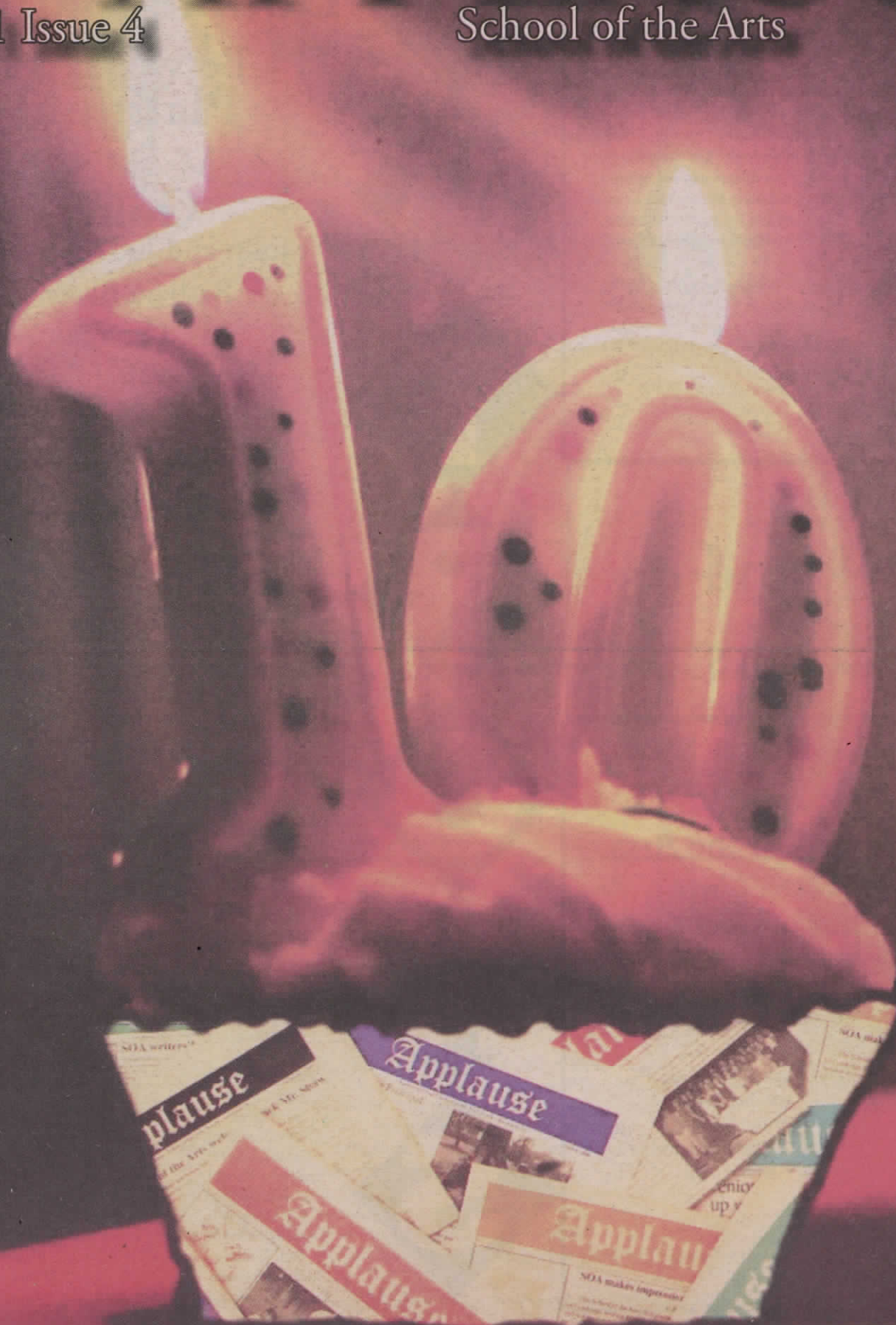


APPLAUSE

Vol. 11 Issue 4

School of the Arts

December 2009



Editor's Note



To say that this is a big issue for *Applause* would be quite an understatement. *Applause* is officially a decade old. I am honored and excited that I get to be the editor for this important issue, but this isn't just an important time for the paper, it is an incredibly important moment for the entire school.

It is strange and kind of heartbreaking that this is the last editor's letter I will be typing in the old building. It's also incredibly strange that I just referred to the place that I have had the immense pleasure to call my school as "the old building." When I began my senior year, I wasn't expecting to say goodbye to anything until graduation, but I'm finding myself having to do that now. I am incredibly excited about the opening of the new campus and the opportunity to see my school head in a new direction, but it is very sad to say goodbye to the place that has been my home for almost seven years. A great deal of jokes are made about our dilapidated old campus with the flooding and the hodge podge of trailers, but underneath all the jokes I know that I can say I have found a great deal of charm in this campus. Despite the flooding and the many challenges that the campus has brought, this campus represents the place where students' uniqueness, creativity, and imagination have been accepted and nurtured since 1995.

I am privileged to be one of the first students to be a part of School of the Arts' bright new future, but it is not without a great deal of sadness that I say goodbye to SOA's humble beginnings.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and congratulations to School of the Arts for making it to this monumental occasion.

- K. Chaney Long

Cover art by
**Alek Mihok and
Caroline Rogers**

Applause
the official student publication
Charleston County School of the Arts

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Former *Applause* editors reflect

Ben Forney 2004-2005

I was co-editor of the *Applause* during the 2004-2005 school year. I must admit that time has clouded my memories of those joyous days like a swarm of flies on a stack of uncooked burgers. It wasn't always easy, I recall, what with the inconsistent cooperation of



the computers and the ever-present threat of Dr. Cusatis running out of coffee. But we somehow managed, nay, thrived in that high pressure environment and went on to

Lucy Hunter 2006-2008

Since graduating in 2008, I've continued pursuing my interests from high school: journalism and creative writing. I'm in my sophomore year at Barnard College, the all-women's undergraduate school of Columbia

University. I work in the copy staff at the *Spectator*, the University's daily newspaper. Editing a daily publication is as exciting as it is stressful (I'm often up until 5 a.m.)!

Last semester I received an independent study grant to expand my senior thesis project from SOA. I'll begin working next semester with a



creative writing professor at Barnard and an oral histories professor at Columbia. This summer, I'll live in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and conduct video interviews with elderly people who remember the Bethlehem Steel Mill in

produce some of the finest journalism south of the Mason-Dixon line. I was quite proud of the paper, and I'm sure under Dr. Cusatis' helpful guidance, the *Applause* is even better today.

Since graduating from SOA, I spent four years at the University of South Carolina as an English major, and I'm now living in South Korea as a Fulbright grantee, teaching English. Life is pretty great here, and I owe it, in part, to the good ole' *Applause*.

its prime. These "oral histories" will help me develop the setting of my novel and document a historical period that interests me.

While schoolwork takes up the bulk of my time, I love going out and about in New York City. I live on-campus in Harlem, but most of my friends live in downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn, which (unfortunately) takes a half-hour trek. I've also developed a passion for dancing—I take about 10 hours of ballet classes per week.

I'm grateful to my teachers at SOA for preparing me well for Barnard. I entered with a solid academic foundation that made the transition to collegiate work go smoothly. I encourage students to take advantage of the outstanding faculty!

Cait Brennan 2005-2006

It is so hard for me to believe that enough time has passed for me to be featured in one of the "Where are they now?" articles. Time passes like warp speed, back to the future kind of fast after high school. I feel like I was just editing one of these myself. I can picture it clear as a bell. I'm sitting behind one of those huge, old, super-slow computer screens, just tip-tapping away. Layouts, interviews, the smell of Dr. Cusatis's many cups of coffee—it was all just a day in the life of an *Applause* editor. I was so immersed in the newspaper at SOA that it made me think that journalism might be the path for me. However, I came to find



that my brain was much too unorganized for all that. Which, fortunately, is considered an advantage in both the art world and the city in which I now reside: San Francisco, California. I am currently a student at the Academy of Art University where I study illustration with a focus in bookmaking. Other than the fact that people make fun of me for saying "y'all" here, it is a pretty amazing place. There is no way I would have ended up here if not for SOA, though. Seriously, if I had stayed at James Island High School who knows where I would be...in a gang perhaps, or maybe on a cheerleading squad somewhere? Thank you SOA, thank you.

Liz Gildea staff 2005-2008

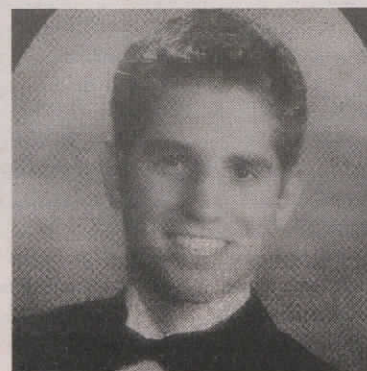
I am currently a sophomore at Northeastern University in Boston studying linguistics. Throughout the three years I spent on the *Applause* staff, I grew both personally and as a writer. Conducting interviews and research for articles led me to overcome my profound shyness for the sake of doing the best work I could for the newspaper. And having been a creative writing major for four of my five years at SOA, it helped me to branch out to other genres

and probably influenced my decision to study linguistics in college. The best part of being an *Applause* staff member, however, was the solidarity among the staff members and the feeling that I was part of something that made a difference to our school. I felt it gave us a sort of bird's-eye view of SOA and its goings-on, so that I was in a position to explore so much about the character of our school and its members that I wouldn't have been privy to otherwise.



Cody Palmer 2003-2004

Looking back at the seven years I spent at SOA I cannot believe it has been almost seven years since I graduated. The teachers and staff there are, without a doubt, one of a kind and definitely have a passion for what they do. SOA allowed me to get involved with the student newspaper which was a great experience. Congratulations to Dr.



Cusatis for gettin' it done 10 years in row. After graduating from SOA in 2003 I attended Clemson University where I studied Business and Psychology. I graduated Clemson in 2007 and have since started a career in Specialty Pharmaceutical Sales with plans of entering law school in the next few years.

The history of Applause

The student run school newspaper is officially a decade old this month

By K. Chaney Long

For ten years, *Applause* has been a monthly constant for SOA. The first issue came out in December of 1999, and since then *Applause* has transformed from a more traditional newspaper, into a sixteen page, color newsprint magazine. The evidence of *Applause's* change is most prominent on the paper's covers throughout the years. When *Applause* began it was a black and white publication, and was released free with the promise that the following issues would be available for twenty five cents. With the exception of spot color on the paper's first

page, the newspaper remained in its original style until January of 2002 when *Applause* began to resemble the magazine format that it uses today. The January 2002 paper was the first of *Applause's* biannual SOA musical issues, and that year SOA was gearing up to perform Peter Pan at the North Charleston Performing Arts Center. Since then, *Applause's* covers have usually reflected the interest of its editors or staff members.

Some of the most colorful and memorable covers can be found from the 2005; 2006 school year. That year, staff writer Omi Naderi was in charge of graphics and his hard work is evident in the vibrant covers that he created. The year *Applause's* covers featured seventh graders traveling through another dimension for Art Smart, Mr. Kerr dominating the universe in honor of his AP music theory class being named number one in the world, Dr. Cusatis as an internet obsessed *Applause* fanatic for a story about the Myspace phenomenon, and the bizarre inner thoughts of Mr. Brehm and Mr. Smyth for an article on Psychology class at SOA. When Lucy Hunter took over as editor in 2007, she abolished the Old English style mast head, and featured the work of a visual artist on each cover. When I took over last year I opted to use visual artist Kenish Magwood's colorful and cartoonish drawings for the cover. Her art was featured on

most of last year's cover, with the exception of the December issue. I might have had forgotten

to ask Kenish about a cover that month, because I realized, the day the paper was due, that the issue had everything except a cover. The cover of the December 2008 issue has a picture of staff member Alek Mihok beaming behind a poinsettia. This is because I handed him a camera and said, "Here, go take a picture of something." Dr. Cusatis quickly picked up a random poinsettia and said, "Use this in the picture! It'll be Christmasy." I would

like to say that this sort of last minute work is abnormal, but I think the hectic up to the deadline energy has always been a part of our history.

The covers haven't been the only thing to change in the last ten years. Many people flip to the back of *Applause* to read the comical and often ridiculous horoscopes, but many don't know that for four years the horoscopes had many serious messages like, "Where something important has been lost, something else important has been found." Now, though the horoscopes do occasionally give someone something to think about, they're usually there to tickle the funny bone instead of the soul.

Despite the changes, there has been one constant throughout the paper's history. That constant has been journalism advisor Dr. Cusatis. I can say with certainty that being the editor of the newspaper would be a completely different experience without Dr. Cusatis. He is the driving force behind the paper that invokes both fear that he'll smite you for not working hard enough, and a sense of admiration. He took some time to sit down and tell us about the busy history of *Applause*.

Why did you want to begin a school newspaper, and how did you become the advisor?

Mrs. Myers hired me to teach senior English, but there were no seniors yet, so I was

assigned a variety of other classes and actually worked in the media center for a little while. There was a journalism class taught by another teacher, whom I started to help out and, after about a month, I took over. I had taught journalism at St. John's High School and started their newspaper *Islander Pride*. Mrs. Myers wanted a newsletter that would go out to the community. The first issue was printed in October 1999 on copier paper and was called *Artifacts*. I found out later that there was an art journal named *Artifacts*. *Applause* was one of the names the new yearbook had discarded from a list of possible titles for their publication. We salvaged it and in December we published our first issue of *Applause* that was more specifically aimed at the student body. I knew it would be a privilege to run a newspaper at a school of our caliber, and it has been.

What were the working conditions when Applause first began?

I was teaching out of what is now Ms. Miller's little guidance office. We had five female staff members. We had one computer for student use and we managed fine because all five staff members were reliable. It may not be fashionable to say so, but females, in my experience, are better organized, more attentive, and more reliable when it comes to putting together a high school newspaper. Of course there have been exceptions.

Also, we went from over nighting floppy discs, to using zip discs, to flash drives, to finally uploading the paper to the printer's server. I can't tell you how many trips I've made to Georgetown to deliver last minute files or pick up last minute papers. *What have the biggest challenges been about being the advisor of Applause?*

Training students to be self-motivated, which begins with training them to do what they are told. I don't believe in the distinction between school and the real world – for students or teachers. Learning is a very real, life-long process, but in journalism it is more obvious be-

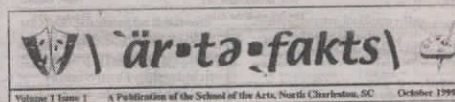
cause the publication of the newspaper provides instant accountability. A school environment is one of the biggest obstacles to learning. The students who can see beyond the walls of the school do the best. Of course, it's challenging to get a respectable paper published every month, find advertisers, and see that kids are learning from issue to issue. But when students become self-motivated these things occur on their own. *Overall, what have you been most proud of regarding Applause?*

This is our eighty-third issue is ten years, and that's not a bad average. But I'm proud that this is all the result of hard work from students. The graduation issues are 48 pages and would be longer if the printer could handle it. The staff has also produced special issues for every musical and every Art Smart. I cannot recall a time when they did not crackdown to meet a

pressing deadline. This type of reliability is gratifying. And they press on even when their work goes unrecognized. I'm especially proud of them when they are acknowledged positively by readers. Mr. Davis always made a point to read every word of every issue and then stop by with encouraging words for the staff. Occasionally he asked for old issues just to walk down memory lane. We have nearly every back issue, and it's quite an archive. *What would you like to see happen or improve in the paper's future?*

It's never as good as it could be. I'd like to see more interviews with

great professional artists, as we have in this issue. I'd also like to feature more work and profiles on our own artists. And we could always do better seeking out the great stories that exist among our own student body and staff. I'm hoping that the new facility will help our vision match the product more closely. Having fewer limits, particularly with technology, will help. I wish we could get around Bess more easily. She makes a journalist's work even tougher. And I'd like to see a few additional motivated writers join the staff next year.



Volume 1 Issue 1 A Publication of the School of the Arts, North Charleston, SC October 1999

Mrs. Yatsco chosen as CCSD "Teacher of the Year" finalist

Earlier this school year Mrs. Cathy Yatsco, sixth grade English teacher, was elected 1999 "Teacher of the Year" finalist. SOA honored her as "Teacher of the Year" soon after. SOA honored that Charleston County School District has chosen her as one of the top ten teachers in the entire county. More recently, CCSD announced its top five finalists for "Teacher of the Year." Among this exclusive list of great teachers is included our own Mrs. Cathy Yatsco. The five finalists will be honored at a Program and Reception on October 21, 1999 from 6 PM until 8 PM at the Embassy Suites Hotel. The Teacher of the Year and State Nominee to represent CCSD will be announced at this time.

Mrs. Yatsco has had a colorful teaching career which has taken her to Alaska, Wyoming, New Mexico, Liberia, West Africa and Louisiana before she settled in South Carolina. While in South Pa. she taught at a Native American school, and in Africa she taught English as a second language. According to her, "I don't think I've ever had a bad teaching assignment. Everything has been fun, exciting, and rewarding."

Mrs. Yatsco received her BA from the University of Maryland, and an MA in multicultural studies from the University of New Mexico. "I always wanted to be a teacher," she says. "I used to lie on my stomach in chairs and I'd read to them." She says she was attracted to SOA because of the reputation it obtained in it began. She just knew this would be a "happy place," she adds.

Mrs. Yatsco has been married for 36 years. Her husband Jim is a retired pharmacist. She has three children, who are "beginning to tell grandchildren themselves."

Mrs. Yatsco, who is entering her second year, a work about Native Americans, says she looks forward to continuing to grow as a teacher. "Teaching isn't about books," she says. "It's about people and their relationships with each other."

Congratulations, Mrs. Yatsco! The students and staff at the School of the Arts are certainly proud of your achievement.

A Word from our Principal

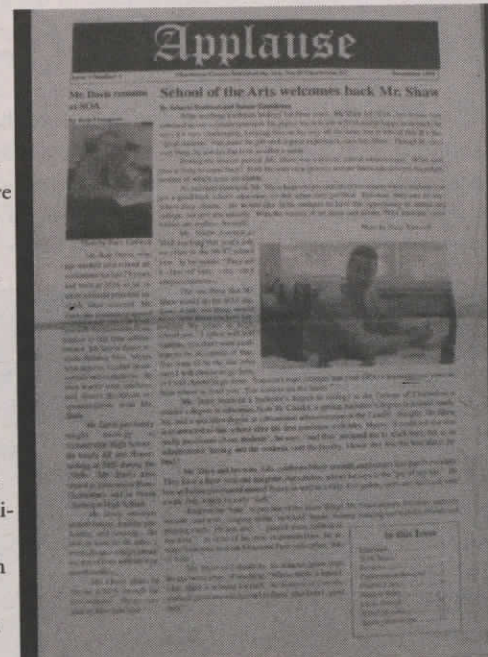
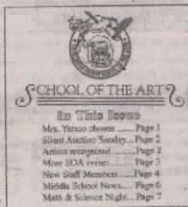
Dear Parents,

We have had an excellent beginning of this school year with only a few minor concerns to work out. As we wait for the listing process to be completed in hiring on a new assistant principal, we are most grateful to have Mr. Roy Davis, retired principal of Elizabethtown, working with us. His knowledge and experience are proven assets to us everyday. I am very grateful to him for his willingness to help us out during this interim period.

Our students have settled into their schedules, and I look forward to the year with this excellent faculty.

I also look forward to hearing from you and working with you and our students for a most successful year – the beginning of a new millennium.

Sincerely,
Rose Marie Myers
Principal

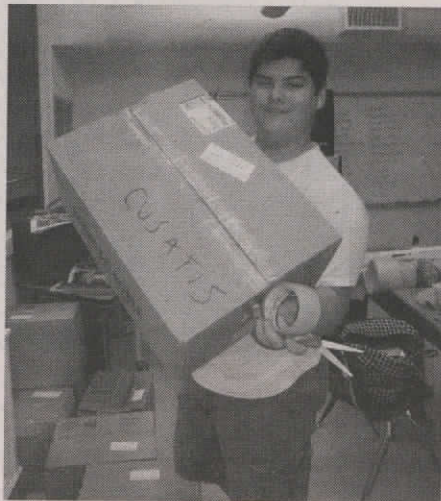


The first issue of Applause

Box 'em up and move 'em out.

By Tori Roy

The lurking elephant in the back of all our thoughts regarding this January is moving steadily nearer as the school weeks go by. Teachers and students alike are becoming more and more concerned with getting the entire SOA family uprooted and marched across the street. The majority of teachers who have the most to worry about are taking the project in stride, Mr. Orvin "fears nothing" in the task of moving his ever crowded room of planes, armor, and Zen masterpieces, and Mr. Donnellon is more worried about "remembering to drive to the right campus everyday" than the move itself. Mr. Orvin stated, "I have already begun



Sophomore Zach Donaldson packs for the arts so far, is the Visual Arts room. Getting the large supply of random treasures and art work, while sifting through the collection that has massed itself over the years, has been more than enough trouble for them all.

"Box 'em up, move 'em out, put the freshmen class to work." The History Department as a whole shouldn't be expecting any more than "Broken wings and things." The Science Department, busy packing, is eager

to box up and ship out with the promise of new, improved equipment and facilities for better Chemistry labs.

As for the Arts teachers, they certainly have their work cut out for them, getting all the chairs, trophies, instruments and supplies to the new building has, even since October, given teachers and students plenty to pack, organize and ship out.

The biggest concern for the arts so far, is the Visual Arts room. Getting the large supply of random treasures and art work, while sifting through the collection that has massed itself over the years, has been more than enough trouble for them all.

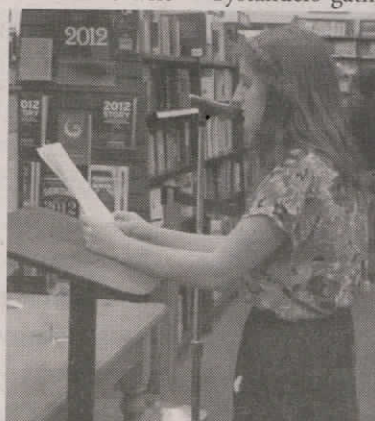
In general, Students and teachers are taking the colossal mission with confidence, and the knowledge that together we can get this taken care of with no difficulty.

Creative writers read at Word Fest

By Samantha Dahabi and Haley Dixon

On November 21, students, parents and supporters of SOA's creative writing department gathered at the Mount Pleasant Barnes and Noble to participate in "Word Fest." At the event creative writing students presents excerpts of their writing.

"Creative writing doesn't have boosters, Word Fest is a good way to raise money for retreat scholarships, classroom supplies and other departmental needs," said Mr. Hammes. Word Fest helped to raise over five hundred dollars for the creative writing department. "It's a wonderful opportunity to show the caliber of writing that SOA is producing."



Junior Becca Forman at Word Fest

Mr. Hammes said. A crowd of parents and bystanders gathered to show their support.

"It was the biggest turnout I could recall," said sophomore, Jacob Elsey, who read from his script "New York Love." Sophomore, Savannah Miller, said, "It was a lot more fun because we did scripts and acted out in front of the parents." Senior, Deborah Crocker, read from her untitled novel. Deborah was pleased with the overall turn out of the event. "Our teachers were interested in what we were doing and told us that they would check out our book if they were published," she said.

AMHS on the impending move

By Shaless Robinson

We all know how we feel about combining, but how does our other half feel? Academic Magnet is no stranger to campus moves. The school began as a program at Burke High School in 1988. There they quickly became a "unique school inside of Burke," and soon felt the need to spread out and become their own school. In 1994 they made the transition to their current campus where the first graduating class had only fifty students. From their humble beginnings, AMHS has continued to grow and become one of the best high schools in the country.

Keegan Shelton, a senior at Magnet, said when he first arrived the school was like a close knit family, and he had "never been to a place so diverse and so accepting." Keegan seems to have a great deal of pride in his school, but now feels that some of that tight knitted acceptance has been diminishing since Magnet increasingly becomes more and more nationally recognized. He feels more people have

arrived at the school and have and "brought the world".

Keegan conducted a survey of several juniors and sophomores at AMHS and claims that students feel it will be weird at first to share a campus with another school that you never see, but they also hope to meet new people. Like many SOA students, one of their major concerns about the move is a loss of identity. It appears that students at both schools are at the consensus that, though change is inventible, the schools must remain completely separate schools. Fortunately for all involved, AMHS and SOA will continue to remain completely separate. Despite not wanting the schools to merge, some AMHS students are excited about being in such close proximity to us, and feel that our art will be a plus to the new campus. Some look forward to seeing the senior walls.

It seems that many AMHS students are facing the impending move with a sense of excitement and optimism.

SOA is ranked #2 in South Carolina

By Samantha Dahabi

On December 10, 2009, U.S. News & World Report—in collaboration with School Evaluation Services, a data research and analysis business, awarded SOA a silver medal. Data was collected from 21,786 public high schools in 48 states plus the District of Columbia. Rank was determined on three levels: the school's ability to serve their students, use of state-wide standards to set benchmarks and test performance. The analysis took into account factors such as poverty-adjusted performance, college readiness, minority enrollment and disadvantaged student enrollment. Top schools

were placed into gold, silver, bronze, or honorable mention categories. Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia has been recognized as the best school in the nation for the third consecutive year. Designed specifically to

challenge students, courses offered at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology include DNA science, neurobiology and quantum physics. SOA was ranked



SOA as second in the state. SOA was recognized as one of the top 200 schools in the nation. Academic Magnet was the only school in the state to be awarded gold. Magnet was ranked first in the state and twelfth out the one hundred best high schools. Garret School of Technology was the only other high school in Charleston County to be recognized.

Nineteen other South Carolina high schools received bronze metals. "This is a great way to close out business before the holiday and prepare for a great start at our new campus," remarks Mr. Reinhart. In the fall of 2010, South Carolina's top schools will share a campus.

THE 3D'S

What makes SOA, SOA?

By David Sass

By David Sass

"The 3D's" column was started in the September 2004 issue of the sixth volume of the *Applause*, by staff member Kathleen Smith. In honor of *Applause's* tenth anniversary, we've brought it back for this issue.



Mr. Dawson

David Sass: What are you looking forward to about the new school?

Mr. Dawson: I'm really looking forward to being in an all new building, and especially not having to go out in the rain early in the morning to take the chains off all the trailers. That's a big thing for me: no more trailers. Also, I'm glad because there is going to be one key that fits all, so no more big ring of keys.

Ms. Darlene

David Sass: Having been here since the school opened fourteen years ago, what are you going to miss the most about this school?

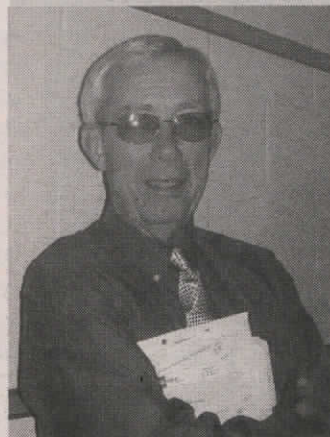
Ms. Darlene: I think what I'll miss most is being able to hear the kids going up and down the halls and getting to see them in the morning, because the cafeteria is in a separate building at the new school. I'm definitely not going to miss this old kitchen, though.



Mr. Davis

David Sass: As a longtime supporter of the *Applause*, what are some of your favorite features?

Mr. Davis: I really just loved them all. I guess I would say that I enjoyed the Point/Counterpoint most of all because it showed the students of the school displaying their individual opinions. My favorite issues of the *Applause* were the two where I was Santa Claus on the front cover. But I loved seeing the talents and intellects of the students shown in every issue.



In 1995, the Charleston County School of the Arts opened its doors to the first students of Charleston's premier arts magnet school. Rose Maree Myers, the school's founder and its principal for twelve years, had a dream

to encourage the growth and appreciation of the arts in the minds of artistically-gifted children and to help those children employ their talents in the future. Since opening, the school has expanded from a meager 200 students to over 1,000, and Mrs. Myers's dream was quickly fulfilled.

But what exactly is that special quality that makes SOA the school it is? For Chris Mears, senior Vocal major, and Seth Zimmerman, senior Piano major, both of whom have been here since sixth grade, it's the people. "The warmth and overall friendliness of the students and faculty is what makes it so great," stated Chris. Seth's response was by far more vocal. "I love the people!" he yelled and beat his chest with caveman enthusiasm.

Karl Heitman, a junior Vocal major who transferred here this year all the way from Detroit, was astounded by the differences he found. "It's much smaller than my old school, which had about 8,000 students, but it's also a lot more focused. Everyone here seems to have a general goal in mind, and the faculty is really friendly and seems to



help everyone achieve his goals."

More than anything, though, he commented on how great it felt not having to slog through heavy snow banks to get from class to class.

Junior Aubrey Moore came here in sixth grade for Creative Writing, but left for Wando High School after her freshman year. "I went to Wando because I was looking for the traditional high school experience that you see in movies." However, she returned to SOA following her sophomore year. "I wasn't comfortable there. I was the weird kid and the poetry girl. I missed the freedoms offered at [SOA]. I wanted to come back and write and have a place that felt safe," she commented about her return.

For some students, it's the people that make SOA such a special place; for others, it's the atmosphere that surrounds the school and freedoms offered. And for a select few, it's the distinct lack of freezing slush getting in your boots. But no matter what it is that they love most about the school, they all agree that SOA certainly is a unique place to be. "It's just so great here that I have a hard time imagining being anywhere else," remarked Seth.

Creative writing teacher Mr. Scapellato talks about writing and Pat Conroy

By Jon Hart

What made you choose SOA?

SOA kind of chose me, actually. The person who was here before me had to leave in the middle of the previous school year. I had left teaching entirely, but when I heard that she was leaving, that it was a part-time position, and since I knew Ms. Miles, I thought, "Let's see what is going on here." Once I was interviewed and saw the school, I knew this is where I wanted to be. *Where did you grow up?*

I grew up in Atlanta. I lived there for 20 years. I went to school in Greenville, SC, at Furman. I have lived here almost 20 years.

What degree or degrees did you get at Furman?

I did my undergraduate work there and then I got my Master's Degree in Tennessee at a place called Austin Peay. *How long have you been writing and when did you start writing professionally? What made you want to become a writer?*

I enjoyed writing in High School, but I got serious about it in college. I've gotten published in the last 12 years, or so, but I wouldn't consider myself a professional writer. I kept reading books when I was younger, and when you read something that really connects with you,

resonates with you, you think, "I want to do this." Especially when I would read books in college and right out of college, and then when I got to meet some of these people, you catch a fire. The works inspire you and then they as people inspire you.

Who are some of your favorite writers and what are some of your favorite books?

I am a big fan of several Low Country writers. Pat Conroy is one of my favorites, but then I really enjoy John Irving's work, I like what Loly Land is doing now; this could be a long list but those were a couple of them.

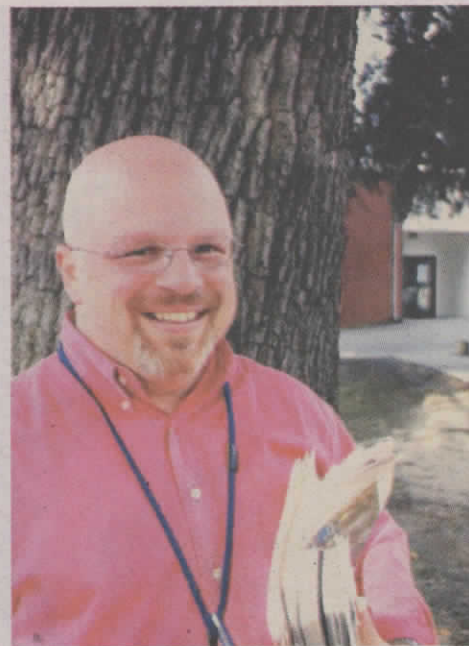
What is your working relationship/friendship with Pat Conroy?

I've known Pat Conroy now for 17 years. I wrote a fan letter to him while I was still in college. He called me, so we talked. Then I started to see him periodically in book tours. He knew that I wanted to publish a novel. With this last book, I would talk to him about some of the Charleston history and such. I talk to him and see him fairly regularly. He has been an unofficial mentor for me.

What are you working on now?

I've been working on a story for a little while now, but it is on hold since I

am going to Law School at night. I actually completed three different manuscripts that I submitted to an agent, who is shopping around NY [for a publicist]. It is miserable for fiction right now. So I thought this is a



Creative writing teacher Mr. Scapellato

good time to do some other things. It is a Charleston book. I had this idea a number of years ago. It was too ambitious for my skills at the time, so I have now come back to it. It is about a man who was kicked out of his house by his wife for his infidelities. He has come back to Charleston, to be with his dad, who is not doing so well. In the course of that he runs into a girl that he used to be completely involved with in High School, so that throws a monkey wrench into the mix.

In a previous issue of Applause, you gave advice to young writers to "quit if you can." Would you like to expand on that?

It sounds counter intuitive because I teach people how to write, but to do it for a living is just a miserable prospect. I think there are fewer than 30 writers who make a living off of writing. In other words, it is their sole source of income, it supports their entire family. Very few people can do it. It just doesn't pay very well. The idea is that the only people who can really do that are the people who can't quit. It really has to become so endemic to who you are that quitting is analogous to quitting breathing. That is what I meant by that, and I am being a little facetious when I say that.

Creative writers find inspiration at Lake Logan writing retreat

By Wes Snell

Junior and senior Creative Writing students found inspiration in Appalachia this past month while on a writing retreat organized by teachers **Rene Miles**, **Sean Scapellato**, and **Rutledge Hammes**. Over the course of the three days in October students participated in workshops on character development, establishing a clear voice and tone, and methods of overcoming writer's block at the Lake Logan Episcopal Center in Canton, North Carolina.

Seniors read excerpts from their theses, a one hundred page work written in the genre of their choice, and received feedback from both students and teachers. "It was a really enriching experience," said junior **Rebecca Forman**, "I feel prepared to take on the challenge that is senior thesis next year." Rene Miles, who has organized the trip every year, explained the rationale of such excursions, "Who would think that a bunch of 16 to 18 year old kids sitting around talking about writing and reading could have fun in the pro-

cess? But they do. This trip is about getting



Creative writers Christina Crossley and Aubrey Moore at Lake Logan

out of the classroom, away from cell phones and computers, about becoming unplugged. I'm trying to build a community of readers and writers, and this trip really helps kids focus on their passion in the midst of like-minded peers."

Students also hiked trails through the mountains, roasted marshmallows over a bonfire, and participated in the Hidden Desire Talent Show, a Lake Logan tradition. From playing guitar to singing, a fashion show to a hilarious satirical news broadcast by the teachers, the class let themselves go for a night of fun and laughs after

days packed with serious self-analysis and workshops. "My favorite part was the eggs," said senior **David Sass**. He's not alone. The

food provided by the retreat center was incredible. Overall, the trip gave students a haven in the mountains to carve out their artistic niches, a place for writers to display their writing to their peers and receive respectful and credible feedback. It



Lake Logan

certainly helped me forge more defined ideas for my thesis. Seniors will publish their theses in April and host a public literary reading in May.

Founding principal Mrs. Rose Maree Myers discusses the origins of SOA

By K. Chaney Long

After graduating from Winthrop University with a fine arts degree and embarking on an acting career with the historic Barter Theater in Abingdon, Virginia, Mrs. Rose Maree Myers decided to enter the

that out of her vision would grow two of the states finest schools, Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary and The Charleston County School of the Arts, which last week was named the second best public school

and he said 'You're definitely the person for the job. So I was named principal.'

After being put in charge of the new school, Mrs. Myers still had a many challenges ahead. One of the largest was explaining to parents the nature of the new school. "We had a number of meetings throughout the district, and I told them what the school was going to be, and it would be a place for students to learn regardless of how they learn. And learning would be fun. After all, why shouldn't it be?" Parents soon became excited about the idea, and they began to quickly enroll their children. Once it got started, the school became so successful that, "mothers who found out they were pregnant would put their unnamed babies on the list." The waiting list extended beyond 1,200. Soon Ashley River became an international model for schools seeking to integrate the arts, with educators visiting from as far as Japan to check it out. In no time

in the North Charleston Elementary School for an office. There Mrs. Myers and a secretary began to create what would become Charleston County School of the Arts. She obtained a former vocational school for the campus. This would be what is now the fine arts building and the block building. "We moved in, we set up shop, and we started." The Berry building did not become a part of SOA for several years, and the process of converting the old buildings was an incredible challenge. The current dance room was an engine repair room that was not immediately handed over. Mrs. Myers saw the need for a sprung dance floor. The workers looked at her as if she were crazy when she suggested it. "But I wanted it, and it came, and they put it together," she explained. What is now Mrs. Link's theatre room in the block building became the dance studio. Mrs. Colquitt's room was the visual arts room, and what is now Mrs. Marks' office was the front office. Mrs. Myers seemed to have a good humored attitude towards



Applause editor K. Chaney Long and SOA founding principal, Mrs. Rose Maree Myers

education field. Maintaining her passion for the arts, Mrs. Myers taught English for a while before becoming an art teacher. It was during this time that she realized that integrating the arts with academics could help students perform better in all areas of education. "I began to realize that we were missing an opportunity for different kinds of learning. The visual learner, the tactile learner, they weren't getting it." She began to use an artistic approach to engage third graders who were struggling with fractions. "My idea was to use kaleidoscopes. Everybody had a pie pan, and we cut out the circle, folded it until we had eight, and made the design. We colored them in these beautiful colors. They were so pleased and proud, but in the process of doing that, they very clearly knew what half was, what a third was. So the problem was solved, and in a fun way." Little did Mrs. Myers know,

in the state academically by U.S. News & World Report— and that is a minor footnote to our school's unparalleled excellence in the arts.

Mrs. Myers eventually moved on from teaching and became the vice principal at Goodwin Elementary School. It was around this time that opportunity came knocking. When the county decided to attempt to create an arts magnet in the old, run-down Wallace Elementary School in West Ashley, Mrs. Myers' fine arts background and theater experience equipped her well to lead such a school. With encouragement from her principal, Mrs. Myers interviewed for the position. "The superintendent and I became so engrossed in planning the school, and talking about what it would be, that we lost sight of the interview. We had just gotten totally carried away. I realized it was time to do something here,

it had earned a Blue Ribbon Award, the Varner Award, and recognitions from both the Kennedy Center and the National Endowment for the Arts. Mrs. Myers was in demand as a consultant, visiting forty-three states to share her expertise.

After ten years as principal at Ashley River, Mrs. Myers, with the encouragement of former school board chair Robert New, began to focus on the prospect of creating a secondary arts school in Charleston County. She was given a "little dungeon of a room" located



Mrs. Myers in the former dance studio

Continued on Pg. 12



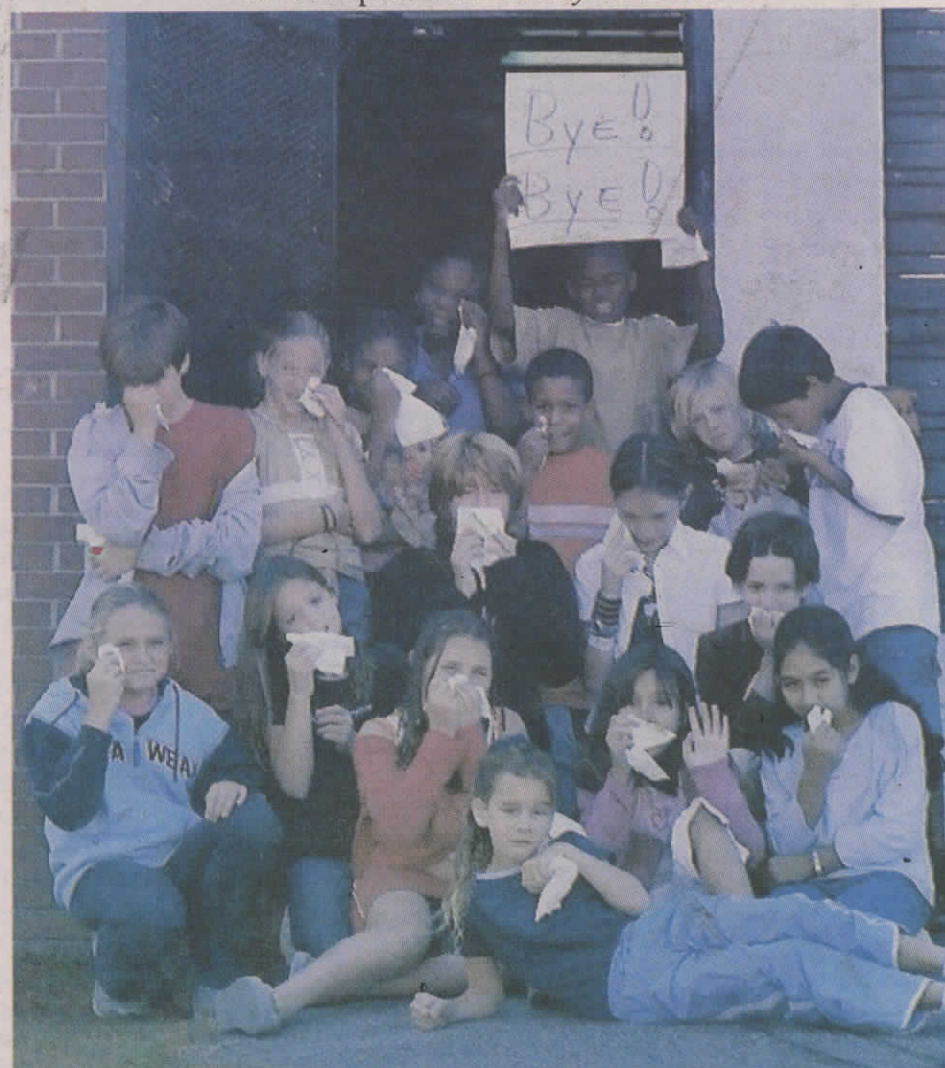
A theatre production of *Comedy of Errors*



The SOA production of *Guys and Dolls*



The seniors share their medieval projects when they were 6th graders



The senior theatre class when they were 6th graders

SOA Reflections

The Jefferson Award

SOA students perform public service

By Cat Bowler

Congratulations to this month's recipients of the Jefferson Awards for public service: sophomore Savannah Miller and freshman Sarah Brown.

Savannah volunteers at the Franke Home in Mount Pleasant every other Sunday afternoon. Admitting that at first "all [she] was thinking about was [her] college applications," Savannah quickly realized the extent to which her time at the Franke Home brightened residents' days, and she came to look forward to seeing them. Savannah first became affiliated with the Franke Home through her great aunt who resides there. Accompanied by her friend and Academic Magnet student, Lindsey Baldo, Savannah makes birthday cards, sorts mail, organizes book shelves, assists residents to and from concerts and delivers afternoon snacks. Savannah has formed many fond memories by volunteering at the Franke Home. She looks back affectionately



Freshman Sarah Brown

Franke Home's residents personally and plans to continue her volunteer service for the remainder of her high school career.

In 2003, Sarah Brown's church started a program in conjunction with other local churches called Hands of Christ. Every summer, Hands of Christ provides school supplies and uniforms for children who are otherwise unable to afford such necessities. Sarah's mother is the executive director of the organization, and she has volunteered with the program for "as long as [she] can remember." Sarah collects school supplies and uniforms throughout the year to donate to Hands of Christ and spends the last three weeks of her summer vacation helping to distribute donated goods. She sets up the goods for shoppers and assumes the role of "shopping buddy," helping children pick out their uniforms and ensuring that they enjoy themselves during the process. Sarah says, "I am grateful for all of the things that I have and inspired by the people who I help" through involvement with Hands of Christ. SOA is proud of Savannah and Sarah for their dedication to community service.



Sophomore Savannah Miller

upon a day when one of the ladies, a kind woman who could always be found reading the newspaper in the living room, shared with her the weather for the next ten days "with such enthusiasm that [she] became interested as well." Savannah hopes that she will eventually get to know each of the

Invisible Children presentation inspires SOA

By Cat Bowler

SOA students watched in stunned silence as Lord's Resistance Army soldiers, many of whom are no older than twelve or thirteen, toted machetes and firearms, performing raids on South Ugandan villages. For many, the Invisible Children footage was their first exposure to the war that exists in Uganda, thus proving the significance of the organization's name: the children who comprise Joseph Kony's army are invisible to the public eye.

Thanks to junior Jamie Amick, a previous recipient of the Jefferson Service Award, representatives from the Invisible Children program arrived at SOA on November 2, 2009 to conduct four presentations throughout the day. SOA was only one stop along a cross-country road trip, during which these representatives will take the Invisible Children documentary into countless schools over the next two and a half months. The documentary was created by three college students, Laren Poole, Bobby Bailey, and Jason Russell, whose passion for making movies carried them all the way from the suburbs of Southern California to war-ridden Uganda. In Uganda, the boys were first exposed to northern rebel Joseph Kony's LRA, which is composed of abducted African children.

The documentary focuses on the story of Jacob, an escaped LRA soldier who was abducted from his home at age eleven and forced to fight for Kony's child army. It is difficult to forget the projected image of Jacob's face plastered to the cafeteria wall as he relived watching an LRA soldier slit his older brother's throat with a "panga," or machete. Uganda's youth lives in perpetual fear of being abducted and forced to fight for Kony. After multiple failed peace attempts and twenty-three years of violent guerilla warfare, Joseph Kony's war wages on more

violently than ever.

The California natives returned home from Africa determined to inform the United States about Uganda's turmoil and help remove Kony from power. The documentary they created shared Jacob's story,

raised millions of dollars in support of Ugandan families and provided education about peace for future leaders of Uganda.

SOA students can support the Invisible Children Campaign in three major ways. First, if you were unable to attend one of the four presentations conducted at SOA where you would have signed a citizen's arrest warrant card for Joseph Kony to be sent to the White House, go to www.invisiblechildren.com - your online signature is equally important.



Second, sign up to donate three dollars weekly to the Tri-Campaign. All contributions help the rescue effort. Finally, start a club through the Schools for Schools program, which is rebuilding Uganda's education system. If our group at SOA raises the most money, those involved with the program will receive a free trip to Uganda to see their money at work constructing a brand new educational facility for Ugandan children.

The SOA Jefferson Club is currently leading the school in a paper-back book collection to be donated to a special school in northern Uganda. SOA's support can help change the lives of Uganda's children. Take a five-minute break from Facebook to explore the Invisible Children website, donate twelve quarters a week, bring in a lightly used paperback book... make a difference.

Applause celebrates fourteen years full of fun-filled musicals at SOA

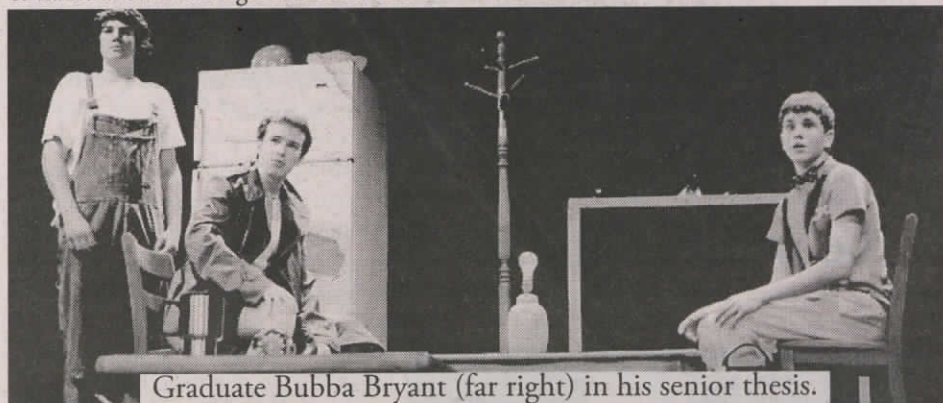
By Deborah Crocker

Since it began in 1995, SOA has been known for its biannual musicals, with auditions open to students and faculty members in the entire school. These musicals are usually held at the North Charleston Performing Arts center, and students are given a free field trip to see the production each year. With creative flyers and posters, and often beautifully drawn life-size posters, SOA's musicals are as professional as any play performed at the Dock Street Theater or Galliard Auditorium. Early productions included *Oklahoma* and *Guys and Dolls*.

Peter Pan was performed as SOA's 2001 musical, and was one of the most memorable. Perhaps one of the best things about the show was the fact that the Las Vegas company, Fly by Foy, came to help with the production. This company specializes in giving flight to many members of different productions – *Wizard of Oz*, *A Christmas Carol*, and another version of *Peter Pan* just to name a few. Although the school had to

pay for nearly everything for them, all the extra money spent was worth being able to 'fly' with the help of a professional team. The production included a wide range of SOA members, and even Mrs. Myers took the role of the character Mrs. Darling in the musical.

Another musical success performed by the School of the Arts was *Big River*, musical performed in 2006. The classic story has come a long way from being banned, turned into black-and-white films, and finally developed into a fun musical that still held the 'wow' factor from the original story. The cast members were all enthusiastic about playing characters completely unrelated to them, and were interviewed about their experiences. Most of the lead characters were played by vocal majors with little theater experience. The play was featured on one of the booklets given to most of us coming into tenth grade in 2007, to give kids an idea of what goes on here at the school that combines all



Graduate Bubba Bryant (far right) in his senior thesis.

Graduate Bubba Bryant finds success as an actor

In May of 2007, former Applause editor Lucy Hunter interviewed class of 2002 graduate Bubba Bryant about life after SOA and his major role on *Army Wives*. These are some excerpts from the interview.

"Bubba transferred to SOA for freshmen year, urged by Ben Pooser and Mark Washington. The experience changed his perspective on a career in acting. 'The directors at this school taught me more than any other directors- Mr. Michael Locklair, Mr. George Younts, and Mr. Sam Wood. They had totally different ways of approaching me, pushed my limits, and gave me the confidence that I needed to go on; They told me that I could do it. If I were to get an Academy Award, the first people I'd thank would be the people at SOA. Those teachers just knew how to attach to a person, knew how to read a script,

had an awesome way of teaching it.'" Several years after graduating from SOA, Bubba found success on the Lifetime television show *Army Wives*. "I was actually told I couldn't go on the [*Army Wives*] audition by the place where I was working, I had already gone on two auditions that week. So I walked out of the bathroom with my cell phone and was like 'my brother just hit his head on the diving board! He's bleeding everywhere,' and so [my bosses] were like 'Go! Go!' I already had my change of clothes in the car."

Life has changed drastically for Bubba since his days as the Cart Cowboy in Piggly Wiggily commercials, but he's prepared to face the challenges that Los Angeles, possible stardom, and life as an actor will bring."



Francis Smalls gets ready backstage for *The Wiz* (2009)

talents, majors, and personalities.

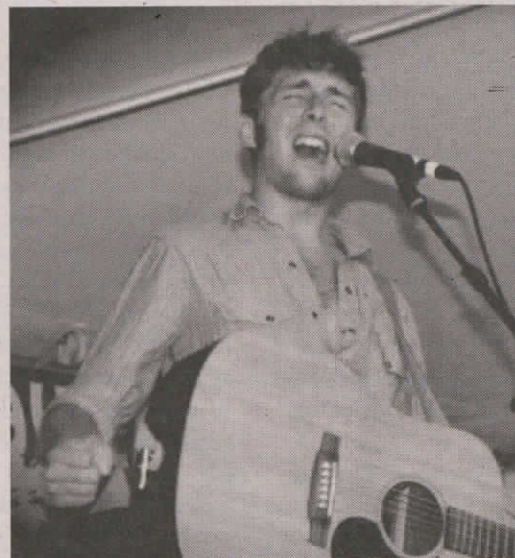
The most recent musical performed was last year's production of *The Wiz*, which is based off the *Wizard of Oz*. It was turned into a fun, silly performance in October, and was further celebrated on Halloween when the school was filled with Munchkinlanders, witches, and monkeys. When passing the rooms in the hall, you could hear the cast members going through their performances, and play rehearsals were always entertaining. The final production was, however, amazing. We can all thank our fellow classmates, teachers, and visual artists for designing the beautiful set and giving us a performance to remember. *The Wiz* was also followed up by a short, humorous performance done by our faculty members, called *Soaz*.

With the new theater being built into the new school, we can expect more successful musicals from SOA for years to come.

Graduate Corey Webb pursues what he loves

Corey Webb starred as Huck Finn in the SOA musical *Big River* several years ago. He took some time to sit down and tell *Applause* about his life after SOA.

I haven't migrated too far since graduation. I am now a senior music theory/composition student at CofC graduating in, oh, a week or so? Since senior year at SOA (does anyone remember *Big River* at this point or am I getting old?) I've been around Charleston since trying to get a firm footing on the music scene. Thought about up and leaving for NY but I know nobody up there. Things are finally starting to look good though. Just played a show - my senior thesis - at



the College featuring a few members of the Charleston Symphony and it luckily caught the attention of some folks (check out some video at www.coreywebbmusic.com in the coming days for video). Now I'll be getting some material recorded with a notable pro-

ducer in January - wish I could say more.

It's funny, when you finish high school, you're ready to break out, do it all, and meet tons of people. But the closest friends I have are still from high school and we occasionally reminisce on how we miss it. I know, sick, right? Luckily we're starting to grow out of that, but I would like to attempt to convey some experience to you. If you love doing your art, do not let your parents talk you into majoring in business unless you are double majoring or something like that. I see a lot

of kids who are already regretting not pursuing what they love and they're not even done yet. It's your life, and college is an important stepping stone to getting there. Take control. Also, have fun in the new building, I'll have to come check that out.

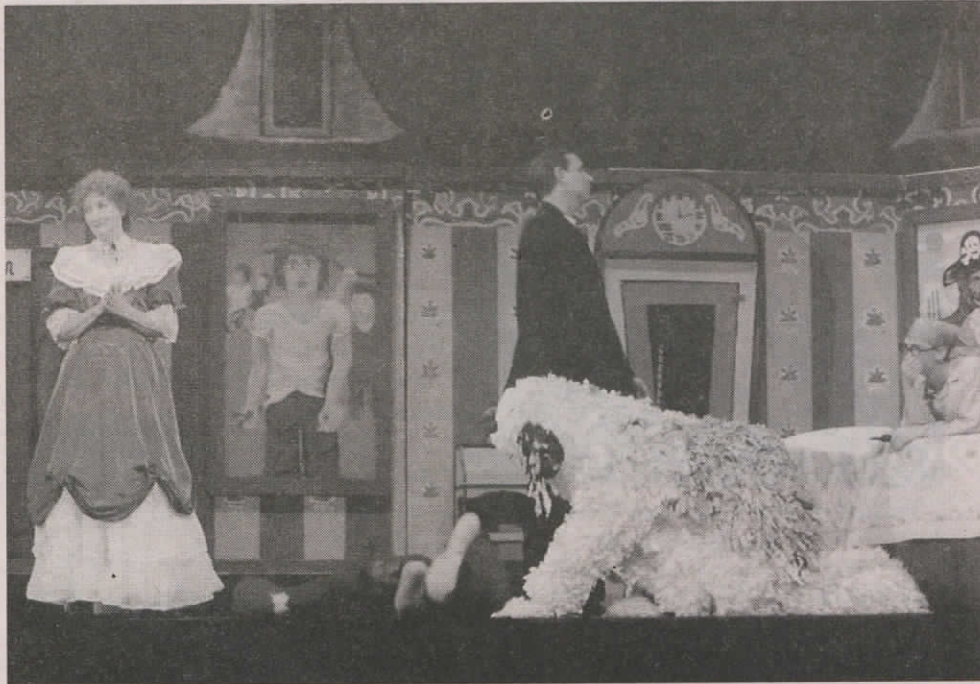
Mrs. Rose Maree Myers (cont.)

By K. Chaney Long

the difficulties the campus presented. Setting up the school took a great deal of creative improvisation. She recalls, fondly, interviewing Mrs. Wade for the front office secretarial position in the front seat of her

big white Cadillac. "The only thing that wasn't fun about that campus was that it really flooded."

Despite all of the setbacks, the opening of the school went incredibly well.



Mrs. Myers as Mrs. Darling in the SOA production of *Peter Pan*



"The first students came in. I was standing up for the buses to roll in. I was just jumping up and down I was so excited." After the success of Ashley River, Mrs. Meyers had high expectations for School of the Arts. "I was certain that we would succeed. I come back and think, 'Hm, maybe it was a little naïve,' but actually it wasn't." Mrs. Myers had the challenge of maintaining a standard of excellence suitable for her highly motivated student body. "Because of the students' incredible abilities in the arts, we couldn't just hire a regular music teacher. They needed to be incredible in their field, and we had to be fortunate enough to find those teachers."

Mrs. Myers' confidence and drive provided the backbone for the School of the Arts. "I was a pusher, and maybe even a shover," she says. While her career has been characterized by overcoming challenges, her perseverance has created two schools that have been a safe haven for tens of thousands of students wishing to pursue the arts in an exciting and unique alternative environment. Her legacy endures as we enter our new state-of-the-art campus for which she laid the foundation.

"I've had a great career. I've so enjoyed every part of it."

Donate toys for the Toys for Tots drive before the winter holidays

By Maddi Phillips

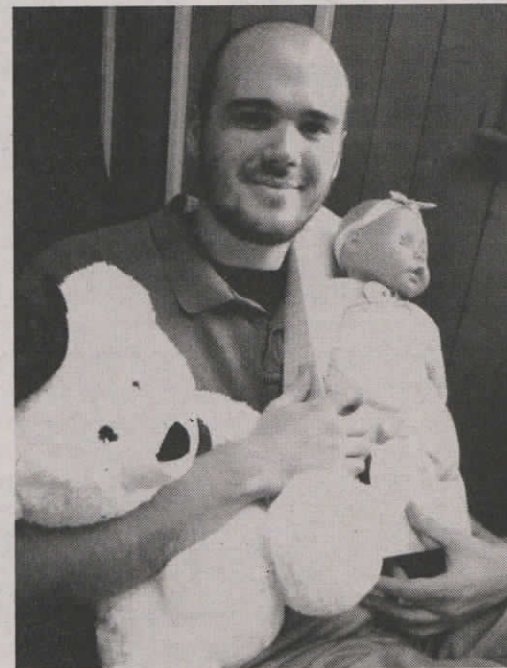
Greetings, SOA, and happy holidays! With all the hustle-and-bustle of Thanksgiving behind us and the excitement of Winter Break just up-ahead, I'd like to take a minute to tell you about the latest sensation to sweep the nation: Toys for Tots! As you may have heard, our fine senior class is sponsoring a school-wide Toys for Tots drive in order to raise excitement for the holiday season. The toy-drive isn't just for seniors though; we need everyone's help to reach our goal of 1,000 toys, including YOU!

Now, I know you may be asking yourself those daunting questions like what? when? and where? Well, don't you worry, readers, because I have those answers for you!

First, I'll start with the "what." Toys for Tots was started in 1947 in Los Angeles when Diane Hendricks, wife of Major Bill Hendricks, handcrafted a doll for an organization to give to a child in need for Christmas. When Diane was informed

by her husband that no such agency existed, Bill, along with a group of Marine Reservists, collected and distributed 5,000 toys to local children in need. Bill's toy-drive was so successful that the next year, in 1948, the Marine Corps adopted it and evolved it into the nationwide campaign we see today. Over the last 62 years, the Marines have distributed over 400 million toys to more than 188 million children in need. In their spirit, the senior class has come together to encourage each and every one of you to participate in this year's Toys for Tots drive. Next, the "when" and "where." Toys will be collected from now until Wednesday, December 16. You may take your toys to your homeroom teacher or to Mrs. Awkerman's room. There will also be large boxes sporting festive "Toys for Tots" banners near the front of the school where you may deposit your toys as well.

Remember, we need everyone's help in order to reach our goal of 1,000 toys. On Monday, Mr. Reinhart agreed to



Bearded beauty Mr. Donnellon with toys brought in by students.

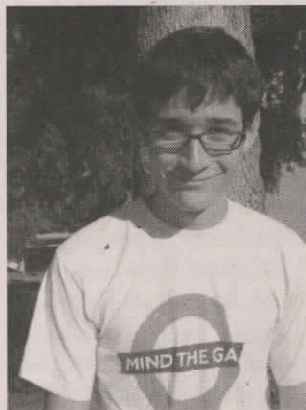
match the total number of toys brought in by students. He told Applause, "I had done Toys for Tots for six years at my old school before coming to SOA, and every year we would raise 200 to 250 toys. The administration and I would pool our money together and purchase good Christmas stocking toys for the poor, and I fully plan to do that again at SOA."

As a quick reminder: all toys must be new and unwrapped, and no clothes will be accepted. So next time you're out shopping and you're wondering just what on Earth you left off of your list, let your desire to help a child in need fill that missing gap, and pick up a toy for Toys for Tots. Thanks, School of the Arts! Until next time, keep bringing in those toys!

The Sass ATTACK

Synthesize My Eyes

By David Sass



A couple weekends back, I went to the country with my old man, down to this little place we call "Hogpen," out past Hollywood. Don't let the name

fool you; it's an amazing place, one of the greatest on Earth, in my humble opinion. You can watch the sun rise and set every day, and you can see the stars every night. But I digress; while we were there, I found a harmonica my cousin Little Richard had left behind after staying there a while back. I don't know if I've mentioned it before, but my musical talent is at the bottom end of the scale, the part that reads "miniscule to non-existent." However, I do love me some harmonica, and so I started playing like a mad fool (mind you, I hadn't touched one in years, so understandably I sounded quite terrible). But anyhow, while sitting out on the porch, my old man mentioned how the harmonica is a dying instrument of a dying age, and how most instruments are following the same trend as contemporary music becomes more and more synthesized.

This got me to thinking about just how synthetic everything is becoming nowadays. As much as I loathe Holden Caulfield, I have to agree with the guy: it's all just so phony. Not too long ago, there was a commercial for that show "Nip/Tuck" on USA Network. Some of you may have seen this commercial, or even watch the show regularly (why you would, I haven't the foggiest). Anyway, at the end of this particular commercial, it showed the back of a woman in the foreground and one of the two plastic surgeons pulling a string that leads to the woman's back, where it's tightening a corset on the woman... except the corset is made from her SKIN. This commercial freaked the living, dead and undead, bejeesus out of me. It reminded me of the "Guerrilla Radio" music video by Rage Against The Machine. If you haven't

seen it, put this down now and don't pick it up again until you have watched the video. I'll wait... (somehow, I doubt any of you actually will do this).

The point I'm trying to get at is that it seems like everything we do now is masked in deceit to conceal our true natures. While I understand that deceit is simply an inevitable aspect of human nature, it just depresses me to think that there are people out there who cannot seem to accept themselves for who they are naturally. Even more depressing is the fact that, for some god-awful, almost certainly sadistically-motivated reason, people actually want to watch shows about this kind of horrible affront against Nature. If women (not to seem like a sexist, but it is almost entirely women who have the following operations done to themselves) were meant to have chests full of silicone and faces stretched tighter than drumskins, then they would have all that naturally. But they don't, and I seriously doubt they were intended to.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not all against Freedom (like Wes and his band of dirty, commie hippies); I love America! Like I always tell people, I'm the lovechild that resulted from true American Stephen Colbert's (cue fanfare) trip back through time to meet Marilyn Monroe. In other words, I AM America. But there comes a point when people take that Freedom and abuse it, i.e. Joan Rivers. Lovely person, hilarious comedian, why anyone would undergo so many cosmetic procedures, let alone any, again, I haven't the foggiest.

I guess what I'm really trying to say is that people need to just take a chill pill and be proud of who they are. If a mirror or a snobby little salesgirl gives you the look that says, "You're <insert relevant rude adjective>," take that mirror and break it over her head; she'll be stuck with seven years' bad luck and you'll feel a lot better. So really, what I'm telling you is that you are beautiful no matter what anything or anyone says. Look at Caterpie; somehow that weird looking little bug turns into Butterfree!

SOA is a school united by eccentricity

By Wes Snell



This is a strange school, unequivocally speaking. I can say that with confidence, considering that I've only been here since my sophomore year. I've attended other schools, I went to Wando, and my middle school in Atlanta had 500 more students than that. I know the rap, I've lived within the bubble of stereotypes that shroud most schools – the drudgery and monotony, isolation and bureaucracy that take something as crucial and interesting as education and turns it into an eight-hours-per-day prison sentence. I've been lost in a sea of drones, kids who drool their way from one class to the next; I've watched their tension build and climax in fights that span hallways. I've seen kids bring weapons to school with intent. When I think back on those glassy eyes and remember my own dead-fish gaze, I thank whatever powers that be for my chance to stumble upon SOA.

Every day feels like a family reunion at SOA. I've never seen a fight break out at school, never witnessed so much as a scuffle. We may bicker and sling lethal looks across a cafeteria, but it's in the same vein as disagreeable cousins; in the end, we are a family, united by our eccentricity. There is solidarity in our diversity that I hadn't experienced at school before coming here. At other schools this identity is created in response to the mainstream, as a defense mechanism against the masses, but here it is the norm. If only the rest of society would measure itself by the frayed edges, we might get along better. The point is, we respect and love one another here. We're a family. When I sat down with Mr.

Orvin to describe the unique atmosphere of our school, he brought up his wife, Ms. Lasley, whom he proposed to over the loudspeaker in 2002. "Thank God she said yes or I'd have had to marry the janitor," he said. They were married April 26, 2003 at Boone Hall Plantation and SOA showed up to support its beloved teachers. Though it was the same night as prom, the jazz band and strings quartet came out to perform the reception, and Vocal major Rodney Lewis sang "Amazing Grace" for the newlyweds. Band teacher Mr. Kerr was the best man. Six years and two children later, Mr. Orvin says that "what started out as a wonderful romance...continues." There's something symbolic in there, for those of you who have a hard time thinking critically. Or what about that poor girl a few years back who ate a "special" cookie and started freaking out? In the midst of her distress Dr. Cusatis ran to his car, grabbed his guitar, and led the class in serenading her with Bob Marley songs until she managed to calm down. If that's not family, I don't know what is.

Those who know me also know I don't invest much in institutional education. However, it wouldn't be fair for me not to admit that I love this school. It has its flaws, its sagging ceilings, moldy air ducts and ill-tempered teachers, but it wouldn't be whole without these factors. I'm just as confident calling the spirit of this school strong as I am calling it strange. When we move to the new school next month, no matter how sterile its ambience may be, its cleanliness and purity don't stand a chance against the dirty, chaotic, beautiful energy that pulses through our student body. Prepare for some crazy lovin', new campus, 'cause like it or not we're coming.

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The student lounge at the new campus

By Brittany Ropp

Many students have had questions about the existence of a Senior Lounge. Even though the lounge was originally intended to be used as a senior lounge, it has been renamed to include all high school students. The lounge will be available to all grades for club meetings and to relax before and after school. Rumors have circulated that there will be a coffee machine, a TV, a fridge, and games in the lounge, but none of these will be located in the area. However, the Senior Canvases will

be displayed in the lounge. The lounge was never intended to be a place to eat lunch or drink coffee, nor was it intended to be just for seniors. No eating is allowed in the lounge because the floors are carpeted and we want to keep the chairs in excellent condition. Seniors will be designated an area to eat lunch and hang out before school and the area will be exclusively for seniors.



The unfinished lounge area

Hearing Impaired update

By Rebecca Forman

The school's Hearing Impaired program is continuing to adjust beautifully. We have recently received a new interpreter, **Marisa Py**, from Brooklyn, New York. In addition, on Monday, November 22nd, the teachers and students presented a thank you to the Charleston County School Board's **Irene Myers** and **Dr. McGinley** for bringing the deaf program to SOA. "We discussed that even during just this first semester there have already been eleven new classes that weren't available before, including costume design," says **Ms. Amick**, a teacher in the program. She notes that middle school teachers have absolutely gone above and beyond in working with our students. One of the students, **Dakota Cooper**, was chosen to be the character award winner for perseverance. **Shamar Smith** is learning violin. Even their classmates have been learning sign language, with the third rotation of 8th graders currently in sign class. "Even the teachers are participating. Once we move to the new school we want to start a sign language club," says Ms. Amick.

It's safe to say that in both the middle school and the high school, hearing

impaired students have been completely embraced. Mr. Reinhart noted at the last faculty meeting that it seems like the program has always been here. They are truly a part of the campus. One of our classmates, **Raven Washington**, was chosen to go to the Jefferson Service Club's regional conference at city hall. Thanks to the support from the other members, she stood up and gave a speech at the conference, receiving a standing ovation.

As the year progresses they're finding other opportunities to integrate into the school, with discussion of attending the 8th grade's annual Washington DC trip. Mr. Younts has invited the program to see his one man play, *A Christmas Carol*. In December, they are going to have national story teller, **Tim Lowery**, perform a Gullah story. Then the students are going to perform Gullah stories for English or theatre students in American Sign Language. At our recent convocation, the students loved sitting on the floor of the band room, feeling the vibrations of the orchestra and band. They fell in love with the dance routines and cannot wait for the next one.

Students show off their talent in *Oliver!*

By Deborah Crocker

On a warm November evening, I was given the opportunity to attend a musical performed by the Fort Johnson Middle School Players. The diverse mix of high school and middle school students did an amazing job recreating Charles Dickens' much-loved story of an orphaned little boy trying to find his way in the harsh streets of London as he is helped or hindered by many quirky, memorable characters. Included in the play were three seniors from SOA, who spent months turning a four-night production into a success, leaving its audience wanting more. But the truly honorable mentions go to the following performers:

Carley Congdon: Originally given the part of Mr. Bumble's wife, she also led the choral arrangement of *Who Will Buy* as the rose-seller. Unexpectedly, she was also asked to play the part of Nancy on the final day of the musical, performing extremely well for a character she was not completely familiar with. She is currently a band major at SOA.

Shaffer Ripley: She did not play

an actual character, but was part of the set crew. Without this group, which is possibly the most important part of any sort of stage



production besides the actors, the musical might not have happened. For visual effects and the arrangement of the creatively drawn pieces of the set, we owe them a big thank you. Shaffer is a theater major.

Graeme Rock: His

character was one of the more important characters in the story – Fagin, the pick-pocket who attempts to turn Oliver to a life of crime. This band major provided us with a hilarious performance as one of the more comical characters in the musical.

So if you saw these students in the musical and were wondering, "Who were they?" then now is your chance to congratulate them on a job well done. They have also been a part of other well-known musicals, such as *Oklahoma!* and *Guys and Dolls*. Their performances could inspire those looking for a hobby to try theater – as they have shown, it's fun, rewarding, and friends and family will love to see the final production.

Students win scholarships for their work

By Shaless Robinson



Demetrius Washington

became interested in the contest when he heard that he had potential to win the local competition and advance nationally.

For the competition, Demetrius had to compose a 1,000 word essay on what interested him in fashion, how he got started, and what he would do with the Fashion merchandise degree. He also had to write an 800 word product description, Demetrius says, "I wanted to come up with something fresh, that wasn't done".

Demetrius chose to use recycled

Demetrius Washington is SOA's first student to win the Charleston Art Institutes' "Passion for Fashion" competition. Demetrius has won a \$3,000 scholarship. He

fabrics to create new garments. He calls it "From sheets to Chic," a fashionable eco-conscience revolution.

Two of the colleges Demetrius is interested in include: University of South Carolina, and The Art Institute of Charleston.



Patrick Page

Patrick Page, an 8th grade visual artist, won 2nd place in the "Kids for Conservation" photography contest sponsored by the Wild Life Expo. He won a \$200 savings bond & gift certificates to Artist & Craftsman. Patrick says, "I think it's a good accomplishment and I'm glad I won 2nd place."

His art will be displayed on Feb. 12-14 at Marion Square.

SOA valedictorians reflect

Adam Kassim

What have you been doing since you graduated from SOA?

Trying to function in the real world. And I must say, functioning is more difficult than I had anticipated. There have been some good plays and some not so good plays. There was a trip to India to study Buddhism, there was a trip to Italy to eat incredible food. I have worked in all manner of places: the crazy people place, the bad people place, the uptight people place, the sketchy people place, and currently, the amazing people place. But the one constant through it all, the one thing that I have continued to do since graduating SOA, is ask for Ann's advice on everything.

What are your fondest memories from your time spent at SOA?

Unfortunately, all of my fondest memories are fabulously inappropriate. Let's be honest here



- as the first class to graduate from SOA, we got away with everything. Thus to protect the guilty (you know who you are), I must kindly

fain amnesia.

How did the community at SOA prepare you for your post-high school years?

At SOA, I was allowed to grow and explore, allowed to read the part of Hamlet's mother in English class, to wear a dress with full hoop skirt to the winter formal, to wrap myself in an afghan and wear it as a shawl. SOA prepared me, for me - and saved me tons of money in therapy years down the road.

In what ways did your major at SOA prepare you artistically for life after high school?

The theatre department at SOA gave me a solid base on which to build my college career at Boston University and present artistic aspirations of doing experimental movement theatre in a barn on a farm that has a goat or perhaps a couple of chickens.

Angela Bedell

Since I have graduated from SOA, I have been attending Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, FL, studying voice. I have performed as a soloist in the oratorio "Elijah" by Mendelssohn and "Gloria" by Vivaldi and occasionally am asked to perform for various venues. Currently I am preparing for my personal junior recital and contemplating possible graduate programs for future study in music or pathology.

My fondest memories from the years I spent at PBA are of singing in Carnegie Hall with our director, Mr. Kevin Eakes, Teacher Cadet with Ms. Marshall, attending the hilariously entertaining Sherman Alexie speech for AP English with Dr. Cusatis, sleeping during the lunch period outside on the sidewalk, and attempting to squeeze my car into a spot every morning (hopefully this problem will



be remedied with the new facilities!).

The community at SOA provided the encouragement that was necessary for me to cultivate my art and continue to grow in this area. The teachers I had at SOA were all gifted in their art as well which was incredibly beneficial in preparing me for university level academics.

I am currently majoring in Voice Performance at PBA, which was also my major at SOA. The choral experience at SOA--including All-State, Regionals, and Nationals competitions--I believe, gave me an edge over other students going into the music program. In addition, I have repeated various pieces in my current repertoire. Because I was able to go to a school where I could establish my art and be encouraged in it, I was positively affected and continue to look back on this time with the fondest regards.

Andrew Bentz

What have you been doing since you graduated from SOA?

Since graduating, I have yet to get out of school. In 2007, I graduated from USC summa cum laude with dual degrees in political science and music. I then went on to Duke University and earned my Master's degree in political science. While at Duke, I was sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security and worked on responses to terrorism at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. This past summer I worked as an analyst at a federal intelligence agency before starting law school. I am currently wrapping up my first semester at the University of Virginia School of Law. I hope to go into international law after graduating.

What are your fondest memories from your time spent at SOA?

The most fun I had at high school was probably performing John in *Peter Pan*. The show was a lot of fun and I got to fly. I also really

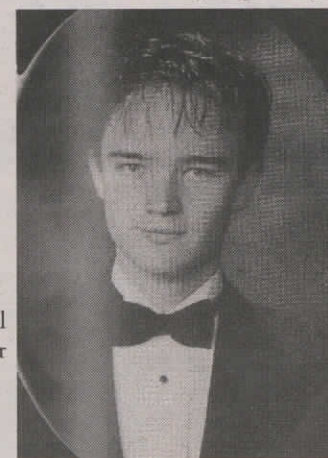
loved the people I went to school with, not only my friends but the teachers as well.

How did the community at SOA prepare you for your post-high school years?

Although SOA is known for its arts focus, I think the academic preparation SOA affords its students is excellent and often unrecognized. The academic teachers at SOA are excellent and prepare their students well for the intellectual challenges of college and beyond.

In what ways did your major at SOA prepare you artistically for life after high school?

I certainly used my major throughout college and graduate school. In addition to singing in Europe and Africa, I was also in several operas while I was at USC. At Duke, I was the music director for several musicals including *The Pajama Game* and *Sweeney Todd*. Hopefully, after law school calms down a bit I will get back to performing.



Daniel Anthony

Since I graduated from SOA, I have been studying at the University of South Carolina Honors College, double-majoring in International Business and Accounting with minors in French and Russian.

My fondest memories of my time spent at SOA were during the course of my senior year. I felt best connected to my graduating class during this time as we all prepared for our future. I spent a great deal of my time practicing my Senior Thesis for the concert at the end of the year as well as preparing and working hard for my AP Exams in May, but I best enjoyed the people that make and made our school great including my friends, my

classmates, and my teachers.

The community at SOA prepared me for my future because I was exposed to a high-degree of diversity already before entering college, where I learned about the importance of tolerance and respecting numerous opinions and viewpoints.

My major at SOA, Orchestra, definitely prepared me artistically for life after high school. I have a great appreciation for the symphony here at the University, which I intend to be auditioning in next semester. Though it will be rigorous and difficult, I believe I will be able to achieve my goal with concentrated practice and the talent I have trained and harnessed during my high school career. I hope my time at SOA will serve as a platform for me to continue to progress both artistically and academically during my study at the University.





Selected covers from



in the last ten years

SOA valedictorians reflect

Frances Johanna Morris

Since I graduated from SOA, I have been attending Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY, which has taken up the majority of my time. I'm graduating this spring with a degree in Studio Art and a minor in education. I've mostly just been trying to continue making artwork along with all the other demands of being a college student. I try to write and read beyond my class work as much as possible, but, as you know even in high school, it's difficult to do much of that. I spent last summer in Columbia; it's always nice to return to the humidity. I had the opportunity to mentor two girls at the juvenile detention center, just talking and making art with them. This and other experiences have led me to hope to become a children's art therapist after I graduate.

My fondest memories from SOA center mostly around my time as a theatre major: spending all day preparing for the annual haunted house, writing and directing as a junior, and writing and performing a thesis. I have really fond memories of almost all my classroom experiences, which I guess most can't say concerning high school. The feedback and support from every teacher every day has been invaluable to look back on since then, even if it didn't always seem so at the time.

The community at SOA especially prepared me for attending Vassar, because, in many ways, they're similar. SOA is small and



full of mostly open-minded people making art together. That's pretty much what a lot of liberal arts schools are like I guess, although I've only attended one. SOA provided an accepting environment where I was free to express myself through art, which has since provided me with the confidence to give my ideas a try here. If I had found high school alienating or excluding, I doubt I would have had the courage to come try and be an artist a thousand miles away.

Being a theatre major also gave me a good bit of confidence, which I guess you might hear from a lot of theatre people. I haven't done anything since high school as embarrassing as some of the things we were expected to do. It really helped me get over myself and learn how to be silly. The theatre major also did wonders for me as a writer, especially with regards to using my own experience, from reality or dreams, as material. I'd

like to think that the work I've done as a creative writer at Vassar was built on top of the one-act and thesis writing I did at SOA. Although I didn't pursue theatre as a major in college, attending SOA and being a part of the theatre program showed me the value of art in education and the importance of art as self-expression. It's educational, it's therapeutic, and it's never necessarily what you expect.

I miss lounging around on the couches in Creative Writing, conversing, hypothesizing, laughing, and doing impressions of Mr. Brehm, while Mrs. Miles chimed in with some sage advice. Also, I can't deny that I had some very fun times in middle school riding bus 550!

How did the community at SOA prepare you for your



What have you been doing since you graduated from SOA?

After my SOA years, I worked on getting my B.A. degree and my law degree. I graduated from the College of Charleston in 2006 with a major in English and a minor in Dance and a minor in Political Science. Just this past May, I graduated with honors from Case Western Reserve University School of Law in Cleveland, OH, and as a new member to the South Carolina Bar, I am currently applying for attorney positions within the state.

What are your fondest memories from your time spent at SOA?

I have many good memories of my time at the School of the Arts. My sixth grade year was the first year SOA opened, so I remember the school being much smaller than it is today. However, my fondest memories all center around the fierce sense of community I felt with the other students and even the faculty. That closeness may have developed because of us being among the first to attend the school, but it remained until graduation. Specifically, I always think of the last years in Creative Writing fondly. By the last two years, my writing class had become an all-female group, and the 8 or 9 of us (including Mrs. Miles) became each other's sounding-board not only for our senior theses (still to this day one of the hardest and most-rewarding assignments I've had to complete) but also for life decisions from the most silly to the most serious.

How did the community at SOA prepare you for your post-high school years?

Without SOA, I do not think I could have been as successful in college and law school as I luckily have been. It seemed that mostly everyone there

post-high school years?

I realized what a special environment SOA creates and how it really facilitates artistic growth and an open mind. After going from SOA to a science-gear school, I was shocked at how uncreative people can be! I also have an enormous sense of pride that I went to an arts school. I like to show my new friends my old schoolmate's writing or artwork, and they are always blown away! I feel that SOA helped to intensively develop people's artistic abilities, so that they come away from high school with

Kristen Gaetke

was driven towards something, be it academics, their art area, or something else. Being around people that focused and ambitious all the time was extremely instrumental in my school and career choices later. At SOA, I always felt that I could push the boundaries of what I was capable of, thanks to the teachers and the other students challenging me to be just that little bit better,

especially in academics. There were so many other talented students that I felt I wanted to work that much harder to stand out. That drive has stayed with me throughout these short years since high school.

Not only that, but it must be said that you're never too far away from SOA. I have been in a mall in Charlotte and in an airport in Chicago and ran into former SOA students, where we always end up catching up and remembering old times. There is just some sort of bond that is always there, which is just so

comforting to know.

In what ways did your major at SOA prepare you artistically for life after high school?

I credit Mrs. Miles wholeheartedly with teaching me to write—I do not think I have taken a class that has been more helpful to me in school than my creative writing classes. With the amount of papers, briefs, and memos I have had to write and presentations I have had to give, I can't be grateful enough for the writing, reading, speaking, and editing skills I learned at SOA. Mrs. Miles really emphasized that as writers, we should be comfortable reading our own work to people. It has been so helpful to be able to rely on those public reading/speaking skills during oral arguments in law school. While most of my writing now is persuasive, legalistic, and let's face it, boring, I know I have metaphor on my side.

more than a degree... they are talented, accomplished artists.

In what ways did your major at SOA prepare you artistically for life after high school?

As a former Creative Writing major, I am unable to look at the world in a straightforward, conventional manner... and this is a good thing! I still find myself studying the way an object is placed on a desk or how a person moves their hands, and I can't help imagining my surroundings as if in poetry. To be an artist makes life more beautiful, more horrid, but definitely more meaningful.



Photo: Jessika Stocker

Convocation 2009

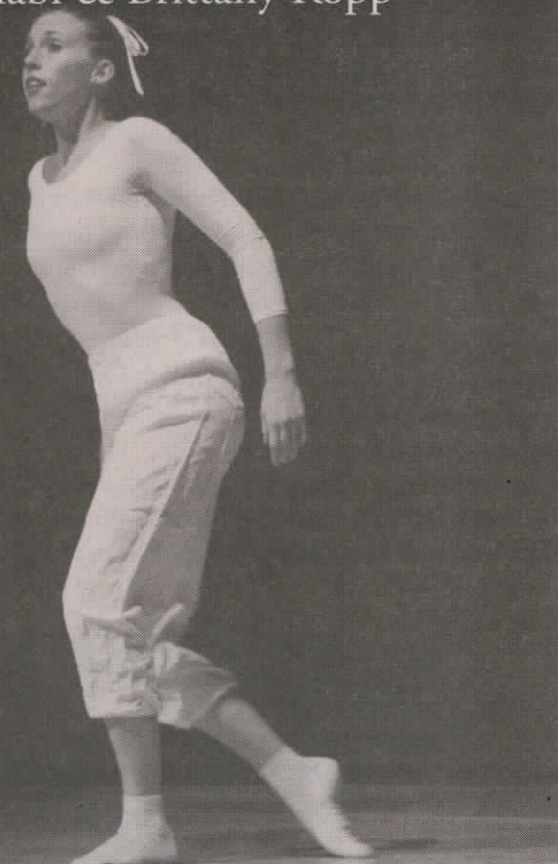
By Rebecca Forman

November's convocation was successful as usual. We were graced with the varying voices of our senior Creative Writers' theses: two poems by Wesley Snell, followed by an excerpt from DeAnna Kerley's novel. Jazz band and the symphony orchestra both played pieces for us. Junior Paige Mixon performed a self-choreographed dance based on an abstract painting, senior Starr Woodall modeled a dance after a contemporary choreographer and senior Melissa Rauton based her choreography on the Holocaust. As the last convocation in our current campus band room, the event seemed especially significant. It also clarified that many of our seniors are on the right track to accomplished theses.

"Footsteps" of Master Choreographers

By Samantha Dahabi & Brittany Ropp

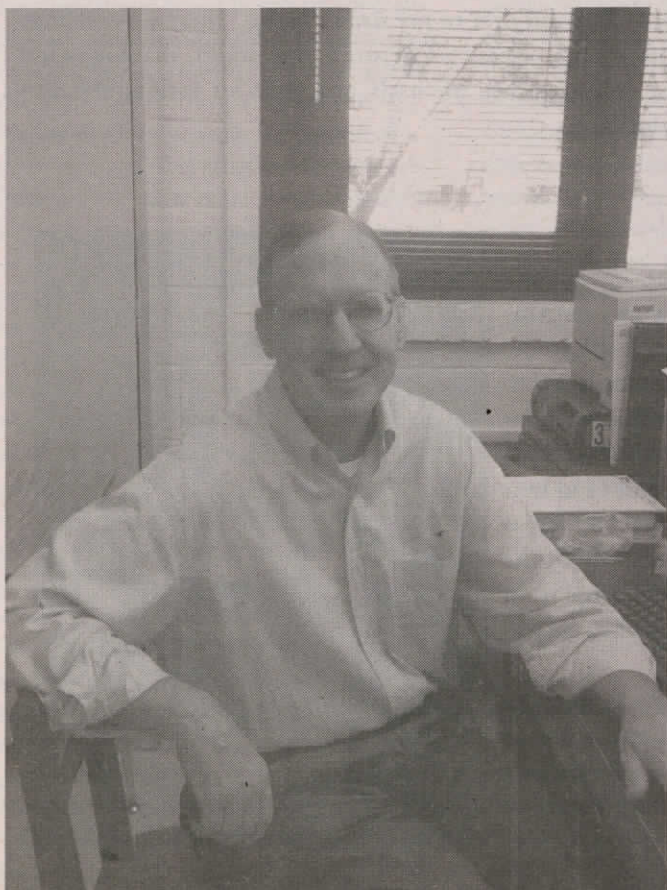
The 2010 senior thesis dance class performed their second installment, "Footsteps," on December 3rd. The assignment was to model choreography in the footsteps of a contemporary choreographer. Choreographers and pieces were assigned to the students to challenge each dancer's stylistic preference. Music for each piece was chosen at random and purposefully didn't match the choreography. Dancers adjusted the choreography to fit the music and to fit their bodies. Another successful show marks the last performance in the black box for the senior thesis dance class.



Mr. Smyth named teacher of the year

By Cat Bowler

Mr. Smyth's amiable disposition has become well-known and loved by both faculty and students since his first year teaching at SOA in 2004. Immediately after receiving the phone call from founder and former Principal Rose Maree Myers asking Mr. Smyth to teach and help her with administrative duties, he eagerly accepted because he "loved everything that this school represented." In December, Mr. Smyth was named SOA's Teacher of the Year. Having earned degrees from the College of William and Mary, University of South Carolina, and The Citadel, Mr. Smyth's educational career includes positions at Heathwood Hall Episcopal School, East Cooper School, Williamsburg Academy in Virginia, and Orange Grove to name a few. No stranger to diversity, he teaches Law, Psychology, SAT Prep and APEX Spanish 2 at SOA in addition to coordinating the textbook room and MAP testing, giving school tours, and writing the school newsletter. With our move to the new campus growing near, Mr. Smyth is incredibly excited and supportive; the artistic talent harbored within the students here deserves "the greatest facilities in which to work-everything will be state-of-the-art, and that's the way it should be."



HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

By Brittany Ropp

Hanukkah Traditions

By Leila Gorstein

Being Jewish, my family celebrates Hanukkah, also called the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah tells the story of a small band of Jews, called the Maccabees, overcoming great odds to defeat the Greco-Syrian army. When the Maccabees reclaimed their holy temple in Jerusalem, they found only enough purified oil for one night to light their menorah. Then a miracle occurred. The Maccabees lit the menorah, and it stayed lit for eight days. This is why the Hanukkah menorah has eight candles (not including the leader candle called the Shamash) and the reason why Jews celebrate Hanukkah for eight days.

During the eight days of Hanukkah we light the menorah each night and eat foods that are fried in oil, such as doughnuts and potato latkes. We also play dreidel (a small top) and sing songs. We exchange presents on Hanukkah, but they are not an important part of the holiday. Hanukkah is a fun, festive holiday where we come together and remember how lucky we are to have the freedom to celebrate religion.



Christmas Traditions

By Alan Smith

Along with my family, I am a firm believer in Christianity. I believe that God loved us so much that he sent his one and only son, Jesus Christ, unto Earth so that we may have hope for an everlasting life. We celebrate Christmas as a remembrance of Jesus' Birth, and Easter as a remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection. If Christ had not come to Earth to die for all of our sins, there would be no hope for eternity, and we would all wind up in Hell. I believe that in order to go to heaven, we must pray to God and repent for all of our sins, and believe that Jesus came to Earth to die to make our payment for our sins, because "The wages of sin is death, and the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23) and that "God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17). Christmas is about remembering God sending his son through the Virgin Mary so that God's plan can be fulfilled. Easter is about the resurrection of Christ. He was crucified on the cross, and he died there. He remained dead for three days, and he arose from the grave on the third day. The reason we give gifts at Christmastime is because the wise men gave gifts to Jesus when he was born.

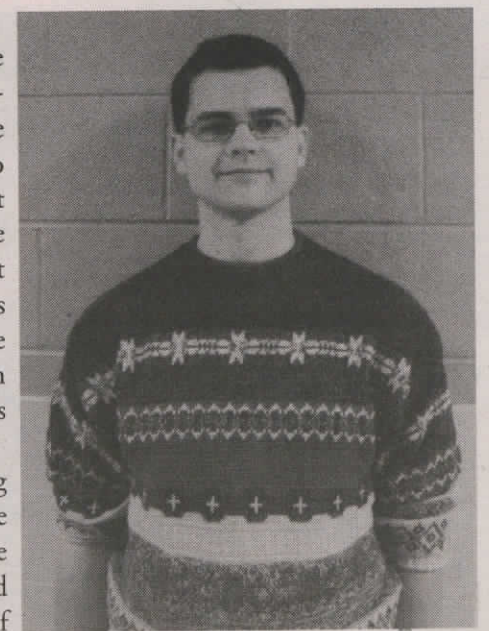
Sadly, I come from a broken family, but there are a lot of traditions on both sides. We'd wake up Christmas morning and give all of our presents out to those who are there at the time. Then, later on, the family will come over and we'll have a huge meal, which varies from year to year. Then we would all gather around the tree and give each other the gifts that we have for them. It's an awesome time to just be around people and to enjoy and share the love and happiness spread around the room. Then, we go to the other's parent's home for the rest of break and do all of the same there. I also spend a lot of time in church. I'm a member of Wando Woods Baptist Church and I love it there.



Christmas Traditions

By Charlene Aiken

Being Christian, we celebrate Christmas. Ever since I was young, my dad would let us open two gifts before Christmas day so we wouldn't die from excitement or from being very anxious. Christmas day, we wake up and open the rest of our gifts. We then all get dressed and head over to my sister's house. There we exchange gifts and have breakfast. Afterwards, we say a Christmas day prayer, thanking God for everything he's done for us, each other, life itself, and Jesus for making the ultimate sacrifice on the cross for us.



REVIEWS

Goats has psychedelic and absurd spirit

By Tori Roy

The Men Who Stare at Goats (starring George Clooney, Jeff Bridges, and Ewan McGregor) is based on Jon Ronson's novel about lunacy in the core of US Military Intelligence and turns it into a bizarre, psychedelic satire. The movie focuses on government plans for developing new militant tactics by creating a special force army called "The Jedi" under the unit "New Earth Army" and training them to develop superpowers.

Following the trip of a small time journalist Bob Wilton (Ewan McGregor), who is desperately trying to get into Iraq to write a career changing story and get his life back on

track, the movie opens with the line, "More of this is true than you would believe." As Wilton stumbles around the border, looking for any possible excuse to cross, he comes across the "psyche gifted", former New Earth Army soldier, Lyn Cassidy (Clooney), and convinces him to let him accompany him into Iraq on a tremendously secret New Earth Army mission.

Switching between Cassidy's flashbacks of the training in The New Earth Army



and the at hand venture with Wilton, we are shown the Vietnam vet-turned-New-Age-Hippie, Bill Django (Jeff Bridges), as he trains the New Earth Army Soldiers to develop their "powers" and educates them in the ways of Mother Earth. Meanwhile, Cassidy and Wilton are kidnapped and lost in the desert as the flashbacks show a new character, Larry Hooper (Kevin Spacey), who had attempted to sabotage the New Earth Army and now has come back with a vengeance, all the while leading to the acidily hysterical climax of

Cassidy's mission.

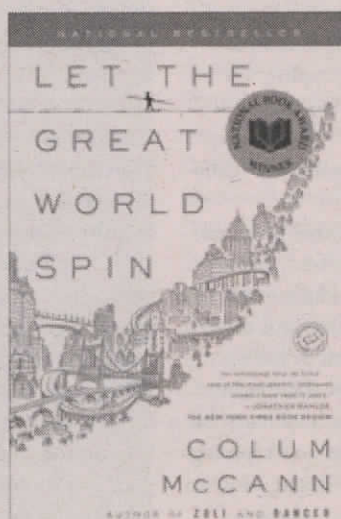
With a spirit that can be appreciated by SOAians, filled with hippie soldiers, secret government plans, and salutations to Mother Earth, *The Men Who Stare at Goats* is 93 minutes of absurd but amusing entertainment that can bring out oneness with Mother Nature while still intertwining a clever humor that keeps you chuckling long after the movie ends.

Let the Great World Spin masterfully weaves together the lives of diverse characters

By Wes Snell

What can be said of Colum McCann's latest novel *Let the Great World Spin* that hasn't already been said? As the recipient of the National Book Award, McCann's novel has garnered worldwide attention and praise as it is being translated into thirty languages. It is a dark novel that explores the texture at the fringes of light, an epic story about a fraying New York City in the 1970s. The story is built around tightrope walker Phillippe Petit, who traversed the air between the Twin Towers in 1974, but once his fleshy human dimensions are sketched, he serves as more of a symbol than an actual character in the storyline. In fact, in the book he isn't even named. McCann is more interested in the people below, looking up. He boldly dances around the heart of the

big city from the perspective of ten different characters, each an ambitious adventure in perspective and voice. The characters are diverse in range: an Irish priest living in the slums, an old prostitute, a Park Avenue judge, and his wife, a young computer-hacking soldier in Vietnam, a black woman from the South, a young disillusioned avant-garde artist, a Guatemalan nurse- each voice distinct, nuanced, and heavy with reality. McCann masterfully weaves the lives of these characters together in a great



web, each bound to the other through grief or loss of some kind. He paints scenes subtly; there is little drama in the action by itself but each carries significance in relation to the book as a whole. In this book brief eye contact or the simple sound of water running can be climactic. "Every now and then the city shook its soul out," he writes. "It assailed you with an image, or a day, or a crime, or a terror, or a beauty so difficult to wrap your mind around that you

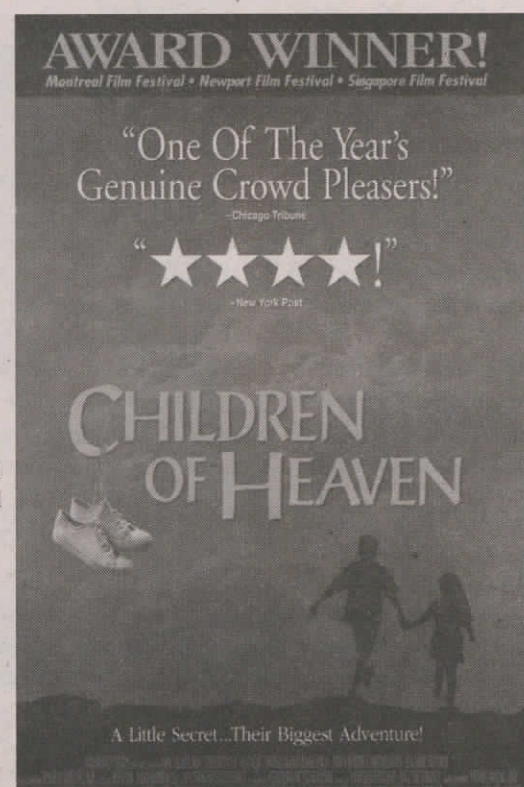
had to shake your head in disbelief." Like the conductor of a great symphony, McCann takes sounds that might sound cacophonous buried on top of each other - the sounds of a city - and delicately picks them apart, stacks them in a pattern that is kaleidoscopic and symmetric. Like the definition of a true artist, he draws beauty from chaos. He takes characters who are being crushed under the world and lets them fly. I think that's the point McCann is trying to make with this book: all of us are burdened with weight of some kind, we all have our struggles, but we still hope for that moment of weightlessness so beautifully and artistically rendered by Petit, and by extension McCann, and by extension all of us. Buy this book.

Children of Heaven is inspiring

By Samantha Dahabi

Majid Majidi's *Children of Heaven* breaks the mold of foreign films. Foreign films are usually thought to appeal to only a sophisticated and cultured audience, but *Children of Heaven* is best suited for all audiences. Forget that this film is set in a foreign land with an unfamiliar culture. Forget that the script is written in a language that you can't understand. These elements are only a small part of the story that will whisk you away and get you lost in the simplicity of the plot. *Children of Heaven* follows the story of Ali and Zahra and their quest to find a lost pair of shoes. In an attempt to hide the lost shoes from their parents, the brother and sister duo decide to share

one beat up pair of sneakers. This film gives an inside view of the life of a poor Iranian family and the innocence of young children. *Children of Heaven* opens your eyes to culture different from your own. A culture very much stereotyped because of its common appearance in American newsstands. *Children of Heaven* tells a story never broadcasted in the media. It can help to show the similarities and differences between American and Iranian culture. Our similarities are more than your local news lets on. We both share a class system which separates the rich from the poor. We both share the importance of fam-



ily relationships and religion. We often forget that people all over the world endure our same trials and triumphs. *Children of Heaven* forces its audience to examine their own lives. As Americans we wonder how children with so little can be content? We wonder what it means to live simply. This film reminds us to be thankful and not value our material possessions. It also reminds us the importance of strong family relationships. Next time you contemplate

viewing a foreign film think of all the benefits. Viewing foreign films exposes you to new and different cultures, languages, music and landscapes. It can contradict stereotypes and biases conjured up by news reports. You will become more respectful to those with values and morals that differ from your own. Foreign films encourage you to explore new places and create appreciations for the benefits that your own culture has to offer you. WARNING: *Children of Heaven* may cause a new outlook on life. You will leave this film a little happier and more appreciative. Now don't say I didn't warn you.

Random Etiquette: Movie Theaters

By K. Chaney Long



For the second time in about a week and a half I have suffered through people's blatant disregard for movie theatre etiquette. Personally, I don't think that proper movie theater behavior is something that needs to be spelt out, but apparently there are some people who are in dire need of it.

Many of my friends will attest to the fact that one of my biggest pet peeves is people talking during movies. I can't stand it. If you try to speak to me during a film

I will probably ignore you. Sorry. I simply can't stand chatter during films. Teenagers and children are usually the worst about this, but as I experienced last week, movie theater rudeness isn't reserved simply for the young. A friend and I were peacefully trying to watch a movie when two women in their mid to late sixties entered the theater. By the third preview, it was obvious that these women had some sort of disease where if they didn't keep speaking their brains might explode. At least I'm assuming that was their problem, because I can't think of any other reason why two adult women who seemed to have the mental capacity to drive

themselves to the Terrace, purchase movie tickets, and then buy popcorn could have the audacity to behave so ridiculously. I'm sorry, did that sound mean? I suppose I really can't stand movie theater talking! If an audience has emerged in a darkened room where pretty pictures are being projected on a big wall then, for the record, they haven't come to listen to you speak, so shut up!

Another problem I have at movie theaters is loud snack food. I know that this problem is almost impossible to avoid until the Nestle company starts packing their movie theater candy in silent, easy open cases, but that's still no excuse to be

obnoxious with your candy wrappers. I'm not saying don't eat candy. I'm just saying, if a film is in the middle of a really quiet scene perhaps that's not the time to go digging for your next piece of Buncha Crunch.

What I'm trying to say is, if you go to a movie theater, or any area where an audience has gathered for some form of entertainment, unless you're on the screen or performing on stage, that audience hasn't converged to pay any attention to you. So the next time you go to see a movie, just remember, you are not that special.

Is a technology takeover turning us into WALL-E World?

By Deborah Crocker



The people of the past would be appalled at the technological advances we have reached so far in 2009. In fact, they'd probably faint at the sight of little robots that move through our homes themselves, doing the vacuuming. Our high-end computers would frighten them out of their minds, since the only computers they can probably remember are the ones that were the size of small cars. Now we have computers that we take with us everywhere, handheld planners, and even robots to do the computing for us when we feel lazy.

But what will happen when we start to rely solely on technology? Will there eventually be little robots to carry our backpacks to and from school for us? Maybe we'll replace human employees with computer cashiers – oh, wait, we already have those; self checkouts. It's obviously not going to be long before all daily activities are replaced by robotics, and we end up like the unfortunate people of Earth in *Wall-E*. One day we just might find ourselves spending our lives in hoverchairs, ridiculously obese and unable to walk, hidden behind the Great Wall of Satellites and having robots at our beck and call. Future generations won't even know what grass or dirt or books are. The annoying thing is, computers and robots have to be constantly upgraded and repaired, which could lead to even more robots and computers to replace the old ones.

When we can't get online for more than two days, we become uncomfortable. We have the internet on our cell phones and

music players, although in my opinion the only thing worse than no internet is tiny internet. This writer was not amused by the fact that it takes about ten minutes to Google something on her sister's Blackberry.

What are the pros and cons of living one's life completely reliant on technology? Well, for starters, we used to have nothing but pencils and paper to write our homework on. Now we have computers, and most students spend about 95% of their time on the computer – not counting time for video games or Facebook. If you lose something on the computer, or if the computer decides to shut down in the middle of a project, it's gone forever, and you're left to scream and kick at the monitor in agony. In the time it takes a person to boot up the computer, sign on, wait for the machine to wake up, turn on Microsoft Word, set up MLA format, and fill in the titles and headings, they could have written a couple of paragraphs – headings, MLA, and all. So why do we claim that technology is faster? Maybe it's because we don't have to form the shape and style of every little letter when we're typing. Or perhaps we don't want to wait for that new movie to come out in theaters – we'd rather download a leaked version illegally (we really can be that impatient).

Internet dating is another phenomenon. Yes, sometimes it works. Yes, people get married through it. Yes, E-Harmony's happy-happy-joy-joy ads on television show several happy couples that claim to have found their One and Only over the internet. But do we know if these people stay married? How do you know these people aren't having terrible problems? Maybe they've got a lot in common, but there's more to relation-

ships than just, "Hey, I like pie." "Hey, I like pie, too!" "Let's get married!" Sadly, there are also 67-year-old men hiding behind the picture of an innocent-looking 15-year-old boy. Before you know it, the girl finds that her new boyfriend's request to meet her in real life ends up in disaster. Some sites take it even further – a custom-made avatar (virtual person) of your choice, whether it looks like the real you or not. What happened to going out for coffee, as yourself? And why must we pay real money to get virtual money? It's getting scary.

There are even sites you can visit to buy and look inside a new car. There are online classes you can take in college or high school that count as real classes. Most accidents occur because people are texting or playing on laptops while driving – or flying. Yes, flying. A couple of airplane pilots were fired and stripped of their licenses to fly because they missed their stop by about an hour. Since they ignored those who were trying to contact them, people assumed they had fallen asleep. But the flight attendant eventually was able to get their attention, although this was a huge embarrassment for the pilots, who claimed that they simply lost track of time. This isn't to say that they missed their stop because of technology, but because they were being influenced by it.

What if you had no intention of becoming connected to technology, but you found that banks wouldn't accept payments unless you made them over the internet? Maybe you won't be able to buy your wedding dress because the one you want is only sold online, and might take ages to get to you? Do you or anyone else you know spend hours upon hours leveling up in various

online role-playing games? Do your eyes start to prickle and bulge after two hours of staring at the screen? Since this is unfortunately happening to most people, why don't we stop? We indulge in this weird masochistic pleasure nearly every day, and it's all because we can't live without technology.

Of course, even as we program our robots and computers to become smarter each year, we still don't realize the danger. Once something is able to think for itself, there's no telling what it will do, and once computers are that intelligent, science-fiction doesn't lie – they will most likely try and control us. Perhaps it will happen tomorrow. Maybe in the next few centuries. We might not even be alive to see it happen. As of now, there are actual human-looking robots that can talk and sing, although their level of intelligence is not nearly as high as the androids and robots in *Artificial Intelligence* or *Wall-E*.

The future of technology both worries and excites me. We already can hardly function without computers, and when they break down, we have to either get it fixed (by spending hundreds) or sit and panic until we get to a new one. Even now, in 2009, technology has given us the interesting (albeit rather disturbing) ability to sit in front of the computer screen all day, and stay there. The only thing we'd have to do is order our meals – and we can do that online too.

My advice to computer addicts: there's a leathery, rectangular thing sitting on your desk. See it? The one with the words on the front? It's got paper in between, and it's got a light coating of dust. This is called a book. Everyone should try it (and no, reading books online does not count).

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What are you going to miss from the old school?

Compiled by Brittany Ropp and Samantha Dahabi



"All the stuff on the walls."
Caroline Tweety, 8th Theatre



"I like how the campus is separated in buildings."
Logan Butler, 8th Vocal



"Knowing my way around."
Haydon Strable, 9th Piano



"Walking across the field in the rain."
Isis Jenkins, 10th Piano



"All the artistic elements on the senior walls."
Lizz McMichael, 10th Vocal



"The theatre shop with all the junk in the back."
Austin Cope, 11th Theatre



"All the intimacy and the sincerity of the campus."
John Crimminger, 12th Band



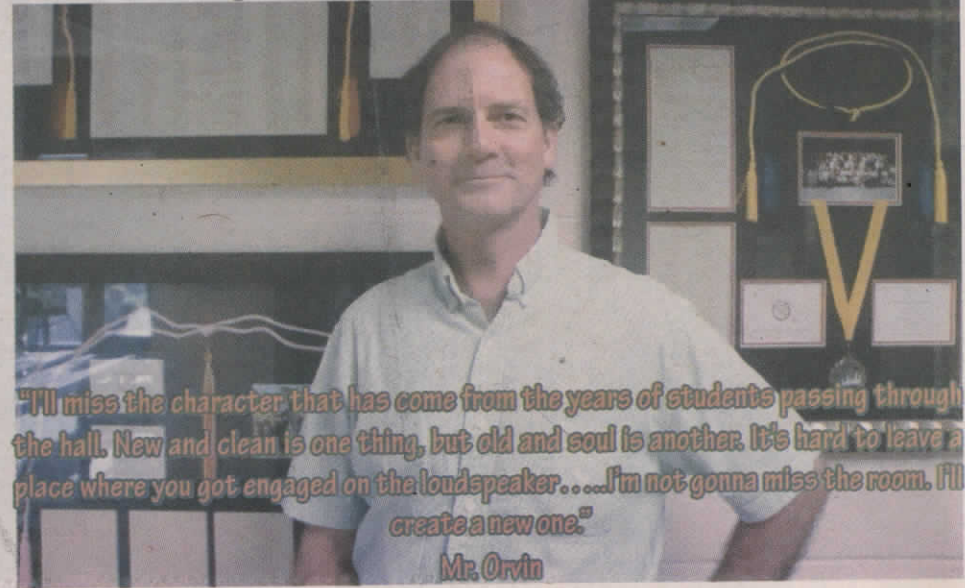
"All the broken down appliances everywhere."
Tyler Dubose, 12th Band



"The camaraderie that the facility challenges brought."
Mrs. Nichols



"The funky charm. Painting the walls is always fun."
Mr. Moore



"I'll miss the character that has come from the years of students passing through the hall. New and clean is one thing, but old and soul is another. It's hard to leave a place where you got engaged on the loudspeaker....I'm not gonna miss the room. I'll create a new one."
Mr. Orvin

SCHOOL SPORTS

SOA students show off their competitive sides by joining their home schools' teams

By David Sass

When most people think of SOA, they think of artsy kids. They don't think of hardcore runners who write and paint, or solid linebackers who act, or volleyball players who dance and play instruments. And truth be told, it's hard to blame them outright for such thoughts; we are a bit lacking of sports teams here at SOA. But just because there aren't any teams here doesn't mean that there are no athletes. In fact, there are quite a few spread across the spectrum of fall sports, which include cross country, tennis, volleyball, foot-



Sophomore Lucy Rummler

cola, **Lucy Rummler** and **Felix Hadstein** all ran for Wando. When prompted about managing her major with her running, Lucy, a sophomore Visual Artist, remarked, "I had more trouble juggling my running with my homework than I did with my major."

On November 7th, Lauren DiNicola, a senior Creative Writer, came in fourth place after running the 5-kilometer (3.1 miles) race with an impressive time of 19:05, helping to lead the Wando Girls cross country

Leanne, a junior Piano major, compounded this by saying, "It was difficult practicing piano sometimes because I was playing tennis almost everyday."

Angel Pope and **Kristin Clark** played volleyball this year for Burke and West Ashley, respectively. "This was the first time I've played volleyball, and also the first time that Burke has had a volleyball team in over twenty years," said Angel, a senior Band major. Despite her unfamiliarity with the sport, Angel quickly caught on and improved so much in the two weeks before her first game that she would end up starting in every match. Kristin, a sophomore Dance major, wasn't as lucky. "It was so difficult to juggle my major with my



Sophomore Kristen Clark

team to win the state cross country championship after a 33-year drought. "It feels so great to have won. There's nothing like being state champs, especially after how hard the whole team worked," she commented. Lauren had not been ranked in the top fifteen prior to the race, making her placing fourth all the more outstanding. "I was absolutely surprised at how well I did. Up until then, I hadn't really been racing all too well, which I believe was because I had low iron levels."

This fall, a handful of students from SOA, **Hailey Bowers**, **Caitlin Newton**, **Leanne Sullivan** and **Grace Engle**, played tennis for dif-

ferent schools, including James Island Charter and Wando. Caitlin, a sophomore Dance major who plays for Wando, said, "[Playing tennis] is great cross training, but it does mean I can't focus fully on either my major or tennis."

sport that I was put on the Junior Varsity team because I couldn't make it to the Varsity practice on time," lamented Kristin.

Football season went on this year with help from SOA students **J.J. Baldwin**, **Kenya Singleton**, **Michael McKelvey**, **Aaron Charpia** and **Eric Mappus**. Kenya, a junior Theatre major who was on the offensive line for Stall, remarked, "While my team may not have done the best this season, having only won two games, I am proud to say that my quarterback never got sacked from my side all season long." A rather impressive student to note is Michael McKelvey, a senior enrolled here in the new Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing major, played football for St. John's).

Finally, half a dozen girls here at SOA have been cheerleaders this fall. **Vika Balyasnikova**, **Caroline Britt**, **Senior Lauren DiNicola** displays her medal for running



Senior Angel Pope

Julia Willson were part of the cheerleading team for West Ashley. "It was really busy during football season, but now that it's over, we're getting ready for basketball season," said Julia, a senior Strings major.

With the fall sports season all wrapped up, everyone is getting ready for the winter sports, which includes basketball and wrestling.



Sophomore Caitlin Newton

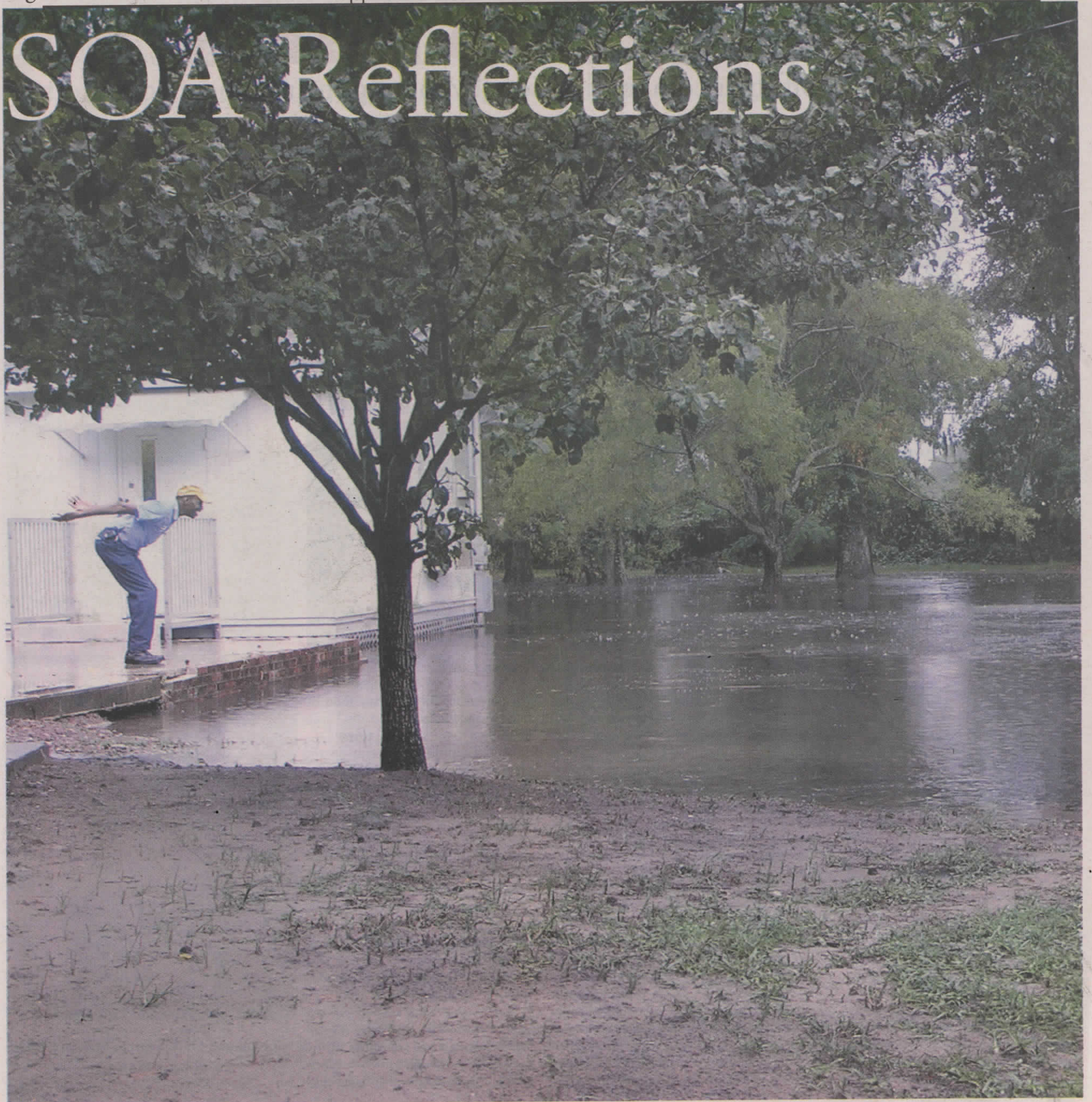
ball and cheerleading.

While they might not be the most numerous, the few students from SOA who ran for the Wando cross country team certainly helped make a difference. **Lauren DiNi-**

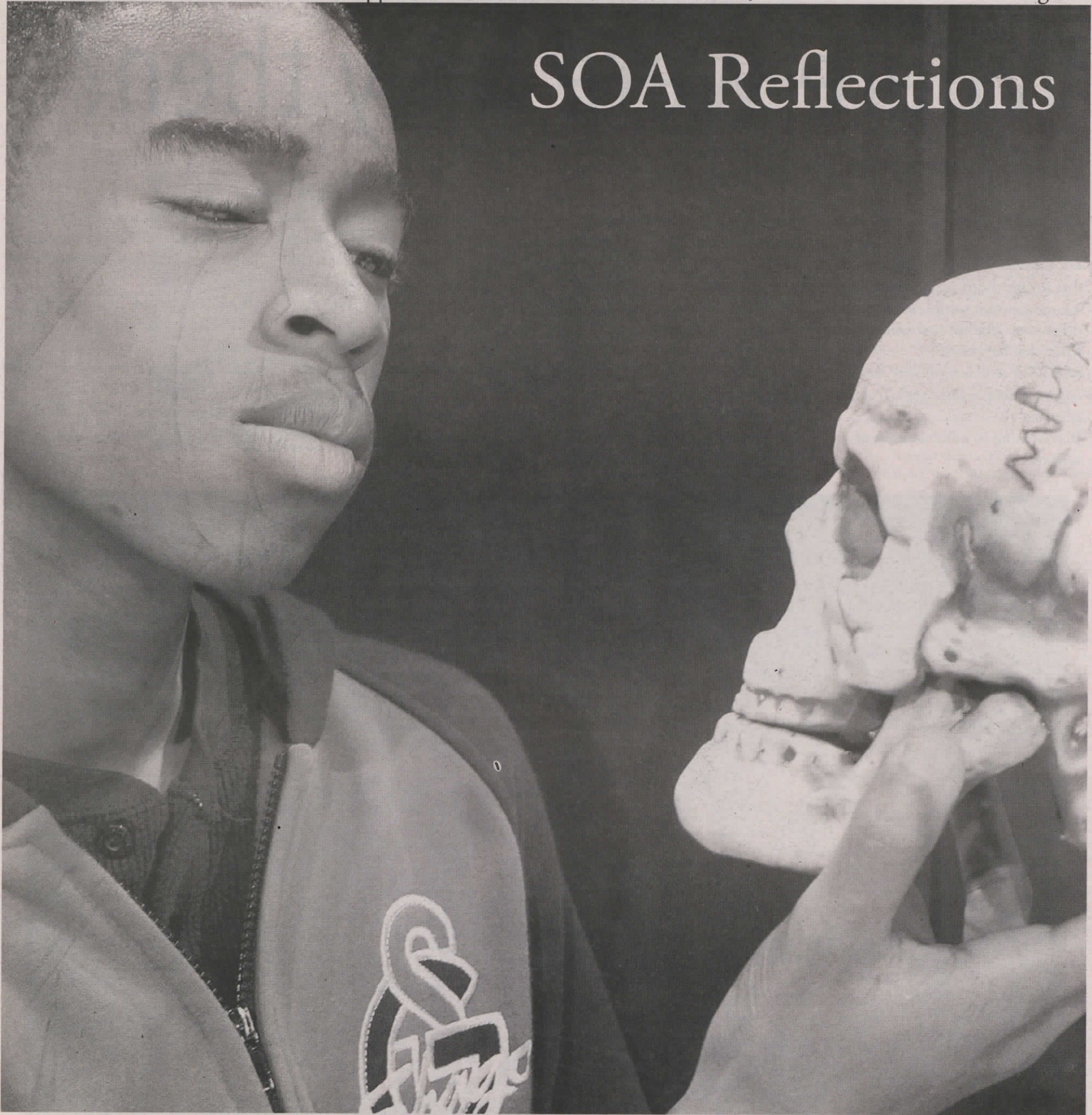


Senior Lauren DiNicola displays her medal for running

SOA Reflections



SOA Reflections



Where were they then?

Applause advisor looks back

By Alek Mihok

Alek Mihok: *Tell me about where you grew up...*

Dr. Cusatis: It's an ongoing process that for me didn't really begin gaining momentum until I was about thirty-five. I'm not sure where I was when that happened.

AM: *What were some of your favorite hobbies besides reading infinite stacks of novels?*

JC: Listening to infinite stacks of records.

AM: *Before college, what other professions did you have in mind?*

JC: Pizza maker.

AM: *What was the first novel you read that had a true impact on your life?*

JC: It wasn't a novel.

It was a fable. "The Tortoise and the Hare" struck me early as a sound al-

legorical assessment of human folly.

The lesson is always interpreted as "slow and steady wins the race," but I think Aesop wanted us to consider what loses the race.

AM: *You've done some writing of your own; what do you enjoy writing most?*

JC: Literary criticism is what I like best. Song-

writing is second.



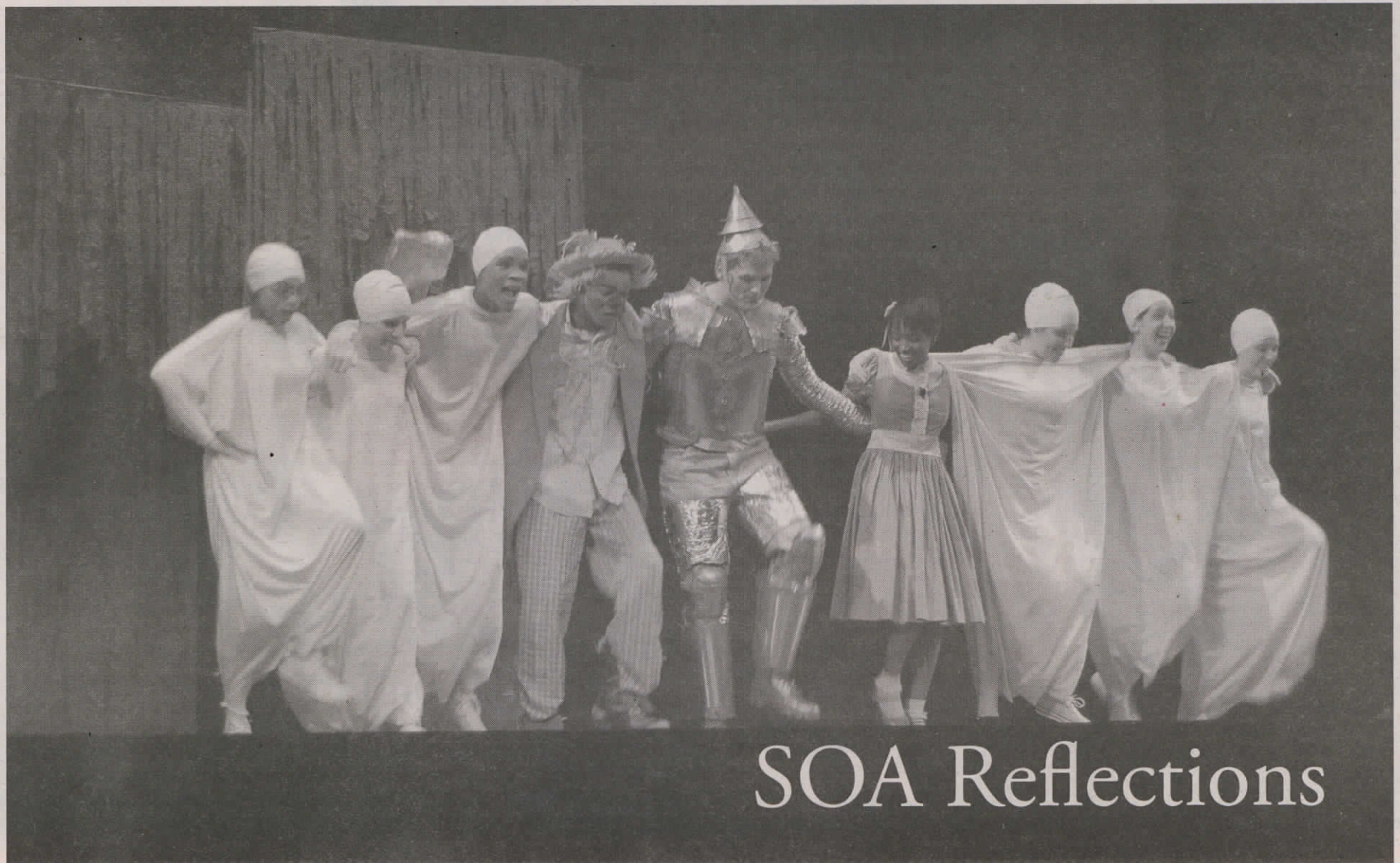
Dr. Cusatis, age six.

AM: *I know that you have a huge admiration for Bob Dylan and his music, why was he so inspirational to you?*

JC: Check out his new video for "Must be Santa," and you'll understand.

AM: *What moved you to be an English major, then an English teacher?*

JC: An attraction to language, I guess. And summers off, I'm sure.



SOA Reflections



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— C. G. Jung

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SOA graduation speaker Colum McCann wins National Book Award

By Wes Snell



Colum McCann with senior Lauren DiNicola after discussing his work with rising seniors

In November, Colum McCann won the National Book Award for his latest novel *Let the Great World Spin*, a harrowing and lyrical novel about New York in the 1970's. *New York Times* columnist Johnathan Mahler called the novel "one of the most electric, profound novels I have read in years. Like a great pitcher in his prime, McCann is constantly changing speeds, adopting different voices, tones and narrative styles as he shifts between story lines." The book bridged the gap between literary and popular and became a national bestseller. Judges hailed it as a "gravity-defying feat...an hallucinatory portrait of a decaying New York City, and offers through his generosity of spirit and lyrical gifts an ecstatic vision of the human courage required to stay

aloft above the ever-yawning abyss." McCann, famous in Ireland and Western Europe, has not garnered much popularity here in the States until now. His new book signals a turning point in his career, a sign of great things to come.

You may know Colum McCann as the guest speaker at last year's graduation ceremony. Who would have guessed that humble, bright-eyed man pounding the podium and passionately endorsing our school would go on to win one of the most prestigious writing awards in the country? Not to steal the attention away from our graduates (2009, woot!), but that's a big deal. Historic.

And this was not random happenstance. The relationship we have with McCann extends beyond his recent fame; it is a friendship kindled over the course of several years.

12th grade English teacher Dr. Cusatis met Colum McCann at USC in the fall of 1997 when the author spoke to his fiction-writing class while touring for his first book, a collection of short stories titled *Fishing the Sloe-black River*. Dr. Cusatis gave McCann a copy of his CD April Days, and years later was asked by McCann for permission to use one of his songs in the independent film *Beautiful Kid*, featuring his close friend and mentor the late Frank McCourt, author of *Angela's Ashes*, to whom McCann dedi-

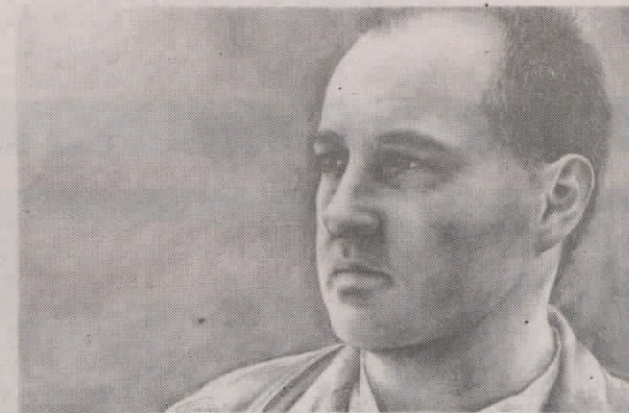
cated his award. "I think he's dancing upstairs," said the author regarding McCourt, who died in June.

Dr. Cusatis began teaching his AP students the author's short stories, and then *This Side of Brightness*, a novel about a homeless man's journey in New York City. He recently completed the first critical analysis of McCann, *Understanding Colum McCann*, scheduled for publication in the fall of 2010. His students have interviewed McCann since 2006 about his novels and short stories, and last year he came to SOA for three days, attending the award ceremony and speaking to the rising seniors about his short story "Everything in this Country Must" and its film version. I was there and remember his intelligence, attentiveness, and the respect he had for us budding artists.

At the graduation ceremony he delivered an inspired speech. Talking of the meaning of art in relation to our mission, he said, "We create art because all the stories need to be told over and over and over again, to speak to and with our pasts, to find the tenderness in the everyday... To defeat logic, to question the facts, to inhabit contradiction, to muffle mediocrity, to throw off a glow in the dark, to make two plus two equal five for once, to create a place

that never existed before...All these things that we saw tonight, they've never existed before. And these young people have brought them into existence. They've created something entirely new. How beautiful is that?" Here is a man whose genuineness and generosity are revealed not only through his eloquence, but by his actions, by his efforts to come to our school and share that moment in our personal histories and make us better for it.

At press time, McCann was meeting with director J. J. Abrams to plan a film adaptation of *Let the Great World Spin*.

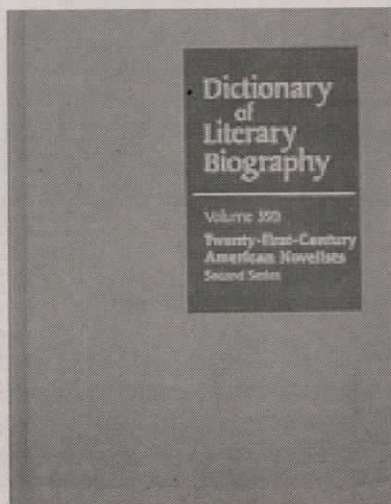


A portrait by 2009 graduate Anastasia Timinia that was presented to McCann at graduation

SOA continues correspondence with author Donn Pearce

By Wes Snell

SOA has always had an affinity with the arts beyond campus limits. Over the past ten years our English classes have hosted various guests and interviews, our visual artists have brought in local artists for special workshops, and every year our senior Creative Writers are paired with published novelists and



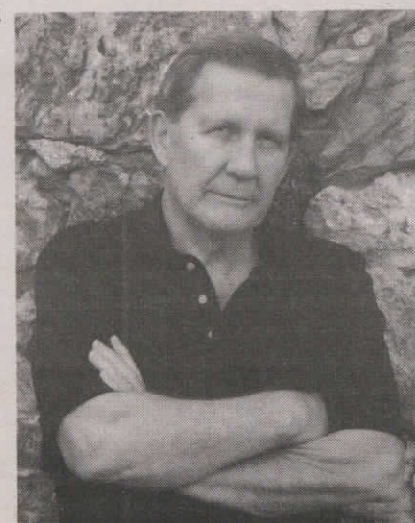
poets in the community who serve as mentors for the arduous task of publishing a book. We understand the importance of getting outside the

academic paradigm and into the real world.

One figure in this pantheon of inspiring artists is Donn Pearce. The beginning of SOA's relationship with Pearce is a lucky one. In March of 2003 Dr. Cusatis mailed Pearce a letter concerning questions his students had raised regarding *Cool Hand Luke*. The notoriously reclusive Pearce replied in a deep and thorough letter that cleaved open the nuances of the book: the existential overtones, pagan and Christian imagery, the semiautobiographical elements, and other symbols. During the following years Dr. Cusatis visited Pearce at his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and brought dozens of students' books for signing, and Pearce generously obliged. For all his ex-convict swagger and tough exterior, he is a man touched by the love this school has for his work. Dr. Cusatis and

his students also conducted several interviews with Pearce about his work.

In September Dr. Cusatis published the first literary analysis of Pearce's work in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography: Twenty-first Century Novelists*. The dictionary was referred to by the Library Journal as "hands-down the best overall literary reference work ever published, a proverbial diamond as big as the Ritz." He compiled much of the article from interviews his students conducted with the author over the past seven years. "It's important

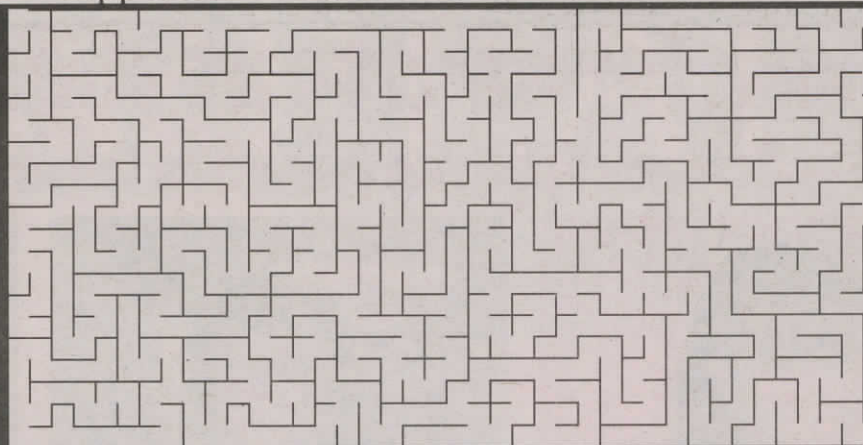


Donn Pearce photographed by Dr. Cusatis in 2005

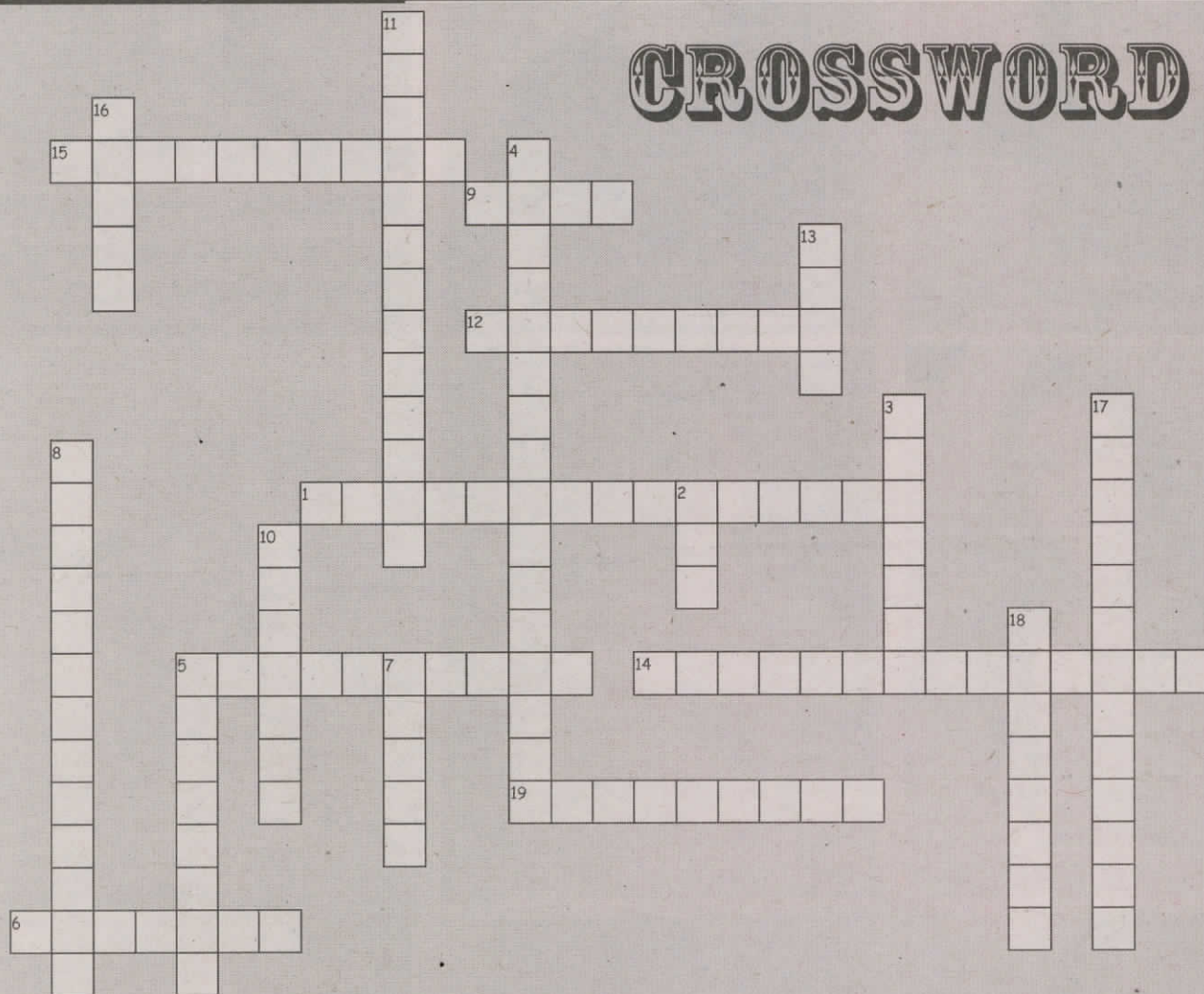
for teachers to keep the work of great – if unsung – authors alive by offering it to their students," he said. The dictionary is available in libraries worldwide.

The most recent SOA interview with Pearce, held in November, covered topics from the art of writing to religion and philosophy to prison life, and each answer was considered and colorful. From a personal standpoint, talking to an established author brought a new dimension to my work, gave it an element of reality and made me consider what my own impact might one day be.

GAMES AND PUZZLES



CROSSWORD


Across:

1. The school we'll be merging with in 2010
5. He teaches Journalism and AP English.
6. He's cute, yellow, and has a lightning-bolt-shaped tail.
9. It sounds like a telephone at 3:30.
12. What you should be doing in class instead of figuring out this puzzle.
14. This teacher encourages the Summer Reading Celebration
15. You need this type of footwear on wet days.
19. Do not anger these critters. They can knock branches down when they're displeased.

Down:

2. The brand of computer used in Music Tech
3. The elusive (and cute!) animals that live under the trailers
4. We beat them if they eat our money.
5. This teacher lets us play with chemicals.
7. What we all tend to do in class if we've stayed up till 2am on school nights
8. Final project for SOA seniors
10. SOA'S 2008 school play
11. A dance held at the SC Aquarium.
13. People give these to each other every day to show they care.
16. There are many of these after a good rain on campus.

HOROSCOPES

Aries

[Mar. 21–Apr. 19]

Take a trip to Antarctica and set it up as a totalitarian government. [V8.2]

Taurus

[Apr. 20–May 20]

Your Xbox Live: Halo 2 girlfriend is really a hairy guy in his mid 30's. I've got two words for you: GO OUTSIDE. [V7.5]

Gemini

[May 21–June 21]

Strange things are afoot at the Circle K. [V9.7]

Cancer

[June 22–July 22]

Your milkshake may bring all the boys to the yard, but it also brings hundreds of nasty sugar ants. [V5.6]

Leo

[July 23–Aug. 22]

Beware of tall, longhaired men with coffee. [V7.3]

Virgo

[Aug. 23–Sept. 22]

Magic and dreams will be all yours. Follow your heart. [V1.2]

Libra

[Sept. 23–Oct. 23]

Don't pour your unwanted chemicals down the drain – think of the mole people! [V10.2]

Scorpio

[Oct. 24–Nov. 21]

Try to look past the differences you have with your hamster and love him for the hamster he is, and not the hamster you want him to be. [V4.7]

Sagittarius

[Nov. 22–Dec. 21]

I know you have been worrying about whether or not your dancing is still drawing a crowd... No worries, keep dropping it like it's hot. [V6.5]

Capricorn

[Dec. 22–Jan. 19]

Relationships these days are too risky; get a pre-nup before you go steady. [V8.5]

Aquarius

[Jan. 20–Feb. 18]

You were born under a lucky star. Unfortunately, your star gambled its wealth away and is now smoldering in a far corner of the universe. [V7.7]

Pisces

[Feb. 19–Mar. 20]

It's the time to show your crush how you really feel! Let them know you care by following them home and burning your name into their lawn. [V10.3]

What are you looking forward to at the new school?

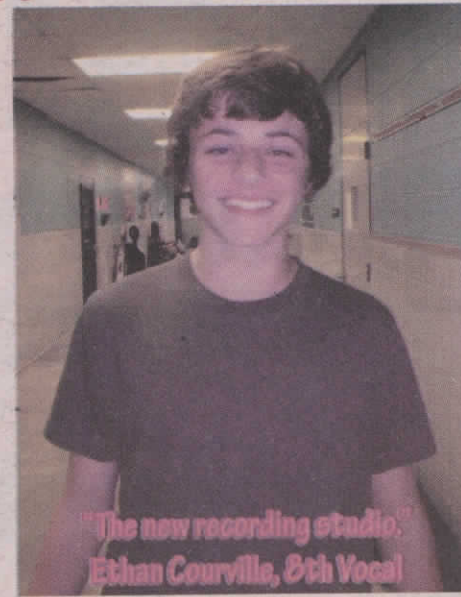
Compiled by Brittany Ropp and Samantha Dahabi



"Closer Bathrooms."
Michael Johnson, 6th Vocal



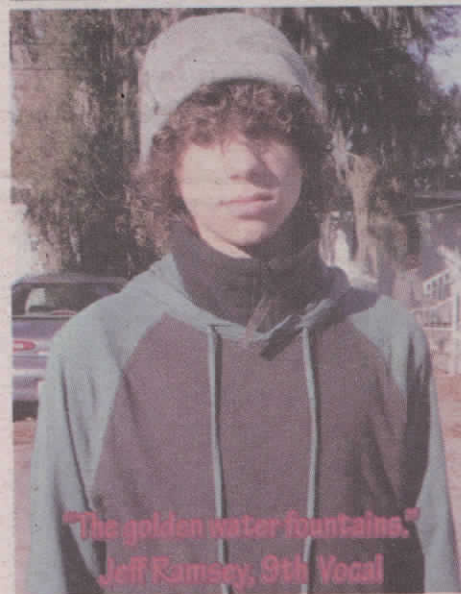
"Getting new classrooms."
Anna Holloway, 8th Dance



"The new recording studio."
Ethan Courville, 8th Vocal



"The new art room because it's all windows and all natural light comes in and no nasty roaches or rats."
Sage Biering, 9th Visual Arts



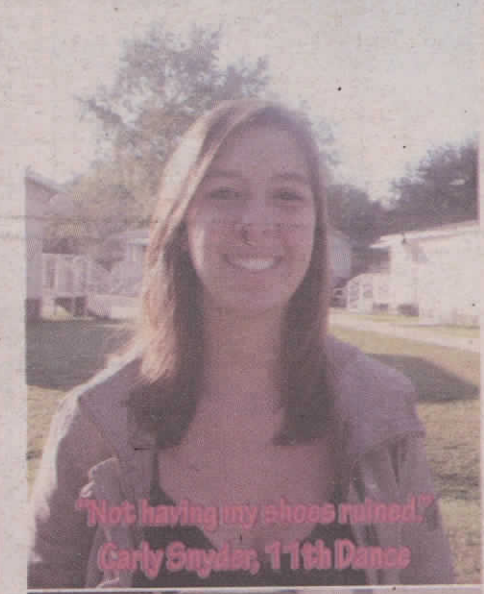
"The golden water fountains."
Jeff Ramsey, 9th Vocal



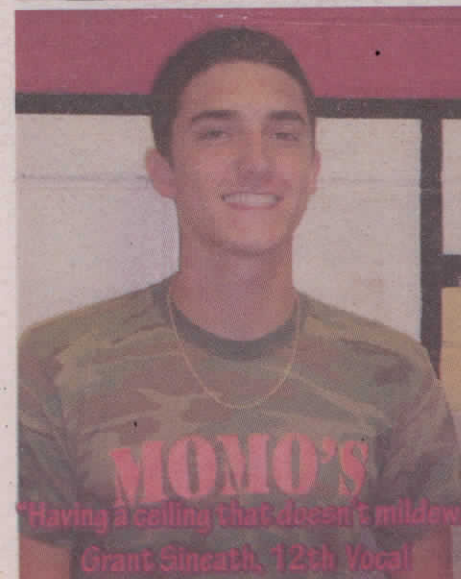
"The new piano!"
Jillian Campbell, 10th Piano



"The new auditorium."
Chetson Dangerfield, 11th Theatre



"Not having my shoes ruined."
Carly Snyder, 11th Dance



"Having a ceiling that doesn't mildew."
Grant Sineath, 12th Vocal



"It's not really going to be our school."
Amber Murphy, 12th Band



"Smart Boards."
Mr. Lindgren



"No strange smells."
Ms. Brenda Moore