: it's not about the ranking—it's about the relentless pursuit of progress.



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The Pulse is published by the newspaper staff of Syosset High School, located at 70 Southwoods Road, Syosset, NY 11791. The Pulse has been established as an open forum for student expression. The opinions expressed in editorials and columns represent the views of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Pulse editorial board.

## **Distribution**

Each issue of the newspaper is posted online on the school website for the Syosset community.

# Students Lead the Way at Annual Health Fair

Clubs and Virtual Enterprise teams highlight wellness and school spirit through hands-on activities that promote taking care of health.

By: Bhoomi Jobanputra & Morgan Shen

On October 16, Syosset High School hosted its 19th Health Fair from periods 3-8, featuring multiple health organizations as well as health classes from the school. First celebrated in 2007 to promote healthy habits, the event has grown to become an annual staple in the Syosset community. The Health Fair aims to bring awareness to mental, physical, and nutritional health through fun activities.

The gym was filled with excitement as students explored tables run by different school organizations. Each club designed interactive activities to highlight aspects of mental, physical, and emotional health, aiming to turn health education into something engaging and fun. Health teacher Mr. Matthew Ring talked about how the fair provides "gifts from each of the clubs and organizations." He also described his Community Health class's fair table, where donations of cereal and canned goods were collected for an interactive ring-toss activity.

The Bring Change to Mind club focused on mental health awareness, encouraging students to reflect on self-care and the importance of talking openly about their feelings. They set up a Plinko Board at their booth where students could talk about mental health in a game-style format, answering questions about getting support and different aspects of mental health. Member Shaina Liss said, "We wanted to make sure the booth was engaging



A student at the Health Fair plays the Community Health ring toss, using cones and boosters made from cans and cereal boxes that were later donated to Island Harvest Food Bank. Photo by Matthew Ring

and informative to all the students. It's important that people feel comfortable talking about their mental health."

The Virtual Enterprise (VE) classes also played a major role in the fair, proudly presenting their student-run companies. Each team showcased its business and played some fun games to get students interested. One company that was highlighted was VitaFuze. "VitaFuze encourages teenagers and adults to take their vitamins by combining essential vitamins and nutrients into one easy gummy," said CEO Chloe Tsionis. The company introduced itself at the health fair through an interactive cornhole game. "We gave contestants the chance to win gummies that represent how good our gummies taste," said Chloe. They also conducted a survey to gather statistics about teens and vitamin intake.

Overall, the Health Fair provided an opportunity for students to learn more about all forms of health and for groups to promote different topics through interactive activities.



# From Stage to Studio: Students Shine in the Arts

Melody Chen is recognized by the Long Island Arts Alliance and Newsday for outstanding artistic performance.

By: Elaine Liu



Scholar-Artist Melody Chen works on a new piece in her art class, drawing inspiration from Monet's impressionist style. For this piece, she focused on negative space and darker tones to bring depth to her work.

Photo by Gillian Kralstein

Step into any art classroom or the theater at Syosset High School, and you'll find painters blending bursts of color, performers rehearsing under the spotlight, and photographers bringing ideas to life on screens. What ties them all together is a shared passion for creativity and the arts. Recently, three of Syosset's seniors were recognized for their passions and excellence in both the arts and academics through the annual Scholar-Artist Awards, including Melody Chen for Visual Arts.

In terms of the recognition these students receive, art teacher Mr. Damon Tommolino said, "As a Scholar Artist, [students] get their own page in Newsday monthly." Additionally, all awardees receive an end-of-the-year celebration. To receive such an award is an immense honor. The application process is rigorous, requiring considerable deliberation and effort from both students and teachers. In terms of nominating students, "a collective decision is made between all the art teachers," said Mr. Tommolino. Art students were nominated not only for their artistic talent but also for their academic performance and overall unweighted GPA.

Afterward, students submit an essay and a portfolio of their work. For instance, Scholar-Artist recipient Melody focused on "investigating the change over time, especially in the systems around us." Mr. Tommolino said, "Her concentration involves the deconstruction, reconstruction, and properties and beauty of something dilapidated, using a subtractive method." Melody's favorite piece in her portfolio was her "Pots and Pans" painting, a 16-by-24-inch acrylic work inspired by her favorite artist Monet and his impressionist style. With this piece, she hoped to capture how light reflects off everyday cooking pans and pots. In doing so, Melody utilized an ordinary scene to

showcase the creativity that defines a Scholar Artist.

Discussing Melody's growth as an artist, Mr. Tommolino, who taught Melody in AP Drawing, said, "I've seen a deconstruction of her aesthetic. When she started with allegorical scenes and pictorial imagery, she began to see the value in 'less is more.'" A big part of artistic excellence that the Scholar Awards look for is an artist's individuality and innovation. Reflecting on Melody's creative approach, Mr. Tommolino said, "She is truly thinking outside of the positive space and treating the negative space in her works as equally important, creating a void or vacuum of space."

Throughout it all, Scholar-Artists continue to be passionate about the arts. Melody has pursued art since she was five years old through many classes, workshops, and dedicated practice. On average, she spends around 30 hours per piece, often working independently or at Ashcan Art Studio. "My biggest advice is don't try to copy other stuff or other people. You can take ideas from someone else's work and expand on that and make them unique," said Melody. Thus, receiving the news suddenly one day that she had won was rewarding. Melody said, "Receiving [Scholar-Artist] validated all the effort that I've put into art over the years."

At the heart of the Scholar-Artist Awards is having a deep love for the arts. Reflecting on Syosset's commitment to nurturing that passion, Mr. Tommolino said, "I seek to show students what I love about the subject and make it contagious." Melody said, "Winning...gave me the confidence to apply to other art competitions too."

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# Introducing Rho Kappa Honor Society

A new honor society for students interested in social sciences, history, and serving the community.

By: Kingsley Ngitngit

This year, Syosset is welcoming a new honor society: Rho Kappa National Social Studies Honor Society. Accompanying science, music, and other specialized honor societies, Rho Kappa seeks students who are interested in both fields of history and giving back to the community.

Syosset's chapter was started by Dr. Laura Wenger and Mr. Martin Connell, two history teachers interested in making our school a part of this national organization. Dr. Wenger said, "The social studies department actually offers more AP classes than most other departments, as well as just different electives. So we felt that it might be the time to start to notice students who really excel in the disciplines of history, economics, and social sciences, and we came across the National History Honor Society—Rho Kappa, which is really supported by the National Council for the Social Studies. It's really the only one in existence."

Rho Kappa will give students interested in history a chance to go beyond the classroom and into the Syosset community. Mr. Connell said, "[Rho Kappa] is something that I used to do in my old school, and I saw a lot of great involvement. I saw students get involved in over 50 hours of community service. Anything from volunteering at soup kitchens to volunteering at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Having something to strive for in social studies makes social studies feel more impactful. When you're just in a class and you just have your basic periods, your basic exams...having this bar to achieve and to aspire to is something that Syosset should and now does have, and I'm really proud of that."

Rho Kappa will host several events throughout the year. The first event hosted was in November for a Veterans Day event at the VFW organization in Syosset. Dr. Wenger said, "They will meet with veterans mostly from Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, maybe one or two older men from, let's say, Korea, but they would really be the men in their 90s. But they'll have an opportunity to hear their stories, show appreciation to the men and women who have served our nation, and then walk with them to the flag pole where they do a short ceremony."

As for other Rho Kappa events, Dr. Wenger said, "December, we'll really be looking at some community service, so toy drives, maybe connecting things to Ronald McDonald House. And then each month, we

kind of have a slightly different theme. In January and February, we really want to look at campaigning and getting in touch with government officials, reaching out to our local representatives, to kind of see areas where they need support. So every month we will lay out a different focus."

There are over 800 Rho Kappa chapters in the United States of America. Mr. Connell said, "We have that ability of being Syosset. We have so much involvement in the community, from the Walk-a-thon to the VFW to all these different opportunities that students have to be involved in our school community. I love the fact that students in Syosset don't look at school as just something to go to and leave at 2 o'clock. You see students who are here and stay... working for clubs, working for sports, or trying to be involved in the community. So, we bring the Syosset community approach to our social studies honor society, which is going to make us stand out."

Academics can get quite competitive in Syosset. Everyone wants to get the best grades they possibly can and wants to be a part of a lot of extracurriculars so that they can get more attention from prestigious colleges. When presented with this notion, Mr. Connell said, "Well, I hope that most students are joining for their love of social studies, and if not, if a student is joining because they just want to achieve another honor society, that's great because we're introducing them to social studies. It's about getting someone in the door. Once you're in the door, hopefully the passion grows from there."

With Rho Kappa's first year in Syosset, students will find new ways to develop their passions and skills in social studies. "Any sort of entry point for social studies, for history, for being a part of the humanities that we teach here, is a great opportunity to get somebody interested in social studies. So even if they're not interested yet, hopefully through being in Rho Kappa, they'll feel even more interested or passionate," said Mr. Connell.





# Cutting the Desktop Cord

Syosset High School removes all desktop computers from its library and classrooms.

By: Rishab Muhammad

Christopher Baker, IT specialist for the high school, explained that the removal of desktops was part of a long-term plan to modernize the district's technology system. "Pre-COVID, we started to go full mobile. Every student, every teacher got a mobile device. The reason we removed all the desktops was because we don't need every single employee and student in the district to have more than one device available to them—it's just financially not possible," said Mr. Baker.

According to Mr. Baker, the shift to laptops and tablets has eliminated the need for fixed desktop setups, which previously required constant maintenance, licensing renewals, and hardwired internet connections. He said, "The cost of those computers was enormous. It wasn't just the cost of replacing a desktop—it was the cost of maintenance, annual licensing, and programs like Microsoft Windows. When you already have a laptop, why do you need two?" The decision affects all ten schools in the Syosset district, not just the high school. Mr. Baker estimates that the overall cost savings from removing the desktops and



Photo by Rishab Muhammad

their supporting infrastructure range between \$1 million and \$2 million. Those funds, he said, can now be redirected into upgrading mobile technology and improving wireless networks.

Despite some initial challenges in adapting to the new setup, Mr. Baker believes the transition has been beneficial. "I think it was a very good idea. It was going to be a hard change for everyone, but the cost savings and flexibility make it worth it," he said. The district's newer classrooms now rely on wireless smart technology, allowing teachers to connect their laptops directly to projectors and screens without logging in or out of shared desktops. Mr. Baker emphasized that this not only saves time but also makes teaching smoother. While some students have expressed frustration over the disappearance of library computers, officials maintain that the district's one-to-one device policy ensures that everyone still has access to technology. Mr. Baker said, "We've moved forward—now every student and teacher can bring their technology with them, wherever they go."

# Story Behind Your Safety

School administrators speak about school drills and how they keep their students safe.

By: Ivy Stallone

Safety is one of the major factors that makes Syosset one of the best schools. While many students in Syosset High School know that Syosset is safe, most don't know just how safe they are or the measures and effort the high school staff put into maintaining their safety.

Since the high school is very big there needs to be extensive preparation when a drill occurs so all staff members know their roles and responsibilities. "In the summer we schedule the days, we have a script for the lock down drill, we go over that as a committee. We also distribute the drill date and everything like that," said Mr. Raymond Gessner, one of the assistant principals. Preparation isn't the only thing needed to ensure most of the drills are successful; there also needs to be a plan that assigns roles to various teachers. Principal Dr. Giovanni Durante said, "typically I'm at the front of the building, that's my station. I make sure that the building is clear and that everyone is 30 yards away, and then I do a call using our radios to see throughout the entire building because everyone has a different station and I make sure that the building is completely clear. We debrief afterward to see if there were any issues and if it was too

slow in a certain area."

There are many safety measures and techniques, which show the improvement in safety precautions at the school. Dr. Durante said, "Under our administration in the central office...what they've done is they've built a vestibule so visitors have to come into the vestibule. There's a trap, meaning that you have to be buzzed in, and once you give in your ID and you're let in by the security guard then you may be permitted in the building with a pass that has your photo on it." This strategy aids the security guards in keeping the entire building safe from any potential threat.

There are also many rules and regulations that the school has to follow. "By law you have to have...eight fire drills and four lockdown drills," said Mr. Gessner. This is a law that is specific to New York. Syosset doesn't just ensure students are safe, but it ensures students feel safe as well. Dr. Durante said, "recently we were talking to students about how safe they feel in Syosset and the overwhelming majority actually raised their hand saying yes, they feel safe."





# Touching Upon a New Experience

Teachers new to Syosset share their background and experiences at high school.

By: Kathleen Cheng



Ms. Tittler-Ingoglia teaches her first period Symphonic Band class. Early in the school year, the Symphonic Band played *Redemption* by Rossano Galante and *American Barndance* by Richard L. Saucedo.

Photo by Kathleen Cheng

Transferring to a new school or district is a daunting task for students and teachers alike. Even the most experienced teachers must adapt to their new environment and familiarize themselves with the students and faculty. This is the case for many teachers in Syosset High School that have recently transferred or began teaching in the fall of 2025, each bringing to the table their own unique perspectives and experiences.

In economics, Ms. Destiny Parsons felt that the finance industry lacked the sense of personal connection that she was searching for. Ms. Parsons then decided to try teaching, a career that she found inspired her and let her connect with her students. While she originally worked at Bethpage as a Social Studies teacher, she recently began teaching Global History 9 and 10, as well as U.S. History here. Mrs. Parsons said, "Syosset has a positive atmosphere and a lot of personality...all students are eager to learn." However, Ms. Parsons is still adjusting to Syosset school life, making her feel a special connection with the freshmen and other teachers who are "in the same boat."

The music department welcomed two new teachers. In the band program, Ms. Molly Tittler-Ingoglia is currently teaching ninth grade Band, Symphonic Band, and Brass Ensemble. Not only is she a multitalented musician, playing almost all brass instruments (but favoring the french horn and trumpet), she also has a wealth of experience, having taught in East

Meadow, Hicksville, and having worked as an outside consultant for various marching bands. While this is Ms. Tittler-Ingoglia's first time teaching at a larger school like Syosset, she said, "students are the ones that generate all excitement and interest, with teachers only intervening when needed. The posters and signs filling up the hallways are proof of that."

The second teacher who's new to the music department is Mr. Gregory Crajci. Since childhood, Mr. Crajci has nurtured his love of the arts through orchestra, chorus, and dance. He first taught in Franklin Square and Clark High School, where he directed the annual musicals, organizing the choreography, music, and stage design. Now he teaches Music Theory and Orchestras 10, 11, 12. Unlike other teachers, Mr. Crajci has a unique connection to Syosset High School: Mrs. Rona Pontecorvo, who up until her retirement last year was Syosset's band teacher, was Mr. Crajci's teacher during his high school years. He sees his time at Syosset High School as a way to honor Mrs. Pontecorvo, who was someone that inspired him both as a musician and teacher.

Syosset's unique environment has made it a welcoming place for incoming students and teachers alike. It's a place that "values [both the] arts and academics," said Ms. Tittler-Ingoglia. It's a place with "trusted teachers," said Mr. Crajci. It's a place where everyone, no matter their background, experience, or passion can find a place to belong.





# Spirit Week Success

Annual Spirit Week comes to a close, filled with themed days, the Walk-a-thon, and Pep Rally.

By: Bhoomi Jobanputra

From Tuesday, October 14, to Friday, October 17, Syosset High School was filled with spirit. From USA colors to pajamas, Spirit Week showcased the school spirit while also supporting a meaningful cause and getting ready for Homecoming weekend.

Party in the USA Day started the week off on Tuesday and brought the energy and spirit that would last throughout the week. Wednesday brought a wave of comfort and coziness with Pajama Day. The day also featured the annual Walk-a-thon, where students walked around the track and back field to raise money for Jay Asparro's Ann Asparro Project, an organization that supports caregivers of patients affected by Alzheimer's disease. Junior Zaina Ahmad said, "The Walk-a-thon really meant a lot to me. I love being able to support the cause and help those whose loved ones have been affected."

On Thursday, creativity was evident with Movie

Character Day. From superheroes to Disney characters, the hallways were filled with characters from all sorts of genres. The week wrapped up on Friday with School Colors Day, as well as all of our sports teams ready for the much-anticipated Pep Rally. With performances from the cheer team and kickline team, the turf was filled with bursting energy and excitement for the Homecoming game later that night. "Pep rally is my favorite day of the year. I love being able to stand with the cross country team and support all of the other amazing teams that Syosset has," said senior Hannah Rivner.

That marked the end of Spirit Week 2025, which presented the high school's togetherness, creativity, and the importance of giving back. From students walking for a cause to cheering in the stands, the week proved that SYO school spirit is stronger than ever.

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1. Students channel their school spirit on Pajama Day. Dressing in a range of pajamas from flannels to full-on onesies, students showcased their creativity.

2. Participating in the annual Walk-a-thon, the entire student body circles the school. All donations went to the Ann Asparro Project, which supports caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's and dementia.

Photos by Hannah Rivner

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# Strength in Vulnerability: Resillience & Junior Day

Veteran teacher Terri Tozer shares her breast cancer journey and the deeper purpose behind one of Syosset's most meaningful traditions.

By: Ella D'Auria



Syosset juniors gather around to root for finalists in the annual Junior Day rock-paper-scissors competition. Moved by the spirit of the day, the students gathered with newfound friends in enthusiasm.

Photo by Ella D'Auria

If you're a Syosset student who has reached your penultimate year of high school, then you are in on one of Syosset's most long-standing secrets: Junior Day. A tradition for nearly 20 years, the day offers one of the most transformative experiences of high school; it's an opportunity to see one's class and one's time left as a high schooler in a new light.

If you haven't yet experienced the day, fear not. Mrs. Terri Tozer, a physical education teacher at Syosset for over 25 years, said, "We want students to go in not knowing what to expect. It's a day of challenge—you'll grow and be stretched a little bit. It really is a rollercoaster; there are so many highs and lows and all types of emotions involved." Mrs. Tozer has been deeply dedicated to the day in her time at Syosset. "This was my first year taking on a host role, but I've been a facilitator and teacher participant for years," said Mrs. Tozer. However, her new position wasn't the only thing that allowed her to understand a new meaning of the day.

Mrs. Tozer is a three-year survivor of breast cancer. She said, "Those were some of the hardest years of my life. What people don't see every day is my battle and the struggle I still have with it." At Junior Day this year, Mrs. Tozer told her

anecdote of perseverance and strength to the 11th-grade class. "I wanted to tell it as a story of resilience. Whether it's something similar or not, we all have a story. After my journey, I wanted to know how I could help somebody through theirs. I'm lucky to be here now to share, and I want to pay that forward," said Mrs. Tozer.

Through her struggle, Junior Day has become a medium for Mrs. Tozer to uplift others and help adolescents realize that they aren't alone. When asked what she hopes students get out of her testimonial and the day, she said, "I want everyone to understand that we all have stuff that we go through—whether it's ourselves, our family, or our friends. I want people to really show some love for each other because you just never know what someone is going through."

This very sense of hope, togetherness, and understanding is what makes Junior Day so special to Mrs. Tozer. "I think it's so important for the students and teachers to come together...for everyone to be on a level playing field mentally and emotionally. As humans, we need to have this empathetic side," she said. Her story continues to remind students year after year that true strength can grow out of vulnerability.





# Behind the Scenes of SYO's Very Own IT Star

An inside look at the life of Christopher Baker, a key member of Syosset High School's IT.

By: Supriya Sachdeva

How many times a day do you walk through the school library? Think about it for a second. Well, it's probably at least once or twice, whether you need to print something out, borrow a chromebook, or, on the rare occasion, even borrow an actual book. Right there sitting behind the help desk surrounded by chromebooks, chargers and most of the time a lot of frustrated students, Mr. Christopher Baker is the reason our Wi-Fi connects, our devices work, and our school stays calm during a technical catastrophe.

Mr. Baker started his journey in tech from a really young age. He said, "As a very young teenager, my father worked for IBM, and he would bring home computers and say, 'Here you go, figure it out.' And so I was just always that computer kid back in the 80s when very few kids were computer kids. So when I was in middle school and high school, I was, you know, president of the computer club and I would always help everybody with their ID issues."

Even as a teenager, Mr. Baker's first goal was to help people. Understanding that technology has only gotten more complicated from when he was a kid, he carries this same goal to this day. "IT issues are very frustrating and they're much more frustrating when you don't have any support, when you're just stuck and don't know what to do. So I like being the person that gets everybody unstuck," said Mr. Baker.

Throughout his 27 years working with the Syosset School District, Mr. Baker went through a lot, both at home and in his career. 15 years ago, on a day that's supposed to be filled with joy and happiness, unwrapping gifts and lighting up trees, Mr. Baker received news that no person could ever imagine dealing with. "On Christmas Day, 2010, I was diagnosed with kidney cancer," said Mr. Baker. To this day, Mr. Baker carries the lessons he learned from this life changing experi-

ence. He said, "I will tell you, I'm very fortunate to have very good health insurance through Syosset schools, and I was able to...have surgery to remove a cancerous tumor out of my kidney." He wants to emphasize that life is about prioritizing the important things and that even if you feel like there is no end to the suffering, "you have to have a long view. I learned that. You have to see that there will be a beyond this time, that this is a struggle. I don't know how I'm going to get out of it or how I see the end of it, but there is an after

time and there will be a time when you will look back and hopefully learn to be stronger from it," said Mr. Baker.

Outside of school, Mr. Baker leads a life as anything but the average Joe. He started his very own home robotics team that participated in the FIRST program. Mr. Baker said, "In 2013, I discovered First Tech Challenge and First Lego League; my own children were at home, when I lived in Seaford, they were 9 and 11, and we decided since our school dis-

trict didn't have robotics, we would start our own home team. So we did a home team, First Lego League, and then First Tech Challenge for nine years." Now that his children are older, he still participates in the FIRST program by taking a coaching position on the Syosset High School's robotics teams. Not only does he spend his time in robotics but he also enjoys and relishes his passion for the outdoors. Mr. Baker said, "I love to go canoeing. I love to go out into the woods. It's pack a several days worth of food and camping gear and ten sleeping bags, push off into a lake, and not come back for a few days, go camp out in the woods with friends."

Cancer Survivor, Robotics Coach, Outdoor Enthusiast; it's quite obvious that Help Desk technician isn't the only title Mr. Baker proudly holds.



Photo provided by Chris Baker

# Syosset Relay for Life Relays a Message

Students gather for the Third Annual Relay for Life to spread awareness about cancer in the community.

By: Caroline Tobjasz

What began as an eighth-grade idea became a powerful community tradition. After attending a nearby town's Relay for Life event, students Cody Lefkowitz, Nick Antonacci, and Trey Freedman were inspired to bring the event to Syosset. With support from the student council and the American Cancer Society, the first Syosset Relay for Life took place in 2023, drawing over 300 participants.

Now in its third year, taking place on October 4 from 6-8 pm, the event has grown tremendously, tripling the number of clubs and teams involved and raising \$22,000 to support cancer research. "It's amazing to see our whole community come together for such an important cause," said senior Ava Fiore, who attended Relay for Life for the first time.

This year's Syosset Relay for Life truly reflected the spirit of collaboration across the community. A wide range of student organizations and teams joined together to fundraise and show support, including the Radio Club, Syosset Football, DECA, Soccer, Cheer, Interact, Italian Club, Model UN, ACT, Robotics, Forget Me Not, Awareness Club, Wrestling, Lacrosse, Fire Fighters, Track, and Kickline. Each group contributed in its own way, selling goods and spreading awareness, making the night a powerful display of Syosset pride and unity.

As the night went on, participants circled the track lined with glowing luminaria, each step honoring



The annual Relay for Life event takes place on Saturday, October 4. Students walked and did various activities to raise money to support cancer research.

Photo by Cody Lefkowitz

loved ones affected by cancer. The atmosphere was filled with energy and hope—some people walked in quiet reflection while others played soccer, football, and frisbee on the field. The mix of remembrance and celebration captured what Relay for Life is all about: a community coming together to fight cancer, support one another, and keep the light of hope burning bright in Syosset.

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# Syosset's Digital Detox

Students and teachers share their perspective on the impact of the cell phone ban.

By: Dania Chaudhry

The 2025-2026 school year marked the end of an era. Sitting down during lunch, eating mozzarella sticks, and enjoying looking at Instagram stories used to be a regular scene at high school. This year, all students entered the school year with a hard challenge: getting from the first to the last bell without even glancing at their phones.

A primary purpose of the phone ban was to give students a digital detox, allowing them to focus more on class and increase their participation. According to teachers, this has been effective because the attention and focus have only increased in classrooms. Mr. David Gordon said, "Students are more talkative and engaged."

Students are not only more academically engaged, but also more socially engaged. Senior Ishal Alladin said, "People are less on their phones, which helps start more conversations." Freshman Maryann Tsang agreed and said, "The ban helps socializing with new

people because people are more approachable when not on their phones."

In terms of change in comparison to last year, teachers have talked about a positive influence on student discipline. Mr. Gordon said, "Since cell phones have not been out, they [the number of disciplinary actions] have decreased." Similarly, math teacher Ms. Nicole Spinelli said, "It has definitely helped because I have had to tell people to put phones away much less." Many teachers then followed with the shared remark that they were happy with the ban and in favor of keeping it.

While the cell phone ban is definitely a sizable adjustment, teachers call it a success, and students say it's not as bad as they thought it would be. Ishal said, "I only used my phone before school or for music, so now that I've converted to an MP3 player, I sometimes forget the phone ban is a thing."

# Coffee Consumption Conundrum

Coffee through the ages serves as a miracle worker.

By: Hitesh Kattula

From 9th century Ethiopia as a red berry chewed for stamina to the drink that gave Sufi monks energy for overnight prayers in Yemen to the coffeehouses in Constantinople, Cairo, London, and Paris to facilitating the birth of the stock exchange and empowering the Enlightenment's ideas to the great Industrialization Revolutions factory shifts, coffee was and still is a miracle drug.

What are the benefits of coffee, scientifically speaking? Well, caffeine improves concentration, alertness, and boosts your mood with the release of serotonin and dopamine, the chemical we all know and crave—even though we don't really think about it that way. Coffee, especially when consumed in plain black form, is rich in antioxidants and reduces inflammation. Of course this is not all scientifically proven by controlled experiments 100% of the time, but the research is highly convincing. But historically, coffee practically changed the world.

Syosset students have varied opinions on coffee



Photo by Hitesh Kattula

consumption. Eliana Leder said, "It boosts my alertness...and it definitely gives you a good rush and changes how you feel in a good way." Eliot Bih said, "I love coffee; everytime I'm up at 3:00 AM because

I have like 7 tests the next day, I chug coffee." Victor Zhao said, "Coffee's always useful. I try not to drink it in the morning or in the night, but afternoon coffee is great at keeping me on task."

While many love coffee and use it to their advantage, some disagree about its effects. Nathan Ji said, "Coffee can actually be bad for you. I just feel like you can get too reliant on it."

Some drink coffee if they have time before school in the morning, some drink coffee when they get home from school, and others drink coffee at night. From working on school work to working out to staying up when needed, coffee serves a purpose beyond simply being an everyday drink of choice.





# Robotics Reaching Out of the Classroom

Syosset's very own Supersonics robotics team aims to connect with the community at large.

By: Supriya Sachdeva



Co-Outreach Heads, Ashna Shah and Ivan Kwok, at Bristal Assisted Living Center. During their visit, they spent time helping senior citizens navigate the features on their phones.

Photo by Supriya Sachdeva

Houston, Texas. Every single year. The Syosset Supersonics, Team 9016, has been to Worlds for the past three years since they've been founded. It is a robotics team that takes part of the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition. FIRST was a program founded by Dean Kamen in 1989 and was created to inspire the younger generation to pursue their interests in the STEM field. FIRST has three different levels, FLL (FIRST Lego League), FTC (FIRST Tech Challenge), and FRC (FIRST Robotics Competition), all of which our very own Syosset district incorporates into their curriculum. Each team takes time out from their busy season to promote STEM all throughout different communities.

Team 9016, Syosset High School's FRC team aims to "bring the world of STEM to underserved groups and nurture a future closely related to STEM," said senior and co-outreach head Ivan Kwok. Senior President of the Robotics Club, Anjali Sinha, said, "Outreach relates to our goals by helping influence young students to not only become interested in technology, but also join our program. We are able to share what we love with our community, a top priority of ours." Just in the past 2-3 months, the Syosset Supersonics have managed to accomplish so much. These accomplishments include volunteering at summer camps to teach robotics, picking up trash at Jones Beach, promoting STEM at the Stony Brook Maker Faire (where people of all ages got to drive the robot), fundraising for Tikkun Olam Makers while participating in the school's annual Relay For Life, and even visiting a

senior citizen home to teach them about the world of technology. Specifically, when it comes to promoting to the newer generation, Ivan said, "Our team feels the need to bring these stem activities to the kids for them to find their passions earlier on the life. This gives them time to develop their passions and focus in on things that they really like so that when they move on in life they aren't confused on what they want to do in the future."

In the near future the team has planned many more events. They plan on going to more fairs, visiting all seven Syosset elementary schools to teach a robotics course, host a Women in Stem Seminar, help a local Girl Scouts team gain their badges, and even mentor a fellow FRC team in Canada. Senior Eliot Bih said, "We're continuing to bring our robotics workshops to the elementary schools, mentorship to the middle school FLL teams, and we're working on expanding to other districts on Long Island to share our experiences with schools that aren't as fortunate as us here in Syosset."

Team 9016 really works hard to reach out, not just in the classroom but beyond. Eliot said, "FIRST Robotics has strived to emphasize the importance of bringing each other up and "coopertition" even as competitors. It's especially important for students in Syosset to recognize how fortunate we are to have so much support from the school and community, in terms of both permission support and financial support, and that in good faith we have a responsibility to take advantage of our position and give back."



# Turning After-School Sales Into Global Change

Students at Syosset High School create successful non-profit organizations that have an impact larger than just Syosset.

By: Emma Rosenfeld

Students at Syosset High School are demonstrating how they can take initiative and make an impact on the world around them. From selling Crumbl Cookies in the hallway after school to teaching English classes for international learners, students here are proving that small efforts can lead to extraordinary change. A model example of this ideal are two student-led nonprofits, Feed the Future and Uplift Scholars.

These students are not only taking action for their own community, but also extending their reach to children and families across the world. Whether by funding nutritious meals or providing educational resources, they are making an impact larger than the walls of the school. "We are a nonprofit called 'Feed the Future,' founded by me, Angela Zhang, and Stella Park," said senior Supriya Kaur Sachdeva, one of the organization's co-founders. She said, "We started this initiative for a DECA project where we had to raise money for a certain cause. Although we didn't make it to ICDC, we decided we loved raising money for a good cause and continued with our journey this year as well."

Feed the Future raises money for No Kid Hungry, a national charity that provides meals to children in need. According to Supriya, the organization "promises to provide 100 meals for every ten dollars donated" and also "supports meal programs, funds food banks, and advocates for policies that expand access to nutritious foods." The group has found a way to connect their efforts directly to their peers' interests. "We usually sell Crumbl Cookies due to the huge demand and craving for them among Syosset students," said Supriya. Being a student means understanding

students and using that knowledge to maximize profit for the cause. Feed the Future has also branched out into other creative fundraisers. Supriya said, "We've held bake sales as well as sold bubble tea as a source of fundraising. We're always looking to sell whatever people would actually be willing to buy."

Uplift Scholars is another nonprofit at Syosset High School. "Uplift Scholars is a nonprofit dedicated to bridging the gap of educational inequalities," said co-founder Elaine Liu. The organization offers English-as-a-Second-Language classes locally while using all proceeds from fundraisers to support education worldwide. Elaine said, "In the past, we've sold all different things at Syosset High School, from Crumbl Cookies to bubble tea to Japanese onigiri. All of the proceeds we earn go to this mission." Their recent project, "Learning Under the Sky," exemplifies the scale of their vision. "We partnered with Global Teachers Institute and Teach With Africa to provide backpacks, school supplies, and early education instruction to over 300 young children in Kenya and South Africa," said Elaine.

Both organizations show how much impact can grow from within a single high school. Students at Syosset are proving that passion, creativity, and collaboration can stretch far beyond their immediate surroundings. Although students who buy from these nonprofits don't typically know where exactly the money goes, they do know that they love Crumbl Cookies and bubble tea. Ultimately, these examples highlight that Syosset has students with the passion to create successful nonprofits that make a real-world impact.



1



2

1. Before the sale, the group must coordinate the sale day, pick up the cookies, and set up their table to prepare for the large number of students eager to buy.

2. Seniors Misha Munir, Shivani Kumar, Elaine Liu, Chloe Wong, and junior Sophia Wei from Uplift Scholars give out Crumbl Cookies to a crowd of students after the final bell.

Photos provided by Elaine Liu



# Club Spotlight

## Finding Belonging Beyond the Classroom

By: Marissa Moustakakis & Hyeon Kwak

With over 90 clubs to choose from, Syosset High School has plenty of options for students to immerse themselves in what they are passionate about. Whether it is a competition-based club like Forensics, HOSA, or DECA, or a club that focuses on personal projects, like Girls Who Code, there are sure to be plenty of options for everyone.

### Adelettes:

As Syosset's group of singers, the Adelettes are dedicated to performing their best, from singing at the pep rally to attending competitions; this group spends lots of time practicing and perfecting their parts. The Adelettes often spend time together rehearsing their individual parts and growing closer to each other. "As a small group of 29, we can all focus on our own parts, like lead, tenor, bass, and baritone. We also have sectionals before rehearsals, which make our connections between each other stronger as we get to know each other better," said sophomore Evelyn O'Shea.

### Future Educators Club:

Future Educators Club allows students interested in pursuing education-related fields to experience what it is like to be an educator. This club provides students with insight into what to expect and activities to help replicate what it is like to be an educator. Junior Kayla Lo said, "My favorite club is Future Educators Club because it allows students like me who want to go through the path of becoming educators, like teachers. It teaches students certain skills to know to be able to teach kids, like lesson planning and what to expect through this profession and career."

### Girls Who Code:

Girls Who Code is a welcoming environment, even as a beginner coder. They help each other and are focused on supporting and empowering others in their community. They focus on many projects, including games and websites, and members collaborate to have fun and make an impact. Junior Manya Prakash said, "I love Girls Who Code because it's such an amazing environment for girls in STEM."



Girls Who Code provides support to girls who want to improve their coding skills and make new friends. "[Girls Who Code] is a supportive, empowering community where we learn, teach, and grow together," said Manya.  
Photo by Marissa Moustakakis

### Korean Club:

This club provides a fun and engaging experience by discovering Korean culture through its cuisine, arts, and more. Mrs. Lee said, "We sometimes watch videos and give presentations about Korean history, society, holidays, and movies. We also enjoy hands-on activities such as cooking Korean food, creating traditional arts and crafts, and playing Korean games. Our students have participated in events like the School Carnival, and our K-pop Dance Club performed at the Lunar New Year Celebration."

### Mock Trial:

For future lawyers or those interested in what it would be like to be in a court, Mock Trial gives students that experience. In Mock Trial, students simulate what it is like to be in court and spend time analyzing and studying different court cases. The Mock Trial team competes against other schools, either being on the defense or the prosecution. Sophomore Pearl Sheth said, "My favorite club is Mock Trial, and I like it because it allows you to experience what it's like being an attorney in a criminal court."



# Two-Part Releases Aren't So Wicked

Split entertainment rollouts like the *Wicked* sequel's are artistically justifiable and a change for the better.

By: Ella D'Auria

Good to finally see it, isn't it? After a torturous year of not-so-patiently waiting for *Wicked: For Good*, millions of fans finally witnessed the epic conclusion of Elphaba and Glinda's tale. I, for one, was obsessed with the whole production, but the film's rollout style remains contentious among critics and cinephiles alike. The cliffhanger and 12-month-long suspension between films were less-than-wonderful experiences, but it seems that this new popular precedent in entertainment might actually be a change for the better.

While the anticipation caused by the two-part release defied the craving for satisfaction, it did not defy the gravity of the deeply emotional story. Renowned for its intricate narrative, *Wicked* is comprised of several meticulously crafted subplots, all of which are essential to the story as a whole. As such, a single three-hour-max film would have neglected to capture the subtleties that make the story what it is. Director Jon M. Chu mastered profound emotional substance and nuanced visual and lyrical storytelling, all while doing justice to a notoriously convoluted tale. In such a binge-culture, forcing us to revisit and rethink the tale for the year resurrected a much-missed delayed gratification and appreciation for entertainment as art. The impact of this movie was unlimited by allowing the story to linger onscreen.

Being the entire Broadway musical only runs about two and a half hours, the two movies did not need the composite five-hour run time. However, acting onstage is a wholly different endeavor than in screen adaptations. What thrives in the immediacy of live performance demands far more time on the screen, and giving the story enough time to breathe across the five hours and subsequent two movies was transformative in this

regard.

Another large consensus was that the split film method frustrated audiences and delayed momentum. The former I could certainly get behind. To the latter point, I'd contend, conversely, that the anticipation enhanced engagement and resonance. It kept the relevant story alive in cultural conversation for years beyond how long it might have been had the production been expedited and condensed. Mr. Chu's extension of the tale and its rollout permitted society to interrogate their understanding of true goodness. We owe Mr. Chu some gratitude beyond our indignation.

The *Wicked* movies offer a compelling case study for the film industry's evolving approach to storytelling and audience engagement, with two-part releases continuing to challenge expectations and desires. So go on believing what you want to, but I'm going to go against everyone's favorite good witch and tell you that you can't have all you ever wanted. We must consider what we truly value in a film, because while "pink goes good with green," perfection doesn't go well with instant gratification.



Photo by IMDb

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# Backlash of *The Life of a Showgirl*

A look into one of the biggest albums of the year by Taylor Swift.

By: Isabela Mangal

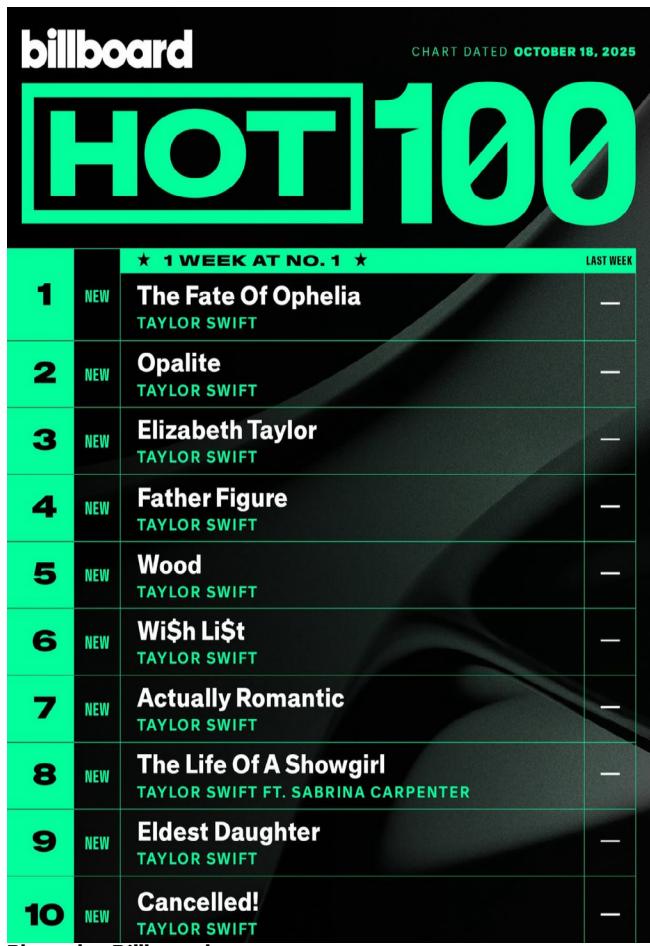


Photo by Billboard

Taylor Swift's twelfth studio album, *The Life of a Showgirl*, was extremely anticipated. Released on October 3, 2025, the album broke the record for most sales in a single week, particularly with the most vinyl records sold in a single week. Taylor Swift became the first artist to have an entire album at the top of the Billboard Hot 100 in 2025. However, at the same time, fans across social media platforms have been criticizing this album more than any other Taylor Swift album. The album has proven to be extremely successful, so several people question why it is receiving so much backlash. Specifically, the album has been receiving backlash because it doesn't meet the standards Taylor Swift has set as an artist.

The opening track, "The Fate of Ophelia," was the first single from the album, and it is centered around Shakespeare's Hamlet. Though the song has the most streams from the entire album, it has been criticized

for misusing its title. According to the play's plot, Ophelia was driven mad by the men around her and ultimately passed away. Despite this, the song is about being saved from that fate by a man; consequently, this has caused fans to believe that Taylor Swift never read the play. Additionally, many listeners have noticed that multiple songs on the album sound extremely similar to songs by other artists, prompting claims of plagiarism. On track four, "Father Figure," Taylor Swift credited George Michael as a writer because he also has a song with the same name. However, first reactions to track nine, "Wood," are that it has a very similar intro and production to "I Want You Back" by The Jackson 5. Similarly, track twelve is the title track, "The Life of a Showgirl," featuring Sabrina Carpenter, and has been compared to "Cool" by the Jonas Brothers. In addition, the introduction to track seven, "Actually Romantic," sounds similar to the beginning of "Where Is My Mind?" by Pixies. Finally, track three, "Opalite," is extremely similar to "Circles" by Post Malone. Overall, aside from "Father Figure," none of the other tracks have been confirmed to be samples or inspired by any other song.

Even though the album is record-breaking and filled with enjoyable songs, some listeners, including Cassie Kaplan, a fan of the artist for years, have said that *The Life of a Showgirl* "was a mid-tier album from Taylor Swift," arguing that certain songs feel unoriginal and affect the project's overall impact. *The Life of a Showgirl* has sparked some controversy, but it is an album worth listening to and is filled with catchy songs. Some of the major achievements were breaking the record for most sales in a single week and becoming the first artist to have an entire album at the top of the Billboard Hot 100.

Along with all of this greatness came a ton of controversy that fans pointed out. This mix of feelings about the album led fans to take sides on whether the album was viewed positively or negatively. However, with the previous album released nearly a year and a half earlier, there is no doubt that expectations were extraordinarily high. Of course, it is unrealistic to meet all of the public's interests with a single album. Nevertheless, as we fans approach this new album, it brings a new generation, aspect of music, and perspective to Taylor Swift's work.





# Perfect Blend of Sports & Comedy: Chad Powers

A show blurring the lines between sports thriller and comedy.

By: Morgan Korn

Sports thrillers are some of the most interesting parts of media. Despite this, some viewers feel that the intensity is unattractive without any lighthearted elements.

Comedy, on the other hand, is fun and light but lacks emotional complexity. This show fixes both of those problems. *Chad Powers* is a comedy TV show that stars Glen Powell as Russell Holliday. The show was executive-produced by Eli and Peyton Manning and debuted on Hulu on September 30. Its supporting cast includes Steve Zahn, Perry Mattfeld, and Frankie A. Rodriguez.

The show is a remastered version of the original ESPN sketch, which featured Eli Manning as Chad Powers trying to walk onto the Penn State football team as a quarterback. Notably, Chad is meant to be an older player with an easy-going attitude and a cannon of an arm. The show is rated PG-13 and finished its run on October 28 with episodes

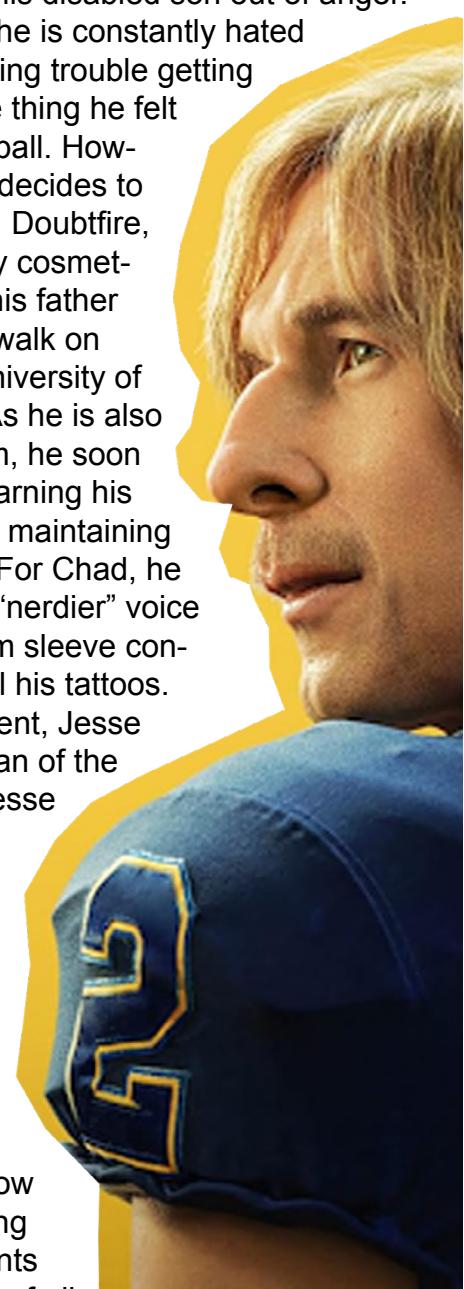


being released on a weekly basis every Thursday.

To begin, the start of this show's plot is hilarious. Russell is a former star quarterback for the Oregon Ducks who gave away the National

Championship because he celebrated prematurely. Then, he abruptly punched an innocent father in front of his disabled son out of anger. Because of this, he is constantly hated online and is having trouble getting back into the one thing he felt accepted in: football. However, Russ soon decides to pull a full-on Mrs. Doubtfire, using high-quality cosmetic makeup from his father in order to try to walk on at the fictional University of South Georgia. As he is also a part of the team, he soon has to balance earning his starting spot with maintaining his fake identity. For Chad, he uses an altered, "nerdier" voice and wears an arm sleeve constantly to conceal his tattoos.

Syosset student, Jesse Katz, is an avid fan of the ongoing show. Jesse said, "I love the show because of its humor and connection to sports. I'm a huge football fan and also a comedy fan, but now I don't have to choose." This show is widely appealing to Syosset students who enjoy sports of all kinds. Nevertheless, *Chad Powers* is also great for non-sports lovers, as it is easily understandable and includes many non-football related dramatic elements. People of all interests should watch the wild roller coaster that is *Chad Powers*.





# No One Fights Alone

Syosset Girls' Volleyball blocks out breast cancer with a winning performance.

By: Diya Thomas



The 2025 Syosset Girls' Varsity Volleyball team and coaches pose for a picture after the Breast Cancer Awareness Game.  
Photo provided by Elizabeth Christiansen

The Girls' Varsity Volleyball team secured a hard-fought victory at home in their Breast Cancer Awareness game on October 14, defeating Herricks High School 3-1. The team was led by Coaches Christiansen and Lertora and finished the regular season with a record of 9-4. Throughout October, many of the high school's teams came together to support breast cancer awareness by wearing pink. The atmosphere was contagious, with fans dressed in pink and filling the stands to support both their team and a cause that resonates with so many in the community.

The Syosset players significantly contributed to planning this night, with their efforts beginning as early as the schedule release day. They decorated the gym as a team and all wore special pink jerseys, which added a deeply personal touch to the evening. It was important to the coaches that the team balance competition with the broader goal of raising awareness around breast cancer. "It is such a meaningful night for our program, and that has the team excited to play that match. It is very motivating to them in preparation for the match," said Coach Christiansen. Both the coaches and the players worked to showcase their support for the cause. The team demonstrated extraordinary teamwork and determination from start to finish, earning the win in an exciting game. Junior Anne Toth said, "I'm glad we won...being able to represent the fight we were supporting for so many people who are helped by not just Pink Aid, but by all the other organizations around the world giving to a common cause."

The donations from this game went to a nonprofit organization called Pink Aid Long Island. In choosing which charitable organization to support, Coach Christiansen said, "One of the players spoke with her PE teacher, Mrs. Tozer, who is a breast cancer survivor, and wanted to know where we could make a difference." Pink Aid Long Island provides financial support to underserved breast cancer patients and their families. "For our players, the opportunity to do something that will make a difference here on the Island was very important to them. We now carry on that tradition yearly, playing this game," said Coach Christiansen.

This year, the team donated \$1,275 to Pink Aid Long Island. Senior Brooke Soderlund said, "Even the small action of wearing pink to the game or contributing a dollar or two can contribute to a larger movement."

Before the game, Mrs. Tozer delivered a moving and heartfelt speech that honored survivors while remembering those lost to breast cancer. The theme of her speech underscored the importance of raising awareness and supporting this cause. According to Mrs. Tozer, "I hope that by sharing about Pink Aid, people would understand that supporting those going through breast cancer is more than just research and finding a cure. It's also about providing support to patients and their families in critical financial need." Expressing how much the speech resonated with the players, Anne said, "I was really happy for Mrs. Tozer to be able to see, year after year, the support her community is willing to give for people like her or who are in her situation."

The Breast Cancer Awareness game has been a meaningful part of the Syosset volleyball program for years, and many players have had the privilege of participating in it multiple times throughout their high school careers. "The best memory of the breast cancer awareness games throughout my high school career is the feeling of playing for something bigger, especially this year in a close set where we won with everyone supporting us and the cause we played for! It was such a special game to us," said senior captain Claudia Cusa.

As the season progressed, the team remained devoted to its commitment to breast cancer awareness, both on and off the court. "The excitement and unity from that game carry over, pushing everyone to play with heart and determination the rest of the season," said senior captain Giovanna Rossillo. Through continued teamwork and philanthropic efforts, the team hopes to make a lasting impact by turning their athletic achievements into a beacon of hope and unity for the breast cancer community.



# Check in: All In

The Boys' Varsity Soccer team continues to set a standard of dedication, resilience, and leadership on and off the field.

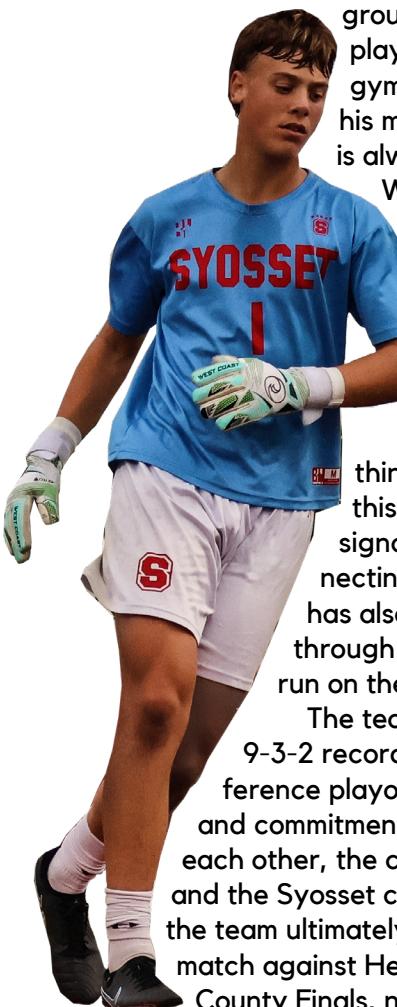
By: Lily Portnoy

All great teams need the right mix of commitment, preparation, leadership, and skill. For Coach Brett Wixer of the Boys' Varsity Soccer Team, these qualities are essential pieces of a successful, cohesive

group. Whether he sees players on the field, in the gym, or in the hallways, his motivational question is always the same. Coach Wixer said, "Check in," and the team replied, "All in." Each acknowledgment reinforces the focus and discipline he expects every day. More than anything else, he believes this collective chorus signals "a constant connecting" for every player. It has also powered the team through another impressive run on the field.

The team carried its strong 9-3-2 record into the AAA conference playoffs with confidence and commitment—a commitment to each other, the coaches, the school, and the Syosset community. Although the team ultimately fell short in their match against Herricks in the Nassau County Finals, no one can argue that this group lacked the heart and dedication of champions. As the team battled through every obstacle during a highly competitive season, senior Xavier Pultz described their journey as having "games that sometimes weren't the cleanest, but Syosset still earned each win the same."

Throughout the fall season, one consistent thread



was the team's strong leadership. Coach Wixer praised "his amazing senior leaders" and emphasized how crucial leadership is in building a winning culture. He credits them with setting the tone for younger players and fostering "the buy-in that was there from the beginning," creating an atmosphere where teammates genuinely enjoy being together and strive toward the same goals.

One highlight of the season was Syosset's fierce late-September match against one of its most formidable opponents, the Plainview-Old Bethpage Jayhawks. Widely considered one of the most competitive games of the year, it resulted in a hard-fought 0-0 tie. More than the score, the game was considered a win for all, as it served as a charity match featuring special jerseys supporting the Ann Asparro Project, an organization dedicated to raising awareness for caregivers of those suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia. The players took particular pride in supporting a cause built around the simple yet powerful mission: "Bigger than a Game."

The next time you see Coach Wixer greet a player in the hallway with "Check in," you'll understand the depth of commitment behind the question—and why the reply "All in" carries such meaning.



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# Madness on the Fairway: The Ryder Cup

The Bethpage golf tournament breaks attendance records and leaves a lasting mark on the community.

By: Ben Rosenzweig

Just last month, hundreds of thousands of golf fans came from around the world to witness what was promised to be the biggest golf event ever. The Ryder Cup is held once every two years and alternates host locations between the European team and the American team. Each team brings its twelve best golfers to compete with the goal of winning for their country. This major event happened only fifteen minutes away in Bethpage and had a big impact on Syosset students, whether they were golf fans or not.

The Ryder Cup was an event of enormous scale, with fifty thousand fans swarming the Bethpage Black course every day, hoping to see their favorite players up close. "It was so cool seeing the guys that you watch on TV in person. These are the best players in the world, and all kids look up to these guys and how good they are at golf," said Ethan Trampesch, a Syosset student who attended the practice round. This feeling was shared by many attendees, especially the students at Syosset who love the sport. "It was one of the most eclectic and fun atmospheres I have ever been a part of," said Jesse Katz. For Syosset students who have this venue practically in their backyard, attending such a spectacular event felt like a rare opportunity. Jesse, who attended the Ryder Cup on Sunday and watched the Ameri-

The view behind the pivotal 17th hole at the Ryder Cup at Bethpage Black. Thousands of fans packed around the hole to witness the Americans attempt to rally behind the victories of Cameron Young and Justin Thomas.



Photo By: Ben Rosenzweig

cans attempt to erase their large deficit, said, "It felt like it would be such a waste if I didn't go, and I am so glad that I did."

Although this event was memorable for students who enjoy golf, it also impacted the Syosset community as a whole. "Well, I have never seen traffic worse in all of my time living in Syosset," said one local resident. The influx of thousands of spectators trying to enter Bethpage caused traffic to extend as far as Syosset. "I don't really like golf, but I thought it was really cool how much these people cared," he said. Many Syosset students agreed. Even if they weren't necessarily golf fans, they were drawn in by the sheer magnitude of the event. "It looked sick, and there were so many people there, so I turned it on for a little," said sophomore Sal Locciasano.

Although the Americans did not end up winning, the event was a massive success for Long Island, New York, and the game of golf. Many people who had never watched golf before were able to experience the energy and culture of a major championship. Because this event was held in Bethpage, Syosset students and adults had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to watch the twenty four best players in the world face off for their countries.



The 1st tee on Sunday at the 2025 Ryder Cup at the historic Bethpage Black. The atmosphere was electric as the Americans attempted to mount an improbable comeback to win the Cup.

Photo By: Ben Rosenzweig



# Human Soundboards: This Meme Doesn't Count as Funny Anymore

Our use of the 6-7 joke has crossed the line from being culturally fluent to culturally feral.

By: Ella D'Auria



Two Syosset students look at a photo of "six seven kid." The photo was one of the most common emblems of the six-seven phenomenon.

Photo by Ella D'Auria

A whopping 67% of humans have never tried pizza. In fact, 6 in every 7 have reported that they'd pick pasta over pizza any day. When asked to rate pizza, the average adult's answer was a 6 or a 7 on a scale out of ten.

If you find yourself itching to lift your hands up and down like a balance scale, trying to smooth out your smug grin, or shouting "six seven!" with unabashed enthusiasm: congratulations—you've officially been conditioned by the Internet's least impressive Pavlov experiment. The absolute chaos that the "6-7" meme has created is very real. What started as a comical inside joke has now become emblematic of how dry and spiritless our sense of humor has become.

The cultural phenomenon's origins are contentious: some say it was born from the height of basketball player LaMelo Ball, while others swear it comes from the rap song Doot Doot by Skrilla. Either way, the only laughable thing is our tendency to mindlessly perpetuate the meme—it's a human construct that everyone decides to subscribe to...because?

Before I get all sanctimonious on you, I will humbly admit that I, too, have the brainworm that indicates terminal social media exposure squirming around in my head. I've plagued my poor physics and math teacher more times than I'd like to admit, but once I caught that look in their eyes—you know, the one that says, "I went to grad school for this?"—I realized the bit had run its course.

At first, I thought it was clever, and I agree it's fun to be in on these things. But now that my classmates and I can't find the angle complementary to 23 degrees, nor say the year the Townshend Acts were passed without choking back a giggle, I think it's safe to conclude that the only thing this meme sums up to, aside from 13, is

one big headache.

I'm all in for harmless fun and a good laugh here and there. My issue is that, at this point, this meme has become robotic and meaningless; "6-7" doesn't have the element of witty wordplay or timing that it used to. Jokes are funny most often because the setup creates an expectation, and the punchline presents an incongruity. But "6-7" doesn't subvert our expectations; it doesn't require thinking to make you laugh—it just makes us flinch. Our response to it has become no better than Pavlov's salivating dogs. When something around us presents the misfortune of ringing that mental bell, we are conditioned to twitch and grin. It's less a joke and more a reflex—it's just not funny anymore. At its best, the 6-7 joke is performative, and at its worst, it's exhausting.

The overuse attests to a larger theme beyond personal annoyance. Humor spreads reflexively rather than cleverly. We are forming a participation-over-creativity culture; people feel obligated to perpetuate the joke. The worst part is that it's ruining the way we communicate: our humor reflects our new cultural hypnosis; we employ our reflexes instead of natural wit and charisma. In the most literal sense of the colloquial term, 6-7 is "brainrot."

So the next time you hear everyone's favorite line in Doot Doot by Skrilla, pause and reconsider before you surrender your self-control and wit to the tyranny of two arbitrary numbers. Culture only survives when we choose creativity over conditioning. It's harmless fun today, but I'd urge you not to count on mindless brainrot as the foundation of your humor. We are becoming obedient vessels of empty humor, and soon we'll be wagging our tails at whatever viral nonsense comes next.



# We Are Officially Cooked

Our obsession with convenience food delivery services has spiraled completely out of control.

By: Ella D'Auria

Lay's potato chips are good, but they are not 11-dollars-and-a-severe-blow-to-my-dignity good. The moment I saw my friend place an order for a solitary bag of chips from 7-Eleven (at express delivery for an extra three dollars) on DoorDash, I realized we had officially lost the plot with food delivery. As of late, our gluttony, disregard for monetary absurdity, and indolence have caused convenience to eclipse our standards for "reasonable." At this rate, in the most literal sense of the colloquial term, we are all cooked.

First of all, with all due respect, there is absolutely zero dignified way to answer the door for a \$14 bag of chips. Yet, our shame has disappeared since the temptation of indulgence has conquered our patience and reason. Why should we go grab a snack, or, god forbid, fix it ourselves, when we can pay to be served immediately? Research on recreational shopping

by colleagues Junghyun Kim and Robert Larose found that reduced friction and effort required when ordering stimulates impulsivity and gratification in consumption. One interviewee in an article on e-commerce by Deborah Lau shared how she "feels excitement after ordering something and at the thought of receiving a package after buying it." In this new age of convenience, indulgence is trending, and it seems overordering beyond necessity and without justification is the new norm.

Moreover, the average price for a single party-size bag of Lay's chips sits around five dollars. Not only is half of the bag notoriously being air a highway robbery in its own regard, but somehow paying nine extra dollars on other exorbitant expenses is absurd. Between the service fee, the delivery fee, the tax, the tip, and the option for express delivery to top it all off, we are throwing

around small fortunes on evanescent pleasures and still believing it convenient. I can't instruct you on how to operate monetarily, but it is indisputable that hemorrhaging copious amounts of money on what could be independently produced or what is simply not necessary is questionable at the very least.

It seems that with our ravaging overconsumption, we are biting off more than we can chew. E-commerce as a whole is fueling a concerning proliferation of wastage and causing significant harm to our ecosystem. According to Lau's article,

a 60% global increase in delivery vehicles by 2030 is expected to contribute to a consequent 60% rise in carbon emissions. If the environment doesn't concern you, at least recognize the emergence of an addictive cycle. What was once a tool for occasional ease and luxury now is abused by impulse, reinforced by

Photo by DoorDash

an automatic, compulsive response to the temptation of convenience, laying the foundation for a problematic societal and individual habit of dependency.

I'd be remiss not to acknowledge that I'm part of the problem, too. I've had two separate door-dashers arrive at the same time to my house—it's a uniquely sobering moment when your front porch starts operating like a reverse drive-thru. We, as a society, must learn to curb this cycle. We don't have to forgo convenience. Conversely, we have to reintroduce intention and justification. Be candid with yourself: is the order necessary? Does the environment and financial footprint align with your momentary ease? Force yourself to let convenience operate as a tool, not a reflex. We have to reestablish some boundaries, before more serious problems come knocking at our door.





# Long Island's Bad Drivers Are More Than Just An Annoyance: They're a Public Hazard

By: Chengshui Yun

Anyone who has spent hours on Long Island roads knows the truth: this island has a bad driver problem. Not just an occasional careless driver, but a culture of impatience, aggression, and recklessness that is deeply rooted in our daily lives, as if it's totally normal.

It's not simply that there are too many "bad" drivers on Long Island; there are too many impatient drivers who will do anything to save a couple of seconds. Driving 10 miles per hour above the speed limit and still being the slowest driver? Yeah, that's normal on the Long Island Expressway (LIE). Prioritizing a right turn over a pedestrian, even when the walking signal is on. Rude, but expected. And you can't forget the most legendary phenomenon that results in road rage, the "merge" or, to be more specific, the "cut". It is a very common driving maneuver that combines impatience, courage, and mathematical impossibility. Don't be surprised if someone is cutting by only three feet from the back of their car to your bumper.

But the issue goes beyond the stereotypes. These behaviors have real, devastating consequences: high car crash rates, injuries, and unnecessary fatalities. According to the NY Post, a serious car crash resulting in damages, injuries, or death occurs every seven minutes on Long Island. Throughout Northern State Parkway, there are several memorials built on the grass parallel to the road, indicating fatality. In recent years, a memorial was built on the eastbound side of the LIE service road by South Oyster Bay Road for a

high schooler who was struck while biking.

Why do people drive badly on Long Island? Part of this is because of infrastructure and traffic. The LIE is an eight-lane highway, and the parkways are typically four or six lanes. With the sheer amount of population on Long Island, traffic can get really slow, especially during peak hours. Heavy traffic fuels impatience, and impatience fuels these behaviors.

Another part is psychology. Many Long Islanders spend hours each week driving in heavy traffic. Over time, this leads to frustration, which develops into entitlement. What was supposed to be a safe and shared place for transportation now becomes a war zone. Entitled drivers even vent their frustration at pedestrians, honking at them to walk faster so they can turn, or sometimes they turn regardless of pedestrians, praying that they to kindly move out of the way quickly enough. By law, the hierarchy on the road is pedestrian, and then motor vehicles. Clearly, entitlement leads them to turn their back on the law.

Long Island needs to improve its culture around driving. Stricter law enforcement, such as heavier fines for speeding or more highway patrol, fill in the potholes quicker, redesign intersections, but most importantly, individual responsibility. Every driver on the road is a potential risk for disaster. To minimize disaster and to have safer roads, we must make the right choices on the road; otherwise, bad driving will forever define Long Island.

The Pulse Staff Wishes Everyone

Happy

Holidays!

