



The Blarney Stone

“Bishop McNamara’s Source for News”



December 2023

Winter Edition

DECEMBER EDITION

Welcome to the December 2023 Issue of the Blarney Stone, the official newspaper of Bishop McNamara Catholic School! As the first semester of the year continues, there is much to read about, including Thanksgiving, Winter Events, and the conclusion of this semester. Additionally, multiple students and faculty members are featured in this month’s edition, including Mrs. Mesenbring, Mrs. Valant, and Ms. Viz.



Written By: Grant Naese

PREFECT SPOTLIGHT: GRANT NAESE

Grant Naese, the Head Prefect of Bishop McNamara, President of the Blarney Stone Newspaper, and President of the National Honors Society, has a multitude of responsibilities and duties within the school.

As put by Grant, he serves as a link between the staff and the students, serves as the leader of all student-run activities, coordinates any number of school events, and manages the other prefects.

Grant has made many meaningful changes and positive impacts on the school, a notable example being the Irish Student

Hub, our school's Canvas page for all events and scheduling. It took a lot of work, but it left a large positive impact.

Grant stated that being heavily involved in Bishop McNamara has taught him a lot of lessons on what it means to be a leader. He has learned how to not only lead but also when to take a step back and guide people to their fullest potential.

When asked, “Do you gain satisfaction and accomplishment from your duties within prefect?”, Grant replied that to an extent he found satisfaction in the completion of tasks, however, it can be difficult to balance those feelings with the stress of the position. However,



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at the end of the day, Grant thinks that it is worth it.

He left us with these: "For me, it's about the impact on the people around me. The love for my school and relationships is really what drives me." These words are evident in everything he accomplishes.



Written By: Oliver Heinrich

ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: JAYDON WRIGHT

There's more to Jaydon than just football. After having the opportunity to interview him, he is hard-working, mentally tough, family-oriented, and knows how to have fun. Everyone can take some advice from Jaydon no matter what sport you play or even if you don't play sports. When asked, what is one piece of advice you would give someone who's

thinking about playing football, he responded, "They should definitely do it. Football doesn't just teach you discipline, toughness, and strength, but you also gain brothers within the sport." It is obvious that he has good advice for others, but he also appreciates the advice given to him. The best advice he was ever given was, "Don't worry about everything else going on, control what you can control and fix what you can fix." As anyone can see, Jaydon has a positive mindset on and off of the field.

We all have someone who inspires us and Jaydon's inspiration is his mother. He states, "She helped me get to where I am today and has made countless sacrifices for me. My mom is everything for me, a doctor, teacher, friend, advisor, and many more. She points me in the right direction and supports me no matter what my decision is. She isn't only my mother, but also my best friend." His

mom sounds like a great person in all aspects and helps him through his ups and downs.

Did you know Jaydon can play the piano and has six siblings? His favorite food is chicken alfredo. He doesn't have a favorite NFL player, but his top five are Patrick Mahomes, Micah Parsons, Fred Warner, Isaiah Pacheco, and Derrick Henry. His top hobbies are also working out, playing sports, and hanging out with friends and family.

Written By: Rylan Barzantny

ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: ABNER GARCIA

Statistics show that nearly eight million students participate in high school sports in the United States. Today you'll learn about Abner Garcia, a senior at Bishop McNamara Catholic High School, and his experiences as a student-athlete, as well as how it has impacted his life thus far.



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Abner responded to a series of questions on how his basketball career got started at the beginning of the interview, starting with what inspired him to play the sport. "I don't really know what motivated me to pursue basketball when I was 4 years old, I just know that I fell in love with the game right away." His love for basketball has allowed Abner to create many memories, but his most memorable one would be scoring his first buzzer-beater against his team's rival. "Ignoring the fact that I was 12 years old, it was a pretty exciting moment in my athletic career; we were down twenty points, came back, and my buzzer-beater won the game for us!"

Abner values his sports just as much as he values his academic life. He believes that the main problem among student-athletes nowadays is time management and procrastination. "My advice to upcoming

or struggling student-athletes would be to manage your time well. Get your schoolwork done as quickly as possible, so it's off your mind when you play." Although some students blame their sports for performing badly academically, Abner says being an athlete has made him a better student. "Sports keep me in line with my schoolwork, if I don't do my work and my grade starts decreasing, I won't be able to play."

Other than promptness, Abner has learned valuable morals like responsibility, discipline and always making light out of situations. "I've learned a lot in my 4 years of being a part of the Bishop Mac basketball program, but if I had to pick my top three valuable morals, they would definitely be responsibility, discipline, and simply having a positive outlook on everything, always have fun." The 23/24 basketball season will be nostalgic considering it is Abner's last time playing high

school basketball with his teammates. His expectations for the season are high since it's his last. "I feel like we have a pretty good team this year, so we should make it pretty far as long as we work together like good teammates and have the same drive to win, but mostly I want this season to be filled with beautiful and joyful memories I can hold on to forever."

"I would like to thank God for the talent he gave me because, at the end of the day, I owe this all to him. I would also like to thank my parents, my family, and friends for supporting me on and off the court and keeping me motivated to be the best version of myself no matter the circumstance." This is the story of Abner Garcia, a senior at Bishop McNamara Catholic High School, and how Bishop Mac's athletics program has impacted not only his athleticism but his life altogether.

Written By: Isabelle Garcia



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TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: MRS. VALANT

Making her return this year, Mrs. Valant has picked up where she left off, making a big impact on her students. Although Mrs. Valant is certified to teach both junior high and high school, she discovered when she student taught how she enjoyed the high school level. Teaching at the high school level gave her several opportunities, such as coaching and teaching higher math. Her favorite subject to teach is trigonometry, but it is clear to every student that she is enthusiastic about every class she teaches, and she loves it when her students share that enthusiasm. "This is my 11th year at McNamara. Every kid I have, every class I have, it's nice that the kids want to learn. When they're struggling with a subject or struggling with a concept, my favorite thing to see is when

they come to ask a question, but then they figure it out themselves. They get so excited about it. Seeing kids get excited when they figure out a problem is one of the many joys of teaching." Mrs. Valant has been teaching since 1992. She has made many great memories over her career, but there is one that stood out as rewarding. In one of her previous AP Calculus classes, there was a particular student who kept trying to get her to slip. Even when he wasn't being kind about it, she answered his questions with patience and grace the entire year. This student took the AP College Board test and ended up getting a 5, the highest score possible. "That summer he called me up to thank me and to tell me how much his score meant to him. He also ended up apologizing for that entire year, and he said that he learned so much, not just about math, but about how to be kind and patient." Although students in her class-

room primarily learn about mathematics or botany, this story shows so much more. She teaches her students so many lessons that go beyond the classroom and into real life.



Written By: Sarah Berg

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: MS. VIZ

"God said no, I have something better for you." Mrs. Viz, an aspiring actress at the age of seven, came to understand that God had a bigger and better plan for her life. Raised in Skokie, Illinois, as a baby of six children, Monique felt called to perform or teach. Marriage, raising her own six children, and then working other roles in the teaching field, Monique desired to return to her first true love: working in a Catholic high school. Combining her love of theater and all things literature,



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she is proud to call Bishop Mac home.

Viz believes the greatest challenge of modern teaching is "imparting perfect knowledge to imperfect minds." At the core of her teaching philosophy is meeting students where they are at

and assisting them in their academic journey. An inspiration or memory in her life was sitting in her Latin teacher's class, Sister Claire, and being inspired to go see Rome and Athens, ancient places that were the birthplace of Western civilization.

Mrs. Viz is most passionate about her devotion to God, faith, marriage, and family. She places God as the final editor and publisher of her life's story and foremost "We must always stay open to God's plans." In her two years at Mac, she appreciates the open minds and humble spirits that are present

in all students, reminding them to reach out for support constantly. Each day she hopes to uncover the sublime and sacred in all literature and show that God has a plan for each one of us: even if it is just reading characters, plot, and themes.

Written By: Cassidy Novak and Isabelle Garcia

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: MRS. MESENBRING

Mrs. Mesenbring knew she wanted to be a teacher ever since she was little. She loved school so much. "At both my grandparents' houses and my house we had a chalkboard and a desk. So even when I wasn't at school, we were playing school." Her love for school soon developed into a love for science. She went on to major in zoology in college before starting her teaching career. This is her 37th year teaching, spending most of that time at the junior high level. "I just look back at my own experience, and I feel like junior high was my best experience. I feel like the teachers you remember the

most are the ones from junior high. When you're little, you learn some things, but it's not really in-depth. In high school, you have so many, and sometimes you're focused on other stuff. In junior high, I feel like I remembered all my teachers." Her love for teaching at the junior high level is not only sparked by her own experiences but also by the curiosity of her students. Their excitement for learning lets her push them to learn more advanced concepts. "I think with junior high I can teach them more advanced things, like balancing chemical equations and the combined gas law, things like that. We're pushing them to learn more advanced things, but they're still excited about it. I feel like they still have a spark of interest in discovery." Mrs. Mesenbring has amassed many memories over the course of her teaching career, but many of her favorite memories involve the three words, "I've got this." "In general, one of my favorite things is when we're doing something difficult, like balancing chemical equations or dimensional analysis or combined gas law. People are struggling and everyone is say-



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ing how hard it is, but I'm saying, 'No, you can do this.' Then you see those students finally going, 'I've got this!' That has to be one of my favorite things about teaching. As a teacher, you have to keep telling them that they can do it. Over the years, I've heard people tell me that I can't have 8th graders doing stuff like that or that it's too beyond them. I think that we should not sell them short. You can't just throw it at them and say figure it out, you have to guide them." Mrs. Mesenbring pushes her students to challenge themselves. At the end of junior high, they leave her classroom well-prepared for high school and beyond.



Written By: Sarah Berg

GIRLS BASKETBALL

The Bishop McNamara girls' basketball team is filled with amazing people who have good chemistry and positive energy. One player who is

apart of this team is Savana Smith. Savana is a senior starter who plays small forward and has been playing basketball since 6th grade. When talking about playing for the Bishop McNamara girls' basketball team, she had this to say "It has made me a lot faster and a lot more of a leader. It's held me accountable in many aspects of life and it has given me some of my best friends." I think this is a great way to describe getting involved in any Bishop McNamara sport. Being an athlete involves winning and losing and dealing with things that don't always go as planned. When asked about how Savana deals with this and keeps a positive attitude through it all she had this to say, "I try to think of the bigger picture. Of Course, you want to win every game but even the greatest teams lose. I would say my positive attitude has gotten a lot better and I would accredit that to our coach for always helping me pick myself up and showing

me how just changing your attitude can make you so much of a better player." Savana is an amazing person and athlete who stays positive and is always encouraging to her teammates.

Written By: Jasmine Wood

GETTING INVOLVED AS A FRESHMAN

As a freshman, it is extremely important to get involved. As it is one's first year of high school there are many worries and stresses such as making friends, getting good grades, fitting in, playing sports, and so much more. Something to help with these worries would be to find something that interests you and to get involved with it, no matter if it's a club or a sport. Doing this can be an outlet or escape from the normal worries of school, it can also help with making friends and getting to know your peers. My personal experience with getting involved with our school has



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been nothing but good. Earlier this year I played volleyball for the freshman team and just this alone has helped me so much this year. The friendships I have made through the sport mean so much to me and help me every day in so many ways. I also learned so many lessons and how to balance both school and sports. If you are thinking about joining something I would do so, even if you're just trying it out for the first time it could be something you're really good at and love!

Written By: Hailey Gerberding

ADVENT CAMPAIGN

This Advent Season, we as a school and a community will be supporting and sharing the love. We will be making Blessing Angels. We will be supporting two very loved families this Advent Season: Luke Akerman and Ashley Hasemayer. By purchasing these Blessing Angels, you will not only contribute to their well-being but also

spread love and Christmas joy. These angels will be personalized with a message for these families, such as "You are in our prayers" or "wishing you joy and improvement". These pin angels will be put up on the tree a few days before Christmas and then will be given back to the families as well as the funds raised for their Christmas blessings. These families are not only in need of support from doctors and medical professionals but also from our school and community! These positive words and prayers go a long way, and we hope you consider donating and supporting these loved staff and administrators as well as their families. Much love to them this holiday season and Happy Holidays.



Written By: Madeline Russell

SPANISH CLUB

Bishop McNamara has recently started a new after-school club - the Spanish Club! The club aims to promote cultural awareness in the school. Despite being new, the President, Cassandra Valtierra, has a clear vision for the club's future. She hopes to see it grow and invites all interested students to join. "Everyone is welcome to join the Spanish Club! We want to include everyone so together we can spread cultural awareness." To raise awareness, Cassandra and the Spanish Club Council are organizing various events to attract the attention of their fellow students. The students will be able to participate in and witness several things around the school, such as the celebration of Posadas and Día de los Reyes, which are significant traditions. Until then students can support the growth and future of the Spanish Club by participating in



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their fundraisers.



Written By: Maya Patel

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST POST SHOW

Bishop McNamara's fall musical Beauty and the Beast took place November 17th – 19th. The cast and crew worked very hard to put this production together and it paid off. If you didn't get a chance to see the show, Beauty and the Beast tells the classic story of Belle, a young woman in a provincial town, and the Beast, who is really a young prince trapped under the spell of an enchantress. If the Beast can learn to love and be loved, the curse will end, and he will be transformed into his former self. But time is running out. If the Beast does not learn his lesson soon, he and his household will be doomed for all eternity. A spe-

cial thanks to the director Stacie Knefelfamp, assistant director Allie Haug, and stage manager Sandy Gray. The show was a wonderful success, and everyone is looking forward to the 2024 spring play.

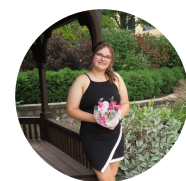


Written By: Hailey Neill

IMPROV CLUB

On November 15th, Bishop McNamara's Improv Club traveled to the Brady Site to play fun games with the Comedy Club. Thanks to the Improv Club moderator, Mrs. Babbitt; Walter Krause, Hailey Neill, Kevin Cash, and Payton Fritz were able to teach the Comedy Club some of their signature improv games. The games played included "Freeze", "Buzz", and "Press Conference". In each game, the kids from the Comedy Club got to act in a scene with some help from our high

schoolers. Both the Comedy Club and Improv Club had a great time. The trip ended with the Comedy Club sharing some of their very own jokes that would be read in the school announcements the next morning. The Improv Club also had its winter show on December 8th from 7:00 pm- 8:00 pm in the Blackbox Theater. Admission is free. They did each game practiced with the Comedy Club and more! Thanks to everyone who attended.



Written By: Hailey Neill

CHRISTMAS CRAFT

Materials

- ◆ Christmas Garland
- ◆ Red and Brown Felt
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Yarn



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- ◆ Beads
- ◆ Needle/Hole Puncher

Instructions

Step 1 - Cut heart and gingerbread men shapes out of the felt.

Step 2 - Using a needle or hole puncher, make a hole at the corner of the heart and top of the gingerbread man.

Step 3 - String the beads and felt on in any pattern you wish.

Step 4 - Hang your garland up on the tree, over a window, or anywhere around the house!



Written By: Sarah Hoehn

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Just a few weeks ago, a few prefects and I were given the

opportunity to attend the YAC meeting at the I-KAN regional building. There, we took part in interactive activities to benefit ourselves and our communities. We started with all students brainstorming ideas for the homeless and in need this Holiday Season. Bishop Mac prefects Grant, Sarah, Jordan, Delaney, and myself, composed the idea of bringing Christmas to the needy! We will set up small Christmas trees and give the families presents and other items to go along with their new decor. This idea was to bring happiness and joy to these families this season who cannot afford presents for their kids, spouses, or themselves. This service is being executed by the students and staff who attended November's Youth Advisory Council Meeting. We then talked about myths about drugs, substances, and vaping. We concluded various myths about vaping and came up with various better options to go towards rather than abusing this

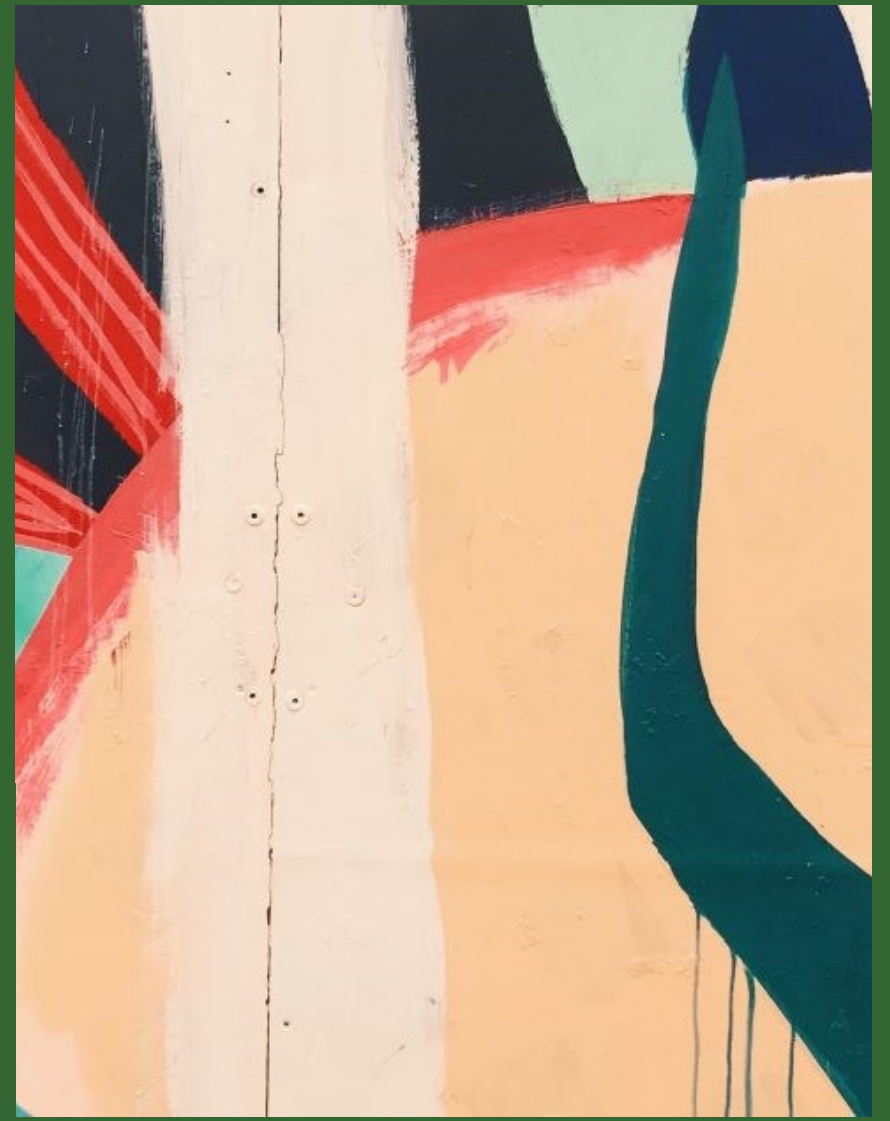
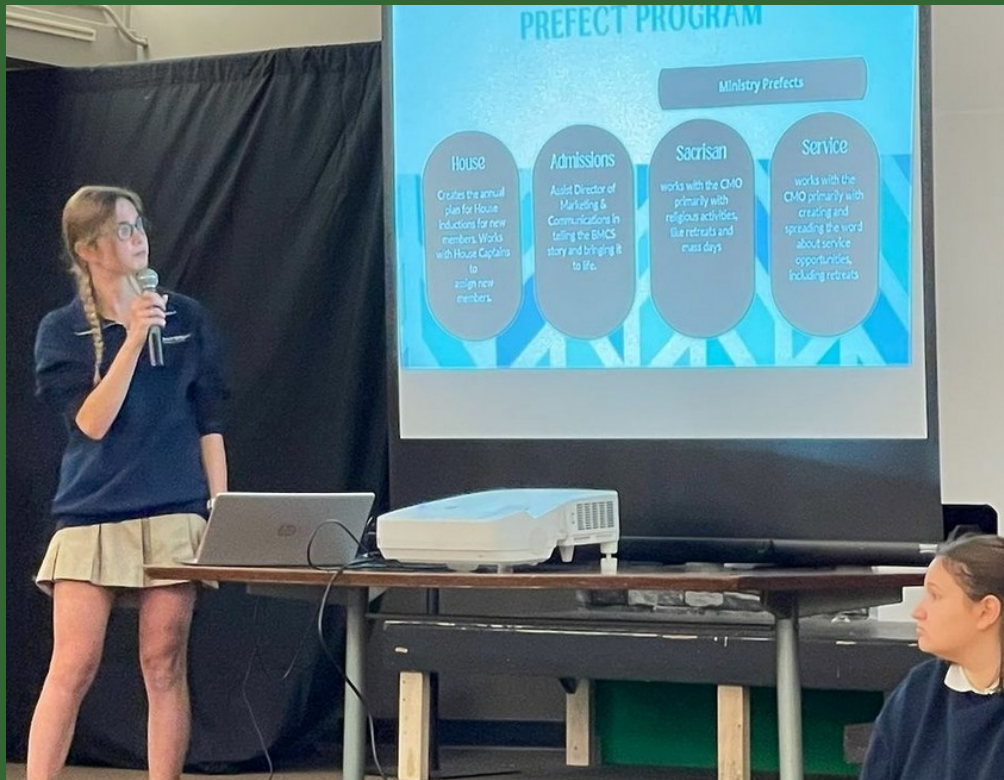
substance or others. This meeting and this organization not only cares about us students, but also the needy of our community. It is very impactful and the work they do goes to show how much our environment needs our help.



Written By: Madeline Russell

SOPHOMORE MENTAL HEALTH SEMINAR

The Sophomore Mental Health Seminar was a new addition to Bishop McNamara. It consisted of a guest speaker, Brandon, a personal trainer at Fitness Premier, who came in and talked to the Sophomore class about his experience with ADHD and how he managed it. The Sophomore class then got to ask some questions. The questions asked were amazing. I even learned so much from it. I think that students must un-



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derstand what mental health is and how they can learn to manage it. We now know some tips on how exercising and meditation benefit your mental health. Next, in the Seminar, the students learned about different ways to get involved at school. They learned about the activities and sports that are available to them. Finally, the students could break out into groups to learn more about the prefect program, tutoring program, service opportunities, and how to manage their schedule. Overall, the Seminar was a success. I am very thankful for everyone who helped out!!



Written By: Emily Storer

FASHION PREDICTIONS FOR 2024

In the world of fashion, 2024 is all about incorporating modern

touches into timeless, vintage silhouettes. From ballet flats to dark-wash denim, we'll be seeing a multitude of closet staples that are easy to put in your day-to-day outfits.



Ballet Flats If you aren't ready to commit to heels every day, or athletic footwear trends aren't ideal for your day-to-day style it might be time to invest in a basic pair of ballet flats. Modeling the structure of a ballet dancer's pointe shoe, these flats are perfect to slip on for a formal event or to elevate an everyday outfit.

Matching Sets Over the past

year, you've more than likely seen Instagram influencers parading your feed in cords or matching sets. Whether it's sweat-sets or blazer-sets, these are wearable outfits that take minimal effort to put together and elevate your closet simultaneously.

Statement Earrings A statement earring is the best investment to boost any ensemble. Arguably the most approachable trend to incorporate into your own wardrobe, the perfect pair of statement earrings is ultimately a matter of personal taste. Distinct and bold, these knock-out accessories are sometimes all it takes to up the ante of an outfit.

Baseball Caps Street style is constantly evolving, but there's one timeless accessory that can improve an athleisure fit: baseball caps. Whether it is plain or branded, the baseball hat adds a pop of color and dimension to a boring athletic get-up. Not



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to mention, it can cover up a bad hair day.

Point-Toe Heels It's out with the block heels, and in with the pointed-toe this upcoming year. Whether styled with cropped jeans, or a mini dress, a classic pair of pointed-toe heels are the perfect versatile, day-to-night shoe.



Dark Wash Denim Light wash denim can be fun for the spring and summer, but the lighter-wash isn't practical for year-round wear. A pair of dark-wash denim jeans is a timeless closet staple that is a must-have for 2024.



Written By: Reagan Kaner

EXECUTIVE CREDITS



Grant Naese, Class of 2024
President • The Blarney Stone



Oliver Heinrich, Class of 2026
Editor • The Blarney Stone



Caitlin Malm • Faculty Advisor

WRITING CREDITS

Writing Staff:

- ◆ Sarah Berg '24
- ◆ Maya Patel '24
- ◆ Maddie Russell '24
- ◆ Emily Storer '25
- ◆ Hailey Neill '25
- ◆ Sarah Hoehn '25
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- ◆ Hailey Gerberding '27
- ◆ Jasmine Wood '27

Guest Writers:

- ◆ Madeline Russell '24