



# PUMA NEWS

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## Positivity is the New Look

*By Maddy Cilley*

Even if you hate school, and you're dreading going back, that doesn't mean you should be negative about school. As a wise person once told me, "Negativity will get you nowhere." Even if your best friend has all different classes, and your face broke out with acne over the summer, try to make the best of what you have. Even if you may have heard that your teacher isn't the greatest, remember that you may have a different opinion, and maybe they'll be your favorite by the end of the year. Anything can happen in middle school.

There are many reasons why you should be positive. For starters, it's good for your health. According to:

<http://www.successconsciousness.com/blog/positive-attitude/five-reasons-why-you-should-think-positively/>, "The mind has a strong effect on the body and on health. When you think positively your immune system is healthier, and your body recuperates faster." When you're healthy, you'll have an easier time in school. It's not easy to learn when you're feeling sick. And when we're negative, it makes us more stressed, which can do very bad things to our bodies. Being positive is just overall better for your health. It also affects your relationships with others. If you're negative, people aren't going to want to be around you. Think about how when someone is being

negative, it rubs off on you. Then everyone is negative. Furthermore, being positive allows you to see the good in people, to look past their imperfections. Nobody's perfect, and the sooner you realize that, the better. There are so many reasons why you should be positive, but if all of them were in this article, it would be way too long and ranty. Hopefully these few convinced you enough to be positive. Once you realize that a positive attitude will make a great difference in your life, you may wonder how you can be positive. For starters, you should try to always stay hopeful. In other words, look on the bright side. If you fall off your bike and break your arm, be grateful that you didn't land on your head. If your mom can't afford a big house, be grateful that you have a mom. Just be grateful for all that you have. If you're hopeful, then you'll accomplish more and succeed more than if you are a pessimist. Also, embracing the attitude, "This too shall pass" will help you to stay positive. In the book "*Don't Sweat the Small Stuff For Teens*", the author writes, "You may have heard the phrase "This too shall pass." It's not just a saying that sounds good in theory. Rather it's a phrase worth looking at because if you can embrace it, your day-to-day life will be much easier and less stressful. You will also be able to get through difficult times more gracefully." This makes it clear that only good comes out of the expression, and taking it to heart will improve your life greatly. Not underestimating yourself can also make a big difference in your life. When you believe in yourself and give yourself confidence, you create the positive atmosphere that you can be happiest in. It's easier to be happy, when you are happy with yourself. Underestimating yourself can lead to unhappy feelings toward yourself, which creates an overall unhappy atmosphere. This can make you feel very sad and depressed. You can avoid all this by just being happy and proud of you and all that you've done. So in conclusion, you should go into the school year with a positive attitude, and maybe everything will turn out better than you think!

## South Meadow School Fall Sports

*By Meara McClusky*

Fall sports are a great way to get involved with the school community and to make new friends outside classes. 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders can all do sports at South Meadow School. Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders are eligible to tryout for all sports, including boys and girls soccer, girls field hockey, boys and girls cross country, girls volleyball, and football. Both boys and girls can join football, but most of the players are male. Another sport South Meadow School students can do is dance team, but this is a year round sport. The sports that fifth graders can participate in are cross country, wrestling, and dance team.

All soccer, field hockey, cross country, and volleyball players practice almost every single day after school. Practices will definitely be canceled if the weather is stormy. Practices will not be canceled if only a few athletes show up, so be prepared to practice almost every day. Jazz band and select chorus are at the same time as practices, but jazz band and select chorus are more important. Athletes must attend jazz or select unless the team has a meet or a game. Once the season gets started, athletes will have more and more games, both at home and away. On away games, the team may travel as far as Sanborn Middle School, and as close as Jaffrey Rindge Middle School. School buses will transport the athletes to and from games, although students may be allowed to be picked up after the games by a parent or guardian. If away games end at around dinner time, the team can decide whether or not they wish to go to a fast food restaurant. The bus will only stop there if the restaurant is on the way. Players will need to bring their own money, although the coach will help out if an athlete does not bring their own money.

Last year, the Boys White soccer team placed second overall and the girls soccer team placed fourth. Girls volleyball won first place in their Fall Mountain Jamboree, and Boys Blue soccer did amazing with a semi-final finish in their Fall Mountain Jamboree. Football, cross country, and field hockey had great seasons as well. All of the teams had great games, and they all worked really hard to have awesome seasons!

Remember, even if an athlete was on the team last year, this does not mean that they are guaranteed a spot on the team the following year. Eighth and seventh graders are more likely to get a spot on the team than sixth graders, but this does not mean sixth graders do not have a chance. Students can try out only if they got higher than a D- or an effort level of 5 on their last 6-7th grade report card. Tryouts are a series of tests to see where you are in terms of skill level. For example, in soccer tryouts, the coach evaluates the students by making them do dribbling, passing, shooting, and game play drills. The athletes must be prepared to work hard, because effort level plays a big part in whether or not they make the team. Cross country, dance team, and wrestling are all sports that do not require kids to try out. In other fall sports, tryouts must take place unless the team doesn't have enough athletes. Then, the team either doesn't take part in the season, or they must try to find another member quickly. All team members have to have all the stuff they need for practices and games. This means they must have the right clothing, equipment, and footwear. If a student does not have what they need for a game, they must call home, or be benched. Having the right equipment, clothing, and shoes is really, really important, as you cannot play without it.

Although dance team is a fall sport, the set-up is very different. First of all, dance team practices year round and puts on performances for the school. Last year, the dance team did a lot of fundraising. Eventually, they raised enough money for the team to take a trip to Disney World! The dance team practices indoors, in the atrium, while the other sports have outdoor practices. The team gets to choreograph their own dances and get to help choose their costumes.

Fall sports are a part of what makes South Meadow School great. They are really fun and help students to meet new people. Each season, new athletes join fall sports and keep coming back. Good luck to all athletes!



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## Summer Soccer

by Jack McLaughlin

In the summer of 2016, some kids were running around, some were swimming, and some kids were just sleeping in and enjoying summer vacation. Some kids though, wanted to play soccer this summer. So they decided to do what every soccer player should do and go to Tod Silegy's summer soccer camp. This isn't just any old soccer camp, because the one and only Mr. Sil is the man in charge. In this soccer camp, Sil used to call himself the Big Cheese, but now he is known as the Silver Cheese. Why? Because of the silver/white hair on his head. The camp starts off with him getting your attention by yelling: UNDER OVER UNDER OVER BING BANG BOOM! After that he splits up the one big group into a bunch of smaller groups. The youngest group with kids who are 6-8 years old are called the little cheeses; the middle aged kids that are 9-10 years old are called the middle cheeses; the oldest group, with kids that are 11-15 years old, are called the big cheeses. Once all the groups are made, all the kids run up to the soccer fields at SMS and sit on the bleachers. When everyone is sitting, Sil teaches you a move or play and has the assistant coaches give a demonstration of the move or play. After the demonstrations, Sil splits the kids up into their groups to warm up and try out the move or play they were taught. Then the kids in each group will play a scrimmage. The scrimmages are 4v4, 6v6, or 8v8 (the coaches form teams for each scrimmage). Throughout the week kids and their teams play a tournament of scrimmages. Each winning team wins a lollipop at the end of the week. On the last day of camp the coaches set up a bunch of drills (passing accuracy, shooting accuracy, speed dribbling and most juggles in two minutes). The winner of each competition wins a small juggling ball. All these prizes are given away at the end of the week during the awards ceremony. At this time there is also a raffle. At the raffle each kid gets a raffle ticket and then Mr. Sil announces a prize and calls out the number that is needed to win the prize. Once the raffle ends each kid gets a certificate signed by Sil and the coaches from each group. This camp is for kids of all ages that want to play soccer, get better at soccer, and have a fun time playing soccer with the coaches and the one and only Mr Sil!



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## Midnight with Mr.Potter

By Nicky DiNino

I have never been more excited for anything in my life than I was for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, so of course I wanted to go to the midnight release so that I could read the book before all my friends. My friend wanted to come, so he came over the night before.

We get there a little bit early so we wait outside for about ten minutes. Then the doors open and all of us go in. There is a table at the front with "magical cookies", only one per customer; they must not have really been magic because if they were I could have eaten more than one cookie without feeling guilty. There is another table near the back that had some stickers and coloring pages and things like that. Right next to that table there was this poster that said "Tell us what Harry Potter means to you!". The idea was that you would go up to the poster and write what Harry Potter means to you. I don't remember what I wrote or if I wrote anything at all, but a bunch of people wrote "everything" which is such a cheat answer if you ask me. Next this "rapper" came in and he did a "rap" about Harry Potter, and even though it was very funny and the guy clearly had a lot of skill at writing, it really was more of a poem. Then it was midnight so everyone lined up and got their books.

It was a very fun experience but it made me a little bit sad, because this was not a "real" Harry Potter book, I feel like they did not go all the way for this release. I heard so many stories about the amazing things they did for the releases of the first seven books, and since it seems like there isn't going to be an eight book I probably will never get to experience a real book release. I am grateful, though, that I even got a taste of what it was like back when the original seven books came out.

## Change at SMS

*Reagan Riffle*

Since my first day of seventh grade, I've wanted to change things at SMS. This does not mean in anyway I dislike the way things are run or the teachers in the school, but it does mean that I want to leave my clear mark on the school by making evident changes in the way students accept each other.

For my first two years at SMS, I and many others around me were put down for our gender, race, or other specifications. I was personally told not to try and to keep quiet about the things they were telling me. I was told that the jokes and insults against me were all conditioning and beneficial, to teaching me more about where my place is, or where my gender and I belong in life and in school. It wasn't until the summer before I went into sixth grade that I learned that I didn't have to listen to everything they told me, and that I didn't have to fit any mold for my gender. I learned that at school, the only mold any student has to fit is the mold of being a student. I want to make sure every student knows this and that they feel accepted and loved. But there was no way I could accomplish these things without taking huge steps that other students weren't taking or thinking about. I thought a clear change needed to be made about the attitude towards female students' in their abilities in and out of school.

I started with the survey; it gave me a chance to observe students opinions about our school and see what needs to change about the gender perception in SMS. I'd noticed how many students were throwing around the term "sexist" and "racist" without understanding the terms' meanings, and sometimes even joking about the terms. I'd heard complaints and groans about the terms in real situations, but no student ever brought these issues to the attention of somebody who could do something about it. It was then I realized that nothing was going to happen if I didn't do something about it. So I decided to take some sort of action.

During my survey, I encountered a very large amount of students with the same attitudes as I. It was so clearly evident to me by that point that students had no interest in changing the way they were treated for fear of being called out as different or annoying. This opinion I can clearly understand, after being called a variety of names myself for not abiding by my gender roles and "complaining" about the inequality.

After that was the club. I took my survey results to administration and showed them the pressing need for change in our community. I explained to them that prejudices were present under the noses of teachers. The survey was a means to prove that a student's complaint was real. And no student was alone in their thoughts. Social Justice Club was a club built to educate and spread awareness to students about multiple societal issues like gender, race, culture, orientation, sexuality, and religious equality. The change in our community before and after the club started became more evident every day. I started writing in the newspaper about my opinions and the club's progress. Immediately after writing my first article, including my survey's results, I could hear more and more students, administration, and educators talking about their opinions and what they can do to fix certain attitudes and prejudices present at SMS. Hearing all the chatter was such an accomplishment and taught me just how powerful one article, one picture, and one survey can be.



## Robotics Summer Camp!

By Bella Schwabe

Over the summer the competition robotics team held a summer camp for children of all ages. There were two sessions of the camp, one for younger kids and the other for older kids. The first week there were kids in first through third grade. During the first week they learned a programming software called WeDo. WeDo is very simple and easy to learn, so it was perfect for the kids. Over the course of the week, all of the kids finished four WeDo packets, and on Thursday we began work with the Mbots. They learned how to make the Mbots go forward, backward and side to side. Then, we taught them a game called the Wasteland game. We originally played the game with the seventh (now eighth) graders, but for the kids we adjusted the game to make it a little bit more simple. The whole point of the game is to get as many cones as possible in your garage; every color of cones is worth a different number of points. Using laptops as controllers, they used their Mbots to guide the cones to their garage. We started with putting all of the cones we had in a huge circle and set up the garages that the Mbots would be in. After that, we set up desks for each of the kids to sit at. Once the kids were all set up, we explained the rules to them and started the game. All the kids did very well and had a ton of fun! It was a great way to end our first week of summer camp!

When the second week started we became acquainted with a new group of kids. These ones were older and were in fourth through seventh grade. This week, since they were older, we used the programming software Robolab, and they each got their own RCX brick. The RCX bricks are the oldest bricks they've created, but they are a good way to start working with robots. Each of the kids started by building a very simple RCX and learning how to control them with two touch sensors. They first stabilized the robot and then made be able to move in a straight line. Next, they started to experiment with the RCX, to make it unique. After they adjusted their robots, they started to learn how to program them. We started with a simple forward and backward program. After that, we changed the original forward program, and they learned how to turn. After they practiced turning and other features, we set up an obstacle course for them to navigate. It took about three days for the kids to finish the obstacle course, and on the last day all of the parents came and saw the kids' creations. It was a really fun time, and at the end of it each of the kids got a certificate! Overall, the robotics summer camp was a blast! Everyone learned a lot, and we got to know a lot of cool kids!

## New Eighth Grade Teachers At SMS!

by Lorien Tyne

This school year four new eighth grade teachers will be starting at South Meadow School. These teachers include Mrs. Woodward, Mrs. Foecking, Miss Keating, and Mr. Townsend. They are super awesome, and there are some cool things people may not know about them. Mrs. Woodward used to work as a para-educator in Burlington, Vermont, before coming to South Meadow, at first, as the librarian. She has been a teacher since 2013 and now is the science teacher for eighth grade. Outside of school she enjoys hiking with her dog--an Alaskan malamute, Cody--and cooking. Starting this year she also coaches the field hockey team. Miss. Keating is completely new to South Meadow and actually just recently graduated. Teaching math isn't the only thing she does, though. Miss. Keating loves photography and, like Mrs. Woodward, she likes to walk her dog except hers is an Australian shepherd/chocolate lab mix. She even used to play volleyball! Her favorite animals are giraffes, elephants, and sloths, because who can pick just one? Like any bookworm her favorite series is *Harry Potter*; *the Prisoner of Azkaban* being her top pick. Mr. Townsend however loves *The Lord Of The Rings*. He used to work at Making Community Connections Charter School and has been teaching for about seven and a half years. His hobbies include fishing, reading, and traveling. Mr. Townsend now teaches social studies, and hopefully he is as excited to be a part of our school as we are for him. Last but not least is Mrs. Foecking, who now teaches math and language arts. She previously worked at Greenfield Elementary and in total has been teaching for fifteen years! In her free time she takes pleasure in activities such as biking, swimming, and skiing. Each teacher has great things about them (especially taste in books), and the eighth grade is excited to get to know them all better, as well as to learn plenty of new things this year from them.

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## The Writer

*Erin Meiklejohn*

I know, a writer is never suppose to write about themselves like,... I, me, or my. But in this case I am. In these next few paragraphs I am going to tell you a little bit of what it was like for me in Middle School. Starting from the first open house, where every one got to meet their 5th grade teachers, to the last period in this essay.

Fifth grade was about the hardest school year I have ever had...so far. Everything was so scary, and new, even my peers. Even though most of them were still there from last year, there was something different, about all of them. It was like stepping into Middle School made them a different person from what they were in elementary school. But I still loved them all the same. I DO know what it is like for you 5th graders; when I was in 5th grade they called us fithies; I know, lame, right? A whole new school, whole new peers, whole new teaches, a whole new everything! When I was in 5th grade I thought it was weird of them to put 5th graders and 8th graders in the same wing, I felt like they were going to step on me. They're older than you, they've been here longer than you, and they're taller than you. It was scary! But it is different for everyone. But I got through it, all the way to 6th grade!

There's not much to say about 6th grade. It was probably one of the best school years ever! On the first day of 6th grade they told us who our teachers were, and who was in our class. I was so hoping I got in the same class as my friends in 5th grade, but it looks like luck was not on my side( I pretty much got in none of the classes with my friends). But I made new ones. For the whole rest of the school year I hung out with the same people, it was nice until 6th grade was over and a whole new year started.

Ahhhh, 7th grade probably my favorite year. Just like in 6th grade, luck was not my friend. All of them, were in the same room together. And I was stuck with the new teacher. I know total bummer right? WRONG! It was amazing! My teacher turned out to be amazingly cool, and I had new friends again! Everything was right in the world, I felt like I was at a place where I was old enough not to be called fithies, and to be respected. I had friends in every class and teachers whom I love, and friends who loved me, just as much as I loved them. I was finally a teenager! Until... Well you know what happens next...

Eighth GRADE!!! Cue the scary music in the background! I was scared to DEATH about 8th grade, every single teacher who walked by you in the hallway would keep saying to you "you're the BIG kids now, every one looks UP to you now, you have to be RESPONSIBLE." I didn't know what to do, I didn't want to disappoint anyone, because I mess up all the time, but then again, I wanted to be myself... So what do I do? That is what I am still trying to figure out. It has only been a week, and I am still trying to figure it out, I will keep making mistakes, but that's ok. That's how I learn and grow all the way to High School... Oh no.

Here it comes, the end of the essay, and the last period. I told you it would happen. There are a few things I would like to say before I go. I just want to say whoever is reading this right now, whatever grade you are in, it is different for everyone, so don't take my word for it, take you own, and just remember you're not alone.

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## Bus Buddies

*by Bella Schwabe*

The new eighth graders got bus buddies this year! The bus buddy system is used to help the new fifth graders find their bus. This is very helpful because it not only helps the fifth graders navigate their new school and find their bus, but it also helps the eighth graders learn responsibility and get to know the new fifth graders. Doing this can help the fifth graders feel less scared and nervous, which is a common reaction to new students. I know I felt terrified of SMS when I first came. Not only is it a completely new building to find your way around, but you share a wing with the oldest kids in school. After the first few days of bus buddies I felt a lot more comfortable, around the school and with the eighth graders! Overall, this system is very beneficial to both the eighth graders and the fifth graders and is a great part of this school!

## South Meadow School 5th Grade Tour

By Sarah Knowles

Do you know what a 5th grade orientation day is like? On August 29, the day before school started, 5th graders came to get a tour of their new school. The Peer Mentors greeted them as they entered the school. The Peer Mentors are an energetic group of students who work with the 5th graders for their first year at South Meadow Middle School. Once everyone was assigned his or her peer mentor, the tour was under way, followed by group activities.

Throughout the day, there were many activities planned by the peer mentors. There was a group photo, decorating paper hands, and if you finished the tour early you could sit down and play games. Mrs. Brezovec, the EHP teacher, took the group photo. It was hard work to get 150 students to smile and sit up straight. The hands were created by all the mentees, the 5th graders. They wrote down 5 things they were nervous about on the paper hands. And later on in the year we are going to see if they are still nervous about the same things. If we finished the tour early, we could play games with our mentees. While we played with our mentees, we got to know them, as well. The games really seemed to help the mentees relax and have fun.

A new thing that has not occurred in recent years, is that the Dublin Consolidated School 5th graders are now coming to South Meadow in 5th grade instead of 6th grade. The reason for this is that there were very few 5th graders at Dublin Consolidated School this

year, so everyone thought it was a good choice for them to come to South Meadow School a year earlier than normal. We are glad to have them join us at the start, instead of jumping in at 6th grade.

After lunch and the tour, parents came and joined everyone in the gym for a few words from Mrs. O'Bryant. She welcomed the parents and new families. She then introduced all the new staff: Mr. Gebo, school counselor, Mrs. Stahl, the nurse, Mr. Bless, the librarian, Mrs. Christian, school counselor, Mrs. Murray, computer tech, Mr. Iwanowicz, language arts and Mr. Cipolla, physical education. We also heard from Mrs. Brezovec about the many programs she offers through Expanding Horizons Program, like newspaper, webcasting, and simple machines, and also from Mrs. Koban about the drama club, which is performing *Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis this year. Mrs. O'Bryant then dismissed the parents and students by advisory to go meet the 5th grade teachers.

Students led their parents to their advisory room. Each advisory teacher was in his or her classroom to meet students and parents. There is a new teacher on the fifth grade team. Mr. Iwanowicz, will teach language arts. Mrs. Rounds has retired and Mrs. Hautanen is now teaching math. They had the chance to find their lockers as well as bring in their supplies if they wanted too.

I got a chance to talk with a fifth grader and see how she feels about

South Meadow.

Reporter: How do you like SMS?  
5th Grader: "I think the teachers are very friendly and it is a welcoming place. But I am still a little nervous that I am going to mix up classes."

Reporter: Did you feel nervous about the tour?

5th Grader: "I was a little worried but the tour helped me get a feel of the place and be more comfortable with where I am going."

Reporter: Are you excited about school?

5th Grader: "I am, but still a bit uncertain. I am really excited about all the new opportunities that I can try, mainly drama and cross-country."

Additional notes from the 5th grader: "I really like roller-skating. I also really like the fact that there are peer mentors; they are really friendly and easy to talk to. They are fun and helpful."

All in all orientation day was a very full and exciting day. I think the 5th graders benefitted from meeting their teachers, seeing their classrooms, seeing their friends again and meeting their peer mentors, students they can go to with any questions concerning SMS. I also think that the peer mentors benefitted by getting to meet the new 5th graders and connecting with them and sharing the experience of going through the transition between elementary school and middle school.

# EHP

*By Kendall Larson*

EHP 2016-17 may be the best yet! “EHP” stands for “Expanded Horizons Program”. EHP is a program here at SMS where you can skip two of your regular classes once every six days (at least) to “Expand your Horizons” and participate in one (or a couple) of the many programs, all taught by Mrs. Brezovec. As a fifth grader, you may do newspaper, webcasting, mind puzzles, or simple machines. However, fifth grade EHP does not start until the second quarter. On the other hand, all other grades may participate in newspaper, webcasting, mind puzzles (mind puzzles does not start until second quarter), simple machines/mechanical engineering, and/or non-competition or competition robotics. Although our old, wonderful eighth graders have recently become freshmen, I know for sure our new eighth graders will be great leaders and mentors, and our new fifth graders will be excellent learners. I am so excited for the new year and I’m sure everyone else is too!

First of all, Newspaper is one of the classes in EHP anyone can join, including fifth graders. Newspaper is an EHP class where you write articles, like this one here, for the monthly “Puma Press”. With two double-period classes twice a month, you get plenty of time to complete one, or maybe even two articles. Besides articles, newspaper students may also take pictures for the “Puma Press”, and work on slides for the morning announcements! You get to learn so much about new programs on the computer, tips on how to make your article better, and how to take an amazing picture! How cool is that?

Second, Webcasting is another class open to all grades. Webcasting involves making slides for the morning announcements, learning all the parts and different jobs of the morning announcements, and, for some students, arriving early to school every day to set up and put on the morning announcements. You could even be on the morning announcements! Like all other EHP classes, Webcasting is double-period, or takes up two of your regular classes, every six days, however, as you know, some kids also arrive early to prepare for the morning announcements as well as have classes. Even though I personally do not do webcasting, I’m sure it’s a lot of fun and a wonderful experience! Next, Mind Puzzles is another neat class you could do. This class also is open to all grade levels. Just a reminder, you miss the same number of classes you would with any other EHP program. In mind puzzles you can learn how to solve challenging puzzles using your most important tool: Your brain! You may choose

from countless puzzles to try and solve, as the EHP classroom is home to many. If you love puzzles and riddles and are always open to solving new ones, definitely try mind puzzles.

Also, Simple machines and mechanical engineering are very cool classes offered through EHP. Simple machines is open to all grades, however mechanical engineering is only open to students who have already done simple machines (sixth, seventh or eighth graders). In simple machines, you will learn about the different simple machines, and even build them yourself. Mechanical engineering is the next step further, and continuing to learn about machines and engineering. If you are into machines and how they work, you should definitely try simple machines or mechanical engineering.

Finally, Robotics, competition or non-competition, can be fun and challenging. Robotics, unlike any other class, is only open to seventh and eighth graders. This is because the experience of being in simple machines and mechanical engineering is needed. In robotics, you will design and build robots. Both classes have regular classes, although competition robotics meets after school often. Competition robotics also get to go to competitions and compete against other schools! Robotics is fun for any student who is willing to commit.

In conclusion, EHP is an extraordinary program where you can miss a couple academic classes once in a while to learn about so many different things you may not learn in ordinary classes. Everyone at SMS has a chance to participate in at least one of the programs offered. Webcasting, newspaper, simple machine, mind puzzles, mechanical engineering, and robotics are all great in their own way. You can be the star announcer in webcasting, take the coolest picture in newspaper, build the coolest machine in simple machines or mechanical engineering, solve the toughest puzzle in mind puzzles, or design the winning robot in robotics. If you are not already participating in EHP, it is so much fun and I encourage you to do so. In brief, if you are interested in joining a group at SMS, you should definitely consider joining EHP.

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## Robotics

*Kylie Johnson*

School is back, deal with it. But you aren't the one with all the work to be done; it's the SMS Competition Robotics team. They will be doing work for the whole season, busy with homework and robot fixes, but they will get it done. They will finish what they started, but they don't know that yet. They think that this year will be a repeat of last year, they think they will get no work done and they will fool around, but believe it or not, there are some people on the team that think differently, some of the people on the team want to be better. They want change, good change. But moving on from that, let's talk about the actual thing they are doing for the season. The theme is 'Animal Allies' and the First Lego League website states that robotics teams across the world need to discover a innovative idea that makes the interaction between humans and animals better, for example, animal testing. The way the makeup companies (not all) test on animals is harmful to the animals, and many end up dying. The animals are being mistreated, and it's harming them in many ways. It's

an awful thing that we do to them, and one day, hopefully, a robotics team can change that, but for now, we need to be brainstorming 24/7, and we need to get our work done. The robotics team is currently completely a homework that is basically brainstorming two ideas, and soon we will land on one good one.

But right now you know what the team is doing and what they plan to do, but you have no idea what actually will be happening in the season. So there is this board that everyone calls the competition board, and it's basically a table with a mat on it, and the mat has many different pictures that fit the theme. On the mat there are structures created out of legos, that the team built. When we received the mat, we received bags with numbers on it, and those bags were full of legos. That is what we use to build the structures. But the structures aren't your average lego creation; it's something mechanical almost, like these creations move when you move/hit/press something on the structure. It's confusing but basically if you touch the structure in a certain way then something will

happen, like movement. And this is how you complete a task. But before we go into tasks, let's go into the robot. Every year, each team participating builds a robot, and it's a difficult and confusing thing to do because your robot has to fit certain measurements; it has to be able to move, everything needs to work properly, it needs to go straight, and many many more things to make your robot complete. Now, your robot starts in a specific corner of the board, and you can run a program that your team created to complete a task. A task is something like, "go to the structure," "press something to make things come out," "bring those things back to that corner that we call 'base'." you create programs using software, and you just drag squares onto the screen that are commands almost, and those commands will tell the robot to do. Or, you can program it to do something. Programming is extremely complex, and you have to know what you're doing before you hop right in. Overall, the Competition Robotics team has a lot more on their plate than you do.

SMS Is Back,  
Baby!