Westbury High School senior Oscar Munguia was recently selected to be part of the 2022 NYSSMA (New York State School Music Association) All-State Performing Ensemble as an All-State jazz baritone saxophone player. His accomplishment is especially significant because NYSSMA only selects ONE baritone saxophone player for the entire state. By comparison, they approximately take 50 trumpet players for the various ensembles at all-state. Oscar will be going up to Albany for two days for rehearsals and performances at the state capital for the NYSSMA Day in Albany, which NYSSMA conducts for advocacy for the arts. We are elated about this at the high school! This is an unprecedented accomplishment for our school. Also congratulations to Mr. Rubenstein and Mr. Johnson for your work with Oscar!

Vilato wins exclusive scholarship

WHS Senior, Isaias Vilato has won the QuestBridge College Match Scholarship to the University of Chicago. The Match Scholarship is offered as part of a generous financial aid package provided by the college that covers the full cost of attendance, including tuition, room and board, books and supplies, and travel expenses. This is a very competitive scholarship. On average about 15,000 apply and only 2,000 get selected for the scholarship.

Vilato is also a semifinalist for the Gates scholarship. According to their website, the Gates Scholarship (TGS) is a highly selective, last-dollar scholarship for outstanding, minority, high school seniors from low-income households. Each year, the scholarship is awarded to 300 of these student leaders, with the intent of helping them realize their maximum potential.

Congratulations to Isaias and good luck on the Gates scholarship!

What’s Inside?

Student Athletes Honored at Reid-Robeson Classic (Page 2)

Students voice opinions on masks, vaccines and shields (Page 4)

Velasquez Honored as Best Soccer Player in County (Page 5)
Students honored for being scholar athletes at Reid-Robe-son Classic

After the event was postponed in 2021 due to COVID-19, Westbury hosted the 35th Reid-Robeson Classic on February 5 at the “Yes We Can” Community Center. Holding with tradition the day featured a triple-header including Boys junior varsity and varsity, and girls varsity.

As always, student athletes are awarded for their exploits in the classroom. This year’s Westbury winners were:

Haroon Ahmed (Boys JV)  Haroon was born in Pakistan and came to the United States at the age of 9. He has a 93 grade point average. He also takes pride in serving his community and has been honored by County Executive Laura Curran for doing so.

Isabella Barrios Gil (Girls Varsity)  Isabella boasts an 88 average in the classroom. She is majoring in nursing in the fall and hopes to attend Mercy College, Molloy College, or NYU.

Clayten Thomas (Boys Varsity)  Clayten ranks 7th in his senior class with a 99.2 grade point average and is the member of several school organizations and activities including National Honor Society. Clayten is interested in a major focused on international relations.

Over 65 students attended the orientation on December 17 at the high school. A number of students completed the application and attended the parent orientation with their parents and guardian.

New Weather Station at WHS

The Science Department recently installed a weather station at Westbury High School that provides real time weather updates including temperature, wind, pressure, precipitation, and UV. The station was secured by District-wide Science Chairperson Ms. Mueller through the Donors Choose program.

Check Westbury weather here!
Teachers boost educational experiences through Donors Choose

Westbury High School teachers are improving their classrooms and student success with innovative programs this year that are being funded through the organization Donors Choose. Donors choose offers programs that support diversity in Schools.

Teachers that have ongoing projects through Donors Choose include:

Ms. Schalk  Ms. Corea
Ms. Rodriguez  Mrs. Kpana
Ms. Santoro  Ms. Mueller
Ms. Holle Nason  Ms. Rojas
Ms. Petrelli  Mr. Rodriguez

Ms. Schalk and Ms. Rodriguez are ambassadors for the program this year at WHS. “Our job is to share the opportunity to teachers helping them make their classrooms the vision they see for their students,” they said.

Ms. Rodriguez’s program provides a charging station for students’ phones during class. She says, “Cell phones are so distracting in class and I love the idea of being able to provide the students a safe place to charge their phones while I am teaching.”

Ms. Schalk’s program through the Key Club is all about fire safety and providing smoke detectors to our students. Given the recent devastating fires in the news the members of Key Club want to make sure fellow students in the community are informed and have the tools to feel safe.”

Ms. Mueller has raised funds for several projects. Two are ongoing for the Greenhouse, and two others are training equipment for the swim team, and new rackets for the Badminton team.

Ms. Kpana's project is a button making project. According to Ms. Kpana, “The buttons will be developed by students and staff to promote equity and inclusion in our educational community. This project will allow them to be seen as well as supported by the staff and their peers. Through meaningful slogans that can be worn on buttons, we will ensure students have a voice in our classes and educational community.”

Overall, Westbury High School has raised a total of $16,581 to date for students & education. That’s 31 Projects Funded, 10 Teachers Funded, and 106 Donors. Great job to all!

ROTC brings home high honors

The Westbury High School NJROTC cadets took home numerous awards at competitions recently. On November 20 they went to Bethel High School in Connecticut and took home first place in Academics. Then on December 18 they won 10 trophies and 2 medals at a competition in Southold.

When not winning awards the cadets were busy giving back to the community. On December 5, our Westbury High School NJROTC Cadets went out and partnered with the Marines and the Army ROTC unit from Hempstead High School, volunteering with a huge Toys for Tots collection at the Nassau Coliseum.

NJROTC passes annual inspection

By Shantal Ibarra Cruz

On December 2, 2021, our very own Westbury HS NJROTC had their annual military inspection. Area 4 Manager Jimmie Miller stopped by to see our unit in action. The NS1 colorguard, led by cadet Koi Santos, presented the colors during the national anthem. The armed platoon, led by cadet Nicole Saavedra, as well as the NS1 unarmed platoon, led by cadet Katherine Guerra performed during the inspection. Multiple awards, promotions and ribbons were given out. Senior Shirley Quezada Mendia was promoted to MCPO (Master Chief Petty Officer) during the ceremony.
Library gets a facelift!
*By Chelcy Santamaria Guevara*

The Westbury High School library has recently undergone a facelift with the help of modern furniture. According to Ms. Grisafi, the library has been in the works for about 4 years. The new furniture and space is looking to make for more collaboration between students, while still being a quiet and comfortable place to study. The new space in the library will help improve the environment around the students and teachers to do their work in a relaxed style.

“We wanted a space that could be flexible and that can accommodate different learning styles,” Ms. Grisafi said.

Some of the new furniture include soft cushion chairs and little booths in the back of the library. There are also high chairs with desks on one side and the other side has comfortable sofa chairs. The middle work space area has been improved greatly. The chairs in the corner of the shelves are comfortable and have a desk connected to them. There’s also a round area of soft chairs that can be used for big groups of students or even used for class while presenting something. There are more desks that more students can come to during their lunch or study hall period to get and read books, complete assignments or just relax. The library also has ongoing technology support for staff and students.

Thank you to Superintendent Dr. Chase, Dr. De Nicol and the Board of Education for funding. There are still additional items that the library is awaiting such as a video wall, charging station, wireless printing and also the old computer room will be turned into an eSports lab.

The library has activities and programs that change throughout the year. Some examples include blind dating a book and poetry slam. For more information on where you can sign up or when the next one is head down to the library. The library seems to be more lively and way more modern now. Make sure you go!

Photo credits: Chelcy Santamaria Guevara and Oscar Munguia

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Students speak out on vaccine and mask mandates

As we approach the two-year anniversary of COVID-19 turning our world upside down, we thought it was a good time for our students to give their thoughts on vaccine and mask mandates in our school, as well as anything they would change about health and safety measures.

109 students anonymously responded to the survey below between January 14 and January 28 and here is what they said:

Students were also asked if there are any other health and safety measures that should be implemented.

See a sampling of what they said on page 5:

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Are desk shields actually helping?
*By Elkuin Rosales*

The Desk shield has become a common sight in Westbury High School, but according to a recent Herald survey many students and teachers are saying that the desk shields are becoming an annoyance.

For teachers It makes it difficult to walk around in their classroom to check on student’s work as they are always bumping into the desk shield. I believe the desk shield makes it difficult to copy notes on the board as the desk shields blurs the vision to see clearly in copying our notes from our teachers.

Now there are studies that show that desk shields cause more harm than good.

Continued on page 5
Velasquez honored as best in County

A historic year for Westbury High School boys soccer which ended in a county championship, also included remarkable individual accomplishments as Edison Velasquez took home the Jim Steen Award for the best boys soccer player in Nassau County.

He was also honored by Newsday as Nassau’s best player this year, as well as All-State, All-Region, and All-American. Velasquez scored 14 goals and added 8 assists this season including 2 goals in the Nassau County AA Championship game.

Coach Valentini also received honors from Newsday as the Nassau Coach of the Year. Brian Rivas Torres was first team All-Nassau and Arvin Pereira second team All-Nassau by Newsday.

Winter Track team boasts 2 All-County performers

The Winter Track team had another successful season which included these performances at the Nassau County Championship at St. Anthony’s on Feb. 8:
- Lenny Jean, Junior: 1st place in the Triple Jump
- Jacob Taylor, Senior: 1st place in the High Jump
- Renzo Chevez, Senior: 2nd place in the 600 meter
- Jason Ferguson, Senior: 2nd place in the Long Jump

Bowling improves with several match wins

The boys bowling team had a successful season, improving on last year’s win total by 4 games, good enough to finish third in our conference.

This season’s best performances came from:
- High Average: Angel Pacheco Sosa
- High Series: Ruben Amaya
- High Game: Alexis Rodriguez
Boys Basketball battles adversity to brink of playoffs

The Westbury Boys basketball team was back for the 2021-2022 season after last season was cut to just 2 games due to COVID-19. As of press time the boys were still in the playoff hunt despite facing numerous challenges this season including playing most of their games on the road due to water damage in the high school gym.

Coach Jason Bryant emphasized the positives this season including getting through the season healthy with zero positive Covid cases. He also went on to say, “Through our differences this season we became closer as a team and as a family.”

Top performers this season included senior Anthony Todd, who averaged more than 17 points per game. He dropped 26 in a 76-50 rout over Herricks on December 18 and a season high 32 in a 71-61 win over Valley Stream Central on January 15.

The future looks bright for the Dragons as several important contributors will return next year such as freshman Apollo Simmons, Rubens Destino, and Jordan Basnight. Graduating seniors are Anthony Todd, Omar Brisbane and Tariq Summers.

Wrestling team makes another playoff appearance

After a 2020-2021 season cancelled by COVID-19, the Westbury High School wrestling team was back this season with another playoff appearance. Top wrestlers this season were Kelvin Ventura (110), Brian Gonzalez (138), Kenson Gervais (152), and Romeo Turcios Joya (285). Gonzalez, Gervais and Turcios all represented Westbury in the county tournament.

According to coach Joe Simeone the future looks very bright for the Dragons as several important contributors will return next year such as freshman Apollo Simmons, Rubens Destino, and Jordan Basnight. Graduating seniors are Anthony Todd, Omar Brisbane and Tariq Summers.

Girls basketball earns respect

The Westbury High School girls basketball team faced its share of challenges in the 2021-2022 season. From numerous games rescheduled due to COVID-19 issues to almost every game being moved away from home due to a flood in the gym, the girls met each situation with poise and fought every game.

The highlight of the early season was a 55-27 win over Hicksville on Dec. 15 which included a 25-0 first quarter for the Lady Dragons. In the win Kirina Azemar had 28 points, 10 assists, five rebounds, and five steals. Naima Jones had eight points, 12 rebounds, and three steals.

The girls continued to fight hard in the following games which included a stretch of 4 conference games lost by 7 points or less and a 43-39 victory over Valley Stream Central on Feb. 1. “This year we earned the respect of the rest of the conference,” Head Coach Todd Teeter said.

This year’s top performers included Kirina Azemar who led the team in scoring for the second straight season, this year scoring 25 per game 3rd in the county. Jones had a late season stretch of 5 straight games where she scored in double digits and was also a major factor on the boards. Things are looking up as both players return next year for their senior season.

Other contributing players who entered the scoring column include: Leila Brabham, Roodline Sainrival, Jennifer Ayui, Alexandra Pierre Saint, Isabella Barrios Gil, Adela Gutierrez, and Monica Desir.

Boys Swim team makes waves

The Westbury High School Varsity Swim Team has been making a splash since its return this year. The team opened their season with a home win against Hempstead. Westbury’s Alex Mungia had a first place finish in the 100 freestyle. Westbury’s George Bonilla finished first in the 100 backstroke.

After a fruitful season of hard work and practice, the team composed of mostly seniors will be saying goodbye to the beloved sport and their team. Here’s what some of them had to say;

George Bonilla: “I liked swimming this year. Not only did I get to improve on skills that I worked on from years past, but we also had fun in the competitions against friendly teams. The coaches helped me push myself and I continuously dropped time in my events. I will definitely miss it when I graduate.”

John Reyes: “Swimming was very enjoyable. Not only did the coaches take precautions to keep us safe from Covid with masking rules and spectator restrictions, but they also pushed us to become better and faster swimmers than we were in each previous practice.”

Alexander Mungia: “Swimming on a team was a new experience for me. It is something that I definitely want to try again in the future and hope to continue to improve my skills on.”

Oscar Mungia: “Although the season was cut short for me due to injury, I enjoyed the time spent during the season. Throughout the years I could definitely feel the improvement, from not being able to swim a lap to doing a 500 yard freestyle event in a meet. There was improvement, team effort and good sportsmanship all around, and it was evident that there were good swimmers among us. Good luck to the team in the coming years!”

Boys Swim team makes waves

By Oscar Mungua

Girls basketball team

Girls basketball team
Roe v. Wade: To be or not to be?
By Elkuin Rosales

The right to privacy that protects a pregnant woman’s liberty to choose whether to have an abortion has been an issue since the 1950s. The U.S. Supreme Court will soon take up a case from Mississippi on whether bans on abortion before fetal viability can be constitutional. Many are concerned that the court might weaken its landmark abortion ruling, Roe v. Wade, from 1973.

Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in 1973 but states are free to regulate and limit the use of it. Many women say that it is a violation of their rights as they should be able to decide what to do with their body. In Texas abortion is now illegal once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, which is usually around the time that a woman finds out she’s pregnant. In Alabama “The Human life protection Act” nearly bans abortion and doctors who perform a banned abortion in the state of Alabama would be of a Class A felony and would be sentenced to life imprisonment. This legislation is facing challenges in court.

On the other hand regulation on abortions has weakened in other states like New Jersey. In January they passed a bill that allows abortion in any stage of a woman’s pregnancy. In 2019, right here in New York the Reproductive Health Act loosened regulations on abortion. You may agree with abortion or you’re against it. We can all agree on one thing it is a touchy subject to talk about.

We want to hear what the Westbury student body thinks about this issue. Your thoughts will remain ANONYMOUS and will be posted in the next edition of the Herald.

Students tell their story through Herstory

Herstory is a creative writing course that is being implemented within the Home Language Arts curriculum to support Newcomer students and ELL students to gain self-confidence, and help with their social-emotional skills as it improves their writing, listening and reading skills in both their native language (Spanish) and English. This creative writing course brings unheard voices into the public arena to transform lived experiences into written memoirs powerful enough to change hearts, minds and policy.

Herstories are anonymous and here is an example from one of our students that grew up in Nicaragua and moved to the United States when he was 9 years old:

Life of a Child
It all starts with a boy, he was 9 years old and he still had questions about what he wanted to be. But he was always distracted by things that attracted his attention. The boy lived in Chinandega, Nicaragua with his sister and his grandparents and uncles. His parents went to the United States to wait for him and his sister to live there. The boy read comic books and watched superhero movies and thought, “I want to be a superhero.” During the week, the boy and his family went to the beach or the river. His mind had many imaginations and his family told him, “You are thinking about big things, for now think about something small and then you can achieve your dreams.” The following month, the boy learned from many people who made art with a lot of practice and time. He wondered if he could do it the way they did. Two days later, the boy drew in a hurry, but the drawing was bad and he got angry. “How did they do it?!” he asked. “Because you’re doing it so fast, drawing is all about focus and time,” his uncle replied. He taught the boy and he understood. Another day later, the boy and his sister played until they saw their father, he said, “it’s time to come to America”. They never thought the day would come. The children looked at their uncles and grandparents. The older sister did not want to leave, but she really wanted to look at her mother. The boy felt the same, but he did not want to say goodbye to all the memories he had in Nicaragua. The dad told him, “Everything is going to be fine, you are going to see them again, we can call you whenever you want. You would like that?”, The grandparents and uncles gave them a big hug so they wouldn’t forget it.

They arrived at the airport. The boy did not like heights, but his sister and his father were going to be with him. A few months ago, the children were talking to their parents for the first time and were impressed with how technology could help people communicate. The boy thought it was like magic. It was a little difficult looking at her parents, but they were happy that they spoke to their family for the first time. Many hours spent on the plane, the children talked with their dad about what it was like to live in the United States. The kids couldn’t wait to see their mom. They came to America. The whole family looked at them getting out of the plane, the children ran to say hello. He was nervous to look at his mother and there she was, the mother was running while crying and the children were too and they hugged. The family is now united and with another member of the family, a little brother!

Demon Slayer
Season 2 Review
By Shantal Ibarra Cruz

Rating: ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

Demon Slayer: Entertainment District Arc premiered on Hulu Sunday, December 5th. As of now, there are 7 episodes currently available for viewing. This season takes Tanjiro and his fellow Demon Slayers to Yoshiwara, a red light district, where crime and demon activity run rampant. Demon activity is suspected here after some wives go missing from the area.

In my opinion, the season is spectacular! The opening song, Zankyou’sanka by Aimer is super catchy! The visuals this season are alluring. What I really like about this season is how it doesn’t focus too much on Tanjiro, but also focuses on Inosuke and Zenitsu. In the last season, it was heavily focused on Tanjiro and his training to become a Demon Slayer. The fight scenes between the demons and the demon slayers are so awesome. It leaves you wanting to see more of that dynamic. Demon Slayer is an amazing series for someone who is into the action genre, but also loves a little bit of comedy. I’m excited to see what happens later on in the season, as well as season 3!
They couldn’t believe that children had a little brother, he was so adorable and so small that the whole family couldn’t stop smiling. They were looking at New York City, it was very big and as I said the first time, the boy had a lot of imagination, he thought that Spider-Man would pass by. They talked about how they are going to like living in the United States, the language, the art, the culture, but about all that, how they are going to live.

Life in America
Many years passed, the school was very different from the one they had in Nicaragua. The children could not understand the language that people spoke. The other students did not have uniforms, only normal clothes, but with the help of their parents, they already understood. Many of the teachers were good to the students and helped others who felt they could not achieve. The boy thought that he would never have friends like he had back home because his sister was the oldest and had many students coming to her. Last week, the family went to many places that the children never saw. They went to the park, to the beach, to the movies. The boy spoke with his father about how it was when he went to school. The father did very well with classes, better with art, but why? “Because you have my blood, you are going to do things that I already did when I was young and I know that you are going to become a man who is going to show the world that you can do it. Come with me,” said the father. The father showed his son his drawings and he never knew that his father drew when he was young. “And that’s because you are going to teach the world what you can do.” “I’ll do it daddy, I’m not going to let you down,” and, how did he know? Because that wasn’t me.

Students are encouraged to take part in this program and tell their story. See Ms. Vaca if you have any questions!

The Model UN: WHS newest club

After requests from several students, Westbury High School has reestablished an the Model UN club. The club discusses real contemporary issues in a safe and supportive setting. Recent cases have dealt with the ethics of social media use, the appreciation of art that comes from ethically flawed artists, and our ethical responsibility towards animals.

The discussions that take place help to prepare the club for the regional round of the National High School Ethics Bowl. Westbury’s Model UN club participated in this year’s tournament, which was held on Saturday, February 12th. Unlike traditional debate tournaments, Ethics Bowl does not demand that teams take a certain side of an argument, but instead allows teams to build arguments that reflect the team’s stand on each case. Teams face off one on one, and the team that puts forth the best arguments wins.

The club appreciates all perspectives and welcomes new members. The Model UN club meets Monday afternoons in room 180. Come and take part in Westbury High School’s most exciting new club. See Mr. Forker if you have any questions.

Westbury gives back for Thanksgiving

Westbury once again teamed up with the NYC Corrections Benevolent Association to distribute Thanksgiving meals to community families in need.

No Hate Tour puts on a show

The No Hate High School Tour had one of its latest stops at Westbury High School on December 3. The No Hate High School Tour, now in its 21st year, is an incredibly impactful educational program that uses the energy and excitement of action sports to deliver critical bullying prevention tools, techniques and information to students in a relatable, peer-to-peer manner. They put on a show for students that included bike tricks, a pullup contest, and impactful information about anti-bullying, inclusion, and kindness.

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