

Challah Talk: nosh, banter, and deep thoughts

by Michael Howie

The recording studio is electric today, just like it is every Thursday. Seniors Jack Yonover and Bobby Becker have created something quite unique: A podcast entitled “Challah Talk.” Of their five shows, each one has had more listeners than the last.

Challah is a bread in Jewish cuisine usually eaten on Shabbat and major Jewish holidays. Becker and Yonover, both Jews themselves, eat the braided bread all the time. The weekly shows allow them, as Yonover put it, to “nosh on some Challah” even more often.

“The thesis of the show is that Challah bread is the basis for good conversation. It’s just three people in a room just having the type of conversation you’d have at lunch,” said Yonover. “Challah is the icebreaker to a great conversation.”

The first episode was with senior Brian Joseph. Yonover and Becker discussed everything with him, including his golf career, his family origins in Haiti, his interest in the Air Force, and his opinions on the N-word discussions in advisory.

Joseph gave the show high praise.

“Jack and Bobby have put together a wonderful podcast that showcases some of New Trier’s most interesting personalities and perspectives, and to have been chosen to share a bit about myself and some of my thoughts on several New Trier events was wonderful,” he said.

According to Becker, the most important component to the show is

the guest.

“We want to capture the stories of different types of people at New Trier. That’s why we selected five unique individuals to introduce to a larger audience.”

So far, besides Joseph, the show has hosted seniors Jordan Shonfeld, Max Rosen, Ayah Bajwa, and Nate Schinderle.

“I want someone who can be real, someone who is interesting and who has a unique background, but we also want diverse voices,” said Becker.

Becker and Yonover created an Instagram account for the podcast, and have asked friends and listeners to promote it on their personal accounts. The viewership has been much higher than Yonover and Becker anticipated it would be.

“Our analytics tell us we’ve had over 1,500 plays over the first five episodes, and on Instagram we’ve been growing rapidly. At one point, I know we had more than 1,000 page views in one week,” Becker said.

Senior Sawyer Harris, a frequent Challah Talk listener, spoke highly of the show’s relatability.

“The aspect of the show that grabs me the most is how everyone is so down to earth,” Harris said. “Hearing my peers talk about their lives and interests gives everything a sense of relatability. At the end of a long day there’s nothing better than listening to interesting people talk about interesting subjects, not to mention how funny the show is.”

Yonover credited the support of his friends in the beginning for the



The show is a hit among students | Challah Talk Spotify

success of Challah Talk.

“I honestly don’t know if I would’ve gone through with it if I hadn’t gotten the response I did. But a good idea doesn’t equal good execution, so we thought we’d start the show and see what would happen. I certainly didn’t expect it to be as popular as it is now,” said Yonover.

Joseph has become a big fan and complimented the other guests.

“Each guest has their own unique qualities, interests, and talents, and to listen to what some of my peers have had to say is intriguing,” he said. “To have been the first guest on Challah Talk was a great experience. I look forward to witnessing the podcast’s continued growth and success.”

The planning for each show is quite simple, Becker and Yonover said.

“We start out with the background of the guest, how we can tailor the episode to them,” Yonover said. “What are their interests? What makes them unique from other students?”

“No one wants to hear us talk, they want to hear our guest talk,” Becker added. “It’s our job as the hosts to get the most out of them.” While they talk about a range of topics, they always try to have fun.

“In Ayah [Bajwa’s] show, the Challah was so good that the prophet Elijah ran into the recording studio and stole it for himself,” Yonover claimed.

“For [the episode with Jordan Shonfeld] we did a game about famous Jordans,” Becker said with a smile.

In that same show, the

conversation started with Shonfeld’s experience as New Trier track and field captain, but by the end he was explaining the social hierarchy of turkeys.

“We never write out a script,” Yonover said. “We want our conversations to be as genuine and real as possible. I usually write out a list of things I want to talk about, but we let our guests take the conversations the way they want to take it.”

Becker expressed gratitude to Mr. Syrek, the WNTH Radio sponsor, for giving them the space and opportunity to record the podcast each week.

“[Syrek] has been so helpful in this process. He lets us talk about the things we want to talk about, things we can’t necessarily discuss on live radio through WNTH,” Yonover agreed.

“One thing that’s unfortunate about WNTH radio is that you can’t talk about politics, you can’t approach many interesting topics we want to approach, he said. “With Challah Talk as a podcast, we have a little more freedom.”

Becker and Yonover have plans for the show’s future.

“We plan to end Season 1 by winter break, and the ultimate goal is to make it more accessible and popular. We don’t want to have the same show each week, so we’re looking to spice it up for Season 2.”

If you want to listen to Challah Talk, you can find the episodes on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and pretty much any site that hosts podcasts.

Sexual Assault Prevention Club in the works

Junior students are tired of silence surrounding sexual assault

by Mattea Carberry

Junior Annie Thornton feels it’s time to bring the conversation of sexual assault to the forefront. She has entered the early stages of organizing a sexual assault prevention club for students.

She explained that she was tired of hearing about it all the time while no one was making efforts to stop it, prompting her to take action.

“I’ve had conversations with a lot of my friends and a lot of them have been sexually assaulted or they know people who have and I was kind of getting tired of hearing about it all the time,” said Thornton.

“It’s not that I’ve been getting tired of it, it’s just that I’ve been getting tired of people being afraid of it. It’s such a big problem even at the high school level and you hear about it so often and I’m surprised New Trier doesn’t already have a club for that.”

Junior Lucy Traynor, who was one of the earlier supporters of the club, attributes the lack of conversation thus far to students’ discomfort with the topic.

“I think sexual assault is one of those issues where everyone kind of knows about it, we learn about it in health class, but no one really thinks about it unless it directly impacts them or someone they care about,” she said.

“I think there hasn’t been a club because we’re high schoolers and people don’t like to think about this kind of stuff because it’s uncomfortable.”

Thornton described how the lack of conversation surrounding

sexual assault often frustrates her as she goes about her day to day tasks.

“I’m sitting and I’m going to my classes and everything and I’m thinking of the standpoint of someone who survived sexual assault,” she explained. “How am I supposed to sit in here learning about fractions or earth structures when I’ve been sexually assaulted or when someone in my class has?”

Thornton also acknowledged that some of the efforts made in health classes are helpful but nowhere near enough to truly address the topic.

“The only thing they really have is one forty minute period in health class and they show that tea video on consent and how consent is a cup of tea,” Thornton explained.

‘It’s just such a big problem and I’m tired of no one talking about it.’

“That’s really helpful and that’s a great explanation of how consent works but it needs to go further than that and the fact that it doesn’t kind of shows that the administration either doesn’t want to deal with it or they’re turning a blind eye.”

Traynor agreed and feels that while the school may conduct lessons on sexual assault, they only scratch the surface of the issue and thus fail to thoroughly address it.

“We learn about it in health class so maybe that’s the school’s way of talking about it,” Traynor said. “But in health class we just learn about it, we don’t really talk about it. It’s not a discussion.”

Junior Megan Reimer, who has been aiding Thornton in the planning of the club and working to spread the word about it, thought the school may not be particularly eager to initiate these conversations because

of how sexual assault has become entangled in politics, but emphasized this is something they hope to combat through the club.

“I think that the school doesn’t address it because they often keep out of things they think might be political. I guess it’s sort of turned political maybe but it shouldn’t be which is also the point of the club,” said Reimer.

“It’s a problem that is universal no matter if you think it’s somehow connected to politics.”

But when sexual assault allegations come up in the news and even in politics, Thornton feels that’s all the more reason to have these discussions in the classroom.

“We don’t talk about it and it’s something that hurts every single person every single day and it’s not just girls, it’s men too. Of course it’s a higher percentage of women, but it’s happening all over the world,” said Thornton.

This growing presence of sexual assault in the media and its growing awareness worldwide is a driving motivation for Thornton, as well as Reimer, to create a club that they hope will be a safe space for people to talk freely about the subject and become more informed.

“[We were thinking about] having speakers come in, having people share their stories, and maybe having viewing parties of documentaries of the #MeToo movement and just informing people of what’s going on and how it affects people,” said Reimer.

Above all else, Thornton stressed that her simple wish is students would begin to talk about it so things can get better.

“It’s just such a big problem and I’m tired of no one talking about it. Once we start talking about it, then we’re able to start combating it,” said Thornton. “It just takes time.”

Exchange students join NT

by Amelia Jacobson

This school year, 5 exchange students, through the AFS Intercultural Program, are attending New Trier. Two of those students are Seniors Marta Ravazzoni and Camilla Petrelli, who are from Italy.

Ravazzoni and Petrelli were introduced to the AFS program in different ways. Petrelli applied to the program after hearing about the it from her friend who had taken part in AFS in a previous year, while Ravazzoni’s father suggested the program to her after hearing about it at the pasta company where he works.

“Every year, [Barilla] offers two full scholarships for two students. I had never really thought about it, but when my dad asked me I was like, why not? So I competed for it and I won it,” said Ravazzoni.

Ravazzoni and Petrelli have already been in America for four months. When reflecting on differences between the two countries, they both agree the biggest difference is the school system and teachers.

“One of the biggest differences at New Trier is the relationship students have with teachers. We are not used to having such good, healthy relationships with our [teachers],” Petrelli said.

In Italy, the students are expected to know the material and be prepared to answer all the teacher’s questions without discussion.

“You cannot ask the teachers for help, you have to find help outside of school,” Petrelli said.

While Petrelli enjoys the extra help from teachers, she does note that it is hard to live away from her parents.

“The biggest challenge is getting used to being in another world or situation without your parents. This includes being prepared, like solving a situation by yourself without asking

for extra help,” Petrelli said.

The students in the AFS aren’t able to choose which region they are sent to or who they live with.

“I could only choose the country and then they put me here and I really can’t complain about anything,” Ravazzoni said.

Nonetheless, both girls are very happy with where they ended up.

Ravazzoni’s host sister is junior Devlin Guthrie. Ravazzoni is very appreciative of everything the host family has done to make her feel comfortable.

“My host parents are very good people and they’re always available for me if I need something,” said Ravazzoni.

Petrelli was paired with a host mother during her time in America. She has leaned on her host mother for support, and remarked that some of her favorite memories while in the U.S. have been spent with her host mom.

The host families have been instrumental in making the transition easier while the girls met new kids at school.

“The biggest challenge was probably making friends, even though I think I got lucky. I really get along with the exchange students, of course, but I also have my own group of friends,” said Ravazzoni.

In order to get the most of her experience, Ravazzoni found out that the key is being open to all the new opportunities available.

“I’ve learned that you gotta get out of your comfort zone to actually live the whole experience. You can’t have prejudices because otherwise you’re not going to go anywhere,” said Ravazzoni.

“You have to open your eyes and enjoy everything around you, meeting as much new people as possible and live the moment.”