



# THE STALLION

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## MRHS Angel Project With Athelas Institute



Erin Yu  
Editor-in-Chief

'Tis the season of giving, and the Marriotts Ridge Key Club, Educators Rising, and other students and staff have been devoted to giving gifts for the children of employees at the Athelas Institute in Columbia, a center that provides services to developmentally disabled adults.

The Athelas Institute has day programs and group homes in many locations with numerous clients and many employees. Initially, the Key Club visited these group homes, decorated for the holidays, and baked cookies. However, the club wanted to find more beneficial ways to not only help the adults receiving services at the Athelas Institute but also to help the employees of the Institute, for it can be financially challenging for these employees to buy their children nice gifts during the holiday season.

To aid these employees, the Institute first attempted to hold a dance to raise money for gifts, but this idea did not gain much traction. Then, the Key Club and the Athelas Institute jointly decided that a gift

drive would be more popular. This was the start of the Angel Project.

The process involved in the Angel Project is quite simple. The names of the children of Athelas employees are written on paper angels, along with their age and gender. MRHS students and staff then take angels

and purchase an appropriate gift for the child on the angel they picked. The price range for these gifts are around \$25 to ensure that the children receive gifts of similar quality. Some people take two angels, and others pair up with someone else to buy a gift for one child.

In previous years, there were about 100 angels, but there were 175 angels this year, which outnumbers the members of Key Club and Educators Rising. The Key Club thus decided to enlist the help of others in the community. Key Club President Stephanie Wolf said,

"We have been very fortunate to enthusiastic members that will take as many angels as we ask of them. We also have the help of Kiwanis, Glenelg High School's Key Club and Mount Hebron's Key Club." The MRHS Key Club contributed around 85 gifts, Educators

wrapped on December 11 at a Key Club meeting. The gifts were then picked up by the project coordinator at the Athelas Institute and will be distributed to the Athelas families.

MRHS Key Club has been involved with the Angel Project for several years and hopes to continue this tradition. Key Club Vice President Renee Paulraj said, "The Angel Project not only gives members the opportunity to aid the underprivileged in our community but also enables kids in low-income households to have a holiday season to look forward to. It always uplifts moods as the holiday season nears and it's such a wonderful opportunity to help others in our community."

Stephanie Wolf also looks forward to the continuance of the Angel Project at MRHS: "This has always been our most popular project and will hopefully continue to progress and get better each year following this one."

This year's Angel Project is over, but anyone who would like to gift those that are financially challenged can pick up an angel next year or find other opportunities in their community.



Key Club members wrap angel gifts at a meeting.

Rising provided about 15 to 20, the Glenelg and Mount Hebron Key Clubs contributed around 15 angels each, and Kiwanis provided approximately 12 gifts.

By making the Angel Project a community effort, MRHS was able to expand the program and provide gifts for all of the Athelas angels. The gifts were collected and

## Calvin Ball Is New Howard County Executive



Brice Handel  
News Editor

After fighting hard for a second term, Alan Kittleman was defeated by Democrat Calvin Ball in the race for Howard County Executive. It's a historic victory for Ball who is the first African-American to become County Executive. Ball won the race with 52% of the vote and was surrounded by supporters as Alan Kittleman conceded the race.

Prior to being elected as county executive, Ball served as the District 2 Howard County Councilmember and served as Chairperson of the Zoning Board and Chairperson of the Board of License Commissioners. During his time as Councilmember, he focused on the education system, protecting natural resources, improving public safety, and advocating for government transparency.

Even after seeing great success as Councilmember, it was clear that it would be an uphill battle for Ball. Alan Kittleman had immense support from those in the community that stood behind him in his four

year tenure as County Executive. In September, a non-partisan poll by the Baltimore Sun showed that Kittleman had 53% of the vote while Ball only had 37% with the rest of voters remaining undecided.

In the time following that poll,

the race for county executive.

Senior Rosie Kendall said, "It's nice to see past and present working together to ensure a smooth transition between county executives." Alan Kittleman acknowledged that it was difficult to accept the loss, but

themes of his campaign as well as how he plans on addressing pressing issues such as the actions being taken in Ellicott City.

Throughout his campaign, Ball was an adamant opponent of certain portions of the Ellicott City flood mitigation plan which was drafted by Alan Kittleman and his team. He wants to explore other possible options to ease the flooding concerns in Old Ellicott City. The current plan calls for the demolition of 10 buildings on lower Main Street. Ball, along with others that oppose the plan, fear that demolishing these buildings will tarnish the historic nature that Old Ellicott City has held for so long. Legislators are expecting a new flood mitigation plan, drafted by Ball's administration, to be proposed in the near future.

Along with Ball, a completely new Democrat-majority County Council was also sworn in. The council is made up of Liz Walsh, Opel Jones, Christiana Rigby, Deb Jung, and David Yungmann who is the only Republican. Working with this new Council, Ball hopes to transform Howard County into a model for diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Calvin Ball (left) and Alan Kittleman (right)

Ball and his campaign staff worked tirelessly to garner support from the community and turn the tables on Alan Kittleman. Come election time, Ball had over half of the vote and robbed Kittleman of his chance for a second term. In a show of sportsmanship and professionalism, Kittleman arrived at Ball's victory party to congratulate him in person and concede

the people of Howard County had spoken. Kittleman shifted his focus to working with Ball to get him up to speed so he could hit the ground running as soon as he was sworn in.

Ball's term officially began on December 3rd when he delivered his inaugural address and was sworn in as Howard County Executive. Throughout his speech, Ball focused on the overarching

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## Gearing Up For A Snowstorm

Olivia Brooks  
Staff Writer

This year has been an unprecedented one in many a field, not least of all in weather. There have been hurricanes, floods, fires, with each natural disaster leaving casualties and destruction in its wake. Even in typically tranquil Maryland, snow coated the ground before the leaves had finished falling.

To start off, there was Hurricane Florence that roared through the Carolinas in September, causing 17 billion dollars in damage and immeasurable anguish to the victims of the storm who found themselves without their possessions, homes, and families. October delivered Hurricane Michael to the southeast where it, too, robbed many of their belongings. Junior Alicia Akhund notes, "The storms took away people's homes and memories. We should take the time to donate and help the people out." Indeed, there still exists towns abandoned or reduced entirely to rubble.

Even during last summer, Ellicott City was ravaged once again by serious flooding. Numerous buildings still bear scars from the floods and though a few have

regained operation, countless more will never return. As ninth grader Neha Narayan remembered, "It was really upsetting to hear. The flooding in Ellicott City occurred really close together, and casualties kept increasing. I hope that it gets better."

*Will a snowstorm be coming this winter?*

This has been a historic year across the board. In a typical year, this area has seen approximately one hundred and ten rainy days in a year, but that number has already been surpassed by nearly one hundred fifty days of watery precipitation, breaking a record that has stood untouched for one hundred thirty years, set in 1889.

"I think the storms are the cause

of global warming," says Freshman Asia Campbellsheppard. This is certainly a possibility, as scientists have found significant links between human-caused climate change and the increasing severity of storms. The rising temperatures

often result in a heavier rainfall, ceaseless rain being one of the many weapons the past hurricanes utilized to lay waste to vast areas, and, of course, the culprit of the floods in Ellicott City. In the Environmental Defense Fund, climate scientist Ilissa Oroko found that, "Clouds that can dump a lot of rain are more common in a warmer atmosphere."

Now that the weather is becoming

cooler, one ponders if the one hundred plus days of rain could turn into one hundred plus days of snow. Already, a massive snow storm, Winter Storm Bruce, has pounded the Midwest, leaving citizens buried under snow and thousands without power. That region can be known to receive great quantities of snow, but the already frigid temperatures in Maryland and the trend of high precipitation could easily signal more snow yet to come.

"Now that it's cold, I definitely think there's a chance of snow. Personally, I would get supplies in advance and make sure I have winter prepared clothing," says Junior Hanah Winik.

Some students believe in another frosty winter, perhaps with even more days off than last year, while others are snow skeptics. As Sophomore Melanie Czepinska recalls, "Where I grew up, there's a ton more snow so no need to prepare for Maryland snow." Nonetheless, the beginning of this incredibly unique year proves that this upcoming winter will be far from ordinary, no matter the quantity of snow.

## Toys for Tots Drive

Abby Kim  
Staff Writer

From November 26th to December 4th, our school participated in the Toys For Tots Drive—a special opportunity for the less fortunate children to receive a special gift for Christmas.

"I feel it's the duty of the more fortunate to help provide for the lesser fortunate. Some parents don't have the money to buy toys for their children. We, the more fortunate, need to help them," claims freshman Maia Parker.

In collaboration with the United States Marine Corps, schools and communities all around the United States teamed up to participate in Toys for Tots and make this holiday season one to remember for underprivileged children around the country.

Toys and monetary donations flooded in as soon as the Toys for Tots Drive began on November 26th. Toys were collected everyday throughout the toy drive and were eventually brought to the US Marine Corps which heads up Toys for Tots every year.

Toys for Tots is a campaign that was started in 1947 and has since impacted countless children and their families every holiday season. Thus far, 548 million toys have been donated and 251 million children have been supported.

Students at Marriotts Ridge have

volunteer of the Toys for Tots drive, I sort toys and help facilitate the drive when children come to centers," says freshman Neha Dave. "As they pick out toys, their faces light up and it's amazing to see their smiles."

Donating toys for children in need is just a small part of what

toys that could be potentially donated. I either donated them beforehand or threw them away," says freshman Lacey Adams.

Like Lacey, many of the more fortunate kids don't possess any toys that are able to be donated to someone. Hayden Bovard, a freshman, states that people feel reluctant to donate because the toys they possess hold significant parts of their childhood memories. In order to encourage students to donate in some capacity, an online portal was set up so students could make monetary donations that will still go towards supporting children this holiday season.

In total, 832 toys were collected and \$1,221 online donations were made.

Everyone, no matter where or how they live, deserves the chance to have happiness in their life. A simple donation may not mean a lot to the person donating, but it means so much to the recipient.

Neha Dave exclaims, "We should all donate what we can; it's the season of giving!"

*These are the boxes of toys collected.*

many reason for why donating is so important Ashley Kim, a freshman, believes it's important to donate for the kids because they aren't given the option of getting any toys unlike what was experienced in our childhood.

"Children can really learn from simple things like toys. As a

donating is really about. When one donates, it gives opportunities to those who aren't able to get them themselves. Although many students jumped at the opportunity to help, others weren't as excited and had varying reasons for not being able to participate.

"I don't have any usable

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# Times Square on New Years Eve



Elizabeth Ottenritter  
Staff Writer

What's the best way to enter the new year? It's debatable, but many people celebrate the last moments of the year in Times Square, New York. This iconic event is not only a New York tradition, but also a global sensation.

According to *Timeout*, "An estimate of one million revelers will flock to the land of LED screens to witness one of the best NYC events in December." This celebration has a lot to offer like live performances and special celebrity guests. Also, the famous ball that drops at midnight. This televised party is something you won't want to miss this holiday season.

So what's the history of Times Square and the ball drop? Revelers had been celebrating New Years Eve in Times Square as early as 1904, but the ball made its first appearance on the flagpole in 1907. In fact, many versions and designs of the ball since then have been made to signify the new year. The first ball was made out of iron and wood with a 5 ft diameter and a weight of 700 pounds. It was first built by Jacob Starr and lowered

by Artkraft Strauss. Since 1907, the ball drop has been a tradition almost every year since. "I like the *Jessie* episode where Zuri gets stuck in the ball in Times Square,"

In more recent times, hundreds of thousands of people gather around the One Times Square tower and wait for hours to watch the ball lowering ceremony. "Despite the



*The bright lights at Times Square.*

says Sophomore Kristin Wagener. The first ball drop to signify passage of time originated from England. This ball would drop at exactly one in the afternoon every day atop of England's Royal Observatory at Greenwich in 1883. This is an international event that exists in many different countries.

cold, counting down with everyone is such an experience. I've been and it's definitely something to put on your bucket list," says Sophomore Rona Okojie. No matter where you are, the full experience of New York's excitement will be televised once again. According to *Times Square, the Official*

*Website*, "Thanks to satellite technology, a worldwide audience estimated at over one billion people watch the ceremony each year".

This year's annual telecast of the celebration will be covered by sources such as *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest* (Starting at 8:00), *New Year's Eve Live With Andy Cohen and Anderson Cooper* (Starting at 8:00), *New Year's Eve With Steve Harvey: Live From Times Square* (Starting at 8:00), and The official Times Square 2018 webcast (Starting at 6:00). We can expect performers like Camila Cabello, Nick Jonas, Pitbull, Britney Spears, Kelly Clarkson, Khalid with Marshmello, Mariah Carey, and many more. "It's exciting to see the new and returning performers every year," says Sophomore Adelina Seck.

This New Year's Eve there will be so many interesting and fun festivities in Times Square with many performers and the ball drop. The event has become one of the most promising and symbolic introductions into a new year.

## Recipes for the Holidays



Shay Salyer  
Staff Writer

The start of the holiday season marks the end of fall fun, but the beginning of cheer, quality time with the ones we love, and most importantly, good food!

During the winter season of celebration, there are so many traditions that people celebrate, especially in our little melting pot of a community. There's religions, cultures and tastes that decide many of our meals during this season of joy. If you are interested in good food, and possibly creating new traditions, read on for the yum factor you will need this winter!

This time of year is the perfect time for those sweet and salty teeth that you've been craving to satisfy, but your bikini-body diet may not have allowed for. Why not indulge in some Christmas cookies that your mom left out for Santa? Why not scarf down some perfectly fried Latkes that your grandpa fried fresh? Why not make a beautiful gingerbread mosque?

For many, the holidays are about giving gifts and receiving them. This year, try giving your loved ones the

gift of homemade food! Whether it's sweet or spicy, there's unlimited options for your holiday menu.

In various places, cookies are

Need a good gingerbread recipe? "My mom adds a twist to our gingerbread. She puts a splash of vanilla and regular sugar and



*The Risalamande is a Danish rice pudding dish.*

a huge seller, especially around this time of year. So many types, flavors, and shapes make the cookies so sweetly satisfying in our bellies. But, this year, instead of small, individual cookies, maybe try and make your own gingerbread house pieces and create your own gingerbread house with a few personal twists!

it makes the cookies softer," explains Senior Hailey Stringer.

Why not spice up your holiday meal a little? Ms. Rhonda Nelson describes how she celebrates Kwanzaa, "I celebrate Kwanzaa. It's seven days long. We make greens, any kind of greens, and a huge thing is black-eyed peas." The

dishes Ms. Rhonda described are a few of the African-based dishes celebrated, though there are many, many more. There are so many options for even black-eyed peas! Great possibility for incorporation into your holiday festivities.

Senior Fie Klemensten explained how her dad makes some traditional Danish dishes for their holiday meal, "My dad makes this almond rice pudding called Risalamande. It's a little piece of Denmark in my new home." The recipe for Risalamande is simple: rice pudding with vanilla, whipped cream, and often a cherry topping. Simple to make and delicious to eat!

Junior Sriya Chebrola described how on New Year's Eve, her family goes to their temple, and her parents make very special Indian desserts for her.

There's so many holidays and so many ways to celebrate the love and pride each and every one of us has for where we come from. No matter where you're from, what holidays you celebrate, food is always something that connects us as people. Instead of limiting your holiday options, expand them!

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## The Best Places to Visit During Winter Break

Himaja Mallampally  
Staff Writer

There are many places in the world that are amazing to visit on your next winter vacation. No matter what you look forward to in the Winter Season these vacation spots will definitely have what you are looking for.

If you want to vacation at exotic and warm places during your winter break, the beautiful state of Hawaii is the one for you. The islands are filled with many landmarks and activities for people with all sorts of interests from spas, to sports, there is something for everyone, no matter your interest.

Maui, one of Hawaii's many islands, is great for vacations with your family and friends. "Maui was an amazing Island. We really had fun at the beaches and the resorts on the water. Everyone is so welcoming and the food is really great," says Sophomore Anica Hyatt.

Oahu, another beautiful island, is great for parties and outdoor adventures. Oahu is one of the greatest attractions of the state itself because of its beautiful sights, pristine beaches, and everyday fun.

The Big Island, or the Official Island of Hawaii, is often called majestic because of its black sand beaches and, for the people that like to enjoy the cold during their

vacations, snow covered peaks. For the extreme adventures, the famous volcano Kilauea is open to tourist to see the acres of beautiful lava deserts. The hiking trails are also extremely beautiful, and definitely something worth seeing, say many locals and tourists in the area. "Hawaii was one of favorite vacations ever. We were

*Hawaii is a beautiful vacation spot.*

always going to the beaches and we even got a tour of the volcano. I really hope I can go back soon," says Sophomore Kalani Cephari.

For people who like to vacation in colder places during the winter season, New York City is the place for you. You can take a long stroll through the rush of people while looking at the holiday lights and decorations. You will definitely not be bored with the many Broadway shows, strolls through Central Park,

and all the places to shop and eat. It really is the most magical time of the year in New York, and it's definitely worth it to be part of it in the Big City. "My family and I went to New York a couple years ago to celebrate Christmas. It was pretty cold and there were a lot of people, but we didn't even

care because we had so much fun touring and eating and shopping," says Sophomore Amaria Tavares.

A more local option is the Wisp Resorts in Maryland with over 175 acres of skiing area, the resorts, spas, and mountains. This resort offers many experiences, including skiing, an 18 hole mountainside golfing course, shopping, dining and more.

Another famous, but local vacation spot is the Gaylord National Resort, overlooking the Potomac River at

the National Harbor. The beautiful Gaylord Hotel and Convention Center is an amazing place to visit and enjoy with your family. Some of the highlights of your stay will include the 20000 square foot fitness center and the world class massages and facials available to you at the Relache Spa. "I went to Gaylord Center with my friends and had the best time ever. We shopped and ate so much, and I really want to go back again," says Sophomore Tara Alvares.

A quick sight seeing trip to Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania is another way to celebrate your holiday with the spectacular views of the garden. The garden is filled golden lights, a majestic arrays of trees and bushes, and fountains. In the very center, a large Christmas tree stands wrapped in lights.

All in all, these places are marvelous places to visit in your winter vacation. These places invite all their vacationers to see marvelous sights, have exhilarating adventures, and much more. So next time you want to vacation in the winter time, definitely take a look at these places for the ultimate winter break experience.

## Celebrating Holidays Around the World!

Kay Yan  
Staff Writer

Time flies! Now it is the last month of 2018. "Happy Holidays" is a term that covers many special days in December for many different cultures. So, depending on where you are during this holiday-saturated month, you may be given a different kind of greeting, and it would be nice to not only know what they mean, but also how to respond and participate in the festivities around you.

Knowing about holiday traditions can help you see new cultures in a clearer light, connect with your friends who celebrate differently than you, and just overall understand the world on a more beautiful and diverse level.

One holiday tradition is St. Nicholas Day in Germany. This December holiday isn't largely celebrated in the United States, but is big in many European countries. On the anniversary of St. Nicholas' death on December 6th 343 A.D., this holiday pays

tribute to a man who spent most of his life helping those in need.

Beyond all doubts, the biggest

commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt

*The Menorah is a set of nine candles that are lit for Hannukkah.*

and the most anticipated holiday is taking place on December 25th—Christmas! This holiday is celebrated by billions of people around the world every year, through friends and families gathering, gifts exchanges, Christmas trees decorations, and so on. Christmas is important because it is a major religious holiday for Christians, because it is a widely celebrated secular holiday. For Jewish people, Hanukkah is a festival

against the Seleucid Empire. It is also known as the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah is observed for eight nights and days, it starts on December 2nd and ends on 10th in 2018. The festival is observed by lighting the candles with nine branches, called a menorah (or hanukkiyah). Each night, one additional candle is lit until all eight candles are lit together. People also eat oil-based food on this day.

Besides Christmas, New

Years Eve, the last day of a year, is another popular holiday in the world. In many countries, New Years' Eve is celebrated at evening social gatherings where lots of people dance, eat, and watch or light fireworks to mark the start of a new year.

In Chinese and other East Asian and Southeast Asian societies, a red envelope, a monetary gift which is given during holidays or special occasions such as weddings, New Years, graduation, or other events. "To be honest, my favorite holiday in December is New Year Eve. My parents and I go to my grandparents' houses to celebrate it with them. We will eat a big meal in the evening. Kids can get red bags of money from elders. That's my favorite" Sophomore Sunny Yang, whose family is from China, said.

Whichever holiday tradition MRHS students are following this December, each holiday is unique and worth learning more about.

## THE STALLION

### Favorite Holiday Movies



Emma Miller  
Staff Writer

When asked their favorite holiday movie, MRHS students and staff had varying answers, but one answer overshadowed the rest.

It is no question that after Thanksgiving, all anyone can think about is the holiday season to come. But what to do in the early weeks leading up to the occasion to get into the holiday spirit? Movies, of course. So what movies are the best to watch and the favorite amongst Marriotts Ridge students and staff?

Many classic movies come to mind when thinking about the holiday season, but which are the best? When asking the student body, many of the more recent movies were decided as their favorite. Multiple students from each grade said that *The Polar Express* was their favorite movie to watch around the holidays. Junior Gracie Kennedy said, "It has always been my favorite since the day in first grade where we drank hot chocolate, made gingerbread houses, decorated cookies, and watched *The Polar Express*. She and many others experienced this fun day in elementary school, leaving a lasting impression that makes them love *The Polar Express*. Other classic favorites included *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*, the short film *The Little Drummer Boy*, *Mickey's Once Upon A Christmas*, *Frosty the Snowman*, *Arthur Christmas*,

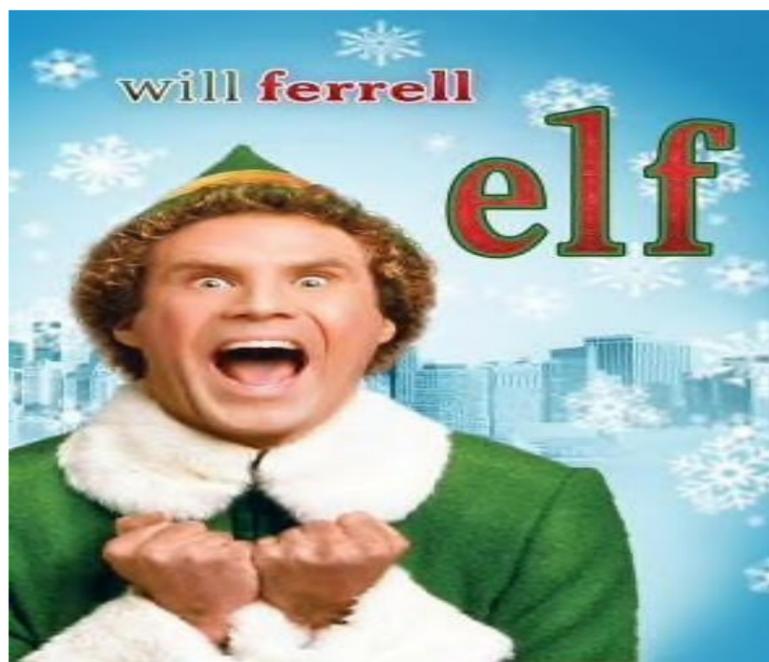
and *Santa Buddies*. A three movie series of *The Santa Clause* is a large favorite by the students. Junior Ellie Parks said, "They are my favorite movies because it is such a cute classic and Tim Allen is so funny." The series is one of the best, according to the MRHS students. Another classic, loved by both students and staff is *The Year Without a Santa Clause*. Mr. Talentino said this was his favorite movie because "[he] really loves the *Heat Miser*." The stop motion

the staff. Many students appreciate *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, for Jim Carrey's hilarious role as the Grinch. Junior Emma Gladstein said, "He took the classic telling of the story and made it into such a funny character. My whole family watches it together every Christmas Eve." Many others have stated that it is their favorite to watch due to Jim Carrey's performance. Another favorite comedy among the students is *Home Alone*. Junior Elena Bosio said, "It keeps you on the edge and

Among the staff, the favorites were more from when they could enjoy them as kids. Mr. Parson enjoys the movie *Scrooged* because of Bill Murray's hilarious character as the man who hates Christmas. While Mr. Reagle's favorite holiday movie is *A Christmas Story*. He said, "Oh definitely, a little boy wanting a gun and shooting himself in the eye, hilarious." The classic story is an all-time favorite of other staff members as well.

The movie that trumps all others in the opinion of the students is none other than the classic, *Elf*, starring Will Ferrell. According to the MRHS student body, this movie is the all time best holiday movie to watch. Will Ferrell's character Buddy is human, but adopted by elves and grew up in Santa's workshop. When finding his real father, he must adapt to living with humans, though his mind lives with the elves and a Christmas mentality. Some popular phrases coming from the movie are "son of a nutcracker," "you sit on a throne of lies," "I'm a cotton headed ninny muggin'," and more. The hilarious series of events that happens as he adapts are comical and fun to watch. The movie is timeless and can appeal to all ages, making it a family favorite.

Overall there are many movies that are considered the favorites in the minds of the Mustang students. From old tales, to newer stories, holiday movies are a joy to watch every year to get into the holiday spirit.



*Elf is the favorite holiday movie for MRHS students.*

animation is a cute telling of a story about Santa and his wife. These among others are a definite must watch during the holiday season.

Other movies that appeal to the comedic side of the holidays were very popular for both the students and

it is really funny." The classic about the forgotten child left at home on Christmas is an exciting adventure with a lot of twists and turns. The characteristics of the two bad guys makes for an interesting tale that can be enjoyed by the whole family.

## Budgeting Your Christmas Shopping

Claire Giannino  
Opinions Editor

It's the most wonderful time of the year, right? Well, not necessarily for your wallet. Time to breakdown the costs of this holiday season!

Let's all be completely honest with each other and admit that the best part about the holiday season is none other than the gift giving... and definitely receiving. As much as you want to buy a gift for everyone, it's not the most realistic plan. Between your parents, siblings, grandparents, extended family, and all your friends it becomes a little too much a little bit too fast. The cost keeps piling on and on. Luckily, there are some really great ways to make everyone happy without spending all of your money!

One of the most popular and definitely most exciting gift giving extravaganzas is Secret Santa.

Secret Santa is a small gathering or party where everyone buys one gift for an anonymous guest and

sales sales sales. Nowadays nobody likes to pay full price for anything and luckily for us we don't

saved a lot more than I expected." If you missed Black Friday there's no worries because the big stores like Target, Walmart, and Kohls still have your back with the deals.

And lastly the tastiest and best way to save your money... baking! Holiday cookies, cakes, and pies never fail to make people smile. If you don't want to go out and spend a lot of money on individual gifts for people you can totally get cooking in the kitchen. Making large batches of treats, wrapping them up, and distributing them to your friends and family is a great way to show your love and appreciation this holiday season. Senior Jake Canfield added, "Honestly, I would much rather get cookies than some present I don't really want or need."

Well, there it is! If you are struggling this holiday season with how to handle your budgeting for gifts, hopefully you've got some ideas now.



*Secret Santa is an affordable and fun way to exchange gifts.*

then exchanges revealing who the person has had the whole time. This method of gift-giving has been around for a while and has been saving people money for years. Senior Soumya Vemuri said, "It's a great way to surprise and give back to your friends on a budget!" Seems like Secret Santa is a go for the holiday season this year.

really have to! The holiday season is filled with half off and prices being knocked down to barely anything. A great way to save some cash is to go sale searching or out on Black Friday. Senior Clare Reynolds, said, "I went out on Black Friday and tried to find all the best deals so I wasn't panicking when the holiday season rolled around. I actually

# OPINIONS

## THE STALLION Is Santa Real?



Mark Antico  
Staff Writer

Each and every year, millions of people across the country wake up bright and early on the same cold December morning, all for the same joyful reason. They wake with the hope of running downstairs to see the vast array of toys and presents that have magically appeared in their home overnight. And who is it that provides this special gift year after year? None other than the famed Santa Clause. However, as children turn to adults and the realities of life begin to take a toll on once youthful souls, some speculation begins to form regarding whether or not the magical, jolly man actually exists.

Despite what some will say, it can not be argued that the task of gifting an entire country, and possibly even world, with presents all in one night is one that could not be carried out by just any mere mortal. No, the person able to defy all odds and give each person the thing that they most desire simply must be a man of great power and supernatural ability. Despite being among the oldest students here at Marriotts Ridge, Senior Emma Meredith had this to say about the topic of his existence: "Santa is

real. One time he left footprints in my front yard. They were big and were in a path straight from outside and into my house. Explain that one." Another Senior, Sheri Rouse, took a very sensible approach to the topic, stating that "Santa always

are still skeptical about the logistics of a large, elderly man coming into homes and planting gifts without ever being spotted. With the concept of magic and its power being one that is highly controversial and even seen as mythical to many, the



*Could this be evidence that Santa is real?*

gives the big presents. There's no way my mom could carry those, so it has to be him." To many, it seems obvious that there is no alternate answer to the enchanting events of the holiday season.

That being said, there are many that

story of what goes on each year is extremely hard to believe. Senior Olivia Ranta, for example, had some trouble following the tale being told, and said, "I live in an apartment with no chimney. How the heck does this Santa guy get into

my home? It just doesn't add up." This definitely pokes a rather large hole in the plot of Santa's doings and is a pretty sensible reason to be unsure. Senior Luke Wartzack also brought up a fair point, passionately stating, "I have two dogs that never stop barking, and I've never heard them barking in the middle of the night on Christmas Eve. If you think Santa is real, you're a cotton headed ninny muffin!" While Luke is a bit harsh in his allegations against Santa and his believers, he raises yet another valid point to support the opposition. After hearing arguments from either side of this heated debate, one could find it difficult to come to a conclusion.

All joking aside, the holiday season is a time for friends and family to come together and spend valuable time with each other. And whether or not the jolly man in the red suit really climbs down chimneys every year, the ideals of love and sharing that he represents are some that should be valued above all. And, as Senior Megan Heverling put it, "Santa is supposed to represent the spirit of the season. And the spirit is real. It's very real."

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## THE STALLION

December 20, 2018

## Boys Basketball Looks Forward to Strong Season



Matt Hendershot  
Sports Editor

As winter rolls around, the Marriotts Ridge Boys Basketball season is underway and there is reason to believe that this team is stronger than in years past.

Coach Brady, in his third year as head coach, feels he has a team that is very talented from top to bottom. There are new faces, returning players, and senior leadership: a perfect recipe for a talented basketball team. Coach Brady states, "We will play a faster paced game and be very strong defensively."

One of the new faces coming into the program is Cam Herd, who will help this team with talent and leadership as the senior point guard. Coach Brady said, "Cam coming in should fulfill the need at point guard, he's a high energy guy." After losing starting point guard Luke Ingersoll to graduation, coach believes he found his guy.

Some returning guys with experience are Ryan Lee and Brandon Held. Brandon Held, an all county player last year and Ryan, being a captain last season, should help this team with guidance in hard situations. Brandon Held is confident about the season as

he says, "this year we have a lot of people with basketball as their primary sport." Having multiple key players with basketball being their main sport helps with competitiveness and desire to win every time they step on the floor.

A surplus of talent is always nice to have but needs to be balanced

team chemistry." Coach Brady added, "If this team plays together at a high level we can be dangerous." Basketball is a team sport and it takes everyone on the team, not just one star player to build the dream team.

There have been changes to the culture of the program: more offseason workouts, competitive

make myself the best player I could during the offseason." The desire to get better is a key ingredient in building a very talented team. These players want to improve and are willing to do whatever it takes to end the drought of success that Marriotts Ridge Basketball has been going through.

Coach Brady has a tough task on hand this year to produce success with this year's team. The County has not gotten any easier and will show no mercy on this team. Coach Brady stated, "The county overall should be very deep but I see us finishing in the top tier this season." That is not an easy task but if this team works together and plays as a team, then the success will follow.

Marriotts Ridge has been missing a dominant basketball team for some time now and this year's team looks to change that. The players are buying into a new system, they worked harder in the offseason, they have played tougher competition, and most importantly have the desire to win every time they step into the gym. There is reason to be excited about this years basketball team and reason to believe they can win at Xfinity Center come March.



The team discusses strategies during a game.

to create the dream team, and this program understands that. Senior Ryan Lee commented on this, "Balancing the talent will come as we continue to practice and build

offseason leagues, and a growing desire to get better. Senior Cooper Stepke states, "Our returning players worked hard this offseason." Brandon Held added, "I've tried to

## Girls Basketball Aims to Improve This Season



Ira Snell  
Staff Writer

Marriotts Ridge Girls Varsity Basketball has high hopes this season as the team looks to improve from last year's 12-11 record.

With new players coming up from Junior Varsity like Emma Miller, Morgan Lee, Natalie Held, and Andrea Plano, the Mustangs plan to have more depth with players. With new Coach, Mrs. Miller, the Mustangs look to learn and improve from last year's average season. When asked what she wants to accomplish this season Mrs. Miller said, "I want to develop a program that can continue to grow in upcoming seasons. I want to be able to maintain the positive chemistry that has always been with the team. I also want to continue to develop the players that will be staying with the program so we build a winning team for years to come."

When Junior Kendall Bryan was asked what she thought about how the upcoming season should

pan out, she answered, "The season should go very well because we have a great coaching staff and good rhythm on the court." To be able to get the offense running, they

big role this year and should be expecting big minutes early in the season." I'm playing at the level that fits me and I feel like Junior Varsity helped me prepare for

hard. One drill in particular they go through is focused on their defensive movement. Another tactic they use for motivation is if the team hits their first 5 free throws at practice, they will be rewarded with pizza. This is an interesting way to motivate the team but if it works, then there is no reason to stop it.

Last year the team came away with some positives from the season but this year they plan to give the county all they can handle each night out on the floor. The roster is deeper and that will help with fatigue come late in the game when Mrs. Miller needs her players to be at their best. Being able to sub different players in without really showing weakness is key. If they can find different line-ups that work well together, the team will be in great shape. The question that needs to be answered is how can the younger players adapt to the varsity play. As soon as the younger players build up their confidence and gain the experience at the varsity level, then this team will be in great shape to make a run in the postseason.



Senior Mallory Conroy plays against a student at Hammond High.

need Senior Mallory Conroy to get in a rhythm early on in the season. She is beginning to believe that this team has what it takes to win each time they step on the court. "We are meshing well together and we all get along because we are all friends."

As said before, the girls from Junior Varsity will be playing a

Varsity," said Junior Andrea Plano. The team has started their season and are getting much needed varsity experience. The team has been preparing for the season ahead and have been practicing what they will be seeing against each opponent. The girls have shown promise in practice, running drills and working

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## THE STALLION

## Mustang Cheerleaders Excited For Success

Madi Costigan  
Staff Writer

Marriotts Ridge Varsity Cheerleaders start a new winter season with big expectations after last season's success. Coming off of their county win in the fall, the girls feel a little extra pressure on their shoulders this winter.

"Because we won last season, we have to win counties this season," explains Junior Kristen Trainer, who was a member of fall cheer and is now a part of the winter cheer squad. The girls had a quick transition to the winter season because of their long run of competition in the fall, so they will try to keep their momentum going and build on what they have already accomplished. Senior Lauren Cumberland says their goal is to "win counties again and advance to regionals and states." The team won the county for the first time since their 2016 season, so the girls are all working hard to stay on top and defend their title, and surpass expectations.

The members of the squad are now all familiar with that feeling of

winning, and will strive for more. The girls all have the determination to win and make it further than ever before. Every year the team puts in the efforts to get better and to increase the complexity of their routines, so they can come out on



MRHS Cheerleaders ecstatic after receiving an award.

top of the competition. There is a lot of pressure, but Sophomore Melanie Kressen says they "are very excited" about the upcoming season.

Working together is an important aspect in this sport, and Senior Mia Krakovsky thinks that they

"have a good, young team" and "good team energy." There are nine underclassmen, which makes up over half of the squad of seventeen. This presents new challenges as they are a relatively young team competing against teams that are

most likely comprised of more upperclassmen, with more varsity experience. The upperclassmen on the Marriotts Ridge team, especially the five senior captains, all have to be leaders in this situation. One helpful aspect of the team makeup

is that the team this winter is "mostly the same as last season, so we should be getting better," says Sophomore Tori Vandenberg. Already having the chemistry and familiarity in the team will be a key component in helping them to be successful this winter. The girls all know how to work together and communicate effectively, and they can work on their weaknesses as a squad because they are already aware of what they may have been from last season. Every member needs to be able to fully rely on and trust the person next to them, or else risks could not be taken. And doing new routines are what will set the squad apart from its competition. Long Reach and other schools in the county will continue to be tough competition, as they are defending county champions. New challenges will present themselves with every passing week, and the girls will have to persevere and work hard to improve and overcome them. But Marriotts Ridge is confident in their abilities and the chances they have of success this season.

## Tough Start To Wrestling Season But There Is Hope

Jack Lipirini  
Staff Writer

When winter rolls around, everybody sees the Marriotts Ridge Wrestling Team in school preparing mentally and physically for the grueling season ahead.

The team has undergone a lot of troubles this offseason, such as losing many of the key wrestlers from last year like Austin Cestone and Ethan Bohan. Coach Muscato elaborates, "The biggest challenge is definitely going to be the injuries, it is going to be getting over the fact that between Ethan Bohan and Austin Cestone we have ninety five wins that we're going to have to make up for the whole season. So that's gonna be tough for the dual meets."

These injuries are very damaging to the team's overall outlook on the season. Senior Stephen Alam said, "Winning at the heavier weights is going to be a challenge, we lost a lot of guys this year."

These concerns are pervasive throughout the team with a lot of people seeing the fact that the best wrestler on the team, Austin Cestone, was injured during football and will be out for the entire season. Austin was on course to beat the

school record for all-time wins. The record holder, Chris Spano had 106 wins at the end of his junior year while Austin had an impressive 112. With him gone more people on the team seem to be worrying.



Senior Austin Manwiller playing hard in a match.

Junior Jorge Zhang had this to say about the team's losses, "Well, we lost a lot of good players and a lot of our players are also injured, especially in the heavy weights." The wrestling team has sustained a lot of injuries early on but that is not on the players' minds who

are healthy and ready to go. Junior TJ Buckley has this report, "We lost a lot of good kids this year and we had some early injuries, but overall with people stepping up I think we have a good chance

of getting to the Regional Duals." Having strong leaders on any team is very important, although the team graduated a lot of good wrestlers last year the team still looks like it has fantastic potential. Even with more underclassmen, they are stepping up to the plate to

take on those tough matches. Coach Muscato is looking for people to step up into those leadership roles and had this to say about it, "We've got a lot of really good juniors who are going to have to step up and fill that position. Up and coming leaders, definitely going to be people like Will Vaxmonsky and even some younger guys. Sophomore Jack Baxter will be a really big leader and is going to be stepping up a lot for us this year I think." There definitely is a good chance for the Marriotts Ridge Wrestling program this year with plenty of up and coming stars. Will Vaxmonsky is looking very promising for the Mustangs this year and hopes to fill that captain role.

The wrestling season ahead is sure to be one of grueling matches and a very exciting season. So be sure to keep up with the wrestling program here at Marriotts Ridge!