

the **INDEPENDENT**

Volume XXIII Number 5

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

March 6, 2017

Guidance plans to make Week of Gratitude tradition

Students write thank-you notes to teachers who have helped them through school

By Maddie Conway
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Due to the better-than-expected response to the Week of Gratitude, guidance department chair Beverly Low, said she is planning to make it a tradition.

A cooperative effort between Low, math teacher Amanda Warren, and senior class president Avery Shaw, the Week of Gratitude was meant to encourage all students, but especially seniors, to write thank-you notes to teachers who have supported them throughout high school.

Low said that she “delivered about 70 cards to teachers’ mailboxes, but some students handed the cards to their teachers themselves, so the total number of notes



Students like seniors Nellie Boling, Hannah Soucy, and Jenny Duff gathered in the guidance conference room writing thank-you notes to their teachers, leading to over 70 notes being delivered.

MADDIE CONWAY PHOTO

written is likely much higher.”

The first day during that week ended up being a snow day, and Low said that she was ini-

tially concerned that the already shortened week -- due to that Friday being used for profes-

sional development -- “would not work out and this project would not be successful.”

After the Tuesday where “only a few people came,” her

worries were assuaged, she said, when groups of students started “turning out on Wednesday to write the notes during U blocks and their free blocks.”

Senior Santana Tosi was one of those students. “I appreciated the opportunity to carve out a certain time in my busy schedule to write the letters ... I should have already [written] because I’m very grateful to the teachers who helped me,” she said.

Tosi worried, however, that teachers “would not think the letters were totally sincere” because they were written as part of an organized effort.

Low, however, disagreed and said that “plenty of teachers were really touched by the handwritten notes they received.”

Because the event was mostly targeted at seniors, some underclassmen said they didn’t know they could participate.

“I felt like [the Week of Gratitude] was more for the seniors, since they will not be seeing [their teachers]

GRATITUDE, page 4

Seniors plan to rewrite current sexual education program

By Amber Paré
Independent Editor

Seniors Nellie Boling and Hannah Soucy, with the help of physical education teacher James

Weed, are preparing to change the sex education curriculum at the school for their SCORE project.

The idea for the project, Boling said, came to her during a phone conversation with cousin about different types of contraceptives.

“Over the course of our conversation, I realized how little I knew about sexual health. When I talked to Hannah, we both

agreed that the sex education curriculum needed to be revamped, so we decided to re-write it as our SCORE project,” she said.

Weed, who is in his first year of teaching at the school, said the current sexual education curriculum comes from Ipswich High School and mainly focuses on the “basics” of sexual education such as sexual expression; however, he hopes to change the curriculum to be more “useful” to students.

“I’m always up for a change, so I want to see what might not fit for students here and what we

could add to make the curriculum more comprehensive,” he said.

Boling and Soucy agreed that their preliminary goals for their project were to make the curriculum feel “more personal, less rushed, and more useful to students in the future.”

Thinking about the conversation she had with her

SCORE, page 4

Administration plans to reorganize library, add collaboration spaces, hire new librarian for next year

By Maura McCormick
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Principal Patricia Puglisi is leading an effort to balance middle school and high school use of the library and plans to reorganize the library over the summer for next year.

After sixth-grade information skills teacher and librarian Sue Krause’s retirement, Phyllis Musco took over her role.

She said the library has been very busy with both middle school and high school students, making it loud and difficult to supervise.

“There was a time last week when I think I counted 70 people in the library while I was teaching a class,” she said.

Puglisi said she is initiating a Google sign up sheet to put a cap of around 10 to 15 high school students in the library during U block because that is when the library gets the most crowded.

Other than that, Puglisi said the library will more or less remain the same this year. Next year, howev-



MAURA MCCORMICK PHOTO

In order for renovations to be completed for the library next year, administrators will be visiting St. John’s Prep and Pingree.

er, administration is planning a library renovation.

“What we’re hoping to do is create different centers within that library space, so maintaining the library but also pulling together collaboration spaces and some classroom

space and also some space for technology,” Puglisi said.

Administrators will be visiting St. John’s Prep and Pingree to get ideas for the library.

Puglisi said those schools just recently renovated their

LIBRARY, page 4

News

Career Day
-page 2
Student athletes
-page 4

Features

SCORE preview
-page 5
Pip’s Closet
-page 8

Opinion

Getting political on
social media
-page 9

Sports

Spring sports
-pages 12-14

Arts

Featured artist:
Carl Parkhurst
-page 15

News Brief

Global Issues fundraisers update

Many fundraisers for the NGO Bicycles for Humanity are coming up for the Global Issues class.

Events like the spikeball tournament, the teacher vs. student basketball tournament, and many restaurant nights are being planned in addition to the annual lip sync contest on March 16.

Last year, there were four student and four teacher teams along with a panel of teacher judges, according to foreign language department chair Michelle Magaña, a judge last year.

She said she really enjoyed judging and plans to judge again this year.

"I think that there are going to be three faculty members and two student members this year, so it's going to be interesting to see what type of scores we come up with," she said.

Wallimann hopes that the lip sync competition will continue to be as successful as previous years. "[Last year] we ended up raising about \$2,000... It brings the whole school and community together and showcases the Gardner Project. It's usually our biggest fundraiser," he said.

This year, the Global Issues class will be helping Bicycles for Humanity, an organization that provides bicycles for those in impoverished communities.

In addition to raising money for donations, the Global Issues Class plans to host a bicycle drive in April. They will be getting all types of bikes "in addition to the hopefully \$8,000-\$10,000 that we are also going to donate, so we are excited about that," Wallimann said.

Curriculum offers variety of new courses

Music, art departments make considerable changes, additions

By Heather Holley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

For next year, the school has made changes and additions to its high school Program of Studies to provide students with new opportunities in their curriculum.

The art department has made two major changes. The course Documenting High School will change its name to Video and Graphic Design. Art teacher Caroline Hunt Epp said she hopes that this course will appeal to everyone and not just to a select group.

"We realized that what the school really needs more than anything else was a class that would appeal to a wider variety of people rather than just people who want to just cover things at school," Epp said.

The art department is also adding the Advanced Placement Studio Art 2d Design Portfolio course. This summer Epp will be going to an Advanced Placement summer camp at the Art Institute of Chicago to prepare her for her new course.

The music department will also be making changes to its options for courses. As of next year, music teachers Donna O'Neill and Joe Janack will officially be part of the music department, as both band and chorus have never been a "department" in the past.

Four new classes are being added to the department: Music Theory II/Composition, Piano Lab I, Vocal Lab I, and Survey of Music.



HEATHER HOLLEY PHOTO

Freshman Jillian Bowen and Sophomore Clara Davis work on PowerPoint presentations in Documenting High School. Next year the class will be renamed as Video and Graphic Design.

O'Neill explained the importance of Music Theory as a part of the school's curriculum as it is a staple in any music department.

"It has been a very popular class in the past and gives the basics of music for both musicians and non-musicians," she said. She explained that the new course will be a continuation of Music Theory I, as it goes into deeper subject material, and the last quarter will be

focused on music composition.

In both Vocal and Piano Lab I, "There will be a lot of independent work driven by student-based interests and is very hands-on," O'Neill said. These three courses will each be one semester courses.

The last addition, Survey of Music, is a yearlong course "for students who want to broaden their knowledge in music," O'Neill explained.

The course includes a chron-

ological study of ancient music beginning with Greece to the mid to late 18th century as well as an introduction to genres such as jazz and rock.

O'Neill will be teaching all of the new music courses next year as she will no longer be a middle school teacher. "I am so excited about the expansion at the high school level," she said.

Janack will continue to teach his middle school band classes.

Local professionals will present at Career Day

Sophomores, juniors can attend up to three presentations, learn about different jobs

By Holly Fossa
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Career Day, which will take place on March 9, will host at least 22 presenters to speak with sophomores and juniors about their professions. Students will be able to attend multiple presentations and ask questions.

Career Day is a way to show students different job opportunities they may encounter after high school or college and give them an idea of which careers they may want to pursue.

Junior Brett Donovan said that he believes Career Day is helpful for students to gain an insight as to what they may learn after high school and what life is like beyond the classroom.

Donovan would like to learn more about entrepreneurship on Career Day, because that is a field he thinks he may po-

Featured Occupations:

- Attorney
- Banking
- Business (non-profit)
- Economic Development
- Health Care
- Health Care (non-profit)
- Hospitality/Accommodations Management
- Events Director
- Newspaper Editor or Commercial Printing
- Marketing
- Non-profit Experiential Learning
- Non-profit Development Manager
- Education
- Small Businesses
- Entrepreneurship
- Human Resources
- Police
- Art

tentially pursue after college. According to Principal Patricia Puglisi, professionals from a variety of 17 different fields, ranging from banking, to

plumbing, to entrepreneurship will be included in the many presentations on Career Day.

Presenters will be assigned to a different classroom, where

they will talk about their profession and answer students' questions, Puglisi said.

Each meeting with last 30 minutes: 15 minutes of them presenting their occupation, and 15 minutes of answering questions.

There will be an opportunity for students to attend up to three different meetings.

Puglisi said students will have an opportunity to sign up for who they wish to see before Career Day, allowing students to pick and choose which careers they are the most interested in and want to learn about the most. An attendance list will then be provided to each person who will be presenting.

The first meeting will begin at 10:10, the second at 10:50, and the third at 11:30. There will be a time period of 10 minutes in between each presentation.

Sophomore Abby Lantz said she thinks Career Day will "help open kids to new professions and fields that they might not have known they liked."

Junior Emery Coggeshall said Career Day is a great way for students to see jobs that are available to them, and she is excited to learn about different types of fields. "I hope they show jobs that are stereotypical, as well as jobs that are not," Coggeshall said.

Guidance department leads March Madness resume challenge

Juniors encouraged to start college application preparations, aim to make substantial progress

By Antonio Gillespie
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As a way to inspire action from the junior class in preparation for college, the guidance department is leading the March Madness resume challenge.

The guidance department knows, and many seniors can attest, that the beginning of senior year is busy with applications.

Guidance's goal is for juniors to get substantial work on their resumes done before the end of the school year.

To achieve this goal, the guidance department will lead a challenge from March 1 to March 31.

The junior class will be undergoing a month-long challenge to work on their resumes to help prepare them for college applications in the coming year.

Guidance department chair Beverly Low said that the inspiration for this idea was from a similar resume challenge that she worked on in the Dean's of-



ANTONIO GILLESPIE PHOTO

Laurie Carlson, secretary, works in the guidance department. Counselors hope that juniors will be motivated to prepare resumes by the end of the month for an undetermined prize.

office at Colgate University with the Center for Career Services.

Low wants the resume challenge to coincide with the NCAA March Madness tour-

namment for it to be enjoyable and relatable for students.

The idea is to make the challenge a competition between the girls and the boys to have the

most resumes completed, but the challenge is subject to change.

No matter how the challenge is run, Low is keeping her focus on her main goal

of completed one-page resumes for the class as a whole.

She hopes that 75 percent of the junior class will have submitted a one-page resume by the end of March.

Low proposed an idea that there could be different levels of prizes corresponding to different percentages of the junior class to participate in making a one-page resume.

For many students, the resume is a step towards college applications that could be worked on during the summer or during their senior year, but it is important to have a rough draft resume heading into senior year, Low said.

Junior Christian Hadaegh said this challenge would be especially effective if there is some type of extra credit reward for the junior students.

The incentive for the junior class is undetermined at this point, but Low is certain that there will be a rewarding prize for productive students.

Police Chief explains role of resource officer at School Council meeting

By Abigail Fitzgibbon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In order to build a partnership between students, the school community, and safety officials, the school and town police chiefs are exploring the concept of placing a resource officer in the high school, Principal Patricia Puglisi said.

The new Manchester Chief of Police Ed Conley explained the idea at the latest School Council meeting, Puglisi said.

Guidance counselor Karen D'Amour said some were surprised to hear that the school was exploring bringing a police officer in regularly, but she was intrigued when she learned more.

"Initially, it took me by surprise, but I have worked in public

schools that have resource officers, so when I started thinking about it, I started to imagine how it might work in our school, and I can see it as very productive," she said.

Puglisi, who has also worked with resource officers at Reading and Masconomet high schools, emphasized that the role of a resource officer to be a mentor and not intimidating to students.

"What it is about is [having] a resource in the school, and the

goal is about relationship-building between students, faculty, staff, administration and the police; it's about partnering as a community," she said.

'The goal is about relationship building between students, faculty, staff, administration, and the police; its about partnering as a community.'

-PATRICIA PUGLISI

A resource officer, Puglisi said, would never be involved in disciplinary issues at the school or conduct searches and would instead work on getting to know students or even help teach a lesson in a health class.

History teacher Jen Coleman, agreed that a resource

officer could have a positive effect on the school.

"I think it would be good because I think most students in this school have a negative interpretation of the police. I think having a resource officer would be good so students can have positive interactions with the town police officers," she said.

Most importantly, Puglisi said, the resource officer must be a good fit in terms of personality in order to achieve its purpose of being a helpful resource in school.

"It's about having the right person. There's a certain personality, and if the person doesn't have a personality that leads to relationship-building with kids, it's not going to work," she said. Senior Zoe Brown,

who is also on School Council, said she believes a resource officer would be a healthy addition to the school environment.

"It seemed like [Chief Conley] had really solid plans to build a better relationship between the Manchester population and the police force starting with increased involvement at high traffic places such as the school," she said.

The idea of having a resource officer is still in the early stages of discussion and the community is still unsure of whether a resource officer may be the right fit, Puglisi said.

"I'm not sure if it's right for us or not. I think it's something that needs to come from the community from the ground up, so it's something that's out there," she said.

Drama Club performs 'Blithe Spirit' in preliminary round of Dramafest

By Avery Shaw
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Despite not being selected to move onto the semi-final competition, the members of the Drama Club performed their "best performance" at the preliminary round on March

4, director Margaret Sears said.

"The performances just got better and better every time. Saturday's [March 4] performance was very strong," Sears said.

The club's performance, a 40-minute

rendition of Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit," focused on a married man who invites a medium over to his house and unintentionally conjures up his deceased wife who then haunts him and his current wife.

The preliminary round was hosted by North Reading.

Eight schools competed against each other, and only three schools were selected to move on to the semi-final rounds.

Preceding the preliminary round, the group performed a dress rehearsal in front of the high school on March 3.

"That tends to be the performance that causes the most stress. It is always a challenge," Sears said.

Sears said the actors did a great job given the mature character roles.

"The chemistry between the actors was really strong. The humor just felt more organic than I expected, and the romantic tension, which can be challenging with a group of high school actors, was definitely there. It really was fun to watch," she said.

Adjusting to North Read-

ing's theater caused issues with the performance, Sears said.

"The theater itself was really difficult acoustically, so we, along with other performances, had a hard time with diction and projection. There was trouble hearing some of the lines," she said.

Despite issues, the team won four awards combined.

Freshman Mya Harmon and junior Belle Allmendinger won awards for acting. Senior Nellie Boling won an award as stage manager. Junior Madison Palmer won an award for hair and makeup.

Next year, Sears said she wants to begin working on the production earlier to address set design issues.

"One of the advantages of going to Dramafest and seeing strong performances is that it inspires you. We saw very impressive set designs, which was an area where many issues arose for us. I am planning on working on the set earlier next year, because the set has a huge influence on directing," she said.



AVERY SHAW PHOTO

The cast of "Blithe Spirit," including Jake Dambrosio and Belle Allmendinger, performed the play at North Reading High School.

Allmendinger reflected upon the differences between last year season and this year's Dramafest season.

"Last year, the play we performed was basically just two characters. This year there were a lot of important roles, and I think that made everyone become much more involved. We became more of a family," she said.

Assistant director and senior

Lillian Schrafft said the performance came together nicely because of each of the member's dedication to the production.

"Mrs. Sears and I were new at directing, so it was sometimes really hard for us to know what we were doing. I think we pulled together a pretty good show regardless. The members were so good, so we didn't really need a lot of discipline," she said.

Junior, senior participate in skating competitions

By Amber Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Junior Kayley Wright and senior Anabelle Haskell are both in the process of training for large ice skating competitions after successfully competing at smaller, local competitions.

Wright participated in the Bay State Games last month in western Massachusetts, earning a first place medal for her routine.

Anyone who places at the competition will compete at the State Games of America, meaning Wright will travel to Michigan this summer to compete.

Wright said she practices almost every day for one or two hours in order to prepare for all of her competitions. She is currently outlining her routine with her coach for the summer competition, which is held for ice skaters across the country.

"I went up a level in my skating program, so that means that the level of my routine will also go up. I'm going to try to push myself and make my routine for this summer something that is difficult and exciting," she said.

Haskell, on the other hand, participated with a group of girls from the Merrimack Skating Club at a Massachusetts competition last month that was held specifically for high school teams.

After training almost daily for the competition, she performed a solo routine and participated in a group event with members of her team.

Haskell said she liked the structure of the competition because it fostered a more laid-back atmosphere.

"The structure of the competition was great. Rather than placing first, second, or third, each team earns points through solos or group events. Prizes are actually rewarded at the end

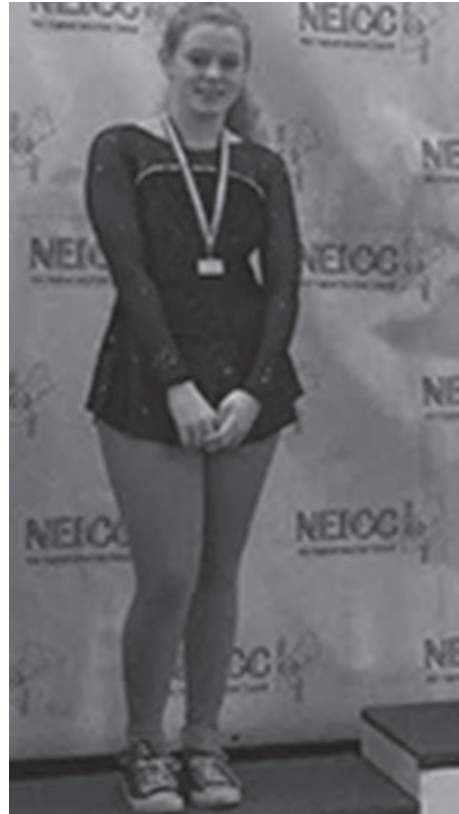
of the year based on those points," she said. To prepare for her team's next competition in Vermont in the spring, Haskell is practicing a solo routine and working with members of her team with whom she will be skating in the group event.

Many of Wright and Haskell's peers have enjoyed seeing their progress and success in ice skating.

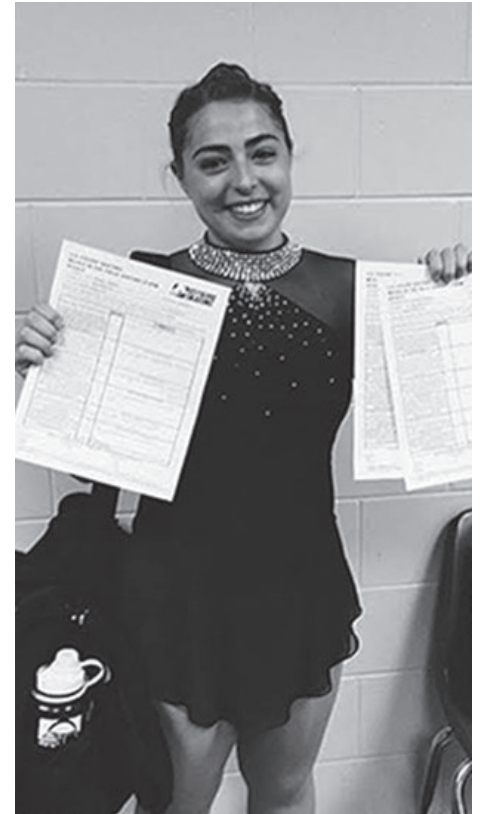
"I have known Kayley and Anabelle for a long time and have seen them skate over the years. It's nice to see

'I'm going to try to push myself and make my routine for this summer something that is difficult and exciting.'

- KAYLEY WRIGHT



COURTESY OF KATRINA HASKELL



COURTESY OF KAYLEY WRIGHT

Skaters senior Anabelle Haskell and junior Kayley Wright continue to train hard to prepare for various competitions. They hope to continue skating in the future.

them being so successful in their competitions," senior Emily Parker said.

Both Wright and Haskell plan to continue skating in the future.

Wright hopes to make connections to coach her own students in the future, while Haskell is hoping to skate while she attends college.

Debate team continues string of victories at tournaments

By Fritz Spofford
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Led by faculty adviser Yvonne Robbins, the school debate club continues to participate in multiple tournaments this quarter, with a recent victory by a sophomore Public Forum team at a tournament held over February break.

The team, which consisted of sophomores Sirine Benali and Anna Bonaccorso, came in first place at the Tufts Classic in Public Forum tournament held at Tufts University in Medford, Mass. on Feb. 25, Robbins said.

Their path to victory first consisted of success in four preliminary rounds, ultimately leading them to the final round, which led them to a first-place victory, Bonaccorso said.

The topic debated was on whether the United States should lift its embargo against Cuba, with Benali and Bonaccorso arguing that it should, Robbins said.

Also representing the team at



FRITZ SPOFFORD PHOTO

Students from all grade levels attend the weekly debate club meetings to prepare for upcoming competitions such as the tournament that took place in February.

the tournament were juniors Abby Fitzgibbon and Maggy Delisio and sophomore Becca Shan, she said.

Benali and Bonaccorso have competed at one other tournament together, held at Princeton University in early December, Bonaccorso said.

"It was a pretty competitive tournament, and we ended winning three rounds out of seven," she said.

The team has had a considerable amount of success this year with a new curriculum model, Robbins said.

"This is the first year that we have

had the Evidence Based Argumentation course instead of the traditional varsity and novice debate courses. The new model has proved successful in preparing students for competition. Students have made it to elimination rounds at several national tournaments," she said.

The team's success this year can also be attributed to its small but strong group of debaters, senior Lily Moore said.

"Since it's now a club, you know that the members actively want to be there as opposed to just doing it for a grade," she said.

In the days ahead, the team will compete at the Needham High School tournament on March 18 and the State Debate Finals on March 25.

"The debate season is coming to a close, but the club will continue through the fourth quarter. We will be taking three teams of five students to Academic World Quest on April 1. The team also has plans to participate in several community events in the coming months," she said.

CONTINUATIONS

GRATITUDE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

next year," junior Shannon Adam said.

"But I will definitely do it next year," she said.

Low acknowledged that the guidance department "did nudge... the seniors, but it was open to all students."

For the first time holding this event, "I'm pretty pleased," Low said. "I think we'll make it a tradition for the week before February break [but] cast a wider net."

SCORE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

cousin, Boling said she hopes to make contraceptives a larger part of the sex education curriculum "in order to make sure

kids have exposure to and are familiar with how to have safe sex."

Soucy said that her main concern when she took sexual education in the past was that the curriculum was much "more focused on frightening students into not

having sex than it was teaching them about sex."

"The curriculum is already very condensed, and a large portion of it is dedicated to showing graphic photos of worst-case-scenario STIs trying to scare kids. Sex education

should be more than that, though," she said.

Boling shared a similar sentiment when describing her hopes for the new sexual education curriculum, explaining that she wanted to "dedicate less time to frightening students and more time to teaching

them about common infections, like yeast infections, that affect a large proportion of young adults."

Before they begin officially working on their project in April, Boling and Soucy hope to have students take a series of surveys at the school about what students feel they have learned in sex education compared to what they wish they had learned.

LIBRARY
CONTINUED FROM
PAGE 1

so they will be able to give valuable insight into the process of reorganizing the space.

She said library renovation has become popular in the new age of technology in the classroom.

"It's actually kind of a new trend in

education to reimagine library spaces to bring them up to speed with the type of learning that's going on in schools today," she said.

'I love the changes [the school] made at the beginning of the year...I think it's great that the school is considering ways to make the library a more usable space.'

- JENNY DUFF

Puglisi said the school will also be hiring a new librarian with an education in technology to supervise the newly organized space.

Senior Jenny Duff said she likes how the school has been paying attention to the library and has been trying to change it to accom-

modate students' needs.

"I loved the changes they made at the beginning of the year -- how they brought in new tables and moved the book shelves. I think it's great that the school is considering ways to make the library a more usable space," she said.

Health Matters



Eating superfoods can help prevent illness

Specific foods contain high concentration of vitamins, nutrients that improve health

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With the increase of sickness during flu season, it is important to maintain a healthy diet and eat foods high in important nutrients in order to avoid getting sick.

One way to do this is to increase one's intake of "superfoods," or foods that are nutritionally dense and therefore good for overall health and well-being.

According to Despina Hyde, a dietician at New York University's Langone Medical Center, consuming the right amount of foods that have diverse nutrients is key to having a healthy diet. Because superfoods have a variety of vitamins and minerals, eating lots of them can allow people to fight off disease more easily, she said, according to an article by Christopher Wanjek from Live Science.

Many fruits are considered superfoods, such as kiwi and blueberries. Blueberries are rich in both various vitamins and fiber, which are important to boost immunity and help digestion, writes Wanjek.

In addition to fruits, beans and whole grains are also considered superfoods because they provide low-fat protein without the processing that refined grains go through. Protein helps to build muscle as well as to construct and repair tissue in the body.

It is also important to consume vegetables, such as kale, which is a superfood due to its high content of vitamins, fiber, and calcium. All dark, leafy



WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Smoothies serve as an easy and delicious way to incorporate superfoods' nutrients into one's diet.

greens, such as swiss chard, collards, and spinach, provide similar benefits.

Finally, eating fatty fish like salmon is another way to get a daily intake of superfoods. Wanjek writes that salmon and other fatty fish contain Omega-3 fatty acid, which can help lower the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

A simple way to increase one's intake of superfoods such as these is to create meals that have superfoods as their primary ingredients. A salad, for example, could be made with dark, leafy greens and salmon in order

to incorporate two of the main superfoods.

Smoothies are another good way to add superfoods to one's diet. By combining various fruits and vegetables together in a blender, it provides the opportunity to have many superfoods in one sitting.

In order to avoid getting sick this year, it is important to have a healthy, well-balanced diet that consists of foods high in a variety of nutrients, such as superfoods.

Beans and whole grains... provide low-fat protein without the processing that refined grains go through.

Senior class prepares for diverse SCORE projects

By Abigail Fitzgibbon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After turning in their proposals, this year's seniors are looking forward to beginning their SCORE projects after the end of third quarter.

Although the seniors this year were somewhat delayed in turning in their project proposals, SCORE adviser James Wallimann said, the class has already achieved success as a whole in the number of students leaving the building for their projects.

According to Wallimann, 98 percent of students are pursuing internships outside of the building, making this year the year with the most students working outside of school.

Senior Karlie Angelis is one of those students, and she will be working with Salem Sound Coastwatch, helping them get more exposure by making promotional videos for the organization, she said.

"I'm really excited to make the films and hopefully make them really creative, and it's going to be really good to learn about environmental issues too, especially locally," she said.

Senior Jazmine Appeltofft will be working at the metal company Essex Bay Engineering. She will be responsible for managing inventory for the company and working with their partner tool company, she said.



ABIGAIL FITZGIBBON PHOTO

Seniors Karlie Angelis and Matthew Kenney have organized unique outside-of-school internships to do during fourth quarter.

"[I'm excited to] learn how to manage a business and see what comes in and what goes out and what difficulties there are when it comes to problem-solving," she said.

Also working locally, senior Jenny Duff will be joining first grade teacher Emily Dwyer at Essex Elementary and will focus on studying student motivation. Duff plans on studying education or child psychology after high school, so the project fits her interests well, she said.

Instead of working at a company or school, senior Matt Kenney chose a more independent route by designing an app, he said.

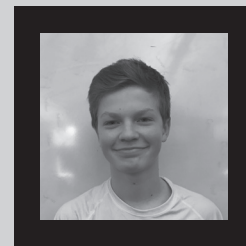
For his project, Kenney will be taking online courses from MIT on how to build an app, learning how to hard-code it, and

ultimately publishing it on the app store, he said.

"I wanted to try something out on my own that would be fun but interesting, and I thought it would be a cool idea to do something with what I had learned in computer science and make an app," he said.

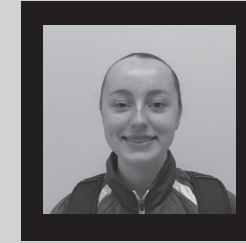
Wallimann said students who do their SCORE internships outside of the building are generally more satisfied after it is complete, so he believes seniors as a whole will enjoy their projects more since so many are working outside of school.

"I think the students will have much better experiences overall... The kids that spend time finding one outside the building and outside their comfort zones have had better experiences over the years," he said.



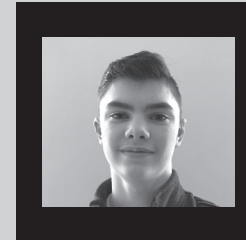
Freshman Spencer Meek:

"I got to travel to Europe this summer with my family. I explored Rome, parts of Italy, and even Paris."



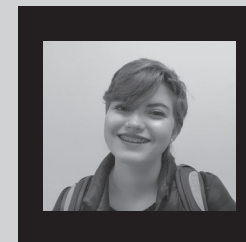
Freshman Kaitlyn O'Connell:

"I made it to school on time today. Considering that I woke up late this morning, I'll consider that very lucky."



Sophomore Ben Soulard:

"During the summer I found a \$20 bill on my way home from lunch with my friends."



Sophomore Anna Mewkill:

"Last year I forgot to study for one of my really difficult biology tests, but it ended up being postponed because of a few snow days."



What is the luckiest thing that has ever happened to you?



Junior Thomas Surette:

"This year while I was out camping, a huge tree branch fell on top of my tent; surviving that was pretty lucky."



Junior Sarah Doucette:

"Somehow I passed all of my classes this past quarter."



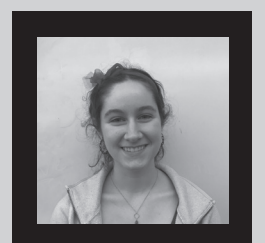
Senior Nicholas Curcuru:

"Switching to this school district was the luckiest and best decision I have ever made."



Senior Nellie Boling:

"One time I fell down the stairs while singing 'Unsteady' by the X Ambassadors and was not hurt at all."





Why are we the Hornets?

By Maura McCormick
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

For as long as most people can remember, the hornet has been Manchester's mascot. In 1958, back when Essex wasn't part of this school, and Manchester High School was referred to as Story High School, the mascot was still the hornet. Because the mascot goes so far back, it is difficult to find anyone who knows how and when the mascot was determined. Some people may wonder, however: Why are we the hornets?

Some school mascots have a meaning. The Gloucester Fishermen, for example, comes from the city's background as a fishing community. Salem's mascot is a witch in reference to the infamous Salem witch trials. Hamilton-Wenham's mascot is the generals in reference to the revered General Patton. But a hornet? What does that have to do with Manchester?

Some students have expressed a similar question about the mascot.

"I kind of feel like it doesn't really have anything to do with our towns," sophomore Eve Feuerbach said.

Senior Zanny Lee also thinks the hornet is unrelated to Manchester or Essex.

"I would like our mascot more if it were more related to the towns.



MAURA MCCORMICK PHOTO

The hornet has changed slightly since its yearbook appearance in 1993 until today although its origin as mascot remains unknown.

I don't know what we could be. Maybe sailors or mariners or something sea-related," she said.

Another concern about the mascot is why the school colors are green if the mascot is a hornet, which is a yellow and black insect.

The mascot painted on the gym wall depicts a yellow and black hornet wearing a green sweater. There aren't many schools that have to put clothing on the mascot to make it match the school color.

Many other schools also sport a green hornet as a mascot, such as North Reading, although it is unclear as to where and why the phenomenon of a green hornet began.

Senior Fritz Spofford suggested one reason for this could be that, "yellow is

just an ugly school color."

Perhaps the hornet mascot's color does not make much sense, and the insect doesn't have a distinct connection to the town, but the hornet is ingrained in Manchester Essex High School.

Senior Meehan Irose said he feels a connection with the mascot.

"I feel a lot of pride in the hornet; I feel like it's something I can identify with as a student, despite the lack of local significance," he said.

Senior Julia Potter said she likes the hornet mascot.

"I think the fact that hornets fly in swarms shows that we have good teamwork, and that's what I like about the hornet mascot," she said.

GUESS WHO?

TEACHER EDITION

Favorite food?

Cape Cod Potato Chips

Favorite activity outside of school?

Reading the newspaper

Favorite beverage?

Lemonade

How long have you worked here?

12 years

Favorite animal?

Elephant

Favorite TV show?

"Shark Tank"

Favorite sport to watch?

Tennis

Favorite restaurant?

Firenze in Salem

Something that makes you smile?

"How kids at this school say thank you when they leave"

Favorite ice cream flavor?

Mint chip

What's your pet peeve?

When kids say, "I have no idea."

Favorite thing to cook?

"Any New York Times recipe that's not difficult"

Favorite Dance move?

"The six trig functions"

Answers can be found on Page 12 under Read, Watch, Listen

Recent graduate travels to Vietnam to work with children on gap year

By Emily Clark
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Jenny Cochand, class of 2016 valedictorian, is currently taking a gap year before attending UNC. Cochand left on Jan. 14 for a two-month-long trip to Vietnam to help children with special needs. She is in the city of Ho Chi Minh, formerly known as Saigon.

"I knew I definitely wanted

to travel and do some type of service, and because in all my life I have always done something with kids, it made sense to continue working with them. I have also wanted to go to Vietnam for a while because I am interested in South-east Asia, and

I have studied Vietnam a bit in French class," she said.

She traveled with International Volunteer Head Quarters, or IVHQ, after hearing about it from class of 2015 graduate and Dartmouth sophomore Olivia Lantz, who did the same program in South Africa.

"We stay at a place that is

called Saigon Tourist Hospitality College. There are classrooms where Vietnamese people learn how to be tour guides, speak English or work at hotels or airports. I am in a room with seven other girls, and we have bunk beds and lockers for our stuff," Cochand said via Skype.

IVHQ has a variety of options for people to choose from while in the foreign countries.

'I knew I definitely wanted to travel and do some type of service, and because in all my life I have always done something with kids, it made sense to continue working with them.'

-JENNY COCHAND

"There are four options under the program, special needs, orphanage, food outreach, and medical, and I am doing special needs, which is like a child care program for kids with disabilities. During Tet, or Lunar New Year, however, I was with the orphanage for a little because some of the special need daycares shut down. I have done both of them for around a week now, but I am going to stick with special needs for the rest of my trip," she said.

A typical day consists of Cochand waking up around 7 a.m., eating breakfast usually around 8:30 a.m., and then walking 20 minutes across the city to the

daycare center. She does various activities with the kids, and then around 11:30 a.m. she goes back to the college for lunch. At 1:30 p.m. she walks back to the daycare for more planned activities and returns back at 4:30 to the college.

"When we work with the kids, we play games or play with Legos to work on motor skills. We also sing songs to them, feed them lunch, help clean up, and settle them down for naps. One day we planned a water balloon fight, and it was funny to see the different reactions the kids had while throwing the balloons and getting wet. Clapping is also very good for them to do; we are always trying to help their hands and brains," she said.

When she isn't with the kids on weekdays, Cochand travels to different areas in Vietnam.

"On the weekend we travel to different places, like last weekend we went to Phu Quoc, which is basically just a tropical island, and rented motor bikes to drive around. We also have gone to Mekong Delta, which is filled with waterways and canals," she said.

Cochand has already made friends from her room and from Culture Week in the first three weeks.

"When you first get to Vietnam you have Culture Week, which entails going on excursions with



COURTESY OF JENNY COCHAND

While on her gap year trip to Vietnam, alum Jenny Cochand works with children with special needs and visits notable sites.

a group of people within the program. The group becomes your friend group throughout the trip, but you also make many friends with many other people," she said.

Cochand said there actually are not that many Americans in the program. There are many Australians and a lot of people from different countries in Europe. She said everyone is very nice, and they all really try to come together and speak English. Cochand, however, also tries to speak French with everyone she can, which is very fun for her.

The city is very green and warm, but she mostly has to keep

her shoulders and knees covered. In the temples she must dress respectfully for the conservative religion and culture, and when she works at the Special Needs Daycare, she doesn't want her clothes to be inappropriate for playing with children. During the rest of the time in Ho Chi Minh, she wears whatever she wants.

Cochand said Vietnamese food consists of a lot of rice, noodles, and pork, but she is registered as a vegetarian because she doesn't eat much meat. She doesn't miss much from home, including the food, and is surprised because she wants to stay a lot longer.

Seniors adjust to, enjoy new film electives in English department

Students learn to balance heavier workload, expose themselves to different movie genres

By Karlie Angelis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

For their third and final quarter, seniors are participating in film classes with the English department, and the reviews, so far, are positive.

The electives are Murder on Page and on Screen, Film Noir, The Movie Monster, The Anti-Hero, and Magic and Mythologies of Baseball.

For some students, the electives are a refreshing end to the third quarter, senior Liam Martin said.

"I find this English class more enjoyable. Even though some weeks [the class] might be more tedious, the class itself is fun and new. I think people are realizing this is their last high school English class, so seniors are kind of enjoying it," he said.

Martin is in the Movie Mon-

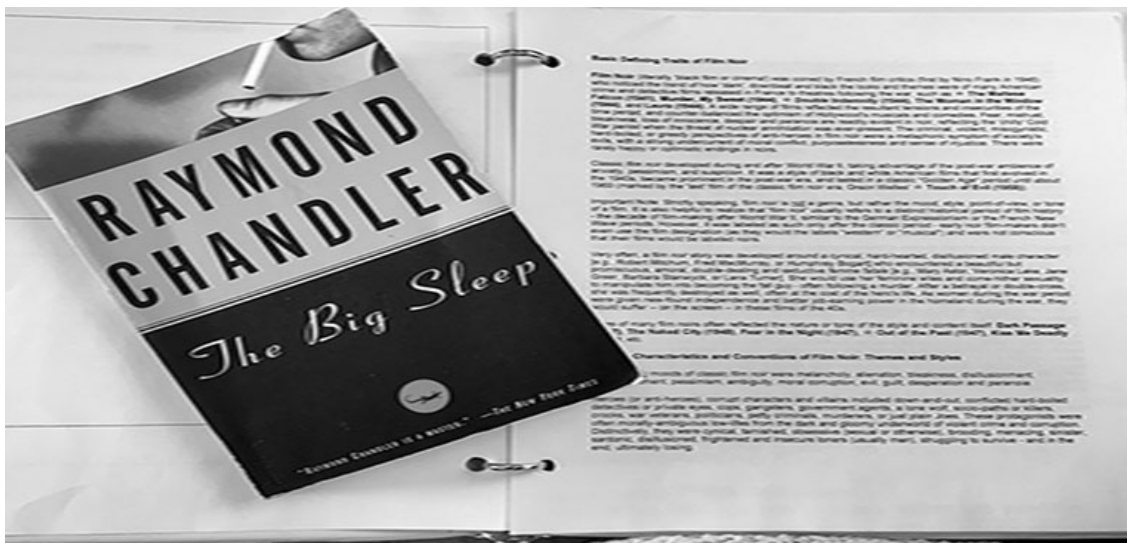
ster elective, where he said they read books including "Frankenstein" and "Dracula" and watch movies like "Interview with the Vampire."

Senior Amber Shaw, who is in Murder on Page and on Screen, enjoyed all of her English classes this year.

"I...liked them all equally because mine all focused on similar themes. I took Dystopian Lit and Southern Gothic [last semester], so they all worked well since they were all very dark in theme," she said.

Shaw said she enjoys the class and the book they are reading, "In Cold Blood," and is excited to start watching movies.

For other seniors, moving to film electives is more of a difficult change, said senior Jazmine Appeltofft, who is in the Film Noir elective.



KARLIE ANGELIS PHOTO

In the Film Noir class, seniors are reading "The Big Sleep" and watching other Noir films. Students are able to choose which English elective they want to take for their final year of high school.

"I like it better because it's more focused on movies, but we also have to read a book at the same time, so it's hard to bal-

ance it," she said.

Although she enjoys learning about film noir, Appeltofft feels she does more work compared to

her last quarters, she said.

"Even though it's more work, I do like film noir...it's fun to watch the movies," she said.

Some teachers show concern with the problem of tracking students in U-Block

By Austin Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Some teachers have been concerned about the way that U-Block is being run because of issues with tracking students and with making sure that they are using their time wisely.

Freshman U-Block adviser John Mullady said U-Block for underclassmen has been used for socializing rather than doing homework, which has caused there to be issues with the completion of homework.

Mullady said U-Block should have a balance of homework and socializing, but there is still a problem with students not doing their work for his class.

"Every day I see kids [who have unfinished work from my class that] sitting around socializing. They are not doing well this quarter because of it, and they do not seem too interested in getting their work made up," he said.



AUSTIN PARÉ PHOTO

Students like freshmen Luke Gjerde, Ellis Provost, Jack Hubbard, and Owen Cox can talk, study, and go on their phones.

Freshman Maria Xhalia said she enjoys U-Block because she can get work done when she needs to, but she can also social-

ize when she has all of her work done and wants to relax.

"I think that study hall should remain the same. Stu-

dents should be able to choose what they want to do. I like going to other power blocks like the collaboration room so that I can socialize with my friends that are in other grades," Xhalia said.

Regarding the issue with work being incomplete, Principal Patricia Puglisi said that students need to be held accountable for their work.

"Students need to make decisions with what they do with their time. That is part of growing up, and that is a life skill that they need to learn," Puglisi said.

Teachers say there is also a problem with tracking students, according to math teacher Kara Brown.

Brown said almost every day during the sophomore and freshmen study halls, there are at least two students missing per a day.

Brown has had to text other

U-Block teachers almost every day because of students that are missing in her U-Block.

"There is so much movement between U-Blocks...I could sign someone into a power block and not know whether or not they get [to the next classroom or location] or how long they are staying there," Brown said.

Teachers like Brown and Mullady, who both have freshmen U-Blocks, are trying to solve this issue with a number of strategies, like having students check in before going to other study halls.

Chemistry teacher Josh Wladkowski said he is making the students in his U-Block check in with him before going anywhere else.

"I'd say half of [my students] go somewhere else whether it's guidance, NHS Tutoring, other power blocks, or the cafeteria," he said.

Senior Green Team members finish major projects, work closely with underclassmen

By Will Heslop
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With fourth quarter and SCORE approaching, senior members of the Green Team are preparing the underclassmen to assume new responsibilities. Additionally, teachers and administration also reconsider how the program as a whole should look in the future.

According to Dana Nuenighoff, who has been teaching Green Team this year, said there is much to be done, as seniors are finishing up their long-term projects and teaching the underclassmen how to run other initiatives such as the hydroponics station on the third floor.

"...It will be tough when the seniors go out on SCORE, but I am confident that the underclassmen will be able to take over where they left off," Nuenighoff said.

Senior Green Scholar Ethan Ketchum has been in charge of communications for three years. He and senior Niamh Dalton write Green Team updates, which are sent out to parents and students via email and a blog that they created this year.

"Communicating with members of the community is the best way to let people know what is going on with the Green Team," Ketchum said.

Nuenighoff and the Green Team are planning school-wide events, such as a "Green Wars" competition between classes to see which class is the most green. Additionally, they are competing in a "Go Green Challenge"

sponsored by the Boston Bruins, during which they will compete against other green schools in the area.

Nuenighoff also mentioned a number of initiatives being spearheaded by Green Scholars in the near future.

"We have a few seniors who are planting trees for their project, so they are in the process of ordering their trees and organizing a tree-planting day... Students are also

getting together with the Manchester Memorial School and will help them with composting and their garden," she said.

Outside of major projects, the Green Team has a new emphasis on making teachings students

about environmental issues in the rest of the world. "Students are now doing their own research and writing weekly journals about environmental topics around the world," Nuenighoff said.

These new initiatives match up with what Principal Patricia Puglisi wants to see from the class in the future. Her ultimate goal of Green Team is to create a class that is still heavily project-based but with a stronger focus on environmental science and sustainable living.

"...We will be posting the position and looking at a variety of candidates with the hope of finding the right person to develop and maintain a program similar to the one we had before, while also developing it further with a focus on sustainable living," Puglisi said.

Puglisi said the Green Team



WILL HESLOP PHOTO

Seniors are teaching students how to use the hydroponic stations on the third floor.

class is already well on its way towards creating a more diverse curriculum for students to learn about environmental issues.

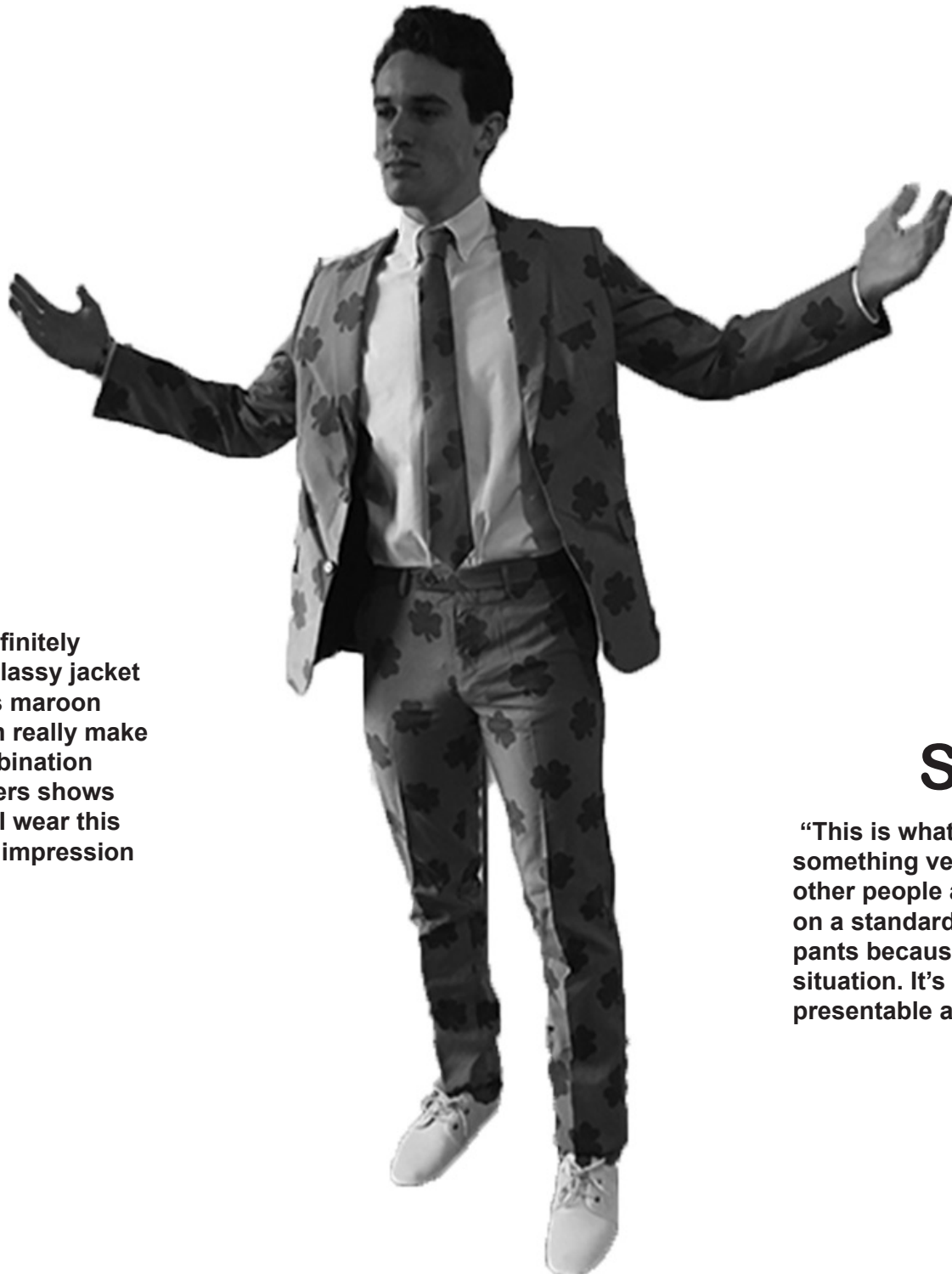
PIP'S CLOSET

Voted best dressed for the class of 2017, senior Antonio Gillespie shares personal style tips



Dapper

"Look good, feel good. I definitely recommend investing in a classy jacket with some flair, such as this maroon velvet jacket, because it can really make you stand out, and the combination of the bow tie and suspenders shows some fresh and edgy style. I wear this when I want to make a bold impression at a classy event."



Sham

"Some say the shamrock is too much, but I think if anything it is not enough. I typically only break out the shamrock suit on special occasions, and it is definitely a fan favorite. Be on the lookout for this outfit on St. Patrick's Day. This suit is one of many eye-catching outfits that I like to bring out on the holidays, which includes an extensive collection of sweaters I have gathered over the years."



Standard

"This is what I like to wear when I need something versatile. If I don't know what other people are going to wear, I'll just put on a standard button-down and normal pants because it works for basically any situation. It's comfortable but is definitely presentable at the same time."



Casual

"Everyone's favorite. Just head to the couch and start up the next episode of Netflix. Sometimes a pair of sweats and a casual T-shirt is the perfect thing to wear. For a casual night in with the boys, I love to stay comfy in my sweats and lion T-shirt. Remember though, you do not want to go too casual when going to something important."



Throwback

"I love to show respect for past fashion styles and trends, such as this comfortable denim jacket. Remember to keep all of your old clothes that still fit and your parents' clothes because they'll make a comeback soon. Stay woke for Denim Fridays."

Accessories



"Hats are a way to express yourself outside of conventional wear and offer lots of room to show your different interests without it taking over. Hats vary quite a bit with shape and size, even the adjustable ones, so I only wear the ones that fit real nice."

"You gotta be rockin' some fly shoes. Shoes are the perfect tool to bring together an outfit. Something that I have learned is to buy a few pairs of cheaper, lesser-known shoes rather than go all out and buy the newest pair of Jordans."



Social Media

Should students get political online?

Pro

Fritz Spofford

With the cacophony of the last presidential election, the discussion of politics has become ever more apparent on social media, but so has the tense stigma surrounding such discourse. However, at the heart of political debates lie real, pressing issues that would be irresponsible to ignore for the sake of pleasantness.

When it comes to our nation's political climate, many have the opinion that the topic should not be discussed – not at the dinner table, nor on social media – for the sake of maintaining pleasant relations with those with different opinions, but this only perpetuates the bubble that shields us from the world's problems.

Many of the political issues currently at the fore will not affect communities like Manchester directly, from the immigration ban to the repeal of Obamacare, but these issues have a profound effect on others. As American citizens, refraining from discussing and paying attention to our political climate as if it is simply some undesirable topic of conversation would be negligent.

In the digital age, social media has become one of the most prominent platforms of communication, and using it to raise awareness surrounding politics should not be discouraged.

However, it should not be an obligation, either.

One of the more negative effects of social media is that it has given all of its users the opportunity to voice their opinions on any given topic, thus validating those opinions by having them appear on the screen of each of their followers. People now feel that they know exactly what they are talking about at all times, when this is so often not the case.

The discussion of politics on social media should be approached with both background knowledge and a clear mind. The point is to communicate, which only works when one side of the conversation listens to what the other is saying. Passionate, impetuous posting will only widen the divide between differing opinions.

It is important to pay attention to politics, and social media is a tool that can and should be used to communicate with others on the topic, but mindful debates should be opted for over aggressive, one-sided arguments.

Con

Amber Paré

As our country is currently becoming more and more politically heated, especially after the recent election, an increasing number of people are taking to social media to voice their political opinions. These online debates, however, do not truly foster helpful political discussions.

Social media, since its creation, has always been a platform for self-expression. There is a problem, though, with one expressing his views on social media because this platform allows anyone, even someone who is politically uninformed, to express himself.

People who have inaccurate or inadequate knowledge of political issues only end up upsetting people who are informed on social media, preventing any progress or changes to be made.

Social media's biggest flaw, though, when it comes to people "getting political" is that an online "discussion" is different than a face-to-face conversation with someone.

Political conversations are often complex with many different facets to one single issue. These issues cannot be summed up in a four-sentence Facebook status update or in a short Instagram caption.

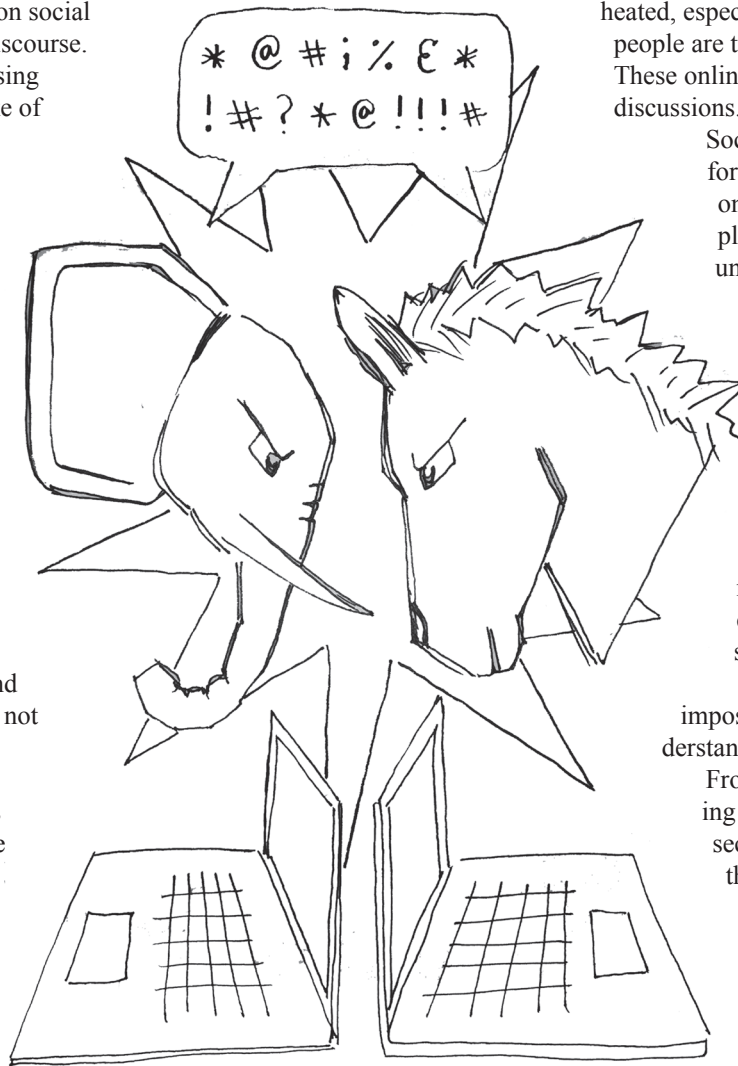
These complex conversations are difficult, if not impossible, to have over social media because of the misunderstandings that can occur through online communication.

From not understanding someone's viewpoint to attempting to "converse" through a series of replies in a comment section to a post, real debate and conversation cannot take their full forms online; face-to-face conversations are much more suitable for those types of interactions.

Additionally, rather than having informed conversations on social media, most people quickly start behaving like children, turning political conversations into personal attacks on their peers and spending more time insulting than listening and having an active conversation with one another because they feel more at ease to say things online.

In these types of conversations, nobody's opinion is going to change, and nobody will leave the conversation feeling more informed, making discussing politics on social media pointless and counterproductive because all it does is create unnecessary tensions between people.

In order to have political conversations that are actually fruitful, it may be best to keep them off social media until people are able to be informed and actually listen.



AVERY SHAW ILLUSTRATION

School should increase access to technology to encourage creativity

Expanding hands-on, 21st-century curriculum caters to all learning styles, improves problem-solving

By Antonio Gillespie
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Over the past few years, especially since the building of the new school in 2009, great strides have been made in improving the level of technology available to the students.

Continuing this trend could benefit the school community by increasing productivity and creativity for students.

A way to encourage community creativity is to find improved software and programs for students to use for various presentations and projects. Getting high school access to programs like Piktochart would benefit the students' creativity, and students can learn important programs that many careers use later in life.

The library has invested in various media tools for students to access, including the green screen, camera, and small studio set-up for video projects. Expanding access to technology

like this will help encourage creativity. History teacher John Mullady has used the room and technology for video projects for his freshmen.

However, the green screen set-up shares a room with the storage room for journalism and other programs. In order for the school to progress technologically, there should be designated rooms for

this type of learning.

A digital-media collaboration workspace could be the answer to find a creative space for people with a passion for technology and its offerings.

A way to encourage community creativity is to find improved software and programs for students

Team, and the Green Team could see changes to their curriculum with more hands-on activities for different learning styles such as a remote control drone, which is a tool being used more and more in careers.

While the classic learning environment is beneficial for

The tech team, the computer science classes, the Robotics



ANTONIO GILLESPIE PHOTO

Technology, like drones, is beneficial in a curriculum because it works well with all learning types, fosters creativity, encourages unique ways of problem-solving, and prepares students for future careers that often include some sort of technology-based work.

many students and has proven its worth, there should be greater access to other learning styles and

passions through technology as jobs rely more and more heavily on it.



The lasts of senior year bring melancholy, remembrance, and hope for the bright future

By Maddie Conway
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

I had my very first “last” of senior year before school even began; it was my last first day of preseason cross country practice.

Since then, I’ve wrapped up much of my last year of high school with the times I reach the point where I will never do something again.

I’ve counted the big ones -- my last first day of school, my last cross-country meet, my last SAT test, and my last 9:30 a.m. release after midterms -- and the small ones like my last yearbook photo with the journalism class of which I’ve been a part for three years.

Sometimes when I reach these moments, these moments that are like mini milestones on the way to the ultimate one -- graduation -- I’m not even aware of them because they’re either too small or I’m simply too busy to notice.

Other times, when I realize that I’m in the middle of another “last of senior year” moment, I feel melancholy and try to actively capture the moment in my memory.

Sometimes I’ll take a picture so I can look back at it later and smile; I took a photo of my feet on the starting line of the cross country team’s home course when we had our last meet there.

For all the lasts of senior year, however, there have been many more firsts.

This year, I finally got to dress up for Halloween, eat outside on the benches during the nice weather in early fall, and enjoy the new schedule with U block and a middle school student-free lunch block.

But for all of the first and lasts that have already happened, many more are yet to come even though I have less than two months of senior year to go.

I’m very excited for the last day of school, the start of SCORE, graduation, and, of course, my last early-morning NHS meeting.

I’m also dreading moments like posting my last journal because it will signify the end of this era of my life, and I know I’ll miss the high school moments I had grown to love over the years, both big and small, even though I’ll soon be experiencing the firsts of college.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Puglisi handles graduation gown controversy with great aplomb

The switch from the traditional graduation gown colors assigned by gender to this year’s one color worn by all has elicited many varied complaints by the senior class, but these objections are inconsiderate because the aim was to accommodate those who do not identify as a gender.

Initially, Principal Patricia Puglisi, the senior class officers, and the advisers decided to transition from the traditional white worn by females and green worn by males to a green gown and a white sash worn by everyone.

Senior class President Avery Shaw said that “the moment this was announced, there were lots of complaints from those who felt as though they didn’t have a voice.”

Additionally, Shaw said, there were still those who wanted the two gender-assigned colors and female students who were worried about the green not matching their dresses.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

The color of graduation gowns is important to students and faculty alike, and this year’s attention to the color is no different.

Facing so much push-back, Puglisi decided to send out a survey, but more people voted in it than there were students in the senior class, so she sent out a second that used students’ school accounts to prevent multiple votes per person.

The second survey’s results showed that the majority of stu-

dents wanted a black gown with a white sash and a green cord, and even though students were able to influence the decision this time, many were still upset over the color choice because a black gown can quickly turn hot on a sunny day.

But in light of what this switch was trying to accomplish --

namely, student equality -- worries about how to match a dress with a green gown or a black gown becoming hot in the sun are insignificant because those discomforts pale in comparison to that caused by being forced to label oneself in a way that is incongruous to one’s identity.

Additionally, Puglisi could have ignored complaints about the switch, but instead she helped those who felt left out of the process by sending out surveys. Although Puglisi is now “putting her foot down,” according to Shaw, she did not have to take student input and should not be the target of students’ complaints about the color choice the majority of the student body chose.

Ultimately, graduation gowns are worn for only a few hours of a senior’s life, and the memories made on that day and throughout the entirety of high school should more than make up for an undesired gown color.

Open curriculums offer far more choice, freedom to college students

By Will Heslop
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In a college environment, students should not be limited by specific “general education” requirement. Instead, colleges should shift their attention away from these strict course requirements towards open curriculums that allows for students to craft more specialized course loads based on their interests.

The vast majority of colleges still have a number of requirements for students, but they can be severely restrictive. Some colleges have already been making strides towards reducing the number general education requirements, such as Brown University, which has had a completely open curriculum since 1969.

This new curriculum was based on the ideals of former

Brown President Francis Wayland, who argued that students should be able to “study what [they] chose, all that [they] chose, and nothing but what [they] chose.”

While Brown is the most famous school with an open curriculum, other colleges have followed suit, such as Amherst College, Hamilton College, and Smith College.

Several more schools have made strides to reduce requirements but perhaps not eliminate them entirely.

Open curriculums have a myriad of benefits for students. For example, students who are heavily interested in English and the arts will be able to focus

more heavily on those areas and avoid science and math classes that may not interest them.

While some would argue that this leads to students taking classes limited to one area of study, this is not always the case. In fact, the lack of general requirements allows people to explore areas that they perhaps would never else have been able to.

The lack of general requirements allows people to explore areas that they perhaps would never else have been able to.

College is an incredibly special opportunity for individuals. The ability to take a wide array of classes in various subject areas gives undecided students the ability to explore their interests and figure out what they really want to do in life.

Many will say that the goal of education is to create well-rounded students, but this popular idea is flawed.



WIKIWAND.ORG

Open curriculums, such as the one at Brown University, have led to increased learning opportunities for students.

Having this mentality could create students who fit under the mantra, “jack of all trades, master of none.”

Not everyone knows exactly what he/she wants to do in life by the time he/she leaves high school, and having an open curriculum makes college a much more explorative time for students, offering the chance for individuals to find their passion and consider career options.

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>



Editors in Chief
Maura McCormick
Amber Paré

News Editors
Sirine Benali
Juliette Kelley

Features Editors
Emily Clark
Abigail Fitzgibbon
Heather Holley
Austin Paré
Avery Shaw

Opinion Editors
Maddie Conway
Antonio Gillespie

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.

Sports Editors
Holly Fossa
Will Heslop
James Riordan

Arts Editors
Karlie Angelis
Fritz Spofford

Faculty Adviser
Mary Buckley-Harmon

Follow us on Twitter:
[@MERHSjournalism](https://twitter.com/MERHSjournalism)

Travel ban encourages Islamophobia

By Avery Shaw
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Trump's presidency began with a bombardment of executive orders and actions, but the one that appropriately gained the most attention was his travel ban put into action on Jan. 27.

This executive order temporarily banned all immigrants and visitors from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia,

Sudan, Syria and Yemen to travel into the United States. It also issued a halt on our Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days, meaning no refugee from any country can enter the U.S during this time period.

Despite Trump's constant talk during his campaign of addressing the immigration policy in this manner, the country was still in shock by his order, partially due to the speed at which it was

issued and the little planning of implementation.

The reasoning behind the order, according to the Trump administration, is to protect the nation from foreign terrorist entry, but Trump's Muslim-specific ban is targeting the wrong people if he is trying to address terrorism.

An analysis of terror attacks by the Cato Institute shows that between 1975 and 2015, foreign nationals from the countries listed in Trump's ban have killed exactly zero Americans on U.S. soil.

What the ban has more effectively accomplished is making it completely clear that the Trump administration is going to promote Islamophobia and spread misinformation about Muslims in America.

It would be one thing if this

ban was just ineffective, but in addition, the ban is affecting people's abilities to return home to their families, education, and/or jobs.

According to the Washington Post, 90,000 people are impacted by the ban.

Mohammed Zandian, a doctoral student in biochemistry at Ohio State University, is one of them, according to CNN.com. He was restricted from seeing his wife due to the ban. His wife Parisa was detained at an airport in New York after the ban was implemented.

In response to the ban, Zandian told CNN, "I came here thinking that here I will have a life like a dream, but it didn't sort out very well. If I'm going to be an imprisoned person, I'd rather be imprisoned back home."

But even if the ban were entirely effective and moral, its legality is questionable.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, implemented in response to unfair immigration quotas targeting certain countries, banned all discrimination against immigrants on the basis of national origin. Even



WIKIPEDIA

Civilians around the world join and protest Trump's travel ban.

President Trump has to abide by federal laws.

Fortunately, steps have already been made to combat the executive order.

James L. Robart, a Washington state judge nominated to the federal bench by George W. Bush, decided on Feb. 3 to issue a nationwide restraining order blocking the travel ban.

While this restraining order only last 14 days, the strides it makes to negate Trump's executive order is enormous.

Robart said in his decision, "I'm ... asked to look and determine if the executive order is rationally based. And rationally based, to some extent, means I have to find it grounded in fact instead of fiction."

Passenger restriction on JOL should only be one or two months long

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In Massachusetts, the law prohibits those with a Junior Operator's License from driving non-immediate family members under the age of 18 until they have six months of experience with their license. This restriction, however, is much longer than it needs to be, and the penalties for violating it are far too harsh.

First of all, many teen drivers have already gathered plenty of experience in the months between passing their permit test and their driving test. From either driving with parents or

taking lessons through a driving school, most are well equipped to operate a car alone after getting their license.

According to the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, total injury rate for operators

from 16 to 17 years old is higher than that of the following age brackets, but only by about 5 percent per classification. This minor difference hardly warrants the six-month restriction period.

Additionally, less than 45 percent of the over 3,000 teen

Less than 45 percent of the over 3,000 teen drivers involved in an accident while violating passenger restriction... were responsible for the accident.



JAMES RIORDAN PHOTO

Current passenger restriction law of those with a Junior Operator's License is too long and has too harsh of penalties.

drivers involved in an accident while violating the passenger restriction in Massachusetts from 2008 to 2012 were responsible for the accident. Considering the

fact that under half were at fault even with the apparent distraction of a passenger, the severity of the penalties seems even more egregious.

The first offense leads to a license suspension of 60 days and a \$100 fine, while the second offense triples the suspension period, matches the fine, and forces the driver to go through a Driver Attitudinal Retraining Course.

Disregarding the financial consequences, the suspension for a single violation is already one-third of the entire passenger restriction. For many families this not only punishes the teen but the parents and siblings who have to resume being chauffeurs until reinstatement.

It is extremely important to teach teens proper driving habits, but the current passenger restriction in Massachusetts is somewhat unreasonable. A one- or two-month restriction would certainly be sufficient, and the violation penalties should be adjusted accordingly.

High drinking age in America encourages dangerous binge drinking

By Maura McCormick
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Nineteen-year-olds in the United States are considered legal adults, can volunteer to join the United States military, drive, and vote, so it only seems fair that they should be allowed to make the decision of whether or not to consume alcohol.

Drinking alcohol at too young an age is unhealthy and dangerous, but the high drinking age of 21 in the United States only perpetuates the problem.

Although the drinking age is 21, the majority of Americans ages 18 to 20 still consume alcohol illegally.

A survey done by the Texas

Alcoholic Beverage Commission found that 58 percent of college students ages 18 to 20 reported having consumed alcohol within the last month.

Not only is underage drinking prevalent in the United States, but the fact that drinking is illegal for that age group encourages binge drinking.

Johns Hopkins University found that 96 percent of alcohol consumed by 18-to-20-year-

olds is consumed through binge drinking.

This is likely due to the

Not only is underage drinking prevalent in the United States, but the fact that drinking is illegal for that age group encourages binge drinking.

fact that alcohol is considered a "forbidden fruit," so when teenagers get their hands on it without supervision, they drink too much.

Underage drinking also often occurs in discrete locations, such as the woods or dorm rooms, without supervision, which leads to more

dangerous situations such as drinking too much and not getting medical help.

To understand how a younger drinking age could benefit the United States, just look to the many European countries with lower drinking ages.

In the United States, although the drinking age is 21, a higher percentage of the population dies from alcohol consumption compared to the UK, Ireland, Italy, and Australia, where the drinking age is 18, according to World Life Expectancy.

Binge drinking is also much less prevalent in Europe, according to a study done by the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs.

The drinking age should be changed to 19, so that alcohol is still not allowed in high schools but so that college students can have more freedom to drink safely.

The age adjustment would make the law much easier to enforce as well, because there would be a clear line between high school students and the majority of college students defining whether or not they can legally drink alcohol.

A major part of the problem currently is that college administration cannot effectively enforce a restriction on alcohol when half of the student population can drink legally and the other half cannot.

GIRLS' TENNIS

Coach: Ken Rawson

Captain: Chanel Bullock (junior)

Record last year: 16-4

Goals: To have every player be better by the end of the season, to repeat undefeated CAL champions, and to progress farther in the tournament than last year

Rivals: Lynnfield, Masconomet

Impact players: Sally Pulver (senior), Chanel Bullock (junior), August Kahle (sophomore),

Christina Bullock (freshman), and Bridget Miller (freshman)

Coach's quote: "Everyone has a role and by fulfilling that role to the best of their ability they are valuable to our team. Corny but true. I'm proud of the maturity, effort, and good judgment of all the girls." – Ken Rawson

Captain's quote: "Even though we are a younger team, we have strong talent and motivation to do well this season and to work on individual and team improvement." – Chanel Bullock



Chanel Bullock

BOYS' TENNIS

Coach: Robbie Bilsbury

Captains: Dewey Komishane (senior) and Red Pulver (senior)

Record last year: 14-4

Goals: Be Cape Ann League champions, make it to the state championship rounds

Rivals: Bedford, Ipswich, Hamilton-Wenham, Masconomet, Pentucket

Impact players: Captains, Antonio Gillespie (senior), Will Heslop (senior), Wolf Hahn (senior), Spencer Feuerbach (senior), Jacob Callahan (senior), and Garrett Lamothe (junior)

Coach's quote: "We're looking to try and stay on top of the Cape Ann League Small... Our basic philosophy is always to go at each other and really practice hard to make each other better." – Robbie Bilsbury

Captains' quote: "I love the team. It's not really a traditional team sport because we're not really playing with each other when we're out there, but the camaraderie is really good... It's just a lot of fun." – Dewey Komishane

– Dewey Komishane

"My goal for us is to make the state tournament." – Redmond Pulver



Dewey Komishane



Red Pulver

CO-OP TRACK

Coaches: Dave Coleman, Jeffrey Destino, Austin Sousa, and Rachel Safer

Captains: To be determined

Boys' record last year: 6-1

Girls' record last year: 7-0

Goals: To win the NEC meet and to get as many athletes to qualify for the Division 1 meet as possible

Rivals: Marblehead and Peabody

Impact players: Carly Curcuru (senior), Sierra Randolph (senior), Maura McCormick (senior),

Kyle Manley (senior), Jacob Belcher (senior), Kaitlyn Marques (junior), Holly Fossa (junior), Chris MacDonald (junior), Eve Feuerbach (sophomore), Leah Rudolph (sophomore), and Marc Smith (sophomore)

Coach's quote: "My goal is for every runner to build as a runner and set their own personal records." – Austin Sousa

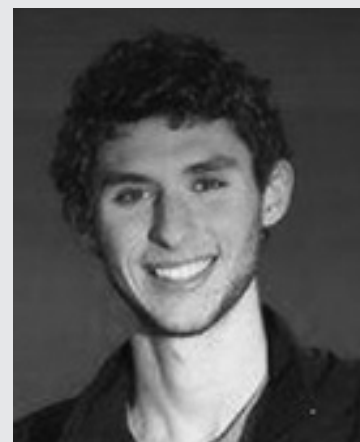
Runner's quote: "We're against a larger group of teams this year and I'm excited to see how we rank both individually and as a team against them." – Junior Holly Fossa



Holly Fossa



Maura McCormick



Kyle Manley

BOYS' LACROSSE



Patrick Guinee



Evan Pennoyer



Jackson Rice

Coach: John McCavanagh

Captains: Evan Pennoyer (senior), Patrick Guinee (junior), and Jackson Rice (junior)

Record last year: 15-8

Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham and Georgetown

Goals: Develop as individuals, get better as a team, have fun playing competitively, and improve record

Impact players: Dan Rodier (sophomore), Chris Brosch (junior), and Ames Sheriff (junior).

Captains' quotes: "We have a lot of kids coming back who played on varsity last year. Even though we don't have the same number of seniors we had last year, there is a solid core group of players that can perform."
- Evan Pennoyer

"We have a lot of potential this year. No denying we lost some talent, but we have a good group of guys who I love playing with. If we can learn to work as a team, we will find a lot of success."- Junior Jackson Rice

"I think we will have a good chance at making the playoffs, and that's our goal." - Patrick Guinee

GIRLS' LACROSSE

Coach: Rebecca Smith

Captains: Jenny Beardsley (senior) and Liddy DeConto (senior)

Record last year: 20-3

Rivals: Masconomet and Ipswich

Goals: To make the finals in the tournament

Impact players: Captains, Bella Pomeroy (sophomore), and Samantha Booma (junior)

Coach's quote: "Last year I was a new coach so we had a significantly easier schedule so we were able to win 20 plus games pretty easily. This year I scheduled games like Marblehead, Pingree and Danvers; I am just looking to win those 50/50 games. I really feel like these are games we can compete in." - Rebecca Smith

Captains' quotes: "We couldn't be more excited for the season. Everyone has been putting in a ton of work to prepare, so I think everyone is pretty amped and ready to go. After a strong season last year and only losing a few seniors, we still have a lot of talent." - Liddy DeConto

"I am really excited for this season. We have a lot of talent especially in our underclassmen. Everyone is going in with a positive attitude and I can't wait to see how far we go."

- Jenny Beardsley



Jenny Beardsley



Liddy DeConto

SAILING

Coach: Joe Ahearn

Captains: Cole Charlton (senior) and Anika Martz (junior)

Record last year: 12-7

Rivals: Wayland and Saint John's Prep

Goals: To be competitive against the prep school crowd

Impact players: Gillian Winn (senior), Micaela Coonley (junior)

Coach's quote: "I am hopeful that I can get up to speed because most of my sailing has been blue-water sailing mostly around here, in Maine, and in the Carribean. I am looking to learn very quickly from the kids." - Joe Ahearn

Captains' quotes: "My goal is to unite the team and get the younger kids excited for the future of the team." - Anika Martz
"My goal is to build the next generation for when we are gone. We are also going to try to have a winning record and beat all of the public schools." - Cole Charlton



Anika Martz



Cole Charlton

BASEBALL

Coach: James Weed

Captains: Peter Coyne (senior), Charlie Otterbein (senior), Jackson Levendusky (junior), Mitch Paccone (junior), Cosmo Pallazola (junior), and Robbie Sarmanian (junior)

Record last year: 12-11

Rivals: Amesbury, Georgetown, Hamilton-Wenham, and Rockport

Goals: Make the playoffs and improve from last year

Impact players: Captains and Harry Painter (sophomore)

Coach's quote: "Our team goals would be to put together a better year compared to last year even though we had a good year last year. We want to get back to the semifinals and maybe get to the State Championship and win the State Championship. We still have a lot of work to do leading up to that." - James Weed

Captain's quote: "We want to make the playoffs and make it further than we did last year, and we also want to win the CALs this year." - Charlie Otterbein



Peter Coyne



Charlie Otterbein



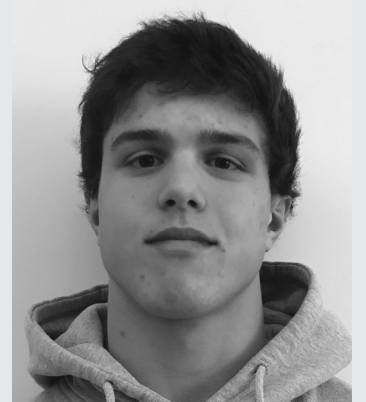
Jackson Levendusky



Mitch Paccone



Cosmo Pallazola



Robbie Sarmanian

SOFTBALL



Melanie Carter



Ainsley McLaughlin

Coach: Frank Sarro

Captains: Melanie Carter (senior) and Ainsley McLaughlin (senior)

Record last year: 4-16

Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham, Ipswich, and Rockport

Goals: To make the tournament

Impact players: Captains, Claire Gendron (freshman), and Sydney Levasseur (freshman)

Coach's quote: "My favorite part of coaching last year was generally the attitude of the team. I am really looking forward to this season. I think that we are going to be really successful. The key for us is to get off to a good start and then to get going." - Frank Sarro

Captains' quotes: "My favorite thing about the team is generally how happy we are to see each other during practice. We're always in a good mood." - Melanie Carter

"I like how close we all are. There is not a lot of drama on our team which is nice. I think that we are all really focused during games which is good. I'm hoping that I can help us focus in." - Ainsley McLaughlin

Brady, Belichick era: the greatest two decades in sports history

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

On Jan. 27, 2000, the New England Patriots hired Bill Belichick in exchange for a first-round pick. Looking back on it now, this signing marks the turning point from four decades of losing to one of the most dominant 20-year periods in the history of professional American sports.

When making this seemingly routine appointment that many experts criticized, owner Robert Kraft and the other members of the organization gave Belichick both the coaching and general managing powers. This was an immense amount of responsibility for a formerly successful defensive coordinator with a rocky tenure as head coach of the Cleveland Browns, but nobody could have predicted how well it panned out.

In that year's draft, Belich-

ick made the biggest steal in league history by taking a rookie quarterback out of the University of Michigan with the 199 pick. Any team would be ecstatic to get a borderline starter that late in the draft, but the Patriots had stumbled upon one of the greatest players of all time in Tom Brady.

With or without Brady, the Pats were set up for a decent amount of success with starter Drew Bledsoe. When Bledsoe went down in the second week of the 2001 season, however, Brady stepped in and led the team to its first Super Bowl victory in franchise history.

Fans in New England knew that something special had just occurred, but it was difficult to tell if the season had been a miracle or if it was an indication of future success. All questions were answered when Brady and Belichick led the team to back-

to-back Super Bowl wins in 2003 and 2004.

Over the next 10 years, regular season success was a constant, but postseason triumph was elusive. After being defeated by the New York Giants in Super Bowl XLII and XLVI, the team looked different than in years past, and people were left wondering if Brady and Belichick had lost their knack for winning championships.

Just five years later, the tandem has proven they clearly had not. They climbed to the summit again with the Malcolm Butler interception in Super Bowl XLIX for their fourth win and became the first head coach-quarterback duo in NFL history to win five titles together with the largest comeback in Super Bowl history this February.

Throughout their careers they have accumulated both accolades and animosity. From Brady's



THEAUSTRALIAN.COM

Cementing his legacy as the greatest of all time, Tom Brady hoists the Lombardi Trophy after the Super Bowl LI comeback.

two MVPs and four Super Bowl MVPs and Belichick's three Coach of the Year awards to Spygate and Deflategate, they have persevered and solidified themselves in the sports Pantheon.

Their consistency along with the records and unimaginable success do not lie. The "Blitz for Six" is the next challenge, but that would only strengthen the argument for Brady and Belichick as the greatest of all time.

Scholastic Art Awards encourage students to continue creating art

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Twelve students, seven of whom were photography students, won recognition from the Scholastic Art Awards, a nationally run art competition, art teacher Tamera Burns said.

"Painting and drawing are very competitive [so] we had more photo awards...That's not unusual," she said.

Photography teacher Caroline Epp was very pleased with her students' achievements.

"I'm really proud of all of our kids that won awards because it is difficult, [and] it was nice for me to have kids in the beginning, the middle, and the end of the program all doing well," she said.

The three levels of awards are Honorable Mention, Silver Key, and Gold Key.

"If you get a Gold Key than your work goes on to the Scholastic National Competition, and so it will be judged again," she said.

Gold and Silver Key winners are also invited to a ceremony at



COURTESY OF ANNALIA LAINO

Scholastic Art Awards recognized junior Annalia Laino and senior Lily Moore by awarding them each Gold Keys for their photography.

the Museum of Fine Arts during March.

Junior Annalia Laino and senior Lily Moore both won a Gold Key for their individual photography pieces, and junior Nina Prince also won a Gold Key for her mixed media piece.

"I was really excited when my artwork was selected as a winner, and I never realized how much I liked photography until

I took the class. This certainly makes me excited to keep pursuing photography and art in general," Laino said.

According to Burns, the competition has undergone some changes in the past year that have made some schools decide not to participate in it.

"There'd been a change in direction and [some teachers] didn't like the judging...[and]



COURTESY OF LILY MOORE

the way the art was being displayed...[so] there were teachers that were taking that approach and just not submitting the work," she said.

The school, however, wants students to be able to experience the competition and therefore decided to continue participating in the event, Burns said.

"It is a wonderful experience for the students...I've seen it re-

ally encourage kids to continue in the arts as well," Epp said.

Burns said the competition is beneficial for experience in the future.

"It gives kids a chance to get used to doing these kind of entries because when you do those kinds of entries, it's a lot like what you're going to do if you submit portfolios for college," she said.

Senior learns to play guitar, hopes to write original songs in future

By Holly Fossa
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

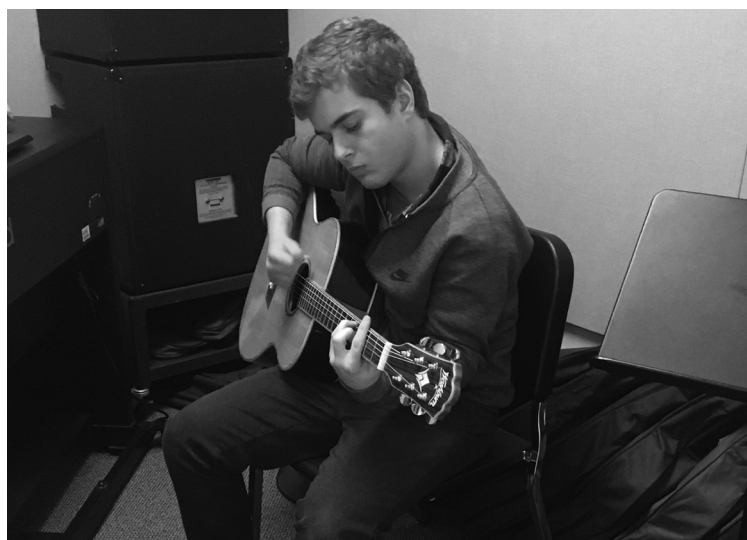
After becoming interested in music almost a year ago, senior Carl Parkhurst taught himself how to play guitar and now enjoys practicing and playing with others.

Parkhurst taught himself to play the guitar for six months and then began taking guitar lessons.

He was encouraged by his cousins, who perform in a local Gloucester band, called Generation Gap, to begin playing. They taught him his first song: "Wish You Were Here" by Pink Floyd, on the guitar.

Now, Parkhurst plays acoustic and electric guitar, as well as bass guitar.

Inspired by some of his favorite bands and artists: Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, Kings of Leon, Led Zeppelin and Nirvana,



HOLLY FOSSA PHOTO

Senior Carl Parkhurst brings his guitar to school to practice new songs, rhythms, and collaborate with local upcoming performers.

Parkhurst enjoys playing classic rock and alternative music.

Parkhurst said he plays for others if they want him to, but he mainly plays for himself and writes his own guitar rhythms.

Recently, Parkhurst played for his first crowd. Sophomores Thad Fulmer and Ryan O'Connell asked Parkhurst to play one night with them at Katrina's Bar and Grille in Gloucester,

he said.

Parkhurst has never written anything more than just rhythms, but he would eventually like to write his own lyrics for his music.

Occasionally, Parkhurst will practice with other local artists such as Fulmer, O'Connell, and senior Annabelle Lord-Patey.

Parkhurst said music has been a great way to meet new people and connect with them.

When practicing alone, Parkhurst said, he plays whenever he has time, which he said is usually one to two hours a day.

His favorite places to practice are in the practice room or at the Music Asylum in Essex, a studio

owned by his teacher, "where he lets people come in and jam," Parkhurst said.

Along with guitar, "Piano at some point would be nice to learn,"

Parkhurst said he plays for others if they want him to, but he mainly plays for himself and writes his own guitar rhythms.

Parkhurst said. He said that music has helped him relax.

Music can sometimes also be a hindrance, he said. "[Music]

gives me something to resort to when I get stressed out with school, but it can also be pretty distracting," Parkhurst said.

He said that anybody who wishes to learn has the ability to play an instrument. "Learning an instrument takes time, and if you really enjoy it, it's worth it," he said.

New Lego animation movie brings out laughs from all generations to enjoy

By Antonio Gillespie
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

The Lego Batman Movie is the perfect film for the whole family as it combines family morals with laugh-out-loud comedy for all ages to enjoy.

The animation film centers on the classic DC character, Batman, and his arch-nemesis, Joker, who is trying to prove his worth to Batman by masterminding an evil plan to defeat Gotham once and for all.

Recent superhero and fantasy action movies have struggled to connect with the average American movie watcher because they rely heavily on background knowledge of the plot. This has left viewers with many questions about the plot when watching the movie, which leads to a lesser movie experience.

However, the plot of The Lego Batman Movie disconnects itself from pre-existing films, which makes it easy to watch for anyone.

Throughout the movie, Bruce Wayne (aka Batman) is struggling with feelings of loneliness. But when he accidentally adopts a son and falls for

the new police chief, Barbara Gordon, his life is filled with people and emotions, which he struggles to adapt to.

Through his journey to defeat Joker, and more deeply overcome his fear of getting hurt by

loving, Batman learns how to trust others, how to work as a team-player, and how to express himself to others.

The plot of Warner Bros.' latest animation masterpiece focuses on Batman, but it also brings characters from all sorts of realms to the crime-ridden streets of Gotham.

family and trusting one another in the process, a life lesson more valuable than having an easy happy ending.

The plot of Warner Bros.' latest animation masterpiece focuses on Batman, but it also

What is especially impressive is that there is no flimsy love story like most superhero movies but rather a love story centered on building a



LEGOBATMAN.COM

Will Arnett voices Batman in a different kind of superhero movie.

brings characters from all sorts of realms to the crime-ridden streets of Gotham.

Superman, Voldemort, various mythological creatures, and even King Kong make appearances in the movie, which adds to its timeless feel.

More than anything else, the humor of the movie is top notch. By over-emphasizing all of Batman's personality traits of being a self-centered lone-wolf, the directors bring out an ironic humor that the non-children audience will appreciate.

Monster mommies abound in darkly comic HBO miniseries 'Big Little Lies'

By Fritz Spofford
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

"Big Little Lies," HBO's scandalous, star-studded new miniseries based on Liane Moriarty's eponymous novel, is at once a campy, sardonic satire, a steamy suburban noir and, at times, a cold, hard look at the bleak reality of domestic violence.

The series centers around the city of Monterey, the kind of wealthy seaside enclave that's crawling with overpriced cafés and Pilates-bound mommies decked out in lululemon leggings and Patagonia vests, a portrayal that bears a much greater likeness to Manchester-by-the-Sea than Kenneth Lonergan's film ever did.

Like any film noir, the show's premise exists within the frame narrative of a murder. In the middle of the elementary school's annual benefit gala, someone is found dead on the steps outside. From then on, the events leading up to the gala are depicted through the lens of investigative interviews with various parents at the school.

These interviews largely follow the show's four leads: Jane (Shailene Woodley), a single mom



HBO.COM

HBO's "Big Little Lies" follows the citizens of wealthy seaside suburb Monterey.

new to Monterey with her son Ziggy; Madeline Martha Mackenzie (Reese Witherspoon), a ruthless, gossipy matriarch as tightly wound as the ponytail atop her head; Celeste Wright (Nicole Kidman), a mother of twins with

The cast and Jean-Marc Vallée's direction keep things running smoothly.

much younger husband Perry (Alexander Skarsgård); and "career mommy" (a derogatory term in Monterey) Renata Klein (Laura Dern).

The resemblance to Manchester is actually quite striking, from the prestigious reputation of the public school system to the matching pastel quarter zips Celeste sends her twin

boys off in on the first day of school.

Catty interactions between mommies and daddies in the school pickup line serve as the majority of the show's comedy; one mother uses a compliment aimed at Madeline to backhandedly imply that she had Botox done, with which Madeline, at first taken aback, replies, "You're sweet to think I did!" with a saccharine smile.

The all-star cast is fantastic, specifically Witherspoon, who pulls off Madeline's slightly over-the-top one-liners while simultaneously conveying her neurosis and insecurity. Some of the writing is clunky, with tired metaphors ("Things never blow over; they blow up.") and

a few awkward pieces of dialogue, but the cast and Jean-Marc Vallée's direction keep things running smoothly.

Beneath all of the causticity, though, the show also takes a fairly raw, sympathetic approach to the ugliness that can happen behind closed doors, specifically in regard to the abusive relationship between Celeste and Perry.

Illusory perfection in wealthy suburbia is nothing new, but rarely is it approached with such delicacy, particularly among the darkly funny humor that pervades the rest of the show.

"Big Little Lies" is rated TV-MA for language, adult content and some violence and airs Sundays at 9 p.m. on HBO.

Big Sean's 'I Decided' entertains listeners with captivating production, reflective lyrics, good vibes

By Will Heslop
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Released nearly two years after his last studio album, Big Sean's latest creation "I Decided" signifies a major turning point in his career and shows signs of maturity for the artist who has been notoriously self-aggrandizing before now.

"I Decided," Big Sean's fourth studio album, was released on Feb. 3 by GOOD Music and Def Jam Records and was met with immediate commercial success, debuting at number one on the Billboard 200. The album is roughly 50 minutes and features three singles, "Bounce Back," "Moves," and "Halfway off the Balcony."

Critics have been slightly torn over the album's message, with many arguing that it is insincere and does not actually signify a



UKNOWBIGSEAN.COM

"I Decided" is Big Sean's most mature album to date.

step forward for Big Sean.

He certainly makes steps to depart from his immature self, but he clearly still has an attachment to the juvenile style of hip-hop that made him famous. Many songs show genuine signs of maturity, while others, such as "Bounce Back," still glorify a lifestyle of

drugs and partying.

For the most part, however, his lyrics are deeply reflective. The final song, "Bigger Than Me," shows how he recognizes that there is so much more to life than what exists within his own bubble.

Big Sean acknowledges that money alone is not

enough: "All I ever wanted was to turn these G's into M's and a Mercedes key/ Got it and still felt incomplete/ That's when I realized this s*** was bigger than me," he said in "Bigger Than Me."

Aside from containing breathtaking storytelling in its lyrics, "I Decided" conveys meaning through the production of the music itself. By switching between more aggressive rap verses and free-flowing R&B sections, Big Sean adds degree of uncertainty to the album that reflects changes in life and how individuals' decisions impact their future.

Big Sean's ability to both tell a story and keep an audience captivated is present throughout his latest album, and "I Decided" has lived up to much of the hype that was expected of it since first being teased in 2016.

What to...

Listen To (Single): "Chained to the Rhythm"

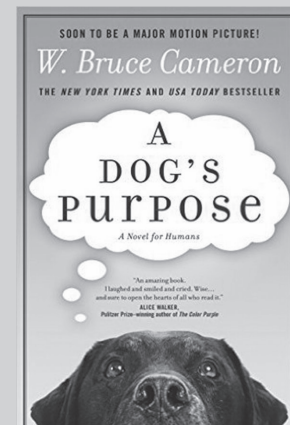
After an odd scattering of 20 disco balls were placed around the world hinting at the release of Katy Perry's new single, "Chained to the Rhythm" was finally released in early February. She surprised fans by getting political, voicing her opinions about the current political situation. Perry, a supporter of Hillary Clinton during her 2016 campaign, sang, "So comfortable, we're living in a bubble, bubble/ So comfortable, we cannot see the trouble, trouble," reflecting Trump's presidency. Co-written by Sia and featuring Bob Marley's grandson, Skip Marley, the song has many characteristics that make it unique. Xatchy and upbeat, the song will be one of many in an upcoming full-length album, but its release date is unknown. For now, "Chained to the Rhythm" can hold fans down until it does.



KATYPERRY.COM

Read (Book): "A Dog's Purpose"

Before seeing the recently released movie, reading "A Dog's Purpose" first is highly recommended. And if following a dog through his multiple lives isn't already adorable enough, this sweet little pup (referred to as Toby, Bailey, and Buddy) looks for the purpose in each one of his lives. It's as thoughtful and emotional as it is funny; writer W. Bruce Cameron uses his skill as a humorist to incorporate the lively, child-like enthusiasm a puppy would have into the protagonist's disposition. The dog's confusion with the human world is entirely lovable and innocent (he thinks his name is "Fella" when a stranger says, "Come here, fella!"), but his blind appreciation for humans makes anyone who reads it love dogs even more. The book is a quick read, tumbling through waves of emotions from laughter, to sadness, to disbelief.



ADOGSPURPOSE.COM

Watch (T.V. Show): "Black Mirror"

This show is not for the faint of heart. At first, with changing characters and different plotlines in each episode, it seems like a show that is hard to get attached to. But, solely from the first episode, the series is established as the most disturbing and hard-to-watch series on Netflix, but it is undoubtedly intriguing. The futuristic style (which is prominently introduced in the second episode) seems frighteningly believable for our future in the next 30 years, incorporating the problems of social media or improving technology into almost every 45-minute story. Most episodes, if not all, have shocking climaxes or tear-jerking finales that are either just too hard to watch or too hard to believe.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

By Karlie Angelis, Independent Editor

Guess Who? Answer: Rick Brown