

Championship challenge

By Maya Airoidi

A score mix up caused The Bellows Free Academy (BFA) girls snowboarding team to believe that they lost the state championship, but they actually won.

The scorekeeper was looking over the scores when he realized they had made a mistake.

After the team had returned home from Okemo, with a 2nd place trophy, things changed. The Burr and Burton Academy (BBA) representative who served as scorekeeper for

the state championship emailed; "We recalculated the scores and then I didn't put them in the spreadsheet correctly. Now I have to do a huge apology to a lot of people... Here's the scores -- you win. BBA loses and I have to reclaim the trophies. Wow am I sorry."

BFA Coach Brett Walker then emailed and called the girls on the team to let them know of their win. "I almost couldn't believe [it], but it was one of the most suspenseful and relieving phone calls I've ever received," Haley Noel ('17) said.

As it turns out, BBA, who had been announced as the winning school by 4 points ahead of BFA, actually came in "dead last" as Chauntell Cook ('16), said.

BBA was really 15 points behind the second place school, Woodstock, and 17 points behind BFA, who had gotten a total of 74 points.

That is a fairly significant loss, one would think the person tallying the scores would notice right away.

"When they announced that BBA took first we were definitely con-

fused because they hadn't really been as much competition as Woodstock throughout the whole season. So when our coach, Mr. Walker, noticed that something was wrong with the scores

we were not surprised," Noel said. While happy they won, most of their frustration comes from their moment of victory in a statewide competition that was taken away.

"It was disappointing not being able to celebrate in the moment, but knowing that our team won states two years in a row completely outweighs that fact," Noel said.



Image Courtesy of Chauntell Cook

Dr. Randall: BFA's new guidance director

By Amber Cooper

Dr. Randall, a well known guidance counselor at Bellows Free Academy St. Albans, is known for his sparkling personality that enables a certain ease in a conversation.

Not only is he a guidance counselor but he also owns the title of BFA's "Guidance Director."

To find out more, BFA Principal Chris Mosca was interviewed on March 12.

"He is one of our administrative leaders, really just Guidance and administration are the only two parts of school that you get to see everybody or get the whole school view. So I think it's really good that we have a Guidance Director that is actually now part of the administration. He can now communicate with us on a regular basis. His job includes post-secondary education and also recruiting and maintaining students from sending schools. We also use him for a lot of data analysis such as, dropout rates and school performance," Mosca said.

This description is very close to the formal job description for BFA Guidance Director.

"The Guidance Program supports the academic and social/emotional growth of students and prepares them to set and achieve personal

goals regarding their future, including defining and successfully pursuing academic and career opportunities during and following a student's time at BFA.....Develops and implements a student registration process.....Actively develops partnerships with colleges and local businesses to ensure post-secondary opportunities," - BFA Job Description.

His job description also explains many more responsibilities that need a responsible and hardworking person. Ellen Gissel, BFA's cafeteria monitor was involved in the hiring of Dr. Randall for his position as Guidance Director.

"He is a great person to work with and I really enjoy the way students can easily trust him with any information," Gissel said.

The students at BFA are exceptionally important, considering it is a public school. Students are meant to feel safe and are expected to receive academic and social support, and who better to help you with that? A Guidance Director or Counselor.

Telling a friend about something that might be bothering you may come with consequences such as someone overhearing your conversation, it becoming non-confidential or just not being able

to talk to that friend for other reasons.

Counselors are confidential, trustworthy and can be talked to in the comfort of a private office. BFA being a school of almost 1,000 students, every student has different issues and students are not expected to have the greatest day of their lives when they show up to school, but BFA counselors do what they can to support students in any way possible. "It is a significantly smaller case load, so I don't have nearly as many students as I used to," Randall said.

Randall seems to enjoy the challenges he faces juggling both jobs at a time. Although his workload can be stressful, he is still connected to all students, whether they are a client of his or just a face in the hallway.

"I like that my job lets me stay connected with students..... but I also get to be a part of the administrative team. So besides working with individual students I can really look at the system as a whole and hopefully have a positive impact on the whole school system," Randall said.

So how did Dr. Randall gain his new position as Director of Guidance?

"I applied. The school did an open search, meaning that not just people within BFA but anyone, I sup-

pose, in the world, who wanted to apply could apply," Randall said. Speaking about his transition from guidance counselor to Director of Guidance, Randall said:

"I had to do a little bit of further education because educators have different licences, I had the licence to be a school counselor, I didn't have a licence to be an administrator."

Last year, the central office and Mr. Mosca helped support Randall in taking the two classes he needed to take to get a provisional licence through the state.

According to Randall, furthering his education was not a challenge to him but having a lot to do is a challenge for him. "But the biggest challenge is practicing patience, you know? To wait and make sure the person is done before you say your thing and sometimes that person thinks they are done talking, but if you wait a little longer they will think of something else," Randall said.

Like many of the counselors, he has had training to help him responsibly deal with these challenges. After listening to Dr. Randall, this reporter became suddenly calm, and my nerves seemed to loosen up. He has a sort of ease to his personality that fits just right for the

Director of Guidance. "I genuinely like people and I think they deserve my time." Randall said.



Image Courtesy of BFA Website

Bellows Free Academy Mercury

The Mercury is published by the Journalism classes at BFA. Articles are selected and written by students. They may also be submitted by the community at large. The Journalism classes are responsible for every facet of the Mercury production. Suggestions and ideas for articles and letters to the editor can be sent in care of:

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Bobwhite Comet Competition

By Gabe Friz-Trillo



Image Courtesy of BFA Handbook

The Bobwhite Comet Competition enters yet another year in its tradition.

For those who are oblivious to such a tradition, it is a school sponsored scholarship competition for the seniors of BFA. The competition consists of a few different phases as they compete and work together for a chance to win scholarship money.

First place overall receives \$1000,

second place takes \$750 and third place is awarded \$500.

The rankings however, are gender exclusive, so there will be both a male and female first, second and third place.

There are a few misconceptions about what the Bobwhite Comet Competition is; where students believe that it is only for the athletic students, or that it is a popularity contest.

However, both of these statements are far from the truth. Barbara Fraser, the Student Council Advisor, has differing views on it. "B o b w h i t e Comet is an opportunity for our seniors to get together and work and play together one last time as a group."

The Bobwhite

Comet competition isn't about "looks, it's not about [grades], it's not about personality or popularity, it's about who performs the best that night and comes across as someone who would make a wonderful ambassador for BFA," Fraser said.

Fraser is currently going on her ninth year of being advisor to the Bobwhite Comet Competition, which makes her a qualified person to judge what the competition is and isn't.

Speaking of judges it should be noted how they are chosen. A list is used, and names are randomly chosen.

While there can be a plethora of judges it is usually kept "anywhere from three to five," with focus on "odd num-

ber so you can break a tie," Fraser said.

With the technical issues out of the way it should be explained what exactly goes on in the competition.

At the beginning of the competition, students perform a dance routine of their choosing. This routine is separated into male and female portions.

Hovering around the two-minute mark, the routines are not the longest ones, but do leave a lasting memory.

From there the competition shifts to the skit portion of the competition, where they will be divided into smaller groups and perform a short, handful of minutes skit. What makes this stand out from the usual, is that the skit is usually a scene recognizable at BFA; from the students

in the hallways, to the teachers in the classroom the skit is up to students' imagination.

With the prior statement, remember the skit doesn't have to directly relate to BFA. The final portion of the competition is more akin to a talk show than anything else.

Students will be introduced to the audience with a few facts about them and even thrown a handful of questions. While this part doesn't sound as exciting as the skit or dance portions of the competition, the students have proven once and again that it easily can be.

In the end, Bobwhite Comet is a great experience for those who partake directly as participants in the event, as well as those in the audience.

However, there is a great deal of work that happens behind the scenes from the fundraising, to weeks of choreographing and practicing for the competition.

So remember everyone save the date for BFA's Bobwhite Comet Competition: Friday, May 13.

One act one family

By Delaney Tatro

The Bellows Free Academy drama organization performed the play "Property Rites" at the most recent One Act Festival. For those who don't know what a one act play is, it is exactly what the title suggests. One act plays consist of only one act, so the exposition and resolution are in the same grouping and don't have their own act. Commonly these plays are shorter than a full sized production. To the actors the difference between this and the fall play is that you get closer to your peers. "It's much better on a personal front, the one act play, because you just get more connected to everyone. The fall play is like you

get to meet people for the first time, you get to see them but it's mostly focused on the acting of it all. But then the one act play you're giving the acting your all but you're closer to these people now and you get to make relationships at the same time," Holly Sherrer ('16) said. BFA drama students formed a very close bond throughout the process of producing the play. Rosie Bibona ('18), describes it as more than just a basic friendship. "We are like a family and it's really fun to be around them."

The play BFA will be performing is 'Property Rites.' French teacher M a d a m e Johnson, who will be Assistant Director, thinks highly of the play. "It's essentially a story about what can happen when technology goes awry, it's an interesting show, it really is, I think BFA is going to do really well with this play at One Acts," Johnson said. Johnson, along with Director Robert Harte, has been working very hard on the One Act play. She is proud of all of the drama kids, and

loves to watch them as they grow and transform the script from paper into visual art.

"It's just so magical how you start with this group of students that really know very little about the play, and how the whole thing just evolves, you know it's baby steps, but man, but then it just blossoms, I love that," Johnson said.

Although the One Act Festival is a competition of sorts, and the group would be ecstatic if they moved onto the Vermont State competition, to the drama students it's less about winning and more about the fun of theatre and connecting with others who share the same passions.

Sherrer explains that it's less about the competition and more about the experience. "We pretty much want to win but it's not too bad, we make friends with the other kids from other schools and it's just fun to watch them and be like, wow they are really good. In the back of your head you're thinking they're our competition, but in the forefront you're just watching good theatre and that's all that

matter," Sherrer said. On Saturday they started the day off at 7:30 am, and were there at BFA Fairfax until 10:30 am, doing various acting workshops and watching each school that attended perform their play. T h e y got to have conversations about what they had seen after all the performances.

"We've spent a really long time working on every play like months in advance we work every single day almost before we perform this thing," Sherrer said.

The commitment these performers have to drama is a big one. Since they are performing it they want it to look its best, there's no room for slacking.

Timing is key, if someone messes up then it messes everyone else up. In Property Rites many of the students are playing as robots, and they have to keep concentration on staying still. Through focus and determination they made the piece the way they all envisioned it would be.

The actors aren't themselves when they

act, they become different persons. This is an experience everyone likes to have once in awhile.

"I like the part when you're acting and you get really in character and you can tell that everyone else is too and there's just this moment of being like where you're outside of yourself and you're in the role and that my favorite part of it," Sherrer said.

Rosie Bibona is the stage manager for the play. Although Robert Harte is the director and makes the final decisions, he takes ideas from everyone so there's not just one mind working it. Everyone can say their part.

"We certainly need a little bit more practice, there's always things that you want to tweak and fix but once it's on stage you realize that yeah, it's great," Bibona said.

Each one of them seems to agree that even when you think it's good there's always room to improve, which can be true for anything.

"It's always a lot of work, it's a work in progress, I can

say right up until you know performance time really. With how much effort these kids put into their work, it makes one question why the school does not promote them as much as other activities," Johnson said.

All the drama participants hope for people to show up to the plays they perform and take part so they have an audience.

This makes it easier for them to want to give their all knowing people are watching them. "I think students would like it, it's engaging, it's fun, so I think it'd be better known that drama was a thing you could go to and if people just gave it a chance I think it would be more popular," Sherrer said.



Image Courtesy of Clipartbest.com

BFA goes to states but not for sports

By Ben Stoll

On Saturday, March 12, the BFA Debate team traveled to the Vermont State House to participate in the Vermont state final debate.

The two BFA teams, one consisting of Cordelia Bell ('16) and Veronica Farr ('16), and the other including Olivia Domingue ('16), and Catriona Cribb ('16), attended the seven hour event of public forum debates.

The schools that were in attendance included BFA, U-32, CVU, South Burlington, MMU, Hanover, and Woodstock.

The two person teams were judged on how persuasive their arguments were on the topic of 'The United

States should withdraw its military presence from Okinawa.'

Each person in a team is rated from 1-30, having a possible combined score of 60. Teamwork is vital in debates. If two partners are not working together, they will fall short in the competition.

The duos must completely understand each other, much more than members of a sports team.

Cribb, who is the second speaker of her team, realizes the level that partners need to be understood.

"Debate is a lot of mental exercise, as opposed to physical, but the teamwork aspect is all there. In the first crossfire, my partner and the

other first speaker are directly arguing each other's points, and the second speakers can't talk. Therefore my job is to understand Olivia's train of thought and find the facts she needs before she asks for them, so that there is no awkward pause in the argument where she has to shuffle through papers. She does the same during the second speaker crossfire. In the grand crossfire, where everyone is talking at once, it is important that we are on the same page, not interrupting each other, and basically working as one coherent, effective team," Cribb said.

While sports teams, such as football, rely on teammates to understand and work

with each other to score a goal, teams such as these have the comfort of relying on many team members in the event one fails. The BFA Debate team does not have this luxury.

"Being on a debate team is very difficult, because instead of being in a large group where other people can pick-up slack, it is just you and your partner. If one of you is having an 'off' day then it can bring the entire team down. That puts a lot of pressure on you, but it is also great because you form a close bond with your partner," Bell said.

While there are certainly many differences between sports and debates, there is commonality: events

can differ depending on the match up.

"High school debates are actually extremely fun, partially because they are never the same experience twice. Sometimes, they can feel like an extremely tense, 45 minute screaming match, and sometimes they feel like a totally calm, normal conversation with the other team. Most fall in between... it depends on the team! Half of the fun is never knowing what you're about to experience in the round," Farr said.

Putting a high level of responsibility on two people can be a unique way to build a relationship between teammates.

"Debate has been one of the highlights

of being in high school and it is very sad that it is over. I love my partner and my team, so it will be very hard to say goodbye to them," Bell said.

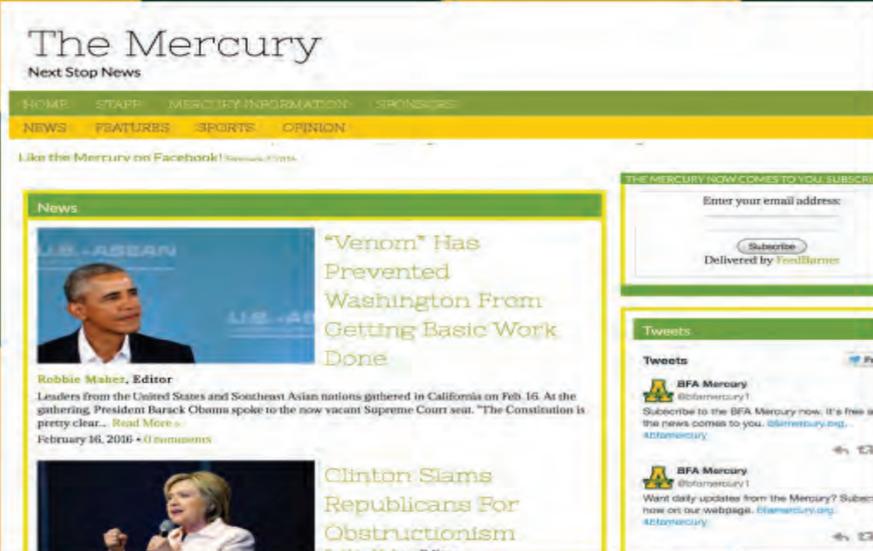
After four years of successful debate seasons, the four seniors will graduate along with the rest of their class this year, paving the road for those who will follow in their footsteps as the future BFA Debate team.



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