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Senior, junior prom to take place at Danversport

Photography to include interactive photo mirror, video revolving platform

By Carson Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Junior and senior prom will occur on the evening of May 26 at Danversport, located in Danvers, senior class adviser Erin Fortunato said.

Seniors began purchasing tickets on March 1, and juniors began purchasing tickets on March 21. Students can also bring people from other schools or from lower grades with the purchase of a ticket for \$80 and a permission slip, she said.

Students also have to sign a contract in order to attend prom. When they sign it, students agree to random bag checks, random breathalyzer tests, and to attend the prom substance-free, senior class vice president Aidan Cunningham said.

In terms of food, Danversport caters their own events, and students will be able to choose what they want from their menu, Fortunato said.

"There are a lot of different options, so once the ticket sales close, we are going to send out a Google form with a bunch of different options on it for people to decide what they want to get," she said.

Due to the district policy, a school bus will take the students from the school to the venue, and then bring them back after prom is over, Fortunato said.

Cunningham said the prom planning process has taken over a year.

There are a lot of moving parts that you have to get right. Not only do you need a venue, but you also need a date, food, photography, transportation, chaperones, and more. As a group, we split up the jobs so that it was more manageable, he said.

Senior and Student Council member Katie Kuhl said there were many different difficult



COURTESY OF AIDAN CUNNINGHAM

The 2022 prom will be taking place at Danversport on May 26. Students will be required to sign a contract to attend prom, agreeing to random bag and breathalyzer checks.

parts of the planning process, but the biggest was the cost.

"We had to assume that we would have enough money to cover everything since until November of this school year, we didn't know that we had enough

money for sure," she said.

For prom photos, a photographer has been hired for all of prom. This photographer will be present for the photos taken at Tuck's Point prior to prom, and will be present at Danversport for

the majority of the night, Kuhl said.

Another option for photography is the 360° camera booth. It can capture short videos of people dancing with their friends. Also,
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Class officers announce Senior Week activities

By Emma Ketchum
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

The class of 2022 officers have been working hard to plan a Senior Week full of activities, and they are excited everything has been officially scheduled, senior class president Lukas Shan said.

After having prom on May 26, Senior Week will start on May 30, which is the following Monday.

The first activity planned on Monday will be bowling at Cape Ann Lanes. The class was able to rent the whole venue for the day just for the senior class, Shan said.

Tuesday will consist of multiple activities, the first being a day at Singing Beach. This activity will be more student organized because there won't be any chaperones involved.

After the beach day, the senior class will have dinner at Tuck's Point with all of the families included as well. This will then be followed by the senior sunset, where the class will watch the sunset from Tuck's Point together, Shan said.



WIKIPEDIA.COM

Senior Week activities will include bowling, a trip to the beach, dinner at Tuck's Point, and a day at Six Flags New England.

"We started the year with the senior sunrise so we thought to bring it full circle we could end with the senior sunset," Shan said.

Wednesday consists of the "biggest" activity planned which is traveling to Six Flags New England. The senior class will travel to Agawam, Mass. together and spend the whole day on the rides and walking around Six Flags, Shan said.

Thursday's activities include Baccalaureate rehearsal in the morning with a catered lunch, most likely from Flip the Bird, and then the Baccalaureate ceremony at the end of the day.

Baccalaureate will include senior awards, student performanc-

es, a candle lighting ceremony, and a slideshow the class officers have prepared, Shan said.

Finishing Senior Week, the graduation ceremony will take place on Fri. June 3, he said.

Shan said he and the other senior class officers Alex Briggs, Aidan Cunningham, Theo Brown, along with student representatives Andrew Torri and Katie Kuhl worked extremely hard to make senior week possible.

"We really tried to make it as fun, exciting, and as memorable as possible. I think it's going to be a legendary Senior Week," Shan said.

Class treasurer Alex Briggs, who helped plan the week, is

SENIOR WEEK, page 3

School Committee makes budget cuts to offset increasing staffing costs

K-6 foreign language, could be eliminated

By Ella Chafe
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With the FY-23 budget at \$28,925,987, the district had to make decisions to compensate for the \$1,130,000 shortage.

School Committee member Chris Reed said the budget has increased by 5 percent, more than the 3.5 percent they try to cap it at.

Contributing to the rise of the budget are teachers' salaries and rising healthcare costs, he said.

Teacher salaries are 85 percent of the budget, Reed said. Their salaries increase by 2.5 percent each year due to COLA (Cost of living adjustment) on top of any raises earned, he said.

Special Education costs have also risen, as it's the district's commitment to meet the needs of every student, Reed said.

To offset the costs, the School Committee chose specific areas to cut from the budget.

The operation reductions include continuing to reduce bussing, to save \$50,000. The late bus will be eliminated, for \$20,000. The total operational reductions equal \$70,000.

Staffing and program reductions include eliminating a high school math teacher position through attrition for \$85,000.

The School Committee may also choose to offer fewer high school art classes for \$35,000 and move instrumental music lessons to be

after-school and fee-based, saving \$65,000. The total staffing and program reduction is \$270,000 for the district.

An elementary classroom teacher position will also be eliminated for \$85,000 as will the K-6 foreign language program for \$65,000. The total staffing and

DISTRICT BUDGET, page 3

'Once both town meetings pass the budget, it's formally complete.'

- PAM BEAUDOIN

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Robotics team competes in FIRST Robotics Competition

Despite challenges,
team 2084
experiences success
during matches

By Caroline MacKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After competing during the weekends of March 19 and March 26, the Robotics team, is waiting to hear whether they can compete in the District Championship on April 13 to April 16.

Junior Alexander Wolf, team member and programming and electronic specialist, said the team competed in nine qualification matches throughout both weekends.

Each year the competition consists of specific games or tasks the robots have to complete, Wolf said.

This year, the robots had to pick up and throw giant tennis balls into two different goals to

get points.

Then the robots have to climb a jungle gym. Each game is three minutes long and the drive team controls the robot for the majority of the duration of the game, junior team captain Ella Warnock said.

Wolf said during the first weekend of matches, the team faced difficulty with assembling the robots but remained optimistic.

“We had some difficulties and completed the robot a little bit late. We had to work on finishing it and getting it working during the competition itself. We prevailed and were able to compete the next weekend with a fully finished robot,” he said.

Ella Warnock said the team did “incredible” during elimination rounds the second weekend, allowing them to make the semi-finals.

“We then went on to win the Judges Award, which means that the judges wanted to acknowledge the work our team has done, and they specifically listed our



COURTESY OF ELLA WARNOCK

The Robotics team received a Judges Award and may advance to the District Championship of the FIRST Robotics Competition after performing successfully on the weekends of March 19 and 26.

work with our team sponsors and our work in encouraging women in STEM,” she said.

Warnock also was nominated and reached the semi-finals for the Dean’s List Award, which

is for exemplary students both in school and in First Robotics Competition, she said.

Robotics team mentor Ken Warnock said the team remained positive throughout the competi-

tion, despite minor difficulties.

“There was a lot of fixing going on all night and day. It’s easy to get angry and mad at each other in crunch time, but I didn’t see any of that with this team,” he said.

Women in Leadership Workshop helps female students create friendships, learn new skills

By Hadley Levendusky
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors were selected to attend a Women in Leadership Workshop in the gymnasium.

The workshop was held on Thurs., March 24 and led by Deb Hult, the co-founder and owner of Core Trainings.

There were 37 female students who were nominated by the guidance department, athletic department, and school administration, athletic director Cami Molinare said.

“The 33 students were all emerging leaders that we think would benefit from a workshop like this,” she said.

The invited students were exempt from classes on March 24 and received lunch from Bravo by the Sea.



COURTESY OF CAMI MOLINARE

Female 9-12th-grade students, who attended a Women in Leadership Workshop, work together in hands-on activities.

Hult talked from the heart and shared her stories during the workshop, Molinare said.

Throughout the workshop, the

female students worked together, Molinare said.

“It is an empowerment dynamic workshop. It’s very hands-on [and the students] work with each other to build a community and friendship amongst one another,” she said.

Freshman Summer Demeo attended the workshop and said she enjoyed working with people in the other grades.

“It was nice to see people that I wouldn’t normally talk to as much,” she said.

Junior Kendall Newton agreed.

“It was nice to connect with other girls in different grades. I left knowing more people than I did when I came in,” she said.

Dean of students Dan Richards experienced this workshop before at Georgetown High School and

thought it would be very beneficial at the school, Molinare said.

Three years ago, Georgetown brought together 50 students from within the Cape Ann League for a workshop.

When Richards came to Molinare with the idea, she said she was immediately on board.

“I have been to several women in leadership workshops and have found it incredibly helpful because I learned all those tools as a woman that would help me define all of these ideas in a workplace and in sports,” she said.

Demeo said she liked that the workshop talked about self-esteem for girls.

“It’s not something that is talked about a lot,” she said.

‘It was nice to connect with other girls in different grades. I left knowing more people than I did when I came in.’

-KENDALL NEWTON

School administers YRBS Survey

By Jordie Cornfield
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students in grades 9-12 took the statewide Youth Risk Behavior Survey (referred to as YRBS) on March 29.

The anonymous survey has been administered in all Massachusetts high schools since 1990. It was created by the Center for Disease Control to monitor students’ health. The questions surround students’ diets, sexual behavior, drug and alcohol use, and history of mental health struggles.

“We do the survey every other year to gather data in places we should be really concerned about,

such as vaping, dating violence, or alcohol use,” Principal Patricia Puglisi said.

The school administration uses the results from the survey to influence future programs.

“We saw a lot of mental health issues in the last survey, which was in 2018. We brought in Minding Your Mind and ME Hub to provide resources for the school community,” Puglisi said.

Some students question whether the survey will be an accurate representation of the school population.

“I’m sure that a lot of people didn’t really answer honestly even though we were supposed to,” junior Isak Gustafson said.

Puglisi said the survey has proven to be an accurate representation of the students, regardless of some outliers who lie on certain questions.



JORDIE CORNFELD PHOTO

Students in all grades spent their U blocks taking the statewide Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which included questions regarding students’ physical and emotional well-being.

“You can see a correlation between school, state, and national numbers,” Puglisi said.

Senior Isabella Hadaegh said she thinks some students may lie on the survey because of how

personal the questions are.

“People would feel so much more uncomfortable answering the questions if the survey wasn’t anonymous. Some of the questions were kind of intrusive,” she said.

Junior Anna Brzezinski believes students had no motivation to be honest, she said.

“I think the survey did not serve its purpose. People were not motivated to be honest, they just made jokes about it and/or rushed through it to be able to do what they wanted during U block,” she said.

Freshman Libby Lawler said the questions ranged from somewhat complicated to answer to relatively simple.

“Some of the questions were a little intense, and other questions were pretty easily answered,” she said.

Ukraine-Russia history helps explain ongoing war dispute

Ukrainian independence ignored, at risk

By Phileine de Widt
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As the war between Ukraine and Russia unfolds, the history between both countries can help create understanding of the conflict.

The beginning of the Ukraine-Russia conflict can be traced back to the early 1700s when

Ukraine’s territory was first added to the Russian Empire. Then, with the rise of the Soviet Union in 1922, Ukraine failed at its first attempt to gain independence and became a part of the Union.

Though Ukraine was always part of a bigger empire or union, there were many traces of independence and Ukrainian nationalism.

Historian Anne Applebaum told CBS news, “[Ukraine] always had its own language. It

always had its own status inside the USSR.”

In response to this growing independence, specifically agricultural and economical independence, Soviet Union dictator Joseph Stalin ordered a Union-wide famine in 1932 called the Holodomor which killed millions of Ukrainian people.

According to an article by

Keith Gessen on theguardian.com, “[Holodomor] was consistently referred to as a deliberate act by Stalin (and by extension

Russia) to destroy the Ukrainian nation.”

Despite these many challenges, Ukraine maintained its nationalism and gained its independence with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

As a country, Ukraine now tries to make political decisions for itself. However, due to its neighboring position and history with Russia, Ukraine’s independence and ability to create Western alliances have been at risk.



PIXABAY.COM

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, daily anti-war demonstrations and protests broke out around the world.

In 2014, with Vladimir Putin as their leader, Russian forces seized the Crimean Peninsula and, according to “The Roots of the Ukraine War: How the Crisis Developed” on nytimes.com, “Moscow also fomented a separatist rebellion that took control of part of the Donbas region.” Both conflicts were in the South-East parts of Ukraine and have caused an ongoing war.

Now, Putin has started an additional war between the two nations, by invading and bombarding Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

In Putin’s address to his coun-

try on the President of Russia Website, he said the reasons for the attacks are to protect Russian citizens in Ukraine who have experienced the “humiliation and genocide” performed by the Kyiv Regime since 2014.

“[Russia] will seek to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians,” Putin said.

Additionally, Putin is against the eastward expansion of NATO, an intergovernmental military alliance that Ukraine

wants to join. “Ukraine joining NATO is a direct threat to Russia’s security,” Putin said.

In 2008, NATO made a promise that Ukraine would be a member one day. However, it was “a promise of membership without any of the actual benefits,” Gessen wrote.

Now that Putin has invaded Ukraine, NATO members cannot help fight without involving all 30 NATO countries and initiating another world war. Instead, they have provided money, military equipment and diplomatic support.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian citizens, and volunteers, have been putting up a fight, and refuted many who thought this war would end quickly and easily in favor of Russia.

According to an article by Pamela Falk on cbsnews.com, over 10 million Ukrainian people, of the total 43 million population, have been displaced. Of those people, 3.5 million have sought refuge in surrounding countries.

“[This war] has become the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II,” Falk writes.

SCAR attends Connections Conference

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Hosted by Sutton High School, the Student Coalition Against Racism (SCAR) attended the Connections Conference on March 18.

Connections is a group of Sutton High School students and staff committed to making the community a more welcoming place for all students. They focus on issues connected to prejudice, bias, and privilege.

SCAR has a similar goal: to create a more diverse school culture and build a community where equity and equality is present and sustainable for all, co-adviser and English teacher



COURTESY OF ALLISON KRAUSE

Members of the Student Coalition Against Racism attended the Connections Conference at Sutton High School where they learned about issues connected to prejudice and privilege.

Liz Edgerton said.

SCAR members were able to participate in workshops and got to hear from keynote speaker Dr. Ousmane K. Power-Greene, Edgerton said.

“What Dr. Power-Greene spoke about goes beyond what

we are able to teach here, and we learned so much from what he had to say,” she said.

Sophomore co-leader Caroline Doucette said the workshops consisted of a speaker and an opportunity for students to interact and engage with each other.

Doucette said she attended “Celebrating Our Traditions” led by the Cultural Student Union at Ashland High School.

They talked about many countries in Africa and Southern Asia and the traditional clothing, music, food, and holidays that are celebrated, Doucette said.

“The students that presented India and Bangladesh brought in Henna, a traditional form of body art, and they chose a few students and did a traditional Henna pattern on their hands,” she said.

Doucette said she is able to use what she learned in this workshop to be more educated on other cultures.

Senior co-leader Emily Doucette said she had a similar experience.

Doucette said she attended a workshop called “Colorism in the Beauty Industry.”

The speaker touched on the

issue of discrimination of darker skin tones and how beauty standards are almost always colorist. Afterwards, students were put into groups to discuss their thoughts, Doucette said.

“The group discussion was very eye-opening because I got to talk to people who this issue has affected and hear about their personal struggles with colorism,” she said.

SCAR attended the same conference last year, but because of COVID, it was over Zoom.

Co-adviser and English teacher Allison Krause said the members who went last year were really trying to make it happen again because of how much they enjoyed going

“These kinds of opportunities inspire us to take action in our school community, and this particular experience gave us practical tools on how to do that,” Krause said.

CONTINUATIONS

PROM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

there will be an interactive photo mirror that prints out photos, Cunningham said.

Cunningham said he is excited for prom and to see the night come together.

“We haven’t had a dance since freshman year, so I think a lot of us are really looking forward to it. I have spent a lot of time planning prom with the other Student Council members, so I am excited to see all of our hard work finally come together,” he said.

Kuhl said everyone she has talked to is looking forward to prom. “This is our only prom, so we

have to make it great. I think we accomplished that with the photo mirror and the revolving video platform,” she said.

SENIOR WEEK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

proud of their work and is looking forward to all the activities.

“I think all the Senior Week activities are going to be very fun and everyone is going to have a good time,” she said.

Senior Chris Daly is also looking forward to Senior Week and bonding with the grade.

“I’m looking forward to dominating bowling and spending time with everyone in the grade before we graduate since we had a shorter high school experience

with COVID,” he said.

This year, seniors will be required to sign the MERHS Student Prom/Senior Activity Contract.

The contract forbids substance use during any of these activities, Briggs said.

According to the contract, any student who does not adhere to the contract rules may face disciplinary consequences, which may include restriction from future school functions, such as graduation.

BUDGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

program reduction is \$270,000 for the district.

The total reduction value for the district is \$460,000, and

\$670,000 from the reserve fund will be used to make up the difference.

Superintendent Pam Beaudoin said the School Committee finished the budget at the beginning of February.

The budget is voted on during a town meeting in Manchester and one in Essex, she said.

“Once both town meetings pass the budget, it’s formally complete,” Beaudoin said.

The Manchester town meeting is on Mon., April 25, and the Essex town meeting is on Mon., May 2.

Foreign language department head Michelle Magaña spoke about the importance of elementary foreign language and how its removal will negatively affect

students.

She said elementary school foreign language allows students to accept a foreign language as a natural course, and it becomes a part of their learning.

“If you start later in age the process of learning really slows down,” she said.

BUDGET CUTS AND MONEY SAVED

Total operational reduction, \$70,000.
Total staffing and program reduction, \$270,000.
Total district reduction value, \$460,000.
Reserve fund, \$670,000.

Comfort Cases Club starts fundraiser, offers rewards

Students collect supplies for children in foster care system

By Amy Vytopilova
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Juniors Ava Ricci and Sophie Zalosh established a fundraiser for the Comfort Cases club, a non-profit organization that spreads awareness about children in foster care across the country.

Each grade is seeking specific donations for children in the foster care system. The grade that collects the most donations will

get one free journal skip from the English department, Zalosh said.

The organization is very important and helps children around the country, she said.

“Comfort Cases helps kids in

the foster care system that do not have anything except for a trash bag to keep their few personal items. The organization collects all sorts of donations and places them into backpacks for kids across the U.S,” Ricci said.

Zalosh said she wanted the high school to get more involved in raising awareness for the club.

“We really wanted to gain support from other students in

‘Comfort Cases helps kids in the foster care system that do not have anything except for a trash bag to keep their few personal items.’

-AVA RICCI

the school because of how important it is to help this cause. Ava and I thought that having a prize of a journal skip would be a good motivator to donate,” she said.

In the past, Comfort Cases has received donations from local businesses, but now they are collecting them from students.

Senior Gracie Susko, a member of the club, is glad she got involved and wants more



AMY VYTOPILOVA PHOTO

Junior Sophie Zalosh stands in front of the Comfort Cases Donation boxes, where grades drop off their donations to compete for the prize of a journal skip as part of a fundraiser for foster children.

students to donate.

“All donations have to be new and unused. We want people to donate and help those in need. It’s a great way to give back to the community,” she said.

Zalosh hopes to have more

fundraisers for the club in the future.

“If all goes well, I hope to have a lot more fundraisers next year with more people involved. It really is a great organization, and a lot of the members enjoy

being a part of the club. It is very rewarding,” Zalosh said.

All donations can be placed in the labeled boxes outside of the high school front office. Comfort Cases will stop collecting donations on April 8.

Students support, work at Cure Rare Disease

Students volunteer at non-profit, pursue passions in genetics, marketing, business

By Ema O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Senior Katie Kuhl and sophomore Avabella Mitrano are pursuing their passions for genetics and marketing while volunteering for Cure Rare Disease.

According to the company’s website, Cure Rare Disease is a non-profit biotechnology company that creates individualized therapeutics for those who are impacted by rare diseases.

The company was founded by the current president of Cure Rare Disease, Rich Horgan, Kuhl said.

“Rich’s brother, Terry Horgan, was diagnosed with Duchenne

muscular dystrophy at a very young age, so he’s always had a passion for seeking treatments for rare diseases,” she said.

Kuhl said she heard about the company when Rich Horgan spoke at a DECA state competition in 2020.

“Since I’m impacted by a rare disease, I immediately took interest,” she said.

Kuhl said she has hypermobility type Ehler-Danlos syndrome, which is a connective tissue disorder that is caused by defects in a protein called collagen.

“With this disease, stuff like exercise is not really possible for me,” she said.

Kuhl reached out to the company in January of 2021 and

worked as an intern until she became the development specialist for Cure Rare Disease.

“My role includes managing interns, supporting fundraisers, donation acknowledgments, and working with patient families,” she said.

Math and business teacher

Dean Martino said he has enjoyed seeing Kuhl develop her passion for genetics and rare diseases.

“Katie is a natural leader and she is a

determined and focused leader in anything she does,” he said.

Mitrano is also currently pursuing her passion for business and marketing by working as an intern for the company.

“When Mr. Martino posted about the company on Google

‘Since I’m impacted by a rare disease, I immediately took interest.’

-KATIE KUHL



EMA O’NEIL PHOTOS

Senior Katie Kuhl and sophomore Avabella Mitrano volunteer for Cure Rare Disease to support the company’s goals of creating individualized treatment and aid for people afflicted by rare diseases.

Classroom, I immediately reached out to Cure Rare Disease and Katie about volunteering,” she said.

As an intern, Mitrano helps out with auctions and fundraisers, and she also reaches out to other companies and organizations, Mitrano said.

“I feel like I’m getting really

good experiences out of this internship, even if I don’t know what I want to do with it in the future,” she said.

Martino said he was pleased that Mitrano stepped up and took on this type of leadership role.

“I’m very excited to see how deeply she becomes invested in it,” he said.

Minding Your Mind speaker tells her story

By Finn O’Hara
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In order to help students seek help or care for their mental health, the high school brought Elizabeth O’Neill, from Minding Your Mind, to present to students. The presentation was met with mixed reviews.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said the school has heard concerns regarding mental health issues.

“We had some people reach out and we have been hearing from kids that there is a concern about students’ social and emotional health, particularly after



FINN O’HARA PHOTO

Minding Your Mind speaker Elizabth O’Neill speaks about her mental health story, encouraging students to share their stories.

the pandemic,” she said.

Puglisi said the goal of the presentation was to let kids know that it is acceptable to be struggling because there are people that can help.

“We wanted to take away the stigma of mental health with

storytelling,” she said.

In the presentation, O’Neill told the audience that while she had depression, OCD, an eating disorder, and other mental illnesses, she felt a need to be perfect, and that is why she was hesitant to get help. A phrase she

used frequently was, “It’s OK to not be OK.”

O’Neill said she continues storytelling because of the kids she is able to help.

“Students reach out and talk to me about how I affected their lives, and it is validating to be able to see the direct impact,” she said.

Adjustment counselor Sara Heller said that when presenters share their stories, the students can relate more and helps them realize that they are not alone.

Presentations on mental health are important, especially now as students are transitioning from very little socialization to the high-stress school environment with social interactions, she said.

“There has been a really big increase in depression and anxiety ever since the pandemic,”

Heller said.

Puglisi said there were mixed reactions from the presentation because people were confused and upset about the experiences O’Neill brought up.

Sophomore Aiden Brown said he found the presentation uncomfortable.

“The experiences she shared were extreme and too detailed,” he said.

Sharing similar opinions to Brown, sophomore Caroline Doucette said the presenter’s journey was very severe and unrelatable for high school students.

“I wish the school had tackled the stigma around mental health in a different way, maybe with small groups with discussions or information on ways to deal with struggles,” she said.



AMAZON.COM

The film “12 Years a Slave,” about a free Black man sold into slavery, is based on the slave narrative of Solomon Northup. The history and English departments combined to educate students on slavery.

History, English departments collaborate for ‘12 Years a Slave’ unit

By Avabella Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Sophomores are participating in a cross-curricular unit through their English and history classes, focusing on the “12 Years a Slave” movie on April 6.

History teacher Jennifer Coleman said the movie is based on the slave narrative of Solomon Northup and his experiences as a

free black man sold into slavery. “I think it’s really hard for students your age to visualize the cruelty of slavery,” she said.

Coleman said the objective is to help students understand the reality of slavery beyond reading excerpts and seeing photographs, hoping the unit will be a yearly tradition in the future as they

‘I think it’s really hard for students your age to visualize the cruelty of slavery.’

-JENNIFER COLEMAN

have done it once in the past.

English teacher Allison Krause said one of the main challenges is to show how difficult and emotional the events portrayed in the movie are, but feels that the sophomores are mature enough to handle it.

“There are parts that portray the very graphic and violent truth of slavery, which I think is so important for us not to sugarcoat and confront it in as authentic of a way as we can,” she said.

Krause said one of the benefits of coordinating the unit between the English and history departments is how enriching the overall interdisciplinary learning experience can be, as it allows students to see a real-world application of what they are learn-

ing across the curriculum.

“I think it’s really important and nice as an entire grade to have this common experience viewing the film together... it creates a sense of unity and solidarity in something that is difficult to learn about,” Krause said.

English department head Debra Isensee said the interdisciplinary unit is an important opportunity for sophomores, as they are integrating the historical and narrative aspects of slavery.

“It is a community experience of bearing witness to one of the most horrible parts of our history,” she said.

Isensee said she believes the movie will also provide awareness of a terrible time in history to the sheltered communities of Manchester and Essex.

“It’s an obligation to sometimes learn about this difficult subject,” she said.

Current Events Club discusses issues in Ukraine

By Amy Vytopilova
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Juniors Juliana Saunders and Jordie Cornfield are spreading awareness to the community about global topics and issues through the Current Events Club.

President Juliana Saunders said she created the club to educate high school students about what’s going on in the world.

“Current events are important because educating yourself on what’s happening in the world around you gives you the knowledge and tools to make the world a better place and fight for what you believe in,” she said.

The club most recently met on March 8 and talked about the issues between Russia and Ukraine, Saunders said.

Vice president Jordie Cornfield is working with Saunders to find an organization in Ukraine to donate to.

“At our last meeting we discussed the current events in Ukraine and how we can help. We



AMY VYTOPILOVA PHOTO

Junior Ceece Carvalho researches with the Current Events Club for a possible fundraiser to help those in need in Ukraine.

are brainstorming for a fundraiser to provide aid to families who are suffering,” Cornfield said.

Saunders said she started the club last year to educate students.

“We have currently been talking a lot about Ukraine, but our conversations are generally about racism, homophobia, COVID-19 updates, politics, foreign affairs, and environmental issues. Conversation is very important in this club as we talk a lot and like to express our opinions,” Saunders said.

Junior Grace Gerhardt, a member of the club, said it’s important for people to talk about what is going on outside of our town.

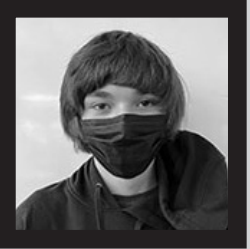
“Especially in our very small community, we need to talk about issues and educate ourselves. Many people do not really care or talk about current events, and I think that is something we can all work on as students,” Gerhardt said.

Saunders also said current events are not commonly talked about at the school, which can be detrimental to one’s future.

“I hope a lot more people join this club and learn about what is going on outside of our bubble. I want to spread our conversations to others throughout the community so we can become more educated on a whole,” she said.



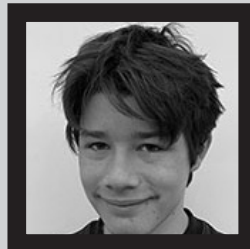
Freshman Gwen Berger:
“When flowers bud in the yard.”



Freshman Cole Cote:
“When my allergies kick in.”



Sophomore Gabbi D’Andrea:
“When you don’t feel cold going outside, but you’re also not sweating.”



Sophomore Dex Woodman:
“When I wake up and it’s light outside.”



What is the first sign of spring for you?



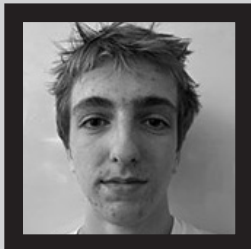
Junior Mary Callahan:
“When it starts raining almost every day, and then when you leave school it’s warm outside.”



Junior Isak Gustafson:
“I was walking downtown, and I saw the first flower growing in the ground.”



Senior Jillian Alden:
“My nose acts up because of the pollen.”



Senior Cam Light:
“Tennis season is starting.”

Students prepare for prom; Instagram account posts dresses

@merhs2022prom gives students opportunity to share expected outfits

By Jordie Cornfield
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

This prom season, seniors and juniors have begun the hunt for the perfect prom outfits. Senior Alex Briggs started an Instagram account dedicated to the dresses that students will be wearing to the dance on May 26.

Students can send in pictures of their dresses alongside captions they want the account to include. So far, the account has made 48 posts, including both pictures of students in their dresses and photos of models from dress websites.

Many students went online to find their dresses but had trouble deciding what dresses to choose, junior Grace Gerhardt said.

“They’re impossible to find. The ones online are so ugly. It’s like, who purchases this?” she said.

The process of dress shopping is stressful and can take hours. For this reason, many students said they have opted to buy their dresses on the internet rather than at local stores.

“I found my dress on TikTok. I don’t like going in person; it’s awful,” junior Paige Garlitz said.

However, students agree that buying dresses online is a hit or miss. They say that one doesn’t know what will arrive at their doorstep until they open the package.

“My dress is actually a maternity dress, but it fits,” Garlitz said.

This year, the prevailing dress style seems to be the mermaid fit, which features a tight, bodycon silhouette and a flare bottom. Popular dress

colors include various shades of blue, green, pink, and red.

“I got mine in blue, so it will match my eyes,” Gerhardt said.

Many students chose to go with simpler dress styles, featuring bodycon silhouettes and sweetheart necklines.

“I decided to choose a simple dress, so I’m gonna go bigger next year when it’s my senior prom,” Gerhardt said.

The Instagram account also serves as a means for students to obtain their dresses. Alumni can list their previous prom dresses for current students to purchase, which both allows students to save money as well as reduce their carbon footprint, Gerhardt said.



COURTESY OF @MERHS2022PROM

Juniors Paige Garlitz, Martha Davis, Allison Reeve, Juliana Saunders and seniors Emma Fitzgerald and Izzy Thurlow all submitted their prom dresses to the account. Garlitz’s photo (upper left) is of a model wearing her dress. Thurlow’s photo (bottom right) is also from a website.



Promposals continue, evolve over 20 years

By Wyeth Takayesu
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Promposals, or formal requests to go to prom, have been a cultural staple for high school students throughout their extensive history.

The first recorded prom proposals were shared through an article titled “Making a Special Delivery to Prom: Teens Share their Unique Approaches to Asking Someone to the Big Dance” by Jean Nash Johnson, a writer for the The Dallas Morning

News in 2001.

According to the article, the display was “as fancy as the marriage kind” with McKinney High student Scott Rodgers proposing to his classmate Amanda Gibson by rewriting a song sung by Adam Sandler in the movie “The Wedding Singer” and performing it in person on his own guitar.

By 2006 large scale media coverage got involved with the growing trend as corporations like MTV started filming extravagant promposals to share

for national entertainment in their series “Laguna Beach.”

However, due to the trend’s extravagant nature, promposals steadily rose in costs as young students felt a need to do better than previous promposals with more extravagance than ever before.

According to a 2016 article by Hannah Ornenstein on the teen news site Seventeen titled “This Is How Much Teens Where You Live Are Spending On Promposals,” the average Northeastern family spent \$431 on prompos-



COURTESY OF LILA CARPENTER AND JULIANA SAUNDERS

Senior Nathan Kelleher and Junior Patrick Cronin promposed to juniors Juliana Saunders and Lila Carpenter with flowers.

als alone in 2016 by purchasing various limousines and expensive lights.

The trend has since had a change in direction away from the expensive additions as they fall out of favor with students, instead returning to simpler ways to show effort and dedication, junior Julia Dobson said.

“There should be a nice middle ground between just asking and going all out where you’re putting effort into it but not spending hundreds and

hundreds of dollars on one question,” Dobson said.

Now, over 20 years since the first recorded prom proposal, the tradition has seen a return-to-form as students like senior Nathan Kelleher reach into

similar musical origins as Scott Rodgers with a homemade made sign referencing the song “Dancing Queen” by ABBA for his promposal to junior Lila Carpenter.

“It fit who we are, and I didn’t need anything else to show how I felt,” Kelleher said.

‘It fit who we are, and I didn’t need anything else to show how I felt.’

-NATHAN KELLEHER

Music during studying

Should students listen to songs while doing homework?

Pro

Jordie Cornfield

Listening to music while studying or completing school work has many benefits on a student’s learning process as well as their memory retention.

A study conducted by Florida National University in 2019 found that music triggered both the left and right hemispheres of the brain to become activated at the same time.

“The activation of both hemispheres can maximize learning and improve memory,” the study said.

Music can improve academic performance by elevating a student’s mood, which is then reflected in their work. For example, listening to one’s favorite song while studying a certain subject may cause them to associate positive feelings with said subject.

Music also impacts students’ sense of self-esteem and confidence. Dennis Y. Hsu, a professor at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, believes that music can also increase a person’s self-confidence levels.

“The effect of music appears to manifest itself not only in its ability to entertain, but also in the ability to imbue humans with a real sense of power,” he said.

Confidence is the main ingredient in achieving success. In an article by [todayslearner.cengage.com](#), the author stresses the relationship between confidence and performance, citing a study by the University of Iowa in which researchers concluded that the more confident a student feels, the better they perform on assignments.

Music is a tool students can use to get ahead; however, not all music is created equal. While a playlist featuring upbeat songs may aid a student in getting words on the page when writing an essay for their English class, the same playlist may have adverse effects when studying parts of a cell for an upcoming biology test.

Everyone’s brains function differently. Some people need a quiet environment in order to focus, while others do not. Students should do whatever they feel is most beneficial to them and help them achieve their best work; However, it is recommended that all students try working while playing music at least once.

Whether it be listening to heavy metal or soft pop, students may discover that listening to an upbeat playlist improves their overall performance and makes the process of completing work more enjoyable.



CAROLINE MACKINNON ILLUSTRATION

Con

Finn O’Hara

Listening to loud and aggressive music while studying is not beneficial and can actually diminish the value that is typically received from studying.

When a student is studying, they are working their brain as they receive information and practice using it in different ways. By adding in lyrics, the brain is given even more information which causes it to work less efficiently and not retain what is important.

Attempting to do both things at once carries the same consequences of multitasking. While the concept of multitasking is more about doing multiple physical activities, anytime when the brain is overloaded with different bits of information it only remembers a certain amount.

Nick Perham, a psychologist at Cardiff Metropolitan University, said that listening to music hurts short-term memory.

Lyrics “impaired performance on serial-recall tasks,” he said.

In addition to recalling information, agitating music can affect one’s focus which then hurts their studying.

When the music’s beat is constantly changing and speeding up, the brain continuously gets interrupted. Outside noises like cars and sirens are typically seen as distractions and aggressive music can be seen in the same way.

When the brain is distracted and more focused on the loud music than it is on the material being studied, the brain cannot even start to process the information.

According to Healthline, the volume and aggressiveness of the music affect reading along with the ability to analyze and actually take in the information.

“If it’s too loud, it could disrupt your thinking process,” the website said.

If a student is playing music from their phone, yet another distraction is brought into their study environment.

Every time students skip a song or change the volume, the temptation of checking another app is going to be there and more often than not, and this will lead to wasted time.

Eric Dolan, a psychology journalist at PsyPost, said the mere presence of a phone disrupts studying.

“People’s own emotional state, such as the need to feel connected to others via their mobile device, has a reliable and negative impact on attention and learning,” he said.

Lives, communities affected by drunk driving by teenagers

By Amy Vytopilova
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Driving under the influence is a very big risk and can put oneself and others in danger. It is against the law, yet many still decide to get behind the wheel while intoxicated.

Teenagers’ lives can be taken at a very young age due to a bad decision.

According to the CDC, most teenagers break the law and drive under the influence due to situations such as peer pressure or their awful decision making skills.

“High school students aged 16 years and older who, when surveyed, said they had driven a vehicle one or more times during the past 30 days when they had been drinking alcohol,” the CDC said.

It is clearly a problem that needs to be talked about, as it can end one’s life.

Teenagers are rebellious and do many things that should not be done since their brains are not fully developed.

The article “Teenage Drunk Driving Facts,” by Drive-safely.net, said there are a couple reasons why teenagers decide to handle the wheel while under the influence.

“Sometimes the newfound freedom is too much to handle responsibly, and other times it’s as simple as peer pressure,”

Teenagers need to realize that they can say no and need to think what is correct in the long run. A choice to drive while under the influence is selfish and horrible.

Drivesafely.net said.

Teenagers need to realize that they can say no and need to think what is correct in the long run. A choice to drive while under the influence is selfish and horrible.

In an article called “Drinking and Driving,” Kathleen Smith wrote that driving under the influence is a main cause of many deaths in the country each year.

“Almost 30 people die every day in crashes that involve a driver impaired by alcohol. That’s at least one death an hour. There are over 100 million self-reported instances of alcohol-impaired driving every year, and over a million drivers are arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs,” Smith said.



PIXABAY.COM

It is important for teenagers, especially in their first few years of driving, to be aware of the harmful effects of driving under the influence of alcohol and how it could affect others in their life.

Each year, many families and friends lose loved ones due to people’s poor decision making when choosing to drive under the influence.

There are many ways to prevent an accident, such as having a designated driver or holding each other accountable before someone drives drunk.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Gap years help students alleviate stress, strengthen skills

Gap year programs should be considered more by students rather than pushing through educational burnout in a rush to finish school.

As students finish high school and begin to plan their futures, many paths open up for them to consider. It’s a huge moment in their lives and partially decides what they will do going forward.

However, this moment is also a large and stressful burden for students still trying to decide what they want their life to be. College can feel like a must when they fill students’ inboxes with spam letters.

Gap years give students time to discover the world on their own and find interests they can pursue, but according to a survey performed by Foundry10, an educational research organization, only around 50% of students consider it as an option.

According to Best Colleges,

Gap years give students time to discover the world on their own and find interests they can pursue.

an organization aimed to help people find the best college for them, many students believe a gap year would cause them to lose momentum and fall behind when they return to school. However, this is untrue.

A study performed by Middlebury College in 2011 through 2014 found that students who take a gap year have a higher GPA on average than students who don’t.

With countless organizations like Education First offering opportunities for students to improve leadership, knowledge, languages, and other essentials, gap years can be much more than a year of lounging.

The benefits are not just skills, however, as gap years also benefit students’ mental health. According to Best Colleges, students often finish high school feeling burnt out and tired of waking up early to go to classes



CAROLINE MACKINNON ILLUSTRATION

Gap years give students more time to plan for their future and ultimately help them later in life when choosing a major. Taking a gap year should be considered more than rushing through college.

they may not be interested in.

Taking a gap year can alleviate this feeling, giving students time to find what does interest them. By the time they go to school, they feel renewed and excited to learn more about their passions.

These reasons are why many colleges and universities, includ-

ing prestigious ones like Harvard University, are beginning to encourage students to take gap years before coming to college.

Harvard students created the Harvard Gap Year Society to help students who are, have, or will take gap years, offering reintegration aid and speaking to

Micro-trends create social, environmental, inequities

By Libby Mulry
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Micro-trends in clothing are supported by the fast fashion industry, which promotes unregulated labor and large quantities of textile waste.

“The fashion cycle of a micro-trend is usually 3-5 years, while macro-trends typically last 5-10 years,” Mariel Nelson wrote in “Micro-trends: The acceleration of fashion cycles and rise in waste,” for Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production Compliance.

Trends made popular by influencers on TikTok and Instagram soon go out of style after audiences decide the items are no longer wearable. The lifespan of sweater vests, claw clips, pearl chokers, short Uggs and



FLICKR.COM

Micro-trends’ short period of wearability and trendiness cause landfills to fill up, which negatively impacts the environment.

crochet crop tops is short.

Micro-trends are propped up by brands like Shein, Fashion Nova, GAP, and H&M Group. Brands appeal to consumers through the low costs and quick production of on-trend articles of clothing.

The cheapness of longer supply chains is made possible by unregulated labor.

According to the Business &

Human Rights Resource Center, Shein workers in Guangzhou and Foshan, China told researchers that they sew for 12-14 hours a day, work about 75 hours a week, and only receive one day off a month.

Unsafe work conditions are apparent in almost all of the fashion industry.

“Between 2006 and 2012, more than 500 Bangladeshi

garment workers died in factory fires,” Style writer Dana Thomas wrote in her book, “Fashionopolis.”

The garment industry is also a large contributor to the climate crisis, as most of the textiles manufactured are in landfills or incinerated.

According to the BBC, fashion is the third-largest manufacturing industry in the world and produces up to 10% of the world’s emissions.

In order to keep up with quick fashion cycles, manufacturers create large quantities of clothing that most people won’t want in a year’s time.

The short timeline of wearability of on-trend and cheap clothing makes them end up in landfills much quicker than well-made or second hand garments.

Being a conscious consumer of

fashion slows excessive production and consumption of goods. Consumers should think about the impact their purchase will have on the environment before buying.

At higher costs, brands like Patagonia, Reformation, and Levis enable consumers to buy timeless clothing that lasts years.

Buying at nearby thrift stores like Bananas, Savers, and Dress Code, revives once forgotten pieces of clothing and prolongs their trip to the landfill.

The online store ThredUp reintroduces perfectly good clothes to new buyer’s closets. By processing up to 100,000 items everyday, ThredUp replaces the need for new clothing production.

Shopping sustainably should not be synonymous with inaccessibility and unaffordability.

According to the BBC, fashion is the third-largest manufacturing industry in the world and produces up to 10% of the world’s emissions.

Faculty Adviser
Mary Buckley-Harmon

Editors-in-chief
Emma Ketchum
Carson Komishane

News Editors
Ema O’Neil
Mechi O’Neil

Features Editors
Caroline MacKinnon
Amy Vytopylova
Wyeth Takayesu

the
INDEPENDENT

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>

Opinion Editors
Phileine de Widt
Ella Chafe

Sports Editors
Hadley Levendusky
Charlie Lations
Finn O’Hara

Arts Editors
Jordie Cornfield
Avabella Mitrano
Elizabeth Mulry

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.

COED SAILING

Coach: Tony Leggett
Captains: Anna Brzenzski and Aiden Harrison
Record last year: 3-4
Goals: To win their division and make it to States
Rival: St. John’s Prep
Impact players: Anna Brenzski (junior), Aiden Harrison (senior), Ian Carlen (sophomore), Ava Rizzico (sophomore), Cole Cote (freshman), Matthew Graeter (freshman)
Coach’s quote: “We are going to have a better race record than last year, because I have high hopes in our core skippers and very high hopes in the next tier of kids who are potential skippers.”
-Tony Legget
Captain’s quote: “We will be focusing on the underclassmen, who have a lot of potential, and also improving the team as a whole. I’m excited to watch the team grow,” - Anna Brzenzski



Anna Brzenzski



Aiden Harrison

CO-OP TRACK

Coach: Mark Dawson
Captain: Sarah Baker, Luke Smith, Nick Poulin (Gloucester)
Record last year: 11-3
Goals: To try to improve the teams’ times on the track
Coach’s quote: “Our goals this season are to try and improve our times on the track. If we run, jump, or throw well, then the rest will take care of itself” - Mark Dawson
Captain’s quote: “Based on what I’ve seen, I think we’re going to perform really well. There’s definitely a lot of different people from last year, but in practice I’ve seen so many good athletes, so I think we’ll do great.”- Sarah Baker



Sarah Baker



Luke Smith

GIRLS’ LACROSSE

Coaches: Nan Gorton
Captains: Wrede Charlton, Amelia Donnellan, Emma Fitzgerald, Ceci Mastendino
Record last year: 9-5
Goals: To support each other, create a sense of unity in the team, and make it far into the tournament
Rivals: Ipswich, Newburypot
Impact players: Wrede Charlton (senior), Amelia Donnellan (senior), Emma Fitzgerald (senior), Ceci Mastendino (senior), Brigid Carovillano (freshman)
Coach’s quote: “Going deep into the tournament is certainly a goal for our overall wins and losses...but if we can get the best out of everyone every day then I think that’s a successful season.” - Nan Gorton
Captain’s quote: “I hope we learn to grow as a team rather than just growing individually and have a team dynamic rather than an individual one.” - Wrede Charlton



Wrede Charlton



Amelia Donnellan



Emma Fitzgerald



Ceci Mastendino

BOYS’ LACROSSE

Coach: Jon Siderewicz
Captain: Andrew Amigo, Hayden Brady, Declan Kirk
Record last year: 3-8
Goals: To make it into the playoffs
Rivals: Lynnfield, North Reading
Impact players: Andrew Amigo (senior), Hayden Brady (senior), Declan Kirk (junior), Mac Edgerton (sophomore)
Coach’s quote: “We harp on getting 1% better every day, kind of taking baby steps toward our eventual goal of making the playoffs.” - Jon Siderewicz
Captain’s quote: “We have a great coach who knows how to bring a team together to have a great season. We already have amazing chemistry, and the environment at practice is awesome.” - Declan Kirk



Declan Kirk



Andrew Amigo

BASEBALL



AJ Pallazola



Ryan Andrews



Vaughn O'Leary



Isaac Porat

Coach: BJ Weed
Captains: Ryan Andrews (senior), Colin Coyne (senior), AJ Pallazola (senior), Vaughn O'Leary (senior), Isaac Porat (junior)
Record last year: 7-9
Rivals: Georgetown, Hamilton-Wenham
Goals: Win the last game of the season, take it one day at a time, enter playoffs with a winning record
Impact players: Captains and Colby Doane (senior), Troy Flood (sophomore)
Coach's quote: "I think this is a close-knit team. They show togetherness, and we have a chance to have a special year." - BJ Weed
Captain's quote: "A lot of people will be expecting us to not be great, so that just puts more gas on the fire for the team." - Vaughn O'Leary

GIRLS' TENNIS

Coach: Ed Conway
Captains: Parker Brooks (senior), Gracie Susko (senior)
Record last year: 15-1
Rivals: Newburyport
Goals: Win another CAL championship, have a fun season.
Impact players: Vanessa Gregory (junior), Emery Weber-Provost (junior)
Coach's quote: "Although we lost a lot of players with the seniors that graduated, we have some great talent from our returning players." -Ed Conway
Captains' quotes: "From the few practices we've had, I'm starting to see some really talented players, returning ones and new ones." -Gracie Susko
"I'm most excited to get to know everyone and become closer as a team." -Parker Brooks



Parker Brooks



Gracie Susko

BOYS' TENNIS

Coaches: Robert Bilsbury, Barrett Alston
Captains: TBD
Record last year: 8-5
Rivals: Ipswich, Hamilton-Wenham, Lynnfield
Goals: Win the Cape Ann League championship, make a run in the state tournament
Impact players: Jack Cummins (freshman), John Pope (senior), Roemer DeWidt (senior)
Coach's quote: "It should be a fiesty pre-season because we really have to go after each other and figure out what makes us the best team possible." - Robert Bilsbury
Impact player's quote: "I'm really striving to have fun this year. I just want to see everyone on the team have a good time." - Jack Cummins



Robert Bilsbury



Roemer DeWidt

SOFTBALL

Coach: George Shapiro
Players: Keira Levasseur (junior), Abby Tarron (junior), Celia Mann (sophomore), Morgan Laspesa (sophomore)
Record last year: 0-13
Goals: Win more games, improve from last season
Coach's quote: "Everybody is super enthusiastic, and it looks like we have some good talent this season." - George Shapiro
Players' quotes: "I know winning isn't what's most important, but I do hope that our hard work pays off, and we win more this year." - Keira Levasseur
"I'm looking forward to having fun, playing games, meeting new people on the team, getting to know everyone, and team bonding activities." - Celia Mann
"I think it's always great to rep the Hornets...but it's also nice to go over and meet new people and play for a new team." -Morgan Laspesa



Morgan Laspesa



Keira Levasseur



Abby Tarron



Celia Mann

Reality television promotes dangerous stereotypes

Viewers dislike over-dramatized character portrayals

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Although television can be educational at times, reality television fosters dangerous stereotypes.

A stereotype is a fixed idea used to describe a specific type of person or thing that acts or behaves in a specific way.

Various ethnic groups are often portrayed as stereotypes on television.

The media is a powerful tool for spreading messages around the world, and it is critical that all cultures are accurately represented.

The new series “Buckwild” has sparked outrage for what some see as the exploitation of broad cultural stereotypes.

The show follows a group of childhood friends from West Virginia who live by their own set of rules and believe life is a playground where “whatever happens, happens.”

Senator Joe Manchin III, Democrat of West Virginia, labeled the show a “travesty” and called on MTV to cancel it.

“This show plays to ugly, inaccurate stereotypes about the people of West Virginia,” Mr. Manchin wrote in a letter last month to Stephen K. Friedman, MTV’s president.

‘This show plays to ugly, inaccurate stereotypes.’

-JOE MANCHIN III

Other shows, such as “Love and Hip Hop” and “Black Ink Crew,” promote stereotypes of today’s African American cul-

ture as ferocious and rowdy.

Stephanie Williams, host of the podcast Mocha Minutes, believes that seeing diversity on reality television will help break stereotypes.

“Reality TV has evolved in so many ways, but in other ways it



WIKIPEDIA.COM

MTV’s “Buckwild” uses cultural stereotypes in portraying many characters, aggravating viewers.

has remained stagnant because homogeneous casts result in homogeneous output,” Williams said in the podcast.

Sophomore Lucy O’Flynn agrees with this statement, as she is one of the only Asian-American students in her class.

“Not seeing many people on reality television who look like me has had a huge impact on my self-esteem that I’m still trying to work through,” she said.

Even when she does see people of Asian descent on television, they are usually stereotyped as

the “smart” character or just the “best friend,” O’Flynn said.

While today’s media does a better job of depicting diversity on television, more work needs to be done in order to successfully create a diverse platform and include representation.

Drama Club receives awards at Dramafest

By Caroline MacKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After performing “Oh What a Tangled Web” on March 19 in the Dramafest preliminaries, the Drama Club advanced to Dramafest regionals on April 2.

Club adviser Gianna Baglioni said the students’ received multiple awards for their effort during the first round.

Lighting designer freshman Nick Haley won the Excellence Award in Lighting. Sophomore Ava Doane, juniors Owen O’Leary and Wyeth Takayesu, and senior Gelsey McCue all won



COURTESY OF MARTHA DAVIS

Five students from the Drama Club won Excellence Awards in both Acting and Lighting.

Excellence in Acting awards, she said. The cast also won the Stage Manager’s Award as a group,

“The stage manager meets with the judges to decide who’s easiest to work with, and who’s the most

professional. It’s quite an honor to receive it,” Baglioni said.

Baglioni said the group of stu-

dents truly embodies the “spirit of the arts” and she cannot wait to see what they do next year and in the future.

“They’re such a talented group of kids. Their creativity amazes me,” she said.

Senior Christopher Siems, who played Tom Scarlotta, said not performing due to the pandemic prompted different emotions.

“It’s been a long time. I was a little nervous initially. But overall, it felt good to be back up there,” he said.

Junior Martha Davis, who played Chris in the production, said the recent two performances were the best the Drama Club has produced.

“Having an audience and a big, full theater with a lot of people helped us,” David said.

‘Munich’ is significantly related to developing crisis in Ukraine

Characters bear weight of multiple important secrets

By Ella Chafe
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

When assessing the book “Munich” and the crisis in Ukraine, it’s clear that while history may not repeat itself, it often rhymes.

“Munich” is a historical fiction novel published in 2017 by Robert Harris, an English author.

Set in 1938, “Munich” is highly informative about the Munich conference and the events leading to World War II. The book can be applied to current events, as another war rages in Europe.

Just as the Germans invaded the Sudetenland to protect ethnic-speaking Germans, the Russians invaded the Donbas region in Ukraine under the guise of protecting Russian-speaking Ukrainians.

Both of these invasions were pretexts for larger wars, as the conflict in Czechoslovakia led to WWII, and the Donbas crisis led to the current attack on Ukraine without a clear end in sight.

The dictators Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Putin share comparable characteristics.

After WWI, Hitler spent many years plotting to seize territory,

which he succeeded in doing with the Sudetenland.

However, Hitler did not stop there, and WWII was quickly underway.

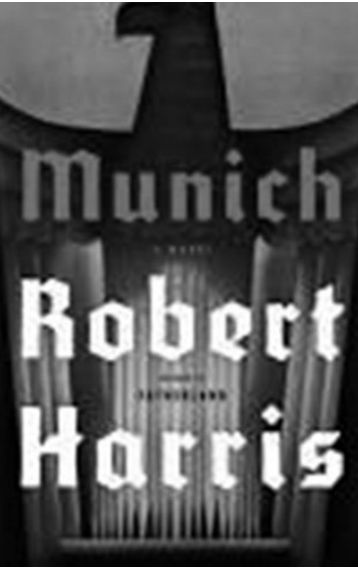
The book “Munich” is ideal for those who enjoy historical fiction.

Since the end of the Cold War, Putin has been trying to take back former USSR territory for Russia, which

was evident with the seizing of Crimea, the Donbas region, and now Ukraine.

Seeing that the two dictators share similar motives, there is no knowing if Putin will stop seizing territory in Europe.

The book “Munich” is ideal for those who enjoy historical fiction



GOOGLEBOOKS.COM

‘Munich’ takes place in 1938.

books that end each chapter in suspense.

“Munich” switches between the perspectives of Hugh Legat, a private secretary to Prime Minister Nevil Chamberlain, and Paul von Hartman, a staff member to Adolf

Hitler, who is also a member of the anti-Hitler resistance in secret.

The two young men were friends at Oxford in the 1920s but have not spoken since.

The book highlights Hitler’s desire to seize the Sudetenland because if an agreement was not met, Hitler was going to invade Czechoslovakia.

The Munich conference was between Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and France, in Munich, Germany. The meeting was called by Chamberlain as a last-minute effort to avoid war.

Hugh and Paul go to Munich, each bearing the weight of a secret that could deeply affect the future of Europe as well as the world.

After finishing “Munich,” readers gain an understanding of how different periods of history are connected, and how to recognize the beginnings of a dictatorship in the making.

Chorus, band performs first spring concerts since pandemic

Students learn new songs for performance

By Avabella Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Following the chorus and jazz band’s spring performance on March 17, the concert band is preparing for an upcoming live performance on April 7.

Chorus teacher Allan MacTaylor said the students have shown enthusiasm for in-person singing and that his favorite part of the class this year is the attitude of the students.

“It’s very easy for students to not want to do an optional class, but the students have really stepped up to lead the group and pushed each other to really care about this,” he said.

MacTaylor said he has been

trying to find a variety of music the students are passionate about learning.

“We spend a lot of time working with the sections students have to promote student leadership...we’ve spent a lot of time discussing potential songs to sing so that students have a voice in the matter,” he said.

MacTaylor said the chorus learned to sing songs in different languages, such as “Baba Yetu” in Swahili, for March 17, the spring concert.

The chorus learned to sing songs in different languages, such as ‘Baba Yetu’ in Swahili, for March 17.

“I want people to come away from our spring concert and not be able to wait for the next,” he said.

Music teacher Joe Janack said the band was also doing great this year as they prepared for their own upcoming spring concert on April 7.

Janack said the concert will feature both the jazz and concert band, with the concert band



PATRICA PUGLISI PHOTO

Music teacher Joe Janack directs the high school jazz band during the Evening of Jazz performance on March 17. They played songs such as “Birdland” by Weather Report and “I Wish” by Stevie Wonder.

playing one of their favorite songs “The Bonsai Tree” by Julie Giroux.

He said the concert will be very special to him as it is the final show for seniors.

“They were the first class I had when I came to Manchester Essex when they were in 6th grade. I’m going to miss them a lot,”

Janack said.

The Evening of Jazz for middle and high school jazz bands took place on March 17 in the auditorium.

Sophomore Ava Rizzico said they loved playing in a jazz band and thought the concert was fantastic.

“All of the soloists were amaz-

ing...It took so much time and effort,” Rizzico said.

They also said the jazz band was a safe and relaxing place to be, a reprieve from the stress of school.

“The students are so kind, and everyone is there purely because they want to be,” Rizzico said.

Series shows Kanye West in new light

By Emma Ketchum
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Netflix’s release of the documentary series “Jeen-Yuhs: A Kanye West Trilogy,” presents rapper and producer Kanye West in a new perspective.

Directors and longtime friends of West, Clarence Simmons Jr., also known as Coodie throughout the documentary, and Chike Ozah, have been filming footage for 20 years.

This documentary captures West’s career from its start to the present, taking the audience through the major life events that shaped him as a person and contributed to his success.

The series is split into three 90-minute episodes that consist



NETFLIX.COM

Kanye West and his late mother Donda West pose on the stoop of their old home, in the early days of West’s career as a rapper.

of raw footage that lets the viewer have a more realistic view into West’s life, and not just the image curated in the media. It also shows live moments of West’s most popular songs and albums being recorded and the thought processes behind each release.

In an article for GQ called “Inside the Making of Netflix’s Revealing Ye documentary,” Ozah told writer Frazier Tharpe that this documentary shows a side of West that the public doesn’t normally see.

“What’s special is the way

Kanye reacts when Coodie’s lens is in front of him. We always say that Coodie’s lens is an empathetic lens. You get a side of Kanye that contextualizes him but also forms a layer of empathy, because now you understand another side of him. Kanye’s a complex person and people sit on different sides with him. Coodie shows a side of Kanye that you’ve never seen,” Ozah said.

The documentary shows West’s struggle to be recognized as a rapper in the start of his career, and how difficult it was to get his record deal with Roc-A-Fella Records.

Once his album, “The College Dropout,” was released, his career gained momentum that would never slow down. This album sold more than 4 million copies worldwide and was nominated for 10 Grammy awards according to Wikipedia. To this day, it is still West’s best-selling album.

In an article for the New York

Times called “Kanye West Always Wanted You to Watch,” journalist Jon Caramanica discusses how the documentary shows that West’s success was predictable.

“‘Jeen-Yuhs’ is something like the demo tape of that phenomenon. It is both fascinating and obvious, eerie in the way it foretells who West would eventually become by showing who he always has been,” Caramanica said.

The new documentary presents Kanye in a different light, and shows how he has always been the same person, even before fame.

The series brings us to the present time, but doesn’t discuss any of West’s recent controversies like his split with media personality Kim Kardashian and ongoing feud with New York comedian Pete Davidson, which would have added more viewer interest.

‘The Batman’ provides new interpretation of old characters, Gotham City, creating grungier feel

By Libby Mulry
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“The Batman” delivers a darker interpretation of Bruce Wayne and the many characters of Gotham City, earning an 85 percent critic score on Rotten Tomatoes.

The film opens with police commissioner Jim Gordon (Jeffrey Wright) enlisting the help of Batman (Robert Pattinson) to find the killer of the recently murdered, corrupt mayor of Gotham.

As the killer’s rampage continues, a series of cryptic clues are left at the scenes of the crimes. The audience is given room to sympathize with the criminal and

to question those who enforce the laws, making all characters more three dimensional.

Director Matt Reeves creates a believable world for personalities like the Penguin (Colin Farrell) or Catwoman (Zoë Kravitz) to live. Unusual characters are representative in the strange architecture and lighting of the metropolis.

Reeves’ attention to world-building gives the thriller a film noir-like feel, with stark lighting effects and contrast.

The soundtrack also added dramatic effect to intense scenes.

Nirvana’s “Something in the Way” played as Wayne rode his motorcycle back to the reimagined Batcave. The underground,

abandoned railway at the base of his tower is no longer as modern or sleek, and the cave allows Wayne to obsessively monitor crime in Gotham City.

According to Billboard, the ‘90s song has been surging in streams since “The Batman’s” worldwide release on March 4. The record even reached No. 2 on the Rock Digital Song Sales chart.

The song acted as Batman’s theme, showing a new, grungier side to the character who struggles with depression, like Nirvana’s lead vocalist, the late Kurt Cobain.

Wayne is no longer a millionaire playboy fighting crime; he’s



WARNERBROS.COM

In “The Batman” Catwoman and Batman, portrayed by Zoë Kravitz and Robert Pattinson, look at the city of Gotham.

a vigilante grieving the death of his parents, Thomas and Martha Wayne.

Pattinson’s Batman fights the traditional displays of masculinity seen in previous renditions of the character. Instead he wears eyeliner, writes in a journal, and

has no idea how to interact with Kravitz’s Catwoman.

According to Warner Bros, “The Batman” has made \$258 million worldwide already, their biggest release since the pandemic. And the box-office numbers are only increasing.