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May 2020

PAUSE



To read the stories of the cover, this photo and all the dividers in this magazine, head over to [HHSToday.com](https://www.hhstoday.com). | photo courtesy asher montgomery; cover photo by tammy nguyen

Letter from the editor

We always intended to publish an April paper. That was the plan. It would be our last issue, we would make it a good one, and the seniors who were leaving could leave knowing that their jobs were done.

That plan was somewhat interrupted.

When we first heard that school was canceled until April 15, I knew that that plan would need to be discarded. We still needed another issue. In fact, I was determined to have one. I had done 13 other issues and yeah, it had been stressful, but there was no way I was going to drop the ball on this one. Not on my last edition as editor-in-chief.

So, we decided to publish a magazine. There were a couple of reasons for this: Magazines mark a special edition of the Red & Black, and we should definitely acknowledge that the circumstances that we all find ourselves in are nothing short of special (perhaps not in the positive sense of the word). The second reason, and probably the most important one, is that we care about our community, the one that we've spent years cultivating.

This is what our community looks like: Stacks of newspapers in Room 506, the smell of newsprint in the air and ink smudging on our fingers as we grab stacks to distribute. It looks like hand delivering an issue to our principal, Gary Brady. Like discarded pages fluttering around the H Patio after a particularly rowdy distribution session at C lunch. It looks like newspapers stacked at Spaddy's, next to your morning coffee. It looks like the Instagram stories that shout out: "Look guys! I made it in the paper."

That community is who we are. And we couldn't let it down.

So, we wanted to talk about you. We wanted to look beyond the loss of taste and smell associated with COVID-19, we wanted to stop barraging you with the latest pandemic statistics, we wanted to tell stories. And that's what we did.

In this issue, you'll find personal essays from us. Yes, we're breaking the fourth wall now. No rules in a pandemic (but please wear your masks outside, though). You'll find stories of students who are working on the front lines, who are rediscovering hobbies, or who are simply just coping.

You'll find letters to the Class of 2020, to the disease itself, to everything it has made us lose. What we really hope you'll find is some semblance of closure. These pages don't hold prom or a graduation or a last week of school, but they do hold a kind of certainty. The Red & Black has been printed for the students of Hillsborough since 1889, and we wanted you to know that not even a pandemic could hold us back from that.

Not even when our life was on **pause**.

Because that's another thing that was worthy of some reporting. It feels like the apocalypse. Like everything we know has been ripped out of our hands, our daily lives, our routines. Sometimes it feels like there's no hope in getting it back. But we wanted this issue to tell you that we will.

Nothing is over forever. Nothing has stopped. We are all just **pausing**. We are **pausing** from the normal, from walks down hallways lined with red brick, from hearing the quote of the day and seeing our friends.

We'll get it back. Hopefully, the stories that we have in these 36 pages will help you mourn, laugh, be angry, be determined. We hope that this issue shows you that it's not over, that the community you've grown to love and rely on hasn't abandoned you.

And on a personal note, I hope that my final edition doesn't let any of you down. Because that community I talked about earlier? I owe a lot to that, as does everyone in Room 506.

So, for one final time: Happy reading.

Marin Fehl

Marin Fehl
Editor-in-Chief

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
WEB EDITOR
PAGE EDITORS

MARIN FEHL
JADEN SHEMESH
ASHER
MONTGOMERY,
WILLOW
MORTON, REEMA
PATEL, KYLIE
SMITH,
CAROLINA
TORTORELLI
MICAH ARBELO,
ALEX CROFT,
JAVIER CUEVAS,
PATRICK
MCCURDY,
ADRIANNA
RODRIGUEZ,
EDILAWIT
SEYOUM, RAHUL
YALAMANCHILI,
MEREDITH YEN
JOE HUMPHREY,
MJE

STAFF WRITER

ADVISER

[HHSTODAY.COM](https://www.hhstoday.com)

REWIND

Let's face it, this year was a lot. There were football games, hall sweeps and band performances. Hours spent studying at Whatever Pops, swinging by Spaddy's to grab that morning cup of Joe, racing to get to the black gate before it got locked for the day. There is also a pandemic. Yeah, that's a big one. We're all coping, we're all doing our best. But here's what we want to talk about instead: We want to talk about what we miss. We want to write about the friends we can't see right now, about the times we wished we could relive. In this section, we're going to look back. Take it slow. Work through our feelings. Because hey, even though life is on pause right now, we can still rewind through all the times before this.

photo by david diaz

DAREL

why is it i love school? you wonder why i love school, a prison of fake smiles, friends and drama, whose chant for the finish drags me to keep attending, the indescribable amount of stress it brings is more than i've ever encountered. and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

you wonder why it is i love school, i love to be meaninglessly dragged into drama against my will, i love watching people fight over nonessential reasons, i love to see their dearest friends recording and witnessing their buddy get kicked out of school, and when a question emerges about their presence at the altercation the friend acts as if he needs to be in school more and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

you wonder why it is i love school, i love stressing over if my girlfriend is having second thoughts on our relationship, i love the feelings of butterflies in my stomach, i love the feeling of not being able to text my lover while in class with out being told "PUT THE PHONE AWAY DAREL!" and when i go to class dejected because of my squabble with her and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

i love the pressure of being embarrassed to answer a question out loud, the fear of being intimidated by classmates for being dumb i love the thought of the girl i liked guffawing at me in her cute little corner i love being asked to try again after i have gotten the answer wrong, just to be tormented again and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

you wonder why it is i love school, and why i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

it's because i'm a teenager.

poem and photo by darel williams

WILLIAMS



On his 18th birthday, over 25 cars full of Jaden Shemesh's friends drove by his house so he could celebrate while socially distanced. | photo courtesy jaden shemesh

Jaden Shemesh is keeping things **moving**

Senior year is stressful, fun, chaotic, nostalgic, disappointing, satisfying and 100 other emotions, but most prominently, senior year is memorable. Quarantine, at least personally, has been stressful, fun chaotic, nostalgic, disappointing, satisfying and 100 other emotions, and similarly, is going to be a prominent memory for the rest of my life. Therefore, it is arguably fitting that this would accompany the end of my senior year.

Like many, I am currently meandering through a range of emotions: apathy, joy, appreciation, dissatisfaction, anger, depression and more (sometimes all at once). On some days I am productive, but on most I am not.

I'm happy to be around my sisters and parents most of the time, but sometimes I want to lock my bedroom door and never leave. I binge-watched "Tiger King" in about a day, but most days I feel too bored to even watch anything. Some days have structure, others consist solely of me in my thoughts. I usually tell myself, "My homework will eventually get done, but not tonight." My mind goes everywhere and nowhere, all at once.

At first, I pictured myself being productive. I researched free college classes I could take and new hobbies to pick up, but eventually I just dropped all of that for YouTube. Soon after, however, my dad's small business

needed help. I began devoting much of my time to helping him. My boredom turned to lingering stress.

In addition to helping my dad, I started delivering for DoorDash. Ensuring that my sealed mask, gloves, sanitizer and wipes are always prepared in my car was a hassle, but it has become my new normal. The job is much less stressful, but it can be very frustrating to hear so many comments such as "thank you for helping out," and then get no tips from the very same people.

Some days I make way more than minimum wage, but other days it feels I'm wasting my time. Nonetheless, it keeps me busy and mostly happy, so I'm thankful for having the job.

My experiences haven't all been so gloomy, however. I'd like to briefly share one positive moment that has come out of this quarantine. Not many would picture their ideal 18th birthday as one without any friends, trapped at home with a family they've grown somewhat annoyed with, but that was how I envisioned April 6. I kept putting off the thought of how sad the day would be, and I kept trying to be the positive, yet slightly passive aggressive Jaden that people recognize.

However, when I walked outside of my house to find a parade of over 25 cars of

friends lined up in my neighborhood, I had never felt more loved. Friends from the last 18 years of my life showed up to wish me a happy birthday (even as the police were called on them)!

If that wasn't enough, my parents and sisters decorated our backyard and threw me a "Club Quarantine" birthday party. It was truly the best birthday I've ever had, and I'm sure I'll never forget the amount of love and warmth I felt during such a dreary, tragic time in our lives.

In moments like these, where we are most distant from one another, we have the opportunity to connect with those around us and feel more loved than ever. Rather than stay isolated (virtually), reach out to that friend you haven't spoken to in a few years. Ask your second cousin how she's doing.

Earth has given us as close to a pause on life as we're going to get, and it is OK to feel whatever you're feeling. But don't forget that there is still a whole lot of love on this planet and you have an opportunity to spread it.

On a less emotional note, DM me @jaden_shemesh for cooking recipes because I've become addicted to air frying in the last few weeks!

essay by jaden shemesh



I've been told I'm intimidating. Tenacious. Tiny but mighty. Whatever you want to call it. I've always been ambitious, always had a plan, always wanted to forge ahead. I've also always been told I couldn't do it. And I've fought that. I've fought that like hell.

I don't like to admit it, but fighting it has hurt. But I've been determined. I've done it. Unfortunately, there's something about this situation that has made me realize that I completely, utterly, irrevocably have had the fight beaten out of me.

I knew this would be hard. When school was canceled until April 15, then May 1, then forever, I knew it would be tough. So, I sat down a minute. I sat down and I thought: "How the hell am I going to sit here and still be ready to keep going when this is over?"

I didn't like to think that I could give up. I mean, after a while, how hard can the constant fight really be? "Honey, you've done it for 18 years already. Don't be lazy." That's what you're probably thinking. To that I must say, maybe you've never tried to remove Caesar weeds from a garden.

Here's how it goes: Caesar weeds are invasive. I mean, those things are really icky. They have these tiny sharp burs that come off and stick to your clothes, shoes, hair. So, when you go to remove Caesar weeds, you are in for a frustrating journey. You pull the plant out by the roots, but then about 400 tiny burs stick to your clothes. They always find your hair, too. Even if they aren't near it.

But, they're invasive. So, you keep going until you've removed them, and your hair

looks like an entire species of birds has decided to nest in it because all those burs are stuck in there.

And after two hours of combing your hair, you just throw your hands up. The burs are just part of your new hairstyle now. Take it or leave it.

That's a bit what this whole COVID-19 induced quarantine thing has been. You really get going and you think it's not so bad, only a couple of burs are stuck to you and you still have to keep removing those weeds. Then, after a while, you're covered in more and more burs.

Your parents start screaming at you, at each other, at the sky. After a while you start to realize that you won't go to the college of your dreams. That you probably won't be going anywhere at all.

You begin to realize that there's no point of struggling to remove all those burs from your hair if they're just determined to stay stuck. And that the reasons you've always had to fight are in that house and in your head and you're just stuck there. That's when you say, OK those burs are just a cute new hairstyle.

That's been my thought process.

I started this quarantine ready to keep going. Then, the reality of my situation hit me like a train: There is absolutely no amount of determination that could make any of this change.

I wanted to write something uplifting. I wanted to write something that told you all to hang in there. That if we just keep fighting, things will get better. But I started writing this

and I was crying.

And the reason I was crying was because I knew that I had reached my limit. I had thrown my hands up, stopped fighting.

So, who am I, the crying girl, to write something that tells you that you gotta just keep on chugging along? After all, I'm certainly not doing that.

To prove it to you, I'm writing this with tears and snot streaming down my face. I'm doing it curled around my laptop like it'll somehow bring me some support. Yeah, real graceful.

It's hard to imagine a reality where I'll want to just pick up the towel and start fighting to achieve things again. I don't know if I can. Not that it's really up to me.

Here's a little more honesty: the sheer inevitability of this situation is enough to make anyone feel the same way as me. I don't think this makes us weak. And at first, because I'm used to always going, I thought that me stopping was the weakest thing I could do. Then, I realized that I'm not stopping. I am just pausing.

Just like our life is. Because maybe, when this whole thing is over, when I have a chance to hit play again, I'll feel like I really can keep chugging along. It's hard to say, but I think it's possible.

For now, though, the reality is that I'm just a girl crying around her laptop. I'm just leaving those Caesar weed burs in my hair. Maybe that's OK.

essay and photo by marin fehl



In 2010, my older sister was in her sophomore year at Hillsborough. That same year my mom allowed her to go to her first football game, with one condition: she take me with her.

I had never really visited Hillsborough, so I didn't know what to expect. After pulling up on Osborne Avenue it was beautiful, this huge Victorian castle with its Gothic curbs and pointed arches stood in a haze of smoke and bright lights deeply contrasted with the orange and blue dusk.

The highlights of that night were the specs of light that shined on the marching bands silver uniform buttons and the capes of the drum majors in full swing during the drum major entrance, the smell of burnt cheese fries that dried my throat. In that moment though, all that mattered was that I fell in love with everything involving the Big Red, or as they called it a lot back then, the legendary Dog Pound.

I fell in love with the way the drums vibrated my face. I knew that this school was

now the love of my life. I just had to be an alumna. "Be a part of something bigger" was the drum majors' saying.

Fast forwarding, I was an even more awkward freshman but I didn't care, all I wanted was to sit in the H Patio taking in the beauty of the architectural design. I was finally in but those precious moments have completely flashed by.

Now, I'm a senior with so little time left. Time that I won't be able to spend in my alma mater and it tears my heart out.

No one really understands how in love I am with this school, with its history and culture.

I know it's melodramatic, but hearing the band play from the outside is not the same as dealing with loose fitting uniforms that aren't yours and the drum major having to make an announcement of "where is jacket number 97?" and the fact that this one has a Gatorade stain even though we're not allowed to drink colored drinks.

But time kept moving.

Now, there's a virus that's killing thousands and you will never get to stand in the band room as a student, a part of a family.

All I can do is cling to old memories of singing showtunes in the back of the bus with my family.

It may be immature and inappropriate to lack sympathy for dying humans but how can we "stand together" isolated in our homes unable to be together. There's no pain worse to me than not being able to be inside the halls of Hillsborough.

I wasn't angry on Saturday, April 18, when I found out we probably won't graduate until July or, even worse, virtually. I was overcome with grief that I won't spend another day in school. Ever.

If there's one thing that's hurt me most during these dark times, it's mainly that I won't be able to have just one last day at Hillsborough High School.

essay by yaritza cortez
photo by luis rodriguez



Overseas, it was still **normal**

It was almost March 12, the day I would be going to London. Every day my parents would turn on the television and more cases of the virus would be reported. Along with that, racism against Asians increased.

My friends and teachers thought it was dangerous for me to travel during the pandemic. However, my parents had planned this trip since last January and my siblings and I were all eager to go. Luckily enough, COVID-19 didn't seem like a big issue yet and most schools and businesses in the United States were still open.

Despite my excitement for the trip, I was also utterly frightened. I was worried that my family would be treated differently. Especially after I read a report about a Singaporean student who was beaten up because of his race in the U.K. Every day, xenophobia increased.

On March 10, we set off for the airport at 5:30 p.m. I realized that there wasn't anything different than usual. A few people had masks on, but mostly everyone was just talking and laughing. When our flight started to

board, that's when my parents became more paranoid. They feared that the air circulation on the plane might put us at risk. They told us not to talk much and to sanitize everything.

After a 10-hour plane ride, we finally arrived at the London Gatwick Airport. I soon stopped worrying about being treated differently. We met many friendly people on our first two days of the trip. As we traveled, I couldn't help but notice that life was normal. People gathered in big groups and talked. They crammed together on double-decker buses. Nothing was out of the ordinary. It was comforting, although admittedly risky.

On March 13, things changed. I woke up greeted by messages of fear. President Trump had just announced he was enforcing a travel ban from Europe, and my friends were afraid for me. My parents were already watching the news. They told my siblings and I that we had to cut our departure date short and we had to leave the country within a day.

My dad called the airlines to change our flight but the lines were busy. Frantic, my

parents researched and learned that the travel ban excluded the U.K. My family breathed a sigh of relief. It wouldn't be enforced until midnight March 16 and we were planning on leaving March 15. We spent our remaining days exploring the city while taking precautions.

On March 15, we safely made it back to the US with no troubles and quarantined ourselves for 14 days.

As of now, with everything that has been happening and more cases being reported, I look back at the journey and am extremely thankful for my time in England. Despite my fears of the virus and being treated differently, the UK was amazing. Everyone there was caring, and no one really discriminated us.

The experience of that travel was unique, but England was everything I dreamed of it being and I enjoyed every moment of it. It was a frightful experience at first, with COVID-19 issues being reported but in the end, my trip turned out perfect.

essay by meredith yen

KYLIE SMITH

This was not what I had in mind. Sure, a month or so ago I was begging for a break from school, but not like this. When I imagined spring break, and I'm sure I'm not alone here, it definitely didn't take place confined to the four walls of my bedroom.

I didn't really follow the whole "stay at home" thing right from the first day of spring break. Obviously, I wasn't like at the beach or anywhere crowded. I'm not crazy. But I'll freely admit that I went to my friend's house a couple of times. Then, things got serious.

In the last month I have only gone on a drive with a real destination twice. And can I just say that in a normal week you wouldn't catch me dead at home. Unfortunately, life is no longer normal.

The first few days of quarantine were not a big deal. Now though? Not to be dramatic, but I've forgotten what it was like to socialize. And look, naturally I'm pretty introverted so becoming more out-going was something I had to work for. So, I'm hoping that when outside is back in business that I know how to be myself again. The myself that I worked for. That is only the first leg of my quarantine-induced existential crisis though.

Next on my list: Junior year is almost over and I'm not ready.

I was supposed to have a few more chances at my SAT. I look over my inbox of 2,125 emails from prospective colleges telling me that applications open in July and that I should consider applying there because of their course selection and how cozy their dorm rooms are. And I couldn't care less.

This new-found indifference runs deep too. Getting up at reasonable hour, exercising, putting on real clothes, all are now optional endeavors that don't interest me. The only task on my to-do list that I manage to complete are the handful of assignments I'm given each week.

I put up a facade of productivity by writing my assignments down in a planner next to my laptop and collection of cups that I plan on taking into the kitchen at some point. However, nothing happens until a couple of hours before they are due. Usually on a Thursday or Friday night. I sit down and grind out all the work that really isn't even that time consuming if I did it when I was supposed to. But hindsight isn't always 20/20.

There's something about the bright yellow of a highlighter on a completed task that provides some serotonin. It almost makes me want to change my mindset. But it's 4 a.m., bedtime. Maybe I'll change it tomorrow.

essay by kylie smith
photo by marin fehl



Cuevas works on building a new chicken coop. His main job was to hold the wood in place. | photo courtesy of javi cuevas



Morton works her first shift back after quarantine at the Revolution Ice Cream. She has to keep her mask on for the entire shift. | photo courtesy of willow morton

No proper goodbye

Searching for songs

My Spotify usage follows a general trend, consisting of me finding a bunch of new artists and then gradually getting sick of them. Going into spring break, my streaming catalog was freshly revamped. Due to a combination of countless recommendations and accidental discoveries, I had assembled the perfect playlist. Like most people, I was unaware of the amount of free time I would have for the next couple of months.

As you might have guessed, I was also unaware of the amount of new music required to fill this free time. I burned through the discographies of my newfound artists within a matter of weeks.

To make matters worse, my attempts to find replacement artists resulted in me having to hear a lot of awful music to no avail. So here I am with nothing but tired out songs to ease the mental pain caused by several hours of homework.

I figure there must be loads of songs out there that I would really like. There is most likely a song out there could become my favorite of all time. I have not even heard it yet, and I might not even find it. That does not sit well with me. This song could be blasting at top volume as I build my new-and-improved chicken coop, and the world would be a better place. Yet Spotify consistently fails to

add it to my daily mix.

Well I guess I should fill you in on that new chicken coop now. My chickens outgrew their temporary coop in a matter of weeks. I probably should not have fed them so many meal worms. Anyways, my dad got the dimensions online and we spent an entire day assembling the main unit. We still have to build the chicken run, but at least the hard part is over.

Personally, I could do without the whole building process. As my family members do not trust me with a nail gun, I am forced to sit around holding pieces of wood in place. My real job comes when it is time to paint. My

parents love to compliment me on my abilities, and I just cannot help but agree. The process is also very mentally rewarding. Applying a stain to a 2x4 never fails to temporarily ease my stress levels.

In other news, my new binoculars came in and I have already put them to good use. I recently witnessed the territorial residents of my new birdhouse fend off a woodpecker from their feeder. This made me really like nature. As I observe the birds, I cannot help but notice how much better the whole experience would be with new music. I guess I will have to keep searching.

essay by javi cuevas

The fact that our last day of school was on Friday the 13th is both comical and fitting. I walked out of Hillsborough — out of Room 506 — for the last time as a student that day. I had spent the entire day there, finalizing some yearbook spreads before sending them to our printing company, and looking at prom dresses online.

The day felt relaxed, it was warm and windy out and everyone was ready for the upcoming break. Everyone just seemed happy to me. I hugged a few of my friends a little tighter than normal before I left, as I was under the impression that I wouldn't see them for a little over a week. As I drove two of them home, we joked about how relieved we were that we were finally free. One of our friends was throwing a party that night, and I was turning 18 that following Tuesday. It was one of those days where nothing had gone wrong.

I felt accomplished and hopeful about what the future had in store for me. I was going to coast through my last few months of school, go to prom, graduate with all of my friends, spend my summer working and going out with said friends before attending Florida State in the fall. For the first time in awhile, I had a solid plan and was really excited about executing it.

That's all up in the air now. The party was the last time I socialized with more than one person and my 18th birthday was the last time I left my house for over an hour. I never got my prom dress. I lost my job, which couldn't

afford to both keep me as an employee and remain open. My friends, who will soon be moving all over the state and country, have been mandated to stay 6 feet away from me.

With the rate at which this is going, I've kind of lost hope that I will be able to walk across the stage, or move to Tallahassee for college in August.

I think the worst part is that nobody is telling us when they think this is going to end. I don't even think the CDC or anyone in power knows for sure. Even if they did, I don't think they'd let us know. We were asked to stay inside for a week and everyone went ballistic and bought all the toilet paper, so imagine if they let us know that this could carry over into 2021.

I feel like there would be riots, or anarchy. That people are going to start going crazy if things don't go back to normal soon. But maybe that's me just being anxious.

I'm worried for my mother, who is immunocompromised but must remain at work, and because of this something as simple as going to get groceries is now rather daunting.

I've been going to bed at around sunrise and waking up no earlier than 1 p.m., which is quite out of character for someone who typically jumps out of bed at 9 a.m. on the weekends and conks out by 11 p.m.

My days have been going one of two ways, 1. I wake up, lay there for a couple of hours, get up and walk out to the living room, and then make my way back to my room where I

lay down for another couple of hours before panicking because I haven't done any of what I was supposed to, or; 2. Wake up, shower, go outside for about 10 minutes and then make my way back inside to do one single assignment before watching TV for approximately eight hours without moving. I can't bring myself to work on anything.

As one of the editors in chief, I was tasked with finishing the yearbook. However, I couldn't figure out how to go about covering events that weren't happening or how to conduct good interviews while being forced to social distance.

I never thought I'd mean it when I say that I miss school. I miss my friends, my acquaintances and even miss seeing the nameless familiar faces in the hallway. I miss tripping on the bricks on the H, and I miss complaining about how out of shape I am when I get to the top of the main building's stairwell. I miss walking with my friends to and from the senior lot, and I miss walking to get a Kickstart every day at approximately 11:46 a.m.

I'm mad at myself for taking all of it for granted, but most of all, I'm resentful. I know it's not anyone's fault, and that there are better things to be mad about, but I'm so angry that we've been cheated.

I'm sad that I probably won't get closure, and that I won't be able to say a proper goodbye.

essay by willow morton

THE WORLD HASN'T

STOPPED YET

Street parking was ridiculously easy to find. I turned on to Zack Street and all the way down the lane were empty spots. I haven't been downtown in such a long time but seeing all the vacancies blew my mind.

After struggling to parallel park for 10 minutes, I finally grabbed my camera and began roaming the streets. In the middle of a quarantine, I was surprised to see people at the Riverwalk. All of them were either running, biking or walking their children and pets. I snagged a few photos of some people walking by from my vantage point at the Colosseum, and eventually made my way down to the Riverwalk myself.

I could hear the saxophone playing. It was the man with the circular glasses and the dreadlocks who plays under the bridge regularly. It was nice to see that some things didn't go away. It didn't hit me right away, but I found out that the things that stayed -- even after the global pandemic -- were not there by choice.

I continued wandering and capturing things that used to be full of people: Curtis Hixon Park, the sidewalks, Franklin Street and even UT. After a while, I decided to walk over to Eddie and Sam's for some lunch. I made my way up to Ashley Street from the river and waited to cross at Zack. A car honked in the distance, and the sound of their horn echoed through the city as if it were a cave.

Eventually I found myself at the pizza parlor. Since it had been a while, I ordered a slice of cheese -- everybody likes cheese. I received my food instantly since there wasn't a line anymore. After I left, I kept exploring the near-vacant city just to see how much we have really been affected.

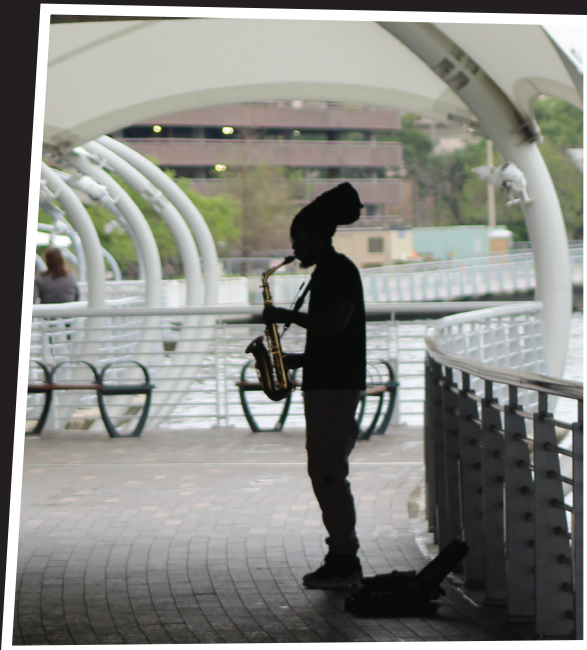
I wandered around for hours. From Taco Bus to the Sykes building. From the convention center all the way back to the art museum. The more I explored, the more reality set in for me.

I saw groups of homeless people huddled together, against the advice to social distance to stay safe, because they wanted to stay warm. There was a couple cuddled on the steps of a building, sleeping under a blue tarp just to stay dry and safe from the elements. Like the man who is constantly rippin' his sax under the bridge, they stayed. Not because they wanted to, but because that's the only place they know how to survive.

I eventually made my way back to Zack and got in my car. We're all stuck in quarantine, and it may seem like we had to put our lives on hold for a while, but all of our problems are still there.

The world hasn't stopped. Not yet.

essay and photos submitted April 27 by a student who requested to remain anonymous



Areas that were once populated are now empty, blocked off by closed signs and caution tape. However, through it all, the man with the dreadlocks continues to play his saxophone at Curtis Hixon Park.

We're still together

I spent my last class before spring break joking with my friends and Mrs. Payne, my English teacher. We were making bets over how long school would be closed. We thought maybe one week. Maybe two. But that's it.

This was the same day Farnell Middle School was closed because someone there had been potentially exposed. I went there not even two years ago. That hit a little close to home. But I still wasn't worried.

I went home focused on my trip to Brazil that would happen in just a few hours. Everything was perfect: I was going to see my grandparents I hadn't seen for a year, eat pao de queijo, my favorite Brazilian snack, and in a week be back to school, ready to finish off the year strong. Well, it didn't quite go that way. It was announced that anyone who left the country would have to quarantine for 15 days. I thought I couldn't keep my sanity that long. If only I knew what was coming.

My parents canceled the trip after making some angry phone calls and emails. Shortly after came the principal's voicemail telling us that school was canceled for a week. I guess my friends and I were right. But it's only a week. Everything would be back to normal soon. Until something finally clicked, and I

realized it wasn't. They soon announced the cancellation of schools until April 15, then May 1, but deep down we all knew we weren't going back to school this year.

The first days were quite stressful, and I actually think I might have gone insane. Stuck in the house, not being able to see any of my friends, not being able to go places, not being able to do stuff. But something changed. One night, I was watching the Brazilian news with my family and to be honest, I wasn't paying attention. Crime here, politics there, just the same boring news that I never bothered caring about. But that's when the word "corona" came up.

It was pronounced with a Portuguese accent, and for a second, I couldn't process it. There was a case in Brazil. Multiple cases. They were in quarantine too. And that's when I realized, if I had gone to Brazil, I wouldn't have been able to see my grandma, or eat my favorite food. She is in this mess too, and just scared as I am. We all are.

The United States, Brazil, Europe, Asia, the whole world. This is happening everywhere. Although for some that would've been a quite overwhelming realization, that made me feel comforted. There was something about know-

ing that we were all stuck inside, all losing our minds together, that made me feel less scared. I realized that we might be social distancing, but we are together in this mess.

As weeks went by, quarantine started feeling less and less painful. My time at home became productive. I started working out every morning, doing schoolwork, solving puzzles, playing Just Dance with my sister, watching movies with my parents. I don't remember the last time I had that much time on hands. I can go on a bike ride with my dad now. I can have a sleepover with my sister. I can do what I didn't have the time for before.

Don't get me wrong, there are days where I wake up and just want to cry. Maybe sleep. I've been doing a lot of that. But here's the thing: quarantine has taught me that not even crying is lonely. Even when I'm doing it at 3 a.m. Even when I'm panicking over when I'll see my friends again. There are people all over the world who are doing the same thing.

We're social distancing, but we're not alone against this virus. I can't wait for this thing to be over. I know the world will be a different place. I'm nervous. But I know that the whole world will be facing it together.

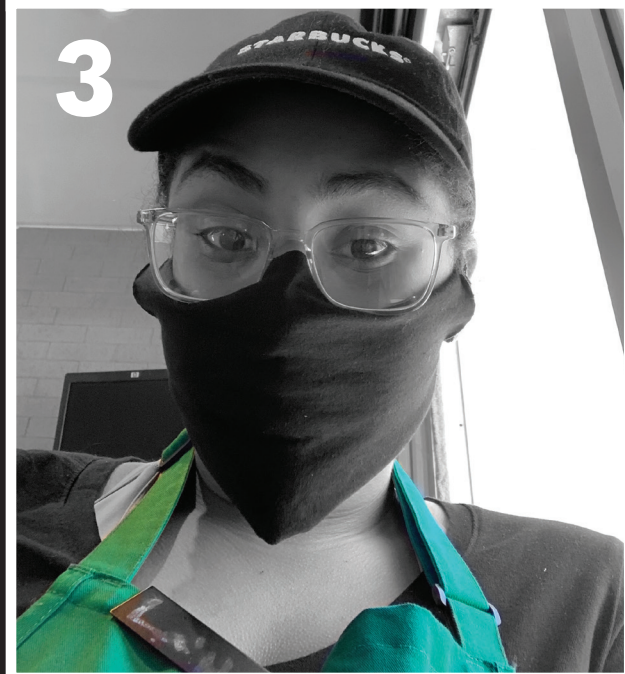
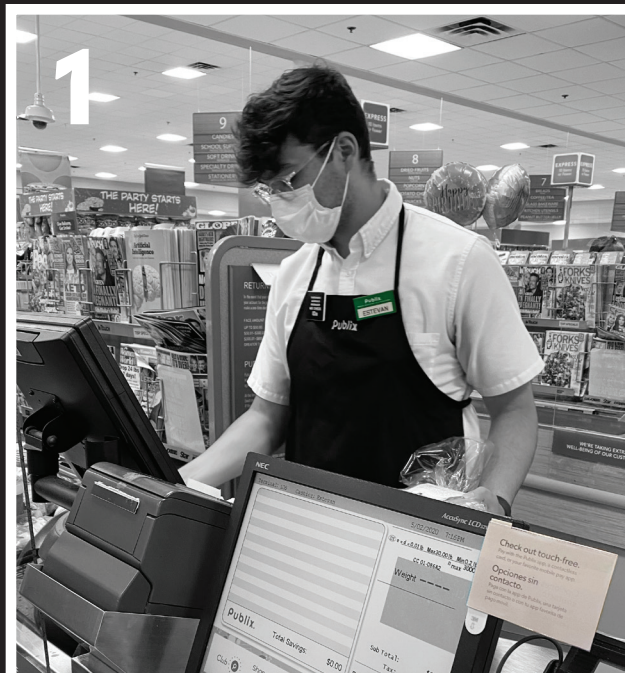
essay by carolina tortorelli

PLAY

Although life has paused for most of us, it hasn't completely stopped. There are still those of us whose quarantine has been spent on the frontlines rather than on Netflix. There are students working jobs, sometimes more than one. Parents who don scrubs before their household is awake and go to work. Businesses in the Heights that are still holding on despite the challenges they face. Yeah, it feels like the world is ending, but people are still going. For now, most of us are on pause. But some of us are still playing.

photo by asher
montgomery

WORKING *THROUGH* A PANDEMIC



1. Estevan Fonseca

He walks into Publix, and struggles to breathe with a mask on for hours. At the end of the day, there are chemical burns in his hands from constantly using cleaners.

Senior Estevan Fonseca has been working as a cashier at Publix since September 2018. He followed his two older stepbrothers' footsteps. "I've been going there since a kid, so it felt right to get a job there," he said. Fonseca works about 20 hours a week, and what he enjoys the most is spending time with his co-workers and trying to have the fastest scan time.

But Fonseca's job environment has gone through a lot of changes due to the current situation. Less people are visiting the store, and the constant threat of exposure to COVID-19 hangs heavily in the air among his coworkers.

"It is nice getting a lot more hours however at this point it is frightening not knowing if the customer you're

helping has the virus or not," he said. Fonseca says he is also being careful, wearing masks and gloves.

Although the anxiety of the people around the virus rises every day, He says he is very eager to contribute to the community, even being at risk. "I'm always ready to help my community because my mom told me to treat others the way I want to be treated."

In spite of being one of the few workers exempt from the statewide stay-at-home order, Fonseca also believes on the importance of maintaining social distance when not working, for the safety of his family. "If I'm not staying home for my own health, I'm at least staying home for my abuela," he said.

story by
carolina tortorelli
photo courtesy
estevan fonseca

2. Megan Pelletier

As senior Megan Pelletier found out when she turned to give a customer a receipt and promptly bruised her leg on a cash drawer, being an essential worker is never without its risks. Pelletier, who works as a cashier at Winn-Dixie, got the job just a few weeks ago and works about 10-20 hours each week.

Pelletier had been looking for a job to save up for college but applied even sooner after hearing that stores were overcrowded and needed more workers in order to stay afloat. She's happy to help her community during the pandemic while saving money for college, she says.

The work environment is far from normal, however. "At first it was a little scary to see everyone in masks and not know what's going on," Pelletier said. "But now I feel

better." The store has a plexiglass shield between her and her customers. They are also alternating open registers to maintain a six-foot difference between shoppers and sanitizing all surfaces. Pelletier and her coworkers also have their temperature taken every day to ensure they are always healthy and wear a mask and gloves at all times.

However, she has also been taking extra precautions in order to stay safe. "If I have to leave my house for any reason, I wear a mask and everything," Pelletier said, "I have also found that I'm washing my hands and sanitizing my desk and space significantly more often than I did before."

story by reema patel
photo courtesy
megan pelletier

3. La'Nya Kelly

Rinse and repeat. Her alarm goes off at 8 a.m. Today is a long one: two shifts and preparation for her third new job. Biology homework will have to wait until midnight, again. Quickly getting ready, she grabs her mask and gloves and rushes out the door to Starbucks for the first shift of the day. She's still not used to the chaos of the drive thru. Her hands grow agitated from washing them every 15 minutes, a mandatory rule. Her glasses fog up constantly from breathing into a mask. Customers line up around the block in their cars. She grows weary; this is only her fourth day on the job. 1:45 p.m. She throws her apron into her car and rushes off to her 2 p.m. shift at Whatever Pops. She still can't believe she's one of only five employees now. She misses her friends. How long has it been since she's seen them? The

store is slow today; it is most days now. In the downtime, she attempts to get some homework done. "Two weeks behind on biology, might as well start now," she thinks. It's getting dark. Is the baseball bat still under the register? Yes. "Just in case," she thinks. She's never had to close the shop alone before.

10:30 p.m. Exhaustion gleams over her body. Not done yet.

She thinks about her new job tomorrow. Customer service for filing for unemployment. The sunrise is starting to peek through her window. Forcefully, she finally falls asleep.

story by jaden
shemesh
photo courtesy
la'nya kelly

4. Sebastian Saltares

Essential worker senior Sebastian Saltares clocks in at his local Publix at 1 p.m. For the next seven hours, he will operate behind one of several registers shielded from customers by see-through plastic panels.

Before opening his lane, Saltares conducts a mandatory cleaning of his station to eliminate any trace of the virus. Hoping that either the spray bottle, paper towel or disinfectant wipe did the trick, he instructs the first member of a growing line of shoppers to proceed to checkout.

Having worked this job since summer 2016, he feels obligated to continue helping his coworkers manage their understaffed branch. So, pandemic or not, he refuses to abandon his Sunday shift.

In terms of workplace attire, Saltares was ahead of the curve. While face masks were made mandatory

for workers at his branch on April 20, Saltares has been sporting them to work since March due to his parents' requests.

He's also been taking extra safety measures at work. "I have been cleaning carts just before they use them."

Though it seems one can never do enough when dealing with a pandemic, Saltares believes that he is playing his part in flattening the curve.

Despite high demand for groceries and limited space for customers, Saltares is confident that his branch can continue to maintain social distancing within the store, which he considers beneficial for himself and his family.

story by javier cuevas
photo courtesy
sebastian saltares



DR IGNATIUS

His mom is up and out the door by 7:30 a.m. She is gone all day and while he stays home with his younger siblings. In between eLearning, he makes sure the house is spotless for when she gets home.

She gets home around 5, cooks dinner and watches a movie with her family.

For sophomore Jeremy Ignatius, this is the new normal. His mom, Dr. Renjitha Ignatius, is an oncologist at the Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute (FCS), where she treats patients with cancer and explores treatments.

Normally a source of pride in Ignatius's household, her job has become a source of concern amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Risk of exposure to virus is exponentially higher in hospitals. For Jeremy, this risk is especially concerning because of his sister, Theresa. "It worries me quite a bit, not only for my mom's safety, but the safety of my sister who is immune compromised," he said.

His 10-year-old sister has eczema, which is only exacerbated by allergies. The condition makes her more likely to get sick, and in turn less likely to recover quickly. "With COVID-19, she would most likely end up in the hospital for several days if she had caught it," he said.

Despite the concerns, Dr. Ignatius still goes to work, responding to the all-hands-on-deck call of the pandemic.

While his mom is at work, Ignatius's life has changed quite a bit. To keep his mind off the crazy world around him he has been gardening and his siblings having been pitching in around the house to help their mom out. "My day to day life has been pretty different because I just have a bit more time on my hand," he said. "When mom is at work, we try to clean the entire house, do the laundry and take care of most of the things at the house so that our mom could relax when she gets home and watch a movie or something as a family."

Dr. Ignatius is taking the need for caution seriously. All of her patients have severely weakened immune systems because of cancer, so the threat of the virus is constantly on her mind. "A lot of times our patients are at a very high risk for a negative defect like hospitalization and death if they get infected," she said.

All doctors have changed their uniform to ensure protection along with constant measuring of everyone's temperature,

Dr. Ignatius has been cautious in making sure she is protecting herself, her family

and her patients. She also supports social distancing, urging people to stay home to protect her family and the patients she cares for.

"There are only so many ways to take care of the situation, there is no treatment that works very well there is no vaccine once you get it and your compromised you could be dead," she said. "Or, you could give it to someone who is in a compromised state who could take it up very bad and be hospitalized."

Dr. Ignatius is doing everything thing she can at work and her daughter and sons are helping to make her home life easier too. They know that her job is important, and Jeremy enjoys spending every second that he can with his mom: "She's really busy and stressed out so I think it's important that we help her to unwind when she gets home so, I value the time we get. Also, we as a family feel closer now because of it."

story by
adrianna rodriguez
photo courtesy jeremy
ignatius



LEFT After closing for a week at the start of the pandemic, Independent cafe owner Veronica Danko decided to reopen for themed takeout and delivery nights. RIGHT To protect her employees, the dining room remains closed until further notice.

Independent cafe **adapts** to stay open

The chairs are flipped upside down on top of the tables and The Independent is quiet, except for the soft indie music from the speakers and the typing of owner Veronica Danko. On a normal night in Seminole Heights however, no matter the day of the week, the bar and restaurant is full of people, with a local band playing rock or folk while people talk, dance, eat and drink.

After an order by Gov. Ron DeSantis shut down the dining rooms of restaurants across the state, the Independent closed completely.

Danko spent the week deciding what to do. "We wanted to focus on the safety of the staff," she said. Throughout the pandemic, the safety of the Independent's staff has been at the forefront of Danko's decision-making.

After the first week, Danko got a sense of what other businesses were doing to handle the virus. She decided to team up with the owners of Shuffle to create an alternating schedule of take-out and delivery for each restaurant (Editor's Note: The author's mother is co-owner of Shuffle). As the restaurants have much of the same crowd, this prevents competition and also prevents both from becoming overwhelmed with trying to stay open every day of the week.

The Independent is open from 4-9 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday for take-out and delivery. On average, they sell about 40-80 items each night they're open. Making the best of the situation, Danko and the staff decided to have fun with the menu and have themed days, making things very different

from what is normally on their menu.

"We get a chance to show what we think we're good at making," Danko said. The themes so far have included Italian, Hungarian, German and Indian.

The themed menus provide something new for costumers each day, so they continue to order from the Independent even if they ordered from there two days ago. Eventually they're planning on including their normal menu items as well.

According to Danko, there are generally two or three kitchen staff at a time making the food for pick up. The other staff stay busy with projects such as painting and cleaning junk areas. These are projects they've been wanting to do for while but never had the time and this also allows employees to get hours while they're off normal work. "Our goal is that all the employees have an income," Danko said.

To reach that goal, Danko has set up a staff fund. All tips go and part of the profit from takeout go to the staff fund. They also are selling cases of alcohol, extra toilet paper and gift cards to be used in the future, part of which also goes to the staff fund.

Danko said that many customers will tip extra in order to support them. "I think people are being very generous," Danko said. "Many people are trying to support local businesses instead of buying from chains."

Even with community support, the transition to only delivery and take-out has been a challenge, says Danko. Sales have decreased by 98 percent, in large part because alcohol

purchases, which usually makes up half of the sales, have decreased.

Although she doesn't know for sure, Danko thinks that the Independent may have an advantage over newer businesses in this situation. Many of the locals have grown to love the staff at the Independent over the decade that it has been in Seminole Heights so they will do a lot to try and support them and help them stay open, a benefit that newer businesses don't have. "[The Independent] is a comfortable neighborhood gathering place," Danko said. "You could come in by yourself and know about half the people here, it's like a third home."

Danko has been spending a lot of time filling out forms and applications in order to get grants and loans from the government and other organizations aimed at helping small businesses. "It's daunting how much you have to fill out," she said. Recently, she received a loan in order to pay staff members a normal salary from the Payroll Protection Program.

When she isn't at the Independent, she's delivering food with the Heights Bicycle Brigade. "The Brigade is very helpful," Danko said. "It's also pretty awesome to have your food delivered by bicycles."

Although small businesses in the Heights are struggling with the new normal, they are finding ways to cope as a community. "This neighborhood is just amazing," Danko said.

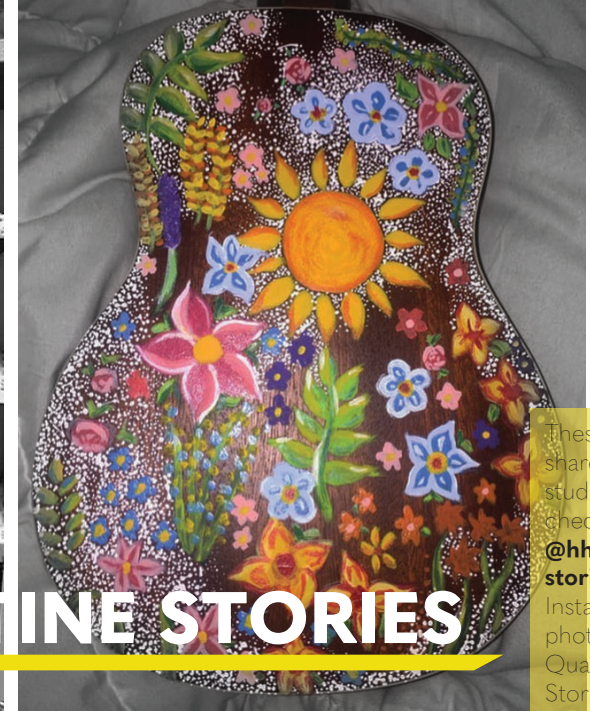
story and photos
by asher montgomery.



Some of us are spending our days staring at walls. Others are discovering hobbies or rediscovering old ones or learning new skills. That whole quarantine limbo? The one where you just wait for time to pass by and have no real recollection of anything that transpired during it? Some students are skipping that. Instead, they're diving into the things that they think make self-isolation easier to bear.

photo by david diaz

SKIP



These posts were shared by HHS students. For more, check out [@hhsquarantinestories](#) on Instagram. | photos courtesy Quarantine Stories

TELLING QUARANTINE STORIES

Inspired by porch singing in Italy and applause for the National Health Service in the U.K., senior Norman Buringolts spent the week of April 5-11 planning to get himself and classmates out of a quarantine funk. To combat the overwhelming negativity of COVID-19, he started HHS Quarantine Stories, an Instagram account that shares what the students of Hillsborough are doing to stay busy while stuck at home.

He filmed his introduction to the project in the master bedroom of his house. He moved a desk to the center of the room and propped up his phone, which was armed with a USB mic, on a stack of books to record the video. Hours later, he had a video, a website complete with a submission form and an Instagram account.

The morning he recorded the video started as usual: a cup of Twinings Irish Breakfast black tea to mark the transition from home to work mode. The day could only be described as a series of eureka moments, Buringolts said. By the end of the day, he knew that he needed to create a community-driven platform to share the brighter moments of quarantine.

"I thought 'Wow. These people are literally creating waves of positivity in this ocean of chaos that we're living through right now.' That really inspired me and made me feel not obligated, but motivated to make a ripple effect through our community," he said. "The sense of community that we have as students hasn't been broken, it's just been paused. Physically, in school it's obviously the most direct form of interaction but now, we have to do everything virtually. At the beginning I was like 'OK.

How can we find ways to preserve that sense of community?'"

Eager to bring people on board with his cause as soon as possible, he recruited his former speech and debate right-hand, sophomore Lauren Novorska, to help him spread the word about the project. The two worked closely together, texting their friends to get their first submissions and brainstorming ways to publicize the account. They were successful, securing 133 views to the introductory video within the first day.

Buringolts was lucky to be equipped for the task, he says. He had received the USB mic he used to record as a birthday present the year before, and his experience with speech and debate, morning announcements and voice acting auditions made him ready to rally people behind the wave of positivity he envisioned creating.

"I thought to myself that everyone is doing something. I was talking to my friends and some people were gardening, some people were baking, and I was thinking everyone is doing something big or small. Any activity is having an impact either on that one person's life or on the lives of other people," he said. "I thought we might as well try to share the story that we're going through together and really weave the tapestry of our school's quarantine history now because it would be a huge waste of time if we just sat here doing something without making it an important part of our lives."

So, they began accepting admissions. While not necessarily a flood at first, Buringolts and Novorska had soon gathered the stories of those rediscovering hobbies,

cooking, painting and writing for their page. And as they continued to post every day and publicize, their traction within the Hillsborough student community began to grow.

"I actually really enjoyed the idea of the account because I've been able to focus on this instead of moping around the house and thinking about how I can't go out with my friends or do anything about it," Novorska said. "It actually has been helpful from a mental standpoint because I can see what people in our community are doing and get some ideas about what I can do as well."

As the account grew, Novorska began to use it as an outlet to bring positivity to her quarantine experience as well as to others.

Inspired by the submissions, she walked around her neighborhood and dabbled in nature photography to take her mind off of the pandemic.

While at-home distractions have made the process of growing the account more difficult – like Novorska's four cats and rabbit constantly begging for her attention – it has also been a good thing. For Buringolts, the chance to work on the project from home has brought him closer to his mom, Julija, who he says is his main support system.

As the account continues to grow, Novorska says they are trying to make the project reach more than just IB students at Hillsborough.

Eventually their goal is to post submissions from the entire school. For now, though, the pair is working diligently to secure more submissions and tell the stories of classmates.

story by marin fehl



She sits in her backyard at 8 p.m., listening to the "Hamilton" soundtrack as she paints on her deck of cards.

Freshman Kaitlyn Bradley was motivated to find her own way of keeping busy during quarantine by her friend, Raina Mayerschoff, who posted her versions of a few painted cards on her Instagram story. Inspired by Mayerschoff, Bradley decided to paint her own deck.

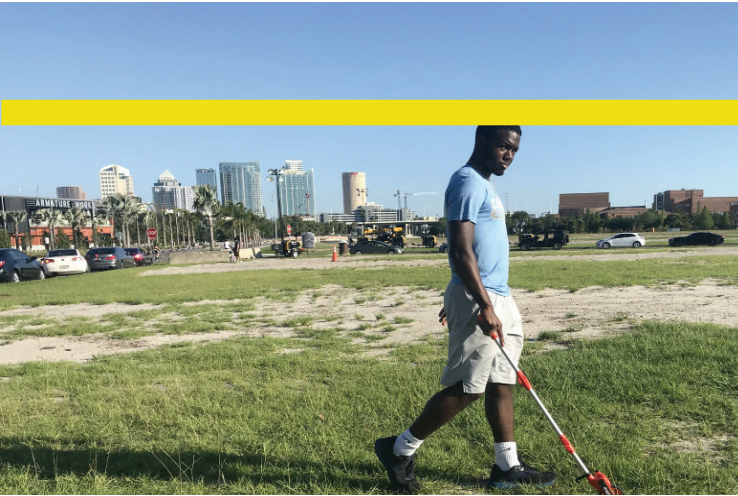
She took to her Instagram story to get suggestions. In total, she painted 54 cards over the span of two weeks.

Her deck of cards brought her closer to old friends and it gave them something to bond over. "I got to talk to some people, some people that I haven't talked to in a while and I reconnected with them over it," Bradley said.

Her favorite cards to paint are any with a Disney character, she says she loves the art style.

"I love art because, while it is stressful at times, it's a nice creative outlet for the stress everywhere else," she said.

story by adrianna rodriguez
photo courtesy kaitlyn
bradley



Matthew Garrett measures distances in the parking lot where he has been training since the start of the cancellations due to the coronavirus pandemic. | photos by asher montgomery



Angel Mendoza runs a relay at various track events. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the rest of the track meets previously scheduled for this season were canceled. | photos by adrianna rodriguez

Going the **distance** from home

With the Tampa skyline behind him, junior Matthew Garrett uses a measuring wheel to mark the distance in the grassy lot outside his apartment building. After prepping, he follows workouts given by his coach back in Charlotte, North Carolina, training for track from home.

Usually, the home workout consists of two 300 meter, three 150 meter and three 80-meter runs. Before the cancellation of the spring season, track practice was every weekday for two hours. Even without practice, Garrett still is attempting to stay in shape for his track events.

Garrett runs multiple different events, including the 400- and 300-meter hurdles, the 100- and 200-meter dashes and a few relays. His best time in the 400 hurdles ranks 35th nationally for the class of 2021.

Running since he was 10 for the Charlotte Flights Club, Garrett found that track was what he truly loved to do.

He transferred to Hillsborough from Mallard Creek High School in North Carolina

only this February. “The transition was good,” he said. “The teachers were helpful.” It is different from what he’s used to in some ways. “The classes are smaller,” he said. He was able to make friends pretty soon after he arrived, mostly from track but some from his classes as well.

Fellow track runner Angel Mendoza says Garrett is a fun guy to be around, and he’s humble. “He never rubs his ability in any one’s faces,” Mendoza said.

Only having been at Hillsborough for a few weeks, Garrett wishes that the season could have lasted longer. “This is the big year to run a time,” he said, referring to the impact this cancelation will have on his opportunity to get scouted.

Now, with the inability to improve their times this season, he and other athletes looking for scholarship opportunities have missed a crucial period for recruitment. Luckily, Garrett still has next year to work out details with colleges, unlike senior athletes.

He’s already talked to several coaches from

colleges he’s interested in about an indoor season, which is usually during the colder months and has a few different events from an outdoor season. He wants to stay in state, possibly at the University of South Florida or Florida State.

He also has several college recruiting profiles set up so it’s easier to be scouted. Garrett wants to study biomedical engineering. While running hurdles at a track meet in his freshman year, he fractured his hip, and the trip to the doctors sparked his interest in that field.

At home, he’s been looking at virtual colleges. He has time now to play board games with his family and watch Netflix. He doesn’t know what this break will mean for his recruiting process.

Despite the suspension of the season, the importance of running to Garrett keeps him practicing Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays. “[Track] means a lot to me,” he said. “It’s become a lifestyle.”

story by asher montgomery

The motion of running is the same on a track or on a neighborhood road, but the latter is still much more difficult. To run on the road is to be interrupted by cars, stray dogs and people on bicycles, especially when running as fast as junior Angel Mendoza.

So, as an alternative, the Hillsborough track star jumps rope for 30 minutes to an hour.

Before high school, he would race his friends after school. He thought he was fast, and he liked to run, so he joined track in his freshman year. He thought it was a sport he could make it in, unlike football or basketball.

Before the qualifying meet in his freshman year, the older boys on the track team told Mendoza he wouldn’t make it to districts. He wanted to prove them wrong, so it was devastating when in fact, he didn’t make it. “It tore me apart,” he said.

In preparation for the next season, he did extra workouts. He worked out in the weight room

or at home after already difficult track practices. “I realized how fun it was to put in the work,” he said.

Outside of Hillsborough’s track team, he runs for the Trailblazers Youth Athletic Ministry, his main event being the 400 meters. His fastest time is 51.3 seconds. To put that time in perspective, the fastest National Collegiate Athletic Association 400 meter time made by Fred Kerley is 6.73 seconds faster than Mendoza’s time.

Mendoza was in the process of looking for scholarships before the Florida High School Athletic Association canceled the rest of the spring season. He created a profile on the Next College Student Athlete (NCSA) website and planned to reach out to college coaches that view his profile.

The shortened season creates a hang-up for Mendoza’s quest for recruitment. There are less meets for scouts to attend. He was already late to the recruit-

ment game, not realizing until December that scouts had been looking out for people his age for four months already.

He hopes to become a physical therapist after college. When he was younger, he watched his uncle draw people and developed a fascination with the human body.

That, mixed with his affinity for helping others, made physical therapy interesting to him. A fellow track athlete, junior Mathew Garrett, noted that Mendoza is a naturally helpful person. When Garrett transferred to Hillsborough from Charlotte, North Carolina, Mendoza helped make the transition smoother.

While at home, Mendoza finds himself sketching and working on art projects for a portfolio. Due to the school year cancellation, an art project Mendoza has been working on was altered.

While previously they would have chosen prompts, the task

was simplified and now the whole class gets one prompt: crumbling society. Mendoza has sketched out a foot, with an ankle tattoo reading “coronavirus.” Under the foot are people being crushed.

Art is a stress reliever for Mendoza. “I look up to my uncle’s art,” he said. His uncle, Jimmy Bayron, does realism and sometimes anime drawings. When Mendoza was younger, he watched his uncle draw and that influenced his passion for art now.

With all the changes, Mendoza for the most part stays focused on track, school and art.

In an attempt to keep training, he can be found sitting on the street measuring out 400 meters, dealing with the possible inaccuracies in timing that come with not having a coach there and dodging the obstacles while running along the street in front of his house.

story by asher montgomery



The transition from middle school into high school is when sophomore Tammy Nguyen found her passion for clothing and collecting unique pieces. "My freshman year at Hillsborough was the first time in my life where I didn't have to wear a uniform," Nguyen said. She had always had a passion for photography, but started taking it seriously in eighth grade. Since then, her photography account has amassed over 13,000 followers. Nguyen started following many photographers, some of which posted photos surrounding everything fashion. This sparked a further interest in not only clothing itself, but how unfamiliar pieces could be put together cohesively. "Sophomore year is when I really started getting into shopping second-hand," Nguyen said. "Finding pieces that not many others have is fun, but I still don't think I have my own style yet." Along with finding unique pieces and putting them together, Nguyen is also quite interested in the design process. "I really like watching others take their ideas and make them come to life in a garment. It's satisfying to see the photos produced to campaign for designer's season drop," Nguyen said. "Although well-known designers like Gucci and Louis Vuitton have some good pieces, a lot of their designs are ugly and way overpriced for what they are. To me, being 'fashionable' is being able to put different pieces together and feeling confident in them."



FASHION FORWARD



Senior Andrew Shinn started paying attention to how he dressed in the third grade. "Since then, I've been conscious about how I dress and how I come off to other people," Shinn said. "It was around a year or so ago when I started making enough money to be able to buy the clothing I wanted though, and finally being able to buy more expensive clothing." Shinn is inspired by many designers and pop-culture icons, especially artists such as A\$AP Rocky and Playboi Carti when it comes to fashion. Shinn finds a lot of his pieces, especially shoes, on resale apps such as GOAT. "I bought these Crimson 1's about three months ago off of GOAT. I buy most of my shoes from GOAT because they have every shoe I want and in my size," Shinn said. With a decently large shoe collection, Shinn says his favorite pair at the moment are his Yeezy 700s. "I like the style a lot, and they're comfortable for everyday use," he said. Although he's comfortable in his style now, Shinn says that he feels as though he still has awhile to go until he's sure he has a style that is his. "I still feel like I have a long way to go when it comes to finding my style, though," he said.



compiled by alex croft and willow morton
photos courtesy tammy nguyen and andrew shinn

FAST FORWARD

We probably just want to leave this whole thing behind us. Ending the school year with a pandemic is not all its cracked out to be - why dwell on it? We don't think we will. Sure, we have a lot to say about this COVID-19 pause in our schedule. We'll admit that. And we'll talk about it too, but we also want to talk about what happens after. We want to talk about what we'll do when this is over. Not just for ourselves, but for all the people who helped us get through it. So, here's what we'll say when we can. Let's fast forward.

photo by willow morton

EDITORIAL To COVID-19

An open letter to COVID-19, You're like that kid in elementary school who scribbles all over someone's drawing just for fun. Except you're doing it in Sharpie. And the drawing actually took us 13 years to create. Too bad. At least we can reward you for giving us an unexpected ending.

But here's the thing: It wasn't an ending. Not at first. It wasn't an ending until it was, and then it was too late to do anything about it. Perhaps it was fitting that our last day of our senior year was Friday the 13th. Was that your joke? Unluckiness that we wouldn't even understand until weeks later? It seems like sick irony.

You have a long list of symptoms: loss of taste or smell, fever, cough, difficulty breathing. We have a few to add of our own: unworn prom dresses that we can't return, friends we won't get to say goodbye to, a senior picnic with no attendees, graduates with no graduation. Your biggest symptom, it seems, is a goodbye that we never got to say. It's all unfinished business.

Sure, of all things, the plight of seniors is not your most devastating effect. But we must congratulate you for it all the same. There's a certain degree of respect that should be had for something that wreaks so much havoc, especially when it can only be seen under a

microscope.

When we drove home from our last day of school ever, should we have cried? Laughed? Given a sigh of relief? Should we have made promises to meet up with friends? To visit teachers? To stay in touch? None of us are really sure. Funnily enough, you don't give much thought to a drive home. Usually there's just a drive back.

But fair enough, we won't be doing that. We get it. You had other plans.

So, now we're staying home. We're going to class online, seeing friends on Zoom, listening to our administration promise a summer graduation.

It feels a bit like you're laughing at us. Maybe you are.

It's OK. We have to move on at some point. We have to buy decorations for our dorms and get ready for classes in the fall. We have to go to college. We wonder if you'll let us do that.

That's really the worst part. You didn't just take away our goodbyes, you took away our

certainty. Some of us had whole futures planned out. We were making career plans. We were coming up with goals. Does any of that matter anymore? Was it worth it?

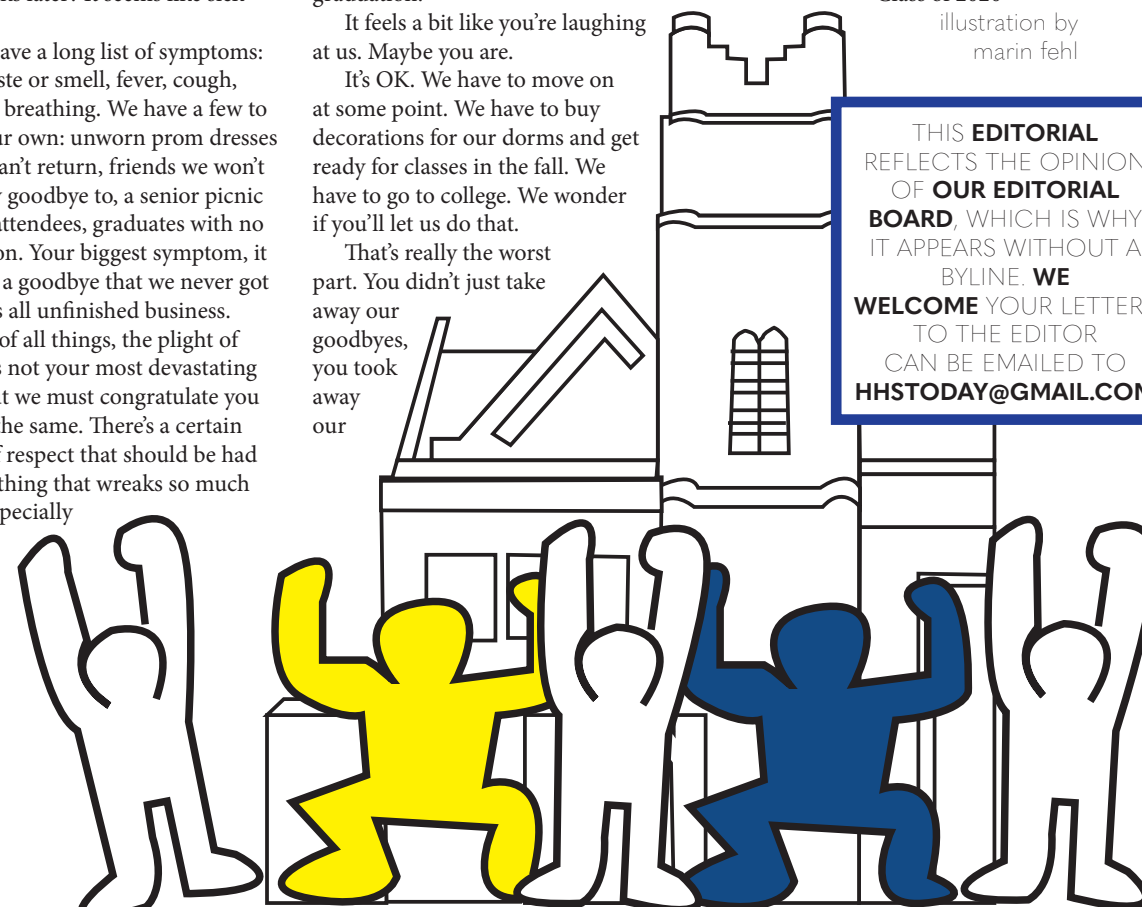
We'd like to think so. After all, we spent our whole time in high school getting ready to move forward. We must be able to at some point.

We're sure that we will. But before we really say goodbye, we'll have to throw a party or two. A last hurrah. And though you may show up unwanted anyway, like you do everywhere else, we wanted to let you know something: You are not invited.

Sincerely,
Class of 2020

illustration by
marin Fehl

THIS EDITORIAL REFLECTS THE OPINION OF OUR EDITORIAL BOARD, WHICH IS WHY IT APPEARS WITHOUT A BYLINE. WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CAN BE EMAILED TO HHSTODAY@GMAIL.COM



DEAR NURSES

Dear Nurses,

Thank you for sacrificing your time and help and putting others health before yours during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to you, a lot of patients have been treated with this disease. I know the long days and nights are terrible, and the mask are leaving red marks on your skin. I believe you all should get a major bonus for this. You all work countless hours with no sleep helping people all over the world. Because of you people are getting the care they need. So again, thank you for all that you do. You guys are amazing.

People are flooding the hospitals. You subsist on coffee, determination, on the need to help others. You aren't heroes, you're nurses. And as far as I'm concerned, your scrubs are a step above the red capes and spandex of any comic book hero.

Sincerely,

Josephine Rowe

photo courtesy josephine rowe



Dear Nurses,

I know this is something new to you and everyone else, I know this is something none of us expected and at such a bad timing. We know you were nowhere near being prepared to be away from your family for such a long period of time. Not knowing if you have the virus so you can't get close to your family being able to hug them and kiss them. You didn't even know when it was going to be the last day you will get to see them or even sleep in the same bed as your loved one.

You have to worry about other people first. That's your job. You have to so that your family and everyone else can be safe. And you can't do anything but hope it will all be over soon because you have never been through anything like this.

But I just want to appreciate you all for it. You are risking your own lives to take care of others who are sick not just with the virus but people with other sickness as well. You're all helping people overcome this virus, something that you never could've experienced before.

There isn't much I can say because I truly won't know the pain each individual is going through or feeling but I have nothing but respect for you and appreciate everything you guys do for us and the people who are sick. Thank you for the restless nights and the many hours without being able to have a nice meal and not being able to come home to your family when you want.

Sincerely,

Gloria Diaz

photo courtesy gloria diaz

TO THE **CLASS OF 2020,**

To the Class of 2020,
I feel like I've grown with you. When we first met back in 2016, I was a brand new, baby teacher. Fresh out of grad school, I had just moved back to Tampa in 2015.

When I was hired at Hillsborough, I did not start until the spring 2016 semester. That one semester felt crazy. I was thrust into the classroom as those students' third teacher that year, in a hurry to prepare for semester exams (when they used to be after winter break) and the EOC. I could not wait for the following year to set my OWN tone.

In August 2016, I met what would become the Class of 2020. You all were a rambunctious group of freshmen — I peeped that on Day 1. Especially the "lunch bunch" — my 5th period. I cannot recall how many calls to the APs had to be made that year, from that class alone. But we had a lot of fun together, learning biology! I rapped, we danced on desks, did some IG challenges, and probably went close to going viral a few times!

We also took some losses ... We lost a student and Mr. Gabriel, my neighbor, early that year. I cried. You all let me. That would not be the first time I would cry with you all. You all comforted me that day. And when you all were sad and needed comforting, I'd be that listening ear to vent to.

In the time that we've spent together, Class of 2020, I have learned so much about each individual that has ever taken my class. Many of you became "repeat offenders" — taking me for your other science classes, allowing our relationship to blossom further.

I have become a part of some of your families. I've met your parents and caregivers, driven you home after school, waited with you while you waited on your ride after school, been to your birthday parties, baby showers, sporting events and ceremonies. I have enjoyed every moment of it, sharing in your accomplishments.

I am so proud of each of you. This is the first graduating class that I have stayed at a school long enough to see rise from freshmen to seniors. Your resilience and determination has gotten you this far. There's a lyric in a song, "Closing Time" that says, "Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end." This is both the end of a chapter, but it's also a new beginning. High school graduation is the first BIG step in securing a future for yourself. Make your next move, your BEST move — you are "adults" now and "the world is your oyster." Like I always say, just be productive, make good decisions, and go out there and BE GREAT.

Congratulations and so much LOVE to each of you. Go Big Red!

-Alexis Cooke, science teacher

Class of 2020,
You never feel ready.

The excitement in the air will trick you into thinking you are, but you're not. At the last moment, something will catch your breath, sink a pit into your stomach or transport you into a memory, and the flood will hit. I'm not ready to move. I'm not ready to leave. I'm not ready to start over. I'm not ready to be ... grown.

No matter how much you prepare for it ... the feeling comes. You all didn't even have the chance to go through the stages of "ready." All of the milestones that count down to the moment of life "after."

You all expected for life "after" high school. Now, it's a whole new "after."

Cliches have been thrown around how the Class of 2020 will cope, will grow, will be better people because of what they've been through and what they've lost. Many of them are true, but I'm sure you're also tired of hearing about them. You have every right to be disappointed. You have every right to be angry. You have every right to not be ready. We still had things to teach you. You still had things to teach each other. To teach us.

I do hope you have a new perspective when the "after" comes, though. How will you live your life in the "after?"

Don't let it be waiting around for another "after."

I hope in this unprecedented time you find new ways to connect. Maybe even some old ways to engage with friends and family. I hope in this strange time you find ways to cope, find new passions, discover new friends or reconnect with old ones. I hope in this unsettling time you are enjoying life at a slower pace and maybe — just every now and then — not wishing for the "after." Not wishing your days away. But I also hope you find your time. Your time for you. A moment. An afternoon. A week. Now. When this is over. Celebrate. You deserve it.

And just because you don't feel ready, doesn't mean that you're not. Take care of yourselves, 2020. Now and after.

- Ashley Payne, English teacher

Hey Seniors! Mrs. Lora here.

You did it! You made it! You worked hard and found a way to reach this milestone in your life. Congratulations! I am so proud of you.

Remember the saying by A.A. Milne: "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think and loved more than you know." Be brave Terriers, as you go out into this new world to find your way and make your contributions. Your love ones are rooting for your success and counting on you to do your best. You are strong, you are smart and you are loved. Never forget that, even when you fall short. Get up, brush your shoulders off and keep trying. You will get there.

Wishing you well as you set and achieve your next milestone. You got this.

- Christellyn Lora, math teacher

FROM YOUR PRINCIPAL,

Big Red Family,

Thank you so much for your support and perseverance during these uncertain and unprecedented times.

As many of you know, eLearning has been extended through the end of the 2020-2021 School Year and Graduation has been moved to July 14, 2020.

Still, through it all, I continue to be amazed by our students, families, faculty, staff and community.

We have all "Zoomed" as if we have been doing it all our lives and have made sure that student learning has continued, uninterrupted. Additionally, we have provided computers and meals and, most importantly, encouragement and compassion and love.

Each day, I feel extremely lucky to work at a school with such dedicated teachers, administrators and staff members, such understanding parents, guardians and families and such resilient, talented and dedicated students.

Nobody expected this and nobody was fully prepared, but I applaud our district leadership, as well as the Hillsborough High School family for their flexibility, patience and understanding.

I will leave you with two messages:

Students, please don't let this pandemic cost you credits and grades. Most of you have done amazingly well, but we want you to push hard through May 19 (seniors) and May 29 (underclassmen). Teachers are so willing to work with you and help you learn, improve and pass, but you must log in, complete assignments and communicate with them.

Seniors, the same applies to you, especially those who are in danger of not graduating. Most importantly, however, please remember how terribly sad we are about how all of this has impacted so many special events we had planned. You all deserve better and have earned it. That being said, we will do all we can to make this time special and know that we love you, we miss you and we can't wait to see you again soon!

Please be safe, stay positive, thank you for your support and Go Big Red!

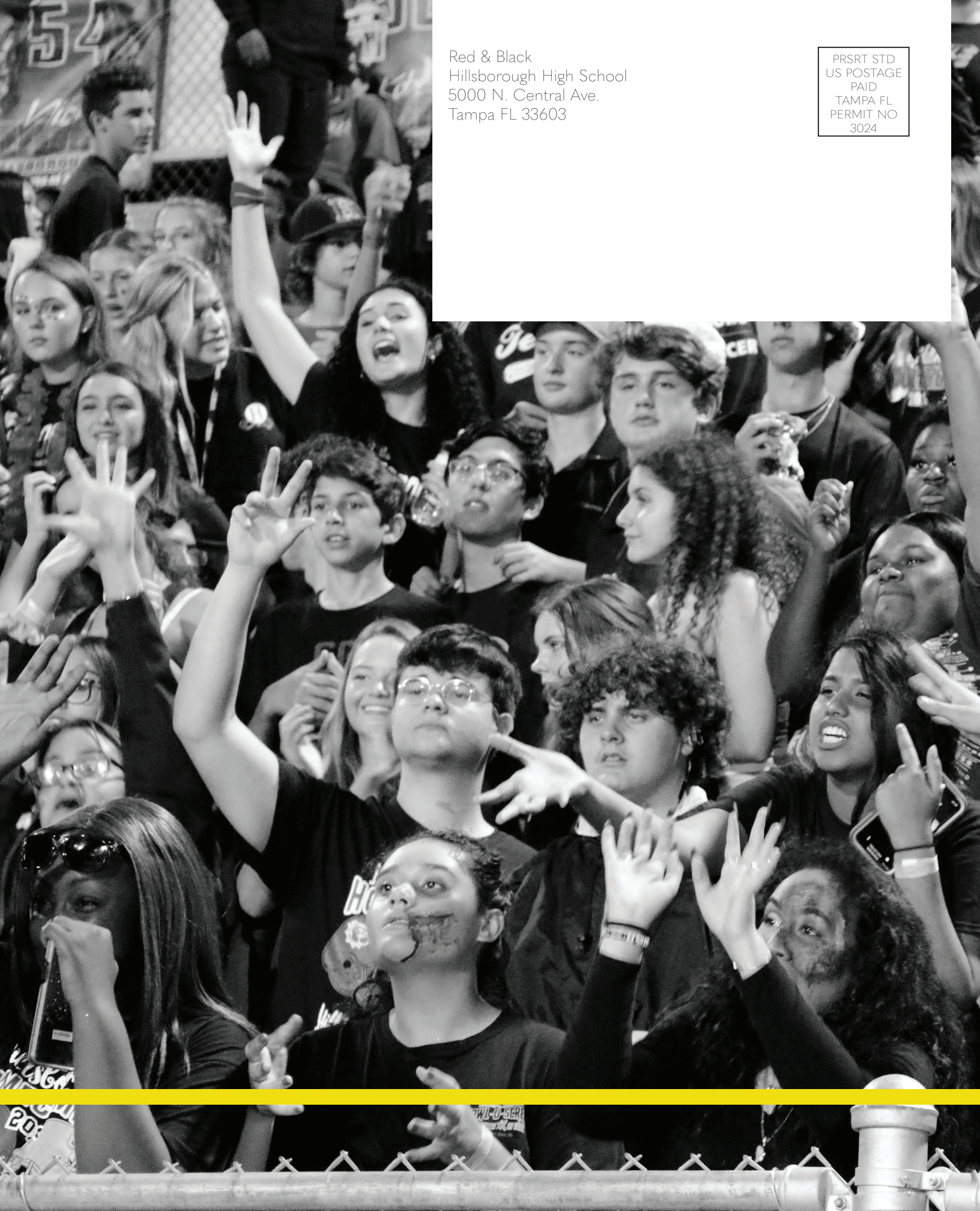
Sincerely,

Gary Brady

Principal, Hillsborough High School

photo by asher montgomery

GARY
BRADY



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