

the INDEPENDENT

Volume XXXI Number 7

Manchester Essex Regional High School 36 Lincoln Street Manchester, MA 01944

June 9, 2025

Class of 2025 graduates, speakers focus on memories

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As the 111 students of the class of 2025 graduated on June 6, the speeches given by faculty and students focused on memories from their senior year and advice for the future.

The graduation procession entered the field with the traditional bagpipers, followed by members of the School Committee, the faculty, and then the senior class.

The graduation ceremony began with Principal Julie Sgroi thanking family, friends, and the staff for their support and dedication to the class of 2025.

“Thank you for being a steady force behind our graduates. Your support, encouragement, and unwavering belief in them [have] shaped who they are today,” Sgroi said.

Jack Cummins, class president, along with class officers Summer Demeo, Gwendolyn Berger, and Luke Holmes, thanked their class adviser, Barrett Alston, and co-adviser Alicen Shaw for their continuous effort during Senior Week and presented the class gift.

“We are proud to announce that our class gift includes a generous donation towards a new scoreboard, as well as a brand new podium, one that future students will stand behind as they share their voices, ideas, and victories,” Cummins said.



Social studies head Lauren DuBois, valedictorian Whitney Turner, and salutatorian Brigid Carovillano deliver their addresses, while reminiscing on class memories. Main office administrative assistant Mary Lumsden and math teacher Richard Brown attend their final graduation before retirement. Upon officially graduating, the class of 2025 throws their graduation caps into the air.

The Class of 2025 will also be giving a \$500 donation to the class of 2026, he said.

“Number one, we have each other, and we are not alone. Number two, we can shape the arc of history and make it a better future. And number three, don’t be discouraged,” he said.

Salutatorian Brigid Carovil-

lano focused her address on the common experience of failure.

“When we’re young, we’re taught that failure is okay ... we grow up taught the right idea. Unfortunately, I’m not sure how many of us still believe that,” Carovillano said.

She said that people are not defined by the challenges they face

but, rather, by how they respond to them.

Valedictorian Whitney Turner reflected on what learned from her classmates over the past four years.

“As I thought back to our freshman year, I was reminded of how far we’ve come. Four years ago, we were wearing masks and

sitting at individual desks in the cafeteria for lunch,” Turner said.

She said she has learned to stay busy, notice the “little things,” not take herself too seriously, and accept uncertainty.

“I am telling you all of these lessons I’ve learned from you

GRADUATION, page 2

Juniors, seniors, guests enjoy prom at Willowdale Estate

By Riley McKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Both students and faculty agreed that this year’s prom was one of the most successful yet, senior class adviser Barrett Alston said.

He said that his hopes for the event, held at the Willowdale Estate on May 29, were for the students to have a great experience and make memories as well as for the weather and food to be decent.

“If that were to happen, I would consider the night a success, and I feel like that happened,” Alston said.

Junior class adviser Alicen Shaw agreed that the event was a success.

“From my perspective, everybody seemed to be really enjoy-

ing themselves, and the dance floor was packed ... everybody also got to and from prom safely, so that also met my expectations,” she said.

Shaw worked with Alston to organize prom this year in preparation for becoming the senior class adviser next year.

“It’s been a really great experience for me to have going into next year ... I’m taking a lot of notes and making sure that I can do my best to make sure everything runs smoothly,” she said.

One of the only obstacles the school faced was when the sixth bus went to Manchester, New Hampshire, instead of Manchester, Massachusetts, Alston said.

“But it was great. The chaperones all talked a bit, and we tweaked the buses. Everyone got on the same page quickly, and we

made it work,” he said.

Social studies teacher Jennifer Michaud, one of the faculty chaperones, said the night went well.

“This prom was one of the smoothest proms I’ve ever chaperoned,” she said.

Michaud said that upon returning to the venue for the second year in a row, she thought the venue still fits the school’s class size and is visually appealing for photos and outdoor activities.

The estate includes areas for guests to play games, such as bocce, Jenga Giant, and cornhole. “I personally love this venue and think that this should be the prom venue every single year for the rest of humanity,” she said.

The venue and prom night were also enjoyed by students.

“It was good that [the Willowdale Estate] wasn’t that big because then everyone could dance together, and we weren’t too spread out,” junior Megan Graeter said.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

Seniors Alice Moody, Skyler Hough, Lily Stefanovich, and Nina Zalosh sit at their assigned table, waiting for dinner to be served.

Junior Samantha Brigham also enjoyed the dancing.

“The highlight was being on the dance floor with everyone when the DJ started playing songs we knew, and everyone was just having a good time,” she said.

The attendees also enjoyed the buffet.

“The food was very good ...

I also heard positive things from everybody else who was there,” senior class vice president Summer Demeo said.

“My favorite part of the night was being on the dance floor with my friends. I saw so many people around me having a great time, laughing, having fun, and dancing,” she said.

News

Retirement
- page 2

Features

Prom pictures
- pages 4-5

Opinion

Senior farewell
- page 6

Sports

Spring sports
- pages 7

Arts

Graduation map
- page 8

Special education department chair retires after a 38-year career

Jean Tarricone supported students, families, staff

By Annie Pinkin
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Special education department head Jean Tarricone will retire this year, finishing her 38-year career of dedication to supporting students, their families, and staff, special education teacher Jim Umile said.

After graduating from Beverly High School in Beverly, Massachusetts, she decided to pursue a career in education, her second choice being nursing, Tarricone said.

“I always knew that I wanted to help people,” she said.

Before beginning her career, Tarricone earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

She then went on to Boston College, where she received a master’s degree in special education and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) in special education administration, she said.

Prior to her past six years in the special education department,

Tarricone worked as a special education teacher and administrator in Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School and Andover High School.

“I’ve worked in a couple other places, and I’ll just say that it’s been my pleasure and privilege to wrap up my career here,” Tarricone said.

Colleagues of Tarricone spoke with glowing remarks, including Umile, who met Tarricone 20 years ago while working at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, he said.

“She takes her job very seriously, and she is very efficient, very professional, and very knowledgeable. She’s the best,” Umile said.

As department head, Tarricone orchestrates meetings, works with students and their families and teachers, and assists colleagues, he said.

“I don’t think many people know how much work she does before 7:45 [a.m.] and after 2:15 [p.m.]. She does not leave a task undone. She goes above and beyond in everything she does, all while being the nicest person,” Umile said.

Throughout her career, Tarricone has been a great leader, col-



ANNIE PINKIN PHOTO

Special education chair Jean Tarricone finishes the last six years of her career in the school district. She previously worked in Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School and Andover High School.

league, and friend, school adjustment counselor Holly Brabson said.

“She’s my boss, but she is also a good friend of mine,” she said.

Brabson met Tarricone 11 years prior to her coming to the high school while they were both working at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, she said.

Brabson said that in addition to being the “the most impeccably dressed person in the entire building,” Tarricone is also kind,

compassionate, and supportive of all that goes on in the school.

“Ms. Tarricone is always the first one to say ‘That’s amazing, congratulations!’,” she said.

Tarricone said her favorite part of her job is interacting with students, whether through chaperoning this year’s middle school Drama Fest, advising student clubs, or working with students to achieve their goals.

“You can never underestimate the difference that you’ve made

in a student’s or family’s lives,” she said.

Her service to the community will not stop when she retires, as Tarricone plans to advocate for housing issues, work with adults with disabilities, and be more active in local politics during her retirement, she said.

“We have to defend public education and be proud and continue to advocate for what we do because it is very important and irreplaceable,” she said.

ESL coordinator retires after eight years in district

Finishes 45-year long career in education

By August Capotosto
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After working in the Manchester Essex School District for eight years, English as a second language (ESL) coordinator Leslie Beaulieu is retiring.

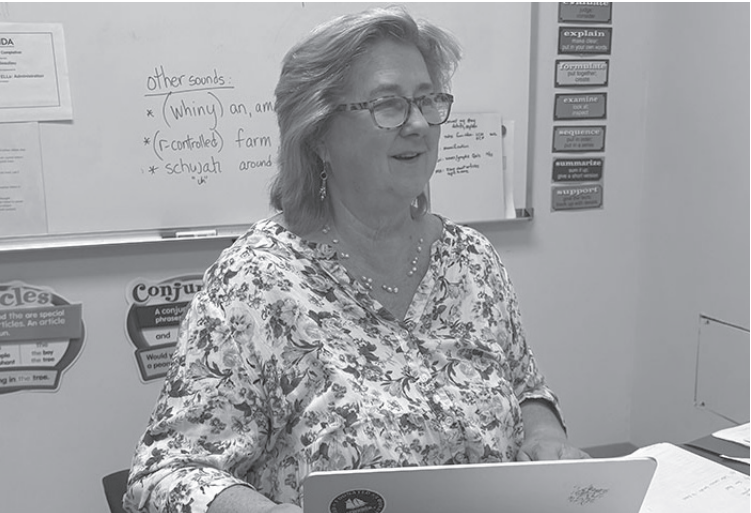
Beaulieu earned her Bachelor’s in Science from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1979.

She later received her Master’s degree in education from Tufts University in 1981.

“During my time [at Tufts], they had us teaching full time during the day and attending class at night; it was the hardest year of my life,” she said.

Before joining the district as its sole kindergarten through high school ESL coordinator in 2018, Beaulieu taught for one year at Georgetown High School and three years at Lynnfield High School.

Prior to her position as an ESL



AUGUST CAPOTOSTO PHOTO

Prior to becoming an English as a second language (ESL) coordinator, Leslie Beaulieu also taught science for 33 years.

coordinator, she worked as a science teacher for 33 years.

Beaulieu taught biology at Medford High School and Lynn Public School but mostly taught pre-school through ninth grade at private schools such as Brookwood, Park School, and Shore Country Day, where she worked for 12 years.

“It’s all been really, really fun, but I’m just the kind of person who can’t do the same thing forever,” she said.

As an ESL coordinator, Beaulieu said that the number of students she works with varies dras-

tically each year.

When a student entering the district requires help adapting to the English language, Beaulieu works with them regularly, checking in as they develop skills. She said this averages to around eight students per year.

Beaulieu said she also works with students who have become former English learners yet still require monitoring.

“So the range is between six to eight kids that I meet on a daily basis, to more than 20,” she said.

Middle School Principal Joanne Maino said she appreci-

ates Beaulieu’s open communication with faculty and her care for her students.

“Through facilitating conversations between teachers and parents, making sure families are understanding what’s being said and what’s available to them, she’s such a strong advocate for all of her students,” Maino said.

She said Beaulieu works towards making sure the curriculum is adapted based on what teachers have learned in their Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) certification course.

The state of Massachusetts requires this certification for all teachers to ensure the implementation of strategies that benefit English language learners.

Maino said she works closely with Beaulieu to stay updated on proficiency and ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) testing in middle school.

Freshman Milla Mavarez Perez said that after she entered the third grade at Essex Elementary School, mainly speaking Spanish, Beaulieu was accommodating and engaging.

“I remember she used to give my brother and I a kind of mini game to remember how to learn English,” she said.

Mavarez Perez said that after becoming fluent around fourth or fifth grade, she stopped regular visits with Beaulieu.

“It was nice seeing her around when I came to [the high school] even though I didn’t need her to teach me anything anymore,” she said.

Beaulieu said that switching to ESL-centered teaching has allowed her to maintain an active lifestyle while helping also others.

As the only ESL coordinator in the district, she said the constant movement between the high school, middle school, and elementary schools required her to maintain a strictly organized schedule.

Beaulieu said that during retirement, she plans to travel and focus on personal development.

“It’s good timing because I’m getting older, and it would be fun to have time to do other things than just work,” she said.

Maino said that after working closely with Beaulieu for eight years, they’ve bonded over their shared passion for education.

“She’s a really diligent worker and takes her responsibilities very seriously. We’ve been very lucky to have her, and she’ll be hard to replace,” she said.

CONTINUATIONS

GRADUATION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

because I think it’s easy to forget the impact we all have on each other,” Turner said.

Social studies department head Lauren DuBois was elected as the faculty speaker for the class of 2025. During her address, she

shared her admiration for the graduating students.

“I am in constant awe of your unique talents, your lofty goals, and what you have already achieved. The more I learn about you, the more in awe I become,” DuBois said.

She spoke about the upcoming retirement of main office administrative assistant Mary Lumsden and math teacher Richard Brown.

“Rick Brown, you have influenced so many lives in your time here ... Mary, you were the first face most of us saw when we walked through the door and have made us feel welcomed ever since,” DuBois said.

Superintendent Pam Beaudoin closed out the speeches before presenting the students with their diplomas.

“Know your independent

spirit; you’ve charted your own course and met challenges with heart and purpose ... we can’t wait to see the future that you will create,” she said.

After students threw up their caps in celebration, they met their family and friends on the field as their class song, “You’re Gonna Go Far,” by Noah Kahan, played over the speakers.

For more graduation photos, turn to page 3.



Class president Jack Cummins, vice president Summer Demeo, secretary Gwen Berger, and treasurer Luke Homes.



Principal Julie Sgroi welcomes the graduates, friends, and families.



Harper Jay and Colin Conway.



Zubin Pathria.



The journalism seniors pose with journalism teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon.



Brian Rosen applauds his classmates while other seniors look at their diplomas.



Ali and Talya Erdoğan.



Luke Donohoe, Avery Dott, Eoin Doyle, and Brooke Doyon.



Leigha Akerley, Basim Arif, Ella Arntsen, and Jack Bediz.



Josh Cohen and Isabelle and Charlotte Donnellan Valade sing "Rivers and Roads" by The Head and the Heart at Baccalaureate.



Nick Brown and Theo Caplan.



Ella Arntsen decorated her graduation cap with the logo for the College of the Holy Cross.



Seniors begin their march to Hyland Field from the Manchester Memorial Elementary School.



Caroline Willwerth, Tim Wonson, Emily Woodman, Afrodhiti Xhalia, Nina Zalosh, and Milo Zeltzer.

MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTOS



Scan this QR code to see more pictures from graduation 2025!



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Juniors Penelope Riggs, Violet Jakes, Anna Gardner, and Megan Graeter.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Senior Luke Holmes and junior Laila Mears.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Chaperones Lauren DuBois, John Mullady, Courtney Brown, and baby Keely.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Chaperones William Novak, Gillian Polk, and Jessica Tran.



LAUREN DUBOIS PHOTO
Juniors Zach Hurd, Lily Oliver, Steel McDonald, Charlie Thurlow, Lucy Parmelee, and chaperone Lauren Woodcock.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Seniors Henry Stevens and Fiona Flynn.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Seniors Megan Hurd and Olivia Kent.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Junior Brynn Duffy and senior Lola Fortunato-McElwain.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Juniors Samantha Brigham and Xan Tomaio.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Juniors Teyah Flemming and Elsa Healey.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Prom attendees enjoyed dinner under a tented outdoor venue.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Junior Abigail Murray and senior Alexis Garfield.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Seniors Charlie Rubens, Basim Arif, Ben Jacobsen, and Jack Cummins.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Junior Jack McCavanagh.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Seniors Ella Arntsen and Charlotte Crocker.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Chaperone Robert Bilsbury and senior Jack Lawler.



CHARLOTTE DONNELLAN VALADE PHOTO
The journalism class with adviser and English teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Sophomore Caiden Brennock and senior Cian Brennock.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Seniors Charlotte Donnellan Valade, Tori Moulton, and Isabelle Donnellan Valade.



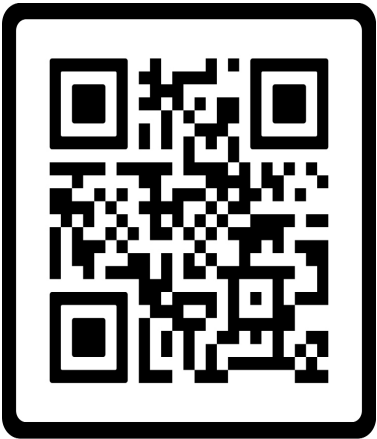
MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO
Seniors Jarrett Croft, Luke Donohoe, and Hayden Spencer.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Seniors Ian Campbell and Cole Cote.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO
Seniors Tess Carpenter and Sophia Marletta.



Scan this QR code to see more photos from prom!

SENIOR FAREWELL

Journalism seniors reflect on their experience on staff

By Stella Straub
and
Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

As our high school careers have come to a close, we have found ourselves reflecting on the past three years we’ve spent as a journalism class.

When we first joined this class as nervous sophomores, we had no idea the impact it would have on us. We were unaware of how it would broaden our perspectives and be unlike any class we had ever taken.

Journalism has been a special experience.

We’ve become accustomed to spending our Monday evenings at the school in our sweats, sharing baked goods and gossip while we work. The environment is that of a supportive family; we share an understanding of the difficulties that come with being on the paper, whether that be tracking down a sophomore for a headshot, turning around a last-minute article, or facing our first spelling error (canon event). But we also share an understanding of the value of this unusual class. It has taught us how to make new connections, manage our time, ask questions, and given us the confidence to be nosy.

We’ve all enjoyed getting to read Gwen’s quirky reviews of North Shore restaurants like Atomic Cafe and West Street Cafe, and she’s become known as our in-house food critic. While Gwen has earned a reputation on the staff for her pessimistic arguments, like writing the negation for our staff ed “You’re never too old to have a stuffed animal,” she has also displayed some of the most creative ways of arguing her side of things, like arguing that stuffed animals are harmful to the environment. We’re going to miss her fanciful and whimsical writing style and her appreciation of our local businesses.

Sam makes sure to keep us all

up to date on how our Manchester-Essex sports teams are performing, but we’ve also been able to see his strong opinion-writing skills through pieces like “State suffers deficiency in competent bilingual medical providers.” Sam has always brought a calming energy to our journalism classroom, and we all appreciate his light-hearted energy when things get stressful.

Alessia showed our staff her skills in a wide array of areas, from her excellent cartoon artistry to her poignant opinion pieces. She always got us thinking with her articles like

“Students should place restrictions on internet use” and “Contemporary music theory courses must be diversified.” Alessia also made sure to always keep us up to date with the goings-on of MERHS Drama and our high school’s music department. She has been a witty, creative, and thoughtful presence on our staff, and we’ve loved being able to read her work over the past few years.

Isabelle became known for her award-winning in-depth feature pieces, including “Reflecting on Hardy Nalley, Manchester Essex legacy” and her article on MERHS teachers balancing being parents with their roles as educators. More often than not, she took on three or even four articles per issue and was always willing to step up and tackle big pieces. We’ve enjoyed Isabelle’s relentless work ethic, supportive energy, and delicious baked goods over the past three years.

Although Sabine joined journalism later, it would be impossible to tell that from her work. She took the time to learn the rules and scoring of sports she had never played or watched before in order to do justice to the teams she often wrote about. She didn’t back down from writing challenging Pro/Con opinion articles, even when they were controversial, such as “CON:



COURTESY OF THE INDEPENDENT SENIOR EDITORS

Senior journalism students Gwen Berger, Sabine Cooper, Hannah Davis, Summer Demeo, Isabelle Donnellan Valade, Sam Heanue, Alessia Omari, Stella Straub, and Whitney Turner worked to create 20 issues of The Independent while in high school. They became strong reporters and writers.

Should math and science courses permit test corrections for full credit?” and “CON: Is Artificial Intelligence beneficial for learning?” Sabine blended into our class perfectly and has been an integral part of our little group.

It’s clear to say that Hannah definitely brought the most whimsy to class; she was well-known for her pieces on music and film, and we’ve all gained a better appreciation for the arts thanks to Hannah’s work. She also demonstrated her layout

skills by putting together our holiday centerspread and our Valentine’s Day centerspread. Hannah has also written some of our best staff editorials. Over the past three years, she has been a force of positive energy and creativity on our staff.

Summer has managed to keep our busy staff organized, creating article lists and coordinating the distribution of the paper each month. On top of writing her thorough news and features articles and staying positive, she

has repeatedly stepped up behind the scenes to help our paper run smoothly. Whether that meant writing additional articles, taking on the “Student Speak” column, or stepping in as a page editor on layout night to help keep class short, Summer has played a vital role on the staff.

Now, as we go out into the world, we hope to carry these skills with us, and we hope to continue reading many more issues of the Independent as it enters its 32nd year.

Faculty Adviser
Mary Buckley-Harmon

Editors-in-chief
Whitney Turner
Stella Straub

Managing Editor
Summer Demeo

News Editor
Gwen Berger

the
INDEPENDENT

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

Editorial space is available to all MERHS students, faculty, and community members.

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.

Manchester-Essex Regional High School
36 Lincoln St, Manchester MA 01944
978-526-4412 newspaper@mersd.org
online at <http://www.merhs.mersd.org/domain/702>

Features Editor
August Capotosto

Opinion Editor
Alessia Omari

Sports Editors
Sabine Cooper
Bissy Mitrano

Arts Editors
Hannah Davis
Isabelle Donnellan Valade

Post-season updates

BOYS' TENNIS



COURTESY OF CAMERON MOLINARE

As of June 9, the No. 1 seed boys' tennis team advanced to the MIAA Division IV State Championship.

They will face the winner of Lynnfield vs. Sturgis Charter West in the State Championship on June 14.

After ending the regular season with a 17-1 record, they won 5-0 at home vs. Rockport, 5-0 at home vs. Westport, 4-1 at home vs. Hamilton-Wenham, and 5-0 vs. Cohasset on their way to the State Championship.

They are led by coach Robert Bilsbury and captains Jack Cummins, Charlie Langendorf, Finn Birkeland, and Jack Lawler.

GIRLS' TENNIS



COURTESY OF CAMERON MOLINARE

As of June 9, the No. 6 seed girls' tennis team advanced to the MIAA Division IV Final Four and will play Bromfield away on June 11.

Finishing 11-8 in the regular season, they beat Rockport 4-1 at home, Amesbury 5-0 at home, and Monomoy Regional 4-1 away in their playoff run.

The team is coached by Barrett Alston and captained by Nina Zalosh, and Grace Scarbrough.

BOYS' LACROSSE



COURTESY OF CAMERON MOLINARE

As of June 9, the No 3 seed boys' lacrosse team will play in the MIAA Division IV Final Four away vs. Norwell on June 11. If they beat Norwell, they will face the winner of Cohasset vs. Nantucket in the State Championship.

After going 11-8 in the regular season, they defeated East Bridgewater 17-4 at home, Pentucket 9-8 in overtime at home, and Weston 8-7 away to reach the Final Four.

The team is led by coach Wyatt Chittick and captains Jarrett Croft, Hayden Spencer, Charlie Thurlow, and Connor Dickson.

GIRLS' LACROSSE



COURTESY OF CHASE ANDERSON

The No. 9 seed girls' lacrosse team was eliminated from the MIAA Division IV State Tournament in the Sweet Sixteen after losing 7-6 away to Nantucket in overtime on June 6.

The team went 11-6 in the regular season and won 17-2 at home against Mount Greylock Regional School in their playoff debut before losing to Nantucket.

Coach Nan Gorton and captains Brigid Carovillano, Charlotte Crocker, and Sylvie McCavanagh led the team on their run.

