

# SMArticles

December 5th, 2014

Science and Mathematics Academy

Volume I, Issue 9

## Something to Pond-er

By: Nathan (Junior)

The Green Team, established from the SMA by Mrs. McDonough, has had many important improvements in the past including organized school-wide recycling and a vegetable garden. Recently, a new and even more ambitious task has been unfolding for the green team. Construction of a fish pond in the Aberdeen courtyard has already begun.

While currently not much more to look at than a black tarp, the pond holds promises of being a valuable addition to our school. The idea may have been inspired by the ponds of other schools, such as the one in Bel Air High school's courtyard; however, a key difference between our proposed pond and existing ones is the addition of practicality. Similar to the vegetable garden project, the pond is to provide food to students, but in the form of fish. Originally, tilapia was decided upon, because who doesn't love this healthy and tasty food. However, tilapia could not survive the pond freezing in the winter. A species that can survive these temperatures will be selected.

While currently not much more to look at than a black tarp, the pond holds promises of being a valuable addition to our school. The idea may have been inspired by the ponds of other schools, such as the one in Bel Air High school's courtyard; however, a key difference between our proposed pond and existing ones is the addition of practicality. Similar to the vegetable garden project, the pond is to provide food to students, but in the form of fish. Originally, tilapia was decided upon, because who doesn't love this healthy and tasty food. However, tilapia could not survive the pond freezing in the winter. A species that can survive these temperatures will be selected.

## Space Tourism Today

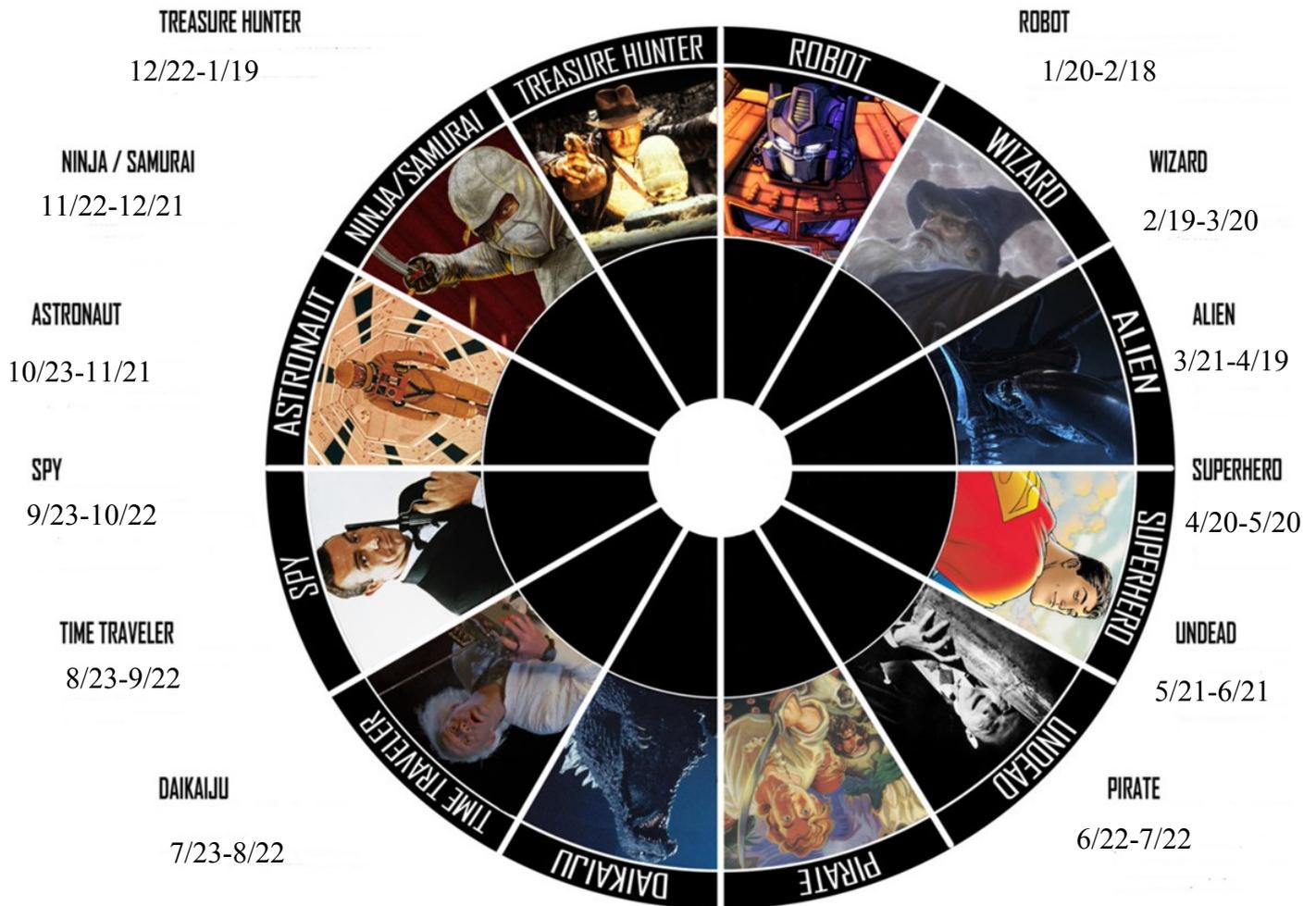
By: Sierra (Freshman)

In recent years, humanity has found themselves seeking answers about the final frontier: space. It seems as though it was only yesterday that we were kids dreaming about becoming an astronaut and discovering new worlds and alien life forms. At some point, reality had to catch up, forcing us to put dreams such as these on hold. But now, the dream of going into space is not only achievable, but also accessible; that is, if you have an extra \$200,000 lying around. Despite the seemingly amazing opportunity the space tourism industry provides for both the consumer and the producer, at some point we have to ask ourselves: What are the costs? For some, the risks are just too great.

On October 31<sup>st</sup> of this year, Virgin Galactic launched a test run of its space craft known as SpaceShipTwo. The company had expected to open its space tourism program to the public within the next year, if the test results deemed the craft safe enough for use. However, for the pilot operating the seemingly safe space craft, the outcome was fatal. The trial run of SpaceShipTwo did not only incite the death of the pilot Michael Alsbury but also it seriously injured the co-pilot, Peter Siebold, who miraculously survived a free fall of 50,000 feet.

The crash not only induced setbacks for the industry, but also left people questioning: Is civilian space travel really safe? Although the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has a minimal regulation framework set up, including requirements for launch vehicles, the operators and the passengers, there is still the question of how many test flights should be performed before the craft is deemed safe. Ultimately, the matter is in the hands of the consumer to weigh the risks and rewards of space tourism. On the positive side you have an amazing experience and extreme bragging rights, while on the negative end you have a significant dent in your piggy bank and the possibility of certain death. What matters more to you?

**The Geek Horoscope**  
**By: Jeremy (Senior)**



**Robot:**

Your first achievement of 2015 will be a thousand new followers on social media from developing countries. You feel so happy, you might just ironically push somebody off a rooftop.

**Wizard:**

It's a good thing it's winter because you will feel the need to go on an Arctic adventure! Grab a friend, preferably a Time Traveler, and go hunt seals on a glacier! You might get lost looking for the Northern Lights, but in the end, you'll have fun, and that's what matters.

**Alien:**

Ancient and mystical forces are compelling you, Alien. They are compelling you to question the reality around you and not be so gullible all the time. Be cautious of Daikaiju, for they are on the lookout for people to fool this month.

**Superhero:**

Midwinter will not treat you kindly, Superhero. Thanks to frigid air current blowing down from the Alaska, temperatures will drop like a stone, and you'll get sick a lot. However, Mercury will cast its healing on you, so you'll recover quickly from illnesses.

**Undead:**

Fortune favors the bold, and the stars have chosen you to become incredibly lucky this upcoming year. To be precise, you will be lucky in getting a lot of money. You won't be picking pennies off the street like a chump; you're finding hundred dollar bills.

**Pirate:**

This month you will be hounded by a psychotic nut. To be precise, your tormentor is an Astronaut, but all Astronaut friends are kind of crazy this month, so what else is new? In order to prevent harm from coming your way, make thirty fudgy mug brownies and burn them in a sacrificial ritual.

**Daikaiju:**

Don't stop reading, this really works! Prank five people each week, and you will be kissed by the love of your life by the end of the month! Aliens are really gullible this month, so target them.

**Time Traveler:**

You probably thought you were going to spend the rest of winter swaddled in your Snuggie, watching the Peanuts Holiday Special on rerun, weren't you? You thought wrong. Thanks to the influence of cold Neptune, a Wizard will suddenly pull you along on an Arctic adventure. Stranded in the bleak frozen Winterland.

**Spy:**

Go outside at midnight and stand on the roof of your house. Watch as the rain turns to snow and suddenly, you will see a movement in the shadows! Is it the Christmas spirit? Nope, it's an Robot sneaking up to push you off the roof and into a snowdrift.

**Astronaut:**

Maybe it's the chaotic energies of Mars affecting you, or maybe you're finally starting to crack, but this month you will suddenly feel an overwhelming urge to just give up and be free! You will do whatever you want to whoever you want whenever you want. Consequences? What's that?

**Ninja/Samurai:**

You feel distressed that the holiday season has begun, because frankly you really could do without the mall Santas and little kids screaming for iPhones. You will make ambitious New Year's resolutions, but unfortunately you won't accomplish any of them.

**Treasure Hunter:**

Look at this mess. A certain era in your life is swiftly ending, and you will find yourself at a crossroads whether you like it or not. So while everybody else clears out their Christmas trees, you'll be in a corner lamenting your fate.

**New HCPS Grading System****By: Sean (Freshman)**

The new HCPS grading system that went into effect this year is a hot topic at the school board meetings. It changes the grading for AP and certain SMA classes. An A is still a 5.0 in these classes but the grades B and C got bumped up a B from a 3.75 to a 4 and a C from a 2.5 to a 3 and a D got moved down from a 1.25 to a 1.

This grading system is great for sophomores, freshman and incoming classes for years to come. This new grading system makes it easier to achieve a high GPA which will be beneficial for students applying to colleges and scholarship programs, which was the objective of this policy. Now Harford County students will be able to keep track with most other counties that have already implemented a similar system.

While this grading system might seem like a good idea it has some flaws within it. One of the major flaws is how it impacts juniors and seniors. With this new grading system coming in and helping freshman and sophomores it does not help juniors and seniors that have not taken classes in the current grading system but have been in the old grading system. It was harder to keep a GPA that most freshmen have now.

There are two plans of action floating around that might be implemented soon to improve the conditions of all students' grades. One is the making the grading system retroactive so that it applies to everyone and their grades in their past years. This would tremendously boost most upper-classmen grades and make them more competitive in college applications. Another plan of action is to change honors grading to a weighted grade too. The honors weighted grading system would not be as big as AP classes but would still generate a boost to most students' grades.

While this new grading system is a great system and will help bring Harford County students higher grades, they should definitely add retroactivity to the policy for all students currently enrolled in high school so that this benefit all HCPS students get into better colleges and receive more scholarships.

## Editor's Note - Preparing for College Applications

By: Reagan (Senior)

As December begins, most seniors are finishing their college applications and are awaiting a response. I wanted to take this time to help juniors and sophomores prepare for their college applications.

First lets talk about sophomore year. Sophomore year is the ideal year to start taking the SAT. It is easiest to take the SAT twice a school year, and you will not be guaranteed the time to take it during your senior year before applications are due. So if you start taking the SAT in your sophomore year, that gives you at least four chances to get the score you want.

When you take the SAT you'll have already taken the PSAT twice and the SAT is not too much different. The SAT however is longer with more sections and includes an essay portion. Make sure you prepare yourself for this test, there are tons of practice questions and essays available online for you to use.

Along with taking the SAT in advance, you should take the ACT as well. The ACT tests science as well as math, English, and reading, and it has an optional essay. The ACT is also an achievement test while the SAT is an aptitude test, so some people find the ACT easier. And colleges accept both.

My next piece of advice applies to all grades. Get involved. People always say to have a variety of activities, but they are not wrong. Not all applications will ask for a list of activities and sports that you participate in, but they can. Questions about your interests can also come up in interviews or scholarships.

Most large scholarships that you apply for are going to be interested in the activities you are involved in, and they want you to be well rounded. Scholarships can also come from Aberdeen if you participate in certain clubs.

In your junior year, you should start to pick out colleges that you like. In the beginning of the year look at all of your options and look thoroughly. As the year goes on narrow down the list based on specific things you want in a college. And while you do not need to know your specific major now, you can look into a bunch of different majors and programs that each school has. Having a general idea of what type of majors and programs are offered will make deciding which colleges you are going to apply to easier.

Whether you plan on applying early for college or not, you will need to start the application process in summer. At this point you will need to decide which teachers you want to write a recommendation about you for colleges. It is best to have a science or math teacher and an English teacher, but sometimes colleges ask for a letter from a guidance counselor. In that case you can get a recommendation from one of Aberdeen's counselors or from Ms. Voskuhl. You should start talking to your teachers over summer so they have plenty of time in advance to write a good recommendation. A teacher will be less willing to write a recommendation for you if you come to them last minute.

Another important thing to consider when getting ready to apply for college is the number of colleges you are applying to. It is best to have a safety school, match school, and reach school. However you do not want to apply to too many schools. If you do, you will be running out of time with the college applications, homework, sports, and clubs. All applications take a few days to fill out, then you need to sometime write an essay and get your recommendations in by a deadline. You do not want to be doing that for more than nine schools. And nine is still a lot.

Overall be conscious of your time management. It is never too early to start preparing for your college applications. And do not be afraid to ask teachers, guidance counselors, parents, or friends in college for advice. Good luck with your applications!