

# the INDEPENDENT

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## Class of 2024 graduates, speeches reflect on unity

Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury gives faculty address

By Summer Demeo  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Eighty-eight seniors officially ended their high school careers as the class of 2024 graduated on May 31 on Hyland Field.

Speeches from students and staff acknowledged the class's unity, discussed old memories and achievements, and offered advice.

In her introductory address, Principal Julie Sgroi reminded graduates to "stay curious, remain resilient, and always believe in yourselves."

Next, the class officers, president Phileine de Widt, vice president Finn O'Hara, treasurer Libby Mulry, and secretary Sander Breuker presented the class gifts: funding for a therapy dog, Daisy, in collaboration with the police department, and funding for a longevity bench in honor of edu-



COURTESY OF THERESA WHITMAN



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTOS

The faculty surround Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury as he holds a banner of Mr. Worldwide. Class president Phileine de Widt, vice president Finn O'Hara, treasurer Libby Mulry, and secretary Sander Breuker present the class gifts of funding for a therapy dog and a longevity bench. Bilsbury gives the faculty address. The class of 2024 ceremoniously throws their graduation caps into the air.

cator and musician Michael Palter.

De Widt then delivered her

speech as class president, thanking various faculty and staff members and her family. She



COURTESY OF COURTNEY BROWN

also thanked her classmates for teaching her English. She said she did not speak any English when

she moved from the Netherlands and only spoke Dutch at home.

GRADUATION, page 3

## Keith Gray retires after teaching science in school for 28 years

By Sabine Cooper  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Science teacher Keith Gray will retire this year, leaving behind a legacy of the Green Team program, math and science department chair Kristin Umile said.

Before working as a teacher in Manchester, Gray worked for the Rockport Police Department as a police officer from 1978 to 1980, then received his teaching license at Salem State in 1984, he said.

In 1986, Gray took a teaching position at Matignon High School in Cambridge as a science teacher, but after experiencing burnout, took a position at Rockport Publishers from 1993-1996. However, Gray later moved to Manchester High School in 1996, he said.

"I returned to teaching because I missed being with people who wanted to know what was going on with stuff, like chemistry, the environment, and biology. I missed just being in this environment," Gray said.

Gray later received his master's degree in education at the University of New England in

1999, he said.

Over the 28 years he has worked at Manchester-Essex Regional High School, Gray has taught biology, anatomy, sustainability, science technology, and chemistry.

Most notable, however, has been his influence on the Green Team program, Umile said.

"All the work he's done in the Green Team will definitely carry on based on all the programs he's put in place. He's going to be the symbol of the Green Team for years to come," she said.

Principal Julie Sgroi said the Green Team will continue despite Gray's retirement.

"Green Team is a part of the MERHS culture, and it's not going anywhere. Instead of hiring a new teacher, we are hoping that a current teacher will be able to bring his enthusiasm [to Green Team]," she said.

Throughout his career, Gray said his favorite moments have been when a student goes on to succeed later in life.

"I love seeing students go out and do something significant. Like with the Green Team, I've got dozens of old students who



SABINE COOPER PHOTO

Science teacher and Green Team adviser Keith Gray waters a banana plant outside of his classroom. Gray will retire from teaching this year.

have done incredible things, and it's not something I did. All I did was open the door a crack," he said.

Umile has worked with Gray for 10 years and said he's always willing to help.

"He is just a kind, dedicated, not-judgemental person who is just willing to drop anything and lend a helping hand. For example, [in 2016], when I had to teach a chemistry class, he was so supportive," she said.

SCIENCE TEACHER, page 3

## SCORE internships allow seniors to consider a plan for their futures

Coordinators assist students with planning

By August Capotosto  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

For their final quarter of school, seniors have been participating in Senior Choice of Related Experience (SCORE), a program set up to provide students with valuable internships, SCORE coordinator Margaret Kane said.

"It provides students work experience, the opportunity to explore a field... and teaches them about responsibility, time management, and accountability in a way that can't be achieved in the classroom," SCORE coordinator Nicole O'Rourke said.

In October, Kane and O'Rourke initiated the SCORE process by having students submit a proposal for their internship. Students were guided by SCORE coordinators and given

access to a list of internships that the school had formerly worked with, she said.

For her SCORE project, senior Libby Mulry said she has been transcribing a journal of a Manchester resident from the 1830s through an internship with the Manchester-by-the-Sea Museum and hopes to eventually digitalize her transcription in order to make

**'[SCORE] teaches [students] about responsibility, time management, and accountability.'**

- NICOLE O'ROURKE

it more accessible to the people of Manchester. "His entries give us a first-hand account of some interesting events like the founding of the town library, abolition, and the stoning of a prostitute a couple of towns over," Mulry said.

Mulry said this internship has been a preview of her college major, which will be history.

"It's such a great experience being surrounded by people who care about the same things as you do," she said.

Other students have realized SCORE, page 3

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# Students attend DECA international competition in Anaheim

Nine students attend competition, senior wins roleplay award

By Bissy Mitrano  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Nine Manchester-Essex students moved up to DECA Internationals held from April 26 to May 1 in Anaheim, California. Business teacher and DECA adviser Barrett Alston and math teacher Alicen Shaw chaperoned the trip. The nine students participated in four individual events, two team events, and one project. DECA hosted 23,000 students from the United States, China, Canada, and other countries, Alston said. The students who participated in individual events had to complete two role plays, while the team events needed to complete one, he said. “Role plays are to demonstrate critical thinking skills under pressure while showcasing business

knowledge and using creativity,” Alston said. Students who participated in role plays were challenged to take an exam within their competition category that would contribute to one-third of their overall score, he said. Senior Erik Bischoff won an award on stage for Top 10 Role Play 1, in his category; automotive service management, Bischoff said. During the competition students had the opportunity to trade DECA pins with other DECA chapters and students around the world before the opening ceremony, Alston said. “The Massachusetts pin was a lobster this year, and people really liked the lobster, so it was a good one to trade ... pin trading is actually a really random DECA activity that ends up being super fun,” he said. When not partaking in DECA activities, the group went to different restaurants, the beach, and Disneyland, Alston said. Junior Ava Fritsch said the



COURTESY OF BARRETT ALSTON

Senior Avabella Mitrano, junior Gwendolyn Berger, senior Eric Bischoff, sophomores Jack McCavanagh, Jake Zschau, Adam MacLeod and senior Finn O’Hara visit the CA Disneyland Park.

trip was fun and the group did a diverse range of activities, as the group was able to enjoy an authentic taco restaurant and eat many açai bowls; everyone was able to find something they liked. Both Bischoff and Fritsch said they really enjoyed their experiences at DECA and would certainly recommend it to others interested in the club. Bischoff said DECA is a great way to branch

out and make new friends. “If you get to the international level, I would definitely recommend students to go because I think it is completely worth it,” he said.

## French students travel to France with classmates

By Bissy Mitrano  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students in French classes traveled to France and immersed themselves in French culture over April vacation. The trip included 21 students and three teacher chaperones: French teacher Erin Fortunato, history teacher Lauren DuBois, and teacher Steve Padovani. The tour included 12-15 different locations, Fortunato said. The trip cost roughly \$4,000 per student and was open for registration to all classes during the 2022-2023 school year, Fortunato said. A school trip to France usually



COURTESY OF ERIN FORTUNATO

French students visit Les Braves, a steel sculpture on Omaha Beach that is dedicated to the soldiers who fought during the D-Day invasion of Normandy during World War II.

occurs every two years if enough students seem interested, she said. The group had a busy itinerary and participated in many outdoor activities, Fortunato said. “Most days we were up, having breakfast by 8 a.m. ... and weren’t back till after dinner,” she said. The activities included museum visits, walks around the city, and a variety of events, Fortunato said. Students and teachers enjoyed many aspects of the trip and had a hard time choosing their favorite experience, she said.

Junior Josh Cohen said this trip was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and would recommend it to any student who has the opportunity to go on a high school trip. “I mostly enjoyed being in an environment where we were in a nice group and could interact without having the stress of school. I also saw sides of people I hadn’t seen before ...,” Cohen said. Sophomore Riley McKinnon said her favorite parts of the trip were meeting new people and seeing architecture. Fortunato said traveling is incredibly important and very valuable. “As a language teacher, I think it is so important for students to be able to visit the places that they learn about and to actually experience the culture(s), as so much of culture can’t be taught and has to be experienced,” she said.

## Junior creates model to predict cardiovascular disease, presents work at researchers convention

Analyzes data set from National Institute of Health

By Gwendolyn Berger  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Junior Jack Cummins presented an independent research project virtually for the All of Us Researchers Convention on April 4. Cummins said he heard of the program while collaborating with his mentor, Doctor Feifan Liu, to create a model to predict stroke mortality in the ICU at Beth Israel Hospital. Cummins said he researches with Liu independently. “I was interested in the work that is being done at All of Us ... so I decided to look into the program,” he said.



GWEN BERGER PHOTO

Junior Jack Cummins conducted an independent project where he aimed to create a model to predict cardiovascular disease.

Cummins said his project aimed to utilize the All of Us

data set to create a model to predict cardiovascular disease for individuals with type two diabetes. All of Us has a variety of research opportunities for students and utilizes a diverse, nationwide data set organized by the National Institute of Health (NIH), he said. Cummins said he enjoyed learning about the variety of ways biomedical research can benefit minorities. The project involved several stages. First, he created a data set for all people with type two diabetes who hadn’t yet developed cardiovascular disease. Then, he collected electronic health records and socioeconomic information for said individuals to predict if a cardiovascular disease would develop in the next five years, he said. “He was incredibly well-spoken. In typical Jack fashion, he smiled throughout the whole thing and never tripped up over his words.” -KRISTIN UMILE

Math and science department chair Kristin Umile said she and Cummins would discuss his research work throughout the year during U-block, but she originally didn’t think she was going to be able to view the presentation. “I was thrilled when I heard that I was going to be able to see and hear it when I heard it was

virtual,” she said. Umile said she really enjoyed watching Cummins speak about his research and seeing his enthusiasm. “He was incredibly well-spoken. In typical Jack fashion, he smiled throughout the whole thing and never tripped up over his words,” she said. Junior and AP Biology student Skyler Hough said she saw the presentation in the auditorium live on a projector. She said she thought the presentation was very professional and found the program All of Us to be incredibly interesting. She had never heard of the research program All of Us before viewing Cummins’ research presentation and found herself very interested in looking into the program, she said. “I was really impressed with the amount of research he did and the conclusions he gathered,” Hough said.



# Elementary school nurse retires, leaves impact on community

Plans to spend time during retirement with grandchildren

By Hannah Davis  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After working at Manchester Memorial Elementary School for 26 years, school nurse Joanne Seaman is retiring.

Seaman attended the New England Baptist Hospital School of Nursing in Boston, graduating in 1975, she said.

Before working at the elementary school, Seaman, who has been a nurse for 49 years, worked in hospitals, nursing homes, doctor's offices, and rehab hospitals, she said.

In 1998, Seaman left her previous position as a nurse at Salisbury Elementary School to work at Memorial.

Memorial School principal John Willis said he will miss his friendship with Seaman once she

has retired.  
"We do a lot together professionally. But she's someone that I'll go to talk to about everything, whether it be work, home, life, that sort of thing," he said.  
Classroom teacher Jennifer Cochand said she will miss Seaman's support of the school.

"She always has my back; that's what I'll miss most about her. She's always there for you when you need an extra ear or a hug," she said.

Seaman said she has loved her job at the elementary school and will miss the school community.

**'She made the school community warmer, and everyone was happy she was there.'**

-JOHN WILLIS

"This has always felt like home to me ... I hope that I touched lives," she said.

During her retirement, Seaman is looking forward to spending more time with her family, especially her grand-

children, she said.  
Willis said Seaman's impact on the school has been profound and that she won't be easily replaced.  
"She has really been the heart



HANNAH DAVIS PHOTO

**Manchester Memorial Elementary School nurse Joanne Seaman is retiring after working there for 26 years. Faculty members reflect on the positive impact she had on the school community.**

and soul of our school and also just of our health services in the district for so many years," he said.

School adjustment counselor Rebecca Xiarhos said Seaman has helped the staff and school community in many ways during her time at the elementary school.

"She makes it so seamless to work with her and so easy, and I feel like she's really given me a good picture of how Memorial works," she said.

Classroom teacher Susan Gould said Seaman's ability to communicate and care for the students made her an irreplaceable nurse.

"It's unbelievable the amount of caring and love that she has given to not only the kids but the families over all these years. She'll be missed," she said.

Junior Maddie O'Grady said Seaman's caring nature helped many students feel welcomed.

"She made the school commu-

nity warmer, and everyone was happy she was there. Just seeing her was a nice part of your day," she said.

Willis said Seaman has had a lasting impact on the school community, but he is glad that she will be able to move on and enjoy her retirement.

"She's worked hard her whole life, and I'm really excited that she gets to have time to just enjoy life, her husband, kids and grandkids," he said.

## Junior Libby McKinnon leads annual spring food drive

By Stella Straub  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

For the second year in a row, junior Libby McKinnon is running a spring sports drive in conjunction with the Beverly Bootstraps food pantry, she said.

McKinnon said she began volunteering with Beverly Bootstraps in January 2023. It came to her attention that the organization wanted to develop a strong relationship with Manchester Essex Regional High School, as they had existing relationships with other local schools.

Athletic director Cameron Molinare said the project began because Beverly Bootstraps was interested in collaborating with



COURTESY OF LIBBY MCKINNON

**Junior Libby McKinnon organizes and collects donations for a spring sports food drive with the Beverly Bootstraps food pantry**

the athletic department, and McKinnon wanted to take part in a spring community service project.

"I initially wanted to do a whole department-wide community service event, and this was a natural fit for what we wanted to do because [McKinnon] had experience [at Beverly Bootstraps], and it was student-driven, which makes it even better," Molinare said.

McKinnon said that she assigned each of the seven spring sports teams with an item off of the Beverly Bootstraps "Top Ten" list of items needed most at the food pantry, which range from shampoo to cereal to toothpaste.

From May 6 to May 17, sports teams will either donate food, or, in the case of girls' tennis and girls' softball, hold a dedication game, she said.

Molinare said these games are taking place on May 13 and 15; the team, the opposing team, and fans all bring the team's assigned item to donate.

She said she wants to raise 300 pounds of donations this year, which will be over twice the amount of last year's 140 pound collection.

Molinare said she wants the effort to be student-driven.

"We want all of our students to be not only leaders within their programs, but also leaders within the community ... Inter-scholastic athletics is about much more than

just wins and losses on a field. It's about giving back," she said.

Beverly Bootstraps' development coordinator Deb Ploszay has been the contact person for the food drive, McKinnon said.

Ploszay said the drives help the Beverly Bootstraps' food

pantry's goal of providing those who use it with as much choice as possible, and during a drive, many different brands and types of food are collected.

Beverly Bootstraps serves five different communities. Since 2007, they have been expanding, and now serve between 400 and 450 households each week in the food pantry, Ploszay said.

"Food is such an important thing for people ... Our pantry is an incredible support for people, and our numbers have been exploding," she said.

McKinnon said she hopes to see the food drive continue after she graduates.

"This cause is important to me because I think that in an affluent town, it's easy to forget that a lot of people can struggle with food insecurity. This is a great way to bring awareness to it," she said.

**'It's about giving back.'**

-CAMERON MOLINARE

## CONTINUATIONS

### GRADUATION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"School [was] the only place I could surround myself with the language. If you think about it, you are the ones that taught me how to speak English," de Widt said.

She later surprised graduates during her speech by revealing that each had a letter with notes from various teachers taped under their seats.

Salutatorian O'Hara also acknowledged the class's closeness with one another in his speech.

"At the end of the day, we are one community. Each one of us has had the unique opportunity

to build meaningful relationships with each of our peers," he said.

Valedictorian Joanna Shan touched on similar themes and recalled class memories from each year since sixth grade.

She also thanked guidance counselor Beverly Low and science teacher Keith Gray, who will retire this year, for their dedication to the school.

Rather than giving advice to her fellow graduates, Shan chose to express her wishes for them.

"My wish is for us to live ... I want us to check every item off our bucket lists and to feel emotions we'll never forget," she said.

Finally, Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury delivered the faculty

address. He began his speech in Spanish but switched to English so all could understand.

Bilsbury commended students for all of their accomplishments and their closeness as a group. He ended his speech by offering advice: "Be present, remind yourself of what you're grateful for, turn your 'have to's' to 'get to's', be the energy you want to see, and focus on what you can control."

After the graduates received their diplomas, the ceremony ended with the class song: "Forever" by Chris Brown.

### KEITH GRAY RETIREMENT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton said Gray was a patient and

passionate teacher when she attended Manchester High School. She graduated in 2002.

"He was the most patient teacher. Chemistry was so difficult for me to learn, and he just never minded giving extra help," she said.

Sophomore Anna O'Leary has had a similar experience in Gray's classes.

"He's making sure you're not just learning the curriculum, but you're actually learning about what's happening in the world," she said.

As he moves on to the next steps of his life, Gray said he plans to visit friends and travel.

"There are places [my wife and I] have always wanted to go back

to, like Australia and the United Kingdom, and places we want to go in general, like Ireland," he said.

**SCORE  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**  
that their SCORE projects won't be something they pursue in the future, Kane said.

"That's also a big part of SCORE; you're trying out a new field," she said.

From May 21-23, seniors shared their 15-minute final presentations detailing what they achieved through their internship.

Mulry said that SCORE provides an opportunity for students to discover new things.

"[SCORE] can open up your world a little," she said.





Quinn Brady, Greta Gado, Pippa Spingler, Henry Thurlow, and Caelie Patrick.



Finn O'Hara gives his salutatorian address.



Principal Julie Sgroi delivers her speech standing next to Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater.



Science teachers Keith Gray, Josh Wladkowski, and Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury sit together before the graduation procession.



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



Alana Falk, George Mullin, and Gavin Davis.



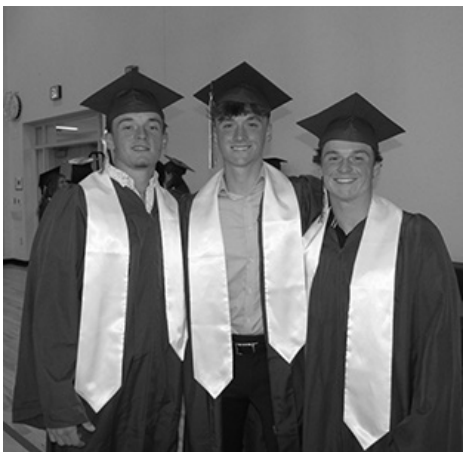
Valedictorian Joanna Shan delivers her address.



Class president Phileine de Widt addresses her fellow graduates.



Matthew McKenna fist bumps director of school counseling Beverly Low on his way to receive his diploma.



Matthew McKenna, Eamon McKenna, and Kevin McKenna.



Sienna Crocker, Mackay Brooks, and Grayson Crocker.



Students turn to face the audience during the procession.



Quinn Brady.



Foreign language teacher Erin Fortunato poses with graduates who took her French class.



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



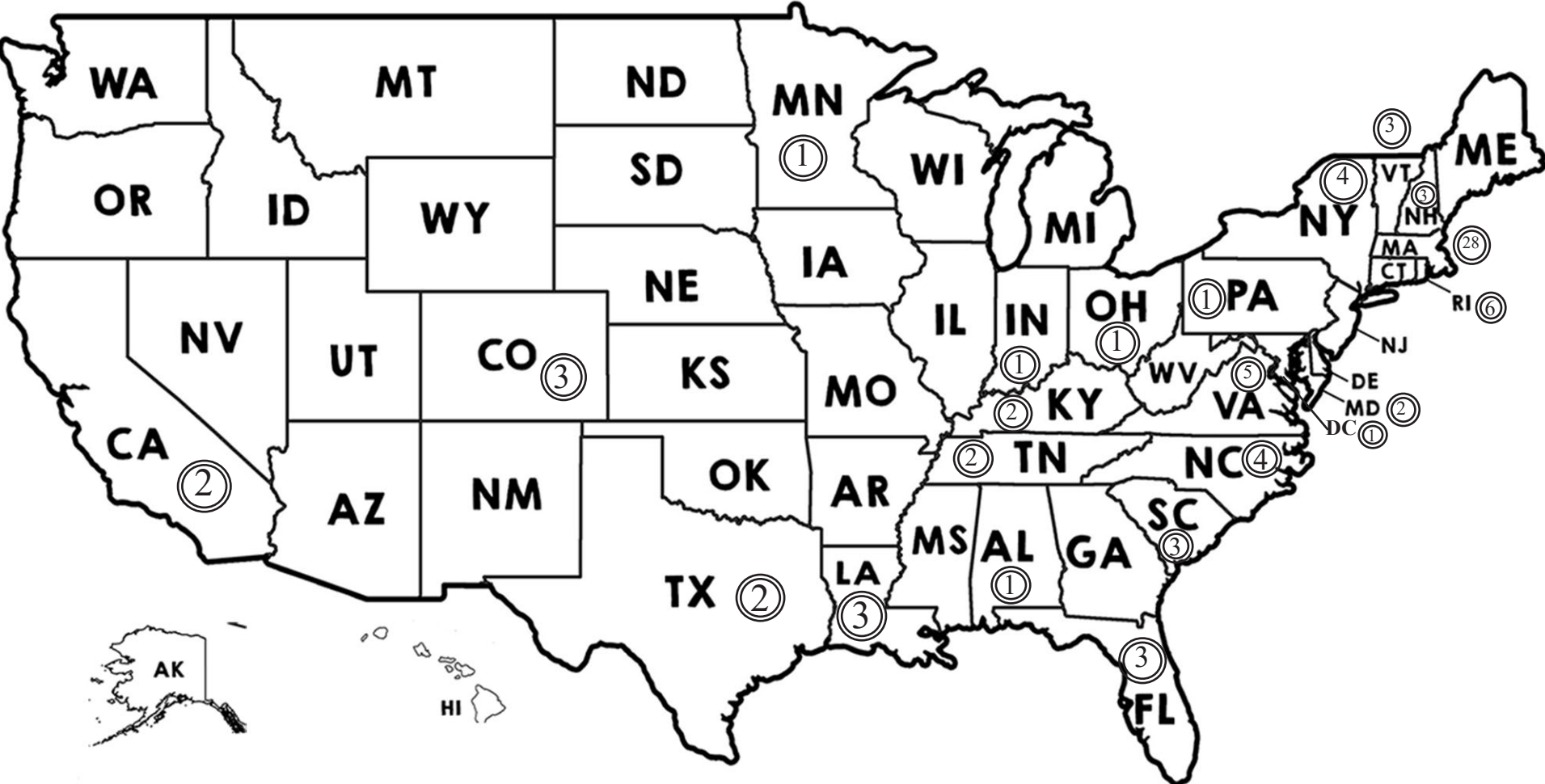
Gabriella D'Andrea, Chloe Lilly, Avary Gangemi, Ella Aieta, and Celia Mann.

MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTOS



Scan this QR code to see more pictures from graduation!





**Alabama: 1**  
Troy Edward Flood - Auburn University, Auburn, AL

**California: 2**  
Sienna Eleanor Crocker - Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA  
Walker Mahin Hammett - San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

**Colorado: 3**  
Erik Spencer Bischoff - University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO  
Samuel D. Porter - University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO  
Beckett Tyler Walker - University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO

**Florida: 3**  
Ella Kate Aieta - University of Miami, Miami, FL  
Ross Jacob Edelstein - The University of Tampa, Tampa, FL  
Celia Mann - University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

**Indiana: 1**  
Avabella Skyla Rose Mitrano - University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN

**Kentucky: 2**  
Lilly Amy Brigham - Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY  
George Vincent Mullin - Morehead State University, Morehead, KY

**Louisiana: 3**  
Quinn Everett Brady - Tulane University, New Orleans, LA  
Alana Paige Martinetti - Tulane University, New Orleans, LA  
Lucile Kokoro O’Flynn - Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

**Maryland: 2**  
Charles David Latons - University of Maryland, College Park, MD  
Mercedes Maria O’Neil - Loyola University Maryland, Baltimore, MD

**Massachusetts: 28**  
Ariana Rose Baker - Salem State University, Salem, MA  
Ian Thomas Carlin - University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA  
Paul William Coughlin - Babson College, Wellesley, MA  
Nicholas David Curcuru - Employment  
Gavin Davis - University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA  
Alana Christine Falk - Endicott College, Beverly, MA  
Greta Francesca Gado - Northeastern University, Boston, MA  
Avary Paige Gangemi - Bentley University, Waltham, MA  
Charles Joseph Paul Hultgren - Employment  
Tyrone Ea Keating - Employment  
Adrian Max Wetzler Kühnemund - University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA  
Eamon Thomas McKenna - Employment

Kevin John McKenna - Curry College, Milton, MA  
Matthew Lyons McKenna - Stonehill College, Easton, MA  
Finnian Thomas O’Hara - Amherst College, Amherst, MA  
Liliane Pilaud - University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA  
Caroline Ann Quinn - Emerson College, Boston, MA  
Samuel T. Reissfelder - Wheaton College, Norton, MA  
Ava Rizzico - Northeastern University, Boston, MA  
Andrew Kevin Reign Souza Rodrigues - Employment  
Hailey Marguerite Rogers - Employment  
Matteo Joseph Sarmanian - Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA  
Charles Shelby Siems - Massachusetts National Guard, University of Massachusetts Lowell  
Liam Alexander Steele - Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA  
Brodie John Tolo - University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA  
Charles David Virden - Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA  
Bing Warren - Suffolk University, Boston, MA  
Nathan D. Woodman - University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA

**Minnesota: 1**  
Katherine Alexandra Bappe - Macalester College, St. Paul, MN

**New Hampshire: 3**  
Caroline Grace Doucette - University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH  
Cade George Armand Furse - Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH  
Joanna Y. Shan - Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

**New York: 4**  
Aiden James Brown - Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY  
Allie Paige Delaney - Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY  
Eleanor Hammer - Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY  
Morgan Tappan Laspesa - Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY

**North Carolina: 4**  
Alexander Paul Breuker - Davidson College, Davidson, NC  
Ella Rose Chafe - Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC  
Logan Farias De Souza - High Point University, High Point, NC  
Diego J. Sanson - Duke University, Durham, NC

**Ohio: 1**  
Natalie Joyce Brunner - The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

**Pennsylvania: 1**  
Lily Anne Francoeur - Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA

**Rhode Island: 6**  
Edward Zaven Chareas - Naval Academy Prep School, Newport, RI  
Amelia Grace Costa - Providence College, Providence, RI

Stephen Joseph Martin - University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI  
Caelie Patrick - Providence College, Providence, RI  
Henry Ewing Thurlow - University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI  
Ali Andrews Viggiano - Bryant University, Smithfield, RI

**South Carolina: 3**  
Torrin Lee Hartwell Kirk - University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC  
Emily Parkins - Clemson University, Clemson, SC  
Stephen Ross - Coastal Carolina University, Conway, SC

**Tennessee: 2**  
Isaac Manuel Amigo - Tennessee College of Applied Technology, Oneida, TN  
Mackay Grace Brooks - Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN

**Texas: 2**  
Chloe Alexandra Lilly - Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX  
Jan Michael Vytopil - The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

**Vermont: 3**  
Cormac Clark Edgerton - University of Vermont, Burlington, VT  
Vivian Francesca Friends - University of Vermont, Burlington, VT  
Nathaniel Gardner - Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT

**Virginia: 5**  
Anneliese Elisabeth Camp - James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA  
Grayson Rust Crocker - William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA  
Gabriella Page D'Andrea - University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA  
Preston Kevin Potter - James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA  
Philipa Shea Tory Spingler - University of Richmond, Richmond, VA

**Washington D.C: 1**  
Corbin Stafford - American University, Washington D.C.

**Other: 7**  
Liv Marietta Cahill - University of St. Andrews, St Andrews, Scotland  
Phileine Margaretha Phoebe de Widt - University College Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands  
Ava Doane - Queen Mary University of London, London, England  
Finn McCue - United States Army  
Jack Peter McDonald - Concordia University, Montreal, Canada  
Elizabeth Alden Mulry - Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland  
Naia Nicole Zachareas - Gap year



# Students attend prom at Willowdale Estate

Despite early ending, attendees enjoy each other’s company, make memories

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Despite this year’s junior and senior prom ending early due to the alcohol found on the premises, students and faculty still enjoyed themselves at the Willowdale Estate, senior class adviser Courtney Brown said.

She said around 230 students attended prom on May 23.

“Everyone looked great ... and the food was awesome. The time on the dance floor that everyone got seemed really fun. It was awesome that there was a photo booth, so [students] were able to take home memories,” Brown said.

She said the other chaperones succeeded at ensuring the students were safe while still having fun.

“It was great to have chaperones that the senior class not only picked but chaperones who were excited to be there and who I trusted to make sure that kids were having a good, safe time,” Brown said.

Senior class president Phileine de Widt said the event went exactly as she wanted.

“Seeing people there all dressed up, actually dancing, actually enjoying the food and talking with each other was just very

rewarding for me,” she said.

De Widt said despite the prom being cut short, it did not ruin the night as a whole.

“To have it cut short was a big bummer, but at the end of the day, I have only heard positive things from chaperones, the staff, [and] the kids ... It was unfortunate that it ended early, but everybody had a great time, and that’s what makes me happy,” she said.

Brown agreed with de Widt.

“Ultimately the decision was made with student safety in mind ... but it has made me feel better knowing that the students who attended did have an awesome

night,” Brown said.

Junior Luke Holmes said he had fun.

“My favorite part was the bus rides because I was with all my friends, and we were having a good time, and the weather was really nice,” he said.

Brown said her favorite part of the night was the students having a good time together.

“Everybody was enjoying each other’s company, and there were no phones. People were talking at tables, playing the miscellaneous lawn games, and just enjoying each other’s presence on a beautiful evening,” she said.

‘It was unfortunate that it ended early, but everybody had a great time, and that’s what makes me happy.’

-PHILEINE DE WIDT



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

The journalism class with teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Seniors Nicholas Curcuru and Sam Reissfelder.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

Seniors Corbin Stafford, Gavin Davis, George Mullin, and Aiden Brown.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Seniors Ross Edelstein and Preston Potter.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Seniors Amelia Costa and Kate Bappe.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Seniors Morgan Laspesa, Libby Mulry, Vivian Friends, and Jack McDonald.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Juniors Skyler Hough, Alice Moody, Emily Woodman, and Tess Carpenter pose for the photo booth.



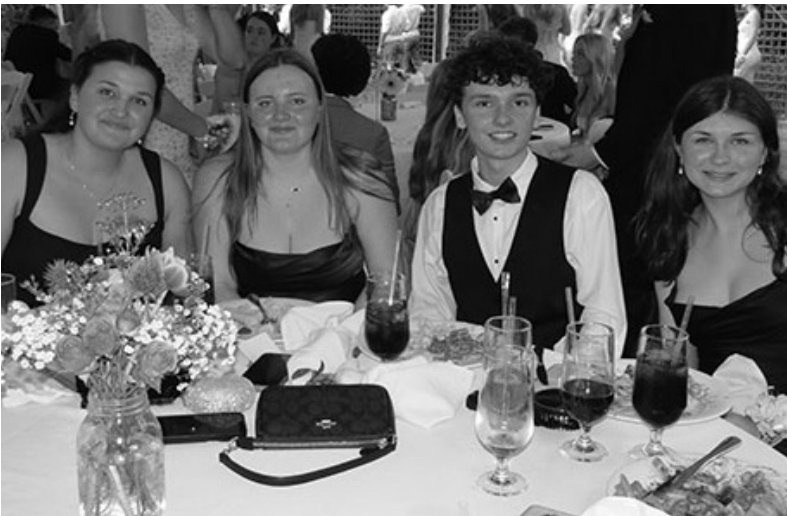
MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Seniors Kevin McKenna, Eamon McKenna, and Matthew McKenna.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Juniors Ben Jacobsen and Sammy Bothwell.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Juniors Ella Arntsen, Charlotte Crocker, Colin Conway, Madi Cook, and Talya Erdogan.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Juniors Emilia Kirkpatrick, Celia Mannal, Nicholas Haley, and Faye Bourgeois.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Juniors Oliver Rodi and Henry Stevens.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Chaperones Robert Bilsbury, Cameron Molinare, Elisabeth Drinkwater, and Officer Andrea Locke.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Senior Eddie Chareas.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Chaperones Elizabeth Edgerton and Will Novak.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Juniors Lily Stefanovich, Nina Zalosh, Maggie Light, and senior Lucy O’Flynn.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
The field hockey team with coach and math teacher Courtney Brown.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO  
Juniors Gwen Berger, Hayden Remington, and Alessia Omari.



Scan this QR code to see more photos from prom!



# STAFF EDITORIALS

## Seniors in journalism class express their gratitude

The feeling of graduation is hard to put into words. A new type of nervous excitement brews in your stomach as you wonder how much your life will change in the coming months. Your heart feels heavy, weighed down by the love you are surrounded by and the sadness of needing to leave it.

One of the hardest good-byes for us is from journalism. Working on *The Independent* for the past three years has been a source of joy, pride, and overall academic enhancement.

As sophomores, we joined the paper knowing merely that the class would take over our Monday nights and that spelling mistakes were unacceptable.

What we did not know yet is how much we would grow and learn to love the journalism routine.

In our first year, we shifted from staff to editors to editors-in-chief, which we would continue to pursue with full effort and enjoyment for the following 14 issues.

In this position, we soon came to love Mondays and weekends devoted to layout. We, of course, had some bumps in the road, but a whole page missing minutes before we send the paper off is really no big deal in the grand scheme of things.

What has been so special and beneficial about working for *The Independent*, is enhancing our

own writing styles. Despite all the rigorous rules of AP Style, we found ways to display our voices through our writing.

We recognized our classmates, especially our fellow seniors, simply through their topics and word choice.

We celebrated Ella as our “School Hero” while she wrote about and earned awards for her editorials “Juniors having access to study halls would prove beneficial” and “Sole microwave creates cafeteria frustration, causes wait.”

Avabella showed us the strength of her award-winning writing as she captured our hearts with her articles about two beloved community members, Mrs. Henry and Dr. Burgess.

We enjoyed Libby’s global perspective as she wrote about varying topics and issues way beyond her years like “Federal Reserve raises interest rates, risks causing recession.”

Mechi dominated every category of journalism as she informed us of the tragic “Sephora 10-year-olds,” kept us up to date on the swim and boys’ basketball teams, and enticed us with her award-winning review on Jamie’s Roast Beef.

Being able to work together as editors-in-chief for consecutive years, allowed us to progress the paper and also ourselves. After all, when we hand out the paper at lunch, our hearts skip a beat



Senior journalism students Ella Chafe, Phileine de Widt, Avabella Mitrano, Charles Lations, Libby Mulry, and Mechi O’Neil each pose for their individual senior year photos prior to graduating.

knowing that what people are reading is a product of a month’s worth of our time and effort.

As we transformed the paper from eight pages to 12, we also expanded our writing and communication skills. Three articles in one week became easy!

As we added more fun by focusing on centerspreads and unique articles, we also became more comfortable around our classmates. We sure do have journalizzm!

As we tweaked the schedules and deadlines, making layout nights more time-efficient, we also learned to better manage our time. Monday nights no longer last until midnight!

Looking back at these moments, we realize that change is often necessary for growth. As we celebrated 30 years of *The Independent*, we noticed firsthand the need for change.

Although we are sad to leave behind our journalism family,

especially our “Journo Mom,” Ms. B-H, we are prepared for the changes ahead and are keeping an optimistic mind on what’s to come.

When the paper celebrates another milestone in five or 10 years, we’ll be waiting for an alumni interview!

We feel beyond lucky to have been able to call *The Independent* ours for all these years, and we sincerely thank the heart of this class, Ms. B-H.

## Administration safely handles alcohol usage at prom

Despite widespread disappointment over the abrupt ending of the prom on May 23, the decision made by school administration, chaperones, and event staff at the Willowdale Estate to bring the dance to an early close was ultimately the safest and most responsible course of action.

When describing the incident, Principal Julie Sgroi said she was informed that one of the 17 chaperones at the event had found miniature alcohol bottles in one of the bathrooms. Immediately,

she worked with the chaperones to close off areas of the venue.

Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater said this incident occurred around 8:30 p.m. The bathrooms were closely monitored afterwards, she said.

The chaperones became increasingly concerned that a student could be sick or get injured after continuing to find more bottles (about 20 in total). Sgroi then contacted the superintendent and obtained legal advice before proceeding, she said.

“Unfortunately, what happened at prom seems like it was a consequence for everyone whereas our [teacher] brains were moreso thinking ‘somebody needs our help,’” Sgroi said.

Though the decision was a difficult one, ending prom early

was the only course of action that ensured the safety of all students.

Sgroi said that at the venue, select students were breathalyzed, and then every student was breathalyzed once the group returned to Manchester Memorial Elementary School.

Breathalyzing every student was a way to avoid the accusation of any students at prom as well as allow the vast majority of students who were not intoxicated to drive themselves home.

Additionally, Sgroi said she was concerned that if law enforcement was brought in by the venue, the issue might not be treated as a school matter.

“It’s a teachable moment ... we weren’t trying to get anyone in trouble. We just tried to get everyone home safe,” Sgroi said.

Calling in Manchester police ensured that safety could remain the top priority during the incident, as well as keep the issue as a school matter rather than a legal one.

Furthermore, students were aware that being breathalyzed was a possibility prior to the night of prom.

Drinkwater said seniors had signed a contract that explicitly stated that if there was any use of drugs or alcohol, they would be subject to a breathalyzer and could lose Senior Week privileges.

Underclassmen signed a similar contract, meaning that all safety precautions taken at the prom were communicated to students beforehand.

Learning commons supervi-

sor and event chaperone Nick Valle said prior to arriving at the venue, boys had been patted down for contraband, and girls had their purses searched.

Next year, more time should be allotted for thorough searches before prom as well as mandatory breathalyzing before and after the event.

Sgroi said that she is open to extending the prom next year by 30 minutes in order to make up for time that has been lost this year.

The difficult decision to end the night early and breathalyze all students should be seen as a precaution taken to protect every student at the dance and the result of a situation that students will hopefully seek to avoid in the future.

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**INDEPENDENT**

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

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.

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# Girls’ lacrosse defeats rival teams, improves chemistry

Team qualifies for state tourney, focuses on small achievements

By August Capotosto  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With a final record of 12-4, the girls’ lacrosse team qualified as the No. 6 seed for the MIAA division IV state tournament after using team-building exercises to perform better on the field, head coach Nan Gorton said.

As of layout, the team will compete in the round of 16 against Nipmuc Regional High School after defeating Lunenburg 15-4 in the first round.

On the Friday before April break, the team discussed their goals and how to support one another on and off the field, she said.

After returning from break, the team has made a more active effort to create fun team bonding activities, senior captain Ella Chafe said.

“We have a team dinner almost every night before a game, which has made us a lot closer and improved how we play together,” she said.

Gorton said that they also painted birdhouses in their locker room and strung them up with the purpose of coming together as a team.

This season, the team has not only strengthened their bonds as teammates but brought strong effort to practices and worked hard to break down each skill, Gorton said.

“Whether it is ground balls, mental toughness, or system play, we are focusing on small steps in our control that will make us better,” she said.

The team lost twice to Ipswich 6-4 and 8-7 this season, which were defining games, Gorton said.

“They were both close games, which always hurt, but it

motivated us to work harder so we don’t have to feel that way again,” she said.

Despite their second defeat to Ipswich being “the hardest loss of the season,” the team beat rivals such as Hamilton-Wenham with a score of 12-8, Chafe said.

On May 7, the team beat Pen-tucket 12-7, which was a statement win, senior captain Mechi O’Neil said.

“Not only did it boost our rankings, but it was so gratifying to pull that off,” she said.

Last year, the team was eliminated in the semi-finals against Ipswich, Chafe said.

“Our current

team goal is to have a deep run in the tournament and make it farther than we did last season,” she said.

At this point in the season, it has been difficult to keep intensity up, especially after a few losses, O’Neil said.

**‘If every day we can look back and say we got a little bit better, I think that is success in and of itself.’**

- NAN GORTON



COURTESY OF IZZY ZAGROBSKI

**Junior Charlotte Crocker runs up the field in a regular season game against Masconomet at Manchester. The Hornets won 13-2.**

“There’s a lot expected of us and sometimes that pressure can be a lot,” she said.

She said it’s important to work hard on trying to do fun things while also improving in games and practices..

Gorton said it’s also crucial to focus on small achievements and gradual improvement.

“If every day we can look back and say we got a little bit better, I think that is success in and of itself,” she said.

# Boys’ lacrosse advances past first round in state tournament

Senior captains help team morale, lead throughout season

By Sam Heanue  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After finishing the regular season with a record of 14-4, the boys’ lacrosse team earned the No. 8 seed and defeated Bourne High School 17-6 in the first round of the state tournament and advanced to the round of 16.

As the team advances through the postseason, they hope to advance further than in previous years.

Junior Hayden Spencer is excited the team has earned the

No. 8 seed, as they entered the tournament last year as the No. 10 seed.

“I think we’re all just really looking to break through that second round and make it further in the state tournament this year,” he said.

Spencer said the team has been working hard to hone their skills in the postseason.

“We’ve been playing great, and if we try our hardest, we should be able to make it further than we did last year,” he said.

Senior captain Henry Thurlow said many players have been important to the team’s success this season.

“The seniors have been performing really well; they’ve been a huge part of the team this year,



COURTESY OF HAYDEN SPENCER

**Senior Beckett Walker runs down the field in a regular season away game against Ipswich High School. The Hornets won 12-5.**

especially some of the guys that have been playing together for years now,” he said.

Thurlow said he and his fellow senior captains Quinn Brady and Mac Edgerton have been leaders throughout the season and help-

ful to team morale.

Assistant coach Jeff Fauci said recent games have been successful, and the team’s overall performance has led to a positive mindset going into the postseason.

“The kids have been playing very well. They know each other ... and have been playing together for a long time, so they understand what they need to do to succeed,” he said.

Fauci said the team has worked hard throughout the season and their performance in the state tournament will reflect the skills they have developed.

Edgerton said the team performed well in the round of 32 against Bourne and looks forward to their next game.

“We started off slow, but in the fourth quarter we really got what we needed going into the next round and we know we can bring it,” he said.

The team will face the winner of the game between No. 9 seed Nipmuc Regional High School and No. 24 seed Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School in the round of 16.

# Athletes qualify for postseason championships

By Hannah Davis  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Camaraderie and hard work have helped this year’s boys’ and girls’ outdoor track teams be successful, junior captain Megan Hurd said.

Both teams concluded their regular season on May 15, 2024. The girls’ team ended with a record of 4-2 and won the Lynch Division. The boys’ team ended their season with a record of 3-3 and got second place in the Lynch Division.

On May 23, sophomore Cia Donohoe, Hurd, and senior captain Nate Gardner competed in the Division IV Outdoor Track



COURTESY OF LAUREN SERGEANT

**Senior captain Nate Gardner leaps out of the blocks at the start of a 200m race in a regular season meet against Salem High School.**

State Championships.

On the second day of the meet, on May 25, Hurd, junior Sabine Cooper, sophomore Caroline Eliassen, and senior captain Finn O’Hara competed in various events.

O’Hara’s relay team won sixth

place in the division. Gardner won the 400m hurdles and broke his own school record. Hurd placed third in the triple jump.

On May 30, Hurd and Gardner competed at the Outdoor Track Meet of Champions. Gardner placed fourth in the 400 meter

hurdles and Hurd placed 15th in the triple jump.

As of newspaper layout, junior Isabelle Donnellan Valade and sophomore Cia Donohoe were scheduled to compete in the heptathlon event in the Massachusetts State Track Coaches Association Invitational on June 3 and June 4.

Head coach David Coleman said he is proud of both teams’ effort throughout the season.

“It’s been a good team; we’ve worked really hard this year and have had a lot of personal bests,” he said.

Gardner is happy with how the boys’ team performed this year.

“I’m proud of our team being able to step up when it mattered, we got really close to winning the conference championship and everyone did their best,” he said.

Hurd said the girls’ team had similar obstacles but it gave dif-

ferent athletes the opportunity to step out of their comfort zones.

“I’m really proud of people trying new things. There’s been a lot of injuries and sickness, and people have been willing to step up,” she said.

Coleman said teamwork and camaraderie have helped the team be successful this season.

“The team has been pulling for each other, rooting for each other. Everyone performs better when they’re happy and feel good,” he said.

Coleman said teamwork has helped the team be successful this season.

“The team has been pulling for each other, rooting for each other. Everyone performs better when they’re happy and feel good,” he said.

Looking to next season, Hurd is excited for younger members of the team to grow and develop.



# Girls’ tennis enters round of 8 in state tournament

## Finishing season 14-3, team works on improving spirit, bonding

**By Sabine Cooper**  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With a No. 2 seed ranking, the girls’ tennis team has progressed to the round of 8 in the state tournament, hoping to advance to the finals, coach Barrett Alston said.

The team finished the regular season with a record of 14-3.

On June 1, they won their first tournament match 5-0 against Joseph Case High School, the No. 31 seed, at Endicott College.

For the second match on June 3, the team defeated Quabbin Regional High School, the No. 15 seed, at Endicott College with a score of 5-0.

As of newspaper layout, the team is scheduled to play their next match against the winner of Monomoy High School and Lenox Memorial High School in the round of 8.

With a high seed in the tourna-

ment, Alston said he has high hopes for the outcome of the state tournament after falling to Hamilton-Wenham last year, garnering them second place overall.

Senior captain and first singles player Grayson Crocker said the team has grown significantly because of their exposure to high-pressure situations.

“The team has improved a lot this season because of the tight matches we have had, [which] has helped us learn how to play well under pressure, like how our two wins against Hamilton-Wenham were very close,” she said.

Along with team growth, all the players have grown individually to be stronger tennis players, Alston said.

“We’ve had pretty incredible progress since the first couple of weeks, specifically for a couple of players such as Sienna Crocker, whose growth as a

**‘The team’s atmosphere is doing really well.’**

-NINA ZALOSH



COURTESY OF ZAC CARVALHO  
**Sophomore Grace Scarbrough plays first doubles with her partner, freshman Sarah Cort, against Newburyport. Scarbrough and Cort won their match 3-6, 6-2, and 7-5; the team won 4-1.**

singles player from the first week compared to now is incredible,” he said

Alston also said that the first doubles players, sophomore Grace Scarbrough and freshman Sarah Cort, had a standout season.

Playing together, Scarbrough

and Cort won the CAL open and remained undefeated throughout the regular season, he said.

In addition to improved skills, the team’s spirit has remained strong throughout the season, junior and second singles player Nina Zalosh said.

“The team’s atmosphere is do-

ing really well...and the seniors are doing a really good job keeping everyone excited to go to the matches,” she said.

Everyone has been getting along, Grayson Crocker said.

“The team has been spirited and bonding ... which has been great,” she said.

# Boys’ tennis team advances to round of 16 in state tournament

## Players continue improving throughout competition, focus on mental strength

**By Isabelle Donnellan Valade**  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As of newspaper layout, boys’ tennis moves on to compete against Ipswich in the round of 16 after defeating Springfield International Charter 5-0 in the tournament round of 32.

The team ended their season with a record of 14-4, becoming Cape Ann League champions and the No. 3 seed in the state championship.

Senior captain Sander Breuker said the team has remained constant in their improvements throughout the season.

“We have stayed pretty grounded and have only gotten

better since the season started,” he said.

Breuker said he wants to focus on improving the mental strength of his teammates throughout the tournament.

“I want to improve our team’s mental game because tennis relies a lot on the mind and there is still lots of work we can do in that regard,” he said.

Coach Robert Bilsbury said despite a stressful couple of weeks due to intense matches and AP tests, the team came out stronger.

“Being stressed with APs while playing important tennis matches can take its toll on you mentally. And I think we came



COURTESY OF ZAC CARVALHO  
**Junior captain Jack Cummins prepares to hit the ball in a home match against Amesbury. The Hornets won the game 5-0.**

through that really well,” he said.

Senior captain Jan Vytopil said the team has a good chance of winning this year’s state tournament.

“We have a chance to win States this year, but we’re gonna

have to really focus to be able to do that,” he said.

Vytopil said despite challenges, the team brings energy to each match.

“Although we had a lot of games ... and [dealt] with some

injuries, our team is resilient and we still came to compete every game,” he said.

Bilsbury said the team played intense matches as they prepared for the tournament.

“We [played] a lot of high-level opponents to get us ready to play our best in the state tournament and to fight for a league title,” he said.

Vytopil said two players who uplift the team are juniors Finn Birkland and Jack Lawler.

“When we have an important game and the team may be feeling a little tense, they always seem to crack a joke and lighten up the team’s spirit,” he said.

Bilsbury said the different energies of each player leads to a fun team environment.

“There’s quirky competitive energy, silly energy ... driven energy, and refuse to lose energy. There’s a nice balance on the team,” he said.

# Sailing team excels at improving skills in team racing, builds cohesion

## Exceeds expectations after hard efforts

**By Whitney Turner**  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With double the number of team members as last year, the sailing team had a very successful season, senior captain Ian Carlin said.

The team finished with a record of 7-7, head coach Anthony Leggett said.

Their record among the teams in their division, the B divi-



COURTESY OF O’CONNOR STUDIOS  
**Junior captain Cole Coté said the team’s sailors excelled at learning how to be successful in team racing.**

sion of the Massachusetts Bay League, was 7-1, he said.

The sailors competed in the A Division of Massachusetts Zimba Fleet Racing Championship on

May 22 and the B Division of the championship on May 23.

Leggett said he sent two boats and four sailors to the competition, which took place on the Charles River in Boston, Massachusetts.

The sailors came in sixth in the A Division and eighth in the B Division out of 21 teams.

Junior captain Cole Coté said the competition includes teams from across the state and is much larger than other events the team attends.

Leggett said the team members improved their skills this year.

“I think the sailors really worked hard this year. And we made some tremendous progress in our boat handling and knowledge of the racing rules and experience,” he said.

Carlin said that despite remaining in the lower of two divisions of the Massachusetts Bay League this year, the sailors’ performance improved.

“I think the team has been doing great. It has exceeded my wildest expectations,” he said.

Over the past few years, the team has been building back after the pandemic and the loss of many graduating seniors. , Leggett said.

“We’ve got much, much better cohesion and spirit this year than we had last year, and last year was much, much better than the prior year,” he said.

Coté said that the sailors have excelled at learning how to be successful in team racing, one of the two types of races they compete in. The other is fleet racing.

“I think we’ve been incorporating team racing tactics very well this year. Team racing tactics are slowing down your opponents to allow your teammates to catch up,” he said.

Leggett said that Carlin stands out as a sailor who has had a large impact on the team for the last four years.

“He is one of the ones that tries the hardest in terms of learning new skills and putting those skills into action out on the racecourse,” he said.

Carlin said that freshman Nicholas Bock was very successful and was even second in the starting lineup in his first year on the team.

“I think he’s got the skills to take the team in a better direction next year,” he said.



# Senior competes in prestigious ice skating competition

Encore of Boston travels to France, performs theatrical skating routine

By Alessia Omari  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Senior Amelia Costa competed in the “Nation’s Cup” international ice figure skating competition in Bordeaux, France, and won the competition with her group, Encore of Boston.

Costa said that the competition, held from April 24-28, involved performing a theatrical group figure skating routine against other skaters and teams..

“It’s basically like Disney on Ice, but competitive,” she said. “You have a theatrical storyline, and you’re also skating in a

group with a bunch of people.”

Costa said that she assembled the group that competed in the competition.

“Last year, I made a team at the Skating Club of Boston that competed nationally and eventually qualified for Internationals,” she said.

Senior Charlie Virden, Costa’s boyfriend, said that figure skating has been a big part of Costa’s life for as long as he’s known her.

“I think it’s really great that she’s been able to participate in this sport she loves for such a large portion of her life,” he said.

Virden said that he has been to many of Costa’s figure skating shows.

“They’re super fun to go to, and it’s always an awesome environment,” he said.

Costa, who has been skating for 10 years, said she was initially inspired to pick up the



COURTESY OF AMELIA COSTA

Senior Amelia Costa competes in the “Nation’s Cup” international ice figure skating competition in Bordeaux, France from April 24-28 with the group that she assembled, Encore of Boston.

sport after watching the Disney Channel film “Ice Castles.”

“I was like, ‘Mom, I want skates for Christmas,’ and after she got them for me, I started skating,” Costa said.

Senior Logan De Souza said that he’s very impressed with Costa’s ability to balance her hobby on top of her school work.

“Throughout the year in our AP Chemistry class I’ve been able to hear about her rigorous schedule,” he said.

Virden said that Costa has dedicated a large portion of her life to figure skating and spent a substantial amount of time practicing for the sport.

“She dedicates a lot of time into her sport, and it shows.”

Costa said she plans to continue figure skating in the future..

“I do plan on continuing skating in college because Providence College has a team,” she said.

Softball ends season in round of 32, team falls to Uxbridge

Hopes to improve rankings next year

By Summer Demeo  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR



COURTESY OF O’CONNOR STUDIOS

Senior captain Celia Mann plays in a regular season game at Sweeney Park against Rockport. The Hornets won 15-1.

way through, and that’s been what we’ve been doing for the whole year. The team just never quits. I’m proud of them for always battling,” he said.

Sarro said the team improved its ranking this year and said he hopes they can continue the trend next year.

Despite the team’s loss, Sarro

improvements in the skill sets of every player throughout the season.

“It’s a night and day difference from some of their skills last year to this year, including myself. It’s great to see, and we definitely notice a difference on the field as we put it all together,” she said.

Sarro said that by the end of the regular season, the team improved greatly with strong defense and hitting with notable performances from sophomores Abby Aiello, Penelope Riggs, and Anna Gardner.

The team created a close-knit environment, one of its strengths, Mann said.

Throughout the season, they built on their bond and kept a positive team culture.

“We’ve gotten a lot more comfortable with each other. We are a family and a team. It’s like a sisterhood,” she said.

Senior captain Morgan Laspesa also said that prior to the postseason, the team had a good dynamic with everyone supporting each other and trying to make each other better.

The captains have worked hard to create positivity on the team.

“[Celia and I] want all the girls to know that this is a place where we’re here to play and have fun. It’s a safe environment,” she said.

**‘[The team] works hard and put in the effort. I’m proud of the year we had and the fact that we were able to make the tournament.’**

-FRANK SARRO

Baseball team seeded No. 31 in state tournament, falls in round of 32

Maintains energy, unity despite close losses

By Stella Straub  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After defeating John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science on June 1, the baseball team fell to Uxbridge High School with a final score of 11-2 on June 2 and concluded their season with an overall record of 6-16.

Throughout the season the team has been staying close and sticking together through difficulty, said head coach James

Weed.

“I always tell them that we’re only going to be as strong as what we deal with through adversity,” he said.

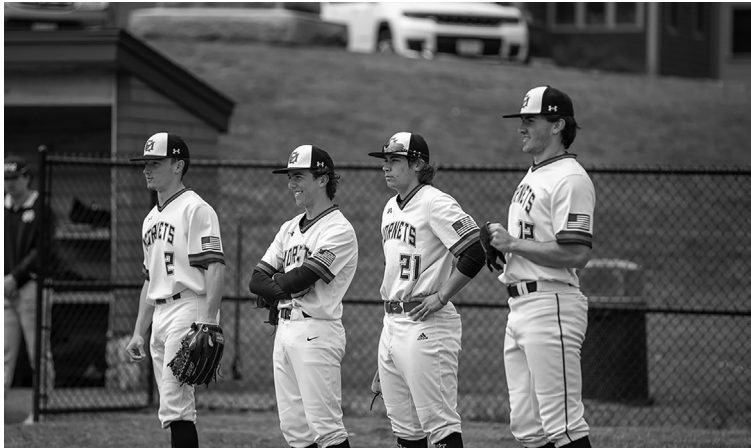
Weed said that the season has had ups and downs but the team has been competitive in many of their games.

“We just fell short in a lot of them ... They’re all learning moments,” he said.

Weed said the team has several strong players, such as senior captain Troy Flood, who is hitting .430 with five home runs, and senior Kevin McKenna, who is hitting .450 and has close to 20 hits.

Flood said the team is building a strong brotherhood and that they are all friends on the field, which helps them when playing..

“Being a good mentor is a big thing for the captains. It starts



COURTESY OF O’CONNOR STUDIOS

Seniors Kevin McKenna, Matteo Sarmanian, Ross Edelstein, and Troy Flood watch the team at their home field, Sweeney Park, on their Senior Night against Essex Tech, which they lost 7-0.

with the older guys, and then what we do is contagious for the younger kids,” he said.

The good energy that the team demonstrates also sets a good example for the upcoming players.

Before the tournament, Flood said that he remained hopeful for the outcome of the tournament.

He said the outcome many of their games against bigger teams like Lynnfield have been quite

close.

Junior Nick Brown said that energy on the team has remained strong, despite playing several hard teams and the fact that luck hasn’t been seemingly going their way.

“That can happen throughout the course of a baseball season. I think if the season was longer, you’d see maybe a surge, or maybe we could win four or five games in a row,” he said.

Brown said that winning against Ipswich (4-2) was a memorable moment in the season for him because the Hornets lost to Ipswich in the previous two seasons.

“So they’ve had our number for a while, so it was nice to beat them twice this season,” he said.

The team also beat Hamilton-Wenham for the first time in several years, Brown said.



# Summerstage auditions take place week of May 20, students will perform ‘Matilda’

Older performers  
enjoy meeting  
younger students

By Gwendolyn Berger  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Summerstage, a Manchester summer theater program, held auditions for “Matilda” junior Josh Cohen, said.

Auditions will take place the week of May 20, and rehearsals will begin the following week, he said.

Cohen said he is auditioning for the role of Miss Trunchbull, the vindictive headmistress of Crunchem Hall Primary School.

“I’m so excited for auditions ... I’ve been practicing my [Miss Trunchbull] voice,” he said.

Cohen said auditioners will prepare a song and perform acting exercises during their audition. He said he’s feeling very confident about his audition.

“The only other boys are like 5 years old, so I don’t think I’ll have much competition,” Cohen said.

He said he is excited about the play as “Matilda” has a good

**Director Eric Vendt said he picked ‘Matilda’ because it was a fun musical, and cast members had requested to perform the show for years.**

storyline. It follows a very intelligent girl named Matilda who has neglectful parents who send her to a militaristic school, Cohen said.

At the school, she meets Miss Honey, who helps Matilda discover her

potential, he said.

Cohen said his favorite part of Summerstage is interacting with the other grades.

“I love seeing elementary school students discover theater



COURTESY OF JEAN SPENCER

**Junior Josh Cohen and Beverly High School senior Lila Pasquarello perform ‘School of Rock.’ The show took place last summer. Director Eric Vendt is excited for summer’s show, ‘Matilda.’**

for the first time,” he said.

Junior Nicholas Haley said he will be handling lights and sets for Summerstage this year. Haley said he has done lights before, but this will be his first year handling set.

“I have to figure out all the details about the set ... and how the lighting will work with the pieces,” he said.

Haley said that while actors do not begin until June, he has already started working on the set. The rehearsal with the lights won’t begin until early July, with the show taking place towards the end in the high school auditorium, he said.

Director Eric Vendt said he picked “Matilda” because it was a fun musical and cast members had

requested to perform the show for years. He said as director, he is responsible for coordinating the different elements of the show.

“My area of focus is building characters with the cast, helping them interpret their lines and coaching them through the process of bringing their characters to life,” Vendt said.

## Art exhibit showcases student work

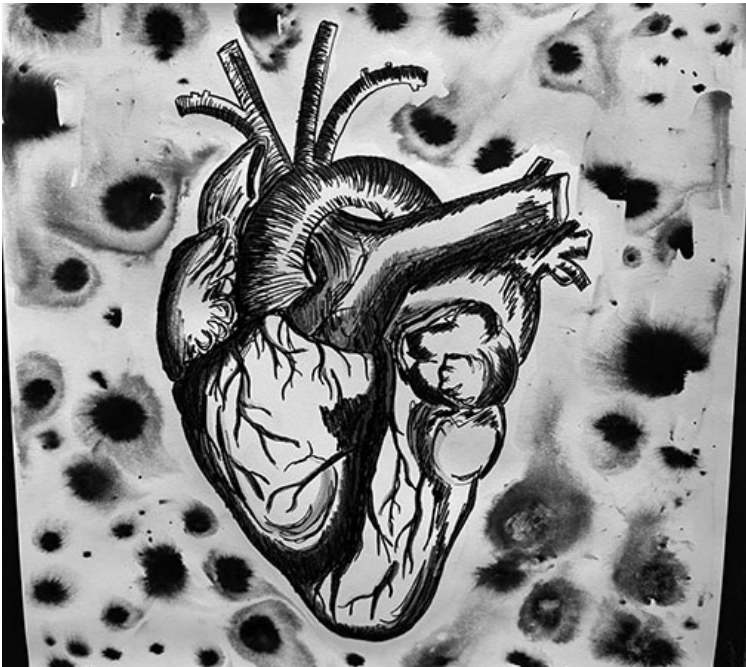
By Whitney Turner  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Over the past several weeks, high school seniors and students in AP Art and Design All Media, AP 2-D Art and Design Digital/Photo, Digital Photo II, Studio Art and Portfolio Art have displayed their work in the high school art show.

The art was on display for the community in the main hallway of the high school from May 20 to June 1, art teacher Tamara Burns said.

She said the show was one of the first physical exhibitions since the COVID-19 pandemic, when art was displayed virtually.

“Nothing replaces a physical show, and it’s a year-end effort. It really shows a lot of production, a lot of effort, what we teach, and what [the students] do,” Burns



WHITNEY TURNER PHOTO

**Students’ art, inspired by their own lives, was displayed in the main hallway. The art show took place from May 20 to June 1.**

said.

Viewers could also scan the QR codes next to the work of AP students, she said.

“That will show you the entire portfolio. So that’s all of the 15 sustained investigation pieces,

including the writing portion of it. It includes the five selected works, which are their best, best, best from anywhere,” Burns said.

Junior Libby McKinnon, who takes AP All Media, said AP portfolios are based around an inquiry

statement, or theme or question.

“Mine was about how to bring interest to love and human connection after COVID. And so all of my pieces are kind of focused on that,” she said.

McKinnon said her favorite piece on display is a graphite piece depicting her parents’ wedding rings.

She hopes viewers of her work always find it pleasing to the eye, she said.

“That’s why a lot of my pieces are clean and not too messy, so I hope that they just enjoy looking at it,” McKinnon said.

Junior Hayden Remington, who takes Portfolio Art, said students chose their work that would be displayed. One piece she had on display is a mix of the styles of the artists Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso.

She hopes her work resonates with viewers, she said.

“They can interpret it to whatever fits them the most. When I was making it, ... it was just important to me, so I’m hoping people can also look at it and tie it to their own lives,” Remington said.

**‘Nothing replaces a physical show, and it’s a year-end effort. It really shows a lot of production, a lot of effort, what we teach, and what [the students] do.’**

- TAMERA BURNS

Burns said one of her favorite units on display was the figurative unit she taught.

“The overarching idea with the figurative unit was mundane aspects of life. So they had to choose a

figure, showing some aspect of doing something very mundane,” she said.

Burns said that displaying art showcases talent in a way that typical classes do not.

## Music department visits New York City, students perform

By Alessia Omari  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In order to foster community within the music department, department members took students on an overnight trip to New York City, high school chorus teacher Ben Icenogle said.

The trip took place from May 18-20.

“We want to draw people into the music program and give students an opportunity to perform in a different setting,” Icenogle said.

Icenogle said the music department worked extensively with the company “WorldStrides” in order to plan the trip and its itinerary.

The department saw “Little

Shop of Horrors” on Broadway, “E.T.” in a philharmonic concert, and “other cool to uristy stuff in New York,” Icenogle said.

Chorus members performed during the trip and prepared by practicing songs they already knew, freshman Cate Vendt said.

“We practiced and perfected some songs all week with the people who would be on this trip, and we went over our parts so we could put on a good show,” she said.

Freshman Bella Hilton said that the band prepared for their performance at the Intrepid Museum by practicing pieces they had already performed.

“We played a lot of music outside the trip, and I know some people that chose to practice on their own to

prepare,” she said.

Junior Joshua Cohen believed that the trip acted as an affirmation for the strength of the music department.

**‘We want to draw people into the music program and give students an opportunity to perform in a different setting.’**

- BEN ICENOGL



COURTESY OF MAGGIE WHITMAN

**Members of the concert band perform at the Intrepid Museum in New York City during the music department trip in May.**

“We’ve held some fundraisers throughout the year, so I think the fact that we’ve done this trip where we’ve done so many things is just a testament to the strength of the department,” he said.

Cohen said that the trip served as a testament to the strength and

passion of the music department.

“The fact that we’ve now had a music trip in which we’ve seen a musical and a philharmonic concert...[shows] that we could plan something that the teachers and students could organize through fundraisers,” he said.