



# the wingspan

*Cover photo by: Eliza Andrew*

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# PLASTIC: Your Evil Best Friend

Natalie Knight-Griffin meets with Principal Cynthia Dillon.  
Photo by: Sara Ferrara

Here we are. A generation of radical, idealistic, and often angry teenagers. We see the way the world has fallen apart under our feet: rainforests cut down, carbon emissions higher than ever, ice caps melting, mass extinction, oceans of plastic. We have been handed this responsibility, this enormous task of reversing hundreds of years of destruction and pollution. But we accept, no questions asked. Because we understand that this responsibility is greater than us.

I never imagined I would be the type of kid you hear about in the news, in the human interest stories after main program hours. The ones that run their own charities at age eight, the ones who are working day and night to make a difference, the ones who make you feel like you've done absolutely nothing with your life. My parents watched quietly before making

“We have been handed this responsibility, this enormous task of reversing hundreds of years of destruction and pollution.”

the oh-so-familiar joke, “Why aren’t you trying to save the world?”

Then, the summer before my freshman year, I saw the Earth in peril and suddenly, I was.

My godmother had introduced me to Flow, a documentary detailing the privatization of water and its detrimental effect on both the worldwide class system and the environment. After that, I began spending the majority of my time observing my own post-consumer waste, not to mention that of my peers. The toothpaste bottle is empty and trashed at 6:38am. My best friend’s leftover coffee drink, watered down, is discarded at 11:12am. At 12:38pm, the bell rings and the lunch table is decorated with three Dasani bottles, sandwich bags with half-eaten PB&Js, Go-Go squeezes, and the assumed necessity of our school’s plastic utensils— despite the absence of their use.

At home, I stand in front of the enormous green bin in my complex; it begins to look the size of my apartment. Its opening is a void, a hole yawning for the day’s trash. None of which, I remember, will degrade in my lifetime. Nor the next. Nor the one after that.

We believe we live in a progressive society— but do we?

Awareness of plastic waste and its environmental effect is no secret. It now feels as though the idea of being “waste-free” is a trend. Reusable straws and biodegradable alternatives are now a marketing term. If capitalist America has caught up, why hasn’t the school system? Is Centennial really a self-proclaimed “green school” if we possess the ability to fill an entire landfill on our own?

In Howard County, we have the privilege of not acknowledg-



# “Is Centennial really a self-proclaimed ‘green school’ if we possess the ability to fill an entire landfill on our own?”

ing our post-consumer waste; to throw away that crumble of paper in our hands, that soda, in a split second, without another thought. We each produce pounds of trash every day. So, in the minds and hearts of our community, why doesn't it matter? The answer is obvious: this waste does not directly affect us.

The day's trash will be taken to the landfill. And that's all we really need to know, right? What you don't see are the pounds of waste that will never degrade. The billions of plastic materials that will exist at the bottom of the ocean, in our forests, and in the stomachs of innocent animals for as long as they are alive.

There it was: my big project. The one that could potentially be the answer to my parent's fateful question.

Where does the single greatest amount of plastic exist within a high school? Three bins laying on a cafeteria table, each containing an abundance of forks, spoons, or knives.

So it began. I jumped in and invested two months of research into the depths of biodegradable and sustainable utensil distributors. I wrote and sent email after email to the officers at the Board of Education; hoping for

traction. Constantly, desperately, always.

Eventually, my Principal Cynthia Dillon aided in landing a meeting from three officers from the Board of Education to discuss the transition away from plastic utensils. We met in the central office of Centennial, with Dillon there to facilitate. Nothing substantive came of the meeting, but I am not discouraged. I will continue to chronicle my research and experiences in a Wingspan series for the 2019-20 school year.

I inform you of this not to point the finger at anyone, nor to deem myself the heroine of this impossible challenge. Instead, I point my question to you.

What are you going to do?

- Natalie Knight-Griffin

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YASH AGARWAL PERFORMS HIS SOLO IN *THE NUTCRACKER*

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# Brook Anderson:

## Building Bonds and Breaking Records

For the past four years, Centennial senior Brook Anderson has competed on the Varsity girls' basketball team, breaking records along the way and forming memorable bonds with her teammates and her head coach.

Anderson started playing for the Varsity team in the 2016-17 season as a freshman. Currently, she holds the school record for most three-pointers in a season, and two times she has tied the single game three-point record with seven made three-point shots. Her goal is to break both of those records this season.

"I tied [the single game record] twice last year. I could have broken it both times, so it would be cool to break it at some point this year," said Anderson. "It would be fun to cap off my senior year by breaking the [single season] record like I

did my sophomore year and my junior year."

In addition to her strong performance on the court over the past three years, Anderson has built a strong relationship with head coach Robert Slopek.

More trust and communication is created when a coach and athlete share a genuine relationship. A player connecting with their coach is not only important for personal growth, but for the team's performance as a whole.

"We're comfortable with each other and with that comes a lot of honesty," Anderson explained. "He doesn't hesitate to let me know if what I'm doing is not so hot and it's the same way for me. I always feel I can tell him, 'Hey I don't like this, it's not working, can we do something else?' That's huge for me. At the end of the day, I like the

feeling that I have some say."

An effective coach supports and respects their players. It is important they are approachable not only on the court, but off the court as well.

"It's nice having a coach that works in the building. It helps that he's always around for me to go to his room and talk about whatever is going on that day," said Anderson

Part of the formula for success includes having a team that feels motivated and inspired to improve.

"Slopek doesn't let us cut corners. I really like the fact that he keeps us honest because that's what makes us better. He cares about the program a lot and puts a lot of effort into what he does and I appreciate that," Anderson added.

As a player, countless hours are spent at practice, games, and other team activities. As a result, Anderson has shared countless memorable experiences with her teammates and has formed many close knit friendships.

"The girls and I are super close. Getting to spend time with them is easily my favorite part of the season."

Talent can only get a team so far. It is essential that Anderson and her teammates work together so they can be successful, especially in important games against rivals where emotions run high.

"I'm excited to be with the girls and to play Reservoir again. We have played them nine times and we have yet to beat them. They have ended our

season two times, and games against them get super emotional, so I'm excited to get another go at beating them," said Anderson.

"Also, I'm excited to play against Mount Hebron because of the rivalry, and it is always fun getting the chance to beat them on their home court."

One of the team's strengths is the valuable Varsity experience they carry. The Eagles have four starting players from last year returning to the team this winter.

"We want to have a winning season and win the region. It's always been a goal for me to make a long playoff run, especially with this being my last year, and winning the region is a huge goal."

As a senior who has been on the Varsity team all four years, the expectations are sky high for Anderson.

Slopek stated, "Brook is a great perimeter shooter and her ability to shoot is unlike any player I have coached. As a senior, we expect her to be someone we can rely on in difficult situations."

-Joey Sedlacko



Brook Anderson possesses the ball against Mt. Hebron.  
Photo by: Zach Grable



# Centennial Student Section: Drawing a Fine Line



Centennial's student section cheers at a Varsity basketball game.  
Photo by: Sara Ferrara

The Centennial student section's behavior during the fall sports season has brought into focus the delicate balance between spirited and unsportsmanlike spectator behavior.

At the Varsity boys' soccer game against Long Reach on October 10, two Centennial students shouted in other languages during the game. Aaron Pollokoff, who is Jewish, shouted the beginning of a Hebrew prayer in Hebrew. Kenji Hoang, who is Chinese, said he shouted cheers like "great ball" and "good shot" in Chinese. Pollokoff also stated that Centennial students called out the names of Long Reach players throughout the game.

During the game, an official called a timeout to address the student section's behavior and gave a warning to them. Afterwards, administrators talked to Burke and Pollokoff, along with multiple other students, about their behavior at the game.

Principal Cynthia Dillon says that it was not simply students' use of foreign languages that made their behavior inappropriate.

ate. She stated that the nonverbal signs accompanying their speech, such as their intonation and body language, "did not indicate kindness."

"[It's] not what you say but how you say it that matters," she remarked.

In addition to the warning against the use of other languages, Burke recalled being told that spectators can't bark or call out opposing players by name or number.

A few days later, Centennial played another boys' soccer game at River Hill. Pollokoff says that Centennial students barked and screamed the names of Centennial's and River Hill's players.

Assistant Principal Tracy Scaltz, who was present at the game, asked students to stop screaming the names of River Hill's players and barking. Although a couple of students initially questioned her reasoning, she said they didn't do so in a disrespectful manner. According to Scaltz, the student section stopped their behavior after she talked to them, but it was apparent that there needed to be

a dialogue between students and staff to reach a common ground.

For Scaltz, communication between the administration and student section is everything.

"When we communicate clearly our expectations, and the staff and students come up with a plan, the kids are awesome," she stated.

What transpired both during and as a result of these games has led Burke to believe that the administration is "keeping a closer eye [on the student section]" than in past years.

While Centennial's Athletic Director Jeannie Prevosto agrees that the student section's behavior wasn't worse than in past years, she says that inappropriate behavior "appears to have been more apparent this year." She explained that when the official called a timeout to address it during the Long Reach game, this put it onto the administration's radar.

Prevosto wants to make sure that the school takes care of any future inappropriate behavior before the officials do and stated that the school will "address everything we feel is unsportsmanlike or violates HCPSS policy for athletic events."

Pollokoff, however, disagrees with the assessment that the student section's behavior was unsportsmanlike. He believes that there was "nothing offensive or mean" about what they did.

Likewise, Burke says he doesn't think "we've done one thing over the top all year."

Prevosto, on the other hand, emphasized the idea that "perception is everything." Even if a student is not intending to be

offensive or mean, their behavior could still be "seen as negative and inappropriate."

After the two soccer games, some confusion developed within the student body over what behavior will –and will not– be allowed within the student section at games. After talking with Dillon, Prevosto clarified the school's stance on certain behaviors.

Barking will be "allowed providing it is used to cheer for Centennial," said Prevosto. However, if it is "used in a derogatory way to berate, harass, or intimidate opposing players, coaches, or officials, then that will not be allowed."

With regards to calling out players' names and numbers, Prevosto stated that "as long as our spectators are cheering in a positive, appropriate manner, we can call out the names and numbers of our players, not the opposing team's."

Ultimately, Prevosto says that she wants "everything we say and do to be a positive reflection of Centennial High School." She is aware of the effect that the student section can have on games, and her goal is to allow as much school spirit as possible while adhering to good sportsmanship.

In a similar spirit, Burke remarked that he and his peers are "just trying to bring back energy and make it fun."

Despite the recent disagreements between students and administrators over what behavior crosses the line, it is clear that both sides share a common goal: increasing school spirit at Centennial.

-Caleb McClatchey



# Holiday Happenings at Centennial

With the holiday season approaching, Centennial's music groups, clubs, and honor societies are planning creative activities to celebrate. From volunteering at the firehouse to caroling and decorating the halls, students never fail to come up with festive ways to commemorate the season.

The music program has been busy preparing for numerous band, choir, and orchestra concerts. As a part of chamber choir, Anika Huang, a junior at Centennial, has the opportunity to go caroling at school.

"We go caroling during third period one of the days before winter break. I love Christmas music, and we have seven songs lined up," said Huang.

Although they bring the holiday spirit to Centennial every year, the choir program also had the opportunity to go caroling at Mt. Vernon for the first time this year, and Huang was thrilled for the opportunity to perform for a new audience.

"I was pretty excited about the new songs for Mt. Vernon... and we caroled for adults which was new," said Huang.

Regardless of who they perform for, the choir program always enjoys spreading holiday cheer.

"Caroling is pretty fun in general, and people are usually pretty excited to hear us sing," added Huang.

While choir students prepared to spread the holiday cheer through caroling, band,

orchestra, and dance students performed at Centennial's annual Nutcracker performance. These students practiced for hours after school to perfect the music and choreography. The students debuted their music on Thursday, December 5 at 7:00pm.

Along with the Nutcracker, band students prepared for the Jazz Ambassadors concert. On December 7 at 3:00pm and 7:00pm, each of the Centennial jazz bands had the opportunity to open for the Jazz Ambassadors, also known as the Army Band. These students practiced every morning, arriving to school at 6:30am to prepare their songs for the concert season.

While the music program was busy with performances, National History Honor Society (NHHS) has given their members numerous volunteer opportunities to spread the holiday cheer. When volunteering in Old Ellicott City and helping out at the B&O Holiday train display, members were able to get credits while engaging with the Howard County community.

Caio Goolsby, Event Coordinator for the NHHS and senior at Centennial, organized the opportunities.

"All of these amazing opportunities NHHS provides its members are in the holiday spirit, helping bring people together in mutual celebration and holiday cheer," said Goolsby.

While some honor societies are engaging their members in the Howard County community, others are creating a more festive environment at Centennial. The National Art Honor Society (NAHS) is spreading festivity through the school with winter decorations. On Thursday, November 21, art students drew and cut out mittens, snowflakes, and ornaments that they hung around the school on Thursday, December 5.

Teachers and students alike enjoy the decorations that the honor society displays around the halls. Aria Ma, a junior at Centennial and the president of NAHS, enjoys being able to organize the event.

"Not only can the decorations add some color to Centennial, it's a nice way to celebrate the changing of seasons and exciting holidays such as Christmas," Ma said.

Clubs are also making sure

to spread the holiday cheer by giving back to the community. The Horizon Club volunteered at Festive Friday, held at the Columbia Lakefront. The volunteers made cotton candy and popcorn as well as helped with crafts.

Sydney Vigderhouse, a senior and the president of Horizon Club, is proud of what the club brought to this event.

"I think this event along with the other events we do show the community that Centennial gives back and wants to help in any way [we] can," said Vigderhouse. "We are a club that wants to make the community around us closer and more enjoyable for everyone."

-Sasha Allen



Senior Sydney Vigderhouse prepares holiday crafts.  
Photo by: Ellie Zoller-Gritz



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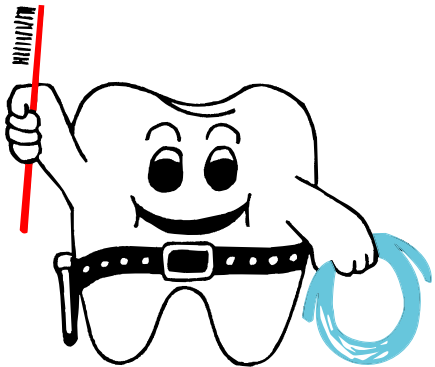
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