

Guns, safety and schools: How safe is SAMS?

By the Salmon Staff

Great Mills. Majory Stoneman Douglas. Marshall County. Rancho Tehama Reserve. North Park. Townville. Sandy Hook.

These are the names of schools that have suffered some of the worst school shootings in recent United States history. We could have made the list longer, but listed the tragedies that resulted in the most casualties.

One school shooting is too much. In the United States, we have had more than any other country. In fact, CNN reported that there have been twelve school shootings in the U.S. as of March. This number includes students being harmed by a gun or killed by one.

Why is this occurring at such a high rate? What can be done to stop it? And most importantly, are we safe here at SAMS?

A main reason school shootings occur is that our society fails to properly address mental health. Bullying, family issues, pressure, corrupt morals, access to guns, and a lack of emotional outlets are other possible causes of school shootings. Add in the fact that most schools are underfunded and many are left asking: where will the next shooting happen?

The Salmon staff has debated this topic since the tragedy in Parkland. Bad things can happen anywhere, but our conclusions are that SAMS is safer than the average school.

For starters, we have we have an armed police officer and resource guard, Officer Frank Spiker, from the Shaler Township Police Department. Unlike the officer at the school in the Florida shooting, Officer Spiker has a great deal of experience in many situations. He alone makes us safer.

We also have a security guard managing the front door. Ron is another resource that makes us safe. Having a visible security presence at the entrance certainly helps.

Continued on Page 2



Ms. Howard spoke to students who participated in a nation-wide moment of silence on March 14. The students left class to reflect on the Parkland, Florida school shooting that took the lives of 17 students and teachers.

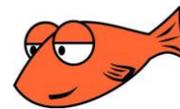
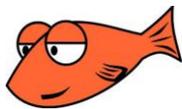
Students raise money for class funds at first SAMS Olympics

Students helped bring the academic portion of the school year to a close by participating in a SAMS Olympics fundraising event on May 24.

The event, which was organized by the Activities Office, helped raise money towards class funds that benefit students as they progress through their high school years. Students paid \$10 a person and formed teams of six for the competition.

Sunny skies, temperatures in the 80s, and a beautiful spring day made the day extra memorable, as more than 40 teams competed in events such as the dizzy bat, a ping pong spoon race, a football throw and three-legged race. Popcorn, snacks, water and pop were sold and students were able to get some fresh air after turning in their iPads.

Continued on Page 4



Is SAMS safe?

From Page 1

We also have lockable doors and windows, and security cameras that are located throughout the building. These things help protect us from all types of danger, not just school shootings.

The fact that SAMS is close to a police station is another reason it is safer than most schools. Shaler's Police Department is located less than a mile away, a resource we are fortunate to have.

One thing that some school shootings having in common is that they are isolated. SAMS is next to several businesses (the Dollar Store, Frank's Pizza and the 412 Lounge that students visit frequently are immediately beside us). Having a campus that is part of a community helps keep us safe.

If anything were to ever happen, SAMS has a variety of exits. Our school has multiple doors and windows included in the school's architecture for students and teachers to evacuate from. Most students and staff carry cell phones and there are school phones in a few classrooms. Help can be called in a hurry.

We want our students' safety ensured at all times. The fact we are in a safe place is one thing that SAMS great! On the other hand, any school could be safer.

Some of our doors do not remain locked, like the door that leads to the courtyard. Of course, these doors may remain in use throughout the day, but we propose there be only one door that is used as an exit during the day. Another investment the school district should take is to hire Officer Spiker full-time at SAMS. A police officer should be available in every school, every day. It would be expensive but worth it.

Nothing is 100% foolproof, but SAMS is a lot safer than most schools. We are very fortunate to have so many resources. We must work together to make sure SAMS stays a great place and work towards improving our school's safety.

Shaler Township Police Officer Frank Spiker helps make SAMS a safe place to learn. Although no school is completely safe, SAMS is lucky to have a dedicated and hard working police officer patrolling the halls.



Students show theatrical talents in musical, play

By Elise Hollenbaugh

Students showed their theatrical talents this winter and spring when they performed the musical "School House Rock" and the play "Twinderella."

Both shows were very successful, with the cast's and crew's hard work paying off during each performance.

Several weeks of practice came together on February 17 and 18 for "Rock," which was adapted from the classic television show from the 80s. The script was led by Alex Eastly, who played the role of "Tom," a teacher preparing for his first day.

Through a series of sing-a-longs, Tom was introduced to the magical world of learning and teaching. Students thrilled the audience with classic songs such as "A Noun is A Person, Place or Thing," "The Great American Melting Pot," and "I'm Just a Bill" in the hour-long show.

The cast and crew had a wonderful time.

"It was a great experience. It is always nice to have opportunities. It was a very fun time," said Sami Rodibaugh, who played Shulie No. 2 and sang the lead on "Inter-planet Janet."

More than 50 kids participated in the musical, which was sponsored by Ms. Birch, Ms. Stoddard and Ms. Millard. The three did a wonderful job working with students on choreography, acting and singing.

In "Twinderella," students showed their sense of humor with a modern take on the famous fairytale. The plot features the typical story of Cinderella and her evil family, but it has a twist with her twin, "Bob," who also has an evil family made up of guys.

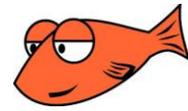
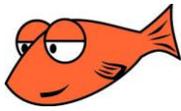
The siblings find more than their lost shoes when they fall in love with the princess and the prince of the kingdom.

Alex Eastley and Amber McKaveny played the leads, with Ms. Paul and Ms. Goetz running the show as staff sponsors.

"Since I was in fourth grade, I've wanted to be in the play because I thought it would be fun," Kylie Clark, who played Shirley the Gerbil. "I was so proud of the cast."

"Twinderella" took place April 20 and 21.

Editor's note: The author performed as George No. 1 in "School House Rock" and Queen Betty in "Twinderella."



Summer is finally here, but not before Mother Nature took spring with her

By The Salmon Staff

It seems that Mother Nature has finally lost her grip of cold and wet weather, but not before she took almost all of the spring season with her.

This year's winter was typical for Pittsburgh but Mother Nature refused to quit when the spring months arrived. Below average temperatures, snow showers and wind chills wreaked havoc on spring sports schedules, school activities and everyone's moods.

The cold and wet weather forced spring sport coaches to move practices indoors or cancel events all together. Activities related to the school musical were postponed, and after school clubs were forced to reschedule.

Measureable snow fell well into April, reducing spring break by three days and ruining plans for many.

"I just wanted to go outside and play sports," soccer player Ethan Opiela said. "It was so cold that I've had to wear double layers Under Armour for my practices. The turf freezes and it hurts to slide."

The baseball and softball seasons were also been affected by wet weather, with constant rain ruining playing fields and making conditions unsafe. Some sports, such as track, were forced to use the hallways and gyms. Other teams have had fewer practices.

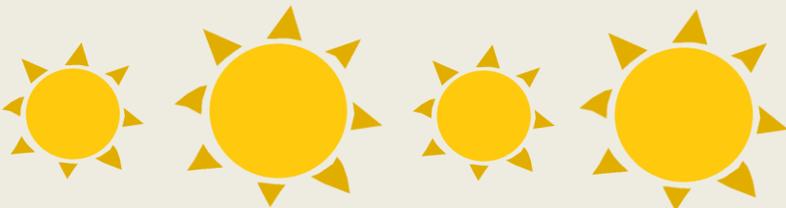
"I didn't like it," Nadaya Yarussi said. "It affected our softball practices and many of our games were canceled."

For some, the bad weather caused emotional responses.

"We had to run in the snow," track star Danielle O'Conner said. "It was so cold that I cried one time."

April snow brought May showers...which resulted in...."Moodiness and sleepiness," seventh grader Connor Metzger said. "People are less energetic than they are when there is warmer weather."

But all is well that ends well, and the long-term forecast calls for above average temperatures, less rain (hopefully) and sunny skies.

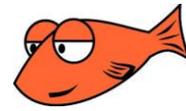
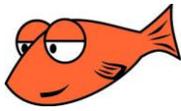


Ah, What a Day!

A sentence-long guide to how a Pittsburgher can spend a long-awaited gorgeous spring day

"Here's how Pittsburgh can celebrate a 70-degree day in the middle of April: By going to a ball game and having nachos, hot dogs, and peanuts; by watching playoff hockey with family and friends; by running outside and playing backyard football; by looking at blossoming plants and flowers; by planning a vacation to a beach, to a city, or to the Sunshine State; by pulling out the short-sleeve shirts; by knowing that summer vacation is almost here; by cracking your bedroom window open; by going outside and playing a game of catch with Dad; by going and getting a \$1 ice cream that you'll get on your car; by washing your car to get the ice cream stains off of it; by watching the trees' leaves grow back; by letting the sun pin you to the ground to the point where you need sunglasses; by going and watching a movie outside; by dreaming of and dreading the 100 degree days you'll face in the midst of summer; by listening to the birds sing their songs of the coming spring; by gaming with your friends, then seeing them at the park; by unfortunately, knowing that 8th grade shall come sooner than later; by watching the sunset at 9:00; by thinking about all of the spring and summer festivals that will take us all the way to the harvest."

-- By Daniel Patel



Student from California claims National Geography Bee

Jayce Klysz won the SAMS competition

The 30th National Geographic Geography Bee wrapped up on May 23 when Venkat Ranjan of California won a \$50,000 scholarship and a lifetime subscription to National Geographic Magazine.

SAMS students participated in the preliminary stages of the event earlier this school year after Ms. Welka signed up through an online application. The event featured 10,000 other schools and 30 million students nationwide.

At SAMS, the competition was held in five rounds, with the first round featuring a Kahoot game that was played in social studies classes. The top five students of the Kahoot round then advanced to Rounds 2-5, which took place in the library during lunch periods. After five rounds of competition, SAMS had three finalists: Justin Kristoff, Aiden Bayne and Jayce Klysz.

The competition was close, but Jayce edged Aiden (2nd place) Justin (3rd place) to claim the SAMS championship.

“I did not think that I would make it that far,” Aiden said. “I was beaten by Jayce but it was a close battle. I was not upset about losing because it was clear that he knew what he was talking about. It was fun but some of the descriptions were hard.”

Jayce moved on to compete in an online test with a chance to participate in the state competition in Harrisburg. Although he did not advance, he did a great job of representing SAMS.

According to the National Geographic, the Society developed the National Geographic Bee in 1989 in response to concern about the lack of geographic knowledge among young people in the United States.

-- By Will Evans

NOTE: You can test your geography knowledge online with the exciting Geo Bee Quiz, which poses 10 questions a day at:

www.nationalgeographic.org/bee/study/quiz

Students compete, raise money for class funds at first SAMS Olympics

From Page 1 – The original plan was to include all students during Period 9, but the stadium was being cleaned and the stands were off limits. None the less, those who participated in the Olympics said the event was a lot of fun, especially the three-legged race event.

“Getting together as a team and working together to win was a lot of fun,” Erica Wagner said. “Even though we didn’t win first place, we still worked hard and had a great time.”

Erica said the three-legged race was the best part of the Olympics and that the event was worth the \$10 entry fee.

Eighth grader Charlize Etap agreed.

“It was a lot of fun because we got to compete and not stay inside,” Charlize said. “I think the best competition was the three-legged race because our team came in Second Place even though we stumbled a bit. SAMS should definitely do it next year because I would like for next year’s students to experience what we got to.”

-- By The Salmon Staff

2017-2018 Sams Salmon Staff

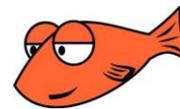
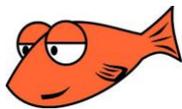
Editors-in-Chief: Riley Pegher & Kaden Kelly

Contributing writers: Aidan Brophy, Kylie Clark, Sophia Rau, Samantha Rodibaugh, Maeve Snyder, Will Evans, Valentina Novas, Kristel Mendoza

**Photographer: Aiden McKern
Comic artist: Connor Molinaro**

Staff Advisor: Brian J. Duermeyer

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.



School walkout was a moment we needed

By Riley Peghar
Editor-in-Chief

When SAMS students walked out of class on March 14 to shed light on gun violence and to remember the Florida school shooting victims, my eyes were trained on the ground.

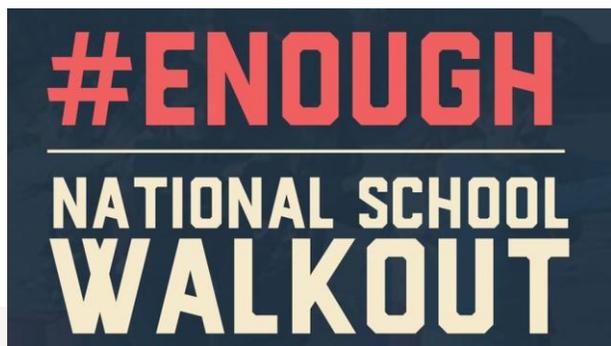
Thoughts of those poor kids from Florida ran through my head as a silence surrounded me, and I was thankful for it: My classmates and I had come together to show respect and make a statement.

Over the next 17 minutes, in schools across the country, chimes sounded periodically for each of the victims; those who didn't deserve to die, especially in their school.

Although this event was tragic and dreary, the walkout itself symbolized the awareness we all finally have about the crisis at hand, and that is a wonderful thing.

Finally, when I looked up and saw the kids around me, I noticed that some had tears streaming down their faces, some were silently hugging and others were praying or just giving thoughts to the victims. For the last two minutes, we held hands in a circle. In a slightly different situation, that might have made us laugh, or we might have shaken our heads and refused to join, but in that moment, though, it was comforting, **and a moment that what we needed.** I want to thank the participants who understood what this day meant. I sincerely hope we don't have to have another one of these.

Editor's update: Unfortunately, the March 14 walkout produced a great deal of talk, but not a great deal of political action. In fact, two more school shootings occurred on May 18 (Santa Fe High School, 10 fatalities) and May 25 (Noblestown, Indiana, 2 injured).



Through the halls

Some news and notes about SAMS

Day of Silence - On April 27, students participated in "A Day of Silence" to promote respect and support and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community.

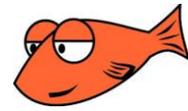
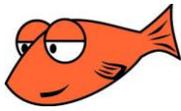
Students who signed up pledged to stay silent for the whole school day, with support from the guidance team, administration and teachers. Around 100 students did their best to not talk for the entire day, which proved to be difficult.

SAMS staff was very considerate and did not require participating students to break their pledge, which acted as a metaphorical example of the struggles the LGBTQ+ community experiences on a daily basis.

The day was held because many LGBTQ+ members report that they struggle to voice their opinions and experiences for fear of being hurt, bullied, or worse. The number of students who identify with the community continues to grow at SAMS and the event helped shed light on both what our students experience and are capable of when they work together.

Ruler of the ramp – Students competing in Mr. Reagle's annual "Ruler of the Ramp" competition finished on Tuesday. Sabrina Quattrochhi finished in first place, with Emily McAllister, Flannery Loudon, & Madison Helfer coming in second and Emma Wunderlin & Brooke Schweitzer finishing in third place. The "Ramp" activity is just another way Mr. Reagle makes his science course one of the most interesting at SAMS.





Stepping into the unknown

A student's story of starting a new life in America

By Valentina Navas

In September of 2016, my family was living in Venezuela. My parents had renewed their visas in order to visit family in America. It had become difficult to get visas because Venezuela was in a complicated political situation. My dad explained the issue to his brother, who suggested that my family move to America. Uncle Johander told my dad that America had a better quality of living. My dad originally said he was crazy but on October 15, he made a decision that would change our lives forever. He realized that his brother was right and that Venezuela could no longer provide us with the type of life that he wanted. I was given one month to complete my school work, pack up my life, and **step into the unknown**.

Moving meant a lot of work for my family: We had to sell the car, break the news to our family and friends, and determine what we could bring. One week before our departure, I finally broke the news to my friends. The day was filled with tears and I wondered if I would ever see them again. My friends made me a book of memories which included pictures and stories of times we shared together.

Even though I was sad, I was excited for the vacation that Uncle Johander had planned as a way to welcome us to the United States. Before leaving, we stopped at the mall and purchased clothes and swimming suits for a cruise trip, and in a few short days we were on a plane headed to Miami, Florida.

We had a four-hour plane ride from Venezuela to Florida. We arrived on a Saturday, spent a night in a hotel, and the following day we boarded a cruise to Costa Maya, Mexico. We stopped in Cozumel, Belize, and Honduras. My dad, mom, brother and sister were joined my uncle, my Aunt Natalie and my grandmother.

The cruise was so much fun that it helped take my mind off of the sadness I felt about leaving my home. The pool was cold, but it felt great in the heat. The disco had us dancing for hours. The DJs played a large variety of music. Finally, the food was incredible. There were so many different things to choose from. The ice cream was one of my favorite parts because it was free. One night, I even woke up at 2 AM, snuck down to the cafeteria on my own, ate as much ice cream as I could for about an hour before returning to my room to sleep. After a week filled of food and relaxation, we flew to Pittsburgh to start our new lives.

It was December 5 when we arrived in Pittsburgh. It's funny because when I was on the cruise I complained of how hot it was and told my uncle that I preferred it when it was cold. Of course, when we arrived, I was complaining about how cold it was. Looking back, I realize that it was not that cold and that Pittsburgh would be much colder. Still, my uncle has not allowed me to forget the time I complained about the heat.

One of the sacrifices we had to make was trading in our home for a room with couches to sleep on for four months. My uncle had a house lined up for my family, but he did not expect that we would move so soon and the house was not yet ready. Even though it was difficult to sleep on those couches every day, I enjoyed spending the time with my uncle, getting to know my aunt, and watching movies with cousin, Joe.

It was time to start school at SAMS. The first person I met was my guidance counselor, Mr. Jowers. He introduced me to all the staff. It was difficult because I could not understand anything. My dad told me to say, "Nice to meet you" to each teacher. I looked at each one and said, "Nice to meet you," but I did not know what I was actually saying. Before I knew it, my parents were leaving the school and I was left alone in an English speaking school for the very first time. A few months before I left Venezuela, I took a very basic introductory class in English and learned to say, "Hello. I don't speak English. I am from Venezuela," (in a very poor pronunciation) and that is all that I said on my first day, and all through my first week, and for the majority of my first year here. Even when Mr. Jowers asked me if I needed a pencil, I did not know how to respond. I recognized the word pencil, but from there, I was not sure what he was saying. You can ask anyone outside of America and they are sure to tell you that Americans speak very fast.

Editor's note: Valentina did so well at SAMS, she was promoted from her ESL language class to a mainstream ELA block. She earned special recognition for her academics and finished with an "A" in ELA.