

the INDEPENDENT

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Spanish Club hosts first student-faculty soccer game

Money will support trip to restaurant, cooking class

By Phileine de Widt
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

To raise funds, the Spanish Club held the first annual student-faculty soccer game.

The game was held on November 22 at 6:30 p.m. and ended in a student victory with a score of 8-2. Both teams had a roster of 24 participants, not including the coaching staff.

Spanish Club president Amelia Costa said the group is planning to use the money to visit a Venezuelan restaurant, La Qchara, in Beverly. There, the owner, who is originally from Venezuela, will show them how to cook Venezuelan food.

Costa said the game was a success. The many players and fans raised more than \$600, which will cover the transportation costs and part of the meal.

As a new event at the school,

Costa wants the soccer game to become an annual event.

She hopes current secretary Charlie Langendorf will take on the responsibility and run the fundraiser next year to establish the event as a tradition.

Math teacher and faculty team member Lauren Woodcock said though she would like to see the game continue, her soccer career has ended.

"I don't want to ruin my statistics," she said.

After the game, Woodcock posted her career points on her whiteboard, displaying how many games she has played, one, and how many goals she has scored, one.

She was a top scorer for the faculty team, scoring half of their goals. 2022 graduate and JV girls' soccer coach Naderson Curtis used his professional soccer experience to score the other.

Woodcock said her overall feelings about the game were good.

"I think it went well for a group of older people who are not in



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTOS



COURTESY OF ZAC CARVALHO

Students and faculty got together on November 22 to play in a soccer game fundraiser to benefit the Spanish Club. The money will support a field trip to a Venezuelan restaurant. The students won 8-2.

shape. We were all here the next day, teaching, standing, walking, and I see that as a win in itself,"

she said.

On the student side, junior Sammy Bothwell was an impact

player, scoring two of the eight goals.

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Operations, finance director resigns, accepts consulting job

By Avabella Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Finance and operations director Avi Urbas has resigned after working in the district for 15 years.

Urbas worked with corporations in financial consulting and investment analysis, specifically focused in the K-12 area, after graduating from Johns Hopkins University with a Bachelor of Arts degree, he said.

Urbas said he began working at the school in 2009 to further enhance his interest in consulting for school districts.

"I was excited to learn more about how schools are run, work, and get a little more hands-on experience working right in the school system," he said.

The biggest aspect that stood out to him about the district was the school pride, especially on his first day when the new high school building was opened, he said.

"I remember when the students



AVABELLA MITRANO PHOTO

Avi Urbas, the operations and finance director, accepted a new consulting job after working in the district office for 15 years.

came, everyone had shirts that had the opening date ... there was a lot of excitement and pride about it. It was fun," Urbas said.

He said he decided to resign because he wanted to move beyond K-12 schools and take the next step in his career.

"I've been keeping my eyes open for opportunities that could help me grow my skill set, challenge me, and help keep me learning. When an opportunity popped up, I was very excited to try something new," Urbas said.

He will begin working for Consultants to Government and Industry Incorporated (CGI), a national technology consulting firm, and assist them with

financial software for large state organizations, he said.

The new job will be exciting, but the decision to resign was still very challenging, Urbas said.

"It's an emotional decision to leave a place that's been like my home. I consider a lot of the people I work with here my friends and family ... we've gone through a lot of challenging times trying to help keep the school district strong," he said.

Urbas said he was happy that he accomplished managing the new Manchester Memorial School building and moving the district to multi-year financial planning.

URBAS RESIGNS, page 3

Two guest speakers visit 9/11 class to share their experience with terror

Provide first-hand perspective for students

By Gwendolyn Berger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Guest speakers Tom Chafe and Josephina O'Neil came into the 9/11 and the War on Terror class to discuss their own experiences with terror.

Social studies teacher John Mullady said the class covers the events of 9/11, the aftermath, and the history of the Middle East, starting with the Cold War and leading up to the rise of extremism in the region. After that, the class looks into the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq by the U.S. in 2001 and 2003.

Mullady said he tells his students to try to bring in members of the community to talk about their experiences during 9/11.

He said Chafe, father of senior Ella Chafe, who served in the U.S. military, came on Oct. 25 to

discuss how he got involved in the military, his experiences, and how 9/11 impacted him and his family.

"We don't always focus on what it was like for a service member's family, but that's important to discuss as well," Mullady said.

Chafe said he started in the United States Navy as a search and rescue swimmer and medic. Then, after college, he got a commission in the Air Force as an officer, he said.

He was in Heidelberg, Germany, training with the Air Force Reserve

when 9/11 occurred, and he immediately tried to get back to the U.S., which took a week and a half because of all the chaos in the air, Chafe said.

"We didn't know if the world was at war. We didn't know what was happening. It was pretty scary," he said.

Later, he was deployed to

9/11 SPEAKERS, page 3

'I wanted to expand the course and look at different regions that experienced terror.'

- JOHN MULLADY

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Students attend DECA mock competition, prepare for Districts

19 volunteers judge,
95 students present

By Stella Straub
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At the DECA mock competition, the goal was to simulate the events of the district competition to ensure students are comfortable and confident going into it, said business teacher and DECA adviser Barrett Alston.

He said the last couple of weeks in his classes have been spent preparing students for the DECA mock competition on November 29, where they presented in front of a judge.

Senior DECA officer Gabbi D’Andrea took the lead in managing the spreadsheet, figuring out when each student would be presenting, and organizing when the judges would arrive, Alston said.

He said there were around 95 students and 19 judges in attendance.

Students were asked to arrive 15 minutes before their event, dressed in business attire, Alston said.

The judges who were in attendance were parent and adult volunteers, D’Andrea said.

Alston said the mock competition was the first chance for students to put some of the skills they had been working on into action.

“On a broader scale, we’re hoping to teach the skills of critical thinking, being able to present to an audience that you don’t know that well, and communication skills. Those are all things that DECA works on broadly,” he said.

Junior Emilia Kirkpatrick said that there were folders on a cafeteria table during the mock competition and that they were labeled with different event acronyms.

Individuals had 10 minutes to prepare a presentation to present to a judge, while teams had 30 minutes, she said.



STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

Juniors Hayden Spencer and Jared Croft presented their roleplay in front of a judge at the DECA mock competition on Nov. 29. Their category is Marketing Management Team Decision-Making.

“Then, you would introduce yourself to your judge, go over your plan, and present your roleplay,” Kirkpatrick said.

She said the mock competition was a beneficial experience for her.

“I got helpful feedback ... My feedback gave me a lot of confi-

dence in myself because some of the things I was worried about I actually excelled in, and vice versa,” Kirkpatrick said.

D’Andrea said the goal of the competition was to get members as prepared for the district competition as possible.

“We had a large number of

new members this year, and even the members who did it last year still haven’t looked at a roleplay or presented in front of a judge in almost six months. We wanted to refresh everyone and make sure our new members aren’t surprised when they get to Districts,” she said.

English assignment encourages students to explore new activities, prepares them for AP exam in May

Project gives students
freedom to learn

By Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students enrolled in Advanced Placement English Language and Composition are working on a new project that is designed to encourage exploration and prepare them for the AP exam in May, English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton said.

She said that the third free response question on the exam requires students to use evidence from their lives, experiences, and observations in their response.

“They have to choose things that are really relevant to their own lives but also answer the question. So, this assignment is designed to give them a few new

Category 1: Longer Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Read a full length work of fiction: free choice, but you should seek out something challenging/at the AP level<input type="checkbox"/> Read a full length work of nonfiction: free choice (Options here)	Category 2: Shorter Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Read an essay of your choice. (Options here)<input type="checkbox"/> Read poetry of your choice (Options here and here)<input type="checkbox"/> Read an article of your choice from a newspaper or magazine
Category 3: Entertainment and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Watch an Academy Award-winning movie (Best Pictures are listed here)<input type="checkbox"/> Watch a TEDTalk on a subject of your choice<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to a podcast on a subject of your choice<input type="checkbox"/> Attend a lecture or an author talk<input type="checkbox"/> View or attend something else in the entertainment realm: music, theatre, dance, etc.	Category 4: Government/Current Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Learn about a current event from multiple news sources, media type, and viewpoints<input type="checkbox"/> Read a complete national or international newspaper<input type="checkbox"/> Attend a local government function<input type="checkbox"/> Visit/tour a government site<input type="checkbox"/> Follow the progress of an in-the-works bill that interests you<input type="checkbox"/> Research a current or landmark Supreme Court case
Category 5: Observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> View a piece of significant art or sculpture<input type="checkbox"/> Visit a museum (real or virtual) that is not historical<input type="checkbox"/> Visit a place you’ve never been<input type="checkbox"/> Find a new recipe and cook it for your family or friend group<input type="checkbox"/> Try a new physical (yoga, pickleball?) or mental activity (crossword, meditation?)<input type="checkbox"/> Interview an older relative about their life experience<input type="checkbox"/> Create a piece of art (music, writing, dance)	Category 6: History <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Watch a documentary on a historical time, place, event, or person<input type="checkbox"/> Read a historical fiction novel<input type="checkbox"/> Read an article or document of historical significance (written at the historical time)<input type="checkbox"/> Experience a historical speech via audio or video<input type="checkbox"/> Visit a historical museum (local libraries offer free and discounted passes) [these are different from art/design museums; Lowell Mills, Orchard House, The Essex Shipbuilding Museum would all count]

English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton gave her students directions for a project that will help them on one of the questions on the AP exam in May. The categories for the project are shown above.

experiences that they could bring into that third question,” she said.

She said the project, which will

be due at the end of the quarter on Jan. 19, requires students to read books of their choice, read

articles, or seek out different cultural activities, for example.

“It gives students a lot of different options to engage with different parts of their world that they wouldn’t otherwise do through school ... It also offers them life experience,” she said.

Because classes are so often focused on simply getting through a set amount of material, Edgerton said she hopes this will spark new curiosity for students.

“I hope that some of them will have experiences, whether they are watching a movie, listening to a podcast, or going to a museum, that make them want to try something else and just open up their world a little more,” she said.

Junior Libby McKinnon said she is looking forward to cooking for a friend and reading a historical fiction novel for the project.

“I think it’s an awesome idea ... It’s a little more fun than anything I’ve done before, so I like it,” McKinnon said.

She said she is intrigued that the assignment is long term.

“I think it’s just nice to have those because it’s really good for organizing your time, and I think it’s going to be great because it’s really going to help with the last question on the AP test,” she said.

Junior Josh Cohen said he has already composed a musical piece as part of the assignment.

He found the reflection part of the project interesting, and it forced him to consider why he enjoyed certain activities, he said.

“I realized that they are just things that I already want to do; I just have the opportunity to look more deeply into them,” he said.

The project has been met with enthusiasm from her classes, Edgerton said.

“I had a couple of students saying they wished this was an elective that they could do for a whole semester, that they want to keep going with the project. To me, that’s a very favorable reaction, just from the rollout, so I think the opportunity to explore these things is making people interested,” she said.

Juniors begin post-secondary planning

By Libby Mulry
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Visits to junior classrooms were conducted by the department of school counseling to give students the ability to start thinking more deeply about post-secondary planning, school counselor David Conwell said.

This post-secondary planning for students doesn’t always mean college, Conwell said.

“Some take a gap year, go into the military, or go into one of the trades,” he said.

A majority of students, however, want to go to a four-year college or are thinking about it,

Conwell said.

The department of school counseling acknowledges this post-secondary reality, director of school counseling Beverly Low said.

“We work in communities where there’s an expectation for a lot of families and students that the next step is going to be getting a four-year college degree,” Low said.

The department wants students to know that it’s okay not to have everything planned out for after high school, Low said.

“We want them to think: I’m figuring out where I want to focus my energy, not what I want to do with my life,” she said.

This question can bring anxiety to many of the students that the department tries to quell, Low said.

“Our intent isn’t to go into

What have I liked about MERHS? (It could be class sizes, an extracurricular activity, a specific teacher....) *

Your answer

What I have not liked about MERHS? (Keep it constructive: not enough classes in a department, size, specific opportunities lacking....) *

Your answer

Would I define MERHS academic environment competitive or collaborative? Why? *

Your answer

In the future, what kind of academic/work environment do I want? (lecture or discussion based classes, real-world applications, competitive....) *

Your answer

The department of school counseling gave students a post-secondary planning survey when visiting the junior classrooms. The survey asked about what they were looking for in a college.

classrooms and make people anxious; it’s just an opportunity to have a connecting point with students in the classroom,” Low said.

Junior Harper Jay said the department made this process as relaxed as possible.

“They did a good job of not stressing people out,” he said.

They also showed students around the college planning website Naviance and gave them an exit survey, Low said.

“Ms. Polk put together a post-secondary planning survey just to get people’s wheels turning,” she said.

The survey asked students what they were looking for in college, like if they wanted to live in a city or go to a college with a big student population, Jay said.

If students are unsure of what life after high school looks like, they are encouraged to come with an open mind to the College Homecoming Panel in early January, Conwell said.

“The panel invites three to four alumni who are freshmen or sophomores in college to come back and talk about their experiences now and what they were thinking then,” Conwell said.

National Honors Society officers induct 54 juniors, seniors

NHS plans to make changes to program, enforce policies

By Sabine Cooper
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Fifty-four new members were inducted into the Masconomet chapter of the National Honors Society (NHS) on Dec. 7, said Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater.

Along with the new inductees, there are 37 returning members, she said.

The speaker's address was given by Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury.

Bilsbury's address discussed the importance of taking a quiet moment in the modern age of technology and distractions.

During the ceremony, foreign language teacher Erin Fortunato was honorarily inducted.

Inducting a teacher as an honorary member is an NHS tradition, Drinkwater said.

The induction ceremony was run by the current NHS officers seniors Finn O'Hara, Kate Bappe, Adian Brown, Ella Chafe, Charles Virden, O'Hara said.

The current faculty advisers of NHS, Drinkwater, and main office administrative assistant, Mary Lumsden, also helped run the ceremony, he said.

In NHS, the council of faculty advisers is supposed to be five

faculty members who are not administrators, Drinkwater said.

Unfortunately at this time, they do not have advisers who are not adminis-

trators, she said.

"I think it would be helpful to have that faculty to help hold the students accountable to continue what they have pledged," Drinkwater said.

The students pledged to uphold



COURTESY OF ZAC CARVALHO

Senior NHS officers Finn O'Hara and Ella Chafe induct junior Madilyn Cook on Dec. 7. Inductees pledged to uphold the four pillars of scholarship, leadership, character, and service.

the four pillars of NHS: scholarship, leadership, character, and service, she said.

To promote these values in the school community, NHS takes on projects to promote community service, Lumsden said.

"One of the big initiatives that they've been trying to get started is the NHS tutoring after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays," said Drinkwater.

Additionally, Lumsden said the program has changed a lot with the new school administration this year.

"It's changed all for the better. It's more meaningful," she said.

For example, this year each candidate had to complete an application and submit a hard copy, Lumsden said.

"This meant that we had it on hand, and if any teacher wanted

to come down and take a look at it, they could," she said.

This year, there is a push to make changes within the program, O'Hara said.

"We want to make sure we are doing NHS the right way," he said.

These changes include better enforcement of academic policies and community service, O'Hara said.

Inefficient traffic patterns cause safety issues, delays

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT STAFF

In response to faculty concerns for students' safety, principal Julie Sgroi and officer Andrea Locke have been encouraging students to leave their cars quickly in the dropoff lane, said dean of students Elisabeth Drinkwater.

The school's goal is to promote safety for all students and faculty. Many parents have been dropping their students off in the parent teacher parking lot to avoid the delays in the drop off line, Drinkwater said.

She said this has caused faculty to fear for students' well-



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

Students are not leaving their cars quickly in the dropoff lane and are causing delays. Parents are creating safety concerns by dropping students off in the faculty parking lot to avoid the delay.

being.

"Staff were still coming and trying to park, and students were getting dropped off ... so for the safety of the pedestrians crossing and people still trying to park,

[the staff] just want the traffic flow through the drop off lane and not the parking lot," Drinkwater said.

She said the staff has been attempting to bring back traffic

cones to sections off the parking lot, but there has been no real solution yet.

Sgroi and Locke have been facilitating the flow of pedestrian traffic.

The dropoff line has been a visible problem all year long, but has gotten worse due to the cold climate, Sgroi said.

This has been causing students to stress at the start of the school day, affecting their ability to learn and concentrate, she said.

Locke said students have been leaving their homes on time, but arriving to school late; however, being in school on time is impor-

tant for students' success.

"Staff is trying to get everyone in the building and into their classes by 7:45 ... keeping the traffic flowing and moving for parents so they can get to work," she said.

Locke said the faculty is still trying to figure out what will work to solve this traffic problem.

"The new way of doing the traffic pattern will be effective once we figure out what is actually going to work. It will encourage students to get out of the car and not wait to be directly in front of the door," Locke said.

'Staff is trying to get everyone in the building and into their classes by 7:45 ... keeping the traffic flowing and moving for parents so they can get to work.'

-ANDREA LOCKE

CONTINUATIONS

SOCCER GAME CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The rest of the points came from senior Ella Chafe in her high school debut, juniors Eoin Doyle and Finn Birkeland, and sophomores Lily Oliver and Harper Brooks.

During and before the game, Woodcock said there was a rivalry between her and Bothwell.

He responded, saying, "She was the only one trying to compete with me. I wasn't really trying to compete with her."

Bothwell still appreciated the work put in by the faculty, saying they put up a good fight.

Senior Kate Bappe attended the game with friends.

"I thought it was interesting and a very fun way to raise money," she said.

URBAS RESIGNS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I think we have also been proactive in investing in good people and teachers ... that the buildings are good, clean, up-to-date environments," he said.

He hopes that the district will continue to work on a building project for the Essex Elementary School, invest in facilities and technology, and make sure that a reserve fund is maintained for emergencies, he said.

Principal Julie Sgroi said she enjoyed working with Urbas.

"Mr. Urbas really understood what made a school different from another typical company," Sgroi said.

Superintendent Pam Beaudoin, who worked with Urbas for 14 years, said he was very committed to his job.

"He wanted to work in education because he thought it was a way he could give back ... he was instrumental in building the new Manchester Memorial School,"

Beaudoin said.

She said she wants the next director of finance and operations to have experience in municipal finance, experience in schools, and knowledge of regional districts.

"[I hope] they bring the same spirit to the job like Mr. Urbas did ... and have the patience, knowledge base, and a real love for schools and supporting students," Beaudoin said.

Currently, the finalist for the director of finance and operations vacancy is Michelle Cresta, an assistant superintendent of finance and operations at Marblehead Public Schools, she said.

**9/11 SPEAKERS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1** Turkey and was part of an aeromedical evacuation group put in place to support the CIA and special operations going into Afghanistan, Chafe said.

He also served in Afghanistan transporting battle casualties and

wounded from multiple forward operating bases back to a more stable base, as well as from that base to Germany, he said.

"I was serving my country and doing my part to give back ... I felt like I was a part of history," Chafe said.

He said he came to speak because he thought it was important for youth to know how 9/11 changed the world.

"[The class] asked some fantastic, insightful questions. They forced me to think about that day in some ways I had not thought of," Chafe said.

Senior Lucy O'Flynn said that hearing Tom Chafe's experience gave her a broader perspective on what it was like to experience 9/11.

O'Neil, the second speaker, discussed the Dirty War in Argentina. Although her presentation was not about 9/11, it was still crucial to look at other areas

in the world that experienced terrorism, Mullady said.

"I wanted to expand the course and look at different regions that experienced terror ... and I felt [the class] made great connections," he said.

O'Neil, mother of senior Mechi O'Neil, visited the class on Nov. 20 to discuss her experiences growing up in Argentina, he said.

O'Neil said she didn't remember much because she was young, so she mostly discussed her experiences moving to the U.S.

"I realized that while [people from different countries] may be different, we have very similar values," she said.

O'Neil said she came to speak because Mullady had told her that her story would impact the class more than any lesson he could give them.

"What he told me had me thinking, 'Wow! I guess I do have something to say,'" she said.

Senior plays for Argentina lacrosse, commits to DI level

Experience helps strengthen skills across her teams

By Phileine de Widt
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Senior Mechi O’Neil is pursuing her lacrosse career through her position on the Argentina National Team and the Division I lacrosse program at Loyola University Maryland.

O’Neil said she has been playing lacrosse since she was 7 years old and started loving the sport when she was asked to play for the Cape Ann select team at 10 years old.

In the fall of her junior year, at 16 years old, she committed to play at Loyola University Maryland.

Nan Gorton, her current high school lacrosse coach, has known O’Neil since elementary school, as she coached the youth town soccer and lacrosse leagues.

“As a high school player, [O’Neil] is pretty similar to who she was as a little kid. She has stayed true to herself. She’s flashy now because of her skill, not her personality, which is what makes her a unique and beloved leader on our team,” she said.

O’Neil has played for the varsity program since freshman year and received the First-Team CAL All-Star Award during her sophomore and junior years. After last season, O’Neil was named the Gloucester Times Female Athlete of the Year for

not only her lacrosse performance but also soccer and basketball.

Junior Brigid Carovillano, O’Neil’s teammate on the high school team, said she

has been playing with O’Neil since middle school and looks up to her as she also underwent the commitment process.

“Mechi is a very confident player who controls the field. She leads by example. All over



COURTESY OF ALEX BRUNE/ LOYOLA UNIVERSITY MARYLAND

Senior Mechi O’Neil is committed to playing DI lacrosse at Loyola University Maryland. She is a member of the Argentina National lacrosse team and a captain of the ME girls’ lacrosse team.

the field, she is in charge, super aggressive, and taking control of every opportunity she has,” Carovillano said.

Nico Prandi, O’Neil’s coach for the Argentina National Team, also said she controls the field.

“She is ruthless. She is just a workforce. Everything that needs to be said, she is saying it with her actions,” he said.

As her mother is from Argentina, O’Neil was eligible to join the newly formed Argentina team

at the beginning of her sophomore year. She has since played with them for three tournaments, including a World Championship.

“When playing internationally, it is very eye-opening and interesting to see how different countries play with their different styles of play,” O’Neil said.

Prandi named O’Neil as one of the top two players at just 15, and he is excited for her to play at the next level.

“I’m also excited to see how she will bring everything she learns from Loyola to the Argentina team and then show everyone up,” he said.

Playing on all these teams strengthens O’Neil’s talent, especially on the high school team.

“It definitely elevates my experience, and because of these opportunities, I get to be a leader, which I really value because I care about our success and the girls on the team,” O’Neil said.

Senior athletes stay active in their winter off-seasons

By Ella Chafe
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Whether it’s training for their spring sport or hitting the gym, senior student-athletes who aren’t currently participating in a school sport are finding ways to be active this winter.

After finishing her fall field hockey season, senior Greta Gado said she keeps moving by going to the gym and taking her dog on walks throughout the week. She also said she wants to attend group workout classes such as yoga.

“I want to have variation in my routine so that I’m not doing the same thing every day. I think this will be more fun and

something to look forward to,” she said.

She said her goal is to be active every day, even if it’s just for 30 minutes.

Gado, who also plays tennis in the spring, said it’s important for student-athletes to take a season off and have time to themselves.

“Athlete burnout is so real, and I think continuously doing a sport can be detrimental to your mental health,” she said.

Senior Caelie Patrick, who is committed to playing field hockey at Providence College, said this is her first time in high school where she has taken a season off. She said she wants to focus on strength training and conditioning this winter.

Patrick said she joined Allied Strength, a physical fitness program in Gloucester, which she now attends twice a week. On her days off, she said she maintains endurance by running and going to the gym.

Patrick said this new free time is difficult to manage, but she is happy to focus on things she wants to do.

“I’m excited to work on setting a good routine for myself that I’m going to be able to maintain,” she said.

Senior Charlie Virden said he is preparing for tennis in the spring by going to the gym, running, and playing tennis at the MAC.

He said he tries to stay active six days a week.

Virden said it’s important for him to continue moving during the winter so the transition into tennis is easier.



ELLA CHAFE PHOTO

Senior Caelie Patrick practices sprinting in her free time to build her endurance and work on speed training. She is committed to playing field hockey at the DI level at Providence College in the fall.

Athletics department gains new member

Role filled to ease athletics, facilities, transportation duties

By Augie Capotosto
INDEPENDENT STAFF

New hire Aaron Millman has settled into his current role as the operations administrative assistant.

He started the position this year, and his work involves athletics, facilities, and transportation.

Millman’s role with facilities mainly focuses on organizing



WHITNEY TURNER PHOTO
Aaron Millman helps with athletics, facilities, and transportation management.

events that take place on school grounds, he said.

“If somebody is trying to schedule the auditorium, or another school space, that goes through me,” he said.

Millman is also in charge of

scheduling buses for athletic competitions, as well as daily bus routes to and from school.

“It was really helpful having someone to coordinate buses for our away games during soccer season,” junior Tori Moulton said.

Millman also helps facilitate student athletics in the middle and high school.

Athletic director Cameron Molinare described Millman as a “tremendous asset,” as he assists by collecting user fees, tracking physicals, coordinating transportation, and much more.

“His assistance allows me to spend more time focusing on the bigger picture ideas,” Molinare

said. Millman grew up on the South Shore in Easton, where he played soccer, track, and baseball.

He graduated from Oliver Ames High School in 2012 before attending Endicott College in Beverly,

with a major in Sport Management and a minor in Business Administration, he said. From 2012 to 2017, Millman worked for New England Revolution, the professional MLS soccer team, that plays at Gillette Stadium.

“If someone is trying to schedule the auditorium, or another school space, that goes through me.”

-AARON MILLMAN

In 2016, he also started working at the Sports Travel Management company Halpern Travel, an organization that specializes in event and tournament housing coordination.

Millman resigned in 2023 when he heard about the position at Manchester Essex.

As a Gloucester resident, he often met up with his friends in Manchester to use public sport facilities.

When he heard about the position opening up “[he] applied right away,” Millman said.

Through his work, he has become acquainted with students and staff.

“He’s a little reserved, but the more you get to know him, the more he comes out of his shell, and I think students are starting to realize that,” Molinare said.



COURTESY OF KRISTIN UMILE

Science teacher Kristin Umile and special education teachers Heidi Pallo and Erin Kenaga ran the annual Stone Cat Trail Race on Nov. 4. All three competed on the trails in the marathon event.

Teachers prepare for, run first edition of TARC Stone Cat Trail Festival marathon in Ipswich

Hope to continue running together in future

By Summer Demeo
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Teachers Kristin Umile, Heidi Pallo, and Erin Kenaga ran a marathon at the 22nd edition of the Stone Cat Trail Race, which was also the first edition of the TARC Stone Cat Trail Festival at Willowdale State Forest in Ipswich.

The previous race organizer stopped after 2022. This year the Trail Animals Running Club (TARC) stepped in to host it on Nov. 4, Umile said.

According to Mass Ultra, TARC continued the Stone Cat’s usual 50-mile race and marathon and added a 100k, a half-marathon, a 10k and a youth fun run.

Mass Ultra’s website said that the event had a capacity of 550 runners, with 100 in the marathon field.

Umile, the department chair of math and science, placed 24th overall and second in her age group. Special education teacher Pallo placed 33rd, and special education teacher Kenaga placed 50th.

Umile said this year was her fourth time running the Stone Cat Trail Race. She has also run two other trail marathons, one road marathon, a 50-miler, and a 50k, she said.

“[The Stone Cat] is a great race because it’s close by and you train primarily in the fall, so it’s not blazing hot, which is nice. Hopefully, we’ll do it

again,” Umile said

She said that the marathon was primarily single-track trails, which means that only one person at a time can go through.

Pallo said she has been running for about 10 years, but this was her first trail marathon and her second marathon ever.

After her first marathon on the road in May, she said Umile asked her to do the Stone Cat race together.

They began training in July, she said.

Umile said when they began training together, Pallo had never run on trails before. “It was a big learning curve, which was awesome to watch. It was really fun to train with her,” she said.

Pallo also said she enjoyed training with Umile.

“We had a blast training together every Saturday morning. We would go out ... we started at eight miles ... and then we finally got to an 18-mile, and it was awesome,” Pallo said.

While she and Umile trained together starting in the summer, Kenaga, who has run the Chicago and New York marathons, said she started training in

October.

Kenaga runs a lot on the road, so Pallo reached out to her in September asking if she wanted to join them in the marathon, Kenaga said.

She said she already had her mileage built up from her normal runs, which are typically 10-15 miles, but before the race, she had never done trail running before, so it was a new experience for her.

She said she still prefers road running but said the marathon was fun and she would “absolutely” enjoy running another race with Umile and Pallo.

Pallo said she is open to trying distances other than the marathon. After gaining experience running on both trails and the road, she said she prefers running on trails.

“It’s so peaceful in the woods; you don’t have the obstacles of cars ... it’s a pretty meditative experience,” Pallo said.

She said the environment of the race was positive even though there were fewer places for people to cheer for the runners because of the trails.

Pallo also said that she liked that it was a small race.

“It felt like everyone was just there cheering for each other, wanting everyone to do well. It was a very small community vibe, which I thought was cool,” she said.

‘[The Stone Cat] is a great race because it’s close by and you train primarily in the fall, so it’s not blazing hot, which is nice. Hopefully, we’ll do it again.’

-KRISTIN UMILE

‘We had a blast training together every Saturday morning. We would go out ... we started at eight miles ... and then we finally got to an 18-mile, and it was awesome.’

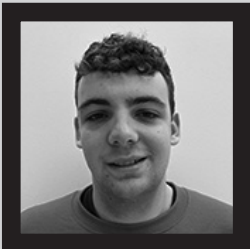
-HEIDI PALLO



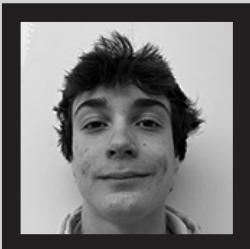
Freshman Helen Moody:
“‘Think Fast’ by Dominic Fike and Weezer.”



Freshman Liam Virden:
“‘Just the Two Of Us’ by Grover Washington Jr. and Bill Withers.”



Sophomore Chris Glass:
“‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ by Queen.”



Sophomore Adam Macleod:
“‘i n t e r l u d e’ by J.Cole.”



What was your top song of 2023?

Junior Clara Grant:
“‘Panic’ by SM6.”



Junior Oliver Rodi:
“‘HYAENA’ by Travis Scott.”



Senior Kate Bappe:
“‘Body Talks’ by the Struts.”



Senior Sam Reissfelder:
“‘Until I Found You’ by Stephen Sanchez.”



30th anniversary throwback

Alumni Speak

Jeremy Fisher, M.D., '99



COURTESY OF JEREMY FISHER

Position on paper:

Co-Editor-in-Chief

Memory: "The happy moments finishing layout together at the end of a long night"

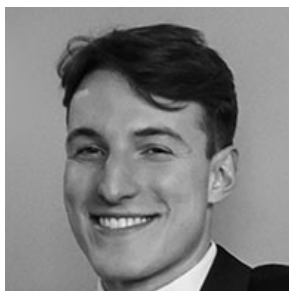
What do you do now?

"I am a Pediatric Surgeon"

How did your journalism skills translate to your work today?

"Working on The Independent taught me how to be a good editor and thus a better writer. I learned to work with a team and how to 'lead from the trenches.' It taught me how to research and put together a compelling story. These are skills that helped me immensely throughout my education. Even though my career has taken me far from journalism, I still use them every day. I am very grateful for that experience."

Connor Senay, 2016



COURTESY OF CONNOR SENAY

Position on paper:

Opinion editor

Memory:

"I remember vividly being in the computer lab— the art room, and just the general sense of camaraderie that was in there, bouncing back and forth between what people were working on, sharing funny stories about classmates' inputs about certain issues, and basically creating a big gossip chain. That sounds negative, but the spread of information — it was fun to hear what everyone said and how people interpreted things. Specific memory was the Valentine's Day issue with all the boys."

What do you do now?

"I work at Art Angels Gallery in Los Angeles, selling art and writing exhibition text for each new showcase from our talented roster of artists."

How did your journalism skills translate to your work today?

"Mainly through exhibition text, I am able to write clearly and concisely while also delivering information with great detail, and when writing emails to clients, I am able to maintain a sense of professionalism and formality while also prompting them to reply."

Wednesday, December 12, 2001



SANTA'S ELVES PHOTO

Journalists Ali Bane and Laura Willwerth get the scoop on Santa

By Alison Bane and Laura Willwerth

"You better not pout. You better not cry. You better not shout, I'm telling you why. Santa Claus is..." at your local mall.

Taking a vacation from the North Pole, Santa is now located outside Lord & Taylor in the North Shore Mall. He said he sees about 500 children a day, so it is clear that people are keeping the faith.

Santa's temporary holiday headquarters is festively decorated with snow-laden trees and jolly robotic elves.

The recent terrorist attacks have seemingly had no effect on the

children's Christmas wishes. This holiday season, the visions dancing through their heads are not of world peace, or even of sugarpums. According to Santa, item number one on most Christmas lists this year is Nutcracker Barbie.

Most of us have heard the frightened wails of petrified children forced to sit on Santa's lap. Santa lovingly calls these children "criers." However, rare are those kiddies who can manage to stump old St. Nick.

Santa told of one of his most perplexing visits with a particularly astute little girl. She requested a Life-size Barbie for

Santa Claus hears requests from children at the North Shore Mall

Despite current events, Nutcracker Barbie wins out over world peace

Christmas. She then asked, "Do they make those at the North Pole?"

Santa answered with a hearty "Ho ho," and then assured the little girl that his elves would work long and hard on that Barbie for her.

The girl then questioned him and said, "But Santa, I thought they were made by Mattel."

Sometimes, even Santa Claus is left speechless.

The North Shore Mall Santa also faces the obstacle of not being able to promise any child that he or she will receive any specific toy. Even he does not control destiny, and sometimes a child's

wish is just not meant to come true, due to evil forces such as a payroll cutback by their parent's sinister employer.

But Santa is able to promise that he will do everything in his power to make every Christmas wish become a reality, and Santa's word is usually enough to satisfy any child.

The holiday picture center outside Lord & Taylor is currently offering a wide variety of products to commemorate a child's visit on Santa's lap. Some of the options include stockings and stuffed snowmen and reindeer with framed pictures sewn on them and snow globes with a view of the picture inside.

Alumna Ali Bane Hammond reacts to 2001 Santa article

Reflects on holiday spirit after 9/11 attacks

By Ali Bane Hammond
INDEPENDENT ALUMNA

Wow! My first reaction is that it must have been a slow news month at MERHS for this [Santa article] to get above the fold real estate! But nonetheless, this was very fun to read and reflect upon.

I thought the article was more witty than I would have expected, which I will credit to Laura [Willwerth]'s incredible way with words.

And of course, the reference to Barbie feels quite relevant in this blockbuster year! I just bought my 18 month old daughter a mini Hot Wheels Barbie Corvette for Christmas. Let the obsession begin!

Amidst the article's playfulness and puns, there is some important context to consider: "Despite current events..." This article was written in December of 2001 - a few months after the September 11 attacks and the start of the "war on terror."

As a now parent of two little ones, I have to imagine that taking your children to see Santa at the mall during the 2001 holiday season felt like a welcome



(Above) Alumna Ali Bane Hammond poses with her family for a photo with Santa at Boston College this year.



(Left) Hammond, co-author of the 2001 Santa article, was a 2003 graduate of MERHS.



Hammond and her son, Harry, 4, pose for a photo with Santa at the Jingle Bell Walk in Manchester

COURTESY OF ALI BANE HAMMOND

respite from the constant news cycle of violence and suffering that seemed to envelope daily life during those days.

It seems to me that you could print the same headline today, and it would feel eerily relevant.

Our world is still hurting. And it can feel hard and confusing to disentangle our joy from the world's suffering, our celebration from the world's sorrow - especially at Christmas. But the holidays come around no

matter what is going on in our lives, communities, or the world at large. And, at their best (and ours), they can help to remind us how we can give back, give thanks, be kinder, and hold onto those we love a little more tightly, all year long.

Top Picks of 2023



Best Restaurant
Restaurant of the Year was a difficult choice, but Beverly’s Flip the Bird ultimately won out because there simply aren’t many situations where I would object to eating there. Combining excellent fried chicken with fast service and high-quality sides is a simple formula, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing. Recently, I’ve been gravitating towards their “Mind Ya Biscuits” add-on that replaces the sandwich’s bun with a pair of freshly cooked, melt-in-your-mouth biscuits. Combine this with a drizzle of their honey butter and the result is highly addictive.

Overall, Flip the Bird may not be a new restaurant for 2023, but new locations and reliable quality food pushed it over the top to become my Restaurant of the Year.

Best Movie
The movie of the year was easily “Oppenheimer.” It’s difficult to say things about this film that haven’t already been said, but the main point is that it undeniably merits its marathon runtime. Cillian Murphy delivers an outstanding performance as Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Robert Downey, Jr. reminds audiences of the incredible acting skills that weren’t on display during the “Iron Man” years.

“Oppenheimer” delivers a compelling, thought-provoking story that places one of the most important moments in history in a new light. It has thoroughly earned its place in the Oscar conversation for 2024.

Best TV Series
While not a new series overall, the most recent season of Netflix’s “Drive to Survive,” which recaps the 2022 Formula One season, was absolutely the best thing I watched this year. An in-depth, behind-the-scenes look at the pinnacle of motorsport, there’s no shortage of excitement and drama in the 10-episode docuseries. Watching Dutch driver Max Verstappen’s ascension to his second consecutive World Driver’s Championship and following the collapse of the Ferrari team’s race strategy in painstaking detail was, while painful to me as a Ferrari fan, still fantastic entertainment.

While the most recent season of the show was my personal favorite, all five are worth a watch, giving context to the events of the 2022 season by starting midway through the 2018 season with its tumultuous driver and team changes.

Best Album
My album of the year pick is “UTOPIA” by Travis Scott. Scott returns to the darker, brooding sound that characterized his first two albums while continuing to flex his creative muscles. The result is a hazy, sinister-sounding record that only gets better with each listen. Arguably Scott’s best work to date, it contains a world-class list of featured artists, and the fact that they were uncredited only added to the suspense for when listeners would hear the intense shouting of Playboi Carti (FE!N) or the break-out performance of multi-talented vocalist Teezo Touchdown (MODERN JAM).

“UTOPIA” definitely merited the long wait and seemingly endless rollout for its release and is more than worth a listen (or relisten).

Best Restaurant
Though Laughing Gull has resided in Manchester since 2014, its availability and increased deliciousness have made it the Best Restaurant of 2023. With a wide array of sandwiches, smoothies, pastries, coffees, and more, it is a perfect place for everyone. The restaurant spreads happiness to everyone that pays a visit, proving how impactful their Emily’s tOATlly Nuts Smoothie or freshly baked scones can be.

With a staff of many familiar faces, a to-die-for Chicken Pesto, and a convenient location in town, Laughing Gull is continuing to act as the go-to place for many, making it my top pick of 2023.

Best Movie
During the “Barbenheimer” Era, a third movie appeared in theaters. With less advertising, “Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One” lived in a shadow. Nevertheless, its classic plot and excellent casting place the movie atop my 2023 charts. Like watching a familiar rom-com, “MI7” is a comfortable yet still thrilling watch. Tom Cruise, yet again, acts as the dreamy hero who creates many shocking feelings as well as sad sentiments. With a perfect blend of success, escape, romance, and fighting,

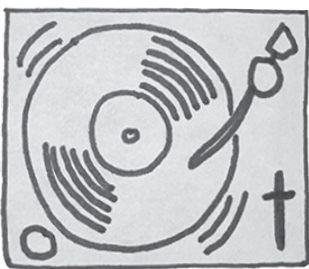
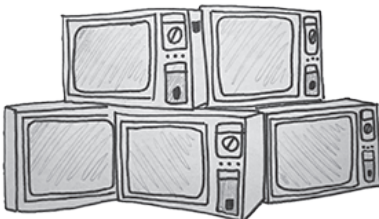
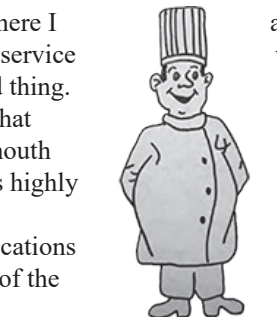
“MI7” is a great watch for 2023. Further, as filming was delayed due to the writer’s strike, viewers can hold on to the “MI7” magic and wait for its second part to come out in 2025.

Best TV Series
Unlike anything previously on TV, “Jury Duty,” which appeared on Freevee in early April, has never left my mind since. With a comedic filming style like “The Office,” a stellar cast of improv professionals, and a lovable and unaware subject, Ronald Gladden, “Jury Duty” beats all 2023 TV shows by far. Created by the geniuses Lee Eisenberg and Gene Stupnitsky, this eight-episode masterpiece is a must-watch. While watching, the laughter will cause you to cry, and your mind will explode. Ronald Gladden, the betrayed, is a kind soul who is easy to watch alongside actors James Madson, Mekki Leeper, and more.

This unprecedented and unrepeatable innovation not only tops my 2023 charts but will also be joyfully remembered for many years to come.

Best Album
Representing New England, Noah Kahan’s “Stick Season (We’ll All Be Here Forever)” sits high in the best album of 2023. Released partly in 2022 yet also throughout this year, Kahan gives the people what they want to hear, including “Dial Drunk,” “Everywhere, Everything,” and a to-be graduation classic, “You’re Gonna Go Far.” Listening to his alternative music lifts the spirits and allows one to let loose of their emotions. His concert in September attracted many students, and even more are signed up and not shutting up (with great reason) about his Fenway show in the spring.

As a fellow New England native, I enjoy listening to his songs and without a doubt believe that Kahan will continue his rise to stardom.



PHILEINE DE WIDT ILLUSTRATIONS

Financial literacy should be mandatory graduation standard for Massachusetts schools

By Sam Heanue
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Financial literacy should be a mandatory standard for all students to prepare them for life after high school.

Although some schools currently offer personal finance electives, many states and school districts lack any form of financial education.

Many students who aren’t able to take such courses continue to lack financial awareness following high school.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2015, 69% of high schoolers pursued higher education. Of those students, less than 24% had access to courses or electives on financial literacy.

This data represents a major issue, as the majority of students receive no form of financial education from their parents.

The same study by the NCES showed that less than 23% of teenagers speak to their parents about money.

This education gap must end, as it leads to students lacking the skills necessary to handle their finances.

High school students must understand the details of banking and taxes, as many are preparing to make one of the most important financial decisions of their lives: paying for college.

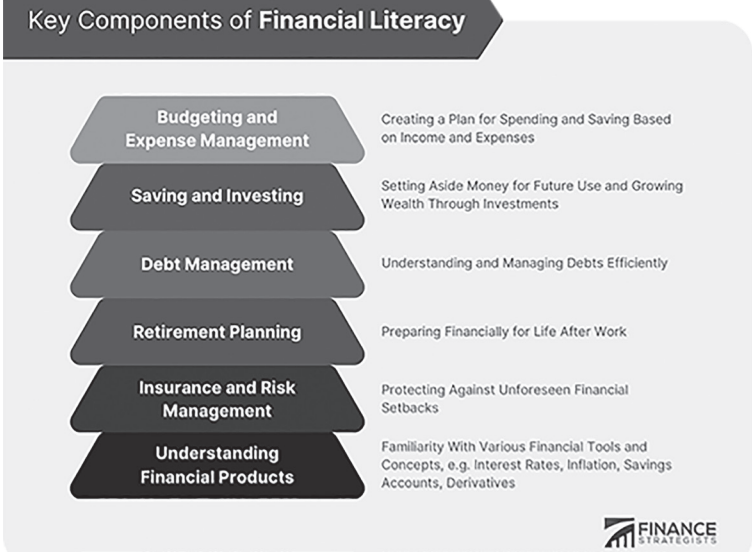
To pay for their post-secondary education, many students choose to take out loans. Few, however, understand the details of this process.

According to a second study by the NCES, the average student debt in each state ranged from \$20,000 to \$35,000. The average number of students graduating with debt ranged from 42% to 77%, with a mean of 70%.

This data means that the majority of students are graduating in debt but lacking any education in the financial skills needed to address it.

Over time, the accumulation of national student debt has reached its peak of \$1.77 trillion, according to a 2023 study published in Forbes Magazine.

To begin dealing with this exceedingly high debt, the state of Massachusetts should institute legislation that incorporates financial literacy as a mandatory



CREATIVESCOMMONS.ORG

Financial literacy is an important subject for students to know.

standard in high school education.

Of the seven states that currently require some form of financial literacy course, all fall in the lower half of average student loan debts and the number of students graduating in debt.

If Massachusetts institutes similar legislation, it will join these states in reducing the national student debt.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Superficial participation in activities hurts students, school

With the pressure of college admissions, high school students can feel the need to spread themselves thin through participation in an abundance of extracurricular activities.

In the long run, participation in activities to only list them on applications leads to a gradual degradation of the value of these activities to a community because it takes away from the many benefits of student involvement.

Clubs and extracurriculars can give students the opportunity to expand their interests beyond the classroom and discover what they are passionate about. However, without genuine interest as a motivating factor, these benefits can not be reaped by members of a club or activity.

History teacher Jessica Tran said that when an activity becomes just another box to check, students may not put forth the effort to grow a club or an organization and really understand how

much work it can take.

“It definitely has the potential for creating longer-term challenges, both in college and in career, where you really do have to put the work in to achieve your goals and move forwards,” she said.

The result is several student activities that don’t carry out substantial progress towards their intended purpose.

Senior Joanna Shan said she thinks kids are generally pushed to be involved in activities that they’re not interested in.

“I know kids that don’t want to play sports, but feel that they need to in order to show that they’re well-rounded, or force themselves to take classes that they don’t want to take ... People definitely do join clubs at our school just for college stuff, but it’s not just a problem at our school,” she said.

With the only goal being to obtain an officer position or leadership role, students running

A World of Difference (ADL)	GSA
Astronomy Club	HOSA - Future Health Professionals
Beach Clean Up Club	Jazz Band
Book Club (Ms. Rice)	Math Team
Chess Club	MERSD SCAR
Class Officers (Sr, Jr, So, Fr)	Mr. Bilsbury’s Spanish Club
Comfort Cases	NAHS
Concert Band	NHS
Concert Choir	Peer Mentors
Current Events Club	Poetry Club
Debate	Robotics

STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

Clubs give students the ability to participate in activities that interest them. This participation in extracurriculars can sometimes only be surface level to make students appear better to colleges.

clubs won’t be overseeing legitimate or substantial organizations.

This leads to the gradual degradation of student activities because clubs that meet less frequently and advertise little work or involvement will be the ones that many students participate in, while clubs that have more substantial commitments involved will die out.

Those clubs are often the ones that are the most important to the community of a school and contribute the most to the growth of a student.

After high school, students

won’t be able to fake or exaggerate their contributions to activities, meaning that surface-level participation in high school does not create the best skills with which to move forward in life.

Guidance counselor Beverly Low said she becomes disappointed when she sees students listing activities on their applications that they haven’t participated substantially in.

“Every college admission officer will tell you that they’re looking for students who participate in activities that are meaningful to them. And they have an

ability to read through the lines on that,” she said.

Low said she emphasizes putting quality above quantity.

“I’m a huge fan personally and professionally of authenticity. In fact, Merriam-Webster, I believe, identified “authentic” as their word of the year for 2023. None of this “fake it to make it” stuff. I’m all for substance and authenticity,” she said.

In the long run, a culture of authenticity is going to have a more positive impact rather than one with activities that are more performance-based.

Teens can help relieve elder loneliness

By Avabella Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Teenagers should strive to remember and interact with the elderly to reduce loneliness in this often overlooked population.

According to a 2021 Center for Disease Control article entitled “Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions,” one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are considered socially isolated due to factors such as the loss of family, living alone, illness, and hearing loss.

Loneliness can increase the risk of dementia, heart disease, stroke, depression, and anxiety.

Isolation also increases premature death, comparable to the risks of smoking and obesity.

PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING:



AVABELLA MITRANO PHOTO

Through Golden Bonds students can donate small and simple gifts to seniors to raise their spirits and connect both generations.

Despite these alarming statistics, the older generations are often not given as much attention as they deserve.

A 2010 The Atlantic Journal-Constitution article titled “Forgotten Seniors Need More Time, Care,” states that many senior citizens spend significant social occasions by themselves, such as holidays and birthdays.

Even though they are a rapidly growing demographic, 60% of senior citizens receive no visitors in nursing homes and are often at risk for being abandoned by their families.

Senior citizens have an immense amount of wisdom they can offer to younger generations. When people begin to forget about them, this invaluable knowledge can be lost.

I began noticing how much knowledge was being lost when I visited my late grandmother for the first time at BrightView Senior Living, Wakefield.

Many times I did not take the opportunity to visit my late grandmother. She was often forgotten due to my relatives being occupied with work.

When I did visit, I noticed

how many senior citizens walked alone asking if anyone was there. They immediately asked if they could talk with us and began sharing stories simply by seeing someone new.

To hear more of these stories, I have volunteered at The Griddler House in Beverly, BrightView Wakefield, and BrightView Danvers.

The senior citizens I converse with have little to no family left. They often spend the holidays, such as Thanksgiving, alone in the nursing facility.

They are always grateful when a person gives them company, and they offer inspiring and impactful life experiences that deserve to be heard.

Each time I leave one of the nursing homes, I feel an irreplaceable happiness for making a senior feel less alone, even if it was for a small and temporary moment.

Making a singular senior citizen feel unforgettable is the first step to reducing loneliness as a

whole. If more teenagers began volunteering, then more steps can be taken.

Although teenagers are often busy with academics and extracurriculars, dedicating even 30 minutes out of their week to talk to a senior can make a big difference for both parties.

According to an 2019 AmericanCorps article entitled “Volunteering Helps Keep Seniors Healthy, New Study Suggests,” 84% of older adults reported having improved health from interacting with volunteers.

When volunteering, teenagers should consider reading to the elderly, playing games with them, assisting them, or simply conversing with them.

They can also create personalized cards for senior citizens in nursing homes to remind them that they are not alone, especially around the holiday season.

People can start by simply remembering a senior from their own personal life and making an effort to connect with them.

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INDEPENDENT

The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class.

We welcome letters to the editor from MERHS students, faculty, and community members. All submissions must be signed. The Independent reserves the right not to print letters and to edit the content for clarity and length. While letters can be critical of an individual’s actions, they cannot slander or libel. The staff editorial may be considered the opinion of the staff of The Independent. By-line opinions are written by individual staff members and should not be considered representative of the entire staff.

The Independent staff hopes that all Manchester and Essex citizens will take advantage of this forum. The paper is meant to serve the school community, and we are open to suggestions to help it better serve its purposes.

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GYMNASTICS

Coach: Chris Way
Captains: Senior Lucy O’Flynn, Hamilton-Wenham seniors Georgia Greaves, Olivia Novak
Record last year: 6-2
Current Record: 0-0
Goals: Qualify for Sectionals, give everyone an opportunity to compete
Rivals: Beverly, Danvers, Masconomet
Impact players: Senior Lucy O’Flynn, Hamilton-Wenham seniors Georgia Greaves, Olivia Novak
Coach’s quote: “We’re making sure everybody has an opportunity to compete and learn about the sport.” -Chris Way
Captain’s quote: “We definitely have the skills to make it [to Sectionals], and everyone has improved a lot.” -Lucy O’Flynn



Lucy O’Flynn

BOYS’ BASKETBALL

Coach: Tim St. Laurent
Captains: Seniors Cade Furse, Eddie Chareas
Record last year: 18-4
Current Record: 2-0
Goals: Go far in the state tournament, win the CAL title
Rivals: Georgetown and Cathedral
Impact players: Seniors Cade Furse, Eddie Chareas, Preston Potter; juniors Milo Zeltzer, Ben Jacobson; sophomores Jake Zschau, Zach Hurd, Johnny Chareas
Coach’s quote: “Our goal is to win another Cape Ann League title. We’ve won four out of the past five CALs, and we’d like to keep that going.” -Tim St. Laurent
Captain’s quote: “My individual goal is to give all I can to the team and to set a good example for the younger players of the program.” -Eddie Chareas



Cade Furse



Eddie Chareas

Congratulations to Cade Furse
on 1,000 career points!

GIRLS’ BASKETBALL

Coaches: Lauren Dubois
Captains: Seniors Mackay Brooks, Mechi O’Neil, Phileine de Widt
Record last year: 16-6
Current record: 2-0
Rivals: Georgetown, Ipswich
Goals: Improving fitness, playing aggressively, pressuring the ball
Impact players: Seniors Mackay Brooks, Mechi O’Neil, Phileine de Widt; sophomores Lily Oliver, Kacey O’Connell, Harper Brooks
Coach’s quote: “We are really focusing on our defense creating our offense. We are trying to pressure the ball to get it up the court in transition.” -Lauren Dubois
Captain’s quote: “Our goal is definitely to make a deep run in the playoffs. Last year we made it pretty far, and we only lost two seniors last year, so I think we can do even better this year.” -Mechi O’Neil



Mechi O’Neil



Phileine de Widt



Mackay Brooks

INDOOR TRACK

Coaches: Nicole Bembridge, Nick Valle
Girls’ captains: Juniors Megan Hurd, Sabine Cooper, Summer Demeo
Boys’ captains: Seniors Nate Gardner, Charles Lations, Finn O’Hara; junior Sam Heanue
Record last year: 2-2
Current Record: 0-1
Goals: Accomplish individual goals for athletes, focus on commitment to effort
Rivals: Ipswich, Hamilton-Wenham
Impact Players: Junior Henry Stevens, sophomore Abby Kent
Coach’s quote: “I know a lot of athletes are really happy to be back, and we’ve got a lot of big stuff planned for this season.” -Nick Valle
Captain’s quote: “The practices have been great so far, there are a lot of new faces, [and] we’re definitely gearing up for the rest of the season.” -Nate Gardner



Sabine Cooper



Summer Demeo



Megan Hurd



Charles Lations



Finn O’Hara



Nate Gardner



Sam Heanue

BOYS’ HOCKEY

Coach: Garrett Stevens
Captain: Senior Quinn Brady
Record last year: 7-12-1
Current record: 0-1
Rival: Beverly
Goals: To advance in the state tournament, draw student spectators
Impact players: Senior Quinn Brady, junior Luke Holmes, sophomore Aaron Crompton
Coach’s quote: “It’s hard to call one school the heart of a team, but Manchester-Essex is definitely a contender; they bring a lot of spirit.” - Garrett Stevens
Captain’s quote: “Together with [Hamilton-Wenham] we’ve had three scrimmages. We went 2-1 in preseason ... and we’re feeling great.” - Quinn Brady



Quinn Brady

GIRLS’ HOCKEY

Coach: Hadley Woodfin
MERHS players: Sophomores Charlotte Earl, Teyah Fleming; freshman Scarlet Lee
Record last year: 4-1-15
Current record: 1-3
Rivals: Masconomet, Winthrop, Beverly
Goals: To bond on and off the ice, make it to the postseason
Impact players: Freshman Scarlet Lee
Coach’s quote:“We have a great group of players. [They are] all supportive, wanting to learn, improve, and are extremely coachable.” - Hadley Woodfin
Player quote: “Getting to know the other girls on and off the ice has been really important to our team.” - Charlotte Earl



Scarlet Lee



Charlotte Earl



Teyah Fleming

SKI TEAM

Coaches: Molly Friedman, Avery Hayes, Jerry Murphy
Captains: Seniors Grayson Crocker, Sienna Crocker
Record last year: 2-8
Current record: N/A
Goals: To connect as a team, improve individual times
Impact players: Seniors Grayson Crocker, Sienna Crocker; freshman Kiernan Day
Coach’s quote: “Everyone plays such an important role when we’re a team this small. That’s the fun thing: everyone’s mood plays into it and everyone’s score.” - Molly Friedman
Captain’s quote: “The goal is just to have fun and get some good scores, but overall, everyone is focused on enjoying skiing rather than the exact times that we get.” - Sienna Crocker



Grayson Crocker



Sienna Crocker

SWIMMING

Coach: Teresa Holland
Captains: Seniors Erik Bischoff, Diego Sanson; juniors Colin Conway, Libby McKinnon; sophomores Megan Graeter, Sydney Hemme
Record last year: 5-2 (girls’), 4-3 (boys’)
Current Record: 0-2 (girls’), 1-1 (boys’)
Goals: To be competitive at dual meets, bond as a team, send swimmers to Districts
Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham, Ipswich
Impact Players: Seniors Erik Bischoff, Diego Sanson; junior Colin Conway; sophomores Megan Graeter, Sydney Hemme
Coach’s quote: “We’ve got a really great group of kids. They are a good team, and they support each other. I’m especially proud of how the older kids support the younger kids.” - Teresa Holland
Captain’s quote: “Overall, [our goal is] getting everyone to put in their all at every practice, putting in their all at every meet, and cheering hard. I think that’s what it’s all about.” - Diego Sanson



Diego Sanson



Erik Bischoff



Colin Conway



Libby McKinnon



Megan Graeter



Sydney Hemme

‘Freaky Friday’ cast overcomes many challenges

New cast members help program grow despite difficulties

By Hannah Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Despite low participation, the Manchester Essex Drama Club successfully performed “Freaky Friday” on Nov. 17, 18, and 19, said director Tyler Garofalo, a dance teacher at Manchester Elementary.

Music director and chorus teacher Ben Icenogle said he is proud of the cast’s dedication and commitment to the show.

“So much time goes into putting on a musical, and we wouldn’t be able to do it if the kids were not willing to put in so much work,” he said.

Garofalo said the cast was very supportive and dedicated to the production during rehearsals.

“They are fun to be around; they are hard workers, [and] they all practiced at home, so when we came to rehearsal we were able to use our time working together,” she said.

Junior Josh Cohen said one of the main goals of the musical this year was to build up participation in the program.

“We got a good amount of freshmen to participate. Most of them seemed to enjoy it. Most of them said they’re interested in coming back,” he said.

‘[The cast is] fun to be around; they are hard workers.’

-TYLER GAROFALO

Icenogle said the cast was young, which will help the club expand in the future.

“We have room for growth in that we

will have kids that will develop through the program,” he said.

Cohen said a big challenge this year was low participation.

“We didn’t really have enough people to do the musical properly, so we had to get a bit creative in some scenes,” he said.



COURTESY OF JULIA DOBSON

The Manchester Essex Drama Club performed their production of “Freaky Friday.” The small cast was forced to make multiple, minor changes to the musical due to low participation in the program.

For example, many of the cast members had to play multiple roles, and a few lines had to be changed because of it, Cohen said.

Senior Caroline Quinn said a strength of the cast was their

humor and stage presence.

“These people are really funny, and their comedic timing on stage was great,” she said.

Looking back, Quinn said she is lucky to have been able to get to know and spend time with new

people throughout her four years participating in musicals at Manchester Essex.

“I just like that I’ve been able to work with so many talented people..people who I know are going do great things,” she said.

Jamie’s Roast Beef opens downtown; friendly staff creates lively atmosphere

New restaurant popular among high school students

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Nestled in the heart of downtown Manchester, Jamie’s Roast Beef has quickly become the go-to spot for locals and students alike.

Jamie’s, located at 25 Union St., opened on Oct. 12 and quickly gained popularity for its exceptional sandwiches and lively environment.

“Beef Head Extraordinaire” Matt Marquis opened the first Jamie’s in Peabody in 2020 and has brought his expertise to

Manchester.

Jamie’s extensive menu offers a delightful array of options, including mouth-watering roast beef sandwiches, flavorful sides, salads, and subs. Along with its diverse menu, Jamie’s has a flexible schedule, as it is open every day from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Customers can dine in or take-out. The restaurant also delivers, unlike its counterpart in Peabody.

Although many of the items are well-liked by customers, the famous “3 Way,” a roast beef sandwich with American cheese, mayo, and Jr. BBQ sauce stands out as the most popular.

However, if customers are looking for something less messy, the “Grilled Clucker” or “Sorry Clucker” are both fantastic chicken sandwich options.

The classic “3 Way” is \$10.50, while the other sandwiches are in the \$10-15 range.

Junior Maggie Light, who started working at Jamie’s this fall, said she enjoys getting to talk with customers every day and experiencing the friendly environment that fills the restaurant.

“Everyone who I’ve worked with has been great and super welcoming to everyone new coming in,” she said.

Jamie’s offers both cozy booth seating and trendy high-top tables, providing a versatile setting for every dining preference.

Vibrant and whimsical dancing bears artwork adorns the walls. Inspired by The Grateful Dead’s iconic “Dancing Bears,” the colorful display adds a touch of musical nostalgia.



MECHI O’NEIL PHOTO

Sophomore Lily Oliver enjoys a chicken sandwich at the newly opened Jamie’s Roast Beef in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Senior Liv Cahill said she loves going with her friends.

“After field hockey games, my friends and I would go since it’s so easy and the food is so good,” she said.

With its inviting ambiance, diverse menu, and commitment to customer satisfaction, Jamie’s Roast Beef stands as a cherished culinary haven for Manchester’s food enthusiasts.

Band, chorus perform at winter concert

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Choral director Ben Icenogle and band director Joe Janack were both happy with how the students performed at the annual winter concert, they said

“It went really well. I was pleased with how we sounded ... I was very proud, and I hope the students are just as proud of what they did,” Janack said.

Students in the jazz band, directed by Janack, performed “My Type” by Saint Motel, “Solstice” by freshman Tyler Cummins, and “St. Thomas” by



ISABELLE DONNELLAN VALADE PHOTO

The Soundwaves performed four songs, all arranged by choral director Ben Icenogle, at the annual winter concert on Dec. 12.

Sonny Rollins.

The concert band performed “Fantasy on a Good King,” arranged by Kyle McKinzey, “Pacem Noel,” arranged by Larry

Clark, “Hanukkah Dance,” arranged by Matt Conoway, and “The Winter Storm” by Aaron D. McMichael.

Janack said that although there

was stress, the performers did well.

“I think there was just a lot of good energy in the room,” he said.

Janack said the audience reflected this energy as well.

“I was very happy with the turnout in the audience ... I think we had the highest attendance from administrators and faculty and staff that I’ve seen in a while, so that was great to see,” Janack said.

Icenogle said the performers were confident, despite their nerves.

“I think sometimes students’ stress will seep into the music, but I feel like we have a lot of really confident musicians. I feel like there was a mixture of nerves and excitement,” he said.

The chorus sang four songs: “Misty Mountains Cold” by David Long, “Take On Me” by A-Ha, “Biodh An Deoch Seo ‘n Laimh

Mo Ruin” by Julie Fowlis, and “Home” by Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeros.

The choral arrangements were created by Icenogle, who has been arranging since college, he said.

Icenogle said he was proud of their soloists.

“I’m always really grateful for anyone who is willing to get up on their own or in a duet and put their voice out there. It’s always a really vulnerable thing, and they all did great at it,” he said.

The Soundwaves performed as well, and sang “Eleanor Rigby” by The Beatles, “Mona Lisa” by mxmtoon, and “Almost There” by Randy Newman, from “The Princess and The Frog,” also arranged by Icenogle.

Senior Caroline Quinn said she felt happy after the concert.

Alumna stars in films, hopes to grow presence in industry

Drama program inspired her acting career

By Gwendolyn Berger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Alumna Katerina Eichenberger has pursued her acting career since graduating in 2012, filming works such as “Secrets Beneath the Floorboards,” which is streaming on the Lifetime network.

Eichenberger attended New York University, majoring in drama, where she graduated in 2016.

Special education teaching assistant Liz Eichenberger, Katerina’s mother, said Katerina was always very motivated when it came to acting.

“Katerina was the type of kid that you didn’t have to tell what to do. She never complained about practices or having to work late on her schoolwork,” she said.

Liz said she enjoyed watching “Secrets Beneath the Floorboards” and thought Katerina did a good job.

“It’s weird because it’s like you know that it’s her, but after a while, you forget. I’m like, ‘Oh, this is a character now; it’s not my daughter,’” she said.

English teacher Allison Krause, who taught Katerina in English 10 Honors, said she was very involved in class.

“She was a great student. She was very engaged and brought a lot of energy to class,” she said.

Krause said Katerina was very involved in the drama program and was a passionate actor. Katerina exemplified the importance of a strong theater department, she said.

“I think [the theater department] allows students to discover if they have that spark or that passion,” Krause said.

Katerina said she considers herself very fortunate to be involved in the drama program when it was strong. She said

she knew by her junior year that she wanted to pursue a career in acting.



COURTESY OF ARI ISENBERG

Katerina Eichenberger stars in the 2023 horror film “I will Never Leave You Alone” about a man released from prison who must stay in a haunted house to clear it of spirits, facing the witch-ghost.

the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree.

Katerina said she loves to try and represent her character and her relationships to the audience as best she can.

“Secrets Under the Floorboards,” took about three weeks of filming, working five days a week with about 10 to 12 hours of shooting each day, she said.

The movie was filmed in December of 2021 in Oklahoma. Katerina said it was a great experience where she worked with many incredible people.

‘New Blue Sun’ creates unique musical sound

By Charles Lations
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After a 17-year hiatus, rapper and multi-instrumentalist André 3000 has released his first solo album – albeit in a markedly different style from his earlier work.

“New Blue Sun” is the first solo album released by the more eclectic half of the iconic Southern rap duo Outkast, and the same defiance of mainstream trends is taken to the extreme here.

Running for almost an hour and a half while containing just eight songs, the LP consists entirely of dreamy, warped flute playing and sound effects that border on ambient noise.



EPIC RECORDS

“New Blue Sun” was released Nov. 17 2023 by the rapper, singer and multi-instrumentalist André 3000 after his 17-year hiatus.

The album does not contain any rapping, singing, or even speaking; instead, André uses

song titles such as “I Swear, I Really Wanted to Make a ‘Rap’ Album but This Is Literally the Way

the Wind Blew Me This Time” to tell the stories.

André’s presence on the record was that of “a happy contributor to [the album’s] world, one among many,” according to a review of the record by Sadie Sartini Garner for Pitchfork.

Specific details and melodic lines are almost irrelevant to the overall environment of the

album and the world that André brings the listener into, somehow managing to create an expansive soundscape.

In an interview with Rodney Carmichael for NPR titled “André 3000 opens up about ‘New Blue Sun,’ his daring new solo album,” André spoke about the creative process that went into making the album and how it came to be.

“My training was living. My direction was living. And what I mean by that is ... I’ve been kind of preparing [listeners] to always be expecting the unexpected from me,” he said.

The level of dedication and passion that went into “New Blue Sun” is clear from the first listen, with each song sounding like a very carefully crafted

journey through a different world of André’s musical creation.

Because of the LP’s deft and clever combination of bold sonic experimentation and that obvious passion with his remarkable polish and quality, “New Blue Sun” earns an impressive score of 8/10.

The album does not contain any rapping, singing, or even speaking.

‘Holidate’ epitomizes timeless romantic comedy, features relatable aspects such as family dynamics

By Ella Chafe
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Classic,” “feel-good,” and “intriguing” are just a few words to describe the movie “Holidate” written by Tiffany Paulsen and directed by John Whitesell.

Whitesell has also directed many other movies, such as the 2006 “Deck the Halls” film.

“Holidate,” the perfect representation of a romantic comedy, gives viewers the comfort of having a predictable ending.

The movie, set in the present, features Sloane Benson (Emma Roberts), a young woman who hates the holidays due to her fam-

ily’s criticism of her seemingly boring love life.

Viewers may find this aspect relatable, as the holiday season can be a stressful time filled with many questions and comments from relatives.

“Holidate” also stars Luke Bracy as Jackson, who is in a similar situation to Sloane and has been spending his holidays with women he has no interest in.

The two characters cross paths and vow to help each other navigate every holiday throughout the year as just friends.

However, this takes a turn when they start spending more time together and growing closer.

Roberts and Bracy’s interactions, full of comical banter, and undeniable chemistry, are interesting to watch.

“Holidate” is a feel-good movie and you find yourself rooting for the couple the entire time.

While some may find themselves rolling their eyes at the rather predictable ending, it certainly wouldn’t be a traditional holiday-themed romantic comedy if the two stars didn’t fall in love.

The film, released on Netflix on Oct. 28, 2020, earned itself a ReFrame Stamp award, which is given to media that shows progress toward important matters like gender equality and proper



NETFLIX.COM

“Holidate” is about two strangers who agree to be each other’s dates for a year, but then catch feelings throughout their journey.

representation of women in key roles.

However, viewer discretion is

certainly advised, as “Holidate” is rated TV-MA for sexuality, drinking, and language