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COMMUNITY

SHINE BRIGHT LIKE A DIAMOND

AGHS students participate in Night to Shine event

By
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Staff Writer

Loud cheers erupted at the red carpet inside Willowdale Chapel. One girl, clad in a bright purple prom dress, grins and gleefully struts down the red carpet where all eyes are on her. This is exactly what organizer Alison Kelisek envisioned when she coordinated Night to Shine.

Night to Shine is a prom sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation that's meant to highlight those with special needs. It's held once a year, and for the last three years the Willowdale Chapel has hosted it to serve southern Chester County.

"We have over 250 guests, 500 volunteers on the night, and about 200 extra helping prior to the night. We also accommodate up to 200 parents/caretakers on the night," said Kelisek.

Volunteer recruitment began towards the end of fall and the beginning of winter. Volunteers could choose from a wide range of positions such as being "paparazzi" (where individuals gather around the red carpet and cheer on the honored guests of the event) and "buddies" (where one person is paired with one of the guests as a companion).

AGHS members of the National



-Photo by Abby Osborne

Willowdale Chapel in Kennett Square has hosted Night to Shine for three years.

Honor Society and an I/E program called SMILE, where students play games and make crafts with those enrolled in the Life Skills class, participated in this event.

"Megan [Schleniger] volunteered last year, and I was inspired to bring it to SMILE since we all love them and wanted to help them experience a fun prom,"

said junior and charter member of SMILE Katelyn Enache.

Throughout the entire prom, smiles and laughter were abundant.

On the dance floor, it was hard to spot anyone who wasn't dancing the night away. With classics from Whitney Houston and *Grease* blasting from the speak-

ers, everyone joined a collective sing-along complete with conga lines and dance circles.

One of the other popular destinations in the prom was the party bus, where more dancing and laughter commenced.

Participants also enjoyed the photo booth, and the crown table - where everyone was given either

a crown or tiara because every guest was a Prom King or Prom Queen.

"I had fun. I was happy to be there and help out and make sure my buddy was having a good time," said junior Emma Roberts.

Most importantly, the friendships formed and the smiles born from this event will last a lifetime.

One of the coordinators told the group of "buddies" prior to the prom that these guests look forward to this prom every single year and immediately countdown the days until the next one the day after.

Kelisek can attest to the fact that this night means far more than anyone can anticipate to the honored guests.

"For some parents this is a night they never thought their child/adult would be part of: a real prom. Also, for many parents this is an event that shows to them that the wider community cares for the special needs community."

It was the night of nights for these guests. For that night, at the very least, it was theirs only. They could do anything they wanted on their own terms and form new memories and friendships that can last a lifetime.

For that night, and hopefully many more, it was their night to shine.

AGHS SCHEDULE

Staff reflects on 3 years of hybrid block schedule

By
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Staff Writer

The logistics of organizing over 1700 people for seven-and-a-half hours a day is a daunting task. For many years the schedule was the same everyday, but at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, Avon Grove High School implemented a new bell schedule.

The new six-day schedule included 53-minute periods for days 1-4. The class periods rotate each day so a student will miss two subjects each day, and an Intervention and Enrichment (IE) period is included on these days where students can go see any teacher for help or have fun learning something new or engage in club activities.

On days 5 and 6 there are four 90 minute block periods. Students see half of their classes on day 5 and the other half on day 6.

The block schedule idea was made about six years ago by a committee made up of teachers, principals, and students to make a new schedule. The modified block schedule was the number one choice from all sides.

The reasons the committee choose the modified block schedule is because everyone liked it. "Students liked it because of the IE period and that the schedule rotates. So if they don't like a class they don't have to see that class every day," said Avon Grove High School assistant principal Dr. Ortega-Moran.

"Some teachers like the 90 minute periods because they can extend an activity, but at the same time some students have a hard time because certain students can't concentrate for 90 minutes straight," added Dr. Ortega-Moran.

"The 90 minute periods are very worthwhile to have if you are doing a long term project or a large essay assignment where students need a lot of extra time," said social studies teacher Mrs. Shirley Schenker.

"The block schedule is great because I can reinforce concepts," said Spanish teacher Mrs. Melanie Miers.

This longer period of time has been beneficial since some teachers believe there is a lack of continuity for students because they do not attend class daily.

Another drawback from the new schedule is that science classes have lost time for lab periods.

However, according to AGHS principal Mr. Scott DeShong, "first-time test takers on the Biology Keystone exam in 2018 earned their highest score in the last 4 years and the percentage of students earning advanced or proficient was in the top 15% in the state."

In addition, there have been other recognizable gains in student achievement. DeShong noted that in 2018 the number of students earning a '3' on an Advanced Placement test was tied for the most ever in the last seven years, and the high school's SAT and ACT scores were the highest in the last five years.

This data shows that students and teachers are adapting to the new schedule.

"A schedule only determines when the bells ring and students change class; what happens while students are in class is what makes the difference in the experience for each AGHS student regardless of when the bells ring," said DeShong.

COMMUNITY

School board proposes new 2019-2020 calendar

By
Lara McKinnon
Senior Editor

As many of the Avon Grove students have already heard, the Avon Grove School Board of Directors has proposed a new calendar for the 2019-2020 school year.

The last day of the school year will be June 2, 2020. However, if there are snow days, this date will be changed to accommodate the amount of school days missed. The last day for the current school year was scheduled for Tuesday, June 11 (this date has changed because of snow days which need to be made up).

Some in the community felt that the reason for the early end to school for 2019-2020 was because of repairs that have to be done on the current high school. However, this is not the case.

"There has been no discussion with the Board regarding proj-

ects that can occur in the current high school during the summer of 2020," stated Dr. Marchese, superintendent of the Avon Grove School District.

The School Board of Directors proposed the change because it sought to provide as many school days before the end of year exams as possible.

"The administration also factored in state assessments and the AP test calendar to afford the maximum amount of school days prior to the administration of those assessments. The spring break in the 2019-20 proposed calendar is reduced from 5 days (Monday through Friday) to 3 days: Thursday, Friday, and Monday," said Dr. Marchese.

Marchese did not confirm that this would be a template for future years. "I wouldn't classify the 2019-20 proposed calendar as a temporary or permanent calendar model for the AGSD."

SPORTS

Esports team established



- Photo by Ben Younger

Senior Jake Delfaro practices playing Rocket League for the Avon Grove High School Esports team.

By
Ben Younger
Staff Writer

Monster cars collide in an enclosed arena. They drift up and down ramps chasing a ball. Now the car is trying to score a goal.

This is not a new form of soccer, but a videogame called *Rocket League*.

This year, Mr. Pizzini and his Esports club will be playing this game against other schools in the state.

Rocket League is a video game where competitors have big mon-

ster cars that fly around an arena trying to score balls into soccer goals.

"This club is for students who do not play sports, but would like to compete. It is giving them an opportunity to do something competitive," said Mr. Pizzini.

"Of course we want to try and win the tournaments, but we are also doing this to have a good time. It is just like actual sports: we like to play, but we also want to win and compete."

Since Andre Brown was young, video games have always been one of his hobbies. Everytime

he got home from school the first thing he wanted to do was turn on his gaming system. It only makes sense that his senior year, he is part of Avon Grove's first video game club, and he is a leader on the team.

"I have played video games ever since I can remember so when I found out about the new club I already knew I was going to join," Brown said.

SPORTS

"They played hard and never gave up"

Girls basketball finishes the season with 6-15 record



- Photo by Zach Humphreys

Jamie Perkins takes the tip in the final game of the season against Coatesville at Avon Grove High School on February 7. The Lady Devils lost 53-50.

By
Zach Humphreys
Staff Writer

Girls basketball had a lot of ups and downs this season. They finished with a 6-15 record, but they did beat Unionville for the first time in 10 years.

The girls really struggled to put points on the board throughout the season, losing 10 games by 20 or more points.

Beginning the season, the team was 3-3 going into a game against Unionville when the losing streak hit.

Avon Grove began a six-game

losing streak on December 22 that lasted until January 10.

The Lady Devils lost to Unionville, Academy Park, West Chester East, Oxford, Downingtown East and West Chester Henderson.

To varsity head coach Bart O'Connor, this is not the best way to start off his Avon Grove coaching career.

However, he was proud of his team. "They play hard and they never gave up all season."

CLASS OF 2019

Tips for surviving college applications

By
Olivia Kunitzky
Column

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair" (Charles Dickens).

A whirlwind of emotions inevitably comes with the college application process. At least that was the case for me.

On the one hand, I was excited that I was beginning to seriously think about life beyond Avon Grove, but conversely, I struggled with a fear that I wasn't ready to leave the small bubble that is West Grove, Pennsylvania.

However, whatever your feelings about college are at this point in time, there are several crucial things to keep in mind during the application process.

First of all, it's important to know what qualities you are looking for in your dream school. Do you want a school with a large undergraduate population? A big sports school? A school in the city?

If you're like me, those questions will stump you. When I first began looking into colleges, I had absolutely no idea what I wanted in a school.

Therefore, I would recommend going to tour some schools that may interest you. Walk around the campus, see what kinds of people

attend the school, and determine if you could even remotely imagine yourself spending four years (or possibly more) at the college.

That is how I eliminated a school that I had been greatly interested in applying to. It was a university in Washington, D.C. and I figured that because I love visiting the city, I would love living there too. I was very wrong.

Doing research on colleges can be very helpful as well, and with the abundant access to the Internet in today's society, gathering information about schools has become much easier.

According to Prep-Scholar, you should be applying to about six to eight schools. Two or three of these

should be reach schools, two to three should be target ones, and two should be safety colleges.

These are certainly not set numbers; one of my friends applied to three schools, while I applied to 14. It all depends on the individual, so don't feel strange if you only have two schools in mind, or if conversely, you're planning to apply to 20.

The reason that I applied to 14 different colleges was because even after going on multiple college tours and doing research, I could not narrow down my list of possible schools.

Therefore, my thinking was that

I would apply to a wide variety of schools. If you're really uncertain about what you want in a school, I think this is the best strategy for approaching the application process.

An important thing to keep in mind during the process is that each application costs money and that you have to spend additional money if you plan to send standardized test scores and transcripts. People have differing opinions on this topic, but my

I actually learned a lot about myself from writing my college application essays.

word of advice is please do not let this limit the amount of schools you apply to if you can help it. The money is worth finding the school that is right for you.

Now, I'm sure you've heard about college application essays and how they can make or break your application. I'm here to confirm that statement.

Okay, calm down, that may be a bit of an exaggeration. However, I will admit that this is a huge component of the application and something that you should definitely spend a lot of time and effort on.

From my experience, many

of the different prompts have common themes, so it is perfectly okay to use ideas from one of your college essays to help with another one.

Some typical prompts include talking about an adversity you have faced; explaining what perspective, identity, or qualities you will contribute to the school; and discussing how you wish to explore your academic interests at the college.

You may be panicking because you can't think of some huge challenge that you have had to overcome that has changed your life, or you have no idea how your perspective will benefit the college.

Don't worry—I literally wrote about the challenge of the college application process for the adversity prompt, and for questions concerning your "perspective" or "identity," you can simply talk about your hobbies, interests, and passions.

The admissions people reading your essays understand that you're only a high schooler and that you may have limited experiences or knowledge to share.

As the Princeton Review advises, "write about something that's important to you." Show the college what makes whatever you are writing about meaningful to

you; that's what they care about because they want to get an idea of the kind of person you are from your essay.

Something else that I find rather fascinating that the Princeton Review states is this piece of advice: "Don't just recount—reflect!"

I hadn't even realized it until now, but I actually learned a lot about myself from writing my college application essays.

To write a special application essay, you have to take a personal experience (no matter how small you think it may be perceived to be) and put it under a microscope. Scrutinize it, dissect it, and look at it from every angle. Walk the admissions people through this process of yours so that both of you make the groundbreaking discovery or realization about your experience at the same time, by the end of your essay.

Some advice that may seem obvious but nonetheless needs to be said is to make sure you keep an eye on application deadlines and don't procrastinate. Otherwise, you'll have your mom nagging you to get an application done when all you want to do is watch Netflix.

For whoever reads this article, I wish you the best of luck with the college application process. It definitely is a rollercoaster of an experience, but all rollercoasters come to an end eventually.

You'll get through it.