

the **INDEPENDENT**

Volume XXXI Number 3

Manchester Essex Regional High School 36 Lincoln Street Manchester, MA 01944

December 16, 2024

New library task force evaluates district libraries

School evaluates, seeks to update learning commons

By Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In order to reevaluate the district's libraries, Superintendent Pam Beaudoin has created a Library Task Force composed of community members, according to a letter sent to the district.

The task force's creation comes amid changes in the learning commons. Principal Julie Sgroi said the group is exploring how to improve the space.

According to the letter sent by Beaudoin, the Library Task Force set goals to assess the district's current libraries, research other library practices, develop an understanding of the community's needs around the libraries, and create a plan to improve the libraries across the district.

The group includes educators, parents, school leaders, and representatives from the town's public libraries, Beaudoin wrote.

The task force held its first meeting on Nov. 20 and will continue to meet monthly throughout

the year, gathering to conduct research in small groups, Sgroi said.

Curriculum director Heather Leonard said she joined the Library Task Force because she recognizes the importance of libraries for student learning.

"It's often a place where groups meet or things happen before and after school, so it often feels like a good hub of a learning space," she said.

At their first meeting, the task force began to study other libraries, Leonard said.

"We're reading currently published pieces about libraries in towns and higher-ed and public schools," she said.

Leonard said she looks forward to meeting with students about their hopes for the library, a future step for the task force.

"I hope that in hearing from students, it can be a place that we're moving towards really meeting that wide range of needs, both for students and also the educators in the building," she said.

Sgroi said that at the beginning of the school year, she had planned for the library to be a more functional space.

"When we had hired our li-



WHITNEY TURNER PHOTOS

(Above) Juniors Maeve Coletti, Izzy Zagroski, and Teyah Fleming work in the learning commons while their teachers are out. The district's Library Task Force looks to improve and optimize libraries across the district. (Left) Library aide Gianna Baglioni monitors the space.



brary assistant, the idea was that the library would be used and be accessed more by middle and high school students who were using it as a library," she said.

The school's library assistant has since left. Sgroi said there is an ongoing search for a replace-

ment library assistant.

"We really would like someone who has some experience with working with students in a library setting," she said.

Currently, for the high school, the library is being used for study halls and as a place for students

to work when their teachers are absent.

Social studies department chair Lauren DuBois said that at the beginning of her 21 years at the high school, she used the library for research.

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NHS collaborates with Red Cross to organize blood drive

Looks to revive blood drive as school tradition

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students and teachers donated blood during the National Honor Society's (NHS) blood drive, run through the Red Cross. The drive renewed a pre-COVID annual tradition of students organizing a blood drive at the school.

The blood drive was held in the gymnasium on Nov. 19, with student volunteers from NHS checking donors in.

NHS communications director Fiona Flynn said the amount of donations exceeded their expectations.

"Our goal for appointments was 48, and we ended up getting 47 ... We were able to collect 43 units of blood, and we had a lot of people that were deferred, which means they're not eligible to donate. So overall, we did really



AUGUST CAPOTOSTO PHOTO

Junior August Capotosto donates blood during the first blood drive hosted by the National Honor Society since the pandemic.

well ... Our school average was only 29 last time," she said.

The amount of walk-in appointments for students who hadn't signed up before was impressive, NHS adviser John Herrick said.

"At 8:30, there were students already looking to be available for walk-ins ... And then at the

end of the day, we were actually turning people away ... We wish we could have opened it up to more," he said.

Herrick, who supervised and troubleshooted the event, said he was proud of the NHS officers' preparation.

"The NHS officers really stepped up, especially Fiona Fly-

nn, to not only manage the event but also take care of the actual day-to-day operations," he said.

Flynn, who donated blood in addition to running the event, said the phlebotomists, medical professionals drawing blood, were experienced and proficient.

"There were definitely times we wished we had more phlebotomists because we were turning people away, but we didn't expect how much interest we were going to get from the community," she said.

Social studies department chair Lauren DuBois, who donated blood, said having a blood drive within the school is a good way

to make it accessible and bring awareness to donating.

"It's nice that people are thinking about those other than themselves. This raised awareness that there are blood drives out there.

'It's nice that people are thinking about those other than themselves. This raised awareness that there are blood drives out there. Now the school population knows this is something that you can do.'

- LAUREN DUBOIS

Now the school population knows this is something that you can do ... hopefully students will continue to donate in the future and look for opportunities," she said.

Donating blood is important because it is the ability to give a literal piece of oneself, Herrick

said. "Students are literally giving blood to someone else. It's a pretty amazing process. And I was

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META shows support for teacher strikes in local towns

Strikes end after long negotiations, schools reopen

By Summer Demeo
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

During teacher strikes in Beverly, Gloucester, and Marblehead, the Manchester Essex Teachers' Association (META) showed its support by wearing "Red for Ed" and donating lunches and money, META president Keith Stefanek said.

The Beverly Teachers' Association strike lasted 12 school days, the Marblehead Education Association strike lasted 11 school days, and the Gloucester Teachers' Association strike lasted 10 school days.

According to the 7 News WHDH article, "Students return to school in Beverly, Marblehead after tentative agreements reached to end teachers strikes" by Eliza Kruczynski, the new teacher contract in Beverly includes salary increases for teachers, a 65% raise for paraprofessionals, increased tuition

reimbursement, and up to six weeks of paid parental leave.

The new contract for Marblehead teachers includes higher salaries, up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave, a safety committee, and an agreement that teachers who go on strike will not encounter retaliation, Kruczynski wrote.

According to the CBS News article "Gloucester teacher strike ends; students and teachers head back to school Monday" by Tiffany Chan and Tammy Mutasa, the Gloucester teacher contract contains an increased salary for paraprofessionals and teachers, paid parental leave, expanded benefits, and more.

While on strike, the three unions faced large fines. Stefanek said the META executive board sent information to union members about the strike funds and encouraged them to donate individually.

Additionally, he said the union later donated to all three unions from its own funds.

META secretary Vidula Plante said she informed members about volunteering in the towns to help the strikers.

Stefanek said META sent a pizza lunch to striking workers in Marblehead and wore "Red for

'The point of a union is to show solidarity with one another and to fight for fair and equal working conditions. It shouldn't be way different in Beverly than it would be here.'

-DAVID CONWELL



COURTESY OF KEITH STEFANEK

The Manchester Essex Teachers' Association (META) wore red for education, gathering in the middle school pod to show support for the teacher strikes in Beverly, Gloucester, and Marblehead.

Ed" to stand in solidarity with the striking teachers.

META vice president David Conwell said the Massachusetts Teachers' Association (MTA) organized statements of support for the striking towns, so META joined with other unions throughout the state to put one out.

With the statement, he said META and the MTA wanted to show that they support the striking unions.

"[The MTA is] organizing these statements to say ... we understand and respect their cause and their positions, and that we hope that the city and towns that they're bargaining with will continue to or will bargain in good faith," Conwell said.

He said he believes it is very important to show support for teachers on strike to promote unity and recognize the similarities between teachers across towns.

"The point of a union is to show solidarity with one another and to fight for fair and equal working conditions. It shouldn't be way different in Beverly than it would be here," he said.

High school co-building representative Jennifer Coleman also said showing solidarity with striking unions is important. She said it provides an opportunity to educate students and people in local communities on what goes into a teacher contract and why teachers go on strike.

"Going on strike is an extreme

thing to do. Teachers would much rather be in school with their students, so if they are willing to strike, you have to stand by them because they're doing it for a true reason and a true purpose," she said.

Plante said she is very grateful that the Manchester-Essex union was able to collaborate well with the administration at Manchester Essex when they were renegotiating their own contracts in 2023 as difficulty collaborating can sometimes be an issue during contract renegotiations.

"We're positioned in a way that we feel ... lucky to have a contract, but we also want people around us to have that same benefit," she said.

Sophomore girls win annual Anna Zerilli flag football tournament, beat juniors 15-8

Tournament named after Rockport student, former Hornets football kicker

By Annie Pinkin
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At the second annual Anna Zerilli Girls' Flag Football Tournament, the sophomores defeated the juniors by a touchdown, winning 15-8 sophomore Katie Crompton said.

The tournament took place on Nov. 28 on Hyland Field.

"Last year we lost in the first round, and we wanted to show people that the sophomores could win," Crompton said.

Their limited powderpuff experience did not hold them back from winning, she said. Many players had flag football experience, and the majority of the team played in the previous tournament, Crompton said.

"We had a lot of practices beforehand, which I know wasn't like the other teams," she said.

Unlike the sophomores, the juniors had one practice on the day of the tournament, junior Laila Mears said.

The seniors, who lost in the first round to the sophomores, held four practices, senior Sylvie



COURTESY OF CAMERON MOLINARE

The sophomore girls' flag football team gathers with their trophy after beating the junior team 15-8. The second annual flag football tournament took place on Nov. 28 at the Hyland Field.

McCavanagh said.

The freshmen held three practices prior to their preliminary loss to the juniors, freshman Tess Taylor said.

Going into the game, the strategy of the juniors was to "just try and win," Mears said.

They prevailed against the freshmen in round one, winning 28-26 but lost in the final round against the sophomore girls, she

said.

The sophomore win definitely included some controversy amongst the classes, with Mears and other juniors pointing out that their final touchdown should have been counted by the referees.

The juniors were optimistic going into the tournament, though, junior coach Charlie Thurlow said.

"We have a lot of athletic people and a lot of good athletes who make it easy to learn football," he said.

The practices mostly consisted of scrimmages and offensive plays, Mears said.

To the seniors, losing was disappointing, McCavanagh said.

"I think we kind of came together in sadness and helped lift each other up," she said. The team was playing without senior

quarterback Ella Arnsten, who was not available that day, McCavanagh said.

"Our big missing component was missing Ella Arnsten," she said, describing her as the "glue of the team."

Even though there can only be one winning team, players agreed that the tournament was very fun and engaging.

"It was fun for us to be able to do that all together," Mears said.

She said that they should have had more practice. However, they are now really looking forward to next year's tournament, Mears said.

The freshman team had only one player with flag football experience, but they put up a fight, only losing by 2, Taylor said.

"It was a good experience and team bonding exercise, and I think it got me closer with a lot of my friends," she said.

Prior to last year's tournament, the high school held a senior-run powderpuff game between the junior and senior classes, athletic

director Cameron Molinare said.

Since last year, both underclassmen and upperclassmen have had the opportunity to play in the tournament, Molinare said.

The tournament gets its name from the Rockport student and former 2015-2017 Hornets football kicker, Anna Zerilli, she said.

In a personal statement on the National Collegiate Scouting Association College Recruitment page, Zerilli said she became the first freshman female in America to score varsity points and broke the school's 60-year record for most points scored by a place-kicker in a single game.

The school honored Zerilli at last year's tournament during the pre-game ceremony, Molinare said.

"I wanted for it to have a bigger purpose and provide an opportunity for more students to be more engaged in the event," she said.

'It was a good experience and team bonding exercise, and I think it got me closer with a lot of my friends.'

-TESS TAYLOR

School hosts inaugural Mom Bowl flag football tournament

Tournament acts as fundraiser to support classes

By Annie Pinkin
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After beating the junior mothers, the senior mothers won the first Mom Bowl flag football title.

The tournament was held on Dec. 2 after being postponed due to the weather on Nov. 26., sophomore Katie Crompton said.

The tournament was a fundraiser for the four classes. Players paid an entry fee, and tickets were \$5, said organizer and social studies teacher John Mullady. He said the entry fees will cover Senior Week costs, and both the entry fee and ticket sales will be divided between each class.

The senior mothers gained possession with a first down in the final three minutes of the game, securing their 12-7 win, senior mother Marnie Lawler said.

“People on my side when I was playing defense really didn’t get through,” she said. Lawler said her lockdown

defense with Lee-ann Willwerth contributed greatly to their victory.

“I think it came down to one or two plays,” junior mothers’ captain Sarah Valeo said.

The junior mothers won 18-16 against the sophomore mothers in the first round.

“Everybody played and everybody contributed, so it was a real incredible team win,” Valeo said.

At the second game of

the night, the senior mothers prevailed against the freshman mothers, with an 18-12 win, freshman mothers’ captain Katie McClain said.

“I think we were a small but fierce team,” she said. The freshman mothers only had eight players, all playing the entire game, she said.

They did not have many opportunities to practice defense,



COURTESY OF TRACY BRENNOCK

Senior mothers pose with students after winning the championship game of the school’s first Mom Bowl tournament on Dec. 2. Social studies teacher John Mullady organized the fundraiser.

she said.

“I think our lack of defensive practice was our downfall,” McClain said. On the other hand, the senior mothers practiced and played strong defense, Lawler said.

“Our defense played zone instead of man, and I do think that helped a lot,” she said. Additionally, they performed successful fakes and an interception, Lawler said.

“We consistently had a lot of questions about the plays, but I guess we eventually figured them out,” she said.

The senior mothers were coached by John McCavanagh and captained by Emily McCavanagh, who later won the MVP award, Lawler said.

Junior Charlie Thurlow, a wide receiver and cornerback on the football team, coached the junior mothers’ team. He said they were

very passionate about learning football.

“They’re very excited, and that makes it easy to coach them,” he said.

Taking inspiration from Beverly High School’s “Mom Ball” softball tournament, Mullady said he wanted to hold a similar event at the high school.

“I think any chance you have to bring people together should be celebrated,” Mullady said.

National Honor Society inducts 39 juniors, seniors

By Sabine Cooper
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Thirty-nine new members were inducted into the Masonomet chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) on Dec. 10, said faculty adviser and main office administrative assistant Mary Lumsden.

Along with the new inductees, 44 of the current members are returning, she said.

At the induction ceremony, the speaker’s address was given by the social studies department chair, Lauren DuBois.

In her speech, she celebrated the accomplishments of the inducted students inside and outside the classroom, emphasizing the importance of the four pillars



COURTESY OF ZAC CARVALHO

Senior NHS officers Atticus Smith and Milo Zeltzer induct junior Laila Mears on Dec. 10. Inductees’ applications were reviewed by eight staff members, a stricter process than in recent years.

of NHS: scholarship, leadership, service, and character.

DuBois referenced several influential figures, such as Presidents John F. Kennedy and John Quincy Adams, to highlight the importance of curiosity, listening, and inspiring others.

Unlike last year, a teacher was not inducted as an honorary mem-

ber at the ceremony, senior NHS president Josh Cohen said.

“The general consensus among the group was that we would rather just honor the teacher speaker and focus on the student inductees, rather than complicating it,” he said.

The induction ceremony was run and coordinated by the NHS

officers seniors Cohen, Fiona Flynn, Milo Zeltzer, Charlie Rubens, and Atticus Smith, as well as the two faculty advisers, Lumsden and biology teacher John Herrick, Cohen said.

Herrick said he decided to advise NHS because he wanted to become involved in the school community.

“Knowing that I teach a bunch of the junior class through anatomy, it just felt like a natural role to fill,” he said.

Herrick said that he wanted to help the program build credibility.

One way the NHS faculty advisers did this was by creating a team of eight teachers and administrators who were involved in applications, he said. In previous years, this had been common practice.

“We had a diverse view on each student and how they’ve done in multiple classes,” Herrick said.

With the new group of inductees, Cohen said he has high hopes for the remainder of the year.

‘We’re putting a more professional touch to [NHS] by making the students accountable. The class officers this year are absolutely superb.’

- MARY LUMSDEN

“We really want to look at revitalizing the tutoring program ... and we’re also planning on hosting another blood drive in the spring,” he said.

Lumsden said another goal is to continue building the program and moving it in the right direction.

“We’re putting a more professional touch to [NHS] by making the students accountable. The class officers this year are absolutely superb. They are taking it very seriously. They go and they do it,” she said.

CONTINUATIONS

LIBRARY UPDATE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“We would bring classes up there to use the computers and do research on databases and learn how to do that,” DuBois said.

She said the use of the library changed since the school no longer has a librarian and research has become more digital.

“We had a librarian here who ended up retiring, and I think at that point, things kind of started shifting,” DuBois said.

She said that although students do more research online, she still thinks that having a librarian and library space to aid with questions

can be helpful.

Sgroi said her goals for the space include implementing technology and creating a casual gathering space for students.

“I see a lot of students studying either on their own or in small groups, and so I want to make sure we have ... the right setup ... to facilitate that,” she said.

Senior Meg Holsomback said she liked the idea of reorganizing the space and collaborating with the towns’ public libraries.

“I feel like it hasn’t been used to its full potential,” she said.

Holsomback said that while students do use the learning commons to study, it is often loud and chaotic, causing students to want

to leave.

“I think the outside tables are used a lot more than the inside tables,” she said.

Sophomore Johnny Garth said he and his peers don’t use the space often, other than when they have a teacher that is absent.

“Maybe it would be nice to have it be used for more activities or projects, just to kind of space people out,” he said.

By the end of the year, Sgroi said she anticipates that the Library Task Force will organize and develop a plan for the library.

BLOOD DRIVE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 just really thrilled that many stu-

dents stepped up and offered their time, their resources, and took interest in it,” Herrick said.

NHS community service director Atticus Smith, who assisted with organizing and donated blood, said the blood drive was a good endeavor for NHS to take on.

“Fiona proposed it, and it seemed like a good opportunity to help the community ... That’s what NHS is all about, helping as many people as possible in any way that we can,” he said.

Flynn said she would have changed several things if she could do it over again, including the number of available beds and phlebotomists, the communica-

tion, and the date, since a town meeting was held the night before.

“With the first run of any event, getting that communication down is always kind of difficult ... We could have publicized the importance of scheduling an appointment and bringing IDs,” she said.

The current NHS officers and adviser plan to continue the blood drive in the future and ensure that it continues as a school tradition, Herrick said.

“I think it’s an important tradition to consider bringing back as a way to help out the community and also introduce our student body to an amazing opportunity to give,” he said.

Robotics Team hires former alum as club's new adviser

Prepares for upcoming January competition

By Gwendolyn Berger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Due to a cancellation in the Robotics competition at Reading High School that the Robotics Team usually attends, the team will be traveling to compete at the University of New Hampshire instead, said sophomore co-captain William Mondello.

He said the team will attend the competition from March 21-23 and another competition at Revere High School from March 27-29.

Mondello said the team will not get specifications for building the robot for the First Robotics competition until Jan. 4.

"We only have three months to build ... we hope to have a

working robot ... do the best we can and make sure everyone has something to do," he said.

Mondello said the team did not have an adviser for the first three months of the school year. Last year, digital learning specialist Matt Tangney was the adviser, he said.

Senior co-captain Cole Cote said the team posted the position on School Spring (a school job posting site), and the team had been recruiting parents to supervise meetings in the meantime.

They said that while they handle the majority of the administrative work, they needed an adviser to supervise and purchase supplies.

Principal Julie Sgroi said she officially hired alumnus, Kevin Hines, who was involved in the robotics program when he was a student. Hines graduated from the school in 2020, according to his LinkedIn profile.

'We only have three months to build ... we hope to have a working robot.'

-WILLIAM MONDELLO



COURTESY OF COLE COTE

Sophomore Luke Pilaud, a member of the Robotics Team, prepares for the upcoming Robotics competition at Revere High in late March by building small-scale robots to practice with in groups.

Sgroi said she is very proud of the Robotics Team's work, spending time contacting local communities to find an adviser.

Currently, the team is hosting an internal competition to help the younger members hone their skills, Cote said. The team has been divided into two, with each

side creating a robot to compete against each other, he said.

Sophomore robotics member Peter Langendorf said the in-team competition is used as an introduction to building the actual robot.

He said the teams will challenge each other to create a robot

that will perform a task, such as moving a cube from one position to another. Later in the year, the team will build their robot for the First Robotics competition, Langendorf said.

"In January, we will learn what the actual competition will be during the year," he said.

DECA chapter participates in annual mock competition

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) hosted their annual mock competition at the high school, in preparation for their district competition.

Business teacher and DECA adviser Barrett Alston said the DECA mock competition's purpose is to simulate the real competition for students so that they are fully prepared.

The mock competition was held on Tuesday, Dec. 3rd from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Alston said.

The first step in planning the mock competition was to ensure all students had chosen their event so that the teacher and officers were able to select an appropriate role play to present to the judge, he said.

The judges were primarily 20 parents who have volunteered their time to participate in the event, Alston said.

The majority of students had to prepare a role play for a specific business scenario from a category of their choosing and present the case to a judge. However, students have had more of an interest this year participating in projects, he said.

Even though the projects from students were not completed by the time of the mock competition, it was still important to get feedback on the initial work and effort, Alston said.

"I think it was beneficial to have them practice the skeleton version of it in front of a judge and have the ability to have a dry-run of the competition," he said.



BISSY MITRANO PHOTO

DECA students juniors Emma Brown and Riley McKinnon prepare for their district competition at Danvers DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel.

Alston said the mock competition had full attendance and was successful for students.

Senior officer Ava Fritsch said the officers are responsible for planning the schedule, organizing the events, and assigning a judge to each event in the allotted three-hour time period.

The other officers include seniors Liv Kent and Gwendolyn Berger, and junior Jack McCavanagh.

Every year, half the students are experiencing the competition for the first time, so having the option to run through a presentation before the actual competi-

tion is really helpful, Alston said.

"It is tough going in front of an adult that you probably don't know, and you have a short amount of time to gather your thoughts into a coherent presentation. It is really difficult. It means a lot to have this and be able to have a good experience at districts," he said.

Junior Anna Gardner believes the mock competition is beneficial for all students interested in DECA.

"I think the mock is very good practice, and since I'm not in a class, it is a good tool to use before doing the actual competition," Gardner said.

Fritsch said she believes the mock competition is an opportunity to improve her performance before presenting to the real judges, especially since the DECA chapter has not competed in a year.

"When we get to districts, the judges' comments and critiques help so much," she said.

Seniors prepare individual SCORE projects

By August Capotosto
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As seniors started quarter two, they began planning for a program called Senior Choice of Related Experience (SCORE), an initiative that allows students to pursue an interest of their choosing in preparation for college or the workforce.

SCORE coordinator Nicole O'Rourke said SCORE will span five weeks from April 7 to May 18, after honors and college preparatory classes end.

"SCORE is an opportunity for seniors to have a meaningful



Seniors Charlotte Donnellan Valade and Brooke Doyon plan their SCORE projects around their future interests and careers.

work experience in a field that they want to pursue after high school," O'Rourke said.

She said the program can also be beneficial to students to decide what they are not interested in for a career.

SCORE coordinator Angie Rice said that the next phase of



AUGUST CAPOTOSTO PHOTOS

the program is to finalize student proposals with a supervisor from their chosen internship or project.

Students must complete 30 hours each week to fulfill their SCORE requirement. O'Rourke said this number changes based on the students' projects.

For every AP class, five hours

are deducted from a student's weekly requirement, she said.

After the date of their AP test, those hours are added back to their schedule.

Senior Josh Cohen said that it is challenging for students who take several AP classes to find a meaningful internship. During the two-week period of AP testing, students with tests both weeks will have five hours per class they finished in their first week of exams returned during their second week.

"The issue is that these students might already struggle with the amount of SCORE hours they have on top of their classes. Then suddenly, they have to deal with a large amount of hours added back while they're still preparing for exams," he said.

Senior Brooke Doyon said she

plans to spend SCORE pursuing her interest in tattooing.

"I've been interested in interning at a tattoo parlor for a long time, even if I just schedule appointments or watch how they set up their stations," she said.

Senior Charlotte Donnellan Valade said she plans to intern in the emergency room at Addison Gilbert Hospital in Gloucester.

"Not only is it a field I plan to pursue after high school, but my friend works at the ER based off of her EMT certification, so I'm familiar with that specific hospital," she said.

O'Rourke said after coordinating SCORE last year, excitement in students made her want to be involved again this year.

"As a teacher, it was really nice to see students excel outside of the classroom," she said.

Science Team competes in district-wide competitions

By Alessia Omari
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Since the school year began, the Science Team has participated in three separate contests, math and science department chair and club adviser Kristin Umile said.

The Science Team competes in the North Shore Science League, senior and co-president Whitney Turner said.

The North Shore Science League includes teams from Beverly High School, North Andover High School, Woburn High School, Billerica High School, Hamilton-Wenham High School, Lynn English High School, Masconomet Regional High School, Pentucket Regional High School, Revere High School, St. Mary's High School, and Andover High School.

The first competition on Oct. 8 at North Andover High School focused on organic chemistry, but transportation issues interfered with the Science Team's ability to participate, Umile said.

"We were all set to go for that, but then we did not get a bus in time to make it to the event," she said.

The club overall came in second place for the month of November, Umile said.

Senior Charlie Langendorf



COURTESY OF KRISTIN UMILE

Seniors Cole Cote and Caroline Chrzanowski construct a model for the Leaning Tower of Pisa event for the Dec. 10 meet.

said that senior and Science Team co-president Nick Brown's recruitment of many underclassmen has helped to make the club's environment more lively.

"Nick did an amazing job convincing a bunch of people to join the Science Team during the club fair at the beginning of the year," Langendorf said.

"I've heard we've had a good number of people participating in each event, which is awesome," he said.

Umile said at competitions, typically there is an "A" and "B" team that each contains four students for each respective event.

"At our build event, we only had four people, but at our other two events we had eight kids, so

it was a nice turnout of students," she said.

The team participated in a meet on Dec. 10 at Beverly High School, where they competed in three events, Turner said.

"We had teams doing a build event where they built a leaning tower that held 50 pounds, teams competing in an event identifying and answering questions about insects and arachnids, and a team competing in an event about nuclear chemistry," she said.

The team had a great turnout of participants, Turner said. Over 20 students attended the event.

While at the science meet, the team received several awards from the previous season. They

'We've been placing pretty high, and to me that shows that we've got a passionate group of people in this club.'

-NICK BROWN



COURTESY OF KRISTIN UMILE

Senior Nick Brown presents a finished model of the Leaning Tower of Pisa decorated in the colors of the Italian flag.

placed second overall within the NSSL and received awards for Best in Biology and Best in Chemistry for the 2023-2024 season, senior and co-president Stella Straub said.

The team also received certificates for performance at specific events for several individual meets, Straub said.

The team placed ninth out of 13 teams at the December meet, Turner said.

The team is planning to restart their speaker series later this year, Umile said.

"The plan is to keep our speaker events going, but the students who ran it last year had been running the Science Team since sophomore year, so it's been hard to fill those shoes," she said.

Brown said he's satisfied with how the team has been performing in competitions.

"We've been placing pretty high, and to me that shows that we've got a passionate group of people in this club," he said.

The team's next meet will be hosted remotely and is scheduled to take place on Jan. 14.

Math teacher, field hockey coach to take maternity leave

Balances coaching, teaching, pregnancy

By Stella Straub
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Math teacher Courtney Brown said she recently told the superintendent's office that she would be taking maternity leave near April 2025.

She said that her baby, a girl who will be named Kealey Barney, is officially due on April 13.

The name was inspired by the character Keeley from the show "Ted Lasso."

"She's a girl boss, she knows herself, and I love that about her," Brown said.

She said she is looking forward to the upcoming months.

"I'm excited to see my husband become a dad and for all the fun things that come with anticipating a baby, like designing the nursery but also the next phase of our life, as parents and starting this family together," Brown said.

She said the first trimester of

her pregnancy was challenging due to balancing coaching, teaching, and sickness.

"It's the most energy-demanding time of the year, but I got through it, and now I'm feeling great. I'm mostly back into my routine," Brown said.

She said she is grateful that her maternity leave will run into the summer.

'I want to make sure [teachers] know that we value them as educators, but we also value them as human beings ...'

-JULIE SGROI

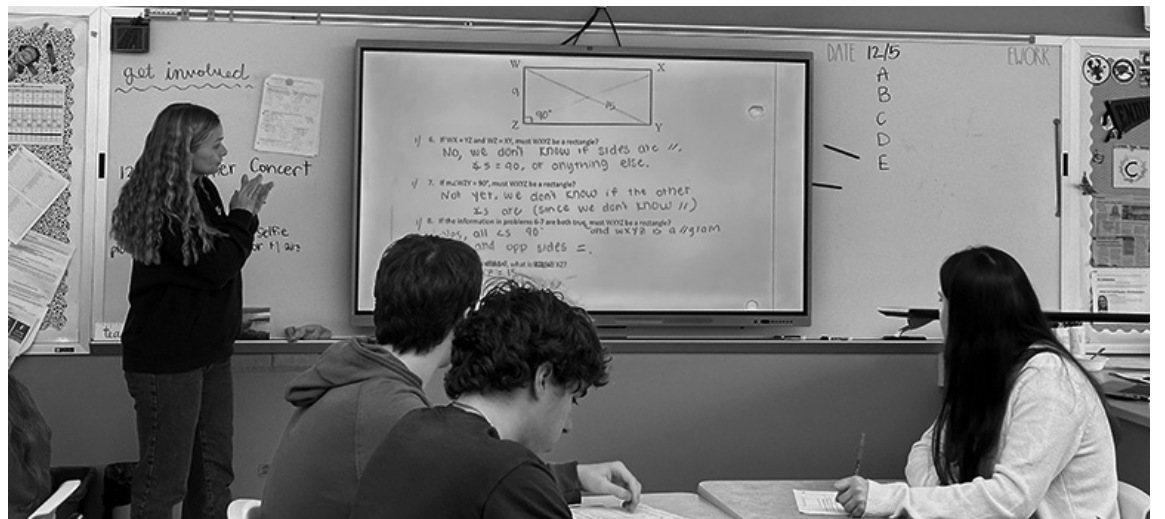
"Most people get a three-month maternity leave if they're lucky, but I have five and a half months. I'll have from April to September,"

Brown said.

Principal Julie Sgroi said she will be posting the position for Brown's substitute before December break. She just finished the interview process for a substitute position for social studies teacher Nicole O'Rourke's maternity leave, she said.

She said it is better to have time to find long-term substitutes rather than to rush the process.

Once a teacher lets the superintendent and Human Resources know that they will be leaving, she posts the long-term substitute



STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

Math teacher Courtney Brown teaches a geometry lesson to her students on the classroom TouchView board. She plans to begin her maternity leave starting in April 2025.

tute position and applicants go through an interview process, Sgroi said.

She said the teacher contract outlines how long teachers can take for maternity leave and that teachers can take additional time unpaid after that.

Sgroi said she hopes teachers can take their time off as stress-free as possible and not have to worry at all about work.

"Teachers are wired to care very much about their students, and their job is very important, but their job at home is now very important," she said.

Sgroi said she believes that family comes first.

"I want to make sure [teachers] know that we value them as educators, but we also value them as human beings, and they should be focusing on what is best for them," she said.

Science teacher Joshua Wladkowski said he went on paternity leave on Sep. 28, 2022, when his daughter was born.

He said he didn't take paternity leave for his son because it was during the pandemic, and thus it was easier to stay home with his child.

Wladkowski said he had spoken in advance with the administration about his upcoming leave for which he took around six

weeks off. He said his classes were merged with classes that he shared with other teachers.

Wladkowski said he used 30 of his sick days for his paternity leave, but because he has been at the school for 11 years, he still has over 100 sick days accumulated, so it wasn't detrimental.

"I could see if you were a new teacher and wanted to have a family earlier in life than your mid-30s, that could be an issue," he said.

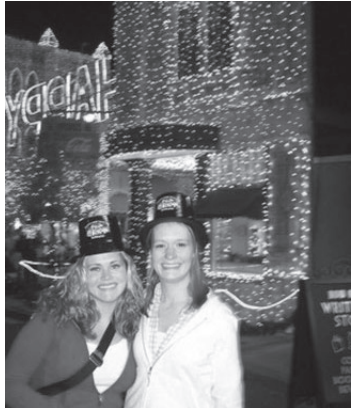
Wladkowski said that in comparison to other industries, teachers in the district have a good situation for parental leave.

Teacher Speak - What is your favorite holiday memory?



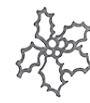
“When I was a kid, we used to have all of our family that lived in all different parts of the country, mostly down [in] Virginia [and] Washington, come up to my parents’ house. I just really loved being able to wake up and have the whole family there. But in particular, when I was in sixth grade, I remember getting my first Walkman and my first Madonna tape, and I think I probably listened to that 83 times in the next three days. And that was the year that I really remember all my presents, and I think it was the first year where I started feeling you know, like a big girl, and I got a hair crimper and a little wicker rocking chair for my bedroom, and it was just all the things, but the whole family was there too. And so kind of just that happy, fuzzy, warm Christmas memory, time with everybody being there and lots of good food and lots of good people.”

- Erin Fortunato



“My best friend went to college in Florida, and so I used to go down there, literally, once a month. Her college roommate worked at Disney, so we’d get in for free all the time. And so for New Year’s one year, I think it was 2002, we went to MGM studio, Disney World Park, and it was amazing. They stayed open until 2 a.m. and at 11 p.m., everybody lined up for the fireworks and parade and that meant there were no lines, and we did Tower of Terror, I think, at least a dozen times.”

- Lauren Woodcock



“I really love the anticipation of Christmas. So for me, Christmas Eve is really special, and just the moment before going and seeing what Santa brought my kids [and] what’s in their stockings, so I love that.”

- Elizabeth Edgerton



“My dear English grandmother Dorothy Berry singing her favorite Christmas carol ‘Joy to the World.’ She sang with enthusiasm and joy, and for me it was always the most fun and magical moment of the holidays.”

- Laurie Carlson



“My favorite holiday memory, it’s both sad and nice. So the sad part is, my grandfather was in the ICU, and we got a chance to see him. But the good thing is, the happy thing is, my sisters are adopted from Russia, so they came to the United States on Dec. 23, so that was our first Christmas with them.”

- John Mullady



“My favorite holiday memory is when it was both of my kids’ first time seeing the Christmas tree up and realizing what presents were and just the understanding of what Christmas is, and just seeing the joy that they had, just experiencing all of that in a family setting.”

- Josh Wladkowski



ERIN FORTUNATO, LAUREN WOODCOCK, ELIZABETH EDGERTON, LAURIE CARLSON, JOHN MULLADY, JOSH WLADKOWSKI PHOTOS



Journalism Staff Speak - What

August Capotosto, junior



“My favorite holiday movie is ‘Love Actually’ because I get to watch it with my family every year, and it’s a beautiful movie.”

Bissy Mitrano, junior



“My favorite movie is definitely ‘Charlie Brown Christmas’ because it reminds me of childhood memories and when I would watch the movie by the fire, with all my sisters home, snowing outside and hot chocolate.”

Isabelle Donnellan Valade, senior



“My favorite holiday movie is ‘A Charlie Brown Christmas’ because I love watching it with my family while we decorate our Christmas tree, and watching Charlie Brown holiday movies is my family’s tradition.”

Gwe



Student Speak - What is your favorite holiday food?



Sophia Eagan, freshman:
“My favorite food is probably gnocchi because it’s a tradition in my family to make it every year.”



Gavin Bolduc, freshman:
“Gingerbread.”



Luke Pilaud, sophomore:
“My favorite holiday food is turkey and gravy because it’s a reminder of my grandmother’s house, connection and family.”



Maggie Olson, sophomore:
“My favorite holiday food is gravy because it tastes good on turkey or potatoes and stuffing, cranberry sauce, anything.”



Laila Mears, junior:
“Probably just some hot chocolate with marshmallows. It just makes me really happy, and it’s very calming.”



Parker Woodman, junior:
“Mac and cheese because I make it with my Nana, and we spend a long time on it, and it’s always really good.”



Shannon Reed, senior:
“Probably mac and cheese because my mom makes it. It’s a comfort food, and it’s really good.”



Theo Caplan, senior:
“Mashed potatoes. I don’t really know. It’s just never bad. I think it’s hard to mess up, too.”



ALESSIA OMARI ILLUSTRATIONS HANNAH DAVIS PHOTOS

What is your favorite holiday movie?



Anna Berger, senior



“My favorite holiday movie is ‘The Grinch’ because it has excellent songs. It’s very original and super funny.”



Sam Heanue, senior



“My favorite holiday movie is ‘The Muppets Christmas Carol,’ because me and my family watch it for Christmas Eve every year.”



Sabine Cooper, senior



“‘National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation’ because I just think it’s a cult classic. It is so much fun. I love when the cat goes through the Christmas tree. It reminds me of my own cat falling through the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. I just think it’s funny. It’s fun all year round, but it’s especially fun during Christmas.”



Top Picks of 2024

Whitney Turner



Best Album

While Clairo's 2024 album, "Charm," has a familiar sound to her 2021 album, "Sling," its ethereal tone makes it stand out among not only Clairo's own discography but among all other albums of 2024. The album's soft rock evokes groovy, mellow feelings. "Juna" quickly became one of fans' favorites, as it added elements of playful jazz while touching on femininity and love. Songs such as the album's lead single, "Sexy to Someone," are catchy and fun as they delve into the singer's navigation of her sense of self and relationships. Where Clairo's past albums had twinges of bittersweet sadness, "Charm" is generally lighter, with the exception of a few more intimate, emotion-filled songs.

Best Restaurant

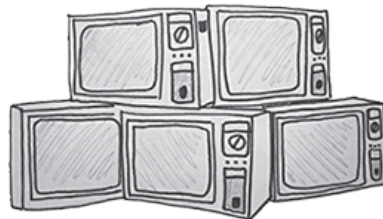
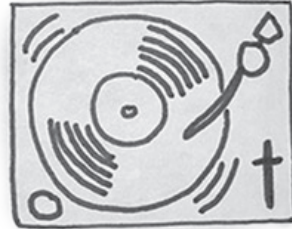
Since opening in March of 2022, Delphine's Kitchen, located at 261 Cabot St. in Beverly, has grown and perfected its craft. The café boasts a variety of savory and sweet crepes, French sandwiches and quiches, pastries, teas, and French sirop drinks. The atmosphere is light and relaxing despite the café's popularity and near-constant business. Not only are the café and its friendly staff inviting, but the food is decidedly unique from many other local restaurants. According to the business's "About Us" page, its owner, Delphine Minogue, received her culinary training in France. Her delicate, airy pastries and paper-thin crepes are well worth the short drive to Beverly.

Best TV Show

The fourth and newest season of Hulu's "Only Murders in the Building," which aired from August to October of 2024, was easily the best show of the year. The show's star-studded cast includes Steve Martin, Martin Short, Selena Gomez, and Meryl Streep. The show's strength is truly in its lovable characters and talented actors. An unlikely group of friends, played by Martin, Gomez, and Short, must work to solve yet another murder that took place right in their New York City apartment building, the Arconia. Although the show's third season lacked much of the charm and wit of earlier seasons, this latest season is full of energy and cleverness. The mystery is fresh and gripping, taking viewers of all ages along for a suspenseful, yet charmingly amusing ride that is sure to endear them.

Best Up and Coming Artist of 2024

Although her musical career began with the release of her first EP in 2020, singer-songwriter Gracie Abrams has had a majorly successful year in 2024. In 2023, Abrams began performing at Taylor Swift's "The Era's Tour," helping to boost her name. In November of 2024, she released the deluxe version of her second album, "The Secret of Us." Featured on the album was "That's So True," the song that would become hugely popular in the US. Abrams' pop music can be moody and dramatic, while other popular songs such are more upbeat and bubbly. In 2024, she amassed a large fan base and gathered the attention of the music industry, making her a fast-growing star.



Stella Straub

Best Album

Singer-songwriter Charli XCX released her sixth album, "Brat," in June 2024. It easily became one of the best pop albums of the year and the anthem of the summer. The lime green color of the album and carefree vibe spread like wildfire online. "Brat" became associated with a lifestyle that promotes not concerning oneself with societal expectations and instead adopting a confident attitude toward life. Popular songs on the album include "365" and "Apple," which were trending on social media platforms during the summer. "Brat" is catchy and vulnerable, and above all, has an infectious, effortless quality about it.

Best Restaurant

Markouk Bread is a hidden gem of the North Shore. The small, family-run restaurant serves authentic Lebanese food and specializes in their saj-grilled flatbreads, which are served with lamb, chicken, beef, and vegetables. Other menu items include kabobs, fresh salads such as tabouli, and side dishes such as baba ghanoush, grape leaves, and hummus. Markouk uses the saj, which is a traditional Lebanese cooking stove that brings out the flavor of the bread, to cook their flatbreads. The restaurant, located on Main Street in Gloucester, is takeout only. All food is made fresh on-site and cooked to order. However, Markouk Bread is likely known best for its homemade baklava, which typically sells out within hours every day.

Best TV Show

The 2024 docuseries "America's Sweethearts: Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders" is an in-depth examination of the world of intense pressure that world-class cheerleaders live in. The series follows the lives of women going through the tryout process to make the cheerleading team for the Dallas Cowboys. As a focused portrait of the women themselves, the docuseries reveals both the highlights of the job, including an intense sense of sisterhood and the chance to perform at an elite level, as well as some of the lowlights, including low pay, body issues, and colossal pressure. "America's Sweethearts" ultimately highlights the incredible lives of elite cheerleaders -- not just as athletes, but as women with families and jobs as doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, and more.

Best Up and Coming Artist of 2024

Though singer-songwriter Chappell Roan began making music in 2014 and gained momentum in 2023 with her album "The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess," it was her 2024 performance at Coachella that propelled her into fame. Originally from Missouri, Roan produces music that dabbles in styles including pop, rock, and indie. Some of her popular songs include "Pink Pony Club," "Good Luck, Babe!," "Red Wine Supernova," and "Femininomenon." Roan has a hyper-confident personality and is known for extravagant costumes, bold makeup, and big hair. Much of her music is about exploring her queer identity, and she infuses her music with authentic humor that helps her songs resonate with a large audience.

Romantic relationships benefit young adults, create opportunity to improve communication

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

High school romantic relationships benefit students by strengthening their mental health and providing emotional support while creating opportunities to practice healthy relationships, boundaries, and personal growth.

Knowing how to create strong relationships can help improve other connections among parents, friends, and teammates. Healthy relationships help students learn how to navigate conflict, express emotions, and manage priorities -- all skills that are not taught in high school.

According to a United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) article, "[Romantic high school] relationships also can play a role in supporting adolescents' ability to develop positive relationships in

other areas including in school, with employers, and with partners during adulthood."

Relationship skills develop through interactions with others, and high school is the perfect time to begin practicing.

Students who do not receive support from members of family or friends are able to gain confidence through romantic relationships, which can provide the emotional support they are lacking. Emotional support is crucial for navigating the responsibilities and stresses of the average teenager.

According to an Assets Coming Together for Youth article, "In adolescence, having a romantic partner can boost one's confidence. When relationships are characterized by intimacy and good communication, youth are happier with themselves. Young people value the support, trust,

and closeness they experience in romantic relationships."

Many connections require values of trust and honesty, and high school relationships can create these values as lifelong habits. Poor relationships, however, lack these values.

In unhealthy relationships "there is no ... mutual trust, compromise, or honesty," according to the HHS article.

Relationships that are unhealthy can cause temporary negative effects for some teenagers but can also lead to individual growth for future relationships.

Practicing romantic relationship skills at a young age can help teenagers grow into adults with healthy coping skills.

Others may argue that relationships can disrupt responsibilities at home or school and that teens should wait until later in life to begin dating.



BISSY MITRANO PHOTO

Juniors Zac Carvalho and Grace Scarbrough have been together for roughly a year and enjoy spending time with each other.

However, according to a National Library of Medicine article by Jessica Kansky and Joseph P. Allen, waiting to have a high school relationship has been linked to detrimental effects.

"Delayed transition to dating in early adulthood has also been linked to problematic outcomes such as low self-esteem, poor mental health, and lower

romantic competence," Kansky and Allen said.

The communication skills and confidence built in early dating are important to creating a supportive network and social system that allows students to thrive. When these skills are practiced early, students can begin mastering them as they navigate adulthood.

GYMNASTICS

Coach: Chris Way
Captain: Junior Amelia Franklin
Record last year: 6-3
Current Record: 0-0
Goals: Improve as a team, win competitions, support younger athletes
Rivals: Winthrop
Coach's quote: "[Franklin] is a great gymnast and a great influence on the other athletes. I'm really hopeful for her season." -Chris Way
Captain's quote: "We have a lot of younger people coming up this year. They're all pretty excited and interested in the sport." -Amelia Franklin



Amelia Franklin

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Tim St. Laurent
Captains: Seniors Milo Zelter, Ben Jacobson; juniors Johnny Chareas, Jake Zschau
Record last year: 16-0
Current Record: 0-0
Goals: Remain undefeated in the CAL
Impact players: Sophomores Graham Lewis, Alex St. Marie; juniors Jake Zschau, Johnny Chareas
Coach's quote: "We're home the first seven out of the first eight games, and we're confident to get out there and play." -Tim St. Laurent
Captain's quote: "Everyone has gotten a lot better and worked hard throughout the off-season. Our chemistry has been really good, so everyone is feeling confident." -Jake Zschau



Ben Jacobson



Milo Zelter



Johnny Chareas



Jake Zschau

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Lauren Dubois
Captains: Seniors Ella Arntsen, Tess Carpenter, Isabelle Donnellan Valade; junior Lily Oliver
Record last year: 15-5
Current record: 1-0
Rivals: Georgetown, Ipswich, Hamilton-Wenham
Goals: Win CAL Baker, do well in state tournament
Coach's quote: "I'm just excited to get this season started and go from there." -Lauren DuBois
Captain's quote: "We have the strength and the talent to really do well." -Ella Arntsen



Ella Arntsen



Tess Carpenter



Isabelle Donnellan Valade



Lily Oliver

INDOOR TRACK

Coaches: Brian Davis, Kim Lations
Girls' captains: Senior Sabine Cooper; juniors Cia Donohoe, Abby Kent
Boys' captains: Seniors Sam Heanue, Luke Donohoe, Henry Stevens
Record last year: (girls') 1-3 (boys') 0-4
Current Records: 0-1
Goals: Team bonding, individual progress
Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham
Impact Players: Upperclassmen
Coach's quote: "[The upperclassmen] are natural leaders on the team, and they're not big, loud personalities. None of them are. They're just quiet leaders, and the younger kids know to look to them." -Kim Lations
Captain's quote: "We had a really small team, but it allowed us to be really close ... And this year I'm excited to still create that feeling but just bring more people on board." -Henry Stevens



Sabine Cooper



Cia Donohoe



Abby Kent



Henry Stevens



Luke Donohoe



Sam Heanue

BOYS' HOCKEY

Coach: Garrett Stevens
Captain: Senior Luke Holmes
Record last year: 7-13
Current record: 1-1
Rivals: North Reading, Pentucket, Amesbury
Goals: Advance further into the postseason, develop the skills of new underclassmen
Impact players: Seniors Luke Holmes, Jack Lawler; junior Matthew DeOreo
Coach's quote: "We have a very motivated, hard-working, more blue collar group that isn't going to shy away from any sort of physicality." - Garrett Stevens
Captain's quote: "This year, we're a tighter system. We have more follow-through, and I believe that improved defense and goaltending are going to win us games." - Luke Holmes



Luke Holmes

GIRLS' HOCKEY

Coach: Rob Parsons
MERHS players: Juniors Teyah Fleming, Charlotte Earl; freshmen Melanie Earl, Joss Twombly; eighth-graders Katelin Aloï, Emma Brown, Lexi Francis
Record last year: 14-6-2
Current record: 0-1
Rivals: Marblehead, Masconomet, Winthrop
Goals: Reach the tournament and advance as far as possible
Impact players: Junior Teyah Fleming
Coach's quote: "It kind of feels like a reloading year where we're replacing some of the older girls with younger girls, and I think we're going to be hungry. I think we're going to be a successful team." - Rob Parsons
Player quote: "It's a great group of girls ... we all played together in youth hockey, so everyone's familiar with each other, so I'm excited to see how we all play together." - Charlotte Earl



Teyah Fleming



Charlotte Earl

SKI TEAM

Coach: Jerry Murphy
Captains: Seniors Celia Mannal, Caroline Willwerth
Record last year: 0-11
Current record: 0-0
Goals: Win a competition
Impact players: Seniors Celia Mannal; sophomore Grey Brooks; freshmen Tucker Gibbs and Quinn McLain
Coach's quote: "We've got a lot of young people who can put in work ... They can do well this season. We've just got to try our hardest." - Jerry Murphy
Captain's quote: "With all the younger boys, they could win, and that's definitely something we want for the team this year." - Celia Mannal



Caroline Willwerth



Celia Mannal

SWIMMING

Coach: Angela Ceriello
Captains: Seniors Libby McKinnon, Colin Conway; junior Sydney Hemme
Record last year: 1-5 (girls'), 2-4 (boys')
Current Record: 0-0 (girls'), 0-0 (boys')
Goals: Improve as a team; work with individuals
Rivals: Lynnfield, Ipswich and Triton
Impact Players: Seniors Colin Conway, Libby McKinnon, Aisling Twombly, Fiona Flynn, Summer Demeo; junior Sydney Hemme
Coach's quote: "We have a lot of different ability levels, to really try to work individually, with each swimmer, to kind of figure out what they want out of this season and help them kind of achieve their personal goals." - Angela Ceriello
Captain's quote: "I'm most looking forward to it being a hard season. I'm excited to be better than last year and just improve overall." - Libby McKinnon



Colin Conway



Libby McKinnon



Sydney Hemme

Senior plans to learn all of jazz piano, began playing in January

Begins with 1920s and works through history

By Stella Straub
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Band and music teacher Harry Wagg said it was evident from his first interaction with senior Brian Rosen that Rosen was incredibly interested in jazz piano.

"I talked to him about music, and it was clear that he was very interested in a specific time period and style of jazz, which grabbed my attention because I think that's unique for younger students," Wagg said.

He said he watched Rosen progress from learning arrangements of songs from notation, by ear, and by video to figuring out what makes music work.

"He's starting to want to figure out how he can either add to [arrangements] or take another song or idea and put it in the same style. He's definitely going beyond just playing what's

already there and is now trying to create," Wagg said.

Rosen said that the song "In the Mood" by Glenn Miller initially made him want to learn the piano.

He started playing at the beginning of January 2024 and began practicing consistently in April, he said.

He said he plays stride piano, which is a style of jazz in which the right hand plays the melody while the left hand alternates between playing a single note and a chord.

"My goal is to learn all of jazz starting from the 1920s right after ragtime and then moving into modern jazz," Rosen said.

He said he enjoys hobbies that are challenging and require skill and practice to excel at.

"What made me like the piano was because it was a mix of [pattern recognition and memorization] ... There are formulas to it, and I'm a big math guy, so that's what sparked [my interest]," Rosen said.

He said he enjoys the flow state that the piano brings him.



STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

Senior Brian Rosen plays the electric piano in one of the practice rooms during U block, taking advantage of any free time to practice his jazz piano skills. Rosen is learning to play stride piano.

"I want to use the piano as something I can relax with in the future," Rosen said.

He said that after he masters the piano, he might move on to a different hobby.

"I don't plan on being the best. I just want to be better than I was the day before," Rosen said.

Senior Charlie Langendorf, Rosen's friend, said Rosen will often go into the practice rooms during lunch to play piano, and he sometimes goes with him.

"In every conversation we have, jazz makes its way in," he said.

Wagg said he hopes Rosen can

impress upon others the power of focus.

"When I think about Brian, it's just proof that if you spend time, things will happen. There's talent and there's aptitude and all that, but he really shines a light on what work and focus and time can do," he said.

Drama Club auditions ahead of Drama Festival

Students will perform 'Advice for Astronauts' by Walt McGough

By Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In preparation for the upcoming Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild's Drama Festival, the Drama Club held auditions for the play on Dec. 4, co-director and ACE program teaching assistant Anya Saben said.

She said the play, called "Advice for Astronauts," is written by local playwright Walt McGough.

"It's about a lot of people right before a rocket launch. There's a lot of relationships in the play. Some of them start going south," Saben said.

Senior Josh Cohen said he is looking forward to performing a new style of play.

"In the past years, we've mostly stuck to comedies, slapstick, stuff like that, but this is the first time that everyone in the cast will really have a chance to flex their dramatic muscles," he said.

The show has an ensemble format, meaning that there are no leads, and all cast members have equally weighted roles, Saben said.

"I chose it because it's an ensemble show, and I was excited to see what our kids could do, being in a very collaborative process and all working together," she said.

Saben said that to compete in the Drama Fest competition, the show cannot exceed 40 minutes in length, with five minutes each to build and take down the set.

She said that she and her co-director, Sophie Collins, are new to Drama Fest.

"It's both of our first times

directing, but we both got our BFA in acting from Salem State. So we've been doing theater for a long time, but neither of us have directed, so we're excited," Saben said.

She said she hopes to teach the students about theater in the real world and improve their ensemble work.

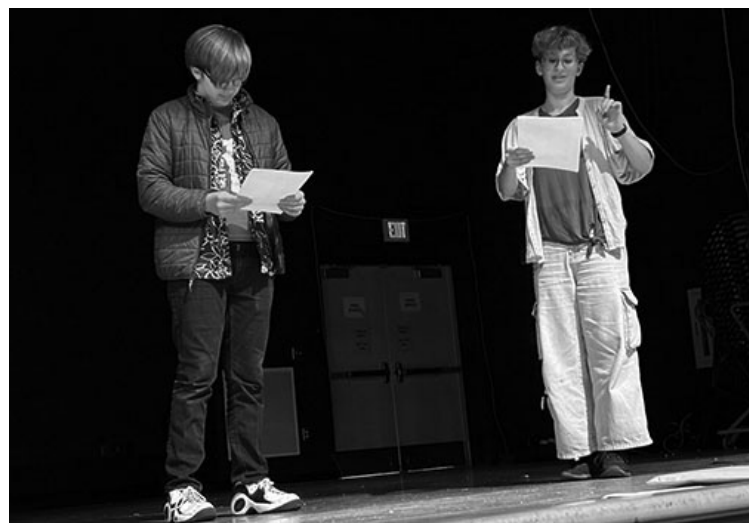
"I'm really excited to see what they can do collaboratively and what they can come up with on their own," Saben said.

Cohen said auditions for the play went well.

"I'm really happy with how they turned out," he said.

The show has 12 parts, and 12 students auditioned to be in the play, Cohen said.

"In the past, we've done shows, and we have had to make cuts. But luckily, with this show, the numbers just worked out perfectly," he said.



HANNAH DAVIS PHOTO

Freshman Colton Sharp and sophomore Elsa Ballock read lines at the Drama Club's audition for "Advice for Astronauts."

Junior Wren Shanks said she hopes the cast will be encouraging to each other and advance in the competition this year.

"I want to make it past prelims and hopefully meet some new people at the competition," she said.

Saben said the first round of the competition will take place on March 1; the location has not been decided yet.

The cast will hold a public performance of their show on March 7 so that the community can attend, she said.

Music students showcase their talent in annual winter concert

By Charlie Baker
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Members of the band and chorus performed in the winter concert, impressing band director Harry Wagg and chorus director Ben Icenogle, they said.

The annual concert took place on Dec. 5, and featured performances by the chorus, SoundWaves, concert band, and jazz band, as well as an original song written and performed by sophomore Sadie Rich, Icenogle said.

Rich said her song, "Baby



CHARLIE BAKER PHOTO

Chorus teacher Ben Icenogle gives an opening speech to the audience prior to the chorus segment of the 2024 winter concert.

Universes," is about growing up and was written in response to another song.

"There's a Taylor Swift song called 'Never Grow Up' that one

of the middle school choruses sang last year, and it's a great song, but it made me kind of mad in a weird way," she said.

The chorus sang "Go the

Distance" from the movie Hercules; "Sakura," a Japanese traditional piece; "So Long, London" by Taylor Swift; and finished with "Seasons of Love" from the musical "Rent," Icenogle said.

After Rich's performance, SoundWaves performed "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" by Frankie Valli; "Where'd All the Time Go?" by Dr. Dog; "One Love," by Bob Marley; "Erase Me" by Lizzy McAlpine, and "Dancing in the Moonlight" by Toploader, all of which the students chose, he said.

The jazz band performed two pieces, "Strasbourg/St. Denis" by Roy Hargrove and "Birdland" by Joe Zawinul, Wagg said.

The concert band performed "Afterburn" by Randall Standridge, a selection of short pieces from Gustav Holst's "The Planets," and closed the show with the holiday

piece "Carol of the Bells" by Jennifer E. Rose, he said.

This is Wagg's first year as band director, and he said his students helped him out a lot.

"There are a lot of routines and norms that they've had for the past four or even seven years, so their ability to guide me through some of that [has impressed me]," he said.

Icenogle said he was impressed with the chorus's performance.

"I think just the caliber of music that's being done is rising: we're taking on harder challenges. Sometimes that manifests in performances that are a little more raw because you're pushing your boundaries, but that's what we're here to do in school is push our boundaries and continue to get better," he said.

Netflix's witty 'Nobody Wants This' follows unlikely relationship

Stars Adam Brody with Kristen Bell

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Netflix's new show "Nobody Wants This" is a witty and complex look into an unexpected relationship between a sex pod-cast host and a rabbi.

The show, released on Sep. 26, was created by Erin Foster.

"Nobody Wants This" stars Adam Brody as Noah and Kristen Bell as Joanne, an unlikely pair.

Initially, Joanne is under the impression that Noah is a divorcee, which creates intense awkward tension when she verbalizes these thoughts to his face. However, Noah is quick to brush it off, and the two establish a quick banter.

Noah is trying to become head rabbi at his synagogue, working to maintain a perfect image. Joanne runs a successful podcast

with her sister, where they discuss relationships and sex from a woman's perspective.

As the two characters find that they can't stay away from one another, the question of whether Joanne will convert to Judaism arises, and the pressures from Noah's family and his upcoming promotion weigh heavily on the relationship.

While the main focus is on the budding romance, the side characters bring comedy and drama.

Joanne's sister, Morgan, (Justine Lupe), is an outspoken and lively presence who, while wanting to support Joanne, is unafraid

The show has also received criticism for its portrayal of women.

to share her doubts about the relationship, causing rifts between the otherwise close-knit

sisters.

Noah's brother, Sasha, (Timothy Simons), finds himself stuck between his wife, Esther, (Jackie Tohn), and his strange quasi-friendship with Morgan.

As Morgan and Esther pull Sasha in different directions

regarding Noah's relationship, he remains a hilarious and likable character.

The show explores how different people navigate an unconventional relationship, as well as how much of an impact a family's opinion can have on the choices they make.

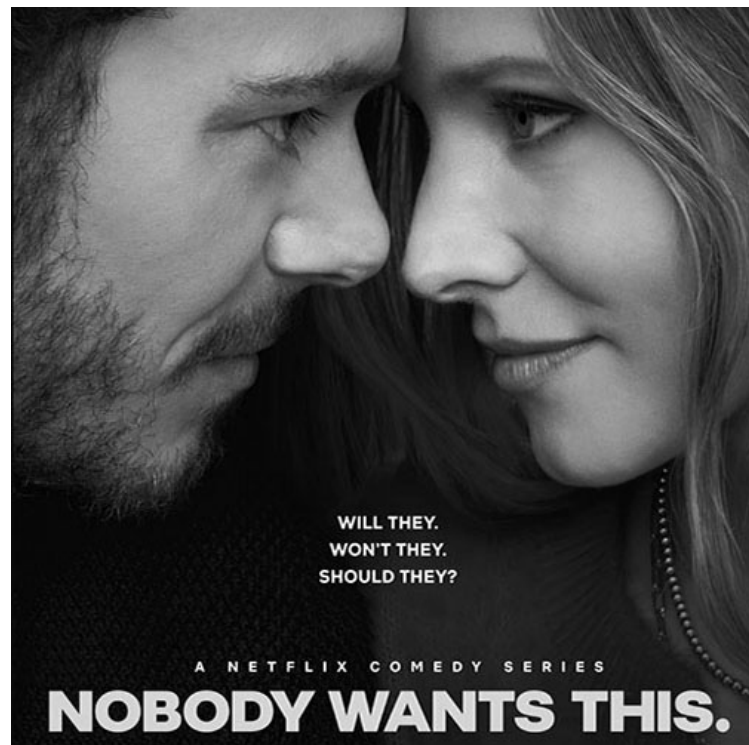
While facing generally positive reviews, the show has also received criticism for its portrayal of women, especially Jewish women.

In Jessica Grose's opinion article, "'Nobody Wants This' Pits Jewish Women Against 'Shiksas.' Nobody Wins" in the New York Times, she discusses this controversy.

"The show seems to have been beamed in from the past century in both its depiction of Jew-gentile relations and also its gender politics," Grose writes.

She references Esther Zuckerman's Time magazine article, in which Zuckerman said she felt the show created a negative portrayal of Jewish women.

"The series seems to loathe Jewish women, who are portrayed as nags, harpies and the



NETFLIX.COM

Netflix's new romantic comedy "Nobody Wants This" is facing criticism for perpetuating false stereotypes about Jewish women.

ultimate villains of this story ... I was faced with the reality that maybe this show actually hates me," Zuckerman writes.

While comedic and romantic, "Nobody Wants This" lacks sensi-

tivity by playing into perceived stereotypes.

The show ends its first season on a cliffhanger, leaving viewers to wonder what will happen with the relationships.

'Chromakopia,' presents electric instrumentals

By Alessia Omari
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Experimental rapper and songwriter Tyler, The Creator re-explores his signature invigorating sound in his eighth studio album "Chromakopia."

The album was released on Oct. 28, 2024, about three years after the release of his Grammy award-winning album "Call Me If You Get Lost."

A leak of the first track, "St. Chroma," on various social media platforms prompted excitement for the album prior to the release of the project.

Despite Tyler's unique whisper-rapping in the opening track, the stand-out moment in the song is when a multitude of



CHROMAKOPIA.COM

Rapper and songwriter Tyler, The Creator released his eighth studio album "Chromakopia" on Oct. 28 after a three year hiatus.

powerful synths, signature to Tyler, The Creator's sound, come to a crescendo.

Canadian singer-songwriter Daniel Caesar's gospel-inspired

vocals interject, powerfully singing, "Can you feel the light inside? / Can you feel that fire?"

The voice of Tyler, the Creator's mother is carefully woven

into the album, providing advice to the listener throughout multiple moments in each song.

The first instance of this can be found in the project's fourth track, "Darling, I," a song with groovy synths and lighthearted vocals that are reminiscent of his earlier projects such as "Flower Boy" and "Igor."

One of the album's most electrifying songs, "Sticky,"

contains catchy features from rappers GloRilla, Sexyy Red, and Lil Wayne. The contrast between each artist's voices and flows complements one another well, keeping the track both musically interesting and upbeat.

"Thought I Was Dead," featuring SchHoolboy Q and Santigold, acts as a perfect hype-song; the track begins with what sounds like a sports-stadium chant, a cacoph-

ony of male voices passionately singing "You don't wanna go to war with a soldier!" only to be interjected by the rich sound of trumpets and brass instruments.

A stand-out song in the album, "Like Him," features English singer-songwriter

Lola Young's soft vocals overlapping with Tyler's as he sings about his struggle regarding his resemblance

to his absent father.

Tyler speaks to his mother in the song, singing, "Mama I'm chasing a ghost, I don't know who he is / Mama I'm chasing a ghost, do I look like him?"

Tyler, The Creator's new studio album "Chromakopia" is an invigorating and upbeat album that draws listeners in with its powerful synths and thoughtful lyrics.

Often crowded, Crave sells tasty breakfast sandwiches

By Gwendolyn Berger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Among the many shops on the busy Rantoul Street in Beverly, the cafe Crave sells many high-quality breakfast sandwiches and beverages, though is often busy.

Located at 199 Rantoul St., the cafe was founded in 2016, according to its website.

At first glance, the store is not as inviting as one may hope. The colors of the interior are cold and unwelcoming. The space is usually busy and cramped; thus the majority of the seating options are located outside, which is not ideal for the winter months.

The store does not entertain many decorations, which, combined with the gray coloring

creates a depressing, corporate atmosphere.

The lack of variety in the menu items is also disappointing. A customer only has one vegetarian breakfast option, Crave (\$9), which is a unique blend of eggs, cheese, and pepper jelly.

For meat lovers, however, there are plenty of options. A customer can enjoy a Northshore, which is bacon, eggs, cheese, and maple aioli on a croissant (\$11); a Whole Hog, a mix of sausage, bacon, prosciutto, eggs, cheese, and spicy herb ketchup on a brioche bun (\$11); a Pesto BLT (\$12), and more.

Luckily for vegetarians, Crave allows customers to make their own sandwiches. This is a fun and creative way to widen the

inclusivity pool.

The consumer can choose their pick of bread, cooked eggs, cheese, meat, and other toppings such as avocado (\$2), oven-roasted tomatoes (\$1.50), or greens (\$0.75).

Another unique option is the opportunity to transform any sandwich into a bowl or to create a tot bowl, which combines tater tots, eggs, and their housemade tot sauce in a bowl (\$7).

The prices are rather expensive, especially if a customer desires extra toppings or add-ons for their sandwich, but the food quality is excellent.

In terms of drinks, Crave offers the typical espresso (\$3), lattes (\$5.25), and other coffees, alongside a few more interesting



GWENDOLYN BERGER PHOTO

Crave cafe in Beverly does not have any outside decorations, giving the building's exterior a corporate look and feeling.

varieties. Customers can enjoy a Pumpkin Spice Latte, Mocha Latte, or Caramel Latte (\$6.15).

The store also offers hot chocolates, lemonades, and teas. Crave makes up for its lack of variety in sandwiches with its wide array of drink options.

If a customer desires a sweet

treat, they can purchase croissants, pastries, scones, cupcakes, cookies, and more.

After receiving their order, the customer should consider consuming their meal elsewhere, as the crowded atmosphere and lack of seating makes it difficult to enjoy their meal.