

# North Schuylkill Junior/Senior High School



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## Spartan Spectrum

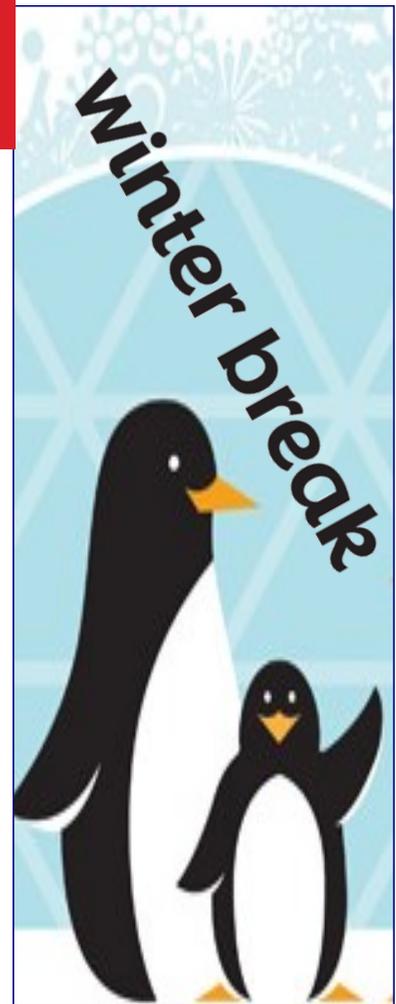
### STUDENTS MEET SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

By Mitchell Roshannon

On Wednesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, the School Board held a very special meeting during the day where students were given the chance to see the inner workings of North Schuylkill's highest form of government. This meeting was held upon the request of Mr. Hepler, the school board president, who has desired to hold a meeting with this setup for some time. When asked what his thoughts were on how he thought the meeting went he replied by saying, "I feel that the school board meeting went tremendously well. It allowed for the student body to see how the process of being a school board member truly works".

During the meeting, the Presidents Club presented their Opportunity Project which was divided into five parts: NSHS TV, Fine Arts Club, Trap Shooting Club, Friends Forever project, and a gardens building project which included a rain garden and pollination garden. Other topics discussed during the meeting were a Ping-Pong Team, a problem with students not being able to get breakfast in the morning, and adding first-aid kits to every classroom.

When the meeting was concluded, Mr. Hepler stated that he is glad to see how wonderful and bright the North Schuylkill students are as well as showing his appreciation for the chance to finally show the students that the school board members are real people. Mr. Hepler was quoted saying "it allowed the students to see that we are human and not just a bunch of stuffed shirts". This statement couldn't be any more true. All of the school board members come from many different backgrounds with many different ways of thinking all placed together to create a very open minded group that is ready to hear new ideas. To sum up the meeting in a few words, the students finally had the chance to meet some of their biggest allies when it comes to the flow and approval of new ideas.



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## WHO IS DOCTOR ACKELL?

By Anna James

Since the start of the school year, many students may have asked “Who is Dr. Ackell?” Not necessarily because they wouldn’t be able to recognize him, but because they want to know who he is as a person. To start, Dr. Ackell was born and raised here in Schuylkill County in Frackville, both of his parents also originating from the area. Dr. Ackell has a younger brother, and a younger sister, and all three of them attended Frackville Elementary as kids, and then moved on to graduate from North Schuylkill Jr/Sr High School. His family includes his wife, Marci, his two-year-old son, Brody, his newborn daughter, Brook, and two dogs, boxers, named Coco and Pebbles.

Dr. Ackell chose to be the superintendent of North Schuylkill because of his previous history with the district. He was happily working as a principal, then got his letter of eligibility, which then allowed him to be a superintendent in the state of Pennsylvania. Though he successfully got his letter of eligibility, he wasn't too hasty to move into being a superintendent at first, since he was very happy being principal. News of an open position at North Schuylkill got his attention. When he heard that the position was open, he talked it over with his family who supported him fully, and then applied for the spot, since North Schuylkill was the only place he truly wanted to be.

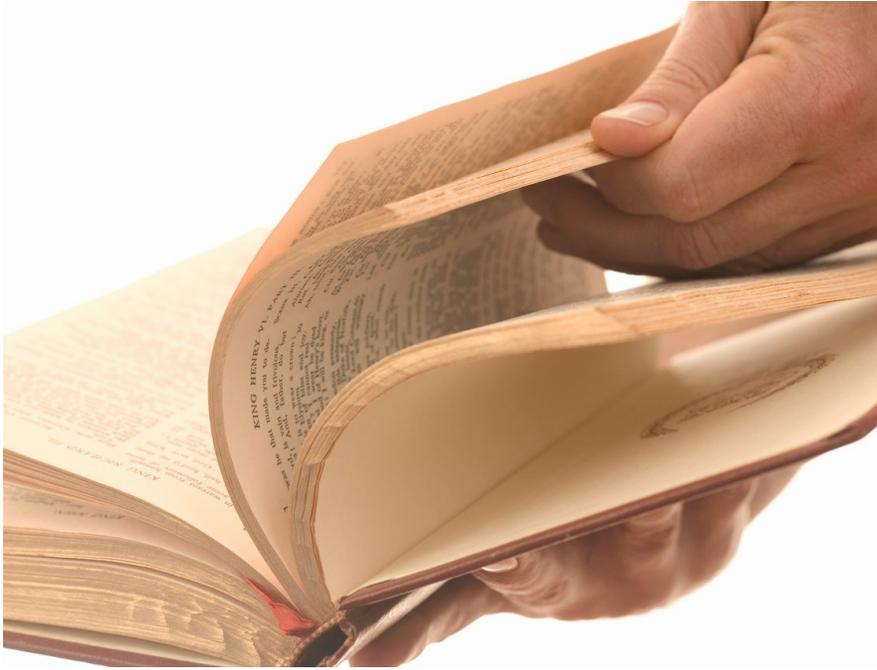
Dr. Ackell's educational philosophy is "All students can learn". What that means to him is that "no matter what type of student, no matter what grade level, any disability, all students can learn". One of his other philosophies is "Fair is not always equal", which pretty much states that "what happens for one student may not always happen for the same student, even though it's not equal, it still is fair". "Assessment drives instruction" is his final philosophy, which is his belief that "teachers and administrators must look at the data, the assessments, and what was done to plan for future instructions".

When it comes to improvements in the school, we all know that there's physical construction, but Dr. Ackell is watching and waiting to make any other changes. He, along with the rest of the administration, is watching how this is

all going, and is getting a general feel for the school, like the day to day activities, how courses are offered, how courses are taught, and how students are assessed. When this school year is over, they plan to look at all of the information gathered overall and decide how it can be improved for everyone. Personally, Dr. Ackell believes that the renovations to the building are very well necessary, and that they'll greatly benefit the school overall, since the building is quite old, and not many renovations have been made except for a few small things here or there. A few of the mentioned improvements are the improved heating and cooling systems, the fact that there'll be a new pool, and a few good improvements to classrooms which will help them run more efficiently and use less electricity. Dr. Ackell wishes to better the student body/teacher relationship by giving teachers the right tools and strategies, and making sure that teachers teach what students need.

Dr. Ackell has a very positive outlook on the school, now and in the future. He believes that this school will be one of the best schools in the state. Though many are striving to be the best in the county, Dr. Ackell wants to go above and beyond that and be one of the best in the state. In his words "I don't want to be a good school, I want to be a great school, and if we settle for just being good, that's not okay with me, since I want to take it to the next level and be a great school, not just in the county, but in the state. In five years, I expect us to be recognized by the state."





*Caption describing picture or graphic*

## THE FUTURE OF THE MURALS

By Nick Paul

During the 2014-2015 construction and renovation of North Schuylkill school district, the new administration plans to paint over the murals that are located on the walls throughout the building. Some of the faculty and students are against the idea of removing all of the art from the school's walls, but some are looking at the positives that can be taken from this change in appearance. Mrs. Hoppel, who is going on her 13<sup>th</sup> year teaching at N.S, said that the murals leave a legacy, and although dated some of the paintings are relatable to current students and can be used to represent N.S as a whole. She later went on to say, "There are two ways you can look at it; the end of something you know or the beginning of what is to come, but either way you have to remain hopeful." Another teacher in the school, Mr. Miller, went on to say, "Don't completely remove a physical link to the past. Keeping some culture is important so that memories students have live on." Both of these experienced teachers felt that not all the painting should go, but they had a similar input on the idea of removing some of the murals that don't necessarily deal with the students or the class they are in.

Other teachers in the building also contributed their ideas on the controversial topic. Mrs. Anderson, who is on her 9<sup>th</sup> year teaching at the school, feels that the building is in a desperate need of a new paint job due to age and appearance of the walls. She does not want all the murals to be removed, and feels like some have good value, but stated that, "There are new opportunities available for current students to leave their marks on the school if the murals were to be removed." She remains hopeful despite what happens with the new changes in the building, and looks forward to the future of the North Schuylkill school district. Mr. Wagner who is a first year teacher at N.S feels that, "The sports related ones downstairs near the gym should remain because they are iconic, but the ones in the classroom are from the past and have no reference to current teachers and the clas-

ses in which they teach." Both teachers offer positive ideas about the walls being painted, but still agree that some of the more iconic artwork in the school should remain.

Other faculty members are coming up with new ideas about the change in the building. Mrs. Briggs, who is on her 15<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, feels that the walls are outdated and are ready for renovation. With this idea in mind she has come up with a solution to help that "legacy" of the past students intact. This idea is to take pictures of the current murals throughout the school and make a scrapbook out them. This scrapbook would serve as a new piece of artwork that could be hung on the wall to honor the students that took time to make these illustrations. Another teacher at the school, Mrs. Holman states that, "I like a clean crisp white wall in class; it eliminates distraction and brightens the room." She also went on to explain that the ones in the classroom need to be removed but the ones outside the rooms should remain as a symbol of N.S.

Despite the feeling and ideas of the students, teachers, and other faculty members, only time will tell what the final outcome of the current murals will entitle. The school district remains hopeful that only positive things will result from the painting of the walls and the construction as a whole.

## “THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY PT. 1” REVIEW

*Mockingjay: Part One*, the third installment of films in *The Hunger Games* series, was released in late November to anticipated fans of both cinema and literature. There were some mixed reviews due to the overall pace, but of course that would be an issue following an action-packed film like *Catching Fire*.

The film begins with Katniss and her fellow tributes in deteriorating mental states from their experiences in the 75th Hunger Games, the Quarter Quell. Once they were taken out of the arena, Katniss and Finnick were taken to the apparently thriving underground haven of District 13, while Peeta and Johanna were taken to the Capitol. We ultimately learn that they are tortured and used as figures to project ideas of pro-Capitol propaganda designed to subdue those planning to overthrow the government. Katniss remains the face of the rebellion, which is in full swing throughout the districts, and is intent on saving Peeta, which had been her goal ever since the reaping of the Quarter Quell.

Now, while Part 1 of the movie followed the plot line of the book, it was lacking in action. We see Gale volunteer to rescue Peeta, Johanna, and Finnick's old flame, Annie, from the capitol. The movie closes with Peeta strangling Katniss, which was the biggest plot twist of the film. Since this occurred fairly late, the beginning was boring and lacked action as compared to its riveting preceding films. Once Katniss is taken into the infirmary, she then realizes that Peeta has been brainwashed and mentally trained to see her as an enemy. Now that Katniss must lead the rebellion, not all will go as smoothly as she had thought when Peeta had returned. Viewers are left with a definite cliff hanger; what will come of Peeta and Katniss, and what will come of the rebellion that is catching fire quickly throughout Panem? Overall, the film followed the plot line of the book, but lacked action. As fans of the series, we agree that this was the least exciting out of the three films but followed the book. (Three stars)

## NORTH SCHUYLKILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

By Logan Bell

Recently, I was invited by Mr. Brennan to tour the area of the Jr./Sr. High School that is currently being renovated. There was a lull in the work as the contractors are waiting for rooftop HVAC units (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning). Mr. Brennan showed us the construction in progress, which consists of upgrading the school to a variety of completely new systems. Our school is getting new electrical and lighting, HVAC, ceilings, plumbing and a few cosmetic upgrades. When construction is completed, individual room temperatures will be able to be controlled.

Although students and parents may not notice much change after the construction is finished, there are many upgrades that will keep us comfortable and safe as well as save energy. We saw the rooms and hallways gutted to reveal the current arrangement of electrical and HVAC systems, with each area having an equally barren appearance compared to what we are used to as students. We discussed the changes to plans and materials and what the school board is doing to save taxpayer dollars and get our school upgraded as much as possible. Mr. Brennan even gave us a glimpse at the construction plans involved in ensuring that every object is in the correct position. The plans consist of a series of large pieces of paper, each showing a different layer that will be referenced as construction advances. The final page is the result of every layer combined into one drawing. There's a lot

going on behind those doors, so when you go into a renovated classroom in January, remember there are a lot of things that were changed behind the scenes, not just appearance.

In the last section of our tour, Mr. Brennan led our group into the pool area, which is being renovated as well. Although construction is still ongoing, Mr. Brennan has confirmed that there are plans to open the pool again in 2015. We were also shown the boiler room, as well as the school's backup generator and fire alarm system. Mr. Brennan also pointed out that maintenance personnel work incredibly hard in an ongoing battle to keep the school running smoothly, so take some time to thank maintenance for their efforts!





## PROMPOSALS

By Kali Antalosky

It may be December, but if you don't already have a date for the prom, then it may be too late. Prom is just around the corner and high school kids are taking the normal prom invitation and turning it into something they like to call a 'promposal'. Gone are the days when you could simply *ask* the object of your affection to prom. Now, you have to have a plan.

**Promposal – n. An elaborate and creative arrangement thought up and executed to increase the chances of retrieving a date for prom**

Now, a promposal is not limited to just prom. The act can also be used for formal, but 'formalposal' just doesn't sound quite as right. If we were to take a flashback to prom ten plus years ago, we would find it was a whole lot different. Back then, it was a simpler time and prom

was more of a once-in-a-lifetime thing. Once limited to senior year, prom has now evolved into a junior *and* senior thing, and sometimes, a sophomore thing.

And then of course, my date to formal, Alex Mazur, a junior at NS popped the question by spelling those four fun letters out with french fries, my favorite food. After eating the fries, I said yes.

There is no wrong way to do it and there's always new ideas coming out of the heads of eager teenage boys. Though promposals are exciting, a simple "Will you go to prom with me?" is always just as special. Wishing everyone an exciting time at this year's formal and prom!

## PROMPOSAL IDEAS

Although some adults may disagree, the experience is still just as beautiful as it would be if only going once during the length of an entire high school career. At least North Schuylkill High School students seem to think so. For Prom 2015, several boys have taken creative routes to pop the "Will you go to prom with me?" question into something a little more inventive. Some examples of a few original promposal ideas include the following:

- A box of chicken nuggets with "Prom?" sharpied on the inside. Who doesn't love chicken nuggets?
- A cozy fall night of pumpkin carving turned into an exciting prom proposal when a brave boy carved "Prom?" into his pumpkin.
- "I might strike out, but will you go to prom with me?" written on a baseball.
- A Pokémon ball that opens to a note that says the name of your choice and "I CHOOSE YOU! Prom?"
- "Prom?" perfectly drawn on a hamburger bun, with ketchup. Mustard could be substituted, of course.
- A goat with a heart tied around its neck that says 'PRAAAAAM?'

## PREVENTING A FURTHER LIFE OF FEAR

By Megan Sendatch

It's that day—the day you present your big project for the marking period. You've worked hard on this, and you're proud of how you did. However, when your name is called, you instantly get butterflies in your stomach. What if you do something wrong? What if you embarrass yourself? Nobody would ever forget it, and you'll make a fool of yourself! That is when you begin to hyperventilate. You begin to shake uncontrollably and sweat profusely. Time begins to drag on, every second feeling like a million years that you've just wasted. Everything seems much more difficult and frightening than it truly is. As the remainder of your day goes on, you feel nauseous and fatigued, and your heart pounds almost *painfully*. It feels as if everyone is laughing at you for looking so weak and feeble, and you just want to go home and never come back again.

Anxiety is a mental condition which affects 40 million adults in America, and roughly a quarter of teenagers. Anxiety, to the average Joe, is the brain's normal response to stress, danger, or any detected threat to our well-being. Of course, we've all felt it before—butterflies in our stomachs, biting our nails, or just *worry*. Having this anxiety once in a blue moon is actually healthy for you, as it proves that your brain can spur you to action or help you appropriately overcome the issues you face. However, many Americans have severe anxiety, which is an overwhelming disorder that interferes with their daily lives.

Anxiety is a general term, so it therefore comes in different forms—it is often categorized into 6 common cases. Generalized anxiety disorder is constant worry and fear, regardless of the circumstances. It is what most people would consider an “extreme worrywart.” Panic disorder is a type of anxiety characterized by unexpected, repeated panic attacks, as described above. Often times, this is made worse with agoraphobia, or the fear of situations and places that cause you to panic in the first place. Obsessive-compulsive disorder is known for unwanted thoughts and behaviors that are difficult to control. These behaviors—which can range from obsessive hand-washing to worrying about whether you turned the oven off or not, as well as countless others—are unintentional and often interrupt the person's daily life. Phobias are considered to be an anxiety disorder as well, and is categorized as an extreme fear to an object, activity, and etc. with little to no danger. These fears can range from spiders to school, and anything in between. Finally, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is often considered the most extreme anxiety disorder, and is sometimes described as a panic attack that never ends. PTSD is the result of a traumatic or life-threatening event, and usually leads to flashbacks, nightmares, startling easily, and withdrawal from situations, people, so forth.

So, there are all of these disorders present, but how do

you know if you or someone around you has an anxiety disorder? Often times, this can be noted in an anxiety attack, which has more easily noticeable symptoms. Common mental symptoms, often denoted through speech, include extreme panic, the sensation of feeling detached and unreal, and depression. Physical symptoms include heart palpitations, chest pain, dizziness and lightheaded feeling, trouble breathing, a choking sensation, hyperventilation, hot flashes, chills, trembling, nausea, and stomach cramps.

There are many misconceptions when it comes to anxiety. First and foremost, most people believe that telling an anxious person to “calm down” is going to solve the problem. Unfortunately, this isn't the case (if it were, though, life would be much easier)—after all, anxiety is a natural reaction to stress, and can't be controlled, especially when as severe as a disorder. Many people think that anxiety isn't a big deal, which isn't the case—as a matter of fact, it is like a wrench thrown into the gears of your life, and it makes it impossible to do *anything* sometimes. Another misconception is that you cannot have anxiety because you have a good life, that the two do not intermix. However, anxiety does not have a prejudice—anyone can have this disorder, no matter who you are. Some think that anxiety can be solved on its own or by directly confronting what you fear. These, of course, are false; anxiety will only worsen if you do *either* of those. And, finally, the biggest misconception to disprove: anxiety is *not* cute, romantic, or funny at all. It is a horrifying illness that can make the world a huge, scary world. As well, the most important thing to note with anxiety is that you absolutely *should not* joke about OCD. It is neither funny nor insignificant, and nobody is “cool” when they say it—therefore, it should not be joked about at all. *Period*.

So, with all of the symptoms defined and the misconceptions debunked, how can you help someone with anxiety, especially in the scenario of a panic attack? First instincts often tell a person to leave the victim alone. Others feel it is acceptable to tell them they are overreacting and need to stop being dramatic. These, of course, only make things much, much worse. In times of panic, reassurance is needed, and isolation will only make it harder to recover. So, step number one—don't leave the person's side and assure them that you're there to help them. Inform them that they can talk to you and that you will help them through their situation once they've calmed down. Talk in short, simple sentences, and be direct. This will make it much easier for them to follow you.

The next step involves calming the victim's breathing. This will help ease feeling of lightheadedness, which can help the victim think a bit more clearly and ease other physical pains, especially in the chest and stomach. In order to do this, there are a few patterns that are commonly used, and they are often arranged into a five minute frame. In terms of seconds

“inhale:hold:exhale”) is 4:7:8—this pattern is highly effective, but isn't practical due to the difficulty to breathe in a panic attack.

After they can breathe, the next step is to assure that you will help them... over and over. It may be tedious, but offer a possible solution to every problem they give you. After all, letting go of all of the issues on their mind will most likely help them. Remember, though, their problems may be trivial (and perhaps even foolish), but that doesn't matter in a time of extreme panic. After all, it's impossible to see a sun on a stormy day. Repeat this step for as long as necessary—until the victim forgets what they were worried about.

Finally, change the focus. Do whatever it takes to make the victim forget their problems for a few minutes. Humor is often a good source for a change in focus—tell the victim embarrassing stories of you, tell them a stupid joke, or even go so far as to do something stupid as to make them laugh. If that's not the route to go, just talk it all out. Discuss anything even remotely positive, from the weather to their favorite band. Ask them if they want something to eat or drink if either of those are available. If they prefer physical contact, a hug is the best route to go. These steps

## THE CHORUS

By Bryel Frasch

Go back in time four years. The North Schuylkill chorus had less than 30 members to its name. The word “dance” was a foreign idea that never seemed to be plausible for such a group. The shows were an hour of motionless singing of ancient songs that, unfortunately, left the small audience underwhelmed. Now jump ahead to 2011. The small chorus welcomed Brandi Kline as their new leader with high hopes of change. Mrs. Kline, as most of the students know from elementary, is one of the most creative and unique people to encounter. Her contagious personality, passion for music, and intense recruiting, brought the chorus to life and gave kids a motive to join. She took the group past old boundaries by adding dancing, modern music, uniforms, challenging musical pieces, and just plain fun. The chorus today holds a whopping 85 members and counting.

With the numbers growing and the talent increasing, the chorus went above and beyond by booking different events to sing at. Each year at Christmas time, the chorus travels to Hershey Park to sing Christmas songs and spend the day enjoying the park and showing off their ugly Christmas sweaters. They also gather a group together to carol for the local nursing homes for an entire school day. The chorus has gone on several trips including a trip to New York City to see the Broadway show “Mary Poppins” and a recent trip to sing in Disneyworld, Florida. During their week in Florida, the chorus had the honor of singing in Downtown Disney and had to audition to be accepted. The chorus plans on another trip to New York this coming May to see the Broadway show “Aladdin.” There is also the opportunity to audition for county and district chorus if you are a member. This year the chorus had 13 members make county chorus.

should eventually settle the anxiety of the victim; if they don't, then just rinse and repeat.

Finally, there are ways to settle anxiety when you are alone. Apps are available for free on iOS. My recommendation, from personal experience, is the SAM app, developed by the University of the West of England. This app, which is completely free and doesn't require internet to work, has a method of calming severe anxiety in roughly ten minutes. It allows you to record and track your anxiety levels. It lets you record what makes you anxious and what calms you down. It is, from my personal experience, like an angel in your phone.

Overall, anxiety is a misconceived, underestimated disorder. It can absorb the life of the person overcome with it. However, does it have to stay this way? Does everyone inflicted with it have to battle it alone? And the answer is no. We can change the face of anxiety, and make it so that nobody has to suffer through it alone like they may now. It all begins with understanding.



With all of the events and gigs, the chorus needs time to practice the music and dancing and be prepared for success. In order to do so, the chorus meets every Monday and Friday until 3:10 and Thursday's until 5:00. The practices are a crucial part to the performance and can easily work around anyone's busy schedule (Mrs. Kline doesn't bite). Two members of the Treble Makers were interviewed to share their thoughts on the overall atmosphere of the chorus. When asked about her decision to be in chorus, Asia Brown-Rawls, an alto and choreographer for the chorus, replied, “I like to sing and I like to dance and it's fun learning to do new things and training my voice to do new things that I couldn't do before and meet new people.” Patrick Gownley, a bass in the chorus, encourages, “To anyone who is debating on wanting to join chorus or not, I would definitely say that the only way to know if you'll like it is if you give it a shot. It's a great time. You meet new people and make new friends that will last you a lifetime.”

There is a major range of members involved in the chorus. Each member brings a unique interest or talent or idea that makes for an accepting environment. It's a great way to meet people and make long lasting friendships. Kids from every sport, club, and activity can come together and share this one common love for music. If anyone is thinking that the stage is a scary place then they must know that no one is ever alone in the Treble Makers. They sing as one unit and everyone supports each other. They hold a Christmas show and a spring show and anyone can join between the two. The chorus recently performed on Sunday December 14<sup>th</sup>, and will repeat a performance on Tuesday December 22<sup>nd</sup> during first and second periods.



## CHEERLEADERS DESERVE SOME LOVE

By Vicki Zak

Most people do not understand the amount of dedication and practice that goes into cheerleading. Try-outs can be a demanding process that involves a lot of work that is evaluated over a three-day period. Girls who try out are required to learn cheers, choreographed dances, and jumps which all require different types of skills. Practices are generally an hour and a half in length, which may seem like a lot of time, but girls are then required to spend time on their own time perfecting all of the requirements.

In addition to the physical requirements, there is also a lot of stress involved in cheerleading. At any given time, we are expected to be peppy and enthusiastic. There is also stress involved in the selection process. Even though you may think that you gave everything you had and deserve to be on the team, each team only takes 21 cheerleaders which means that some girls may find themselves disappointed. Spots are also not guaranteed; you can make Varsity one year then the next; get bumped down to Junior Varsity.

A lot of the work

that cheerleaders have done is earned but not really recognized. This year, we have earned three trophies and eight ribbons. We have earned the trophies and ribbons by outperforming of all of the other squads at competitions. The most coveted prize among cheerleaders is called the Top Banana and it is awarded at the end of camp at Pine Forest; it is difficult to achieve because of the number of participating schools throughout the state. It is a symbol of our hard work, spirit, support, and dedication.



Ashley David, a junior cheerleader, who has stood up at the board meeting to make a point about the cheerleaders lack of representation says "I don't think it is fair that every other extra curricular activity and sport has their own case to show off what they have earned by hard work and we cannot. We have our own little closet that has tons of trophies, medals, plaques, awards etc. That isn't on display to show how hard we really work for."



The Spartan  
Spectrum staff wishes  
you

Merry  
Christmas  
and  
Happy  
New Year

