

the INDEPENDENT

Volume XXIV Number 4

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

February 5, 2018

Students fundraise for local sixth-grader with rare disease CMT4J

By Austin Woodman-Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students in the Humanitarian League and journalism class came together to raise over \$1,150 for Talia Duff, an Ipswich sixth-grader with a rare neurological disease called CMT4J.

2017 graduate Jenny Duff, Talia's cousin, said CMT4J causes muscles degeneration, weak muscles, and is usually fatal because it causes respiratory problems.

She said it is similar to ALS and will cause muscle loss until, eventually, it becomes fatal.

Jenny said in order to begin the clinical trials, the organization Cure CMT4J needed \$1 million by the end of 2017.

"The end of the year goal was just a timeline, not a hard deadline," she said, "On Jan. 3, we exceeded our goal and hope to move forward with the trials," she said.

Journalism teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon said she introduced the idea of a fundraiser to the class after the release of the Talia Duff video made by students at Ipswich Middle School.

"Initially, the Humanitar-

ian League and journalism class thought we would have a bake sale, but we expanded it to collecting donations before and after school and selling food at two basketball games," she said.

Buckley-Harmon said the senior class donated \$85 of their proceeds from the hypnotist show to Talia.

She also said the students were excited about raising money for Talia.

"It was such a busy time of the year, but everyone in our school came together to support Talia. When you see the things people wrote about Talia on the donation website and watch kids taking money out of their wallets and throwing it in like it was nothing, you see how this cause brought out the best in people," she said.

Senior Shannon Adam, who is a member of both journalism and the Humanitarian League, said she was "blown away" by the amount of money they had earned in such a short amount of time.

"I was super surprised to see students reach into their pockets, picking out a \$20 and just



COURTESY OF JENNY DUFF

Students donated money to help Talia Duff, an Ipswich sixth-grader with a rare neurodegenerative disorder. The fundraiser raised \$1,150, which Duff's family will use to fund CMT4J research.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTOS

throwing it into the donation pile. I'm happy that we found this cause. We were really brought together by this. Even with the surrounding schools participating, I think we all grew closer as a community," Adam said.

Jenny said Talia is grateful to see everyone com-

ing together to support her.

"Obviously it's really frustrating for her because [she] cannot walk or feed herself anymore, but the amount of people supporting her is definitely helping," she said.

Jenny said she was happy about the number of students reaching out and supporting her family.

"It's amazing to see how far this is spreading especially because a lot of people don't know Talia. I've been tracking the website, and people have donated from Peru, the West Coast, and so many crazy places. I love to see how many people are touched by her story," she said.

Seniors accepted early into college

By Holly Fossa
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Seniors who decided to apply early to their top-choice colleges have received the decisions and are planning their next steps in the college process.

Guidance director Beverly Low said that roughly 85 percent of this year's senior class applied either through early decision or early action to at least one college.

The bulletin board outside the guidance office holds the names of 13 students who applied early to their top choice colleges, got into these schools, and decided to enroll.

Some of the students who decided to apply early, applied as recruits for a sports team at their top school.

Seniors Samantha Booma, Coleman Komishane, Cole Hay and Paul DiFluri all enrolled early decision at colleges as recruits.

Booma will be playing Division III Lacrosse at Trinity College in Connecticut, and Komis-



HOLLY FOSSA PHOTO

Once students have accepted and enrolled in a college, they put a balloon on the board outside guidance to declare where they will be attending. Currently, 13 students have committed to a school.

hane will be swimming Division III for Bowdoin College in Maine.

Hay will be playing Division III Soccer at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in New York, and DiFluri will be playing Division III lacrosse at Stevenson University in Maryland.

Hay said he is glad he applied early because it is less stressful for him, and he gets to be a member of a new team. "I am excited to play on the team and meet new

people, and I am happy to know where I am going," he said.

Some seniors applied early to colleges because they already knew which college they wanted to go to.

Other students who have enrolled early in college are Robert Parker at Connecticut College in New London, Conn., and Katelyn O'Brien at Catherine Hinds Institute of Esthetics in
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Midterms removed in hopes of adding instructional time, reducing stress

By Anton Kozyrev
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Hoping to alleviate students' stress levels, the high school administration and faculty chose not to administer midterm examinations in most classes two years ago, implementing this change in the 2017-2018 school year, Principal Patricia Puglisi said.

Midterm week, which was a school week at the end of quarter two dedicated to taking midterm examinations, was replaced with a typical week with normal class schedules.

Not only did the absence of midterms allow for students to focus on activities that promote "greater learning," but this also gave teachers more in-class time with their students, said Dan Lundergan, mathematics department head.

"One benefit is that there [was] more instructional time; we lost a number of days of instructional time when we had the midterm exam week. We didn't see students for the better part of the day," Lundergan said.

Lundergan said he sees mid-

term exams as an efficient way to gauge a student's progress throughout his or her semester and what he or she has learned. In the absence of midterms, teachers will turn to other methods of measuring progress. One such example is the system of quarterly tests in the mathematics department that Lundergan has introduced.

While midterm week itself is no more, individual teachers (such as foreign language teachers) can still administer exams during their own class periods.

The foreign language department is continuing administering midterms to students because languages are more fluid than other subjects -- and it is difficult to grasp the subject material without having understood the foundations, said Michelle Magana, foreign language department head.

"[The midterm exam] is an indicator of skills that [the students] are developing throughout the school year, as we need to review skills learned in October and September," Magana said.

Spanish and French exams also
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DECA kicks off season, prepares for upcoming States

Chapter looks to continue success, build off District performance

By Sophie Larson
INDEPENDENT STAFF

DECA began their competition season on Jan. 8, competing as individuals and teams of two at the Mass. DECA District Competition at Endicott College.

This year at the District Competition 12 students came in first place, 15 in second, 10 in third, and seven in fourth meaning 44 students qualified for the State Finals Competition, DECA teacher Dean Martino said.

The team competed against over 550 students from 10 schools at the District Competition, he said.

The top four teams or individuals from each category at Districts qualified for the State Finals Competition which will happen in Boston this March, Martino said.

“Our state goal will again be to qualify as many students for International Competition as possible. The challenge is that each of our students will be competing against 36 to 42 winners from nine other districts. That means 10 first place, 10 second place, 10 third place and 10 fourth place winners will be competing for the top four spots in Atlanta. This is very competitive and students will put a lot of work into preparing and executing testing and role play strategies,” he said.

Those who qualified for States hope to progress to the third and final level of competition: Internationals in Atlanta this April where qualifiers will again compete against 18,000 students for the top three spots, Martino said.

Junior DECA team member Bennett O’Leary explained the benefits and challenges of competition season.

“I like going to Endicott and competing with all sorts of people from different towns. It’s cool to assume a role of someone in the business world. Being



COURTESY OF LAURA HANNAFIN

Seniors Clara Tuttle, Annalia Laino, and Micaela Coonley, and juniors Faithe Shatford, Jake D’ambrosio, and Hannah Oettinger have all made an impact early in the DECA season.



COURTESY OF OLIVIA MITRANO

able to convey what you want to say in a short period of time is hard, though, because you really have to make sure what you are saying is quality,” he said.

Senior vice president of finance Laura Hannafin noted the strengths of the team going into competition season this year.

“I’ve seen a lot of excitement for competition this year, which is good, because it’s the years where we see the most people really eager to compete that we see the most people qualifying,” she said.

As an officer, Hannafin has goals for the team as a whole while competing.

“I would really like to see the younger chapter and the [sophomore marketing class] do well because when they do well that’s a really good sign for the next few years of our chapter. Also I would like to see the juniors and seniors do well to keep the momentum,” she said.

Graduates return for College Homecoming panel, give advice to seniors



Neil Henry
WHEATON COLLEGE

“I definitely think that the change that you’re going to go through is going to be beneficial because you’ll learn a lot about yourself and how other people work.”



Jenny Cochand
UNC at CHAPEL HILL

“I think a lot of it is the professors expect you to do whatever you want... You’re going to do it if you want, and if you want to do well, you’re going to do well.”



Thomas Ambrose
SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

“For me, [the difference] is definitely the attitude of the professors. The idea is that this is the class you’re taking, and it’s definitely a lot harder than a high school course.”



Santana Tosi
FURMAN UNIVERSITY

“Go and meet your professors and actually get to talk to them and know them as a person. That made it easier if you were struggling to go to them for help.”



Noah Smith
CITY YEAR MIAMI

“I definitely wanted to get out of Manchester, get out of Massachusetts, get out of the Northeast, and get to see a brand new culture.”



Paola Florencio
CITY YEAR MIAMI

“Be ready for whatever is coming toward you... Just go out and do what you like to do because when you’re doing what you like to do, it will make school more fun for you.”

Peer Mentors look to become source of support, expand visibility throughout school

By Emily Clark
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After starting the year with training in areas such as communications, group facilitation, listening skills, and brainstorming, the Peer Mentor group looks to become more prominent within the school and increase visibility, guidance director and Peer Mentor adviser Beverly Low said.

Currently, Low has a goal of making the program more

“student run,” where the kids think of different ideas for them to be a “source of support” within the high school.

“We have some new Peer Mentors that really are looking to change the climate of the school. Not that we have terrible problems, but it would be nice just to have a peer to go to rather than a teacher or an administrator sometimes,” she said.

Another goal the group has is to help the freshmen adjust to high school, which Low said is not always fun. The Peer Mentors found after visiting freshmen U blocks that the biggest difficulty is learning time management, and Low believes that Peer Mentors could be more prominent throughout the school to help with some of

the challenges freshmen face.

“Sometimes someone just needs someone to come up to them and say, ‘Hey, it looks like you’re having a bad day, but I am around if you need anything.’ That makes so much of a difference,” Low said.

‘We have some new Peer Mentors that are really looking to change the climate of the school.’

- BEVERLY LOW

Senior Clara Tuttle, who has been a Peer Mentor since freshman year, agreed with this goal of increasing the visibility of the group.

“Over all, I would like to see the Peer Mentors expand in what we actually do within the school. A couple times in the past, we have reached out to students and felt around to see what some of the major issues and themes are that pop up in the high school, so that might be something we



EMILY CLARK PHOTO

Seniors Clara Tuttle and Bennett Dolan, both Peer Mentors, said they would like to see the group become more active in the school.

do this semester that will help us steer the Peer Mentors in the right direction,” she said.

One of the main events Peer Mentors have held so far this year is a college panel where previous students talked about their experiences after high school.

“I think the most beneficial thing we have done so far is the college panel, which answered

a series of questions regarding what seniors should actually expect next year whether it be college or a gap year,” senior Peer Mentor Grace Porter said.

The future of the program is not concrete, but Low said it could be beneficial to have Peer Mentors be held during school as some type of elective where credit is earned, as many other schools have.

Updated Program of Studies focuses on diversifying electives

New courses added aim to accommodate larger class sizes, teach specialized content

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As the goal is every year, the updated high school Program of Studies for 2018-2019 strives to engage a wide variety of students and improve the overall learning experience through new and revised courses, guidance director Beverly Low said.

This year specifically, she said there was an emphasis on providing a range of electives in each department directed toward underclassmen, due to the larger class sizes compared to recent years.

"We're looking to make sure we've got some good options in a lot of different areas...I think that the departments have done an outstanding job with their curriculum to build in some electives in each department," she said.

Along those lines, the STEM curriculum added courses intended for freshmen and sophomores and outlined clearer pathways for students interested in computer science, electronics, or engineering.

STEM teacher Steve Cogger, responsible for redesigning the department, said he has a clear goal behind the restructuring.

"The idea is to sort of have these introductory courses where kids can try things and see what it's like to design and take a course where there aren't right answers. Then the goal is to build



JAMES RIORDAN PHOTO

Steve Cogger, STEM teacher, helps sophomore Thymen de Widt program during AP Computer Science. Cogger hopes there will be similar classes in coming years.

classes that have deeper knowledge and more specialized content," he said.

Another development Low is encouraged by is the creation of interdisciplinary courses such as Life Skills for the 21st Century, which she said exemplifies the school's focus on creative thinking.

The idea for the course came from math teacher Kara Brown and science teacher Joshua Wladkowski, who said it

would address practical uses for math, science, and social science in everyday life.

In terms of other new courses added to the Program of Studies this year, the social studies department will add Conspiracy Theories in U.S. History. In addition, the English department has added a semester elective, Creative Writing, that will involve the production of a literary publication. The art department

A FEW NEW COURSES...

- Redesigned STEM pathways
- Life Skills for the 21st Century
- Conspiracy Theories in U.S. History
- Creative Writing
- More AP art options
- Introduction to Biotechnology

also has provided more opportunities for Advanced Placement concentrations.

Regarding the wide range of new options, Low said, "In terms of looking out for students, we are making sure they have a nice menu of options. I think we are making sure we truly embrace the notion of reaching all learners, with courses available for all types of students with backgrounds and interests that are various."

Guidance advises students to create balanced schedule, encouraging growth, success, improvement in coming year

By building schedule using teacher advice, self evaluation, choosing appropriate level, students can prepare for coming year

By Mia Cromwell
INDEPENDENT STAFF

As course selection approaches, guidance director Beverly Low and counselor Gillian Polk are advising students to build a schedule that is challenging but not overwhelming.

Low says the first step a student should take to build a proper schedule is to do a self-evaluation. Students should reflect on what they can improve upon but also consider how they can challenge themselves.

The second measure is for students to talk with teachers and get their advice on what classes to take which will help them pick the right class and level.

"Teachers look at students from a perspective of knowing what the next level

is going to be like... and it's good to get that feedback from a teacher," Low said.

The third action is to include a few classes the student enjoys, rather than only taking the required academic classes for a more balanced schedule.

The final step is to build a schedule where students can choose the appropriate level at which to learn and be successful without being grade-oriented.

Other than these suggestions, Low greatly encourages students to set themselves up for success and growth while still keeping in mind that the level they start at might not be where they finish.

When advising students about choosing an appropriate schedule, Polk explained what factors the guidance counselors take into consideration.

"I think about what [students'] interests are and if they have goals down the line... also, getting to know the kids about what their work habits are like [and] what would

make sense in their busy lives," Polk said.

She also said it is important for students to consider what classes they want to take purely based on self-reflection and not considering others' choices.

"I think they should consider what's realistic in terms of work habits [and] workload. They should try to care... less about what might be trending," Polk said.

She said it is common for students to take two math classes their sophomore year because they think "that's the thing to do," but in reality, that choice might not be the best decision.

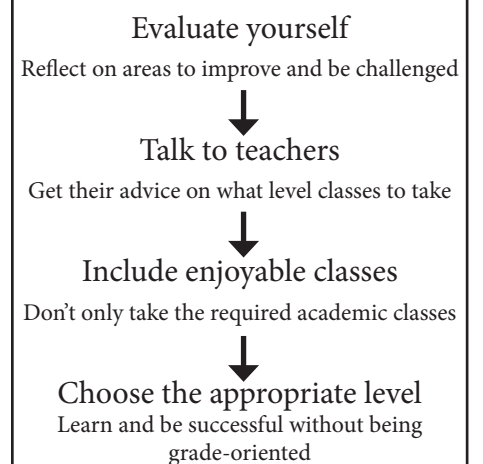
Math department chair Dan Lundergan similarly said students who are waiving into a higher level math class are occasionally doing it for the wrong reasons.

"Kids sometimes want to waiver in because their friends are all in that higher level class, and that's not a good reason to do it," he said.

'Teachers look at students from a perspective of knowing what the next level is going to be like.'

- BEVERLY LOW

How to build a proper schedule



MIA CROMWELL GRAPHIC

Lundergan said over 50 percent of students that are waiving into a higher math class have gotten a C or below, and he wants to make sure students know what they are setting themselves up for.

"It's important that kids and their parents understand what they are getting into. I think a C in a really hard class can be good for some kids [but] may not be so good for some other kids," he said.

CONTINUATIONS

NO MIDTERMS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

incorporate a speaking portion, which involves two teachers that grade two students on their ability to communicate clearly, and are thus able to give feedback to students on their verbal prowess halfway through the school year.

The foreign language oral exam, which lasted for a week and a half, commenced during U block and continued until the end of the school day for students who happened to have foreign language last period, which follows U block.

Having to structure foreign language exams around U block was difficult, and Magaña said it would be preferable to revert to the original midterm week.

"As a teacher, I definitely could've used the extra time in the afternoons for correcting; we were basically testing all

day long, and it was hard to find time to correct and get grades done," she said.

In regard to the original midterm week, some students did not feel less stressed this year than when they had a full midterm week, junior Emma DiZio said

"Yes, the midterm week had too many exams in a condensed amount of time; it was too stressful ... but other classes still give homework and things to do," she said.

Senior Garrett Lamothe said he actually "felt more stressed" without a midterm week, explaining that with the old midterm week there could "only be two tests per day."

"I liked that we weren't overloaded with tests," he said. "We were done by noon, and had the rest of the day to study."

Lamothe also said midterms were beneficial because they separated two semesters and prevented teachers from rushing to finish grading.

"It wasn't a scramble for teachers to

get grades in at the end of the quarter, so I wasn't stressed about my grade," he said.

In addition, some students enjoyed having the opportunity to review what they have learned halfway through the year.

"I would've preferred to keep midterms because it's easier to remember things you've learned at the start of the year halfway through the year, rather than at the final," sophomore Isaac Notte said.

On the other hand, some students felt as though the lack of midterms was beneficial.

Debra Isensee, English department head, said one issue that could still arise concerns the dependence on only one exam, the final, to gauge how well a

student has learned over the school year.

According to Isensee, students consume a great deal of information within a year, and it could be "very difficult to evaluate their knowledge cumulatively."

"Departments will have to decide whether they want to do a cumulative final exam or if they want to provide more guiding of specific things to know," Isensee said.

While this new experience without midterm examinations has elicited both positive and negative responses, final exams will not

be removed, as "it is important to assess a student's performance over the span of one year," Principal Patricia Puglisi said.

'[With midterms], I liked that we weren't overloaded with tests...We were done by noon, and had the rest of the day to study.'

- GARRETT LAMOTHE

Seniors bond through interactive hypnotist show

Class hopes to boost morale mid-year, prepares for Senior Week

By Abigail Fitzgibbon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

To create a class-bonding experience, the senior class officers invited hypnotist David Hall for an interactive performance on Dec. 21.

Hall has 20 years of experience as a magician in the Boston area and, according to his website, has entertained celebrities like Mick Jagger.

Senior class president Taylor Reader decided that having a hypnotist come to a senior class event would be an unusual but entertaining way for the Class of 2018 to bond.

"We'd thought that [a hypnotist show] would be a fun idea to bring to our school," she said.

The senior class charged \$5 admission to non-seniors for the evening event. According to Reader, approximately 50 people attended.

At the show, Hall invited about 20 seniors to come on stage and be hypnotized. He proceeded to convince the hypnotized students that they were only able to speak in alien language, that they were seeing a cute animal, or other humorous situations.

Senior Hadleigh Richard remained hypnotized for the show's entirety and found the experience interesting, she said.

"At first, it felt like I was slowly falling asleep. I was able to hear everything [Hall] was saying, but I was unable to open my eyes even when he would ask us to. I knew everything I was doing but didn't think much of it," she said.

Richard said Hall's requests of the hypnotized students were quite funny and convincing.



David Hall hypnotized students of the senior class, as a fun activity to unite the students. He convinced them that they were seeing funny movies, participating in a dance competition, winning the lottery and being accepted into their top colleges.

"I remember the funniest part of the show was when we were all told we were watching a very funny movie. I remember laughing so hard, and I was not able to stop, but I don't think I was picturing a movie in my head.

I just remember laughing so hard that my stomach was hurting," she said.

Because the show allowed the seniors to participate, many students thought it was a great bonding experience for the class, senior Caroline Francoeur said.

"It was good that our grade got together, and it was a good way to start senior year with our senior activities early," she said.

Although senior class activities usually begin right before graduation, the senior class officers decided to host

this activity earlier in the year, senior class treasurer Clara Tuttle said.

"The original plan was to have it during senior week, but there was no time in the week to do it, so we [did] it in the middle of the year as a morale-booster," she said.

Principal Patricia Puglisi, who was in the audience, said that hosting the event earlier in the year was a great way to create a sense of community among the seniors.

"If you can have events throughout the year rather than waiting all to the end, then you're just building your class bond and your class spirit prior to graduation," she said.

The senior class officers decided to donate the proceeds from the \$5 admission fee to Ipswich Middle School student Talia Duff, donating \$85 in total to CureCMT4J,



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTOS

the organization Duff's family formed to fund research for this genetic disease, administrative assistant Mary Lumsden said.

Tuttle said if anything could have been improved, the class officers could have advertised for the event more to increase proceeds.

Otherwise, Tuttle said the event was a great success overall.

"A good amount of our class went, and a good amount of people all had a fun time," she said.

Puglisi also believes that the event was a fun experience and thinks it should be continued.

"I hope that other classes follow through in the future and kind of make it a tradition for seniors because it's kind of a fun class experience," she said

Learning commons' events encourage students to explore

By Sofia Gillespie
INDEPENDENT STAFF

In the week preceding winter break, the learning commons hosted a week of educational events for students of the middle school and high schools.

The week featured five different daily events, with one event on each day, which were organized by digital learning specialist Del Vollink and learning commons aid Phyllis Musco.

On Monday, students shared their personal holiday traditions with one another.

Musco and Vollink kept the shared stories up on a website throughout the week for people to read.

It served as an interesting way to share personal stories with one another, Musco said.

Tuesday was the day of the "Continuous Reading Chair," which was an event where a student or a teacher had to be in the reading chair reading throughout the

entire day. The goal of that day was to promote avid reading among students.

Wednesday was a day of stitching for both novices and experts; there was knitting, crocheting, and plarning, plastic bag yarning. Vollink enjoyed teaching students and teachers how to knit.

On Thursday, students had to leave their phones at the front of the learning commons to create a phone-free environment.

Musco and Vollink agreed it was interesting to see students talk to one another instead of look at their phones all day.

"It was very interesting to see who could and could not live without their phones. I loved looking around and seeing people doing puzzles together, talking to each other; they were playing games together. It was so nice to see that," Vollink said.

"It gave kids a time to reflect on their phone usage," Musco said.

Friday was open mic day, in which any student could sing in front of

'[Events like those] give me an opportunity to discover stuff I normally don't do.'

- KEVIN HINES



COURTESY OF DEL VOLLINK

Events throughout the week gave students the opportunity to break their normal routine and try new activities, including learning to play the guitar and knitting.

the rest of the learning commons.

Senior Christian Hadaegh, junior Ryan O'Connell, and senior Mason Camille all performed.

Vollink noted that the events did not bring in any more students to the learning commons than a normal day would, and the participation was mostly among middle school students.

Sophomore Kevin Hines participated in both the stitching day and the no-phone day, and he enjoyed learning to knit for the first time.

"[Events like those] give me an opportunity to discover stuff I normally don't do," Hines said.

He hopes for more art promotional events like knitting as it was a bit different than what he usually does daily.

Vollink and Musco considered the week a success and both hope to have more events like these in the future.

"[These were] events that made people look at things differently, try different things, discover new talent; we hope to do more," Vollink said.

CONTINUATIONS

ACCEPTANCES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Woburn, Mass.

O'Brien will be enrolled in the master esthetics program where she will go through clinical training of many different beauty procedures.

Chanel Bullock will be attending San-

ta Clara University in Santa Clara, Calif.

Luke Heffernan has enrolled at Saint Anselm College in Goffstown, N.H., Konrad Nowak will be attending Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, N.Y., and Rebecca Braimon will be attending Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.

Clara Tuttle, who is going to be attending Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and Randall Doane, who will be going

to the University of Vermont in Burlington Vt., have also committed to their early action or early decision schools.

Heffernan said that this decision was a weight lifted off his shoulders, and he is excited to study business.

James Riordan, who was accepted into the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania as an early decision applicant, said he is relieved and

excited to know where he is attending.

However, he only suggests the early decision route to students who are absolutely sure that they want to attend their number one school.

"I'm excited to put the whole college process behind me, but my advice to next year's seniors would be to only apply early if you're sure and focus on showing your passion in the application," he said.

Internet Restrictions

Should net neutrality be preserved?

Pro

Austin Woodman-Paré

Net neutrality is the basic concept that information on the internet should remain protected and free-to-use.

According to dictionary.com, the definition of net neutrality is “the concept that broadband Internet service providers should provide nondiscriminatory access to internet content, platforms, etc., and should not manipulate the transfer of data.”

“[Net neutrality] preserves our right to communicate freely online. Net neutrality means an internet that enables and protects free speech,” according to savetheinternet.com.

As a result of net neutrality being repealed, companies such as Verizon, Comcast, and AT&T could hike up their prices and limit which websites are fast or slow. This easily determines which websites, content and applications will succeed.

By doing this, there is a chance that lower income citizens will not be able to afford the same access to the internet as other families. This will create a larger gap between social classes.

Without net neutrality, internet service providers can block out their competition, certain activist websites, and anything that they do not agree with.

Companies such as Amazon, Google and Facebook are strong enough to prevent slow connection without net neutrality, but they might have to pay more for that accessibility.

Companies that are not strong enough to prevent this will suffer; they will not be able to compete with the higher prices and will go under.

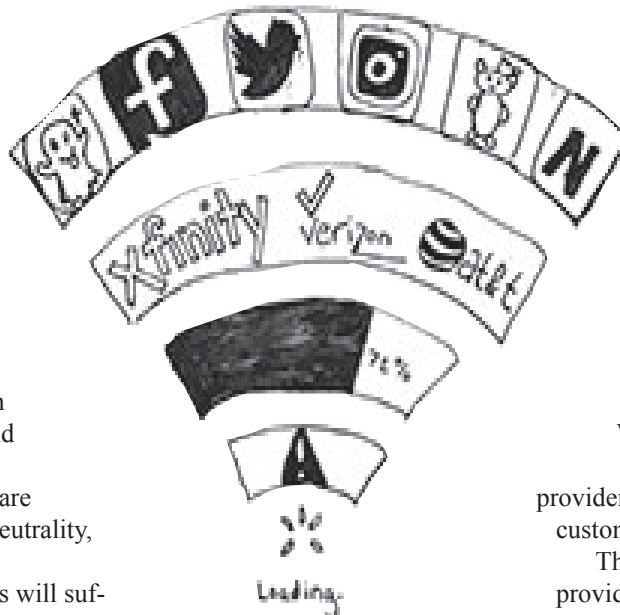
According to savetheinternet.com, small businesses, large corporations, and communities of color and other vulnerable groups of people depend on net neutrality to speak freely.

“Without net neutrality, the next Google or Facebook will never get off the ground” because internet service providers would be able to determine which websites were fast or slow, according to savetheinternet.com.

Some individuals, such as Chairman Ajit Pai of the Federal Communications Commission, say net neutrality is not the right course of action because Pai believes the government is too involved, according to Jim Puzzanghera of the LA Times.

The fact that the government is involved in such a remarkable and empowering platform is justifiable because people are reliant on what they see, watch, and hear on the internet.

The ability to access all content becomes even more important for individuals to form their own opinion and speak freely about them. The media is a prime resource of influence for all, and internet service providers should not be in control over what is shown.



AUSTIN WOODMAN-PARÉ

Con

Hannah Freeman

After the FCC declared the end of the Obama-era policy of net neutrality, people across the country have been growing concerned about what these changes could mean for them, but they will likely mean nothing.

This change is insignificant and unimportant because, while it opens the door for internet providers to charge websites for their service, these changes will never directly affect the consumer.

For example, there is no direct correlation between the cost of the popular entertainment streaming service Netflix and whether or not a country has a net neutrality restriction.

In Mexico, a country without net-neutrality, the basic Netflix package costs 96 pesos, the equivalent of \$5.03 a month in US dollars, while in the United States, it was actually more expensive, at a cost of \$7.99 a month.

Economic self-interest will also stop providers from slowing down internet for certain sites. Internet providers that are in competition with each other will also not want to risk losing customers to other providers because they are slowing down popular websites.

Verizon pledged they would not change any of their policies without net neutrality: “Unblocked access to lawful Web sites ... will not change.”

If Verizon remains true to this promise, it is unlikely another provider, like AT&T, would risk changing their policies for fear of customers switching to their competitors’ unblocked network.

The repeal of the bill also makes economic sense for internet providers. A streaming service, like Netflix or Spotify, is far more demanding of a provider’s data than a site used for checking email or booking a hotel stay.

The repeal of the bill would allow companies to charge for the heavier usage of the network, which would allow the internet provider to put that money towards improving the capacity of the network to run faster for these increasingly data-demanding

streaming sites.

Net neutrality is also unnecessary. It was enacted in 2010 when there was absolutely no basis for this set of restrictions in the United States.

Ian Tuttle at National Review said when the FCC first attempted net neutrality regulations in 2010, they were only able to “cite four examples of anticompetitive behavior, all relatively minor.”

The enactment of such a restriction would need to show a trend of negative activity across the industry, much more than just four minor examples of a distasteful, but not illegal action.

The end of this baseless restriction will allow members of this competitive industry to make a fair and moderate profit while consumers see no major changes to the prices they pay for internet service.

Americans should not fear North Korean nuclear war, missile threat

By Julia Kaper
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Although North Korea has recently increased the frequency of its nuclear bomb and missile tests, Americans should not be more afraid of North Korea’s nuclear power than they would be of any other country’s nuclear power.

According to CNN, North Korea has fired 23 missiles since February 2017. On Nov. 29, they tested an intercontinental ballistic missile, which is the first missile they tested that has the capability of hitting all of U.S. mainland.

North Korea has also tested an advanced hydrogen bomb that it claims is small enough to be delivered by one of its missiles.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un recently announced that he has a nuclear button on his desk he is ready to push at any time, according to the Washington Post.

These kinds of threats are why many Americans are scared of North Korea. A recent CNN poll found that 86 percent of Americans believe North Korea poses a serious threat to the United States, with 62 Americans calling North Korea a very serious threat.

However, Americans should not be afraid of North Korea’s nuclear threats.

While Pyongyang boasts about its newly-gained nuclear capabilities, these are certainly not unique to North Korea. There are nine countries in the world, including the United States, that have some sort of nuclear power, and most of these have many times the amount that North Korea has.

The United States not only has thousands of nuclear weapons, it also has many more precision-guided conventional bombs, according to the Los



RAPIDTRAVELCHAI/FLICKR

North Korean ballistic missile is displayed on the streets of Pyongyang during the Victory Day Parade each year on July 27.

Angeles Times.

If North Korea were to use their nuclear weapons, it would quickly spiral into a world war

of mass destruction because of how many other countries have nuclear weapons they could use to retaliate.

In his annual New Year’s Day speech, Kim said that he would not launch a nuclear weapon unless the security of his country is seriously threatened, according to the Washington Post.

Therefore, Americans should not be scared of Pyongyang starting a nuclear war for no reason, and they should hope no country would knowingly provoke North Korea.

Kim also showed a willingness to ease tensions with South Korea in his New Year’s Day speech. This is another reason Americans should hope that disputes between North Korea and the United States can be settled with diplomatic means rather than nuclear war.

Although the prospect of nuclear war is frightening, Americans should not be more afraid of North Korea than they would be of any other nuclear power in the world.

STAFF EDITORIAL

As learning commons transitions, its purpose remains unclear

Over the summer, the space that was previously the library was remodeled into the learning commons, and as the space continues to transition, its policies and purpose remain unclear.

The redesign of the learning commons changed the environment into a much more relaxed space where there have already been various social events, such as an open mic day and a day dedicated to stitching.

During these events students came in to the learning commons to socialize with both students and staff.

“[The open mic day] was just a relaxed environment where people could perform... during school. We had the middle school come in and perform a song from ‘The Lion King.’” learning commons aid Phyllis Musco said.

Allowing students to perform in the middle of the learning commons distracts students from doing their work, causing them to seek other improvised study spaces such as the tables outside the library, which often become crowded.

Digital Learning Specialist Del Vollink said she wants to create a space where people feel comfortable and almost like they’re at home., but she said they are focusing more on [students] “doing something... working instead of putting your



AUSTIN PARÉ GRAPHIC

Many high schoolers want to use the learning commons to do homework or to unwind, but it is often unable to accommodate their requests.

feet up/hanging out because you have no class.”

She said they understand that people need to speak when they work collaborately, but they “like to keep the focus more academic than just hanging out.”

Despite the intended academic focus, the learning commons still offers various games to its students, including chess and makerspaces. These games often create noise and get quite rowdy, distracting other students from

academic pursuits.

In an effort to create a space where students are able to be productive, Musco said she likes to keep the volume down.

“We don’t want this to be an environment where kids come

in and think that it’s too loud in here,” she said.

However, games and various performances in the learning commons undermine both the academic environment and the rules on volume the staff aims to enforce.

In addition to rules regarding volume, eliminating food from the space has been important to the learning commons staff in order to prevent staining and rodents.

Even with this rule in place, the staff sent a mixed message by advertising a book group with hot chocolate and cookies in the learning commons.

Although the staff of the learning commons has been doing their best to provide fun activities for students, most students are just seeking a place to do work and easily access computers. Presently, only four computers are available for student use, and they are usually occupied.

Even though the learning commons remodel had good intentions, the updated space does not, in fact, better suit the needs of students.

The conflict between creating an academic workspace and fostering a relaxed environment could be solved by moving distracting activities after school and providing more computers for student use.

Use of brominated vegetable oil should be banned in the US

By Charlotte Pick
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Although the harmful chemical Brominated Vegetable Oil is illegal in Europe and Japan, soda companies are still wrongfully using it in their beverages in the United States.

BVO originates from vegetable oil which is chemically bonded with bromine in order to form BVO.

Once this reaction occurs, the Bromine in BVO is used to prevent the oils in citrus flavored soft drinks from floating to the top. This allows for beverages to avoid emulsification and remain mixed.

Business Insider said over 100 countries around the world have

banned the use of BVO because it contains Bromine which is used as a flame retardant in carpets and couches.

Bromine is a chemical element, and when it is ingested by humans it can cause extensive reproductive, behavioral, developmental, and physical and speech coordination problems.

There have been several medical cases in which the extensive intake of BVO caused health issues.

According to WebMD, in 1997, doctors encountered a case of a man who drank approximately 2-4 liters of soda containing BVO every day. His symptoms included headaches, fatigue, and loss of muscle coordi-



POOLIE/FLICKR.COM

While some companies have removed BVO from their products, many drinks still contain the harmful chemical.

dination; he eventually lost his ability to walk.

The symptoms of extensive BVO intake can vary greatly. In 2003, a man who was also

drinking large amounts of soda containing BVO had painful sores that were diagnosed as a rare skin condition as a result of BVO intake.

Only a few beverage companies have chosen to remove BVO from their products in order to avoid health issues in consumers. In 2013, PepsiCo removed BVO from the sports drink Gatorade, but it is still used in many citrus flavored drinks such as Mountain Dew and other soft drinks.

The United States is already faced with extensive health issues such as obesity, and eliminating BVO could prevent the development of even more health issues.

Outlawing the use of BVO in food products would allow for less health risks for Americans who may not be aware of the harmful causes of BVO.

In order to spread awareness about this harmful chemical, people should be educated about its dangers and negative impacts on health.

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The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class.

Editorial space is available to all MERHS students, faculty, and community members.

All submissions must be signed and put in the newspaper mailbox in the front office of MERHS.

The Independent reserves the right not to print letters and to edit the content for clarity and length. While letters can be critical of an individual’s actions, they cannot slander or libel.

The staff editorial may be considered the opinion of the staff of The Independent.

By-line opinions are written by individual staff members and should not be considered representative of the entire staff.

The Independent staff hopes that all Manchester and Essex citizens will take advantage of this forum. The paper is meant to serve the school community, and we are open to suggestions to help it better serve its purposes.

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States should create independent redistricting commissions

Partisan gerrymandering underscores democracy, unbiased agency viable solution

By Anton Kozyrev
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Gerrymandering, the process of drawing voting districts in a way that creates unfair advantages for whoever happens to be drawing the lines, subverts the very idea of a representative democracy, and an independent commission must be established in order to redraw districts. According to the New York Times, the term gerrymandering originated in 1812, when Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry redistricted the state to benefit his own party, the Democratic-Republicans. The shape of one of the districts resembled a salamander, leading to the term “gerrymander.” In today’s age of politics, however, gerrymandering has become a very powerful tool in order to sway the results of elections. Gerrymandering has a very significant impact on election

results; for example much of the Republican Party’s current majority in the House of Representatives can be attributed to gerrymandering in 2014. According to PBS, the Democratic Party won 44% of the votes in Pennsylvania’s 2014 U.S. House of Representatives election, but the GOP won 13 of the 18 districts. The results of this election are disproportionate to the amount of votes received by each party, meaning that some voters’ votes have less weight in elections than others’.

According to redistricting.ils.edu, a website that explains how electoral lines are drawn, state legislatures have the responsibility of redrawing district lines in 37 of the 50 states, including Massachusetts. A system in which the legislators have a say as to which communities are included in their districts hurts the very foundation of democracy, as they have a conflict of interest in this situation. When voters who belong to different parties are divided into separate districts, politicians

are less incentivized to listen to other political viewpoints. This allows for more extremist rhetoric from candidates, as they merely have to use rhetoric that inveighs against the other party rather than attempting to forge a bipartisan message. According to fairvote.org, a website that campaigns to eliminate voting restrictions, the GOP won 51% of the votes in the 2013 New Jersey assembly election, but only won 32 out of the 80 seats. Clearly, the group drawing

district lines has a very large impact on the outcome of the election. It is unwise to entrust this responsibility to one party or another,

and as such, an independent agency must be created in order to avoid gerrymandering and protect democracy. There is widespread support for such a commission. According to U.S. News, Voters not Politicians, a group opposed to partisan gerrymandering in Michigan, garnered about 350,000 signatures for a petition in 2017 that proposed a commission of citizens who

A system in which the legislators have a say as to which communities are included in their districts hurts the very foundation of democracy, as they have a conflict of interest in this situation.

In Wisconsin’s 2008 state assembly elections...



Democrats won **53%** but received only **39** seats



Republicans won **47%** but received **60** seats

80% of gerrymandered districts were drawn by Republicans

Gerrymandering won the Republicans an additional **22** seats in the House of Representatives in 2016

ABIGAIL FITZGIBBON GRAPHIC

would handle redistricting. An independent commission can be successful. According to redistricting.ils.edu, six states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, and Washington) currently have an independent commission. This system needs to be em-

ployed in every state across the nation, as the commission must be free of partisan bias so that politicians cannot choose their own voters. After all, a representative democracy is no longer a democracy when elected officials choose just whom they represent.

Online college application platforms cause applicant numbers to soar

Students apply to broader range of schools, making admissions process far more competitive

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With an increasing number of high school students pursuing higher education, the ease of having online college application platforms causes the application process to be extremely competitive, ultimately making it more difficult for students to be accepted. According to their website, the Common Application was originally started by 15 institutions that “envisioned a future where a student could complete one application and send copies to any of the other 14 schools.”

Although this was a good idea in theory, the increasing number of students applying for college has made the Common App into a way for students to apply to more schools without as much work.



JULIETTE KELLEY PHOTO

The online Common Application makes it easier for more students to apply to a broader range of schools that they don’t care too much about without putting in a lot of work.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 20.4 million students were expected to attend American colleges and universities in the fall of 2017, which is an increase of 5.1 million since 2000. Taking into account

this increase in applicants, the process has already become far more competitive than it used

to be, especially since many of these students will also apply to at least 10 to 15 schools, according to Jacoba Urist from The Atlantic.

David Edmonds, vice president of Noodle.Org, an education company that helps students with the college application process, believes “application inflation is linked...to the Common App... There’s no extra paperwork associated with applying to many more places.”

In 1998, the Common App went online, and today, the vast majority of ‘selective colleges’ allow students to use it—driving up their own selectivity.”

Many students will also simply add on colleges and universities to their Common App in hopes of getting accepted to at least one of them even if they don’t care too much about the school, said Sarah Markhovsky, a counselor at Severn School in Maryland.

“They’ll say, ‘Oh, my gosh, I should apply to a million schools — if I shoot lots of arrows, maybe I’ll hit something,’” she said in an article for the New York Times.

Additionally, online applications make it easier for schools to sort through students’ applications without fully considering

their assets. According to a survey done by Rachel B. Rubin, a doctoral student in education at Harvard University, the majority of colleges in the survey will do a “winnowing” of the applications first before reading through the students’ entire application. The most common type of winnowing (used by 76% of the colleges and universities in the survey) is done through some measure of academic merit, such as test scores.

The online applications make it easier for admissions officers to “winnow” because computers are so formulaic, which means students with lower academic standards may be initially sorted out before an in-depth reading of their application.

Schools should return to having their own individual applications to make sure students are truly dedicated to the school to which they are applying, rather than just applying to many schools they don’t care that much about.

This will also make the process less competitive since application numbers will decrease, which will allow each student to have a fuller read of their application and consequently a higher chance of getting into the school that they want.

What gift should you give your significant other?

Dating Less than a Month

By Juliette Kelley

Dating for Three Months

For Him:

A Tie - \$10

Nothing says personal like a carefully chosen tie. Your guy is into music? There's a tie for that. How about sports? Just stop by Macy's and you'll find a super romantic baseball tie. No matter what, there's always a tie pattern to match your guy's interests. If you don't know his hobbies, just get them one with bright red hearts to theme it with Valentine's Day, and your shopping will be done!



For Her:

Fuzzy Socks - \$5

February is a pretty cold month, so some fuzzy socks are the perfect gift to help your girlfriend stay warm. The only hard part is choosing the pattern, but just remember, you can never go wrong with some kind of cute woodland creature. Fuzzy socks are a popular clothing choice in the middle of winter, so stop by a local store and pick up a pair!



For Him:

A Flannel - \$30

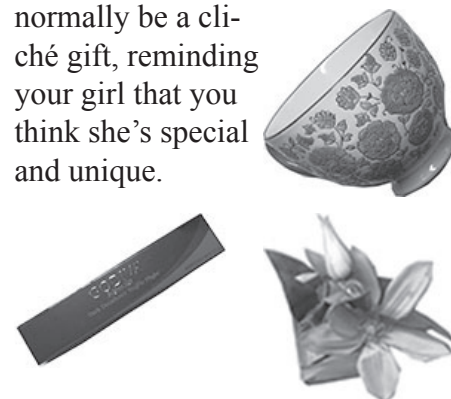
As a step up from a tie, a flannel is the perfect way to say, "I like you enough!" As long as you pick out the right colors (maybe a nice navy blue and dark green), your boyfriend will be head over heels as soon as he opens the box. Just make sure you get the right size. If you're not sure, it's always better to guess too small than too big to avoid any unintended offense.



For Her:

Flowers & Mug - \$10

This is the perfect gift to express your feelings while still keeping up that masculine façade. Although it may seem slightly sappy, every girl would kill for some flowers and chocolate. A personalized mug (maybe with your picture on it!) adds a little pizzazz to what would normally be a cliché gift, reminding your girl that you think she's special and unique.



Dating for Six Months

For Him:

A Watch - \$50

Not only is this useful, it's also something that he may not know he needs. It will also probably come in handy for you -- "losing track of time" as an excuse to being late when meeting you can no longer be viable now that he has this fab new present. Although his phone might tell time, nothing can beat the added style of a classy watch!



For Her:

Jewelry - \$50

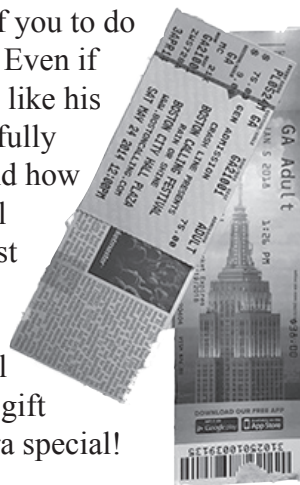
This is a big step. Buying her a necklace or bracelet signifies that you're starting to get serious. Unless you know her favorite color, something in solid silver is always a safe bet. Just be careful with rings -- you don't want to send the wrong message!



For Him:

Tickets - \$100

Hopefully by now, you know your guy's favorite sports team or band (if you don't, find out ASAP). Tickets are a good thing to splurge on since it's something fun for the two of you to do together. Even if you don't like his music or fully understand how basketball works, just pretend you do, and that'll make the gift seem extra special!



For Her:

A Spa Day - \$100

For the big one year (or more), she's going to be expecting something huge. Be prepared to go all in. Whether it's a massage or a facial, your girlfriend will love to sit back and relax with a trip to the spa. Bonus points if it's at some kind of fancy hotel.



Abigail Donnelly, History



Donnelly and her now-fiancé, Paul, went hiking in Killington, Vt. with friends. One of the trails that they were going to take was cut off, but

Paul and her friend's husband were still determined to find a way to their planned destination.

"They wound up dragging us up the side of the mountain that hadn't been cleared in two years... We got to the overlook area, and that's where Paul asked me, and he got down on one knee, and he gave me a super beautiful ring, and I said yes."

Elizabeth Edgerton, English



Edgerton and her now-husband, Joe, went surfing despite a hurricane approaching. She was thrown off her board and pummeled by the water. She was not

having fun, so they returned to shore.

"We get out of the water, and he's unzipping his wetsuit, and I'm like, 'Just wait until we get back to the beach house.'... And he's reaching in his wetsuit, and I'm like, 'What are you doing?... And [then] he pulled out the ring... it was really sweet. His parents had packed champagne and a picnic for us to eat up on the beach. And I did say yes."

Keith Gray, Science

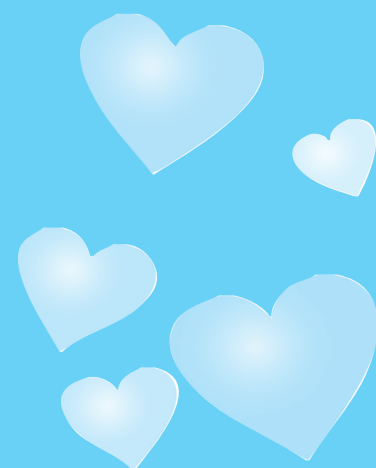


Gray and his now-wife, Paula, had been dating for two years and during their sophomore/junior year of college, knew that

marriage was the next step in their relationship. He asked her dad for permission, and her dad approved.

"We went out to dinner, and I proposed to her there, in a little restaurant in Gloucester, and we got engaged."

Teacher How did you get engaged?



Student Speak: Candy Hearts

BOYS

GIRLS



Tyler Erdmann

Freshmen



Hannah Koopman



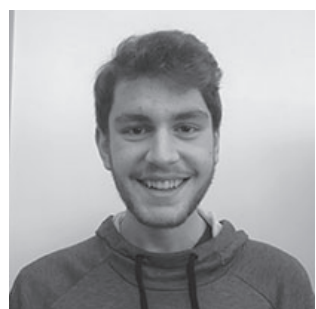
William Pollock



Sophomores



Sydney Levasseur



Liam Buttrick

Juniors



Haley Wolfe



Luke Heffernan



Seniors



Randall Doane



Student Speak: Did you get engaged?

Allison Krause, English



Krause and now-husband, Josh, went to Disney World. He insisted they take a picture off to the side of Cinderella's Castle for privacy.

"I'm like 'No, this is a terrible spot for a picture. You can't even see the castle!' He started talking to me, and he said 'Well, I think this is a good place.' And I was like 'Well, yeah. It's the happiest place on Earth. What do you mean?' And then I don't know what else he said because I kind of blacked out. He was down on one knee with a ring in front of the castle [and] I was completely surprised, and then I said yes."

David Conwell, Guidance



Conwell and his now-wife, Laura, dated in high school and he had saved notes that he wrote to her from back then. They went to the beach, where Conwell's musician friends were waiting.

"I had coordinated with [them] that after I proposed, I was gonna call them and they would come from across the beach with champagne glasses, playing a song they wrote for [the proposal]. So, I read [the notes], and then I proposed."

Mary Lumsden, Office



Lumsden and her now-husband, David, met in college, while he was in a fraternity and she was in a sorority.

"He gave me his pin, so I was pinned to him and... then one night we went out to dinner, and he just said... 'You want to get married?' and I said, 'Yes, but not until after I finish college.' And I finished college, and then a year [later] we got married on the hottest, hottest day in July."



CIVIL RIGHTS: DERAY MCKESSON

The civil rights movement is taught in elementary schools, but what some do not realize is that the fight for equality continues today. In recent years, former school administrator DeRay Mckesson has become a leader in the modern civil rights activism and the Black Lives Matter movement. He has been active in protests against police brutality in Ferguson, Mo., and Baltimore, Md. He currently writes for The Guardian and the Huffington Post and hosts the podcast "Pod Save the People."

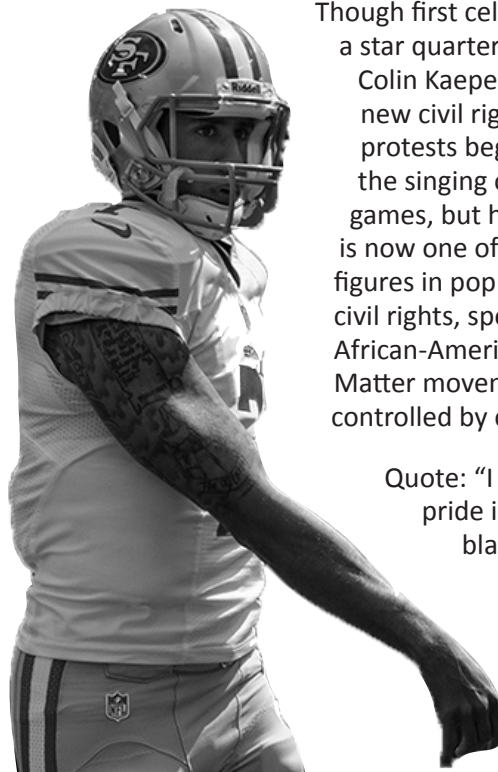
Quote: "You are enough to start a movement. Individual people can come together around things that they know are unjust, and they can spark change."

SCIENCE: KATHERINE JOHNSON

Katherine Johnson was 14 when she graduated high school. She was a young African-American female math prodigy in a world that was not welcoming of people that looked like her. Johnson began working for NASA as a mathematician in 1953 and was the sole woman to earn a promotion to a team of all-male researchers. Her work for NASA, including her calculations that made the first moon landing possible, was largely forgotten for decades. In 2016, the film "Hidden Figures" finally gave her the recognition she deserved when Johnson was nearly age 100. Her work for NASA and her efforts to integrate West Virginia University's graduate school earned her a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015.

Quote: "I felt most proud of the success of the Apollo mission. They were going to the moon, and I computed the path to get there."

SPORTS: COLIN KAEPERNICK



Though first celebrated for his skill on the field as a star quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, Colin Kaepernick is now at the forefront of a new civil rights movement. Kaepernick's silent protests began simply with him kneeling during the singing of the National Anthem before games, but his message has since spread. He is now one of the most divisive and powerful figures in pop culture, drawing attention to civil rights, specifically police brutality against African-Americans and the new Black Lives Matter movement, on a stage and in an industry controlled by conservative, white businessmen.

Quote: "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way."

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Throughout the month of February, Americans celebrate African-American heritage. Many African-Americans' stories are those of courage and triumph in the face of adversity. Even if you cannot relate to their discrimination and experience, you can still derive hope and inspiration from their lives.

POLITICS: SHIRLEY CHISHOLM



In 1968, newly elected New York Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm walked into the House of Representatives as the sole black woman in the room. Even though she was elected at the height of racial tensions in the United States, Chisholm refused to be intimidated. Over her 14-year career in Congress, she fought for education, social programs, and access to healthy food, especially for mothers and children. She empowered women, hiring an all-female legislative staff and fighting for women and people of color around the country through her voice in Congress. In 1972, she became the first African-American presidential candidate, running for the Democratic nomination.

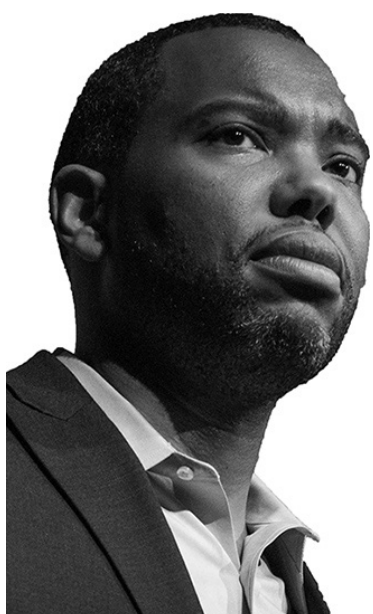
Quote: "Tremendous amounts of talent are lost to our society just because that talent wears a skirt."



WRITING: TA-NEHISI COATES

As a kid growing up in Baltimore, a city crumbling during the crack epidemic, Ta-Nehisi Coates used books as an escape. Now, he is an award-winning journalist and author whose work has exposed the truths of white supremacy in the United States and stirred debates over race relations. Coates rose to prominence in the literary world after he began writing for The Atlantic. His best-selling book "Between the World and Me" criticized institutional racism and won him the National Book Award.

Quote: "We should seek not a world where the black race and white race live in harmony, but a world in which the terms black and white have no political meaning."

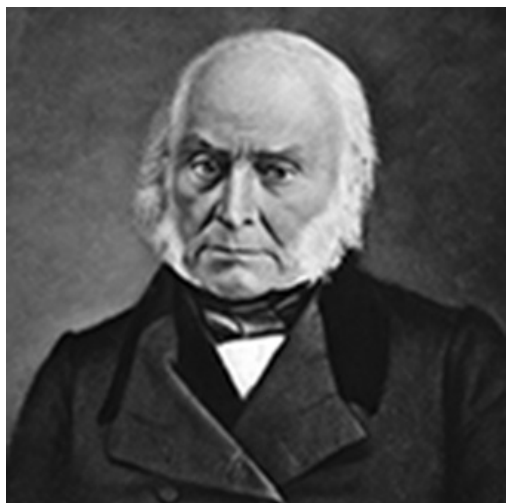


History department shares presidential trivia

In honor of Presidents' Day on Monday, Feb. 19, 2018, history department teachers share their favorite, weirdest, and most random United States presidential trivia facts they have ever heard.



JENNIFER COLEMAN



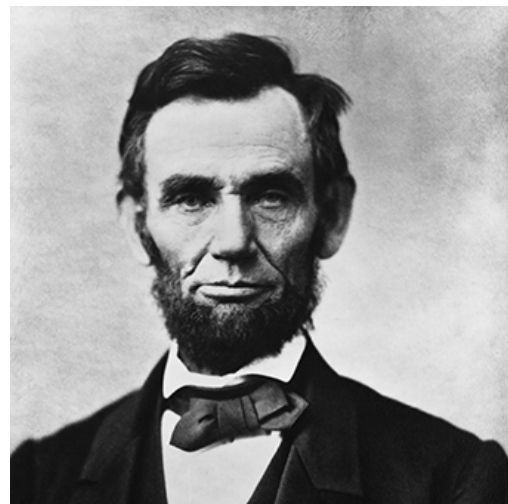
“John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, used to like to skinny dip.”



JOHN MULLADY



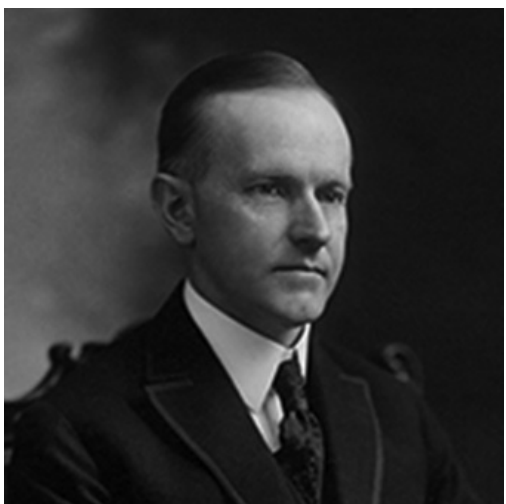
“It’s borderline ‘inappropes,’ but Warren G. Harding wrote a series of love letters to his mistress and nicknamed a certain part of his body in the letters, and his family today has tried to put a court order to stop the release and publication of those letters because [they’re] embarrassing.”



“Abraham Lincoln was asked by his wife to attend a psychic, and he went and figured out how the person was faking it.”



LAUREN DUBOIS



“Calvin Coolidge was nicknamed ‘silent Cal,’ and one night at a dinner party, a woman bet him that she could get him to say more than two words to her throughout the course of the dinner, and all he said to her the whole night was ‘you lose.’”



JESSICA TRAN

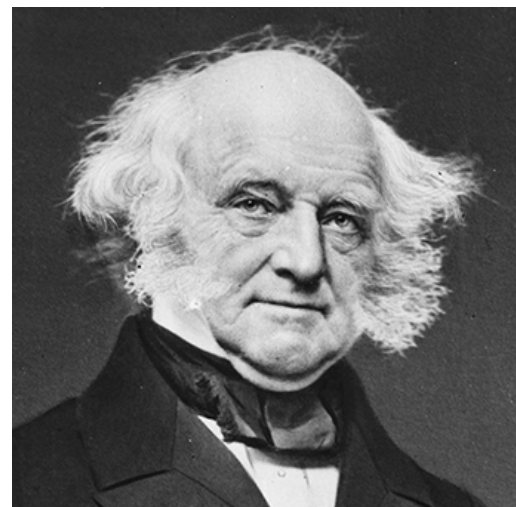


HAYNES (TOP LEFT), W. HARRISON (TOP RIGHT), MCKINLEY (LOWER LEFT), AND B. HARRISON

“Depending on how you calculate it, the number of presidents that were living in the state when they were elected president is the highest from Ohio, my home state.”



ABIGAIL DONNELLY



“A few years ago a 12-year-old girl created a family tree in which she connected all of the presidents as descendants of King John of England, except for Martin Van Buren.”



“William Taft was so fat that he got stuck in a bathtub.”



JAMES WALLIMANN



CLINTON AND CARTER

“Both [President] Clinton and President Carter had alcoholic, drug abusing brothers that they had to cover for.”

Girls' basketball team hopes to qualify for state tournament

Captains lead team to success in games through hard work, practice

By Hannah Freeman
INDEPENDENT STAFF

As the season comes to a close, the girls' basketball team has performed well under the leadership of junior captains Bella Pomeroy and Grace Brennan, as well as junior Suzy Morton, coach Lauren DuBois said.

The team is 9-6 so far this

season with five more games to go; DuBois is optimistic about the team's chances of making the state tournament, and the team will need one more win to do so.

"[The team] has been really good at correcting our mistakes so far this season. This has really helped us when we have a slow start in the first half of the game because we are good at coming

back and fighting the second half," Pomeroy said.

Pomeroy said she is confident in the team's ability to succeed this season.

"We have a really good mix of players this season; girls that are tall, fast, and strong," she said

This young team has had excellent chemistry so far,

which will help them continue to find success, Brennan said.

"We are doing really well, and since we don't have any seniors this year, it's

great because the good chemistry we have with this team will carry over to next year as well," she said.

The impact players this season have been Pomeroy and

'[The captains] are really approachable in practice and do a great job helping us play better.'

- LAUREN DUBOIS



COURTESY OF MAXINE HICKEY

Juniors, captain Bella Pomeroy and Suzy Morton have led their team with optimism. The two players have kept their teammates grounded throughout the season, Coach Lauren DuBois said.

Brennan, DuBois said.

"Bella is our leading scorer and is definitely a stabilizing force for the team when she is on the court, and Grace provides a real spark both defensively and offensively; she has really risen to the occasion this season," DuBois said.

The captains have led the

team well this season, sophomore Bridget Twombly said.

"They are really approachable in practice and do a great job helping us play better," she said.

DuBois said junior Suzy Morton has also been a strong leader for the team.

"Suzy has really been a leader

so far this season. She does a great job leading the team, calling out plays, and getting the team going and ready to play during timeouts and halftime," DuBois said.

Morton has done an excellent job keeping the team focused and leading plays in the game, sophomore Sophia Pomeroy said.

Paccone, Lantz lead team with talent, spirit

By Heather Holley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As the boys' basketball team nears the end of a close season with a record of 6-9, two players have proven to be vital assets through their talent and spirit.

Senior Lake Fleming said senior Mitch Paccone and junior Ben Lantz lead the team with Paccone's strengths on the court and Lantz's enthusiastic energy.

Fleming explained how Paccone leads his team throughout the season as both a captain and a valuable player.

"Mitch is a great leader. He is someone all the guys look up to because he's been our most reliable scorer all year," he said.

Fleming said, "He embodies what a captain and a valuable player is, and he's had a very

successful year."

Fleming said Paccone is always striving to improve as he puts in the work outside of and during practice, which is what motivates the team.

Another teammate, junior Dylan Wilson, said Paccone is consistent and a dependable scorer every game.

"He can drive as well as make smart decisions on the court. Overall, Mitch is a very smart player and a valuable asset on the team," he said.

Paccone said as a captain on the team he works hard every day and helps out his teammates by trying to make it easier for them on and off the court. He then explained his mentality during the games.

"My offensive mindset is to



HEATHER HOLLEY PHOTO

Senior captain Mitch Paccone has played an impressive season alongside teammate, junior Ben Lantz, who leads with energy and keeps the team excited about upcoming practices and games.

get to the rim or shoot the open jump shot, and if the shot isn't there, I find an open teammate and keep the offense flowing. I'm trying to let the game come to me more and not force as many shots," he said.

Fleming and Wilson said that Lantz, another key figure on the

boys' team, has been a leader through his enthusiasm and spirit both on the court and on the bench.

"Ben always brings a certain type of energy every day. In the game, he's a leader and directing people. On the bench, he is always cheering his teammates

on and rallying the team to do the same," Fleming said.

Wilson also said how Lantz hypes up his teammates and celebrates for things such as making a basket or a smart play.

"He has a lot of energy all of the time, gets the bench going which helps the players on the court, and puts a lot of emotion into the game," he said.

Lantz said hyping his teammates up is his way of contributing to the team off the court.

"Whether it's by going crazy on the bench, doing handshakes when starters are announced, or getting everyone pumped in the hallway right before we run out, I like to hype up the team when I can," he said.

Lantz said if a teammate is looking tired or something seems off, going directly to them to give them a needed boost is good for team morale and getting that teammate into a competitive and positive mindset.

Indoor track team enters end of season, strong athletes lead team to success

Leaders inspire teammates to race well, support each other

By Paige Swanson
INDEPENDENT STAFF

With only a few meets left in the season, a few talented athletes look to finish the season strong with both their performance and their leadership, assistant coach Steve Whittey said.

Historically, the team has had strong individual performances, so that is where most of the emphasis falls, head coach Mark Dawson said.

Dawson identified two of the strongest runners on the team as juniors Eve Feuerbach and Dean Campbell.

"[Dean] has been having a really great year for the sprint



COURTESY OF JILLIAN BOWEN

Junior captain Jillian Bowen runs the 300 meter race at the Reggie Lewis Center in Boston.

team. He's been running well recently and he's been winning points for the races he's in," he said.

He said that Feuerbach is also having a good season.

"[Feuerbach] has been unde-

feated in all of her races... that has been great to see," he said.

Sophomore Olivia Ford has also been impressed with Feuerbach's performance throughout the season.

"She's a really good runner. I don't know how she pulls it off... she is just so good," Ford said.

Feuerbach said she has been training a lot to do well in her races.

"I've done a lot of long runs because endurance runs can really help... I also like really intense core workouts," she said.

In addition to top performers, Dawson identified two athletes who led the team not in wins, but with their spirit and leadership.

Dawson said junior Jillian Bowen and junior Matt Carter both help to lead the team with

their attitude.

"[Bowen] is one of the captains, and she does a great job making sure the team stays together. She also helps out with coming up with ideas to support the team," Dawson said.

Bowen said she likes to make sure everyone has an "accountability partner," which is someone who will watch the partners races and cheer. She believes this helps to bring the team together.

Dawson said Carter, who is also a captain, helps to lead the team on the boys' side.

"He's been great in helping everyone stick together along with helping everyone feel good and light," he said.

Carter said he has enjoyed taking on the duties that come

along with being a captain.

"I like to be able to set a good example. I also think being knowledgeable about the sport is important so I can answer any questions

people might have," he said.

With the strong performances on and off the track, Dawson is confident that the team will finish the season strong and hopefully qualify some athletes for States.

'[Feuerbach's] a really good runner. I don't know how she pulls it off... she is just so good.'

- OLIVIA FORD

Captains lead swim team to success during the season

By Charlotte Pick
INDEPENDENT STAFF

After a season of six meets, the boys' swim team was undefeated, and the girls' swim team had a record of 4-2.

With many swimmers advancing to Sectionals, the swim team ended their season with a win against Hamilton-Wenham, and then continued on to CALS on Sunday, Feb 4.

The swimmers who placed at CALS include: Elizabeth Athanas who won first in the 200 IM and 100 breaststroke, Jake Athanas who won second in the 50 freestyle and first in the 100 free, and Coleman Komishane who won first in the 100 freestyle and 500 freestyle.

"We have had a very successful season," Komishane said.

According to Komishane, many swimmers stepped up this year and contributed to the team's success.

"Drew Charlton, Maggy Delisio, and Maddie Carvalho had some really influential legs this season," he said.

Despite the large amount of impactful swimmers on the team, Komishane was noted by captains as the team's most influential swimmer this year.

"He is a strong swimmer in many events, and contributed greatly to the team this year," senior captain Will Finn said.

Sophomore captain Elizabeth Athanas and sophomore Maddie Carvalho also said that Komishane was a very important part of the team this season.

"His swims have been very



Senior captains Coleman Komishane and Will Finn help the team finish the season strong with their attitude in and out of the pool.

impactful this season, and have certainly helped to better our team and contribute to our success," Athanas said.

Komishane is going to swim at Bowdoin College in the fall.

"I enjoy swimming because it helps me in all areas of my life. I have enjoyed our practice structure this season and work-



CHARLOTTE PICK PHOTOS

ing with the new coach Marnie Lawler," Komishane said.

Sophomore captain Elizabeth Athanas also said that senior captain Will Finn exhibited leadership and positively impacted the entire team throughout the season.

"He always had a positive attitude, and encouraged his

teammates," she said.

Although Finn does not plan to swim competitively in college, he hopes to still continue swimming.

"I enjoy swimming because it helps me to stay in shape; I hope to continue to swim in college, even if not for a team," Finn said.

Finn also noted freshman Sam Rice as a leader on the team.

"He is always cheering on his teammates; I hope that he continues to improve and lead the team as he continues on the team in coming years," he said.

The swim team will attend Sectionals on Saturday, Feb 10.

"We hope to continue to have success as we move into Sectionals and hopefully States. I am proud of what we have done so far this season, and hope that we can continue that," she said.

Girls' hockey team beats rival with key players

Team continues to improve, works towards making playoffs after win

By Sirine Benali
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Winning an important game against Beverly and improving performance, sophomores Isabell Amigo and Annika Smith on the girls' hockey team have been working towards their season

goal of making the playoffs.

"We have a good shot at making States and that is definitely our team goal," Smith said.

The team is currently 8-4-1 and has won some key games against teams like Beverly, their rival, and has had close losses against teams like Masconomet.

"Our league is pretty strong... Our three losses this year came in league play. They're all three games where

we outplayed the team but we made costly mistakes at certain times. If we get those three teams again, hopefully, this time around we can beat them," head coach Chris Wells said.

Amigo noted that Beverly is a strong team.

'The whole team is starting to improve. Some of the stuff that we've been working on during the season is starting to kick in which is very good to see as a coach.'

- CHRIS WELLS

"They've always been really strong and had a lot of talent, but they graduated a lot of their seniors last year. So, they have been struggling this year and we've been capitalizing on their weaknesses," Amigo said.

Both Smith and Amigo have been important players on the team, said Wells.

"The Manchester girls have done really well [and] are hard workers," he said.

Wells and Smith both said Amigo is a strong player and



COURTESY OF ISABELL AMIGO

Head coach Chris Wells said Manchester players Isabell Amigo and Annika Smith have been influential to the team

leader on the team.

"Isabell has definitely been a strong player and leader on the second line. She's definitely a modest player, but she is a very a good leader," Smith said.

Wells said that Amigo is "a team leader and she's definitely growing into that role, which is great to see."

Wells also identified Smith as an influential player on the team.

"[Smith] comes to practice, works hard, wants to improve, is a good teammate, and is such a good example," Wells said.

Overall, the team has one month left in the season until the playoffs to keep improving.

"The whole team is starting to improve. Some of the stuff that we've really been working hard on during the season is starting to kick in which is very good to see as a coach," said Wells.

Rice, Parker exhibit talent, spirit despite disappointing season

By Emily Clark
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With a record of 2-10-2, the boys' hockey team has had a disappointing season, head coach Patrick McIntosh said. Despite this, he values the talent and spirit that senior captain Jackson Rice and freshman Phillip Parker add to the team.

"We have very much under-achieved this season, and I think all of the players would agree with that," McIntosh said.

Rice is also disappointed with the team, especially because it will be his last year playing with these boys.

"Overall we have been a huge disappointment, and I really thought we were going to have a better season than this. There is always next year. Just kidding, I am a senior. I wish them luck for next year but wish this year could've been better," he said.

Despite this dissatisfaction, McIntosh recognized that Rice and Parker have helped the team. "Phillip Parker is definitely the MVP so far in the season. Without his hard work and

total of eight goals we would be nowhere. No one else has more than two," he said.

Parker agreed the team has underperformed this season but is happy with his achievements so far.

"We have more talent than what we are showing on the ice. We should be better than we are right now. I came into the season expecting to score only one or two goals, but I have done pretty well so far, which has been cool and a great experience," he said.

Rice agreed that Parker has led the team with his goals and deserves to be recognized as the MVP so far in the season.

"Phillip has come in clutch with a few big goals this year, and when he is able to find the back of the net, the team is able to get excited around that and bring up the energy for the game," Rice said.

McIntosh said beyond talent, Rice also adds a lot of spirit to the team, no matter what the score is, as the captain, according to McIntosh.

"Jackson Rice is the most spirited player on the team. He is very fiery and always tries to motivate the team," he said.

Rice said he plans to continue this spirit in hopes of winning more games and keeping positivity within the athletes, and he still enjoys playing because he will always love the sport.

Seniors create memorable final ski season

By Holly Fossa
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Seniors Jon Rouillard and Katie Donnelly have acted as very important members of the ski team, according to coach Tim Wonson, through their skill in the sport as well as their attitude toward meets and practices.

Though all members of the team are hardworking and impactful on the slopes, Wonson said Rouillard has been very essential to the team and its successes.

"He has always shown up and

given way more of himself than any coach has ever asked, and he is a blast to ski with," Wonson said.

Rouillard said he has learned a lot from ski team and thinks it is a great break in his week.

"I have learned a lot about commitment because of the large amount of time and effort it takes to be a part of the ski team," he said.

Junior captain Max Hahn said Rouillard is an excellent role model to the younger racers and is a very important member of the team.

"He is a very important asset because of his experience and knowledge of the team. He is also a super important role model," Hahn said.



Seniors Katie Donnelly and Jon Rouillard have carried the team through the season with their good attitudes and performances.

Senior captain Emily Clark also said Rouillard is a key member of the team.

"He doesn't get enough credit for his commitment to the team. He helps out everyone and is a huge asset to the team," she said.

Wonson said Donnelly always has a great attitude when it



HOLLY FOSSA PHOTOS

comes to getting the team excited for meets and keeping a positive mindset.

"She is always super positive, super pumped to ski, and she is a great skier, student athlete and teammate," Wonson said.

Donnelly said being on the ski team has been awesome because

it is a unique sport that can bring all skiers together even in harsh conditions.

"You have to try and be positive and upbeat even in the freezing cold or training after races," she said.

Clark said Donnelly never fails to get the team eager to race.

"I really do appreciate the positive energy she brings to the team. It is rare to find her not smiling or laughing no matter how long the bus ride is or how icy the slopes are," Clark said

Wonson said he is extremely thankful to have been able to coach and ski with the members of the team. "It has been a real honor getting to know these racers and skiing with them," he said.

Drama Club works on choreography, character development for show

Students prepare for preliminary rounds of Dramafest production

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With the preliminary round of Dramafest less than a month away, the Drama Club is busy preparing for their production of “Another American: Asking and Telling” by Marc Wolf.

Student director senior Belle Allmendinger said the group worked on getting “off-book” over winter break, which was a big step towards getting ready for the show.

“We’re going start to finish with people not having the scripts, and so it’s to get them to memorize their lines and running it through so we can make sure that the time is correct,” she said. The play is about the treat-

ment of gay people in the military and is written through a series of interviews with characters that have various points of view on the issue, Allmendinger said.

“This was written during... the whole ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy. It is a controversial show just because it does show both sides of the argument, and it does talk about some serious things. I’m so proud of everyone here for being able to handle it,” she said.

Drama Club adviser Sirkka Natti said she is very excited about the play.

“I think it’s a super cool play, and I’m really excited that Belle is picking something that is so



JULIETTE KELLEY PHOTO

The play focuses on difficult topics and ideas such homosexuality in the army. The Drama Club hopes to make it to the second round of the competition, which they have not done in past years.

dear to her, and so many of the cast members are so enthusiastic about the project,” she said.

Sophomore Genevieve Young said the serious topic has motivated the group to put a lot of work into making sure the play is going to be performed as well as it can be.

“We want to put on a good show with this. We have to do the script justice. Not even the script, just the whole idea,” she said.

In addition to working on being off-book, Allmendinger said the Drama Club has been learning choreography and evolving

their characters.

“We’re going to start putting choreography into the show with the person speaking. We’re going to be doing more character development; we’re constantly doing character development,” she said.

Natti said the group has also been working on transitioning between scenes.

“It’s about transitions and moving quickly through the different things that are happening,” she said.

Young said many of the elements they are incorporating were inspired by shows the group saw at last year’s Dramafest.

“Some of the stuff last year... it was incredible... We’re working on more this year is taking all the tech elements and all the drama elements and really mixing them,” she said.

Allmendinger said her goal is to make it past the preliminary round of Dramafest and also for the cast and crew to feel proud of their work.

“The past couple years we haven’t moved past the preliminary round, and I want to change that. Even if we don’t, I want us to leave the competition feeling like we gave it our all,” she said.

Sophomore performs at Hard Rock Cafe showcase, starts writing her own music

By Paige Swanson
INDEPENDENT STAFF

After practicing her music throughout the year with her private instructors, sophomore Jenna Cirella sang live at the Hard Rock Cafe on Dec. 16, 2017.

The Music Asylum, Cirella’s music school, allowed students to perform at a show in front of family and friends as well as showcase their musical talents Cirella said.

“[The show] was super fun. I thought it was a great venue, and the audience was pretty cool too because it was all people that I knew; it was awesome,” Cirella said.

Cirella sang “The Way You Look Tonight,” by Frank Sinatra, which she says is very meaningful to her because she grew up listening to his music with her



PAIGE SWANSON PHOTO

Sophomore Jenna Cirella performed at the Hard Rock Cafe in Boston with other students from her music school, The Music Asylum. She performed in front of her friends and family.

family.

Junior Jia Mulvey, who also performed at the Hard Rock Cafe showcase, said that she could tell Cirella was very passionate about what she was singing and also

confident.

“She sings with such a purpose. She has a really good stage presence so when she’s singing she gets the audience’s attention,” Mulvey said.

Cirella said although she tends to be confident while performing, she doesn’t always feel that way.

“When I’m up on stage I usually feel pretty nervous, but it’s so fun and exciting, and I love being in front of people,” Cirella said.

Donna O’Neill, a music teacher, believes performing is the best way to grow as a musician, and Cirella can perform very well.

“I’ve known her for a while through various school performances and classes and I’ve seen that she has a unique way of expressing her emotions and getting them across to the audience... she really touches the audience,” O’Neill said.

O’Neill also said Cirella is fantastic to work with.

“She asks a lot of great questions and is always looking for

critiques so she can continue to improve, which is something I really admire,” O’Neill said.

Cirella said being given the chance to participate in shows motivates her to work hard on the pieces she is learning because performing is always her ultimate goal.

“I’ve been singing forever but more seriously for maybe four or five years,” Cirella said.

She also said she appreciates the opportunity to share something that is very important to her with other people.

“Now that I’m writing my own music, it is really cool that I get to share my feelings with others... especially because music is like therapy for me,” Cirella said.

‘She has a unique way of expressing her emotions and getting them across to the audience.’

- DONNA O’NEILL

French class studies artists, replicates 1800s impressionist pastel drawings

By Hannah Freeman
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Students in the French V seminar class worked to complete pastel drawings that mimic paintings by French impressionists.

The class completed these drawings as a part of a unit on French impressionists during the 1800s, teacher Erin Fortunato said.

“[The students] read background history about art before the French impressionists, the movement itself, how the movement changed modern art and has become a crucial part of both art and literature worldwide,” she said.

The class studied well-known artists and their many works, then each student chose one lesser known artist to study in

depth.

“I chose an artist named Armand Guillaumin to study,” senior Holly Fossa said, “I chose him because his work has a lot of colors and it looked fun to try.”

They had to accumulate five of their chosen artist’s paintings, compare them to what we had learned about impressionism and analyze their paintings, then select their favorite painting to copy in class.

“It was really nice to all be able to show each other the different approaches we took to the different artists’ paintings” which helped the students “see how the

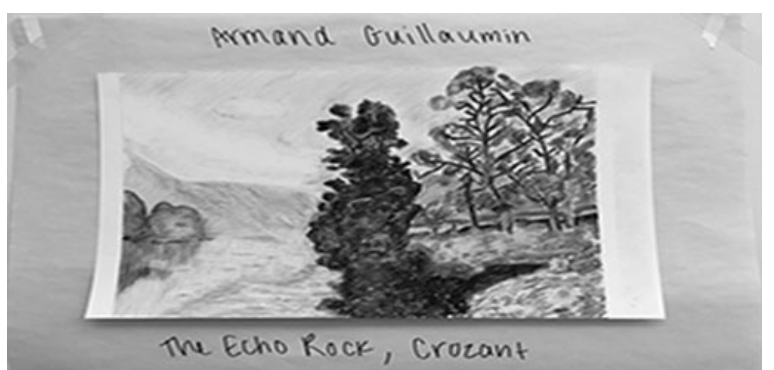
different painters use the light in their work and try to replicate that or show your own version of [the light] in your painting,” Fossa said.

‘I love the bright colors they used and the similarities to the original pieces.’

- CLAIRE GENDRON

“Everyone seemed really comfortable working with the pastels, they were really great for blending and working with light the way the impressionists did,” Fortunato said.

The pieces are currently hang-



HANNAH FREEMAN PHOTOS

Students in French V class completed drawings mimicking French impressionists’ artwork.

ing in the back of the Fortunato’s classroom for students and staff to see.

“[The drawings] are really good. I love the bright colors they used and the similarities to the original pieces,” sophomore Claire Gendron said.



Podcasts offer variety in news, entertainment

Taking a long road trip soon? Looking for something different in your earbuds when you hit the gym? Sick of your current mix on Spotify? Podcasts offer a plethora of subjects and are available through iTunes, subscription services like Stitcher, or in an easily accessible (but often underrated) iPhone app. Whether you're looking to hear the latest news in politics or just want to relax and have a laugh after a long day, there is a podcast for every interest.



**WAIT WAIT...
DON'T TELL ME!**
FROM NPR® & WBEZ® CHICAGO

Trivia: "Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!"
(WBEZ and NPR)

Perfect for the trivia geek, weekly airings of "Wait Wait" are structured like a hilarious quiz show with prominent minds in entertainment testing their luck by guessing which weekly news headlines are real and which are fake. This podcast is ideal for news junkies and culture geeks who love competitive learning and laughing out loud in public.



Psychology: "The Hidden Brain"
(NPR)

Everyone has an odd mannerism or wacky way of going about his or her daily routine. This fascinating podcast uses science to unpack the myriad quirks and absurdities of the human brain. Although grounded in psychology, the show draws from facets of everything from neurobiology to economics to explain the subconscious decisions that make up human behavior.



Comedy: "2 Dope Queens"
(WNYC Studios)

Two real-life best friends from Brooklyn share intimate and hilarious stories with their listeners. The hosts invite a live audience to their show, discussing topics from pop culture fads, race, and entertainment. The podcast is a platform for rising female comedians as well as cultural icons and entertainers. Guests perform standup and tell stories that will have you laughing through your morning commute.



Variety: "TED Radio Hour"
(NPR)

Most students have heard of TEDTalks, 18-minute special interest shows from leaders in technology, education, and design. Welcome to the "TED Radio Hour"—TEDTalks in a podcast format. The podcast invites guest innovators, scientists, educators, and artists, among others to discuss their ideas. This podcast is ideal for anyone wanting to dive deep into a niche subject for 18-minutes of exciting, educational entertainment.



Mystery: "Serial"
(WBEZ Chicago and This American Life)

Drawing influence from television shows, "Serial" is released, as one could probably guess, serially, so unlike most podcasts, the order matters. "Serial" follows a single true crime story each season. Episodes are released every other week and add new evidence and insight to the plot. The audience listens to these true stories unfold, following twists in the narrative until finally arriving at a verdict. If you love detective stories or true crime mysteries, this podcast is sure to keep you on the edge of your seat.



Political: "Pod Save America"
(Crooked Media)

With a young, fired-up energy, millennial hosts (and former Obama admins) Jon Favreau, Tommy Vietor and Jon Lovett give listeners the latest in "straight shooter" political news with in-depth analysis and rapier wit. This liberal-leaning podcast is really just a conversation between good friends, giving heavy political topics a relaxed and humorous delivery.

Season four of 'Black Mirror' appeals to both new viewers, previous fans

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After receiving significant critical acclaim for the third season, its first under the control of Netflix, the six-episode fourth season of "Black Mirror" was released on Dec. 29. Thankfully for loyal viewers, the newest installments provide both characteristically chilling technological tales and even a few atypically uplifting episodes.

Written primarily by British satirist Charlie Brooker for all four seasons, the show's first two seasons appeared on a British television network in 2011 and 2013 before being bought by Netflix for \$40 million. Even with the change in production location, the series stayed true to its roots due to Brooker's consistently imaginative, often dystopian worlds.

Unlike many currently popular series, each episode is independent of the next and involves a different cast, setting, and



NETFLIX.COM

The newest season of Netflix's series 'Black Mirror' mixes in positive plots to classical dystopian episodes, engaging viewers and receiving critical acclaim to expand on the success of season three.

situation in a manner reminiscent of "The Twilight Zone" and basically functions as a separate abbreviated movie.

Surprisingly, arguably half of the six episodes in season four ended positively, which was a relative rarity in the first three seasons. Brooker explained his

thought process, saying that after the 2016 presidential election he was not sure how receptive audiences would be to more negativity.

"I genuinely thought, 'I don't know what state the world's going to be in by the time these [episodes] appear, and I don't

know how much appetite there will be for nothing but bleak nihilism,'" he said.

Consistent with this assertion, "USS Callister," "Hang the DJ," and "Black Museum," episodes one, four, and six respectively, all end with some amount of room for positive interpretations.

Although Brooker is the primary writer for all of the episodes, the series boasts a range of experienced directors, including Jodie Foster among others. The actors, on the other hand, while talented, are less recognizable.

With running times from 41 to 76 minutes, there is plenty of time for each plot to develop, whether it deals with the latest innovation in helicopter parenting found in "Arkangel" or the secrets uncovered by a memory machine used for insurance purposes in "Crocodile."

In the end, the fourth season truly has something for everyone. The independent plots allow new viewers to jump in at any point, and the repeated use of the song "Anyone Who Knows What Love Is" by Irma Thomas and subtle references to previous episodes in "Black Museum" reward those who have faithfully watched from the start.

Pixar's 'Coco' brings back dead, reveals bittersweet truths about losing loved ones

By Shannon Adam
INDEPENDENT STAFF

In Pixar's newest film, Miguel Rivera, a Mexican boy, aspires to become a musician in a family that has banned all music from their home.

The film is directed by Lee Unkrich and Adrian Molina. Unkrich has co-directed "Monsters, Inc." and "Finding Nemo" and was the director on "Toy Story 3." Molina was a writer on "The Good Dinosaur" and "Monsters University," and made his co-directorial debut with this movie.

Set in Santa Cecilia, Mexico, "Coco" follows the 12-year-old boy, voiced by Anthony Gonzalez, on his journey of realizing his dream of becoming a musician in spite of his family's tradition of being a shoemaker.

The family has barred music since the singer-songwriter husband of Miguel's great-great grandmother went off to be a musician and never returned, which instilled a hatred of music for generations to come.

On the Mexican holiday, Day of the Dead, which reunites the dead with the living for one night, the boy revolts against his family and decides to borrow the guitar of his idol, Ernest de la Cruz, which accidentally transports him to the land of the dead.

With the help of his dead relatives, Miguel must find his way back to the living, while also proving his musical talents.

Despite the serious topic, "Coco" is a family-friendly movie that demystifies death and portrays the land of the dead more like a skeleton party than the dark afterlife most people

imagine.

Comic relief is provided by Miguel's grandmother, Abuelita, who is the strict, flip-flop throwing head of the house in one second and a doting grandmother in the next.

But the feature that stands out the most, is the breathtaking scenery of the land of the dead, displaying thousands of lights and flowers in green, blue, orange and yellow schemes.

The border between the dead and the living, functioning similar to a border and customs control at the airport, brings up the unavoidable comparisons to the real world. While current politics are certainly noticeable to the older members of the audience, the main focus of the story is on finding one's true self and the importance of family.

"Coco" named after great-



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'Coco' centers around young Miguel as he journeys through the land of the dead and discovers his family's secretive past.

grandmother, Mama Coco, also shows off some original tunes like the reoccurring "Remember Me," with bittersweet lyrics about life and loss, written by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, known for their hit "Let It Go."

The final stretch tugs at the

heartstrings, leaving many viewers misty-eyed and more appreciative of Mexican culture and the importance of family.

The film is rated PG due to thematic elements and was released on Nov. 22, 2017 with a total running time of 109 minutes.

'Hamilton' goes on U.S. tour, allowing more people to experience revolutionary musical

By Julia Kaper
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Following the success of the Broadway and Chicago versions of "Hamilton," a tour version of the show was created to allow more of the country to experience the groundbreaking musical.

After finishing its run in San Francisco, the tour edition of "Hamilton" moved to the Pantages Theater in Los Angeles in August 2017.

The musical uses styles of music and dance that are unconventional in theater, like rap and hip-hop, to tell the story of Alexander Hamilton's role in the founding of the United States.

In the opening number, "Alexander Hamilton," Aaron Burr, played by Joshua Henry, leads the cast in narrating the story of Hamilton's early life. Burr continues to act as the storyteller



JULIA KAPER PHOTO

'Hamilton' stops in Los Angeles, Calif. on tour traveling across the country, reaching new audiences and expanding on the success reached by the Broadway and Chicago production of the musical.

throughout the whole show.

In the next song, "Aaron Burr, Sir," Michael Louwoye, who plays Hamilton, and Henry illustrate how Burr acts as a foil to Hamilton.

Henry portrays Burr as a

smooth politician who advises Hamilton: "Talk less. Smile more." Hamilton, on the other hand, is always expressing his opinion and even admits, "I got a lot of brains but no polish. I gotta holler just to be heard."



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In "The Room Where it Happens," Henry continues to make his narration of the story interesting to listen to by bringing life into the description of an otherwise boring meeting between Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison.

He sings, "Two Virginians and an immigrant walk into a room diametrically opposed, foes." By sounding like he is telling a joke, he makes the story more entertaining.

In the second act, Solea Pfeiffer, who plays Eliza Hamilton, the wife of Alexander Hamilton, is a fundamental contributor to the emotion the audience feels.

When Hamilton cheats on her, she sings, "I hope that you burn." Pfeiffer expresses completely the pain Eliza goes through by conveying emotion through her singing, and she leaves the audience in tears.

The "Hamilton" tour is set to play in more than 15 cities across the United States over the next two years, including Northeastern ones like Boston and Providence.