



## BHS Mock Trial Progresses to Statewide Playoffs

By Nadia Malec  
*Redcoat Review Writer*

On December 15th, the Mock Trial team competed at the New Britain Courthouse represented Berlin High School. This was the second year in a row where the team has traveled to New Britain and participated in the competition. Participation in the club has increased this year, allowing two separate sections to compete, one named "Berlin Red" and the other named "Berlin White."

Mock Trial simulates a real court, where students take on the role of plaintiff or defendant, and choose between being a witness or lawyer. Witnesses must embrace and fully embody their character. They must stand their ground when their opponents' lawyers cross-examine them. Lawyers must not only direct-examine their witnesses, but also cross-examine their opponents' witnesses in order to persuade them to disprove their position. Both witnesses and lawyers must think on their feet, making split-second decisions on what to say to help their case.

A total of 24 students from Berlin traveled to the New Britain Courthouse to compete. These students have worked hard since the beginning of the school year, surrounding themselves in complicated law terms, pages of rules and objections, strategic moves to use in court, and memorizing their affidavits like the back of their hand.

In the weeks leading up to the competition students worked tirelessly to ensure their direct and cross examination questions were finalized and more than ready for court. Both sides also had to present openings and closings, which were crucial parts of their arguments. With so



Photo Courtesy of Mr. Jones, Mock Trial Advisor

From left to right: Elijah Santos, Brandon Garrity, Jacob Marion, Jack Baclaski, Patrick Kot, Jacob Miller, Meghan Snyder, Lexi Barbagallo, Hiba Jebli.

many roles to fill, Mock Trial club truly feels like a team sport, rather than a club.

This year the Mock Trial Case was a contract case. Students were given over 90 pages of information to help build their arguments as to why they should win.

In the case, Plaintiff Joni Watson is suing Defendant Gillette Lodge and Catering (GLC), for breaching the contract they agreed upon when Joni Watson decided to have their dream wedding at GLC. Their wedding was scheduled for July 4th, 2020, however Coronavirus was making it hard for the wedding to happen and Joni Watson wanted to cancel. However under the contract, GLC would be allowed to keep money already paid.

There are many more details for the case, which students had to dissect and use to create their arguments as to why GLC breached, or did not breach the contract. If they breached the contract, Plaintiff Joni Watson would be allowed to get her money back.

The day in court was split up into a morning trial, followed by a lunch break, and then an afternoon trial. In the morning, in Courtroom 2A, "Berlin White's" defense side faced Northwest Regional High School Plaintiff. Just one door down, in Courtroom 2B, "Berlin Red's" defense side faced Cheshire High School Plaintiff.

Both trials lasted around two hours and were conducted by a real judge. The court was then adjourned, allowing for a lunch break. Both teams left the court feeling confident and after lunch, they re-entered the court, preparing to switch sides. "Berlin White's" plaintiff faced Cheshire High School defense while "Berlin Red's" plaintiff went up against Northwest Regional High School defense. Similar to the morning, both trials lasted two hours. At the conclusion of each trial, the judges gave feedback to the teams, while congratulating them. Being part of a court case is no easy job.

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## Impacts of the Writers and Actors Strike

By Sofia Calabrese  
*Redcoat Review Writer*

Starting off the summer of 2023, for the first time in 63 years, two specific unions in the entertainment industry went on strike. These two groups were the Writers Guild of America (WGA) and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG). This strike started in May 2023 and lasted until September 27, 2023 for the WGA and for the SAG it lasted from July 14, 2023 to November 7, 2023.

This halt in working for these two groups put a heavy foot down on production for media entertainment such as TV shows, movies, and Late-Night programs. This momentous strike provided a key insight into how the writers and actors in the entertainment industry are critical for larger corporations and production companies to thrive.

The start of the standstill in the

entertainment industry started with the WGA. This union demanded that writers in the industry be paid fairly for all of their work. This included minimum compensation and increased residuals (payment when media is replayed on different platforms).

As for the actors, they wanted the same as the writers in terms of payment, but also asked for better working conditions. One issue that both unions simultaneously believed was a rising problem was the use of artificial intelligence and how the expansion of it could impact their jobs.

Over the duration of the four-month strike, the members never backed down on their alliances to their unions and continued to strike despite the lack of work. Many screenwriters and actors went to the picket line and marched, demanding the production companies to hear their cries.

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# Changing Our Mindset About the New Year

By Ian Saunders

*Redcoat Review Lead Editor*

As 2023 came to a close, many saw the opportunity the new year brings for positive and productive change in all of our lives. Many of these changes are not immediate and take time to come to fruition. But, we must be reminded that all good things take time and hard work.

Although society has ingrained within us the importance of taking advantage of the new year, it might be time to question that mindset.

Heather Pach, our BHS psychologist, emphasized the importance of not waiting for a new year to make a change.

"I personally do not get caught up in the 'starting new' trends of New Year's Day," she said. "That is because I believe that we don't have to wait for a new year, a new month, a new week or even a new day to start over."

Pach encourages the BHS community to make a change as soon as you recognize you need one, rather than waiting for the perfect day on the calendar. Pach also advocates working to attain reflective



mindset as we consider our progress towards our goals. Taking the time to look back on our accomplishments rather than simply focusing on the pitfalls can provide much needed motivation to continue pursuing your goal.

Part of changing your mindset comes with eliminating bad habits. One tip Pach shared was to eliminate the phrase "I can't" from our vocabulary—it does not give room for improvement. Also, she

underscored the importance of allowing change to happen and to not continuously "push back" development of our social, academic, or family lives.

Finally, one of the most detrimental habits to personal and community growth is always focusing on the negative. When we see our world through this limited perspective, we do not give ourselves the time nor the energy to focus on the positive, rather, the only things we see are things that we perceive need to be improved.

Pach shared a helpful strategy for those that struggle with looking on the bright side: before going to bed, write down two things that made you happy from your day. This will help you to focus on the steps already made to reach your goal rather than the steps that still need to be taken.

Pach ultimately left us with one piece of advice: focus on the smaller accomplishments that complement your overall goal. So, go ahead and enjoy the spirit of the new year, but treat it as a spark for change, rather than as an excuse to start working towards your goals next year.

## Writers Finally Reach Compromise after Long Battle

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While these unions eventually were able to make an agreement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), the representative for over 350 film and television production companies, numerous shows and movies were severely impacted by the strike. Many shows and movies had to be put on hold, delayed, or canceled completely since there was no one to work on making those ideas come to fruition. Some shows included Saturday Night Live, Shadow and Bone and Stranger Things.

Despite this, some shows and movies did try to use alternative resources to attempt to screen write, such as using people from other departments that were not writers and even artificial intelligence. This only further proved



Photo Credit: Associated Press

how essential screenwriters were to the production of film.

In the end, both unions reached a compromise with producers. The contracts they developed will serve for three years. All of the issues that union members were striking for were settled in each of the contracts. As a result, there has been and will be significant changes in the film and television industry due to this historical strike.

Though there is still immense uncertainty in the industry, the strike has highlighted the importance of both writers and actors in the filmmaking industry.

## Mock Trial Team Rallies; Advances to Next Round

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After a long day, teams waited patiently in the lobby for the judges to deliberate, tally up scores, and announce winners. Unlike a real court, where judges decide which side wins and loses, the judges observe the students in court and assess whose argument is stronger overall. Judges fill out a rubric, and the scores help determine the winners.

The judges had finally come to a conclusion: "Berlin Red" had lost their morning defense trial, but prevailed and won their afternoon plaintiff trial while "Berlin White" had won both their morning and afternoon trials.

The "Berlin White" team was made up of students from last year's team, who were driven by their previous losses, learned from their mistakes, and it definitely paid off. "Berlin White" will have the chance to compete again in February, against other teams in the state who have also advanced to the playoffs. In the weeks after the trials, the teams will be sent their rubrics, with scores and commentary about the students' performances.

Mock Trial is a stressful, yet exciting club. Competition day truly shows the determination and work ethic of the students. If you come to trial unprepared, you can expect to get beaten up by the opposing team. Students this year showed that hard work and determination can payoff, winning three of the four trials; after losing in all of last year's trials.

We can't wait to see how the team performs in February, at the next round of the State Mock Trial competition.

## Writing Center Welcomes All Students

By Katie Tierney

*Redcoat Review Writer*

Are you looking for a place to get help on your next writing project? The Writing Center is a place open to all students across each grade level to come and get help from some of the sophomore, junior, and senior writing tutors.

The Writing Center is located in the corner of the English wing, next to Ms. Buzzelli's room, 1502. If you are interested in making an appointment, go online to Berlin High's website, and click under the "Student Services" heading at the top of the page. Here,



you can find information about what the Writing Center offers to students, information about the tutors, and how to book an appointment.

If you are interested in becoming a writing tutor, sign up for the *Issues & Methods in Writing & Peer Tutoring*, a semester long class. Consider stopping by during a study hall or after school!





Photo Credit: BHS Broadcast Club

Seniors show their school spirit during the pep rally.

## Spirit Week Showcases Pride

By Katie Tierney  
*Redcoat Review Writer*

The 2023 Fall Spirit Week was a major success across all grade levels. Spirit Week has been a recurring tradition at Berlin High School, and for many students, it is their favorite part of the school year. During the week leading up to the annual Friday pep rally, students and staff are able to dress up according to the daily themes to show off their school spirit.

This year, students and staff highlighted their school spirit from October 16th to the 20th. During spirit week, each day is given a specific theme for students and staff to take part in.

This year, Monday was Pajama Day where individuals wore their favorite sleepwear attire to school. Tuesday was BBQ Dads vs Soccer Moms. Students and staff dressed like they were going to a cookout or a soccer game! On Wednesday, BHS supported breast cancer awareness by wearing the color pink with the theme of Barbie.

Thursday was Decades Day and each grade level was assigned a specific decade. Freshmen were the 70s, sophomores the 80s, juniors the 90s, and the seniors were early 2000s. Friday was the day of the annual pep rally and it was Color Wars. Each grade level was instructed to wear their class color. Freshmen wore red, sophomores blue, juniors white, and seniors black.

One of the most well-known and well-liked traditions our school has each Fall Spirit Week is the hallway competition. Students from each grade level are given a designated hallway and pick a theme that directly correlates with their class color. Students spend vast amounts of time and effort creating decorations for their hallway in hopes of winning. This year, the stakes were extremely high as each grade level executed an incredible hallway.

The freshmen, whose class color is red, decided on a Marvel theme. Their hallway was covered with different characters pertaining to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, like Spiderman, Dr. Strange, Wandavision, and Captain America. For

their first ever hallway experience, they did a fantastic job. The sophomores, whose class color is blue, went with the theme of the Disney movie, *Moana*. The hallway was like being placed inside of the movie. They had Moana herself, her boat, Maui's hook, and more. One of the highlights of their hallway was the drink station where members of the sophomore class handed out a drinkable punch that related to the movie.

The junior class this year had a major comeback, upping the stakes for who would secure a first place win. They used a wedding theme, and decorated so that the hallway resembled a real life wedding. In the hallway next to the B-Gym, there was a realistic wedding cake, an area to get married, and a DJ dance floor area. The senior class took on the theme of Black Hole. They incorporated past hallway designs from their freshmen through junior years, in addition to other items from the other grades' hallways.

The junior class ended up securing a first place win, while the sophomore class took second place. The senior class took third, which was a major shock, and the freshman class took last place.

For the annual Friday pep rally, the senior class took first place, making up for their third place position in the hallway competition. Following, the junior and sophomore class tied for second place, while the freshmen class took last. We are looking forward to the spring pep rally!



Photo Courtesy of Kaitlyn Kozlowski

The Junior class wedding theme impressed judges.

## New Teacher Spotlight: Ms. Williams

By Grace Buchholz  
*Redcoat Review Writer*

BHS welcomed a new English teacher this fall. The vibrant Ms. Cara Williams teaches English 9 and Junior Seminar. Prior to joining the BHS community, Ms. Williams owned a dance studio in Storrs, CT. During the pandemic, she realized that dance was not a job her body would be able to handle forever, and she found a new passion: education.



Being a high school teacher is not an easy task, but Ms. Williams has a different take on teaching this age group. "I think that you can goof around with the students," she said. "The kids are really funny, they make me laugh, and I hopefully can make them laugh. I can talk about real world things with them."

Ms. Williams is also a very attentive teacher and wants each and every student of hers to know that success is found in the learning process and measured in growth. Says Williams, "It's not about how many pages you read, but what you get out of them."

One piece of advice that all students can take away from working with Ms. Williams is the same advice she was given in high school.

"Learning in layers ... you can't tackle everything, you have to build your foundation, learn broad things, then build up to the nitty gritty," she said.

Being an English teacher translates to other aspects of her life, as one of her favorite out of school activities is reading, especially on the beach.

"I'm outside-y, not outdoorsy" she says. Williams also has a lot in common with the freshmen she teaches, saying "Weirdly enough, I feel like one of the freshmen."

Adjusting to a new school and a new schedule can be a challenge. One such change Williams and her students have had to contend with is the shift to 90-minute classes.

From the classes she teaches to the friendly competition of Christmas door decorating, Ms. Williams has surely added much more than just her English expertise to our BHS community and we are so happy to have her here.



# Annual Winter Pops Concert Sleighs

By Julia Grabek  
*Redcoat Review Writer*

As the crisp winter air settled over Berlin, the spirit of the season came alive in a melodic symphony of sound at Berlin High's highly anticipated Winter Pops Concert. This annual musical extravaganza, held on December 15, promised an enchanting evening filled with festive tunes, heartwarming performances, and the undeniable talent of our school's musicians. The stage transported the audience into a magical world of winter delights, adorned with twinkling lights, snowflakes, and a backdrop that captured the essence of the season. The Winter Pops Concert was not just a showcase of musical ability; it was a celebration that brought together the entire school community, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere for all who attended.

The repertoire for the evening was thoughtfully curated, featuring a diverse selection of holiday classics and contemporary hits. The band started off the concert with an impressive performance of "Sleigh Ride" by Leroy Anderson. After a brief introduction by the band director, Mr. Dresko, the combined choirs directed by Mr. Boyle sang two warm tunes, "Snowy Day" and "Your Holiday Song." Following these performances, the BHS Saxophone Quartet presented everyone with a challenging set of well known songs composed of "Frosty the Snowman," "We Need a Little Christmas," and "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch." Soon



Photos Credit: BHS Broadcast Club

after, The Berlin High School Madrigal Singers performed four magical holiday songs including, "Angels We Have Heard on High," "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," "Hanukkah!" and the holiday classic, "Jingle Bells." The audience had the opportunity to enjoy a new student-led instrumental ensemble called Multiple Directions. They played "Baby, It's Cold Outside" featuring a saxophone duet. The BHS Concert Band then resumed their presence by playing "Night Before Christmas" with a special twist. The music was paired with its well known poem, which was read by Mrs. Amenta.

The BHS Barbershop Quartet, led by Glenn Fearn and Robin Crisler, expanded the group by reaching out to BHS music teachers, Mr. Boyle and Mr. Dresko, who sang along with them in an exceptional

rendition of "The 12 Days of Christmas." The night could not have been a success without the annual combined band and chorus number: Mariah Carey's hit, "All I Want For Christmas is You." Accompanied with fake snow, audience members felt this was the perfect arrangement to round out the night.

From the soaring melodies of the school choir to the harmonious notes of the band and many of its smaller groups, the Winter Pops Concert gave a beautiful performance that appealed to all musical tastes. Students had been diligently rehearsing for weeks, pouring their passion and dedication into each note. The concert served not only as a testament to their musical capabilities, but also as a reflection of the unity and camaraderie within the Berlin community.

## ADL Names Can Really Hurt Us Program Inspires

By Sydelle Holland  
*Redcoat Review Writer*

In a new tradition here at BHS, a crucial assembly is held for the freshmen to try and make our school a better place. The ADL Names Can Really Hurt Us assembly is incredibly important for creating the safe, productive learning environment that the BHS community works tirelessly to produce.



According to Ms. Dumas, "[The assembly] is so important because it makes people more aware of the impact their words can have on people's lives." She helped to organize the assembly along with many other teachers and upperclassmen.

Ms. Pach, one of our school psychologists, was drawn to assist with this program because, "Any program that helps create a kinder, more supportive school where nobody feels alone is worth my time. We can't learn if we feel disconnected, overwhelmed or afraid... It is part of my responsibility to help create a school climate that is supportive for all."

Without these coordinated efforts the assembly would not exist, but

anyone who has attended the program will admit that the most powerful part of it is the panelists. These upperclassmen guest speakers took time out of their busy day to share intimate and personal details about themselves in the hope that the freshmen will understand how "names truly can hurt us and we never really know what is happening in someone's life," says 2023 panelist Emily Tessier.

In her panelist speech, Tessier described the difficulties she faced as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Tessier, along with the four other panelists this year, helped the freshmen realize several things. For those who were struggling, they learned that they weren't alone, and for those who were acting as perpetrators, they better understood the true weight of their actions.

It was widely agreed that every story was very impactful. According to Ms. Dumas, "It is awe inspiring to see their courage. Sharing personal stories of being a target makes you very vulnerable. I am really proud of them for taking that risk. I know that their raw stories connected to people on a variety of levels."

The panelists were definitely well aware that there were huge risks involved with their job. Tessier described some of her initial anxiety, saying, "When I first found out about the opportunity I almost turned it down because I was truly terrified about going in front

of the freshmen. I didn't know how they would react to hearing my story. I feared the negative comments that could've been made the most." Tessier overcame her apprehension by reminding herself that "By sharing my story I could help so many students get over the fear of being themselves and to help them realize that expressing themselves for who they are and how they want to identify is ok."

Though there are many reasons that the speeches are so powerful, Ms. Pach has her own take: "The reason they make such a big impression is that they are kids from within our school. They are older students that the freshman look up to and to learn that they may have been in a similar situation... is important to hear. We are all a lot more alike than we are different and when we can see ourselves in other people's stories it makes us not feel so alone."

Seeing the panelists walk through the hallways and realize that the stories they heard belong to actual people that they can interact with definitely makes a difference for the freshman. Overall, the panelists and coordinators of the program truly want only the best for our school community. Hopefully, the freshman will take the initiative to carry on the empathetic and caring example of those who contributed their time and effort to making the program the very best it could be.



# Sophomores Snag Powderpuff Title

By Nadia Malec  
Redcoat Review Writer

The annual girls Flag Football Powderpuff tournament took place at Sage Park on Tuesday, November 21st, 2023. Girls at Berlin High School competed against each other throughout the competition to find out which grade level would be named the champions.

Girls put together their own teams of around 15 players, and along with the help of current football players serving as coaches, practiced and then competed in the event.

Although Powderpuff is a competition, it is most importantly a fundraiser for Berlin Helping Berlin. The club helps those in financial difficulty at BHS. Donations from the event will help students purchase food, pay utility bills, or go on a field trip. Donations from players and coaches are required in order to compete.

Under the lights and the rain, two games were played simultaneously. On one field, the sophomore team faced juniors. The sophomores beat the juniors, making it to the final round. At the same time, the freshmen faced the seniors, who were two-time Powderpuff champions, bringing home the trophy both their



Photos Credit: BHS Broadcast Club

sophomore and junior year. However, the underclassmen had some promising potential to beat them for their last year. They came into the tournament confident and ready to face any challenge.

The seniors beat the freshmen and advanced to face the sophomores in the final round. In the final game, the seniors were ready to take the win for their third and final year in a row. However, the sophomores came off of a powerful win against

the juniors and were on a winning streak. In a close game, with the freezing rain beating down across the field, the sophomores were able to defeat the seniors and beat the reigning champions.

All teams played exceptionally well and raised a lot of money for Berlin Helping Berlin. We hope everyone had fun while enduring the pressures of the tournament and come back to play again next year!

## Movie Reviews: *The Marvels* and *Wonka*

By Lillian Cookson and  
Eleanor Henriques  
Redcoat Review Writers

### *Wonka*

Since its announcement in early 2021, *Wonka* has been a heavily anticipated movie for critics and fans of Timothée Chalamet alike, who plays the lead in the film. Many of the criticisms people have mentioned relate to how it will compare to the other movies retelling the iconic story of Willy Wonka.



There have been two previous spins on this classic story, which are *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*, starring Gene Wilder, released in 1971, and *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, which stars Johnny Depp, released in 2005. The 1971 version has been rated the highest out of the three by many, with Timothée Chalamet's *Wonka* falling into second place. This version of the story was a bit different, since it centered around Wonka's backstory rather than children winning the golden ticket and visiting his factory, giving it a new and creative twist before it was even released.

Its opening night was December 15th, 2023. With almost two years in the works, it was an anticipated box-office hit—and the film was just that. The movie did a fantastic job of making Willy Wonka's story its own, and it was for sure a different one than many expected. It centered around his rivalry with three other chocolate makers, and his friendship with five loveable misfits

who helped him to achieve his dream of becoming a chocolate maker. While not explicitly advertised as a musical, it had many enjoyable songs and was filled with comedy, music, and pure joy for all. There was plenty of fun involved, and it was a great movie for families to go see.

Timothée Chalamet did a great job portraying Willy Wonka, showcasing clear character development throughout the film. Despite the criticisms of some of his line deliveries, and his general performance as the character, he did an excellent job of putting his own spin on the role. Surprisingly, Hugh Grant stole the show with his performance as the Oompa Loompa, as he brought a dignified sense of humor to the film. Overall, *Wonka* delivered a captivating storyline filled with laughs and was a highly enjoyable film for everyone. It is definitely worth watching!

### *The Marvels*

Many fans have been intrigued to learn more about the direction the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is taking its carefully built universe. While some people are enjoying the new movies and shows, others have differing opinions. A new addition to this universe came out in November: *The Marvels*. This sequel to *Captain Marvel* and *Ms. Marvel* echoed laughter through almost empty theaters. It was a box office failure, only making \$188 million. Starring Brie Larson (Captain Marvel), Iman Vellani (Ms. Marvel), and Teyonah Parris (Captain Rambeau), *The Marvels* was executed with these amazing actors. The reason for this overall failure wasn't due to their acting rather the lack of plot in the film. The predictable generic storyline of heroes meet villains, heroes try to stop villains and fail, heroes try to stop villains again and succeed, was gilded with special effects and

action scenes but, ultimately, it failed to fool most audiences.

*The Marvels* delivers in one area that fans have come to expect from the franchise: it brings diverse comic plots and characters together. The movie provides a hilarious meeting for Ms. Marvel, a young teenager from New Jersey, with her hero, Captain Marvel. It shows a new aspect of Captain Marvel's relationship with her best friend's daughter, Captain Rambeau. Everyone comes together in a flash of light when the three heroes realize that when they all use their powers, they switch places. They have to learn to use that power to fight the new Kree leader obsessed with reforming the planet Kree back to its former glory by taking resources from other planets leaving them barren and lifeless.

Before watching this movie, it is necessary at least to have watched *Captain Marvel*, *Ms. Marvel*, and *WandaVision*. To get a full understanding of everything, most of the MCU would have to be watched. Much like many of the new Marvel movies or shows, this movie feels like a cheap sequel to already established characters, with the character Ms. Marvel having recently been introduced and most of the other characters already having their own stories.

*The Marvels* has exciting action, hilarious characters, and most of all, some really cute cats. Although this movie has its flaws, it is still a fun movie to watch, and enthusiastic MCU fans who have enjoyed the movies and shows that lead up to this one will also like this movie.

