



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

IN THIS ISSUE

D.A. ALL DAY!

A Freshman's First Community Day at D.A.
By Kayleen D. '29

"A Tiger Plush and a Water Bottle: Gifts to the Next Freshman Class"
By Alice M. '28

Who Dominates the Court: Students or Teachers?
By Ysabela S. '27

Inspiration and Reassurance: Junior Career Day
Lucy P.

Shakespeare Competition 2026: An Interview with Alice M., '28 By Melissa B. '26

The Upperclassmen Dance Showcase: Bringing Movies to The Stage
By Mara L. '27

SPORTS

Personal Bests and First-Place Freelays - Two Successful Swim Championships
By Peyton R. '29

Pushing Limits: How Hard Work Defined the Indoor Track Season
Elnaz M. '28'

A Day for the History Books: D.A. Excels at "A" Swim Championships
By Claire P. '26

CULTURE

Dumplings: A Taste Into the New Year
By Nora W.

COLUMNS

A Walk Through *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende
By Ana D. '26

Faculty Feature: Mrs. Checo
By Sophie A. '29

Upper Eats Side
Food Review: Piccola Cucina
By Vivienne S. '26

Saving in the Most Expensive City
By Paloma G. '28

Where Botany Meets Art: Harvard's Glass Flowers By Iris M. '27

D.A. IN PHOTOS

Dance Performance Videos



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

Editorial Staff

Editor-in-Chief: Ana D. '26

Current Events and Student Life:

Nora W. '27 and Sophie N. '26

Entertainment and Arts: Vivienne

S. '26 and Mariel R. '26

Athletics: Katie B. '26

Photography: Emily W. '26 and

Ysabela S. '27

Illustrators: Eileen L. '27, Lauren W. '28

Moderator: Mrs. Sullivan

WRITER'S SEMINAR

Hosted by Student Prints



Tatiana Serafin, '90

- Previous editor and staff writer at Forbes magazine
- Co-founder of FirstAmendmentWatch.org
- Associate Professor in Communications and Media Arts at Marymount Manhattan.
- Winner of the 2024 Society of Professional Journalists for *The Doorstep* podcast



Margaret Besheer '85

- Previous Voice of America's United Nation's correspondent
- Covered the Hezbollah-Israel 2006 war in Lebanon
- Co-author of *Cultures of the World: Saudi Arabia* (Times Publishing, 2003)
- Bachelor's degree in International Relations and a Master's degree in Journalism

RSVP NOW!



**APRIL 21st @
3PM MPR**





Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

D.A. ALL DAY!

A Freshman's First Community Day at D.A.

By Kayleen D. '29

What started off as a normal freshman day, with students chatting and partaking in routine activities, turned into one of the most fun days ever! Freshmen Community Day was an event for socializing, working together, and getting to know each other better. This community day helped build new relationships and strengthen friendships that had started on day one at Dominican Academy. We began with a hands-on cooperation challenge, where we constructed a bridge out of paper that was meant to hold a yearbook without falling apart. My team and I rolled up tons of paper, stacked them in an orderly fashion, and placed extra support on top. We even tested our bridge by placing a water bottle on it. Fortunately, our group's bridge (and many other's) withstood the yearbook, despite redesigning and rebuilding under a time limit.

Our next activity was to make a vision board using cutouts from magazines. This was meant to be a reflection of what we have accomplished and what we wanted to reach for in the future. Similarly, we also wrote down our goals, reflecting on what we have achieved, and even penned ourselves certificates on how far we have come. After that, everyone excitedly waited for one of the best parts of the whole day, a pizza party!

After a delicious and lively lunch break, we got back to business and set out on a scavenger hunt. We were tasked with taking photos around the first and second floors while answering questions about our favorite aspects of D.A. We also watched videos and did a Kahoot with Ms. McGinley on how social media affects us as teens, and how to build better study and organization habits.

For our last part of the community day festivities, we relaxed with a chair yoga and meditation session led by Ms. Finlayson. It was very calming, almost as if I was out on a boat at sea or floating on a cloud. We ended our day, as we end all things here at D.A., with prayer and were given treats to take home. This community day was a huge growth opportunity and I would love to relive this day over and over again.

"A Tiger Plush and a Water Bottle: Gifts to the Next Freshman Class"

By Alice M. '28

On January 29th, Dominican Academy opened its doors for an Accepted Students Night for the class of 2030. D.A's student ambassadors donned their blazers and got into position to present as the organized, unified, and welcoming school we all know. Dr. Egler, Dr. Petit, Ms. Weil, and Mrs. Checo did an incredible job arranging this accepted students night. It was a successful event and an excellent reminder of what Dominican Academy can produce when we all work together.



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

This year I took on the role of a tour guide, leading the accepted students through the school from the lab to the fourth floor, with the hope of solidifying their induction into the Dominican Academy community. I was anxious but excited for my first tour as I patiently waited in the locker space next to the kitchen with other tour guides. We were all ready for the night to start as for many of us it was our first time as a tour guide. I could hear the prospective students and their families as they started to mingle in the Cafeteria with DAPA parents and other student ambassadors. As they finished their cookies and cannolis, it was time for the tours to begin. Emulating the tour guide I had during my first tour of D.A., I introduced myself and started my tour with a gentle warning for the amount of stairs to be climbed.

Soon we passed through the labs and the busy entrance of the building that were filled with warm smiles and the forming of new connections. Dominic the Tiger greeted guests and guided them to the student ambassadors where they checked in and received an adorable tiger plush and a water bottle. It was a flurry of activity from all sides as my tour guide partner and I escorted our tour up the iconic red stairs to the Mezzanine where delicious food was being served. People were crowding the entire space of the mezzanine and filing into the MPR and the Auditorium where a panel and presentation would take place after tours had been conducted. On the Mezzanine, I took a second to stop and just take in the vast amount of people that make up the D.A.

community: parents, students, faculty, staff and administration were all there that night to support and continue to grow the school. It's wonderful to realize when you are a part of an organization that is so connected. This knowledge invigorated me for the rest of my tour. On my tours, I got to know the people I was showing around and answered any questions they had about Dominican Academy. It brought me back to what only feels like a short time ago, when I was in their shoes. Over the course of the tour, I presented the halls that now feel so familiar and introduced the school that will become just as familiar to these students as they progress in their years at D.A. By the time I dropped off my tour at the auditorium, and said hi to all I passed, I felt the same sense I felt at my accepted students night, a sense of belonging and community.

Who Dominates the Court: Students or Teachers?

By Ysabela S. '27

It's not an everyday sighting to see your physics teacher quickly dodge a curveball—except it was not a normal day. On February 6th, students proudly represented their grade's color and filled St. John's gym with their loud cheers during the ultimate showdown at D.A.'s first-ever Students v. Teachers Dodgeball game - a perfect way to wrap up Spirit Week.

The event began with three competitive rounds between the underclassmen and upperclassmen to determine which team would advance to the next round against the teachers. The



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

underclassmen team consisted of freshmen Aimony E., Jenny G., Alexandra D., Madison M., Evelyn S., and sophomores Jasmine O. and Sophia P. On the other side of the court, representing the upperclassmen, were juniors Tammy L., Natalie Y., and Eileen L., and seniors Samantha W., Emily W., Taylor F., Ezra K., Katherine B., Samantha H., and Sophie R. The underclassmen put up a tough fight, but ultimately fell to the undefeated upperclassmen team that demonstrated stronger agility, teamwork, and precision. Jasmine O. '28 states, "Even though I knew they were going to win, I liked having a friendly competition with my upperclassmen friends!"

Dominic the Tiger put on an amazing halftime show as the crowd sang along to "Fight Song" by Rachel Platten, a popular favorite memory from the dodgeball event. Natalie Y. '27 states, "It's hard to pinpoint my favorite part because the whole event was amazing. I loved seeing the D.A. community come together in a (kind of) friendly match and beautifully sing 'Fight Song'."

It was now the most anticipated segment of the event—the battle between the students and teachers. The second half began with a walkout of the teacher team, represented by Ms. Cerulli, Mr. Chen, Mrs.

Sullivan, Mrs. Mazzara, Mr. Ponce, Dr. Cagney, Ms. Oing, Mr. Tottaram, Ms. Lawlor, and Mr. Rasimas. In the first round, the teachers caught the upperclassmen team off guard with their fast dodges and powerful throws. Katherine B. '26 states, "Mr. Tottaram surprised me the most! He is a lot more agile and faster than I thought." However, despite their power and speed, the upperclassmen managed to pull through and take the first round!

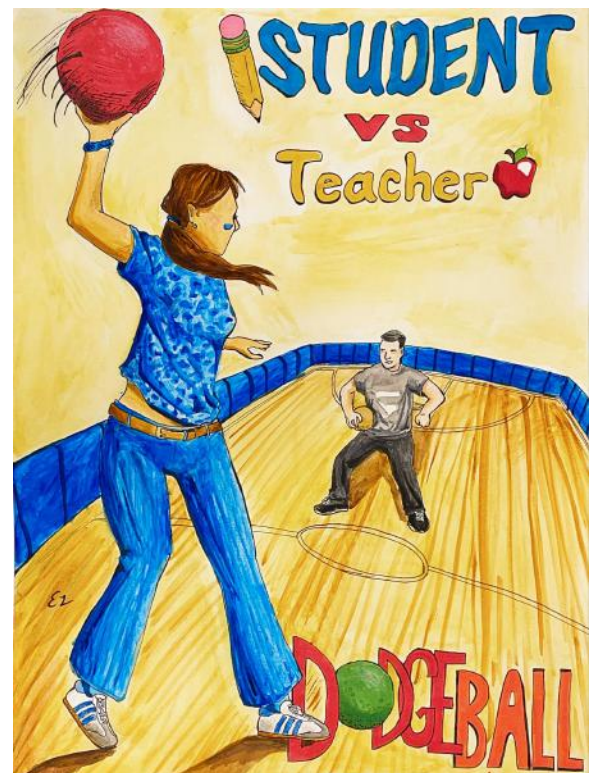


Illustration by Eileen L. '27

After huddling and strategizing, the teachers came back significantly stronger, refusing to let the students win without a fight. Many students also commended Mr.





Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

Chen, Dr. Cagney, and Mr. Rasimas for their flexibility. Nailah E. '26 says, "I thought that Dr. Cagney and Mr. Rasimas were the toughest opponents. They were very technical players who could juke, dodge, and put great power behind their throws. Mr. Chen surprised me the most with his calculated movements to get student players out, and his clutch catches." The crowd erupted into loud cheers, hoping to fuel the student players' energy with school spirit. Many were chanting "upperclassmen," while others clapped and laughed at funny moments throughout the game. With an improved plan and increased sense of familiarity with the upperclassmen's abilities, the teachers took the second round, tying the score 1-1!

The audience roared even louder during the final round. Many cheered on the teachers, as other upperclassmen proudly showed their support for their classmates. The audience could really feel the players' competitiveness and determination as they celebrated after each elimination. The crowd was on the edge of their seats, curious as to who would take the victory.

In the final seconds of the game, Ezra K. '26 and Nailah E. '26 faced off against Dr. Cagney. Although he had a remarkable strategy and powerful throws, the seniors' school spirit was stronger. Ezra delivered the finishing blow, securing the victory for the students! Nailah says, "I felt tremendous relief and joy that the student team had won our first-ever dodgeball game against the teachers!" The upperclassmen

team celebrated by proudly singing D.A.'s alma mater as they rejoiced.

Many people—whether student or teacher, audience or player—seemed to truly enjoy the friendly yet intense matchup and display their school spirit. Mr. Ponce states, "I participated to have fun and build



The winning upperclassmen team (and Dominic)

community and a stronger bond amongst my fellow faculty members and even with some of the students. It's nice and fun to talk about it with students I know, and form connections with students with whom I never had a conversation." In addition, many are looking forward to similar events in the future. Ms. Oing states, "I am not the most athletic person, but I still love playing games and organized sports as a way to stay active. Plus, I remember it being a lot of fun whenever students would play against teachers when I was in middle school and high school. It's really cool to be on the other side of that now, even if we did lose



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

this year. The juniors and seniors definitely deserved their victory, but I'm proud of the way the faculty/staff team played, especially because none of us are on a softball team.”

Congratulations to the upperclassmen for their victory, and to all the other participants for displaying their impressive teamwork and athleticism! Will the upperclassmen be able to defend their title, or will a new team steal the win? Find out next year!

Inspiration and Reassurance: Junior Career Day

Lucy P. '27

On the morning of Thursday, February 8th, the junior class participated in Junior Career Day. From two panels of alumnae, the juniors heard a variety of perspectives on college, career paths, and encouragement to pursue things out of love. Insight was gained from several generations of former D.A. students, with graduation years spanning from 1983 to as recent as 2021. Each speaker's life path and career was unique to their neighboring alum, but they all agreed that they continue to carry memories, relationships, and lessons from their time at D.A. Juniors listened to professionals in medicine, law, entertainment, business, marketing, engineering, photography, entrepreneurship, mental health, and more. The MPR was full of talented, driven women, as well as future leaders and change makers. These inspiring

women brought to light the many ways of learning, working, and living, showcasing numerous paths to joy and achievement.

The alumnae proved that opportunities are waiting for you and when you work authentically and passionately, you can be a part of whatever you love. They emphasized that changing paths is completely acceptable and will likely happen. No one is all knowing and comfort should be taken from the fact that nothing is permanent if you do not want it to be. They urged that there is no wrong move or waste of time, rather, each is a valuable step from which to learn. Many panelists have found themselves in different places than they had expected, entailing schooling or professional transfers, while others saw childhood dreams realized. All of these people have had and continue to craft exciting lives inside as well as beyond their careers.

Shakespeare Competition 2026: An Interview with Alice M., '28

By Melissa B. '26

“When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: My next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.'” Those were the opening lines of Alice M.'s monologue from Act Four of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare. During this scene, Bottom, the character Alice was portraying, wakes up from a very vivid dream. He had just transformed back to a man after being



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

“enchanted” into a donkey. The monologue she would perform recounts Bottom’s experience of being Titania the Fairy Queen’s lover. But we were far from the Globe Theater in London, where Shakespeare debuted his famous plays. No, we were in D.A.’s auditorium as the annual Shakespeare Competition took place.

This was a moment Alice had been preparing for weeks. Her preparation consisted of reciting her monologue in front of her family and friends. But just memorizing the monologue was not enough; she made sure to focus on when to pause for dramatic moments and how to properly project her voice. The day of the competition, she was slightly nervous. There was a very talented pool of D.A. thespians performing, vying for a chance to punch their ticket to the next round of competition.

Alice’s performance went exactly as she practiced. To her surprise, she won first place. She shared with me that she was so ecstatic to have won, as there were so many talented people performing. She moved on to the next round, the National Shakespeare Competition NYC Branch Semifinals. She was honored to have the opportunity to represent D.A. She recited the original monologue from the D.A. competition at the semifinal, but also with a new piece - Sonnet 130. Sonnet 130 is a satirical sonnet that parodies traditional, exaggerated love poetry. The speaker of the poem gives a realistic description of his lover, compared to the ideal lover of which other poems speak. At the end of the sonnet, the speaker insists that his love is more honest and

heartfelt because it is not built on false, idealized descriptions of beauty.

The semifinals deepened Alice’s love for Shakespeare as she practiced Sonnet 130. As she heard the other participants’ sonnets and monologues, she met many students who shared her love for Shakespeare. She found an extremely welcoming community that all supported each other throughout the competition. The D.A. community also came to the competition to support her. Ms. Spelman, the moderator of the Shakespeare Club, Sr. Joan, and Dr. Gowans all came to the competition that day. After the competition, Alice said she was proud to put on her best performance and grateful for all the support she had received. At the end, her cue came, and she put on the performance of a lifetime.

The Upperclassmen Dance Showcase: Bringing Movies to The Stage

By Mara L. ‘27

On Friday, February 13th, D.A. made history with its very first annual “Upperclassmen Dance Showcase: A Night at The Movies.” Each dance section, along with Dance Club, selected a movie and song to perform and began learning choreography and rehearsing together to bring their movies to life on the stage.

In the months before the event, students spent time perfecting their performances in class, after school, and during free periods. Every junior and senior contributed to the process, whether dancing, managing costumes and props, or handling



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

music. Some underclassmen and the Spirit Team were also involved in the event, working backstage and ensuring the production ran smoothly.

By the time the showcase began, the gym at St. John's was packed with faculty members, parents, and underclassmen who came to cheer on the performers. To create an immersive movie theatre experience, popcorn and snacks were served before the show. Finally, the emcees Sophia M. and Kamila F., took the stage and kicked off the event by getting the crowd excited for the show.

Dancers presented a variety of styles, including jazz, modern, hip hop, and Latin. The afternoon opened with Dance 401's performance of "The Greatest Show" from *The Greatest Showman*, where they took the audience on a trip to the circus, complete with acrobats, elephants, and a bearded lady. Dance 402 brought everyone back to 1950's California with "Summer Nights" from *Grease*. Dance Club followed with their choreography for "Someone in the Crowd" from *La La Land*, and Dance 301 performed "(I've Had) the Time of My Life" from *Dirty Dancing*.

Between dance numbers, the emcees entertained the audience by hosting a movie trivia game with prizes. After the break, the showcase continued with Dance 303's dance to "Someday" from *Zombies*. Dance 302 then defended the galaxy in "Men in Black" from *Men in Black*. Finally, the afternoon closed off with Dance 403 in the ultimate acapella battle: the finale from *Pitch Perfect*.

The showcase would not have been possible without Ms. Finlayson, who choreographed each routine and guided dancers through the entire process of putting together a show. Her dedication played a huge role in making the event happen, and thanks to everyone's hard work, the performances were a success. We cannot wait to see what is in store for next year's dance showcase!

SPORTS

Personal Bests and First-Place "Freelays" - Two Successful Swim Championships

By Peyton R. '29

The Dominican Academy swim team ended their season with two astonishing championships. On January 24th, four swimmers from the D.A. swim team competed in "B" Champs. These swimmers were Ana D., Elis F., Devereaux L., and Peyton R. Despite being small in numbers, they tied for fourth place and even ranked above teams with twenty swimmers. Then, the following weekend the "A" Champs were held at the Nassau County Aquatics Center. The fourteen D.A. "A" Champ swimmers consisted of Clancy B., Aoibhin B., Elisa C.B., Taylor F., Emilia G.L., Maja K.R., Mairead L., Caroline L., Sophia M., Claire P., Anya R., Samantha H., Isabella S., and Emily W. The team did an outstanding job and achieved 5th place, which is such a tremendous accomplishment and required all of the swimmers to put in a great deal of effort. In addition to this, D.A. received their



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

first ever first place in the 400 free relay (freelay)! The relay team included Aoibhin B., Elisa C.B., Anya R., and Caroline L. After months of practice, many swimmers achieved new personal bests because all of the swimmers were dedicated and worked very hard this season, which was shown during the championships.



A-Championship Swimmers



B-Championship Swimmers

Pushing Limits: How Hard Work Defined the Indoor Track Season
Elnaz M. 28'

The indoor season came to a close after months of competition, practices at the Armory, and steady improvement across the team. From the first meet to the final race, athletes demonstrated commitment, resilience, and growth, making this season one defined not only by results, but by progress. As a member of the team, I was able to witness all the hard work every athlete put in, whether it was coming to an early meet or attending practice in the cold winter weather.

Our last meet of the season was the CHSAA Intersectionals at Ocean Breeze. We had eight runners qualify for this competitive meet. Neena O. qualified for the 55m and the 300m, Laisha G. and Julianna M. qualified for the 600m, and Brune W., Maya P., Fiona A., and I qualified for the 1000m. The team had trained all season tirelessly for this moment and were prepared to showcase all of our determined effort.

I walked in and immediately noticed that the stands were filled with hundreds of athletes awaiting their race. The warm-up rooms were packed as everyone was preparing for their turn on the track. Coach Jen and Mrs. Sullivan waved at me with a smile. While I was nervous at first, their presence and the support I received from the team made me feel at ease.

There were amazing results at this meet. Neena O. broke the school's record for 300 meter. Maya P. and Brune W. shattered their PRs, and Laisha cut five seconds off her season's best. Fiona A. achieved her 2nd best time of the season.



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

Of course, all of this would not have been possible without the help and support of Coach Jen. At every practice and every meet, she would greet us with a smile, motivating us to go out on the track and do our best. She is consistently ready to answer any questions or concerns you have. She is always understanding of each athlete's individual needs, whether academic, physical, or personal. Her guidance and encouragement created an environment where everyone felt supported, challenged, and confident throughout the season.

On days when the weather was gloomy and cold, Coach Jen would offer strength training practice. Despite it being cramped in the MPR, Coach Jen taught us valuable exercises to improve our running and prevent injury. These practices emphasized the importance of preparation beyond simply running. They reinforced the idea that improvement often comes from consistency and attention to the smaller details of training.

At one of the last practices we had at the Armory, we worked on 4x400m and 2x200m. After doing my 400s, I was exhausted and completely unmotivated to complete the rest. I was honestly considering just quitting. However, Coach told me that I did not have to do the last 200s if I did not want to, but she believed that I was capable of more than I thought in that moment. Her confidence in me made me reconsider giving up and reminded me why I joined the team in the first place. I finished the workout not because it was easy, but because I learned the importance of

pushing through obstacles. Coach Jen challenges you until you are ready to challenge yourself.

This season, the indoor track team showed their perseverance and commitment from grueling practices to celebrating each other's successes. It was a testament to hard work, teamwork, and the guidance of Coach Jen, who pushes every athlete to reach their potential.

A Day for the History Books: D.A. Excels at "A" Swim Championships By Claire P. '26

The 2026 GCHSAA "A" Championship made history! D.A. entered Nassau County Aquatic Center with the largest team of "A" Championship qualifiers in the last four years, with a total of fourteen swimmers representing our school. The D.A. cheering section dominated spectator seating, with blue pom poms and a massive "D.A. ALL DAY" sign boldly displaying our school pride. The two-day meet saw countless personal records, several podium finishes, and, as always, incredible camaraderie and sportsmanship from the aquatic Tigers.

Highlights from the weekend included both individual and group achievements. Junior Caroline L. earned first place in both of her events: the 100-yard breaststroke and the 100-yard freestyle. This made her one of the highest scorers of the whole meet! Junior Elisa C-B. broke D.A. records in both the 200-yard freestyle and the 500-yard freestyle, securing two second-place podiums. The



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

200-yard freestyle relay also placed second, setting a new school record. Following the senior walk ceremony, Mairead L-G. '26 was awarded the All-League Award for embodying the spirit of the D.A Swim team.

The loudest, most nerve-wracking race to watch was certainly the final event of the meet: the 400 Yard Freestyle relay. Aiobhin B. '28, Anya R. '27, Elisa, and Caroline not only took home Dominican's first-ever gold medal in a relay but also set a new school record at 3:50.72. Each member swam four laps in under a minute!

D.A. finished fifth overall, swimming neck and neck with Notre Dame Academy throughout the meet. Our group proved to be, as it has in the past, small but mighty. Every person swam with dedication, strength, and a true love for this team.

"A" Championships was sealed with a post-meet lunch tradition, where our team gathered to enjoy Shake Shack as a reward for two days of valiant swimming. With a pizza party and the Athletic Banquet on the horizon, D.A. Varsity swim will continue to celebrate a fantastic season under the invaluable guidance of Coach Kristin and Coach Doyle.

CULTURE

Dumplings: A Taste Into the New Year

By Nora W.'27

The village in China closed their doors and hid in terror. Then, on the eve of Lunar New Year, Nian awoke from the sea to feast. This beast had the face of a lion and

the tail of a scorpion. The village people thought they were doomed. Then, an old man with silver hair and a red robe appeared and set off fireworks and shined bright lights. Nian fled and was never seen again. The old man turned out to be a celestial god and explained to the villagers how to keep Nian away. This famous legend explains why many people wear red and set off fireworks on Chinese New Year.

On February 11th, Cooking Club and China Club collaborated for Chinese New Year. Food plays a big part in the celebration of Chinese New Year. On New Year's Eve, people feast with family and friends. They celebrate and wish each other good fortune for the New Year. One significant dish is the dumpling. A dumpling symbolizes prosperity and wealth because it is shaped like ancient Chinese currency called a sycee. People usually eat dumplings at midnight to highlight the transition between the old and new year. We were able to try the dumplings ourselves!

While watching a YouTube video on different ways to fold dumplings into cute little shapes with square wonton wrappers, I chatted with my friends and started my boat design. First, I placed beef filling in the wrapper and wet the square edges with water. Then, I folded the wonton paper diagonally in half to create a triangular shape. Finally, I joined the corners of the triangle together to create a cute boat. After doing five of the boats, I tried the envelope and sailor's hat methods with vegetable filling as well. It was like making art. Usually, I am not a cook, but it was a



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

collaborative experience with others. I would ask a freshman how to make the envelope dumpling and teach my friends how to make the boat design. We were not just making food. We were also forming bonds.

Then it was time to eat! I took three beef dumplings with mild soy sauce. To say my mouth died of enjoyment is an understatement. The soy sauce blended with the beef filling so well, and the wonton wrapper tasted like egg noodles. I gobbled the dumplings up in a second. Altogether, it was a ten out of ten. Then, I tried the vegetable dumplings, and they were even better! The soy sauce completed the savory taste of the vegetable fillings.

After we all devoured the dumplings, we learned about Chinese New Year. We watched videos about the importance of

animals in the calendar. They follow a 12-year zodiac cycle and were originally used to make timekeeping easier. These animals are the Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. These animals are used to predict what will happen in the upcoming year: anything from fortunes to challenges or misfortunes. These zodiac signs are meant as a guide toward everyday life and toward someone's personality.

This is the year of the Horse, specifically the Fire Horse. It symbolizes passion and intense energy, which can mean anything from exciting career opportunities to romantic relationships. It also means that people born in the year of the Horse are hard-working and resilient. It was fascinating to learn that so much detail goes into every zodiac sign. I never knew that the animal reflects our personalities, and it made me appreciate the idea so much more.

Finally, we played a Kahoot that answered the questions from the video. Even though I did not win the horse plushie, I had a fantastic time. It is extremely refreshing to learn about someone else's culture. When we are willing to step outside of our comfort zone and learn about the experiences of others through food and culture, it will connect us together. Thank you Cooking Club and China Club for this opportunity! I am so glad that I was able to be a part of it.



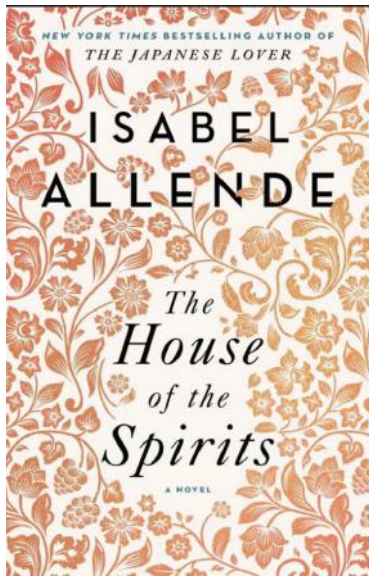
Illustration by Lauren W. '28



COLUMNS

A Walk Through The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende

By Ana D. '26



Book of the Issue: *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende

Rating : 

If you were to ask me what book I would like to read again as if it were the first time, it would certainly be *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende. This novel is a genuine work of genius and passion. Though I must caution, *The House of the Spirits* is not an easy read, with over 500 pages of (at times) confusing narratives and characters bearing equally complex names. Nonetheless, this is an essential part of Hispanic literature featured in many college

courses and an incredible story that will keep you entertained from cover to cover.

The House of the Spirits details the lives of three generations of the Trueba family as they live through a South American revolution, starting with arguably the most influential character in the story, Esteban Trueban, who climbs his way from poverty to the ultra-wealthy political class of a South American country. It is never explicitly mentioned in what country the novel takes place, but many theorize Allende to have set the story in Chile. The story then continues to illustrate the lives of Esteban's children: Blanca, Jamie, and Nicolas as well as their mother, "Clara the Clairvoyant." The final generation Allende's story covers is the harrowing life of Alba Trueba, her grandfather's favorite family member. As the revolution approaches, all the characters choose their side of history to be remembered, and even, die by.

My adoration for Allende's novel may also come from a sense of appreciation of the circumstances of her inspiration. The Chilean-American author originally wrote the basis of her story in a letter to comfort her dying grandfather in Chile. But he had passed before having the chance to read the letter that would inspire the novel. As her debut novel, the narrative had such detail and reality sewn in that I related to the complex, mysterious, and sometimes bizarre family history that often arises in my own family.



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

Should you find yourself with a rather long and uneventful break as I did, I would highly recommend reading *The House of the Spirits*. Until our next read, stay warm and well-read!

Let me know if you have any comments or book recommendations by emailing me at adelgado2026@dominicanacademy.org.

Upper Eats Side *Food Review: Piccola Cucina* Vivienne S. '26

Rating: 

Hello Upper Eats Siders! I know you have missed me but winter break has restored a semblance of discipline and I am officially back. Whether you believed you would make it this far or not, we have reached the spring semester. Truthfully, I was worried those mountains of snow would never melt. As you may know, I have a toxic love-hate relationship with that prophetic groundhog who insists on ruining my February 2nd. However, while he was predicting five more weeks of winter, I predicted I would find a five-Tiger-token eatery.

Piccola Cucina, meaning “little kitchen,” is a Sicilian cuisine restaurant. The business’s success is owed to its founder, Philip Guardione, who took all the traditional skills he learned from his grandmother. He traveled Central Europe cooking and tasting, only to eventually fall in love with New York City during a short visit and felt compelled to call it home.

Today, he operates multiple locations across the city, a Mediterranean-leaning outpost in Ibiza, and has an opening in Madrid on the way. With the inspiration he found in the Big Apple, he created delicious dishes and a fabulous franchise to follow.

The Upper East Side location sits on Park Avenue and 60th Street. Opening in the unfortunate year of 2020, it nevertheless survived the pandemic’s impact on restaurants and eventually grew to the point where a physical expansion was necessary. Guardione and his wife soon opened up a second floor in May 2023 as New Yorkers continued to like what they were tasting. Piccola Cucina Uptown feels less like a Manhattan restaurant and more like you accidentally wandered into a packed dinner party, the kind where everyone talks loudly, tables are close together, and nobody leaves quickly. The place holds a celebratory atmosphere where it is intimate but never completely quiet. The servers greet and treat you with such loving hospitality it seems like a familial connection. The space is compact, intentionally reinforcing that Sicilian trattoria feel. Take it from someone that always needs to update her friends at lunch, you will overhear your neighbors, and they will overhear you. You are surrounded by cream-colored plaster walls, dark wood trim and furniture to match, rustic shelves lined with Italian wine bottles, and hanging copper pans and kitchenware all wrapped in candle-like lighting. Piccola Cucina also possesses what is perfectly described as the “open kitchen effect.” Even though you can’t fully see it, you sense the kitchen:



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

aromas of garlic, tomato, and seafood move through the room constantly. Food arrives fast and steaming, reinforcing the crafted at-home kitchen illusion. While it might not be attracting business lunches or minimalist aesthetic enthusiasts, this place is perfect for group dinners and guests who want a memorable NYC Italian night. You don't just eat dinner here, you join the room.

There are numerous elements that make Piccola Cucina unique from an Italian-American red-sauce menu. It is Sicilian regional Italian cooking, where the simple dishes exist alongside seafood crudi, truffle pastas, and Mediterranean flavors. They offer appetizers and multi-course meals of comfort and elegant marine products. Even classic Italian dishes are given a Mediterranean twist with the addition of citrus and herbs. The menu



revolves around the pasta and you can immediately tell it is the kitchen's pride. They offer all three main types of pasta

styles: traditional Sicilian classics, seafood Mediterranean pastas, and rich Northern comfort pastas. Finally, they do not forget the classic Italian finish: dessert, with options like cannoli, tiramisu, and lemon cheesecake. Nothing is overly modern but it is clear the luxury comes from ingredients and care, not attempted reinvention.

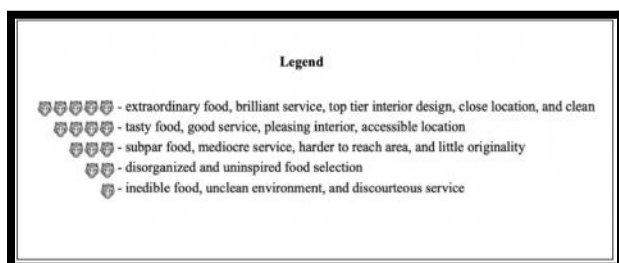
I ordered their calamari starter and penne pomodoro for my meal. The calamari here does not resemble the heavy, crunchy basket American bar type appetizer. Instead, it feels unmistakably Southern Italian: light, aromatic, and carefully balanced. The squid arrives pale gold rather than dark brown, which immediately signals a very light flour dusting and a clean fry. The rings stay tender and almost creamy inside, not rubbery, with tentacles crisping into lacy edges. Instead of relying on marinara for seasoning, a sauce filled with lemon zest and parsley is offered. The overall effect is refreshing and you keep going in for more because it never becomes heavy. The penne pomodoro is one of the restaurant's most ordered dishes according to servers and online research. It perfectly demonstrates the kitchen's philosophy: restraint with ingredient quality. Visually it is minimal, a simple dish of red sauce, basil and pasta, but the depth is in the tomatoes and cooking precision. The pomodoro tastes slow-cooked yet fresh, offering a naturally sweet tomato base, gentle garlic presence, and an olive oil richness instead of butter heaviness. The tomatoes are emulsified instead of reduced to a paste in order to create a glossy and fluid sauce. The penne is cooked perfectly al dente, something that



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

seems obviously fundamental but easily overlooked. They have firm centers, no chalkiness, and slight ridges that allow the sauce to cling.

In a neighborhood filled with polished Italian dining rooms, Piccola Cucina refuses to feel curated. The atmosphere is warm, the seating is tight, the room is loud, the pacing follows conversation rather than courses and it is all perfectly on purpose. Piccola Cucina isn't trying to impress you, it's trying to feed you well, and that confidence is exactly what impresses you anyway and makes you want to come back. Clear a free period in your spring semester schedule to visit this Sicilian spot. Its hosting vibe will make it feel less like a reservation and more like a standing invitation.



Faculty Feature: Mrs. Checo

By Sophie A. '29

Tigers, can you recall your application process to Dominican Academy? Was it stressful? Intimidating? Exhilarating? Have you ever considered what this process is like from the perspective of a person who plays an integral role in making admission decisions? I had the opportunity to speak to Mrs. Checo, the Director of Admissions at

D.A., and learn about her position, what it entails, her life outside of our school, and her life before joining the admissions department here nearly three years ago.

Although a typical day at D.A. for Mrs. Checo varies depending on the time of year, she is currently coordinating thrilling events for newly accepted students, such as Registration Day, a welcoming experience for the Class of 2030, and the Sneak Peak Open House, an event that familiarizes incoming students with life at 44 E. 68th Street. In the fall, she visits numerous middle schools and organizes arguably the two most important events of the admission season: the Fall Open House and Shadow Day. Her enthusiasm, leadership, and authenticity have made the occasions immensely successful, with a family from the 2025 Fall Open House sharing, "We were struck by the school's commitment to academic excellence, leadership, and service, all within a caring and faith-centered environment. It's clear that Dominican Academy nurtures confident, compassionate young women who are prepared to make a difference in the world." In the winter, she reads countless applications and makes admission decisions before releasing them in late January. Mrs. Checo's unmatched effort and dedication throughout the admissions process guides incoming students and their families as they complete their applications, make their decisions, and embrace their new lives at D.A.

Having been in admissions for over fifteen years, Mrs. Checo worked at



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

Manhattan University (formerly known as Manhattan College) prior to working at D.A., constantly traveling for college admissions. Being on the east coast one week and on the west coast the next reduced the time that she spent at home tremendously. This did not fulfill her desire to be home more, especially at that point in her life and career. Having attended an all-girls high school herself, she recognized the impact that attaining an all-girls education had on her and eagerly applied to an open position in admissions at D.A. Despite the rocky start that she had had at other jobs, Mrs. Checo felt as though she truly belonged at our school from the start and was astonished by how easy it was to be here.

Mrs. Checo approaches her position with a distinct understanding of applicants, students, and their families. A Catholic school student for nearly her whole life, she acknowledges the difficulties that students and applicants may endure and the various highlights of attending a Catholic school. Moreover, having lived in the Bronx while traveling to Manhattan for school, she recognizes the hesitancy that parents may have in terms of commuting and sending their daughters to another borough. This understanding ties heavily into Mrs. Checo's favorite part of her job: helping families come to D.A., especially if they thought they would not be admitted or able to afford it.

Outside of D.A., Mrs. Checo can be found spending time with her old-year-old son and her husband, playing video and board games, or seeing her friends and

family. An avid reader, she read forty-eight books last year (that's approximately one book per week!) and frequently travels with her family during long breaks, with her next potential destinations being North Carolina and the Dominican Republic.

Mrs. Checo plays a pivotal role in helping applicants and their families navigate the complex admissions process and building up the community that we call our own. If you spot her in the hallway, say hello or give her a warm smile!

Saving in the Most Expensive City By Paloma G. '28

New York City has a reputation of being really expensive...and that's because it is. However, there are quite a few ways you can save money while living in NYC. One of my favorite ways to save money is buying secondhand clothing. Going to different thrift stores is fun in itself, but it also saves you a considerable amount of money in the long run. When thrifting, you are able to find high quality clothing for cheap prices. It's more environmentally friendly compared to buying clothes from popular brands, which are usually fast fashion and expensive for the materials used. My favorite thrift stores are 2nd Street, which have locations all over the city, and Goodwill. 2nd Street has cuter clothes while Goodwill has better prices. 2nd Street has some hidden gems but you just have to hunt for them. For example, I bought an Old Navy coat for \$15 and a trench coat for \$20. I was looking for both of these jackets on



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

popular sites. If I had bought them without thinking about my decision, I would have spent extra money on items I might not like in the future. My general rule is any time I am thinking about purchasing clothes over \$50 online or in a store, I go thrift shopping to see if I can find it cheaper. If I can't, then I just buy it online.

Another way to save money is to stop spending on drinks every day. I know, I know, it's hard to resist that Blank Street matcha or coffee after school. However, if you end up dishing out \$7-\$8 on drinks every day that expense will add up quickly. In a month, you would be spending roughly \$210 just on drinks. Instead of dropping a ridiculous amount of money on drinks that are half filled with ice, I would buy ingredients to make drinks at home. It may be an investment at first, but it will eventually save you money in the long run. If you don't think you can give up your afternoon caffeine boost, many companies have rewards programs. In general, I encourage you to sign up for these programs from every company you patronize since there is no risk or cost and membership perks often mean free or discounted prices.

Finally, my last way to save is to stop spending money when you want to hang out with your friends. There are so many free events that go on in NYC like pop-ups, concerts, shows, and more. An easy way to find these events is to just search "free events NYC" and include the current month. Another way to find these events is with the Culture Pass Program at NYC libraries. You

can access this program through "culturepass.nyc" and all you need is a library card. You should find loads of free events that you can attend with friends and family. Also, your NYC student ID lets you in many museums for free. One of my favorites is the Met, but there are also countless other museums that you can go to for free or with a donation of your choice.

When saving money, don't spend it all in one place. If you look back to one of my old articles, I wrote about high yield saving accounts. To get the most out of your NYC savings, put your money in one of these accounts and watch it grow.

Where Botany Meets Art: Harvard's Glass Flowers

By Iris M.'27

Though many may perceive arts and sciences as two completely separate areas of study, the work of Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka shows that art and science can intersect to create something extraordinary. From 1886 to 1936, the Czech-German father and son duo created roughly 4,300 anatomically accurate glass models of over 750 plant species originally intended for scientific study with details and craftsmanship so meticulous they are hardly discernable from real plants. Today, the Blaschkas' body of work, which ranges from vividly colored maple leaves to apples with realistic mold, is housed at Harvard University's Herbaria, and many models are on public display at the Harvard Museum of Natural History's Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants. If you are



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

ever in Boston, this is an exhibit not to be missed.

Leopold Blaschka was born into a family of jewelers in Northern Bohemia, part of the modern-day Czech Republic, in 1822. Leopold was passionate about the natural world and used his skills to create and sell strikingly lifelike models of plants and sea creatures around the 1860s. Leopold and his family moved to Dresden, Germany after the birth of his son, Rudolf, who eventually began to work with his father. In 1890, Leopold and Rudolf shifted their focus to plants after receiving a commission from George Lincoln Goodale, the founder of Harvard's Botanical Museum. At a time when plants were hard to preserve, models, usually made from impractical paper mache or wax, were essential to teaching botany. The Blaschkas' more accurate and durable glass models facilitated study of hundreds of species, including enlarged cross-sections of small plant parts. Many of the Blaschkas' plants are permanently showcased in a gallery in the Harvard Museum of Natural History, where, according to collection manager Jennifer Brown, they were always intended to be displayed.

To make them, the Blaschkas first created wire frames and added glass tubes around a supportive wire structure. They then used heat to soften glass tubes which they formed into stems. Glass rods were shaped into leaves and attached to wires, which were then joined with the stem structure and color.

While the models were at first painted over using a variety of traditional

pigments, Rudolf later developed a new coloring process which involved painting the glass with a substance created from powdered glass enamel and a viscous agent that would spread across glass structures when heated. This method led to even more realistic color patterns. The Blaschkas also added unique textures to many of their models, for example, using tiny cotton fibers to mimic hairy surfaces.

Preserving the thousands of Blaschka flower models is difficult. The models are fragile and susceptible to deterioration – demanding constant care, mainly from conservator Scott Fulton. Fulton uses complex methods to clean the models, fill in cracks or missing pieces, and repair coloring imperfections caused by humidity or other factors. He also works to maintain favorable environmental conditions within the display gallery to preserve the collection. Fulton's work requires advanced knowledge of chemistry, but also a precise artistic eye.

Fulton and Brown do most of the work maintaining the collection. With Fulton responsible for hands-on conservation, Brown tackles everything from curatorial work to assisting researchers. "I wear a lot of hats," said Brown. "One day I could be cleaning the humidifier, and the next day I could be flying to Paris."

In 2016, the Ware Collection underwent a massive renovation. The Blaschka models had been on display in the same room since the Harvard Museum of Natural History opened in 1890. A century of continuous display left many of the



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

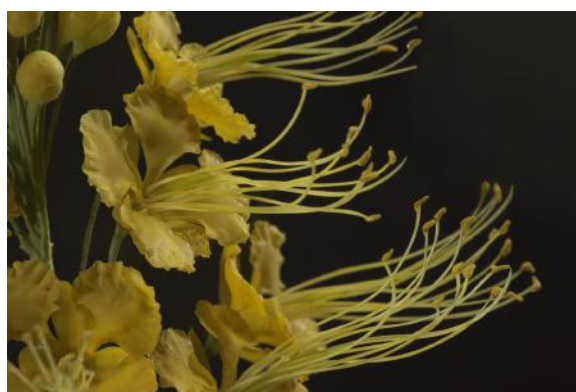
scientific explanations within the exhibit outdated and many models in deteriorating condition. The renovation team selected the best models to display from an enormous collection, taking into account their condition, but also plant diversity, and putting in place a new exhibit floor plan reflecting contemporary plant classifications. The models remain in refurbished versions of the exhibit's original wooden display cases to keep a historical feeling despite the modernization. "We focus on what kind of stories we want to tell with the models," said Brown.

Whether you are interested in botany or just want to enjoy these beautiful models, this exhibit is a must-see in the Boston area. While I, as someone passionate about art, appreciated the models most through an artistic lens, the exhibit's scientific precision should appeal equally to those approaching it through the lens of biology and botany. I was moved by the hard work and precision that was put into the creation of each unique model. The glass flowers are truly one of a kind – I have never seen pieces of art that have imitated nature so closely. The dim lighting and wooden display cases contribute to a peaceful and historical atmosphere that is perfect on a rainy day.

The Blaschkas' artwork exists at a crossroads between art and science. "The intersection is so interesting and one of the things I love about working with the glass flowers is how people are so interested and inspired by the collection," said Brown. The glass flowers continue to educate and delight more than a century after they were made.



The Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants, Harvard Museum of Natural History



*This model of the flower *Caesalpinia pulcherrima*, *Pride of Barbados*, was made entirely by hand by Rudolf and Leopold Blaschka in 1895.*



Conservator Scott Fulton works on the preservation of a model of a rotten apple created in 1932 by Rudolf Blaschka



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

D.A. IN PHOTOS

Dance Performance Videos

[Google Drive of all Videos](#)





Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4



*Movie Night Dance Show -
Section 401 - The Greatest
Showman - The Greatest
Show*



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4



*Movie Night Dance Show -
Section 402 - Grease -
Summer Lovin'*





Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4



[Movie Night](#)
[Dance Show -](#)
[Dance Club - La](#)
[La Land -](#)
[Someone In The](#)
[Crowd](#)





Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4



*Movie Night Dance
Show - Section 301 -
Dirty Dancing - I've
Had The Time Of My
Life*





Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4



*Movie Night Dance Show -
Section 301 - Dirty Dancing -
I've Had The Time Of My Life*



[Back to Top](#)



Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

Movie Night Dance Show - Section 302 - Men In Black - Men In Black





Student Prints | Winter 2026 | Vol. 84 | No. 4

Movie Night Dance Show - Feb. 13th, 2026 - Section 403 - Pitch Perfect - The Finals

