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contents:

TAKE A LEAF OF FAITH!	3
OBX SEASON 3	4
THE Y2K REVIVAL	5
OVERCOMING SEASONAL SADNESS	7
SUDOKU	8
EVERYBODY'S LEAST FAVORITE SEASON: AP SEASON	9
A LETTER TO UNDERCLASSMEN	11
NATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH	13
BAKING FOR A CHANGE	17
THE OHIO TRAIN DERAILMENT	21
SARAH'S STRESS STRATEGIES	24
EARTH DAY	25
SPRING MOVIE RECS	27
MR. WIRTH HAS 13 PETS?	29
SINCERELY LENA,	30



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear reader,

Here's to the 16th edition of Runestone! We have so much in store for you this Spring edition, and we can't wait for you to dive into these pages. We chose "Spring" as our theme this month to celebrate the fact it is no longer snowing (as much as it was last month).

We have a modge podge of articles in store, from interviews with Mr. Wirth (who unfortunately has retired this year) and our very own Gordon Ramsay (just without the British accent) Surya Man, as well as some passionate articles about the upcoming AP season and a letter to underclassmen denouncing taking 15 APs throughout your high school career (written by a frustrated upperclassman who is now realizing her mistake in taking 5 APs this year and needing to study for all of them in a 2 week timeline).

And in accordance with the Spring theme, we have articles touching on Earth Day, plant recommendations if you (unlike me) actually have a green thumb, and how to tackle Seasonal depression—which all Rochesterians deal with at one point given the 6-month long winters we experience here.

As always, we welcome you to submit to pmhsnewspaper@gmail.com. We would always love to feature your unique voice!

Happy reading!

● angel tang '23
london lindley '24

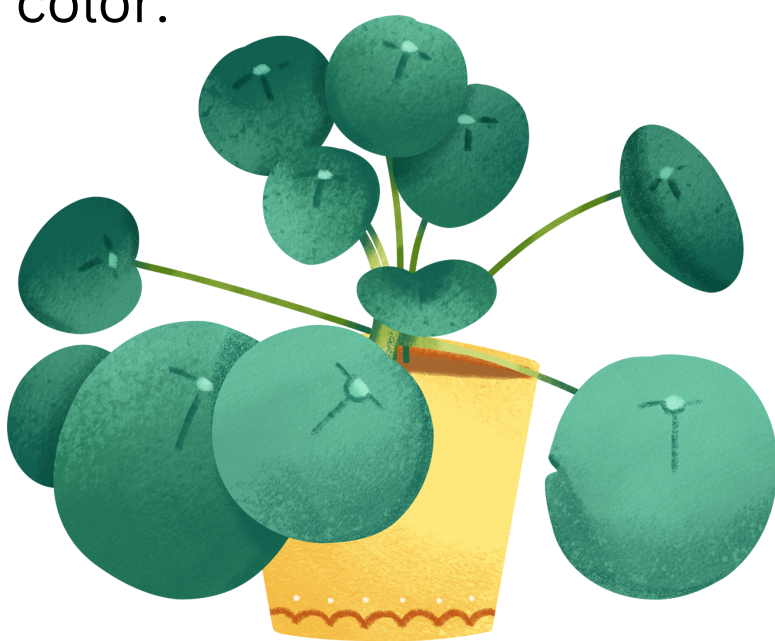
Take a Leaf of Faith!

by Lauren Rutledge

Houseplants can be beautiful additions to a living space. Not only do they have visual appeal, but they can also improve the air quality of your home! Plants can be complex, but it can be quite exciting to find the best way to care for them and what varieties work for you. Here are some houseplant recommendations for people of all experience levels.

SPIDER PLANTS

In my experience, spider plants are one of the easiest houseplants to care for. When cared for properly, they can produce large amounts of offspring called “pups,” that look like tiny spiders (hence the name). The pups hang down from the mother plant by long stems. When the pups are big enough and have developed tiny nubs that can grow into roots when propagated. It is easy to tell when a spider plant needs water—which is usually once a week—because their leaves will begin to droop and look dull in color.



Peperomias are considered semi-succulents that only need water every 1-2 weeks. There are hundreds of Peperomia varieties that exist, and they require very little attention. Peperomias rarely need fertilizer and enjoy bright, indirect sunlight but are also tolerant of lower lit spaces. Their leaves can be a wide range of colors including green, grey, red, and purple, and they are beautiful additions to a desk top space, nightstand, or dresser top area.

PEPEROMIA

HAWORTHIA

Haworthia are beautiful green succulents native to Southern Africa. They are closely related to aloe plants and share the same medicinal use, which includes mostly assisting in healing burns and other wounds. The best soil for Haworthia includes sand for drainage, although though they rarely need any water. While they grow extremely slowly, they make for great houseplants and are excellent beginner plants because they're difficult to kill.

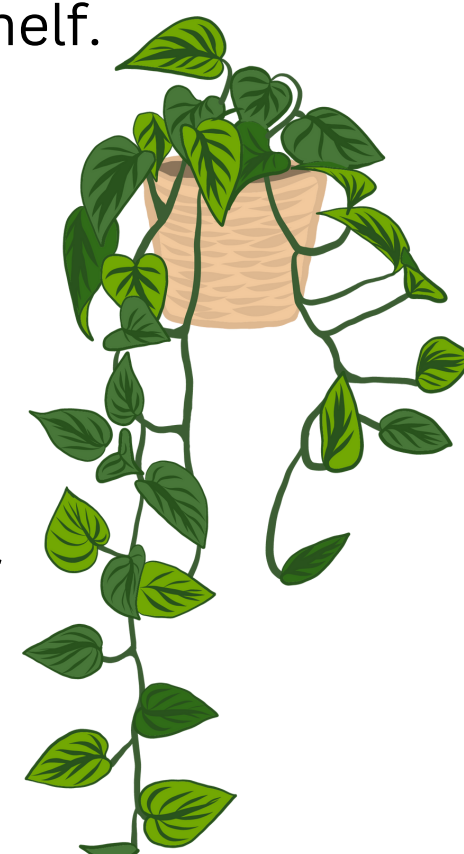


POTHOS

Also referred to as an umbrella plant because of its leaves, the Schefflera is an easy and relatively fast-growing tropical plant. They can grow to be very large under ideal conditions and can even reach a mature size of 4-6 feet. Most of these plants that you would find at your local garden center are on the smaller side. They are flexible with watering and thrive in bright, indirect sunlight.

SCHEFFLERA

Pothos, also called Devil's Ivy, are fast growing plants that can reach extreme lengths. It is easy to tell when they need water by the state of their leaves, which weaken and become flimsier with a lack of water. Pothos are trailers, meaning they grow in long vines that can reach up to 30 feet in length. If you'd really like to get creative, you can train their vines to grow around a pole or shelf.



OBX Season 3

By Lindsay Whitaker

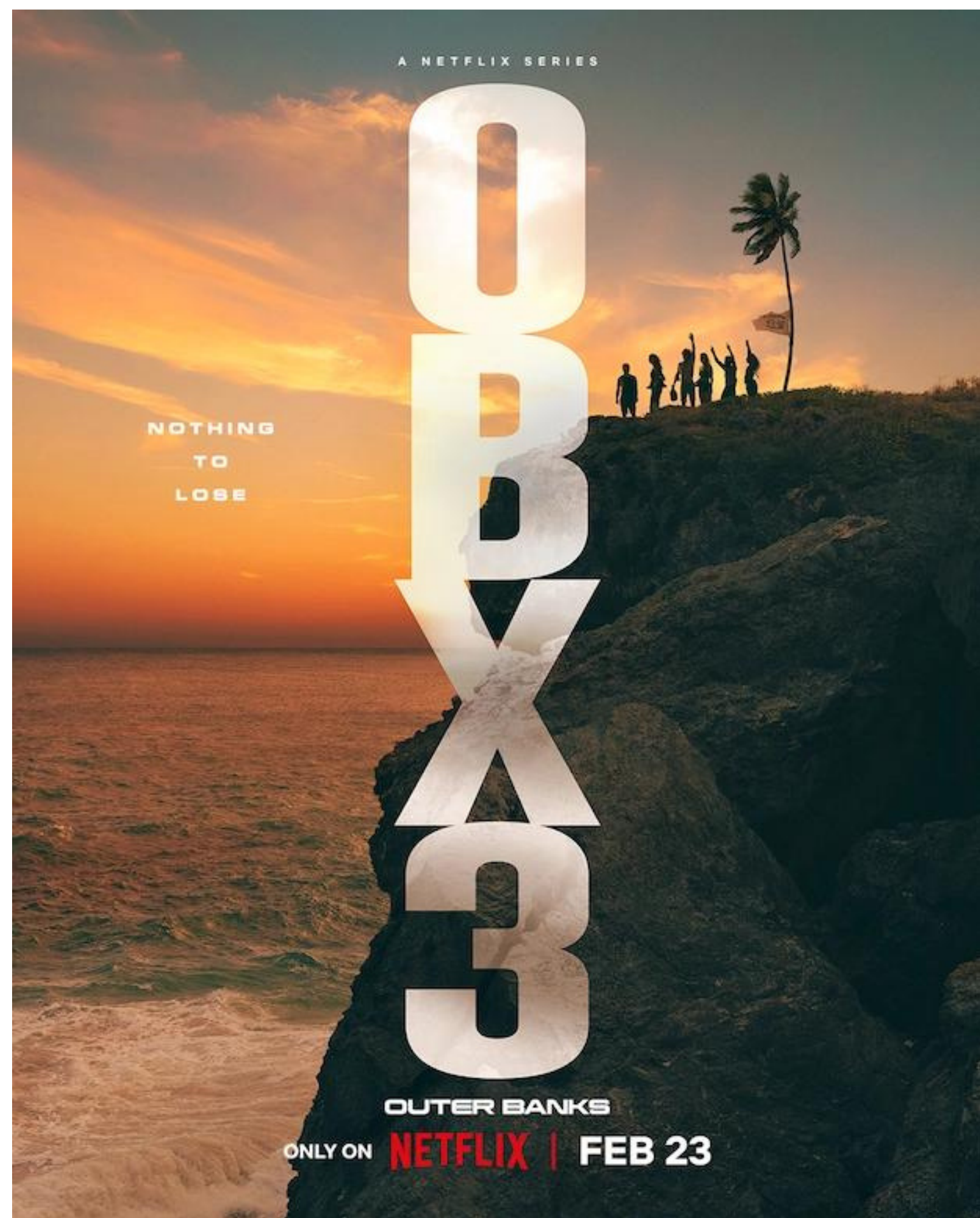
On January 3rd, Netflix announced Season 3 of Outer Banks would be released February 23rd. During the next month and a half, fans flooded the internet with predictions of what was to come in the new season. And when it was released February 23, the show quickly became Netflix's number 1 show for the next week, as fans all rushed to see whether their predictions held true or not. So, what was all the hype about?



To give an overview for those who haven't seen the show yet, the story follows five teens who are on a quest to find gold and a cross that went missing from

John B's and Pope's (two of the main characters) families. John B, Pope, and the rest of their friends belong to the Pogues, which are one of two social classes of the Outer Banks, the other being the Kooks. The Kooks are upper class socialites who own all the restaurants and businesses of the island. The Pogues fall on the exact opposite end of the spectrum—they all have had to work for what they have, and haven't just been handed money left and right on a silver platter. The 2nd season of Outer Banks left off with the Pogues shipwrecked on an island.

The new season continues to follow the Pogues as they work toward completing their quest, starting from where they left off last season. It also contains a large dose of romance and, as always, throws the audience a whirlwind of emotions. I mean, what else would we expect with the return of our favorite main characters--John. B., Sarah Cameron, JJ, Kiara, Pope--as well as the newest member of the Pogues--Cleo. Oh, and of course, our favorite Kooks--Ward Cameron, Rafe Cameron, and Topper--return as well (I mean, they do carry half the plot, so we unfortunately do have to somewhat appreciate them).

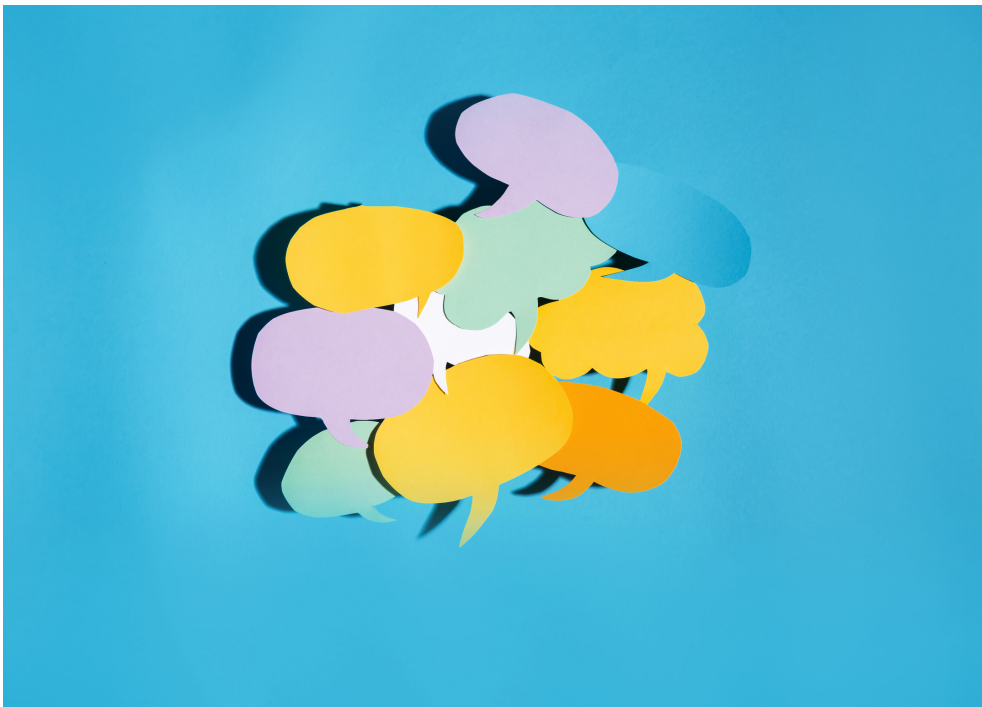


New challenges awaken this season (as they always do). John B. and his dad reunite after being separated for a few years, and the Pogues return to the Outer Banks for 6 weeks. John B. and his dad set out to complete their adventure, and the rest of the Pogues set out to recover a gold cross. Everyone then sets out to South America to find Big John, John B's dad, who was captured by Carlos Singh. After they save Big John, John B. and Sarah go to El Dorado to find the gold.

Many of the characters have changed drastically from the last season. Personally, I believe that Ward Cameron, who was the main antagonist in the last season, can be viewed as a victim in this season. However, Rafe is much worse in this season (talk about character un-growth). He is definitely one of this season's main antagonists. The Pogues on the other hand, could be described as victims as they run around trying to take back what was stolen from them: the cross and the gold (though that's old news, the Pogues have had it hard since season 1). If you haven't seen Outer Banks yet, this is your sign to go watch it. This show is perfect for anyone looking for a drama-filled, action show with a dash of romance.

The Y2K Revival: Flip Phones, and the Resolution of Gen Z's Everlasting Social Isolationism

by Elena Lesniak



Making friends has always been a challenge, to say the least—particularly during this age of hyper online connection and parasocial relationships. Keeping a tight knit circle, I have never seemed to have more than a few friends, and I'm satisfied with that. However, connecting with others online, even with my peers, is a continuous struggle. Reading the tone of text messages is quite the feat, let alone just interpreting emojis. Of course, I too love watching knitting videos and curating my little Pinterest

boards, but there are some things I can never seem to understand. Often, this has left me feeling isolated and awkward, a bit more so than usual. Maybe I'm just cynical, but I feel like no one is interested in living in the moment anymore, not even adults. Nevertheless, I still find myself feeding into that numbness--zoning out for hours on end as I scroll through TikTok, or Instagram. Just a few minutes, I tell myself, then I'll study. It is this numbness and disconnect that has led to a newfound group of Gen Z-ers to rise up, to challenge the norms surrounding social media use, social detachment, and disconnection. Flip phones, which are a historic relic to many born after the 2000s, have become the newest trendy, stylish, and Y2K (Year 2000) revival accessory among adolescents.

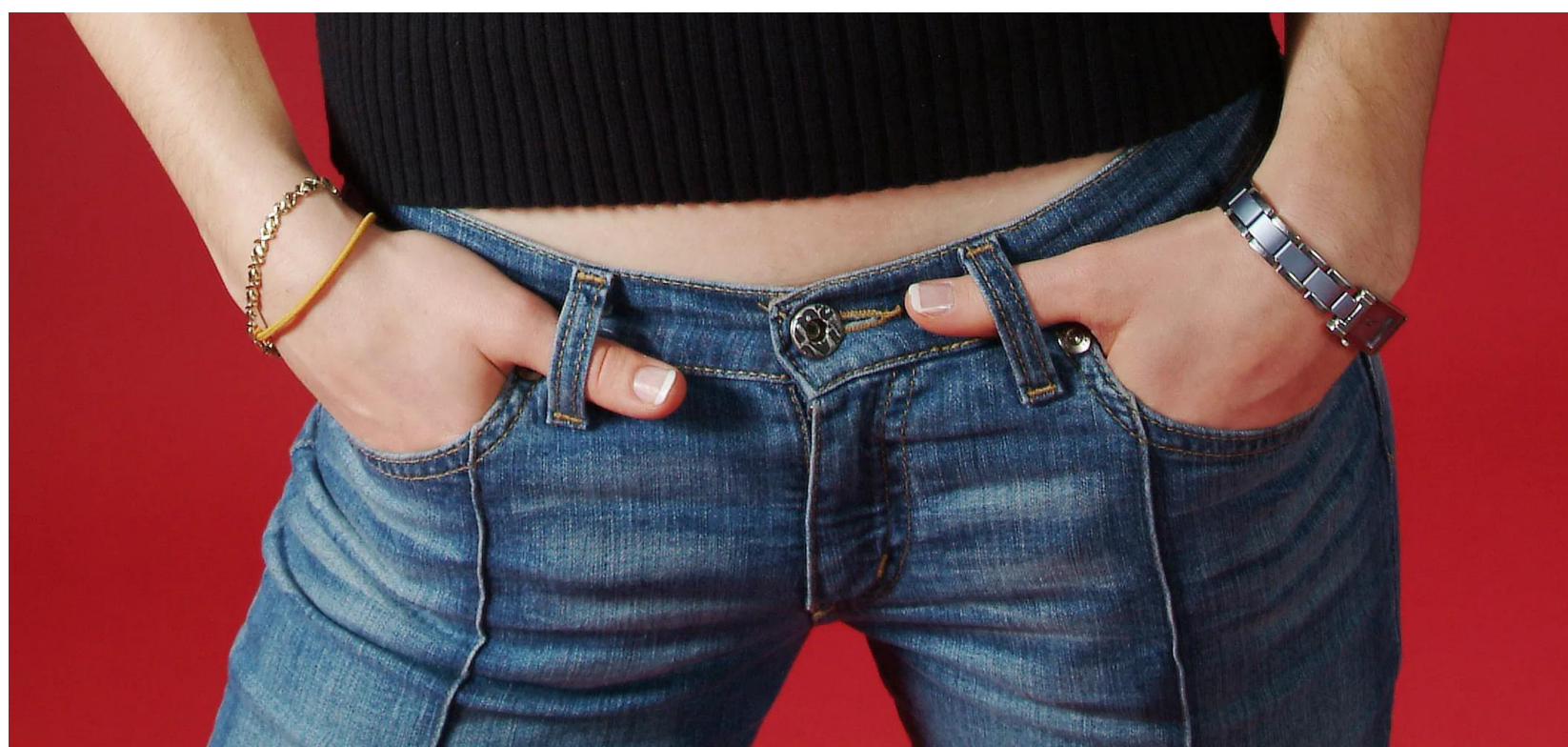
With over 4.3 billion users and growing, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and even Facebook are among a few of the most popular social media platforms. They mainly provide photo and video content, but also provide advertisements, and in-app purchases. Scientifically, it is the se videos and photo content that has left us seeking the dopamine kick and instant gratification feedback loop that social media provides. In an

interview with Forbes magazine, Professor at USC, Dr. Julie Albright cites that craving dopamine, or "feel-good chemicals" enables us to continue to scroll, and scroll, and scroll... What makes TikTok so addicting among other social media platforms is the algorithm of it all. With short videos, if you don't like them, you inevitably can keep scrolling, and scrolling, and scrolling. Your interactions create a FYP (for you page) curated with content you enjoy, keeping things interesting—and keeping your attention captured for as long as possible.



However, the main problem researchers point out with social media is its consistent toll on the health of developing minds. Experts highlight that self-esteem, mental health, physical well-being, and motivation have been deeply affected by social media. While social media is not solely to blame for challenges faced by adolescents, research suggests that social media's negative impacts may outweigh the positive. Research has found that even over 2 hours of social media usage a day negatively influences circadian rhythms and can begin to reduce the general quality of life, which is especially concerning considering social media usage is starting to occur at younger ages than ever.

Furthermore, the scientific journal article “No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression” reflects that many adults report feeling a sense of inadequacy and an increase among loneliness after viewing social media. themselves is already challenge as is. However, with social media usage occurring at younger ages than ever, research states that even over 2 hrs. of usage negatively influences circadian rhythms, and can begin to reduce the general quality of life. Furthermore, the scientific journal article “No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression” reflects that many adults report feeling a sense of inadequacy and an increase among loneliness after viewing social media.



Recently, some Gen Z's, particularly college students, have been eager to find ways to omit the adverse effects that social media and cell phones provide—temporarily at least. While the early 2000's is known for low rise jeans and Juicy Couture, it's also known for the rise of online communication and...the flip phone. And Gen Z college students of today have decided to take back

this technology, to leave behind the apps and the social media, and just stick with the simple text and call. College students have reported recently leaving their phones at home to attend parties, go to night clubs, and peruse campus, bringing just a flip phone along with them. Many have even replaced their digital cameras with disposable ones, to achieve that grainy “retro” look. Sammy Palazzolo, the acclaimed creator of the flip phone, feels that having a flip phone alleviates much of the distraction that comes with having a phone which is constantly connected to the online world. Because flip phones allow for the most minimal form of communication, it prevents you from doing something online that you may come to regret the next morning. It prevents students from making poor choices, sending poor messages, and making posts that are risky.

Though this flip phone trend has only been happening on a small scale, one's small efforts in combination with others will vastly improve the social quality of society alike. It only takes one small action of one to turn the entire world on its head--and I am very hopeful that this is the start of a revolution. Even if you're not buying a flip phone and instead, just limiting screen time, that too is still helpful and worthwhile in changing patterns of socialization.

\$39.99 is a small price to pay for reducing your carbon footprint and making memories that you will likely remember longer than a photo. The underbelly of social media is dark, but not an individual struggle in its entirety, rather a societal hiccup at its core. Inevitably, removing all forms of internet access would be nearly impossible as connecting with others, jobs, and innovations are surrounded by it but I know we can modify the way we use it, so the quality of society and social life will improve. I know things it will. I know we will be able to enact this change-- yes, I'm sure we will.



Overcoming Seasonal Sadness

by Shaila Man

Gorgeous wildflowers, budding leaves, blue skies, and fluffy clouds. Spend one winter in Rochester, and you'll soon realize why these are just fantasies during the annual November-March stretch. While winter offers wonderful qualities—powdery snow, cozy holidays, and the opportunity to play winter sports—there are often days when it seems endless. Suddenly, we miss walking outside without having to worry about falling on black ice. Or driving to school without having to scrape layers upon layers of snow off our cars. And sometimes we are simply unmotivated, lonely, or sad during the winter, maybe even for no clear reason at all. We all get seasonal depression or the winter blues from time to time—I definitely do! Craving sunshine and getting in a rut is completely normal, but there are many things you can do to lift yourself up.

The first thing I would tell anybody who is struggling to keep their spirits high during the winter is to stick to a healthy, disciplined sleep routine. While I may not be the most qualified to give this advice, I can attest to the fact that an extra hour of sleep makes all the difference. Sleep can help you focus on school better, help you stay connected with your day-to-day life, and promote a positive mindset. With that said, it is certainly helpful to focus on other healthy habits as well, including drinking more water, keeping organized, and staying active. Improving upon your daily routine, no matter what that looks like or where you are in that process, can help you feel accomplished and productive during the colder months.

Additionally, providing yourself with something to look forward to, no matter how big or small, can help you approach life with a more positive outlook. It is easy to dwell on the negative in the early months of the year, especially when people spend most of their time indoors and most sports are in their off-season. Scheduling things to look forward to, such as spending time with friends or reading a book you haven't had the time to pick up, gives you an incentive to simply get through a hard week. I highly recommend creating a reasonable task to complete as well, especially if it is hard to feel motivated at times. It makes me feel empowered to get something important done, and getting after a goal can simultaneously boost your self-esteem and productivity. With this in mind, it may be easier to get yourself out of a slump!

These are useful tips to implement in your daily life, no matter the season. However, find solace in the fact that spring is here! Beautiful days are hopefully ahead as the winter comes to a close. If you have been in a rut lately, carry this advice with you and remember that negative emotions are not restrictive to winter! Continue to move forward and strive to be your best self, every day and always.

If you found this helpful, I have a podcast that talks about motivation, goal setting, life advice, and women empowerment! It is called Potentially Perfect (Instagram @potentiallyperfectpodcast) and available on your favorite listening platform (see episode 6 for in-depth advice on overcoming seasonal depression). Wishing all of you a very happy and healthy Spring, 2023!

sudoku

		4						
9	1					8	2	
2				4		7	3	
4		9		7				
		8		2		5	7	
					1			3
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3			5			9		
7			9			2		





EVERYBODY'S LEAST FAVORITE SEASON: AP SEASON

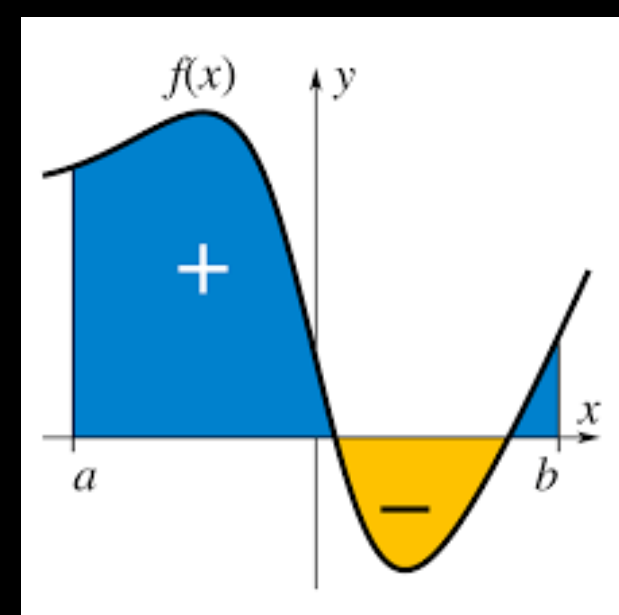
**BEWARE
AP TESTS
AHEAD**

Literally my brain at all times now, because AP exams aren't just a one and done thing, they take up a lot of brain space. I think we should charge the college board rent for all the space it takes up in our brains; we'd earn that \$100 back real fast!

The birds are starting to sing, the geese have packed their bags and are headed to Rochester, and the warmth of the sun in warmer weather is sprucing up everybody's mood. Even the little kids are starting to pick up dandelions across the playground, happily playing tag. And where are you? Stuck in your room with Khan Academy open on your laptop, your notes scattered across your bed, a Princeton Premium Review book propped upon your desk, and a highlighter in your hand. What is a normal person like yourself doing while the weather phenomenon of "not grey and depressing" is occurring in Rochester? Sitting inside, cursing the AP College Board, and studying for the upcoming AP exams. For those of you who are freshmen and are wondering what the heck an AP Exam is, just talk to any Seniors who are still salty over the Mexican Revolution. Don't know what the Mexican Revolution is? Don't worry, we didn't either.

The next few weeks will become an academic hell for those in grades 10-12, as we prepare to take three and a half hour exams that we had to pay \$100 for because who doesn't want to spend money to suffer? Or maybe the AP stands for "advanced purgatory" because we're constantly suffering. Anyway, while the AP course itself may have been okay, we now have to re-learn the entire curriculum. In a few weeks. With every single detail memorized...including the ones we didn't learn. Yippee.

The stress from these classes that has been slowly accumulating over the year (just like how integrals accumulate area! Sorry, as you can see, the studying has already started) peaks on the day of our exam, crashes down, builds up for our next exam, and then we'll just float through the rest of the year like mindless teenage zombies. The point is APs are stressful, even with all the mindfulness in the world. For the masters of AP who've been through this before, we know what study skills work best, what study schedules are most efficient, and generally how to manage things. Mostly. But for those of you who are taking your first AP, here are some tips and tricks.

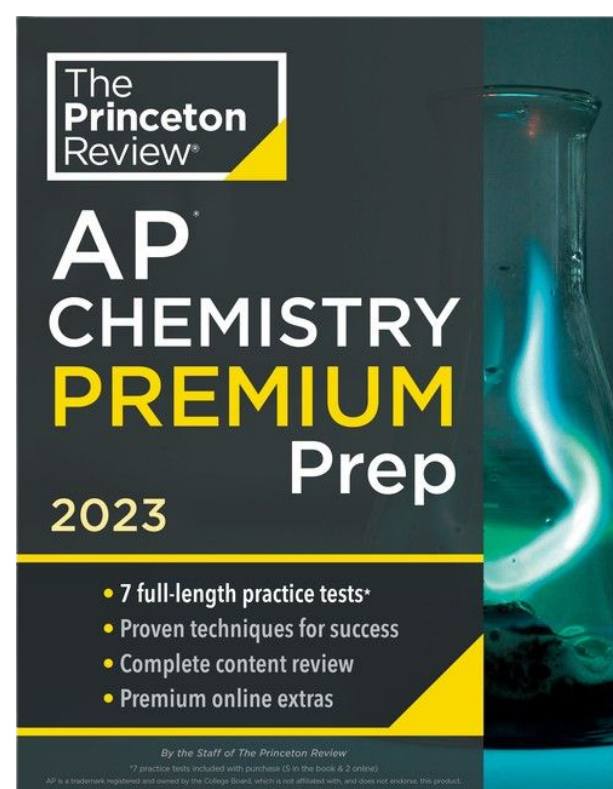


I understand you probably have no idea what an integral is, but it's the area under the graph. First, the area (like our stress level) is really high, but then it dips below the x-axis and is now a negative value (in between exams) and then spikes back up again (our second exam).

Start studying now.

And by "now" I mean the beginning of April in case this edition releases late. AP exams are like if you stuffed a water balloon full of the curriculum and then that balloon burst out questions all over your test. Question 1 could be on WWII and question 3 could be on the Qing Dynasty. Knowing as much as you can will help reduce the panic caused by the unit switches, and thus make life just a little easier for yourself on test day.

Buy a review book.



Review books have all the information you need to not only pass, but to get a 5, and include a few practice tests. These practice books sometimes use old AP exams or have questions that mimic the style of AP questions very well. Each multiple choice and short answer question come with an explanation as to why that choice is correct AND why the others are wrong. The book will also likely contain a general overview of all the “need to know info” of the entire curriculum. I personally have found review books to be a great study tool, and in the past, I’ve used the Princeton Review, but any book should do. Barron’s, Princeton Review, and 5 Steps to a 5 are popular choices if you need some recommendations.

Thankfully, I won't be reading the AP Chem review book this year, but seriously, these books are such a big help! My used review books have black and blue pen and two highlighter colors plus pencil marks all over them. It really is nice watching your brain cells come together.

Study every day.

Listen, I know how that sounds, but I don’t mean study for five hours and fall asleep highlighting your review book. Maybe just do like half an hour on the weekdays, and a bit more on the weekends if you have time. Breaking up the studying will help to reduce stress so that you’re not cramming for hours, causing your brain to become exhausted. You can’t retain information well on your fourth hour of studying at 1 am. This tip works best the longer you have to study, but if you only have a few weeks, maybe spend half a week on a unit overview, to ensure you can get the most information studied.

Rewrite your notes.



I cannot emphasize how much rewriting my notes has helped me, whether studying for AP’s or just a regular test or quiz. Rewriting your notes is proven to help memory recall, and with all that information flying around in your head on test day, you’ll be less likely to blank on something and then panic. Now you don’t need to rewrite every single page of notes, it’s really up to you and your study style. I always get super stressed and overstudy, but while studying for AP World and AP U.S, I rewatched every single Heimler’s History video and took notes. It was incredibly time consuming and exhausting, but also incredibly helpful! But you shouldn’t be making yourself exhausted over studying, so maybe just do the videos on topics you struggled with in the past.

These are definitely not what my AP bio protein synthesis notes looked like, mine were way more chaotic, like protein synthesis on 2x speed. But whatever the level of aesthetic your notes are, putting concepts into your own words can really solidify the material, and who doesn't love drawing cute little ribosomal subunits snacking on mRNA?

Reward yourself and take breaks.

High school is mentally exhausting enough without the stress of three and a half hour exams at 8:00 in the morning, and studying for hours straight can take its toll. Even just thinking about these exams and all the pressure of them is enough to exhaust you. So be kind to yourself. Break up the study sessions, and in between, have one of your favorite snacks or watch one of your favorite shows. When the weather gets nicer, try taking a walk outside. Try setting goals and then reward yourself when you reach them, maybe with candy (as you can tell, I’m very motivated by snacks). Or hang out with friends and try not to talk about school. It’s nice to just vent to other people who understand the stress and won’t reply with something like “well, that’s how life is.” Like okay sure, but three and a half hour math tests on a Monday morning.

I hope some of these test prep tips will help you, whether you’re taking your first AP or are a seasoned pro, in which case, why would you take like five APs in a year? Anyway, congrats to those who have stuck it out with your classes this far in the year, and good luck to everyone studying for AP’s! I know they’re really stressful exams (I’m taking them too guys) but you’ll likely do better than you think. I understand if that doesn’t bring you much consolation, but just know that you’re definitely not alone in your studying endeavors, and your teachers are always there to help you. When in doubt, reach out to them with any questions. And if you need some motivation, after the AP exam there’s really nothing else to learn. So, from the beginning of May onwards, you’re pretty much done learning, and are completely validated in annoying your teacher to take your class outside or to watch a movie. After all, the least they could do is help you relax after taking a test for them.

AP schedules are posted on the website, so be sure to check when your test is, and ask your teacher for details on where you'll be taking it. Most tests are taken in the Church of Transfiguration down the street



A Letter to Underclassmen

Freshmen and sophomores of Mendon High School, I have a few words for you guys. And honestly, I don't know if the person reading this is even my target audience, but whatever. Let's get this message out. What I mean to do with this article is sum up some advice for your future. As for me, I was once in your place too. I too, progressed through the cursed first and second years. I panicked over which classes to take the next year. I watched the sophomores panic over which classes to take. I watched juniors panic. It was a lot of panicking if I'd say so myself. Poor counselors.

I watched the college acceptance map fill up with stickers, and I watched friends bid their classmates goodbye in graduation posts. I'm not going to say time flies, because that's an absolute lie coming from me. Time does not fly, time crawls. Time is dragging itself across the floor as slow as it possibly can. Maybe everyone feels different, but for me, it's like high school has lasted a decade. The light at the end of the tunnel? Graduation. To quote one of my friends, "I'm looking forward to college, but I wish I was knocked unconscious during the application process."

As a junior myself, the time is quickly approaching. In less than 6 months, I will be hunched over my computer with my spine at an inhuman 45-degree angle, tapping out my college essays. In a striking foreshadowing of the future, I am currently hunched over my laptop tapping out this article. We juniors are all stressed, of course. The word "college" seems taboo, with the way heads will turn in a classroom upon mention. But there's something interesting I've noticed: there are sophomores -even freshmen- who are stressing about college. I thought this was strange. There's so much time left, so enjoy your teenage years! But then I realized: for almost everyone I've met; the thought of college has crossed their mind at least once. So as someone whose time is almost up (that sounds extremely dramatic and disgustingly cliché), here's what I think, and here's what I have to say to you.

First of all, classes. What is the purpose of coming to school, if not to go to classes? Decide what you want to do, but don't limit yourself to a strict plan. I chose a technology class in eighth grade and took it freshman year. Later down the road, I realized that it would have probably helped to take an art class instead, as I'll be taking a portfolio class next year. However, if you make one wrong turn, it's not the end of the story. I still ended up in an art class despite not taking any art prerequisites. Don't confine yourself and feel like you can't take a class. There are always openings, and you have time to figure it out. Also, if you want to take a class, take it. Please. Even if you're one of those kids gunning for who gets to throw the most money at Collegeboard (taking the most APs), try to squeeze in that one class you're really interested in. Senior year is a great opening for freeing up your schedule and exploring new options. It's better if you take the class than regret taking it in the future. You don't want to be sitting in a retirement home at 80, pondering about how you should have taken Criminalistics in 11th grade.



APs too: these courses seem to be a huge hot topic at our school. As someone who is deep in the AP cesspool, I regret nothing but the fact that I have given up hundreds of dollars to this monopolistic, autocratic company we know as Collegeboard. However, don't overshoot yourself. It's not a competition, and that's the most important thing. Just because the kid sitting next to you is taking 71 APs next year, doesn't mean you have to. A little word of advice, it's the grade in the class that matters the most, much



more than your actual test score. Challenge yourself, but don't push yourself past your limits.

Next, grades. Keep your grades as good as you can get them. Try to improve every year or at least keep them constant, but if I have to reiterate one thing: ONE bad grade, or a FEW bad grades are not the end of the world. It is not worth it to panic over a test that you will forget about down the road, and it is not worth it to keep comparing your grades to other people's grades. You set your own standards, not someone else. Junior year is arguably your most important year, so don't slack off. Don't overwork yourself though. Find that balance between work and other activities, because after it all, you'll realize that activities are important as well. Your life doesn't revolve around a number. Freshman year me would go ballistic over an 80, but junior year me HOPES for an 80 in Calc BC. Your standards will not remain the same, so remain open to change.

Last, your activities. You should not dedicate your life to school and grades. When you do end up in my position, thinking about what schools you want to go to and what you have done in high school, it might be discouraging to realize that the last 4 years have been nothing but school grind. For freshmen, I would suggest joining clubs or activities that interest you. There's no limit to how many you can join, so try them all out. You're not obligated to stay, so you can pick a select couple you really enjoy and stick with them. If you want to join the track team, try it out! Newspaper? (Sign up, this is not an ad). For sophomores, you may already have a few activities. Stick with the ones you have, maybe try some new ones. Maybe start looking into volunteer opportunities to get those valuable hours in. You should be able to do your schoolwork, other things outside of school, and enjoy life in general. Relax, it's truly not that bad.

When I start the application process, I may rediscover this in the depths of my computer files and laugh at how silly this whole letter sounds. But honestly, I think I might take my own advice. Your time has not yet come, and there's much left to do. You'll figure it out, and most importantly, you will end up exactly where you need to be. The future is not to be feared: your turn will come soon. (This sounds very ominous. Please accompany with mental gong sound).

Rena 



NATIONAL



During Women's History Month, it is important to reflect on the women we look up to. When thinking of my female role models, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my mom. My mother was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, and lived through many wars throughout her life. She immigrated here after having me and set down roots for our family. Always there for whatever we needed, my mom made sure we knew the value of education and that we appreciated all of the opportunities presented to us. My mother is a pillar of strength in my life and always set an incredible example for me. Through her, I was taught empathy, compassion, and to have confidence in myself and my abilities. As someone who experienced discrimination herself, she instilled in me a fire to fight for what I believe in, and not allow myself to be silenced. She is a total bad-*ss*! I mean just look at this old picture of her below--could it get any more iconic than that? (No, no it can't.) So, this month, I'm paying extra attention to the person who displayed to me womanhood in all of its power: Ghida, my mom.

Yasmeen Rifai



There are so many beautiful and strong female role models to highlight this month, and someone I'd like to point out is an MHS teacher: Mrs. Dietz. Mrs. Dietz is an absolutely amazing person and educator. Whether you're going in for an English conference, to ask questions about a homework assignment, or even just to talk about what's been up in your life, she is always there to listen and talk if you need. On the first day of freshmen year, one of the most nail-biting days of any freshman, I instantly felt welcomed into high school because of her first period English class, and I instantly felt super comfortable around her. On my morning strolls around the school before first period, I always find myself walking into the English Office to chat with her, as she always makes time for everyone. She's enthusiastic and excited about her teaching and is always reaching out to get everyone involved in the fun. Recently, Mrs. Dietz (along with Jisu Oh, another amazing role model) hosted our school's first Heritage Day—she helped Jisu flesh out the idea and all the logistics behind it, get administration's approval, and conducted a lot of the behind-the-scenes work. Mrs. Dietz, like many of us, wants to see change enacted in the world. But unlike many of us, she doesn't simply talk about changing the world, but acts on it, and that is one of the things that I admire the most about her. She is truly the embodiment of "be the change you want to see in the world," and she inspires me continuously to do the same.

Careena Sondhii



National Women's Month is the time to celebrate not only the women around us, but also to recognize the impact they have had upon us. There are many women in my life whom I am infinitely grateful for, especially for their guidance, ideals, and ultimately their character. My mom, Lana, is certainly one of these women, for more reasons than I can name. She grew up in a two-parent immigrant household and immigrated from South Korea to the US as a toddler, which one can imagine, was very challenging, to say the least. Even more challenging was the fact she had to pick up her life every few years or so to move to a new Army-sanctioned housing location, which continued until the end of her high school career in the States. Her story has instilled values of independence, kindness, and a strong-willed nature within my brothers and me. And to this day, she continues to be honest, kind, intelligent, and strong. Her wittiness and character simply light up a room, and there are very few that do not enjoy her presence. She has been my definition of womanhood ever since I was a child: proud, vocal, and liberated. No one will step over her, and no one will hold her back from what she can achieve. While I could write about so many women in my life, the one I owe it the most to is my mom, Lana.

Elena Lesniak

WOMEN'S



National Women's Month is almost over at the time I'm writing this, but I don't think a singular month should be the only time we honor the important women in our lives. Some people I'd like to honor in these waning days of March, are London Lindley and Angel Tang. Angel and London are the editors of Runestone, the newspaper that you're holding right now. I've known both for a while, and they are genuinely the nicest people you'll meet. Take this as a hint to join the club, you won't regret it. Angel is a senior at Mendon, which means she won't be with us next year. She'll be doing world-changing activities somewhere far far away in college, but that doesn't mean we'll forget her influence. Angel has been so helpful with everything, as I am a confused junior who keeps asking her for advice. She has the best sense of dry humor, a sort of sarcasm that sneaks its way into her articles and fills the pages with color. London on the other hand, is a junior, so she'll be with us for another year. I've known her since middle school and even though we have no classes together, we still meet up at Runestone during our brainstorming sessions or trips to raid the English office for snacks. She's an amazing person and in fact, she's one of the first people I met when I moved to Pittsford and knew nobody. London is the type of person who will instantly bring a cheery mood to the room, and she is kind to everyone. I've never seen her without a smile. Both of our editors have displayed tremendous leadership in keeping our club going, and although Angel will be leaving soon, I trust that Runestone will keep chugging along even after she leaves. There are a lot of famous figures and icons one could write about, but I think we should also appreciate those closest to us, as we sometimes miss the details when looking at the big picture. Without Angel and London, this article would not have even been possible.

Rena Li

Another staff member here at Mendon who deserves to be recognized is someone who sees more students than most teachers. You know her, you love her, she's the "Keeper of the Cookie"—Jess! Jess is our amazing cafeteria cashier, who spends 5th through 7th period greeting almost every student by name from freshmen to seniors, cashes them out, and wishes them a good day. Even when her work is difficult and there's a shortage of employees, she always puts on a smile for everyone and is there to listen to if you need someone to talk to. I would talk to her every morning during hybrid year when I ordered a wrap, and it was one of my favorite parts of the day. That was also when she told me that she makes it a priority to get to know every kid who comes through the lunch line, and she always makes sure to greet students by their name. Due to the shortage in cafeteria employees during the pandemic, Jess's workload greatly increased during that time--she had to prep all the food, cash out kids and clean up, and even had to help serve food at times. Jess sometimes even got to school at 4:30 in the morning just so she'd have enough time to prep all the food. She was exhausted. But she says she kept going because she couldn't just leave all her students here. She also somehow manages to keep the freshmen boys in line, and we all know how difficult a job that is. It's been a difficult year with the shortage of employees, and so I believe she deserves a little shoutout, as we should all be grateful to have someone as great as Jess working in our school.

Careena Sondhi

There are so many strong women to recognize that it's hard to choose who to highlight. I would like to take the time to highlight someone I have looked up to since I was a small child: Zendaya. Since her Shake It Up days, Zendaya has spread the message of kindness and love. She has had to face various obstacles in the film industry, from abuse experienced as a child star to racism and sexism, and yet she handles everything with grace. She continues to stick with her morals and remains humble regardless of her success. Not only is she an actor, but she is a fashion icon. A Barbie doll was modeled after her 2015 Oscars award show look, despite racist criticism for her locs. At age 16, she became a producer for her second Disney show K.C. Undercover, where she insisted that the title character have a Black family, forcing variety into the Disney show slate and increasing representation in media for the Black community. In 2020, she became the youngest recipient of the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series for her role as Rue Bennett in Euphoria, at age 24. She became the youngest two-time winner when she won the award again in 2022. She continues to use her platform to raise awareness and draw attention to the difficult topics facing the modern world. She has taught me to face the world and its problems with grace and power. She has instilled in me the value of my voice, and the power I have in this world.

Sarah Dailey



One of the English teachers--Mrs. Dietz, someone I've loved getting to know this year--has already been spotlighted, but I wanted to recognize the other lovely English teachers that I've also had the privilege of learning from. I met Mrs. Odell in freshman year during hybrid learning, and her class quickly became one of my favorites. Her enthusiasm on the very first day of school was infectious, even when the class was half-empty, and my friends and I were very lost--both figuratively and literally. (It was hard to navigate Mendon while coming in only twice a week!) English class became a highlight of my day, and we became very close. I loved chatting with her about rowing, and she was amazingly supportive of any projects I had outside of school. Additionally, I would love to honor Mrs. Curtis. She is Runestone's advisor, and the newspaper would not be up and running without her! Mrs. Curtis is smart, sweet, and supportive, and she is incredibly understanding of all her students. I look forward to her class daily, and she writes the kindest comments on students' work. I know that if anybody was struggling--in school or out--Mrs. Curtis would be there for them! Truly, the English teachers we have here at Mendon are some of the best.

Shaila Man

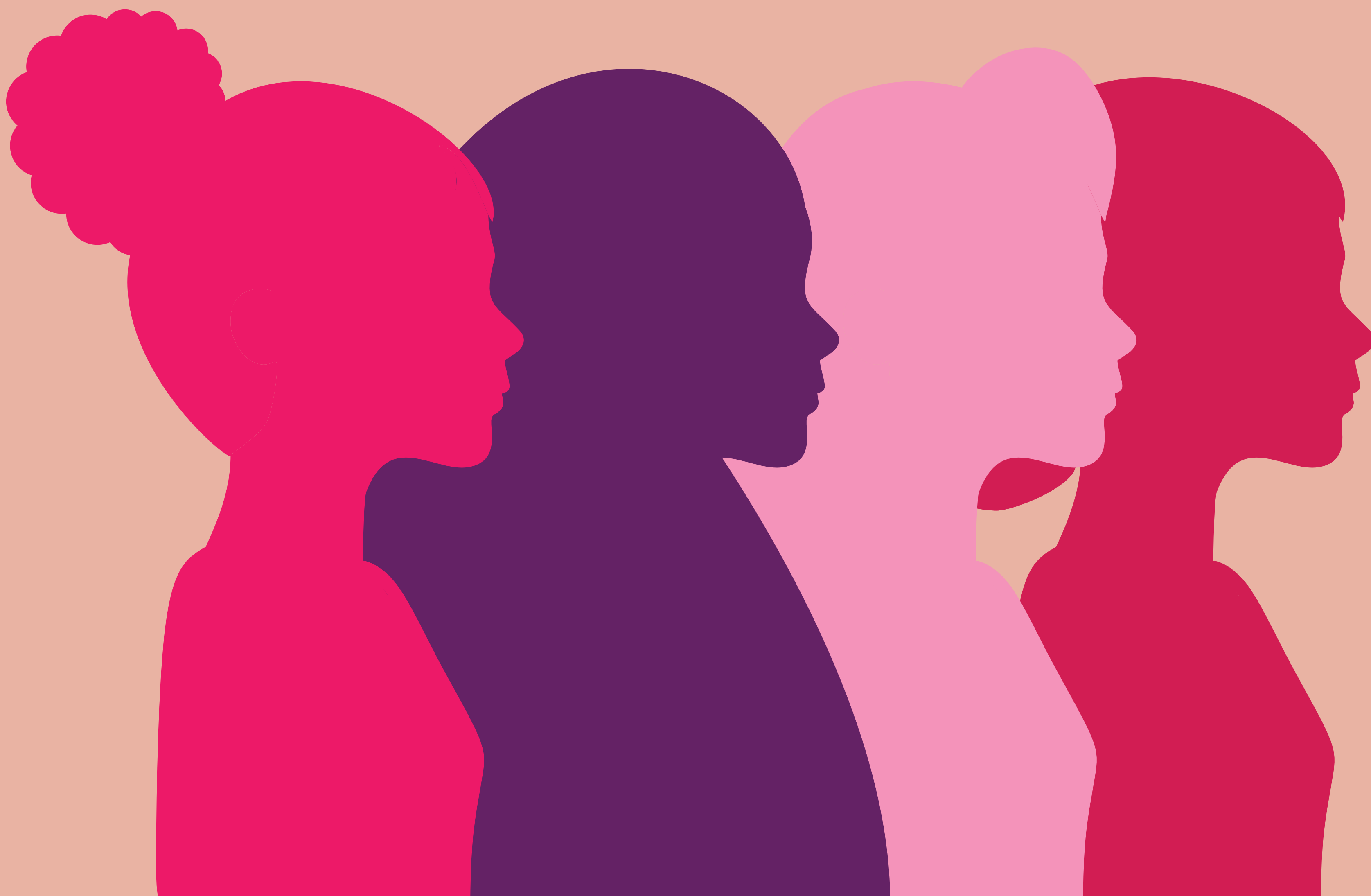
In honor of National Women's History Month, we're often highlighting famous female role models from history to today. But instead of thinking back to history or thinking of celebrities, another role model here at school I would like to point out is Mrs. Grinnell. I remember during all my countless after-school days spent in the library doing homework, Mrs. Grinnell was always there to greet me on the way in and ask how my day was going. I remember vividly one day I had done badly on a geometry test and was feeling frustrated. Mrs. Grinnell saw my frustration and took the time to talk to me, giving me suggestions on what I could do, and was there to listen to me. The next day, and even the next week, she checked up on me and asked how geometry was going, and I was glad I was able to tell her it was going better. She cares so much for every single student that walks into the library and knows almost all of us by name. I love seeing her smiling face every morning and being able to talk to her in the library. As a senior, she's known me for four years, and she still remembers things I've told her from years past. Aside from always being so kind and generous, she brings food for Ex-Libris meetings, helps make the copies of the book pages that we've all needed at one point for our research projects, and runs them down to classrooms too! She puts the borrowed library books back, organizes everything, and is there if you need computer help. She is one of the nicest people I know and a comforting presence at school, and I know that if I'm having a bad day, I can always go to my happy place--the library--and talk to her. Thanks for being your amazing self Mrs. Grinnell!

Careena Sondhi

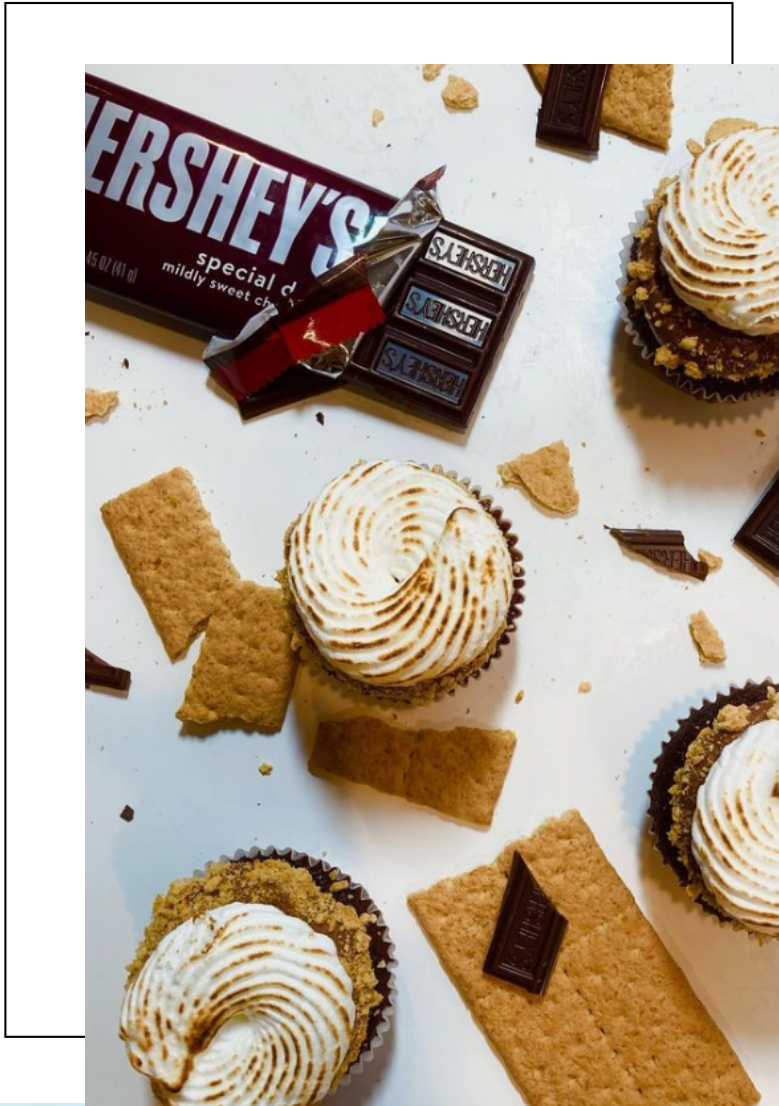
Women's History Month is such an important time to recognize the women in our lives who have influenced us. For me, one of the biggest influences in my life is my grandmother. My grandmother is one of the strongest people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. My grandmother grew up in a very difficult time--she lived through the Chinese Communist Revolution and World War II, and survived the losses of various people in her life. She lost her father at a very young age, and soon after his death, her land and home were taken away from her during the Communist Revolution. Regardless of the struggles she faced, she persevered and continued to work for a better future for herself. Her resilience and strength are truly one-of-a-kind. She is one of the most patient, considerate, and compassionate people I've ever met, and she has always shown everyone unlimited kindness. My grandmother makes an impact on everyone she meets, and I dare say there is not one person who does not come to love and have an unmeasurable amount of respect and admiration for her. She has instilled in me the belief that I can accomplish anything as long as I put my mind to it, and to believe in myself no matter what. My grandmother is ninety years old now, but she continues to spread her message of courage and compassion to everyone.

Leixi Chen

HAPPY NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



a conversation with:
by Angel Tang



So, we're here today with Mendon High School sophomore, Surya Man, who runs a certified 501(c) (3) nonprofit baking business, Baking for a Change in her free time. We had the opportunity to sit down with her today to learn more about this business and some of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into these mouthwatering creations!

A: Ok, so tell me about this business for those who might not have heard about it yet. Give us a little summary.

S: Ok, so basically, it's called Baking for a Change and what I do is I accept custom orders for different desserts, and all the money that I make from it goes to different charities. Every month I donate the money to a different charity.

A: Oh yeah that's really cool! I've seen the charity stories on your Instagram which is cool. So, what inspired you to start this business?

S: Well...I don't know. I've always loved watching like the baking shows on Food Network. That was just what my sister and I did like every week. And then over COVID everyone was picking up new hobbies and I wanted to get into baking. Like my family doesn't even bake so no one knew how to do it and we didn't even have any ingredients, but I wanted to learn so I just watched like a bunch of YouTube tutorials and stuff. And then once I got a lot better at baking, I thought I could actually do something with this other than just baking at home.

A: Right, so in the beginning was it just like you were baking for friends and family? And just like yeah, to eat or whatever.

S: Yeah.

A: So, it's like recent then, you haven't been baking for very very long.

S: Yeah, like probably three years.

A: So, it was like during hybrid year--that's good then, some hobby stuck. Like I picked up knitting during quarantine and I haven't done it since, you know what I mean? I know how, which

A: is kind of nice though. Was it just you, or did Shaila also learn to bake during quarantine?

S: I guess it was mostly me, but Shaila--she learned too. I was just more into it. In terms of cooking though, we both learned how to do a lot of different stuff in the kitchen during quarantine.

A: Oh, that's cool. Was there anyone who specifically inspired you to start the business?

S: Not really just--

A: You just wanted to?

S: Yeah.

A: Then like why not cooking or like a different hobby? Is there a reason why you chose baking specifically?

S: I feel like baking gives you artistic ability and also, it's not just like art, it's also something that you can eat, right. So, it's like the best of both worlds.

A: That's true, I understand like the creativity of it and then also yeah, the fact that you can eat it is kind of nice. It's like chocolate cake, like who's ever gonna turn that down! So, what's your favorite charity you've helped with so far and why?

S: I don't know...I have learned about a lot of charities through this because I try to pick different ones every time but that's hard...maybe like the World Wildlife Fund because I'm really interested in the environment and like, helping with the different impacts that humans have on the environment.

A: Right, especially with like all the endangered animals...yeah that's good. Is that something you wanna go into?

S: Yeah.

A: Cool! So, how do you usually choose your charities?

S: So, I try to do a mix of like, like a medical one, one that could impact the environment, one that could impact like humans...things like women in STEM or like maybe veterans or something like that. I basically just search up lists of like top rated charities that do good work and studies have shown that they actually like--

A: They actually use the money for good; they're reliable.

S: Yeah. I just choose from those every month.

A: Ok. They're not all local though, right? Some of them are international?

S: Sometimes I do local ones, and sometimes I do national or international ones.

A: I see, ok. Some other businesses like yours probably only donate to a specific set of charities, like only environmental charities, so it's cool that you have the versatility. OK, favorite baked good you like to make?

S: OK, that's probably cupcakes just because, I don't know, I really like eating them. I think they're better than cake and they're just kind of satisfying to make for some reason, like decorating them. The swirl on top is just satisfying.

A: I see...why are cupcakes better than cake though...they're literally the same?

S: I don't know, I feel like the proportion is better.

A: That's true, I agree--'cause cake is too much cake.

S: Yeah, and just how like it's in layers and stuff I feel like cupcakes...they're just better. It's just fun to eat them.

A: That's true, they're really cute too. But did you always really like pastries or like had a massive sweet tooth? Is that kind of what got you into this?

S: Yeah, I would say so, yeah.

A: Ok, favorite order that you've completed so far?

S: Probably...I really like making cakes...

A: Your favorite order is a cake, but you're favorite baked good in general are cupcakes? You're such a conundrum!

S: Like the decorating cakes! Because it's more involved and you can get really creative with it.

A: Right, that's really true.

S: But like just in general, if I'm looking at all my orders, cupcakes are the best.

A: OK, I see. But of all the cakes you've made so far, which has been your favorite?

S: I have to think about what I've made...

A: I've definitely seen some very cool ones on your Instagram account. (Go check her out: @baking.for.a.change)

S: Ok, so I like doing new techniques and stuff, so maybe that one gold cake I made.



A: Oh yeah, that one was really pretty.

S: Like the marbling effect, and then I did this thing with like rice paper.

A: Is that what the clear stuff is?

S: Yeah, and then like the chocolate balls...that was really fun.

A: Oh yeah, the rice paper thing was really cool--how did you do that?

S: So, you soak the rice paper until it's pliable but not falling apart, and then you put it on top of parchment paper like slightly crinkled, and then after it dries like 24 hours, it's hard, so you can put it on top of the cake.

A: Oh, that's actually so cool. And then the marbling is just like you roll out a bunch of different strips of the same...?

S: Its actually butter cream. So, I put it on acetate and then put different spoonfuls of like colors of buttercream and then like you smooth it out and then you wrap it around the cake and let the cake set in the fridge and then you take the plastic acetate off.

A: How often do you learn a new technique, like every week?

S: I don't know...just when people give me--like mostly my

customers give me creative freedom so it's kind of like, if I'm doing an order where it's like "oh, I wanna try this" and it's something that I feel comfortable that I'd be able to be successful on the first try, then I try to do a different technique.

A: Right, that's true. Yeah, because it's still in the end, people are paying for this, so you can't like completely just like play around...

S: Yeah, and like other experimentation--like a lot of the time I make something and then my mom brings it to work because like her colleagues--like she's a doctor so she brings my stuff in, then they'll all share, and they'll really appreciate it.

A: Yeah, and then they can give comments and it's also nice because doctors definitely deserve that appreciation. OK, proudest achievement about the business?

S: So, there's this one cookie order that was like 30 dozen cookies and--

A: Jeez, 30 dozen cookies!

S: Yeah, I took it because I would be baking over Thanksgiving break so I would have some time...and it was really time intensive.

A: I bet, 30 dozen cookies!

S: But like I completed it, and it was a big success--I was really happy with the turnout. So, I was really proud about that.

A: You should be, like 30--how long did that take?

S: I don't even know; it was just like the amount of time that I go to school across the week just like working on the cookies.

A: So, you were waking up at 8 AM ready to bake cookies!

S: Yeah.

A: Dang, and did you not find it tedious?

S: I mean it's a little tedious, but it was mostly relaxing because they're sugar cookies, so most of the time was decorating. It was just like piping slowly, but it's kind of like therapeutic.

A: Right, that's kind of good that it's like a hobby that you enjoy so it doesn't feel like a burden.

S: Yeah.

A: But do you like put in music and then just like---

S: Sometimes yeah.

A: So that's kind of a vibe honestly...wait why did they need 30 dozen cookies?

S: It was actually a fundraiser--wait it was a sock drive. There's like a realtor whose team was doing a sock drive where people would come drop off socks and then they'd get like a little goody bag with my cookies in them, so they were sock shaped cookies.

A: That's cute. You kind of answered this previously, but do you only bake, or do you also cook?

S: Yeah so, I really like cooking too. Like I mean obviously I just cook for myself or my family, but just cooking, baking...like in general I feel like it's a really useful skill to have.

A: For sure, yeah.

S: And it's really fun.

A: Yeah exactly--you can provide for yourself, especially when you're in college--you'll be fine, and you won't just be living off ramen. But do you prefer baking over cooking?

S: Probably yeah.

A: And you also probably do the baking more because of the business.

S: Yeah.

A: Funniest customer interaction or any funny story you can tell about the business?

S: Oh my gosh. Since my business is like on Instagram and I say you can either DM or e-mail me to order I get so many scam DMs. There was this one person who emailed me about a Black Forest cake for their father and the wording they used was so weird--they were like, I need something that will "sate his palate" or something.

A: What? What kind of terminology is that?

S: I kind of was like, maybe English isn't their first language, so I'll just keep interacting with them and if they're like red flags I'll just block them. But then they were like, I want to pay you no less than \$300--then I was like, OK,

no, and then they started to ask for like information--

A: Like Venmo?

S: Yeah, and then I just blocked them.

A: Yeah, no that's good. Because "no less than 300 dollars"--that's so sus. I bet this happens a lot actually with online businesses like yours though. Do you see this expanding into a full-time job later or at least continuing in college? Like what do you wanna do with this?

S: Well college is supposed to be extremely busy, so I'm not sure if I'd be able to keep it up then. I'm definitely gonna do it through high school and honestly, I probably would be able to keep it as a hobby in college...on weekends I might have the time to do something and like in summers and stuff like that I'll have more time. And like even after college, I feel like I could do this like on the side of whatever job I do.

A: Right, exactly. OK, any help or are you just like a one man show?

S: I mean pretty much, one man show.

A: Dang, 30 dozen cookies.

S: Yeah, I mean every now and then like sometimes I have to go out of the house and then my sister will have to watch over the stuff in the oven and take it out for me--other than that, one man show. Also of course my parents--well obviously they have to get all the ingredients and then like sometimes when I deliver, they have to drive.

A: Right, that's true. So, is it usually you deliver, or do people come pick it up?

S: Usually people come pick it up, but like sometimes...like every now and then I would deliver, depending on like their situation or like what works best for them.

A: Right, that makes sense. Maybe if you ever really need help, you can call on friends, but the thing is also, you might not exactly trust their skills like when it comes to decorating and stuff.

S: That's true, that's true.

A: But that's a lot on you. Ok, so how can people order from you, in case people wanna order after reading this interview. And what do you cover--just kind of put out an advertisement for yourself!

S: Basically, I have an Instagram account @baking.for.a.change and you can also e-mail me, my e-mail is suyra.baking.for.a.change@gmail.com and I think it's on the Instagram. Either DM or e-mail me and if you know me in person like honestly you could just tell me to my face. Also, like just people I know like teachers have already ordered things from me.

A: Oh, that's really cool!

S: Yeah, like my Spanish teacher's one of my best customers.

A: Spitz?

S: Yeah

A: I bet--she has 5 kids, right? So that's a lot of birthdays.

S: You can order cakes, cupcakes, cookies...cookies I sell sugar cookies and I can also do like traditional cookies that aren't just like flavors. And honestly, no one asks about these, like other things other than those I just mentioned, but I'd be willing to do mini cupcakes or cake pops. Honestly, if you have something that you think I could bake, I'd probably be willing to do it for you.

A: Ok that's cool, you cover pretty much everything. And usually how long do you spend on the business every week?

S: Well other than the actual baking it actually takes a long time to plan the custom orders because it's like thinking--it's like art, you have to think about how you'd want it to look.

A: Right, that's true.

S: But then I have to plan out what ingredients I need that I don't already have, and sometimes I have to order stuff from Amazon or Esty and then I have to keep track of the prices and like all that stuff. So yeah, I mean if I have an order it'll take like the whole week to do it, even if I'm only baking over the span of like one or two days.

A: I see, OK. So usually, you probably spend a week on each order planning and buying things?

S: Yeah.

A: Oh ok, that's not too bad either. But do you only do like one order at a time?

S: Well yeah. Also, since I've started more recently, they're usually not more than one order per week. Sometimes I have two orders per week.

A: I see. But the baking itself actually doesn't take the most time?

S: It kind of does because I'm a perfectionist. It does take a while, but I usually dedicate the weekend to that.

A: I see. And then usually how long are you in the kitchen? Are you just in the kitchen for the whole weekend?

S: Yeah, pretty much.

A: Dang, you're just gone on the weekend. It's kind of insane that you do this, it takes so much time but it's really cool.

S: But it's different from school or sports, so it's kind of like, it's just fun and like a way to do something on my own and relax.

A: Yeah no, that's nice then. Like it's a space for you. Ok, that's all my questions, so thanks for talking to me!



Some of Surya's mouthwatering creations.





Elena Lesniak

The Ohio Train Derailment: The Dangers of National Chemical Spills and Hazardous Chemicals

With the constant flood of news surrounding environmental threats, climate change, and the imminent doom of our planet, it's hard not to become so numb to it all. Even though it's easy to glaze past the news stories, we have to try to stay aware. In early February, a detrimental spill occurred on the border of the Ohio and Pennsylvania border, putting the lives of thousands at stake, and possibly more to come. Dubbed the "Ohio Train Derailment," the mass chemical spill has not only led to tighter regulations on train corporations, but also has led to imminent consequences on wildlife, air quality, and the general health of US citizens.



In 2012, a train passing through Paulsboro, NJ, a town not too far from Philadelphia, was carrying 23,000 gallons of vinyl chloride (a chemical used to make PVC) that spilled into Mantua Creek when it crossed a bridge. One of the train cars leaked colorless liquid vinyl chloride into the surrounding

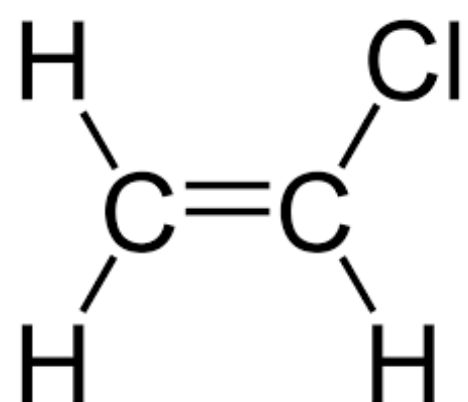


water. Residents were immediately evacuated, and schools were locked down in response to this crisis. Residents reported signs of respiratory issues, dizziness, severe

headaches, and general unrest. Some were even sent to the hospital--71, to be exact. They too reported scratchy throats and a slew of other miscellaneous respiratory issues. In February of 2023, almost a decade later, a similar incident occurred in Ohio early February –but this time, it wasn't just one car of vinyl chloride that leaked—it was 5.

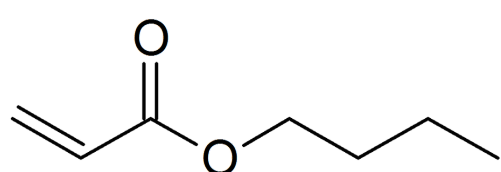
On February 3rd, a Norfolk Southern train carrying toxic chemicals was derailed in East Palestine, Ohio. Vinyl chloride, a toxic and flammable gas, was released from 5 tankers, amounting to over 115,000 gallons of liquid spilled into nearby soil, water sources, and most concerning, the air. Out of the 150 cars attached to the train itself, 38 were derailed—and 11 of those contained vinyl chloride, butyl acrylate, ethylhexyl acrylate, and ethylene glycol montobuyl ether.

While these chemicals may seem harmless, their internal impacts on the body are far more dangerous than one would expect, especially when they're released in large amounts. So, to save some time, here's a breakdown of each chemical that was released:



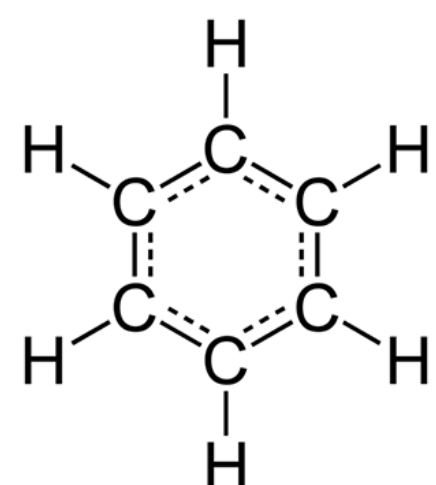
Vinyl Chloride

Commonly used to make PVC plastics; extremely flammable; boiling point of 8°F; toxic fumes produced and released into the air when burned; highly carcinogenic



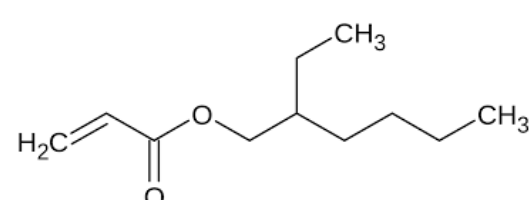
Butyl Acrylate

Liquid used for sealants, adhesives, and paints; leads to respiratory issues and skin/eye irritation



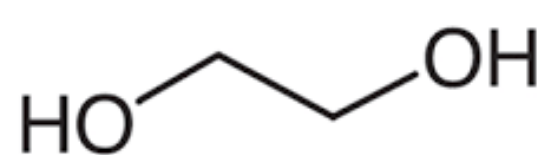
Benzene Residue

Highly flammable; used for making rubber, plastic, and dyes; at high levels of exposure, dizziness, unconsciousness, irregular heartbeat, and other conditions can occur



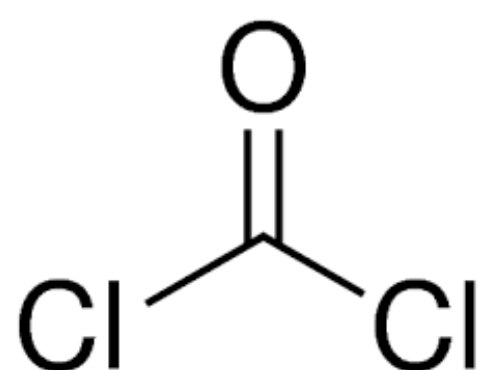
Ethylhexyl Acrylate

Liquid used to produce paint and plastics; generally causes respiratory and skin problems



Ethylene glycol monobutyl

Used as a solvent for ink/paint; causes extreme nose/eye irritations among nausea and headaches



Phosgene

Used as chemical warfare in WWII; extremely toxic with minimal inhalation; causes severe respiratory damage, pulmonary edema, and dermal/ocular burns from exposure

Due to the boiling point of vinyl chloride (which sits at 8°F), it was released into the atmosphere as a gas, but simultaneously a liquid into the ground and



other surrounding waters. This has led to the deaths of 45,000 marine and land wildlife, and that number continues to rise to this day. With their natural habitats--

local creeks and ponds--being infested with carcinogenic chemicals, they are dying in record numbers. Currently, the long-term impacts of vinyl chloride and other carcinogenic chemicals on such a large scale cannot fully be understood, however, it is safe to say that a large disruption has occurred in this habitat.

While there are no citizens that have died because of this spill within East Palestine, many continue to report respiratory issues within a 50-mile radius of the incident. Over 4,000 have sought out medical attention for difficulty breathing, itchiness in the throat, eye irritation, and much more. Furthermore, while local officials of Norfolk Southern and Ohio conducted a controlled burn of the damaged area, this actually caused more issues as it only furthered the combustion and spread of vinyl chloride into the surroundings.



Following the train derailment, the company involved apologized for the incident. But a 58-count federal lawsuit has gone against Norfolk Southern for its "negligence and recklessness", and these claims are not unjustified. The lawsuit started in early March and has moved up to a class-action lawsuit filed by East Palestine residents. They have appealed to the Ohio federal courts explaining that their property being overtaken by the train

derailment was an act of public trespass and all costs and damages must be repaid. The lawsuit further states that the company should be inclined to reimburse the state for the impacts the chemical spill had on public health and the general welfare of the community.

This incident is also not the first time the company has shown such signs of negligence--between the latter half of 2021, Norfolk Southern has been accountable for 5 other significant accidents, which has led to the questioning of the company and their safety regulations. While Norfolk CEO Alan Shaw has expressed his sincere apologies for the Ohio derailment and its impact on the environment, he has failed to provide compensation to the residents adversely impacted by the chemicals themselves. Shaw's apologies to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPA) were not sufficient, and due to the company's previous track record, investigations into the cause of the incident began.



The investigations into the causes of the incident itself led to a shocking discovery: the derailment was found to be 100% preventable. The main reason for the derailment was due to the overheating of the bearing of the cars. Right before the incident on February 3rd, the National Transportation Safety Board received an alert regarding the overheated bearings, however Norfolk Southern did not sound the alarm. The wheel bearings were therefore overheated 253 degrees above the surrounding air temperature, which started the initial fire and derailment.

Ultimately, this overheating could have been prevented by placing rail heat sensors closer together. While these are not mandated by the



federal government, they are significantly impactful in reducing this problem of overheated bearings. This derailment, among many others, highlights that

more significant regulations on railroad transport are necessary to reduce future railroad accidents, derailments particularly. Though on March 8, Norfolk Southern explained that they would add 200 more heat sensors along their rail lines, investigations into the company's general practices continue. Just the day before their announcement, on March 7th, a 60-day assessment of Norfolk Southern had begun, conducted by NTSB.

Reporting on this issue remains challenging as it is largely underreported. There are currently both a large number of facts and fiction present to the public as investigations continue. Only when the EPA releases a full statement regarding this derailment will the full scope of its



impact begin to be understood. Unfortunately, only time will tell of the impacts of this mass chemical spill on wildlife, residents, and the public health of those around the affected areas.



Sarah's Stress Strategies

by Sarah Dailey

Look at you! You have made it to April! First off, I would like to say that I am very proud of you. High school is hard, and you have been able to succeed, in whatever way that means to you. You only have two more months to go, and I believe in you! I understand you may be stressed, whether that's because you have final exams or are struggling to decide where to go to college. It's okay to be stressed. It's perfectly normal!

However, prolonged stress is not healthy. Back in 1992, April was named Stress Awareness Month in hopes to bring attention to the negative impacts of stress and to promote healthy coping and healing mechanisms. Every year, doctors across the nation work together to raise awareness of the growing stress epidemic, including the causes and cures for stress.

While I am no doctor, I have compiled a list of healthy stress management strategies in hopes that one or more will work for you. Keep in mind, there is not one strategy that works for everyone, so give yourself the time to find what is best for you!

Without further ado, here are Sarah's Stress Strategies:



Listen to Music

Whether you are hunkered over some homework or struggling with racing thoughts, music fixes everything! Music can bring about positive emotions and relax your mind from all the busy thoughts in your brain. I suggest making or finding a homework/study playlist that brings you all the good vibes. Feel free to have a mini dance party if the vibes are right!

Talk With Others

You are not alone! We all have experienced stress at one point or another. By talking through your stress, you are lightening the load your mind and body have to carry. Find your safe people and have an open, honest conversation. It may be hard to talk through everything, but there are people who love and support you that are willing to listen.

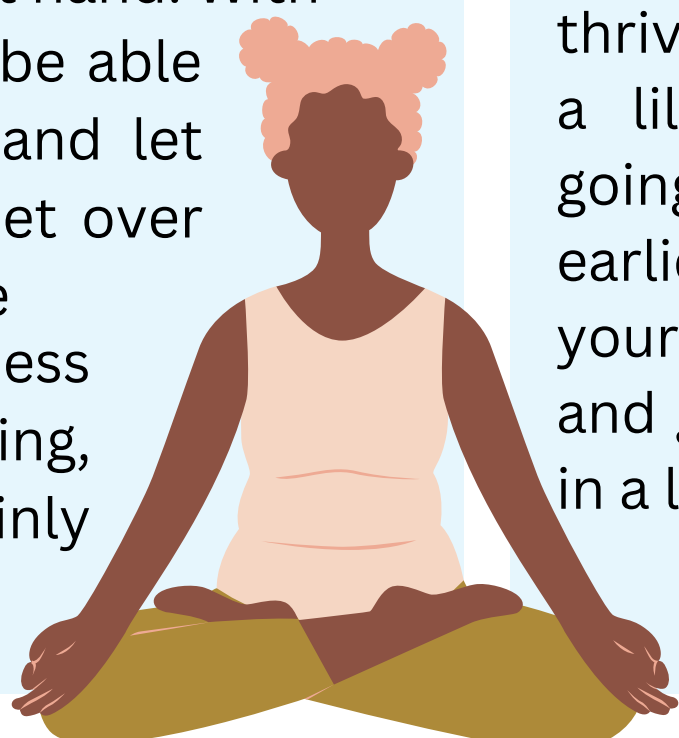
Make Time For Your Hobbies

By solely focusing on homework and tests while neglecting the activities you enjoy; you are draining that mind of yours. Make sure to leave some time open for your hobbies! That can mean taking half an hour every day to draw or paint, or leaving an afternoon open to play some tennis. It's normal to get distracted by the stuff we have to do, but don't forget to enjoy this time in your life.



Meditate

This strategy may take some time to perfect, but it works wonders! All types of meditation help calm the mind and body, allowing you to refocus on the task at hand. With meditation, you will be able to clear your mind and let an emotional calm set over you. Whether you are practicing mindfulness or deep breathing, meditation is certainly worth a try.



Take Care of Your Body

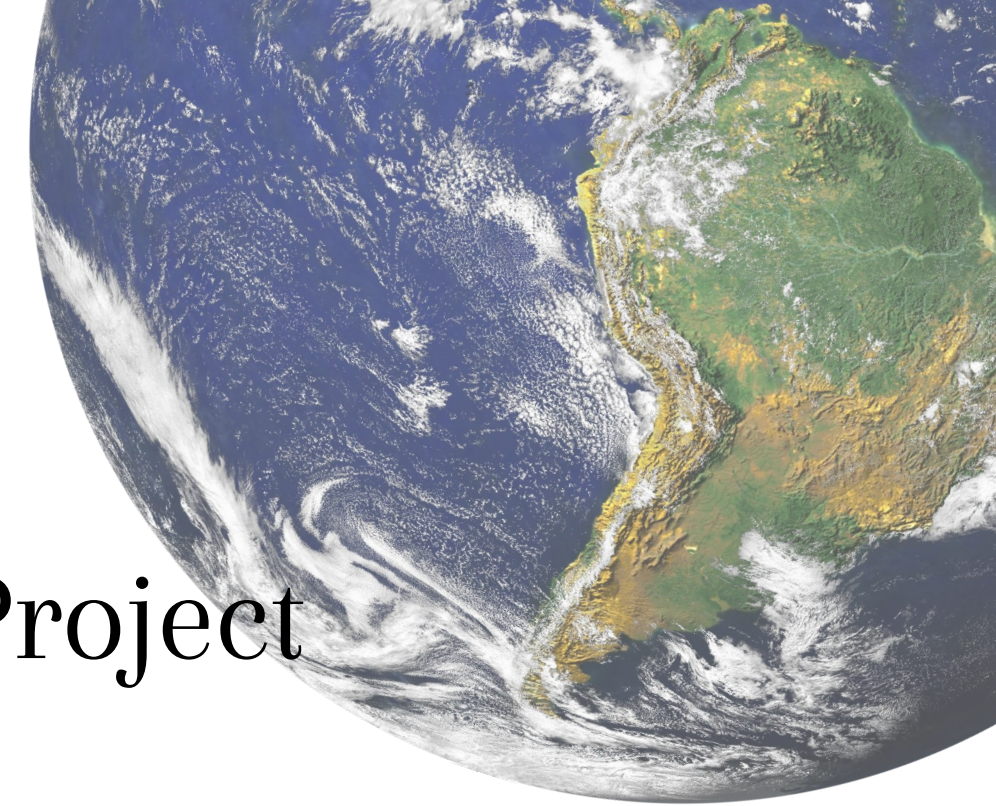
In times of high stress, namely exam season, it is easy to forget to take care of yourself. This, in turn, can make you feel even more stressed, because your body isn't getting everything it needs for you to thrive. Whether this includes having a lil snack between studying or going to sleep fifteen minutes earlier than usual, take care of yourself! Remember, eat healthy and get enough sleep! Maybe throw in a lil bit of exercise if that's your thing. You deserve to take care of yourself!

Take A Break

Just like your body, your mind deserves a break to recharge! By just taking fifteen minutes away from your work, you are allowing your mind a chance to reset. You may find that you are able to get through your work quicker once you return to it after a break. Whether you enjoy a small snack or watch a silly video, allow your brain a chance to recharge.

A Brief History of Earth Day and a quick background on the Willow Project

By Leixi Chen



Ahh, Earth Day. The perfect time to use the excuse of honoring Earth Day by sending all your schoolwork to the recycling bin. Earth Day is celebrated on April 22nd to display support for conservation and sustainability, while raising awareness. So, as you can guess, Earth Day is immensely important. But how did it come to be?

The first Earth Day occurred in 1970. It was created by Senator Gaylord Nelson, who proposed the idea of Earth Day as there were no legal or



regulatory ways to protect the Earth. He started Earth Day after he saw the distressing damage of an oil spill off the shore of Santa Barbara in 1969, which covered miles of the beach with tar. His idea didn't originally begin as a day dedicated to the Earth though--it began as informal discussions on the environmental issues occurring at the time. Nelson started these so called "teach-ins" in order to inform students about the environment and what they could do to help protect it.

With the help of representative Pete McCloskey, political activist Denis Hayes, and a staff of 85, these teach-ins were expanded upon. They were eventually able to organize 20 million people across the US to take part in inaugural events at thousands



of sites nationwide to demonstrate support for environmental protection. On April 22nd of 1970, thousands of people held rallies and protests. This day gained media coverage and attention, leading to people gathering and speaking about the environment, which then led to them coming up with solutions to defend and save the planet. This day led to the creation of the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), and multiple new environmental laws, like the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the National Environmental

Education Act. These laws have rescued millions of people from disease and death, while also protecting hundreds of species from extinction. This day is also why April 22nd has been deemed Earth Day.

Since the first Earth Day, Earth Day has only grown in popularity. The fight to preserve the environment is still crucial to this day, and becomes more and more urgent, as the effects of global warming and climate change grow increasingly evident. Everyone has a voice and an impact, and now is the perfect time to make a change. Earth Day this year is on a Saturday, and there are a multitude of things that you can do to help support environmental conservation, like cleaning up plastic in a local park, planting a tree, and conserving water! Do whatever is possible for you!

Considering the upcoming Earth Day, I feel that it is also important to talk about the Willow

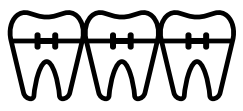


Project, which has been recently approved. The Willow Project is an enormous oil drilling project in the National Petroleum Reserve--located in Alaska--which will be underway for decades. This project is estimated to release 9.2 million metric tons (277 million tons) of carbon pollution per year. Not only will this develop consequential climate pollution and irreversible damage to wildlife and their habitats, but there are public health concerns and risks to the people close by who rely on the land for subsistence. Last year in March, there was an uncontrolled gas leak at one of the pre-existing facilities. It released natural gas, and it took almost a month for this leak to be entirely plugged. During this leak, the nearby villagers of Nuiqsut suffered from headaches, breathing problems, and nausea. These types of incidents will only increase in the future. While there are limitations to what you can


do to help, here are a few ways to stand against the Willow Project: write to the White House, sign petitions like the petition on Change.org, and try to get in touch with your local representatives by email to advocate for stopping the project.

Now, to end on a more cheerful note, here are a few of my favorite Earth Day slogans and a couple of Earth Day jokes. (Think like "funny" dad jokes.)



Where does a killer whale go for braces? 

The orca-dontist!
(This one is a personal favorite.)

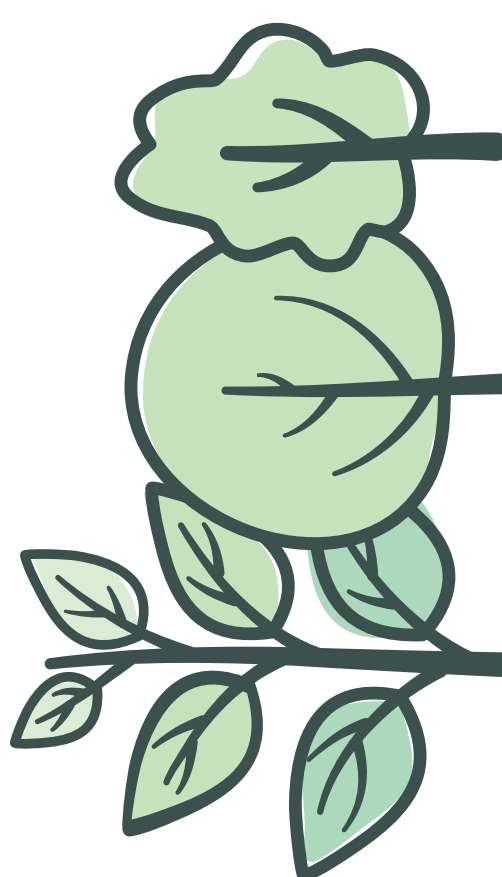
WHY COULDN'T THE FLOWER RIDE ITS BIKE?



IT HAD LOST ITS PETALS!

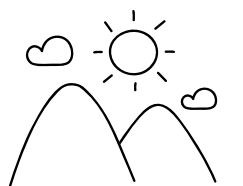
Think green, keep it clean!


If I ride my bike twice ... does that count as RE-CYCLING?


East or West, Planet Earth is the best!
(Does this not sound like a school chant?) 




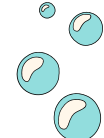
WHAT DID THE BEACH SAY TO THE WAVE?


NURTURE THE NATURE


Keep the Earth clean and green!


LONG TIDE NO SEA.


Where does seaweed look for a job? 

HOW CAN YOU TELL THE OCEAN IS FRIENDLY?


What did the tree wear to a pool party?

In the Kelp-wanted section!

BECAUSE IT WAVES!


Swimming trunks! 





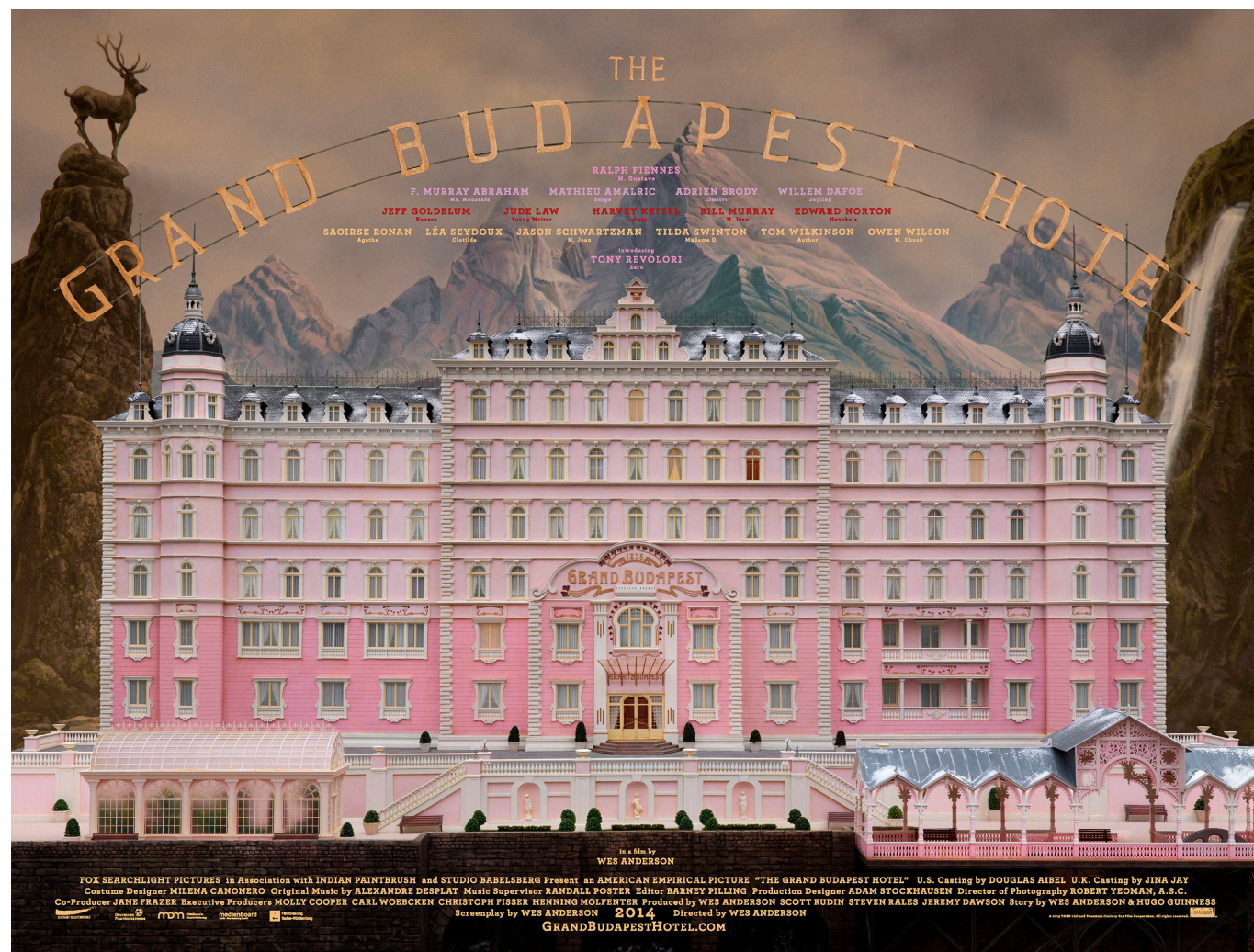
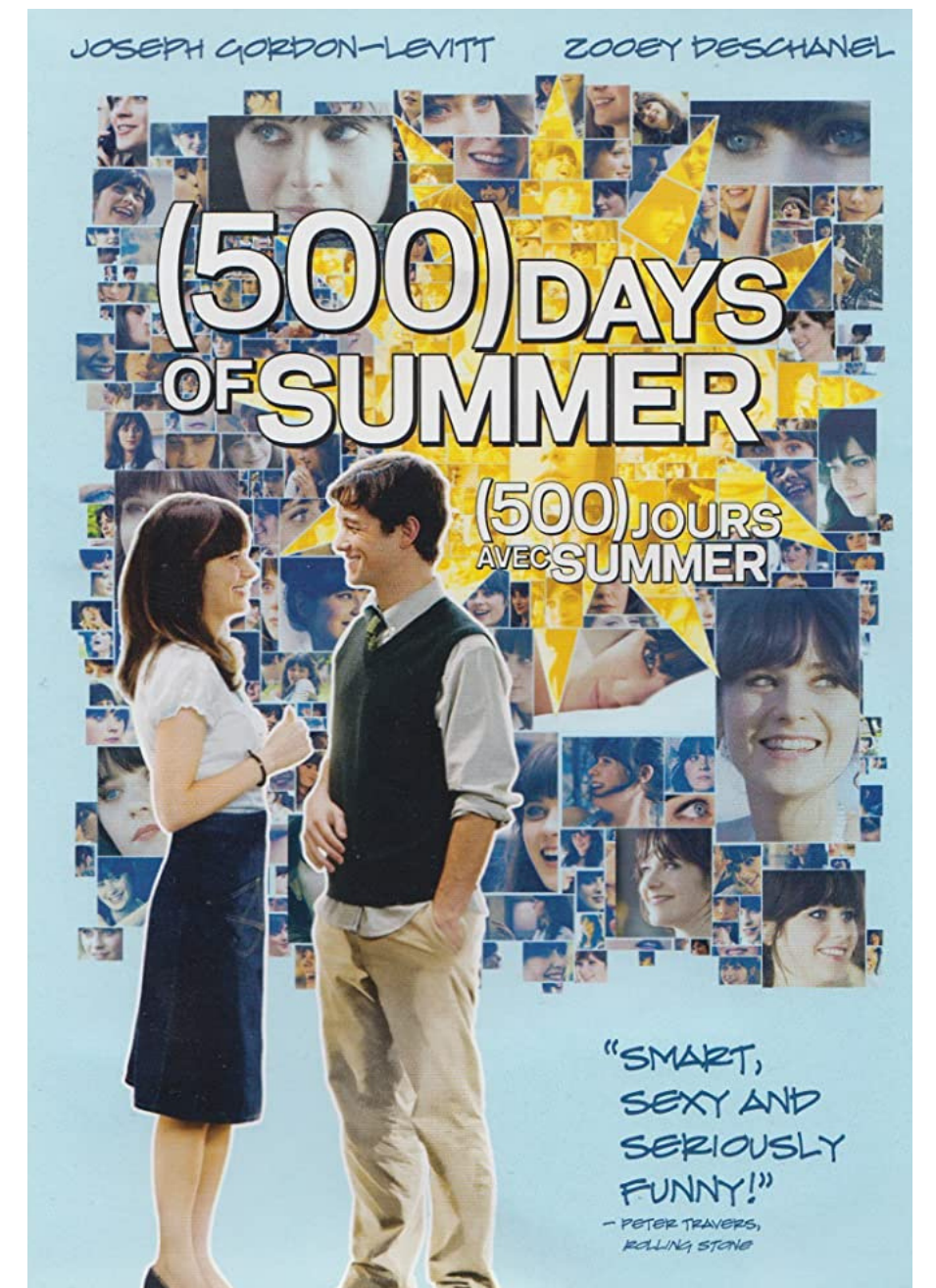
Spring Movie Recommendations:

What to watch this season to give you all those Spring vibes

by Yasmeen Rifai

(500) DAYS OF SUMMER (2009)

Even though this movie has “Summer” in the title, do not be misled. This movie takes place through all four seasons over the span of, you guessed it, 500 days. It jumps back and forth through time, giving us fragments of this relationship between Hallmark card writer and overall sap Tom, and a non-believer in love, Summer. We watch as Tom reflects on the entire course of their relationship trying to figure out where things went wrong. This is the perfect comfort movie, and one to watch over again at different points in your life. If you haven’t yet, watch it this season for a beautiful romantic comedy that is not a love story.



THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL (2014)

Directed by filmmaker Wes Anderson, The Grand Budapest Hotel tells the story of Gustave H (played by the talented Ralph Fiennes) and his experiences working as a concierge at a 1930’s European hotel. This film is quirky in the best way, with a joyful color scheme and gorgeous cinematic staging. The plot is multilayered and the dialogue eccentric, classic elements of a Wes Anderson movie. Highly recommend to any and everyone.

MARIE ANTOINETTE (2006)

Probably the most aesthetically “spring” movie on this list, Marie Antoinette tells the not-so-historically-accurate tale of a 19-year-old Marie being placed on the throne of France

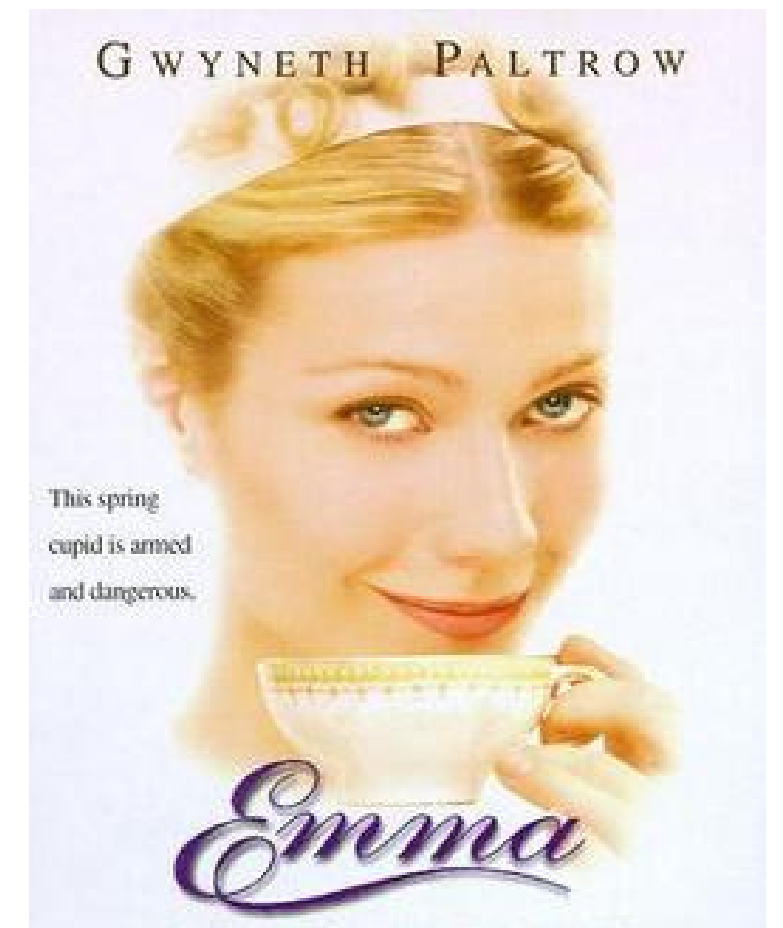


through her marriage to King Louis XVI. Now this is not your traditional period film. Instead, it retells the life of this iconic figure through a modern lens, one filled with exaggerated rococo fashion and Paris Hilton-esque party girl lavishness. Aside from the stunning pastel visuals created by director Sophia Coppola, I also appreciate the feminist undertones she weaves into the film, spinning what we know about this figure on its head.

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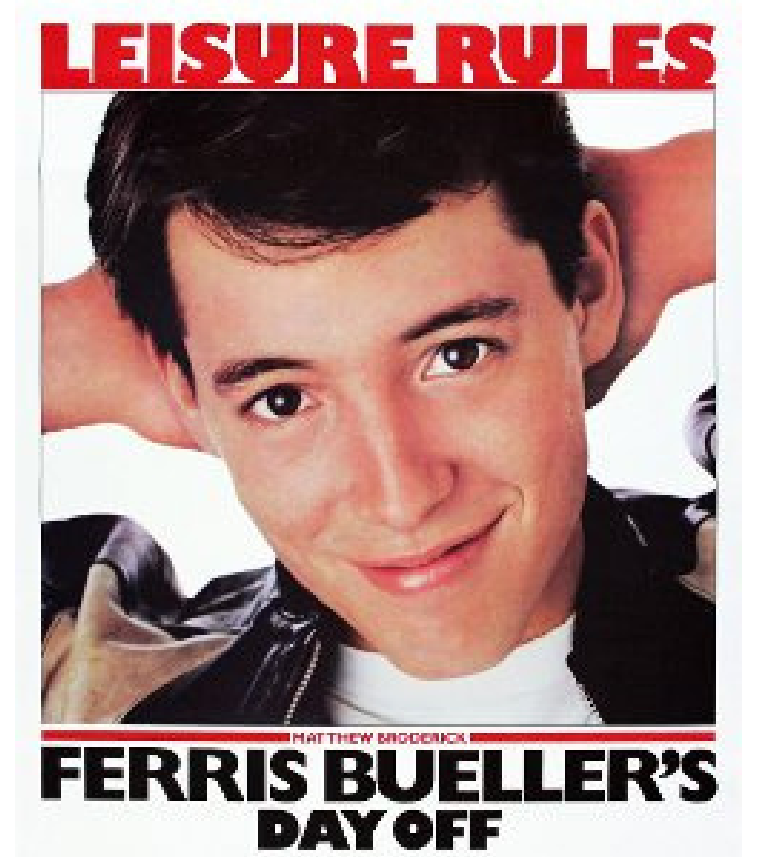
EMMA (1996)

Even though the covers are strikingly similar (what can I say, it was the time), do not confuse this period film with the one above it. Emma is a movie adaptation of the book by the same name by romance novelist Jane Austen. Starring pre-goop era Gwyneth Paltrow, this is a liting and sweet romantic comedy. Our main character, Emma, is known to be a wonderful matchmaker, both socially keen and charming. However, love for herself seems to be out of the question. Watch for picturesque scenes of Spring in the English countryside, witty repartee, and a tall dark and handsome love interest. I also would advise you to check out the 2020 version of this film, which is equally amazing.



FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF (1986)

This John Hughes film is not only a classic of the 80's, but also one of my personal favorite movies of all time. It gives us the day in the life of the charming and widely beloved Ferris Bueller. A high school student who decides to play hooky for the day, he goes on a series of adventures through Chicago along with his best friend and his girlfriend. If you like beautiful shots of Chicago in the Springtime, impromptu musical numbers, and iconic cameos by bad boy Charlie Sheen, you're going to love this movie.



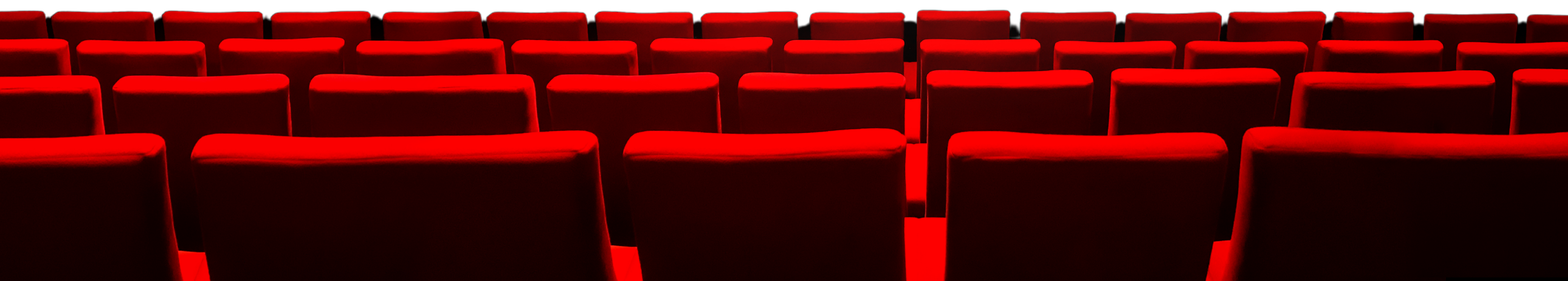
YOU'VE GOT MAIL (1998)

Another one of my personal favorites, You've Got Mail is the lighthearted 90's romcom that we all need in the Spring. Set in NYC, it tells the story of a small children's bookshop owner (played by Meg Ryan) as she starts to lose business due to a big chain bookstore moving in right across the street, Fox Books. The owner of this store, and her new mortal enemy, just so happens to be somebody she knows. I won't spoil too much, but this movie is just incredibly cute and a must-watch for the spring season. Believe me when I say, it will become a future re-watch for you very quickly.



BOOKSMART (2019)

Fellow Seniors, this one's for you. Booksmart is a comedy about two academic overachievers and best friends, Molly and Amy, nearing their graduation, navigating college acceptances, lost experiences and regret, and sense of identity. If you yourself are still waiting on decisions, I could not recommend a more perfect movie to watch right now. It will make you laugh, reflect, and maybe even question yourself. It accurately represents the panic, confusion, and frankly jealousy that can come with the college mania of the springtime.



MR. WIRTH HAS 13 PETS?

by Shaila Man

On Friday, March 10th, Mr. Wirth retired from Pittsford Mendon High School after years of serving as a physics teacher. He taught multiple physics courses offered at our school and bonded with countless students. In honor of Mr. Wirth, Shaila sat down with him to ask some fun and interesting questions, learn about his favorite memories from Mendon, and hear what he has to say to his students. We'll miss you, Mr. Wirth!

What is your favorite part about Mendon High School?

The students! Even, I would add, the students who really enjoy science. It is really energizing, being older and being around younger people.

What do you notice about morning classes versus afternoon classes?

Overall, I've noticed that kids in early morning classes are just getting going and sometimes not always with it. Same thing with 9th period—everybody's kind of ready to go, and I totally understand that! There are some kids who don't get a break; I can't even imagine doing what I do every period of the day. I wish that students always had lunch and could get the sleep they need to do well in school every day!

How do you enjoy spending your summer breaks?

I like to spend summer with my family, of course, and travelling! The place that we've gone to for years is Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. We love to go to the beach--there's a boardwalk, and sometimes we rent houses. My wife and I were married there. Just travelling in general—last summer my wife and I went to California and had a nice trip there. It was my first ever time in San Francisco.

In which other teacher's class would you like to enroll, even for a day, and why?

There's a lot—I will say Mr. Martelotta's, because I'm a math-y kind of person and he is brilliant. That's outside of science, but we have a lot of great science teachers. I would love to sit in an AP Biology class with Mrs. Salerno or Mr. Smith.

What's your favorite school event? Spirit weeks, the Rainbow Classic, etc...?

My favorite one is actually Halloween! Two reasons for that: the students dress up but then also the science department always has a group costume. We did "Where's Waldo?" this past year with striped shirts. I was also a part of the teacher choreographed dance this year—I got a video and tried to make it up as well as I could.

How did you get into physics? Have you always been passionate about physics?

I was originally an engineer--I had a bachelor's degree in engineering, and I worked at Kodak for 27 years. I always thought of teaching as my next career or when I had had enough of engineering, so that happened 15 years ago or so. I had all the math and science background I needed, and I am actually certified for technology, math, and physics. Physics was the job that was available at the time--I could have been a technology or math teacher, but I am glad I ended up here because it combines everything I love.

What is your first teaching memory?

My first teaching job was a long-term substitute job in Bloomfield, and then after the first two weeks there I got a call from Pittsford that they were looking for a physics teacher. I only worked there for two months, and my favorite memory was getting that Pittsford call.

If you could take your students on a field trip to anywhere in the world, where would you take them?

There's a Physics Day at Darien Lake, and I have always wanted to take students there. You're given equipment to take measurements of roller coasters, and you can track acceleration around corners, work and energy, things like that. That's something that we were never able to pull off, but it would have been great.

What's your favorite dish from the cafeteria?

I pretty much get cafeteria lunch every day, but I would say it is meatballs and garlic bread!

Sincerely Lena,

What makes a good day at school?

A good day at school is when students are engaged and learning.

Do you have some traditions or superstitions for the first day of school?

The thing I've been doing for quite a long time now is having everybody fill out a little notecard with information about themselves and fun drawings to personalize it. They tell me a lot and give everyone a chance to express themselves and give me some personal information to help me get to know them a little bit.

What would students be surprised to know about you, or something that is interesting about your personal life?

I have an adopted daughter from China, so maybe that! Maybe students wouldn't know that I haven't always been a teacher, but I was an engineer before coming to Mendon.

If you won the lottery, what would you do?

Here's what my wife would want to do—if we won the lottery, she would want to quit her own job and open up an animal rescue shelter. That's exactly what she would do. She would love to open up her own dog and cat shelter because she loves to help animals. She feeds feral cat colonies in Fairport. Also, in the South, for whatever reason, there are a lot of dogs who are going to be euthanized, and there's an organization that transports dogs to shelters up North or even Canada. My wife volunteers driving and keeping dogs overnight, so we also do that in addition to our now 4 dogs and 9 cats. I've almost lost track of the number of cats we have!

What books/movies would you take with you if you were alone on a deserted island?

I think I'm a Tom Hanks fan when I think about it, because I love all his movies from serious to comedic. One of my favorite movies of all time is Joe Versus the Volcano, and I would also take Castaway. I like science-y and mystery type movies, so I would also take Interstellar with me.

What would you like to say to your students or any student at MHS?

I will miss everyone, and I will miss teaching! It just became the right time for my family and I to transition to something different, but Mendon High School holds a special place in my heart.

Q: How do I take a mindfulness walk if it's cold out?

For those who don't know, a mindfulness walk is when you take a walk and focus on your surroundings and being in the moment, attempting to not focus on worries and concerns. Walking outside in the cold is certainly not as enjoyable as walking in the sunshine. However, it can still be done! Make sure to put on layers and bundle up so you are ready to face the cold, as well as pay attention to the slipperiness of the ground. Enjoy your walk!

Q: How should I go about eating a hamburger?

1. Obtain the hamburger
2. Pick it up with two hands
3. Bite and chew
4. Swallow
5. Repeat from Step 2 until burger is consumed

Q: What are some good ways to stay on task while doing homework?

Here are my best tips for getting work done efficiently! Hopefully they help!

- Work in a quiet space, sitting up, and at a table
- Place your phone in a spot AWAY from where you are working; do not check it until your work is done!
- Organize your materials so you can get started and not waste time searching for papers or other supplies you need
- Take breaks after finishing one subject; that way, your mind is clear before starting the next one
- Prioritize assignments by due dates and complexity level so you do not feel burnt out and become forced to finish a long-term assignment in one night
- Work with a friend taking the same class to get work done more efficiently but make sure to keep each other on track

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