

the INDEPENDENT

Volume XIX Number 4

Manchester Essex Regional High School 36 Lincoln Street Manchester, MA 01944 February 4, 2013

Security measures prevent intrusions at side doors Administration implements alarm system, new entrance policy

By Landon Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

School security is a major issue in the school system, according to Principal Sharon Maguire, and a security alarm system was implemented in order for students to be safe. Maguire said that the security system is a sensor that detects when someone is entering and leaving the building and that keeps anyone from entering anywhere but the front of the school.

While most students believe that the security system was in place because of the Sandy Hook tragedy,

Maguire said that this idea was in the making before the school year even started.

"[The administration] came up with the idea about implementing a security system in August," she said. "Since it hadn't been completed when the school was built, we had to plan ahead before we enacted it."

'We just need to make sure that our students are safe all the time, and the implementation of the security system does just that'

-SHARON MAGUIRE

Maguire said that she was surprised to see that there was no security system when the school was first built. She would have thought that everything would be updated with a brand new school. According to Maguire,

the building of the security system was completed by head custodian Joe Lucido days af-



LONDON KOMISHANE PHOTO

Head custodian Joe Lucido installed an alarm system at the side doors of the high school and middle school wings of the building in order to prevent intrusions in those previously unguarded locations. Administration had planned to make security changes prior to the December Sandy Hook shooting.

ter the Sandy Hook tragedy. "[Lucido] did everything to build the alarm system," she said. "At first, he was guarding

the side doors to prevent intrusions, but then he spent an entire day putting the alarm system in."

According to Maguire,

the alarm system had to be implemented for the side doors on the middle and high school wings. CONTINUED PAGE 4

AlcoholEdu program surveys students

By Kelsi Field
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In an effort to inform students of the dangers of drinking and instill responsible habits, the administration required an AlcoholEdu program to be completed by all high school students between Jan. 25 and 27.

According to Athletic Director Kelly Porcaro, the program is used by many school systems nationwide, and the MIAA uses the program for student-athletes.

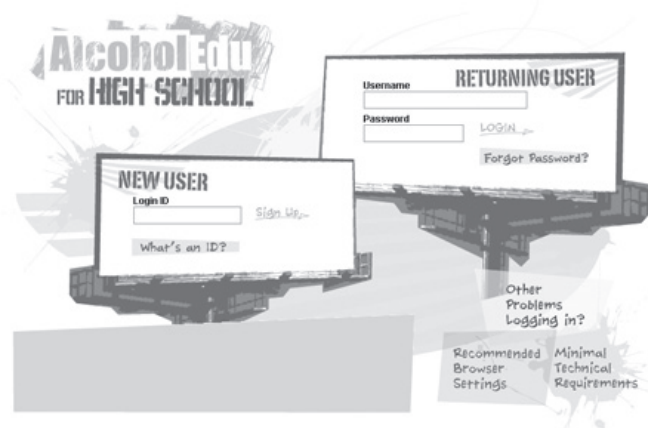
Assistant Principal Paul Murphy introduced the program to students with Porcaro in brief class meetings. He and Porcaro explained

Students and parents answered survey questions and watched videos about substance abuse with the program AlcoholEdu from Jan. 25 to 27. The same program is used for athletes in the MIAA.

the motives for using the program, which included a recent case in Rockport in which a girl was left alone while experiencing severe alcohol poisoning. She was eventually taken by ambulance to the hospital, and the party was subsequently stopped by police. Murphy and Porcaro told many similar stories of local students who had gotten themselves into trouble or

According to Murphy, throughout his career two students have died due to drug and alcohol abuse while they attended MERHS.

trouble or



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Online grade program aims to improve student-parent communication

By Rebecca Even
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Hoping to encourage a more communicative relationship between students and parents, the new online grading system enables both parties to access grades online.

The new system, a part of the Aspen software program that will become available to parents by February vacation, has been in progress for months and will be accessible for grades 6 through 12, according to interim principal Sharon Maguire. Maguire also remarked that the teachers have been given time to learn the system and to adapt.

According to math teacher David Alger, who was responsible for acclimating the teachers to the system, the anxiety some

teachers feel over the transition is understandable. "Having grades available to students and parents 24 hours a day is very different than the way we've done things in the past," Alger said.

However, Keith Gray, chemistry teacher, said that most teachers

'This particular program takes the best of what everyone's been using and puts it into one program.'

-KEITH GRAY

picked up the program quickly and have adapted to it. "Everybody feels comfortable with [the system] now," Gray said.

According to Maguire, teachers have the option of posting assignments and homework for the students to access on Aspen, as well as on their websites. Grades will also be up more quickly. "We're going to ask the teachers to have a turnaround time of posting new grades within two weeks," Maguire said.

Despite some misgivings about the technological advance CONTINUED PAGE 4

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News Briefs

Loyd Waites recognized in national Science competition

The Intel STS is a national Science competition that recognizes pre-college scientific research merit. Senior Loyd Waites has received an Intel Science Research Report Badge for "an exceptionally well-written, college-level report covering his research" that he did this past summer for his Authentic Science Research internship at the Harvard Center for Astrophysics.

Green Team scholars give tour of school

The Green Team scholars recently gave the Masconomet High School Environmental Club a complete tour of the "green" elements in the high school. The club was mainly interested in learning about the unique compost system that the Green Team is heavily involved in.

Commissioner of Education for Massachusetts visits school

Commissioner Mitchell Chester spoke to a group of high school students about social media and the great impact that it has on the lives of students today. He also had the chance to talk with each of the department heads and received a tour of the school.

District plans for 'carry forward' budget

By Fiona Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With few major changes in the plans for the fiscal year 2014 budget, the district will continue with a "carry forward budget," according to Superintendent Pamela Beaudoin.

"We will continue to grow under this budget and carry everything forward. Our rate of growth will be determined by how much money we can free up within the existing budget, so it will be slower than we would like, but it won't put us into jeopardy," she said.

Director of Finance and Operations Avi Urbas said some of the slight changes will have a more long-term impact, especially in the area of student enrollment.

"There are updates that change from year to year related to three major variables. The largest is student population... enrollment has been slowly but noticeably increasing... The changes are not that significant, but the decimal places do tend to move large numbers, and they

do have an impact," Urbas said.

According to Beaudoin, the continuing rise in residential or local student enrollment strains the ability of the school to fund programs like School Choice in the future, meaning that the budget must attempt to manage School Choice more tightly.

"We haven't had the luxury of being able to invite new students on board because we don't have the money to invest in additional teachers to lighten the load on the already large classes that we have. School Choice will only become sustain-

able if local enrollment starts to go down. But, if the resident population continues to grow, it could eventually squeeze out School Choice," Beaudoin said.

One area in which the district saved some funds is in small cap investment, according to Beaudoin, where the initial request for \$250,000 dropped to \$53,000. According to her, small caps include investments outside the regular operational budget in the areas of technology, facilities, and personnel. Beaudoin said some proposed investments could include the addition

'If we want to make additional investments, we will have to find trade-offs within the existing budget.'

-PAMELA BEAUDOIN

FAST FACTS

-Administration: 3.36% of operating budget

Total Spending: \$714,612 Change in Spending: \$10,165 Percent Change: -1.4%

-Instructional Services: 62.88% of operating budget

Total Spending: \$13,379,458 Change in spending: \$1,219,251 Percent change: 10.0%

-Other Student Services: 6.74% of operating budget

Total Spending: \$1,433,919 Change in spending: \$191,561 Percent change: 15.4%

of another guidance counselor.

"If we want to make additional investments, we will have to find trade offs within the existing budget," she said.

According to Manchester Finance Council member Morgan Evans, many districts will be investing in security updates to school buildings in light of the Newtown shooting.

"There has been talk about various schools changing buildings or entrance ways and looking for state money to do so," he said.

According to Beaudoin, the 2014 budget will not include funds for securities modifica-

tions because last year's budget accounted for security updates in the form of buzzer systems for both elementary schools as well as the high school.

Beaudoin said she does expect to see state chapter 70 funds to help balance out the limitations in town funding but not necessarily in the area of securities.

"We have no state numbers officially. What we do have is an indicator from the governor's office of where he wants to go with the budget... under one scenario, the chapter 70 funds will go up \$25 per student and that would be the best-case scenario," she said.

Drama students begin to perform two separate plays



LAUREL BARRIE PHOTO

Sophomore Steven Ascolillo, junior Landon Komishane, and senior Nicole D'Ambrosio play the role of a family sitting down eating dinner together in scene one of their production, "WASP."



LAUREL BARRIE PHOTO

The drama students have been working hard to prepare two plays for this winter/spring. The first, "WASP" by Steven Martin, is a dark comedy about a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant family in the '50s and is going to be performed in March at this year's Drama Fest. The second play, "Audience," is a play about an audience that is watching a play, and it is scheduled to be performed as the school's spring play for 2013. Despite the fact that the program graduated many talented seniors last year, the participants find that this new group has been very enjoyable.

By Hannah Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After weeks of auditions, students have begun rehearsing two plays, one which will be performed at Drama Fest and one which will be performed at school.

Drama Fest, which takes place in March, is a competition between schools throughout Massachusetts. This year, students will perform "WASP" by Steven Martin at Drama Fest. "WASP" is a dark comedy about a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant family in the '50s.

Senior cast member Nicole D'Ambrosio has competed in Drama Fest for four years.

"There are a lot of unexpected things that happen in a strange, comedic way," D'Ambrosio said of "WASP."

Faculty adviser Elizabeth Edgerton said that the cast works well together and that she is pleased by an increase in participation from underclassmen.

"Some of them [the cast members] are new this year, but they're fitting in as if they've been doing it forever," Edgerton said.

The other play, which students will perform for the school spring play, is called "Audience." It is

about an audience watching a play, and according to Edgerton, is full of realistic humor about mishaps that often ensue at the theater.

Junior Evanthia Boling has one of the lead roles in "Audience."

"It is a fantastic way to make new friends, and I love seeing how it brings out peoples' crazy sides," she said.

According to Boling, "Audience" is full of hilarious surprises sure to delight audiences. She also said the cast works well together and the actors are able to play off of each other's energy, fulfilling an important characteristic of an entertaining play.

D'Ambrosio says that the cast is significantly smaller than last year's. Graduating many talented seniors form the program proved to be a difficult adjustment. Nonetheless, D'Ambrosio has enjoyed rehearsing with the new group.

For Edgerton, the journey of rehearsing and performing a play makes the long hours of preparation worthwhile.

"It's really fun to see what happens between the time when you first read the script out loud and you're first sort of getting a sense of it and then making that come to life and actually seeing it on the stage once everything's come together," she said.

'It is a fantastic way to make new friends, and I love seeing how it brings out peoples' crazy sides.'

-EVANTHIA BOLING

DECA students participate in District competition

24 competitors qualify for States in March, may continue to internationals

By Anna Tyler
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Competing against 665 other participants at the DECA district competition, 24 DECA students earned spots in the State Career Development Conference (SCDC).

On Jan. 10, 37 DECA students from all four grade levels ventured to the Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel in Danvers to compete in the District 6 conference.

The district competition is the first leg of a three-part competition series, which consists of a district, state, and international competition. At the beginning of the competition, 225,000 high school students from eight different countries strive to qualify for a spot

in the next part of the series.

According to DECA adviser Dean Martino, the number of participants in DECA districts has grown, so the students had to work very hard to earn their state qualifier position. "These students are truly authentic. Competition is not an easy event," he said.

'I am very proud of everyone in DECA...I think everyone did really well and tried their best.'

-JACKIE ROSE

The competition consists of a 100-question written exam followed by a business role-play situation that is judged by a business professional. Students must assume the

role of an adult in a business situation and attempt to solve a business case. Students must apply what they know, what they've learned, and a wide variety of soft skills, Martino said.

"As challenging as it is,

if you do your work in class and listen to what Mr. Martino teaches, you are well prepared for it," senior Jackie Rose said.

Both the results from the exam and the role-play are added together for students' final scores. The top performers qualify for the SCDC, which will be held on March 14-16 at the Marriott Copley Hotel in Boston.

"I'm proud that I made it to States. It was a cool experience, and I got to meet new people from other schools," DECA officer, senior Ellie Mortillaro said.

DECA students who qualified for the state competition can then qualify for the International Career Development Conference (ICDC), which will be held April 24-27 in Anaheim, Calif.

"I am very proud of everyone in DECA because we all did awesome. A lot of people qualified for States, which was really exciting. Overall, I think everyone did really well and tried their best," Rose said.



COURTESY OF ALYSSA SHEPARD

Junior Michelle Fuca, and sophomores Eliza Logue and Breanna Arnold participated in the DECA District competition in Jan. and were three of 24 winners that will move on to States in March.

Emily Davis
Hope Kincaid
Alexandra Leventis
Christopher Pellegrini
Ian Lewiecki
Sophie Sortwell
Zachary Trembowicz
Brian Gibson
Camden Tuttle
Austin Waldsmith
Taylor Ketchum
Alyssa Shepard

Eleonora Mortillaro
Rachel Gallagher
Charles Hoff
Eric Fossa
Alex Thompson
Troy Ciarametaro
Devon Towle
Alura Carbrey
Leah Thompson
Breanna Arnold
Michelle Fuca
Eliza Logue

College Homecoming assembly informs high school students

Graduates advise juniors, seniors on application process, first year

By Maggie Lehar
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Nine graduates of the class of 2012 returned to the high school to advise juniors on the college application process and talk about their freshman year to seniors during a College Homecoming assembly.

The panel comprised of Max Gove of New York University, Morgan Kennedy of Emerson College, Caroline Wood of Butler University, Madeline MacNamee of Loyola University, Savannah Repucci of Salve Regina University, Anya Ciaramentaro of Boston College (transferred to Salem State University), Olivia Prentiss of Bentley College, Melissa Moore of Tufts University, and Kaitlin Cochand, who is taking a gap year.

The assembly was moderated by seniors Megan Jones

and Riley McCarthy, who led the discussions for both the junior and senior classes. Panel members offered advice about applying to college, shared their experiences at their respective schools, and addressed students concerns and questions.

Time management was a major topic that the panel members addressed. "Get to school and figure out what your workload's like and then figure out how you are going to go about it. It's a different kind of preparation when you have four essays to write or when you have four standardized tests to take, so you have to figure out what works best for you," Kennedy said.

Many panel members advised students to join clubs and activities. "Make sure you fill your time up during the day so you can be productive," Wood said.

Panel members also addressed the issue of picking a



MAGGIE LEHAR PHOTO

school once a student is accepted.

"I went to Boston College because it was the best school that accepted me. So I kind of just went for my ego. Don't do that," Ciaramentaro said.

According to Ciaramentaro, the lack of diversity at her school is what made her decide to transfer. "Everyone was white, religious, conservative, and incredibly wealthy; all of which I am not. That drove me to leave because a huge part of your experience at college is you're constantly meeting new people," she said.

Cochand agreed that meet-

'Make sure you fill your time up during the day so you can be productive.'

-CAROLINE WOOD

ing new people was an important part of her experience. "You meet a bunch of different people from a bunch of different places from a bunch of different walks of life," she said.

Senior Devin Kelley said she "thought the College Homecoming assembly was interesting and helpful. It was fun hearing all the different experiences they've had at college, and the advice they gave was really helpful."

Some students wished there was a greater variety of students in the panel.

"I thought the girl to boy ratio was skewed, and I would have liked it if there were more male representatives," junior Dylan McClure said.

"It would have been interesting to hear from more students who had a different experience than attending a traditional four-year college or university straight out of high school," senior Tiffany Vander Laan said.

According to guidance counselor Karen D'Amour, the Peer Leaders take on the responsibility of contacting college freshmen and inviting them to come. "After the Peer Leaders contact them, then they let us know who are the students who will be coming," she said.

D'Amour said another factor that limits the amount of students available to speak to the high school is the start of the second semester. Many students had to return to school earlier than others.

Annual Student-Council run Blood Drive to take place March 12

FAST FACTS

-Over 30 million blood components are needed in the US.

-Every 2 seconds someone needs blood.

-1 of 3 people needs blood at some point in his/her life.

By Landon Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

One out of three people need blood in his/her lifetime. The Student Council takes that into account when they host their annual blood drive, which is on March 12.

Student Council adviser and math teacher Sarah DeLuca runs the blood drive and has given blood for the last eight years.

"I love giving blood because so many people need it," she said. "It's a relatively quick procedure, and it's for a great cause."

DeLuca said that the Stu-

dent Council pairs up with the American Red Cross to run the blood drive and that 52 people gave blood at last year's drive, which is outstanding from the Student Council's point of view.

"Even though we have all of this technology, we still can't manufacture blood," she said. "Sometimes people need their lives saved through blood, and the only way to do that is by giving blood through a blood transfusion."

Senior Ellie Mortillaro donated blood at last year's event, and she thought that giving blood was worth it.

"The Blood Drive was an awesome experience because

blood can be valuable for people with various sicknesses," she said. "During the Blood Drive, I was lucky because I didn't get dizzy or faint from donating."

According to the American Red Cross, many side effects can occur when donating blood. Mortillaro was able to avoid these side effects because refreshments and snacks are offered to prevent that from happening.

The American Red Cross provides a guideline for the entire process of donating blood. First, the donor will have to identify himself/herself. Second, the American Red Cross will take health and personal information.

Third, the actual donation occurs. This takes eight to 10 minutes, and the donor will only feel a slight pinch as his/her pint of blood will be taken. Lastly, the donor will lie down for 10-15 minutes in order to get used to the feeling of a lower volume of blood. The donor may then resume daily activities.

According to DeLuca, a donor must be 110 pounds and a certain height to match that in order to be eligible to donate blood. She encourages everyone who is eligible to donate blood.

"Overall, it's a great experience because you get to help people out who are in need of blood," Mortillaro said.

Blue: Newest addition to bio/anatomy classroom

By Lila Hughes
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Within the classroom of biology teacher Maria Burgess, a variety of plants, animals, insects, and even biomes that contain their own little ecosystems add to the learning environment. The newest addition to the classroom is a Flemish Giant rabbit named Blue.

Mimzy, the dwarf lop eared bunny that roamed around the

biology classroom, was put to sleep last summer. According to Burgess, the veterinarian thought he had a stroke because his back legs were paralyzed. Mimzy was around six

or seven according to the veterinarian, when he was believed to be a lot younger.

According to Burgess, Blue is only three months old now and will grow to between 22-44 pounds. He was being given away for free on Craigslist from a breeder because of

his inconsistent eyes, one being blue and one being black.

In Burgess's biology class, she has already used Blue as an example of a bunny with a unique genotype, and she has even received the genotype of Blue's parents from the breeder.

"He makes the classroom a very welcoming environment. The Flemish Giant bunnies are known for their mild disposition, and they're more like a pet compared to other types of rabbits,"

Burgess said.

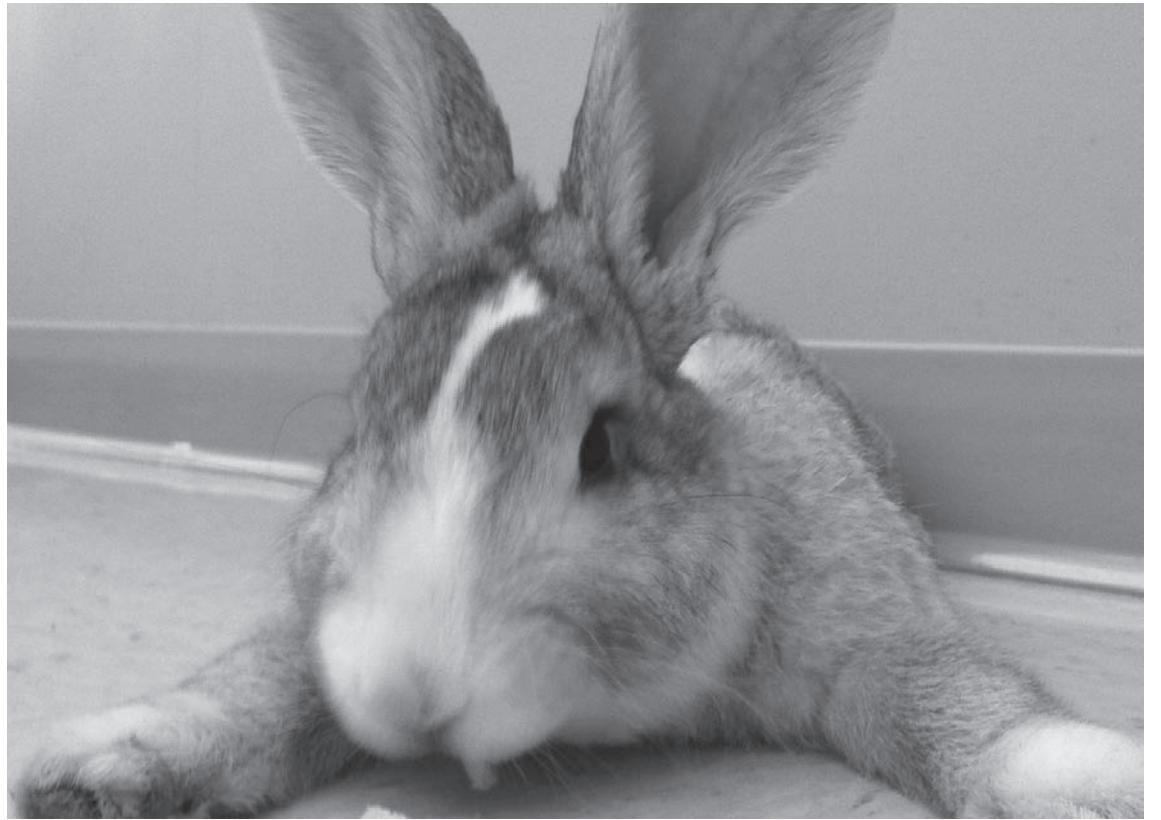
The biology classes don't study animals, so there are only a select few of animals in the classroom to show the differences in biomes. For example, a tarantula named Francisco was chosen to show what a tropical biome is like. Students

also looked up the genetics of the tarantula and what the biome of a tarantula is really like.

"The animals in the biology room give students something to apply the information they learn in class to something they can actually observe,"

'He makes the classroom a very welcoming environment. The Flemish Giant bunnies are known for their mild disposition.'

-MARIA BURGESS



LILA HUGHES PHOTO

Blue lounges in the biology/anatomy classroom. He is a popular pet; faculty and students love him.

sophomore Will Burgess said.

Two leopard geckos, a male and female named Thunder and Lightning, live in a desert biome. There are also four fire-belly toads that live in a tropical rainforest, with three plants that are relatives of plants in an actual rainforest, and works as its own

little ecosystem. Finally, there is a Bahama anole, which is a type of lizard that puffs out its neck.

"I love walking into the classroom and watching the lizards interact with each other before class starts," sophomore Eliza Logue said.

Students take on the job of

cleaning the cages, scooping the desert substrate, and feeding the animals. Burgess would like to add an anemone to the classroom because they can clear contaminants out of water, which could then be given to the reptiles. There's always room for more animals in Dr. Burgess' room.

Students excited about Costa Rica trip over February break

By Max Nesbit
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students from Manchester and Essex will take an educational and community service trip to Costa Rica through the foreign language department, according to chaperone Robert Bilsbury.

Four boys and 16 girls are scheduled to take the trip to Costa Rica during the school's February vacation. The trip was timed this way because February vacation falls in between the winter and spring sports seasons, and "it's just an easy time for everyone," Bilsbury said.

Along with touring the country, the students will be working with the local schools to help improve the community. The students will be interacting with the local children, planting trees, and teach the kids from Costa

Rica our culture in the United States, according to Bilsbury.

"We decided to help out one of the local schools that we are going to visit while we are down there. We are going to spend some time with the kids, and then they are going to put on a little show for us. It should be really fun," senior Calvin Lamothe said.

The trip is planned around Costa Rica's cultural ties to the United States and the hope for students to spend the week speaking Spanish to the local people.

"The trip is great for students to spend time with the local people, work with the local schools, and enjoy the gorgeous landscape of Costa Rica and the things the country has to offer to tourists," Bilsbury said.

"Part of the reason we decided to go to Costa Rica was because of the landscape and the connec-

tions it has to the United States. Many of the local Costa Ricans speak a mixed English and Spanish language because of the surfing trend that caused many Americans to travel to Costa Rica in the 1950s and '60s" Bilsbury said.

The students, as a group, have a huge feeling of excitement going into the trip, according to senior Jacob Martz.

"We have a bunch of good kids going on the trip, and I'm really excited to learn about the local culture and immerse myself in a new way of life that I have never experienced before. It's also a rare opportunity for any high school student to be able to help a struggling community and to also put their language skills to the test, and we get to do both of those things," Martz said.



FLICKR.COM

While in Costa Rica, students will balance doing service projects and spending time with locals with relaxation and fun in the sun.

CONTINUATIONS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 SECURITY

school side, as well as on the front doors being locked after school hours.

Assistant Principal Paul Murphy has made it clear through announcements that no one may enter through the side doors, or else the alarm will go off.

The frustration of the multiple alarms going off has resulted in the issuance of office detentions, according to Maguire.

Several students have said that the alarm goes off daily as people either forget about the rule or because of rowdy behavior. They said they are also upset that they cannot get into school after hours because of the locked doors.

A solution to this problem is to allow students

in after hours through remote access, Maguire said.

"The system is installed, but we are working to coordinate it with our electrical system," she said. "We are hoping that it is up and running by next week."

The new alarm system has received mixed reactions. "I think that [the new security system] is a bit over the top," senior Alex Shepard said. "Our school system overdid it in my mind."

Junior Brennan Houghton disagrees. "I think it was a good response by the school, but the fact that no one takes it seriously when the alarm goes off, it loses its purpose," he said.

ALCOHOL EDU
al-life situations that students are put into, and I thought they were beneficial."

According to junior Austin Keating, the program was

designed for students much younger than he. "At one point they used the line 'If you were a booger I would pick you.' Lines like that made the program obnoxious. The animations weren't necessary for surveying high school students," he said.

Other students agreed, saying that the program geared for a younger age group. "Especially as seniors, we have heard all of these things in health presentations, since two years of health are required. It didn't teach me anything I didn't already know," Kelly McIntosh said.

According to senior Calvin Lamothe, who doesn't drink, the program did not give enough options in the survey and in questions. "I feel like it assumed everyone drank based on the options it gave for questions," he said.

Many students expressed

the lack of trust in some of the statistics presented throughout the program. "I just do not believe that only 22 percent of college students drink," senior Colin Babikian said.

While some didn't fully trust the anonymity of the surveys and the accuracy of the statistics, senior Elise Doucette said, "Regardless of the corniness of the presentation an some embellishment of the stats, I appreciated most of what I was taught and understand why the school required it."

The program was linked with a parent survey and information, and all parents were informed via ConnectEd that students were required to complete it. In March, a follow-up lesson will be required. In addition, there will be an information night for parents and members of the community about what the

school learned from the program.

ASPEN
advancement, teachers seem to have no problem with this new policy. "[The 2 week period] is completely reasonable," Alger said.

Gray is one of the teachers who has used different online grading systems, but said that Aspen is superior. "This particular program takes the best of what everyone's been using and puts it into one program," he said.

Aspen's goals are familial communication and academic awareness. "Now [students] will be able to go online and see what's happening, see what to do," Maguire said. Sophomore Sam Creighton believes that the program will improve communication between parents and students. "Parents will take a role and look at their kid's grades, and it'll motivate kids," he said.

Gun Control

Should the US implement stricter gun laws?

Pro
Kelsi Field

Hoping that tragedies will prevent other tragedies is not an efficient way to subdue gun violence in the US. Despite the loss of around 30,000 Americans per year to gun violence, American officials in Congress have sat around hoping media coverage of one gun-related tragedy would prevent the next. Until Obama's recent plan, no actual reforms have been made. Americans need to band together and demand action for legislative change.

Obama's plan makes it harder for citizens to obtain weapons, requiring background checks for all people--no exceptions. It increases penalties for those who buy weapons for other and also limits the weaponry that is available for purchase. Civilians will no longer be able to purchase armor-piercing bullets.

Presently, at gun shows, criminals and mentally-ill persons can avoid background checks and obtain firearms in just one day through totally legal means. Many of these firearms are specially designed to kill mass amounts of people in one fail swoop and were created for use in the military.

When the forefathers of the United States drafted the Constitution, granting Americans the right to bear arms, they were referring to rifles in the hands of members of the militia, not semiautomatic handguns in the grasps of gangbangers and the mentally unstable.

As one of the world's superpowers, America no longer has an operating civilian militia in order to protect freedoms. The United States armed forces is the strongest military in the world; therefore, there is no need for anybody else to own semiautomatic weapons to protect liberties.

Allowing civilians to own automatic and semiautomatic weapons instigates and allows for tragedies to happen. Guns kill people, point blank. An automatic/semiautomatic handgun gives the power and ability to unleash rounds on innocent people before they realize what is going on.

The quickness of these weapons kills targets before they would have the ability to draw their own weapon; so, it would not be beneficial to provide arms to more people, it would only lead to more bloodshed when those guns reach the wrong hands.

Recent shootings have caused the belief that the mentally unstable are the ones responsible for the majority of gun violence. Yet, it is important to recognize

that the mental health and gun control are two separate issues.

Guns themselves kill people. Someone who has just reached his/her mental breaking point may raise no red flags when applying for permits to own firearms. It is far too easy to purchase weapons, legally or illegally, in the United States.

Longer wait times, heavy taxes, and strict regulations on which weapons can be held by civilians need to be put into place. The way US citizens obtain weapons is far too hassle-free, and the fact that weapons designed for mass murdering on the battlefield are on the streets of US cities is atrocious.

Con
Fiona Davis

Public policy created on the basis of wild emotion in immediate aftermath of tragedy cannot succeed. On the issue of gun control, lawmakers must look to the core cause of gun violence and the problems of restrictive gun purchasing policy.

Looking back on the Prohibition Era, historians easily conclude that prohibitionist policies rarely work. The prohibition of alcohol led to decreased tax revenue, unemployment, and an uncontrollable crime wave that perpetuated lawlessness.

Banning the purchase of guns can have the same effect, hurting both the economy and the safety of the United States.

The gun industry is a thriving industry, providing jobs and revenue for the recovering economy. Artificially stunting this growth through gun control would be devastating, setting the economic recovery back and leaving millions unemployed.

More importantly, however, with limited legal access to guns, many individuals including criminals would turn to the already problematic black market gun trade. With unregistered weapons crossing the border from Mexico and fueling border violence related to the drug trade, the illegal sale of weapons allows dangerous individuals to possess guns.

The current legal gun purchasing system requires FBI background checks for potential buyers. In Virginia, gun sales increased 73 percent between 2006 and 2011, which was coupled with a doubling of the number of background checks and a 24 percent drop in gun violence, according to Virginia Commonwealth University professor Thomas R. Baker.

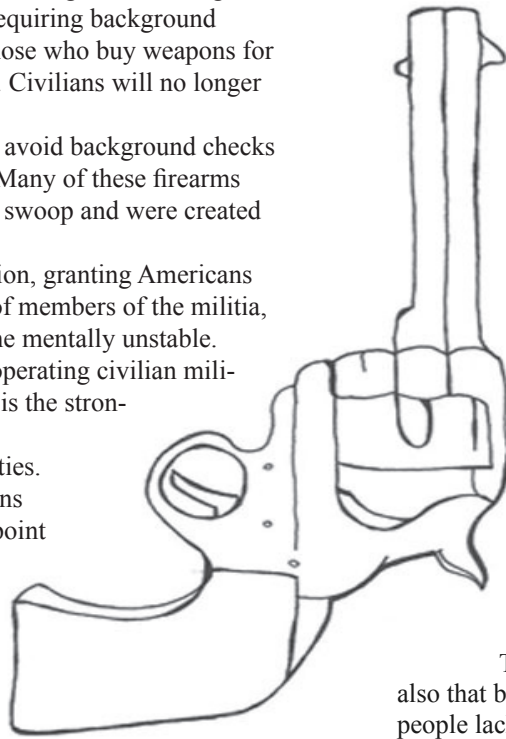
These statistics show not only that guns do not perpetuate crime, but also that background checks are of great importance in gun purchase safety. If people lack legal channels for purchasing the guns they want, they will turn to illegal purchasing methods that the government cannot regulate.

The problem of gun violence does not stem from the guns themselves, but rather from the people who are able to gain access to them.

The Supreme Court has ruled that gun restrictions may only be imposed on those deemed prohibited persons under the Gun Control Act of 1968; however, current legislation is ineffective in barring these people access to guns.

According to the Georgetown University Law Center, dangerous loopholes do not allow states to remove firearms from gun owners deemed dangerous post-purchase or to prevent children or mentally ill persons from coming in contact with weapons of other owners, like their parents. These loopholes that give unpredictable, volatile persons access to guns are imprudent.

While guns are already sufficiently regulated, people are uncontrolled, requiring that the correct method of addressing the issue of gun violence is people control, rather than gun control.



RACHEL DALEY ILLUSTRATION

Test retakes enhance students' understanding of class material

By **Natasha Statz-Geary**
INDEPENDENT STAFF

For high school students, failing a test is one of the worst feelings in the world; however, making the same mistake over and over again on tests feels even worse.

This is the situation I faced test after test in honors biology at the beginning of the year. The questions on tests constantly overlapped, and I found myself getting the same few questions wrong.

I was still doing well in the class, but I realized I could do much better if I could have an explanation behind the concepts I kept on misunderstanding.

My problem, and the problem with most students, is that after I would get a mediocre grade on a test, I wouldn't want to go back through my textbook and figure out what went wrong because retakes aren't offered in biology.

To be honest, unless extra points are offered, I never have the motivation to relearn the topic.

Even though our class would go through the tests and have the opportunity to ask questions, I still felt like I never fully

understood my errors.

Finally, after getting the same question wrong on three separate tests, I took time on my own to figure out the answer to the question.

This process could have been

I believe that students should be offered retakes in all classes.



FLICKR.COM

By offering test retakes, students have an incentive to review notes to ensure complete comprehension

simplified had I taken a retake. I would have buckled down and reviewed the questions I got wrong, then taken a makeup test and boosted my grade and comprehension of the subject. This is the logic behind why I believe that retakes should be offered in all classes.

By no means am I advocating for retakes to be allowed on every test. If each student was permitted one makeup test per quarter, then students would have a better understanding of the subject, as opposed to just failing a test and then crumpling it up and throwing it away.

Another idea could be making students do test corrections after every test and then counting that grade as a homework. Either way, I strongly think that there should be some kind of follow up after students don't perform up to their capabilities on a test or quiz.



School fails to address tragedy

By Sofia del Valle
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In only a matter of hours, the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School had become a globally known tragedy. The story was unavoidable; immediate coverage took over every news station.

Our high school, like many others, responded with utter shock and grief for those affected by the accident. Everyone struggled to understand why such a terrible event had to occur less than two weeks before Christmas, a time meant to be spent with family and friends.

In light of such a devastating event, both students and faculty found it difficult to approach the holidays with joyful sentiments knowing that many families were mourning the lost lives of their loved ones.

The Friday after the shooting, our school was meant to have our annual holiday assembly, and high school students were to meet with their advisory groups. Both were cancelled, and the school resorted to a regular shortened schedule. A statement was sent to teachers to read to their classes explaining why the assembly was cancelled which, according to the administration, was because of "the sadness that we are all feeling as a school community."

While the standard school Christmas traditions, such as the ugly sweater contest, would not have been appropriate to celebrate at this time, no effort was made school-wide to commemorate the lives lost in such an atrocious tragedy other than the daily-occurring moment of silence on the Monday following the shooting.

Even a school-wide moment of silence (as requested by the governor of Connecticut) was cancelled, but then at 9:15 a.m., the administration emailed the faculty to inform them that individual classes were welcome to participate.

A festive celebration could have been modified into a service for the victims of the shooting, and to remind people that upon entering Christmas break, they should cherish their families, and be grateful for life. High school advisory meetings would have been an ideal time for students and teachers to discuss their thoughts about the event in a small and private setting.

The school seems to have lacked communication and planning in handling such a delicate situation. The shooting was an alarming shock to the country; it is too significant of an event to have been swept under the rug.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Media coverage of Newtown tragedy disrespects victims

By Natasha Statz-Geary
INDEPENDENT STAFF

As is too often the case, the media has taken advantage of a tragedy and turned it into a gain for their own interests.

In the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, there has been incessant and highly inappropriate news coverage of the situation, which in the beginning often included factually incorrect information.

If news channels felt the need to report extensively on the tragedy, they should have at least reported the actual facts. Instead, their reports were clogged with information that was not even near the truth, stating fallacies such as the shooter's mother being a kindergarten teacher when she actually had no connections with the school.

Even more disturbing was how the children were interviewed the day of the shooting.

These poor children were already in an extremely fragile state of mind, and the news networks made the situation infinitely worse by showing cameras and microphones in the faces of



DIGINONYMOUS.COM

News reports on the Sandy Hook shooting displayed a desire for profits at the expense of feelings.

six-year-olds who just witnessed the slaughter of their classmates.

For days the only news on TV was coverage of the tragedy. However,

instead of reporting on the beautiful lives that the victims lived up until that day, all the

media could report on was the shooter and the secluded, sad life that he lived.

Not only are all these factors insensitive, but they can also inspire other heinous acts, a prime example being the threat that

The news networks made the situation infinitely worse.

was written in the bathroom of our school.

The insensitivity and motivation behind the threat at our very school could likely have been spurred by the overblown media coverage of this delicate situation.

The media handled the Sandy Hook tragedy horribly; they should have given more attention to the innocent victims. Instead of remembering a six-year-old's beautiful smile, what will be remembered is that the shooter was a loner in his school and played violent video games.

When a tragedy of this magnitude presents itself again, the media should wait to know the facts before they begin coverage to pay respect to the victims.

Improved mental health treatment would reduce mass shootings

By Hannah Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Every year, we fill out the same questions on the clipboard questionnaire in our doctor's office. Are you depressed? No. Do you spend excessive amounts of time alone? No. Do you often feel lonely, isolated, or withdrawn? No.

Primary care physicians barely graze the surface of their patients' mental health concerns, pushing many people to an alternative of self-diagnosis.

Mental health treatments in America are swathed in illegitimacy. Millions of Americans each year are denied sufficient mental health treatment, with

over 1 in 5 Americans affected by mental illness. Kevin Cullen of the Boston Globe mentions one mother who called 66 pediatricians in no avail in search of therapy for her young son.

While the medical system itself fails to address the national issue of mental health, the societal stigma about it is even worse. Mental illness is taboo in many social situations; being diagnosed with a mental illness may have more social ramifications than personal ones.

In the wake of the Sandy Hook and Aurora movie theater massacres, many point fingers at mental illness. Instead of making waves of change on the epidemic however, shallow opinion-based pieces on the psyches of shooters

are only counterproductive, entrenching prejudices that isolate these patients even further.

Media speculation about the dangerous warning signs of a shooter like reclusiveness and a passion for violent video games only exacerbate fear about mental illness. Sixty eight million Americans have mental illness or substance abuse problems, meaning that there is no reason to be afraid of a huge sector of the population.

Millions of these affected Americans are high functioning members of society who lead successful lives despite their

illnesses. The stigma doesn't discriminate though, and although psychopaths and sociopaths (a nominal minority) are often those who cause real problems, those with moderate depression or anxiety disorders are disrespected just the same.

Mental health treatments... are swathed in illegitimacy.

One of the first steps to preventing mass shootings is erasing the aversion towards mental illness and fostering acceptance. Only after society as a whole can come to terms with the idea that mental illness is common, treatable, and benign, can treatments improve, reducing the violent ends that occur in extreme instances.

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The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class. Editorial space is available to all MERHS students, faculty, and community members.

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

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

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

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

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

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Twitter becomes academic tool, blog, fosters cyber-bullying

By Lila Hughes
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Tweeting, hashtag, favorite, retweet, subtweet, followers, following: expressions like these are all examples of Twitter jargon that has become increasingly popular over the past couple of years.

Originally, the appeal of Twitter was for the average person to be able to follow his or her favorite movie stars, musicians, and people who they couldn't normally converse with. Now, Twitter is one of the leading social media websites for people to post and discover new information.

Many people argue that Twitter is too similar to Facebook, but most people prefer Twitter over Facebook. On Twitter, you choose who you follow; on Facebook, you become "friends" with someone

and both users can view the other's profile.

Twitter was designed for people to receive information quickly and efficiently. The limit 140 restricts the user from posting long and detailed tweets. The argument with this limitation is that someone can't say enough, but sometimes saying less is saying more. There are

many different reasons why people have Twitter accounts. For example, knowing what all your friends

are up to, posting updates on a certain sports games, looking at tweets out of boredom. Even educators are using Twitter to inform their students of homework and to update their students on class news and assignments.

The issue of subtweeting, which is defined as an indirect tweet at someone without mentioning his or her name,

Twitter was designed for people to receive information quickly and efficiently.



TWITTER.COM

Tweeting, once a way to update your friends on your activities, has become a way to cyber-bully.

has become more relevant with Twitter users. For instance, if someone writes, "She is so annoying," everyone who would reads that post would try to figure out who the person is, which ultimately defeats the purpose of the subtweet.

In a way, subtweeting is a

form of cyber-bullying, giving a person the power to say something mean about someone else without even mentioning his or her name. It has become popular to deal with social problems through subtweeting, which in turn creates even more issues. Twitter resembles a very concise

form of blogging. If there is something on a person's mind, the place for that thought is Twitter.

Twitter's purpose and popularity are frequently questioned and the website is still struggling to find its place in today's social and cyber worlds.

SAT Prep classes provide insider information, boost many scores

By Rebecca Even
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Fast approaching is the most stressful part of junior year: the Scholastic Assessment Test. It can decide your future. Going into the test fully prepared is crucial; doing well is equally important.

The pressure of the SAT is sometimes overwhelming. This single test can influence what opportunities are offered to you. It can impact how other people view you, and how you view yourself.

Many students take a preparatory course that claim to raise scores by incredible amounts. Students, either disappointed with their PSAT results or seeking to raise their scores, are drawn in by these advertisements.

The promises seems too good to be true. The real question is: Are SAT Prep classes worth the time and money, or are they a waste of

A thorough explanation of the necessary topics, along with supplementary material, is the perfect way to get scores up.

time?

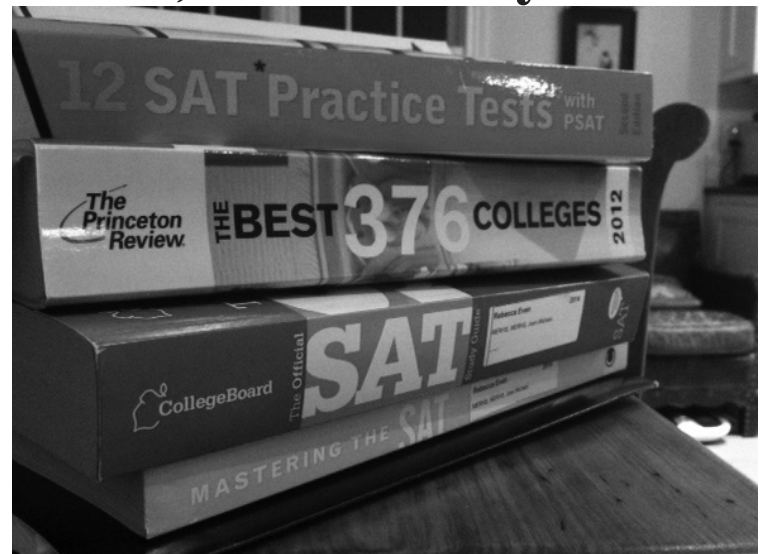
Some students need refreshers on certain subjects. Some students need to expand their vocabulary. In these cases,

preparatory classes are perfect. A thorough explanation of the necessary topics, along with supplementary material, is the perfect way to get scores up.

Although there is a substantial amount of work for one of these classes, they impact scores significantly for many students.

Many parents are reluctant to spend so much money on a class when their child has already done well. However, sometimes, all that is needed to gain the coveted perfect score is a little bit of advice from an expert.

These courses teach the insider strategies of the test: how to maximize time by reading only the first lines of every paragraph, how to consistently eliminate all but the viable options for vocabulary and grammatical questions, how to score perfectly on the essay. The best part is, the methods work. Many students



REBECCA EVEN PHOTO

To prepare for the SAT, students utilize books and practice tests.

go into the SAT feeling confident and prepared, and their scores reflect these feelings.

Since the SAT is a huge factor in your future, doing well

is important, as is preparing as well as you can for them. Despite the score, there is almost always room for improvement, and a preparatory course can almost guarantee a score boost.

Allowing students to leave study hall early could prevent problems



REBECCA EVEN PHOTO

If students were allowed to leave school if their last block was a study hall, problems throughout the school would be reduced.

By Max Nesbit
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Many changes have been enacted by the school system recently regarding the student body, and maybe it should be time for the school to give up a little freedom to the students.

At the end of the day, the only people who can leave early if they have study hall last are the members of the senior class. Why not open up this privilege to the entire high school student body?

There is a certain protocol the school follows which currently prevents the seniors who leave

early from being a nuisance, and so all the school needs to do is extend this privilege to other kids who have study hall during their last block.

Students would be required to have a note from their parents in order to make sure they can leave and would need to sign out at the main office before leaving. The policy would not be mandatory, ensuring that no student had to leave if he or she did not want to.

A majority of students who have study hall during their last block of the day do not end up spending their time wisely anyway. Most students pass their time unwisely because they feel as though they have the whole rest of the day to do homework and can just

procrastinate for now.

"Most of the time whenever I have study hall last block I just think of the school day as over. I spend a majority of my time then talking to friends, playing games, or doing nothing," sophomore Will Burgess said.

The school has had numerous difficulties with students in the library too, and this proposal could also relieve this issue. Most of the students who cause problems are the ones who do not feel like they have work to do. If students were allowed to go home during their last block, then they would not be a nuisance in the library anymore. They would be able to spend their time the way they want to.

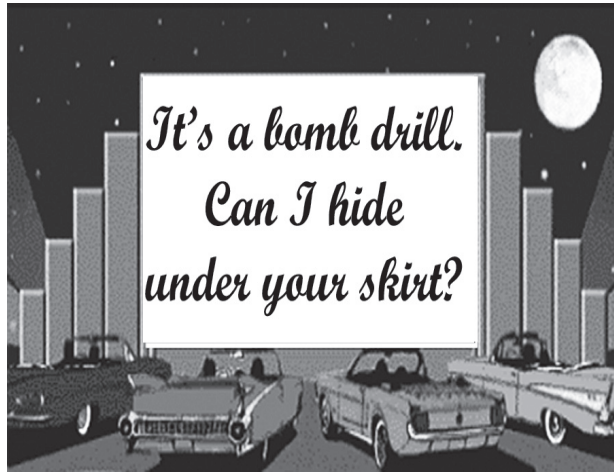
This easy change could make a lot of students happier, make life easier for the student body as a whole, and possibly solve a few of the library's problems.

'Whenever I have study hall last block I just think of the school day as over.'

'40s



'50s



'60s

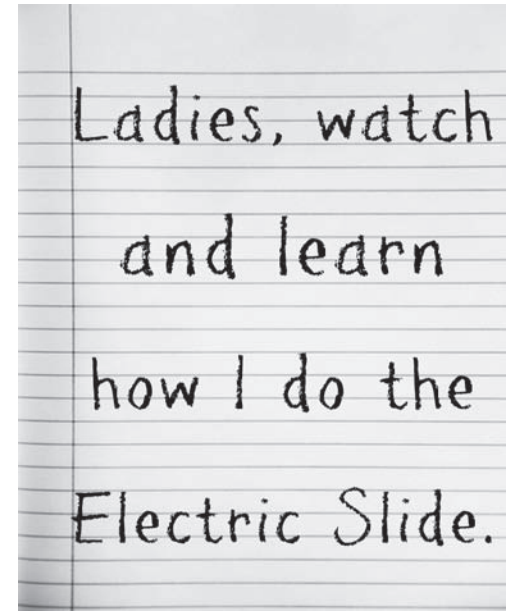


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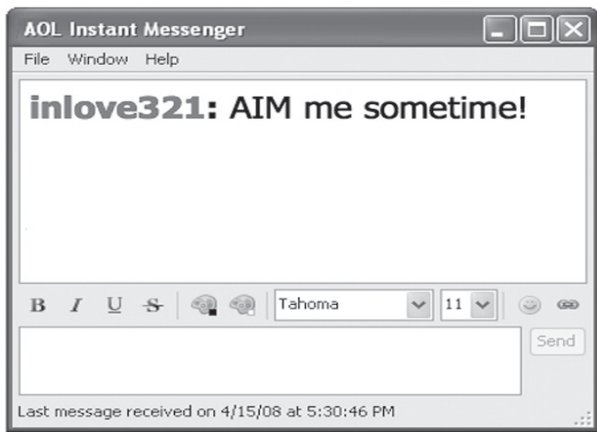


Score a date from any decade with these flirty phrases

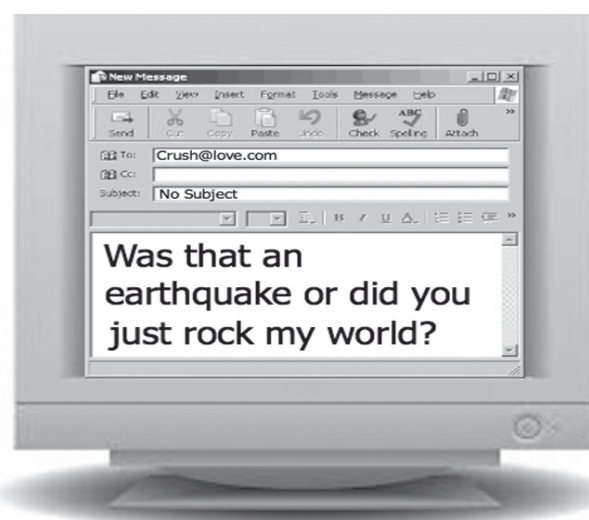
'70s



'00s



'90s



'80s



By Emily Arntsen



Janda Ricci-Munn
"The first Valentine's Day I spent with my wife."



Paul Murphy
"Before my wife and I got married, I had heard of a restaurant called Mama Marie's that has a private dining room. I made reservations, and we got all dressed up. We had a nice dinner and then went out for a night of dancing."



Deb Nolan
"Going to Boston, walking through the Commons and having dinner at the Four Seasons."

What was Valentine's



Valentine's Day Rulebook

DO'S

Turn off your electronics. Focus on your significant other, not your phone.

Cook for your special someone. Even if it doesn't taste very good, it's the thought that counts.

Plan a date that's outside the box. Experiment with creative and original ideas for a memorable day.

Share your feelings. Tell them how you feel! This is the one day in the year that gives you an excuse to be totally cheesy and sentimental...take advantage of that!

Plan in advance. You don't want your perfect date to already be reserved for someone else.

DON'T'S

Forget! This is the easiest way to ruin Valentine's Day.

Spend the day alone. Even if you're not in a relationship, find some friends and go out. There's nothing more depressing than spending a Valentine's Day alone.

Contact your ex. Move on! Don't waste the day focusing on the past.

Put up make-out pictures. Really? Gross.

Write long, sappy wall posts. Social media is public. That kind of thing should be just for your boy/girlfriend to know...not all 936 of your "friends."

By Isadora Decker-Lucke

your best
e's Day?



FLICKR.COM



Caroline Epp
"Every Valentine's Day I've spent with my husband."



Catherine Hunt
"On our 25th anniversary we went to Brookline, and we ate at the Golden Temple. That night we went to the Sheraton, and we stayed overnight, and the next day we shopped downtown Boston."



David Alger
"My best Valentine's Day is every one that I've ever had with my lovely wife."

Health Matters



Influenza claims 18 Mass. lives



TIENSPLAN.BLOGSPOT.COM

Influenza is a highly contagious virus which causes a severe cold.

By Rachel Daley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Influenza has taken the lives of 18 Massachusetts citizens in the past month. In the first week of January, 7.3 percent of deaths were caused by the flu, leading to its classification as a national epidemic.

The flu is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract, and although it is more common in children, all age groups can be affected.

Symptoms of influenza in-

clude the chills, dizziness, loss of appetite, and nausea or vomiting.

The virus is basically a severe cold but is treated very seriously due to the deathly symptoms of pneumonia, a lung infection which is contracted by the flu and other viruses.

In Boston, flu cases are 10 times higher than they were last year, causing Mayor Thomas Menino to declare a public health emergency on Wednesday, Jan. 9.

All 10 regions of the United States have portrayed elevated flu activity, showing that the

epidemic is country-wide.

Vaccine shortages are becoming more widespread every day, and are ineffective as well.

This year's flu vaccine is 62 percent effective, scientists reported on Friday in the Center for Disease Control's weekly publication, meaning that almost four in 10 people who receive the vaccine and are exposed to the virus will nevertheless become infected.

Since the vaccine may be hard to acquire, simple precautions can be taken to stay clear from the flu.

Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap, especially before eating, after using the bathroom, and after coughing or sneezing.

During the flu season, never share utensils or cups. Since influenza is spread through germs, you should eliminate all of your normal habits which consist of directly sharing germs with other people.

Most importantly, don't go to school or work if you have the smallest suspicions of having the flu; stay home until the symptoms have been gone for at least one day.

Senior completes 100th hour of volunteering at hospital

By Austen Coviello
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Senior Anna Tyler has been a volunteer at Beverly Hospital since the spring of her freshman year and has recently completed 100 hours of work there.

"I was inspired to start volunteering at the hospital because, throughout freshman year, I was positive that I wanted to get a job in a medical field," Tyler said.

According to Tyler, she started volunteering in Radiology but switched over to Special Care Maternity this year.

"I first decided to work in Radiology because I knew absolutely nothing about it and thought I'd try something completely new, but helping out with x-rays all the time kind of got dull," she said.

This year, she is working in Special Care Maternity. According to Tyler, "babies turned out

to be super complicated," so she is folding baby clothes and blankets and filling out forms because she still doesn't know "what to do if one cries."

She said the jobs she faces can be difficult at first before she is familiar with the tasks, "but the nurses are really nice and help out whenever [she] needs it."

After volunteering at the hospital for almost four years, Tyler



AUSTEN COVIELLO PHOTO

Senior Anna Tyler has been volunteering at Beverly Hospital since freshman year in Radiology and Special Care Maternity.

said she does not think she wants to pursue a pre-med degree in college.

'I have learned more than I ever thought I would when I signed up.'

-ANNA TYLER

"That's actually one of the reasons why I am glad I did it, because now I know I don't want to concentrate on a pre-med degree," she said.

According to Tyler, her volunteer experience did not affect her college search because she decided against a focus on a medical field. She said she does still plan on pursuing a science-related program in

college.

"I really enjoy volunteering at the hospital because the nurses always need help, and everything from folding a few clothes to filing papers can be a major help to them. I have learned more than I ever thought I would when I signed up," Tyler said.

Jane Karaman, the Manager of Volunteer Services at Beverly Hospital, wrote in a letter that she "[commends] Anna for her efforts, energy, and enthusiasm and for making a difference in the quality of care and service [they] provide."



COURTESY OF GINGER DRISCOLL

Freshman Brendan Driscoll trains on the exercise bikes with Blake Leeper, a bronze medal winner in the Paralympic trials.

Freshman pursues Paralympics

By Fiona Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Freshman Brendan Driscoll took his biggest step toward the Paralympics, according to mother Ginger Driscoll, when he was invited to become one

of the youngest members of the International Wheelchair and Amputee Team.

"Brendan was chosen to be one of 36 athletes in the United States to be put on the International Wheel Chair Amputee Team going to Puerto Rico in August," she said.

Driscoll, a single leg amputee since age 5, competed in last July's Paralympic Track and Field trials among other top Paralympic athletes in the 100 and 200 meters according to him.

"It was pretty exciting being there and able to run races next to these people who have been doing this their whole lives," he said.

Driscoll, who is a member of the New Jersey Navigators team that specializes in training disabled athletes, also trains locally with Nan Gorton of Gloucester, he said.

According to Gorton, Driscoll began training with her at age 10 and continued to improve and initiate the process of becoming an elite athlete.

"Over time, he gained more and more confidence with

himself...and he saw how good he felt when he was competing...every time he competed there were more doors that were opened," she said.

Besides coaches, family and athlete mentors support and encourage Brendan in his pursuit of athletic achievement, according to Ginger

Driscoll.

"Blake Leeper was the young man that won the bronze in the Paralympics and is a very close friend. It is a pretty tight world, and Brendan has a lot of mentors," she said.

Brendan Driscoll said he hopes to be

a role model himself, always trying to challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance in the world of athletics for those with disabilities.

"My entire life I have had an increasing will to break stereotypes. Obviously, there is the

stereotype that cripples are weak, and I just want to break that," he said.

Gorton said that Driscoll's perseverance and determination in spite of his disability continue to inspire her.

"He is an amazing person who has overcome a lot of obstacles.

Everybody has obstacles; his just happen to be ones you can see. It is not that it has been without struggle, because it has been with a lot of struggle, and that is what makes it so great," she said.

'Everybody has obstacles; his just happen to be ones you can see...It has been with a lot of struggle, and that is what makes it so great.'

-NAN GORTON

He hopes to be a role model himself, always trying to challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance in the world of athletics for those with disabilities.



Save energy during winter

By Kendall McCormick
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Winter in New England can bring some of the most frigid temperatures, causing many people to crank up the thermostat.

However, the cost of constantly heating a house not only serves as a financial burden but also is very harmful to the environment, requiring the use of oil and gas, non-renewable resources.

Using a basic heating system, while inevitably necessary in some degree, is not the only way to stay warm during the winter.

If you have a fireplace, one way to stay warm without turning up the heat is to have a fire every once in a while. A fire most likely won't heat the entire house, but if the fireplace is in a central room, the heat can be lowered for a bit while everyone is near the fire.

On a related note, a wood stove can also be helpful in decreasing heating costs. They serve a similar purpose to fireplaces but often can be even more effective at spreading heat.



YOURFIREPLACEANDGRILL.COM PHOTO

Wood stoves and fireplaces can help conserve heat during the winter while saving money on traditional household oil costs.

Wood stoves can heat at least one or two rooms while the heat is turned off.

With a sufficient blanket supply... sleeping should be just as comfortable if the thermostat is turned down.

One method of conserving energy that is often overlooked is lowering the heat during the night. Many keep their thermostats extremely high during the night to make sleeping more comfortable; however, with a sufficient

blanket supply and a comforter that is good at maintaining heat, sleeping should be just as comfortable if the thermostat is turned down a few degrees.

Aside from excessively heating your house, other common winter actions can be needlessly harmful toward the environment as well, such as starting the car too early for it to warm up. Though getting into an already warm car feels a lot nicer than a freezing cold one, starting the car 20 minutes before you leave is unnecessary and wasteful. Ten minutes, in most cars, is more than enough time for the engine to warm up.

Science teacher converses with juniors about college application process

By Sarah Beckmann
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Chemistry teacher Keith Gray plans to speak voluntarily with junior students the week before February vacation about starting the college application process.

Since the 1980s, Gray has insisted on speaking with juniors about their futures to give them an extra, more realistic perspective, adding onto the guidance department's views.

"I cover a timeline for visiting schools, downloading applications to figure out what they're looking for as far as their essays, what to do over the summer, how to get everything organized, SCORE, the whole process," he said.

He wants to help students avoid the mistakes he made when he was their ages, and to alleviate a portion of the stress that accompanies this procedure.

"It's important that everybody has enough information to make a good, informed choice in pathways in approaching their senior year," Gray said.

Junior Will Davis said that he has started looking at colleges as far as California and as close as Northern Massachusetts. He has



SARAH BECKMANN PHOTO

Chemistry teacher Keith Gray makes an effort every year to be proactive in helping juniors prepare for the college process.

also considered applying to the University of California, Santa Barbara.

"It's a really nice area," Davis said. "I think I'm going to get a jump on things, because we've been talking about it a lot, with guidance and Mr. Gray."

Prefering to stay on the East Coast, junior Tess Goulakos plans on seeing "big city schools," like Boston University, New York University,

and George Washington University.

"I haven't looked at them yet; they're just ones that I'm interested in. I'm probably going to start looking at them during spring break and over the summer," she said.

Gray's daughters, who are also juniors, have been looking at colleges since the summer after their eighth-grade year; however, he stresses the point that no one needs to rush.

"You don't have to start looking yet, and that's what I want to get at. As long as you have a target and you can start to roll with it junior year, you're in good shape," he said.

STUDENT

Sam Kurpis PROFILE



Sam Kurpis

By Lila Hughes
INDEPENDENT STAFF

If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go?

Patagonia, hands down no question.

If you could pick a superpower what would it be?

Flying.

Best way to find out the news?

Through well informed friends; I don't really watch the news.

What is your dream car?

Ducati motorcycle.

What was your first impression of Manchester?

Small and quiet, and everyone is really friendly.

What's your favorite type of music?

Really chill music or rap; depends on what I'm doing.

Favorite book?

"Great Expectations"

If you could meet a celebrity who would it be?

Meghan Fox

Boys' basketball shoots for States again

By Kelsi Field
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Winning some monumental games, the boys' basketball team is prepared to be a top contender in this year's state tournament.

The Hornets hold a winning 8-7 record.

Although they lost games early in the season to Rockport and league powerhouse North Reading, the team's momentum has been picking up, which can be seen in their recent defeat of Newburyport.

Senior captains Max Nesbit and Liam Aldrich have been leading not only the team, but the Cape Ann League. Nesbit and Aldrich have been praised in local papers and articles for their

forceful play on the court. In the Cape Ann League, they are two of the top three 3-point shooters.

According to head coach Bryan Shields, their smarts in school carry onto the court; they know the game and how to be effective.

According to Shields, if the team avoids foul trouble, they have the ability to beat any team they are scheduled to face at tournament time.

Aldrich says although he is at the top of the league for three point shots, he is never looking to shoot the ball first. "My first instinct is to pass the ball and get it to the basket, but if there is no other option and the slot is open I go for the shot," he said.

Over winter break, the Hornets won the third annual Winter Tournament held in Gloucester. Many of the teams they play in that tournament are from high-



KELSI FIELD PHOTO

Junior Sean Gutierrez attempts a free throw in a game against Georgetown. They held off their rival and won the game, 76-67.

er divisions and much larger schools. Nesbit and junior Petey Morton received All-Star praise for their play, and Aldrich was named the tournament's MVP.

According to Shields, the en-

tire team has gotten court time and been influential in the team's success. He praised senior captain Taylor Ketchum who has been an asset since his sophomore year, as well junior Sean Guti-

erez, who plays center for the Hornets, as leaders on the court.

According to Shields, if the team avoids foul trouble, they have the ability to beat any team they are scheduled to face at tournament time.

Off of the court, the team stays on the straight and narrow with a curfew on weekend nights and over school vacations.

According to both Shields and captains of the team, the curfew was installed to avoid eligibility issues they have had in past seasons due to student athletes getting in trouble with alcohol.

The players must call Shields by 11:30 p.m. from their house phones in order to be able to play in the next game. According to Shields, he takes this rule very seriously and has no problem suspending players from games if they fail to follow the rule. The team has also been compliant with the rule and does not argue with Shields.

Girls' basketball makes state tournament

By Austen Coviello
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With six games left in the regular season, the girls' basketball team has a record of 5-11 and has qualified for tournament, according to coach Lauren DuBois.

"I think we've really done a good job with our defense. We put in a new defensive set mid-season, which really changed the way we were playing, so I think that's really been our biggest strength," she said.

According to senior Allyson Conway, "the team has improved immensely" since the beginning of the season.

"I don't think our record reflects the amount of work we have put in. Everyone is doing well, and I think our upcoming games will prove what we've done," she said.

Conway said the team has been working on improving basic skills as well as add-

ing new ones with which they hope to improve their game.

Senior captain Carolyn Heslop said the team needs to work on playing every game with more confidence so they can avoid making small mistakes.

According to DuBois, the team can always make improvements in order to have a better season overall.

"Rebounding is a big one for us. We're a smaller team than a lot of other teams that we see, so we have to make sure we're getting our rebounds. Also, we need to work on being more active on offense," she said.

The team's bonding, according to Conway, has been key in their success. She said the main objective they have to work on is "bringing all [their]

individual talents together."

According to DuBois, freshman Sydney Christopher has been a huge contributor for the team, leading the team with 6.8 points per game. The team has cited her as a cornerstone for the future.

While the team has not faced any serious injuries, DuBois said an obstacle the team has faced this season has been sickness.

"Different people have been out for different games due to flu, mono, strep throat, and things like that," she said.

"We want to make the tournament outright and finish 10-10, and if we win the next six, we can do it. If we just take it game by game and work on what we need to work on, then we can get it," DuBois said.

'If we just take it game by game and work on what we need to work, then we can get it.'

-LAUREN DUBOIS



AUSTEN COVIELLO PHOTO

Freshman Sydney Christopher shoots a three-pointer in a game against Newburyport. The team eventually lost the game, 51-39.

Track sets many personal bests, looks to postseason

By Isadora Decker-Lucke
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With the boys' track team currently ranked second in the Cape Ann League Small Division and both girls and boys team members qualifying for States, track plans to finish off their season strong, according to junior captain Sarah Lewiecki.

According to junior captain Fiona Davis, some highlights so far are wins over track powerhouse Hamilton Wenham and Amesbury for the boys' team.

While the girls have yet to win a meet, Davis says their main focus is qualifying for the Division IV state meet on Feb. 15.

So far over 15 team members have qualified for the state tournament. Davis qualified in the mile and two-mile; sophomore Olivia Lantz in the mile, two-mile and 1000, the 4x400 relay



FIONA DAVIS PHOTO

Senior John Beardsley runs the 300 and passes his opponent to win his event at the Winter Festival at the Reggie Lewis Center.

team, and the 4x800 relay team.

For boys, senior captain John Beardsley has qualified in the high jump with a mark of 5ft 8in and in the 300, according to Davis. Sophomore Cam Holley qualified in the 1000, and the boys' 4x400 relay team has qualified as well.

Many runners who haven't qualified yet are extremely close to the qualifying time, such as sophomore Samantha Woodman in the 300, according to Davis.

Junior captain Erik Rajunas is pleased with the way the team has performed overall this season.

"I'd say having won two meets and having a better record than

last year is a big thing. Also just seeing so many people set personal records and qualifying times and raising the bar for the team," Rajunas said.

However, according to head coach John Barbour, the season has not been without difficulties.

"Colds and flu, mid-terms, conflicting activities like debate tournaments and a few other things

have coalesced to make this a challenging period for the team, which it is handling well," he said.

The team has also set many personal bests this season, such as

Olivia Lantz's 11:01.46 two-mile, which was within a second of an

'I'd say having won two meets and having a better record than last year is a big thing. Just seeing so many people set personal records and qualifying times and raising the bar for the team.'

-ERIK RAJUNAS

18-year-old meet record according to Barbour, and Cam Holley's 2:54.43 1000, both at the MSTCA/Red Auerbach Frosh-Soph Meet on Jan. 5.

Senior Cory McCollum set a school record in the shot put of 37-11 on Jan. 11, and

high jumpers such as senior Jacob Martz, junior Sam Nesbit and senior John Beardsley all set personal bests at CAL dual meets against Amesbury and North Reading.

Ski team works to achieve team, individual goals

By Carolyn Heslop
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At the start of the season, the ski team's goals included bringing both a girls' and boys' team to the state tournament, and the girls are well on their way to achieving this goal as they are currently dominating in individual standings, senior captain Megan Jones said.

According to varsity coach Tim Wonson, Jones is currently ranked No.1 and has won every single giant slalom race that she entered. Juniors Alexandra Marshall and Lizzi White are not far behind Jones, as Marshall placed second in every race that she entered, and White consistently ranks somewhere in the top 10, he said.

"We have also been surprised by freshman Megan Clark, who started racing only last year, but as of now she is go-

ing to the state tournament due to her 11th place ranking in one of the most competitive leagues in the state," Wonson said.

Sophomore Chris McAuliff said that although the girls' team is not far from accomplishing their goals, the boys' team has suffered some minor setbacks due to injuries on the team.

These injuries include a severe knee injury that kept McAuliff from improving his ranking this season and a nasty fall in which sophomore William Kiley hooked a tip, was flung into the air, and then proceeded to slide down the mountain until he crashed into a gate, Wonson said.

However, senior captain Brian McAuliff has managed to achieve top 10 in every race that he has entered in, giving him a very likely chance of making it to the state tournament, Jones said.

Chris McAuliff said the team has really been working to encourage each other, and everyone is improving on a day-to-day basis.



CAROLYN HESLOP PHOTO

The boys' ski team gathers for a picture after a race on Bradford ski mountain in Bradford, MA.

"We have definitely come together as a team and are simply working towards accomplishing both the personal and the team goals that we set for ourselves at the beginning of the season," Jones said.

According to Wonson, the coaches are immensely proud of the effort and courage the team has shown thus far, as skiing can sometimes be intimidating and racing in particular, can be quite nerve-racking.

"The team has battled through sickness, the freezing cold weather, the long bus rides, and the long hours of training on top of all their other responsibilities, and they are beginning to reap the rewards," Wonson said.

Swim team focuses on personal goals, less on overall record



NATASHA STATZ-GEARY PHOTO

Sophomore Annie Alfano competes in a meet at Gordon College.

By Natasha Statz-Geary
INDEPENDENT STAFF

As the swimming and diving team approaches the end of their season, they reflect on their goals being met despite facing many changes this year.

At the beginning of the season, with a new coach and many of their best swimmers graduated after last year, the team decided they wanted to focus on improving personal bests this year and not be as concerned with their record.

"Considering we lost a handful of senior swimmers last year and our coach, at the start of the season we really just wanted to work on promoting personal bests and having each swimmer meet their potential. We by far and away achieved this goal, and we're seeing our whole team look better than ever despite not

having the greatest record," senior captain Alex Walder said.

Coach Mary Maher agreed, too. "Our record is currently 0-4, but this really doesn't matter considering how we've have some great performances so far this season. Both of our divers, senior Alex Walder and junior Peter Cottingham, have qualified for the state meet. Freshman Nathaniel Rautio has had important first place finishes in both the 200 Individual Medley and the 100 Breaststroke," Maher said.

In addition to these personal achievements, the team as a whole hopes to at least win one meet before the season

comes to a close on February 3rd.

"I feel that everyone is working even harder at our practices now, hoping that we can win one of our last meets, which excitingly enough are both home meets. We look forward to seeing Hornets fans there cheering us on," sophomore Emily Callahan said.

Additionally the team is preparing for CALS, which they attended on Sunday February 3rd.

"We are looking at having a strong showing at CALS. We've been improving greatly throughout the season and plan on ending with a bang. We want to showcase our improvements," Walder said.

'We really just wanted to work on promoting personal bests and having each swimmer meet their potential. We by far and away achieved this goal'

-ALEX WALDER

Gymnastics squad improves from last season, accomplishes goals

By Devon Musgrave-Johnson
INDEPENDENT STAFF

With wins against both Gloucester and Peabody, the Hamilton-Wenham gymnastics team, in co-op with Manchester-

Essex, came out of its season having achieved the goal set out by Coach Alex Gabriel to win more meets.

"This season went a lot better than last year. It went great, and everyone tried really hard," Gabriel said.

The team's final record was 2-6, and the team as a whole scored around of 120 points each meet. An average score for high school gymnastics is about 130.

"We have been improving all season," sophomore Lizzie Ranger said.

Captain Emily Ciruolo, a senior, scored an average of 8.65 out of 10 by the end of the season. "She was a really high scorer for our team, and she

helped motivate the rest of the girls," Gabriel said.

The official varsity season has ended, but the junior varsity hope to get one more meet in before their season ends, and both teams are going to compete in the Cape

Ann League on Feb. 9. CALs is an event at the end of the season in which all the teams of the league get together for a meet.

"Although it is going to be

'It was really exciting to improve our record this season and come together as a team both at practice and at meets.'

-MADELINE DAHLIN



COURTNEY MACDOUGALL PHOTO

The Hamilton-Wenham and Manchester Essex co-op gymnastics team stretches and prepares for their turn to compete in their floor routines as they watch their sophomore teammate Lizzie Ranger.

tough competing against every other team at once, I think our girls will do very well on an individual level," Gabriel said.

"It was really exciting to improve our record this season

and come together as a team both at practice and at meets," captain junior Madeline Dahlin said.

The team is already setting goals for next season. With seniors Emily Ciruolo, Hannah

Palmer, Katie Mastrianni, and Jessica Nims leaving the team after they graduate, Gabriel hopes to strengthen the team as a whole and help to bring up some girls from junior varsity to varsity.

Girls' hockey three wins away from meeting season goal

By Max Nesbit
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After a strong start to the season and a record of 7-4-1, the girls' hockey, which is a co-op team between Manchester, Essex, Swampscott, and Marblehead, team finds themselves only three wins away from accomplishing their goal of making the state tournament, according to junior captain Brittany Smith.

"We are a really young team this year, and it shows itself sometimes out there on the ice, but in the end we have been able to find ways to beat older more experienced teams," Smith said.

"I am really proud of the way our girls have played. They have played well under pressure and beaten some good teams down the stretch," coach Emily

Hudak said.

The team set a goal of making it to the state tournament, and in order to do so, they needed to win at least half of their games. As of right now they have seven wins and are only three wins away from accomplishing that goal.

"We have won a lot of games so far, but we could have won

even more.

Many times we would only play two out of the three periods of the game. One thing we really need to work on is playing a complete game, and that is something we need to do well if we want to go far in the tournament," Smith said.

On Jan. 27 the team played a full three periods and came up with an important win against the Everett High School team, which was a big win for their tournament hopes and hopefully a step

The team set a goal of making it to the state tournament...they needed to win at least half of their games.



2012-13 Marblehead H.S. Girls Varsity Hockey

COURTESY OF BRITTANY SMITH

The girls' hockey team is close to accomplishing their season's goal: to make the state tournament.

forward for the team, according to Smith.

Another aspect the teams needs to work on is their communication on the ice and making sure they are constantly talking, according to Smith.

"Like I said, we have a young

team this year and communication and chemistry is something that takes time to develop. I'm sure that as we continue to practice and work together, those things will begin to develop and we'll start to play even better because of it," Hudak said.

"We have all played well because that is what needs to happen in order to be as good as we have been to start this season, but Caroline Hughes from Marblehead has really stepped up and made everyone play better around her," Smith said.

Boys' hockey clings to a state tournament bid, surviving injuries

By Landon Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With a record of 5-7, the boys' hockey team is battling injuries that ultimately might affect their season for the long term, according to coach Derek Papalegis.

The team lost senior captain and top goal scorer Conor Douglass and third-liner Tucker Reedy for the rest of the season due to injuries suffered in a game against Gloucester.

Injuries will not cause the team to lose hope or abandon the season, Papalegis said.

"The effort is there," he said. "Even if it's not the outcome that we wanted, it's something positive that we can build on in the locker room."

Sophomore Cole Spencer agreed, and he said that the game against Gloucester was the most important game of the season because not only was it a turning point, but the game sparked a new series.

"We lost, but it was one of the biggest games of the year because the last time Rockport played Gloucester was in 1991," he said.

The state tournament is not far away, and Papalegis still thinks that the team can get there.

He said that general outcomes of their games have not been

entirely in their favor throughout season, but the players are responding well. Everyone on the team will have to step up and keep fighting, according to Douglass.

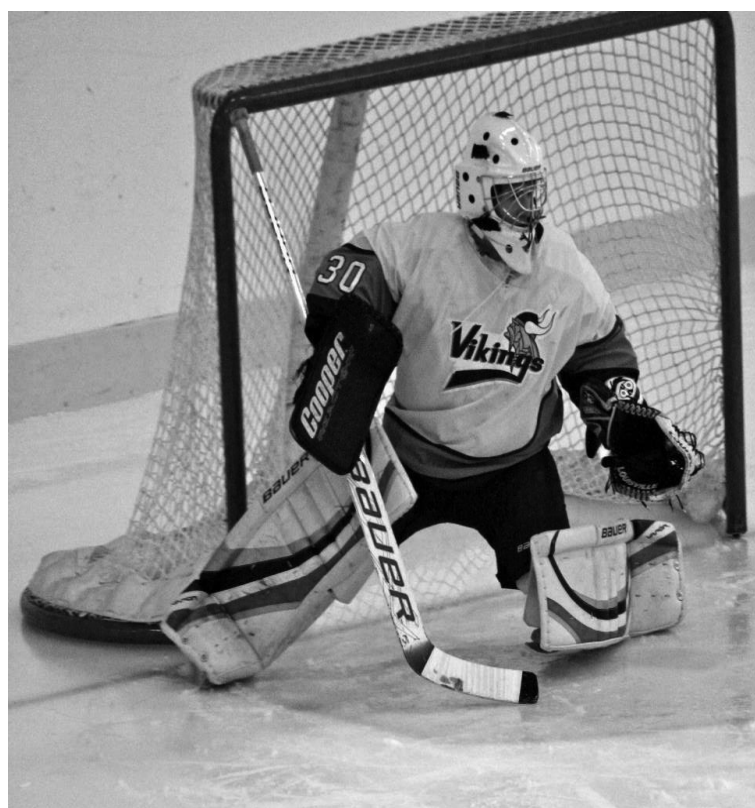
"The outlook is challenging for the rest of the year," Spencer said. "We have some more big games ahead of us and are looking to improve our current standpoint."

According to Papalegis, the team has four games left on the schedule before the state tournament. That includes three more conference games and a matchup with Revere.

Papalegis feels that the team can gain momentum from its loss to Pentucket and make a run at the state tournament. He says that he still expects that every player will be able to compete at the level they were on last year.

The boys' hockey team is determined to go deep into the state tournament, if not farther.

The team lost senior captain... Conor Douglass... for the rest of the season due to injuries suffered in a game against Gloucester.



COURTESY OF MIKE ROLLINS

Though suffering injuries, boys' hockey is focused to make finals.

Manchester Sailing Association members triumph in Orange Bowl

By Sofia del Valle
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

During Christmas break, five representatives from Manchester Sailing Association travelled to Miami, Fla., to compete in Orange Bowl, a four-day long sailing regatta. The event, hosted by Coral Reef Yacht Club, is a large international sailing competition.

Juniors Luke and Quinn Anderson, sophomore Sam Creighton, and freshman Ethan Anderson, along with high school varsity sailing coach Kevin Dooley, all participated in the event made up of more than 450 competitors.

"The competition is pretty steep," Luke Anderson said.

He and his brothers, Quinn and Ethan, have competed three times at Orange Bowl.

The team was competing with sailors from all over the

world, including representatives from the United States as well as Spain, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and Canada.

According to Luke, the team was happy with the results from Orange Bowl. Partners Quinn and Ethan raced in a fleet of 80 "420" boats (double-handed), and placed 18th overall. Quinn placed 4th in his best race over the four days. Luke sailed with Creighton and placed 41st overall.

The competition consisted of three types of boats: Optimists, which are single-handed, and 420's and Lasers, which are both double-handed.

"The results show the level of competition held by Manchester sailing team has. We are able to compete in international

events and do well," he said.

According to Anderson, the team has been training since the fall in preparation for Orange Bowl.

'The team was competing with sailors from all over the world.'

"Within 30 minutes of landing in Miami, I was on the water practicing," Creighton said.

According to Creighton, the Orange Bowl was

a good way to prepare for the high school sailing season, which takes place in the spring.

"I learned many of the finer points of sailing and overall became a better crew," he said.

Over February break, the team will travel to Florida yet again for the mid-winter regatta, which according to Quinn Anderson, has a higher age limit, and the team will race against both college and high school students.



COURTESY OF QUINN ANDERSON

Students represent Manchester Sailing Association at Orange Bowl Regatta in Miami, Florida during Christmas break. The Orange Bowl is a four-day long sailing regatta.

19 awards received from Boston Globe Scholastic Art Award

By Austen Coviello
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In the annual Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards, a state-wide art competition run by Scholastic, the school submitted a total of 63 entries and won 19 awards.

For this contest, each teacher enters 20 pieces of art with a maximum of five pieces for one student. Each piece can then win honorable mention, a silver key, or a gold key.

The pieces that win a silver or gold key go on display at the transportation building in downtown Boston. The gold key winners are able to submit their pieces to an international competition in New York.

According to art teacher Caroline Epp, the awards cover all types of art and are split up into categories.

"I go through every single photo my kids have taken and try to get down to the 20 best. I don't always know what the judges are looking for, so I try to pick a wide variety. Some are classic while others are more experimental and sometimes humorous," she said.

Each art teacher, Marion Powers, Tamera Burns, and Epp submitted 20 pieces, and Epp had an additional three senior portfolios sent.

Seniors Willy DeConto and Tiffany Vander Laan both

won gold keys for their senior photography portfolios.

"I felt strongly about the photos I submitted because they all emphasize a theme about incongruity and transience, so I was happy that the gallery of the photographs was united in that way," Vander Laan said.

Junior Julia Paccone won an honorable mention in mixed media, as well as a golden key for a dress she made in organic fashion. This dress also won an American Vision Award.

According to Paccone, in this competition 9,000 students submit 14,000 pieces of artwork, and five pieces are chosen per state.

Her award-winning dress was made out of hemp rope and sea grass, which is "a fluffy grass." She structured it using bent wire clothes hangers and a rug pad. The rope used for the top is "weaved, braided, tied, and frayed to create a ruffled edge," she said.

Paccone said this piece was her "personal favorite," and her teacher Powers suggested she enter it in the competition.

"I was shocked and amazed that I had won another award for the same piece considering I was already insanely excited and happy about receiving a gold key," she said.

Throughout grades 9-12, eight pieces won honorable mentions, five won silver keys, and six won gold keys.

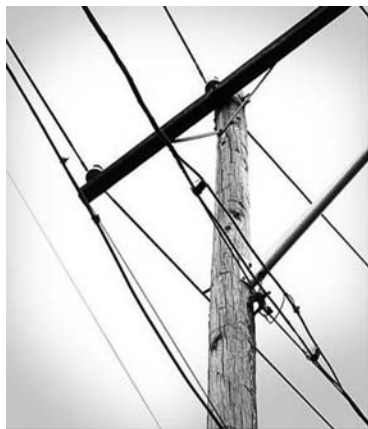


MEMO.COM PHOTO

Self-portraits by senior Tiffany Vander Laan (left) and junior Sarah Lewiecki (right) win gold keys.

Arntsen, Emily	Gold Key	Photography	Waltz Of The Flowers	Art
Cochand, Jenny	Silver Key	Photography	Cricket	Art
Crossen, Liam	Honorable Mention	Photography	Perception	Art
DeConto, Willy	Gold Key	Photography	Last Of Its Kind 1	Art Portfolio
Fackre, Campbell	Honorable Mention	Photography	Complete	Art
Filius, Dana	Honorable Mention	Digital Art	Could Be Here	Art
Finnerty, Kelly	Silver Key	Photography	Scar	Art
Lewiecki, Sarah	Honorable Mention	Painting	Twin	Art
Lewiecki, Sarah	Gold Key	Mixed Media	Make Up Artist	Art
Lewiecki, Sarah	Silver Key	Mixed Media	Words for Malala	Art
Macleod, Julie	Silver Key	Design	Malala	Art
Moore, Emily	Silver Key	Photography	Decrepit	Art
Paccone, Julia	Honorable Mention	Mixed Media	Punch Buggie, No Punch Back	Art
Paccone, Julia	Gold Key	Fashion	Organic Glamour	Art
Tognazzi, Jacob	Honorable Mention	Mixed Media	Disorganization	Art
Vander Laan, Tiffany	Gold Key	Photography	Seul	Art Portfolio
Palmer, Maya	Honorable Mention	Design	Augmentum	Art
Potter, Julia	Gold Key	Mixed Media	Malala Speaks	Art
Spofford, Fritz	Honorable Mention	Mixed Media	Pieces Of Malala	Art

Senior art student accepted to MassArt, wins gold key for photography portfolio



WILLY DECONTO PHOTO

DeConto's quadriptych shows obscure scenes from Beverly, Mass.

By Emily Arntsen
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Few people can say they've taken all the art classes offered by their school, but senior Willy DeConto shows his dedication to art by proudly admitting he's completed every art class he could fit into his schedule.

"I've taken everything, literally everything," DeConto said.

He's unsure of exactly what inspired him to pursue art; he said his family isn't artistic at all.

"I just liked doing it, so I signed up for a bunch of classes because I didn't want to take real classes," he said, but through his nonchalant decision, he discovered his passion for art.

"I guess the best way to put my style is just a lot of pen, Sharpie and water color on paper," DeConto said.

His photography teacher, Caroline Hunt-Epp, said, "Willy definitely has his own style. In his photographs, he shows

mundane objects and spaces that are often overlooked. Visually, his photographs have a quiet, muted quality to them."

Hunt-Epp submitted his photography portfolio to the Boston Globe Scholastic Art and Writing awards which received a gold key, the highest award.

His portfolio focuses on scenes from Beverly, Mass., a city he spends plenty of time in.

"I used a digital camera with a 20mm lens and a 50mm lens to shoot my portfolio," DeConto said.

His portfolio, along with other award-winning artwork from the high school, is on display at memo.mersd.org and will eventually be showcased at the school.

Recently accepted into MassArt, DeConto's future as an artist is unfolding. He plans on studying either industrial or graphic design, and then hopefully finding a job in either field.

"I think that he would really thrive in such a creative atmosphere," Hunt-Epp said when she learned

he was accepted to MassArt.

Another of DeConto's art teachers, Marion Powers, also said thinks he will flourish at MassArt: "He has a strong sense of design coupled with his conceptual thinking has provided him with a strong foundation for MassArt. I see that school being the perfect fit for him," she said.

His print making teacher Tamara Burns thinks graphic design will be an excellent area for DeConto to enter.

"Willy has very strong creative instincts for graphic design. He has the ability to convey messages through brochures, as well as artwork that would utilize text and images," Burns said.

"While I think that Willy will do well as either a commercial or a fine artist, I think that clients will come to Willy for his own style, rather than asking him to do generic work," Hunt-Epp said.

For his S.C.O.R.E project, DeConto plans on painting a mural in Lynn for the Boy's and Girl's Club of Boston.

You Know You Love YouTube

Rhett and Link expand audience beyond YouTube

By Devon Musgrave-Johnson
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Rhett McLaughlin and Link Neal are "life-long best friends" who have made a

name for themselves creating videos for both YouTube and Television commercials.

Across their two channels, Rhett&Link and Rhett&Link2, the pair has almost 700 videos and 206 thousand video views. On their main channel,

Rhett and Link have accumulated over 1,000,000 subscribers.

The videos made by Rhett and Link have weeks of work put into them and use extremely high quality technology for filming and sound. Some of their most famous videos include "Tee-Shirt War (Stop Motion)," "2 Guys, 600 pillows," and "Epic Rap Battle."

They also produced a commercial for McDonald's and Coke called "Tee-Shirt War 2," as well as various content for Taco Bell, Starburst, and Dentyne Gum.

Rhett and Link have both worked in network televi-

sion before and have been featured on the "Conan" and "The Jay Leno Show."

In 2011, they aired their own show on IFC called "Rhett and Link: Commercial Kings." The show was non-fiction and based off of their journey well making their web series "I Love Local Commercials," in which they traveled around and offered to make commercials for local businesses.

They also have a web series on their second channel called "Good Mythical Morning" that airs each weekday and lasts for about 15 minutes each episode.

Almost all of the videos made by Rhett and Link involve music and this music is usually an original and comedic song written by them. Rhett and Link have released five albums of their music and have written about 100 original songs.

The duo has several awards for the full-length documentary that they made called "Looking for Mr. Locklear." The film is about their attempting to contact their "beloved" first grade teacher.

Their channel Rhett&Link has also won the 15th Annual "Webby Awards."



'Downton Abbey' returns in season three

By Kendall McCormick
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Coming off little less than a year's hiatus, the highly anticipated return of BBC's drama "Downton Abbey" aired Sunday Jan. 6 on PBS. The show is on its third season and has an already established, widespread fan-base.

Originally airing in the U.K., the show rapidly gained popularity in the U.S. during its first season in 2010. In fact, according to T.V. Guide, "Downton Abbey" was the second most widely viewed television program last year on Super Bowl Sunday after the Super Bowl itself.

"Downton Abbey" depicts a family in the early 20th century living in a great house in rural England. The various storylines center around the family, including the lord and lady of the estate, their three daughters, and the numerous servants.

The show is very much a soap opera in its various, conflicting and dramatic storylines, but these storylines are centered around the historical context of the period.

According to senior Jacob Martz, what differentiates it from the stereotypical American soap opera is the fact that the



PBS.ORG

"Downton Abbey" has rapidly gained popularity in the past year.

actors "are incredibly talented and skilled, doing an excellent job at selling the drama but being witty and funny when necessary."

Another fan of the show, Junior Madeline Dahlin thinks, "It's cool that it has a historical background, and the drama of the events makes the show very entertaining to watch."

The plotlines complement the historical backdrop of the time; the entire first season's focus was on finding a way for oldest daughter, Mary, to keep the estate (females at the time were not allowed to inherit), the second

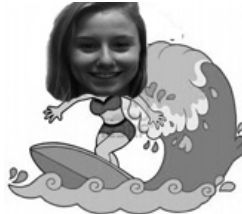
season was set during World War I and plotlines centered around the war, and now in the third season, financial concerns regarding the upkeep of the house match similar situations actually occurring after the war.

Sophomore Ethan Andersen agrees that observing life during that time period is interesting, and he thinks the actors do a good job keeping the plotlines realistic.

"Downton Abbey" appears every Sunday at 9 p.m. on PBS; one of the biggest perks of the show is that it consists of one entire hour with no commercial breaks.

WEbsurfer

By Lila Hughes
INDEPENDENT STAFF



Ancestry.com

By creating an account on Ancestry.com, you can trace back your roots and find all you want to know about your ancestors. There are close to 6 billion records on the website and 20 million family trees. To begin your ancestor search, the website asks you the ancestor's name, the place that they might have lived, their estimated birth year, and what your relation is. If you can keep adding family members, the website will create an entire family tree, as well as available public records the name has appeared in. Examples of information you can find in records are street addresses, birthplace, immigration dates, military service, and occupation. There is also an option where you can take a test and the website looks at a huge amount of your DNA, and compares it to other DNA samples from around the world. By detecting similarities, they can trace back generations to connect you to where your ancestors came from. To become a member, you can either choose the U.S. Discovery option, or the World Explorer option. A six-month membership to access all U.S. records on the website costs \$12.95 per month. A six month membership for unlimited access to every source on the website costs \$24.95 per month. Ancestry.com is awesome way to feed your curiosity about your heritage and relatives who have passed away.

Awkwardfamilyphotos.com

We all have those old photos where we cringe with discomfort when looking at them, but then laugh at how awkward the photo really is. On awkwardfamilyphotos.com, there are thousands of pictures of families, couples, siblings, and portraits that are so uncomfortable yet so funny. There are pages and pages of pictures, each with its own caption underneath to make it even more hilarious. The website offers categories of photos such as family portrait, prom, pets, the '80s, holidays, and more. Awkwardfamilyphotos.com also makes hallmark cards with a picture on the front of it, which is perfect idea for a funny card to send to friends and family. If you have any awkward family photos you want to share, without any cost you can submit them to the website so everyone can see how funny it really is!

Apps of My Eye

Cool apps for a smartphone or tablet

By Rachel Daley
INDEPENDENT EDITOR



Find My Friends

Looking to stalk your friends or crushes at the push of a button? Install Find My Friends from the iTunes store now! This app allows you to easily locate your friends and family from your iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch. By searching someone's name, they will appear on a map of their location. However, don't be too sketched out; the consent to share your location with another user has to be mutual. If you do not wish to grant your parents the satisfaction of always knowing where you are, you can choose the "temporary sharing" option, restricting the amount of time that they are able to view where you are. If you're scared about your parents somehow rigging the system to find you, there is also a privacy setting which allows you to block them. Additionally, if your device is updated with iOS 6, then you can receive location-based alerts which notify you when a friend or family member leaves a current location or arrives to a new one. For girls, this will help substantially with getting ready to go out because you will actually know when your ride is leaving. The app also tells you exactly how far away you are in miles from your friends.



Starbucks App

It's fair to say that behind Nick's Roast Beef, Starbucks is the next most popular teen hangout spot in the Cape Ann area. The Starbucks app is both convenient and rewarding. A key feature is the "Starbucks Card," a virtual store credit card which can be swiped via your iPhone or iPod Touch at the register. You can check your card balance on the app and you can reload it with more money as well. Aside from the store card, the app also consists of a full food and drink menu which changes with the seasons. With this, you can access the nutrition facts of your favorite drink or pastry. Each time you buy an item at Starbucks, a star gets added to your virtual rewards coffee cup. Once you reach a certain number of stars, you are rewarded with a free food or drink at any local Starbucks. If you're in dire need for a cup of coffee, you can search for the nearest Starbucks through the app with the store locator feature.