



The Talon

Gripping News



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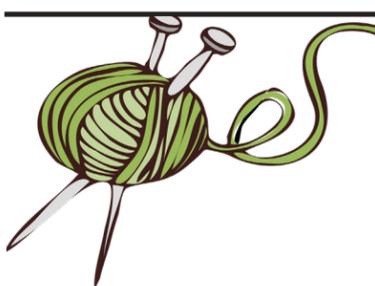
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There's Hope For the Housing Crisis in Ulster County

By Freddy Luttinger

On March 8th, the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Ulster County. Three days later, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.

During the beginning of the pandemic, New York City was the epicenter of active cases. At its peak, 12,000 cases were being reported daily, likely with thousands of cases left unreported. The death toll was astronomical and shook the city to its core. This understandably caused many NYC residents to look for a way out of a place ravaged by sickness and death. For many, Ulster County was the way out. This brings us to our story today.

Obviously, the worsening housing crisis can't entirely or even primarily be attributed to people from NYC moving upstate; it would be a bit biased to exclusively blame them. In Ulster County, housing prices have been on the rise since 2015. This has been catalyzed by many factors, the most notable of which being the pandemic.

However, there is an unmistakable correlation between rent/housing prices and the onslaught of people migrating from NYC. But once more, to be fair, there is a more significant correlation between the housing crisis and people (due to the pandemic) simply being unable to pay their rent by no fault of their own.

The housing crisis in Ulster County is, to put it lightly, really bad. Since 2010, the median rent in Ulster County has increased by 16%, and the median price of a family house has increased by 17%. However, the aver-

age household income has gone down by 1%. This presents a clear issue: the prices of buying and maintaining a home are increasing, while the incomes of those buying and maintaining said houses have mostly remained the same or gotten smaller.

To make this disastrous situation worse, these trends don't show any sign of stopping. The increasing rates will most

likely catch up to the average Ulster County inhabitant sooner or later, making housing in the United States, and especially in Ulster County, more difficult. If these trends continue (which they appear to be doing), a significant number of citizens simply won't be able to find reasonable and affordable housing at all.

In Ulster County, 30% of renters spend more than half of their paycheck on housing costs. This statistic is noticeably higher than the rest of the country, which can be partially attributed to wealthy families and individuals migrating from NYC to find a home in Ulster County. Due to some people's above-average income for the area, many are willing to pay



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter

more to rent more lavish homes. This, in turn, brings prices up and incentivizes the creation of more luxurious and less affordable homes. A process that is reflected in the universal increase in housing prices. To add to these bleak statistics, 13% of homeowners now spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs, which intuitively doesn't make sense. This is something that we can

undoubtedly help reduce if we take the proper measures to do so. To add to the crisis, no new affordable housing is being built in Ulster County. Most people building new houses aren't trying to make accessible housing for those having difficulty making ends meet; they are making houses for themselves or the rush of NYC residents moving into the area.

Today, the average price of a newly built house in Ulster County is a whopping \$425,000, a price that is simply inaccessible for the average person living in Ulster County. However, this astonishing price likely won't incentivize anyone to take initiative,

as there simply isn't as much money in providing affordable housing that prioritizes residents over the economy. This isn't the fault of the people building and selling these homes-- it's just how our economy works. We need to find ways to incentivize the building of more accessible housing.

These numbers are simply staggering. When I read these statistics, I was admittedly not the most informed about the costs of housing as a renter or homeowner. However, there are moves we can make to compensate for these troubling statistics.

Roughly twelve months after the beginning of the pandemic, a housing action plan was released by the Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress. It contains the statistics previously addressed, an overview of the situation currently playing out, and a plan to deal with the crisis.

As reported by the Ulster 2040 working group, the Ulster County Housing Action Plan is "an argument for workforce and affordable housing as part of the social infrastructure needed for economic development aligned to the needs of people." The report also presents many ideas for "the creation of higher paying employment opportunities, a significant factor is the issue of housing affordability."

This hopefully represents the beginning of a movement towards better housing opportunities for the average inhabitants of Ulster County, and, more broadly, the movement towards a more people-focused economy that does a better job of contributing to the common good.

TechCity's Reboot

By Shane Stackpole

As a teenager, it has been pretty depressing to witness many buildings in Ulster County—once economically prosperous and full of vitality—shut their doors and fill with dust. TechCity, located just 1.3 miles from the Kingston mall, is without a doubt one such building. Throughout the years, I have driven past the run down site, imagining what it could possibly be: a community college, a massive Trader Joe's, a scientific laboratory. But now, after nearly three decades of vacancy, I will no longer have to wonder what TechCity might one day become.

On December 21, 2021, the Ulster County Legislature and Economic Development Alliance unanimously voted to transfer the ownership of TechCity from Alan Ginsberg to National Resources.

"This is the dawn of a new day for Ulster County!" remarked County Executive Pat Ryan, who made revitalizing the TechCity site into a beacon for economic growth and job creation one of his main goals when first sworn into office.

Since the former resident of TechCity—International Business Machine Corporation, or IBM for short—shut its doors in July of 1994, a myriad of infrastructure failures have plagued the site with significant deterioration and environmental problems.

Fortunately, however, National Resources—reputable for its success in redeveloping and revitalizing worn down sites—has pledged to put a total of \$12 million into TechCity, \$7 million of which will be used for the sole purpose of cleaning up the site. The majority of the remaining money will be used to fix old buildings and build new ones in preparation for businesses to make what will soon be called iPark Kingston their new home.

National Resources has made it clear that one of their main goals in taking over the site is a complete environmental cleanup of TechCity. As it currently stands, some older buildings on the site are surrounded by rubble contaminated with asbestos (a highly carcinogenic and toxic material). Using

the \$7 million allocated for infrastructure renovation, National Resources plans to remove the asbestos, one of their many efforts to reduce the site's environmental impact.

Along with cleaning up the site, Ulster County and National Resources have announced a vision for what will reside in iPark Kingston when it's completed. Due to the vast size of the TechCity site, the county hopes to utilize it for many different purposes, some of which include light manufacturing, agricultural management, and even a film and television division.

Additionally, there are hopes to develop part of the iPark Kingston site with quality workforce housing complexes. Not only would this centralize the county's economic pursuits, but it would lead to the creation of up to 1,000 well paying jobs for local residents, many of whom are struggling to find work and affordable housing.

The plan to have a film and television division of iPark Kingston is also particularly exciting for Ulster County. Mary Stuart Masterson, Founder and President of Stockade Works (a local film organization), has



Courtesy of @ulstercountyexecutive on Instagram

already announced her plan to take part in TechCity's revitalization, remarking that "that the film and television industry will transform our local economy [and will show] the next generation that they can find meaningful work and a future in their hometown."

Moreover, this addition to iPark Kingston would better support local filmmakers and help rejuvenate Ulster County's artistic creativity—something that has unequivocally been suppressed by the pandemic.

One can only hope that Ulster County's innovative trajectory with TechCity will continue to render change throughout our community, breathing new life into other vacant buildings that are filling

with dust. In the coming years (when we're all home from college or work for the holidays) we will drive past what used to be the old TechCity site, and instead we will gaze upon iPark Kingston—beaming with economic opportunity and filled with busy bees at work. And maybe (just maybe) iPark Kingston's birth will prompt the revitalization of other lifeless buildings in Ulster County, such as the Kingston mall. But for at least right now, as Pat Ryan says, "we have finally reached an exciting and transformative moment, one where we can revitalize [TechCity] and make it a thriving beacon of new opportunity for our county."

Live Performance is Back at Onteora!

By Augie Luttinger

On December 10th and 11th, A Midsummer Night's Dream was performed by the Onteora Theater Department. Directed by Leslie Sawhill, it was the first live performance at Onteora since the COVID-19 shutdown in 2020.

While successful in the end, the road to the performance was a bit bumpy. A snow day and power outage during the final weeks of preparation led to delays and scheduling problems at the worst possible times. Moreover, a few original cast members had to leave the play, resulting in stage crew members clambering to fill roles and other actors having to take on a second role to ensure that all characters were accounted for.

Despite these unexpected hurdles, the performance proved to be another successful Shakespeare performance at Onteora.

While the size of the audience was small (composed mostly of the cast's family members), it actually eased the stress of most performers and helped create a more comfortable atmosphere for them.

Another highlight of the production was the innovative and charming set design by Sawhill. With the cast's help and Sawhill's design, many

essential set pieces—such as the bower—were made easy to move around the stage.

The excellent sound design was carefully crafted by ninth-grader Devon Hunt to enhance the play's most whimsical moments. Notable tracks included the works written by famous composers Danny Elfman and Elliot Goldenthal.



Courtesy of Onteora Facebook

Some stand out performances included seventh-grader Azi Tehrani as Oberon, tenth-grader Ada Helm as Puck,

tenth-grader Becca Ratcliff as Bottom, and eighth-grader Ruby Gahagan as Quince.

When asked how they thought the play went, Helm responded, "I think we were all pretty nervous that it was gonna go horribly, but overall I was really proud of how it turned out! I made a lot of new friends during this experience, and doing live theater after such a long time was so incredible. As stressful as it was, all our work really paid off."

In response to the same question, Ratcliff said, "I thought it was a resounding success! Learning Shakespeare was challenging, much like learning a new language. I loved sharing my time with such a wonderful community. In the end I'm really glad I stuck with it, and I'm proud of all of our work."

After two years without any plays, musicals, or concerts, A Midsummer Night's Dream has breathed life back into live performance at Onteora. Despite some mishaps, it was a wonderfully successful production with an especially wonderful process.

Hindsight's Always 2020: A Reflection on the Pandemic

By EJ Schackne-Martello

As hard as it may be to believe, it's been nearly two years since the original COVID-19 shutdown—back in the old days of March 2020. With the Omicron variant now making its way into our towns, homes, and bodies, let's take a look back at our very own paper's point of view.

The date? Thursday, March 12th, 2020. Without context, an onlooker would think it was just another day at school or on the job. However, those of us in the know recognize it for two things: First, the 12th was the last day we were in school that year. Second, it was the day before the release of Volume II, Issue III of our very own *Talon*. Seriously, a first hand account for

the historians of tomorrow. Well, let's hope not.

If a historian somehow survives the inevitable climate-induced apocalypse (which I'm sure will happen around 2050) they would be amused to find our only mention of COVID-19 on the absolute bottom of page six. An article, more like a blurb, titled "The Coronavirus Pandemic: Status and Implications at Onteora" by Onteora graduate Brian McHugh cited that when written there were 133,000 documented cases worldwide. That's right, in the entire world, only a bit over 100k!

We'd kill for those numbers now.

The article goes on to quote Victoria McClaren, the Onteora Superintendent at the time, stating, "In the event of a confirmation of COVID-19 in our community, we will likely close school for a day or two." Little did we know, the following day would be our last waking up at six in the morning for quite some time.

Over these last two years, the way that many of us learn has changed drastically. Many have been hurt and many fewer helped by this extended phenomenon. One can only guess what will happen next. All we can rely on is our community to get through it together as best we can.

Athletic Updates at Onteora

Meet the New Athletic Director!

By Shane Stackpole

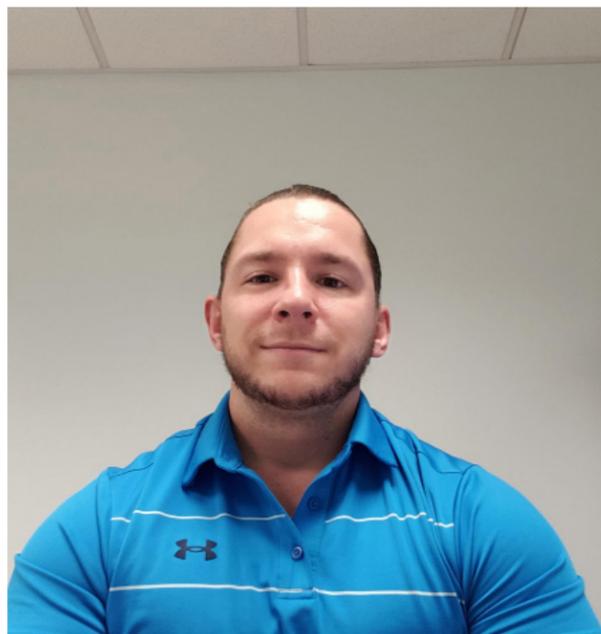
On December 7th, the Board of Education appointed Ryan Naccarato as Onteora's new Director of Physical Education, Athletics, and Health. Naccarato, who previously served as the Director of Athletics at Blind Brook High School in Westchester, NY, assumed his athletic position at Onteora last month.

Naccarato has always been avidly involved in sports. After playing football, baseball, and basketball as a student at Kingston High School, he continued his athletic pursuits at SUNY Brockport, where he received a bachelor's degree in Physical Education. In addition, Naccarato graduated from SUNY Cortland with a master's degree in Sports Management and Canisius College with another master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision.

Having previously served as Athletic Director at Coxsackie-Athens High School, Dean of Students at Miller High School, and Physical Education teacher at RJK Middle School, it's safe to say that Naccarato's myriad of administrative and athletic experience have well prepared him to jump mid-year into the Onteora community. But for Naccarato, it doesn't just end here: the new Athletic Director also has years of coaching experience, from being the owner of the Hudson Valley Ambition—a local fitness organization—to leading the Marlboro High School Varsity Softball team to a New York State Class B Championship win.

Naccarato's goals as Onteora's new Athletic Direc-

tor include heightening school involvement in and support for athletics, fostering a positive team culture, and most importantly, teaching students important life lessons through athletics. Reflecting on his entrance into the Onteora community, Naccarato remarked that "[he] look[s] forward to the opportunity to work in such an amazing district with dedicated students and staff."



Courtesy of Onteora Facebook

Athletic Council

By Sophie Frank

If you're a student athlete who wants to raise school spirit, support fellow athletes, or share your opinions about sports at Onteora, consider joining the Athletic Council! Founded in October of 2021, the Athletic Council is a new club with senior Bella McHugh as president and Physical Education Teacher Eric Pezzello as the faculty advisor. The club's current project is a Winter Sports Week. For each day of this week, a different sports team would be recognized; for instance, the team may have their next game broadcasted during morning announcements, or there may be a highlight reel played during lunch. The team's roster and highlight reel would also be posted on the Onteora High School website. The club plans to host more fun events throughout the school year. The club meets once a month, giving club members a chance to voice their opinions or concerns on athletic matters. To join or get the google classroom code, talk to Bella or Mr. Pezzello.



Clawsnaps:

What was your favorite song of 2021?



Meredith Grant, Sophomore: "The Big Deep" by Elwood. It's by a local artist, and they sound amazing.

Maria Grinberg, Sophomore: "Is it Real" by Rayzd, "Earth boy" by Tony22, and "Through The Trees" by Phantom Planet. Those songs helped me through rough times.

Amy Weisz, Librarian: "The New Abnormal" by The Strokes. I just like the vibe of it, it doesn't stress me out and it sets me in a good mood.

Kate Davis, Senior: "Virtual" by YNW Melly. I went on vacation and met this group of surfers that was blasting it.

Abilene Adelman, Sophomore: "I miss those days" by Bleachers. I listened to a podcast about it and it just kinda stuck for a while.

Ada Helm, Sophomore: "The Big Deep" by Elwood. It's local and it reminds me of summer.

Linus Driscoll, Sophomore: "Amari" by J Cole, "Come to Life" by Kanye, and "No Friends in the Industry" by Drake. I like them because they are good.

Jillian Tyler, Freshman: "Happier Than Ever" by Billie Elish. I like Billie as a person, and I think she's pretty.

Sarah Wolfeil, Sophomore: "Spirit Phone" by Lemon Demon. I went through a Lemon Demon phase.

Pilar Piera-Tyree, Junior: "To The Moon" by Jnr Choi. It gets me hyped every time I listen to it.

A Student's Experience in the SUNY Ulster Early College Program

By Clara Mead

I wake up at nine when the sun is out. I get ready for my one high school class. After I finish that forty-two minute class, I drive to SUNY Ulster and take an hour-long class. I'm home at 1:30 and have the rest of the day to myself.

During my junior year, I decided to skip out on my senior year at Onteora. Instead, I enrolled in the Early College Program through SUNY Ulster. I have absolutely no regrets. In fact, that decision was probably the best one I could have made regarding my high school career.

The premise of the Early College Program is that a senior can achieve their degree through dual enrollment and through earning college credits awarded directly by SUNY Ulster. I'm still graduating through Onteora, but I just take my classes at Ulster.

High school can be oppressive. We all know this. If you don't do special programs like BOCES, New Visions, or Early College, you're spending at least seven hours in forty-two minute periods five days a week. Sometimes, you'll have three tests in a day. In a row, even. After a long day of intense fluorescent lighting and fish sticks, you're expected to stay even longer and participate in at least one extracurricular sport or club.

Not only are the days stressful and tedious, but the social climate can also be exhausting. Onteora is a small school. Seeing the same faces every day can be difficult, especially considering that many students at

Onteora have known each other since primary school.

Of course, most of the things I just listed are not specific to Onteora. All high schools share the same, slightly suffocating, qualities. However, if you're miserable, let me be the one to tell you that there is a way out.

Participating in the Early College Program, I finally feel like I am developing habits that will help me for the rest of my life. Most of the work is done outside of class, and none of the work is busy work. Overall there are fewer assignments, but the assignments that are given are more work-intensive--also making them more gratifying. I find myself doing most of my own research as opposed to recycling materials fed to me by teachers.

In my fall semester at Ulster, I wrote a psychological analysis on the characters in the film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, a research paper on the extent of corporate influence in politics and legislation, and, my personal favorite, a critical analysis of the film *Mean Girls* and how it demonizes hyperfemininity. The underlying factor in all of these assignments was that they were my choice. I had the freedom to pick my own films, my own topic proposals, and my own ideas to expand upon in my own research. The most important difference for me taking classes at Ulster in terms of academics is that there is no cookie cutter rubric. I found that I had so much more freedom in what I wished to write

about, something which I am extremely grateful for.

Taking classes at Ulster is also rewarding for me because I get to take classes with people that are all in different places in their lives. For the most part in high school, you're either grouped with people your age or the year below. Most of my classes at Onteora were in an AP bubble where I had almost every class with the same rotating group of thirty or so students. At Ulster, I was in an English class with a woman that took a six year break from college and came back to finish her degree. My film class had a man in his 50s, as well as many young adults around my age. Everyone is there for a different reason, and being exposed to different inputs and opinions was enlightening and frankly relieving for me.

Overall, I wouldn't have it any other way. I am still involved in clubs at Onteora, through which I can connect with my friends. But other than that, I have so much more freedom and have learned how to be more responsible as an Early College Program student.

At Onteora I rarely studied. The first test I can recall actually putting significant effort into was my APUSH test last May. My procrastination habits were not great, and I often found myself not working to my full potential. All of my shortcomings as a student (as previously mentioned) have basically been eradicated during my time at Ulster. I can actually study for



Courtesy of SUNY Ulster Community College

tests, and I don't do all of my work the night before. Being a student at Ulster has taught me to work hard and prepare well, which are skills that I know I'll use for the rest of my life.

I'm grateful to have this opportunity through Onteora, and I hope this article compels unhappy high schoolers to look into the Early College Program.

If you're reading this article and you're thinking "Wow! I totally want to do this!" Here's the 411. Below is the QR code for two documents that provide some information about application and eligibility for the Early College Program. Onteora has certain requirements that need to be met in order to be eligible for this program. Talk to your guidance counselor if you're interested in the program but are unsure if you're qualified.

In my personal experience, I was looking to graduate from Onteora with an Advanced Regents Diploma. Because I was on the advanced track for everything except math, I had to complete my math credit (required by the Advanced Regents Diploma) at Onteora. I didn't take a sci-

ence junior year, so I took Biology in my fall semester. The other credits that were required for me were English, Physical Education, and Government. All first year students at Ulster have to take a class called First Year Experience, which is a half-semester course at the beginning of the year.

If you read the fine print on the fact sheet, you may see that Early College students are not eligible for financial aid. I had to pay tuition to attend. The expenses were minimal compared to the cost of most four year colleges, but this is still something to note.

I hope my experience and insight is helpful to those looking to find some escapism from high school. I know personally that I could not have made a better decision regarding my mental health and life skills. I fully recommend the Early College program to anyone that is interested.



Students Respond to TikTok Threats

On Thursday, December 16th, 2021, the Onteora Central School District issued an announcement notifying families of school shooting threats that were circulating on the social media app TikTok. The threats—none of which were targeted towards Onteora—came as a result of “National Shoot Up Your School Day,” a TikTok challenge that encouraged students to commit such acts on Friday, December 17th. While the Onteora District did not close on Friday the 17th, some families chose to keep their children home out of an abundance of caution. However, many students still went to school. No violent acts were committed at Onteora on the 17th.

The following questions were asked of Onteora High School students in response to this event: What was your initial reaction to hearing about the school shooting threats on Friday, December 17th? Did you go to school that day?

Why or why not?

Zoe Gabriele, Junior: I guess I was pretty surprised. I heard about the TikTok threats from my friends who texted me about them the day of. I would like to think that nothing would have happened—and gladly nothing did. Regardless, I stayed home on the 17th. I didn't want to take any chances. But better safe than sorry! I am just glad that nothing happened.

Ari Green, Junior: I woke up on December 17th to a text in a homework group chat asking if I was going to school that day. Groggily, I made the assumption that there was something wrong with the weather. However, when I checked the Onteora website, there was a message from administration about a circulating TikTok threat to the safety of schools across the nation. Despite the grim context of the message, I just smiled,

A Validation of Our Generation's Shared Trauma

By Sophie Frank

Before I hit double digits, I knew how to scan a room. I was taught to look for abandoned backpacks, suspicious individuals, and excess police presence. It's called situational awareness. Trust your instincts. If you're in danger, keep yourself safe, even if you have to break a rule.

I was nine when the Sandy Hook shooting happened. I still played with dolls and wore my hair in those awful early 2000s-era barrettes. I vividly remember my parents' tense expressions and the serious voices of the NPR commentators (that should have turned to white noise) working their way into my head.

I was fifteen when the Stoneman Douglas shooting happened. I read every news story, letting every ounce of horror and political failure pummel me until my frustration nearly exploded. It had been years since I learned to scan a room, since the anxiety had taken up permanent residence.

That anxiety made me a buzzkill. I'd be laughing with friends at a movie theater or mall, and suddenly my heart would stop. I would be certain something bad was going to happen. I never told my friends what I was afraid of; rather, I logicked my way out of the heavy cloud of fear, reassured myself of the statistical rarity of mass shootings, and went on laughing.

The first friend I told that I think about shooting tragedies when entering a crowd looked at me in shock. But to my surprise, she told me that she did the same. Knowing that she shared my same worries made me question what I had been so embarrassed about. Sure, not everyone internalized the anxiety as intensely as I did, but many people had been raised with, or had come to develop, a baseline fear about bad people and dangerous situations. Many people felt like a part of their childhood had been taken away from them due to increased access to the news, the dramatization of tragedies, and a lack of political action on gun violence, among other issues.

Stoneman Douglas was the latest in the long line of school shooting tragedies. But no matter where or when the shooting occurred, it prompted the same spiral, the same frustrations—the same renewed awareness of possible danger in my own community.

When Onteora experienced a bomb threat and multiple shooting threats I stewed in my intrusive thoughts for a week, desperately trying to assess the person in my last period class

who made loud jokes about bringing a gun to school.

My first draft of this article wound up a bitter criticism of the American Dream. I argued that it was dead, leaving the everyman to pick up the pieces of an expired land of the free.

But that isn't what this article should be about.

That first draft was me intellectualizing my way out of the conclusion to which I've been building up throughout my life. I was attempting to find a scholarly argument in a situation that makes me emotional, not rational. The time for my scholarly arguments will come. But for now, let me make this article what it should



Courtesy of Pixabay

be: a validation of our generation's shared trauma and experiences, a forum for us to say, "This freaking sucks."

It used to seem normal to fear the part of childhood when all the world's horrors dump onto you without any warning. It seemed normal that anxious pre-teen me spent hours on my school Chromebook with glitter stickers plastered on its exterior, researching things like, *How to survive a school shooting?* *How to avoid sex trafficking?* or *Why won't a creepy man stop messaging me on Instagram?*

But these things aren't normal. And they certainly aren't fair. Right?

Maybe every generation has to learn too soon that the world is an unkind place. Or maybe I'm experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety, and my thoughts will wind up being more confusing than relatable. But I think it's safe to say that the unique, lethal combination

of social media, globalization, and political partisanship have teamed up to make Gen-Z's coming of age wholly unrelatable to older generations. The current college system, the job market, our attitudes towards technology, and our feelings about social issues have changed so much that they are unrecognizable to other generations.

With that in mind, I'd like to say a few things.

One: my constant, low-level fear about mass shootings is something I don't think I'm alone in. Who else was taught to scan a room, to make judgement calls, or to be afraid of this very real possibility? Who else shares upset posts about the injustice with which many of these situations are handled and worries about whether something like that could happen here?

I also think I'm not alone in being angry. It's not fair to live in fear. It's not fair that we have to beg our representatives to prioritize our lives over gun rights. It hurts to see other countries doing better with mass shootings and gun violence. It's exhausting to see politicians in the pocket of the gun lobby, to see gun control legislation that could change everything be dismissed, while "thoughts and prayers" and flowers are sent to families gutted by tragedy.

Two: on a note larger than mass shootings, being in this generation is difficult. Rising costs of college and living; climate chaos; an increasingly unjust and unstable job market; the wealth gap. Herein lies the entire purpose of my article: to validate our feelings that are too often deemed invalid. Get upset. Be existential. Maybe you are already. But I've spent too long trying to normalize what is simply not normal—too long trying to force logic to overtake emotion. I have worried for too long that if my anger isn't mirrored in my peers, my views would be deemed unreasonable. I have feared for too long that my views wouldn't be respected if I presented anything but a flawless, calm front to the 50-year-old men picking fights with me on Instagram.

I think it's time to shed a few tears, scream into a pillow, march for gun control legislation in the streets, and volunteer for progressive politicians—whatever helps us cope, and maybe even make real change. I think it's time I stop ending all my articles with a peppy conclusion to make this all the more palatable.

It's not fair. I am angry. And I know I'm not alone in that.

Students Respond to TikTok Threats

thinking of my friends who would take any opportunity to skip school.

We can often take for granted the relatively peaceful climate at Onteora, considering the fact that other schools have holding cells for the persistent fighting among their students. And in my mind, staying home was an illogical decision for such a remote and safe school like Onteora. This is not to say that I faced no temptation; after all, I was going to a concert later that day, and the chance to get in some extra rest was appealing. Nevertheless, I decided to go to school because giving into illogical fear only advances the problem of school shootings as a whole. If violent people see such threats succeed in instilling fear among students, they will be more inclined to spread terror of their own.

Sophia Wentland, Senior: When I first got the email about the TikTok violence threats, my heart dropped. It was the first time I was hearing about the threats, as I had not seen any of the trends on TikTok. I still went into school, despite all of my close friends staying home. I told my parents beforehand that I would just leave school if I felt uncomfortable or unsafe at any point throughout the day. I honestly felt like nothing was going to happen, but it was still nerve-racking. My day consisted of constant over-the-shoulder glances, especially during lunch and passing periods—when something would be most likely to happen. Regardless, everything ended up fine, and by 12:00 PM I was pretty confident that it was going to be a "normal" school day. Even though going to school was risky, I decided against letting social media threats get the best of me. I refused to allow such threats that lack credibility put a pause on my life.

Let's End Misgendering at Onteora

By Becca Ratcliff and Elijah Salazar-Garris

Over the years at Onteora one issue has significantly impacted LGBTQ+ students more than anything other: misgendering, or dead-naming as it is colloquially known.

One of the most prominent examples of misgendering at Onteora occurs when the attendance sheet—which includes both a name and nickname column—is read off at the start of class. Unfortunately, when a student requests to have their name changed at school, their new, preferred name goes under the nickname column. Consequently, the first name that appears on the attendance sheet is most often used when a student is called on—which is typically the student's legal name, not their preferred name.

This can be very harmful to students, regardless of it being intentional or not. Speaking from personal experience, it can feel like a gut punch. It's a reminder that we have a long way to go for transgender rights and issues to be taken seriously. It's a reminder that even in 2022, trans students' identities may be deemed invalid.

Luckily, there is a small light at the end of this dark tunnel. After talking to High School Principal Lance Edelman, he agreed to help by, for instance, adding proper gendering lessons to the substitute teacher training. This will hopefully lead to proper gendering of students. Mr. Edelman was shocked to hear this was still an issue, as he thought it had been addressed years ago. Regardless, Mr. Edelman quickly agreed that this was a big

problem and worked right away to find a solution for Onteora and its students.

This, my friends, is not only a big win for transgender students, but for Onteora's LGBTQ+ population as a whole. We can now sleep soundly knowing that students will not have to dread an attendance sheet for fear of being misgendered. We can now look forward to a brighter future for transgender and non-binary students in which dead-naming is a thing of the past. And most importantly, transgender students can now live their lives as they are.



Courtesy of Atticus Schouten

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The Most Rad Fashion Trends

By Isabella Hamilton

Due to the fast paced nature of contemporary society, fashion trends constantly move in-and-out of popularity. Fashion trends can often dictate an individual's style and how they choose to express themselves. Below are some of the most notable fashion trends that Onteora teens are currently inspired by.

Vintage Baseball Caps

Are baseball caps the new bucket hats? Many people are dressing down blazers, puffer jackets, and other winter attire with vintage caps. The most popular baseball cap colors are brown and green.



Claw Clips

Claw clips are easy, quick, and affordable. People are now choosing to clip their hair in lieu of tying it up in a messy bun. This is because claw clips won't damage your hair. With claw clips, you can be fashionable and grow healthy hair at the same time.

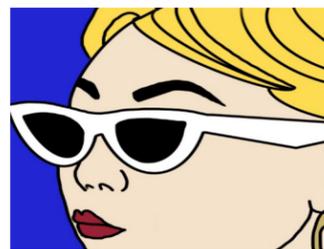


Oversized Button-Downs

An oversized button-down can elevate a look when paired with jeans, a crop top, or a plain sweater vest. They're a wardrobe staple for any season.

Retro Sunglasses

Retro sunglasses are back and better than ever with a new elevated look. There are many styles to choose from with many colorful options. They are a necessity for everyone's closet.



Air Jordan Sneakers

The very popular Air Jordans are the new trending sneaker because of their high performance and quality. They are customizable and come in a variety of different options to choose from--such as multiple color schemes, styles (low/mid/high dunks), and sizes to fit everyone.



Tote Bags

Tote bags are now the most popular form of a handbag. They are cute and easily accessible to anyone. Due to their versatility, they can be worn nearly anywhere: to school, the mall, and your local market.



Crochet The Day Away

By Joey Driscoll and Tahlula Potter

A specter is haunting Onteora—the specter of needlework. Endless hours of Zoom school led many students to start crocheting. But even as we transition back to in-person school, crocheting has remained a popular hobby. The repetitive nature of crochet renders it a great stress reliever, and the ability to create tangible products within a relatively short amount of time makes it a rewarding pastime.

Supplies

Only two things are needed to crochet: a hook and yarn. Crochet hooks come in a range of sizes indicated on the side of the hooks in millimeters. Yarn also varies by thickness of strands—known as weight—indicated by a 0-7 scale that is labeled on yarn packaging alongside the appropriate hook size.

Using a suitable hook for a given yarn or crochet project is key. Small hooks create smaller—and in combination with larger yarn, tighter—stitches, and the reverse is true for larger hooks paired with smaller yarn. Tighter stitches are generally apt for amigurumi crochet, a type of crochet that makes small stuffed toys, while looser stitches work better for wearable clothing garments.

Yarn can be made of many different materials. Acrylic yarn—made from synthetic fibers—is the most available. It's a washing machine safe and affordable yarn, making it the best choice for beginners. Beyond simple acrylics, there exists cotton, wool, cotton-wool-acrylic blends, pricey alpaca, cashmere, silk, and bulky chenille yarn.

Patterns

YouTube is a great resource for beginners with tons of tutorials you can follow along with. The content of the videos range from how-tos for specific stitches to walkthroughs of whole patterns. It may feel difficult or overwhelming to start without knowing if you're doing the right thing, so these step-by-step video tutorials can be really helpful in the early stages. If you're feeling stuck and would like more guidance, you could always come up to one of us (Joey or Tahlula) and we can help you get started!



Courtesy of Joey Driscoll and Tahlula Potter

Once you become familiar with the basic stitches and are a bit more comfortable with your technique, written patterns become easier and faster to follow. Patterns use abbreviations for each type of stitch, such as “ch” for the chain

stitch and “sc” for the single crochet stitch. You'll learn that you can either crochet in rows—like how you would to make a scarf—or in rounds—like how you would to make a ball.

All of these techniques can be combined in many ways to produce different shapes, designs, or whatever you want to make! Once you learn more about the different stitches and how to manipulate the yarn, you could even start to write your own patterns. It's a lot of trial and error, but nothing feels better than completing a project you produced entirely on your own—pattern and all.

Chain and Single Crochet

So, are you ready to learn about the two most fundamental stitches? The first is called the chain stitch, and it is the foundation of scarves, granny squares, sweaters, and most garments you would crochet in rows.

The other stitch we will look at is the single crochet stitch, which is the stitch you will use most often as you learn to crochet. Single crochets build off of chains to create volume, and two single crochets can be worked into a single stitch to create an increase, which significantly increases the size of whatever you're making.

Once you reach the end of a row of single crochet, chain 1 and turn your work around. Then, single crochet in the next stitch

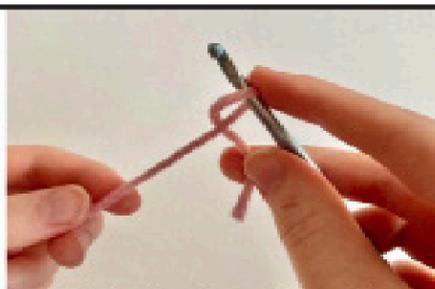
from your hook, this time making sure your hook goes under both strands in the “v” of the stitch. Repeating this process will eventually lead to the completion of a scarf!

Happy crocheting!

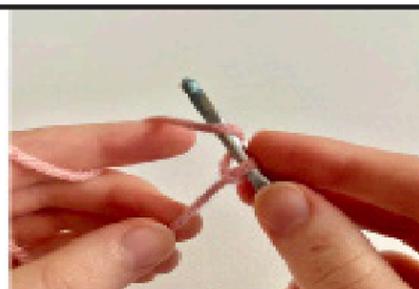
Slip Knot:



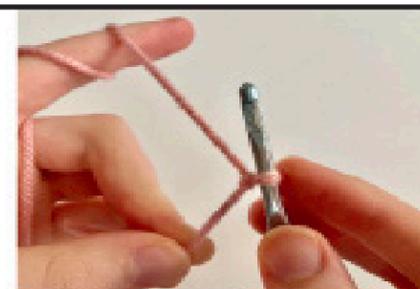
1. Place yarn over hook with short end in front



2. Put short end behind yarn from left to right



3. Keeping short end down, yarn over hook

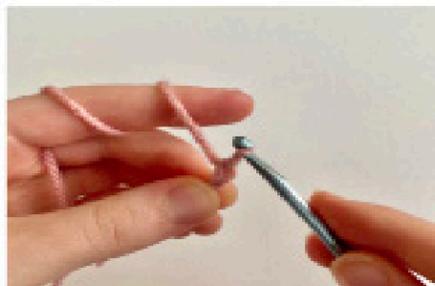


4. Pull through loop, then pull both ends to tighten

Chain (ch):



1. Starting from slip stitch, yarn over hook



2. Pull through loop—this is your first chain!



3. Repeat first two steps until desired length



2. Yarn over hook



3. Pull through loop so you have 2 loops on hook



4. Yarn over hook



Single Crochet (sc):

1. Insert hook into next ch/sc stitch (sc pictured)



5. Pull through both loops, then repeat 1-5!

Monthly Favorites Playlist

By Sophia Wentland

Welcome to the second monthly favorites playlist! This month features RED (Taylor's Version), some classic rock, songs from *Euphoria*, and chill music. If you're a non-Spotify user, you can find the same playlist on my Apple Music account:

@sophiawentland
Enjoy!



Valentine's Day Word Search

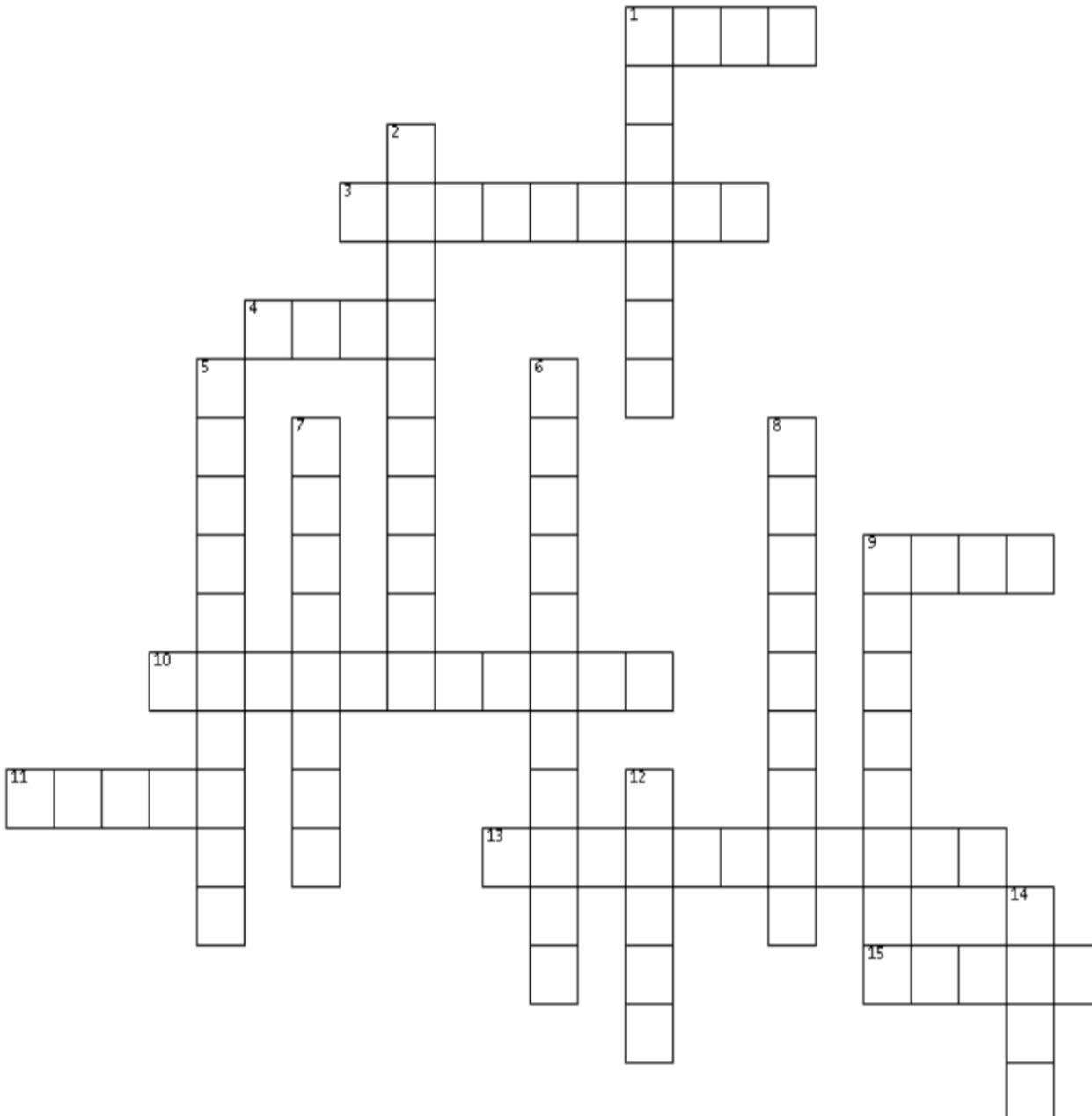


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|------------|---------|-------|------|
| GIRLFRIEND | ADMIRER | CANDY | PINK |
| BOYFRIEND | FLOWERS | DOVES | HUGS |
| VALENTINE | KISSES | ADORE | RED |
| AFFECTION | HEARTS | ROSES | |
| FEBRUARY | ARROW | DATE | |
| ROMANCE | CUPID | LOVE | |

Crossword

By Kelly Wen



Crossword Clues

- ACROSS**
- This inventor pioneered the technology that formed the basis for WiFi, GPS, and Bluetooth.
 - This town in _ holds the Guinness World Record of the longest place name.
 - The largest animal on Earth.
 - The largest organ of the human body.
 - A word blending the sounds and meaning of two existing words.
 - This country has the highest number of vending machines in the world.
 - Flamingos are pink due to the chemical called _ in the food they eat.
 - The hardest working muscle in the human body.
- DOWN**
- This artist was responsible for popularising Valentine's Day greeting cards.
 - Valentine's Day origins to the pagan festival of _.
 - 99.9% of commercially grown artichokes come from this state in America.
 - It is illegal to own only one guinea pig in this country.
 - The name of the oldest known living land animal.
 - "Moon of a moon", also known as a subsatellite.
 - The Earl of _ invented the food consisting of filling in between two slices of bread.
 - This dessert is named after the 1:1 ratio of ingredients in its recipe.
 - The ancient Greek God of love.