

# the wingspan

Centennial High School

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## On The National Stage: Centennial Performs at the Midwest Clinic

Calvin Lee  
Casey Lu  
Staff Writers

It is April 2025. There is a palpable tension in the bandroom. Centennial Band Director David Matchim stands in front of a silent Wind Ensemble, about to reveal whether or not they have been accepted to the Midwest Clinic.

“So,” he began, “when I knew, and I thought you could get into Midwest [when we auditioned] in October... I was right.”

Matchim barely finished his sentence before there was a loud gasp of disbelief from the students. They leapt from their seats; screams and yells rang out as they embraced one another, celebrating with uncontained joy at this achievement.

“I remember giving Claire Jenkins, our other percussion section leader, the biggest hug. None of us could believe it. It was one of those moments I’ll never forget.” Maggie Cipriano, a Centennial alum who graduated in 2025 and played a pivotal part in leading the band to acceptance into the clinic, explained.

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Photo by: Tammy Chen  
With the trophy held high, Bethany Cunha takes first place in the Lip Sync Battle!

## Poetry Out Loud: Fostering Creativity and Self-Discovery

Kaitlyn McManus  
Photo Editor

Noted by the National Endowment for the Arts, “Poetry Out Loud can help students improve public speaking skills, build confidence, and grow their appreciation for poetry.”

On Jan. 13, 2026, Centennial High School students competed in the school-wide Poetry Out Loud competition which included a series of memorized, recited, and intense poetry performances to qualify for the regional round.

Dr. Kelli McDonough-Johnson, the sponsor for National English Honor Society (NEHS), is a prominent figure in organizing the Poetry Out Loud competition. With the help of other English teachers (Rus VanWestervelt, Christopher Bailey, and Tana King) and NEHS, the competition was able to flourish and even incorporated performances from dance, bella Voce, and the Chinese Culture Club.

The competition first

started in the students’ English classes where they competed with their fellow peers. The winner of each class then continued onto the schoolwide competition.

The competitors performed in front of a panel of judges which included teachers Melissa Jacobson, Michelle Van Gieson, Marylynn Doff, Thomas Wheeler, and the accuracy judge, Katie Carr. They follow a strict set of criteria, and each contestant receives a score out of 6 for their physical presence, voice and articulation, interpretation, and evidence of understanding; they also receive a score out of 9 for the overall performance.

Senior Alex Hobson and Junior Madeline Salter performed the highest out of sixteen of their peers school-wide to move onto the next round. Both students’ theatrical style and interpretations of their poems are what set them apart from their competitors.

Hobson describes how he presented “Mezzo Cammin” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his English class and “The Dilettante: A Modern Type” by Paul Laurence Dunbar.

“I chose ‘The Dilettante: A Modern Type’ because it’s a witty, backhanded compliment-riddled commentary on an ‘artist’ who dabbles in little bits of everything.” The “Mezzo

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## Centennial’s First Ever Lip Sync Battle

Ryan Doody  
Teju Reddi  
Co-Editor-in-chief  
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On the evening of Friday, Nov. 21, students, teachers, and members of the Centennial High School community gathered to witness the first ever and highly-anticipated inaugural CHS lip sync battle. The auditorium buzzed with excitement as the audience waited for the show to start. In the weeks leading up to the event, there had been advertisements through the morning announcements, posters around the school, and a video trailer. The hype among students and staff was off the charts, making it a must-attend event.

The battle was a fundraiser for the Class of 2028, organized by Centennial Math Teacher Erin Parisi, with proceeds from the paid-for votes going towards the current sophomore class.

The host for the night, Denis Ahearn, a social studies teacher at Centennial, was the first person to walk the stage as he welcomed the audience and introduced the performing acts. Ahearn is known for his strong personality and humor, making him the perfect person to host.

The panel of judges for this year’s lip sync battle was math teacher Kathryn Carr, Spanish teacher Stephen Doff, French teacher Marylynn Doff, Officer Marc Carneal, and Jared Mantegna.

Judge Marylynn Doff, had volunteered to be a judge; a decision she did not regret

“This is brand new. I’ve been here a long time, so this is a brand new thing. I hope they do it again next year, it was a lot of fun.

Starting the night was a solo act by Chris Panzarella where he combined martial arts and lip sync, with an impressive performance of “Kung Fu Fighting” by Carl Douglas. The song was a crowd-favorite, engaging the audience from the start.

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## Feathers of the Wingspan

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## One School, a World Of Traditions:

### Worldfest

Andrew Banjade

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The world is more than a place: it is a collection of cultures, stories, and shared human experiences. Centennial High School is lucky to have students with origins all around the world, and at the annual World Fest, the whole student community comes together to celebrate the rich tapestry of cultures represented in our student body.

Organized by the National Honor Society (NHS), Worldfest is one of Centennial's most ambitious school-wide events, requiring months of preparation and coordination. NHS co-sponsors, Thomas Wheeler and Lori Estes lead members as they undergo the process of organizing the event.

"This is our big project for the whole year. It's where most of the service hours are coming for the National Honor Society, Estes said." She added that the work of NHS members is crucial to organizing World Fest, saying "Every National Honor Society member is expected to contribute."

According to Wheeler, "NHS focuses on outreach to clubs to put on as many food booths and workshops as possible. The wider the variety of offerings, the better the event is! NHS members are part of different committees that focus on outreach, advertising, or decorating for the event."

Senior Emma Liu, president of NHS, shared how planning for Worldfest involves "making sure money is handled correctly, making sure that we have availability in classrooms, specifically with food booths, making sure that clubs that need outlets can have outlets, mapping everything out for the event, and then on the day of, making sure that decorations go up."

As NHS works on the event, their goal is to improve from the year prior, with this year featuring involvement from over 40 clubs.

"Every year, we want it to be even bigger than the last," Liu claimed. "Even more workshops, even more areas to do food booths, even more people from different schools or different parts of the community coming to enjoy WorldFest."

Wheeler has high praise

for this year's event, saying it was, "the best since we took over as club sponsors."

He does note that there were initial difficulties with organizing the event, saying, "There was a learning curve when it came to putting an event of this magnitude together."

Wheeler credits the hard work of the NHS board and NHS members for pushing through the adversity and putting together a successful World Fest.

"With the effort of our board and members, I think we put on a heck of a show. This year there was over \$4,000 worth of sales. That is \$4,000 going right into our clubs at CHS which means that they will hopefully have the funds to do whatever they want!"

National Honor Society. Reflecting on the night, she noted that "there were a lot of people, a lot of great turnout, and I know a lot of clubs made a lot of money." The increased number of workshops and booths, she added, contributed to the event's overall success.

One booth that stood out to many was the National Art Honor Society Doodle Booth, where student artists created custom drawings for attendees. Both Liu and Zheng described it as a unique and especially popular addition to this year's festivities. Students lined up to receive personalized sketches, turning the booth into both an artistic showcase and a memorable keepsake for participants.

The event also included a talent show, primarily orga-



Photo by: Cole Newton

An Indian dance performance takes over the stage at Worldfest!

For the NHS and club organizers, the success of World Fest was marked by the huge sales. For many who attended World Fest, food was the highlight of the event. Estes remarked that she "was amazed that they didn't start with five or six tickets. They went right with 40 tickets because they were so excited by the food offering that we had."

In addition to amazing foods, clubs and honor societies had the chance to host workshops and booths to showcase some of their unique attributes. From henna art to jewelry-making and cultural crafts, the variety of activities ensured that there was something for everyone. This year alone featured over 20 workshops, a noticeably large increase from previous years.

Audray Zheng, an NHS member-at-large who led the workshop committee, played a key role in expanding that participation. She explained that her committee worked to reach out to student-run and school-sponsored clubs, encouraging them to host workshops and become involved in the event. Some highlight workshops included the Chinese Club's YoYo workshop and the Henna Club's workshop.

Alongside helping organize workshops, Zheng also ran a food stand for the Science

nized by Centennial's dance department. Together, the booths, workshops, and performances created an atmosphere that was energetic, colorful, and welcoming.

Estes echoed that sentiment, emphasizing the broader impact of the event. She described it as a way of "bringing the community together and celebrating the incredible diversity that we have here at Centennial." Families with younger children attend, giving future students a glimpse into the vibrant culture of the school. According to Estes, the tradition has existed for many years and continues to grow, something she and co-sponsor Wheeler are proud to help sustain.

Ultimately, World Fest is more than a night of food and festivities. It is a reflection of Centennial itself, diverse, collaborative, and constantly growing. Through months of planning, countless volunteer hours, and the dedication of students and staff, the event transforms the school into a living representation of the community it seeks to celebrate.

As Liu concluded, "I guess you could say the way students embrace and share their different traditions is always really, really fun to see. I feel like I always learn new things when I come to World Fest."

## Midwest

>>Continued from page 1  
The Midwest Clinic in

Chicago, Illinois, is one of the most prestigious music showcases in the world. More than 18,000 people attend every year from different states and countries to listen to various groups' performances, but only five high school bands in the nation are handpicked to perform. Centennial High School was one of these schools. This is the second time Centennial has attended the Windy City's coveted festival, their first time being in 2018, where they were the first group from Maryland to be selected in over four decades.

The news of their acceptance capped off months of hard work and anticipation that occurred throughout the 2024-25 school year. The audition process involved sending in both audio and video performances of the

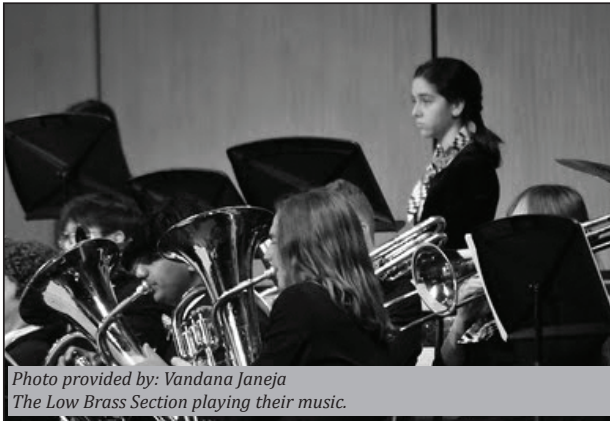


Photo provided by: Vandana Janeja  
The Low Brass Section playing their music.

band, which they had professionally recorded at UMBC.

Nayeon Song, the trombone section leader, discussed the system they collectively created to meet these challenges called the "Boundary Band Council."

"We did a lot of basement rehearsals. I hosted some sectionals in my basement. During the snow days, we went to Maggie [Cipriano's] basement. It was a lot of out-of-school preparation, a lot of individual work, a lot of encouragement," Song noted.

The excitement over the band's achievement was not limited to the community here at Centennial. The Marching Ravens, the official marching band of the Baltimore Ravens, quickly rallied behind the band's success after a few members of the school community reached out. In total, they provided over \$2,000 in support towards the program, which included personalized sweatshirts and a letter of encouragement.

Tory Nymick, manager of entertainment marketing at the Ravens, who was in charge of this sponsorship, discussed why they were moved to sponsor the Centennial group.

"[We] are very proud of them for their accomplishments, and we hope to see them do great things in the future. We want to acknowledge the great work that they're doing, and the hard work that they put in, in addition to all their studies," praised Nymick. "But just taking the time to cultivate their creativity with music is a bigger accomplishment, and we love to see that."

This wasn't just a notion to celebrate the Eagle's hard work. It was also an act that contributed to a wider message of unity in the city and, ultimately, the state.

"It's an encouragement of music," shared John Ziemann, president of The Marching Ravens for over 40 years. "Not only are we promoting the Ravens, but [by sponsoring] we're promoting Maryland—something community-oriented."

Still, the bulk of the work remained for the band. It would

not be an easy task—the group that auditioned was not the same group that would have to prepare to perform. Many of the members who auditioned had recently graduated, and although there were a considerable number of returners, there were also many new members. It would be up to this collective band to carry the torch passed by the auditioning group. Centennial's band program would be composed of 10 songs, each varying in time period and skill level to give listeners a wide range of exposure to different pieces.

"Usually, when an ensemble prepares a program [for a concert], it's 20 to 30 minutes long. This was an hour-long program," Matchim explained. "So three months to prepare our program and learn to play together as a group, get along with each other as a team. So it's super high pressure."

The process of learning these pieces was strenuous. At times, there was doubt whether or not they would be properly prepared in time. It reached a point where Matchim reached out to the clinic, considering a change

to the proposed program they were playing. However, Centennial's self-accountability, strong leadership, and collective unity allowed the band to persevere.

Section leader Owen Landle, who plays the Euphonium, described the process for him and his section, praising them for their effort.

"I am very proud of the lowbrass section for all the work that they did," Landle noted. "That's what it's all about. That's Matchim's band program. You kind of have to take initiative, step up, and they did." There was a recurring theme of initiative that Landle discussed, similar to Song, and that is something he hopes will be carried on even after he is gone.

"Matchim does a great job holding people accountable, but the students also need to be able to hold the other students accountable. That would help build community and keep the band responsible to one another," Landle advised.

It is now December 17, the day of Centennial's performance. They are set to take the stage at 2:30 P.M., but rather than spend the morning running last-minute rehearsals, Matchim made an unexpected decision. He and the rest of the band took a trip to the Willis Tower, one of Chicago's iconic landmarks.

"There is not much you can prepare for the day of the performance," said trumpeter Aiden Lee. "I think he just wanted us to relax."

Centennial's wind ensemble arrived at the performance hall around 1:30 P.M. to rehearse and finalize details. The weight of the moment began to settle in. Sitting onstage an hour before the concert, the reality of the moment became impossible to ignore.

"I could tell this group started to freak out," Matchim said. "You're sitting in this room with like 3,000 empty seats that are waiting for people to come in."

Recognizing their nerves, Matchim paused the rehearsal and gave a speech to the ensemble.

"I had to get pretty passionate with them," he explained. "Any little mistake that happens, [they] start to freak out... I let them know they deserved to be there and that they've worked hard for it."

When Centennial finally walked onto the stage, their nerves did not disappear. They performed their repertoire, including *New Places*, *Scram!*, and *Moth*. In total, their performance lasted about 55 minutes.

"There were little things

that could have been better," Matchim admitted, regarding their performance. "I even made a conducting mistake, and they saved me."

Despite this, when the students finished their performance, they experienced a collective sense of achievement that went beyond the music itself. They had met the challenge of an extraordinary program through hard work and determination. It was an achievement earned at the end of an uncertain journey because of their intense preparation and dedication.

"Afterward, it was a huge feeling of pride," Matchim said. "Knowing that it wasn't an easy road, but we never gave up on it."

## Lip Sync

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Panzarella was able to showcase his martial arts prowess, something he takes immense pride in.

"I grew up studying martial arts; that was my thing as a kid. I didn't really play team sports. Just getting a chance to show that off to the school community and show how much I appreciated and enjoyed the values of martial arts and the values of self-perseverance, hard work, and self-improvement."

Being the first act is no easy task, and despite the fun environment, Panzarella's performance didn't come without nerves.

"Getting up on stage is definitely scary, the anticipation and anxiety there is pretty intense in front of a crowd, is nerve wracking. I was doing it by myself."

Following up Panzarella were fellow math teachers Rona Li and Teri Stevens, who performed "Golden" from the 2025 smash-hit movie *K-Pop Demon Hunters*. Stevens and Li brought with them a group of student backup dancers, a theme that would be present for the rest of the performances. Although their song choice may have resonated more with the younger generation, the energy was felt throughout the entire audience.

The next group to take the stage was the powerful trio of Rus VanWestervelt, Frank White, and Matthew Sillers, who got into character and re-enacted the "My Shot" scene from the Broadway musical *Hamilton*. The lip syncing was on point, but more importantly, all three embraced their roles perfectly with VanWestervelt as the ambitious Alexander Hamilton, Sillers as the witty Marquis de Lafayette, and

White as the skeptical Aaron Burr.

By the time this performance concluded, the battle was

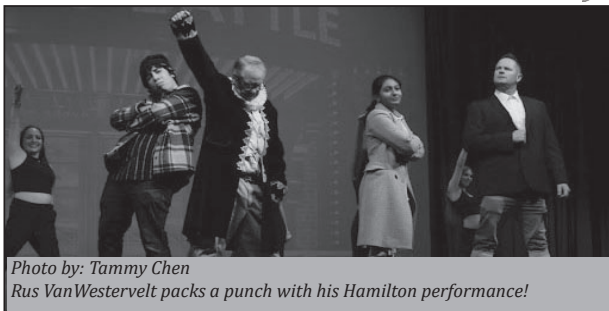


Photo by: Tammy Chen  
Rus VanWestervelt packs a punch with his Hamilton performance!

in full swing, with judges and the crowd buzzing over who had left the strongest impression so far, while also in anticipation of what the final few acts could bring.

Coming after the amazing Hamilton spinoff was Bethany Cunha, who brought the house down with a dynamic medley. She started with Lady Gaga and Beyoncé's "Telephone", making her presence felt on the very first note of the song.

"I felt like it had a really good intro that had an opening on stage that would make a big statement," Cunha said.

About midway through the already unreal performance, Cunha vanished from the stage, allowing student Tatiana Machiz to step in to lip sync Beyoncé's feature. When she returned, Cunha had made an outfit switch, and the music had changed to Rihanna's "Where Have You Been". The return and song switch had the audience in awe, making Cunha's time on stage debatably the most memorable of the night.

Closing out as the final act was Shalonda Holt, Haley Nachlas, and Erin Parisi, turning back the clock to 2000's with a classic, performing NSYNC's "Bye Bye Bye". The group committed to the boy band vibe, even reciting the same dance moves that were made famous with this song. The song was a great way to conclude the battle, leaving it now up to the audience.

Once the battle had ended, Ahearn directed the crowd to the hallway to vote for their winner. After the counting of the votes had been concluded, Cunha was revealed as the winner, which was an amazing moment for her, but it didn't come as much of a surprise for the viewers or herself.

"It was awesome, but I knew that we would win because I think no one expected us to bring the show that we brought."

It's safe to say that the first-ever Centennial lip sync battle was a huge success, bringing together the Centennial community and, more importantly, a successful fundraiser for the Class of 2028. When asked if she would

be defending her title in next year's battle, Cunha had no doubt.

"100%. I plan on winning every year."

## Science Paraeducators Face Removal

**Ryan Doody**  
**Haley Hunt**  
*Co-Editor-in-chief*  
**News Editor**

Jessica Stockham is one of 14 science paraeducators in HCPSS, she spends hours fulfilling her duties and serving the students of Centennial High School. Stockham relieves teachers of part of their burdens, organizing, setting up, and cleaning up classroom labs. She and others in her role give students the opportunity for hands-on learning.

Between the 2026 and 2027 school years, all 14 Howard County science paraeducators, including the Applied Research Lab (ARL), had originally faced potential removal according to the Fiscal Year 27 Plan (FY27) put together by HCPSS superintendent Bill Barnes. science paraeducators are a sacrifice due to budget cuts.

The duties of these 14 science paraeducators entail taking charge of the science safety regulations according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards to make sure labs and chemicals are being carried out in a safe manner. In addition, it is also their responsibility to help student-aides individually by mentoring and teaching lab safety.

Next year, all of these duties would shift to the shoulders of science teachers, without compensation for the additional burdens. Setting up labs will require significantly more effort and time, which will mean that these teachers will need to rely on digital labs. However, even this alternative is at risk. Within this FY27 plan, the grant for Gizmos, a digital lab simulation website, also runs out this 2026 school year. Science teachers

have no reliable way to conduct labs in real life or electronically next year, which risks eliminating the use of labs, one of the most important elements of a science education for students.

This means that hands-on learning in science classes will be reduced. The change will be especially present in AP classes, where a class that plays an important role in furthering a student's education and understanding in the field may suffer. Students take courses such as AP Biology and AP Chemistry in hopes of more in-depth science application, which includes lab experiments. Given the AP curriculum requiring a certain amount of labs that have to be completed, the science paraeducator role is crucial.

Board member Dr. Linfeng Chen described issues concerning how the money is distributed. "They usually allocate half the money to the school system, they also need to take care of the libraries, and Howard County Community College, and Howard County Creation, and the fire and police department. So multiple agents need to be addressed and that's a lot of needs."

It is uncertain if or when the role of science paraeducators would be reinstated. "I think it is possible but I cannot guarantee, because at the end of the day, it's not one voice; we need the seven board members' majority to agree," Chen said.

However, these budget proposals are often tweaked and subject to change. Student member of the board, Erin Alistar, said, "Budget proposals are not final, and a lot of things do change."

It is important to acknowledge that the elimination of science paraeducators next year is not definite. "We've gotten many emails from students about this, showing up to board meetings and caring. We are trying to keep the role, but we need the money to do so," Alistar said.

At Centennial, Jessica Stockham holds this role and is facing the proposal that could eliminate her position entirely. In a science prep room connected to the classrooms of Amy Seker,



Photo by: Emma Liu  
Centennial Science Paraeducator Jessica Stockham prepares a lab.

Robert Astri, and Shalonda Holt, Stockham focuses on lab setup, requirements, and organization of material. Stockham voices her concerns about the new budget proposal and what that could mean for science classes going forward.

"The drawbacks to not having this position is that teachers will have to absorb the time that I am allotting to make the labs," Stockham said. "So if a lab takes an hour to set up and an hour to properly clean and dispose of, then, that's two extra hours out of their time where they're not grading, not sponsoring clubs, not coaching, not teaching that they will have to do that."

A major part of the science paraeducator's responsibility is to make sure that everything used in a lab returns back to the science prep room. "Things are going to probably go missing or not be put back in the proper spot, and it will take twice as long to find things and construct labs", Stockham stressed.

Centennial Science Teacher Amy Seker has similar fears regarding the cut, especially the impact it could have on her classroom moving forward. Seker acknowledged the unrealistic expectation that teachers will be able to absorb all of the responsibilities that were once handled by Stockham.

"I mean between planning, grading, and everything just in the day to day life of a teacher now I have no time. To add on top of that prepping and breaking down labs is just not feasible."

Seker added the consequences that could come as a result of the science paraeducator position being removed.

"We just won't be able to do as many labs. We'll have some but there are some that I think are great that will get cut because we won't have the time or resources to do them."

Stockham, along with the other science paraeducators in Howard County have become a cohesive group who meet once a month and frequently trade ideas and tips on labs. The group is disappointed that their position is in jeopardy, but they understand the power that they hold in advocating for the proposal to not go through.

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to this story.

Poetry

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Cammin" explores the themes of regret, unfulfilled potential, and hope for the future.

"I love the tension between one artist's introspective angst due to not finishing one fantastic project and the satirical critique of another seemingly exalted artist who's completed many superficial works," Hobson described.

McDonough-Johnson shared how Hobson compels his audience to follow him through his narration. "He's a storyteller that makes you, as an audience member, join him on his journey." Salter's two poems were, "Dream Within a Dream" by Edgar Allan Poe and "Nothing to Do" by James Ephraim McGirt. "The poem itself is already incredibly passionate, so acting it out would



Photo by: Teju Reddi  
Alex Hobson (left) performing his poem "The Dilettante: A Modern Type."

not be difficult at all, but also it had a shift in tone that really let me display my abilities," Salter described when choosing to perform "Dream Within a Dream."

The poem by McGirt also portrays the worries and freedom of unstructured time. "I know that as a young kid there were sometimes where I was overwhelmed by the idea of time and how it often felt that it was going too fast," Salter said.

Just like Hobson's storytelling, Salter's emotional performance is what draws the audience to react differently to each of her poems. "She shows this versatility that no one else really has. Instead of it just being her words or her certain actions, she takes you there with that emotion," McDonough-Johnson said.

Both Salter and Hobson will be moving onto the regional



Photo by: Teju Reddi  
Madeline Salter performs a "Dream Within a Dream" by Edgar Allen Poe.

round, which consists of schools in the western region of Maryland. In this round of the competition, both students will face a series of strong, dedicated competitors. The top three students of the regional round will move onto counties and then states.

Not only has this competition taught these students valuable lessons of public speaking, but also immersed them into the art of poetry and how to fully connect a piece of literature to themselves.

"I read dozens of poems weekly in home school until 8th grade, but in taking the time to select and memorize only a couple works, I've been able to see connections in their structures and themes that I wouldn't have at a cursory pass," Hobson expressed.

"Honestly when I first won my class competition I did not think much of it, but reading and practicing poetry has really opened my eyes to a new genre of literature that I am excited to learn more about," Salter similarly claimed.

Centennial's strong tradition of being in this competition will make Hobson and Salter strong contenders. They will be representing our school and building the connection between poetry and personal revelation.

## Centennial's Holiday Thrift House Spreads Joy and Raises Over \$1,000 for Grassroots

Sukaina Hussain  
Staff Writer

On Dec. 16, 2025, Centennial High School students proved that the holiday season is more than just decorations and countdown calendars, but also about the community and giving back.

This year, Centennial's Holiday Thrift House transformed the school into a festive, service-driven shopping space, where students and families could browse donated goods, sip hot chocolate, and get gifts wrapped, all while supporting people in need.

The event was spearheaded by Sanika Shah, president of the Hearts in Action club, who said the idea began as a desire to create something meaningful that would extend beyond a typical club meeting.

"I met with my sponsor, Ms. Rosuck, and we were

planning monthly events... and I wanted to do something really big, for the entire year, especially related to Grassroots, since it's such a prominent crisis center in our community," Shah explained.

While the thrift house was rooted in holiday cheer, it was also designed as a tangible act of service. Inspired by a past event that Hearts in Action sponsor Stacy Rosuck had once run, Shah envisioned a collaboration that could unite clubs and non-profits.

"I wanted to invite a bunch of different nonprofits," Shah said. "So we invited Grassroots, NAMI, Lumious... and then I wanted to partner with some other clubs like ACS, Horizon, Wingspan... I just wanted to do a big community event because when you bring everybody together, that's kind of like the biggest way you can spread festivity and joy."

Planning was intensive, and began months in advance. Even social media content took careful preparation. "We posted a bunch of TikToks... planning those out and marking out dates, those you start weeks in advance." Like any large-scale student-run event, the thrift house faced challenges, especially with coordination and logistics.

"Some of the biggest challenges... I think it was things with communication," Shah said. "Since we're not always all together, a few things were misinterpreted."

One example involved collecting supplies. "Some people brought in a bunch of extra food, but then we really didn't need that much food," she explained. Still, Shah quickly adapted. "I just sent out more emails and we would have more in-person meetings," she noted. Frequent board meetings also helped keep the process organized.

However, the thrift house's success came not only from Hearts in Action, but also from the many student groups that contributed, such as the SGA, NAHS, and ACS.

"Having all these different clubs and nonprofits and volunteers at our event was a big part of its success," Shah confirmed.

In order to make the day run smoothly, Shah emphasized clear expectations and timing, even down to setup. "The day before I reached out to all of these different clubs and I was like, 'If you guys could be here at 9:30 a.m. to set up because the event started at 10.'"

Perhaps most surprising of all was the money raised. Past versions of similar events had brought in only a few hundred dollars, but this year's event sur-

passed expectations.

"We made over \$1,000, which really surprised me," Shah said. "And I was honestly really proud of that because that just means that much more money for all of those individuals in need."

For Shah, the most memorable part wasn't the profit, but the joy the event created.

"Really just seeing everybody's smile, because we were selling some exciting items during the thrift house. Some of this included brand new Stanleys



Photo by: Sukaina Hussain  
Stuffed animals with prices.

around \$20."

She also noted how meaningful it was to watch younger children enjoy the holiday activities. "I saw so many little kids there and they looked so happy when getting their face painted and when they got to get their gifts wrapped by ACS."

Beyond a successful event, Shah believes organizing the thrift house reshaped her understanding of leadership and service. "Even little things make a big difference," Shah reflected.

"Collecting donations and raising money might not seem that large to most people. But it really does make an impact."



Logo created by: Lily Nguyen



Check out our  
Wingspan  
podcast:  
*Inside the Nest*

# Normalizing Gun Violence Has Put Our Generation in Lockdown

Emma Liu

Co-Editor-in-chief

New Year's Day is supposed to symbolize fresh beginnings. Goals to achieve, habits to break, resolutions to check off. But as 2026 began, one reality, at least to me, remains unchanged.

According to the Gun Violence Archive, which defines a mass shooting as four or more people shot, there were 26 mass shootings nationwide by the end of the first month of 2026. By Feb. 12, that number had risen to 37.

With headlines of gun violence filling my daily news, it feels too common that I hear of the tragedies happening to students my age or younger. In a reality where students routinely rehearse for deadly threats in the same classrooms they plan their futures, it raises a question in my mind: When did preparing for the worst become the new norm?

After a shooting on Feb. 9 at Thomas S. Wootton High School in Montgomery County, just a 45-minute drive away from Centennial, the threat feels espe-

cially close to home.

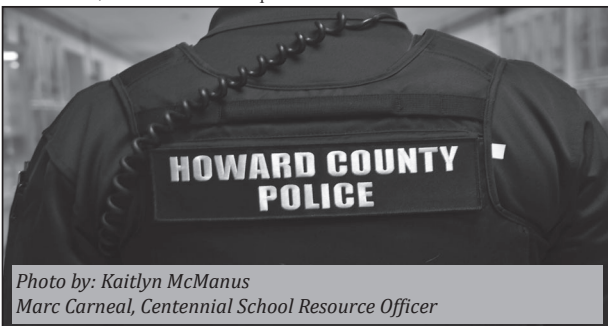


Photo by: Kaitlyn McManus  
Marc Carneal, Centennial School Resource Officer

For Centennial senior Charles Henn, the fear is not only constant but terrifying.

"It's a very existential fear," Henn said. "The closest thing I can compare it to is Cold War nuclear fears—it's not always an immediate threat, but it's always there in the background. Something that could happen."

And yet, while this terror is everlasting in students' minds, it is completely normal. Growing up with lockdown drills, preparing for a threat is all sophomore Esha Hegde has known.

"It's something that we've come to expect," Hegde explained. "Because it's so practiced, it doesn't really strike the forefront of our minds."

With this expectation, it only makes sense that running

for their lives has become a daily thought.

Senior Lily Nguyen finds herself ruminating over logistics in case of an emergency. "It's not necessarily that comforting to think about what we would do, especially since our classrooms don't really have windows." As she mentally maps out exits in the halls, she asks the question that crosses many students' minds: "What would you do? How would you escape?"

For Centennial government teacher David Riddler, the shift has also become prevalent for him as well.

"It's become so commonplace that we don't think about it all the time," he said. "It's just part of our existence as educators and students." Riddler even describes protocols that feel like second nature, with students' safety always at the forefront of his mind while teaching.

"It's been infused in my everyday practice; it's just natural now. And I think about things just like keeping your door locked with the magnetic thing, and you're supposed to pull that if there's a lockdown... We just do it."

But it is this normalization of safety precautions that concerns English teacher Rus VanWestervelt, who has been teaching in both private and public schools for nearly 40 years.

"It bothers me so much



that we have normalized this to just accept that this is a way of our lives. For decades, I have absolutely preached that we cannot be numb to this."

Though drills and protocols in the classroom have become a part of daily habit, VanWestervelt warns that this reality should not redefine what true safety looks like. "Every day, we know that it is a possibility," he said. "I can't think of any other profession where we come into a shared space every day and just accept that this could be the day that we have a lockdown."

While students and staff rehearse what they would do in an emergency, Centennial's Student Resource Officer, Marc Carneal, assures me that he is there to prevent one in the first place. As a trained police officer, Carne-

al would be one of the first on site in case of a threat. Every day, maintaining safety is always his top priority. Monitoring halls, keeping a close eye on students, and watching the doors to enter the school have always been second nature.

"I like doing the drills. I like people feeling like they know exactly what to do if a major threat comes to our school—but it is kind of sad to think... that we have to do that."

For Centennial alumnus and Brown University student Ryan Zou, the threat became immediate on Dec. 13, 2025, when a shooting occurred on campus during final exams in the Barus & Holley Engineering and Physics building. Zou was on his way to a Secret Santa event when the campus was alerted to the danger.

"At first, I didn't know if they were being serious," Zou said. "Then I checked online, and people were confirming it."

Zou proceeded to lock down in his suite for nearly nine hours, sitting in the terrifying truth I know could happen to my peers and me anytime. With two casualties, Ella Cook and Mukhammad Aziz Umurzokov, and nine more wounded, the incident was added as one more in the long list of tragic school shootings. After, students quickly moved their flights up to go home for the holidays, and the campus quickly became deserted.

However, amidst the aftermath of the tragic incident, Zou told me another alarming pattern he noticed. The focus began to shift beyond what had happened to who would control the story of it.

"While we were still immediately dealing with the shooting, there were political commentators online who weren't here putting their own spin on it," Zou said. "It was falsified for political spectacle."

"It was very disheartening for those of us involved to see what happened to us be politicized in this way," he explained. "It feels like it invalidates our experiences and reduces the trauma we've gone through to a political message that is untrue."

As these incidents grow

more frequent, violence becomes more normalized, and the focus shifts to political debate rather than a focus on the trauma, leaving students like Zou unacknowledged after acts of violence.

"Our experience is real. We've lived through it, and we do not want it to be turned into a political message that is unrelated to what happened."

Keeping students and their experiences at the center of conversations is vital to addressing gun violence. Centennial Principal Joelle Miller believes that community support and awareness are needed in uncertain times such as this.

"By creating a culture of care, where people look out for one another and communicate concerns promptly, we can keep our school community safe."

Still, with gun violence traumatizing young students all across the nation, I believe we often find ourselves powerless in the situation. With national debates and political agenda growing louder than the lives lost and changes to be made, students stand stranded in fear.

However, this powerlessness may be explained by how society functions in general. Riddler points out patterns consistent with how reactive society is, rather than how active.

"It feels like there's not a lot of urgency to address it," he said. "There are things people can do to prevent it, but it often feels reactive." He explained how this can make students feel. "It's frustrating. It feels like there's so much elite power in politics that even students feel like they won't have an impact."

However, for students such as myself, living in this reality, sitting in classrooms every day, does not feel like policy debate, nor is it an issue skimmed over in the morning paper. It feels like a ticking time bomb, one that we all hope doesn't detonate too close to our schools.

Our generation has grown up behind curtained windows and locked doors. Since the first grade, we have practiced the protocols. We have memorized the exits. We have continued to learn regardless. But we will not yet accept this as normal.

## In Case of an Emergency...

"Safety is my number one priority, and every person in our school must contribute. By staying alert, following safety procedures, and speaking up when something feels wrong, students and staff play a critical role in preventing potential threats. We must stay vigilant every day."

—Dr. Miller

### Do:

- Report any suspicious behavior.
- Report any individual who is not a student or faculty member of the school.
- Follow all lockdown, secure, and evacuation procedures immediately.
- Trust your instincts—if something feels off, say something.

### Don't:

- Prop open doors in classrooms or nearby exits.
- Let strangers into classrooms or school entrances.
- Leave assigned areas during an emergency unless directed by staff.
- Assume someone else has already reported a concern.

# What Teen Vogue's Loss Means for High School Journalism

Christine Ma  
A&E Editor

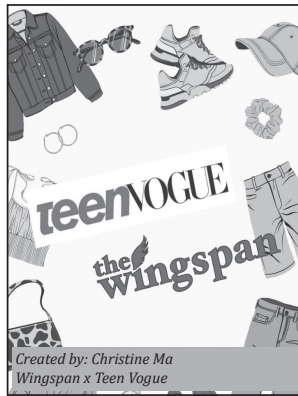
Unlike other teen magazines, Teen Vogue was a bold company that fueled educating the youth by never being afraid to shy away from controversial topics like feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, abortion rights, political viewpoints, mental health, and sexuality. The magazine brought light to the youth's right to be cognizant of the world's social and political climate, affirming that their voices were needed.

It was a publication that wasn't just read, it was argued with, learned from, and challenged. So when I heard that it was being merged with their sister company Vogue.com on Nov. 3, 2025, my first thought was not that it was just a transition, but an upsetting loss after 22 years of independence.

Their merging is something that followed a history of teen magazines ceasing publication such as Elle Girl, Teen People, Cosmogirl, and Sassy during the past few decades, adding to the already established debt of youth media.

The recent transition additionally came with 70% of Teen Vogue staff being laid off—many of whom were politics and identity writers, and women of color—including Editor-in-chief Versha Sharma and Culture Editor Kaitlyn McNab. Additionally, Conde Nast—a global media company known for publishing renowned magazines like Vogue—fired four employees who confronted the head of HR over the layoffs, citing “extreme misconduct.” Among them was Alma Avalle of Bon Appetit who recounts her unfair termination in her essay for *The Nation*, “If Conde Nast can illegally fire me, no union worker is safe.” She writes that her termination “for posing questions to a human resources manager” was “clearly retaliatory,” a warning aimed not just at her, but at every worker who dared to question the department, showcasing the unfair efforts behind Conde Nast's HR department to diminish youth voices by silencing their writers.

Avalle has every right to be worried. The National Labor Relations Board, the agency responsible for protecting employees' rights, has drastically decelerated under the Trump ad-



ministration. With weaker labor laws, firing union workers becomes framed as a restructuring decision. She writes that corporations are “all too happy to align themselves” with the “gutting of workers' rights.” In a period with weak job security and an increasing amount of layoffs, union protections are the only stability workers can really rely on now.

So when an unapologetic publication like Teen Vogue terminates their union workers, it starts to become clear that the educating voices behind political and social content are no longer valued when they challenge the systems that control them.

The company states that the merging was “part of a broader push to expand the Vogue ecosystem,” but this feels juxtaposing since the larger ecosystem of political journalism in Gen Z media has consequently been shoved backwards. What hoped to conjoin beliefs across generations ended up muting a plethora of young voices.

Now that such a significant teen media source as Teen Vogue has been stripped away after many other teen magazines have in the past, young people's vocal rights in politics and society are diminishing faster and faster. With *The Wingspan* as a publication written by high school students, I'm a firm believer that it's our job to preserve youth voices.

What happened at Teen Vogue represents the hole remaining in the industry when youth-driven journalism merges into a larger publication that prioritizes aesthetics over authenticity. At our high school level, this might look like pressure to avoid political issues and softening coverage of identity or student activism. While this might seem better as it gathers more “appropriate” or “digestible” content, it undermines the purpose of student journalism which is to reflect the real experiences and concerns of its readers, often being other high school students.

As firm believers that editorial independence matters, we must be encouraged to protect

student journalists' ability to ask hard questions and cover difficult topics to fulfill the meaning and potential held within youth media.

# Growing Up in Hawkins: Stranger Things

Evan Ruiz-Lebron  
Staff Writer

After nearly a decade, *Stranger Things* has come to an end, closing the chapter on one of Netflix's most popular and influential shows. Since its 2016 premiere, the series set in the small town of Hawkins, Indiana, grew far beyond a typical sci-fi drama, becoming a major part of pop culture and a show many Centennial students grew up watching. With the final season newly released, the show's conclusion has sparked widespread discussion among viewers, both online and in everyday conversations.

For many students, *Stranger Things* wasn't just another show to watch. It was shared with friends, referenced in class, and debated at the lunch tables. Because of that connection, the ending felt personal to many students.

Senior Emma McMonagle said the show felt tied to memories growing up.

“I started watching when



Photo from: NPR News, Netflix  
Dustin, Mike, Lucas, and Will get ready for the adventure of a lifetime in *Stranger Things* season 5, episode 1.

I was really young, so it feels like I grew up alongside the characters. The ending wasn't perfect, but it still felt emotional, like closing a chapter of my own life.”

Reactions ranged from appreciation for the emotional ending to disappointment over how the story was wrapped up. The divide immediately became clear online and in person, with people sharing strong opinions across social media and in face-to-face discussions.

Opinions felt tied to expectations built over years of theorizing and speculation. For a show that had such a long runtime, the ending's pressure to satisfy everyone was nearly impossible to meet.

Senior Casey Stachera pointed out how hard that task really was.

“Everyone had their own idea of how it should end, so no matter what, people were going to be upset. In my opinion, it wasn't as good as people made it out to be. There was just too much buildup for one finale to cover everything.”

Fans didn't just watch the finale and move on; they analyzed it frame by frame, searching for meaning beyond the surface. That helped fuel the Conformity Gate theory, one of the biggest discussions surrounding *Stranger Things*.

Conformity Gate is a viral fan theory suggesting that the final moments of *Stranger Things* weren't as straightforward as they seemed. According to the theory, the peaceful ending was actually a false reality created by the villain, Vecna, leaving the characters trapped in a state of calmness when it was the opposite. Fans pointed to subtle visual details, odd character behavior, and background inconsistencies as potential clues that the story wasn't truly over.

The theory gained even more attention when speculation about a secret episode 9 spread online. Some fans believed Netflix would release a hidden final episode revealing the truth behind the illusion. That episode never appeared, and Netflix instead released a documentary, but the theory still became a big cultural moment among students.

Senior Aiden Gauthier said the theory changed how he

viewed the finale.

“I didn't totally believe the theory, but it made the ending way more interesting. It felt like people weren't ready to let go yet, so they created another layer to the story. That just shows how attached everyone was to the show.”

Whether students loved the finale or felt disappointed, one thing is clear: *Stranger Things* left a lasting mark on students. It introduced many to sci-fi and horror, sparked interest in 1980s music and style, and created characters that became instantly recognizable. The show spanned multiple stages of students' lives, from elementary school to high school, making its ending feel like the closing of a chapter beyond just television.

## Love Birds all Around the Eagle's Nest! Sage Hawkins Staff Writer

Love is in the air and all around Centennial High School. In the month of February, one of the most celebrated holidays is Valentine's Day. Everyone has their own traditions for this special holiday, with couples everywhere planning their special days with their partners.

Before this holiday became a celebration of love, it was something completely different. Valentine's Day combines both Christian traditions and ancient Roman roots, honoring St. Valentine. He was a Christian priest from the third century who was persecuted for his faith. Emperor Claudius II banned marriages for young men since he thought single men would make better soldiers, so St. Valentine went against the emperor's wishes and continued to secretly perform marriage ceremonies behind the Emperor's back. When Claudius found out, he ordered that St. Valentine be put behind bars. While in prison, he is said to have cured his jailer's blind daughter. After this, legend says his final letter to the jailer's daughter said "From your Valentine," which is where the tradition comes from.

Valentine's Day is often celebrated by sending heartfelt cards, gifts of love and affection to family, friends and partners. Today, there are many couples at Centennial who are celebrating their love for each other in their own special ways.



Photo provided by: Stephen Doff  
Stephen and Marylynn Doff

Let's start with the famous staff couple at Centennial, Stephen Doff and Marylynn Doff right across the hall from each other. They both are language teachers, and have been married for 30 years. They first laid eyes on each other in grad school in 1996. One of their professors initially put them in a group together, playing the role of cupid in the Doff's love story. This cupid is always invited to significant life events of the Doffs, like their wedding. Initially, Mrs. Doff was not impressed with Mr. Doff, and he assumed she didn't like him. Surely Mr. Doff was able to win over Mrs. Doff's heart, and eventually, after

they got to know each other, they decided to go on their first date. They went to Ortiz, an Italian restaurant in Binghamton, New York (which they still visit to this day), a special place for these wonderful love birds to remember where their love started and how far they have come. Fast forward to their wedding, where their wedding song was *Just The Way You Are* by Billy Joel, a song that captures all the sweet memories. Their favorite memories include their kids and traveling. They emphasize the importance of having family dinners together, maintaining traditions, and supporting their children. Their home might be an empty nest, but their hearts are not. For Valentine's Day, they had a surprise weekend planned.

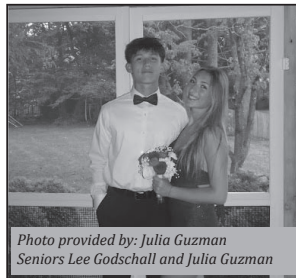


Photo provided by: Julia Guzman  
Seniors Lee Godschall and Julia Guzman

Next, on the student side and from the class of 2026, we have seniors Lee Godschall and Julia Guzman who have been together for 2 years and 3 months. They bumped into each other in chemistry and history class sophomore year. Guzman's first thought about Godschall was that he was quiet and outgoing, while Godschall was intimidated by her at first. Clearly they have come a long way from their first interaction. Winning her heart, Godschall took her to his house and spent time with his family for their first date. From there, they have gone on multiple dates and created a beautiful relationship together. A favorite memory they cherish from their relationship is when they went to Mexico together over the summer. When Guzman thinks about Godschall and all the memories they made together, the song *Baby Doll* by Dominic Fike runs in her mind on loop. Godschall ties Guzman with the song *Julia* by Mount Joy for obvious reasons. An activity they both bond over is playing card games with each other. Guzman has learned Vietnamese games from Godschall's cultural background, and she does the same and teaches Godschall how to play Ukrainian games from her background. Both respect each other's background and are open to learning new things about each other. If these two love birds' smiles say anything, it is they are perfect for each other. For Valentine's Day, their special plans were visiting a cat café in

Baltimore and from there they went to a restaurant for dinner.

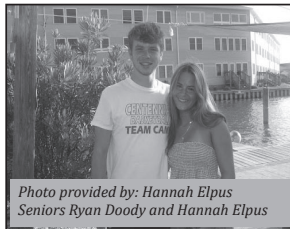


Photo provided by: Hannah Elpus  
Seniors Ryan Doody and Hannah Elpus

We have another Centennial couple who caught everyone's attention: seniors Ryan Doody and Hannah Elpus, who have been together for 9 months, almost crossing the 1-year mark. They met in math class in their freshman year. Elpus's first impression of Doody that drew her in was that he was funny and kind hearted, while Doody admired Elpus's bubbly and vibrant personality. He liked that Elpus knew a lot of people and was in the mix with things that were going on. Their love story is proof that timing is everything, and they bring the best from each other. For their first date, they went to the movies and from there, they started creating so many lovely memories. Elpus's favorite memory with Doody is attending a Lumineers Concert, while Doody cherishes the first Halloween they spent together. Both love spending time with each other and clearly they are a perfect match. The song that reminds Elpus of Doody is *Best I've Ever Had* by Drake. Doody has developed a taste in folk music and artists such as Noah Kahan and Zach Bryan because of Elpus. Elpus has expanded Doody's bubble of music. This lovely couple likes spending quality time playing board games and spending time with each other's families. For this Valentine's Day, they plan on going out to grab a bite and then going to Yogi Castle, which has a special place in their hearts. Their love story is only just getting started.

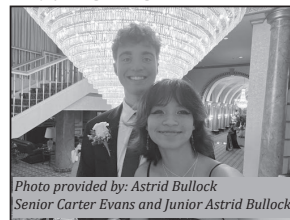


Photo provided by: Astrid Bullock  
Senior Carter Evans and Junior Astrid Bullock

Among the Centennial crowd, Senior Carter Evans and junior Astrid Bullock stood out to each other and have almost reached their 1-year mark. What started as a small little friendship quickly turned into something so much more. For their first date, they went to Dash In to grab some food. After that date, their love continued to grow. A memorable moment they both cherish is Evans coming to Bullock's house and surprising her with flowers, ice cream, and cookies.

What a great way to hit that sweet tooth. Something that this couple enjoys doing together is watching horror movies. A song that reminds Bullock of Evans is *Eyes Without a Face* by Billy Idol, and a song that reminds Evans of Bullock is *Baby I'm Yours* by Cass Elliot.

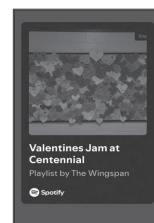


Photo provided by: Alisson Rubio  
Seniors Nico Arias and Alisson Rubio

Last but definitely not the least, we have Centennial seniors Nico Arias and Alisson Rubio. They have been together for 1 year, and their journey started in English class. Rubio's first impression of Arias was that he was cute and Arias was drawn to Rubio's hair and her luscious curls. Their first impressions were sweet, and that continued on to the rest of their relationship. For their first date, they went to a park and hung out. A song that Arias associates with Rubio is *She's Always a Woman* by Billy Joel. The song that reminds Rubio of Arias is *Luther* by SZA and Kendrick Lamar. A memory that stole the spotlight in their relationship was going to a lantern event in Washington D.C. While this memory was adorable, there is much more to their relationship, such as spending quality time with one another. They enjoy cooking dishes together (like pasta) when Arias gets off of work. For this Valentine's Day, they planned to watch a movie together and have a nice dinner. At the end of the day, it's clear they are each other's favorite person.

While every couple is different and unique, one thing is common between all, the endless love they have for each other. As all these wonderful couples are celebrating the holiday of love, this reminds us that it's not about the big gestures or picture-perfect memories. Sometimes it's the smallest things, and with the right person, any memory is beautiful. Valentine's day is a special day to celebrate with the one you love and the one who loves you.

Jam out to Centennial's  
Valentine's Playlist!



## Is Wicked: For Good Actually Any Good?

Zola Gargano  
Staff Writer



Photo from: Rotten Tomatoes  
The Wicked: For Good movie poster

Warning: This article contains spoilers for *Wicked: For Good*.

The long awaited sequel, *Wicked: For Good*, starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo was released on Nov. 21, 2025, with around 10 million people going to see it in U.S. and Canadian theatres on its opening weekend.

Despite all the excitement building up to its release, many people were left wondering if it was worth it to go see the film in theatres. Our Centennial students believe it is.

Centennial Senior Bella Hachani went to see *Wicked* the musical at the Hippodrome in Feb. 2020, and also saw the first *Wicked* movie when it came out last year.

"I thought that it did a pretty good job of sticking to the original story line of the, you know, musical," Hachani said, in regards to the first movie.

Hachani expected *Wicked: For Good* to be just as good as its predecessor, and went to see it opening weekend. And she was not disappointed, citing the well executed comedic relief when Elphaba and Glinda fought after Nessa was crushed by Dorothy's house.

"The first movie had really good parts of comedy, but the second act didn't really have as much, so I'm glad they kind of brought that back in."

Hachani also deeply enjoyed the ending scene of the movie, where Glinda and Elphaba are sitting in the grass, recreating the iconic original Broadway musical poster.

"The poster for the musical, I just love it so much. I remember being in New York when I was little and seeing it," she shared.

Senior Stella Snyder also watched *Wicked: For Good* during

opening weekend.

"I liked when all the animals were set free, that was really nice," she said. "I like animals, and they got to be happy."

The *Wicked: For Good* Official Soundtrack has also done wonders, surpassing one billion streams on Spotify in late 2025 alone.

Snyder's favorite song was *For Good*, when Elphaba and Glinda shared a heartfelt moment at the very end of the movie.

The sequel has not only done well in terms of music, but pop culture and social media too. Clips of Michelle Yeoh, who plays Madame Morrible, have gone viral.

"Madame Morrible MM, flip it around, Wicked Witch," is a phrase Yeoh has repeated during many interviews, and social media users have taken it and turned it into a meme.

While both seniors enjoyed the film, Hachani did have some criticism about its pacing.

"The movie felt a lot more rushed in some parts than the musical, and I thought that if I had been watching the movie as somebody who didn't know what was going to happen, I might have been a little bit confused as to what was going on."

But don't take Hachani and Snyder's word for it! Go watch *Wicked: For Good*, and decide if it's actually good for yourself.

## Saint "Nachlas" and the Winter Spectacular!

Calvin Lee  
Staff Writer

Among the holly halls and jolly spirits of the wintery season is a special occasion that occurs every December in the building of Centennial High School: The Winter Spectacular.

The Winter Spectacular is an opportunity for the school's performing arts groups to display the fun work done so far throughout the year. It is typically seen as a token of pride and a celebration of our school's band, orchestra, choir, dance, and the-



Photo by: Teju Reddi

Musical theatre takes the stage for their curtain call, concluding the show.

atre program, and this year was no different.

To the audience, the Spectacular is truly a spectacle to behold. Between the rush of color as dancers leaped across the stage, the melodies of song from string, brass, and voice, and the emphatic performances of the theatre, the stage flourishes with activity and energy. With a runtime of roughly one hour and forty minutes, the audience is allowed to appreciate the work put forth by the school's arts department.

Yet, unseen by the viewers, there is an abundance of work that takes place behind the scenes to ensure that the best show possible is put forth, both during in-school and out-of-school rehearsals. One of the main ways the arts program prepares for the show is through their dress rehearsal, which occurs the day before the opening performance. This is a time for the students as a collective to learn the final bowing routine, as well as a time to check lighting, audio, and transitions between performances.

For this year in particular, there was a small change in the preparation process with a new dance teacher, Haley Nachlas, taking the lead of the show. Typically, the dance instructor has played a pivotal role in not only ensuring the dance performances run smoothly, but also in choreographing the curtain call for the entire show, which is a very important task, one that Nachlas has met.

"The Winter showcase is truly a puzzle, bringing the departments together in such a beautiful way. Each Director has their job to make sure everything runs smoothly," Nachlas noted.

Given that the entire

Centennial arts department performs, it was imperative that it wasn't just the students that were unified, but the directors as well.

"For dance that mainly included our daily class rehearsals, after school rehearsals for our student choreographed pieces, staging, tech, costume design, flowers, and organizational tasks for dance. One of my favorite parts of the process was teaching bows to all students, during our dress rehearsal, when all programs were together as one."

It was a special experience for Nachlas in particular. Originally from Maryland, she moved to New York to study under leaders in the dance industry, concentrating on performance, pedagogy, and choreography in college. Afterwards, she traveled as a professional dancer and dance educator across the country. Now, she has brought her experience, and passion for dance here to Howard County, taking the lead of Centennial's dance program, becoming the newest addition to the collaborators that make the Winter Spectacular possible.

Along with her experience is an inspiration that fuels her teaching, this same intent is carried into her role in shaping the show.

"Living in New York for 10 years, I thought it would be special for my first show here to create a piece inspired by a place that has inspired me for so many years and built me as a professional dancer and educator. I cry a little every time I watch that piece."

The impact of the Spectacular is one that expands beyond the walls of the school and into the entire community. In line with the spirit of the holiday season, it is a chance for people to come together and enjoy art in the form of music, dance, and theatre.

"Every director has a vision, and every student is an artist. And as a newcomer to the community, it is so special to see all of the Fine Arts departments and their families come together to support each other. To me, it seems the showcase intends to celebrate the season and the hard work of the students."



Photo by: Teju Reddi

Members of Centennial's dance program perform their annual showing of *The Nutcracker*.

## Mid-Season Momentum: The Highs and Lows

**Blythe Zheng**  
Feature Editor

It's that time of year again, winter sports are in full swing. From our basketball teams to wrestling and indoor track and field, each team has been training hard for regular season matches and aiming ahead towards playoffs, hopeful to bring championships home. If you aren't a regular in the stands, here's Centennial's winter sports mid-season review.

Starting on the mat, the wrestling team, coached by Cliff Kraisser has seen individual success and team wide challenges. With an incomplete roster filling only nine out of the 14 weight classes, the team often starts matches with a point deficit, due to the forced forfeits. Despite some matches starting 0-30, Kraisser emphasized that the focus remains on growth.

Regular matches throughout the season serve as preparation, with the team aiming to peak at the county tournament.

"Our goal is to have everyone better at the end of February than they were in November," he said, noting that many wrestlers don't begin until high school.

Individually, wrestlers are making strong progress. Captain Grady Conrad is currently un-

Echoing Conrad, teammate Sophia Cortez highlighted the team's steady improvement.

Despite injuries and mental blocks, Cortez values growth over wins.

"As long as I know I got better, I'd be satisfied," Cortez explained.

All three hope that through work and grit, Centennial's wrestling team will make it to states once again.

Moving onto the court, boys and girls basketball teams, like the wrestling team, have had to face the issues of younger rosters and new roles.

On the boys' side, Senior Obi Agbim acknowledged that the season hasn't gone as hoped record-wise (2-8), but emphasized the importance of trust and accountability. "That's a very important part of a team," he noted.

Building off of this, Agbim hopes the team will finish the season stronger by working hard in practice and supporting each other when morale is low.

Head boys basketball coach Robert Slopek echoed similar sentiments, noting that injuries, sickness, and graduated key scorers have made this season different. With four sophomores playing significant varsity minutes, the team is very much on the younger side.

Struggling to adapt to a younger team than those of the past, they have focused more on improving each day rather than getting stuck on the wins and losses too much.

"We're digging in one day at a

on a positive note.

Now grab your spikes because indoor track and field has seen strong performances despite the challenges of winter training. Head coach Kevin McCoy said the season has gone according to plan, even with a canceled meet due to facility issues. However, it's no easy feat with these cancellations.

"It's difficult to reschedule indoor meets because we don't own the facility," McCoy explains. Meets down at the PG Sports and Learning Complex, and at the Armory and Ocean Breeze up in New York, are integral for track and field athletes as they serve as key qualifiers for regional and state meets.

Several runners have already stood out. Junior Natalie Bank recorded a personal record that earned her a third place finish at a recent meet and has already qualified for regionals in shot put. She continues to train, hoping regionals are a stepping stone that will get her to states.

Senior distance runner Jack Arrington shared optimism after strong county meet performances, highlighting Ian Doll's US No. 59 ranking in the two-mile and hopes of qualifying a 4x800 relay for nationals.

Whether you keep up daily with Centennial sports or not, it's no doubt that these teams have persevered through ups and downs: younger teams, new roles, regional qualifiers, wins and losses alike. With the winter sports season at its midpoint, so much can change but the one thing we all know is that there's much more to come.

## Track Attack!

### Eniya

**Headspeth**  
**Charles Sandersen**  
Sports Editor

Among all the winter sports at Centennial High School, senior captain and sprinter Eniya Headspeth has soared to new heights. A recent Towson University commit, Headspeth continued her senior season at the Howard County Indoor Track and Field Championships on Jan. 16, 2026, and after multiple standout performances, reminded everyone that success in track and field is measured by more than just winning.

While many students stayed inside for warmth throughout the brutal winter months, the Eagles track and field team practiced: lacing their spikes, packing their hand warmers, simply putting their heads down, and working. Headspeth's level of passion

and work ethic separates her from the field, balancing the physical and mental challenges of the season while continuing to push herself forward.

"To me, success means seeing the progress and hard work I've put in at practice come out onto the track during meets," Headspeth said. "It's always a good feeling to know that all the hard workouts we go through push us to become better."

Her definition of success was on full display at the County



Photo by: Tammy Chen  
Headspeth competing at the Howard County Championship

Championships. While competing in the 300-meter dash, Headspeth ran a personal record of 40.77 seconds, finishing second overall and earning the new No. 21 ranking in Maryland for that event. While she just narrowly missed first place, the moment still meant a lot to her.

"I haven't been having that good of a season," she said. "But at counties, I was able to finally get a personal record. Even though I was upset I didn't get first, I was happy to see improvement, especially this late into the season."

Headspeth's impact on the program extended beyond that second place finish. She placed third in the 55-meter dash with a time of 7.32 seconds. Alongside teammate Jada Franklin, Lauryn Crawford, and Jackie James, Headspeth was the anchor behind the 4x400-meter relay as well, with her team finishing in 4:05, a new Maryland No. 7 and National No. 57.

For Headspeth, however, those results only tell part of the story. When improvement felt slow earlier in the season, it was her teammates who kept her grounded and motivated.

"My teammates have been such an important part of my track career," she said. "Ever since freshman year, I've had people pushing me to be the best I could be. I honestly don't think I could have done it without them."

While Headspeth has immense gratitude for the team, her teammates also acclaim her strong leadership as team captain. Senior sprinter Peace Funso-Ore explains how, "She guides us as a unit on and off the track, she motivates her teammates, and always leads by example. I know when I'm having doubts about my race I can count on her to get me in the right mindset".

That sense of family has



Photo by: Kailtyn McManus  
Grady Conrad walks away after pinning his Atholton opponent.

defeated in county competition placing third at the Adam Janet Wrestling Tournament at Gilman School. Moving forward, Conrad has one goal in mind: winning states. Further, he highlights the limited experience of the team this year.

"We have a small and young team this year, which is common for wrestling, but a lot of wrestlers are making lots of progress and it's fun to see it happen," he said.

time," Slopek said, "Every game for us right now is big."

Similarly, on the girls' side, Junior Tatiana Machiz described a season of adjustment after losing many seniors. Their record is currently (3-7), and with a smaller lineup and less height, the team has had to find new strategies.

"It's been challenging, but it's helped us grow and work better together," Machiz emphasized. She hopes the team will continue to grind, trying to end the season

been reinforced daily by the coaching staff. Headspeth credited Head Coach Corey Eudell as a constant source of support in all aspects of her life.

"He's been my rock," she said. "He's helped me through injuries, mental health struggles, and has made me stronger as a person." She is also thankful for long-distance coach, Kevin McCoy, who, despite not working with her much directly, has supported her in her college decision and long term goals.

Before and after every practice, the team circles up and chants, "Eagles on three, family on six." For Headspeth, those words are more than tradition, but symbolize unity. "Track is such a mental sport," she said. "You can't build yourself up alone."

Headspeth emphasized that she will take that message with her as she continues through other aspects of her life. The importance of community and support will stay evident as she continues her athletic career at Towson University. Through her perseverance, leadership, and athleticism, she has redefined what it means to be successful, one personal record at a time.

She now packs her bags for the State Championship after qualifying during the 3A Regionals with a personal best time of 7.28 seconds, a new #34 in Maryland, where she looks to cement herself in Centennial history as one of the greats.

## Super Bowl LX

Aiden Lee  
Staff Writer

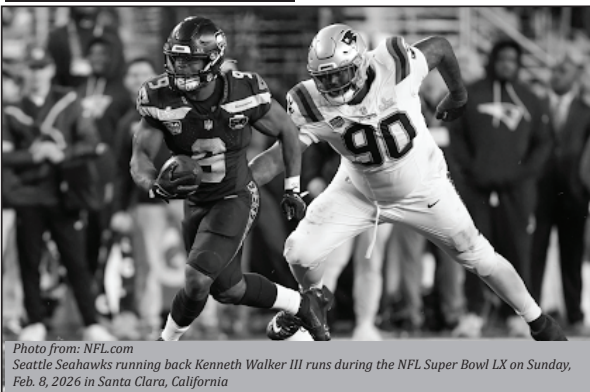


Photo from: NFL.com  
Seattle Seahawks running back Kenneth Walker III runs during the NFL Super Bowl LX on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026 in Santa Clara, California

On Feb. 8, 2026, over 70,000 fans from all corners of the country streamed into the stadium to watch as two teams each faced one last obstacle on the path to football immortality: each other.

New England was led by the young Drake Maye—selected in the 2024 NFL draft out of the University of North Carolina—coming off of an incredible regu-

lar season campaign that saw him finishing as the runner-up for the NFL MVP award. In Seattle's corner sat veteran arm Sam Darnold, the third pick in the 2018 NFL Draft by the New York Jets. A crucial preseason signing as a replacement for former quarterback Geno Smith, Darnold had been a great passer and leader during the Seahawks' march to the Super Bowl.

After an opening coin toss, New England kicker Andrés Borregales sent the ball into the endzone, and the game had begun. Seattle opened the game with a 10 yard rush by running back Kenneth Walker III, a second-round draft pick from 2022 out of Michigan State. The team leaned on him to carry more than his own, following a season-ending injury sustained by back-up Zach Charbonnet in the NFC Divisional Round playoff game.

A few plays later, Darnold connected with former Los Angeles Ram and Super Bowl LVI MVP Cooper Kupp for a 23 yard sideline catch that took Seattle into the red zone. Another key offseason signing for the Seahawks, an aging Kupp was brought in—not to be the primary target as he once was during his peak in Los Angeles—but to be a veteran presence and situational slot option for a talented Seattle offense.

After a successful start to the drive, Sam Darnold and the Seahawks were stopped short of the endzone and brought out veteran kicker Jason Myers for the 33-yard field goal try. Myers hadn't cooled off since his blazing regular season performance, where he scored a league-leading 171 points and didn't miss a

single extra point attempt. After a 34-yard try in Week 10 of the season, Myers passed Stephen Hauschka as the Seahawks record holder for field goals made. Sure enough, his kick from 33-yards out split the uprights, giving the Seahawks the first lead of Super Bowl LX.

New England fans hoped that quarterback Drake Maye would rebound after a subpar per-

formance in the AFC Championship game against what would be a tough Seattle defense. Dubbed "The Dark Side", the defensive unit was headed by key players such as NFL veteran Leonard Williams, second-year contributor Byron Murphy II, and three-time Pro Bowler Devon Witherspoon. The defense had proven to be impenetrable all season, and had been highly touted by some as one of the greatest defensive squads in NFL history. Play after play, Drake Maye and the New England offense struggled to handle the overwhelming shadow cast by Seattle's defensive might. With no other options, the Patriots ended the first half with five punts, and failed to score a single point.

Seattle faced a similar struggle in getting into the endzone, but Myers's leg ensured that they were consistently getting onto the scoreboard. They left the first half with three field goals, holding a 9-0 lead over New England. The Patriots went down the tunnel, and looked to reset and find a way to change their fate in the second half.

After halftime, New England set up to receive a kickoff from Myers. The halftime reset proved unsuccessful, however, as they opened up the new half with another three consecutive punts, followed by a Derick Hall-induced Drake Maye fumble on their last drive before the fourth quarter. With another field goal on the board, Seattle now held a 12-0 lead with 15 minutes standing between them and gridiron glory.

On the first drive of the fourth quarter, Sam Darnold connected with tight end AJ Barner for the first touchdown of Super Bowl LX. With a 19-0 lead and less than 14 minutes left on the clock, a trophy ceremony seemed imminent for Seattle.

With the ball back in the hands of New England, Maye connected with wide receiver Mack Hollins for a 35-yard touchdown pass, finally getting the Patriots on the scoreboard. Hope once again sprouted in the heart of New England fans, as they wondered if the two-possession deficit could be closed.

However, after a continued defensive effort by the "Dark Side" and a NFL record-setting 5th field goal by Myers, whatever hope left for the New England squad was shriveling quickly. Another touchdown pass from Maye to Rhamondre Stevenson left a little over two minutes left in the game, with Seattle holding the ball and a 29-13 lead. The Patriots defense forced a punt from Seattle, putting the ball in the hands of Drake Maye for one last

drive. However, despite a valiant New England effort, a sub-two minute clock with no remaining timeouts proved an impossible wall to climb, and the clock ran out after a 24-yard completion to TreVeyon Henderson.

Navy blue and lime green confetti filled the air, and yellow Gatorade poured onto Mike Macdonald as Patriot heads hung low. Both teams had worked their entire lives with this game in mind, and the victors celebrated accordingly. Seahawks running back Kenneth Walker III was awarded the honor of Super Bowl LX MVP for his 135 rushing yard performance, becoming the first running back to do so since Terrell Davis of the Broncos following Super Bowl XXXII.

## Recent News at Centennial

### Annual BSU Assembly



Photo By: Teju Reddi  
Anaya Alexander (left) and Tobi Viatonu (right) brought the spirit to the BSU assembly with their performance.

On Feb 20, 2026, Centennial had their annual Black Student Union (BSU) assembly, showcasing the representation for Black History Month. The assembly involved performances that brought the crowd to tears, along with poetry, a fashion show, dance, singing, and amazing student artwork. The assembly reached a new level of appreciation for the powerful message being sent out.

### Centennial Students Walk Out Against ICE



Photo by: Kaitlyn McManus  
Centennial students at the walkout.

Go to [chswingspan.com](http://chswingspan.com) to read the story.

# Crossword Puzzle

Created by: Sahil Prasad

Check us out at:



@wingspan.chs

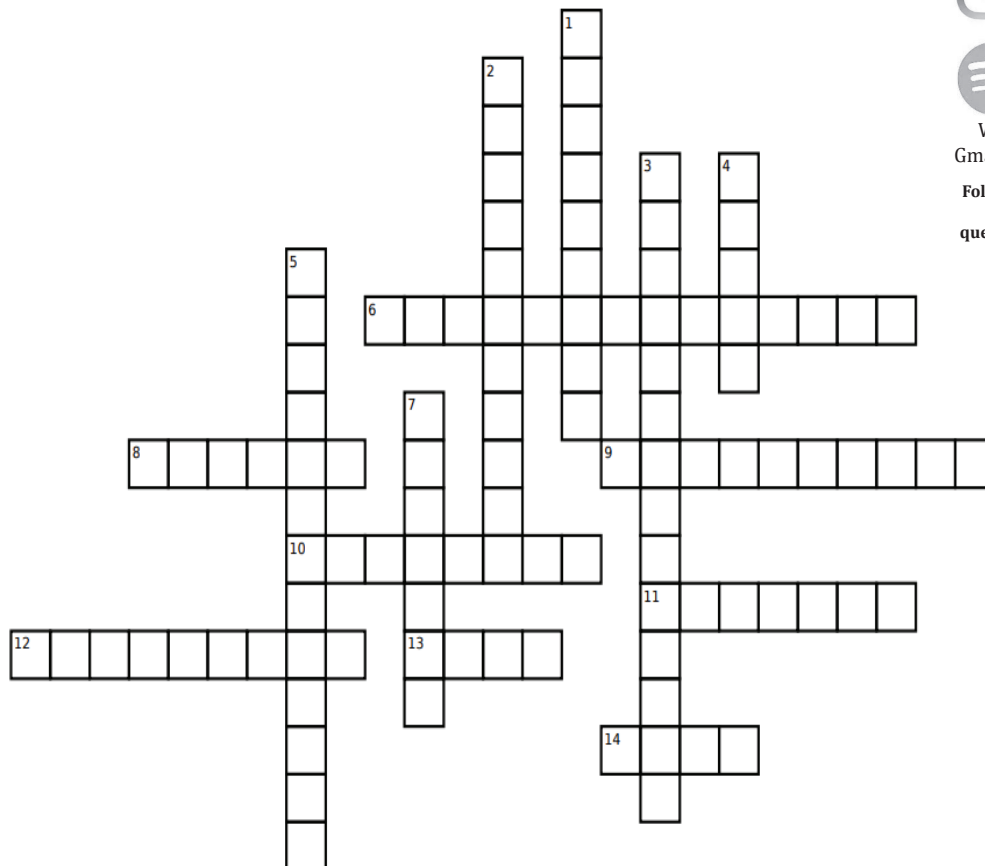


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**Down:**

1. Famous fashion company merged with its sister company vogue.com (no spaces).
2. Saint Nachlas and the Winter \_\_\_\_.
3. Club that launched the Holiday Thrift House (no spaces).
4. The winner of the Lip Sync battle!
5. Lead actors of Wicked: For Good (no spaces).
7. The winners of the 60th Superbowl

**Across:**

6. The show that has the characters Dustin, Will, Mike, and Lucas.
8. Organization whose marching band sponsored CHS for the Midwest Trip.
9. One of Alex Hobson's poems.
10. The goal of Worldfest is to celebrate all the \_\_\_\_ around the world!
11. Where the Midwest competition was held.
12. Grady Conrad is the captain of the \_\_\_\_ team.
13. Theme of Valentine's Day
14. The famous language teacher couple at Centennial High School

Check out the Wingspan website for answers:  
[chswingspan.com](http://chswingspan.com)

## From the Art Corner

