

the INDEPENDENT

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New protocols enacted to combat spread of COVID

Changes reduce crowding due to increased cases

By Carson Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After the sudden rise in COVID cases due to the Omicron variant, new precautions have been put in place in order to try to keep students in school safely, Principal Patricia Puglisi said.

To decrease crowding in big groups where masks may not always be worn correctly, the library seating has been spaced out, gym seating for lunch has been limited to four people per table, and some of the extracurriculars such as ping pong have been removed during lunches, she said.

Due to similar crowding during U block, Puglisi said they have locked U block slightly more than usual.

"[This is] because what we were seeing was large groups congregating in the cafeteria, and

having kids stay in their classroom just makes things a little bit more manageable," she said.

Puglisi also said that the administration has made sure to focus on being more vigilant with masks.

"So far I think kids are doing a really good job. I think people understand the importance of it right now with how contagious COVID is and [also because of] the number of kids getting COVID, which was not something happening as much last year, but right now it is something that is hitting our high school kids," she said.

One new protocol for the first two weeks after returning from break was that spectators were banned from watching sports games, unless they were a family member of one of the players. The Cape Ann League decided that this rule would be decided by each individual school, and Manchester-Essex was the only school that decided against spectators, Puglisi said.

Prior to eliminating the rule,



CARSON KOMISHANE PHOTO

Seniors Aidan Cunningham and Sam Rosen follow new protocols in the library by working at distanced seats and wearing masks properly over their nose to prevent the spread of COVID.

Puglisi said, "Our biggest concern is [that] we want kids to be able to be in school, and if we have a big fan section with kids shoulder to shoulder, yelling at a game, [and] masks are falling down...that seems to us to be an

unsafe environment for kids, particularly when our goal is to minimize the spread in order to keep kids coming to school," she said.

Athletic Director Cameron Molinare said students are now allowed back to the stands to watch

games due to the fall in COVID cases after break with masks and distance between each other.

According to the MERSD COVID dashboard, when students first returned, nine of them had
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CAD teacher creates new manipulatives for geometry class

By Avabella Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Geometry teacher Dean Martino and engineering teacher Steve Cogger are implementing interdisciplinary learning in their classrooms with 3D printed shapes.

Their main goal is to get students involved with interdisciplinary learning and have students continue to use their knowledge in classes like Computer Art Design (CAD) for geometry class.

Martino said that the objective is cross-curricular integration with 3D printers and a laser cutter. The Spaulding Education Fund made the curriculum integration possible with grants for the machines.

"We look for ways to utilize [Cogger's] class, those machines, and integrate them into other courses... for instance, in geometry, while students were learning altitudes, medians, bisectors, I created tools that allow students to construct them," he said.

As Martino teaches the geome-



AVABELLA MITRANO PHOTO

Geometry teacher Dean Martino and CAD teacher Steve Cogger implement interdisciplinary learning through 3D printing.

try concepts to the students, Cogger himself creates the shapes. Martino thought it would be useful to have manipulatives to help students better understand the concepts and drew pictures for Cogger to make in the CAD software.

"They are physical shapes, like a protractor and a ruler, that are specific to certain geometry relationships like the midpoint of an angle or the side of a triangle," Cogger said.

Cogger and Martino work collaboratively with a common purpose in expanding interdisciplinary learning.

"I think about ways Mr. Cogger can build pieces that bring to

life the concepts in other courses," Martino said.

Students said they liked the new form of learning. Freshman Josh Cohen said it was nice to have shapes to hold in their hands.

"When Mr. Cogger comes in and gives us all the shapes, there's this childish glee of taking off the tape [of the packaged shape] and seeing it," Cohen said.

Freshman Ella Arntsen said it was very helpful to use the new geometry manipulatives because she is a visual learner and notices a difference from past years.

"I definitely see a difference; it was hard for me to just have

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DECA competitors return to in-person competition at Districts

Team prepares for state competition in March

By Hadley Levendusky
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Fifty-four members of DECA returned to in-person competition at the district event at Endicott College.

DECA adviser Dean Martino said that the team performed well at the event on Jan. 6, with over 89%

of the school's competitors qualifying for the state competition. Despite competing in-person this year, there were still a few changes and challenges to the DECA district competition that were different from years prior to COVID, Martino said.

Due to COVID, there were many students that were unable to compete at districts, he said. DECA wants to try to find a way for those students to compete, Martino said. "My heart goes out

to those students who were unable to attend the district competition."

Students took their exams online in December prior to the competition, he said. Then, on Jan. 6, the students completed their role plays in person at Endicott College.

Returning to competing in-person was a challenge for students who competed last year, Martino said.

Last year the competitors were

given three hours to prepare and record their video to put on YouTube. This year individual competitors had 10 minutes to prepare, and team competitors had 15

minutes, he said. "Going from three hours and accomplishing the same thing in 10 minutes is very different," Martino said.

Junior Helaina Davis said she liked competing in person better than last year's online competi-

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Seniors commit to colleges early, plan post-graduate steps

Students discover various paths for their futures

By Ema O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As the new year begins and some students receive early college decisions, seniors are committing to schools and making plans for their futures.

Senior Charlie Weld said she recently decided to attend Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she plans on majoring in song-writing.

“What I loved about [Berklee] was that...it makes each individual a fully-formed, workable artist,” she said.

Applying to any university as a music major is very different

from applying to any other major, Weld explained.

“The process was so difficult. I’m so happy it’s over,” Weld said.

Senior Vaughn O’Leary will be attending college at American International College, where he will be playing Division I baseball and majoring in criminal justice.

“I’m looking forward to continuing my passion for a sport that I’ve played my whole life,” he said.

Over the summer, O’Leary said that he was considering other colleges; however, when he visited AIC, he enjoyed the environment of the school and baseball team.

Senior Emma Wonson said that she was also considering other options for her first postgraduate

‘Being able to skip the college debt after high school, I believe, is a great advantage.’

-COLBY DOYON



COURTESY OF TIMMY WONSON

Senior Emma Wonson is planning on spending her gap year in Germany, where she will visit her family, explore different parts of Europe, and discover what subject she wants to pursue in college.

year but recently decided to take a gap year in Germany.

Wonson wanted to take the time to figure out what she wanted to do with her future, she said.

“As well as figuring everything out, I am really looking forward

to being able to travel and explore Europe more,” Wonson said.

Senior Colby Doyon said he also is not planning on attending college after his senior year.

Instead, he plans on working with his father at an electrical

New winter program implemented for athletes helps students prepare for their sports seasons

Athletic director provides strength training

By Amy Vytopilova
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

A six-week program has been implemented to help student athletes stay in shape and prepare for upcoming seasons.

The winter strength and conditioning program is led by junior varsity soccer coach Heidi Pallo and assistant football coach Cory Burnham.

Athletic director Cameron Molinare said she brought the program to Manchester-Essex to help student athletes have an opportunity to train during their off-season.

“This came to me because in



AMY VYTOPILOVA PHOTO

JV soccer coach Heidi Pallo guides freshman Charlotte Crocker in her barbell back squats as she prepares for her soccer season.

my high school, I helped bring this program because I would always go to other strength and

conditioning gyms and get my own trainer, and it helped a lot, but I noticed that a lot of my

teammates were not having the same benefits that I was,” she said.

Molinare said that having this program will help an athlete in many aspects.

“It’s so important to the social, physical, and emotional development of an athlete. There’s so much that happens in the offseason, whether that’s deconditioning or reconditioning. Having this program in place helps athletes fill their time with something productive and constructive to get ready for the season,” she said.

Pallo said she has a background in exercise and wanted to share her experience with athletes to help them feel better while working out.

“I have a huge passion for weightlifting. I know it’s a very male-dominated sport, so if I can share my knowledge with the high school girls so they can feel more comfortable and empowered when they go to the gym, that’s exactly what I want to do,” Pallo said.

The program is open to all students grades six through 12, Molinare said.

Freshman Sylvie McCavanagh, a spring sport athlete, said the program will help her train for her approaching season.

“I like that it’s independent and I can do any weights I want and be myself. It helps get me ready for playing lacrosse and makes me stronger for having a competition,” McCavanagh said.

‘Having this program in place helps athletes fill their time with something productive and constructive to get ready for the season.’

-CAMERON MOLINARE

NHS reimplements middle school tutoring

By Finn O’Hara
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

NHS officers are working to recruit more middle schoolers as they create a tutoring program that helps out the community and allows members to pass down their knowledge.

Charlie Weld, president of NHS, said the tutoring, which takes place in the school library on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school, is available for students who sign up.

These students sign up by scanning QR codes that are spread

across the school and then they can select a day and a subject that they want to focus on.

Ema O’Neil, NHS community service director, said there has been minimal participation in the program so far.

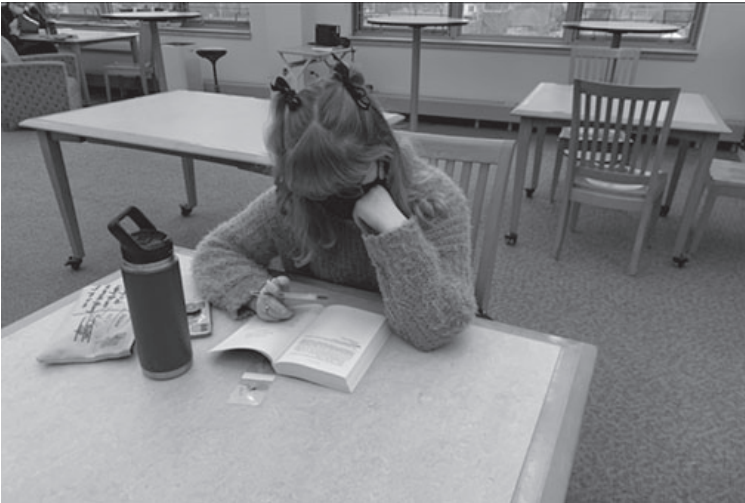
“I think the middle schoolers are nervous to be tutored by high schoolers, especially because this is a new program,” she said.

Although participation has been low, the officers are hopeful for an improvement, O’Neil said.

“We are planning new ways to advertise the program and make middle schoolers feel more welcomed,” she said.

Any student can go to the tutoring sessions, Weld said. Whether their teacher gave them a recommendation or they are simply trying to learn more, they are always welcome, she said.

Alex Briggs, NHS vice presi-



FINN O’HARA PHOTO

NHS president Charlie Weld attends a tutoring session and starts her homework while she waits for middle schoolers to arrive.

dent, said tutors can list what they are interested in so that they can be passionate about the sessions and begin to bond with the younger students.

“We wanted to create a situation where our members not only teach the middle schoolers, but also get to know them,” she said.

Shea Furse, NHS secretary,

said the officers are bringing back the tutoring program from years past to help fulfill one of the goals of the National Honor Society: building a community.

“Through the tutoring, we want to create a bridge between us and the middle schoolers,” she said.

The officers want the high school to be a place where people bond and learn from each other, Weld said.

Furse said, in addition to being a great community builder, tutoring is a great way for NHS members to get more involved in the community through a system that is already set up.

Despite difficulties, Weld said the officers were encouraged to see pairings of a tutor and student that have occurred multiple times.

“The pairings we’ve seen really help the tutors build relationships,” Weld said.

Doctor, Harvard assistant professor educates science team

Students learn about personalized medicine, epigenetics

By Jordie Cornfield
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Dr. Rachel Kelly, who works as an assistant professor at Harvard with Brigham and Women’s Hospital, recently gave a presentation to the science team on metagenomic epigenetics.

Metagenomic epigenetics is on the forefront of research in personalized medicine, junior Charlotte Lawrence said.

“It’s a really interesting field and researches what’s called the metagenome, which is the study of small molecules, and tries to combine genetics and the environment together,” she said.

Senior Lukas Shan and Lawrence both act as the club’s co-presidents. The science team, led by science teacher Kristen Umile, has changed in the past year, Lawrence said.

“We’ve always had the North Shore Science League, but during COVID we went online. This year myself and Lukas Shan brought it back together,” she said.

The science team came into contact with Dr. Kelly at the community thriving event Show up and Shop in October, which Lawrence said was “serendipitous.”

“A lot of clubs set up tables. We set up a table. Dr. Kelly and one of her colleagues came by and offered to speak to the science team because they thought what we were doing was interesting,” she said.

The goal of the science team is



CHARLOTTE LAWRENCE VIDEO

Harvard assistant professor Dr. Rachel Kelly meets with the science team to talk about personalized medicine. Students learn how to further their careers in science and medicine.

to educate students on different fields in science and medicine.

“We bring in speakers to educate everyone and apply that knowledge in competitions. Science team is a place where a lot of kids who love science can come to learn more about the different fields that they may be in-

terested in,” Lawrence said.

Students attended Kelly’s presentation on January 2, in what the club calls “SciTalks.”

“It was a really cool talk. She brought in slides and presented about what she does and how she got there,” Lawrence said

She said students learned

many valuable lessons from Kelly during her visit about how to further their careers in science and medicine.

“Kelly told us that we should forge a network in science to understand who’s the hub and who you should get in contact with to further our careers,” she said.

Debate competes in final tournament

By Wyeth Takayesu
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Members of Debate competed in the Columbia Debate Tournament on Jan. 28 through Jan. 30 to round off their competition season with mostly new members. The tournament was held virtually.

Manchester Essex had three teams competing: freshmen Gwendolyn Berger and Stella Straub, freshmen Jan Vytopil and Sam Heanue, and sophomores Finn O’Hara and Charlie Lations.

The teams were advised by debate coordinator Joshua Wladkowski, and junior Kevin Adams represented Manchester Essex by judging matches throughout the



WYETH TAKAYESU PHOTO

Debate members Charlie Lations and Joanna Shan stage mock competitions to prepare for the Columbia Debate Tournament.

tournament.

With so many members, Wladkowski said he was happy to watch the team’s progress throughout their competition season.

“This has been my first year doing anything in debate ever... it’s been so interesting learning and watching the new members grow throughout the season,”

Wladkowski said.

Having helped train the new teams, Debate president Andrew Torri said he was excited to see their improvement regardless of results.

“For two of our competing pairs, this is their first large tournament that they’re competing in. Win or lose, getting the chance to go to the Columbia

tournament is a great experience for them to improve and grow,” Torri said.

The debate topic at Columbia this year was the legalization of drugs, following movements to legalize marijuana throughout America. Competitors prepared arguments for both sides before meeting with another school’s team for a timed debate, Torri said.

In order to prepare, the team held mock debates among themselves where they would try their own prepared arguments against other members of the club. Teams would also work to refine arguments and debate against one another to build confidence, Torri said.

Although two of the teams,

Vytopil and Heanue and O’Hara and Lations, were narrowly kept from reaching the elimination rounds, Berger and Straub reached the top 16 before being knocked out by a 2:1 split decision, Wladkowski said.

Straub also won 4th place for the speaker award, beating out 96 other entrants in the pool of 100 speakers.

Following the conclusion of the last major debate tournament, the club is now looking to build more

‘Win or lose, getting the chance to go to the Columbia tournament is a great experience for them to improve and grow.’

-ANDREW TORRI

funding. “We’re going to focus on winding down and making sure the club has plenty of resources for next year...I also hope that tournaments are in person,” vice president Ari Brzezinski said.

CONTINUATIONS

COVID UPDATES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 tested positive for COVID, then the following week 12 students had COVID, but this past week only three students had COVID, which has allowed for spectators to return to sports games.

Senior Alex Briggs said she has had to adapt a little bit to the new protocols.

“I understand why the new protocols are in place, but it is sad to have to lock down certain parts of school that we just got back after last school year,” she said.

Briggs also said she thinks the MedBot form where students can report symptoms is helpful.

“MedBot helps the school a lot because it allows the nurse to stay organized with those who have

symptoms or close contact with someone who has COVID,” she said.

Senior Jessica Khani said she is hopeful with the new protocols in place.

“I think it is good that the school has added additional rules to try to prevent the spread of COVID so that hopefully the year stays fairly normal,” she said.

DECA DISTRICTS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 tion.

“[It was] way more fun to be with everyone, and you are able to meet new people,” she said.

Junior Kendall Newton said she also liked competing in person because it gave a real taste to what doing a role play is like.

“It was a fun experience...I

feel that it will help me in the long run in preparation for States,” she said.

Martino said he was very proud of how all of the students competed.

“All of our students were [placed] one through five or top 10 [in the competition],” he said.

Now the DECA classes will begin to prepare for the state competition which will be held March 10-12 at the Hynes Convention Center Boston, Martino said.

GEOMETRY PROJECT
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 someone telling me what to do when doing math but when I got to use my hands, it really helped me learn...especially coming from a year online,” Arnsten said.



AVABELLA MITRANO PHOTO

Engineering teacher Steve Cogger and his CAD class make 3D printed shapes for geometry teacher Dean Martino’s students.

Mandatory Practices

Should school sports teams run over vacations?

Pro

Caroline MacKinnon

While some think taking a break from practice during vacations is beneficial to give students a small break, the long-term effects can be detrimental. The benefits of sports teams practicing over school vacations or breaks outweighs its disadvantages.

Practicing during breaks provides more opportunity to spend time with teammates, which improves the team bond, and causes them to play better together.

Bonding with teammates improves team chemistry. Better team chemistry means there is more support and motivation among the athletes. This improves each player’s individual skill and the team’s overall performance

“Without practicing over break, it will take time to get back into the rhythm and timing they shared to execute plays prior to the break,” indoor track coach Nelson Desilvestre said.

The main issue with not practicing over break is the loss of conditioning. Every day an athlete does not complete physical activity sets them back, he said.

“Think of it as an athlete who is coming off an illness or injury. If you watch sports on TV, you will hear the announcer talk about how the athlete may be ‘a bit rusty’ or it may take a few days to get the timing back, not only because of recovering from injury but also the time off from practicing,” Desilvestre said.

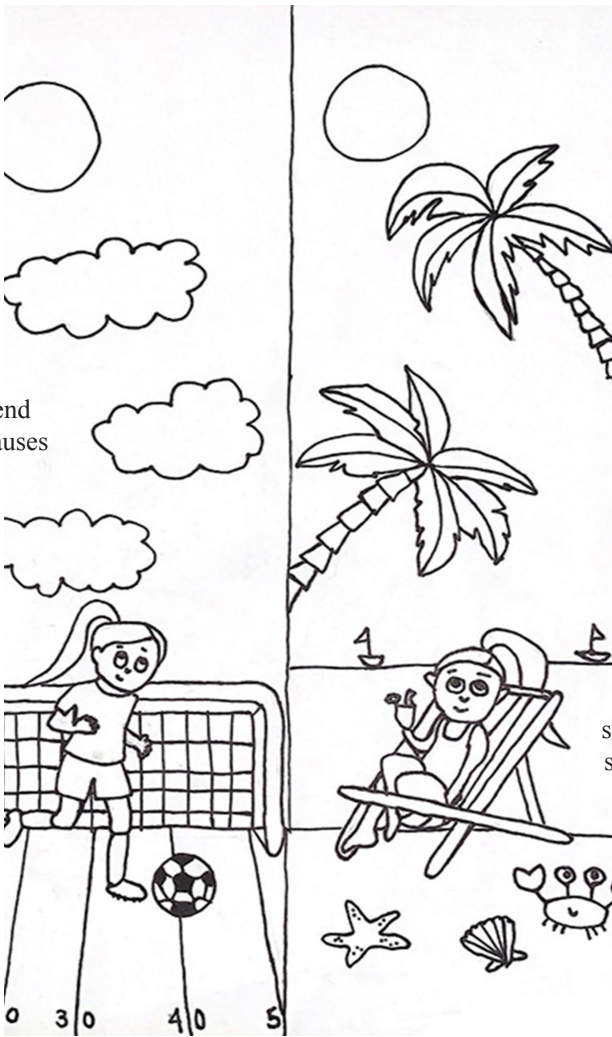
Once a player is compromised in ability from loss of conditioning, it affects the whole team. This can cause issues within the team itself and in the players confidence.

Sophomore Liv Cahill said there is no downside to practicing over breaks.

“If a team you’re up against doesn’t practice over break, you have the advantage since you’re in better shape, and if a team practices over break, it’s an even match up. Either way you’re still in a better place than you’d be without [practicing],” she said.

A team’s record can be compromised if other teams are in better condition. A team with more practice time is more improved in skill and physical shape and will win against a team that has less practice. It is not worth the few days off to jeopardize an entire season.

Relaxing or going on family vacations seems great at first, but it can negatively impact an athlete’s performance. The athlete will play poorly, affecting their self confidence, and their relationship with other members of the team.



CAROLINE MACKINNON ILLUSTRATION

Con

Phileine deWidt

School athletics should not continue during vacations in order to allow student-athletes, athletic staff, and families to take breaks.

After difficult and stressful weeks of school, students often get burnt-out and require a restful vacation.

According to Allinahealth.org, Doctor Kathryn Isham, author of “Importance of Taking a Vacation” said that when taking a vacation, “feelings of calm arise and relieve stress, which allows the body and mind to heal.”

By having sports practices and games during vacation, student-athletes do not get the needed opportunity to relax and de-stress.

Sophomore Gabbi D’Andrea has to make difficult decisions regarding vacations due to basketball practices.

“Sports during vacation are unnecessary, and vacations should be a break from all things school-related, including school sports teams,” she said.

Though breaks from sports may negatively impact a team’s steadiness, the mental well-being of student-athletes should be prioritized.

Instead of having planned practices and games during vacation, coaches should promote an at-home workout routine to keep the team in shape while allowing participants to exercise in their own time and space making it stress-free.

Having sports during vacations can collide with planned family trips, taking away family time or important experiences.

“It takes a toll on not just me but also my family. They can’t go on the trips they want because of a sport they aren’t even playing,” D’Andrea said.

When athletes do go away for vacation, they often feel guilty for letting down their team and worry over the upcoming punishment for what they missed, which is usually sitting out for the next big event like a game or meet.

In addition to student-athletes, athletic staff needs to be present for all practices and games, which interrupts their vacation time.

At the Thanksgiving day football game, staff like the athletic director and trainer need to be present, ultimately taking away important family and vacation time for them.

Without having adequate time to relax, the athletes who are present will have a stressful and fatigued attitude, which overpowers their physical abilities, negatively impacting the team.

Valentine’s Day: Money grab or romantic day of love?

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

This time of year frequently brings up the age-old question: is Valentine’s Day merely a holiday created by card and flower companies to increase sales?

While the answer appears to be “yes” nowadays, it is important to remember the true meaning of the holiday, a day to celebrate your significant other.

According to the National Retail Federation, consumers will spend an average of \$161 on Valentine’s Day-related items each year.

It is no secret that companies have capitalized on the story of St. Valentine by celebrating Valentine’s Day through flowers and chocolates, turning the holiday into a big money-making event.

According to the National Retail Federation, consumers will spend an average of \$161 on Valentine’s Day-related items each year.

With more than half of the U.S. population expected to celebrate Valentine’s Day, it is clear to see how this holiday easily generates a large amount of revenue.

Preparation for Valentine’s Day begins in January when pink heart balloons begin to line the aisles of every grocery and department store.

This leads to a climax that makes people feel left out if they do not participate in the “buying frenzy.”

Sophomore Lucy O’Flynn said that she feels pressured to buy Valentine’s Day gifts.

“I spent \$45 on a gift last year; that’s a lot of money,” she said.

Valentine’s Day should not leave people wondering if they “did enough” or, more importantly, if they bought enough to keep their significant other happy.



MECHI O’NEIL PHOTO

Rows of Valentine’s Day cards fill the shelves in Hallmark’s stores, incentivizing customers to purchase a card for their significant other and prove their love through monetary expenses.

Valentine’s Day can also put pressure on relationships.

According to the Odyssey Online, 53 percent of women say they’d end their relationship if they didn’t receive a Valentine’s Day gift.

This goes to show that society cares too much about monetary assets.

With birthdays, anniversaries,

and the holiday season, buying gifts for significant others can become too much of a normal occurrence.

“I feel obligated to buy gifts for every occasion, which can be very overwhelming,” O’Flynn said.

This isn’t to say that couples can’t celebrate Valentine’s Day but rather that the holiday

shouldn’t be surrounded by marked up teddy bears and sub-par boxes of chocolate.

Valentine’s Day should be a day when couples take time out of their hectic schedules to slow down and reconnect with their partner.

It does not take money or a holiday to show someone you love them.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Popular movies inaccurately represent mental illness

Producers who create movies about mental illnesses should devote more of their time to making sure that the mental illnesses are portrayed correctly in their movies before showing it to people all around the world.

Some of the people viewing the movie could be children, teenagers, or young adults who are susceptible to societal norms and peer pressure.

Movies that solely display mental illness as stereotypical, for example, portraying the fixed idea that someone with ADHD is lazy, could also potentially be harmful by adding to the negative stereotypes that already exist.

According to the American Institute for Cognitive Therapy on cognitivetherapynyc.com, many different films have inaccurately represented mental illnesses.

For example, in the popular movie “The Visit,” mental illness

is portrayed as the bad part of the story as two teenagers go to visit their grandparents for the first time, but they did not know what they look like, and they are accepted into the home of random people that aren’t their grandparents.

In reality, the two random people have schizophrenia and killed the actual grandparents.

However, there is an inaccurate portrayal of schizophrenia, which adds to the stereotype that people with the mental illness are murderers.

According to independent.co.uk, a news source, popular artist Sia also inaccurately portrayed autism in her movie “Music.”

First, she chose to cast Maddie Ziegler, who is neurotypical, meaning she does not have atypical thought or behavior, to play the lead. Ziegler plays a neurodivergent character, which



IMDB.COM

Actress Maddie Ziegler plays a person with autism in artist Sia’s movie “Music.” The movie received negative feedback due to the inaccurate portrayal of the neurodivergent community.

is someone who does have atypical thought or behavior. Ziegler was instructed to portray this character in a stereotypical way by making inaccurate and exaggerated facial expressions.

Viewers created a petition against the movie’s nomination for a Golden Globe, and some of these people explained how the movie, though it was supposed to raise awareness for the autistic community, was harmful due to

its overstimulating flashing lights and loud noises.

The popular movie is extraordinarily harmful to the autistic community because it once again creates stereotypes that people will believe in and apply to everyday life.

According to tmsallentownpa.com, a therapy company, stereotypes surrounding mental illnesses change the perception of people with mental illnesses.

When popular movies do not portray these mental illnesses accurately, it adds to the negative stereotype already in place by society. Producers and members of the cast alike need to either hire a neurodivergent person to assist with the creation of the movie or characters, or they need to be neurodivergent themselves. Another option would be to do extensive research or contact a medical professional for help.

Written planner helps improve mental health

By Emma Ketchum
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Bringing a written planner to school every day can be a therapeutic outlet that improves time management, memory, organization, and stress.

After a teacher assigns homework, students often trust themselves to remember the assignment without writing it down anywhere. This often leads to forgetting about the assignment until the last minute or completely forgetting about the assignment in general.

The act of writing a task in a paper planner (not typing it in a phone’s notes app) helps students memorize what they need to get done.

In an article called “5 Reasons Why You Need a Paper Planner” on Start It Up, Kesten



EMMA KETCHUM PHOTO

Senior Shea Furse writes down her homework in her planner. Using a written planner helps with time management and stress.

Harris said writing in a planner “activates part of your brain that typing doesn’t, such as working your memory.”

Harris said one’s connection with writing on paper is much stronger because it activates and strengthens critical thinking skills.

Acknowledging all tasks that have to be done for the day helps plan a schedule and teaches a person better time management.

Sometimes students don’t

comprehend how much work they have until they see it written down in one place, leading to the realization that they may need to spread out work over a couple of days or simply not spend as much time scrolling on social media after school. Acquiring this habit of writing daily tasks down in high school can improve productivity for college and the distant future.

In addition to increased productivity, writing in a planner has

been proven to relieve stress and anxiety.

“Planning does more than give us something to anticipate. It can also help quell anxiety by dealing with cognitive clutter,” journalist Kate Morgan said in an article for BBC called “Why Making Plans Helps Manage Pandemic Stress.”

Taking a couple of minutes each class to write in a planner is a way students can enable creativity and relaxation throughout the day. Anyone can make their planner look however they want. They can use different colors, handwriting fonts, drawings, and they can organize tasks however is most beneficial to them. This consistent creative outlet throughout the day can be a beneficial break from the repetitive, draining school schedule.

Japan is known for being a technology-driven country, but they still have a thriving paper planner culture, according to an article called “5 Science-Backed Reasons Why Paper Planners Are Better Than Digital Planners” on Luxafor.

“Wittingly referred to as the ‘techo (planner) culture,’ the Japanese take time to organize their thinking via pen and paper, stickers, color coding, etc... In a fast-paced world like Japan, that might be one of the easiest habits to keep a clear mind,” the article explained.

Writing in a daily planner is an easy way to maintain time management, while also improving one’s mental health. Affordable paper planners can be purchased at any store that sells stationery, such as Staples, The Paper Store, Target, Walmart, or Amazon.

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the
INDEPENDENT

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All submissions must be signed and put in the newspaper mailbox in the front office of MERHS.

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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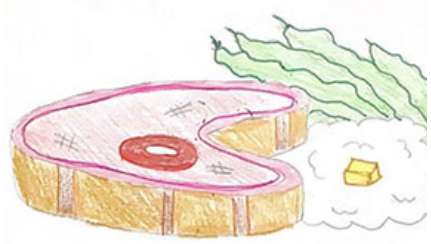
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COVID-Friendly Valentine's Day Activities for Singles, Couples

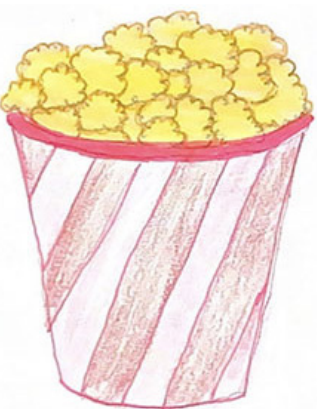
Make dinner

Making a nice meal is a great way to wind down an evening and relax. Spending an hour or two to find a recipe, gather ingredients, and try to make it all come together can be fun even for someone who doesn't know anything about cooking. Although making a meal may seem daunting to beginners, the experience of trying something new or making your favorite comfort food warrants giving it a try.



Watch a movie

Settling in for the night on Valentine's Day is the perfect time to watch a new movie or an old classic. No matter the mood, tastes, or budget, there's a movie for anyone on streaming sites like Netflix, Disney+, or Hulu. Use a pile of blankets and a bowl of home-made popcorn to recreate the theatre-going experience, and soon just about any movie will be able to instill some excitement into your evening.

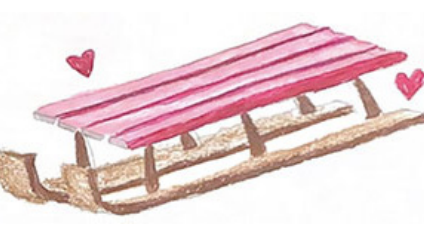


Give a gift

Few things are as romantic as putting thought into the perfect present for a significant other, especially when traditional dates aren't available. Presents are a sign of love and affection, and can make someone's day by getting them that one thing they desperately need. With online shopping being easier than ever, getting that manner is as simple as the click of a button. Exchanging and opening the gifts is most of the fun as surprised reactions wash over the receiver's face. Organizing a spot to meet with masks or simply dropping off the gifts at one another's house to later open on video can help keep that joyous feeling present.



Go outside



Going out and playing in the winter snow is a wonderful way to catch a breath of fresh air this Valentine's Day. Getting some space from family members or going to see something other than a wall can be really refreshing. With winter weather bringing in snow storms, going out to build a snowman or make snow angels is a wonderful way to enjoy the cold weather.

Stay up together



With many relationships needing to take some space as everyone works through the pandemic, taking some time to call and hear each other's voice is always a nice break from the world. Spending a little extra time on call with one another is the safest way to experience the holiday while making the day still feel special. Plus, with games and video chats online, there is no shortage of activities to do.

Margaret Kane, Spanish



"The song I would think of is 'Anyhow' by Tedeschi Trucks Band."

Jessica Tran, social studies



"The song that makes me think of my husband is 'Wonderwall' by Oasis because it's his favorite song ever, so whenever my kids or I hear it, we always think of him."

Barrett Alston, learning commons



"Our song is 'Never Love Before' by Alan Jackson and Martina McBride because it was our wedding song that we took dance lessons for."

Teacher Speak:
What song makes you think of your significant other?

Dan Lundergan, mathematics



"The song that makes me think of my significant other is 'Just Like Heaven' by The Cure."

Kristin Umile, biology



"The song that makes me think of my husband is 'Whenever I See Your Smiling Face' by James Taylor."

Caroline Epp, digital arts



"One song that we really like is 'All Through the Night' by the Paris Sisters... we played it at our wedding, and it's just a very fun and upbeat song about how much we love each other."

Cheesiest Pick-up Lines



"Are you McDonald's? Because I'm lovin' it."

Freshman Sammy Bothwell



"If you were a chicken, you'd be impeccable."

Freshman Sylvie McCavanagh



"If I could rearrange the alphabet, I'd put 'U' and 'I' together."

Sophomore Amelia Costa



"Are you from Tennessee? Because you're the only ten I see."

Sophomore Eddie Chareas



"Do you believe in love at first sight? Or should I walk by again?"

Junior Zak Porat



"Should I get COVID test? Cause every time I see you I feel like I can't breathe."

Junior Juliana Saunders



"Are you a time traveler? Because I see you in my future."

Senior Noella Hadaegh



"Did you fart? Because you just blew me away."

Senior Theo Parianos

CAROLINE MACKINNON ILLUSTRATIONS

CAROLINE MACKINNON PHOTOS

Cold weather activities recommended by community

Students, faculty suggest pastimes to improve mental, physical health throughout winter

By Caroline MacKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Winter can be a cold and depressing time compared to the liveliness of the warmer months. There is an abundance of activities to do in warm weather, but there isn't the same luxury in the winter. Some people might have difficulty passing during time during colder months or just getting through the winter.

Physics teacher Debra Nolan said being active by walking or running during the winter makes her feel better and more relaxed.

"It's nice to go to different places that aren't just my neighborhood. If you have someone



COURTESY OF MOLLY MACHAIN

to walk or run with, that's great too," Nolan said.

Senior Molly Machain said she enjoys spending time in the snow during the winter.

"I actually go outside in snow pants like I did when I was little and play in the snow along with my dogs because they also like the snow a lot too," Machain said.

Junior Alexander Wolf said he likes spending time at home when it's cold out.

'Around here it's kind of hard to find stuff to do in the winter.'
-IZZY THURLOW



COURTESY OF BARRETT ALSTON

Library aide Barrett Alston does yoga every night for 30 minutes to an hour. He uses yoga to improve his health and keep his body flexible in cold weather. It allows him to keep calm in the winter.

"In the winter months, I enjoy spending my time playing tabletop games with my friends and family. I also like baking sometimes," he said.

Senior Izzy Thurlow likes participating in outdoor activities people can only do in the winter. She especially enjoys taking advantage of the outdoor ice-skating opportunities, she said.

"Around here it's kind of hard to find stuff to do in the winter, but spending time outside is always good, as long as you bundle up," Thurlow said.

Thurlow also strongly recommends playing Wii from time to time, especially Mario Kart, if you want to spend time inside, she said.

Learning commons aid Barrett

Alston enjoys keeping active indoors in the winter.

He does yoga and uses a peloton to prevent stiffness, he said.

He also likes relaxing indoors during the winter months, Alston said.

"Nowadays it gets dark really early, so it's great to play chess by the fire at eight o'clock on a cold winter night," he said.

Students chosen to play on court during Celtics game

DECA members attended event with discounted tickets

By Carson Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students in DECA had the opportunity to buy tickets to see the Celtics game against the Cleveland Cavaliers on Dec. 22. Two students from the school were selected to play on the court during halftime, DECA adviser Dean Martino said.

Junior Declan Kirk said Martino told his classes that they could buy tickets at a discounted price through DECA and had a chance to be chosen to play on the courts out of everyone who

attended.

Kirk said he was picked to play on the courts alongside junior Zach Brown, and they played with other DECA students who were chosen from other schools that also attended the game.

"[It was a] once-in-a-lifetime experience; you don't have that every day. It also puts it in perspective how good [the players] are," he said.

Brown also said it was an unforgettable opportunity to be able to play on the court.

"It was really cool to be on

'We all had a great time being able to experience [the game].'
-LYNN BENALI

that floor and then just be able to look around and see everyone looking down at you and watching you play. Every time we made a basket, the whole crowd would start cheering. It felt like a real game," he said.

Brown said he also had the experience of watching the game in-person with the rest of the DECA students.

"It was a really good game, and it was really cool to see [my favorite players] play too," he said.

Kirk also said being able to see the game in-person was an exciting experience.

"It is cool seeing [the game] on TV and then being able to watch them in real life," he said.

DECA state officer and senior



AMY VYTOPILOVA AND CAROLINE MACKINNON PHOTOS

Juniors in DECA Declan Kirk and Zachary Brown were chosen to play on the court during the Celtics vs. Cleveland Cavaliers game.

Lynn Benali also attended the game but did not play on the court.

"The game was really exciting. It was a close one, and I was able to attend with some of my friends. We all had a great time being able to experience it in-person. The atmosphere is really different and energetic," she said.

Benali said the Celtics won 111-101.

"They won the game, which was incredible. This experience was definitely unforgettable, and I am glad I had this opportunity to get tickets," she said.

Students, parents, teachers [and] the administration often," he said.

Athletic trainer approaches fourth year helping athletes

By Caroline MacKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Stephen Sablack has been working as the athletic trainer since the fall of 2019. Since then, Sablack has been supporting student-athletes participating in all sports.

Sablack graduated in 2011 from Salisbury University in Salisbury, Maryland, majoring in health. He received his master's degree in athletic training from Bridgewater State University in 2014, he said.

He comes to school around

one o'clock each day and he is in school for all games and practices. He cares for athletes that come into his office or need immediate help on the court or the turf, he said.

Sablack said his job is different since he started the position.

"Since the beginning, it's definitely changed," he said, remarking that students are "more welcoming" and "comfortable" with him. "I can't get [athletes] out of my room, which isn't a bad thing," he said.

Sablack said his favorite part of his job is the atmosphere, and he never gets tired of coming to work.

"There's something new every day. Whether it's a different injury or just someone coming in here to hangout, I never have the same day twice," Sablack said.



CAROLINE MACKINNON PHOTO
Stephen Sablack previously worked at Auburn High School in Auburn, Massachusetts as athletic trainer.

COVID created change in his job, which he said was difficult at first due to new sanitation protocols and the limited number of students he could treat at a time, but it also has had its advantages, Sablack said, because he was still

able to see students in person, rather than on Zoom.

Athletic director Cami Molinare said that Sablack has handled new COVID protocols very well, enforcing mask and social distancing policies as well as regularly sanitizing equipment, especially out of respect for his athletes.

"He cares so much about our athletes here and will do anything for them to make sure that they can play the sport that they love," she said.

Molinare said Sablack is very reliable when it comes to supporting his athletes.

"He is here for every practice and every game without ques-

tion. He cares about each sport equally," she said.

Sophomore Caelie Patrick said that Sablack is very knowledgeable when it comes to helping with injuries.

"He always knows what's wrong and finds the best way to help. I always feel better after seeing him," she said.

Sablack forms great relationships with athletes by treating them or just by talking to them, Patrick said.

"After just one time of meeting Stephen, he knows your name and will always say hi to you when he sees you. Whoever you are, it makes you feel special," she said.

'Whoever you are, [he] makes you feel special.'
- CAELIE PATRICK

Skill, spirit drives boys’ basketball team during games

Team defense proves impactful

By Ella Chafe
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With an overall record of 10-1, the boys’ varsity basketball team is outscoring their opponents and playing selflessly, coach Timothy St. Laurent said.

St. Laurent said the team has been playing exceptionally well offensively and defensively, and they have handled the press.

Moving forward, the team is going to continue to focus on rebounding, he said.

St. Laurent said that he is impressed with junior Brennan Twombly and sophomore Cade Furse, as they stand out for skill.

“Cade is one of the best shooters in the league at just a sopho-

more, and Brennan is one of the best I’ve ever coached,” he said.

Senior Captain, AJ Pallazola agreed that Furse is the best shooter on the team, and he said that his defense is very good.

Pallazola said the team has many different personalities, and everyone working together helps keep the morale up.

“When everyone is positive, we are confident, and when we are confident, we shoot, play defense, and communicate well,” he said.

The toughest game this season was against Amesbury, where the team started down 13 points and had to fight their way back, Pallazola said. The final score was 53-51.

“That was against one of the top teams in the CAL, so getting that win showed a lot about our team,” he added.

Furse said that the team’s strength is their defense because they are able to talk well, and



COURTESY OF PHILLIP FURSE

Sophomore Cade Furse lines up for the rebound of a foul shot in game against Georgetown. The Hornets won the game 52-42. Furse is noted for his skill on the team by coach Tim St. Laurent.

they naturally have great chemistry.

Junior Patrick Cronin brings the most spirit to the team because he always has energy,

Furse added.

“He somehow manages to find something good out of something boring,” he said.

Furse’s goals for the team are

to win the Cape Ann League title and win a playoff game. In order to be successful, they have to play together and not be selfish, he said.

Girls’ basketball moves forward, progresses

Team’s schedule eases up after playing tougher teams first

By Amy Vytopilova
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Despite a slow and difficult start to their season, the girls’ varsity basketball team is progressing and starting to connect, senior captain Amelia Donnellan said.

With an overall record of 2-10, head coach Lauren DuBois said the team is moving forward after playing some of their toughest opponents.

“We have gotten through the first quarter of the season and got a few of the toughest teams behind us. Hopefully, moving forward we’re going to get to more of the CAL small opponents, which I think will be more competitive and kind of be able to get things going for us,” DuBois said.

DuBois said senior captain Emma Fitzgerald is a key player who has created offensive opportunities to help the team throughout the season.

“Emma has really stepped up for us this season especially on the offensive end. She’s our leading scorer, and she’s done a nice job of getting points on the board



COURTESY OF VICKI DONNELLAN AND JEFFREY VALADE

Senior captain Amelia Donnellan dribbles the ball up the court in game against Amesbury. The Hornets lost the game 34-54.

for us,” she said.

Fitzgerald said she is a team player and enjoys leading her

teammates to success.

“I love being on the offensive end. Going to the hoop and pass-

ing to open players is definitely my strength, and I love setting up opportunities for my team. When I’m on the bench, I love cheering on my teammates and making sure everyone has self-confidence when they’re in the game,” she said.

DuBois said Donnellan’s positivity and motivation is key to the teams’ chemistry.

“Amelia is a leader in spirit and dedication for the team. She sets a great example for hard work on and off the court,” she said.

Donnellan’s contributions remind her teammates to have a positive attitude and to play for their enjoyment, DuBois said.

“I am always reminding my teammates to have fun while they are working hard and trying to bring other people up if they seem like they are down about a mistake or a loss,” she said.

Individuals stand out in track this year

By Hadley Levendusky
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Coach Mark Dawson said the boys’ and girls’ track teams have had a “bumpier” start to their season this year.

Despite not winning a meet yet this year, the athletes have been performing well and running decent times, he said.

“The measure of how we win and lose meets is really just a numbers game,” he said.

To have a full staff in indoor track, the team needs about 50 athletes. This year, the boys’ and girls’ teams combined have only 30 athletes, Dawson said.

Dawson said they have a



COURTESY OF LIV CAHILL

Track team junior Caroline MacKinnon finishes a run at practice. The girls’ track team record is 0-4; the boys’ record is 1-3.

couple of state qualifiers this year and will find out more qualifiers deeper into the season.

“That’s kind of my measure, how many athletes we get deeper in the season. We have really good performers this year,” he

said.

This season on the boys’ side, junior Jack Newton, sophomore Nate Gardner, and sophomore Charlie Latons have been competing well, Dawson said.

On the girls’ side, junior

Caroline MacKinnon, sophomore Caelie Patrick, and junior Amy Vytopilova have also been competing well this season, he said.

MacKinnon said she runs the 600 meter race during meets.

“It is my first time running officially indoors this year [since last year was outdoors], but I have improved my time,” she said.

Dawson said the whole team has helped each other keep their spirit up and stay motivated through the season.

But more specifically, he said the captains, senior Maddy Curran, Patrick, Vytopilova, Gardner,

Newton, and sophomore Finn O’Hara, have done a good job with it.

A few middle schoolers are on the team, and Newton said he helps the younger runners keep their goals right.

“I mostly just work to keep the mindset right for the newer runners,” he said.

O’Hara, who has been injured for most of the season, also helps mentor some of the younger athletes, Dawson said.

“Even though Finn has been hurt

for the season, he has shown up for every meet regardless and helps support some of the younger athletes,” he said.

‘That’s kind of my measure, how many athletes were get deeper into the season. We have really good performers this year.’

- MARK DAWSON

Boys’, girls’ swim teams succeed due to effective senior leadership

Both teams celebrate individual wins as their seasons end

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As the season nears its end, the boys’ and girls’ varsity swim teams have performed well under the leadership of their five senior captains, coach Caitlin Eramo said.

After having competed in four meets so far, the boys’ swim team has a record of 3-2; the girls’ record is 1-4.

Despite the losses, the team has been doing well with many individual event wins, Eramo said.

“We have smaller numbers

than many of our competitors, but I feel the talent and dedication of all our swimmers puts up a strong fight against the other larger teams,” she said.

Senior captain Emma Ketchum said everyone on the team is working hard at practices, and it is showing at meets.

“At our meet against Lynfield, we won 16 out of 22 races, which is a pretty big deal,” she said.

Ketchum said senior Shea Furse is definitely the swimmer to watch on the team.

Eramo said Furse, who will be

swimming at the University of Georgia in the fall, has been one of the biggest standouts, and is undefeated this season.

Furse said that team spirit has kept the morale high and has inspired her to continue acting as a role model for the other swimmers on the team.

“Swimming my whole life and always wanting to be a Division I athlete has kept me motivated to work hard and improve,” she said.

Senior Aidan Cunningham and sophomore Diego Sanson have been named by Eramo the most spirited swimmers on the team because of the

‘Swimming my whole life and always wanting to be a Division I athlete has kept me motivated.’

-SHEA FURSE



COURTESY OF KENDRA PINO DOTT

Senior and captain Alex Briggs competes in the pool at the Sterling YMCA in Beverly, where the team practices.

energy they bring to practices and games, Ketchum said.

Sanson said that there is a great environment on the team and that everyone cares about how their teammates are doing.

“Everyone is working hard, and when my teammates are trying their hardest, I want them to know that the team has their back no matter what,” he said.

The team has one more meet on Feb. 5 against all teams in the Cape Ann League.

Eramo said she is excited for their last meet and seeing all of the swimmers working together as a team.

“I think when the team is excited and meshes well together socially, it really makes a difference in the water,” she said.

Alpine ski teams demonstrate spirit, goodwill, development

Boys’, girls’ teams continue to improve as season progresses

By Ema O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Despite a slow start to their season, coach Tim Wonson said the boys’ and girls’ varsity ski teams have shown improvement and cameraderie.

At the beginning of January, many of the teams’ practices and meets were canceled or postponed due to poor conditions at Bradford Ski Resort, Wonson said.

“When we aren’t able to actually ski, we either do dryland or meet in classrooms,” he said.

Senior captain Emma Wonson said both teams’ seasons began to pick up in mid-January, and



COURTESY OF EMMA WONSON

Senior Gracie Susko crosses the finish line at a race against Amesbury on Jan. 19, held at Ski Bradford in Haverhill.

they have since been competing weekly.

So far, both teams have faced Andover and Masconomet. The girls have also competed against Haverhill, while the boys have

faced St. John’s Preparatory School.

“Even though we haven’t won, it’s been really fun to travel to Bradford as a team and ski together,” Emma Wonson said.

Tim Wonson said a player who does well in encouraging team spirit is junior Peter Shaw.

“He really motivates other skiers to work hard, and he’s been such a great kid to work with this season,” the coach said.

Shaw said he has enjoyed improving his skiing and spending time outdoors.

“I’ve made a few mistakes this season, but I think that I am now a more capable skier than I have been in prior years,” he said.

Shaw also said he hopes to continue building on his strengths as a skier and perform better at future meets.

In addition to spirit, Tim Won-

son has also noticed a lot of skill between the two teams.

“[Senior] Gracie Susko, specifically, seems like she’s about to turn a corner and really excel this season,” he said.

Susko said she has been skiing since she was 5 years old and enjoys the anticipation on racing days.

“Going over the course and waiting for your turn to race is such a thrill for me,” she said.

Susko is also looking forward to becoming closer with her teammates and improving as a team.

“I really want everyone to improve their times this season,” she said.

‘Even though we haven’t won, it’s been really fun to travel to Bradford as a team and ski together.’

-EMMA WONSON

Boys’, girls’ hockey coaches recognize players for their skill, team spirit

By Jordie Cornfield
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Both the girls’ and boys’ hockey teams started off their seasons with positive attitudes towards upcoming games, said girls’ coach Brittany Smith and boys’ coach Kyle Nelson.

While the girls’ team is small relative to other schools, totaling only 16, Smith said that this helps create a close-knit environment and improves team spirit. Players who demonstrate team spirit help other players and motivate them to try harder and do better, she said.

“Team spirit is when a player is always supportive of her team-

mates, cheering them on even when it’s a hard game. Regardless of playing time, they’re out there giving it their all every practice,” Smith said.

Smith said someone who displays team spirit is sophomore Lily Francoeur, the team’s goalie.

“Lily is always there cheering her teammates on. She brings a good attitude to the team even when we’re down,” Smith said.

The team’s range of abilities, as well as their drive, is one of

the factors that help the girls win, Smith said. So far, the team’s record is 4-5. While all the girls on the team bring different skill sets to the team, freshman Elsa Wood stands out, Smith said.

“Elsa Wood is very skilled in her hockey knowledge as well as her stick skills and know-how. Her ability to score is what brings our team to the next level and helps us win games,” Smith said.

Smith also credits senior Jay Whitten for their performance.

“[They] brings good leadership and solid skill to the defensemen,” she said.

On the other side of the ice, the boys’ team is currently 4-6, coach Nelson said, but the boys are making up for this record with team spirit, he said.

“Team spirit is presence in



COURTESY OF @MOLLYAMBROSE_PHOTO/INSTAGRAM

The Rockport boys’ hockey team shows their spirit before a game at the Talbot Rink in Gloucester, the team’s home ice rink.

the locker room, always picking up their teammates in a positive way, and not getting down when things are going tough,” Nelson said.

Nelson said that junior Jack Crompton, who plays, demonstrates team spirit on and off the ice.

“His personality is very well fit to be described as [an example

of team spirit],” he said.

While Nelson said that all Manchester Essex players contribute to the team’s skill, he also said that junior captain Dougie Pratt stands out for his performance on the ice.

“Dougie Pratt has been our strongest forward so far this year. He also leads our team in points,” Nelson said.

‘Regardless of playing time, they’re out there giving it their all.’

-BRITTANY SMITH

Drama Club begins rehearsing for March show date

Club will perform a one-act comedy by John R. Carrol

By Charlie Lations
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Oh What a Tangled Web,” the production being put on by the Drama Club, is moving

closer to completion as the cast and crew move off-book and enter the rehearsal stage of production.

Senior Christopher Siems, who will play Tom Scarlotta in the production, said that at this stage in the process most of what happens is polishing and adding “the little things that really take a show to the next level.”

Gianna Baglioni, the club’s

adviser and the show’s director, said that mostly small tweaks remain to be made.

“At this point in the game, I’m nitpicking and perfecting each and every moment in the show as we continue to run through it, get our lines down, and evolve our characters.”

The students participating in the show play a role in deciding the look of the costumes and sets, she said.

“The cast is currently sourcing their own costumes from home before we figure out what pieces might be missing and go from there...I like to have all hands on deck for set building stuff—we’re a company, after all,” she said.

Senior Nathan Kelleher, the show’s production manager, said student influence extends beyond just those on stage.

“Every designer and director leaves different influences and

‘Every designer and director leaves different influences and...marks on the set and how the production is run.’

- NATHAN KELLEHER



COURTESY OF GIANNA BAGLIONI

Students from the Drama Club rehearse lines and practice scenes in the school’s auditorium in preparation for the annual Drama Fest, which will take place on Saturday, March 5.

different marks on the set and how the production is run, and every designer and director has a specific way they want things to look and feel,” he said.

Siems said the remaining work at this point is figuring out how to bring their characters off the

page and into the real world.

Kelleher said a greater workload will fall to the technical crew, who work behind the scenes.

“Now that the actors know their lines, the focus will be more on the behind-the-scenes aspects of the show. The pressure will be

more on my crew and I to finish creating and designing the technical elements, like the sound, lights, set, and costumes,” he said.

The play will be performed Saturday, March 5 at Drama Fest.

Netflix film ‘Don’t Look Up’ satirizes current societal debates

By Emma Ketchum
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Netflix’s new film, “Don’t Look Up,” addresses the polarization and corruption of society through satire.

The film, written, produced, and directed by Adam McKay, follows two scientists, played by Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence, as they warn everyone of an approaching comet that will destroy Earth. Their discovery is at first ignored and not taken seriously, and the world thinks they’re crazy.

The president, Janie Orlean, played by Meryl Streep, finally steps in and tells the world the truth of the comet and its ap-

proaching journey towards Earth.

Following the news of the comet, the country divides into different opinions on if the comet is real or made up by the scientists. The “Look Up Movement” occurs, and positive role models, like famous singer Riley Bina, played by Ariana Grande, bring awareness to the comet’s approach. The polarization demonstrated throughout the film gives a satirical view of how denying scientific evidence, of both coronavirus and climate change, affects our society.

In the article, “Netflixable? The World’s Ending and We’re Still Distracted--‘Don’t Look Up,’” on Movie Nation, critic Roger Moore discusses the film’s mes-

sages.

“It’s a satire about a Big Subject--the ways nothing gets done in the face of great planetary crises thanks to money, know-nothing politics, and a shallow, ignorant, and easily distracted culture that can’t focus on anything big because trivia, optics, and ‘clicks’ control our attention spans,” he said.

The people in power who have the resources to save Earth from the comet, president Orlean and “BASH” phone company CEO Peter Isherwell, played by Mark Rylance, are shown as selfish people who only care about making as much money as possible.

After president Orlean is made aware of the comet, her first ques-



NETFLIX .COM

The Netflix film “Don’t Look Up,” starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence, satirically portrays the polarization and corruption of society caused by the anticipation of a comet.

tion is, “So how certain is this?” In response to the answer 99.78%, the president’s chief of staff and son, played by Jonah Hill, responds, “Oh great, so it’s not 100%!” The government proceeds not to do anything about the crisis, reflecting how people in power don’t prevent world-ending situa-

tions until it’s too late.

The extremely well-known cast paired with a satirical view on an important message makes for an overall enjoyable yet shocking watching experience.

Viewers should watch to the end of the movie, so be sure to sit through the credits!

Television icon Betty White passes away at 99

By Ema O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

American actress Betty White passed away on Dec. 31, 2021, at the age of 99, leaving behind a lasting legacy and a successful life.

According to ABC News, White’s agent, Jeff Witjas, said she died peacefully in her sleep due to natural causes.

“Betty lived a great life, and she lived a life that she chose... she was happy,” Witjas told ABC News.

White was born on Jan. 17, 1922, and grew up in Los Angeles, California, according to



WIKIMEDIA.COM

Betty White, actress and animal rights activist, died in late 2021.

Britannica. She began her acting career during the ‘40s, where she acted on various radio shows.

White landed her first role on television in 1949 and started appearing regularly on “Hollywood

on Television,” a live talk show.

She eventually became the host of the show, making her the first-ever female television talk show host, according to PBS.

White is also the first woman

to produce a national television program. After co-founding Bandy Productions in 1952, she co-created and starred in “Life With Elizabeth.”

“It was really an experience, but it was fun,” White told PBS.

After that, White appeared on many other programs such as “Date with the Angels,” “To Tell the Truth,” and “What’s My Line?,” according to Britannica.

White is also known as the first woman to receive an Emmy nomination and the first woman to win an Emmy Award, according to PBS. She received three Emmy Award nominations during the ‘70s for her role in “Happy Homemaker” on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show.” White won in 1975 and 1976.

Her most well-known role was on “Golden Girls,” which aired in 1985. She earned seven Emmy

nominations and won in 1986 for her acting as the innocent and optimistic Rose Nylund.

After the filming of “Golden Girls” ended in 1992, White continued her acting career until her death, by acquiring small roles in television shows and commercials.

According to USA Today, in 2018, White broke the longest TV career by an entertainer for a female in the Guinness World Records.

Along with her acting career, White was also known for her work as an animal rights activist, according to Britannica.

“Animals don’t lie. Animals don’t criticize. If animals have moody days, they handle them better than humans do,” White wrote in her memoir, published in 2011, “If You Ask Me (And of Course You Won’t).”

Dubai’s World Expo 2020 exhibits create lasting impression

Event promotes sustainability

By Phileine De Widt
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Sharing creations from 192 countries, the World Exhibition 2020 in Dubai focuses on promoting sustainability, mobility and opportunity. The exhibition’s overarching theme is “connecting minds, creating the future.”

The World Expo, also known as the World’s Fair, occurs every five years at a new location.

According to the World Expo 2020 website, “For 170 years, World Expos have provided

a platform to showcase the greatest innovations that have shaped the world we live in today.” Due to COVID, Expo 2020 had to postpone its opening, starting Oct. 1, 2021, and ending Mar. 31, 2022.

The exhibition purposely avoids the summer months to accommodate the high temperatures of Dubai. However, while walking around in December,

short sleeves are recommended as even then, the weather can be hot.

Taking advantage of the strong and abundant sunlight, the exhibition contains numerous sustainable creations, including solar trees that shade the pathways underneath while collecting maximum solar energy.

Throughout the history of the Expo, many structures have been deemed iconic. At Expo 2020, the world’s largest unsupported dome, called Al Wasl dome, can be compared to previous World

Expo centerpieces such as the Crystal Palace, the Eiffel Tower, and the Space Needle.

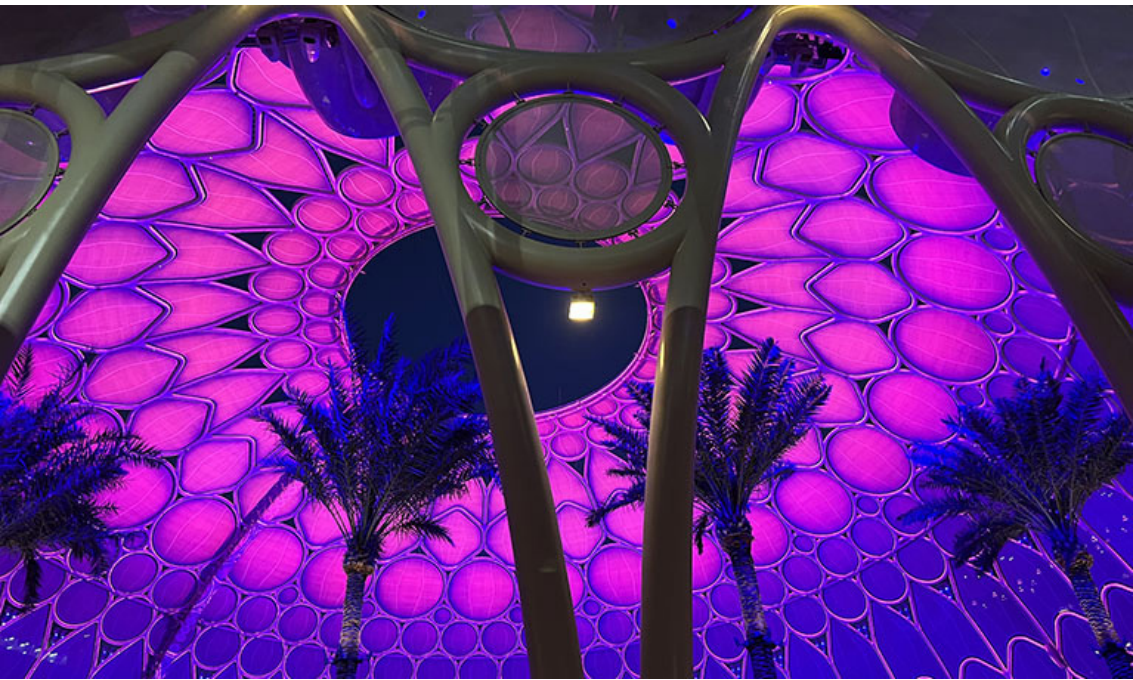
The Al Wasl dome

covers a stage and plaza where visitors can gather and enjoy a breathtaking light show or special performance at night.

For the first time in Expo history, every country has its own pavilion spread throughout the exhibition, which according to CNN, covers 1.7 square-miles of land.

Countries that were unable to create a pavilion themselves due

For the first time in Expo history, every country has its own pavillion.



PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTO

At the World Expo 2020 in Dubai, the central pavillion called the Al Wasl dome, meaning “the connection” in Arabic, displays a nighttime light show in the “urban room”

to internal conflicts were gifted one by the United Arab Emirates. Those pavilions include Lebanon, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and the Bahamas.

All of the pavilions share the countries’ unique stories and contributions towards a sustainable world.

Being the host country, the UAE has an exceptional pavilion

representing a falcon, a staple in the Islamic nation. Inside, it shares the story of how the UAE originated from a desert. The pavilion opens with a pathway of desert sand leading to a rising theater presenting a short film about the country’s evolution.

Of all the pavilions, Saudi Arabia takes the lead as the most impressive. It includes an intel-

ligent use of reflective mirrors and lights to amaze the visitors and present their country as culturally vibrant and sustainable.

Expo 2020 provides an abundance of inspiring creations and stories, and its large and open spaces allow for the strict COVID safety guidelines to be followed.

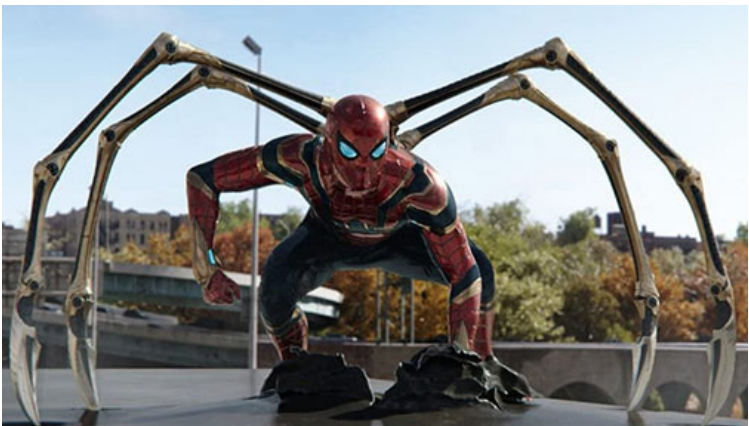
‘Spider-Man: No Way Home’ revives old roles

Returning actors build nostalgia for fans of ‘Spider-Man’

By Wyeth Takayesu
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Spider-Man: No Way Home,” latest iteration in the Spider-Man movie series produced by Marvel Studios and distributed by Sony Pictures, tells an enchanting story in this culmination of all things Spider-Man.

Following the life of the web-slinging superhero after his



IMDB.COM

Spider-Man, played by Tom Holland, defends his home, New York, from unwanted visitors coming from across the multiverse.

identity is revealed in the movie’s predecessor, “Spider-Man: Far From Home,” Peter Parker (Tom Holland) tries to deal with the unwanted publicity by asking the help of the powerful mage Dr. Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch)

However, when a spell to erase people’s memories goes awry, enemies from across the multiverse pour into Earth to wreak havoc, and Spider-Man is in charge of putting them all back where they came from.

This film brings back characters from past Spider-Man movies, bridging the gap between the current Marvel movies and the series of “The Amazing Spider-Man,” directed by Marc Webb in 2012, and “Spider-Man,” directed by Sam Raimi in 2002.

With many actors returning to reprise their award-winning roles, such as Willem Dafoe playing the Green Goblin after his last performance in 2002, longtime fans of the series received a loving nod through countless references to past movies.

Allowing these crossovers to appear in the film was difficult due to Marvel Studios and Sony Pictures sharing ownership over the Spider-Man brand, and many of the actors having aged greatly since their initial performance. However, this did not stop director Jon Watts and

producers Kevin Feige and Amy Pascal.

With modern technology able to make the actors appear much younger on screen and the two companies coming together over a film agreement and splitting profit, fan’s dreams of having characters from all Spider-Man films in one movie became reality.

Breaking box office records mere days after release, the PG13 film became Sony’s top grossing domestic film of all time after bringing in over \$405 million one week after its first air in theatres.

The movie’s beautiful cinematography, clever writing, and thoughtful inclusions of beloved characters from past films won it a 93% on Rotten Tomatoes and an 8.8/10 on IMDb.

Long-term substitute teacher arranges Queen song for chorus to perform at upcoming spring concert

By Libby Mulry
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After graduating from Salem State University, Allan MacTaylor joined the music department as a long-term substitute for Donna O’Neill.

MacTaylor currently teaches students in Piano Lab, Vocal Lab, Music Theory, and chorus.

“In Music Theory I’ve learned so much, and the semester is almost over, so soon I’ll be going into Piano Lab 1 with him, and I’m really excited,” junior Mad-die Machain said.

MacTaylor has a wealth of experience in teaching music.

He was a drill instructor for the

Salem and Beverly High School marching bands. MacTaylor also taught fourth-grade music at the Landmark School, he said.

MacTaylor also has an extensive career in arranging music.

He arranged many pop songs for his high school acapella group and general chorus, he said.

Arranging gave MacTaylor the opportunity to share his work.

“I knew I really loved music, but at the time I felt overlooked as a performer, and a way you can get your work out there without having to be the one who performs it, is by writing and arranging a piece,” he said.

MacTaylor said he wants to give students more opportunities

to do well in performing arts and is currently arranging “Somebody To Love” by Queen for the school chorus.

“By writing an arrangement that will play to the strengths of the group, I believe that the students will be more successful in their performance,” he said.

Students voted on the songs they’d like to sing for the upcoming spring concert.

“It makes you feel like you have a choice in the matter, and that increases the enthusiasm that we feel because it’s a song we want to do, not something that has been pushed on us,” sophomore Adrian Kuehnemund said.

MacTaylor said he doesn’t



WYETH TAKAYESU PHOTO

New music teacher Allan MacTaylor instructs a vocal warm-up in general chorus classroom, helping students practice “Dirait-on.”

want the spirit of the piece to be lost when performed by a chorus.

“With ‘Somebody To Love,’ I’m focusing on when there are background harmonies, making them sound like a big chorus sound

to give the song a different feel while retaining the general atmosphere of the original,” he said.

The chorus will perform the Queen song for the spring concert on April 7.