

the INDEPENDENT

Volume XXIV Number 3

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

December 11, 2017

Juuling becomes increasingly common in schools

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Although vaping has been a concern in high schools across the country for a while, Juuling has dramatically increased its prevalence, according to a recent article by Beth Teitell of The Boston Globe.

On Nov. 16 Teitell's article titled "'Juuling': The most widespread phenomenon you've never heard of" was published. The headline accurately addresses the fact that despite the mainstream usage of Juuls, the most popular brand, over the past year, most administrators, teachers, and parents are just becoming aware of it now.

The Globe defines Juuling as "a discrete form of vaping...that [is] easily concealed," and the Juuls themselves are "often mistaken for thumb drives." The legal age to purchase and use one is 21.

Juuls and other similar vapes are rechargeable devices that use electricity to vaporize liquids into inhalants, which can be flavored and contain nicotine or even THC, the chemical

compound found in marijuana.

Teitell emphasizes there is not currently enough information regarding the health risks of Juuling, but that students' belief that there is nothing wrong with it is a misconception.

First, she points out Juuling can be considered a risk as a gateway drug. Besides that, the article quotes Dr. John Ross of Brigham and Women's Hospital, who said although e-cigarettes are less harmful than regular cigarettes, nicotine alone can cause diabetes, increased heart rate and blood pressure, and more tendency toward addiction.

While the negative effects of the inhalant are reduced in comparison to the effect of cigarettes, the amount of nicotine in one of the replaceable pods is equal to a whole pack of cigarettes.

The Juul website clearly states, "We strongly condemn the use of our product by minors, and it is in fact illegal to sell our product to minors. No student at any high school should be in the possession of a Juul product."

The company has to make



AUSTIN PARÉ PHOTO

Despite the various health risks associated with Juuling, many students are not deterred from using the product. Administrators are becoming more aware of the prevalence of Juuling in schools.

this statement for legal reasons, but the warning does not stop high schoolers across the country from repeatedly obtaining the devices and pods.

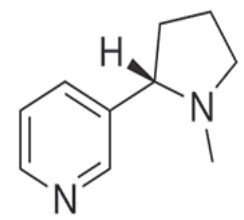
Students at MERHS are familiar with the phenomenon, whether they are users or have simply observed use on school grounds.

One male junior, who said

1 Juul pod = 1 pack of cigarettes in nicotine content



Only 13% of high school students know there is nicotine in Juul pods



Humanitarian League organizes food drive to serve local communities

By Anton Kozyrev
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Hoping to engage the community in helping others, the school's Humanitarian League organized a food drive to benefit the Open Door Pantry in Gloucester.

According to Open Door Pantry's website, the organization serves the towns of Gloucester, Manchester, Essex, Rockport, and Ipswich.

In an effort to raise awareness and increase participation in the food drive, Humanitarian League started a competition between the high school grades. The group offered a free pass on weekly "journaling" assignments to the grade that brought in the greatest amount of food items for the drive.

The winner of this competition was the freshman class, which brought in a total of 101 food items for the drive.

The senior class came in second



COURTESY OF CAROLINE HUNT-EPP

During their recent food drive, the Humanitarian League collected a total of 318 food items to help local communities.

with 88 items, while the sophomore class and junior class brought in 67 and 62 items, respectively.

According to Humanitarian League members, the drive brought in a total of 318 food items to benefit local communities.

While this food drive was Humanitarian League's first major project and involved much of the high school, it serves as a starting point for the group, senior Shannon Adam said.

"It's a sort of launchpad for us as a group so that we can

do other kinds of fundraisers in the future," she said.

According to Debra Isensee, English department head and Humanitarian League adviser, the group started out as a political group within the school but eventually developed and began to support local causes.

"The focus of the group is on helping disenfranchised people; helping the homeless, helping women, helping children. We've been trying to find a purpose for

FOOD DRIVE, page 3

Green Team separates, reduces waste in cafeteria, promotes recycling

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

To reduce waste and promote sustainability, the Green Team has been working in the cafeteria to sort excess materials and increase the effectiveness of the school's disposal system.

Green Team adviser Keith Gray said one of the biggest changes this year has been bringing back the Lucidomatic, which forces students to sort their waste between trash, recycling, and compost.

"I saw it work really well when it started when we built the building, and I just wanted to bring it back because it works," he said.

Green Team president senior Belle Allmendinger said the change has been very effective at reducing waste.

"Last year the company that picked up our compost refused to pick it up because it was so contaminated. This year...we have little to no contamination, we're recycling a lot more, and we're throwing away less," she said.

Senior Randall Doane said she thinks bringing back the Lu-

cidomatic has been a good way to help the school take steps toward effectively separating waste.

"It's a great way to separate the trashes from the recycling... It does the job," she said.

In addition to bringing back the Lucidomatic, the Green Team decided to separate out lunch trays from the rest of the compost, which has also contributed to the success, Gray said.

"We've gone from last year having, I want to say eight to 10 bags of trash a day to having one bag every three days of trash. We're composting more, in that we've got the bucket of compost, but we pull the trays out, so it's not bags and bags of light, almost nothing," he said.

The Green Team has also been working to promote recycling in classrooms to reduce the work that the janitors have to do at night, Gray said.

"The students have a schedule that we rotate on, and everyone does it...We go, and we collect the recycling to make sure it's being

GREEN TEAM, page 3

News

Math team
-page 2
Science League
-page 3

Features

Maria Burgess
-page 4
Community service
-page 5

Opinion

College athletes
-page 7
Background checks
-page 8

Sports

Winter sports
-pages 9-10

Arts

Dramafest
-page 11
Album review
-page 12

Math team secures top two finishes in early fall meets

Weekly practice leads to successful results in first two meets of the year

By Julia Kaper
INDEPENDENT STAFF

By winning the October meet and coming in second place in the November meet, the math team has had a successful start to the year.

The team practices every Thursday after school and attends meets on the first Thursday of most months from October to March, math department chair Dan Lundergan said.

The team's biggest rivals are Hamilton-Wenham and Masconomet; other schools in the same division include Ipswich, Pingree, Rockport, and Pentucket, sophomore Maria Cristoforo said.

Senior Connor Coale explained that during the meets, there are six

10-minute individual rounds that each focus on a different topic, such as factoring or trigonometry.

He said each round is essentially a three-problem math quiz worth six points, and students compete in three out of the six rounds. By the end of the meet, students can earn a total of 18 points.

After the individual rounds are over, there is a team round in which the whole team has 15 minutes to work together to answer a set of more challenging questions. Then, all the individual and team points are added up to see which school has the highest score, Coale said.

Competing in these math meets gives students a chance to represent the school in an academic way while also having fun, Lundergan said.

Many students enjoy the meets because the problems are more challenging than regular math class problems, Cristoforo said.

"You learn different problem-solving skills because the prob-



SIRINE BENALI PHOTO

Members of the math team said they enjoy the free food and extra credit received from attending.

lems in the meets are hard, so you are forced to think outside the box when you solve them," she said.

Coale added that by participating on the team, students receive free food at the meets

and extra credit in math class.

He said this is one of the reasons many students like the math team, along with doing challenging problems.

While the team hopes to

maintain their success in the upcoming meets, Lundergan said the meets are still a very low-stress environment.

"The goal is really just to have fun and try to improve," he said.

Robotics team hopes to return to worldwide First Championship

By Sofia Gillespie
INDEPENDENT STAFF

This year's robotics team hopes to match last year's success by qualifying and attending the worldwide First Championship.

The team had a successful season last year in which they placed in eighth place in the First Championship in St. Louis. Adviser and seventh-grade science teacher Paul Pennoyer said that the team will work towards returning to the world championships again this year.

This year, the team participated in a Savage Soccer competition that functioned as a warm-up for the season ahead. The participants traveled to the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, WPI, where they competed with their 20-pound robots.

The team had prepared for

this a month preceding the event, sophomore Maria Cristoforo said.

The upcoming First Competition Robotics season will include six weeks of building the robot and about two months of competing throughout New England. If they succeed in those FCR competitions, they can qualify for the worldwide First Championship in Houston from April 18 through April 21, 2018.

The captains of the team are seniors Coale and Michael Conlon and Cristoforo.

Pennoyer said he is excited for his first year leading the robotics team. He is eager to work with high school students interested in robotics.

"They are a bunch of just incredibly talented, nice students who are able to organize themselves and work and get along together and undertake activities



COURTESY OF PAUL PENNOYER

After participating in a warm-up "Savage Soccer" competition, the robotics team will spend the next six weeks building the robot.

with very little of my help. They are very independent," he said.

Coale is enthusiastic to lead the team another year.

"We are just trying to teach everyone on the team sound engineering practices and hopefully succeed in our competition

season like last year," he said.

Cristoforo is participating on the team for her fourth year. She said she has enjoyed being part of the robotics team thoroughly and liked attending the world championships last year.

"I enjoy getting to work with other students and going to competitions and meeting teams from the North Shore and all over," she said.

The team has practices regularly in which they either brainstorm plans for the robots, program the robots, or build the robots, Cristoforo said.

Sophomore Isabella Leonard, a participant in the robotics team, enjoyed last year's season and is excited for the upcoming year of robotics.

"I enjoy [robotics] because you get to build stuff and be creative," she said.

The Gardener Project organizes Powerpuff game fundraiser for One Sight

By Austin Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Members of the Gardener Project hosted a Powerpuff football game in order to raise money for a non-government organization called One Sight.

Senior Katie Donnelly said tickets were sold for \$5 at the gate, and the game raised over \$1,200 in total.

She said everyone at the game on Nov. 17 was having a good time.

"Many students want to get involved, and since we have so many students involved with sports, we thought that it was a great idea to have this fundraiser. It was uplifting and hands on," Donnelly said.

History teacher James Wallimann said the students were going to compete against Hamilton-Wenham seniors, but when the coordination of the game became too difficult, they decided on juniors versus seniors.

"Despite the organization problems towards the beginning, I thought it was a great fundraiser. I hope that we can do it again in the future," he said.

Junior Abigail Lantz said she hopes the school organizes something like this again.

"I think that it was an amazing fundraiser to have despite the cold weather. The seniors and the juniors each had 10 players, and each team had student coaches, [seniors Lake Fleming, Mitch Paccone, and Andrew Hantzopoulos, and juniors Ben Lantz and Harry Painter]," she said.

Lantz said the seniors won 26-20, but the juniors fought hard.

"You get such a big adrenaline rush from playing football compared to other sports. The announcers, [history teacher John Mullady and Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury], were hilarious. They made the experience ten times better," she said.

Wallimann said the organization One Sight refur-

'Despite the organization problems towards the beginning, I thought it was a great fundraiser. I hope that we can do it again in the future.'

- JAMES WALLIMANN



AUSTIN PARÉ PHOTO

The senior girls took on the junior girls in the Powerpuff football game fundraiser on Nov. 17, which ended in a 26-20 senior win.

bishes eyeglasses and sends them to third world countries.

The organization also provides eye exams and takes donations for glasses globally to those who are in need.

"Because The Gardener Project is a student-run class, I have my students choose a non-government organization, or a NGO, and then we start or-

ganizing fundraisers for the one we pick," Wallimann said.

Donnelly said she loved the fundraiser and thought a lot of students had fun getting involved.

"Students were able to get hyped up about something that happens outside of school, and they were excited to support the organization we were sponsoring," she said.

Science League aims to incorporate more students in program

Team develops students' understanding of biology, chemistry, engineering in competitions

By Mia Cromwell
INDEPENDENT STAFF

With a current rank of fourth out of 22 schools, the Science League started the season off well, Kristin Umile, science department chair, said.

The League placed second in the first meet of the season and seventh in the second one, competing against other schools across Massachusetts.

Every meet covers three main topics. Sophomore Nils Taylor explained how the first section is chemistry related, and the second category addresses construction or engineering. The third group pertains to ecology and biology.

Umile explained how a typical meet runs. "There is a hosting school. About 22 schools show up. The school is basically divided into three wings, and each event [takes place] in a specific area of the school," she said.

A few top schools competing with Manchester-Essex include Billerica, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, Somerville, and Revere.



COURTESY OF KRISTIN UMILE

The Science League placed seventh in the Revere meet. Students competed in three events which addressed chemistry, construction/engineering, and ecology/biology.

In order to prepare for the competitions, practices are held after school on Tuesdays or whenever the students are available, Umile said.

Twenty students have expressed interest in the League, and all the students who choose to join focus on the topic they

deem most appropriate and in which feel like they can excel in, meaning no student is better than another, Umile said.

"Everyone kind of finds their strong event and then gravitates towards what they feel most comfortable with. It's nice because I think kids are meeting

new kids that they might not necessarily have worked with before," Umile said.

The students are enjoying having Umile as the adviser for the League

"I think Science League is interesting, and Ms. Umile is the perfect teacher to be the adviser for it because she really loves what she does and is passionate about science," junior Lena Brzezinski said.

Taylor said he likes Umile's style of advising the League.

"She's very involved. She's good at switching from one subject to another, and she can help and give assistance in all types of sciences," he said.

Science League is unique in the way that students don't have to commit 100 percent, Umile said, but they can pick and choose the meets and events they find interesting.

Umile's goal for the season is to incorporate more students into the program and events this year.

"I would like to see more kids involved from our school. The more kids we can get involved in science, the better off the world's going to be," Umile said.

DECA participates in Philadelphia conference to refine skills, prepare for upcoming competition

By Abigail Fitzgibbon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

To prepare for the District Conference in January and develop life skills, 10 DECA students travelled to the DECA Power Trip Conference in Philadelphia on the weekend of Nov. 10.

Students flew from Boston to Philadelphia. Throughout the weekend, students participated in conferences and mock competitions, spending free time touring Philadelphia, chaperone and DECA teacher Dean Martino said.

The conference developed business skills like creativity, critical thinking, communication, and leadership. The presentations also enriched students outside of DECA through lessons about the college process and life after high school, Martino said.

"Students learned how to balance travel, competition, performance, and fun. The opportunities DECA presents allows

students to gain a sense of maturity, independence, and accomplishment," he said.

On Saturday, students selected conferences called "learning labs" to attend based on their interests. These instructional conferences included The Art of Negotiation, Brand Identity, College Timelines, and more, Martino said.

'Students learned how to balance travel, competition, performance, and fun.'

- DEAN MARTINO

Senior and DECA vice president of leadership Clara Tuttle said she enjoyed the learning labs because she learned how to improve her chapter.

"There were tips specifically for DECA officers, so I'm excited to implement these new techniques," she said.

In addition to learning from the conference itself, students also engaged with other DECA chapters, senior and DECA President Isabel del Valle said.

"There were people from all over the country, so being able to talk with them was really fun and interesting. I

was able to see how different schools arrange their chapters," she said.

After learning labs, students had the opportunity to compete in seven-minute role plays during which they had to develop a hypothetical social media campaign for a personal trainer, Martino said.

Senior Jon Rouillard and junior Olivia Mitrano won the competition, ranking in the 98th percentile of 1,200 attendees.

When students were not learning or competing, they toured Philadelphia, went bowling, and visited the Eastern State Penitentiary, Tuttle said.

"It was so much fun and a good break from competition," she said.

Now that the conference is over, DECA students can apply what they learned to competition season, Mitrano said.

"Especially for people who do written stuff, [the conference] taught them how to write their papers and the format because you can lose 10 points on just formatting, which can make a huge difference in competition," she said.

Tuttle said the conference will



COURTESY OF DEAN MARTINO

Juniors Hannah Oettinger, Jake D'ambrosio, and Olivia Mitrano attended the Philadelphia conference.

help senior members refine their skills and support younger students.

"We have a lot of sophomores that are super motivated and really good, so we're focusing on building up the younger kids so we have a stronger program moving forward," she said.

CONTINUATIONS

JUULING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I'd say I go and see kids in the bathroom once in a while and take a hit whenever... It gets you in a weird state of mind like a buzz and makes you feel better in some way," he said.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said when Juuling first came to her attention through other high schools, she assumed similar activity was going on at the high school.

"I think things that happen in every high school happen here as well. I don't think we're immune to different behaviors," she said.

Puglisi added that bathrooms have always been the place where illegal activity occurs on school property, saying, "I just think it's important for teachers to be going in and out of those spaces so that students know that we're concerned about them, and we're watching what they're doing."

Senior Andrew Hantzopoulos also said he most often finds students Juuling in the bathroom.

"It seems like the majority of the time I walk into the bathroom, there's

a group of kids huddled around doing it. I usually just turn around and go to a different bathroom now," he said.

The problem is not confined to male students, however. Junior Bella Pomeroy said it has been going on in the girls' bathroom as well.

"It's annoying. I want to go to the bathroom, and all the stalls are being used. Usually there's more than one person in them laughing, which isn't normal," she said.

According to the Student Handbook, having a Juul on school property would result in detentions while using one would lead to a suspension, fine, and a meeting with guidance for the first offense. The penalties increase in severity with repeated violations.

Additionally, there are repercussions for athletics under the MIAA's chemical health rule, including suspension for 25 and 60 percent of the season for first and second offenses respectively.

While the policy is important, Puglisi said she is most concerned with the health and safety of students.

"I think we need to have better education for parents and students. There isn't a

lot of information about the health consequences, and my gut feeling is kids don't see it the same as using other drugs or smoking a pack of cigarettes. It's important that the school and families partner together to educate children," she said.

HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

our group," Isensee said.

At one meeting, the group discussed expanding the Humanitarian League's projects in the Cape Ann community.

"We're trying to reach out to local schools to see if we can help out with anything," senior Madison Palmer said.

They also explained the importance of increasing awareness about Humanitarian League in order to more effectively aid local causes, such as the food drive.

"We could also do a 'Humanitarian Week' that would be similar to 'International Week,' and it would have guest speakers," senior Nina Prince said.

These guest speakers would present about helping others over one school week in a similar way to International Week, Prince said.

GREEN TEAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

done," Allmendinger said.

The Green Team is also implementing new farming techniques to increase plant production, senior Green Team member Alec Estabrook said.

"We're going to be starting a grow wall, which is basically just vertical farming," he said.

The Green Team plans on using plants that green quickly, Gray said.

In addition to farming within the school, the Green Team has also been working to cultivate the gardens in the front of the school.

"We installed four composters outside, we've cleaned out the gardens and gotten those ready for next year, so we're taking some control over maintaining the gardens," Gray said.

Gray said he is very excited about the work of the team as a whole, especially as he is new as their adviser.

"I'm having a blast. This is so much fun. It's more work than I thought, but it's 10 times more fun than I thought it was going to be," he said.



(Above) Science teacher Maria Burgess and her late husband, Bill, with their three children Ellen, Joe, and Will. Bill passed away in June of 2005 from liposarcoma. Burgess raised her three children while teaching at Manchester Essex and Boston University.

(Right) Burgess at Singing Beach with Ellen and Joe, now 24; and Will, now 21.



COURTESY OF MARIA BURGESS

A story of resiliency

Burgess finds happiness helping others

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Throughout her life, science teacher Maria Burgess has faced adversity.

Through it all, she said she learned to be resilient and find happiness in the happiness of others.

She was born in Philadelphia, Pa., on June 28, 1957 and moved to Beaver, Pa., shortly after.

As a child, Burgess did not see her father often because he played Major League Baseball.

He was a catcher for the Philadelphia Phillies, but she said being a professional athlete was not nearly as glamorous and financially rewarding as it is today, and the demanding schedule was quite hard on their family.

“Between February and October we would see him maybe three times max,” she said.

Although her father’s major league career was just four years long, he was gone for other long portions as well.

She said, “He was just gone all the time. His playing career... was interrupted by two stints of military service.”

Concerning the rest of her family, Burgess said the constant presence of other people at their house and the generosity of her mother stand out now.

“We weren’t well off, but we always had people for dinner, relatives stopping by, and even people that my mother would feed,” she said.

Burgess said she is fond of those memories and emphasized how proud she is of her mother for doing that.

As far as her education went, she said she was not always a high achieving student.

“I was just a very average

student. I got out of high school and college with a 3.0, and it was hard for me to achieve that,” Burgess said.

By the end of high school, she already knew she wanted to be a teacher, especially after her work at an Easter Seals camp for special needs children.

“That’s where I first became interested in teaching deaf children...I learned sign language and went to Penn State as an undergrad for deaf education. Then I taught for five years at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Pittsburgh,” she said.

In order to pursue higher teaching, she had to quit that job.

She got her master’s degree in physiology at the University of Pittsburgh and her doctorate at the University of South Carolina.

At that point in her life, Burgess said she did not feel a strong desire to get married.

She met her husband Bill in graduate school, however, and immediately loved that new facet of her life.

“I loved being a wife and being a partner with somebody. It was very fulfilling,” she said.

Early in their relationship in March of 1994, her husband was diagnosed with liposarcoma, a rare soft tissue cancer, but they were able to have three kids during his remission of over nine years.

Currently, twins Joseph and Ellen are 24, and Will is 21.

After the long remission, the cancer returned with a bleak prognosis while Burgess was teaching at Boston University.

Bill Burgess died in June of 2005, and she said that changed the course of her life.

“I would probably not be [teaching] in the high school, but I decided I needed to be closer to

the kids. I have not looked back and had one regret...I remember saying that I didn’t know my kids well before,” she said.

She admitted that she did not think she was going to make it alone.

“I remember thinking when the kids graduated from high school, ‘We did it.’ I did not think I was going to be able to do this on my own. I just decided that I didn’t have a choice...What it did was allowed me to develop an attitude that I don’t fear tough situations,” she said.

From barely seeing her father to becoming a single mother with three children, she said she learned to be resilient and find happiness in helping others.

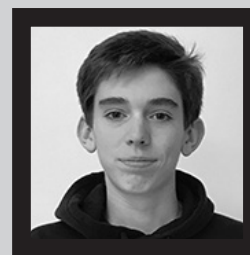
“I think you should help other people...Not because you think, ‘Oh, look what I did.’ It’s not that at all. I just like to see people doing well,” she said.

Science department chair Kristin Umile believes Burgess exemplifies this well, saying, “She has never hesitated to give me all her time. No matter what she has going on, she has always dropped everything to make me feel welcome.”

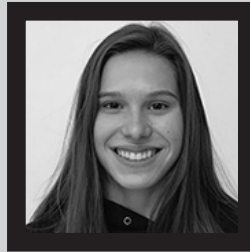
Senior Anika Martz reiterated this and added, “I love Dr. B’s enthusiasm for all of the topics she teaches. She always wants to help with any question we have and makes it much easier to understand.”

Burgess said she hopes that her life serves as an example of how to treat people.

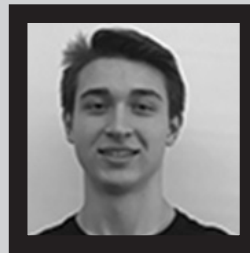
If her kids have learned to be generous and charitable from following her guidance, she said “that would be the biggest testament to my life. If they would do something without me, I would feel like I did okay on the planet.”



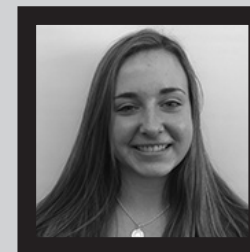
Freshman Gus Holch: “Grandma Got Run over by a Reindeer’ by Elmo & Patsy because it’s funny.”



Freshman Tess Eichenberger: “Baby It’s Cold Outside’ by Idina Menzel & Michael Bublé because I like the movie ‘Elf.’”



Sophomore Dane Moruzzi: “Mele Kalikimaka’ or otherwise known as ‘Hawaiian Christmas Song’ by Bing Crosby because I heard it in first grade when I was on vacation in Hawaii for Christmas.”

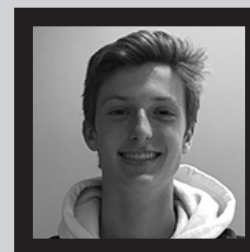


Sophomore Catherine Garlitz: “Last Christmas’ by Wham! because it’s catchy, and it always puts me in the Christmas mood.”

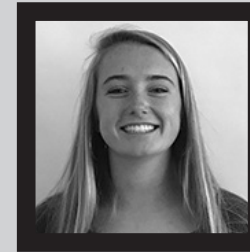


What is your favorite holiday song?

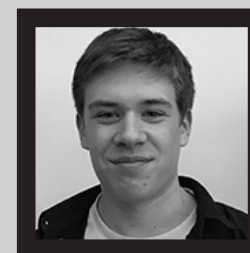
Junior Max Hahn: “Frosty the Snowman’ because it’s got a nice rhythm and a sick beat to it.”



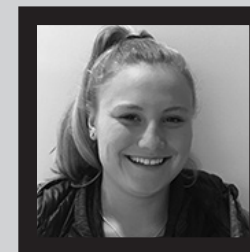
Junior Drew Charlton: “All I Want for Christmas is You’ by Mariah Carey because it has a really good tune, and it’s just a really good song.”



Senior Alec Estabrook: “Jingle Bells’ because it’s classic and dependable.”



Senior Katie Donnelly: “All I Want for Christmas is You (party edition)’ by Mariah Carey because it’s lit, and it brings some great vibes to the party.”



COMMUNITY SERVICE ALL-STARS

Although 40 hours of community service is a requirement for graduating, many students do not involve themselves in community service solely for this reason. Community service is an opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the community with quality citizenship and service for others, according to the guidance department.

NINA PRINCE



COURTESY OF MICHAEL PRINCE

Senior Nina Prince spent many hours volunteering at Apple Street Farm on Apple Street in Essex, which is now closed.

“I was a farmhand as I picked fruits and vegetables, prepped and sold things at the farm stand, and took care of the chickens, geese, pigs, and goats. I spent most of my time with the goats, though, as they free graze so I had to herd them and keep them from going into neighbors’ property,” she said.

EMILY CLARK



EMILY CLARK PHOTO

Senior Emily Clark worked for the PAC program as a Pre-Adaptive Coach at New England Disabled Sports at Loon Mountain.

“It’s a group of high school kids who must go through a pretty difficult interview process, which I did my freshman year. We teach a variety of individuals who are affected by disabilities how to ski. I work with both kids and adults,” she said.

Clark said the most common lesson for her is a blind student, a child with autism, or someone with paralysis or any disorder that puts them in a wheelchair.

“I really enjoy it because I get to see how affected peoples’ lives are with different disabilities, so this is a way for them to go out and do something they normally wouldn’t be able to do,” she said.

COLE HAY



COURTESY OF NPH

Senior Cole Hay went to Honduras the summer of his freshman year to participate in an organization called NPH.

“It’s a series of orphanages or homes in Central America, and they need a lot of volunteers because it is non-profit. I heard about the organization from my old school. My brother did it, so it thought it was a great way to expand my horizon,” Hay said.

For a week, he spent time and played with the kids there, helped on the farm, and did some repairs. Hay said he really enjoyed the opportunity as it put things into perspective for him.

KATIE DONNELLY



COURTESY OF ANDREA DONNELLY

Senior Katie Donnelly spent hundreds of hours training a wild mustang through the Mustang Heritage Foundation. She specifically trained for an event called the Extreme Mustang Makeover.

She explained that because mustangs are so overpopulated in the West, they exceed holding capacity by tens of thousands.

Future school dances depend on student interest

Dances lose student participation, may gain more enthusiasm in future

By Charlotte Pick
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Over the past few years, the high school did not host dances other than the freshman/sophomore semi-formal and junior/senior prom. Despite this, increased number of high school dances will be possible in the future if interest within the student population increases.

The main issue is the lack of interest within the student population, Principal Patricia Puglisi said.

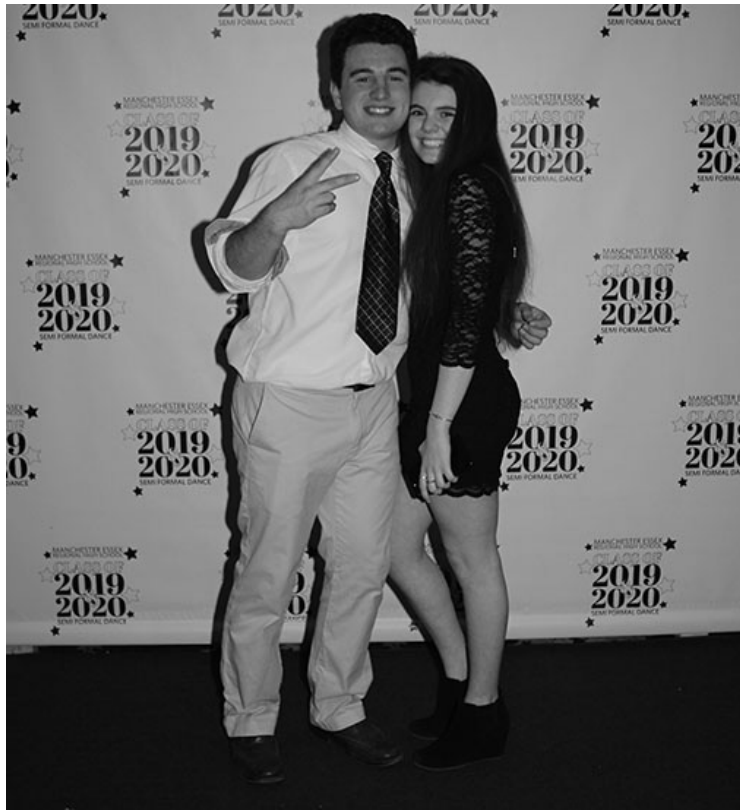
In an attempt to revive dances, the administration held a homecoming dance on Saturday, Oct. 11.

For the homecoming dance, Puglisi set the minimum number of students attending at 60 students. Because hosting a dance requires many components such as a DJ and venue, this number needed to be reached in order to successfully run the dance.

Around 71 students attended the dance, most of whom were freshmen and sophomores. Although Puglisi found this amount of students sufficient, it was not as many as she hoped.

“Having talked to principals around the North Shore, everyone is struggling with the tradition of a high school dance,” Puglisi said. “You need critical mass to make a dance successful.”

Many students expressed their reasons for attending or not attending the homecoming dance. Most centered around the lack of students attending and the fact that the dance was announced only two weeks in advance.



COURTESY OF CAROLINE HUNT-EPP

Juniors Austin Paré and Ryan O'Connell enjoy last year's winter semi-formal for the classes of 2019 and of 2020 at the Essex Room.

“Not a lot of my friends were going,” junior Meredith Wolf said. “I would have liked to have known about it further in advance.”

Many upperclassmen also did not like the idea of going to a dance with younger students, Wolf said. Students may have enjoyed it more if it was divided between grades.

Students also voiced their opinions about the venue.

“My friends and I had a good time at the dance, but I think [a dance] would draw more people in if it was not in the cafeteria,” sophomore Catherine Garlitz said.

Garlitz and her friends also expressed interest in future dances having a theme. “It would be fun to have a neon-themed dance,” sophomore Hannah Hubbard said.

Principal Puglisi, Assistant

Principal Paul Murphy, and history teacher Abigail Donnelly organized and chaperoned the homecoming dance.

Although students are showing less interest in dances, Donnelly still sees value in them.

“We’re seeing a national trend with a decrease in dance attendance, but I see high school dances as a right of passage,” she said.

Donnelly also feels the memories students make at dances are valuable.

“It’s fun at the time, and it’s fun to have those memories when you’re older of the fun that you can have with your friends,” she said.

In the future, the administration is looking to introduce more school dances. To attract more students in the future, the selection of a theme may be helpful, Puglisi said.

GUESS WHO?

TEACHER/STAFF EDITION

How long have you been teaching here?

Three years

What was your first car?

2000 Subaru Outback

Dream vacation spot?

Seattle

Favorite meal of the day?

Lunch

Favorite holiday?

Thanksgiving

Favorite season?

Spring

Favorite sport to watch?

Baseball

First job?

Working at a cider mill

Favorite movie genre?

Comedy

What book world would you want to live in?

The Harry Potter books

Do you play any instruments?

Yes

Movies or TV?

TV

Dream celebrity friend?

Ben Folds

What super power would you want to have?

Invisibility

Biggest Pet Peeve?

People who are late

Answer can be found at the bottom of Page 12

English department changes commenting; new system allows for more beneficial feedback

By Holly Fossa
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Rather than commenting on three journals, English students now write one in-depth review of one student’s journal.

English department chair Debra Isensee said the change arose from a department conversation about improving comments.

“The comments were starting to feel formulaic, and not enough [commenting was] about the writing itself,” she said.

English teacher Allison Krause said the conversation began after she had been discussing commenting with one of her classes.

“They felt like commenting had turned into busy work, and, for the most part, found value mostly in journaling and really kind of lost a sense of value in commenting,” she said.

Krause said after the discussion, English teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon suggested the idea of students writing one in-

depth comment.

Buckley-Harmon said the English teachers then made a list of potential areas of critique, and she used the list to create a sample review after reading a student journal.

“I wanted to see if it was doable before expecting students to try it. I found the list was very helpful, and it forced me to really think about what I was writing. It made me feel like I was actually connecting with the student, and that’s what we want our students to feel,” she said.

Isensee also said the list is helpful for students writing reviews because it helps students in writing a more sincere review.

“I don’t know if students like [reviews] better, but I think it is more meaningful; there is a lot more commentary about the writing in particular,” she said.

Students appreciate the checklist and new style of commenting on journals. Senior Grace Porter said she thinks the new system for reviews makes her focus

more on one student’s writing.

“It makes my comments more unique and less repetitive each week,” she said.

Another benefit from the reviews is that now all students will have their journals commented on, when before, certain students would receive no comments, Isensee said.

“Even with the ‘five comments per journal rule’ some students still never got comments on their writing, so we were hoping to even it out that way too,” she said.

Junior Dylan Wilson said he preferred the previous method for comments because of the number of comments each student could receive.

“The old way was easy and gave kids feedback from multiple students,” he said.

Isensee said the department is excited for this new change because she believes the new system is more fun for students while writing and for teachers while grading.

Changes to Journaling

The English department redesigned journaling to provide students with a more rewarding, in-depth commenting experience.

1 comment per student and per journal

Single comment (instead of three) allows a deeper understanding of one classmate’s journal

200 words - underclassmen

Longer word count (up from 75 and 100)

300 words - upperclassmen

encourages students to write an in-depth analysis of classmates’ work

More guidance on what to discuss in comments

Comments should focus on style, tone, structure, and diction to promote a higher level of discussion

ABIGAIL FITZGIBBON GRAPHIC

College Sports

Should collegiate athletes get paid?

Pro

Paige Swanson

In recent years, there have been many discussions about whether or not college athletes should be paid. To improve athletics, the athlete's education, and the overall college experience of the players, these athletes should be given a salary.

A salary would improve student athletes' performance on the field.

"I think a salary could be good for [athletes], because they'd want to work harder for the money," said Jessica Palmer, a field hockey player at Merrimack College.

Often times, playing a sport in college earns the athlete a scholarship, but scholarships can fall short.

"The average scholarship shortfall...for each 'full scholarship' athlete was approximately \$3,222 per player during the 2010-11 school year," Sheryl Nance-Nash of AOL Finance said in 2011.

Since scholarships cannot always cover the full extent of a student athlete's education, many are forced to get a job. Sports are often time consuming though, which makes it difficult and extremely stressful for athletes to get and keep work.

"Many student-athletes... reported that they practice at least 30 hours a week on average, with some sports reporting weekly practice commitments of more than 40 hours," according to a 2011 NCAA survey.

Since having a job can be so hard for players because of sports, classes, and other social obligations, they must choose between struggling to pay their bills, and stressing about work on top of all their other activities. A salary would take this tough decision away, and allow athletes to spend time on the things that matter.

A salary would also allow students to pay for both their education and any materials they may need.

"[College athletes] can't always see the money when it's all going towards their scholarship... sometimes I want a job, but I have to remember that field hockey is my job. I just want another one, because I'm not getting hard cash that I could use to put towards my tuition and for things I need," Palmer said.

Since the athletes aren't getting cash they can use to support themselves throughout college, the benefits of scholarships aren't as obvious as those of a salary. Also, athletes are only being paid with tuition, so it can be difficult to pay for materials necessary for classes.

"I have a summer job so that's where my spending money comes from, but some people don't work. [A salary] could definitely help with buying books and other stuff like that," Palmer said.

Having money for academic necessities is important because ultimately college athletes are at school to receive an education. A salary, instead of a scholarship, allows the student to pay for tuition but also for necessities that improve their learning.

Con

Anton Kozyrev

No athletes playing collegiate sports should be paid because they are attending college not to make money, but to further their future careers.

Collegiate level athletics serve the same purpose to top Division I athletes as collegiate academics do to other top students; they act as a funnel into higher level professional sports the same way academics help further students careers.

The vast majority of professional athletes played their sport in college before playing professionally. In the 2017 NBA draft, the NBA reported that 74.5 percent of draft prospects had played or were currently playing collegiate basketball at the time of the draft.

Students are getting an opportunity to play their sport on a national stage, which provides them with countless opportunities and sets them up for success in the future.

College athletes are also eligible for scholarships the same way other students are at universities.

Many of the top college athletes that schools would even consider paying are already attending school for free or at a significantly reduced rate. Even then, the NCAA Student Assistance Fund helps student-athletes who need more than the usual cost of tuition at the school, which completely nullifies the argument that athletes must be paid so that they have the ability to attend college.

If colleges were to pay their athletes, they would be placing a higher priority on sports than academics.

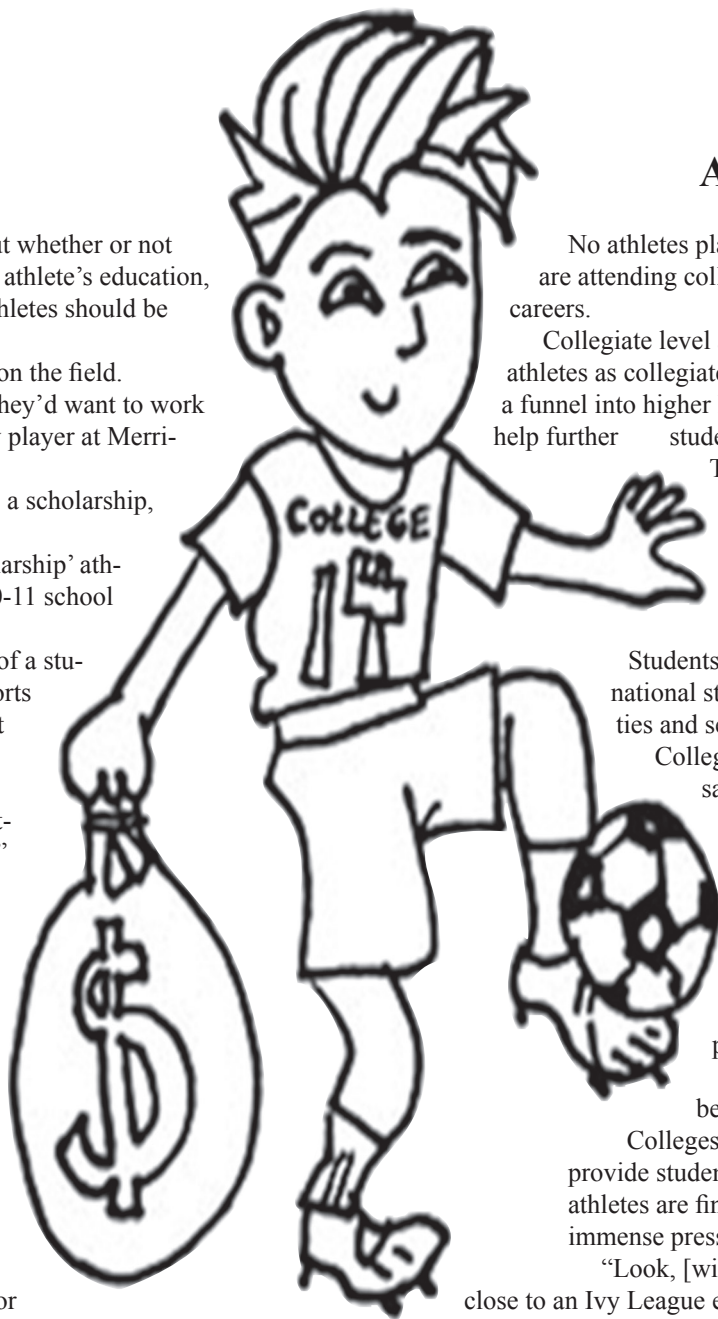
Colleges and universities were not founded for sports but to provide students with a higher level of education, and yet college athletes are finding themselves struggling in academics with the immense pressure to perform in their sport.

"Look, [with the college sport I play] I'm not getting anything close to an Ivy League education. I'm just trying to attend as many of my classes as possible and pass my courses," a major-sport athlete at an Ivy League college said to Michael M. Rooke-Ley for the New York Times.

This student-athlete, like so many others, is already missing out on an opportunity to further himself in academics. If he were a paid athlete, it would only raise the stress he already has trying to manage his success in sports and academics, which would push academics out of his priorities further.

With college athletes, "academics usually fall by the wayside, pushed to the periphery of students' consciousness by a culture that simply does not value education enough," Erin Shortell said in the Harvard Political Review in 2013.

The emphasis on college athletics is already high, and paying athletes would only inflate this emphasis past a reasonable point.



AUSTIN PARÉ ILLUSTRATION

Religious phrase 'under God' should be removed from Pledge of Allegiance

By Anton Kozyrev
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Each morning, students stand up facing the flag of the United States of America and promise their allegiance to "one nation under God." However, using the words "under God" poses a conundrum for some students.

According to Smithsonian Magazine, the Pledge of Allegiance was originally penned in the 17th century by Francis Bellamy. His version of the Pledge of Allegiance had no reference to God.

However, during the Cold War, numerous groups urged President Dwight Eisenhower to include the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance in

the hopes of countering Soviet ideologies which were widely characterized as atheist.

The backers of this idea anticipated that this change would be challenged on the basis of the separation of church and state and argued that students were not required to recite the pledge of allegiance.

According to the Newseum Institute, "[P]ublic school students may not be compelled to recite

the Pledge of Allegiance," meaning that if one does not wish to affirm that this is a nation "under God," they are under no legal obligation

to do so.

While students can always exercise their right to not engage

If people wish to affirm their faith in God, they may use the moment of silence after the Pledge of Allegiance.



ANTON KOZYREV PHOTO

Genevieve Young stands up and recites the Pledge of Allegiance.

in certain speech and simply sit down during the pledge of allegiance, this kind of behavior can often be stigmatized as un-American and unpatriotic by their peers.

The Huffington Post states

that the Pledge of Allegiance is "not truly a religious exercise, but rather more of a patriotic exercise." The issue here is that including the words "under God" associates being a patriot with believing in God.

In fact, the best course of action here would be to remove the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance all together. After all, if people wish to affirm their faith in God, they may use the moment of silence after the Pledge of Allegiance in order to pray if they choose to.

The Massachusetts legislature's website states "[a]t the commencement of the first class of each day in all grades in all public schools the teacher ... shall announce... a period of silence... for personal thoughts and during any such period, silence shall be maintained."

Removing the mention of God in the Pledge of Allegiance and allowing students to use their moment of silence as they choose to would appease both those who do not want to Pledge their Allegiance to a "nation under God" and those who still may want to affirm their faith in God.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Americans should demand universal background checks

More stringent regulations for gun purchases offer a solution to rampant gun violence

As almost weekly mass shootings gain more national attention, Americans should support universal background checks on gun purchases to prevent further loss of life.

It seems almost every day the United States wakes up to a new mass shooting at schools, movie theaters, concerts, and more. “Thoughts and prayers” from politicians do nothing to halt the ever-increasing prominence of gun violence.

Universal background check legislation differs from current laws because it requires background checks for all gun purchases, including private sales and gun shows. This “universal” approach would close loopholes that allow criminals to bypass background checks that they would otherwise fail.

For example, 69 percent of criminals who used guns in a crime obtained their firearms through methods like private sales that do not involve a background check, according to research from the Center for



AUSTIN PARÉ ILLUSTRATION

American Progress in 2015. Universal background checks could prevent criminals from obtaining these guns.

The idea of “gun control” usually throws supporters of the Second Amendment into a rage. These supporters, however, must understand that background checks pose no threat to the Constitution.

If someone is legally entitled to own a gun, he or she can get one. The Second Amendment must be regulated just like other amendments. Free speech is protected by the Constitution but has been limited by the Supreme Court just as gun sales should be regulated.

The term “gun control” is

often tossed around to broadly encompass a series of approaches limiting firearm access.

Universal background checks, however, refer to a specific piece of gun policy. With background checks, guns would only be sold to those who qualify, barring anyone with a criminal record.

This approach is only logical. There is no reason why a violent domestic abuser, for example, should have access to semiautomatic weapons that can kill dozens of people in seconds. Those with a criminal record are already barred from certain jobs like in a school or police department. If an abuser is banned from teaching, there is no reason he or

she should be allowed a tool only designed to inflict harm.

Beyond mere logic, statistics support universal background checks as well.

According to the American Journal of Public Health, Connecticut saw a 40 percent reduction in firearm-related homicide from 1996 to 2005 following the enactment of the state’s background checks, saving an estimated 296 lives in 10 years.

Besides homicides, suicides significantly decrease in states with background checks.

On average, over 20,000 Americans commit suicide using a gun each year. In the 14 states with background checks, however, there were 48 percent fewer

firearm suicides after universal background checks were implemented with no change for other methods of suicide, according to a report from Everytown for Gun Safety, a nonprofit focused on gun violence research and advocacy.

These results clearly point to background checks as a remedy for gun violence. By barring those who committed past crimes from guns, future violence is less likely.

A federal law requiring universal background checks would expand the success of laws like the one in Connecticut to a national level, so Americans should encourage this kind of gun reform to keep their communities safe.

Even though there is overwhelming evidence in favor of background checks, legislation could be passed solely based on public support.

According to the Pew Research Center, 88 percent of Democrats and 79 percent of Republicans are in favor of background checks for private sales.

Legislators owe it to their constituents to take a stand in favor of universal background checks. Similarly, people, gun owners or not, have a duty to prevent deadly guns from falling into the hands of dangerous criminals in order to promote and protect responsible gun ownership.

Trump’s proposed visa shutdown threatens diversity in United States

By Shannon Adam
INDEPENDENT STAFF

America was built by immigrants coming to this country from many different parts of the world, and its diversity is one of the reasons why America is so unique.

After the terror attack in New York City at the beginning of November, when an Uzbek national killed eight people, President Donald Trump called for the immediate shutdown of the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, saying that the people in it are “not that country’s finest” as the attacker had come to this country with a diversity visa.

The program, which distributes around 50,000 visas a year

to countries that have a low immigration rate to the U.S., was originally designed to diversify the pool of immigrants. The visas offer immigrants permanent legal residence and a path to citizenship. The process for such a visa can take years and candidates are thoroughly vetted before being accepted.

Approximately 1.5 million people have entered the U.S. since it was established. The issue with President Trump’s request is that he is putting 1.5 million people in the same box as the attacker.

I am one of them.

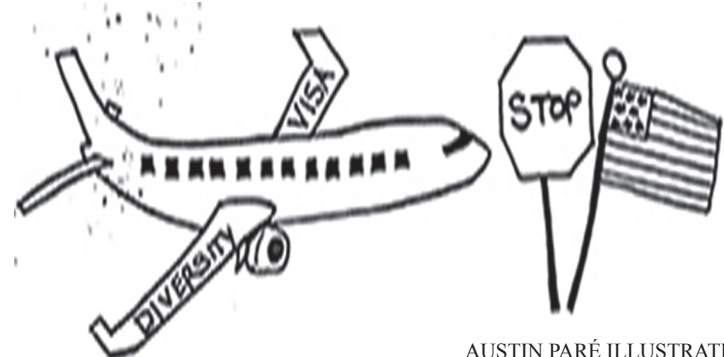
When President Trump made that statement, I worried about how Americans would perceive

people like me. Would they want me to leave the country as I might not fit in due to my different cultural upbringing?

My family moved to the U.S. five years ago because my parents wanted to expose my sister and me to a different culture. I am grateful for the opportunity that I have had to live in the U.S. and meet people who have a different cultural background than myself.

Many people live in a bubble, and they do not even realize their isolation until they step outside of their familiar surroundings. Due to my parents’ strong professional and personal international orientation, our family traveled frequently, and I have been to various countries.

My exposure to new and interesting cultures made me understand that not every person



AUSTIN PARÉ ILLUSTRATION

is like me, but they still can be trusted. Living in another culture or knowing someone with a different cultural background than one’s own, helps to understand the other person’s point of view.

America has always been a melting pot of various cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

At this point, no action has been taken to terminate the program; however, President Trump’s request to shut down

the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program will endanger the acceptance of various cultures. America may well turn into a bubble of just white or established Americans, diversity will fade, and tolerance will slowly disappear.

There is a realistic chance that the hate that is currently bubbling up from under the surface will increase and spill over until diversity ceases to exist.

Editors-in-chief

Juliette Kelley
James Riordan

Chief Layout Editor

Abigail Fitzgibbon

News/Features Editors

Sirine Benali
Emily Clark

Opinion Editor

Heather Holley

Arts Editor

Austin Paré

Sports Editor

Holly Fossa

the
INDEPENDENT

Manchester-Essex Regional High School
36 Lincoln St, Manchester MA 01944
978-526-4412 newspaper@mersd.org
online at <http://www.merhs.mersd.org/domain/702>



Staff

Shannon Adam
Mia Cromwell
Hannah Freeman
Sofia Gillespie
Julia Kaper
Anton Kozyrev
Sophie Larson
Charlotte Pick
Paige Swanson

Faculty Adviser

Mary Buckley-Harmon

Follow us on Twitter:

@MERHSjournalism

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.

BOYS' BASKETBALL



Mitch Paccone



Lake Fleming



Will Janowicz

Coach: Tim St. Laurent

Captains: Seniors Mitch Paccone, Lake Fleming and junior Will Janowicz

Record last year: 6-12

Rivals: Georgetown and Rockport

Goals: To make the state tournament

Impact players: Captains

Coach's quote: "The three captains on the team are all impact players. They are all three returning starters that are excellent leaders. The preseason outlook has been very good for the hornets. We're a very deep basketball team with a lot of dimension so I'm excited to see how this season goes."

Captain's quote: "Goals for the season is to make the state tournament and go as far as we can from there. I think the team looks good. We have a lot of players who have a lot of varsity experience and can play at the varsity level. We have lot of impact players. Myself, Lake, and Will are the three returning players with the most time spent on varsity, and I think we will be a big part of the season." - Mitch Paccone

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Lauren DuBois

Captain: Juniors Bella Pomeroy and Grace Brennan

Record last year: 16-6

Rival: Amesbury and Pentucket

Goals: To make the CAL championship

Impact players: Captains, and juniors Ava Glass, Emma Cochand and Suzy Morton

Coach's quote: "I think we can be competitive and hopefully make a run at the CAL championship this season."

Captains' quotes: "We've never played with [the new freshmen] before, so that will definitely be new. We really need to create chemistry on this team in order to do well this season." - Grace Brennan

There's definitely potential [for this team] to be great, and that will come with practice and a lot of hard work." - Bella Pomeroy



Grace Brennan



Bella Pomeroy

INDOOR TRACK



Holly Fossa



Brianna Pappas



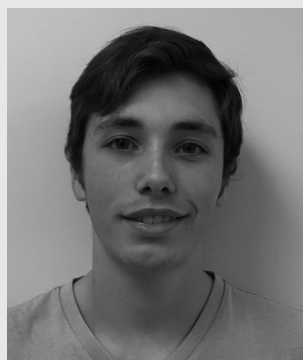
Jillian Bowen



Matt Carter



Zach Edwards



Liam Falk

Coaches: Mark Dawson, Steve Whittey and Nelson Desilvestre

Captains: Seniors Holly Fossa, Liam Falk and Zach Edwards, and juniors Matt Carter, Jillian Bowen and Brianna Pappas

Record last year: 1-6-0

Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham

Goals: To qualify many members of the team for the Division V meet

Impact players: Captains and juniors Eve Feuerbach and Sophia Larson

Coach's quote: "Historically we have had strong runners and strong individual performances from athletes, so we'd like to qualify as many athletes as we can [for the Division V meet]." - Mark Dawson

Captains' quotes: "I want to help improve the entire team by using positive reinforcement and a good attitude." - Liam Falk

"I am hoping that we will be able to unite the team this season and bring all of the different events together to support each other. The captains came up with some fun ideas to get teammates excited for other races, so I hope that those ideas go well and we build some solid team spirit." - Holly Fossa

GIRLS' HOCKEY

Coach: Chris Wells

Captains: Junior Caroline Kinne (Swampscott), senior Grace Moroney (Hamilton-Wenham), and junior Sydney Cresta (Swampscott)

Record last year: 9-11-2

Rival: Beverly

Goals: To make the playoffs

Impact players: Sydney Cresta (Swampscott)

Coach's quote: "Right now, I'm taking it day by day, game by game. On paper, we have a very young team but at the same time some of these girls have been playing hockey for a long time. I expect us to actually stir it up a little bit in the league and I think that we should have a good season"

Players' quotes: "I think that we've been improving skill-wise because we have gained a lot of talent this year and we also lost a lot of people that weren't as good. We also have a new coach which adds a lot." - Isabell Amigo

"This is actually my first year playing...My family is very hockey-orientated so I played from about kindergarten to fourth or fifth grade and then I stopped, and then I'm playing again this year." - Annika Smith



Isabell Amigo



Annika Smith

BOYS' HOCKEY

Coach: Patrick McIntosh

Captains: Senior Jackson Rice

Record last year: 7-9-2

Rivals: Shawsheen and Gloucester

Goals: Beat their rivals

Impact players: Jackson Rice

Coach's quote: "I think it will be a building year, or we are going to compete. It could go either way, depending on how the freshmen adapt to the speed of play. I am looking forward to the season. There is a lot of enthusiasm from the young kids and a lot of talent." - Patrick McIntosh

Captain's quote: "It's my third year as a captain on the team, and it is definitely a different role because as a senior you have more responsibility than you did in the past. I think the kids look at me different, especially the freshmen. I hope to carry the team and make it to the playoffs for the first time in my career." - Jackson Rice



Jackson Rice

SWIMMING



Will Finn



Coleman Komishane



Sofia Puchniak



Elizabeth Athanas

Coaches: Marnie Lawler

Captains: Senior Will Finn, senior Coleman Komishane, junior Sofia Puchniak, sophomore Elizabeth Athanas

Record last year: 6-1-0

Record this year: 1-0-0

Rivals: Masconomet and Hamilton-Wenham

Goals: To win the Cape Ann League and be able to have strong swimmers in a variety of events

Impact players: Senior Coleman Komishane, sophomore Elizabeth Athanas

Coach's quote: "I want them to understand that it's not just about swimming laps up and down the pool. It's how they actually execute getting from one end to the other."

Captain's quote: "So far I am impressed with our performance this season. The boys won 83-79 and the girls' team won 83-71 at our meet on Sunday; a few people made states." - Will Finn

SKI TEAM

Coach: Tim Wonson

Captains: Senior Emily Clark, junior Max Hahn

Last year's success: Emily Clark and Claire O'Brien made the state tournament

Goals: To have three racers qualify for the state tournament so they can have a full team compete

Impact players: Captains, freshman Alex Rosen, sophomore Hannah Hubbard, junior Claire O'Brien

Coach's quote: I believe they can all qualify for the state tournament; if we bring three skiers, we are considered a team. We have the potential to do pretty well."

Captain's quotes: "[Dry land training] is a great time for the team to bond, but I can't wait to get on the snow, fingers crossed before Christmas." - Emily Clark



Emily Clark



Max Hahn

Drama Club prepares unprecedented production for Dramafest

Student director chooses intense, provocative play

By Sophie Larson
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Dramafest is months away, with preliminary rounds scheduled for March 3, but the Manchester-Essex Drama Club is well underway rehearsing the play “Another American: Asking and Telling,” by Marc Wolf.

Twenty students total are participating in Drama this year, including cast and crew members, senior director Belle Allmendinger said.

This year Sirkka Natti, the Manchester Memorial Elementary School music teacher, is in charge of the Drama Club and preparations for Dramafest.

The Drama Club has been working since the end of October, rehearsing three days a week and plans to begin set construction after Thanksgiving break, junior

stage manager Lizzy Klebart said.

The play “Another American: Asking and Telling” is set in 1999 and revolves around the individual stories of gay people in the military and the don’t-ask-don’t-tell policy, Allmendinger said.

The story presents a series of interviews the author conducted with current or past military members and their families about their experiences concerning the treatment of gay people in the armed forces, she said.

“It’s recounting people’s experience when they were gay in the military and what others saw. We have one scene that describes someone being raped when they were awaiting discharge, then we have one about the guy who came up with the don’t-ask-don’t-tell policy,” Allmendinger said.

“[The play is] educating and informative in a way you don’t usually get because it’s so personal. The whole purpose of



SOPHIE LARSON PHOTO

Juniors Molly McCarthy and Jia Mulvey rehearse their lines in Drama Club for the play, which will be performed in March.

the play is to inform people and I love that,” she said.

“Another American: Asking

and Telling” and the message behind it is new terrain for the Drama Club, Klebart said.

“I’m excited to work with the script. I think it’s really different from what we’ve done in the past, and also what we’ve seen at Dramafest before. We’ve usually done comedies or rom-coms and this is more of a drama. This is also dealing with social issues that we’ve never dealt with before,” she said.

As director, Allmendinger has goals for Dramafest this year and the Drama Club as a whole.

“I want to move past problems, but mostly I want us to feel good about our performance and feel good about the effort we put in. I want to leave Fest, even if we don’t move on, on a high,” she said.

To help the Drama Club achieve their potential, Natti has goals of her own as the adviser this year.

“The kids who are doing it want to put on a meaningful show. They have the right spirit behind it, and my goal is to give them the dramatic chops,” she said.

Kelsea Ballerini’s album, ‘Unapologetically,’ gives listeners closer look into her life

By Shannon Adam
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Following the success of her first album, Kelsea Ballerini released her second album titled “Unapologetically” on Nov. 3.

The newcomer entered the country music scene in 2015 with her debut album, “The First Time.” Ballerini’s career skyrocketed when she became the only female country artist to have three consecutive No. 1 songs with “Love Me Like You Mean It,” “Peter Pan” and “Dibs.”

Her sophomore album continues her successful journey with all 12 tracks written by the 23-year-old songwriter herself.

The album falls into three categories and describes the story of her life in chronological order, she said in an interview on Oct. 31 with Annie Reuter on the website “Sounds Like Nashville.”

“I wrote about the break-up that I had...about growing up, self-discovery, fighting off some insecurities and discovering some new



WIKIPEDIA.COM

Kelsea Ballerini’s honesty and openness shines through in her second album “Unapologetically” as she talks about her life.

ones, and then I wrote a lot about falling in love,” Ballerini said.

The album starts out with “Graveyard,” in which Ballerini

compares her relationship with a dash between two dates on a gravestone.

In “Miss Me More,” she comes

to the realization that the relationship made her compromise her own identity, singing in the catchy chorus: “I forgot I had dreams. I forgot I had wings. Forgot who I was before I ever kissed you.”

“High School” is about the ups and downs of growing up. “It’s about that moment when you realize you’ve outgrown your young self. You’ve changed and evolved and don’t fit somewhere anymore,” she said in a TIME interview on Sept. 21 with Raisa Bruner.

In the song, Ballerini tells the story of a boy refusing to grow up: “Cause it’s five years later and you can’t get off the elevator that’s going up ‘cause it’s going up, and the world gets cruel when you’re still living in high school.”

The sixth track of the album, “In Between,” is her most personal song. In it she openly admits her own insecurities, finding herself caught in the middle between childhood and adulthood: “Sometimes I play grown up and sometimes I play pretend. Sometimes I’m a princess

dressed all ribbons and all curls. And sometimes I just wanna scream, ‘I’m not a little girl!’”

Ballerini considers the title track, “Unapologetically,” the first love song she has ever written. Penned just three weeks after meeting her husband, Morgan Evans, it reveals the early stages of their relationship.

The last song of the album called “Legends” tells the story of a failed relationship; however, it chooses to focus on the good memories and moments, Ballerini said in an interview on Oct. 30 with Liv Stecker on the website “The Boot.”

A songwriter at heart, Ballerini gives her fans a look into her personal world, the songs being like entries from her diary.

Throughout the entire album, her openness and honesty are what makes the listener connect with the songs, and those qualities will help Ballerini make an even bigger name for herself in the future.

Bambolina serves variety of innovative pizzas, provides modern, cozy atmosphere for diners

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Located in downtown Salem, Bambolina offers customers high-end pizzas with unusual flavor combinations.

Lit by hanging, exposed light bulbs, the restaurant has a modern, upscale atmosphere. Bricks line two of the walls, and the ceiling is left open, leaving pipes and air ducts exposed to create an industrial yet cozy interior.

The menu presents a variety of options for appetizers, nearly all of which contain fresh vegetables, including roasted carrots (\$8) and zucchini salad (\$9). For a more substantial starter, customers can order a seasonal squash soup (\$8) or beef carpaccio (\$15).

The primary entrées offered by the restaurant are pizzas, cooked in a handmade wood-

burning oven that can be seen in the back of the restaurant. Customers can sit at the high-top counter near the kitchen and watch the cooks make pizza in the oven.

Bambolina provides a variety of Neapolitan style pizzas, including classics such as a plain

cheese pizza (\$11) and a margherita pizza (\$13). For more adventurous customers, the restaurant serves more creative, “fancier” pizzas, such as their egg and cauliflower pizza (\$16), which is topped with roasted cauliflower, truffle essence, mascarpone, and a poached egg.

For those interested in something other than pizza, Bambo-

lina also offers entrées such as spaghetti carbonara (\$18) and mushroom risotto (\$18), which is perfect for vegetarian diners. The restaurant also caters to gluten-free customers, offering gluten-free pizza dough for all of their pizzas.

Adding to the upscale environment, servers work to foster a relaxed environment; they are attentive and accommodating to customers’ needs, such as altering the toppings on a pizza and refilling drinks,

while still allowing customers to relax and enjoy the food without feeling rushed.

In addition to their restaurant, Bambolina also offers catering, bringing a mobile wooden oven to wherever the event is so that



BAMBOLINARESTAURANT.COM

Bambolina, a restaurant in downtown Salem, offers a variety of handmade pizzas and Italian dishes such as spaghetti carbonara.

they can effectively prepare pizzas of the same caliber as in their restaurant.

Open until 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 p.m.

Friday and Saturday, Bambolina is the perfect restaurant to go to for an upscale meal while still maintaining an industrial-chic atmosphere.

Senior Districts accepts senior percussionist into festival for second time

Band member chosen to perform in January concert

By Austin Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After practicing over the summer with his private instructor, senior Thomas Surette was accepted into the MMEA North-eastern Senior District Festival.

Music and band teacher Joe Janack said auditions were held on Sat., Nov 18.

"We had three students audition for Senior Districts: two members of the band and a member of the chorus," he said.

Surette said Senior Districts is a festival in which students audition to be a part of an honors festival, and he said he is excited for the performance.

"I'm really excited because last year I missed it by one point, which was too bad. This year I'm really excited to get to participate in the concert. I'm



AUSTIN PARÉ PHOTO

'[Surette] is a great musician and a great leader in both band and in chorus.'

- JOE JANACK

in the percussion ensemble, so the whole band that I'm in is full percussion. I'm excited to work on some cool music with some cool people," he said.

During his sophomore year, Surette was accepted into Districts with an All-State recommendation.

"[Surette] is part of a group



SHANNON ADAM PHOTO

Senior Thomas Surette will perform alongside students from other towns on Saturday, Jan. 13 at the Wakefield Middle School.

of nine other students of all percussion instruments. He will be going three times in January for two rehearsals and one performance. The way he did that was he prepared for an audition, and then after the auditions, they rank everyone based on their performance. The top certain

amount get placed into different ensembles, so he got placed into the percussion ensemble," Janack said.

In order to prepare for Districts, Surette said he started working on the piece with his instructor well in advance.

"I have my own private in-

structor, and I started to prepare for Districts last summer for my snare drum piece," he said.

Janack said the students will have rehearsals on Jan. 10 and 12, and the Districts performance will be held on Sat., Jan 13 at Wakefield Middle School.

Janack said he is not surprised that Surette's audition for the position went well.

"Thomas is a great musician and a great leader in both band and in chorus. I am proud of what he has accomplished," he said.

Surette said he has been playing the drums for almost nine years.

Junior Brianna Pappas said Surette is incredibly passionate whenever he plays the drums.

"It's really exciting to watch him play. I am really excited for him because I know how hard he has been working to accomplish this, and he's been looking forward to it. I know that he is going to go far," she said.

Netflix original series 'Big Mouth' provides humorous perspective on adolescence

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After premiering as a Netflix original series on Sept. 29, "Big Mouth" has already been renewed for a second season set to debut some time in 2018. With its raunchy humor and ridiculous puberty-focused plots, the show can easily appeal to a wide variety of viewers from high school to parenthood.

The adult animated series was created by Nick Kroll, Andrew Goldberg, Mark Levin, and Jennifer Flackett, and the basis for it came from the adolescent experiences of Kroll and Goldberg growing up in the suburbs of New York.

Kroll even voices one of the two main characters, the fictional representation of himself named Nick Birch. Birch, an

awkward kid who is late to hit puberty, suffers from extremely overprotective and uncomfortably emotional parents voiced by Fred Armisen and Maya Rudolph.

Andrew Glouberman, the main character based on Goldberg, however, is played by John Mulaney. The stark contrast between Birch's parents and Glouberman's stereotypically Jewish mother and father voiced by Paula Pell and Richard Kind adds to the humor.

Besides the boys' families, the most important supporting character is their best female friend, Jessi Glaser. Voiced by

Jessi Klein, she provides the most in-depth perspective into the thoughts of young women.

Netflix describes the sitcom by saying, "Teenage friends find their lives upended by the wonders and horrors of puberty in this edgy comedy from real-life pals Nick Kroll and Andrew Goldberg."

This description accurately conveys the number of relatable and realistic situations the teenage characters face, such as the classic awkwardness of a first kiss, but fails to prepare viewers for one of the more surprising and unique aspects of the series: two of the main characters are imaginary friend-like male and female "Hormone Monsters"

The show can easily appeal to a wide variety of viewers from high school to parenthood.



NETFLIX.COM

New series 'Big Mouth' starring Nick Kroll and John Mulaney has received positive reviews after the release of its first season on Netflix.

voiced by Jason Mantzoukas and Rudolph respectively. Nick, Andrew, and their many acquaintances are quirky and funny on their own, but Mantzoukas and Rudolph truly represent the vulgar and impulsive inner thoughts of teenagers everywhere.

The conventional plotlines with unique twists and interesting animation has garnered the 10-episode first season generally positive reviews, and hopefully the second season is able to build upon the consistent humor and relatability.

Band and chorus continue holiday tradition at town tree lighting

By Sophie Larson
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Band, jazz band, chorus, and the Sound Waves are preparing for holiday events all across Cape Ann.

The chorus, the Sound Waves, and the band participated in the annual tree lighting ceremony in downtown Manchester on Dec. 3, band director Joe Janack said.

The tree lighting ceremony is a tradition spanning 52 years which the band, the chorus, and the Sound Waves became a part of by performing, interim pastor Marlayna Schmidt said.

Select student musicians from the chorus performed Dec. 2 at the kickoff of the Manchester-by-the-Sea Holiday Weekend, chorus director Donna O'Neil said.

One of these select musicians was senior Madonna McGuire, who attended the Holiday Weekend as a child.

"I remember once I went to the Holiday Festival as a kid. I remember it being a lot of fun. You know that feeling you get because everything is so vibrant and joyful," she said.

McGuire was enthusiastic about being a part of the festivities this year.

"Now I'm part of what was great for me as a kid. Little kids stayed and watched me perform. I got much more comfortable after a while; at first I was kind of nervous. It was also nice to see everyone from town," she said.

Both the band and the Sound Waves also performed at the Council on Aging Luncheon at the high school on Dec. 9, Janack said.

"That is when senior citizens from Manchester and Essex come to the dining hall, and they get served lunch, and we play holiday tunes for them," he said.



Music teachers Joe Janack and Donna O'Neil direct the band and chorus students during their holiday performance of seasonal music at the Friendship Tree Lighting on Sunday, Dec 3.

Junior band member Lizzy Klebart enjoyed performing for the senior members of the community.

"The Senior Luncheon is a wonderful event that further connects the band and the Sound Waves with the community," she

said.

The Sound Waves will also be performing at the Edgewood Rehab Center Dec. 18, which is the favorite performance of the students who have a special connection with the patients, O'Neil said.

Both Janack and O'Neil said they plan to perform holiday songs at their upcoming events.

The Winter Concert on Dec. 14 is an important performance and includes the chorus, the Sound Waves, the band, and the jazz band, Janack said.