

# PHOENIX

October 8, 2010

The Voice of Schenectady High

SCH'DY, NY

## PHOENIX SPECIAL REPORT

### Shhh!

Many teens feel silenced



See INSIDE pages 5 and 6

## Step Afrika steps it up for SHS students

by **KARINA BERMEO**  
*Phoenix Writer*

It's their life, and it's something they love to do. Step Afrika is the first professional company that is dedicated to the stepping world. Step Afrika's performers come from all over the world which they are entitled to audition before getting in the group. Step

isn't just what they do. It's who they are.

Step Afrika visited SHS on Wednesday, September 29, to show many dance students and music students the art of step dancing.

Step dancing is a percussive dance in which an individual or group of people use

See STEPUP, page 3

## President Obama proposes longer school year

SHS officials weigh in on plan

by **ALEX CHIEZA**  
*with Staff Reports*

On the "Today" show Monday morning, President Barack Obama said he wanted to make the school year longer because schools in foreign countries is an average of one month longer.

He said this is because the future generations are becoming less and less educated compared to the previous, causing the United States to have a disadvantage in the global economy.

The average school year in other competitive countries is 197 days compared to our mandatory average of 180 days. Based on a study performed by OECD/PISA, the United States ranked 15th for reading literacy, 19th for mathematical literacy and 14th for scientific literacy.

The United States is being outranked by countries such as Liechtenstein. Our educational system is being overthrown by other less economically capable countries.

One of the main arguments for the proposal is that, with more vacations scattered throughout the year, students would have more opportunities to forget what they have learned.

Another problem would be the finances. Teacher, bus drivers, hall monitors, paras, and everyone else working in the school would have to get paid year round. That's not including gas for the buses, school

See OBAMA, page 3

### INSIDE THE PHOENIX

Being Muslim in America

Santorio reaches 100

Robotics Club gets funding

SHS b-ball alum hits the Bigs

# Don't feel sorry for 'Next Top Model' mixup

An epic failure on live television led to over a hundred thousand views on YouTube. "Australia's Next Top Model" made a huge mistake in announcing the winner on its finale. While the two finalists, Kelsey Martinovich and Amanda Ware, were on stage the crowd was on the edge of their

by **CHELSEA DOYLE**

out the winner of the agonizing competition. The host, Sarah Murdoch, had received the answer, and the minute she said Kelsey Martinovich the crowd went wild. Kelsey began her acceptance speech and couldn't stop smiling.

After Amanda gave her thank you speech, Murdoch stepped in quickly saying, "Oh my god I don't know what to say right now."

The crowd got quiet and as Amanda and



**"Model" contestants Amanda, left, and Kelsey, center, look on as host Sarah Murdoch reacts to mistakenly announcing Kelsey as the winner.**

Kelsey stared at Murdoch, she continued, "I'm feeling a bit sick about this. I'm so sorry about this, oh my God. I don't know what to say. This is a complete accident, I'm so sorry. It's Amanda. it was read to me wrong."

Kelsey was a good sport about the incident, hugging Amanda and telling her it was an "honest mistake."

As I watched this on YouTube, I felt awkward for the crowd and three ladies on stage. I felt bad, but when I think about it not too bad. The mistake has made "Australia's Next Top Model" a talking point in the USA and around teh world when we knew nothing about it before.

And although Kelsey didn't get first place, she already has so much fame from this simple mistake.

# 'I am NOT a terrorist' *Growing up Muslim in America*

"Muslim man beats his wife."  
"Islamic Militants fire on crowd."  
"Islam: Religion of Peace or Terrorism?"  
You may have heard or read captions similar to this on the news. You can't really watch the news without hearing about "them" -- Muslims. What's wrong with those people anyway?

My name is Maryam Shahani and I'm a young Muslim girl and a proud American. I follow the religion of Islam.

My religion teaches how to live peacefully and with dignity. I have to be kind to my neighbors and respect my parents and my teachers. It's wrong for me to ridicule any faith or its followers. If I kill one person it is as if I am killing all of humanity because God gave life and I don't have the right to take it.

These are just a few of the principles of Islam. Unfortunately, Islam is a very misunderstood faith.

There's a new term going around for Muslims. What's that word again??

Oh yeah, Terrorist.

Well, what is a terrorist? The dictionary defines terrorist as a person who spreads terror on the land.

I hate terrorism. Any domestic violence is totally against Islam so why is it consistently linked to my religion? Nowhere in my holy book, The Qur'an, does it justify the killing of innocent human beings.

Now there are some bad people out there who call themselves Muslims. They kill and do terrible things. Islam does not teach them to do this though. In fact they are going against Islam by committing such sins.

If a Christian man was to kill his wife, would Christianity be brought into this issue? In the newspaper would you read about any Christian beliefs? Would Christianity be blamed at all? Of course not. Christianity teaches its people good morals and respect. There's no question of such a thing.

Then why Islam, I ask?  
In April of 1995, when Timothy McVeigh bombed a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing and injuring many innocent people, his religion was not brought into it. No one

## STUDENT VIEW

by **Maryam Shahani**

dared to blame his church or The Holy Bible. So why is it when I read the article in the newspaper about the shooting at Fort Hood,

the word "Islam" came up twice. I read the word "Muslim" three times. The man responsible for the shooting, Nidal Malik Hasan, committed a horrible crime and there's no doubt of that, but why is Islam being brought into this? He may have been born a Muslim, but he surely didn't act as one. His thoughts and his actions were nothing but pure ignorance. Osama Bin Laden, Saddam Hussain, and any other killer, in no way, shape or form represent my religion, my beliefs or the millions of innocent Muslims living throughout the world. It's just like how Timothy McVeigh does not represent us Americans in anyway.

Yet many Muslims feel that they are being judged. I've been asked before if I'm related to Osama Bin Laden and if I know anything about the terrorist attacks. Some people think that because I'm Muslim I think killing is okay. Has our image been tarnished that badly? Do people think we are barbaric?

In December 2009, a young man in our school stabbed another boy. We all know what reputation Schenectady High School already has. The New York State Education Department has labeled us as a "persistently dangerous school." A lot of people think that this is a terrible school filled with bad students. The action of that boy only made us look worse. We are stereotyped. This is wrong because the majority of our students are well-mannered and non-violent. So why

See MUSLIM, page 5

### Phoenix Staff

Editor-in-Chief  
Nikki Griesemer



### Writers

Karina Bermeo, Tarah Bernard, Alex Beverly, Diana Harrynarine, Ashley Brown, Tori Calandra, Alex Chiesa, Chelsea Doyle, Michael Fenner, James Paukstela, Gianna Vitale, Asia Williams, Theo Winston

## News Briefs

### Robotics competition season opens

The SHS Robotics Club was presented a check for \$6,500 from ITT Technical Institute to initiate a FIRST Robotics Competition team this year.

Advisors are ecstatic over the opportunities the grant will provide for students. The team received a generous grant earlier this spring from Bechtel/Knolls Atomic Power Lab to sponsor the FIRST Tech Challenge team.

The team began its season Sept. 8 at an ITT sponsored event. It will be competing in FTC regional competition this spring in Connecticut and N.Y.C.

There are 31 SHS club members. The advisors are Mike Gauthier, Tom Patterson and Kevin Shannon. --D.H.

### STEP UP

from page 1

their whole body as an instrument to create many complex rhythms and sounds using a mixture of hand claps, word speeches, and foot steps. Step dance is composed of many different dances but mainly tap, African and Caribbean dancing.

Each step dancer that came to entertain SHS are college graduates.



Together with Step Afrika, some SHS students went on stage as the group showed them some basic fundamentals of step dancing. Each of them worked on the beat of their feet and created an amazing show for everybody to enjoy. Everybody participated in their own way whether they were on stage or just sitting in the audience.

Following the show and a brief Q and A session, certain dance students were chosen to participate in an hour long dance session with Step Afrika themselves in the SHS dance room. There, students learned some basic steps and created some amazing sounds with the steps that they used.

We hope Step Afrika can return one day.

## Fine Arts gets new principal, Global Commerce gets new name

Phoenix Staff Report

As you came back to school this year, you may have noticed a few new faces in the Main Office and house offices.

In addition to Gregory Fields joining us as the new Associate Superintendent, replacing the retired Mr. Comley, we have one new house principal, two new house deans, and a house name change.

Christopher Chank is the new interim head of the John Sayles School of Fine Arts. He takes the place of Margaret Normandin, who is now principal on special assignment

for Department of Labor Programming and High School Restructuring. Mr. Chank's post as dean was filled by Louise Gundrum.

The GE Scholars School of Humanities and Culture added Neil Estrada as its new dean.

The house formerly known as Global Commerce was changed. It is now known as the School of Business and International Studies.

Contributing to this report were staff writers Nikki Griesemer, Diana Harrynarine and Ashley Brown.

### Six SHS students attend program at Dartmouth

by ASIA WILLIAMS

Phoenix writer

When I joined five other SHS students going to a two-week, all-expenses paid trip to an Ivy League college this past summer, I had to ask: what does it take to get in? Simple, good grades.

We spent our time at the Hanover, New Hampshire-based college in various activities like canoeing, swimming, rock wall climbing and camping. We also had a robotics class and a humanities class.

The object of the trip was to prepare high school students for college and give them exposure to campus life.

The six students -- Kirk Fray, Michael Baily, Andres Jimenez, Kailinn Bevihmyer, Kassandra Rojas and myself -- arrived at Dartmouth and were immediately introduced to brand new laptops and the 24 others ar-

riving from various high schools including the Bronx Center, Fairmont Virginia and more.

We searched for the dorm room with our names on the door and were paired with a roommate. On the beds were notes to us from our summer advisors, academic coaches and mentors, all of whom we would get to know over the two weeks.

Mentors were there to take us just about anywhere we requested: out to eat, swimming in the lakes, or even to the jewelry studio to create your own masterpieces. The academic coach's job was to help with assignments. The summer advisors just instructed us on how to actually make it in college.

We all agreed it was the single handed best summer of our lives. Throughout the rest of our high school experience, we will be able to reunite with the friends we made.

### OBAMA

from page 1

lunches, text books, and electric bills.

"I know a longer school year terrorizes me," said MST House Principal Jerry Rosen. "I think that maybe the reason for the supposed 'decline' of education is not caused from the actual year, but rather the effectiveness of school itself. If school is not a group effort to learn, deeming it effective, students can be put in school as long as they would like and they would not learn anything more

than the abridged."

Christopher Chank, the principal of the John Sayles School of Fine Arts at SHS, said he likes the proposal.

"A longer school year can be a good idea if our society changes it's priorities to make education number one. It would be a very expensive change when you consider educator salaries, utilities, gas prices for buses, etc., but certainly would have potential to positively impact student learning."

Contributing to this report were Tori Calandra, Ashley Brown and Nikki Griesemer.

# Football squad beats Columbia

## Homecoming win sets up match with 1-4 LaSalle

by **GIANNA VITALE**  
*Phoenix writer*

Schenectady High School's varsity football team turned their season around with a big 13-10 homecoming win Friday night over Columbia.

Kirieme Pitts ran for 157 yards on the ground and added the only two scores of

the game for the Patriots.

The Patriots boosted their record to 1-4 with the win and dropped Columbia to 0-5.

With their remaining opponents, LaSalle and Colonie, having a combined 3-7 record, the Patriots can run the table and earn a berth as a #4 seed in the Liberty Division with a 3-4 record.

# Santorio scores 100th goal

by **TARAH BERNARD**  
*Phoenix writer*

Her sixth goal of the season turned out to be her 100th goal of the year. SHS soccer player Gabrielle Santorio reached this milestone on Sept. 16 when she and her teammates defeated Troy High School, 4-2.

Santorio scored 12 goals her first year as

a 7th grader on the varsity squad. Last year, she transferred to Clark High School in San Antonio, Texas, as a sophomore and scored 36 goals for the Cougars.

Gabrielle and the SHS Patriots will be having a rematch with Troy at home on Tuesday, Oct. 12 at 4:30 p.m.

# Loudis named new basketball coach

by **ALEX BEVERLY and DIANA HARRYNARINE**  
*Phoenix writers*

Eric Loudis has been named the new boys varsity basketball coach at Schenectady High School. Loudis has been the assistant coach on the team since 2007.



Loudis has said that he will stress defense, defense and more defense as the team will be lacking height but will be very quick and athletic.

Both Loudis and Assistant Athletic Director Steve Boynton have said they have very high expectations for this team. A school

that has won two state titles in the past 12 years.

Former coach Mark Sausville announced this summer that he was resigning because he wanted to spend more time with his son, who is also a basketball player.

Sausville took over as varsity head coach from Gary

DiNola in 1998. Under Sausville's leadership, the Schenectady squad won five Big 10 championships and one state championship.

He was presented with a ball commemorating his 200th win at the end of the 2010 season.

# SHS alum Casper Wells hits the Bigs

by **ALEX BEVERLY**  
*Phoenix writer*

Casper Wells, an SHS graduate, broke into the MLB this season with the Detroit Tigers.



Wells' first hit came May 19 off of Dallas

Braden, a pitcher who threw a perfect game earlier in the season.

Wells' campaign in 2010 has been a huge success as he is hitting .354 with 4 home runs, and 17 RBIs in only 82 at bats through September 27.

This great effort Casper is putting in should almost guarantee him a spot on a major league roster next season.

# SHS music policy should be changed

Schenectady High School rules indicate students are not, under any circumstances, allowed to listen to their musical devices during class.

Why?

Obviously to get rid of distractions in class, but what about study halls? If I have

nothing to do but read a book, what will a little music hurt?

There are also art classes. Several artists need inspiration to do the best they can in their future careers in fine arts.

Even English classes or creative writing students may feel a need for music to help them get into the proper frame of mind, block the world around them, and focus only on their assignment in a stress free environment.

Isn't that what teachers want most from their students? For work to be done at the students' best?

In my opinion, music amplifies the creative mind and sparks all kinds of ideas to create a bonfire of a story or an essay, or even a newspaper article!

Of course, the school cannot give us music privileges in all our classes, and specifying which classes music would be appropriate would be too much hassle for such a topic.

I think the music policy should be changed to allow teachers to control their own electronics rules. If the teachers feel their students would be more motivated, more focused, and quieter by listening to their iPods and MP3 players, they should have the authority to say "set your minds free!"

**The PHOENIX wants YOU!!**

**We are seeking writers, reviewers, columnists, photographers, cartoonists, editors and more to create Schenectady High's award-winning student newspaper. To learn more, see Mr. Gaboury in Room AB17.**

## STIGMA

from page 6

participate in a Day of Silence to support LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender) rights. The students who participated were silent to represent the struggles that this group of people have had to go through.

May 6 was a less-observed day, Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. The National Institute of Mental Health states that 13% of children ages 8-15 are suffering from at least one mental disorder. They say that this is "a rate that is comparable to diabetes, asthma, and other diseases of childhood."

This may seem like a small percentage, but if we use the senior class of Schenectady High as an example, it puts things into perspective. Our senior class last year was 514 students. If 13% were to suffer from some type of mental illness, that would be nearly 67 students.

So as a fellow student and someone with connections to this issue, I ask that not only on Mental Health Awareness Day, but every day, we be aware of those around us who may be suffering from a mental illness and also those around us who may feel silenced by any type of difference they have.

*'I was out of school for months to get a handle on what was wrong with me.... When I came back, it was not to a warm reception. People looked at me different. Kids called me crazy.'*

See the SHS *Phoenix* online and in color. Get a copy of this paper at the district website: [www.schenectady.k12.ny.us](http://www.schenectady.k12.ny.us).

## MUSLIM

from page 2

do people blame Schenectady High School for the actions of some people.

Similarly, why does the media blame Islam for terrorism? Why are Muslims stereotyped as violent?

I ask you, the reader, one thing. Next time you hear something about Islam, just think

## SURVIVOR

from page 6

was able to move on.

In the most recent incident however, I was assaulted while on my way to get help. I FELT HORRIBLE! Luckily I had the help and support of my parents, friends and my school advisers and did not let this incident of bullying continue.

I was able to walk away knowing that there is nothing wrong with me and proud that I did something to stop it. I told someone! Unfortunately some people aren't as lucky as I was.

Something needs to change in order for us to feel safe again. Maybe more assemblies or clubs to help address the issue of bullying. Let's make a change!



## DO SOMETHING

from page 6

"He/she didn't seem like the type to take their lives." That's the scary part; it leaves people to think "who will be next?"

On March 29, 2007, an SHS student and a personal friend of mine, Dashad (Mano) Womack took his life. There had been no sign of him being bullied but everyone agreed that it was uncharacteristic. Dashad was the class clown and you could usually find him screaming the most inappropriate things in the hallways. He had friends and was considered popular. Nobody would have ever thought he would even think of suicide.

How do we prevent suicide within a school district? It's a difficult challenge, especially

in a big school.

My first advice would be: Don't ignore it. It's obviously a problem and acting like a death is no big deal will not help. Another thing to think about is since a lot of suicides

**How do we prevent suicide? Why not make a stand. This is our generation and our friends.**

are a result from being bullied, focus on preventing bullying. If we see somebody being targeted, why not make a stand. Like I said before you never know what a person is going through by just

looking at them. So even if the person doesn't seem affected, befriend them and just talk.

This is our generation and our friends as we still mourn for A Jay, Dashad, Dee-Jay, Kuwana, Jalissa, Mary and Chelle. It's time to take a stand.

look up verses of the Qur'an, or ask a Muslim you know.

Don't judge without knowing. One of the worst diseases of humanity is ignorance. Please don't be a victim.

See the Blue Roses Theatre's first play of the year, "Noises Off," Nov. 3-6 in the Black Box Theater.

## Mental illness causes stigma too

by **HALEY ELSTON**  
for the Phoenix

Mental illness comes in many different forms. At this time, we are extremely well informed and educated about it, so why are people with mental illnesses still being discriminated against? With proper medical care, people who have mental illness can live in society and thrive just like those who are "normal."

Mentally ill teenagers can feel especially silenced by their diseases. Teenagers are judgmental and very critical of one another.

Having a mental illness can be embarrassing and isolating. It is hard for teenagers to feel comfortable opening up and talking to people about things that could potentially make them vulnerable. This is why I believe that teenagers with mental illness need to be represented and spoken for. Society needs to realize that just because you have a mental illness, you are not different.

**Studies show 13% of children aged 8-15 suffer from at least one mental disorder.**

As a young teenager, I was a victim of discrimination and bullying. Why? I am Bipolar. If you were to meet me now, you would never know it unless I told you.

But three years ago was a different story. I was out of school for about 3-4 months to get a handle on what was wrong with me. So, being out of school that long, obviously kids are going to talk.

When I came back, it was not to a warm reception. People looked at me different. Kids called me "crazy." I felt like I was treated differently, almost like people were scared of me. It was like people had to walk on eggshells because they didn't know if I was going to go "crazy" on them.

But I wasn't crazy then, and I'm not now. I am a normal 17 year old girl who wants the world to know that just because someone has a mental illness does not mean that they don't have feelings.

On April 16, SHS allowed its students to

See STIGMA, page 5

## Bullied: A survivor's tale

Bullying is a problem everywhere; in every town, every neighborhood, every school. Even though there are rules and consequences that pertain to bullying it is still a major issue.

by **LINIHA MORTON**  
Phoenix writer

Having dealt with bullying first hand, once in 8th grade and then again a few months ago, I personally know exactly how being bullied can alter a person. Bullying makes you feel



Most of the time the cause of bullying is jealousy, he-said/she-said arguments or just people looking for attention. In most cases it starts as cyber bullying; bullying on MySpace, Facebook, Twitter and other websites similar to this.

scared, insecure and defenseless. Scared to go to school and to tell anyone about what is happening to you. Insecure because you feel that there was something wrong with you that caused this to happen. Defenseless because it seemed that there was nothing you can do to stop it.

The first time I dealt with bullying it was started by a rumor. Someone said I was talking about them but instead of just asking me if it were true. I was subjected to taunts and name calling. Luckily the bullying stopped and I

*'... The first time I dealt with bullying it was started by a rumor.'*

See SURVIVOR, page 5

## What can WE do about bullying?

After Phoebe Prince's death, her tormentors had no mercy. Instead, they posted comments on her Facebook wall saying "Accomplished."

On January 14th, 15-year-old Phoebe Prince took her own life due to bullying. Her 12-year-old sister found her, dead in her closet.

Phoebe endured exclusion, threats and name calling. She was a victim of both face-to-face bullying and cyber-bullying.

This is nothing new to any high school student. By looking at a person, you can't always tell how they feel on the inside. You can't tell what they are going through. Bullying is and has been a problem throughout

the United States, New York, and more importantly Schenectady School District. This isn't an issue that should be ignored, swept under a rug in hopes for it to go away.

Last year, in our school district, there were at least two victims being bullied before they resorted to taking their lives; as well as years before that. This left victims' families, friends, and the community crushed. People thought, who could be this cruel to make someone think there is no way out? What could I have done?

People don't realize that just talking to a person can make someone feel important. It's sad because most of these victims had many friends they could have talked to. After these past suicides, I've heard the same response:

See DO SOMETHING, page 5

See the SHS Phoenix online and in color. Get a copy of this paper at the district website: [www.schenectady.k12.ny.us](http://www.schenectady.k12.ny.us).