



The Comet Newsletter

October 2019

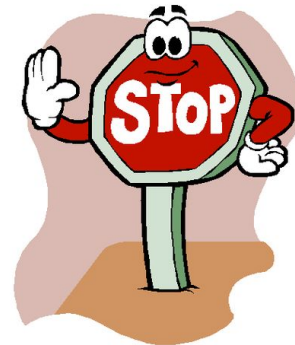
Editor's Note

This month, we'd like to give a warm welcome to a plethora of new writers and journalists in The Comet team, which now includes sixth, seventh, and eighth graders from CMS. Long story short, we now have a record of ten pages in this issue of interesting and altogether inspiring content from these talented students. Please enjoy!

- Naomi Ling

Is Quitting Really So Bad?

In today's society, we often think of quitting as the ultimate failure. Motivational speakers preach phrases along the lines of "Winners never quit, and quitters never win." Fitness gurus and coaches alike proclaim the same thing: Quitters don't amount to anything. It's evident that not following through is a slippery slope to disappointment and defeat. But are all the sayings we're hearing really accurate?



It's actually not so simple. Sometimes, there are situations where quitting is the right thing to do. Maybe you're slogging through a class or lesson someone else signed you up for. Perhaps you just don't think a job is right for you. Either way, stopping yourself seems like a good route to go down. As Helen Roe of *The Huffington Post* explains, "It's not easy to quit something - it takes courage to

make the decision and commit to what you really want next.” Quitting can mean freeing yourself and refocusing in a new direction that you’re seriously passionate about.

Sometimes, you might feel like the path you were meant to take is wrong, and it takes lots of courage to admit that. However, if you truly have the energy and passion, there’s nothing wrong with choosing - or creating - a new path for yourself. Don’t be ashamed of what others might think, or waste time on things that compromise your happiness. Do what you love, and embrace the change.

- Naomi Ling

Paw Patrol

101 Dalmatians

If you’ve ever owned a pet, whether a dog, cat, bird, or fish, you would know that it’s never easy. All pets require the basic water, food, and shelter, and some, more high maintenance animals, such as a dog or cat, will require daily exercise to stay healthy. But even with all those requirements, many people dive too quickly into getting a pet, without knowing how to properly treat it. Though many grow up wishing to be a ‘cat lady’, owning more than one pet can become a responsibility overload.

On September 11, 2019, in Ross Township, Pennsylvania, more than 100 dogs were kept in one house, resulting in nearby rescue shelter *Animal Friends* pulling off the largest rescue they’ve had in years. Lauren Laffakis, Chief Operating Officer of *Animal Friends*, says, “They were everywhere, they were on the second floor, they were in the basement, they were inside the furniture.”

Neighbors reported the stench of ammonia was so strong that they could not use the pool in their backyard. Rescuers had to wear protective suits and oxygen masks when going into the home for dogs. They also reported that the neighbors had called many times for rescue however nothing was done.



The owner of the house will most likely be charged with animal cruelty and animal hoarding; however after closer inspection, not a single dog was hurt or injured - just dirty. With all this in mind, next time you adopt a new furry friend, make sure you're ready, for both the sake of yourself and your pet-to-be.

- Estelle Chen

Photo credit: KDKA

Self-Care

Hi guys! Welcome back to the self-care section of *The Comet Newsletter*. This month we'll be talking about how to reduce stress, since I know how much stress can be caused from school. I'll be giving you four easy ways to relieve your stress this year!

1. Write it down.

If there's something in particular that's been stressing you out, write it down! Write down the worst possible scenario, things that you should prepare for, and other stuff like that! Seeing everything on paper usually helps to contextualize the problem, and it'll help you realize that whatever you were stressing about it something you can overcome.

2. Take a shower.

Take a warm, relaxing shower, and have some time to think to yourself. Afterwards, put on some comfy clothes, and cozy up with a blanket.

3. Sleep.

Pretty self explanatory, but sleep allows you to ease yourself from everything that has been stressing you out. It allows you to regenerate with a fresh mind when you wake up again, and can really help to give you a fresh mindset.

4. Listen to something calming.

Listen to anything that helps to relax your mind. This can be anything from thunderstorm and rain sounds, to a calming song or playlist. In fact, there are certain songs, such as Marconi Union - *Weightless*, which have been scientifically proven to reduce stress.

Hopefully you guys find these tips helpful, and I'll see you next month.

- Lily Peng

Travel

My Trip to Britain, Part One

First Stop: Warner Bros Harry Potter Studio Tour

As a Harry Potter fan, I really liked this attraction because I was able to see all of the props and digital effects behind the movies. I especially enjoyed the wizarding bank, because of its amazing architecture, and how it looks just like how it did in the movies. Speaking of which, here's a picture of Diagon Alley:

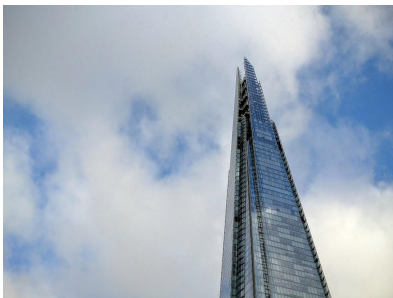


I also got to see a lot of other cool stuff, like a fake hippogriff in the Forbidden Forest, and the Gringotts dragon from the seventh Harry Potter book. Even some of the weird stuff was kind of cool, like the puppets they used for the goblins in Gringotts, Fawkes the phoenix's

puppet, and even a puppet of Voldemort from the fourth movie. If you don't enjoy all that, you can at least enjoy the gift shop with merchandise you won't get anywhere else (had to beg my mom to get me something from there), and the food court with refreshments. They have Butterbeer!

Second Stop: The View from The Shard

The Shard is a seventy or so story building, with an open roof, where you can get an absolutely spectacular view of the city of London. The Shard's best feature is



that you can see for miles, and miles - even the Tower Bridge looks small, and big cargo trains look like tiny caterpillars! Every floor you go up on the super-fast elevator, the view just gets better. On the top floor you can enjoy an open roof terrace, and there, a variety of ice cream is served.

Third Stop: Churchill War Rooms

Enter Churchill War Rooms - a half-museum, half -preserved underground headquarters that Winston Churchill used during WW2, a combination for maximum fun. Learn many interesting things about the events of World War 2, Winston Churchill, and his life underground. Some of the things featured in the Churchill War Rooms are colored telephones used to contact people, a conference/planning room with maps, and a cafe with, in my opinion, amazing onion soup.



All in all, please consider going to London. I don't want anyone to miss out on the amazing things in good ol' Britain!

I'll continue in a future newsletter,
- Siyuan Dai

What's Happening?

September was a great start to the school year! Let's recap what's happening in our school and community.

Jersey Day

Last month, we had our first spirit day of the year: Jersey Day! It was so great to see everyone showing up in their jerseys and supporting their favorite local and national teams.



Redistricting in Howard County Public Schools

As many of you have already heard, the Howard County Board of Education is currently working on a new plan for the districting of public schools for the 2020-21 school year. Our Superintendent, Dr. Martirano, recently proposed a plan based on evening out the capacity in our schools and creating equity for FARMS (free and reduced meals students) throughout the county. This plan, which proposes moves at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, impacts hundreds of students in our community. There has been a lot of opposition and

support for this plan. Several people from our community are planning on testifying for as well as against the current recommended plans at the public hearings scheduled on Tuesday, September 24th and Thursday, September 26th. The Board is planning to make their final decision on November 21st, so make sure to keep up with what happens with redistricting, as these plans could affect which school you end up going to!

Clubs

The sign-ups for most of the clubs have ended, so good luck to our Science Bowl, Mathcounts, Science Olympiad, Debate, and Academic Bowl teams for this year! We're rooting for you!

Make sure to stay safe on Halloween. Happy Autumn everyone!

- Livia Zhao

Photo Credit: Pinterest.com

Book Nook

Cinder from the Lunar Chronicles

Cinder, a gifted mechanic, is a cyborg. Thanks to her robotic limbs, she has always felt like an outcast in society, and to help her case she lives with an ungrateful step-mother and step-sister. However, her world turns upside down when her life is intertwined with that of Prince Kai of the Eastern Commonwealth; her only best friend, her second-step sister, is sick with the deadly virus letumosis; *and* she gets caught between national matters that oppose the ruthless Queen Levana Blackburn of Luna (the moon).

Read the first book to this enthralling four-part series to see what happens.

- Shruti Vadlakonda

Words of the Month

Wow! It's October - the scary, spooky, tenth month - already! Originating from the old Roman calendar as the eighth month, *October* retained its Latin name when January and February were added to the calendar. 'Octo' obviously means 8,

as in octopus, octagon, and best of all, Doc. Octopus.

Although most people associate October with Halloween, candy collecting, and more, others truly believe that there is more to October than just games and fun. Such people report sightings of supernatural beings, become superstitious, and seemingly having bad luck follow them.



Onto our next word - *superstition*. According to Merriam-Webster, superstition is “a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation.” Coming from the latin root of supersti, meaning to witness, superstition has been an English word since the 13th century! I guess sometimes getting too involved in the Halloween spirit (ha-ha) can be a bad thing.

- Patrick Deng

Foodie Fun

Fun(gi) Candy Experiments

If you have ever heard someone say “Peeps,” your mind may automatically jump to the well known sugary treat. But recently, a scientist decided to put different types of fungi inside each of the marshmallows to see how, or if, the tiny organisms survive. This substance was specifically chosen because the corn syrup and sugar within a Peep feeds fungi, but the potassium sorbate prevents it from thriving. But even before this strange experiment, Peeps were being sent up into the stratosphere for a NASA project, and Twinkies were put into extreme situations. This just goes to show that candy can be useful for something more than personal enjoyment!



- Lydia You

Photo Credit: Matt Kasson

Science Time!

Have you ever heard of elephant toothpaste? Basically, it's this really cool chemical reaction that happens when hydrogen peroxide is mixed with a catalyst. (According to Merriam-Webster, a catalyst is defined as 'a substance that enables a chemical reaction to proceed at a usually faster rate or under different conditions (as at a lower temperature) than otherwise possible.' In other words, it's just that key ingredient that makes the whole experiment awesome!

There are two different ways to make elephant toothpaste - one of them should only be done in a lab and it uses much more dangerous ingredients. I just did the home-safe one, and it turned out fine. I'm guessing if you use the lab ingredients, the whole process will be a bit bigger and faster!

The ingredients to make home-safe elephant toothpaste are as follows:

- 1/2 cup (120 ml) of 6% hydrogen peroxide liquid
- 1 tablespoon (25.5 g) of dry yeast
- 3 tablespoons (44 ml) of warm water
- Liquid dishwashing soap
- Food coloring (optional)
- Plastic bottles of all shapes

The more dangerous version is:

- Liquid detergent
- 30% hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2)
- Saturated solution of potassium iodide (KI)
- Graduated cylinder
- Food coloring (optional)

You have to be really careful working with this version because the potassium iodide can make the temperature of the 'toothpaste' greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and strong concentrations of hydrogen peroxide can bleach your skin and burn you. Again, I strongly recommend that you do the first set of instructions, but if you choose to do the second set, make sure you have an adult with you.

To conduct the experiment, you want to first add three tablespoons of yeast to warm water. (You can check the yeast packaging to see how warm the water has to be!) Next, in a separate container, mix together dish soap, food coloring, and

half a cup of hydrogen peroxide. Be careful for this part! Finally, just add the yeast mixture to the bottle with the dish soap, food coloring, and hydrogen peroxide. Stand back, and POOF! Elephant toothpaste should come flying out of the top of the bottle.

When I tried this experiment, it worked really well for me! However, it can get a little messy. So roll up your sleeves, stay safe, and have fun!

- Julia Goldenberg

2020 Census Corner

Do you know about the 2020 U.S. Census?

What is a census?

“A census is the procedure of systematically acquiring and recording information about the members of a given population.”

Is the Census mandatory?

The census is required by the Constitution, which has called for an "actual enumeration" once a decade since 1790.

Why is there a Census?

1. Census results determine how federal funds are distributed. Every year the federal government allocates more than \$675 million in funding based on census data.
2. Census results determine the number of seats states have in the US House.

How often is the U.S. Census?

The U.S. Census has been conducted every 10 years since 1790.
The 2020 United States Census will be the 24th United States Census.

When is the National Census Day?

National Census Day will be April 1, 2020.

-Amanda Wang

About Us

Hey! We are sixteen middle schoolers who enjoy writing, editing, and journalism. Contact us at thecometnewsletter@gmail.com; we would love to hear feedback!

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- Emily Zhang, writer
- Amanda Wang, writer
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Foodie Fun

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Science Time!

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