



FMS Presents.....

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THE PANDEMIC THAT'S SHAKING THE WORLD

By: Sahar Mokhal

As the world still rests under the dark clouds of the Covid-19 pandemic, and more than ten months of isolating, mask-wearing, social distancing, endless hand-sanitizing, and online learning has yet to be over, millions of people worldwide are testing positive with Covid-19, an infectious disease caused by the newly discovered coronavirus. With the U.S. government in chaos, a recent insurrection against the United States Capitol, and the economy nearly crashing, the world has lived through much uncertainty, grief, frustration, and simply too many deaths.

According to the Cable News Network (CNN), Covid-19 now kills more than one American every minute, and the rate is continuously accelerating as the death toll pushed past 300,000. Hospitals are immensely overwhelmed with the sheer amount of people coming in with a positive test result, and conditions have been so poor that many nurses have resorted to stationing patient's beds along the busy hallways and corridors of the hospital. Hospital staff have been working day and night, getting little rest and even less nourishment.

Closer to home, New York ranks fourth of the fifty states with the most cases, and currently 1,143,848 people have tested positive. New York City, with its heavy, crowded population, is an orange zone area. There are nearly 2,000 active cases in Ulster County, but according to the Covid-19 Ulster County Dashboard, the positivity rate of the county seems to be steadily decreasing as the new year begins. The City of Kingston records most cases in Ulster County, and most schools in the area remain closed or are following a hybrid schedule.

Yet, all hope is not lost. The American pharmaceutical company Pfizer has been working with the German biotechnology company BioNTech in manufacturing a messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine to counter the virus. This biological preparation does not contain a weakened or inactivated part of the disease, unlike many other vaccines. Instead, when injected into the body, it teaches the cells how to make proteins-or even just a piece of the protein-that triggers an immune response inside the body. When injected twice into the muscle of the upper arm (with each injection twenty-one days apart), Covid-19 mRNA give instructions for our cells to make a harmless piece of "spike protein", which is found on the surface of the virus that causes Covid-19. The immune response that results in the cell's production of this protein prompts antibodies to be made, which protect us from getting infected from the real virus.

Therefore, vaccines are very powerful as they do not treat or cure diseases, but prevent them, decreasing the spread of the illness. According to Johns Hopkins University, recent trials of the Pfizer vaccine are showing promising results, and Phase III clinical trials has a preliminary analysis indicating efficacy of about 95%, meaning one out of twenty people who get the vaccine may not have protection from getting Covid-19. Many health organizations such as <https://www.cdc.gov/> are strongly recommending citizens of all countries across the globe to get this vaccine or others that are being manufactured in different countries, especially those who are over the age of 65 and/or have pre-existing health conditions. Both Pfizer and Moderna, another American pharmaceutical and biotechnological company showing propitious vaccine results, report that their vaccines prevent both mild and severe symptoms of Covid-19 if contracted. The U.S. government has already pre-purchased thousands of doses of vaccines, and the federal government has vowed that at least the initial round of vaccinations to all Americans will be free of charge. It is expected that 40-45 million people, if not more, will be vaccinated by the end of January. Many Highland Middle School teachers have already been vaccinated, and more people in the community are signing up for their shots each day.

Which leads us to the million-dollar question: What about schools? As of right now, Pfizer is only offering vaccines to children ages sixteen and up, as those younger than sixteen have not yet been tried for the vaccine. From a clinical standpoint, most children 1 through 18 years old experience mild or no symptoms from Covid-19 and are much less likely than adults to face severe consequences from the infection. Most of the few university students who contracted Covid-19 on campus were reportedly asymptomatic. However, given the considerable portion of students and staff who live in a household containing at least one person over the age of 65, fears of infecting family members and close friends have held back many from returning to school. In addition, small school buildings still lack the space needed to maintain 6 feet of distance between all individuals, and the utilization of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) by many upper-level classmen is dangerously decreasing.

On the other hand, online learning, for the most part, has been detrimental to the physical, mental, social, and emotional health of young beings. According to The New England Journal of Medicine, "Children miss out on essential academic and social-emotional

learning, formative relationships with peers and adults, opportunities for play, and other developmental necessities when they are kept at home. Children living in poverty, children of color, English language learners, children with diagnosed disabilities, and young children face especially severe losses." To many, learning from home has not only isolated us from time itself, but has made the divisions between us increasingly prominent. Racial wealth gaps in communities, for instance, have been given more and more attention as education researchers raise the concern that school closures have created a poor situation for disadvantaged students, mainly children of color, when it comes to supplies available at home for online learning.

So what will it come down to? When exactly will we be able to move passed this time of economic depression, racial injustice, rising infection rates, Zoom classes, mask-wearing, and uncertainty? When will Covid-19 be but a distant memory to our nation and world, left to the history books and museum plaques? Well, although vaccine distribution and positivity rates are not standing at their best in this country, a recent change of events must be considered. On Wednesday, January 20, 2021 Joseph R. Biden was sworn in as the 46th President of the United States of America, along with Kamala D. Harris, who was sworn in as Vice President that same day, making history as the first woman, African American, and South Asian vice president of the United States. In his inaugural address, President Biden spoke of unity, strength, trust, possibility, overcoming division, and hope. Already, his first day as President, according to White House press secretary Jen Psaki, consisted of signing fifteen executive actions, part of a flurry of steps he plans to take in the coming days to address his top policy priorities — and to roll back some of former President Donald Trump's initiatives. These actions focused on addressing the Covid-19 crisis, the economy, racial justice, and climate change. According to <https://www.npr.org/>, "The signed actions include a mandate for masks on federal property, an action to rejoin the Paris climate accord, a removal of Trump's travel ban affecting Muslim-majority nations, a proclamation halting further funding or construction to the wall along the U.S. southern border, and an order reversing Trump's decision to withdraw from the World Health Organization."

"This will strengthen our own efforts to get the pandemic under control by improving global health," Psaki said during her first White House press briefing Wednesday night.

Although there is a long, narrow road ahead, many people such as Amanda Gorman, the United States' first-ever youth poet laureate who recited a poem at the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, believe we can rebuild, reconcile, and recover from this pandemic, and become a stronger nation with better-built values afterward. While schools, communities, and states across the country are still struggling, and many such as hospital staff, parents, teachers, and healthcare workers continue to be alarmed by rising cases and this dire societal period, with a vaccine and possibly with the power of a new federal administration we can overcome and defeat this pandemic, seeing the light emerge into a real future once again.

Wistful Winter

When leaf subsides to cold winter grief,
Does the world recommence it's propensities.
And the endless night sky makes no promise of dawn,
Our lives submit to their intensity.
We hear the rustle of branches,
A numbing frozen pond,
The cry of a sparrow,
A gray sky newly spawned.
Our thoughts surrender to
An endless list of to-do's
The sun slips from the grip
Of the high above endless blue.
Life has no name in this stage,
Only feeling; only restlessness.
When the Earth seals its silver,
And exhales in its breathlessness.
Yet our spirit tirelessly seeks,
Golden adventure not yet nursed.
Never cease to pursue and challenge,
The roaring current of your inner thirst.
~~The Mystery HMS Poet

Q: What is your plan for this school year?

A: This school year my plan is to try and do fun activities to boost everyone's spirits during these tough times. I would like to put a suggestion box in the school to get other students' ideas.

Q: Have you ever run before for a student council position? If so, state which position and if you won.

A: Yes, I ran last year for secretary and I was lucky enough to win. I was very excited about it and I enjoyed being in that position.

Q: How did you feel while waiting for the results of the election?

A: I felt very nervous waiting for the results of the election. I was worried I would lose at points, but I kept up my confidence and was thankful that I ended up winning in the end.

Q: How do you feel about becoming Vice President?

A: I feel very happy. I haven't had a more important role on the council, and I have much more say now, I'm excited to see what this year brings.

Q: What are some challenges you think you will encounter during this year?

A: We have and will encounter problems related to the Covid 19 pandemic. We are currently trying to complete as much as we can in the upcoming weeks. I am working closely with the President and the rest of the council to brainstorm ideas before winter break.

Q: How does it feel being elected President?

A: It feels good. And it feels nice knowing that I get to make changes to help fellow students.

Q: What is your plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

A: I'd like to make it a good year for everybody. I know some people have been having a rough time so far, but I'd like everybody to know that I'm here to make this year possible for the Middle School. I would love to help the school and community as much as I can.

Q: What are your top goals/priorities as President?

A: I'd like to set up a lot of fundraising for this school. Like I said, I hope to make things better and I want Highland Middle School students to know that their ideas are heard and can definitely be put into action. Students and their views/ideas are the priority.

Q: Have you ever ran for/held office in an organization before? If so, which one?

A: I have not held office before. I ran for National Junior Honor Society President a few months ago, but I was not elected.

Q: What inspired you to run for the office of President?

A: I like being a leader and helping other people.

Q: How did you feel when running for office?

A: It was stressful. Obviously, I didn't know if I would win. But it was really fun running against you and I'm glad we all participated.

Q: What are your thoughts/feeling about what the Student Council can accomplish this year with the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic?

A: I think a lot of students have felt that we haven't done much this year, which is understandable. But I believe we just need to keep setting our ambitions as high as possible, like we have done in previous years. The harder we try, the more accomplished we will be, no matter what outcome. We can work through this struggle. The Coronavirus Pandemic is a huge challenge, but that does not mean we shouldn't try, it just means we're going to have to try harder.

Covid-19 has been one of the worst pandemics in history.

By: Kyle Menezes

The current number of cases worldwide is 87.6 million and about 21.4 million cases in the U.S. Unfortunately, there have been 1.89 million deaths worldwide and 361,000 deaths in the U.S. Thankfully, 48.9 million people have recovered from Covid-19 worldwide and 13.07 million have recovered from Covid-19 in the U.S. In New York there are currently 1.06 million cases of Covid-19 and sadly 38,846 deaths. However, there have also been 61.62 million cases, in which people have recovered from Covid-19. In Ulster county there are 1,864 current cases, 162 deaths, and 4,864 cases in which the person recovered. In neighboring Dutchess county there are 1,626 active cases, 255 deaths, and 11,498 cases in which the person recovered. In the town of Lloyd there are 119 active cases, 44 deaths, and 458 cases in which the person recovered. In Marlborough there are 89 active cases, 4 deaths, and 321 cases in which the person recovered. Please note that the numbers above were written down as of January 7th, 2021. The FDA has approved the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccine. Both vaccines have been distributed and administered. The Pfizer vaccine has 2 doses 21 days apart, while Moderna's vaccine, has 2 doses 28 days apart. The Pfizer vaccine is recommended for people over the age of 16, while the Moderna vaccine is recommended for people over the age of 18. In clinical trials Pfizer was 95% effective at preventing Covid-19 in people who do not already have Covid-19, while Moderna was 94.1% effective at preventing Covid-19 in people who do not already have Covid-19. There are two new strains of Covid-19, the U.K. variant (called B.1.1.7) and the South African variant (called 501.V2). Both have not been found to be more deadly, but they are more infectious. Both vaccines can protect against the U.K. variant, but are less effective against the South African variant.

The Hybrid Schedule

By: Miranda Farbaniec

The hybrid schedule has its pros and cons. At least we are protecting ourselves more, and it's easier to get in contact with teachers after school hours. But since we are using zoom, teachers do not know if students are signing into class, but then ditching their device for video games. Also, a lot of learning online depends on the internet, and how it acts, or the connection, especially at home. But then again, it's new learning material. Overall, the hybrid schedule is different for all of us, but we will get through it eventually.

By: Gavin Decker

Did you know that:

People who are currently alive represent about 7 percent of the total number of humans who have ever lived.

There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on earth, but there are more atoms in one grain of sand than stars in the universe.

Einstein's Theory of Relativity suggests that when you enter a black hole, you can travel through space and time of the entire universe and beyond.

The daily joke:

Where do cows go for entertainment?

The moo-vies!



By: Jai Ndiaye

Words of the Week:

By: Joshua Haviland

Malaise- a sense of being unwell

Malice-the intention or desire to do evil.

Inside Scoop of the HMS Principal, Mr. Judge

Interview by Sahar Mokal and Gavin Decker

Q: What inspired you to become a principal?

A: A lot. How many hours do you have? In short, I have a big poster at the side of my office that states my mission statement that I wrote for myself in the beginning of all my years teaching: "My mission is to lead a life of integrity surrounded by people and things I love, and where my actions leave the greatest possible positive impact." For me, becoming a principal is how I would live out my mission. When reflecting on it this year, I realized that as a teacher, I have an impact on thousands of students a day, but more importantly, I can impact other teachers and truly help them be the best they can be.

Q: How do you feel being a principal in the middle of a pandemic?

A: Well, I'm not gonna lie, it's crazy. I have to do things, say things, and make decisions that I never thought I would have to do. Sometimes, it's frustrating. Most of the time, it's crazy. But I know that I have teachers and students to help me and guide me, and who I can help and guide, so at the end of the day, I am leading out my mission.

Q: What are you hoping to do as a principal this year to make the school a better place?

A: Well, this year in particular, I am more concerned about supporting teachers and supporting students and parents in all the concerns that the pandemic has brought. I hope to make sure that people can be the best they can be and are feeling supported.

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10, ten being the best, how would you rate your first year at Highland Middle School?

A: A ten. And I'll tell you why: We have the best students. When I talk with the other new teachers in the building, they tell me that they are very impressed, and that their students are phenomenal, understanding, and kind. I know we have the best students in this building, and that truly makes the pandemic worthwhile.

Q: How different is this experience compared to your role as Vice Principal of the Highland High School for the past few years?

A: It's very different. So, one of my main roles as vice principal was to maintain student discipline. Now, I have Ms. Coburn to cover that area, and I can focus more on student learning and curriculum which is very cool.

Q: What particularly has been helping you through this crisis?

A: Having really great teachers. Because, if we didn't have great teachers, this would all be so much harder. These teachers are such hard workers, great team players, and wonderful people. On a more personal note, my three amazing dogs have really been my friends and companions through this crisis, and I love them so much for that. Whenever I have a bad day, I will get home and they'll start cuddling with me, which makes me feel so much better.

Q: What is your favorite dessert?

A: Cannoli.

Q: What is your favorite holiday?

A: Probably Christmas. Not particularly because of the presents, but because we all get to spend time with family.

Q: What did you want to be when you were younger?

A: I wanted to be a chef.

Q: Hoping that the pandemic will be over, and we can all be back in full, in-person school, what do you plan on doing at the end of the year or as a farewell to the trials and tribulations of the 2020-2021 school year?

A: That is a phenomenal question. But I don't know. Whatever it is, it will be decided not only by me but by a group of people including Ms. Coburn, the teachers/staff, and me.

GLITCH

By
Ava McNamee



Hey guys!
today I
am going
to finish
The legend of
Flora! I am at
the final boss!

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views

Just have
to go to the
bathroom!
BRB!

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views



Oooo!
Vidio games!

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views



-BLEEP
-BLOP



YOU
LOST! OMG

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views



OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views



Sorry it
took so
long, I went
to get some
Snacks
and..

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views



Wait...

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views



Why does
it say I
Lost?

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views



TRIUNITY!!!

ok ok ok
Im Sorry!
Just stop
yelling!

OH NO!!! Legend of Flora #36
2547658views