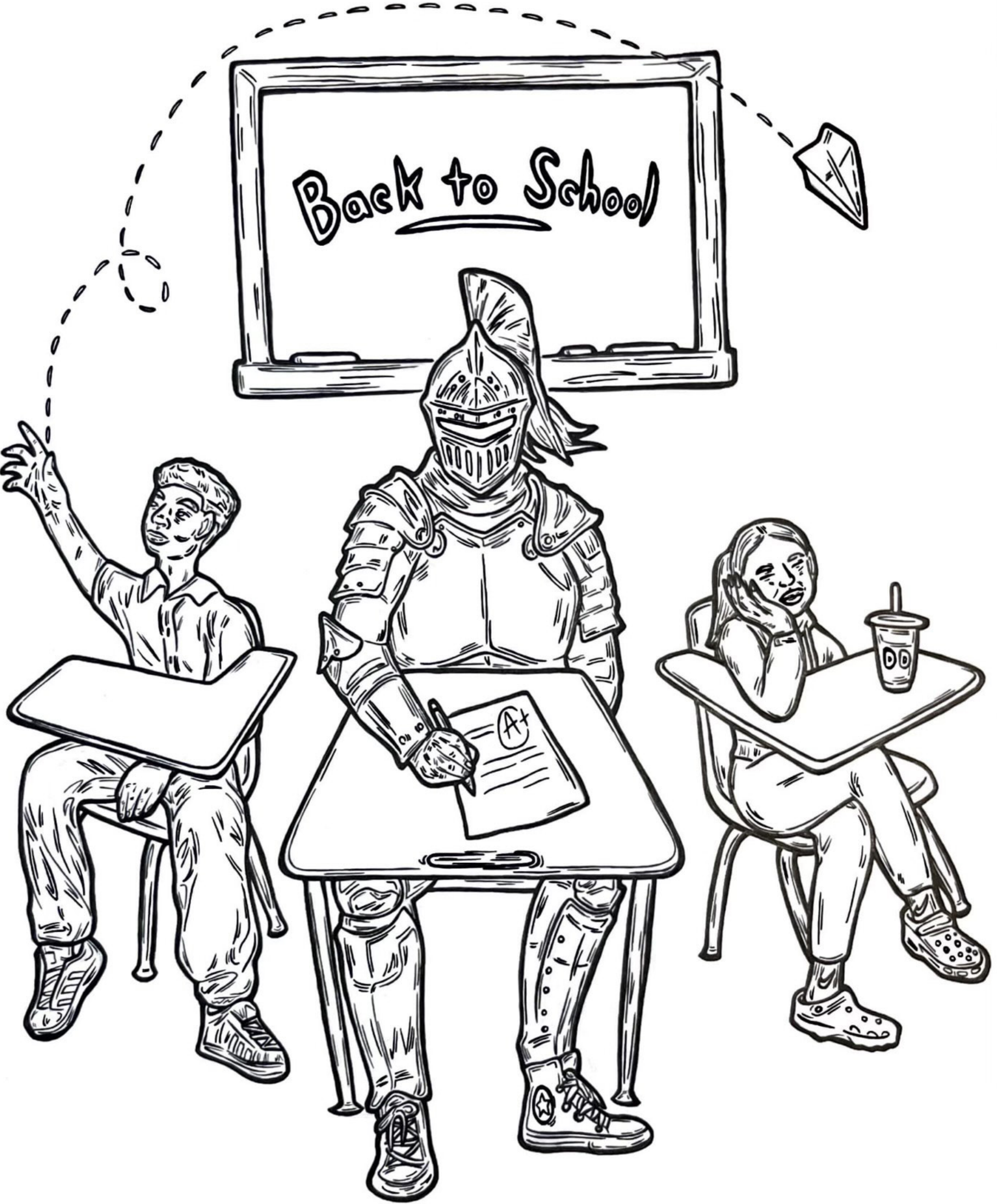


Centralizer



Artist: Betsy Okrent

Central High School Named a National Blue Ribbon School

Sadie Batchis (284)
Staff Writer

The U.S. Department of Education named Central High School a National Blue Ribbon School on September 23, 2024. Central was one of the only 356 schools in the country and thirteen schools in Pennsylvania who won the award this year.

In celebration on September 23rd, Central teachers and seniors gathered on the south lawn and listened to President Katherine Davis and Superintendent Tony Watlington announced the achievement. Watlington said, “I am elated to celebrate the hard work of the president, teachers, students, and their families at Central. This nation-

al recognition is a point of pride and a testament to the academic excellence within our District.” President Davis expressed how honored

Central is to have received this award, emphasizing that the school “strive[s] to build a community that values student voice and lead-

ership” and “wholeheartedly believe[s] in the power of young adults to positively impact our local and global community.”

The National Blue Ribbon Program, started in 1982, recognizes elementary and secondary schools based on academic excellence and progress in closing achievement gaps among students. Academic excellence is classified by state and national standardized testing scores.

This is not the first time Central has earned the prestigious Blue Ribbon award. Central was also given a Blue Ribbon in 1987 and 2011. This achievement is an important recognition of not only Central High School, but the School District of Philadelphia as a whole. It is especially poignant for an urban school like Central to receive this great honor.



*Central students and staff at the Blue Ribbon Ceremony
PC: IMPACTO*

Go-To Study Spots

Simona Montalto (286) & Laisha Khatun (286)
Staff Writers

As the new school year begins and the assignments start to pile up, Central students fall back into the annual, dragging routine: cracking open their textbooks as soon as they reach home. However, did you know the mid-quarter dread can be combatted? Ever considered changing your study location from time to time? We took it upon ourselves to reach out to the Central community and inquire about the beloved study spots both in and out of the school building.

Paris Baguette (Rating: 3/5)

Paris Baguette is a chain cafe with a few locations established around Philly. We visited the Center City location, easily accessible from Central by hopping on the BSL Ex-

press and a few minutes walk. As soon as we opened the door, it was evident the atmosphere was tranquil. The interior has two rows of tables, the walls lined with cabinets stacked with baked goods along the wall. Slightly dim, warm lighting, and quiet pop music set a relaxing tone for customers. It seemed to be relatively easy to find a seat after school. Two drinks and two pastries brought us to a total of 18 dollars. The pastries were small, but delectable, filling enough to satiate our hunger.

Cafe Walnut (Rating: 4.5/5)

Cafe Walnut is located in Center City and is easy to reach from the BSL Spur 8th and Market stop. Most menu items are affordable: we bought two bagels with cream cheese for just over 5 dollars. The counter is on the lower level and seating is upstairs. After ordering, you walk to the

second level where you are greeted with warm lighting and a variety of wooden furniture. The quiet music playing in the background and colorful paintings bring the space together to create a cozy environment. The large window offers a view into Washington Square. Our food was conveniently brought up to our table. The Wi-Fi works smoothly, and there’s a readily accessible bathroom for customers to use. The only negative is that it closes at five, so a Central student may not have enough time to finish all of the entirety of their workload.

Central’s Tables (Rating: 2/5)

The picnic tables scattered around Central’s outdoor areas offer a nice breeze and a breath of fresh air for studying. Typically, it is quiet unless there are other students mingling outside. On a good day, the sun supplies plenty of

natural light to work under. Unfortunately, it is next to the parking lot so there are cars often whirring by and one view is obstructed by a dumpster. This would not be an ideal spot if the weather was bad, as any rain or wind would disrupt your peace.. It’s difficult to connect to the school Wi-Fi at the tables, so we do not recommend this study spot if you are relying solely on your Chromebook for homework. You also have to take temperature into account—this study spot is seasonal at best.

Central’s Music Hallway (Rating: 3/5)

If you value a change in your surroundings, the music hallway may be the place for you. The middle hallway on the 3rd floor is home to the music classrooms and also the favorite Central wing for many students. There are tables you can use if you’re lucky, but they are often taken during

busy periods of the day. There is always also the opportunity (or risk, if you’re not a fan of noise) to hear music rehearsals or practices. If all of that is fine by you, this might be the perfect spot!

Barnwell Library (Rating: 5/5)

The school library is cozy and inviting, ideal for studying or reading. With lots of comfortable seating from cushioned chairs to spacious desks, there’s many places to settle in. The dim lighting adds to the relaxed vibe, and open windows allow for fresh air, making it easy to focus or unwind within a good book. Whether you’re working on a school assignment or on the quest for research materials, the library’s peaceful atmosphere and laid-back ambiance makes it the ideal place for efficiency.

Why Gilmore Girls Resurges Every Fall

Aviva Weinstein (286) & Amelia Mazelis EauClaire (286)
Staff Writers

Gilmore Girls is a staple autumn TV show. Globally, people enjoy the episodes of the chaotic, funny, and relatable lives of mother, Lorelai, and teenage daughter, Rory. First aired in 2000, this show

remains loved as its popularity spikes year after year in the fall, enticing people to sit down to rewatch and binge the familiar series.

But why do people watch it specifically in the fall?

When presented with this question, student Sophia Scorsolini (286) said, “A lot of the episodes take place in fall, and Gilm-

ore Girls is a comforting show. As the school year begins, it is nice to watch a familiar series.” She also expresses the appeal of the familial dynamics captured in the show, which she described as “sweet and a semi-realistic portrayal of a mother and daughter relationship.”

Another enticing aspect of this show is the main

character, Rory Gilmore, a bright high school student, who attends the fictional academy of Chilton Preparatory School and later Yale University. Chilton is a very difficult and rigorous school, prizing itself in academics and its status—much like Central High School. This adds a note of relatability for all Central students to connect with the

show, especially as we enter a new school year.

As fall begins once again, many students will be settling into their routine of rewatching this shared comfort series. Gilmore Girls, with its chaos, comedy, and relatability, is the perfect show to watch during the back-to-school season.

Who Are Central’s New Assistant Principals?

Josiah Sofidiya (285)
Staff Writer

Passing through the bustling halls of Central High School, an observant student might notice the absence of two prominent faces. Assistant principals (A.P.) Harrington and Brooks have moved on from Central and their absence has been felt by students. In their places, Mr. Myrick and Mr. Smith have come to be Central’s newest A.P.’s, and they are here to work hard.

The *Centralizer* sat down with both A.P.s for an interview in the hope of providing the student body with the stories behind these two new faces. After pleasantries were exchanged, we sat down in Mr. Myrick’s — formerly A.P. Harrington’s — office, now filled with posters of comic book characters, and began.

We started with a couple of questions about their professional backgrounds. Mr. Smith said he has been teaching since 2008, starting with special education in the Bronx, New York and continuing on to teach social studies and subsequently Spanish in several other schools. Ultimately, while he loved the classroom, he decided that he was ready for a different type of challenge. Mr. Smith decided that taking up a leadership position would allow him to combine the satisfaction he gets out of helping teachers and the joy he finds in learning. Mr. Myrick followed a similar path. He was a classroom teacher for twelve years, but had another reason for becoming an A.P. After the tragic killing of Ahmaud Arbery, his sev-

enth grade class began asking him about social justice. When the George Floyd protests happened later that year Mr. Myrick asked himself the question, “What can I do that will extend beyond this [his classroom] that will make an impact in education?” He found his answer in a school leadership position, and after a few years of moving around he found himself at Central High School.

When asked about the key lessons each AP was bringing from their prior experience, Mr. Myrick continued with his prior line of thought, saying, “we have to listen to students.” What students focus on has changed drastically since he was in school. He identified that there is now a bigger emphasis on understanding mental health and social issues. There is also the addition of technology and how it has changed the way students process information to be considered. Teachers need to figure out how to instruct students while understanding these changes. The best way to do so is to listen to the students themselves. Mr. Smith shared his view on schools, saying “I fundamentally see schools as a place of growth for everyone.” He went on to explain that everyone—from President Davis, to the faculty, to the student body—comes to school to grow. At Central, because of how hard we work, and the pride we take in our work, we are always striving towards growth.

When asked what their top priorities for the school year were, both administrators had immediate answers. Mr. Myrick’s top

priority was to maintain Central High School’s legacy of excellence, while simultaneously supporting President Davis in moving the school into the future. Central’s rich academic tradition remains a central focus for Mr. Myrick, but equally as important is asking how faculty can “maintain what Central has been but still remain relevant to students of today and kids who will come in tomorrow.” Mr. Smith said that what AP Myrick said was “spot-on.” Being an assistant principal means continuously supporting President Davis’ vision, but also being committed to furthering the school’s history of equity and academic excellence. Both assistant principals were asked how they saw their role in fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion in Central. Mr. Myrick said that his philosophy as an “equity-centered leader” is dedicated to listening to teachers and students to make them feel welcome. The diversity of our teachers and students allows us to tackle issues from a range of perspectives and find the best solutions, while still allowing faculty to take part in a collective vision. AP Smith commented further on Mr. Myrick’s idea saying, “diversity makes us better.”

Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Myrick agreed that our differing lived experiences allow us to approach problems more effectively than we would otherwise. In addition, as school leaders, Smith and Myrick believe it is their job to remove barriers that prevent Central’s school community

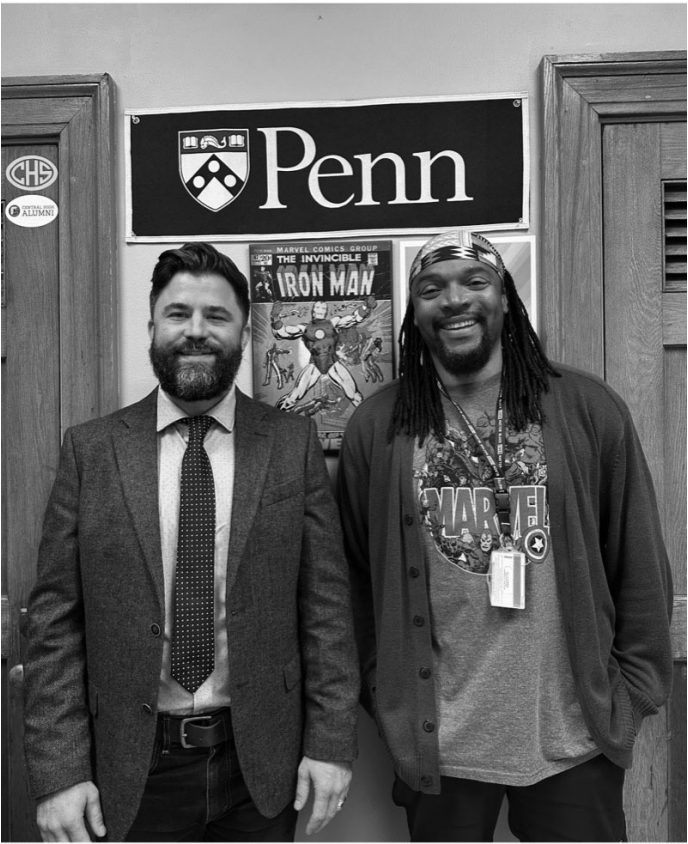
from thriving. Making sure our school is a place where students know they are able to grow and meeting families and communities where they are is an important aspect of being an AP.

Moving away from the more serious questions, they were asked to reveal something that students would be surprised to learn about them. Mr. Myrick revealed that he was a massive Janet Jackson fan, traveling not just across the country, but the world to see her perform. Mr. Smith revealed that he was a former D1 college soccer player as well as an avid chess player.

To close the interview out, the newly minted assistant principals were asked what they think the best part of the school day is. For Mr. Myrick, despite the “can of worms” that it could release, his favorite part of the day is when kids stop in to visit him. For Mr.

Smith, the most enjoyable part of the day is either admission or dismissal because it’s when people are smiling the most. Whether students smile because school is starting or ending doesn’t matter to Mr. Smith. The most important thing is that they are smiling and happy.

As the school year progresses, it is clear that Central’s new assistant principals are committed to preserving the school’s legacy and steering it towards a better future. With a focus on listening to students, fostering equity, and supporting growth, Mr. Myrick and Mr. Smith are set to make a lasting impact on Central’s community. Whether it is through a welcoming atmosphere or meaningful conversation, both students and staff can look forward to being seen, heard, and expected to thrive by these two new assistant principals.



Central’s New Assistant Principals: Mr. Smith (left) and Mr. Myrick (right) | PC: Aziza Kahrmonova (284)

Politics at Central

Nica Jurlando (285)
News Editor

With the upcoming presidential election and the aftermath of the presidential debate between current Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump, political discourse is as heated as ever. For many people, the stakes have never been higher. 2020 saw the highest voter turnout in nearly 40 years, and 81% of city voters cast their ballot for the Democratic Nominee: current

President Joe Biden. But what does political participation look like at Central?

The only current club or organization at Central that is specific to discussing political beliefs is Politics Central, run by President Sadie Batchis (284). Sadie describes the club as a “political discussion group” in which students converse and sometimes debate pressing topics related to US politics – from gun violence to current elections. Sadie says students “tend to be a little

bit iffy about talking about politics,” perhaps due to being conflict-averse and worrying about openly sharing their positions on topics that may be controversial. Despite the potential worries of participants, Sadie and her cabinet work to create a welcoming environment that is open to all kinds of perspectives, stating it is “very easygoing.” She also believes the club discourse is greatly affected by how liberal Philadelphians are. The widest array of differentiating opinions arises

when discussing “issues that vary within liberals and within the Democratic Party,” citing examples of gun violence and the death penalty. “The fact that we’re in a very liberal city and a very liberal school makes debates less common,” she adds.

While currently, Politics Central is Central’s only politically-focused club, the Student Socialist Coalition, which operated in 2023, was a political student organization sponsored by history department teacher

Mr. Satlow. The club, per its name, was rooted in socialist ideology. Socialism is a political and economic philosophy promoting state-based ownership over privatization, as seen in the United State’s practice of capitalism. Satlow says the club’s goal was geared toward supporting socialism as opposed to critiquing capitalism. However, he also explained there are “two sides of the same coin” and that the club’s work achieves both.

(continued on Page 5)

Mr. Lobron: More Than a Librarian

Sharon M. Emdin (?)
Staff Writer

On the first floor of Central’s Barnwell Library, you’ll find more than endless piles of books. If you look a bit deeper you’ll find a man who embodies much more than a keeper of information, more than a librarian— Mr. Lobron. With years of experience, ranging from an educator of social studies to Spanish to Central’s library, Lobron’s journey is a testament to his commitment to teaching students to navigate both their academic and personal challenges.

Mr. Lobron’s career thus far can only be described with utmost dedication. He has a history of teaching a vast variety of subjects: World and U.S. History, Political History, IB and AP Psychology, and AP European History. His qualifications—with three masters, including that of Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) from Drexel University—reflect his deep dedication to his career.

You may be asking, what prompted Lobron’s shift to being a librarian? He wanted to keep teaching, but sought a new environment. Thus, he saw the Barnwell Library as an extension of the classroom, a space where learning can flourish in diverse and unexpected ways. For over a decade, Barnwell has func-

tioned as both Lobron’s classroom and space for academic excitement.

The Best Part of the Job: For Mr. Lobron, the best part of being a librarian is the diverse daily interactions in Barnwell: he works with students and staff from all walks of life. “The most interesting range of people,” he notes, “the way[s] that people think.” From students who are just starting high school to staff members using the library printer, Lobron gratefully says, “do you see the span of humanity I work with?”

He recalls a touching moment with a freshman, who, in awe asked, “Wow, you’ve read all these books?” The curiosity of students like these is the part that makes his job so fulfilling. He cherishes the relationships he builds, not just with “college-bound juniors and seniors,” but also with students who face personal struggles. “It’s not just like I’m a great student, I want to do my homework...I’m not knocking that. But many students live in poverty...with a lot to deal with. They’re just children.” He

said, his voice filled with emotion. “It’s so hard sometimes.”

A Social Worker At Heart: At times, Mr. Lobron finds himself playing the role of a social worker, guiding students who come to him with challenges that go far beyond schoolwork. Rather than seeking academic resources, many stu-



Mr. Lobron working in the library | PC: Aziza Kahramonova (284)

dents seek a trusted adult who can help them navigate life’s difficulties. “They’re not just doing homework for a grade,” he says. “They’re looking for an adult they can trust to help them find the answers they need.”

Mr. Lobron is always ready to guide students to proper resources—

whether that’s a book or the counselor’s office. “I don’t have all the answers, but I know which of these books can help along the journey.”

The Librarian’s Ethical Code: A librarian, Mr. Lobron explains, comes with its own ethical responsibilities. Much like a doctor who takes an oath to heal without judgment, a librarian’s duty is to guide students to the resources they need. “Our job is to help the user identify relevant sources,” he says, highlighting that librarians have an ethical compass that compels them to serve without bias.

One of the most rewarding aspects of his job is watching students discover themselves through books. The most popular section in the library? Religion. As students begin questioning the beliefs they were raised with, many turn to the library for answers, and Mr. Lobron offers guidance in the form of literature. “It’s a beautiful thing to see a person’s discovery of ideas not just about math and science, but about themselves.”

Collaboration with Teachers: Another vital part of Mr. Lobron’s posi-

tion is collaborating with both students and teachers on research. Whether it’s guiding freshmen through research tasks or helping seniors with pressuring assignments, he plays a key role in developing students’ research skills. “The [key] word is collaboration,” he says.

He relishes in helping students narrow and expand their research topics, taking pride in seeing them develop critical thinking skills. “It’s a privilege to help a kid cultivate an understanding of the topic,” he reflects.

After twenty-one years in education, Mr. Lobron still feels lucky to work at Central High School. He’s helped countless students to grow and thrive. “I’m a humanist,” he says. “I believe in the unlimited potential that each of us possess, and I’ve seen it here.”

Through his work as a librarian, Mr. Lobron touches the lives of students in ways that go beyond books and research. His deep commitment to education, empathy, and guidance make him more than just a librarian, but also a mentor, teacher, and advocate for the students of Central High.

“I think it’s a great gift to work here. I consider myself one of the luckiest people in the world.”

Fall Athletics at Central

Emma Weill-Jones (286)
Staff Writer

Central is not only known for its prestigious classes and academics, but also for its strong sports teams. With fall rolling in, Central’s fall sports are kicking off the season with some incredible performances that have continued to make Central proud. It is that time of the year again, where students begin bringing out their crimson and gold to show Philadelphia who the Lancers are. You may know of the field hockey, cross country, soccer, volleyball, football, and tennis teams, but do you really know them? This article will explore three fall sports at Central, including: tennis, football, and volleyball!

When most people

think of fall sports, they think of football, and Central’s football team does not disappoint. The Lancers football team is currently ranked 329th in Pennsylvania, with five wins and four losses. Just to give a brief summary, our head coach is Coach Drayton. We play in District 12 Class 6A, and we are in the Philadelphia Public League Liberty. This means that we play schools like Thomas Edison, Olney Charter, George Washington, and Boys’ Latin Charter School. The Lancers football team has also made some massive comebacks, and has been able to defeat schools they lost to in previous years, displaying their grit and hardwork. You can find photos of players jumping for joy after touchdowns and levitating in the air as

they run with the ball. The junior varsity and varsity team are made up of strong, vigilant, and committed players, who not only work hard, but play hard.

The girls’ volleyball team has been on fire to say the least. With a 5-3 record, they have continued to dominate and play hard in their games. The team is coached by Mr. Leong and Coach Jen, who doesn’t work at Central but still plays a pivotal role in the training of these athletes. One really huge accomplishment of this team is their win against Northeast, our biggest rival. The game against Northeast was described as lively, loud, and full of so much Lancer energy. The varsity team happens to have no seniors, and only four juniors, with

the underclassmen really proving themselves despite going against athletes up to three years older. Aside from statistics and the sport itself, the varsity team has become a tight knit group with so much support and encouragement amongst one another. Make sure to wish them lots of luck for the playoffs!

Finally, we simply cannot forget to mention the girls’ tennis team. This team is doing absolutely incredible, with players preparing and training for public league Semifinals and the Championship match. They have been killing it, not only this year, but many years before this as well. The girls’ tennis team are 10x consecutive Public League Champions and 3x consecutive District XII Champi-

ons. They’ve played games against schools like Masterman, Carver, Little Flower, and George Washington High School, securing wins left and right. The team is coached by Mr. Graham, and has members ranging from freshmen to seniors. Through the practices and games, many connections have been formed and friendships have blossomed along the way despite grade gaps.

Woah, that was a lot of Lancer goodness. Beyond these three teams, every fall sport at Central has been working tirelessly to make our school proud. Shout out to the field hockey team for being Public League champs, and good luck to the volleyball team in their championship game!

284 is Saving Lives: Central’s First 2024-25 Blood Drive

Yolani Baron (284)
Staff Writer

Central has many traditions: the showcases, Northeast rivalry games, and the well-loved Phil-lies Night. One of the most impactful traditions in our community, however, is the annual senior-led blood drives. Starting strong in September, 284 co-chairs Rafaela Rodriguez, Harley Shur, Pelham Tennant, and Clara de Groot led this year’s first successful blood drive.

With the help of a committee of twenty seniors, the American Red Cross, and Ms. Zeserman and Mr. Horwits, Central’s Blood Drive and all our donors saved over 200 lives in just five hours! Ms. Zeserman, having sponsored this club for over three years, claims, “The entire team has been dedicated to the cause, really through their promotion and encouragement for the entire Central community.” She is so glad to see 284 continuing such a great legacy. The Blood Drive co-chairs are “proud of the community, which came together with the same goal - to give blood and spread love.”

Despite the wrestling gym shutting down during third period due to safety concerns, the co-chairs managed to move on, realizing what happened was out of their control. They had to adapt, regain control of the situation, and stay calm.

They wish they didn’t have to send many students away but are thankful to have gotten a great number of pints even with half the space, showcasing the resilience and leadership 284 embodies. Rafaela Rodriguez “is certain that the next blood drive will be much more successful. Being involved in something like this is so important as [she’s] helping foster a community willing to help others while learning how to be a strong leader and team member,” making this an experience she can’t wait to recreate in February.

The 284 Blood Drive Committee as a whole came together to create a lively and meaningful event for the entire school, showing how the blood drives are one of the most powerful traditions at Central - as not only do they positively impact the lives of others, but they are entirely student-run. Additionally, many students don’t understand how generous of an act it is. Many sign up to give blood, donate, then head back to class, nearly unaware of the impact of saving the lives of three other people - three strangers in need of our donations. Rafaela ensures that “it is an extremely selfless act everyone should be proud of.” Gina Burtulato, one of the checking-in leaders, recognizes how “it’s not common for high schools to hold blood drives with the Red Cross, [and] it’s a unique and amazing experience we

get to host at Central.” Gina joined the committee to help others, sharing how “sometimes we don’t realize that there are people who need blood for so many different reasons, and being able to say you saved three lives is amazing in itself.” Interested in the medical field, Gina encourages others to continue to donate and be part of a greater community at Central’s Blood Drive.

Sydney White, one of the leaders for music and media, feels the “blood drive went extremely well,” knowing the committee has put so much effort and energy into this first blood drive. She assures that in February “everyone who wants to donate will be given a fair chance to do so!” Sydney cultivated a six-hour playlist to keep the energy up - whether she was dancing to the music or shouting in the mic, she made sure this year’s drive stayed upbeat, as it’s an exciting and joyful day for our school. Driven by her inability to donate, Sydney appreciates everyone who wished to donate blood, emphasizing that “we are saving lives and making a difference in the world at our very own school.”

284’s first drive is rooted in a tradition students hope will continue years after we graduate. The entire committee and Central’s sponsors were inspired by the number of people willing to donate, and there will hopefully be an even bigger turnout this winter!



Central’s 284 Blood Drive Committee | PC: instagram @/centralblooddrive

Politics at Central (continued from Page 3)

He stated students held meetings to discuss socialism and its inner workings, while also hosting charity fundraisers like for wom-

en’s shelters. Despite straying from the typical US citizen’s political and economic stance (capitalist), previous member Matthew Brocco (285) never felt uncomfortable or unsafe sharing his perspective.

As of this school year, the Student Socialist Coalition club has shown no sign of re-emerging at Central. Satlow explains the organization was founded and run by 283s, and there was no new cabinet designated.

287’s Guide to Central: A Fall Freshman Advice Column

Irene Hong (285)
News Editor

Schedules, classes, the building, clubs, IDs, planners, time management, showcases, events, sports, friendships, the pool on the 5th floor— Central’s controlled chaos can be difficult to navigate. At the very least, it is an adjustment.

I asked several sophomores, juniors, and seniors to offer some tips for any freshmen looking for some mentorship. Here’s what they said.

On classes and extracurriculars:

“Don’t procrastinate on big assignments just because they have longer due dates. Things will start to pile up. You’ll hear about new tests and homework and get really overwhelmed.” - Corinne Gustafson (285)

“Try not to push your homework to the next day!” - Z (286)

“Just because others say a class is easy, doesn’t mean it will be the same for you. Take classes only if you are interested in them. You will have so much more fun and put more energy into your work. Freshman year is hard to adjust to, but it gets easier as you go on. Try your best! You got this!” - Saanvi Sheth (285)

“Join clubs! They can really help you form bonds. Schoolwork is so important but it’s also essential to make sure you have time for the activities you love.” - Kala Ramji-Nogales (285)

On what they wish they had known as a freshman:

“Make sure mental health is a priority.” - Nico Cruz (284)

“Make sure to start talking to your counselors early and forming bonds with your teachers, specifically your advisors, as they can assist you later on in your high school career. Additionally, don’t stress about making tons of friends, but focus on making a few good

ones!” - Natalia S. (285)

“Build strong relationships with your classmates and make lots of friends. Their perspectives will help you gain new knowledge and you’ll always learn from them.” - Habiba Mahmoud (285)

“Join extracurriculars, because they are fun, but more importantly to build close bonds with other students. These relationships are great when you need advice on a class, help with homework, or even just someone to look out for you. In the long run, these other students will be your #1 supporters when you need help regarding Central.” - Sasha Berney (285)

“Surround yourself with people that inspire you to work harder.” - Jocelyn Djunaïdi (285)

“Always advocate for yourself because there’s not always going to be someone reaching out and asking if you need help... Your assistant principal, principal, counselors, and teachers are there to listen but they can’t just make assumptions about certain things. You have to go out and really show that you need it and mean it, because that’s the only way your voice is going to get heard.” - Synai Rorie-Hands (285)

Fun Extras!:

“Don’t get addicted to Dunkin’!” - Valerie Q. (284)

“Never let your happiness depend on the vending machine. It’ll either be empty or thirty cents more than last year.” - Varjak Zeleniak (285)

“Take freshman year seriously.” - Jesslynn Ong (285)

No matter where you’re coming from or where you’re going, the Central community is here to support you. 287, enjoy your freshman year and make the most out of it!

Expressing Self-Identity At Central

Marcos Echevarria (287)
Staff Writer

At Central, we’re lucky to be a part of a diverse student body in which we can find, join, or start a club/community that makes us feel comfortable and represented. Despite this, it’s not always easy to verbalize and express ourselves and our feelings. Still, we have to remember that it’s important to do so.

Due to anxiety and social pressure, some of us feel the need to “tone ourselves down” and mask ourselves to fit in, instead of expressing who we are. However, when we start to do this, we lose the sense of who we are as people. Instead, we should embrace who we are using the opportunities we have and can make at Central. Central offers clubs and communities that assist us in expressing ourselves creatively through the arts or simply through communication and group activities. These clubs include the Afrocentric (Central’s

magazine that raises Black voices), the Mosaic (Central’s magazine that celebrates all cultures), our culture clubs (such as A.A.S.U (African-American Student Union), A.S.A.O (American Student of Asian Origin), and H.L.U. (Hispanos y Latinos Unidos), our LGBTQ+ club, and more.

I had the opportunity to speak with the student board of the Afrocentric: President Danay McNeill (284), Creative Director Amelia Hanes (284), Chief of Operations Tavian Denisor (284), Marketing Manager Isa Muhammad (284), and Chief Editor Matthew Brocco (285). The Afrocentric makes an annual magazine featuring its members’ Black-focused art, stories, articles, and more, as well as submitted works from the student body.

When asked about the impact that the Afrocentric has had on them and the process of joining, Danay responded, “I joined because it was a space that was Black-focused. Being a

minority in academic spaces was always difficult for me, but joining Afrocentric helped me connect with people and find my space.” The board emphasized “the need of having spaces to express yourself and feeling comfortable and safe enough in a community.” They also highlighted the importance of the true missions of these clubs: “our mission at Afrocentric is to raise and showcase Black voices. Even if you’re not a part of that culture, you learn from others and you’re able to grow as a person.”

With the resources available, it’s crucial to remember that while observing the wonderful showcases and events throughout the year is fantastic, you should always be able to push yourself out of your comfort zone and become a part of them. Therefore, I encourage you to do so and hope that you’ll explore the different opportunities Central offers to express yourself!

Interviews with a Famous Italian Kickboxer

Amelia Nelson (284)
Staff Writer

In early September, Central’s Italian teacher Ms. Walker received an interesting email. A world-renowned Italian kickboxing activist was looking for a Philadelphia school to give a presentation at, and the Italian consulate thought Central High School could be the perfect place.

A couple weeks later on September 12th, Central’s Italian and third period P.E. classes gathered in the gym to hear from Gloria Peritore, Italian kickboxer and anti-violence advocate. The 35-year-old world champion spoke about the Shadow Project: her social promotional association to increase accessibility to combat sports and highlight their physical and psychological benefits. She believes that sports can be helpful in “managing fears and regaining confidence” as well as instilling “respect and equality” in all. She also discussed #FIGHTTHEVIOLENCE, a non-profit branch of the program that specifically focuses on gender equality in and out of the sport.

Peritore’s presentation resonated with her audience on many levels. IB Italian student Natalie Margasak (284) gained a lot of respect for both the athlete and the sport after hearing about the “emotional courage” it took to start kickboxing and the “emotional resilience” it has given Peritore. P.E. student Rachel Speizman (285) also agreed. Hearing Peritore parallel bravery in sports to real life “empowered” her. This is one of the athlete’s goals; Peritore was previously in an abusive relationship, and through kickboxing, she wants to help others in situations similar to hers know that they can break free. While Natalie didn’t agree that women learning kickboxing would directly reduce domestic violence rates, she did gain a new appreciation for combat sports.

Afterwards, Natalie and Rachel both expressed their potential interest in trying out kickboxing. Natalie thought that fighting,

especially in front of an audience, would be fun, and Rachel imagined that doing combat sports in gym class would be a healthy and engaging way to be competitive while safely “unleash[ing] stress.”

The President of Central’s Martial Arts Club (MAC) Lixin Wu (285) believes in the power of combat sports as well. For him, martial arts were a way to overcome physical insecurities, and through his practice, he became mentally and emotionally stronger. As president of MAC, he would “love to give people more confidence and make sure they’re able to defend themselves.” The club meets weekly to discuss and teach martial arts and is open to all. Like Peritore, he also connected sports to anti-violence. He believes that martial arts could help people learn to physically and verbally stand up for themselves against bullying.

Another important point that Peritore brought up was gender inequality. She has observed through experience that many women “fight twice, once in the ring and again [with] the stereotypes that come from athletic success as a woman.” In the sports industry, women often face social stigma, lack of representation, and lower quality resources. It is not surprising then, that according to the Women’s Sports Foundation (WSF), girls have 1.3 million fewer opportunities to play high school sports than boys. Sports can have many health benefits, but girls have to fight twice as hard for them. After hearing the presentation, Natalie, who has participated in Central’s Cross Country team for all four years, articulated that “we should keep this in mind when celebrating the victories of our girls’ teams.”

Overall, whether it was through highlighting the benefits of combat sports, raising awareness about gender inequality, or letting students try out kickboxing in a demo, Gloria Peritore definitely inspired Central students!

What Happened to the Spotted Lanternflies?

Hannah Koch (284)
Staff Writer

Sometime around the beginning of the pandemic, I went on a hike in Fairmount Park. I came upon a section of solitary fence next to the trail I was walking along, the surface covered in the black and red nymphs of the spotted lanternfly. I had just learned about these insects at that time and knew them as an invasive species. They were swarming up and down the lengths of the wood, all at different stages of growth. I probably spent an hour there, solely focused on squishing the bugs, but more would appear to replace the ones that I had killed, so I was forced to give up.

That was around the same time that the government was sanctioning people to stomp on these annoying pests. Now, every time I pass that same bit of fence, it’s entirely void of insects except for a few lonely carpenter ants. So where exactly did all of the spotted lanternflies go, especially considering that

they were such a large problem no more than four years ago?

Experts are torn on this question. According to the Guardian, spotted lanternfly reports have been dropping in the areas where they have been established for the longest periods of time, mainly in sections of southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey. However, this population data is not definitive as it relies on individuals notifying the proper scientific authorities about sightings, which is not always guaranteed.

With the first appearances of spotted lanternflies in the U.S. occurring around 2014, it has been a multi-year long fight to quell the invasive insect. These bugs primarily feed on the sap of another invasive species, the tree of heaven, but they are known to infest native plants as well, depleting the trees of nutrients and leaving behind a sticky “honeydew” which promotes the growth of mold that is detrimental to these plants.

From personal ex-

perience, it seems likely that there has been a notable decrease in the population of spotted lanternflies in and around the Philadelphia area. However, it is important to stay vigilant. Spotted lanternflies are known to travel quickly, and their local diminishment in population is likely a result of mass migration due to food source depletion. This would entail the infestation of surrounding states that don’t currently deal with spotted lanternflies, making the infestation more widespread. It is crucial for people to continue to play their part in the removal of this invasive species from our local ecosystems by destroying their egg masses and stomping on any nymph or adult they may come across. For more information regarding how you can personally combat the spread of these insects, please visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service at [aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/slf](https://www.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/slf).

Sophomore Student Elections

Nora Walkiewicz (286)
Staff Writer

Every year Central students in the sophomore, junior, and senior classes run to become members of the student government. Sophomore year is especially important because it is the first year we are introduced to this opportunity. The elections take place within the first 2 weeks of the school year, which some may argue is not enough campaigning time. I spoke with Dr. Soda, the 10th grade sponsor and head of the 10th grade student elections to get some more background information. Throughout President Davis’ time at Central, she has been focused on the importance of the student elections and tradition.

Here’s the week-long process. At the 10th grade welcome assembly, Dr. Soda announces the elections and the four possible positions you can run for: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The academically eligible candidates can express their interest in running via a Google Form. The candidates then need to retrieve 75 signatures from any member of their class and submit a one to two minute

speech. At an advisory election assembly, the speeches are read aloud and students vote for one candidate for each position. Within the next two days, Dr. Soda releases the winners.

Being a part of student government is important because it allows students to contribute to Central’s community through leadership and maintaining tradition. Additionally, a government role is great for future opportunities. The positions allow students to foster strong leadership skills and promote class identity, factors which colleges scout for. Despite the limits of authorial decision-making, students are still able to serve and advocate for the many voices of their class. These elections also provide civic education, serving as an introduction to voting practices as we inch closer to eighteen. Through the elections students learn the mechanics of voting and evaluating the candidates’ many promises. Congratulations to all members of this year’s sophomore student government (President: Miranda Gao, Vice-President: Harvey Chen, Treasurer: Marquez Browne-Rosario, and Secretary: Sovanika Oum)!

Central’s Notable Alumni: Kenneth Wong (232)

Bangle Wei (285)
Staff Writer

Have you ever wondered how Central has impacted an alumni’s life? Or where alumni are now? The Centralizer recently spoke to the remarkable alumnus Kenneth Wong of the 232nd class to find out. Mr. Wong is currently on Central’s Board of Managers and is a past Chairman of the Board of USA Badminton and Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the U.S Army.

When asked about how Central impacted his trajectory in life he responded that “going to school with a diverse group of students was new to [him].” Attending Central “helped [him] realize that the world was a lot different” from what he found in his singular life experience. Mr. Wong also believes that Central also

helped create his drive, motivation, and passion to try new things. For Wong, Central “created opportunities.” His time at Central laid the groundwork for him to fence in D1 at Penn State. Wong’s experiences at Central have shaped him. As an alumnus, he participates in Central’s community by serving on the Board of Managers, making donations such as those to the Girls Badminton team, and dedicating his time toward mentoring current students. His advice for current Central students is to not be afraid to fail but rather to treat failure as an opportunity to improve oneself. In lieu of Mr. Wong’s success and in the true Central spirit of active learning; seek out opportunities and ask alumni questions. There is much to learn from the story of each Central graduate.

Not Back-to-Open Advisory

Isabella Schwartz (285)
Staff Writer

The phrase “back-to-school” is synonymous with “back to routine.” This year at Central High School, we are not going back to the routine of open advisory that this school has been accustomed to for years. But could closed advisory be a blessing in disguise?

Going from the freedom of open advisory to a more restrictive closed homeroom was a drastic change for Central students. Although some may not agree, the implementation of closed advisory was rooted in only positive intentions. When the transition was announced, one 285 student believed that “not being able to go to an environment where [they] can feel ‘more productive’ ruins [their] motivation” (285). This new schedule was not meant to be suffocating. Administration sent out a letter to all the advisors with guidelines regarding how lenient they should be with students to ensure that they are able to relax and make the most of their time

in advisory. President Davis said in regard to the transition, “that change is always difficult, we get used to something and then it changes, there is always going to be a period of adjustment.” Advisory is a crucial period for multiple reasons. It gives students who travel long distances time to arrive at school without missing class, and allows students a designated time to study material or complete assignments before the day begins. Last year, there were many who students were cutting advisory on a daily basis. Having open advisory gave students the ability to make excuses in order to skip advisory and spend time in the hallways instead. Ms. Snyder claims, “I could just say, ‘Why are you in the hallways?’ and they would say, ‘It’s my open day.’” Closed advisory was designed to make this period of the day as organized as possible. Ms. Snyder says that now “the hallways are far more manageable” and that “it’s much more conducive to kids getting things done.” Administration is “finding a lot more students reporting

that they are more productive in advisory when they are actually in their space as opposed to out.” Closed advisory creates a better environment for concentration and social interaction: by being with your advisory students each morning, stronger connections can be made within advisories.

Teachers and students are also enjoying the new closed advisory. Teachers have seen the impact of the designated work time each morning as marks are increasing since closed advisory was put into place. President Davis states that “from faculty, [she has] heard that closed advisory has reintroduced a level of professionalism and a focus on a stronger academic environment.” Not only are grades increasing, but so is attendance. President Davis claims that administration has “actually seen some students really improve not only their attendance for advisory but also first period.” It may only be the beginning of the school year but the benefits of the closed advisory policies can already be seen.

Do Metal Detectors Belong in Central?

Oliver Coan (286)
Staff Writer

School shootings have been a problem ever since most of us can remember. Every year, every month, a shooting happens. It’s something I’m used to hearing about. In high school, I had to experience the realities of it. The metal detectors remind me of the risk I, my classmates, and millions more students, think about every day. On the one hand, they make me feel safe. Ari Felderman (287) feels they keep us safe, saying, “Although it is tedious to walk through in the morning and the lines, I think it is important for my safety and everyone’s safety.” Our safety is in the staff’s hands, and I trust that they will keep us protected. On the other hand, although it doesn’t feel like a prison, as some may say, I don’t feel totally secure either. Many of my peers are also skeptical of their effectiveness. Everyday, I see someone go through these detectors and I hear beeping. Obviously,

this can be from someone with a belt, someone walking too close to the machine, or someone keeping their headphones in. That is usually the case, but it definitely is a little worrisome when this happens.

Studies and research have shown that metal detectors aren’t as impactful as one may think. The National School Safety and Security Services states that the only way they are useful is if the human element behind them is knowledgeable.

The schools devotion to protection was highlighted by the school threat posted on September 16 on Instagram. I remember seeing everyone talk about it. What the next day at school was going to look like was on everybody’s mind. As I and every other Central student arrived to school, we saw the multiple cop cars, police officers, and faculty outside the building. Despite all this, the whole day I felt scared to go to the bathroom during class. The reality of a school shooting had

hit me. Yes, I knew it was a real and constant threat, but I always saw Central as the last place it would happen. Andrew Linn (284) told me how he felt that the detectors should work better, and that the threat the other week would “hopefully” be stopped by the security in place. We shouldn’t have to be “hopeful” we are safe. We should know. The fact that there is always a chance would make anyone worry.

The threats last week definitely reminded me of the reality I live in, but after seeing the effort the faculty put into the situation I felt a whole lot safer. The multiple kind and educated counselors, security guards, teachers, assistant principals, and President Davis have created an environment where students can feel safe. Still, there’s always a risk, and this unsettling feeling will never leave me or some other students. The metal detectors are definitely an unfortunate sign of the times.

Humanity Is Dying (Humanities, Actually)

Akofa Deh (286)
Staff Writer

In the past few years, colleges have seen a vast decline in students majoring in the humanities- fields like art history, English literature, history, anthropology, and sociology. This crisis has caused students to believe you can't be successful with these majors. Students sprint toward STEM as if their financial futures depend on it. In the age of eternal debt by college tuition, it seems students have taken a "return on investment" approach to education. Translation: "Will this degree help me buy food in a housing market where I'll never own a home?" While it's hard to argue with the appeal of a six-figure tech salary, the mass exodus

from the humanities has many educators asking—what happened to learning how to think? So, I took to the streets (the halls of our esteemed educational institution) and found that the people I interviewed had various answers. Some thought there was not enough money in it, others didn't see it as an option (due to lack of representation but also parental expectations). One member of 286 claimed that "there's a lot of factors that go into it but I think the lack of diversity in the field, economic barriers, and the amount of other jobs that grab people's attention. People don't find it as interesting any more because of all those things." The more I interviewed, the more I found evidence for

this claim. I heard from two future humanities majors in 285 and 286 who plan to study history. I asked one about her decision and she said that she wanted to go into criminal justice (not a social science) but would study history as a foundation for learning to practice law. The other said that she's interested in English and history, but is interested in becoming an astrophysicist, so she's not completely sure. When listening to the students' answers, I came across a pattern: humanities seems to be a path that many don't see themselves in for the long run. To them majoring in the humanities is an enigma- why pay for a degree that won't assist you in life? Why go for the degrees that make you drown in student debt? Who would

want to be a historian when you could be a doctor or an engineer something with an actual impact? The Crisis: To Humanities or Not to Humanities? We get it. STEM degrees are filled with cash. Who wouldn't want to say, "I'm in quantum computing (I make more money than you)" at family gatherings? While your English major cousin is quietly reading "Divine Comedy" in the corner and asking, "What's the meaning of life?" (Answer: probably not an allegory of a soul's voyage to salvation but also not that Comcast interview you just bombed). Concerns over job prospects are the main drive of the humanities crisis. Fields like engineering and computer science offer clear, high-paying paths.

But are we forgetting humanities graduates also land jobs? Humanities majors bring critical thinking, creativity, and ethical reasoning to the table—the skills that help when the apocalypse eventually comes. We need someone to argue why we shouldn't let AI run everything. However, these opportunities are sinking because of the humanities crisis. Classes that focus on the study of humans and the history of culture are integral parts of our education as well as knowledge that we should know in order to be functioning members of our diverse society. It is a crime that these majors as well as these career paths are disappearing because they are so important they are equally important as any other major.

How Brat Summer Led to A Demure Fall

Jay Fischer (287)
Staff Writer

If you're anything like the average high school student, you probably use TikTok. 67% of American teens use the video sharing app. For the past few months you have probably heard the terms "demure" and "mindful" on your feed. A video by creator Jools Lebron entitled "How I Do My Makeup for Work" sparked the massive trend. In the clip she explains how when she goes to work, she wears very "demure and mindful makeup," remarking that she "doesn't do too much" when she's at work. This inspired many to share their own versions, and soon it became the latest growing trend of early autumn. But weren't we having a brat summer just a few weeks before? There is nothing demure about brat,

an album released by hyperpop artist Charli XCX in early June. The brat aesthetic is composed of partying, clubbing, and being true to yourself, no matter how the world reacts to you. The brat life is in stark contrast to the demure lifestyle. The demure trend has been received in a variety of ways. Some individuals are embracing it ironically. For instance, actor Penn Badgley announced the completion of filming for YOU Season 5 with a TikTok video. In it, he initially claims to be demure, only to then show himself screaming in a cage, subverting expectations. On the other hand, others are interpreting the trend more literally, showcasing their genuinely modest and reserved lifestyles. Some may wonder why the switch from brat to demure was so abrupt. One

Central student shared what they thought about this sudden change. Maeve Liyanage (287) said she first heard about the demure trend on TikTok. She said that her English teacher brought up the topic in class, revealing the vast spread of the trend. However, she was not really familiar with brat summer. After a long summer of partying I think we are tired. In this transition from summer to fall, we exchange loud social scenes for peaceful nights drinking Autumnal beverages, and watching our favorite fall and halloween movies. We feed into the demure trend, falling away from brat summer. The modern trend cycle is a pendulum, coming and going. In this ever-changing online trendscape, be brat, be demure, but above all else, BE YOU!

Scan this to check out our Central Air Podcast!



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