The science behind “Fake News”

Staff-created rumor spreads quickly, proves importance of fact checking

By Aidan Brophy

A recent rumor involving a claim that the district was considering a year-round curriculum was false.

It was actually created by members of the Salmon staff, who decided to do an experiment on just how quickly “fake news” could be spread.

At a meeting two weeks ago, a few of us came up with the idea to spread news that the district administration and the School Board were debating whether to eliminate summer break in favor of more instruction.

The rumor was mentioned to students that night at a swim practice and to people at SAMS the next morning.

Results revealed that it did not take long to spread. In fact, by third period the next day, the rumor was being discussed district-wide.

More information on the spreading of “fake news” can be found on Page 2.

JFK expert believes that Oswald never fired a shot

By Dylan Henne and Callum Montgomery

On February 2nd, SAMS welcomed a special guest speaker to the Auditorium when a JFK assassination guru, Mr. Jamie Sawa, spoke to students about one of the most important events in our country's history.

The assassination of 35th President has fascinated people for decades. Many of them believe that Lee Harvey Oswald was involved in a bigger conspiracy to kill JFK.

Mr. Sawa's interest in JFK was sparked when he was very young. His parents were very interested in the case and as he grew up, his desire for answers grew bigger. By the time he entered college, Mr. Sawa had reached the conclusion that Oswald never fired a single shot.

After seeing pictures of the room the day of the assassination, Mr. Sawa decided that it would be incredibly hard for Oswald to navigate after firing three shots in six seconds. The room in the Texas School Book Depository was filled with boxes and other obstacles.

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Mermaid Jr. cast preps

Students at SAMS have been practicing for this spring’s musical, The Little Mermaid Jr.

The cast started by singing and working on vocals, before moving on to the big numbers. Mrs. Spondike – the staff sponsor - started to piece parts together in February.

This year's show will include amazing scenery from Bella Greco’s aunt, who directed the show at her school in the fall. Mrs. Weaver helps by working on the vocals and will work with the dancing later.

Continued on Page 3
In just a few days, “SNARE” had major affects on students and teachers in the SAMS community. Fake news can cause social and political uproar and students went as far as staging protests about the possibility of the elimination of summer break.

“Fake news” is a popular term these days but there have been many cases in history which have caused major problems. One example was the Orson Welles’ “War of the Worlds” 1938 radio scare. The event quickly became one of the greatest fake news scandals of the century, and went on to inspire the “War of the Worlds” franchise.

As war-weary listeners tuned in to their favorite radio broadcast on Halloween night, Welles scared many into believing the country was under attack from aliens in giant 3-4 legged walkers with strange beams of light. These aliens could seemingly evaporate anything they touched, including people and vehicles, and left many believing the nation was under siege. Welles’ story said the walkers could not be destroyed, as the military had tried and failed in Grover’s Mill, New Jersey.

The story caused mass panic as people flooded police departments with phone calls, hid in their basements, and tried to flee in any and every direction throughout the United States. The chaos subsided a day later when Welles’ story was proven to be entertainment.

Fake news can do more than just cause a scare, however. Almost 80 years later, President Donald Trump continues to use fake news as a medium for gaining supporters and avoiding scandals and problems in the government. The President denies the existence of global warming unlike most of the world and the 99.9 percent of scientists who believe it. He has falsely claimed that his Inauguration crowd was the biggest in history when photographs easily dispute him. His claims that millions of people voted illegally are baseless as well as completely biased. This is fake news and people continue to fall for it. In layman’s terms, the spreading of fake news is a disease that must be cured and eradicated, lest it destroy us all.

--By Aidan Brophy

Nearly 80 years after “War of the Worlds” fake news has once again taken hold, with the newly-elected president leading the way.

Rumor spreads quickly

From Page 1

Students mentioned the rumor to teachers on the top floor, who had conversations with teachers from other buildings, including some at the High School.

It took less than a half day for the lead writer of this story, Aidan Brophy, to hear news of the rumor around 11 a.m. Gianna Law, another Salmon writer, heard the rumor even earlier.

“I heard it the very next day while waiting in the cafeteria in the morning,” she said.

Mr. Duermeyer also heard about the rumor. He received an email from another teacher asking if he had heard about the fake news and was texted by Mrs. Birch, the 7-Red English teacher, about whether it was true.

“I heard it from some students in my 7th period class, who said they’d heard from other teachers and students,” Mrs. Birch said. “After I heard it, I asked a few other high school teachers, who said they’d heard the rumors, too.”

By this point, it was obvious the rumor was running rampant and had made its way to the high school.

“I heard it during homeroom the day after we started the rumor,” Salmon writer, Julia Ehrenberger, said.

The experiment went deeper than just the spreading of fake news, however. In the week after the rumor went school-wide, there were accounts of students staging symbolic protests in classes in hopes of fighting the possible year-round change.

In conclusion, it took about 5-8 hours of active spreading for the rumor to become district-wide. The Salmon’s experimental project, which we dubbed “SNARE” (Shady News and Rumors Experiment), was completed and designated an overwhelming and interesting success.
Oswald didn’t fire a shot

From Page 1
For Oswald to fire not one or two, but three shots, and then run down the stairs, grab a Coke and transform into a normal guy, well, that would be miraculous, Mr. Sawa said.

Facts like these lead many to believe that Oswald was not the only man responsible. Well, then, who killed JFK if Oswald did not fire a shot?

Mr. Sawa believes there were up to four shooters in Dealey Plaza that day and that a group of Texas Oilmen financed the shooting.

They disliked JFK’s views of communism and the oilmen had the money and the motive to kill the president. This theory makes sense because the Oilmen disappeared the next day, Mr. Sawa said.

He also thinks that the CIA being involved was a strong possibility. He said, “The Texas Oilmen had the money and the motive. The CIA had the means and ability to carry out the assassination as well as cover up their involvement and place the blame elsewhere.”

So, if Oswald wasn't the killer, and the Texas Oilmen didn't do the job themselves, who were the actual assassins? Mr. Sawa said he did not know who fired the shots that killed JFK.

Over his 26 years of research, Mr. Sawa has been able to interview many people connected to the Kennedy and Oswald families. During a conversation with Kerry McCarthy, JFK’s cousin, Mr. Sawa asked why the Kennedys never went after those they believed were responsible. After all, their political power is very strong.

The answer he got was simple, but extremely interesting: “What makes you think we didn't?” McCarthy answered.

Cast prepares for Mermaid Jr.

From Page 1
The leads, which include Anthony DiGirolamo as Prince Eric, Brindle Waltzer as Queen Triton, Alyssa Lorenz as Ariel, Zoe Babbit as Ursula, Bella Greco as Sebastian and Ethan James as Flounder, appear ready to deliver memorable performances.

“Ariel wants everything she doesn’t have, she is very headstrong, determined, and infatuated with the human world,” Alyssa Lorenz said. “It will be an honor to explore this character and it will be very fun to work with such amazing people who are all devoted in the Little Mermaid.”

Anthony DiGirolamo, who was surprised to get the part, is also excited to play his role as Prince Eric. “He likes to sail, and be out on the open sea,” he said.

“Queen Triton is very serious, with Sebastian always by her side,” Brindle Waltzer said.

The musical show dates are March 16 at 7:00, March 17 at 7:00, and March 18 at 2:00. We hope you are able to come. Everyone is working very hard on their parts.

--By Jorja Kobert

John F. Kennedy rides with the First Lady, Jackie, in his presidential limousine in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963.

Moments later, JFK was shot down by an assassin believed to be Lee Harvey Oswald.

Students welcomed a JFK historian and conspiracy theory expert who questioned the shooter's identity.
Issues with the dress code?

Blame society (and the boys)!

By Madeline Turner

The dress code can be annoying, no matter whom you are. But have you ever noticed: most of the rules apply exclusively to girls? In fact, only two out of the 16 pictures in the school’s handbook represent inappropriate clothing that is worn by boys.

So why does the dress code target girls like that? The answer has more to do with boys than it does with girls.

The reason behind some of the dress code restrictions makes perfect sense. For example, we aren’t allowed to wear backless sandals because we can get hurt while running and we aren’t allowed to wear vulgar and offensive slogans or images on clothing because, well, they are vulgar and offensive.

But the reason for the restrictions on girls’ clothing like leggings, shorts, tank tops, and crop tops is not as clear.

In today’s culture, girls’ and women’s bodies are often sexualized and objectified by men and boys, and this could be a big part of why these clothing items are banned.

If we want to have a looser dress code, we need to fix the way people think.

We need to find a way to teach them, that girls are to be respected, that they are not simply an object to be enjoyed, and that, most importantly, we are people.

I am not saying that this is the only reason for the dress code, but I do believe that it is one of the main reasons.

There are dress codes in “real life,” such as business attire and uniforms for certain jobs, and I do acknowledge that. I also acknowledge that we are still children and need to have rules and structure to our lives.

The point that I would like anyone reading to take away from this is the idea that if we were able to teach everyone to respect people as just that, people, not objects.

We might not even need a dress code, and many of the “real world” problems – such as sexism and gender inequality - would be solved, too.

This may be interpreted as wishful thinking from a child who does not understand the world, but keep in mind, all children become adults, and one person can change the way people see the world.

Cleveland trip planned for May 9

For the second straight year, students in seventh grade have the opportunity to go on a day-long trip to Cleveland as part of the Ancient Empires curriculum.

This year’s trip is scheduled for Tuesday, May 9th from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Students will board charter buses for the two and a half hour drive, which will lead them to the Cleveland Museum of Art, which is known for its collection of medieval and Middle Age artifacts. Then students will go to the History Center, where they will watch a movie and explore the exhibits. The final stop on the educational tour will be the Botanical Gardens, which is similar to Pittsburgh’s Phipps Conservatory.

Lunch will be eaten at one of the museums BUT students are required to bring their own bagged lunch.

Once the museum tours are completed, students will head to Zip City USA, an indoor trampoline park with zip lines and a rock climbing wall. Dinner will be provided - all you can eat pizza and pop.

Take a look at their website, zipcityusa.com for more information. This trip will be super fun and a great experience! Talk to your Ancient Empires teachers for more information.

By Caty Clark and Jocelyn Schwartz
A closer look at the Mandela Effect
Why do people collectively remember mistruths?

By Cassidy Laffey

When you think of the board game Monopoly, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? Is it the Monopoly man?

You most likely can form a vivid picture in your head: he’s a little man, white-haired and rich looking. You can probably picture his tall hat, big head and the circular monocle (magnifying eye glass) over one of his eyes, right?

Wrong.

He has never had a monocle. This is called the Mandela Effect.

The effect can be explained as a collective misremembering of a fact or event. The theory can be traced to the 1980s, a time when many people falsely believed that Nelson Mandela had died in prison. There were even books published that incorrectly reported the information. The mind baffling part is Mandela died in 2013 but it does not stop people from falsely remembering or claiming otherwise.

These are not the only two cases of this phenomenon. There are many more and these are what the students remember.

--- You may remember Darth Vader’s very famous line: Luke, I am your father. Well, sorry to break it to you, but that was not said in Star Wars. The line from the movie actually says No, I am your father. That didn’t stop 59 of 70 students from incorrectly remembering “Luke.”

--- Millions of people remember the children’s book and television show, The Berenstein Bears, but most remember the series by an incorrect name. It is actually called the Berenstain Bears, though 53 of 70 mistakenly picked the title.

--- We all have seen the Mona Lisa, one of the most famous paintings in history. Most people remember Mona’s straight face. Wrong again. The Mona Lisa’s smile did not stop 48 of 70 students from wrongly selecting a straight face.
As the Rubik’s Cube phase fades, there is a new one that everyone seems to be catching onto: The Fidget Spinners. They are supposed to calm people’s hands so they are not as distracted but that does not seem to be the case at SAMS.

Students are bringing the spinners to their classes, causing disruptions and forcing teachers to confiscate them to regain order.

Some of the spinners are not cheap. 7-White’s Evan Visconti said he spent $50 on his through Amazon. “I fidget and get yelled at for tapping my pencil,” he said, “so I bought one. I paid more so I can trust the product. Mine spins for 5-6 minutes without stopping because of its low friction ceramic ball bearing.”

Other students have made their own spinners by taking apart their roller skates in order to get to the ball bearings. It seems kind of foolish to destroy something like skates for a Fidget Spinner that may not be popular in a few weeks.

--By Julia Ehrenberger

Why students love gum

Do you love gum? Have you ever seen someone with a pack and gone crazy because you needed a piece so badly? Have you ever been the person with the pack and found yourself bombarded by outstretched hands?

I did an experiment to find out why gum was so desirable among students. With the help of a few friends - people I provided with gum to see how others would react - I collected results from 24 students who were standing near.

My experiment placed people into three groups: 1) Those who did not care I had gum. 2) Those who asked me for a piece. 3) Those who begged for a piece.

It became clear rather quickly that students love gum, as 18 of the 24 approached me and inquired about a piece. Actually, 10 of the 24 love gum so much that they could not help but beg. (Two of them asked me for the entire pack). I was surprised by the six people who noticed me handing out gum but did not seem to care. Actually, those who begged were so adamant that I was shocked by anyone who said nothing. So why is gum so popular? My theory is larger than a pack of Juicy Fruit.

People commonly desire things they do not have and demand increases when this happens. These packs of gum cost $1.59 each but were worth much more to those who asked or begged. Supply and demand is a real thing. When people do not have things they desire, they will go to great lengths to get those things. When it comes to gum, I have even heard of people offering $5 - $10 for a single stick.

The fact the gum was in school (a place where it is not sold or easily acquired) made prices skyrocket. The reason people desire sticks or packs of gum so much is because they cannot have something they normally do.

--- By Kaden Kelly

The SAMS Salmon is written and edited by middle school journalists. The viewpoints and opinions reflected in this publication may not reflect those of the Mt. Royal Middle School or Shaler Area School District.
Suicide: A tragedy that can be Prevented through awareness

By Maeve Snyder

Were you aware that approximately 100,000 people commit suicide every 40 seconds?
Suicide is an enormous and serious problem that can be prevented. I wrote this article in hopes of raising awareness of a tragic subject that has affected me personally.
A few years ago, my cousin took his own life.
It devastated my family and me. We fell apart and blamed each other for missing his signs of depression and calls for help. It took some time to piece things back together and for my family to overcome the loss.
While any suicide is tragic, it is important to know that many can be prevented. The first step of prevention is to be aware of the signs.
We all get depressed, but when depression becomes an everyday thing, something is wrong. If you notice someone is constantly upset, crying or making statements about harming himself, be sure to have a conversation about what that person is feeling.
Talking about a problem can relieve stress and help a struggling person vent. It also reassures the person you care about that you are there to provide support and love. It is very important for people with depression to have friends.
Another step involves getting help. If you feel like a friend may be thinking about doing harm, immediately tell someone of authority. The school has guidance councilors and teachers who care about safety. They are here to help us when we need it. Do not take depression lightly.
Even people who do not know others who suffer from depression can help. Comments meant to be jokes that involving hurting oneself are not funny and need to not be made. They are especially not funny to those who have experienced death.
Even worse, comments directed at others in an attempt to harm them can have lasting consequences, so follow the rule about not talking if you have nothing nice to say. Social media can make bullying much worse but it can also make it more visible. Be sure to report any signs of bullying that may appear on your accounts or timelines. Doing so could help save someone’s life.

For more information about suicide prevention, speak to a guidance councilor or visit www.sptsusa.org or call 1-800-273-255.

Read-a-Thon students “hooked on a book”

By Julia Ehrenberger

On Tuesday, February 14, SAMS celebrated the third annual Read-a-Thon in the cafeteria lobby.
The stairs were decorated with bright posters with big, shiny heart-shaped balloons that were tied to chairs to also celebrate Valentine’s Day.
As in past years, teachers, students and staff grabbed a book and a chair to celebrate a commitment to reading.
Some teachers signed up for times through the library and Ms. Millard, who organizes the event. Classes filled the corridor throughout the day.
Those who participated were eligible to win prizes through drawings organized by the Library. They included gift cards to the Dollar Store, bags of candy and books.
Ms. Millard said the event was organized to “encourage our students to read.”
She wanted all of the kids at SAMS to have an opportunity to explore the different types of books available in the library. She was very excited because students seemed to be getting “hooked on a book.” Many took books out so they could finish them after the event.
The library was successful in its mission to get students reading. It was also nice to have a different type of activity planned at the end of another long winter.
Continued from issue No. 1.

When Super Sam got back to Badzville, she was none too pleased. She immediately challenged Super Scott to a Super Heroes’ match. In Badzville, a rare event, it is a three-battle challenge that includes saving 20 people from a burning building, a duel to determine who can fight best, and another of who can run through a dangerous maze and come out first with a little baby pug.

“I accept your challenge,” Super Scott said.
“Then I’ll meet you at the volcano tomorrow at midnight,” Super Sam said, confidently.
“Can’t, I have a date!” Super Scott replied smartly.
“Then cancel!” Super Sam replied angrily, scooting away.

The minute Super Sam arrived at her base she stated training. She practiced her fighting and made a portable trampoline for people to bounce to safety. After, she decided to take a nap on the couch. When Super Sam awoke it was 11:50. She had slept so long it was ten minutes until she had to meet Super Scott! She got dressed and zoomed to the volcano, hoping she was not too late. But Super Scott was nowhere to be found.

Super Sam waited until 1 a.m. before giving up. She changed her super outfit for normal clothes - flower leggings, comfy tennis shoes and a sweatshirt. It was especially rare for a super hero to be caught without a costume, but Super Sam was mad, tired and annoyed. On the way back, Super Sam heard the snap of a Polaroid camera.

“Gotcha!” Super Scott, waving a picture, said. “I knew you would quit and now I have evidence. Once I show the town a picture of you without your costume, you won’t be a super hero anymore.”

“A costume doesn’t make a super hero,” Super Sam snapped back, but Super Scott was already gone, flying off to City Hall to reveal Super Sam’s identity.

Super Sam knew that what she looked like on the outside had nothing to do with being a superhero. “It’s what inside that really counts,” she thought as she headed to City Hall. “He can show them the picture. I’m not afraid of who I am.”

She increased her speed and as she approached, Super Sam could see the Super Scott was about to show the picture to a group of bystanders. The group included the mayor and police chief. Just then, Super Sam heard the cry of what sounded like a young boy in trouble. “Noooo,” the voice shouted from the distance, “Help me! Help me!”

While the people lined up to see the photograph, Super Sam followed the sound to a tree next to City Hall. Sure enough, a little boy was stuck in the tree. “Forget the picture, I’m going to save that kid,” Super Sam said, and she zipped into action.

Super Scott stood by as Super Sam saved the boy. The group of gossips became less interested in the photograph and more interested in the rescue. They quickly formed a new group as Super Sam freed the boy. A loud, thunderous roar broke out as the boy hobbled back to its owner, who was waiting nearby.

Super Scott started to regret the photograph. “What am I doing?” he asked himself. “Super Sam and I are both great superheroes. It was my choice to leave Badzville so...”

When Super Sam finished helping the boy, she noticed that Super Scott was gone and the photograph was torn into a bunch of pieces. Super Sam found a note on the ground next to the torn up photograph.

_‘I’m sorry about trying to become the only Superhero of Badzville. I’ll stay out of your hair. – Super Scott’_

“Well that takes care of him,” Super Sam thought as she headed home.
AH, WHAT A DAY!
Students enjoy a February heat wave

Here’s how Shaler Area celebrates a 70-degree day at the end of February: By sitting on the track and watching joggers pace about; by hearing the faint sound of chirping birds rustling through the trees; by observing the swaying forest as the wind passes through; by watching the neighborhood children gather for a game of kickball; by hearing the kicking team’s cheers and noticing the solemn looks on the fielders’ faces as the ball soars over the fence; by listening to the familiar chime of the ice cream man; by noticing children sprint inside to quickly get money for a delicious treat; by re-braiding ponytails because they are overused; by quickly tying up a pair of Converse shoes so you can catch up with the others on field; by delaying the start of the game because of the stubborn squirrel that won’t budge from the pitcher’s mound; by picking the teams and claiming they are even, despite the fact it is apparent that one is stacked; by sprinting onto the field to get three outs and playing your heart out until dark; by watching the sun die, turning the sky into a breathtaking pinkish and purple shade; by running back to the neighborhood to play a game of kick the can; by hearing your parents’ demands to return home; and, by wishing the day wasn’t done but hoping that the cycle will repeat itself tomorrow.

---By Holly Rapp

Here’s how Shaler Area celebrates a 70-degree day at the end of February: by opening the blinds and running outside; by stargazing in the grass; by wearing your short shorts; by hearing your dad yell "no coats today!"; by calling all your friends to play; by washing the car and spraying your dog; by for the first time in a while scraping your knees; by going to get ice cream and sitting outside; by teaching your best friend to roller skate; by running till you fall on the ground; by thinking about shoveling sand, not snow; by putting up that new zip line; by blowing up every beach ball you own; by having an ice cold sponge war; by finding wildflowers in your yard; by realizing soon you must leave your oh-so-great teachers; by thinking about those finals; by looking forward to summer break but knowing you’ll miss school; by knowing 7th grade is almost gone; by spending 1st period English on the track and watching the gym class fail to catch a ball, by listening to my classmates sing a country song called "Farmers Daughter" while writing this sentence.

---By Caty Clark

Looking for a bf or gf?

Are you looking for a boyfriend or girlfriend? Dating is certainly a priority for many of today’s students and studies show that up to 20 percent of young couples stay together. Maybe with our dating advice, you and your partner can too.

We spent some time interviewing some of the school’s top couples. Some make things work despite a long-distance or the fact they rarely get to see each other.

The couples have rituals like nightly Skype sessions and are constantly texting. A distanced partnership can make a connection even more powerful, so, even if your significant other moves across the country or cannot hang regularly, do not give up!

While some may be too young and immature to maintain a steady relationship others may be forming partnerships that could last forever. If you want to be a successful middle school couple, follow these tips:

Tip #1: Communication is key.
Tip #2: Don’t be afraid to be yourself.
Tip #3: Be supportive and try to do what’s best for them.
Tip #4: Be positive.
Tip #5: Make an effort.
Tip #6: Don’t say “I love you” too early.
Tip #7: Don’t keep secrets from them.
Tip #8: Make time for them.
Tip #9: Don’t be too clingy.
Tip #10: Have fun together!

Follow our stellar advice and we assure you, you can keep your boo!

--- By Krista Croft, Isabel Dean & Braiden Madine
Basketball team falls to Pine Richland despite winning effort

When I arrived at the game, the Titans were doing pretty well. The boys were playing hard and making shots. The effort paid off as the score was close at the end of the first quarter, with the Titans trailing, 18-12.

Pine Richland built a bigger lead but the Titans continued to battle hard, especially on the boards.

Three players came together on defense to stop this lay-up attempt. The Titans were awarded the ball after making the big block.

Later, the Titans turned a steal into a quick layup.

The cheerleaders helped keep the game close with loud cheers and a spirit-filled mood. Cheerleading is a dangerous and underappreciated sport, so be sure to thank a cheerleader when you see one!

Despite the pushback and a great team effort, the Titans fell to Pine Richland.

---Pictures and reporting by Madison Ordean