



Photo by Ambrielle Dougherty  
Members of the Patriot Club, which was responsible for organizing a military flyover before the first football game, practice proper flag etiquette each day outside the high school. Adriana Danyluk unhooks our nation's banner, with help from Reece Johnson, Evelina Mayak, Taylor Everk (hidden) and adviser Mr. Scott Gerould.

# Break, bond, and thrive

*New 'Lunch and Learn' schedule reshapes high school's school-day experience*



Kaylee Young adds the 'Learn' to her 'Lunch.'

Photo by Ella Taylor

By Lacey Groover  
Editor in Chief

Lunch and Learn is a new schedule added to Northern Lehigh High School. Students' previous schedule consisted of four blocks, each lasting eighty-six minutes with only a half hour to eat lunch in the cafeteria. Lunch and Learn allows students to have more free time to socialize, study, and get support from teachers.

Blocks are shortened to 80 minutes which gives students an entire 73 minutes for lunch. Students also have the ability to go wherever they want around the school.

Clean-up stations, trash cans, high-top tables, and chairs are set up throughout the halls so students can pick up after themselves and eat in a different setting.

A survey was sent out to students asking their

opinions on L&L and out of 281 responses 86% liked it, 9% didn't like it, and 5% weren't sure how they felt. An overwhelming amount of students have positive opinions on L&L. Right off the bat, many were contacting teachers, finding a space to work, and taking the initiative to use this time for their benefit.

L&L has a positive effect on other things around the school as well. Officer Mark Nicosia observes a change in general behavior for some students, "The boys get their energy out and they don't have the energy to screw around. A lot of kids don't get to see their friends, or boyfriends, or girlfriends, and they get to see them for an hour. There's also much less traffic in the halls."

By getting a chance to socialize, students are less eager to push through the halls or interrupt

See L & L, page 2

# Chaos in Paris

*Scandals, Struggles, and Shattered Ideals Tarnish the 2024 Olympics*

By Ada Porobenski  
Staff Writer

The Olympic Games are an event that brings every country together in a friendly, yet tense, competition. It brings out intense patriotism from every country and millions of viewers from around the world looking to support their country.

Usually, every four years the Olympic Games showcase athletes creating new records and countries setting aside their differences to compete together, but this year's events were quite different from years past.

Multiple controversies and complaints emerged during the 2024 games, from athletes getting sick due to the contaminated Seine River to a convicted child rapist being allowed to compete. France's 2024 Olympic Games were far from ideal.

Most people would expect that the athletes – the main attraction – would get their basic needs met and maybe more. Most would think they are staying at the Olympic Village, living in simple comfort to come down from their strenuous competitions, but it would seem to be the opposite.



Multiple athletes' complaints have been reported saying that the beds are extremely uncomfortable and made of cardboard, there is a lack of privacy, no air conditioning, and very mediocre food.

According to Newsweek, Coco Gauff, a tennis star of Team USA, created a TikTok video showing the living conditions of the Olympic Village. The footage revealed that Gauff had to share a single bathroom with 10 other ath-

See Olympics, page 4

## Loud and Proud Woof-Gang



Photos by Sam Mack

The NLHS Student Section has been a loud supporter of Fall Sports.

(Above) Ella Tosh, Katelynn Barthold, Natalie Moffitt.  
(Left) Kylee Snyder and Tegan Simms.

INSIDE



Cutting Through the Noise — Battling the Election's Deception . Page 7.



Allowing Your Individuality to Blossom — What's in your mirror? Page 5.



Fall Sports Galore — Soccer, Field Hockey, Football, and more. Pages 9-15.



New Feature! — A Northern Lehigh Bulldog Crossword Pawzle. Page 7.

# Adapting to change while losing your unfamiliarity

## How emotional independence can help us cope with life's unpredictability

By Lacey Groover  
Editor in Chief

We live in a world that constantly changes around us. Going through adolescence, we're faced with an abundance of changes in such a short period of time. Most people deal with life on an external level, adjusting to change by how they interact with other people or situations they are placed in; however, it is much more important to deal with change internally. Sometimes the feeling of having everything, especially significant changes, in your life be out of your control can be extremely complicated.

Let's say in your home, there is a picture on the wall. The picture on the wall may not be completely noticed or acknowledged every time you walk past it because you get accustomed to it being there. Now imagine things in your house start changing; the walls are painted a different color, and the rug may be new, but the picture always stays.

The idea of the picture not being in

its place is unimaginable. Now a picture on the wall may not be as significant as a friend, family member, heirloom, or something else one may find oneself familiar with, however, something that becomes a constant is challenging to be forced to let go of. Although it is something simple, a picture like that on the wall can bring comfort and a feeling of familiarity.

I grew up in a nuclear family with two parents, a sister, and two dogs in one home together. After the separation of parts of my family, I realized I wasn't prepared for the changes that were coming my way. During the transition between childhood and adulthood, we're taught how to be generally independent, but many forget to become emotionally independent as well.

Growing up with stability, and then suddenly having none is an issue many face without a clear solution. Without external support systems, you must create support systems for yourself. By reshaping thoughts and the feelings associated with the issue at hand, one can learn to overcome the feelings of

being alone that come with losing a part of their life.

Reliance on others balance out your emotions is something many teens struggle with when developing new relationships. Gaining independence over regulating your emotions is so empowering, and I greatly encourage everyone to work toward doing so. Although most feelings are valid, the reaction associated with it may not be. It's important to maintain control of your actions when feelings like anger, frustration, sadness, anxiety, or other hard-to-handle emotions come to the forefront.

The most effective way to help these negative feelings would be to find the root of what is causing them and fixing what that is, however, when the ability to change the circumstances around you is taken away, it's difficult to navigate your personal emotions and the situation at hand.

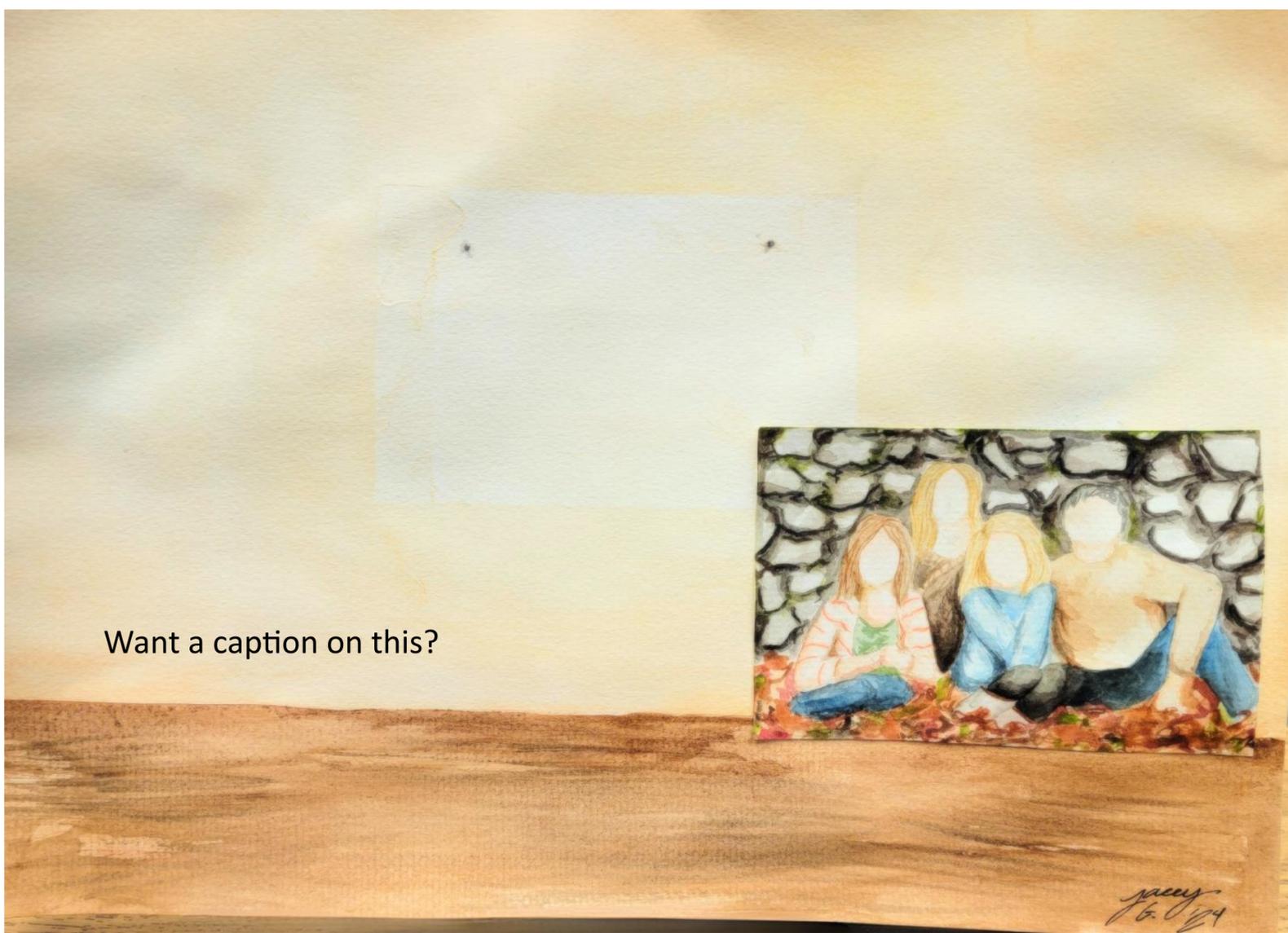
For example, it's valid to be upset at someone for chewing loudly next to you, but that does not mean it is acceptable to lash out on them. If you're unable to move your seat or ask them to be quiet-

er, the next best thing would be to rebuild the thought process behind the cause of the frustration. Commonly, young people are trapped in situations where they have a very limited amount of control. Emotions you choose to work through will have a significant affect on your own well-being, which, at the end of the day, is the most important thing.

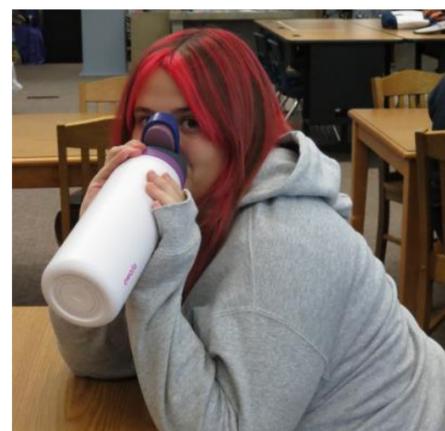
Learning to come to terms with things that we inherently want to reject is one of the most difficult challenges we face. When someone suddenly takes your picture off the wall, you must be the one to figure out how to fill the space.

Coping comes in many different forms and the way you cope will form the path for what lies ahead in any given situation.

The actions of others may have an effect on you whether they intend for it or not. The mindset that everyone should adopt is that the only constant thing is change, and we must learn how to work through it for the overall benefit of ourselves and the relationships we have with others. 🌱



# Growth and learning takes new form in L&L



Photos by Ella Taylor

Enjoying the mid-day refresher. (l-r) Lauralie Ayala-Barreto and Leah Cudzil. Xiomara Morales and Ayden Sandt; Marlee Rorrer.

### L & L, from page 1

class time to talk to a friend. Often school schedules can cause students to have major burnout, and no motivation to focus or work during class time. Having more freedom makes students feel more mature and motivates them to focus on academics when it's class time, and focus on actually enjoying high school during their downtime.

NLHS assistant principal Mr. Michael Strohl is confident about the positive effect L&L has on students: "It's fantastic! I love it. Students can get what they need when they need it. Students are making spaces their own, and

I think it's fantastic for relationship building.

On the same point, teachers are outside their classrooms greeting, meeting, and saying hello to the students.

Otherwise with the regular lunch, teachers and students were not really seeing each other the same way they would be during Lunch and Learn, so I think that's another great experience for teachers and students. We have already had some students, since day one, seeking out their teachers to get caught up on some school work and working ahead, so I see nothing but positives so far."

Like anything else, L&L has its pros

and cons. When I asked Mrs. Maldonado, a paraprofessional here at the high school, how she felt about L&L, she had an authentic response, "It's an adjustment schedule change, I would say the negative part of it is just that I think my students are still trying to get used to it. Especially when you're dealing with students with special needs that are very schedule dependent, a change can be difficult."

Although there are many pros to L&L so far, realistically, there have been some issues with adjusting to the switch. Some students that are fairly caught up with their work may have trouble finding something to do with

this extra time, and express that they feel as though it drags on for too long. With students also having the ability to grab lunch when they want to, many students pile into the cafeteria immediately after the ringing of the bell. It is difficult to get lunch quickly in the long lines, and some are forced to wait longer than they expect to.

I know I, and many other students, appreciate the fact that admin are trying their best to make this school a positive environment, and giving students new opportunities and experiences. The general consensus around the school seems to be that L&L is a *good* change. 🌱

# Trapped in a digital world

*Kids who are hooked on screens cannot be blamed for social media's control*

**By Madilynn Husack**  
Contributing Writer

We should not be blamed for being addicted to technology. It is everywhere and always on. We all grew up with technology in our hands because we were given a phone to quiet us down as babies and toddlers.

Technology is always growing. There will never be a time when a generation does not grow up with technology. It has shaped us and made us more connected through similar experiences, but it is hard to have a conversation without distractions, like social media.

Scientists say that technology is as addicting as a drug. It releases the same dopamine—feel-good hormone— as alcohol and gambling would. The difference; however, is how infinite social media is. Social media never runs out which means we can have constant dopamine. This can cause us to want to replace pain with pleasure by spending countless hours scrolling or messaging to escape real-world problems.

Social media is said to be linked with multiple mental health problems that include depression, anxiety, loneliness, and body image issues. Suicide and self-



harm have both increased due to social media.

All these feelings were later amplified thanks to COVID-19. We all were stuck inside, not being able to see our friends in person, and many of us looked to online sources for an escape.

Humans naturally look for social connections and conversational cues. Both social media and COVID limited us to both. During a time filled with uncertainties, having a place, like the internet,

to find like minded people, to talk to, was not necessarily a bad thing.

The problem now is we are back to a relative pre-COVID state, but we still have relationships and friendships like we are still in COVID time. We are still stuck inside, captivated to our phones when we should be outside, with our friends, doing what teenagers do.

Besides social media being incredibly addicting, it also affects how we behave and see the world. Before technol-

ogies and social media, parents were the key figures in shaping young children's lives. Now with social media, we have complete strangers influencing us on so many different topics. From getting advice on how to treat someone in a relationship, to business advice, to what your favorite color or animal should be, just to name a few.

Social media isn't always bad. It can be used as a platform to connect us to various things. It can teach us new things, such as finding ways to discover friends or lost family. It can also give us ways to share happy or sad memories. The time that we spend on it and how the addiction of social media affects our lives is the problem that arises.

This year, the new 'Cellphone Daycares' were instituted in all classrooms. It gives students a place to disconnect from their devices. The hope of this is to give students a place where they don't have to worry about what is going on outside of their studies, which is the most important thing when at school.

Whether you view social media as good or bad, there is no denying that social media affects our lives in so many different ways. 🌟

## Bruiser spreads his cheer for all to hear



Photos by Sam Mack  
Griffin Martineau and Travis Danko.



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# GO BULLDOGS!

# Why can't anyone afford concerts anymore?

By **Kyra Grabowski**  
Contributing Writer

You know when you want to buy concert tickets and they are over the top expensive? Well you're not alone on that. So, how did we go from \$10 concert tickets to \$100 concert tickets? Well, inflation plays a big part in why concert tickets are so expensive. For example, what cost \$100 in the 80s is now equal to at least \$300. In the 80s, you could go see Aerosmith for \$5, but now the tickets are around \$100.

Throughout the years, prices of *everything* has been increasing; therefore concert ticket prices also shoot up throughout the years. Inflation also causes the prices of production to go up.

When an artist is producing a song, music video, going on tour, or even releasing a t-shirt, they have to talk to a promoter about pricing. The pricing of their productions also has to make money to pay their producers, dancers, and in some cases their writers. Plus, they may need enough money to support themselves if they have a full time career as a musician.

In addition to touring, when an artist would have to travel, the trip can become very expensive. The artist would

have to cover flights, equipment, crew transportation, and the venues they will perform at.

The recent pandemic had definitely caused costs of things to spike. Concert production has also become a lot more complex throughout the years, such as stage design, visuals, and lighting. With all the new special effects and modern concert technology, prices for these things have definitely gone up.

Prices tend to be high when seeing a popular artist in concert, and people also seem willing to spend more when seeing a popular artist perform. When Taylor Swift's Eras Tour tickets went on sale on *Ticketmaster*, the website ended up crashing. Consequently, lots of people had lost their tickets that they bought. Thankfully, they soon got refunded.

The reason popular artists' concerts can be more expensive is because they have more control over the ticket prices, and smaller artists tend to not be in control of how they price their shows. Plus, more popular artists have a larger fanbase; therefore, the demand for tickets will be higher.

Resellers also play a big part in high ticket prices. Sure, concert tickets are already expensive to begin with, but



when people resell tickets, they rank up the price by more than necessary.

They take advantage of the high demand for tickets along with the limited number of tickets. Adele concerts; for example, had tickets that were sold or resold for up to thousands of dollars. Some of the thousand dollar seats weren't even good!

Another factor for why prices are rising is technology fees, websites such as *Ticketmaster* and *SeatGeek*, where you buy tickets will charge extra fees

usually called "service fees" or "process fees." This can cause a \$75 ticket to go up to \$100 just with these fees. *Ticketmaster* charges a 40% fee at most when buying tickets.

This is supposedly to cover the cost of the buying platform, although many fans feel like it is just a way to get them to spend more money. With all of these reasons in mind and as concert tickets continue to rise, will going to a concert become something for more of a wealthy class to go to? 🍷

# Paris Games plagued by scandal and unrest

Olympics, from page 1

letes. There was also mention of a lack of privacy when it came to changing clothes; some rooms had no curtains to cover the windows. The cardboard beds that were originally seen in the Tokyo Olympic Games have returned as well. These beds have been criticized by many athletes as they say the beds are uncomfortable and fragile.

In an interview with *Newsweek*, a Spanish gymnast, Ana Perez, says, "The beds are very hard. Terrible. Very, very hard. We arrived so tired that in the end, you just lie down and fall asleep immediately."

Simone Biles, the famous U.S. gymnast, even came out and stated that "the bed sucks." Athletes also had to go without air conditioning in the middle of Paris's hot summer. The Olympic Village was not built with air conditioning, but instead, a water-cooling system was built under the village, but it did not work the way it was planned. Many athletes took it into their own hands and brought portable air conditioning units into their rooms to combat the heat.

The food that was served at the Olympic Village seemed far from 5-stars. Athletes complained about the menu being 60 percent vegan, which gave many whose diets include meat a hard time getting the nutrition they sought. According to a French publication, *L'Equipe*, higher protein foods such as eggs and meats were rationed, which led to more complaints about small, unfilling portions of food. The reasoning for all of this has been stated by the organizers in Paris to be "eco-friendly."

Something that is *eco*, but isn't very *friendly*, is the Seine River – infamous for being one of the most polluted rivers in France. Swimming in it has been illegal for over 100 years due to the amount of pollution. France decided that it would be a good idea to host the triathlon event in the Seine. According to Reason, when the river water was tested before the race was to take place, the levels of E. Coli bacteria were 20 times higher than what is considered acceptable and safe. Despite the extremely high levels, the triathlon still took place and had athletes swimming in highly polluted water. Shortly after the triathlon concluded, eight athletes reported falling ill.

According to the news site *Tortoise*, Ireland's Daniel Wiffen fell ill with a viral gastrointestinal infection after swimming in the triathlon. Belgium's Claire Michel was hospitalized with E. Coli just a day after her event. Three German and Swiss athletes also fell ill after their event. The Paris organizing committee said it was "not aware of any established link" between athletes getting sick and the Seine River's water.

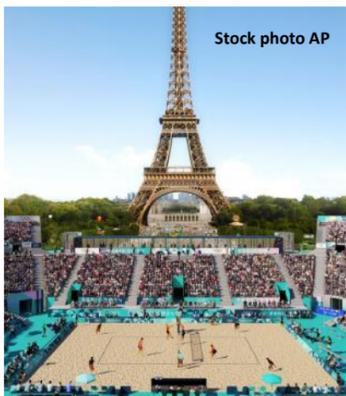
Dutch volleyball player Steven van de Velde, who was convicted of raping

a 12-year-old girl in 2014 (according to CNN) was allowed to participate in this year's Olympic Games, causing a roar of controversy. Van de Velde reached round 16 with Matthew Immers, his teammate, before losing to Brazil. During every game van de Velde played, he was booed. Many could question what was going through the Netherlands' officials' heads allowing a rapist to represent their country. Van de Velde has come out and stated that "...I'm not the person I was 10 years ago." In an interview with Dutch national broadcaster NOS, van de Velde admitted that he had moments where he wanted to quit, but he refused to allow the power of others to bully him away.

From the get-go, this year's Olympic Games were causing controversy. The opening ceremony caused an uproar, with a short clip showing a depiction of drag queens, that at first seemed to be recreating Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper," but later was said to be the "Feast of Dionysus," two similar paintings.

Many conservatives and Christians were quick to say the scene was an offensive parody of the "Last Supper." The depiction had a woman in a silver halo in the middle of a long table surrounded by drag queens.

Then, a nearly naked man painted blue comes onto screen and begins



Stock photo AP

singing, and afterwards everyone at the table starts dancing. The French Bishops Conference said, according to *USA Today*, that the scene was a "mockery and derision of Christianity." The artistic director of the opening ceremony, Thomas Jolly, insisted that the scene did not represent the Last Supper, but rather the Pagan celebration with the Greek god, Dionysus. Jolly said the scene was not meant to be "subversive or shock people or mock people... the Last Supper was not my inspiration...The idea was to have a Pagan celebration connected to the gods of Olympus."

Even with Jolly apologizing, many still found the depiction disrespectful. When the closing ceremony concluded, the Paris 2024 Olympic Games could be deemed a mess throughout. Organizers can only hope for a better and more put-together competition in 2028. Good luck, Los Angeles. 🍷

## 'Ride the Wave' into 2025



Our Reflections Yearbook staff for 2025: (in front) Kailee Meckes, Abby DeCastro; (back, l-r) Addison Smith, Reece Repsher, Mylz Miller, Ambrielle Dougherty, Nae Silverio, Sam Mack, Elizabeth Wells, Morgan Smith, Amyah Fisher, Courtney Gutai, Savannah Kast.



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# Embracing individuality in a world of conformity

By Nicole Singh  
Contributing Writer

Learning to become your own person may be more difficult for some than others. You may feel the need to act and have certain interests to fit into the way those act around you.

Tending to question whether or not you do something because you truly enjoy it or do it to satisfy the expectations of others. You may find an idol and become a clone of them, thriving off their validation.

Why is this? Is it adherence to what we are used to, how we were raised to see “normalcy”? Being different is seen as a flaw with this a need for being included and feeling a sense of belonging forms because of the hatred of judgment one may get from being different. Does your life satisfy you as it is now? Are there changes you want to make? Items, people, or habits you’ve been longing to get rid of? Your environment—things you surround yourself with make you who you are.

When you adapt to a lifestyle where you try to fit in, you lose any individuality you may have had. Why is it so hard to detach from derogative people? By having this idolizing attachment to them, it creates a trauma bond and low self-esteem. Social norms play a big part in fearing the unknown and the uncertainty of how they can affect you.

Lacking a proper support system can make you feel trapped in this unhealthy situation, and cause you to not know if you will thrive or flourish by breaking free from these people. You may be craving and thriving off the validation from the wrong people and wanting to constantly please them. Dealing with the aftermath of the fallout might keep these people in this type of

environment, not wanting to feel the discomfort and rationalizing the situation. Finding a supportive environment can cause one to change and break free.

Personal reasons may cause imposter syndrome. Doubting yourself is a sign of lack of confidence, which may lead to comparing yourself to others. Watching others obtain higher goals and accomplish big achievements can cause envy. Basing someone off their achievements and what you observe does not ensure the exact reflection of a person.

The perspective you have of that person’s mind or life is limited. Everyone has a path destined for them that is unique in their own way.

You lose the satisfaction of realizing your accomplishments big or small, having a lack of gratitude. Real self-growth comes from building internal qualities and focusing on your own goals can get rid of low self-esteem.

Social media, consumerism, influencers, etc. give us an idea of how we should look and buy, how it’s acceptable to act, and things that are deemed as “corny” universally. It is such a belittling word to those who act out of social norms.

People have different interests and embracing these differences rather than

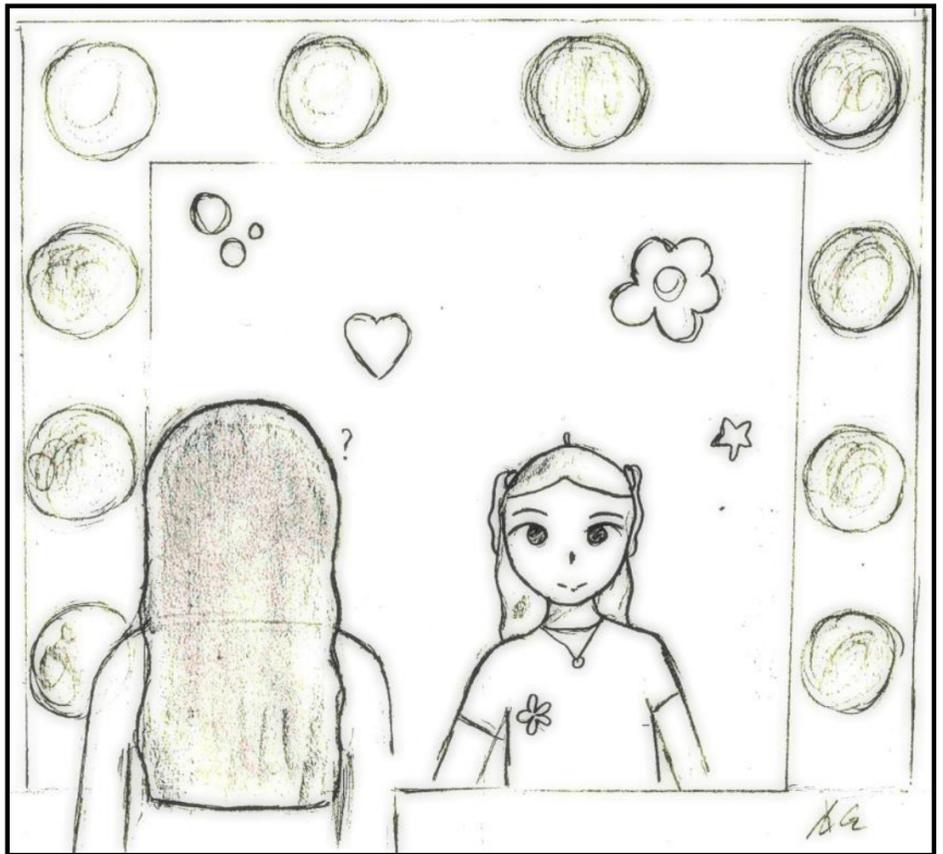
shaming them can help someone accept themselves. Yes, you may find it off-putting, but if it makes someone happy then no one should be humiliated based on their preferences of living and interest.

Individuality is meant to differentiate us from one another, whether it’s unique traits or our own experiences that we grow from.

Embracing it not only shows a sense of contentment with ourselves, but also

contributes to having different perspectives in life. As cultural norms start to take over the modern world, it’s important that we know who we are and to respect one another’s differences.

We connect on a deeper level when we try to connect with those around us rather than shaming or following them. We grow together in potential growth and progress with each other when we learn to accept one another. 🌸



## How horse riding boosted my confidence and well-being

By Kristiana Callaby  
Contributing Writer

About a year or two ago, I started going to horse riding lessons, which I do admit were out of some jealousy towards a girl in my class at the time. However, in all honesty, I don’t regret my decision, and since then my reason for taking them has largely changed.

I can admit that doing it for as long as I have certainly helped me with getting out of the house, even if I didn’t want to, and it mentally helped me. Being around animals like horses has taught me a few things that can also apply to things outside of horse riding shockingly.

The same thing goes with horse riding itself. I’ve learned to better control my emotions and not give up as easily as I used to, even if I fail at something multiple times in a row, along with helping me gain better patience and even earn higher confidence in myself when it comes down to things.

There have even been confirmed facts that spending time around animals of all sorts, usually house pets, releases “happy hormones”, or in other words oxytocin and serotonin. Even things like counseling sessions can be some-

thing horses aid in, typically called animal-assisted therapy, to help people feel less stressed or overwhelmed.

I would also say it teaches you to be more mindful, and it is even a great form of exercise for the core and especially legs. My physical health has also improved thanks to horse riding.

Getting to be active and let out energy productively is to be honest, amazing, if I were to describe it.

This may be something just for me as well, but caring for horses as well makes me feel much better whenever I’m feeling depressed, mostly because it doesn’t involve social skills. Also, doing chores and activities that help make things easier for others makes me happy myself, and also because it helps the horses.

One thing is for certain, and that’s been my improvement since participating in equestrian, even if it can get tiring sometimes or scare me, it feels wonderful to have that thrill from training.

It’s similar to a pick-me-up, just a bit more expensive and also very draining once all is said and done. But I love it, and how things have changed for the better since starting it. 🌸



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EDITORIAL

# Find a Way to Feed

*NLSD should be commended for again providing free breakfast/lunch to students. Until Bill 180 is decided, other districts need to jump on board.*

In a commendable move, Northern Lehigh School District is again providing free breakfast and lunch to all its students. This initiative is more than just a meal program; it's a significant step forward in ensuring the nutritional well-being and academic success of all Bulldogs.

In an email sent to district parents near the end of summer, NL Food Service Director Nichole Fink wrote, "The [NL] Food Service Department is happy to announce that breakfast and lunch for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year will once again be free of charge through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) which is part of the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs."

Pennsylvania House Bill 180 – which still simmers unwatched the stove – would introduce a universal school meal program and establish an accompanying fund to pay for the food. Such a program would cost the state an estimated \$290 million, but it's an investment that would help teachers spoon-feed more knowledge in the classroom.

Students with access to healthy meals (yes, even Bulldog Bowls) are better equipped to focus, learn, and participate in school activities. Nu-



Evan German and Reece Johnson unwind with a lunch at no cost.

Photo by Ella Taylor

two meals a day for children can be a considerable strain, especially for those with multiple school-age kids. For moms, dads, grandparents, and others working long hours or juggling various jobs, the peace of mind that comes with knowing their children have access to nutritious meals at school is immeasurable.

This program removes one more worry from their daily lives, allowing them to focus on other critical responsibilities.

In a letter welcoming back faculty and staff, Superintendent Dr. Matthew Link wrote, "We were the first district in the area to transition to the Community Eligibility Program, and I am proud to say that our commitment to ensuring every student has access to a nutritious meal year-round has been solidified well into the future."

Other districts need to find a way to make this happen. With full stomachs and empty trays, we commend the NL administration for pushing this through for another year.

If the state does not help by passing a universal free-lunch bill, other districts need to find a way to feed. 🌱

merous studies have shown that children who eat breakfast perform better academically, have improved concentration, and exhibit fewer behavioral problems.

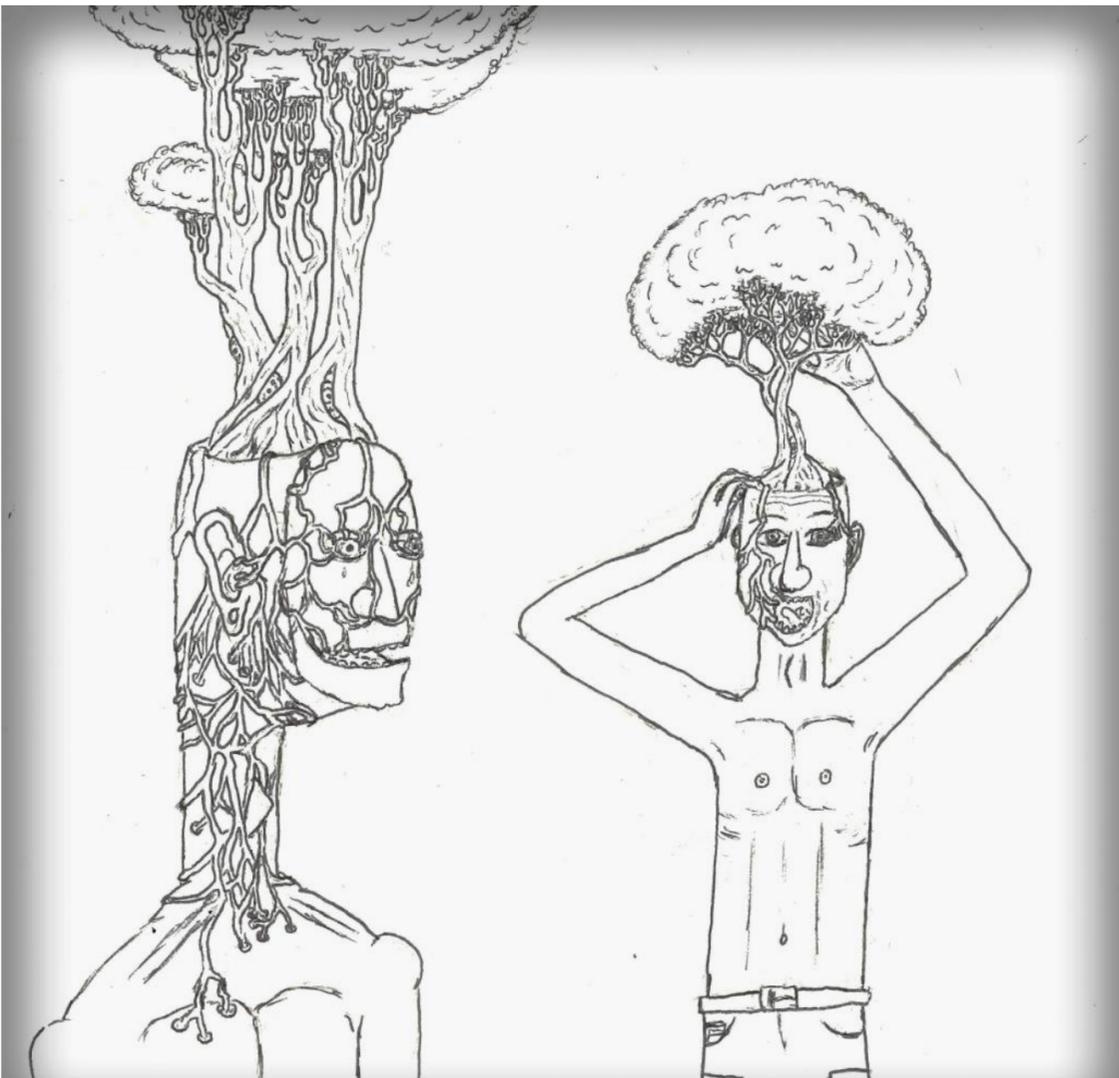
Consider the parents' perspective. Not having to worry each night about preparing food for the fol-

lowing morning, or if the kids remembered it before hopping on the bus. Lunch would be one less thing to worry about in an ever-evolving worrisome year.

In today's economic climate, many families struggle to make ends meet. The cost of providing

## Where Is Your Tree?

By Preston Miller



"What is a tree but a stalk of growth and wisdom, a gnarled and twisted trunk paired ancient arms stretching towards unimaginable height and thick roots engrossing and encapsulating the soil of our minds."

## First 'Slate' summer issue coming in July

For decades, The Slate has published its issues during the school year and then closed up shop when the June summer days began.

This year, we will be unleashing five packed issues while school is in session; but saving the sixth Slate for the summer months, to be released near July 4th.

You all need something to read by the pool, at the beach, or in the hammock. We got you covered.

While pondering ideas to personalize her stint as editor in chief, Lacey Groover thought of a summer issue.

"I want there to be a platform where we have the opportunity to include more summer activities that go on closer to the very end of the school year," she said. "The gap between the last issue of the Slate and the first one of the new school year should have a proper bridge that can conclude one year and commence a new one."

This year's graduation and prom photos will be included as well. Enjoy our five Slates in-season, and then save some time for us in July.



Northern Lehigh High School  
1 Bulldog Lane  
Slatington, PA 18080  
theslatenews@nlsd.org



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**Lacey Groover**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

**Sarah Garcia**  
COPY EDITOR

**Andi Szwast**  
SPORTS EDITOR

**MANAGING ADVISER**  
Mr. Christopher Barnes

**STAFF WRITERS, ARTISTS,  
PHOTOGRAPHERS, GRAPHIC DESIGNERS**

Alondra Gonzalez, Aubrey Reinhard, Sam Mack, Mylz Miller, Patrick Conway, Nicole Singh, Madilynn Husack, Morgan Smith, Ada Porobenski, Ella Taylor, Sarah Guth, Kyra Grabowski, Sarah Costabile, Brooke Glaze, Preston Miller, Patience Nitz, Kristiana Callaby

@theslatenews

theslatenews@nlsd.org

# Cutting through the noise

*How misinformation and slander have turned elections into a battle of deception*

By Patrick Conway  
Slate Columnist

Elections aren't fun. There's no sugar-coating it. A significant group of American independents such as myself don't like the time surrounding elections.

The amount of advertisements and slander campaigns to win votes make candidates and normal people considerably more hostile in their discourse. People normally united as friends or family but divided by party are expected by politicians to turn against one another, and some oblige and ruin relationships with one another. The election process is very trying for American society.

As toxic as election season is, it's a necessary process for Americans. Democracy is not free, and there is a price to pay to protect our rights. At this point in our country's history, the price is not very extreme-- no need for violence or loss of life to protect our country's institutions.

In peaceful times like these, politicians feel inclined to make the appearance that our democracy is at stake. Politicians push large bills to solve small, irrelevant issues, and candidates mislabel their opponents and their policies to take office. These things create a toxic political environment in America, alongside our limited ability to select viable candidates.

This sort of phenomenon has highlighted this election as an important one -- arguably one of the most important of the 21st century so far, and has become very hostile as a result. Beyond the surface appearance, however, the election isn't much different from usual elections-- at the end of the day, the election is just two candidates from the same two parties which seem very separated politically from our small worldview, but in reality hold ideas which generally don't differ much and are influenced by lobbyists and business above all.

As normal, the election primarily focuses around the Democrat and Republican candidates. In a relatively rare circumstance, there is no direct, eligible incumbent running for reelection, as Democrat Biden dropped out of the race last July. Instead, his vice president and running mate, Kamala Harris, has taken over the campaign and is running alongside Tim Walz, governor of Minnesota. Republican candidate Donald Trump previously served a term, but lost the election as an incumbent. This year he's decided to run again alongside

Ohio's junior senator JD Vance.

Both candidates have very publicized platforms which most politically active Americans will know about. What causes the widespread uncertainty about this election is the increasingly severe slander campaigns being put out by both sides. Political advertising has evolved above simple persuasion, and has instead gone to illogical extents using propaganda tactics to attack the opposing party.

This is causing misinformation and

regards to immigration, displaying her pragmatism and defeating these claims of radicalism and blind idealism.

On the other hand, Republican Donald Trump is not a fascist, and he does not aim to be a tyrant. The Harris campaign has highlighted Project 2025 as a plan by Trump to destroy American democracy and take away key rights that Americans have.

Trump has not endorsed this plan, and was not even a major proponent in its creation. Though Trump does sup-

However, when looking at the actual goals of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump from an objective standpoint, it begins to shift into a more realistic perspective. This election isn't a fight against socialism or fascism, but another election against two candidates that aren't as far separated as you may think -- either way you are voting for a rich politician that may claim to support you and your affiliations, but in reality does not care very much.

The slanderous misinformation



misunderstandings about both candidates. There are things to clear up specific to the advertising.

Firstly, the Democratic candidate Kamala Harris is not a socialist. Kamala Harris, though definitely having left-leaning policies compared to Republicans and moderates, is considered by political analysts to be a pragmatic and moderate democrat, similarly to the current president Joe Biden.

What makes Harris look more left-leaning is slander from Republicans, who outline her as a lazy, leftist prosecutor who is unable to push any legislation across. Ironically, many leftists have also insulted her character, especially targeting her prior career as a prosecutor and her "right-wing" actions in that position.

Harris does take more liberal stances in relation to American politics, but has begun to shift her positions to even more moderate ones, especially in re-

port some of the base ideological ideas the plan suggests be implemented, he does not endorse giving the executive branch more power than it already has. Instead, he supports basic conservative and capitalist policies. It may be a stretch to call him a moderate in his party, but he certainly isn't the most extreme in his party.

Many are misled by political statements being made by both campaigns this election season, and as a result has caused many partisans to stop supporting their native party's candidate. There is not so much support for one's own candidate than distaste for the opposition in American politics, and though criticism of another candidate is perfectly fine in a campaign, it is bad when it is made of half-truths and baseless lies. It becomes even worse when legitimized by the public and media.

Many analysts and media outlets have deemed this a high-stakes election.

coming from both major parties this election has made a great case for voting this year, but how should you be handling this election and making your choice?

The most important thing to consider is voting with your own opinions. Of course, using information to create your decision is fine, but make sure you remain careful about what you consume. When you first start using propaganda as justification for your vote, it is hard to determine what is true and what is untrue, and will inevitably make you more of a radical than your candidate probably ever will be.

Verify your sources, do research with reliable sources, and use your ideas to make your vote. It's easy to fall into the trap of propaganda, but remaining mindful and rejecting and ignoring the misinformation in the media will create a fair election and environment not just this year, but for many years to come. 🐾

## Bulldog Crossword Pawzle



Crossword grid with 15 numbered squares for clues.

### Across

- 4. Mr. Lehtonen's hope for Super Bowl champs
- 5. Where students hone their trades and crafts
- 8. Mrs. Lilly's cat's name and a Vin Diesel character
- 9. Slate editor last name
- 10. This club "has your back."
- 12. Strohl and Stoll are examples of this ELA term
- 13. "Just Walk Away \_\_\_\_\_" famous song / Ms. Scheckler's middle name
- 15. Before she was a "Bali"

### Down

- 1. These teachers' first concert was Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_)
- 2. Ms. Cappucino, a Bulldog now, had this mascot in college at DeSales
- 3. Keeping the music going for Mr. Carroll
- 4. Our Bulldog's identity
- 6. Club responsible for hoisting Old Glory
- 7. Where Ren McCormack "cut loose" last year
- 11. Ladies of the gridiron, coming in November
- 14. "Just in the \_\_\_\_\_ [Sander] of time"

Answers on page 14

# Remember when? A look back at the Class of '24



Jessica Erking.

Photos courtesy of Reflections Yearbook



Steven Blodget Nunez.



Mr. Andy Kern and Mr. Nick Sander.



Cadence Whalen, Zoe Edwards, Emma Wensing.



Dean Frear



Bella Heintzelman (right) and



Jalyn Lesh.



Ayden Scanlon.



Bailey Smith.



Kasia Dos Santos and Savannah Elchami.



Jack Tosh.



Daisy Richards.



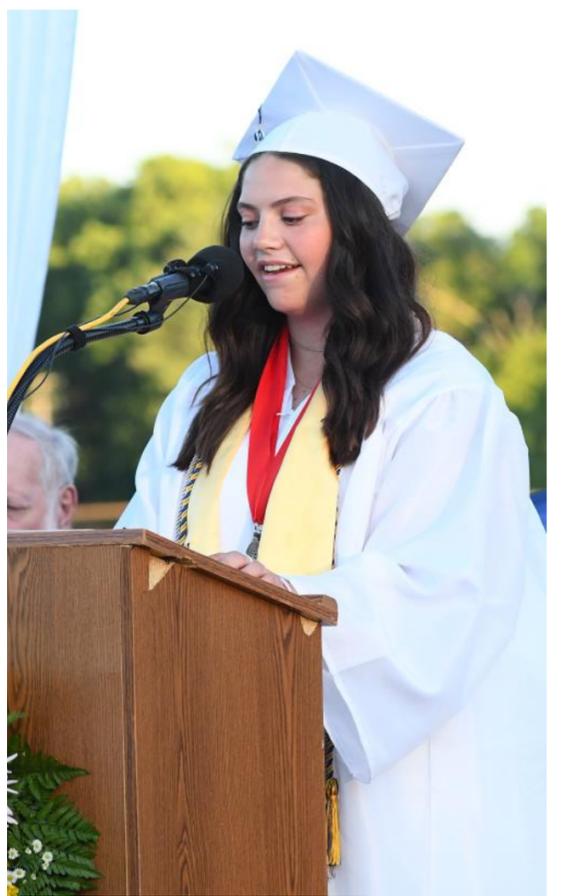
Brayden Arnold and Eli Pagan Acosta.



Avery Diaz.



Delaney Szwast.



Kaitlyn Stock.

# SPORTS

ISSUE 1 OCTOBER 2024 PAGE 9



Photo by Lifetouch  
Kyle O'Connell protecting the score for his team.

## Kickoff to Greatness

*Under new coach, boys soccer hopes for championship run*

**By Andi Szwest**  
Sports Editor

The boys soccer season has begun, and they are setting the bar high for achievements. "Boys Varsity Soccer this year have many hopes and goals," says head coach Tristan Moore. "Led by 4 captains, seniors Matt McCarty, Logan Berfield, Michael Wilk, and junior Ethan Moore, we hope to achieve a spot in the districts for the 3rd year in a row.

With this, we moved up to 2A from 1A, which makes the challenge all the more special." The players also have many hopes for the outcome of their season.

Senior Logan Berfield shares, "I hope that everyone stays positive and sees what a good team we've become within the past decade. I expect to have a positive record this season and to show everyone all the hard work we all put in during the offseason."

This season, Coach Moore has strong expectations of his players. He wants his team to keep moving forward, improving every day, and maintaining a positive culture. Senior Matthew McCarty believes in his teammates, stating, "I feel optimistic about the rest of this season and achieving our goal of a better record than last year." In addition to having their sights set on a spot in districts, the team is focused on developing their bond on and off the field. "We are a family," says Ber-

field. "When something goes wrong or [someone] goes through something we go through it as a team."

The boys soccer team has been introduced to a new playing style under the direction of Coach Moore, who asserts that this format has helped the team win games that have ended in narrow defeats in past seasons.

He also highlights the team's midfield, saying, "Our team strength is our midfield orchestrated by [Michael] Wilk, [Logan] Berfield and [Ethan] Moore. I cannot say enough about these three."

Coach Moore additionally praised sophomores Kellen Bauer and Kyle O'Connell: "Sophomores Kellen Bauer and goalkeeper Kyle O'Connell have stepped up for us tremendously this year on a team where, for the first time in years, [we] have had enough numbers to have a JV squad."

As the players continue to push towards achieving their goals, Coach Moore reflects on his team's past and future accomplishments, stating, "I hope people know that we are entering a new era in Boys Varsity Soccer.

Our feeder programs have continually put out skilled players, some of them excelling at travel. We will finish this year out strong and hope to have another postseason run in District playoffs." ❁



Photo by Lifetouch  
Zaid Salih.

## United for victory, aiming for playoff glory



Photos by Sam Mack  
(Clockwise) Chris Frame; Kaden Quinones, Grady Newhard, Kayden Novicki; Johnny David.

**By Andi Szwest**  
Sports Editor

This August, the Bulldog football program returned to the stadium for another season of dedication, perseverance, and triumph.

This season, the team has found strength in its offensive and defensive players. “Much like other years, we are excelling in a grinding offense supported by a fast and physical defense,” says senior Joshua Haldaman. Head coach Joseph Tout comments, “We have good team speed, and now we are much more diverse offensively. We have good leadership with Ayden Oswald taking on different roles and being a leader in those roles.”

In addition to Oswald, Tout also notes seniors Landon Moll, Eli Grady, Cyrus Kinchen, Reese Lipsky, Zane Roth, Brody Sterner, Noah Herring, and Isaac Raber; juniors Nathaniel Kuhns, Grady Newhard, Adam Neff, and Ethan Grozier; and sophomores Christopher Frame, Colin Karetsky, Garrett Smoyer, Ryan Zambo, and Billy Slattery.

For the first time in quite a few years, the football team has a female member—Anna Trelease.

“Anna has been a good fit and a good teammate,” says Tout. “I believe she will be the first person to tell you that she just wants to play football and doesn't care

about being the only female on the team. She is a true football player, and I wish all of our players were as committed to the sport as she is.”

With a roster full of talent and potential, the team hopes to make it through the playoff season. Tout's goals for the team include winning their division in the Colonial League, qualifying for district playoffs, and making their way to and winning the District XI AA championship game. “We want to win the district championship and play through December,” affirms senior Brody Sterner.

Tout is looking forward to seeing the team unite towards a common goal. “One of my biggest concerns was that our team was not united in the off-season, and we've spent a lot of time team building,” he says. “I believe we have better teammates than we did last spring.” However, the

players simply want to experience the game with their teammates. Sterner states, “I'm most looking forward to winning out the season and playing with my guys.”

As a unified team, the Bulldogs will tackle the rest of their season in the next few months, aiming to extend it for as long as possible and playing in as many playoff games as they can.

**Turn the page for more photos.** 🐾



## Boys soccer kicks off another great season



Matt McCarty.

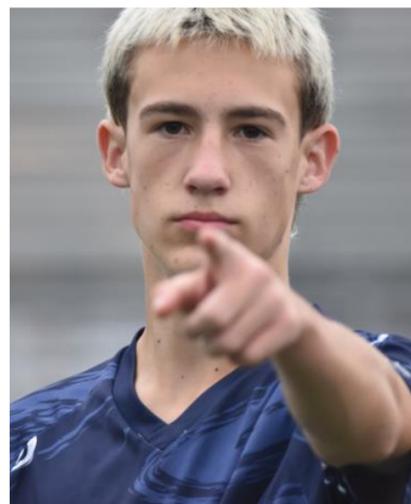
Photos by Sam Mack



Coach Moore and Michael Wilk.



Landon King.



Dregan Millroy.

## Kings of BLUE MOUNTAIN



Photo by Mr. David Hauser

The Bulldogs took the battle of Blue Mountain, over Palmerton.



Photos by Sam Mack



(Clockwise) Garrett Smoyer, Noah Herring, Logan Berfield.

Chris Frame, Ryan Zambo, Colin Karetsky, Ethan Grozier.



Photos by Sam Mack.



Cyrus Kinchen.



Kaden Quinones.



Eli Grady.



Kayden Novicki and Mason Rothrock.



Brody Sterner.



Ayden Oswald.



Landon Moll.



Colin Karetsky.



Anna Trelease.

# Hiking a path to victory

*Football players' bonding fuels success on and off the field*

**By Morgan Smith**  
Staff Writer

Our football team is dedicated to working together to make sure they win.

On Saturday, July 30th, members of the varsity football team, and coaches, opted to take the time out of their Saturday morning to go for a hike. They hiked the steep, narrow trail off the shoulder of the Lehigh Gap Nature Center in Slatington – a grand total of five miles in the blistering heat on a very rocky terrain.

This journey was completely optional, which shows the players' grit and determination toward winning, and how much they care and love the sport they play.

As another form of team bonding, the Bulldogs also have team dinners every Thursday before a game. They get together to eat a carb-loaded meal, provided by the moms of the senior boys, as they prepare for their game the next evening.

Head coach Mr. Joseph Tout said, "Our team had mentioned to our speed training coaches Kerri Jahelka and Sage Nalesnik that they would like to do a team hike at the end of our summer sessions. We planned a hike on the Blue Mountain and it went well. I think anytime you can be with a group outside of your normal setting it allows you to bond. In the case of our team and coaches. We typically see them at practices and in school. This gave



Before the school year commenced, members of the football team got together to bond up a mountain.

See Hike, page 15

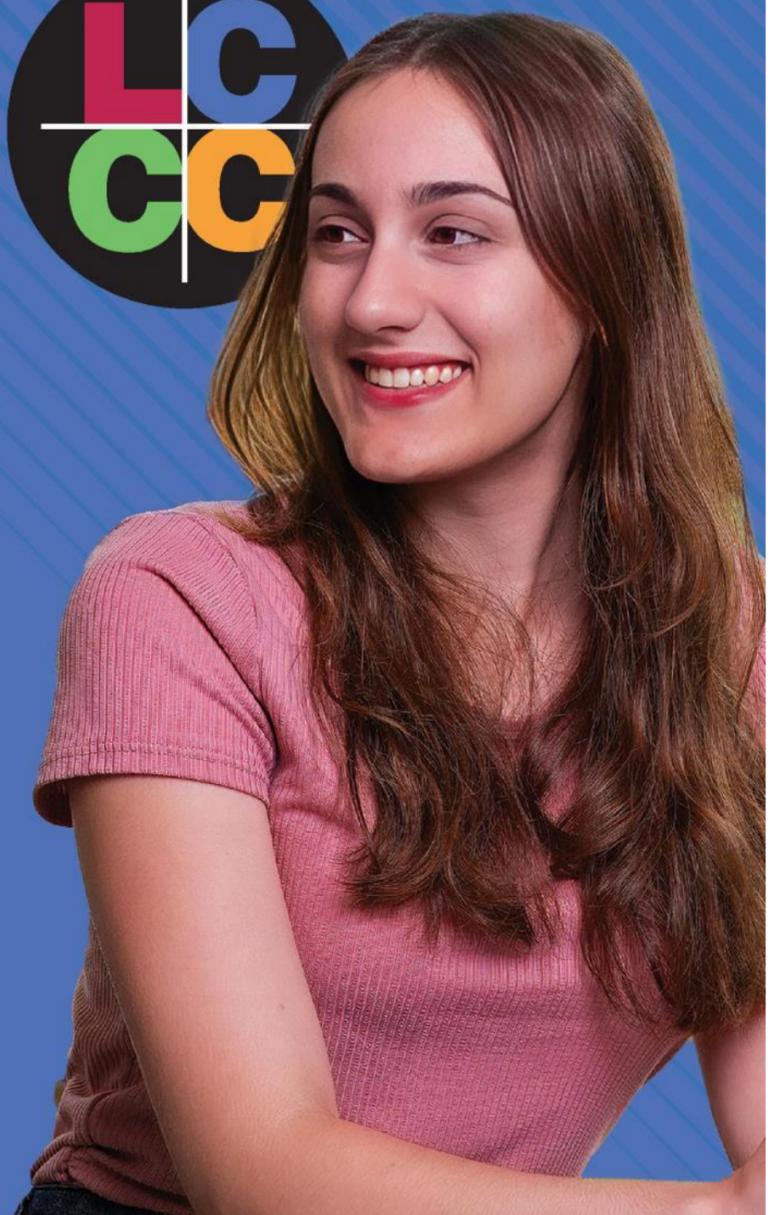
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## Determined girls soccer on the rise

By **Andi Szwast**  
Sports Editor

This season, the girls soccer team returns with a passionate and determined crew of players. Head coach Mr. Jason Reinhard highlights senior captains Katelynn and Dekotah Barthold, Mikayla Gordon, Gabriella Hanna, and Katya Pesesko.

While playing at Tamaqua Area High School on September 14th, Katelynn became the first player in school history to score 100 goals throughout her career. "Dekotah is the school's all-time leader in wins," adds Reinhard.

Throughout the season, the girls have faced some challenges, most notably a transition from the 1A bracket to the 2A one, another first for Northern Lehigh. Senior Gabriella Hanna says, "This made us have to play bigger and better teams we weren't familiar with yet, but we had to adjust and it didn't take long to regain our confidence."

Senior Katya Pesesko reflects on previous challenges that the team had to overcome: "Our team has gone through many ups and downs over the years with countless season-ending injuries and very tough losses. Through it all, we have always stayed extremely determined to succeed as a team. We worked very hard during the preseason to prepare for this year and it shows."

Setting yet another record for the Northern Lehigh girls soccer program, this year's team defeated Southern Lehigh at their game

on September 10th. This was a huge accomplishment for the team, and it became a turning point for the girls' season.

Hanna shares, "Winning the Southern Lehigh game was, what I believed, what we needed as a team. We were going through a rough patch during our season and defeating them not only made the girls more confident but also created a sense of unity like never before in this season."

In the face of their current achievements, the team strives to push even harder, aiming to land a spot in district playoffs while continuing to progress their skills and teamwork.

Reinhard says, "Our goals are to qualify for leagues and districts and to improve every day while having fun playing the game [the girls] love."

Sharing similar expectations to those of her coach, senior Mikayla Gordon states, "I hope that we can have a winning record this year and avoid long-term injuries."

With their goals in mind, the Bulldogs are looking forward to continuing to develop as the season progresses. "I look forward most to seeing the girls grow as players and as young ladies," shares Reinhard. Hanna reflects on her teammates and the future of their season: "There is so much talent and skill among the girls I share this sport with, and I am excited to see what the season holds for us. I wouldn't want to do it with anybody else." 🐾



Photos by Lifetouch

(Clockwise) Katya Pesesko and Katelynn Barthold; Dekota Barthold; Alexa O'Connell.

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## Marching Band



“The Marching Band has kicked off the 2024-2025 season with a busy start, football games, competitions, fundraisers, and pep bands! The Northern Lehigh Marching Band took 1st place in their first competition of the season - fingers crossed for more to come!

The Marching Band plans to keep moving forward to take 1st place in more competitions as the season progresses. Our show is soon to be complete and we can't wait to share it with others! As marching band ramps up, concert band also sneaks in to the scene. This year, combined middle school and high school concert band has more members than in recent years and we can't wait to keep growing - strength in numbers!! Stay tuned for Jazz Band, Percussion Ensemble, and a Mystery Ensemble to make their appearances this fall/winter!

I am so excited for what's to come for the bands this year! Let's be great!”  
- Director Ms. Mikayla Vangelo

## Fall Cheer

“For the 3rd year in a row, Northern Lehigh Cheerleaders in grades 7-12 had the opportunity to attend a UCA camp, where they learn new sideline cheers and dances, become credentialed as a squad in stunt safety and have the ability to try out to become an All-American cheerleader. Becoming an All-American cheerleader requires knowledge in the material taught, possessing a positive attitude with the instructors and the squad, along with demonstrating leadership skills within the squad. Our goal is to attend an away camp in 2025.

We've also created a different opportunity for the High School cheerleaders and NLYAA cheerleaders to perform a halftime performance during the youth night football game. The HS

cheerleaders had a chance to talk with the youth cheerleaders about their day, likes/dislikes and what they enjoy about cheerleading.

The cheerleaders are excited to start working on their homecoming routine, which will be performed during the pep rally and then at the Homecoming game, scheduled for Oct 4. This is an opportunity to show off their skills they have been working on all summer.

We are also excited to work as a Competitive Spirit squad again this year with our competition season starting in November and ending in January.



The squad works together to fine tune their skills and compete against other Spirit squads within our league and district, with the hope of making it to states.

I'm always looking forward to watching how the seniors lead their squad through games and develop their leadership skills throughout the season. This is my 3rd football season with the cheer squad and I enjoy watching the growth of all of the cheerleaders and the dedication they have to keep grades up, attend other clubs/sports/class functions and be a great support within the cheer family.”  
-Coach Michele Richards

## Field Hockey

“The coaching staff entered this season focusing on small gains. Our program is in a time of building, unfortunately due to a lot of coaching turnover throughout the past 4 years. So, we focused our summer pre-season workouts on going back to the fundamentals and have worked consistently throughout this season to build those in every game. Our coaching staff is happy to see the team's willingness to try new things and apply what we practice. We have been able to compete this season against teams that we have lost to and closed the gap on the overall ending score. We are proud of the sportsmanship our players show each and every game even when other teams don't show us the same. These players never



GIVE UP and they fight til the end which demonstrates their competitiveness, discipline, and drive.

We have a lot of talent on our team and we know that over the course of the next few years this talent will shine. We look to continue to work hard in the off season to grow in our field hockey IQ and skills by investing in playing more field hockey. I wouldn't trade our players for anything and we are proud of what they have achieved this season despite our record. It doesn't reflect the growth we have made and all the players should be commended for that.

Our season will end on October 9th with senior night!”  
-Coach Allison Chruscial

## Cross Country

“We just finished a busy stretch of meets, attending 3 invitationals - Moravian Academy, Northampton Invite, and the Desales University Invitational. These provide much larger fields of runners than our typical Colonial League meets - the Northampton Invite had big competition with 49 teams running!”

We seem to be continuing to get better. The girls varsity team started the season 3-0 and now has a record of 5-2.

The girls team is led by Emma Heil. She is coming off a big track season with a personal best in the distance events and running as part of the school record breaking 4x800 team. Emily Gad has been our #2 each meet. She seems very strong this year and will be a very good runner in the future. She is only a sophomore currently. Freshmen stepping up for us this year include Audriana Wertman, Sophia Fiorito, Mya DeSousa, and Rylie Scholl. They have done a great job working hard to adjust to the 3.1 mile distance (middle school is only about 1.5-2 miles). Our boys include Edward Benedict, Andrew Mohry, and Reece Johnson.

Our goals will focus on the end of the year with the Colonial League Championship Meet and District Championship Meet. We bump up to the AA



classification this year, so the competition will be tougher - Northwestern, Notre Dame GP, and Blue Mountain will be some of the top teams in the region.”

-Coach Michael Lehtonen



- 1. FireAndDrive 2. Bulldog
- 3. MissVangelo 4. Bruiser
- 6. Patriot 7. Footloose
- 11. PowderPuff 14. Nick

### Down

- 4. BuffaloBills 5. LCTI
- 8. Groot 9. Groover
- 10. Aevium 12. Homophones
- 13. Renee 15. Kuhns

### Across

### Crossword Answers

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# Footballers strengthen bonds up the mountain

Hike, from page 12

us an opportunity to do something different together and I think it was a positive enjoyable experience. There is research that indicates shared experiences tend to be more meaningful than those experienced individually.”

There are many factors that play a role in creating a great team; however, one of the key factors in a well-performing sports team is having everyone work together, much like a family. Our football team has performed so well in previous years because of their attitude towards each other. They made sure they were friends with their teammates, and treated everyone with respect and as equals.

When a team has this sort of connection they tend to play better because they trust one another. If a quarterback has trust in his linemen, then he can focus more on throwing the ball than about if he is going to be sacked or not. This ultimately takes a lot of pressure off of his back and gives him the ability to play the game he loves care-free.

Team bonding is so important because it improves the communication among the team, and helps build trust among team members. Once a team starts to build that trust in each other then they will start winning more games. In the end, all of the team bonding and hard work did pay off because the Bulldogs are currently 2-2. 🐾



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# You drink water and eat food. *So Read Me.*

*How corporate giants manipulate snack choices with processed foods and toxic chemicals*

By Mylz Miller  
Contributing Writer

As a society, when it comes to what we snack on, we don't have too many healthy alternatives. Marketing in the media has led people to believe that there are loads of nutritious options in grocery stores, but the truth is most food items or brands marketed as healthy are simply the same overproduced junk manufactured by corporations that use GMOs and toxic agricultural chemicals in our food.

Quaker Oats, Life Cereal, and Nut Harvest are all owned by PepsiCo, the same corporation that mass produces Lays, Cheetos, Doritos, and many more popular chip brands.

This is just one example of how monopolistic our food industry has become.

We know why chips such as Lays or Doritos are unhealthy to consume. They're processed foods that contain high amounts of sodium, sugar, and harmful additives like dyes and MSGs. MSGs, which are a sodium salt of glutamic acid, are linked with obesity, metabolic disorders, neurotoxic effects, and can be detrimental to reproductive organs.

Food dyes can cause migraines, allergic reactions, and can even damage DNA. But why are products like Life Cereal or Quaker Oats considered to be unhealthy? Industrial agriculture has used toxic fertilizers and pesticides to treat our crops, and what once could've been a healthy granola bar is now filled with carcinogens and life-threatening chemicals.

A study done in 2023 by the Environmental Working Group showed that in oat-based foods alone they found 92% of chlormequat, a chemical that is used for crop growth, but can disrupt fetal growth and cause harm to the reproductive system.

Glyphosate, an herbicide that kills weeds and grasses, is another big chemical used to treat our crops. It has been associated with respiratory effects, and developmental problems in animals. According to NBC News, nearly 300 million pounds of glyphosate were found to be sprayed on crops. For a bet-

ter understanding of how much is used, about 90% of corn and soybean crops are modified to be tolerant of glyphosate.

According to the ATSDR, Berkeley Public Health also wrote an article stating the levels of glyphosate residue in urine in adolescence and childhood



were associated with higher risks of liver inflammation and metabolic disorders as young adults. Some argue that in low doses glyphosate may not be harmful, but the amount regulated by companies throughout food industries is substantial. Kellogg's, General Mills, and Winland Foods are just some of the major companies that use these chemicals. General Mills and Kellogg's dominate the cereal aisles in American grocery store.

These chemicals in our food don't only affect our bodies, but our environment as well. According to USGS, Glyphosate is found to be a major water contaminant in U.S. streams and rivers. Yes, this means the water you drink isn't safe either.

Bottled water manufacturers have some problems of their own. BlueTriton Brand, once known as Nestlé Waters, is responsible for many bottled waters we know today such as Deer Park, Pure Life, Arrowhead, Poland Spring, Ice

Mountain, and others. This is yet another example of false individuality within the products we consume.

BlueTriton is a mass contributor to land pollution with 86% of plastic bottles ending up as garbage or litter. BlueTriton has also been known to infringe on local water supplies.

In one instance, after a drought in previous years, Maine attempted to rein in large-scale access to freshwater by passing a bill that put a seven-year limit on a contract for freshwater pumping for corporations that shipped water out of Maine. When the bill was on its way to the Maine legislature, BlueTriton struck the bill by saying, "It would make it unaffordable for any large-scale water purchaser, including Poland Spring, to invest in infrastructure and operations."

This is a common occurrence within the U.S. In Southern California, an environmental group is suing the U.S. Forest Service for allowing BlueTriton to pipe out water out of the San Bernardino National Forest.

They stated water extraction has caused a dramatic reduction in the flow of Strawberry Creek; therefore, causing serious environmental harm. BlueTriton sued to challenge that decision by claiming they are entitled to the water. According to an article released by Moun-

tain News earlier this year, the drainage of Strawberry Creek caused imperiled native fish to go extinct.

The Santa Ana speckled dace was a native fish that went extinct in 2003 due to a large part of spring water being removed. Even species like deer, songbirds, bears, and rare plants have been inadvertently affected by fresh water pumping.

Microplastics or plasticizers are another big issue in our water and food packaging. On average, bottled water contains about 60% more microplastic than tap water, and 84 out of 85 supermarket foods and fast foods tested in a study done by a consumer group contained plasticizers.

According to the National Institute of Health, a liter of bottled water contained about 240,000 tiny plastic pieces and 90% were nanoplastics. Phthalate, a chemical found in plastic, was found to have elevated levels in Cheerios, Gerber Baby, and Yoplait; all products that are manufactured by General Mills. Microplastics are horrible for humans.

They accumulate in different parts of the body and can cause things such as cancer, changes in hormone activity, inflammation, oxidative stress, lipid metabolism disturbances, neurotoxicity, and many other health related issues. Ingestion of these chemicals has gotten so bad that scientists have found the plastics in our brain, with an approximation of 0.5% of plastic by weight in our brain tissue. In another recent court dispute with BlueTriton, their statement on microplastics in their water was, "When simply breathing air puts you at risk for microplastics, it is unreasonable to assume your spring water won't have microplastics."

Companies and corporations across the board have more than enough money to make their products environmentally friendly, sustainable, and transparent.

However, due to a lack of media awareness and pushback from federal agencies, people are forced to succumb to ingesting garbage. It is important to bring awareness to consumers alike, and we must know what's being put in our bodies and fed to our minds. 🌱

## Underfoot: A Tiny Life in the Shadow of Giants

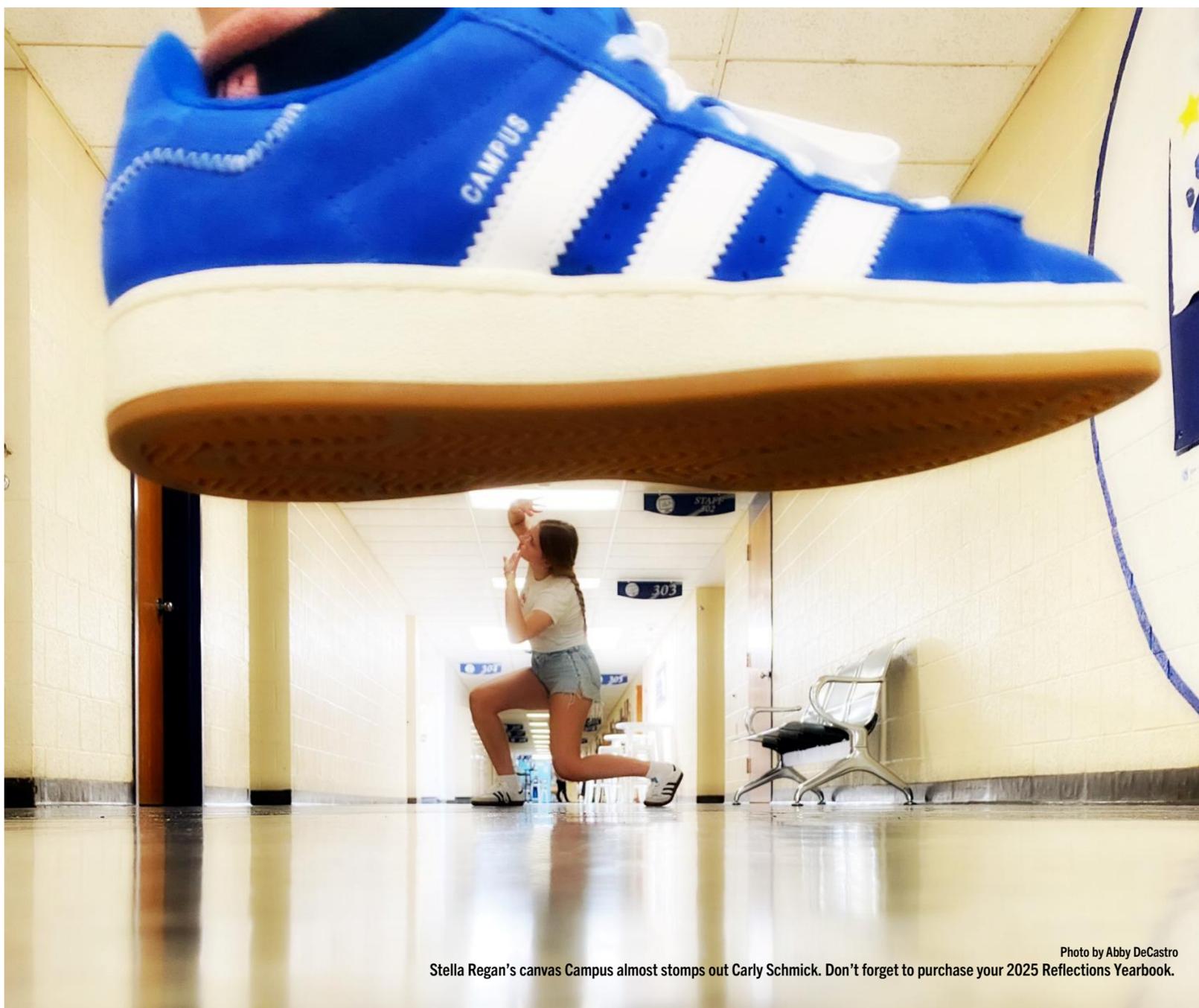


Photo by Abby DeCastro

Stella Regan's canvas Campus almost stomps out Carly Schmick. Don't forget to purchase your 2025 Reflections Yearbook.