

the **INDEPENDENT**

Students, teachers visit Costa Rica on language trip

Experience locations across country over February break

By Summer Demeo
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury led 42 students and teachers on a Spanish language trip to Costa Rica over February break. The group experienced the whole country. According to the itinerary, they divided their time between the capital, San José, the Arenal region, Turrialba, and the Pacific coast. English teacher and chaperone Mary Buckley-Harmon said the trip was “jam-packed.” The group participated in hikes, nature walks, kayaking, ziplining, and white water rafting and visited a pineapple farm, a coffee plantation, a waterfall, a basilica, multiple nature reserves, and a Costa Rican primary school, she said. English teacher and chaperone Allison Krause said she enjoyed

doing activities that pushed her out of her comfort zone. “The adventurous activities we did like white-water rafting and zip lining, even hiking, are really outside my comfort zone, and I would not have done those things if I was not on this trip. I loved everything we did,” she said. Junior Aisling Twombly said that along with these activities, she was able to improve her Spanish skills while on the trip by interacting with locals and listening to the group’s guide. “By the end, I could understand more of what [our guide] said, and I didn’t have to try as hard to translate what he was saying in my head. Also, having conversations with the locals and our bus driver Victor helped,” she said. Bilsbury said he liked traveling with a large group of students, allowing more people to experience new places and learn more about each other and the world. “It was awesome to take such a big group because we all came from different walks of life and



COURTESY OF HENRY THURLOW



COURTESY OF AISLING TWOMBLY

Students and chaperones on the Costa Rica trip stopped at an overlook point in Jaco with guide Jimmy Alvarado (above). They also went to the beach, Playa Esterillos, to see the sunset (top and bottom left). As a surprise, they visited a local school called Escuela República de Guyana. Senior Stephen Martin received a hug from one of the K-6th grade students during his visit (bottom right).



DORIS-ANN VOSSELER PHOTO

social groups, and now we have this wonderful common experience,” Bilsbury said. Junior Emilia Kirkpatrick also said she saw the group come to-

gether despite not spending time together in school. “One of my favorite things about our group was how closely we all connected ... it was

amazing how everybody just got along,” she said. Bilsbury has led many trips to Spanish-speaking countries and **COSTA RICA TRIP, page 3**

School organizes, prepares to host second annual STEAM showcase

By Gwendolyn Beger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After months of planning, the science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) showcase will be put on for the second-year, science and mathematics department chair Kristin Umile said. She said the event, which will be held in the cafeteria and gymnasium on March 27 from 5 to 7 p.m., will involve presentations from community members and students from grades K-12. “I’m excited to have the younger kids be able to participate in the STEAM night,” Umile said. Students will be showcasing what they’re learning in their classes and clubs, including Bio-tech students showing how to use pipetting to load samples into a gel and Once Upon a Crime students doing a station on fingerprinting, she said. Umile said there will be outside groups coming to present as well. The Little Scientist will do

MERSD STEAM

SAVE THE DATE

MERSD K-12

STEAM Showcase

High School Cafeteria and Gymnasium

March 27, 2024

5:00-7:00 PM

COURTESY OF KRISTIN UMILE

The annual STEAM showcase will run for the second year on March 27 from 5-7 p.m. in the school cafeteria and gymnasium.

chemistry experiments; the Society of Women Engineers will demonstrate how they built and programmed mini robots from toothbrush bristles; Cape Ann Vernal Pools will bring in live snakes; New England BioLabs and Cell Signaling will also attend, among other groups, she said. Umile said she plans to display as much art as possible in the school. “We’re also hoping to have a couple of art students who are willing to set up some tables and present,” she said.

Senior Joanna Shan, the co-president of the Science Team and captain of the Math Team, said the Science Team plans to do a lab for STEAM night while the Math Team will have students solving problems for candy. “[STEAM night] is a good way to market STEM clubs for next year and encourage students to try them out,” she said. Shan said she wants to pursue computer science as a career and enjoyed STEAM last year because she could learn about professions she had never heard of **STEAM SHOWCASE, page 3**

Students compete at annual DECA state competition in Boston

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Ten students qualified for the International Career Development Conference at the annual DECA state competition from March 8 to 10 in Boston. The international competition will take place in Anaheim, California, from April 27 to 30. Senior DECA chapter officer Gabbi D’Andrea said the students did very well, particularly in the Hospitality and Tourism Team Decision Making event. Three teams competing in the event qualified for ICDCs. The teams were seniors Mackay Brooks and Sienna Crocker; Caelie Patrick and Celia Mann, and juniors Ava Fritsch and Liv Kent. The other qualifiers for Internationals are seniors Erik Bischoff, Finn O’Hara, and Ava-

bella Mitrano, and sophomore Adam Macleod. DECA adviser Barrett Alston said there was plenty of preparation going into the state competition. “States is different from Districts in the sense that [the students] don’t know the topic of their role play, so there’s a lot of studying new terms and making sure they’re as ready as possible,” he said. Some students spent time preparing for States outside of class, D’Andrea said. “The [students] put a lot of work into perfecting their roleplays and exam scores,” she said. Alston said almost every student felt both nervous and excited before presenting in front of a judge. D’Andrea said her role is to organize DECA items such as T-shirts, room cards, and vouchers and distribute them to the **DECA STATES, page 3**

‘The [students] put a lot of work into perfecting their roleplays and exam scores.’

-GABBI D’ANDREA

Speakers present careers to students in Once Upon a Crime

Class plans lab study, continues fiber analysis

By Sam Heanue
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Over the past semester, four speakers have come to present to the Once Upon a Crime class on their careers in criminal justice and defense.

The class, co-taught by English department chair Debra Isensee and math and science department chair Kristin Umile, has invited detectives Alex Edwards and Mike Richard, forensic nurse Maureen Hume, and Connecticut Superior Court Judge Moira Buckley to speak about their careers in criminal justice and crime.

Umile said the class shifts between English-based and science-based learning every five weeks. Topics covered during each period typically relate to the presentations.

She said this allows students

to research ideas covered by the speakers. For example, students learned fiber analysis and dating techniques before hearing about medical examinations from Hume.

“After we did work on dating, we heard about medical examinations... and some details about that career from [Hume],” she said.

Umile said Hume spoke about her career path and the need for new medical examiners.

Hume said the lack of examiners has led other professionals to take over their roles.

In addition to fiber analysis, Umile plans to have the class perform others, including a lab study on etymology and how insects play a role in identification for medical examination.

Umile said students have reacted positively to the speakers and look forward to future presentations.

“Students enjoyed seeing how the things we learn about play out in real life... I think for a lot of



COURTESY OF MOIRA BUCKLEY

Moira Buckley spoke to the Once Upon a Crime class about her career as a Superior Court Judge and a defense attorney.

them, these [speakers] have been a highlight,” she said.

Isensee said students interested in the criminal justice aspect of the class enjoyed Buckley’s presentation on her career as a former defense attorney and current judge.

“She spoke a lot about how the right to counsel is a foundational part of the constitution and how



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

important it is to defend a client even when you know they’re guilty,” she said.

Isensee said that seeing these topics covered in real life by both the detectives and Buckley has motivated many of the students to continue pursuing studying criminal justice and forensics in the future.

“Students have... decided to

study these topics in the future after hearing from these speakers and learning about what they do in real life,” she said.

Senior Morgan Laspesa said that members of the class have found the speakers’ presentations educational and exciting.

“I think these presentations have been very beneficial for us. I enjoyed them a lot,” she said.

Week of Gratitude encourages people to write thank-you cards, express appreciation for others

Peer mentors plan class fair to inform students of classes

By August Capotosto
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Peer mentors hosted a Week of Gratitude the week before February break and have started planning for the class fair.

Spanning from Feb. 12-16, the week created an opportunity for people in the school to write letters expressing their gratitude to each other, said director of school counseling Beverly Low, who helped plan the event, which first began in 2014.

Low said it was a tradition from her old schools that seemed like a natural transition to pass on to the peer mentors.

“The goal of the week is to



AUGUST CAPOTOSTO PHOTO

Peer mentors distributed thank-you cards to U-blocks and placed collection boxes around the school for the Week of Gratitude.

encourage people to write thank-you cards to show appreciation for the people who help them,”

senior Joanna Shan said.

Peer mentors chose to focus on increasing student involvement

this year by making the process more accessible, Shan said.

Thank-you cards were distributed to every U-block at the beginning of the week, and collection boxes were posted in the learning commons, front office, and counseling office, Shan said.

Peer mentors delivered the letters on Friday, Feb. 16, she said.

“People’s

batteries tend to run low this time in February ..., making it a perfect time to encourage people to show gratitude to others,” Low said.

She said students and faculty were encouraged to write letters to their peers, teachers, and other members of the staff.

“People can leave with an upswing and can start their vacations on a high note,” Low said.

Sophomore Zac Carvalho

wrote a letter as a part of the Week of Gratitude.

“I decided to send an appreciation card to Mr. Valle for all he does for the school and me personally,” he said.

The peer mentors have begun to plan hosting a class fair, Shan said.

“It’ll be a lot to organize, but I really hope it’s something

‘The goal of the week is to encourage people to write thank-you cards to show appreciation.’

-BEVERLY LOW

that will work out,” she said.

The purpose of the fair is to bring awareness to available classes that younger students wouldn’t be aware of when going into junior year, Shan said.

“I know everyone in peer mentors tries to share their experiences, but there’s only so much we can do day-to-day,” Shan said.

This is an opportunity to expand the peer mentors program in a more accessible way, Shan said.

Students win in annual basketball game

By Phileine de Widt
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After a buzzer-beater loss last year, the students ended up victorious in the annual student-faculty basketball game.

Ending in a score of 63-51, the game was on Thurs., March 14, in the gymnasium and raised about \$300 for the senior class.

The faculty team was led by returning coach and social studies teacher Jennifer Michaud, who said she was disappointed in the loss, especially after last year, but was still happy with the game.

“We had some unexpected superstars like [Christian] Weiss—a

crowd favorite. I’m really proud of my team and am excited for next year. Hopefully, we can take back the crown,” she said.

Both returning and new players filled the 15-man faculty team, including Principal Julie Sgroi and her 9-year-old son Jameson, Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury, and social studies department chair and girls’ varsity basketball coach Lauren DuBois.

DuBois, was also proud of the team despite the loss.

“I was really happy with how the team played. Of course, I was disappointed in the outcome. The game got away from us a bit in the first half and then again late in the second. We’ll get them next year,” she said.

The student team consisted of 10 players and was coached by senior and girls’ basketball team manager Pippa Spingler.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

The students took the victory in the annual student-faculty game on March 14. The game was a fundraiser for the class of 2024.

“I was honored to coach the student team; it was super fun to see all the seniors play together one last time,” she said.

At half-time, Spingler took off

her coach’s suit and hopped on the court.

“The team was lacking in some areas, so I decided it was time for my basketball debut. I was quick-

ly humbled by [DuBois]. I definitely give a lot of credit to all the real players now,” she said.

Spingler played alongside the CAL Baker boys’ and girls’ basketball players of the year, senior Cade Furse and sophomore Lily Oliver.

Michaud commented on the student teams’ successes in their varsity basketball season runs.

“I think the faculty team played hard and smart. It is difficult to play against a team that is filled with CAL Champions, so it was a difficult match-up,” she said.

Michaud hopes the faculty can go into next year improved and ready for the win.

“The faculty team is full of wonderful people who didn’t want to hurt the kids’ feelings by playing with 100% effort, so next year I think I would encourage them to bring it all,” she said.

Mock Trial Club competes for first time, learns about law

New club hopes to reach States next school year

By Gwendolyn Berger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At Saugus Town Hall and in a courthouse in the North Shore, the Mock Trial Club participated in their first competition.

Senior Lily Pilaud said the competition occurred on Feb. 5 and 6. She and senior Avabella Mitrano are co-founders of the club.

She said the Mock Trial Competition is in Association with the Massachusetts Bar Association and is nationally run with differing rules per state.

Pilaud said the team competed three times against three different schools. Although they didn't make it through preliminary rounds this year, she said she thinks next year they have a chance for making States.

She said the team had intensive preparation to complete. "We get a 70-page packet, and we have to comb through the rules and all the information presented to us. We have to ask really specific questions to our witnesses to get the information we want out there," Pilaud said.

She said they also had a very interesting case that was fun to decipher.

"A man was filing against another man for a false police report and burglary ... The other man, the defendant, is claiming that he was kidnapped and beaten up ... so it's a weird situation where there's no straightforward answer," Pilaud said.

She said that the prosecutor didn't come across as a good man, and the defendant was a drug addict and therefore not a reliable source, so it was a complex case.

Their team also had the bare minimum of people, with three attorneys, three witnesses, and



COURTESY OF LILY PILAUD

Seniors George Mullin, Gavin Davis, Charlie Siems, Avabella Mitrano, Lily Pilaud; junior Ava Dennesen; and sophomore Bissy Mitrano competed in three trials for the Mock Trial Club.

one bailiff, Pilaud said.

"The other team had a whole army of people ... and the whole experience was a really big learning curve, but we did a great job working as a team," she said.

Social studies teacher Jennifer Michaud, the club's adviser, said while she initially didn't know much about Mock Trial, she now thinks it's an incredible opportunity for students.

"I think there is a big community in this school who would be interested in this sort of thing but don't know it exists," she said.

Senior Gavin Davis said he was an attorney throughout the trials.

"I had to come up with a list of questions for my witnesses, memorize scripts for introducing evidence, and there was a lot of etiquette to remember," he said.

Davis said originally the group struggled a bit as they didn't understand all the rules.

"At the first trial, we were really unprepared. In the following two trials, we had a lot of notes and preparation. I felt like I learned a lot about law and how the court worked," he said.

Davis said he felt much more interested in law afterward and was glad for the experience.

New finance director brings knowledge, experience

By Summer Demeo
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Michelle Cresta will be starting as the new director of finance at the end of March, Principal Julie Sgroi said.

Cresta has experience in multiple types of school districts and has served on a town finance committee, Superintendent Pam

Beaudoin said

Cresta said she started her career in municipal finance and later branched out into school finance. She took a program to earn her Department of Elementary and Secondary Education license.

She then got her first job as the director of finance in Stoneham public schools in 2010, she said.

Since then, she has worked in the Chelmsford School District, the Triton Regional School District, and is currently working at the Marblehead School District.

Cresta said she is looking forward to working at a regional school again.

"A regional school district is more like a town environment where you run your own financial operations, and that interests me. It appeals to me," she said.

Beaudoin said she thinks Cresta will be a good fit at the school, given her experience in regional schools and finance, as well as her personality

"She's a great collaborator and really carries the same values as our culture," she said.

Cresta will also bring new ideas to the school because of how much experience she has, Beaudoin said.

"[I'm excited] to have a fresh perspective on how we do things and advice on how we can make things better and more efficient and simpler for people to understand," she

said.

Sgroi said Cresta will bring a sense of stability and consistency to the district.

"I think she brings a lot of knowledge on how to handle the budget, and I'm excited to learn from her," Sgroi said.

Cresta said she hopes to connect with the district and understand the issues that are important to students, parents, and staff.

"I'm looking forward to being part of a successful, cohesive leadership team that is able to make an impact on the entire district through all faculty and all students," she said.

CONTINUATIONS

COSTA RICA TRIP
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has been to Costa Rica before with another group. He said this group's guide, Jimmy Alvarado, made the trip even more special.

"Jimmy might be the best guide we've ever had. His connection with the kids, his knowledge of everything about Costa Rica from history to biodiversity ... He's the full package, he knows a ton, and he's awesome at connecting with the kids," he said.

STEAM SHOWCASE
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before.

Principal Julie Sgroi said she attended STEAM night last year before she became principal.

"I'm really excited for this year because it was just phenomenal last year," she said.

Sgroi said she is very excited to

see all the presentations.

"I think it's a huge opportunity for community engagement, and I'm excited to see who from the community comes and showcases their talents," Sgroi said.

DECA STATES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
students. Patrick, who won an award for the highest exam score in her event, said it was her first time competing in DECA.

"It's a great way to get out of your comfort zone and to learn how to present and articulate your ideas under pressure, which is super helpful, especially going into college," she said.

Alston said over a third of students who went to States were finalists.

"The vast majority enjoyed themselves and felt like they performed well in front of the judges, and that's honestly more important than what the results show," he said.

DECA STATES



ELLA CHAFE PHOTO

Seniors Mackay Brooks, Sienna Crocker, Caelie Patrick, Celia Mann; and juniors Ava Fritsch and Liv Kent qualified for the DECA International Career Development Conference (ICDC) on March 10 at the state competition for the Hospitality and Tourism Team Decision Making event. Students said they learned how to present their ideas under pressure and gained skills for college.

Senior prepares for Cheap Marathon during off-season

Work ethic,
commitment
impresses peers

By Ella Chafe
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Senior Charlie Virden is training for the Cheap Marathon in Derry, New Hampshire, on April 6.

Virden said he decided to pursue the marathon in November and started training in December, allowing 16 weeks in total.

He said he started running in 2022 to prepare for soccer and kept with it sporadically. Last year, Virden completed a triathlon with senior Sam Porter.

His training plan requires four, and sometimes five runs a week, making his current average 40

miles per week. Virden said his training has been going well, although it can be difficult to run late at night on the treadmill. He also experienced an interruption on his school trip to Costa Rica, as he was unable to run.

“Costa Rica was tough because I wasn’t able to get my miles in, so I’ll have to cut out that week,” Virden said.

Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury, Virden’s tennis coach, said he loves Virden’s commitment and thinks pursuing other forms of exercise in the off-season is a smart idea.

“The more diverse you are as an athlete, the better you can play each of your sports,” he said.

Bilsbury, who chaperoned the

‘Going from not really running to deciding to run a marathon and going on 18-mile runs and waking up early is very impressive.’

-AMELIA COSTA



COURTESY OF CHARLIE VIRDEN

Senior Charlie Virden trains for the Cheap Marathon in Derry, New Hampshire, by running various routes around his neighborhood. His training plan consists of 4 to 5 runs, averaging 40 miles a week.

Costa Rica trip, also said Virden couldn’t continue his training while away.

“We did physical stuff, but there wasn’t enough knowledge about the running routes or if they would be safe,” he said.

Senior Amelia Costa, Virden’s

girlfriend, said she is proud of him, as she knows it hasn’t been easy.

“Going from not really running to deciding to run a marathon and going on 18-mile runs and waking up early is very impressive,” she said.

Costa said she appreciates his dedication and determination, as Virden sometimes runs before school or late at night.

“It’s definitely hard on your body to be running those distances, so I’m proud of him for it,” she said.

Gender Sexuality Alliance, Poetry Club collaborate

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Poetry Club adviser Elizabeth Edgerton and Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) adviser Ben Icenogle collaborated to allow students to participate in both clubs due to concurrent meeting times.

Poetry Club was created during the 2022-2023 school year, Edgerton said.

This year, the club has a very active group, and has been meeting every Monday, she said.

Sophomore member Grace Rumble said the activities typically include learning about new poets, writing poetry, and sharing the poems with the students.

GSA is a club that engages students in projects and discussions about gender and identity,

which promote the idea of raising awareness within the school community, Icenogle said.

Edgerton said the clubs both have Monday meetings scheduled at the same times.

“A couple months ago, we joined up for a meeting ... and we realized there was a crossover of kids who wanted to come to GSA and the Poetry club, so we thought if we joined forces, it would be interesting,” Edgerton said.

The clubs have recently been exploring what they can do to bring the groups together.

“Mr. Icenogle came up with a list of topics related to LGBTQ+ issues, events, and things we can learn about. We thought about how we can teach some of the issues with and through poetry,” Edgerton said.



COURTESY OF ELIZABETH EDGERTON

The Gender Sexuality Alliance and Poetry Club have collaborated on Mondays after school to allow students to attend both clubs. They have been discussing topics related to LGBTQ+ issues and events.

Many students enjoy the two clubs working together.

The collaboration is “nice since the clubs are bringing together two things that are different and finding commonalities,”

Rumble said.

Icenogle said the clubs naturally mesh together as art can be a way to express emotion.

“A lot of art forms come from personal struggle and [from]

people of queer identities and sexual identities ... as there is a lot to express about these topics,” he said.

Icenogle said he plans to continue collaborating in the future.

International Week emphasizes other cultures

By Stella Straub
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

All French and Spanish classes in the middle and high school will be celebrating International Week from March 20-22, said Michelle Magaña, Foreign Language Department Head and event organizer.

Magaña said the goal of the event will be to inspire students to travel to places outside of the United States.

“We hope to inspire students to explore ... [and] to have the desire to use the language they’ve learned here ... wher-



COURTESY OF KRISTIN MCGINN

Speaker Kristin McGinn visited Frankfurt, Germany in 2005 and will be presenting on her trip to students for International Week.

ever they travel to and use that language in another country,” she said.

Magaña said that in Massachusetts, International Week is signed by Governor Maura Healey and celebrates the desire to learn about and explore other

cultures around the world.

Students will be given a “participation packet” with space to take notes on the presentations they see, she said.

“When we come back as a class, we can talk about what we heard, what was interesting to us,

what we liked the most,” Magaña said.

The packets are also used to record participation when students wear the colors of the three countries to represent the different countries that will be celebrated on each of the days of International Week, she said.

Computer science teacher Steven Cogger will be presenting on his trip to Italy this past summer, where he visited Florence, Verona, Montepulciano, and Rome, he said.

Cogger said he’s presented several times over the past few years and enjoys sharing his experiences.

“It’s important to know about other places and other countries. I always try to bring some thinking into it. In the past, I’ve talked about where my family is from

and what that meant to me,” he said.

Cogger said he plans to speak about where he traveled in Italy, put distances between places in perspective, and share some of the pictures that he has from the experience.

Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater said she will be presenting on her experience living in Spain for a semester during college and in Costa Rica for a summer while finishing her master’s degree. She also had her wedding in Costa Rica.

“I love sharing my experiences because I feel that travel is really important, and both of those experiences really shaped who I am and [my] future experiences. The more I can share and persuade young people to do that, I’d love to do that,” Drinkwater said.



Girls’ varsity basketball assistant coach Hardy Nalley sits with head coach Lauren DuBois during a game against Lynnfield on Jan. 15. (Right) Nalley is pictured in “Jeffrey’s Creek: A Story of People, Places and Events in the Town that Came to Be Known as Manchester-by-the-Sea” by Gordon Abbott Jr.

COURTESY OF VICKI DONNELLAN



Manchester-Essex icon Hardy Nalley continues to impact community

By **Isabelle Donnellan Valade**
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After dedicating over 60 years of his life to the success of the Manchester-Essex School District’s programs and studies, Hardy -0 continues to support students of the district as girls’ varsity basketball assistant coach.

Nalley said he began high school at Manchester-Essex in 1957, where he played football, basketball, and baseball.

He played on seven Cape Ann League championship teams and two State championship teams, Nalley said.

“[Manchester-Essex is] a small school, great teachers, great coaches. Loved to come to school every day,” he said.

Nalley graduated from high school in 1962 and attended Keene State College in New Hampshire, he said.

He studied education and returned to Manchester-Essex the year after he graduated college to teach math and social studies in the middle and high schools, Nalley said.

“[Students] are great. They come to school very positive, smile on their face, they want to learn,” Nalley said.

Nalley said his wife Betsy, who he’s been married to for 57 years, taught kindergarten at Manchester Memorial Elementary School for 16 years.

His two children, Sarah Beth and Kirk, also attended Manchester-Essex and contributed to the athletic program.

While teaching, Nalley said he coached boys’ varsity basketball and tennis, with which he won three tournaments.

During his career with Manchester-Essex, he took on the role of principal for half a year and was also assistant principal and athletic director for three years, he said.

After he coached for roughly six years, Nalley became athletic

director (A.D.). In this role, Nalley said he did “everything.”

“I lined fields. I umpired games. I spread speedy dry. I hired coaches,” he said.

As A.D., he was most proud of the school’s competitiveness despite its size, he said.

“Being one of the smallest schools in the Cape Ann League and always being able to compete in and win many championships,” Nalley said.

World language teacher Robert Bilsbury said he was appointed by Nalley as a coach in 1998.

“His passion for the kids’ success as an athletic director was phenomenal. He was a phenomenal coach, [and] a highly decorated athlete. He brought that

understanding of how much sports can help kids grow as people,” he said.

Bilsbury said Nalley deserves his name on a school after

everything he’s done for Manchester-Essex.

“[Nalley] has been an example of how to coach with class and dignity and fairness and how to put kids first. He’s just an incredible person that’s given so much to our school,” Bilsbury said.

After teaching and being the A.D. for 43 years from 1966-2009, Nalley retired.

In honor of his retirement, Nalley said the school created the Hardy Nalley Award to give annually to “a deserved student who exemplifies leadership and sportsmanship both on and off the playing field, who gives back to the community, who goes above and beyond for all causes, and who always puts the team first and self last.”

After his retirement, Nalley said he remained with Manchester-Essex athletics, becoming middle school girls’ basketball coach followed by volunteer assistant coach of varsity girls’ basketball.

He said he’s been assistant coaching under history depart-

ment chair Lauren DuBois for 10 years and has continued coaching for the competitiveness, the kids, the familiarity, and it simply being “a good fit.”

DuBois said she has known Nalley for 20 years.

“He hired me to be the freshman girls’ basketball coach ... [and] when the varsity position opened up the following year, he encouraged me to apply, and he took a chance on me for the position,” she said.

Nalley has constantly supported her coaching and the program, DuBois said.

She said Nalley has served as a sounding board for her and is someone she can trust to help run the team.

“He’s always trying to come up with ways for our team to be more successful, and he’s incredibly kind and funny,” DuBois said.

Girls’ basketball players and alumni have fond recollections of Nalley.

“Mr. Nalley is truly one of a kind; his wit and coaching IQ are unmatched ... His presence meant the world to us each day, a testament to his unwavering support and dedication,” 2016 graduate Sabrina Pallazola said.

Fraley Morton, a 2015 graduate, said Nalley supported them through every accomplishment.

“Nothing was better than the thumbs up and smile I’d earn from him [while] running back down the court after making my free throws,” she said.

Former athletes agree that Nalley’s impact as a leader is unmatched.

“He continues to be a great example of a leader with his commitment to the community, [his] humor, brutal honesty, and patience. The ME girls’ basketball program is extremely lucky to have him,” said 2017 graduate Melanie Carter.

Girls’ basketball captain Phileine de Widt, a senior of the team, said Nalley is an inspiration with his one-liners and charisma.

“I just love talking to him ... It’s just special that I get to have someone who so many people know and appreciate as a coach,” she said.



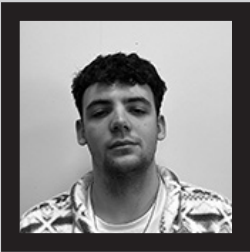
Freshman Katie Crompton:
“When an ump calls a bad strike.”



Freshman Charlie Mannal :
“When a ref makes an unfair call in any sport.”



Sophomore Penelope Riggs:
“People that chew loudly. I hate that so much.”



Sophomore Chris Glass :
“The weather in New England because it’s 60° and then starts snowing the next day.”

Student Speak What gives you “March Madness”?

Junior Charlotte Donnellan Valade:
“People who stand in front of the TV and don’t even realize they’re blocking people behind them.”



Junior Henry Stevens:
“The College Board.”



Senior Joanna Shan
“Inertia in physics.”



Senior Troy Flood
“Bronco Sports and Jamie’s Roast Beef because I don’t get a good vibe from them.”



Junior chosen as member of theater organization’s executive board

Will offer student perspective as new Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild representative

By Alessia Omari
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Junior Joshua Cohen was nominated to join the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild’s executive board on Jan. 19.

The Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild (METG) provides support and opportunities for middle and high school theater programs throughout the state, with members of the executive board making decisions, he said.

“I’m a full member of the

board, so it functions similarly to the School Committee,” Cohen said. “I’m voting on the issues, and I can speak during meetings.”

Cohen’s past experiences with supporting the theater program caused him to develop an interest in the position, he said.

“In my application, I wrote a lot about how I was working to build back the theater program here, as well as how I’ve been working with the Friends of Manchester-Essex Performing Arts (FOMEPA),” Cohen said.

High school theater director and elementary school teacher Tyler Garofalo said that she initially posted the opportunity on the Drama Club Google Classroom without expecting students to take much interest.

“Imagine my shock to receive

an email from the president of METG that our own Josh Cohen had been chosen!” she said.

“This is the first year that METG has sought out student ambassadors, and it is so exciting to have Josh on the board.”

Cohen has an innate talent for bringing the characters he plays to life through his acting and is a knowledgeable figure within the theater program, freshman Lilah Malone said.

“He makes his characters his own and gives them a personality you wouldn’t even expect from just reading the script,” she said. “He always knows what’s going on and is very interested in what he’s doing.”

Cohen’s involvement in the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild will help bring a much-needed student perspective to the executive board, Garofalo said.

“He has participated in Drama Fest for the past three years and has great ideas about what students like, expect, and experi-



COURTESY OF MERHS INSTAGRAM

Junior Josh Cohen has been involved in theater for seven years, and was chosen to be a member of the METG executive board.

ence,” she said. “This will help inform their decisions going forward to make the whole experience very student centered.”

Faculty recalls bonds, lessons from intercollegiate sports

By Avabella Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Former college athlete faculty members said their experiences on their intercollegiate teams helped them form tight connections and taught them invaluable lessons.

Foreign language teacher Robert Bilsbury said he participated in Division III soccer and tennis at Brandeis University.

Bilsbury played as goalkeeper for all four years and became the captain of the team. He also played tennis during the spring season.

“[As a freshman] you’re connecting with all these kids that are older than you that really know the school well. It was just a really helpful thing to be

on a team that freshman year of college, because it can be scary,” he said.

Bilsbury said that although his participation took up a lot of his time, he was used to balancing academics and athletics from high school.

“I’m also used to it now as a teacher and coach because I do the same thing ... it’s been a helpful thing for me,” he said.

Bilsbury said he still plays soccer with his old teammates from Brandeis, and the connections he made were his favorite part.

Math teacher Courtney Brown said she also formed many connections during her tenure as a Division III field hockey player at Endicott College.

She played mainly on defense



COURTESY OF NICK VALLE

Learning commons aide Nick Valle, who ran Division III track and cross-country at Aurora University, recommends college athletics.

and was teammates with athletic director Cameron Molinare.

“I met my husband at Endicott, and all my best friends are players from my team. So without a doubt, my favorite part was the people that I’ve hung on to after graduation,” she said.

She said she learned about her own role as a coach today due to her field hockey experience.

“[I learned] to try to make

“[Being a student athlete] opened up a lot of doors to become friends with other athletes, hang out with different sport teams, and just belong to something,” Brown said.

Learning commons aide Nick Valle attended Aurora University in Illinois through recruitment for Division III track and cross country.

He said he wanted to continue with running throughout his life.

“I just knew from a physical and mental standpoint that it was really good to stay active,” Valle said.

Despite pandemic-related challenges, he said he has a lot of memories with his team.

“Really just being with the team, having fun and competing was definitely like the highlight of it,” Valle said.

Brown and Valle said they recommend that future college athletes are fully committed and engaged in their sports, while Bilsbury recommended that students should consider participating in some level of sports to experience a team atmosphere.

School seeks out opportunities to work with AI

By Phileine de Widt
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) advances, the school continues to plan for ways to work with the development in classrooms.

Digital Learning Specialist Matt Tangney said every school will be wrestling with the use of AI and will have to think fundamentally about how their curriculum is set up.

“To a certain extent, this is the same as spell check. We assume that on an assignment, students have had the chance to proofread

You

Are these sources real?

ChatGPT

I apologize for any confusion. Since I cannot browse the internet or access real-time databases, I generated those sources based on common types of academic articles and essays you might find when researching literary analysis. While I can't guarantee the existence of these exact sources, they are representative of the kind of analysis available on "Beloved" by Toni Morrison. If you're looking for actual sources, I recommend searching academic databases like JSTOR, Google Scholar, or university library catalogs using keywords related to "Beloved" and identity. These databases should provide you with numerous legitimate sources for your research.

PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTO

Faculty have been finding new uses of AI for school. When asked if its sources are real, ChatGPT does not respond affirmatively.

... I think we are going to get to that point with AI tools and say, ‘Of course you use AI,’” he said.

How the tools should be used, however, is still the question, Tangney said.

Tangney said a lot of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, are language-

said, have found innovative ways to use AI in their classrooms.

Senior Natalie Brunner’s AP Spanish Literature and Culture class has worked on experimental ChatGPT assignments, she said. She found it very useful.

When using it for her English class, however, Brunner said ChatGPT gave her seemingly authentic sources with bibliographies that ended up being fake.

“In school, we should incorporate how to learn with AI because it is inevitable that it will be around for the rest of our lives. Right now, however, it can be really misleading and scary for students who want to find accurate source information,” she said.

Social studies department chair Lauren DuBois found AI initially concerning but also

understands its potential to create improvements, she said. One way the department has used the tools so far is to adjust the reading levels of texts.

“I need to figure out how to use [AI] effectively myself but also how to teach students how to use it in a way that is still promoting academic integrity.” DuBois said.

Tangney said tools to detect the use of AI are not reliable, as AI keeps developing. There are other applications, however, that track document revision history.

Tangney is not pushing towards a specific AI tool, as the industry is still developing.

“This is new for everyone, and everyone is learning this. Everybody needs that flexibility to try, to experiment,” he said.

Media Ethics

Is true crime an acceptable form of entertainment?

Pro

Isabelle Donnellan Valade

Dealing with the repercussions of crime can be difficult to handle, but true crime provides educational and emotional benefits that can help individuals cope with events that would otherwise be hard to process.

By removing true crime as a form of education based on it being unethical, people would remain uneducated and ignore important events.

True crime is popular due to how it helps people learn about real events.

According to Siena Roberts in “Why do we love true crime? The phenomenon behind our obsession,” this popularity is higher among women.

A study by the University of Illinois discovered that women, especially those who were victims of a crime, report that watching true crime is a healing experience.

Along with the benefits true crime provides for those trying to understand criminals and crimes, true crime has also been shown to improve people’s understanding of the criminal justice system and investigations into crimes.

A YouGov article titled “Half of Americans enjoy true crime, and more agree it helps solve cold cases” by Taylor Orth listed the views of American media consume true crime. “[True crime] brings awareness to unsolved crimes, builds empathy and support for victims, and makes people more vigilant and safety-conscious,” Orth wrote.

Orth provided statistics to demonstrate the percentage of the American population’s stance on controversial topics surrounding true crime.

According to her, 63% of Americans think that true crime offers a deeper understanding of the criminal justice system. and 37% believe it increases trust in the police, compared to 31% of people that disagree.

Tom Murray and Inga Parkel for in the Independent write in “11 times true crime documentaries helped solve the cases they were based on,” that cold cases have been solved by true crime series.

“Documentaries are able to bring renewed attention to cold cases – unsolved criminal investigations – which can sometimes bring new evidence to light,” the authors write.

They wrote that the creator of “Unsolved Mysteries,” a popular true crime series, said during its 23-year run, the series helped to solve over 260 cold cases.

Con

Sabine Cooper

Entertainment that profits off true crime stories is not ethical and causes serious long-term damage to the victims’ families and the audience.

In recent years, there has been more backlash targeted at producers who are making these forms of entertainment based on real stories because of their insensitivity to the victims and their families.

For example, the release of “Dahmer —Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story” on Netflix in 2022 distressed victims’ families who felt that the show profited from their pain and misrepresented actual events, according to the article “My Sister Was Murdered 30 Years Ago” by Annie Nichol for the New York Times.

By profiting off this type of entertainment and commoditizing true crime, the lives and stories of victims are reduced to marketable content, further dehumanizing them.

A study from the University of Oregon states that women feel true crime media makes them more aware of potential threats because “women, in particular, have anxiety about potential threats [and] turn to true crime to feel better prepared if something violent were to happen to them.”

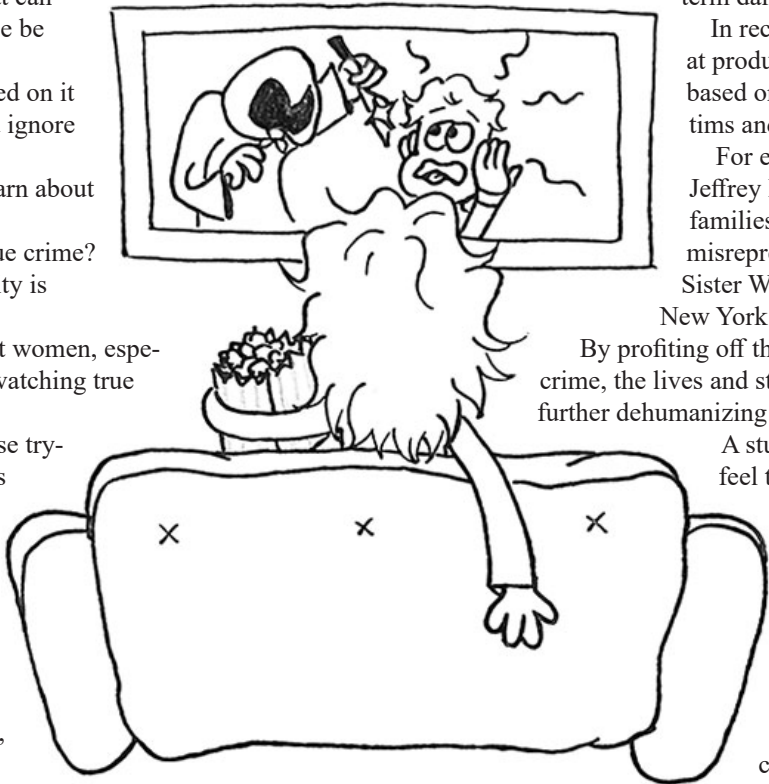
According to Whitney Phillips, assistant professor of digital platforms and ethics at the UO School of Journalism and Communication, consuming true crime media to learn about potential safety concerns sets an expectation of a certain type of stereotypical victim: a young, innocent white woman. “[Yet,] many missing white women do not fit the criteria for coverage if they are not the ‘right’ type of victim,” according to Phillips.

These commonly portrayed stereotypes create a media perception that certain victims are not considered a “good enough story” because of the warped perception, according to the University of Oregon.

When consuming this media, the glorification of criminals often leaves young viewers unable to separate the entertainment value of the show from the reality of the story.

For example, the TV show about Jeffery Dahmer gained positive reactions from fans who called the modern portrayal of him “attractive,” according to the USD Student Media Center.

The portrayal of the criminals in true crime media is only one of many ethical problems with this genre.



Alessia Omari

‘Sephora Kids’ trend shows issues with Gen Alpha behavior

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Hordes of Generation Alpha kids are storming makeup stores, such as Sephora, purchasing anti-aging products, ruining sample displays, and disrespecting both employees and their parents along the way.

The “Sephora Kids” trend, most popular on TikTok, includes young children posting what they purchased for their very large and expensive skincare routines, according to www.wenc.com.

Multiple Sephora employees have documented their appalling experiences on TikTok, including a user called @natsodrizzy, who witnessed a young girl make her mother buy her \$500 worth of products.

Aside from the overall disrespect this girl showed to her mother by refusing to take items out of the cart, the products she brought to the register were particularly eye-opening, one being the Viktor & Rolf Flowerbomb perfume. This alone costs \$96 for

a standard size bottle at Sephora, she said.

This phenomenon raises numerous concerns among individuals of older generations, provoking questions over the dangers of consumer culture and lenient parenting.

“The problem isn’t the kids, it’s the parents,” @natsodrizzy said in her TikTok. “These little girls have never heard the word ‘no,’” she said.

Gen Alpha was born into the are of rapid internet globalization. They are culturally adapted consumers because of their access to the internet and, most importantly, to influencers. This makes them more susceptible to following clothing and makeup trends, even if the trends don’t align with their age group.

Gen Alpha is exposed to influencers who are in their

early-to-mid 20s, rather than teen pop culture idols. In this sense, young girls are paying attention to trends outside their age range, thus drawing them to expensive stores such as Sephora.

Not only is it a consumerism issue, but the products these kids are buying are causing damage to their skin barrier, dermatitis and more.

Dermatologists say they’re seeing more and more children as patients with several-step skincare

routines, often filled with products they don’t need or that are harming their skin, according to USA Today.

Dermatologist Dr. Brooke Jeffy recalls one patient, around age 11, who developed a severe rash around her eyes from retinol, an ingredient known for anti-aging, which she says the child insisted on using.

“This rash had been going on for so long and was so intense, it’s probably going to take at least a month, if not more, to

Fostering responsible habits and age appropriate skincare routines is essential to the well-being of Gen Alpha.



PHILLIP PESSAR/FLICKR.COM

A brand commonly targeted by the trend of “Sephora Kids” is Drunk Elephant, an expensive brand not targeted to children.

totally resolve,” Jeffy said. “All for trying to use an anti-aging product that she doesn’t need.”

In light of the concerning “Sephora Kids” trend and its

implications on consumerism and parenting, fostering responsible habits and age-appropriate skincare routines is essential to the well-being of Gen Alpha.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Proposed schedule surprises students, shortens U block

Due to efforts to align the middle and high school schedules, a committee was tasked with creating a new schedule. The current schedule, however, better supports social-emotional learning and is critical for the academic and personal success of students.

Changes to the schedule were proposed for next year, but this plan has been postponed to the following year of 2025-2026, pending the results of a new committee study of schedule options.

The proposed schedule includes a 40-minute U block and six blocks per day that are 45 to 50 minutes long, which is comparable to other schools.

The current schedule includes five blocks of 55-60 minutes and a 50-minute U block.

Principal Julie Sgroi said the proposed schedule was very similar to the current schedule with the main difference being an extra class, which caused the other blocks to be shortened by 5-10 minutes, she said.

The scheduling committee, which consisted of teachers in both the middle and high school, created this proposed schedule, Sgroi said.

In an email Sgroi sent out to the school community, she said the primary reason for the

change in schedules was to provide more financial efficiencies and increase program opportunities for students.

The proposed schedule may have financial benefits for the school, but it includes many negative aspects for students.

The schedule shortens U block and adds an extra class, resulting in less time for homework to be completed and more stress for students.

U block serves as a break time for students to relax. Many students fear that with U block being shortened and a class added, school will be more stressful.

The current schedule provides breaks after two blocks, which motivates students because it allows more time for decompressing.

The proposed schedule includes U block after three blocks in the morning, which can cause problems with having too much work and less time to prepare for upcoming classes later in the day.

Many students’ course choices may also be impacted by this proposed schedule change, as having more classes results in a heavier workload. This may cause students to choose less challenging courses.

Sophomore Arielle Stafford said she was originally plan-

7:45-8:35	A	G	F	E	D	C	B
8:39 - 9:29	B	A	G	F	E	D	C
9:34 - 10:24	C	B	A	G	F	E	D
10:28 - 11:09	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
11:10 - 12:00	D	C	B	A	G	F	E
12:04 - 1:26 Class and lunch	E	D	C	B	A	G	F
1:30-2:15	F	E	D	C	B	A	G

COURTESY OF JULIE SGROI

The proposed schedule, which allows for more blocks each day, shortens U block, which caused student pushback. U block is integral to the academic and social success of many students.

ning on taking five AP courses but will reconsider if the new schedule gets implemented in the future.

In the proposed schedule band and chorus class will become its own block, instead of being held during U block. This allows band and chorus students to have access to U block, making it more fair for students, but it forces students to choose between music courses and other electives.

Sophomore Grace Scarbrough said, “I like the idea of having [music] be its own class instead of during U block, but I don’t appreciate having one less elective.”

However, in the current schedule band and chorus students

have the opportunity to have a study hall during another period if a student chooses to.

Students learned of the proposed schedule through word of mouth and were surprised and unsettled.

When students learned that the school was considering a schedule change, they felt excluded from the process and felt that their opinions and needs were not being valued.

As a result, many students complained to Sgroi and spoke out at a meeting held during U block for students to learn more information and ask questions.

The administration decided to postpone the new schedule due to how the students and com-

munity received the information and the reactions that followed, which showed that the community was not ready for a change, Sgroi said.

The administration will include students and parents to join faculty when designing the schedule, said Sgroi in an email to the community.

This year, the scheduling committee put a lot of effort into the proposed schedule to be successful for students; however, the current schedule is what has been working best for the students because it helps students be productive throughout the day while maintaining social emotional learning, which is best supported in the current schedule.

Third places

are becoming vital to communities

By Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In an increasingly disconnected society, third spaces, also referred to as third places, are becoming progressively more important for the wellbeing of everyone.

Third spaces, places separate from the home and the workplace, allow people to gather and interact with each other. In other words, they are physical community spaces. Some examples include local coffee shops and cafes, clubs centered around one’s interests, parks, and community centers.

One of the main benefits of



FLICKR.COM/ADAMCHANDLER86

Third spaces, like coffee shops, connect people with others.

third spaces is the socialization they encourage.

According to the Today article, “Do you have a ‘third place?’ Here’s why finding one is key for your well-being,” Dr. Narae Lee of the Population Research Institute of The Pennsylvania State University said third places

allow direct or indirect social contact.

“In third places, you can enjoy direct social interaction with other people by chatting and enjoying activities with them,” she said.

Currently, there is an epidemic of loneliness in the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued an advisory on the issue in May 2023.

“Given the significant health consequences of loneliness and isolation, we must prioritize building social connection the same way we have prioritized other critical public health issues,” he said.

The social interaction provided by third spaces has been even more rare following the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people still work remotely, resulting in

the loss of a separate workplace. Third spaces also often provide many job opportunities and are vital to local economies, Lee said.

“People lost jobs, and they also lost places to enjoy social activities, which heightened psychological and mental distress,” she said.

In response to this issue, the city of Boston has begun a project called the “Third Spaces Lab,” designed to create more public spaces for city residents. More cities should be taking this type of initiative to strengthen their communities.

According to the city’s website, “Third Spaces Lab,” Boston is seeking to invest in public and private spaces, while allowing grassroots organizations and centers to grow without heavy-handed government intervention.

When investing in third spac-

es, it is important to consider the preservation of existing spaces.

In the Independent article, “Loss of ‘third places’ has been a symptom of ‘America’s decline’ - here’s why cities are bringing them back,” Brookings Institution senior fellow Stuart Butler said that for low income neighborhoods, the addition of certain new spaces can be damaging to existing diners, local bars, and community spaces.

Social spaces should be financially accessible to everyday people, and if cities choose to invest in and support social infrastructure, they must be intentional in avoiding gentrification.

As the country shifts into a post-pandemic world, strengthening the vital third spaces of our communities will be essential to combatting the loneliness epidemic and building interpersonal connections.

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the
INDEPENDENT

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

We welcome letters to the editor from MERHS students, faculty, and community members. All submissions must be signed. The Independent reserves the right not to print letters and to edit the content for clarity and length. While letters can be critical of an individual’s actions, they cannot slander or libel.

The staff editorial may be considered the opinion of the staff of The Independent.

By-line opinions are written by individual staff members and should not be considered representative of the entire staff.

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

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Junior Brigid Carovillano commits to UNC for lacrosse

Looks forward to upcoming high school season, playing lacrosse with friends

By August Capotosto
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Junior Brigid Carovillano verbally committed to the University of North Carolina (UNC) for lacrosse.

The college has one of the best lacrosse teams in the nation, Carovillano said.

“I wanted to go to a school with strong academics and a good lacrosse team since the sport is such a big part of my life,” she said.

Academically, Carovillano wants to pursue science, possibly majoring in biology or chemistry, she said.

Carovillano said UNC had the exact culture she had been looking for in college.

“Everyone at the school was

‘I wanted to go to a school with strong academics and a good lacrosse team.’

-BRIGID CAROVILLANO

welcoming but took lacrosse very seriously,” she said.

Her recruitment process started during freshman year, Carovillano said.

“Last summer I was spending every weekend in Maryland or New Jersey or New York doing showcases or camps that I wanted to see,” she said.

The camps are hosted so that potential players can meet coaches, and those coaches can look at players.

Coaches and players meet at showcases run by a third party, so coaches can pick out players they see potential in, Carovillano said.

As well as these camps, she said coaches attend tournaments to observe how the players perform in games.

Carovillano said she was gen-



BRIGID CAROVILLANO GRAPHIC

After UNC made a verbal offer on Sep. 22, 2023, junior Brigid Carovillano announced her committment to UNC on Oct. 4, 2023.

erally confident when she went to the showcases.

“I was nervous going in but confident that I played in front of the schools I was interested in. UNC was actually the only school I felt like I didn’t perform well in front of,” she said.

Carovillano said she began her lacrosse career in second

play,” Carovillano said.

She said she is looking forward to learning from older, more experienced goalies on the UNC team.

Carovillano said she received support from her coaches and mentors at school and through club teams.

She was assisted throughout the process by her club lacrosse coaches, high school girls’ lacrosse coach Nan Gorton, girls’ field hockey coach Courtney Brown, and athletic director Cameron Molinare.

Molinare was “so accommodating and helpful,” Carovillano said.

Molinare aided Carovillano with any questions, concerns, and preparation for college visits.

“I was here as a resource and a mentor for her, but it was really all Brigid,” she said.

After the stress of recruiting, Carovillano said she felt relieved to be secure in where she would be going to college.

“In the meantime, I’m excited to play with my friends during my upcoming seasons here with [Manchester Essex],” she said.

Boys’ basketball team loses in round of eight

Wins Cape Ann League for second consecutive year

By Mechi O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Boys’ varsity basketball ended the season as CAL Baker champions, with an overall record of 21-2, and as the No. 5 seed in the MIAA Division IV tournament.

The Hornets fell to Millbury High School in the round of eight. The game took place at Sutton High School, and the final score was 42-41.

Head coach Tim St. Laurent said the team played excellent defense, only having six turn-

overs the entire game.

“It was a great game. Amazing atmosphere, and I’m really thankful to all the Hornets fans who traveled to the game,” he said.

In the round of 32, the team defeated no. 28 Frontier Regional and Tyngsborough in the round of 16.

St. Laurent said he is proud of his team for having a deep run in the state tournament.

“We just had a really good team with a great group of boys that we loved coaching every day,” he said.

Senior captain Cade Furse

‘We all just really wanted to be there, and we all wanted to work hard every day.’

-EDDIE CHAREAS

said he enjoyed watching his teammates grow throughout the season.

“Everyone grew into a bigger role than what they were in the beginning of the season, and I’m just really proud of that,” he said.

Senior captain Eddie Chareas said the team maintained a positive energy on and off the court.

“We kept practice fun while also being focused. We all just really wanted to be there and we all wanted to work hard every day,” he said.

Furse said this season was one that he will remember for a very long time because of the support they recieved from the fans’.

“People who don’t go to Manchester would text me after the



HORNETS IN THE HIVE PHOTO

Senior Cade Furse drives down the court against Tynsborough in the boys’ basketball round of 16, which the Hornets won 77-36.

game talking about how insane the crowd was. It was just amazing to have that kind of support, especially in our last game. It felt like the whole town was there cheering us on,” he said.

St. Laurent said the team worked hard every day and created a culture in the Manchester

Essex basketball community that one can be proud of.

“I’m going to especially miss my four seniors, Kevin McKenna, Preston Potter, Eddie Chareas, and Cade Furse. This was the funniest, most athletic, and gifted team that I could ever ask for,” he said.

Girls’ basketball loses in round of 32

By Hannah Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Following a win against Madison Park in the preliminary round of the MIAA Division IV tournament, the girls’ basketball team traveled to Georgetown for a round of 32 game and lost 50-40, ending their season.

With a regular season record of 15-4, the team won the Cape Ann League Baker Division.

Senior captain Mechi O’Neil said she is proud of how the team improved throughout the season.

“I think we really just got better as each game went on, and al-



COURTESY OF VICKI DONNELLAN

Sophomore Penelope Riggs looks to shoot during the preliminary round against Madison Park Vocational. The Hornets won 64-19.

though we did have some losses during the regular season, we kept our heads high,” she said.

Head coach Lauren DuBois said she is happy with how the

tal toughness,” she said.

During their game against Madison Park, O’Neil said the team was able to get less experienced players more playing time.

“We got to put in some of our swing players and players who don’t get as much playing time, which furthered their experience,” she said.

DuBois said the team would not have been able to win the game without the help of all of the players.

“We made some adjustments during the game, but everybody contributed,” she said.

Senior captain Phileine de Widt said the team was successful because of their ability to win close games.

“A lot of times at the end of the game, we’ll be really close to the other team, but we’ll still hold on to our win or we’ll get the win, so I’m proud of that,” she said.

DuBois said she is looking forward to working hard next season and improving on what the team has worked on this year.

“I’m excited about the people that will be coming back and that we’re building even more experience on top of what we already had,” she said.

‘Though we did have some losses during the regular season, we kept our heads high.’

-LAUREN DUBOIS

Boys’, girls’ swim teams send athletes to Sectional, State meets

Team spirit improves energy at competitions

By Summer Demeo
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Three individual swimmers and three relay teams competed in the MIAA North Swim Sectional meet, and two individuals competed in the Division II State Championship meet, coach Teresa Holland said.

Sophomore captains Megan Graeter and Sydney Hemme swam in both meets.

Graeter competed in the 200-meter Individual Medley (IM), placing eighth at Sectionals and seventh at States. She also swam the 100-meter backstroke, placing fifth at both Sectionals and States.

Hemme competed in the 100-meter breaststroke where

she placed 24th at Sectionals and 22nd at States, and the 100-meter butterfly where she placed 24th at Sectionals and 25th at States.

She said the environment at Sectionals and States is very exciting and encouraging.

“It’s so fun. We sit with the CAL every year, and [they’re] always so supportive. We’re all cheering on each other even though we’re competing against each other all year,” Hemme said.

Graeter said she enjoyed getting to go to Sectionals with the rest of the girls’ team. She said having more of the team there brought up their energy.

“All the girls were there, and it was really fun to be with everyone even if some people were only in relays,” she said.

‘[The athletes] all support each other and cheer for each other.’

-TERESA HOLLAND

Holland said that Graeter and Hemme had strong performances at States, which was a competitive meet.

“It was some really good competition from girls all over the state, so it was a really fast meet. Lots of good swims, and our girls did great,” she said.

Junior captain Colin Conway also attended the Sectional meet, representing the boys’ team. He placed 30th in the 100-meter breaststroke.

Conway said the environment was competitive, but he enjoyed seeing old teammates at the meet.

Although he swam alone at Sectionals, he said his favorite part of the season was the team environment.

“We had a good team atmosphere. We did a lot of team din-



COURTESY OF CAMERON MOLINARE

Sophomore captains Megan Graeter and Sydney Hemme pose after competing in the Division II State Championship meet.

ners, and I feel like we just got closer as a team,” Conway said.

Holland also said the team environment was strong this season.

“What I was most impressed with was how all the girls and boys came together as a team. It’s a small but mighty group ... They all support each other and cheer for each other. They’re just really great kids,” she said.

Indoor track athletes compete in Division V championships

Captains attend New Balance, Nike Indoor Nationals

By Sam Heanue
INDEPENDENT STAFF

After successful Cape Ann League and Divisional championships, multiple athletes competed in national-level indoor competitions.

Coach Nick Valle said the team had many members qualify for the CAL Championship and Division V state championships in the postseason.

“We had a great season as a team. At CAL, we had a lot of great performances and some divisional qualifiers, which was great,” he said.

Valle said despite having a



COURTESY OF CAMERON MOLINARE

Senior captain Nate Gardner stands on the podium after placing first in the 55m hurdles at the MIAA Division IV Championship.

small team, individual athletes achieved the goals they set at the beginning of the season.

“Because we were so small, we weren’t able to score as well as we had hoped, but there was a lot of individual improvement since we were able to work so closely with athletes,” he said.

Valle said he hopes athletes will look to junior captain Meg Hurd and senior captain Nate

Gardner for motivation and to model themselves based on their work ethic.

“I think Nate and Meg have worked really hard and shown an incredible amount of effort. They never miss a workout ... and they do what they need to be great at what they do,” he said.

Gardner competed at New Balance Nationals Indoor on Saturday, Mar. 9, in the 60-meter hurdles preliminary heats. He placed seventh in heat No. 16 and 190th overall.

“I had a lot of fun; it was a great time, and there wasn’t a lot of pressure. I enjoyed just being able to compete,” he said.

Gardner said he had a successful final indoor season and looks forward to future competition against new athletes when he competes in track and field at Middlebury College.

“It’s been a good season, and I’m excited to see how things go in the future. I’m ... excited to compete against different people in college,” he said.

Hurd competed in the triple jump at Nike Indoor Nationals on Saturday, Mar. 9. She jumped a season-best of 34’ 6.5” and placed 22nd overall.

“I trained hard this season, and it went well. I’m happy with how I did, and now I’m just excited to compete outdoors,” she said.

‘I trained hard this season, and it went well.’

-MEG HURD

Marathon World Record holder dies at 24 in Kenya

By Charles Lations
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Kenyan long-distance runner and marathon World Record holder Kelvin Kiptum passed away in a car accident on February 11. He was 24 years old.

Kiptum’s coach, Gervais Hakizimana, was also killed in the accident according to the article “Marathon world record holder Kelvin Kiptum and coach killed in road accident in Kenya” by Larry Madowo and Heather Chen for CNN Sports.

According to the article “Marathon World Record Holder Kelvin Kiptum Dies In Car Crash At 24 Years Old” by Chris

Chavez for Citius Mag, Kiptum’s short career saw him rise to the top of the distance running world quickly.

He ran the fastest marathon debut in history with a 2:01:53 finish at the 2022 Valencia Marathon, according to his athlete profile on the World Athletics website.

Kiptum’s second career marathon was, at the time, the second fastest ever run, with a 2:01:25 victory at the 2023 London Marathon.

His third and final marathon was the 2023 Chicago Marathon, where he broke fellow Kenyan Eliud Kipchoge’s previous World Record by 34 seconds in a time

of 2:00:35.

Kiptum’s world record was officially ratified by World Athletics a week before his passing.

Kipchoge, along with many members of the running community including World Athletics president Sebastian Coe, took to social media to express their condolences following his passing.

“[Kiptum was] an athlete who had a whole life ahead of him to achieve incredible greatness. May I offer my deepest condolences to his young family,” Kipchoge said in an Instagram post.

Kiptum and Kipchoge were set to face each other in the 2024 Paris Olympic Marathon.

Coe said in an article from BBC Sport titled “Kelvin Kiptum: Lord Coe says Kenyan ‘would have broken’ two-hour marathon mark” that he was confident Kiptum would have made



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Spectators cheer for Kenyan runner Kelvin Kiptum as he races to a World Record finish of 2:00:35 in the 2023 Chicago Marathon.

history as the first person to run under two hours in a record-eligible marathon.

“It is a frustration to all of us that we won’t witness what I truly know he was capable of ... for sure he would have broken [two hours,]” he said.

Drama Club earns several awards at Dramafest

Group competes against other local high schools

By Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At the Massachusetts High School Drama Festival on March 2, the high school’s Drama Club competed against other schools, with two members winning individual awards.

The competition is hosted by the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild, director Tyler Garofalo said.

Each theater group must perform a show in less than 40 minutes. Each play is given five minutes before and after to set up the stage with their props and sets. The show, “Death of a Dead Guy,” by William L. Bowman Jr., is a comedic murder mystery

set in the 1940s, said junior Josh Cohen, who plays the clueless detective Pete Cannon.

“It’s essentially murder for dummies ... Unfortunately for everyone, nobody understands how a murder works or how it’s carried out. So they just stumble around until they come upon the solution, but that’s what makes it fun,” he said.

Out of the six groups that performed at St. John’s Preparatory School, three were chosen to move on to a semifinal round, Garofalo said.

Although the group did not advance in the competition, Cohen said that the performance was a success, and they are proud of the schools that did

move on. “I feel like we had without a doubt the strongest performance that we’ve ever had, which is rare. Usually, you know, nerves get to everyone, but this time it was just rock solid,” he said.



Whitney Turner Photo
Juniors Josh Cohen, Alessia Omari, and Charlotte Grace; and seniors Libby Mulry and Caroline Quinn perform “Death of a Dead Guy” at Dramafest on March 2 at St. John’s Preparatory School.

Senior Caroline Quinn, who plays the criminal Toots Monahan, said she thought the group’s jokes were well timed and served as a strength for the performance as a whole.

“People in this group just naturally have good comedic

timing. I think they’re all just very easy at being funny, and they’re all good comedians,” she said. Quinn and Cohen agreed that another strength of the play was the vocal projection of the actors. Freshman Lilah Malone won an METG All-Star Award for hair

design and execution, while Cohen received an METG All-Star Award for acting. Awards are not preset but are awarded when the judges see an exemplary performance Cohen said. Malone said she was pleased to win an award at the event.

‘People in this group just naturally have good comedic timing.’

-CAROLINE QUINN

Music Honors Society hosts talent show, raises funds for upcoming New York trip

Invites community to showcase talents, hobbies, passions

By Sabine Cooper
INDEPENDENT STAFF

To encourage engagement with students in the performing arts, the Tri-M Music Honors Society hosted a talent show to fundraise for their trip to New York City in May, chorus teacher and MHS adviser Ben Icenogle said.

The talent show, which took place on March 7 in the cafeteria, is the second community event that the group has held. Last spring, the MHS hosted an open mic night to encourage students



Caroline Chrzanowski Photo

Freshman Sadie Rich performs her original song “Goodbye Prodigy” at the MHS event, which raised a total of \$460.

and community members to get involved in the music department, he said.

Throughout this year, the group has worked hard to create more

opportunities for students and community members to present their work and hobbies, which was one of the goals of the talent show, Icenogle said.

Another goal of the talent show was to help fundraise for the MHS trip to New York City in May, where the band and chorus students will be performing, he said.

With tickets selling for \$10 a person, the talent show raised about \$460, Icenogle said.

As the talent show was more of a showcase than a competition, there was no “winner,” MHS member Josh Cohen said.

“The talent show was more of a celebration of the different students in the performing arts here at the school,” he said.

Junior Hayden Remington, who performed in the band Limelight Apparatus, said the talent show was a unique opportunity that allowed her music group to perform in front of others with little stress.

“It was not really high stakes. It was just for people to have fun, and it was nice to have that opportunity to perform without pressure,” she said.

With 11 performances, the show gave many students the

opportunity to present a wide variety of skills and passions to an audience, Cohen said.

“We wanted to give everyone a chance to show off their various skills in something they could choose,” he said.

Despite the novelty of the MHS, the turnout for the talent show was good, Icenogle said.

“Music Honors Society is in its first full year right now, so we’re still feeling out how we do events, but we’re starting to establish a nice atmosphere within the music department,” he said.

‘We wanted to give everyone a chance to show off their various skills.’

-BEN ICENOGL

Boston Pops drummer performs at ‘Evening of Jazz’

By Alessia Omari
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Professional drummer and 2007 alumnus George Darrah starred as a guest artist at the Jazz Band “Evening of Jazz” concert.

The concert took place on March 14, 2024, at 6 p.m. in the auditorium.

Darrah, a drummer for the Boston Pops, performed with a small jazz combo that played during the second half of the concert, after the performances

of the middle and high school jazz band.

“What’s great about this is that he graduated in 2007, went on to study music in college, and is right now a very in-demand composer, arranger, performer, and educator in the Boston area. Most notably, he is the drummer for the Boston Pops,” band director Joseph Janack said.

Prior to the concert, Janack said this event was several years in the making. Originally, plans for the event involved Darrah bringing a much larger band to perform with him on concert night.

“In March 2020, he was supposed to be our special guest at our ‘Evening of Jazz,’ which was unfortunately canceled [due to the pandemic]. This time around, [Darrah is] going to bring a

smaller ensemble,” he said.

Junior and trombone player Caroline Chrzanowski said that by watching professional musicians play at the concert, band members gained an insight into what it may be like to both pursue music as a career, and to continue to perform music as an adult.

“The event helped Jazz Band members learn more about what a music career is like; it was super cool,” they said.

Senior Caroline Quinn accompanied the Jazz Band, singing an arrangement of “Cry Me a River” by Arthur Hamilton.

She said the event served as an opportunity to display the hard work of both her and her peers in the music department.

“I thought it went pretty good. I practiced with the Jazz Band



Mary Buckley-Harmon Photo

The high school Jazz Band performs an arrangement of “My Type” by pop band Saint Motel during their annual concert.

for a good deal of time, so getting to finally perform with them was very satisfying,” Quinn said.

Darrah said that he hopes the event will have inspired students to pursue their passions in music.

“I [want] young musicians to know that it is possible to have a career in music and do what you love. Also, sharing music with people is ultimately why I do what I do,” he said.

‘Excuses for Travellers’ creates vivid listening environment

Album’s atmosphere shines through

By Charles Lations
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Expressive vocals and stripped-down instrumentals combine on “Excuses for Travellers” by the British alt-rock band Mojave 3 to create a timeless classic album.

Released in the year 2000, the record was part of a side project from the members of the shoegaze band Slow-dive after being dropped by their record label, according to the band’s Spotify biography.

The record blends country-adjacent instrumentals with distinctively British vocals that capture the sound of the shoegaze and alternative rock that Mojave 3 was born from.

The songwriting throughout the record is usually uninteresting at best, but the music’s strong suit is the feeling it creates rather than the literal meaning of the lyrics.

The lyrics don’t actively disrupt the listening experience or ruin the atmosphere of any of the songs but simultaneously don’t add to the experience or deepen the meaning of the record.

“The words all seem to blur together into a beige-colored blob of monotony,” according to a review of the album from Pitchfork.

It’s difficult to disagree with this assertion when the album contains such gems as “I need laughter and love, some special drug, I need cigarettes,” on the track “Prayer for the Paranoid” – which is nevertheless one of the best songs on the record because of the feeling created by the combination of lyrics and instrumentation.

The music’s strong suit is the feeling it creates rather than the literal meaning of the lyrics.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The members of rock band Mojave 3 are Neil Halstead, the guitarist and vocalist; Rachel Goswell, the bassist and vocalist; Ian McCutcheon, the drummer; and Ian Forrester, the keyboard player.

However, the project shines most when it is listened to more as ambient music as opposed to searching for deep meaning.

The emotional impact of the album is achieved mostly through the overall sound as opposed to deep storytelling or profound lyrics.

Lead singer Neil Halstead’s

vocals seem to drift in and out of focus while pedal-steel guitar lines transport the listener to the psychedelic, washed-out Western environment the songwriting centers around.

“Excuses for Travellers” earned an average score of 77/100 on the review aggregator site Metacritic, while the Pitchfork review that

was written immediately following the album’s release only gave it a score of 5.5/10.

Taking into account the lack-luster and rather boring songwriting but also considering the unparalleled atmospheric quality of the album, “Excuses for Travellers” earns a score of 7.5/10.

‘Hunger Games’ prequel entertains young audiences

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

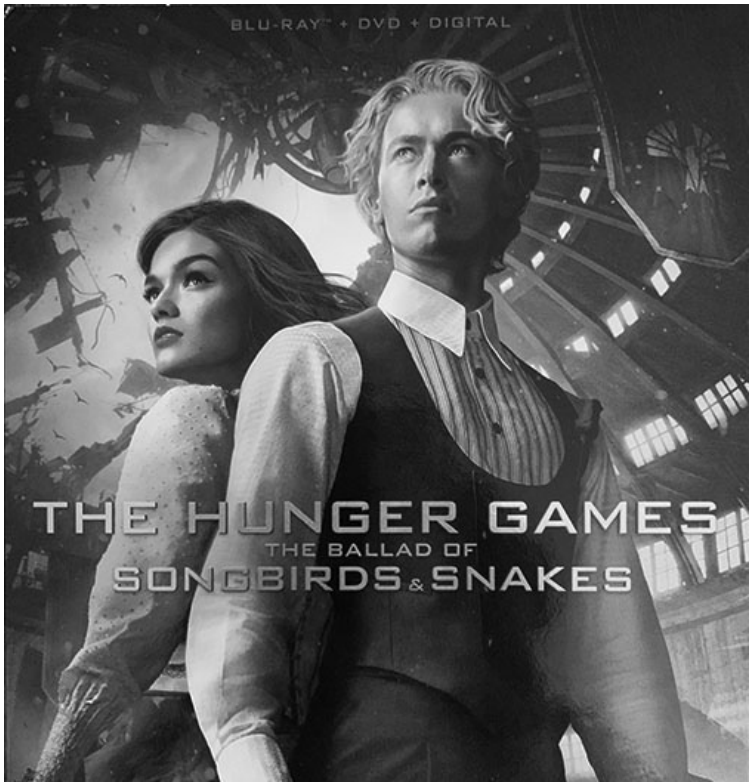
Based on Suzanne Collins’ novel, Francis Lawrence’s adaptation of “The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes” is an emotional and riveting prequel.

The storyline dives into the history of Collins’ original “Hunger Games” trilogy.

“The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes” novel was published in May 2020, and filming for the adaptation began in July 2022.

Tom Blyth stars as a young Coriolanus Snow, a mentor in the Games, and provides context for the character he becomes in the following trilogy.

Blyth gives a compelling and multidimensional portrayal of his



HUNGERGAMES.MOVIE

Tom Blyth and Rachel Zegler are the leads of “The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes,” the new prequel of the “Hunger Games.”

complicated character, shedding light on Snow’s personal develop-

ment.

Rachel Zegler stars as well, playing Lucy Gray Baird, a tribute from District 12, whose charm and defiance draw the characters to one another.

Zegler commands the viewer’s attention with her charisma, elegant yet powerful acting, and passionate songs, bringing the character she plays directly off Collins’ page.

The story delves into their complicated relationship as they fight to survive the Capitol, Snow from poverty within, and Baird from the Games the Capitol runs.

Through Snow’s character, the film offers a deeper look into the effects that war, hunger, and deadly competition can have on children and who they grow up to be.

The connection between Snow and Baird is clear, and the actors

have a unique chemistry that pushes the narrative to a higher level.

Their relationship begins in a time of unrest and change, when Snow is assigned to mentor Baird through the 10th annual

The storyline dives into the history of Collins’ original ‘Hunger Games.’

Hunger Games and makes it his mission to save her life.

The downfall of their relationship becomes evident in the last section of the film, as it

changes location, tone, and theme, moving away from the Capitol and into District 12 with new dangers arising.

“The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes” has harsh scenes that serve to deepen the themes of resilience, injustice, and privilege that are incredibly prevalent and relevant throughout the storyline.

New ‘Mean Girls’ enthralls viewers with incredibly comedic modern adaptations, exciting musical twists

By Hannah Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Mean Girls,” released on Jan. 12, 2024, is a fun remake of the original film and of the adaptation of the stage musical. The film stars Angourie Rice as Cady Heron, Renée Rapp as Regina George and Auli’i Cravalho as Janis Sarkisian.

The adaptation follows the story of Cady Heron as she navigates her first year of high school after being homeschooled all her life.

Writers Tina Fey, Nell Benjamin and Rosalind Wiseman effortlessly adapt the original film

while also keeping the new film creative and original.

The adaptation incorporates elements of social media to adapt the film to newer audiences which made the film more appealing to viewers of all ages.

Fourteen songs from the original stage production were cut from the film, including “It Roars” which was replaced with “What Ifs,” a song written exclusively for the film.

“What Ifs” was co-written by American composers Jeff Richmond, Nell Benjamin and Rapp, who is also a successful singer-songwriter.

Rapp, who played Regina on

Broadway from 2019 to 2020, captured Regina’s cruelty perfectly.

American actor Jaquel Spivey, who plays Janis’s friend, Damian Hubbard, improves upon Daniel Franzese’s performance in the original film released in 2004.

His humor and talent allowed him to change and adapt his character while simultaneously staying true to Franzese’s performance.

The film has grossed about \$103.5 million since its release, including \$11.6 million on its first day in theaters.

With the help of a talented cast, the film is able to embrace



PARAMOUNTMOVIES.COM

“Mean Girls,” which was released in 2024, combines a unique mix of the original film and the popular Broadway stage musical.

the over-the-top nature of a movie musical while also staying shockingly true to the very popular and famous original film and appealing

to a much larger audience than the first film.

Overall, this film is a definite must-watch.