



The Talon

Gripping News



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Sports Are Back At Onteora!

By Ori Grady

Eagles fly outside on a beautiful sunny day. They can feel the fresh air running up and down their wings. They are once again free. Free to fly together. It is a time of celebration, and this is the moment for which the Eagles have been waiting over an entire year.

I am, of course, referring to our Onteora Eagles because sports are back, and we couldn't be more excited! The return of sports is certainly some of the best news our Onteora

community has heard in a while, so let's dive into all of the information you've been waiting to hear about.

Normally, this time of year is the upcoming spring season for sports. This year, however, sports that would have been played in the fall are now being pushed to the spring season. Soccer (boys and girls), field hockey, cross country (boys and girls), girls tennis, and golf (boys and girls) will all take place this spring.

These sports are considered "low and moderate risk" sports, so they are free to be played. "High Risk" sports such as football and volleyball were initially prohibited to be played, but we have received breaking news from the Board of Education that football is back! Foot-

ball began on March 8th.

Furthermore, only the varsity level of sports are being played. The sports season officially started March 1st (March 8th for "High Risk"), and games will begin shortly after that. I'm sure most of you are getting excited by just reading this! I know, sports being back is a pleasant surprise--one we all needed.

Now, let's talk about masks. Yes, masks will be worn at all times, as they should be. That includes when you're six feet apart playing golf or playing goalie on the other side of the field. Safety is always first, and the best way to ensure the safety of our school is to keep your mask over your nose and mouth. All sports will mandate that masks be worn during play,

during timeouts, and while sitting on the sidelines.

So to all the Onteora Eagles, make sure to wear a comfortable mask that isn't loose or annoying to wear. You don't want to be the person remembered as the person who took off their mask and got into big trouble because of it.

Mask rules also apply to bus rides, where the limit will be 21 people (including the bus driver). That means masks MUST be worn at all times. NO excuses. If you do decide to take your mask down, be prepared to be isolated from everyone you know for a long time. You don't want that.

If you're still reading this, I congratulate you because that means that you are really looking forward to representing our

Onteora sports and getting back outside with your friends. So pop open your sparkling water and get back to running outside to be in the best shape possible. Yes, that also applies to all of our golfers. Let's all get back to soaring high above the clouds. Soar, Eagles, soar!

"Sports are back and we couldn't be more excited!"



Courtesy of Bella McHugh



Clawsnaps

What Are You Most Looking Forward to About Spring?



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Shane Stackpole, grade 11: While this may sound cliché, I'm most excited for the warm weather that comes with the revitalizing spring months. I also can't wait to wear my favorite spring clothing: overalls, light sweaters, and floral shirts.

Nelson Del Tufo, grade 12: I am excited to hike and run in the warmth again.

Emily Peck, grade 12: I'm looking forward to spring skiing!!

Shayne Durkin, grade 12: Graduation.

Natalie Horberg, grade 12: Something about spring just makes you feel alive again. Nothing compares to sunshine.

Simon Rands, grade 12: Flowers, rain, daylight, and college admissions decisions!

Nora Vogt, grade 11: Being able to have social-distance hangouts with my friends outside.

Sophia Roberts, grade 12: I'm looking forward to spring break and to sunshine and picnics!!



Courtesy of Pixy.org

Covid-19 Update: Vaccine Distribution in Ulster County

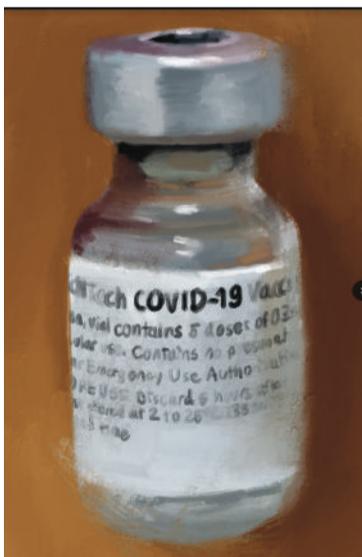
By Shane Stackpole

*All information is up to date as of February 2, 2021.

On December 14, 2020, Sandra Lindsay--a nurse at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in Queens--became the first person in New York State to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine. Thereafter, anticipation heightened as New York transitioned into the distribution phase--the most important step towards reaching the light at the end of this long and dark tunnel.

While distribution initially moved at a sluggish pace (the first shipment to New York only contained 170,000 doses) things are finally starting to move along as more New Yorkers become eligible to receive the vaccine.

On January 11, New York State shifted from exclusively administering vaccines to those eligible in phase 1a--primarily



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter

health care workers--to offering vaccines to those in the priority groups of phase 1b. New York State's phase 1b includes individuals 65 and older, educators, first responders, transit employees, and many more.

This transition expeditiously expanded the group of eligible individuals to 20 percent of the Ulster County population; accordingly, County Executive Pat

Ryan and his team made sure to prepare for the overwhelming nature of allocating thousands of vaccines by implementing a systematic and coherent distribution plan.

Ulster County has since set up its primary sites of distribution at the Kate Walton Field House at Kingston High School and The Ellenville Regional Hospital Center. The Kingston location is working rigorously to allocate as many as 1,500 doses per day, and the site is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week. With approximately 100 volunteers, many of whom are retired doctors and nurses, the Kingston site is equipped to perform up to 45,000 vaccinations per month.

Similarly, the Ellenville location--which is considerably smaller and will only be open Monday through Friday--is devised to distribute up to 5,000 vaccinations per month.

In addition to the Kingston and Ellenville sites, New York State is working in conjunction with hospitals, local pharmacies, and healthcare facilities to increase the number of vaccine distribution sites across the board. One pharmacist in particular, Dr. Neal Smoller of Woodstock's Village Apothecary, has set up two vaccine clinics, both of which are exclusively immunizing individuals 60 and older in the community.

While the speed of vaccine distribution in Ulster County has undoubtedly increased over the past few weeks, due to the methodical and efficient methods being employed, it's nowhere near the rate imperative to reach herd immunity and vaccinate all residents in a rapid manner. This setback is not exclusive to Ulster County or New York State for that matter; rather, it's a problem on the federal level.

The federal government is responsible for providing each state with enough vaccines for

rapid distribution; however, the federal government is only supplying New York with about 300,000 vaccines per week, a problematic amount when compared to the millions of eligible individuals across the state anxious to receive their vaccine. This has resulted in an overwhelming amount of appointment cancellations, creating an inconsistent demographic of those vaccinated and those impatiently waiting to reschedule.

While this obstacle is certainly hard to overcome, Pat Ryan helped to alleviate the situation by explaining that "we are all echoing at every level and county an urgent plea for the federal government to do everything they can to get more vaccines to everyone."

Despite these shortcomings, it's reassuring to know that vaccine allocation is increasing as the rate of hospitalization and deaths are decreasing. If these trends continue to progress, we may find ourselves reaching herd immunity by the end of the summer--or sooner--and in a state of normalcy by the end of 2021.

The Grammys: Excitement and Dispute

By Ori Grady

One of the best things that came out of 2020 was the amount of great music that was released. Musical artists around the world used their time at home to give their fans new music to dance and bob their heads to.

The Grammys, the greatest night for music lovers, is also just around the corner on March 14th in the Staples Center, where the best music of the year is awarded to the best artists of the year. Some, however, have disagreed with this analysis of the awards ceremony, creating lots of drama leading up to the show. But drama aside, people should be able to project the winners by

looking at the many talented nominees.

The Weeknd released arguably the best and most successful album of the year with *After Hours*. His hit single "Blinding Lights" has been played almost 2 billion times on Spotify, and I'm sure most of us had it on our Spotify 2020 Wrapped Playlists.

Critics and fans alike praised the album, not just for the catchy hooks in almost every track, but also for the new style the Weeknd displayed in his work--both in his fashion and music. The Weeknd brought back the 80's, and I, along with billions of others, embraced it.



Courtesy of Natalie Horberg

One would surely think that such an album from a legendary artist would be deserving of a nomination at the Grammys. Nope. The Weeknd was snubbed big time. He quickly turned to Twitter and called the Grammys "corrupt," which created a Twitter frenzy--a social media war if you ask me.

Justin Bieber joined in on the action saying, "it feels weird" after being nominated for a pop album and not RNB. Come on Justin, at least you got nominated. When two of arguably the biggest artists in the world complain about the Grammys, it only weakens the Grammys' reputation.

Now, let's look at the nominees across the board, where Beyoncé (9 nominations), Dua Lipa (6), Taylor Swift (6), Roddy Rich (6), Justin Bieber (4), Billie Eilish (3), Post Malone (3), and Harry Styles (3) lead the way. These names are not a surprise, as this list (from the main six categories) makes up most of the hottest artists in the world.

But as opposed to other music

awards, the Grammys make sure to recognize not just main mainstream artists. This year The Black Pumas, Jacob Collier, and JP Sax make up these less recognized artists who are nominated for the big awards (Record of the Year, Song of the Year, Album of the Year).

However, I would be surprised to see if any of these artists win an award because, unfortunately, we have seen a pattern repeat itself year after year: A young global superstar practically sweeps the competition and takes home the majority of the awards. For example, we saw this with Billie Eilish last year, Bruno Mars a few years back, and Adele the year before that.

Now take a close look at the nominations. Beyoncé may lead, but I wouldn't predict she will sweep the table since she already has 15 awards in her cabinet. Same with Taylor Swift, (one of the most successful artists of the decade who completely changed her style to folk, sweeping away the critics) who already has ten Grammy awards. Eilish won't win because she won everything last year. That leaves most likely Dua Lipa or Roddy Rich: two young global superstars.

Even though Roddy Rich may deserve to win, Dua Lipa seems like she may have an edge.

Her sophomore album *Future Nostalgia* has already been called the best album of the year by multiple worthy critics thanks to its immediately danceable 80's vibe that is almost impossible to not sway your hips to. It includes hit tracks "Don't Start Now" and "Break My Heart." She also won two awards last year for "Best New Artist" and "Best Dance Recording," but this year, her fans shouldn't be surprised if she at least doubles that number. The stage is certainly set for a strong night for the 25 year old pop queen.

The 2021 Grammys should be a fun night, regardless of the Weeknd's snub and Twitter hate. Whether you like music or not, it should be a night to remember, so make sure to get your popcorn ready and stash up on some Ben and Jerry's.

Let's Lower the Voting Age!

By Liam Bertheaud

In America, the problem of low voter turnout--especially among young people--plagues our elections. The U.S. ranks 26th in turnout, with only 50 to 60 percent of eligible voters showing up in presidential elections and even fewer in midterms.

The 2016 presidential election had a turnout rate of 46 percent among youth voters. The youth are not to blame. A solution to the problem at hand is to lower

govina, you can vote at 16 if you are employed. Argentina and Brazil both have a minimum voting age of 16.

Teenagers can be motivated to find information on elections when given the correct resources in school and the right to vote. During the 2014 Independence Referendum in Scotland, they allowed both 16- and 17-year-olds to vote, and it resulted in a large increase in youth voting. In fact, it went so well that they decided to allow voting to continue in parliamentary and local elections.

Political Correspondent and Senior Writer at The Independent Andy McSmith, when writing about the referendum, said, "about 100,000 under-18s, 80 percent of the eligible total, signed up to vote in the first of-

have a job and become taxpayers. And isn't our republic based on the idea of no taxation without representation? Also, in the U.S. the age at which you can drive is a landmark in a person's life. You are old enough to drive a vehicle and considered to be responsible for the lives of others when on the road.

Social media platforms are dominated by users around our age, but we have virtually no say in the legislation which regulates them. The movement against climate change has entire organizations run by teenagers but, still, we have no say in what is to become of the world we inherit.

When turning eighteen, people begin to separate from the life they have known. They go on to

How Covid-19 Changed My Small Town

By Clara Mead

Woodstock fulfills every city person's hidden-away-tiny-place-with-tiny-people dream. I don't blame them. It's a beautiful town nestled in the Hudson Valley and the namesake of the iconic '69 music festival. The town has a very family-like atmosphere, which I had always taken for granted growing up.

Since the pandemic hit in March, Woodstock's environment has changed dramatically.

The summer of 2018 before my freshman year, when I got my first job at Cucina (a local Italian restaurant), I used to see at least one person I knew every single night. This past summer, while masked and gloved, I was lucky if I even saw a familiar stranger.

The influx of city dwellers desperate to get away from their apartments has had a huge impact on the nature of the town.

According to The Daily Freeman, real estate prices in Ulster county have risen 17.6% (the most in the country), forcing longtime renters to relocate and exacerbating the struggles of marginalized communities. One Onteora graduate told me about their experience: "My mom's apartment building just got sold to city people, and she can't find anywhere in the area to move, since all the rent has skyrocketed and property is so scarce. She's lived in this area her whole life, and she'll probably have to move."

The pandemic has also paved the way for new Woodstock stores with prices and decor targeted toward city dwellers. For

example, one new store has nothing more than a mini fridge and a counter. Not only does this contrast the existing aesthetic of the town that makes it so appealing in the first place, but it also reinforces the creeping feeling among locals that they are strangers in the town they've grown up in.

Stores are avoidable for locals: We have the luxury of deciding whether we want our latte to be \$5.25 or \$6.00 depending on which store we patronize. However, nature is not.

Possibly the main attractions of the Hudson Valley are the lush forests and clear streams open for public recreation and enjoyment. Well, at least they were the main attraction.

This past summer, two beloved local swimming holes, Little Deep and Big Deep, were closed because of littering. Having grown up spending my summers at these swimming holes, I was heartbroken--but not surprised.

What was especially disappointing was that this happened during a pandemic when the only place most of us could interact was outside. To me it really felt like a betrayal: Outsiders coming into our home and leaving their garbage everywhere.

I asked some people how they felt about this whole debacle. Natalie Horberg, a senior at Onteora, had some wise words: "I wish there was a forum where locals and city folk could actually talk out our problems. Right now it just seems like a lot of anger from our side and a lot of ignorance from theirs."

It's easy to stereotype a large group of people such as those coming to live in Woodstock during the pandemic. However, it is incredibly important to remind ourselves we do in fact have something in common. We occupy the same beautiful place, and we'll all enjoy it more if we take care of it together.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

the voting age and make civics a core part of our education in schools. Research shows that the younger a person begins to vote, the more likely they are to continue to vote as an adult.

There are many real-world examples of this. Austria was the first nation in Europe to lower its voting age to 16. The opposition to such legislation in Austria argued teenagers simply would not vote, and that was a decade ago.

Sylvia Kritzing, a Professor of political science at the University of Vienna, said there was a spike in youth turnout that corresponded to higher adult turnout as time went on.

Greece lowered its voting age to 17, and in Bosnia and Herze-

cial political contest."

Time and again, earlier voting leads to positive results. By lowering the voting age and improving civic education, we would produce a generation of permanent, dedicated voters.

This wouldn't even be the first time that the United States has changed the voting age. The 26th Amendment to The U.S. Constitution lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1971. The argument in favor of lowering the voting age was that if you were old enough to be drafted, then you were old enough to vote.

There's an ongoing movement to lower the voting age to sixteen, the age at which you can drive and at which many will

higher education, get jobs, acquire debt, and live on their own. The stress can be a distraction and can interfere with voting. If 16 or 17 was the age at which citizens may vote for the first time, they would not be preoccupied with their nascent adulthood, and the chance they will continue to vote would be far higher.



Courtesy of Natalie Horberg

The Ulster County Immigrant Defense Network

By Shayne Durkin

The Ulster Immigrant Defense Network (UIDN) is an organization that works to protect and assist the local immigrant community. It covers all the bases in terms of help, including offering legal assistance, paying rent and utilities, and helping people put food on their tables. The organization is led by co-presidents Father Frank Algana and Stephanie Kristal, and it is run

what additional costs might be included, if they are pending eviction, and if we could try to negotiate with their landlord for a more reasonable price.

One of the most vital parts of UIDN is the free food and clothing market that operates out of the Santa Cruz Holy Cross Church and is offered every Wednesday evening from 4 to 6:30. It is currently set up outdoors to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID, with spread out tables containing the

this winter to give gifts to roughly 250 kids from 120 families for the holidays.

I started volunteering for UIDN in October, and I have since become a helpline phone operator and interpreter and a regular market volunteer. There is a lot to be learned from being part of an organization like this one, and these are some of the most important things that I wish to articulate:

1. There is never enough that you can do, no matter what. Everything helps.
2. Pity and sympathy are two very different things. It takes strength to reach out for help, no matter the situation. Do your best to provide the help that you signed up to give, and don't act like some kind of savior.

UIDN offers support for so many, and its importance has only been amplified by the impact of COVID on families. The winter has proved to be extremely difficult because so many businesses that typically provided jobs through the cold months are closed. More people are facing money crises, food



UIDN kitchen, Courtesy of Shayne Durkin

shortages, and more, which is why UIDN has continued to offer support in every way to anyone who needs it, despite the challenges that 2020 presented.

The official mission statement from the UIDN website reads, "UIDN's mission: To provide a network of safety and support to immigrants, regardless of status. Misión de UIDN: Prover una red de seguridad y apoyo a los inmigrantes, sin importar su estado legal. Nuestra visión: Una sociedad donde todos son bienvenidos, respetados, y seguros. Our vision: A society where everyone is welcomed, respected, and safe."

If you wish to donate, please visit <https://ulsterimmigrantdefensenetwork.org/get-involved/7349-2/>

If you are interested in volunteering, please visit <https://ulsterimmigrantdefensenetwork.org/get-involved/volunteer-2/>

If you or someone you know is in need of assistance, call (888)-726-7276

Free market at Santa Cruz Holy Cross Church, 30 Pine Grove St. Kingston, NY



Shane Stackpole, Molly Whitehead, and Emily Peck, Courtesy of Shayne Durkin



Leslie Gallagher and Kim Touchette, Courtesy of Shayne Durkin

entirely by volunteers.

There are different sections of the organization that cover different areas of assistance, such as household support, case management, and transportation, and it is all interconnected by emails, phone calls, and a nifty website called CharityTracker.

Here's a brief rundown of how someone can get help: A person calls the UIDN Helpline number, and they are connected to an interpreter who takes down their information and fills out a form describing their needs. The form is then put into the CharityTracker system, which holds every case that UIDN handles.

Once the form is entered, different leads receive the case depending on the person's needs. For example, a very common request at the moment is assistance with paying rent. We ask how much the rent costs,

bags of food offered. Each family member gets a bag of meats, dried goods such as Maseca, rice, beans, cereal, a bag of various fruits and vegetables, milk, and eggs. There are often other items offered, like soaps, diapers, hand sanitizer, bottled water, sodas, apple sauce, and peanut butter.

We are also currently offering coats, hats, and other winter garments. Leslie Gallagher, one of the leads of the Household Support branch of UIDN, has emphasized the importance of community involvement with the market. Anybody can pitch in and help. Supporting one another during these times is essential.

In addition to the market, UIDN volunteers frequently make deliveries to families. In the late fall, UIDN became an official food pantry, which offers more support and resources related to food. There was also a massive Christmas toy drive



UIDN market, Courtesy of Shayne Durkin

Student Perspectives on Covid-19 and School

Online School, Productivity, and Mental Health

By Julia Milla

Students can't be expected to work at their full potential during a global crisis.

With the ongoing pandemic, schools have been switched to fully virtual for the first time ever, and it's a new system to a majority of the students.

Not only is it harder for them to keep concentration at home, but it's also harder to learn with the teachers still adjusting as well. With all the complications of the pandemic and online learning, students' grades during the quarantine shouldn't be seen as a reflection of a student's progress in high school.

Virtual learning provides a safe environment where students can learn without the spread of infection; however, it has greatly affected their grades and mental health.

While it's still school, online teaching cannot provide the same help that in-person school did. Online learning is a big change for everyone, including teachers. While some adjusted well, others are having as much or more trouble than the students. Many students cannot learn at the same pace via online learning as they would via in-person learning.

The rates for teen depression and anxiety have skyrocketed

during quarantine, and the pressure to try to keep grades up is now harder than ever. School used to be a good outlet for students, but without it they're trapped inside all day looking at a screen. This has taken a toll on student health and ability to complete work.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Students' grades during this pandemic should not be held to the same standards as they were in previous years. It is not fair to the students who are trying their hardest and still only barely passing when they used to be honors students. Online schooling is too new for any student to just jump into easily, and even though it's been a year already, there seems to be little improvement.

Nothing can replace the hands-on learning that many students need to thrive.

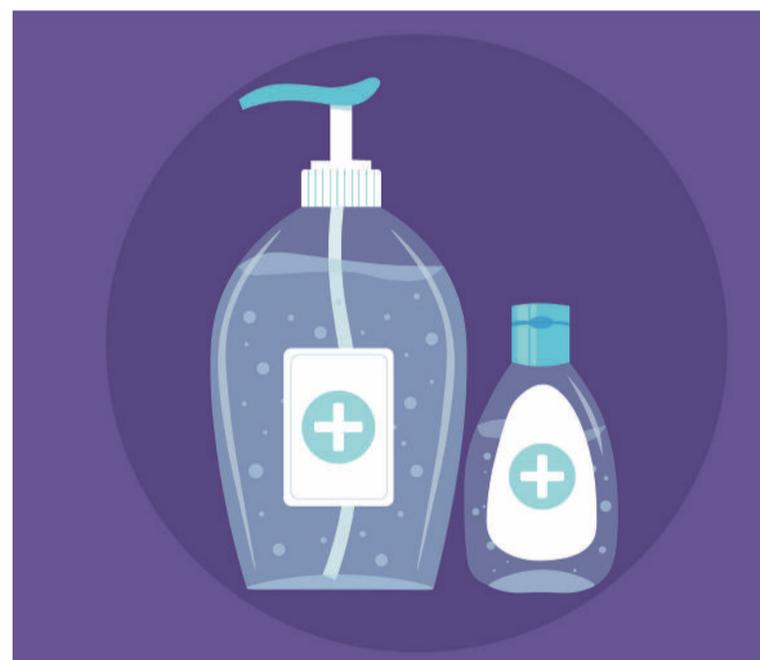
While online school has many challenges, it is an effective and safe option given the circumstances and is a great way to keep the virus from spreading while continuing education. And while it might not be the best, it ensures that we can keep moving on with our education. None of this would be possible if it weren't for technology and the effort of the school board and administration. It's amazing how much students have been able to learn in these challenging circumstances.

Safety Questions, Staying Safe, and the Risks of Covid-19

By Ariana Johns

On February first, the Onteora School District returned to a hybrid in-person learning model.

Many students, like myself, have forceful parents that are telling us it is in our best interest to do in-person learning and that the virus "isn't real." I disagree.



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Multiple students from Onteora alone have caught the virus either from other students or at home. This proves that social distancing alone doesn't stop the virus from being transmitted. Sending us back to school could put us at risk of either catching the virus or possible death due to COVID-19 side effects.

It is proven that wearing a mask and properly sanitizing can help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Onteora school district requests that students and staff wear their masks and respect the COVID-19 guidelines to ensure everyone's safety. This does give me some assurance that I will not be at risk of get-

ting the virus. As long as my fellow students and I follow the guidelines, we should all be safe from COVID-19.

A way to take further precautions could be to use plastic dividers around students' desks. The dividers can help further protect students from COVID-19. The possibility of a student either taking off their mask or lowering it is very high. If we have dividers, it could not only protect students who do not follow protocol, but also students who do wear their masks and follow the proper sanitation procedures.

Another example of how students could take further precautions is using hand sanitizer often. If a student sanitizes their hands before touching door

knobs and other surfaces they could protect themselves and others from the spread of the virus.

In conclusion, I believe that it is in my own and the school's best interest to wait until COVID-19 cases drop in Ulster County until we go back to in-person learning. Often during these times people do not take into consideration how the virus can affect themselves and others.

Whether students experience symptoms from catching the virus or not, there are people at risk that can catch the virus and could very well die. Staying home can stop the spread and protect people's lives.



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Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Scooby-Dooby-Do: An Exposé on Childhood Deception

By Eleanor Schackne-Martello

When I was five or six, I loved all the different versions of shows within the Scooby-Doo franchise. Daphne was hot, and I had a short attention span. I was always just a little bit too scared to watch the Mystery Incorporated version. It had always seemed like the more mature one.

Over quarantine, I put my resentment aside and rewatched. I fell back in love with the warm yet mysterious hug that is the town of Crystal Cove. But there was a nagging feeling. A little twang in my heart that told me everything was not alright. A twang that screamed that the sense of security I had been lulled into was false.

Part of this twang was the harmful stereotypes perpetuated by the show. I did not love that the two woman main characters immediately fit perfectly into the "jealous girlfriend" archetype, especially since Velma and Daphne were presented as opposite sides of the "woman" coin. By giving the watcher two women and contrasting almost every aspect of their characters except for the fact that they are both women and jealous, the words "woman" and "jealous/clingy" become dangerously associated.

Both Shaggy and Fred were deeply manipulative in their relationships with Velma and Daphne. Even when the women realized this, they forgave Shaggy and Fred almost immediately, regardless of if they'd changed their behavior. I am not a fan of this plot point, especially when it's shown to kids as an example of a healthy and loving relationship.

Now onto my main qualms. If you have the misfortune of not being able to say that you have watched and rewatched Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated sixty trillion times over, you may not understand me when I tell you that Ernesto uses anti-com-

munist, anti-revolutionary propaganda.

Ernesto--one of the few people of color that exists in the world of Crystal Cove--protests at a local college about frivolous things that discredit protesting as a whole. Even Daphne questions what they're protesting about because it seems so unnecessary. And I get it, haha, hilarious.

Where I draw the line is when Ernesto protests that monsters deserve rights too. This is obviously a joke, but it downplays the whole "real people having to fight for basic human rights" issue. And then, after they make protesting seem silly and ineffective, the commie-coded man becomes a villain later on in the season. His crime? Drilling oil after protesting fracking to raise money to fund more protests. Because, of course, the commie is ultimately selfish.

This show exemplifies how much control the ruling class has over the proletariat. Scooby-Doo is not even an isolated case of miniature, modern-day red scares. Propaganda is everywhere. No one is immune to it. From kids' books to toys, everything is grooming and manipulating our young minds and oppressing us. As Americans, we are taught that it is normal to look after ourselves and our own first. When we look at ourselves, we see only the individual, not the community or the group that supports us. If kids' shows stepped away from political commentary and themes for one second, maybe our country could start leading the world in free-thinking and innovation.

But there is hope. In Scooby-Doo, the Mystery Machine is called "our van;" however, it's most likely Fred's car. This shows a lack of private ownership. They also rarely visit the "institution" that is school, don't engage in paid labor, and sometimes partake in unmasking corporate monsters. So, while

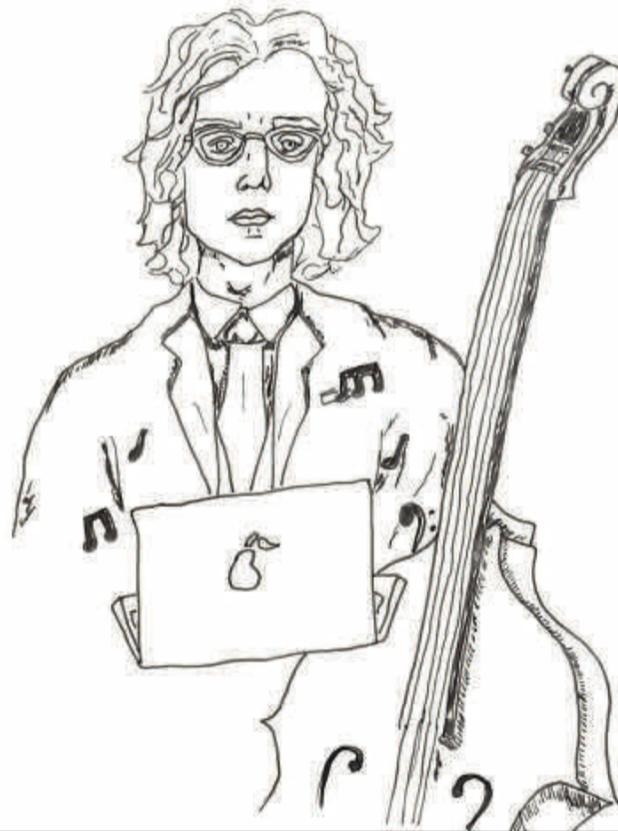
the gang does live inside of a propaganda-laced show, they are capable of achieving class consciousness at some point. I also interpret it to mean that they are at the very least aware of the unfair structures in place in their town.



Courtesy of pixy.org

The All State Experience

By Max Mielcarek



Courtesy of Zach Calinda

Every year, nearly one thousand students pile into a Holiday Inn in Rochester, New York. After outstanding performances in the previous spring's Solo Festival, they are specially selected by the New York State School Music Association to come together and play at Conference All State.

Last year, I was one of those students. I was one of the few juniors chosen to play in the

symphony orchestra in Kodak Eastman Theater. The experience of playing the climax of Gustav Mahler's Titan was one of the most monumental yet most human moments of my life, and it forever changed how I view music. Music changed from something I love to something that I have to do.

I was yet again chosen to play in 2020's Conference All State, this time in the string orchestra. Even in the age of COVID, NYSSMA prevailed, and All State still took place. But now, as a veteran of two All State festivals, I ask myself if it truly should have.

As one could imagine, having nearly one thousand musicians from all across the state cram together in one hotel was out of the question this year. However, NYSSMA found a solution in the form of SmartMusic, an online music education program. SmartMusic functions in a similar way to Guitar Hero--a mu-

combined to form one large ensemble. And just like that, All State from home was possible. Or should I say, the music of All State from home was possible.

There I sat, in a tuxedo in the dining room, recording the "Brandenburg" Concerto. I felt nothing. I was stone faced throughout the entire recording process. So much went into making All State happen this year, but it couldn't have worked.

The music was never what was important about All State; it's the experience. For many, myself included, it's the first real exposure to the classical world. A huge orchestra, long rehearsals, incredible conductors, and a community formed with your section. The grueling four days were a whirlwind, a truly human experience that showed the ups and downs of music. Recording at home just couldn't accomplish that.

And yet, I'm the lucky one here. I had the opportunity to go to Rochester and have my All State experience with all of the fear, loathing, and wonder that go along with it. I didn't need the profundity of playing Mahler at Eastman; I already had it.

The fact that All State happened at all this year was a miracle. However, the energy that went into attempting to give seniors the experience should have been redirected into guaranteeing it for the next generation of student musicians who really need it. Hopefully, this will be the last SmartMusic All State because it cannot inspire the wonder and magic that four days in Rochester can.



Courtesy of Max Mielcarek

sician is presented with sheet music that they must record. This recording is judged by an AI which awards points based on the accuracy of the performance.

On paper, this is the perfect solution. The AI would ensure that tempo would not be an issue and that a good performance was given. Then, since it functions on recordings, all recordings could simply be

How Pets Have Helped During Covid-19

By Noah Makowski

I know this is an overused expression, but living during the time of COVID has been hard for all of us. Between not being able to go out without a mask on and having to do school through a screen, our social contact has been extremely limited. Because of this, a lot of people have gotten pets to cope. According to the Washington Post, animal adoptions have increased to double or more at certain shelters and breeders, and there are waiting lists that go well into the end of this year.

It seems that, because of the lack of human companionship, people are looking for companionship through animals.

I have a dog named Loki. He is about 95-100 pounds, which is pretty big as far as dogs go. He is currently six and a half years old. He is very funny and is not aware of how big he is. Since COVID, we have been spending a lot more time with him because we are home more often. Since COVID happened, everyone has been a little sadder than usual, but a dog jumping at snowballs or a cat laying on your computer can really make your day.

My friends and I all agree that pets make you happier, but are there any studies to back it up? After some combing through the Internet, I was able to find some.

One interesting study I found from Time Magazine listed the different types of pets and how they help humans. One of the studies concluded that taking care of anything alive reduces stress. Between COVID and school, there is plenty of stress to reduce. Other studies showed that specific animals can help with specific disorders. For example, having a guinea pig in the classroom helped kids with autism focus and be more social.

Pets also help with loneliness. Most people that have a pet have occasionally treated them like a human, whether it's talking to them, wondering what they are thinking, or dressing them up. This can really benefit the mental health of those who are not very social. It allows them to get comfortable around living things. Another study featured in Time showed that kids who struggled with reading were able to become less nervous and improve their skills by reading to dogs.

Overall, pets have many positive benefits. They can reduce loneliness, help you get better at reading and give you a good laugh every once in a while. Pets are a great addition to any family or even just a good companion to have if you live alone.



"Cookie" Courtesy of Shane Stackpole



"Oreo" Courtesy of Emily Peck



"Moby" Courtesy of Sophia Roberts



"Henry/Smush" Courtesy of Joey Driscoll



"Tigger" Courtesy of Elijah Salazar-Garris



"Clover" Courtesy of Nelson DelTufo



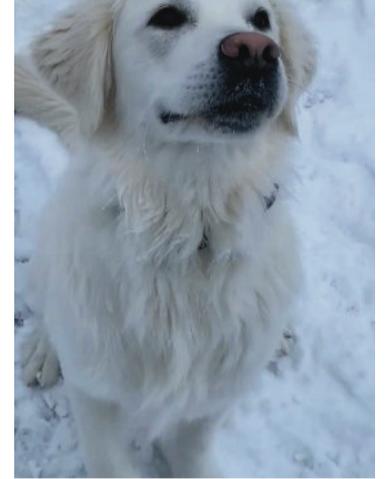
"Echo, Eddie, and Suki" Courtesy of Axel Roberts



"Loki" Courtesy of Noah Makowski



"Maggie" Courtesy of Nora Vogt



"Otis" Courtesy of Bella McHugh

Music Recommendations

By Mikayla Stock

"Left for Denver" by The Lumineers

After careful consideration, I've officially decided that The Lumineers is my second favorite musical group of all time. "Left for Denver" is a fantastic arrangement off of their latest project, III, which has rightfully earned a spot on my list of the greatest albums ever made.

Based on the story of the fictional Sparks family, III is organized in a trilogy of chapters with each containing songs that are correlated to the stories and development of Gloria, Junior, and Jimmy Sparks. "Left for Denver" has been a recent favorite of mine, but the entire album is worthy of experiencing in the form of the ten music videos released by the band. The whole arrangement is seen as more of a short film, and it is a truly heart-wrenching, magical piece of art to have the privilege of witnessing.

"honey let's just drive" by Philip Brooks

"honey let's just drive" reminds me a lot of the type of music I would listen to while driving with my brother down the West

Coast's well-known Highway 101. COVID has certainly limited my ability to travel, so I often find myself searching for music that reminds me of my favorite places to go to when there isn't a deadly virus circulating the Earth. This song is definitely like a personal escape to some of the best memories of my lifetime in one of my favorite places, and maybe it will become that for you, too.

"Step" by Vampire Weekend

It was only a matter of time before I recommended this. "Step" is my favorite song created by my favorite band of all time, Vampire Weekend. This track, off of the group's third album *Modern Vampires of the City*, holds so much meaning for me, and I got to witness it being performed live a couple of years ago.

All I can say is that seeing your favorite band perform your favorite song is practically a spiritual experience in itself, and I will forever regard that night as one of the best of my life. I hope you enjoy this one as much as I do, and if you don't... well I might be a little heartbroken, but that's okay.



"Abby" Courtesy of Bella McHugh



"Lulu" Courtesy of Olivia Weiss



"Aberama" Courtesy of Sophie Frank



"Buttercup and Lightning" Courtesy of Autumn Schouten

Why Good LGBTQ+ Representation Matters

By Elijah Salazar-Garris

Positive LGBTQ+ representation in the media has been on the rise in recent years. From 2018's *Love Simon* to the coming out of popular YouTuber Jojo Siwa, the LGBTQ+ community has been starting to get the representation we need. Having a gay love story in mainstream media or an LGBTQ+ YouTuber whose audience is mostly little kids shows everyone that they exist in the world and aren't an out-cast.

But while representation has been increasing, there's still not enough.

While I'm going to mainly focus on LGBTQ+ representation, what I'm going to say will apply in a similar way to other groups. In addition to a lack of LGBTQ+ representation, the media also lacks racial diversity, neurodiversity, and physical disabilities.

Representation matters because it allows everyone to feel included. Back when I thought I was straight (surprise Mom, I'm bisexual), I never felt like I wasn't included in films. Being a white male that was straight at the time, I never had to wonder, "Why don't I see anyone like me in this movie?" I just always fit in.

But now that I'm bi, I'm noticing how little that part of me is really shown on screen. I can only think of a few bisexual characters in popular media: *Brooklyn 99's* Rosa Diaz and *The Owl House's* Luz Noceda. And while I'm sure there are more bisexuals on screen that I simply haven't seen yet, it's honestly sad that there are so few. I am happy to have them, but I wish representation wasn't limited to just them.

And that's just talking about my experience and my identity. There is even less representation



Courtesy of Zach Calinda

for trans and non-binary people, or for other genders and sexualities.

It is also very important to expose younger audiences to LGBTQ+ representation. Young people should know that LGBTQ+ people exist, and that it is okay and good to be one of them. It helps them feel unashamed if they do realize they are gay, trans, etc. in the future because they learn at a young age that they are normal and accepted.

Shows like *Steven Universe* (a personal favorite of mine), *The Owl House*, *Craig Of The Creek*, and *The Loud House* are all examples that come to mind. It warms my heart to know that kids will have an easier time being themselves in the future because they see themselves represented from a young age.

We can't talk about why we need representation without talking about how to properly execute it and how doing it poorly hurts the community and how we are viewed. Throughout history we've been viewed in a negative light, and poor representation in the media makes that worse. While there is a lot to discuss about discrimination and homophobia in general, I'm going to focus exclusively on the media as-

pect of it from the last few decades.

For a long time, the best representation the LGBTQ+ community got was the "gay best friend" trope, which mostly reduced the entire community to a pet that went shopping with girls. This is both sexist, portraying women as people who are only fueled by shopping, and homophobic, reducing gay people to a stereotype.

A good example of poor representation can be found in *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry*, a 2007 film in which Chuck (Adam Sandler) and Larry (Kevin James) pretend to be a gay couple for insurance benefits. It's a typical Adam Sandler comedy, and it was made in poor taste because two straight actors are playing into gay stereotypes and earning money by making fun of LGBTQ+ struggles.

Another example is the 2015 movie *Stonewall*, which also stars mainly straight actors playing gay roles. In addition to that, the movie is whitewashed, as it stars almost all white actors even though the activists they are playing would actually have been people of color at the time of the 1969 Stonewall riots.

Representation has come a long

way in the media, but we have a long way to go before everyone feels like they have a place in film. Everyone should get a chance to feel like they're in the spotlight, and one day hopefully they will.

Editor's note: This article is the first in a series of articles written by Gender and Sexuality Alliance club members. The GSA seeks to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ students or allies, and we work to make our school a safer, better place.

If you are interested in joining or helping the GSA please email Ms. Curlew (acurlew@onteo-ra.k12.ny.us), Ms. Nelson (cnelsen@onteo-ra.k12.ny.us), Sophia Frank (sofr01@student.onteo-ra.k12.ny.us), or Elijah Salazar-Garris (elsa01@student.onteo-ra.k12.ny.us).

The Onteora Chess Club!

By Liam Bertheaud

Are you a fan of chess? If so, then you are in luck! There is a new chess club at Onteora. We meet every other Tuesday. We talk and play friendly matches against one another. You don't have to be a great chess player to join either! All are welcome. We can't wait to see you there.

Wake Up, What's Next

"By white supremacy I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings." - Frances Lee Ansley

Wake Up What's Next (WUWN) is a reformative activist group looking to grow ways to reinvent, re-develop, and re-educate communities and municipalities through informative discussions.

Meetings covering police reinvention, mindfulness and mental wellness, intersectionality, anti-oppression training, and more will be held in spring and early summer!

We are a multicultural community holding conversations about socioeconomic and racial justice issues. Our goal is to connect the community and solve these issues of structural oppression. We look forward to meeting with more people to hear their voices.

If you want more information you can email wakeupwhatsnext@gmail.com or message @wakeup_whatsnext on Instagram

"The game of chess is not merely an idle amusement; several very valuable qualities of the mind are to be acquired and strengthened by it, so as to become habits ready on all occasions; for life is a kind of chess." - Benjamin Franklin