

THE DRAGON

The Student Newspaper for Middlesex Middle School!

New Student Council Brings Change to MMS

By Brendan Ferguson, Green Team

As things at MMS change, few things stay constant. One of these things is the Student Council Executive Board. This year especially, Student Council plans to make big changes in our school.

Each one of the Council members put countless hours into making their campaign amazing. As promised, **THE DRAGON** has collected information on this year's Student Council members:

8th Grade Representatives

Brendan Ferguson

- Would like a Taco Bar on Thursdays at the Cafeteria and change number of homework slips for an after-school detention from 4 to 5.
- Experience: was in Student Council in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade at MMS.
- Slogan: Fergie says, "IMMA BE voting for Brendan Ferguson and I GOTTA FEELING you should too!"

Lindsey Green

- Would like a Salad Bar on Tuesdays at the Cafeteria and more fundraisers.

- Experience: first year on the Council.
- Slogan: Don't Be Mean, Vote Green!

Katy Murphy

- Would like I-Pods in study hall and Pajama Day.
- Experience: first year on the Council.
- Slogan: If you want to help out places like Haiti, then your best bet is to vote for Katie!

Tiger Sullivan

- Would like to open up the Courtyard and get rid of Styrofoam trays.
- Experience; was on Student Council in 6th and 8th grade at MMS.
- Slogan: Tony the Tiger says, "Vote for Tiger Sullivan, he's GREAAAT!"

7th Grade Representatives

P. Adams

- Would like a Suggestion Box at the Message Center and a School Store.
- Experience: Was on Student Council in 5th (Tokeneke) and 6th grade.
- Slogan: Think of the Children.

Will Collier

- Would like a Taco Bar & Pajama Day.
- Experience: was on Student Council in 6th and 7th grade at MMS.
- Slogan: Where there's a Will, there's a way.

Carson Stewart

- Would like Pajama Day and Spirit Days
- Experience: was in Student Council in 6th grade at his old school.
- Slogan: Peace, Love, Vote The Ginger.

6th Grade Representatives

Mairead Ferguson

- Would like Febreze in gym locker rooms and Bring-a-Parent Day.
- Experience: first year on the Council.
- Slogan: Vote for Mairead and school will be a parade.

Kelly Moran

- Would like a Field Day and Taco Bar.
- Experience: first year on the Council.
- Slogan: My way or the highway.

Athletes Hope for "Bright" Fields

By Jack Duggan, Green Team

A hot topic among athletes at Middlesex Middle School is the controversy over the Darien High School athletic field lights. Will they be a help or a hindrance? They will bring the privilege of having awesome night games and practices. Is it worth it?

For those of you who do not know about it, the Darien High School athletic field does not have any lights, unlike most schools in the area. This prevents DHS from having night games, which some people think are the best kind of football games. The committee in charge, however, is planning to put in two eighty-foot poles with 12 light fixtures and two ninety-foot poles with 13 light fixtures, if they get approval from the town.

Along with the lights, the committee plans on putting a new sound system in that is directed towards the bleachers and will not carry to the neighbor's houses. In addition, they will add small lights in the parking lot so DHS fans can get safely back to their cars in the parking lot. What's wrong with this? It's a win-win situation.

Unfortunately, we can't get approval for all of this because of one main reason.

Neighbors complain that they will lose monetary value on their house if at night they have to deal with the lights.

However, many students are in favor of the lights at the Darien High School. Eighth grader Tiger Sullivan explained, "DHS should have stadium lights because later practices allow for moms and dads who get home from work in the evening to be able to drive their child to practice and watch."

Eighth grader Erika Osherow added, "I like the idea of lights because they allow athletes to practice and keep up their skills even in daylight savings and keep sports going even when there is barely any daylight left."

Coaches at the DHS also agree. Coach Maureen Minicus, the varsity girls' field hockey coach said, "LIGHTS! LIGHTS! LIGHTS!! In a nutshell, a small number of 'neighbors of the High School' are selfishly holding up/interfering with the process. They are more concerned about the potential devaluation of their property than the positive value a night game would bring to the community."

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Summer Fashion Works in Winter

By Jenna Buckley & Jessica Campbell,
Maroon Team

News flash, honey: it's winter now. This means it's time to bring out your fuzzy sweaters, cozy skinnies, and warm scarves and prepare for that holiday chill we all look enjoy.

Imagine sipping hot chocolate in Starbucks on the weekends with your friends in a pair of comfy boots, stomping through the snow in a cute coat and mittens, or curling up on the couch in a chunky-knit cardigan, whatever is more your style.

But before you shove your dresses, skirts, and tank tops into the back of your closet for a winter of idleness, integrate them into your chilly-weather wardrobe. Sound hard? It's really not.

Before you dismiss a floral sundress as too cold for the next coming months, remember the age-old trick of layering. Throw on a pair of solid-color tights, a warm, light brown sweater, a pair of boots, and viola.

You're ready to face the freezing wind with the help of a winter coat and the occasionally necessary hat or gloves, staying just as warm as the kid at the bus stop next to you who's bundled up in sweatpants and a long-sleeved tee, plus a puffy coat. But, of course, you're a million times more stylish.

And those tank tops? Sure, it's not the

most intelligent thing to step out in the cold with your shoulders mostly exposed, but as I said before: layer. A simple pullover or cardigan and a scarf will keep you warm throughout the day without sacrificing your own personal sense of style, leaving you the ability to personalize whatever and still be temperature-appropriate.

Of course, it never hurts to have long sleeves, jeans, cords, and all of the other usual December/January/February basics in your closet. You never know when a fashion or weather emergency is gonna hit, and it's better not to rely on just your summer-month clothes.

So make sure your closet is full of the warmest staples, so you won't be stranded in a winter wonderland with nothing but a tank top and a skirt.

But next time, when you're rifling through your boring tees and straight-legged jeans that you've worn at least a million times, remember those summer clothes you tucked away for two seasons of rest.

Maybe, just maybe, you'll get to spice up your outfit with something adorable. Something not as blah as your waffle-print thermal and sweatshirt.

And if all else fails? Just go back to bed.

New Harry Potter Misses the Mark

By Molly Bell, Purple Team

SPOILER ALERT: This article reveals details of the latest Harry Potter movie. If you have not read the book or seen the movie, you may want to stop reading.

One of America's most beloved film series is back. On November 19, millions of Harry Potter fanatics gathered at movie theaters around the world to see Harry Potter's newest battle against Voldermort.

The highly-anticipated movie has gathered lots of hype and has been dominating the box office talk. But does it really deserve it?

In my opinion, it doesn't. The movie starts out with an exciting scene as Harry Potter races across London on a broom and battles death eaters to get to the Weasley's house, which results in a horrible loss.

Unfortunately, the majority of the film can't keep up with the fast-paced action of the books and the previous movies. There are a few exciting scenes, and much of the film is slow, boring, and it seems to drag on and on and on. The film has become very dark, drifting away from the lighter, funnier movies.

Also, many key parts are left out in order to cram half of a 784 page book into a

two hour, twenty-six minute long movie. There is none of the planning in Harry, Ron, and Hermione's hunt for the seven horcruxes, which leaves you very confused, especially for kids who have never read the books.

With that said, there are some exciting scenes. There is an exciting scene in which Harry walks into Bathilda Bagshot's house, and when he discovers a horcrux in a lake, and he struggles to retrieve it. But the majority of the scenes are slow, boring, forgettable, and confusing, such as the one in the Lovegood house.

The beginning is the only part worth seeing. For the most part, the middle and the ending are disappointing for a casual Harry Potter fan. The three stars of the Harry Potter movies (Emma Watson, Daniel Radcliffe, and Rupert Grint) do a good job acting, but they can't brighten up a mostly boring, confusing script.

I don't suggest seeing it unless you are a die-hard Harry Potter fan, or else you will find it confusing. If you want to see exciting Harry Potter movies, watch the old movies, read the much better books, or wait until [Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2](#) comes out.

Music Preview 2011

By Carson Stewart, Gold Team

The best music year in a decade. That's the label 2011 is getting from artists, critics and music insiders. Top artists including The Script, Lady Gaga, Mariah Carey, and Britney Spears, will be releasing an album in 2011. This winter will bring the release date for many new albums from artists who haven't released anything for a long while. Most of us cannot wait until the ball drops, and it's 2011.

Even though she hasn't released anything for a while, Lady Gaga was one of the rising celebrities in pop culture this year. She released three best selling albums, *The Fame*, *The Fame Monster*, and *The Remixes*, which all stayed on the Top 20 Albums Chart for at least three weeks with the longest being six months!

Her new album, *Born This Way*, was announced for release this winter (Winter 2011), but there is no concrete date yet. The album, which Gaga said "Who knows, you might get, like, 20 new Gaga songs!", is going to include the title track "Born This Way" and "You and I," which she debuted during her Monster Ball Tour.

The Script has become a very popular band this year, with hits such as "Breakeven" and "The Man Who Can't Be Moved", will be releasing a new album this January. Their first album, *The Script*, stayed on the Top 100 US Album chart for 37 weeks, making it go double platinum. Their new album, *Science And Faith*, is going to be released on January 18th, and includes 13 new tracks. Their first and only single for that album; "For The First Time" was released on November 9, 2010.

Britney Spears will release a new album this winter (Her first work since *Circus* in 2008). *Circus* sold 8 million copies in the U.S., and her new album will be an "electropop sensation". The new album, according to Max Martin, the songwriter of "...Baby One More Time" and Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone", will be "grittier" than the last album.

There are many more albums to be released in 2010 and 2011. American Idol contestants, Adam Lambert and Crystal Bowersox just released new albums (Lambert released *Acoustic Live EP*; Bowersox released *Farmer's Daughter* on December 14th). Aerosmith is rumored to be creating a "new, old school album" according to Joey Kramer, their drummer. Jesse McCartney will also be releasing a new album called *Have it All*. Overall, 2011 will be a great year for music.

Ask Alice Provides Some Holiday Advice

Dear Alice,

I love the holidays. I have so many cousins, and we all get together every Christmas. We all get tons of gifts, and everybody is happy. But this year, I want to give my cousins gifts too. The only problem is that... I am totally broke! Where can I get a present for every one without breaking the bank?

—Penny Pincher

Dear Penny Pincher,

Good for you for getting into the Christmas spirit! And some good news: you don't need any money at all to give the perfect gift. A handmade craft is just as appreciated, if not appreciated even more, because it came from your heart, and you can't get it anywhere else. Or, if you're not the crafty type, try any local store! They're catching the holiday fever too, and should have lots of cheap gift ideas for you! Good luck!

Dear Alice,

My friends are having a Christmas party, and I'm invited. Fun, right? Sure, except that I'm Jewish, and I don't celebrate Christmas. Should I tell them that I can't go?

—Santa Who?

Dear Santa Who,

If you want to go, then go! You can have fun no matter what holiday you celebrate. The point of the holidays is to spend time with your friends and family, so do it! Of course, I'm not forcing you to go. If you really and truly are not comfortable, just tell them that something came up. Either way, you can still enjoy the holiday spirit.

Dear Alice,

I always write thank you notes for all of my Christmas presents. But all of the thank you notes I get seem like fill-in-the-blanks (Dear _____, Thank you for the _____. I think it is _____. Happy Holidays! From, _____.) How do I write a sincere thank you letter, without it sounding like... well, like that?

—I Really Mean It!

Dear I Really Mean It,

That is so great that you write thank you notes to your friends and family! To write a sincere thank you letter (and to avoid fill-in-the-blanks), just write from your heart! Say thank you (obviously), but also write why you like it, when you plan to use it, etc. If you really want to personalize it, write a few sentences asking about their family, how their Christmas was, and just be yourself! They will really appreciate it because it came from your heart. Good luck, and Merry Christmas!

Dear Alice,

Every year, my best friend and I do a present swap. But this year, the present to me was something I already had! How do I tell my friend without hurting any feelings?

—Double Trouble



Dear Double Trouble,

You don't have to tell! They obviously meant well, and they would feel bad if they found out. So be thankful (they obviously know your taste well if they got something you have!), and don't tell. And the next time you use it, let them know that you love it. So what if you have two? It's the thought that counts.

Dear Alice,

I just got the worst present ever! I was so excited because it came in a big, beautiful box. But I opened it and I got... a makeup case! I DON'T EVEN WEAR MAKEUP!!! Now what do I do?

—They Don't Love Me!

Dear They Don't Love Me,

For information about what to do about a bad present, we have an entire article for that! Look for "I Guess They Just Don't Know Me" by Claire Lincoln. She has covered all of the basics about how to solve your present dilemma! Just remember... It's the thought that counts!

Dear Alice,

My teachers told me to study over Christmas break for the *dreaded* midterms! I'm really not big on studying, and I plan to spend all day, every day snowboarding out west! Now what?

—Snow Bunny

Dear Snow Bunny,

Compromise, compromise, compromise! For every hour or so you spend on the slopes, assign yourself a certain amount of study time! That way, it's good for your grades and your desire for snow!

—Alice ❄️

I Guess They Just Don't Know Me: What To Do With A Bad Present

By Claire Lincoln, Aqua Team & Mariana Seibold, Bronze Team

Have you ever had a family member or friend watch you open a present? And maybe they were the one who gave it to you? Let's say you asked for a new pair of sunglasses, and get all excited ripping apart the wrapping paper, only to find a glamorized toy watch.

In situations like these, the key is to stay calm and remember their feelings. Don't exactly lie and say you love it if you really don't, but try to complement it as many ways as possible. This goes for duplicates too.

Sixth grader Mariana S. says, "Once when I was little, I got a doll that I already had, and because I was young, I accidentally told them. It wasn't a big deal though; they just gave it to my cousin." That might be okay if you are young, but once you get to middle school, it can just be seen as rude.

Moreover, it is important to know if the gift giver is sensitive and will care a lot if you don't like it. For instance, my sister gave me a small mirror, and I made the mistake of not keeping a straight face, for I was expecting

something nicer since the bag was so big, and she told me I would love it. Similarly, my other sister gave me a glass bird and it was pretty, but I wanted something else.

Unfortunately it ended up in my closet. My sister found out and said, "Do you know how much I thought about that present? It was expensive!" To avoid this, try to put your present on display to show your appreciation. If you show you don't care, they might get upset.

One more thing: If you absolutely can't lie, be sensitive in telling them how you feel. While this may still lead to conflict, be aware of the gift giver's feelings.

Sixth grader Samantha Wind says, "If you get a bad present, lay low, say thank you and don't complain. But if it's really bad, talk to the 'giver' politely about returning it or trading it in for something you like."

Seventh grader Paige Adams says, "Even if you get a bad present, try to highlight the good things about the present to make them feel good about it." I agree with Paige, but remember, no matter how awful the present is, it's the thought that counts.

Other Holiday Do's and Don't's:

- **Do:** Buy or make all your presents before the holiday rush.
- **Don't:** Channel your inner Ebenezer Scrooge and be all grumpy.
- **Do:** Whatever you must to get into the holiday spirit.
- **Don't:** Wait to decorate your house or tree until the night of.
- **Do:** Help your parents as much as you can so they don't go crazy.
- **Don't:** be unhappy if you don't get everything you wanted.
- **Do:** Wish for that white Christmas!
- **Don't:** Let the dog drink the water from the tree base.
- **Do:** Put antlers and a big red nose on your car.
- **Don't:** Be afraid to belt out your favorite carols, even if you are terribly off key.
- **Do:** Wear a Santa hat to every activity.
- **And Don't:** Forget to spread cheer. The holidays are only once a year!

Where Will You Be This Holiday Season?

By Aditya Krishnamachar, Silver

When thinking of Christmas, people often describe a scene of a cozy, unwrapping of presents, not to mention the decorated tree, the cookies for Santa, amongst other things.

But what really happens over the break? Do people arrive at that perfect vacation spot just in time for Christmas? Or are they not there for the holiday?

This year, the variety of destinations is widespread, involving nearby Boston, faraway Turkey, beautiful Switzerland, and everywhere in between!

One of the themes this year is spending time with family. In a random poll of the MMS population, over half of the group are planning to join their family members for Christmas or the eve of the holiday. Aunts, kids, husbands, nephews, and nieces will all

come together in this great family event. Whether traveling or not, Middlesex kids are seeing relatives.

Because the break is relatively short, home is the #1 destination for Middlesex families this year. Two-thirds of the sample group will be happily home in Darien.

However, because Christmas falls on Saturday this year, some people are staying for this special day and then still sneaking away for a brief vacation. Some are going into New York City. Others will depart for Massachusetts or the Adirondacks. Many are choosing to go skiing in the northeast, close to home, in Vermont or Maine, but at least one family has chosen to go out west and brave the slopes of Whistler Blackcomb (the site of the 2010 Winter Olympics).

Meanwhile, others have plans for longer forays to exotic locations such as

Costa Rica, Mexico, the Caribbean Islands, Hawaii, and India. South Carolina and Florida are also on the list. These trips need more time and these families are gone for the whole break.

Last but not least, one respondent is on her way to Geneva, Switzerland, but not just for the holidays. She, in fact, is moving there for good!

Overall, I polled 65 members of the Middlesex community, including kids from all grades, teachers and aides. Thirty-four families will be spending time with relatives here or elsewhere. Forty-three families will be home for the holidays. About 27 families will be spending time away from Connecticut. Some of these families overlap multiple categories.

No matter whether you're home or away, all the best to you this holiday season!

Give, Give, Give

By Patricia Collins, Gold Team

For years, MMS has supported different drives and collections during the Holidays. This year, like many others, MMS is holding a Toys for Tots drive for kids who aren't as lucky as everyone at MMS, so they can wake up to the joy of presents on Christmas day. Also, a hat, mitten, and glove collection will be held for people who need those warm clothes that we all love and cherish on a cold day.

Toys for Tots is a non-profit organization that MMS has supported for over 20 years. The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, which picks up the toys and personally distributes them to the young children, runs Toys for Tots. The presents are distributed all throughout the United States, and in the past MMS has contributed up to 1,000 presents.

Breana Del Gatto, a 7th grader on the Aqua team, said, "I think Toys for Tots is a great organization because every kid loves to wake up on Christmas morning to new toys. It's great that kids who are less fortunate get to enjoy a Christmas they have never had before."

The hat, mitten, and glove collection is part of Person-to-Person's Kid-to-Kid program. Everything donated will go to those in need in and near our community. Donations can be made in children or adult sizes, which helps a large range of people who need the right glove size!

No matter what, remember to give a little this December. Most people don't have what students at MMS have, so remember, giving time is here!

The Holiday Hit List

By Sophia Fredo, Maroon Team

Still have no idea as to what you are going to get your friends and family for Christmas this year? Well, look no further. Here are all the hottest toys and gadgets, along with what not to get in 2010.

For mom, body products are always a popular choice. Stores such as the Body Shop, Bath and Body Works, etc. in the mall are a great place to start. Things such as body butter, body mist, and rice toners are on the rage.

Body butter has a lot of the calcium often found in dairy products, which promotes silky soft skin as well as a great scent. Rice toners are also a skin-softening serum. Rice contains nutrients which ancient Asian women would use to soften the skin. Sake brewers would also find their hands to be incredibly soft after working all day.

The Body Shop and Bath and Body Works also have lots of cute, fun, (and inexpensive) products that are a must for this season

NOTE: These products would also work well for girl(friends), sisters, aunts, or women in general.

What dad wouldn't want some new techno-gadget? I know mine would. Technology is fast becoming the world's favorite gift category. It's near impossible to find someone who doesn't have an iPod, cell phone, laptop, computer, Xbox, or Wii system today.

So why not get "the world's greatest dad" an iTunes gift card or a laptop case? Stores such as Best Buy, Wal-Mart, and Staples are a great place for electronics. Websites like SkinIt.com are a great place for skins for phones, laptops, and other

electronic goodies that'll make any dad's Christmas.

Now, most family members find the smashing and explosion from other family members Xbox or Wii, to be quite annoying and can give one terrible headaches. But since it's Christmas, you kind of have to be nice to these gamers. Stop by Game Stop to pick up this year's hottest games; Black Ops, or why not other Call of Duty games, Halo, Fable III, FIFA Soccer 11, or Dance Central.

We at THE DRAGON hope this helps you when you're shopping for all your loved ones! Good luck!

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with THE DRAGON?**

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TheDragon@darienps.org



Holiday Ho-Ho-Horror Stories

By Eleanor Larsen, Navy Team

The holiday season brings caroling sessions, cookie-making, hot coco, traveling, and family. With so much action packed into a one week break, sometimes things are bound to go wrong.

Even the most fun holiday activities can go south. Don't believe me? I have my own story to tell. Think Christmas morning; pretty foolproof right? You get presents, how could it go wrong? Well think again!

I was five years old and I got exactly what I wanted, a Madeline playhouse. After the big presents were opened, I started opening my other presents. I opened one of my stocking stuffers, and it was a pair of purple underwear! And the icing on the cake was that my parents, brother, and grandparents were watching me open them! Thanks Grandma for the undies!

For some, Christmas is all about the presents. But for others, it's all about the food. And some of us happen to be a little too weak-willed to wait until Christmas dinner for the turkey and have to do a little sneaking.

Jessica Campbell, of the Maroon team,

was not the one who snuck her turkey. In fact, it was her dog. He didn't eat a part of the turkey, he ate the whole thing! Instead of having turkey that year, they had the next best thing...hotdogs?

It's always really fun when you get action packed presents. For me, it was when I got to put together a whole mini skeleton; it was so cool! For Julia Murray of the Green team, it turned out to be less, very less, than cool.

One year for Christmas she and her cousins got a crystal-growing kit. They made the crystal garden and were very excited. The whole "garden" must have looked pretty awesome, that is until her cousin's dog ate the whole thing!

You can always tell when people have their families home for the holidays because cars overflow their driveway. But for Brendan Ferguson of the Green team, something else overflowed onto his driveway.

He had all his extended family over when some guy parked in his driveway. He said he was very sick and requested that the police were not to be called. He then threw up everywhere. Lucky for him, the

police were not called, but he had to clean up his mess and call his girlfriend to take him home. "Not too much horror there, but not your average Christmas," says Brendan.

Most kids hope to get a puppy or kitty for Christmas. Morgan Peters, of the Green team, got a fish! Things would have been fine and dandy if the fish had not died before it could be unwrapped.

For Julia Evans, Tan team, she didn't forget to open or feed her pet. Instead, she lost one. It turns out her cat died Christmas morning.

Everyone hates it when they get a really incredible gift, but then as soon as they try to use it, it doesn't work, because "batteries not included." Unfortunately for Julia Murray, the complete opposite happened to her. Her parents bought her and her brother a pack of batteries with a sign saying "toys not included," as a joke. "Needless to say, we weren't amused," Julia describes.

No matter how hard you try, sometimes things can go wrong and mar your perfect holiday. But if you try hard enough, you can always find the silver lining and turn things around. Happy Holidays!

When You Believe, You Will Receive

By Breana Del Gratto, Aqua Team

Saint Nick is stout with long wavy white hair, a white beard, and rosy red cheeks. He wears a bright red suit with white fur trim and hangs out with a bunch elves and reindeer - or that's what most people think.

But has any one of us ever actually seen Santa a.k.a. St. Nick? Maybe our opinion of what he looks like is pure fantasy, and we are totally off base. Perhaps he's muscular with dark brown hair, and wears All Stars sneakers and an earring.

No one I know has ever actually seen Santa Claus except for the saintly Old Nick's who work at the mall and let hundreds of crying, runny nosed kids climb on their lap each year with a chance to plead their case for some special toy they saw advertised in a commercial. Do we know for sure that Santa is even real?

It seems like there have been more sighting of alien space ships than there have been of Santa Claus. Maybe that's because Santa tries hard to keep a low profile and can spot a Papparazzi or journalist from a mile away. Maybe even as far as the North Pole!

I asked several Middlesex students if they believe in Santa Claus. "I don't believe in Santa Claus, because whenever I would get up too early on Christmas morning, my parents would get mad at me. They acted like they were hiding something. I was very

suspicious." said Claire Lincoln, a 7th grader on the Aqua team.

Seventh grader Molly Bell on the Purple team said, "I don't know if Santa Claus exists. I have no evidence either way." Many students like Molly are uncertain whether Santa does or does not exist.

"Yes, I do believe in Santa," said Katie Huffert, a 6th grader on the Orange team. "When I was five, my mom was on the phone and suddenly she was screaming 'Santa's on the phone! Santa's on the phone!' My mom handed me the phone, and Santa knew exactly what I wanted for Christmas. He didn't sound like anyone I had known at the time." Many kids like Katie have personal stories involving a "close encounter" with Santa.

In the long run, it really doesn't matter if you believe in Santa or not, because the most important thing about the holiday is spending time with your friends and family, and appreciating all the great things we have.

So the entire MMS community, Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukah! Happy Kwanzaa! Happy Boxing Day- or whatever else you celebrate.



Lights! Lights! Lights!

...continued from page 1.

Coach Mitch Ross, the offensive coordinator for the varsity football team said, "Lights would be a huge benefit to the High School in many ways. Friday night games would give the community a chance to come together in a fun and safe atmosphere. In addition, with dusk at 4:30 now, the barely sufficient temporary lights that are now used for practice is a potential hazard. The poor lighting increases the chance of injury on the field. The lights also are turned off very promptly at 7:30, since there is no lighting in the parking lot, this represents a safety issue for players waiting to be picked up as well." Obviously, there is full support from the coaches for this project.

So why is this important to you? Well MMS, the answer is simple. Whether it's the youth league teams of today or the varsity teams of tomorrow, our ability to maximize the DHS athletic fields will lead to our athletic progress today, tomorrow, and in the future.

As you can probably tell from coaches to students, most of the Darien community is in favor of the Darien Lights Project. A project like this will improve Darien by giving the town a greater sense of community as well as providing a useful and safe practice and game environment for athletes and their fans.

The Twelve Preparation Days for Christmas

By K. Huffert & Mia Malizia,
Orange Team

Holiday vacation is coming up fast, and as you know, it is the "busiest time of the year." It is time to celebrate with family and friends, enjoy decorations, and give and receive presents. Because this is such a busy time, you need at least a guide line to help get you ready for Christmas from now to then! (Warning: Do not try to sing the following article!)

On the first preparation day for Christmas, I did this: It's your favorite holiday season of the year! You can't wait to wake up on the 25th and find presents calling your name under the tree, or to decorate your tree with the glistening ornaments full of memories. But you really want to show off your holiday cheer first. Start by bringing out the lights! Look in your attic for Christmas lights of any colors (Though red and green are strongly recommended if you really want to get into the holiday spirit) and hang them around the bushes or plant life, around lampposts, and on doorways outside.

On the second preparation day for Christmas, I did this: The outside of your house is a beauty; decorated from head to toe in red, green, and gold lights. Now you should decorate the inside, with garland, wreaths, tinsel, and enough reindeer to pull two of Santa's sleigh. Also, clear a spot for your tree, or maybe even put up the tree. When you do put up your tree, make sure you cover it with your favorite colorful bulbs, old family favorites, and maybe even some new ornaments. Some trees may get so heavy that you need "invisible" string to stay up, so if you like to decorate, monitor your tree carefully.

On the third preparation day for Christmas, I did this: You've decorated your house from head to toe, inside and out. You're tired from walking all around your house and breaking your back in the attic, so all you want to do is sit down, kick back, relax, and watch some Christmas specials, but what's this? The minute the TV turns on, *The Walking Dead* comes on, making you shudder in spite of all that holiday spirit. You flip through the channels to try and find a Christmas special, but there's nothing on! You decide to walk a little more and look for the entire Christmas special schedule. Try to print it out at least in the first day of December. It'll be pretty convenient to know when [A Charlie Brown Christmas](#) or [Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer](#) is on to watch with your family.

On the fourth preparation day for Christmas, I did this: Everyone loves the sights of the holidays, but what about the music? Christmas music is a must have. Most people listen to it on the radio, but if you can't find your favorite tune on the air, it is time to turn to your good old CDs and iPod.

On the fifth preparation day for Christ-

mas, I did this: You got all your shopping done on Black Friday, and you got your mom that beautiful Pandora necklace, your dad a nice bathrobe, and your little sister a baby doll. Suddenly, your little sister begs you for a Zhu Zhu Pet! You realize you forgot to buy it! You immediately get to the store as quick as possible. This last-minute shopping may seem out there, but you should go over each family member's wish list one more time, just in case.

On the sixth preparation day for Christmas, I did this: There are the sights and the sounds of the holidays in the air, but what about the tastes? It is about time to make your Christmas cookies. Sugar cookies in all shapes and sizes piled high with sprinkles are good, but any other cookie that matches your taste is good too.

On the seventh preparation day for Christmas, I did this: You're bored on a Sunday night, your homework's finished, and you're watching your little brother struggle with math homework. You decide to go caroling. Enjoy the smiles your neighbors will give you when you sing Christmas classics to them.

On the eight preparation day for Christmas, I did this: "Oooh! That looks good! Can I eat it?" "No." "What is it?" "It's a gingerbread house!"

You already have so much food and cookies that you are starting to feel like you would rather play with your food than eat it. A gingerbread house gives you the perfect chance to do so. Stores usually have the gingerbread house frame all ready. All you need to do is use glue to stick the house together, and frosting, sprinkles, gum drops, PEEPS, candy canes, and more to decorate.

On the ninth preparation day for

Christmas, I did this: So you've done just about everything to wring out your energy and Christmas spirit. But you forgot one of the great things of the holiday. JC Penny is having a donation to give toys to those less fortunate, and Middlesex is having Toys for Tots, so wish another little angel a Merry Christmas.

On the tenth preparation day for Christmas, I did this: Yes! It's snowing and Christmas vacation has started! Now it's time to jump into the fun. Go ice skating, make snowmen, angels, and have a snowball fight with your friends. Then dig in to hot chocolate with marshmallows. If time allows, take a good look at wrapping paper, and check where ever you are hiding your presents to make sure they are safe and sound. At some time in the day, wrap your presents. Although, you are probably having too much fun to wrap, WRAP!

On the eleventh preparation day for Christmas, I did this: It's the night before Christmas Eve, and your siblings are bored. Grab a couple of Christmas books off the shelves and read to them. This may seem lame, but you'll be happy when you see the smiles on your siblings' faces. "'Twas the Night Before Christmas..."

On the twelfth preparation day for Christmas, I did this: Oh goody, goody! It is Christmas Eve! Spend time with your family and arrange those last few presents perfectly under the tree. Make sure to put out the milk and cookies for Santa and the lettuce, carrots, and water for the reindeer. Christmas Eve should be peaceful and calm, not crazy because you are fighting with your little brother over the Xbox 360. Finally, plunk down into bed, and dream of sugar plums and such. Remember, "We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

Review: *This Isn't What It Looks Like*

By Samantha Wind, Red Team

Looking for that last-minute gift for the reader in your family? Then this book is it!

This Isn't What it Looks Like, by Pseudonymous Bosch, is a fantastic story of mystery, adventure, humor, and excitement. The sequel to *This Isn't Good For You*, this book might just give you that "Oh-my-give-me-more" feeling.

This Isn't What it Looks Like is one of the latest and greatest books to have been released in November. Now, it can be found on the shelves in many local bookstores and libraries, waiting for an eager reader to pick it up.

Meet Cass, a 12-year-old survivalist. Nothing scares her. Not until now, at least. Cass finds herself stuck in a world of kings and castles, alone and disoriented. She remembers nothing about how she got

there, why she's there, and who she really is.

Cass soon realizes her goal: to find the Jester, founder of the Terces Society and the only person on the planet to know the Secret, a secret so powerful, it could give the gift of eternal life. The odds are stacked against her. How will she ever find the Jester in this crazy world of knights and castles?

Meanwhile, back in modern day, Cass is stuck in a coma. The doctors have done everything, and so has Max-Ernest, but nothing seems to work. Will Cass ever get out of the coma? Will she find the secret?

Follow Cass in her epic journey to find the Jester, facing bandits, knights, and mysterious magicians in an amazing story that will leave you on the edge of your seat, waiting for more. I highly recommend this book to anyone in middle school who loves a great adventure story.

Julehjerte: A "How-To" for a Danish Christmas Tradition

By Amanda Sload, Green Team

Julehjerte, or in English, Christmas hearts, adorn the Christmas trees of Danes each December. These easily made paper hearts open up to be filled with little cookies called Pebernødder, and are hooked onto limbs of evergreens.

But how can one make one of these festive and fun decorations? Learn now and astonish guests of all ages with your beautiful hand-made ornament.

1. First, gather scissors, paper of two different colors, a pencil, and tape. These hearts are traditionally white and red, but can be any colors you choose.
2. Fold each piece of paper in half.
3. Draw and then cut out a 'U' shape on one of the papers, making sure that the flat part of the 'U' is on the fold.
4. Take the 'U' you just cut and trace it onto the other paper, again making sure that the flat part of it is on the fold.

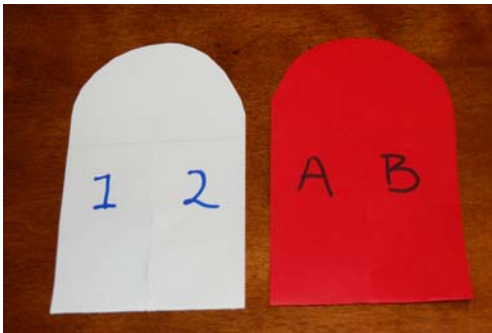


Image A: When you complete steps 1-10, you will have the following "U"s with a slit going up the middle of each from the bottom to the base of the curve. (Courtesy of The Dragon)

5. Cut out the second 'U'.
6. Take one of the 'U's and lay it horizontally onto the other 'U'. Make sure that the bottom edge of the top 'U' lines up with the flat part on the other 'U'. Draw a line on the bottom 'U', using the top edge of the top 'U' as a straight edge to guide where the line should be.
7. Repeat step 6, this time drawing the line on the other 'U'.
8. Cut a slit on one of the 'U's from the middle of the base, which has the fold, to slightly over the line you just made
9. Repeat step 8 with your other 'U'. You can make more than one slit for a more complex design, just make sure each 'U' has the same number of slits, they are evenly spaced, and keep in mind that the more slits you make, the more challenging it will be put together.
10. Now that you have you're completed parts, it's time to put them together. Take your two 'U's and in your mind, label them. If it helps, you can write on them in pencil. One flap on the first will be A, the other B. On the other 'U', the flaps will be 1 and 2. Hold them in your hands so that '2' is on the top of '1', and that their base is next to the vertical 'A' and 'B'. (See Image A!)
11. Hold flap '2' in your left hand, and the other 'U' in your right. Feed '2' in between the two pieces of paper that make up 'A', so that the color of 'A' covers '2'. Then, feed 'B' down through the two pieces of paper that make up '2', so that the color of '2' covers 'B'. Now it should look as if you

have one square that is the color of 'A', in the upper left corner, and the other three squares should be the color of '1' and '2'.

12. Now, feed 'A' down through the flap of '1'. Then, feed '1' through the flap of 'B'. This may be a little tricky to do, but you just have to bend things a little to make it work. You should now have a heart that has colors in a checkerboard pattern.
13. Now that you have assembled your heart, you just have some finishing touches to add. Erase any lines that you have drawn. Also, cut a strip of paper or a piece of ribbon for the heart to hang from. Tape it so that each end of the paper strip or ribbon is inside of the heart and it makes a loop above the heart.

Your Julehjerte is now complete! Hang it on your Christmas tree, show it off on your wall, or fill it with treats. Have fun displaying your craft and proclaiming your holiday spirit!

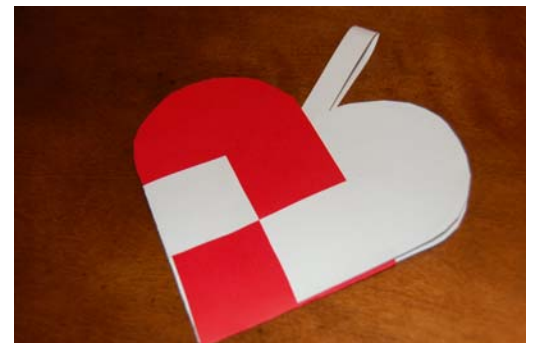


Image B: The finished product! The pouch inside can hold your favorite holiday treat!

Holiday Cookies! Get 'em While They're Hot!

By Sarah LeHan, Blue Team

Have a craving for cookies? Whether you're stomach's growling for sugar, chocolate chips, or even lemons or oatmeal, you can be sure there's a cookie recipe out there somewhere that includes it! Here are a few students' favorites to give you some ideas and when you get baking, don't forget to leave some for Santa!

Sugar Cookies: Molly Bell, a seventh grader on the Purple Team, says that she loves sugar cookies- especially with frosting and lots of sprinkles! "Just make sure they're homemade," she says, "Not only are they fun to make, you get to eat the dough!" Katie Tsui, another 7th grader, says they're her favorite, too- "Yum!"

Gingerbread Cookies: You can't go wrong with this holiday tradition! Not only do they taste delicious, you get the fun of decorating them, too. Seventh grader Dominick Wood, says, "I really like gingerbread cookies. The comforting smell and taste always puts a smile on my face."

Lemon Squares: With their tart, zesty filling and chewy crust, you can't go wrong with lemon squares! In fact, in one recipe book, this lemony treat is listed as the presidential favorite of Lyndon B. Johnson. Once when I made them, I ran out of lemons- so I used limes instead, and it was delicious! (This recipe is also included at the bottom of the article.)

Chocolate-chip Oatmeal Cookies: Chocolate-chip cookies with an original, chewy-and-crunchy texture, these cookies are a cool mix of the traditional and the creative! One student, Amanda Cohen, recounts a funny memory, "When my sister and I cook these, she always eats the oatmeal before it can be put into the cookies!"

Snickerdoodles: What could be better than a Snickerdoodle? With their random name and great taste, they have something for everyone! One seventh-grader, Claire O'Leary, says her opinion, "They're really good- they taste cinnamon-sweet, and sugary- they just taste awesome!"

As you can see, there are tons of cookies just waiting to be baked! So, grab your apron, blow the dust off all those cookbooks- or check out the lemon squares recipe below - and get started! Start with:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup butter

Mix the flour, sugar and butter as for a pie crust. Pat evenly into a 9x18-inch (or equivalent) jelly roll pan. Bake in preheated 350°F degree oven until very light brown, about 15 minutes. Then get the following:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 beaten eggs
- juice and finely grated zest of 2 lemons
- confectioners' sugar

Mix ingredients, except for the confectioners' sugar, in the order given and pour over the baked crust. Bake at 350°F for 15 to 20 minutes, or until set. Sprinkle with confectioners' sugar.

of the Amazon

The next week...

Ceylub, we're so proud of you for getting that 100. You really have your parent's smarts.



Ceylub, how could you get a 67 on that test?!



I know, I know... I guess I didn't study hard enough.

But, of course... We all know that my failing must have come from one of you...?



Sorry honey, but I believe your dad gets credit for this.

Ceylub, your mother is way too modest.

Excuse me? I'm the one who got straight-*click*

I guess it's true... "Success has many parents and a failing grade is an orphan."



By Oliver Burke, Aqua Team

Annie Mation Christmas Edition

Featuring Sarah!

By Jana Powers, Bronze Team



World Cup Venues Announced for 2018 & 2022

By Matthew Hayes, Tan Team

The FIFA World Cup is a globally-renowned phenomenon, similar to the Olympics, in which countries put aside differences and play the world's favorite sport- soccer. The 2010 Final achieved 1.75 billion views.

Despite not being American's favorite sport, 24.3 million viewers from the US tuned in to watch the World Cup final. This huge figure shows that soccer is not to be taken lightly; even in the US about 18 million children play soccer, not counting those over 18 years.

So when the FIFA World Cup announcement was made earlier last week, there were a lot of eyes on it, from people in the US and around the world.

In a surprise move by FIFA, the 2018 World Cup will be played in Russia, and the country hosting 2022 World Cup is Qatar.

This is one of the most controversial decisions in recent years. Just some of the countries bidding for the 2018 event were England, Russia, Belgium/Netherlands, and Portugal/Spain. The bids for 2022 were South Korea, Japan, Qatar, the US, and Australia.

In the 2018 race, England was the clear leaders in the beginning, but after corruption charges surfaced just weeks before the final voting, England was effectively knocked out of the running, despite a strong showing of representatives from their country in a plea to host it, among these were the Prime Minister and David Beckham.

Following that the favorites were the co-hosting due of Portugal and Spain, with the

other three, mainly Russia and the Belgium/Netherlands duo, tailing them.

However, the real shocker was not Russia winning. They had hosted the 2009 Champions League Final, and have a former Big 10 team on the FIFA rankings, now 13th. Not only that, they have a huge country, with many existing stadiums and the sixth best normal league in Europe. They have world stars such as Andrey Arshavin and Roman Pavlyuchenko.

The real shocker, rather, was Qatar getting the 2022 event. Smaller than Connecticut, Qatar is about 11,000km², and it is ranked 113th in the world rankings. It has never played in the World Cup, and only one player, Hussein Yasser, plays outside of Qatar, on the Egyptian team Al-Zamalek.

So what led to this odd choice? Opinions vary. One of the main things in the Qatari bid was the new stadium they are

going to build for their World Cup. To combat temperatures that reach up to 120° in the summer, they said that they would build advanced outdoor cooling systems in all stadiums. They also agreed to make the stadiums very eco-friendly, a chief concern in modern society and in FIFA's decision.

Nick Clegg from the *Wall Street Journal* talked about the reasons for choosing Qatar in a recent article, "A desire to make history, and the opportunity to partner with the natural gas fortune of the Qatari royal family, ultimately proved irresistible to FIFA. Qatar has promised to spend \$4 billion to build nine stadiums, renovate three others and equip all of them with a high-tech, outdoor air conditioning system to combat summer temperatures that can reach 120 degrees during the day. The country has vowed to spend another \$50 billion on infrastructure ahead of the tournament."

It seems as if that one of Qatar's redeeming features was its ample amount of money. Also, a less seemingly corrupt reason was that FIFA is on a quest to spread soccer around the world, and the World Cup has yet to be played in an Eastern European country and a Muslim country, which will be checked off their list by the end of 2022.

Celebrations in Qatar were huge upon receiving the event, with people pouring onto the streets of places like the capital, Doha, shouting and chanting. It was in stark contrast to Russia, where it was -4°F outside, so little outside public partying took place. None the less, the two countries are extremely happy to be hosting the tournament, where history will be made.



The new stadium design for the 2022 World Cup. (Courtesy of FIFA)

Concussions: National Issue Hits Home

By Pablo Castro, Tan Team

In this sport-absorbed world, it is easy to ignore obvious indications of a perhaps serious head injury. As kids and teenagers become substantially more involved in their sport worlds, safety is sometimes compromised for the sake of a successful game or season.

In a recent incident that gained the attention of the media, Ron Stiles, a 17 year old from Kansas, collapsed after receiving a concussion during a football game. It is thought that a concussion prior to the game might have been a serious cause for his collapse and death.

Eighth grader Jay Jacobs experienced a similar head injury. According to Jay, he missed two months of school. Such an injury can hinder one's academic success, and he said that it was difficult for him to catch up on missed work.

"I had to undergo a lot of impact tests," Jay said about several tests he had to take to assess the damage to his brain.

Another eighth grader, Carter Joyce, experienced a concussion when he got hit in hockey. Carter almost blacked out and his head hurt a lot.

"When I woke up the next day, I had a piercing headache," he said when prompted about how his head responded to the blow. However, even with this intense pain, he only waited about three weeks before returning to the ice. As parents rush their kids back into sports, some warning signs of long-lasting head injuries are neglected. Luckily, Carter didn't experience too bad of a head injury, and he is now fine.

Some studies have linked concussions to brain diseases and injuries once these kids have grown. Although the long-term effects are still unclear, it is evident that concussions do have an effect on players and people of all ages.

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WRITER'S SPOTLIGHT

A section dedicated to creative writing from MMS students!

Build Your Own Short Story

By Morgan Doherty, Red Team

Have you always wanted to be a writer, but you weren't sure where to start. Well today is your lucky day!

We here at The Dragon are all about encouraging student writing. So, we're launching a new feature called, "Build Your Own Short Story".

Below, you will find two short story starters. Use the paragraphs and/or characters to start your own short story. You could choose to focus on character, link both characters together, or simply use them as inspiration for your own story.

This edition will be a practice run, and we hope to launch a possible writing contest in the spring. Good luck!

Trouble Twins

Haley

I'm having like the worst day ever. And my outfit is totally ruined considering I'm sitting in a puddle. You see early today I was standing in the hallway with my best friend ever Jen and the only two things I cared about were making sure I looked flawless and getting my hands on some mint gum.

I didn't really care about anyone or anything else. And if someone had told me I had a special forces, super "think-he's-sooo-cool," ninja-like twin brother, I would probably have done one of three things. I would have just not talked to you, put you in my loser file, or sent you to the football team to have them deal with you. All in all, this is like the worst day ever.

Jay

I'm pretty mad right now. You see I'm sitting on the floor tied up and gagged. I'm also sitting next to the twin sister I never knew I had. And she's really starting to get on my nerves.

Some how (and I really don't know how) she ungagged herself and won't do the same for me. And now she's talking my ear off about how annoyed she is that we're stuck here. It's not like this whole situation is my bucket of sunshine either. Just because she's a princess in-waiting doesn't mean she has to expect me to make this better for her. I can't believe that KSQUAD would go after my "sister".....

**Opportunity: Chapter 2**

By Morgan Peters, Green Team

There are probably very few things worse than trying to sleep in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

It's loud, stuffy, and possibly the least conducive environment to taking a well-deserved nap. Or, at least, I'd like to think that I deserve it. After all, I made no complaints after my Aunt Sasha announced her idea of a road trip to New York. This is partly because I didn't want to hurt her feelings, and partly because every time I tried to open my mouth to voice and opinion, she would try and feed me something that looked terribly similar to cat food.

The cat in question, was Cypress-who was so large that you'd never guess he was missing any amount of food- we perched lazily on my stomach, adding to the discomfort that prevented any sort of a doze. Even if I had managed to shut my eyes in the few moments between angry car horns or the lurch of the hideous RV, he would have just smacked me in the face, as if he actually wanted my company.

"Samantha! Come out and look at the map, will you dear?" My aunt called from the front seat. Once again, no respect for a teenager's desires. And, no concept of just how helpful a GPS can be.

"Sure, where am I supposed to be looking?" I asked, exiting my small can-barely-stretch-my-toes-without-hitting-the-wall bedroom, and headed out to the front cab. She was sitting there in all of her turquoise-sequin glory, complete with a purple headscarf.

If I hadn't already heard on the radio that it was an overturned tractor-trailer, than I would be under the impression that she was the one causing the back up. After all, it's not often you see a hideous 'Recreational Vehicle' driving down the highway driven by a woman who could quite possibly be insane.

"Well, right now, I am pretty sure we're in Nevada, somewhere in the upper bits," she said distractedly, glaring at a man on a motorcycle, weaving his way in and out of traffic. I noticed the large map she had spread out on the passenger seat and a sense of terror immediately gripped my stomach.

There was no way that I was going to make it all the way to New York in one piece. Either Sasha would drive us off the side of a cliff, or I would hurl myself off of one after a week with her. Either way, it was going to end badly for me.

"Er, well that sign there says that we've just passed Carson City, so we

should be about here," I said, pointing to a location on the map. We were inching ever closer to the middle of the country, a place I had never particularly been interested in visiting, and probably for good reason. The Midwest was nothing like California, and I had almost started crying when we crossed the border earlier on. This was terrible.

"Thanks darling," she said, then sighed a very content sigh, "It's so nice to be out here, braving the elements, and spending some quality time together." I ought to have pointed out the fact that, seeing as we were enclosed in a modern method of transportation, we weren't really braving anything. But I couldn't really be bothered.

"Oh yes, I love sitting in traffic. Traffic in Nevada no less," I said with false enthusiasm, "Who would have thought that there would be cars in Nevada?"

"Oh, there are cars everywhere, and we'll see them all, I don't doubt!" she said, completely misinterpreting what it was I meant, "Well, now that we're here together, I think that ought to take some time and get to know each other."

This was certainly the last thing I wanted to do, but once Aunt Sasha gets going, there really is no stopping her.



The Spotlight Section is dedicated to publishing creative student writing!

While this edition features short stories, we also take poetry submissions, along with other forms of creative writing.

To go along with our website, we also have a Writer's Spotlight Bulletin Board right outside the main office!

Also, visit THE DRAGON website for more information, and email your original pieces directly to us at

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