

the INDEPENDENT

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College acceptances:

Early applicants receive answers before vacation

By Morgan Kennedy
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With 84 acceptances to date, the class of 2012 is off to a strong start, according to guidance department director Sharon Maguire.

Early action and early decision applications are becoming increasingly popular, and Maguire said about 62 percent of the class applied somewhere early this year.

Guidance counselor Karen D'Amour said it is too early on to know if the amount of admitted students is comparable to past years but the counselors are "beyond thrilled with the acceptances so far."

Senior Casey Weld applied early decision, a binding agreement that requires a student to attend the school if admitted. He applied and was accepted to Occidental College in Los Angeles, Calif.

"I took a trip to the West Coast to visit some schools. When I saw Oxy, I stopped touring because I



MORGAN KENNEDY PHOTO

Seniors Julia Toby, Melanie Tognazzi, Savannah Repucci, Ian Gillis, Max Gove, and Margaret Henry show off their stars signifying their college acceptances. 84 seniors have been accepted early.

knew I loved it and wanted to go," he said.

According to Weld, the application process wasn't too stressful at first, but became

increasingly nerve-racking as decisions started to come in.

Weld was taking a nap when his letter came in the mail.

"I woke up to my mom run-

ning in my room screaming with a letter that said 'Welcome to Oxy' on the envelope. I was a little disoriented at first, but I became progressively more excited

as I woke up," he said.

Once a student is admitted, he/she goes to the guidance office to share the good news, where the entire department "jumps up and down and gets very excited," while the student makes a star to hang on the college board, D'Amour said.

Senior Melissa Moore applied early action to Yale and was deferred to regular action.

"Being deferred from a school like Yale was more exciting than it was disappointing," she said. "The only downside is that I have to wait until April to find out if I get in or not."

D'Amour said that deferred students should continue to work hard and send colleges updates of any new achievements to show they are still interested.

Maguire encouraged students to apply early action and early decision.

"It makes for an incredibly hectic September and October of senior year, but it's well worth it to have an acceptance letter before winter break," she said. "We are

EARLY ACCEPTANCES,
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Vietnam War veteran speaks at Veterans Day assembly

By Anna Tyler
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Learning Center assistant and Vietnam War veteran John Twombly spoke at the Veterans Day assembly Thursday, Nov. 3, of his experiences in combat.

At the assembly, Assistant Principal Paul Murphy, on behalf of the Massachusetts State Senate, awarded Twombly with a Certificate of Merit for being in education for 52 years.

In the early 1960s, Twombly took a break from his job as a teacher and football coach for eight months to serve in Vietnam as a combat medic.

According to Murphy, he asked Twombly to speak because the school wanted someone with a military background who had not spoken at previous assemblies.

Twombly was a good fit because he had served in Vietnam and was comfortable speaking to high school students.

This year's assembly was the first time a faculty member had ever spoken at either a Veterans or Memorial Day assembly, according to Twombly.

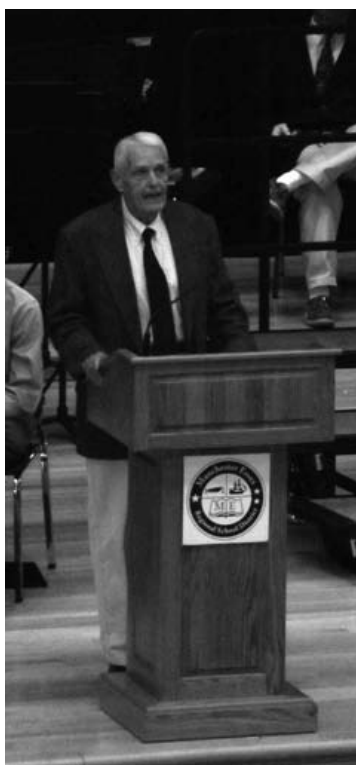
He said he wrote his speech mainly based on personal experiences, but he wanted it to be informative as well.

"I wanted it to be more of a historical review; I wanted [the students] to understand the difference between Veterans Day and Memorial Day," he said.

According to Twombly, Veterans Day is about the living veterans, whereas Memorial Day is to remember those who have passed away.

Murphy said Veterans Day is an important holiday

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MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

Teacher John Twombly speaks at the Veterans' Day assembly. In his speech, he recounted many humorous anecdotes of his experiences in Vietnam.

Winter semi-formal raises money for DECA conference

By Maya Shnider
INDEPENDENT STAFF

For the past four years the DECA team has hosted the winter semi-formal; this year's dance earned a profit of about \$860.

According to DECA adviser Dean Martino, the team planned the event since the start of school. Eliza Rohner and Kelly Dodge,

DECA officers, said the detailed planning really began about one month prior to the dance.

"The event is mainly planned by myself, Eliza Rohner, Olivia Prentiss, Anya Ciarametaro, and Mr. Martino," Dodge said.

According to Rohner, planning takes a lot of work; it's getting the

DJ, finding designs for the ticket and flyers, deciding on a theme and how to set up the dance.

Dodge said that they also need to get Principal James Lee to approve the date, and then they complete a building release form.

According to Dodge the profits from the dance go to the entrance

fees for DECA's district competition.

Martino said DECA tries to improve the dance each year. "We take mar-

ket research and the feedback we get from our customers to make each year's dance better," he said.

The tickets cost \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door, which some students thought were too expensive. "I don't think we should have to pay \$15 to go to a dance.

SEMI-FORMAL, PAGE 3

This year's dance earned a profit of about \$860.

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BRIEFS

Diversity Alliance holds toy drive for HAWC, Wellspring

With help of Diversity Alliance, the school collected the “largest amount of gifts ever brought in from one location” to Wellspring, according to Assistant Principal Paul Murphy.

Students were asked to bring in unwrapped, unopened toys to donate to Wellspring and Toys for HAWC during Dec. 5-16.

According to Wellspring.com, this organization is devoted to psychotherapeutic healing and is non-profit. The Diversity Alliance began working with Wellspring last year.

Toys for HAWC has been part of the Diversity Alliance’s donation list since Gandolfi became the adviser of the club, according to junior club member Laurel Barrie.

Rather than conducting separate collection periods, the Diversity Alliance decided to combine the weeks to collect toys, and just split the amount in half at the end of the drive.

“It was a little last minute, but we pulled it off,” club adviser M’Lena Gandolfi said.

After the first week, the club members decided to extend the collection period because they thought more people would participate.

“It was amazing how many more people participated after the first week. We had almost one full box at the end of the first week, but by the end of the second week, we had two and a half boxes full,” Barrie said.

“I love doing this during the holidays, because it gives me the feeling that I’m giving back and makes me feel better about myself,” she said.



ELLEN BURGESS PHOTO

The Diversity Alliance collected two and a half boxes of toys for charity.

DECA selected to promote Dew Tour

Manchester-Essex chosen to represent skiing, snowboarding event

By Landon Komishane
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Killington, Vermont, will host the Dew Tour this January, and the DECA program has been one of five DECA chapters selected to promote the Dew Tour.

“The Dew Tour is an exhibition of professional skiers and snowboarders,” DECA adviser Dean Martino said. “They comprise of professional athletes and Olympians. They tour around the United States and the tour has a skateboarding side and a winter side.”

“The marketing part of the Dew Tour requested for proposals from DECA chapters to submit an application to help promote the event,” Martino said.

‘The Dew Tour is an exhibition of professional skiers and snowboarders. They comprise of professional athletes and Olympians.’
-DEAN MARTINO

Martino said that senior Kelly Dodge used to ski on the Killington freestyle ski team and was the “spearhead” for this application. She said she would love to head this.

“I had to fill out an application to send to the Dew Tour in order to be chosen for this project,” Dodge said. “The application basically asked why you are interested in pursuing this project and what your promotional ideas are. We are using all of our marketing knowledge by putting it in a real world situation. DECA is only gaining experience.”

Advertising for the Dew Tour was put on flyers for the Winter Semi-Formal around the school, and DECA has gotten Dew Tour



HULU.COM PHOTO

Using marketing strategies learned in class, DECA students are advertising this year’s Dew Tour at Killington Mountain.

apparel. “We are trying to create Dew Tour events,” senior Olivia Prentiss said. “We have spent a few days in class brainstorming ideas of how to get the word out about Dew Tour.”

“[Dodge] is organizing the specific groups for the events,” Martino said. “We are trying to get a

display case downstairs, and we are also going to tie in the Highlighter Dance with the Dew Tour with a video screen running with the dance.”

“It has taken a long time to come up with plans that will actually work,” Dodge said. “Right now we are working on making a display case for the school.”

Global Issues classes strive to change the world

By Emma Jakes
INDEPENDENT STAFF

History teacher James Wallimann noticed there was a lot of “doom and gloom” in the world to teach about and as a result, wanted to do something positive. He asked his global issues classes how they could change the global landscape in a beneficial way.

Students formulated ideas and presented them during class to gain feedback about the feasibility and general appeal for the content of each plan.

Once votes whittled down the presentations to a few, they were combined into a final project titled MERHS Sole Purpose.

According to a project outline written by Wallimann, Sole Purpose is meant to “assist in the self



EMMA JAKES ILLUSTRATION

Senior global issues classes are working to make an impact on the global landscape.

advancement of Haitian residents.”

The two classes, totaling 44 students, have continued to organize and develop the plan under Wallimann’s guidance. He hopes the project will create empathy and compassion among students as they work together.

Initially Sole Purpose’s mission included the donation of shoes and funds to Haitians, but the group has hit some roadblocks. “Any completion of the project is success,” Wallimann said.

The project’s successive development is new to him and his students. According to Wallimann, this will build perseverance as they collectively shift around obstacles.

Wallimann explained that students plan on giving presentations to local high schools about their cause and holding a walk-a-thon and concert to garner further awareness.

To achieve this outcome, students have formed groups responsible for the various tasks they decided would be necessary, for example public relations, multimedia and research.

Each group’s members fill out a progress report every two weeks, recording the work they have completed. This work is structured around deadlines decided by students.

All classes are excited about the project. “I think it’s a really good cause, and I can’t wait to see how it turns out,” said senior Alex Filias, who is part of the multimedia group.

Students are also eager to see the end result of their work in the spring when Sole Purpose holds many major events.

“I hope we reach all goals and expectations with a positive result,” said senior Aryanna Tiberii, a member of the photography, presentation and ad and marketing groups. She is glad to see the classes venturing outside of the school for a project.

Interact club works with Rotary to raise money, help community

By Austen Coviello
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Interact Club, a segment of Manchester-Essex’s Rotary Club centered in the high school, is a group that works toward helping the community through fundraisers and volunteer work, according to adviser Dean Martino.

Rotary is formed by local professionals who create events in which money can be raised to support community needs, Martino said, and it “attempts to integrate high school students into community service.”

Interact’s goals are to provide aid within the community as well as internationally. On a local scale, Interact will be participating in projects such as “helping out” at Cape Ann Food Pantry, junior Carolyn Heslop said.

Juniors Heslop and Olivia Mastendino have been in the club for two years and are now the co-presidents. Mastendino said the club is made up of 70 members, equally dispersed grade-wise, but about 35 students regularly attend meetings.

According to Heslop, she and Mastendino “delegate and direct” the meetings with occasional Rotary aid, but the “idea is to have to members run it.”

Martino said the club is “still getting traction on what types of fundraisers to come up with,” but presentations from Rotary provide ideas. The club is in the planning stage of a number of fundraisers, Mastendino said, including a freethrow competition and bake sales.

This year, according to Mastendino, the club is hoping to provide aid for Rotaplast, a charitable organization supported by Rotary



AUSTEN COVIELLO PHOTO

Interact Club junior co-presidents Carolyn Heslop and Olivia Mastendino lead a club meeting. This year, the club hopes to raise money for cleft lip and pallet surgeries for children.

Clubs worldwide, which provides free reconstructive surgery to children with cleft lip and pallet mainly in third world countries.

According to Martino, some members have taken part in a leadership conference at Ipswich High School with Interact Clubs from various other schools. This, Martino said, allowed the club

leaders and members to “look at other models of success the other schools have engaged in and see what they can emulate.”

“Really, [Interact] is about students integrating themselves into the awareness of community service needs on a broader scope, looking at the world beyond themselves,” Martino said.

Debaters travel to Princeton University for esteemed tournament

Students compete at national event, work for Tournament of Champions bid

By Isadora Decker-Lucke
INDEPENDENT STAFF

The Princeton debate tournament was one of the most prestigious tournaments of the year, according to the Debate Team press release. Many debate students participated in the three-day tournament in the hopes of getting a Tournament of Champions bid or breaking into final rounds.

The team was very successful at the tournament, which took place December 2-4. This shows a great improvement, according to the press release. Last year only three students advanced into final rounds, all in speech.

Junior Jacob Martz was enrolled in Congress, which is a competitive event.

"It's one of the best tournaments. There's great competition and it's an opportunity to get a bid to the Tournament of Champions, which is a very big deal," he said.

Junior Colin Babikian competed in varsity LD at Princeton for the third time. "I think it was a pretty good tournament because the town is located near the college, so it's easy to explore the quaint little shops," Babikian said. "It's also a national tournament, so people from all over come to compete."

Many other debaters were also excited about the chance to explore the town with a level of freedom that's not usually possible at home.

Freshman Justin Eichenberger attended in novice LD. "It's exciting to stay in a hotel with all my friends," he said.

Although the debaters were wary of their opponents, the opportunity to learn from the wide variety of competitors they faced was exciting for them. "It helped to further my debate knowledge," Babikian said.

Martz agreed. "It's definitely one of my favorites because of the



ISADORA DECKER-LUCKE PHOTO

Junior Colin Babikian prepares his Lincoln Douglas debate case at the Princeton University tournament as freshman Justin Eichenberger looks on. The tournament was December 2-4.

Princeton experience and seeing different competition than I would at a local tournament," he said.

Social studies department chair and debate teacher Daniel Jewett was very proud of the team's success. "In recent years the team maintained a few standout students but lacked the depth of a nationally competitive program," he said. "This return to success in all divisions is a testament to the high expectations and class instruction of new debate teachers Jennifer Coleman, Jessica Tran and James

Wallimann."

In Public Forum Debate, the teams of Graham Shaw and Nabila Mahmud, and Margaret Henry and Kirsten Coale broke into triple octaves but were eliminated during that round.

In Novice Lincoln Douglas, Cam Holley competed in runoff rounds but did not advance to double octaves.

In Dramatic Performance, Jared LaFontaine broke into semifinals and came in 10th overall.

In Congressional Debate, Fiona

Davis and Jacob Martz broke to semifinals, where Martz dropped and Davis continued on to the final round to earn the rank of 13th overall.

Team president Graham Shaw is happy with the team. "We saw success across many fields and among people of different ages. Our freshmen and sophomores show huge potential for future tournaments."

FAST FACTS

- Partners Graham Shaw and Nabila Mahmud and Kirsten Coale and Margaret Henry broke into triple octaves in Public Forum.

- Fiona Davis and Jacob Martz broke into semifinals in Congress.

- Jared LaFontaine broke into semifinals in Dramatic Performance.

Juniors in Authentic Science Research contact potential mentors, anticipate responses

By Emma Jakes
INDEPENDENT STAFF

A key component of the Authentic Science Research curriculum includes immersing students into real world research scenarios.

According to ASR teacher Dr. Maria Burgess, the entire first year is devoted to teaching methods that help with this research, and much of that time is used to independently seek out internships.

First year ASR students are asked to pick three topics of science in which they are the most interested. Throughout the next few months they learn scientific procedures and how to best investigate further into those three topics. They eventually narrow down the selection to one area of study and then begin looking for re-

searchers in their field of scientific interest.

According to Burgess, the purpose is to find a mentor under which one can intern in order to gain real experience in a field rather than being limited to only **p r o b i n g** through related scientific articles; many of these articles don't always paint a clear picture depending on the complexity of the subject matter.

This year's juniors have begun sending out emails to scientists and science-related industries. Students utilize Google in a

search that starts broad but becomes narrower, depending on locations and subject focus.

Junior Marissa Ostrovitz said that epidemiology, the study of the distribution of disease, and oncology, the study of cancer, are her main concentrations. Her interest to apply to a university in Ontario led her to pursue a potential internship in Canada. ASR allows students the opportunity to travel outside of Massachusetts and even the country for in-

ternships.

Burgess encourages curiosity across the entire scientific spectrum in this process. "I'm looking



EMMA JAKES PHOTO

ASR students conduct online research in attempt to find mentors and summer internships in their preferred scientific field.

for an internship at a machine company where I can learn computer aided design (or CAD) and CAD machinery," junior Dustin Ferzacca said.

Junior Loyd Waites said he is

looking into astrophysics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Each junior has already sent out emails to possible mentors. Some have been declined while others are still awaiting responses.

CONTINUATIONS
continued from page 1

EARLY ACCEPTANCES

thrilled with the outcomes so far, because we know how hard the students have worked. Getting to see their faces when they know they are going to college is priceless. It's what brings us to school every day."

SEMI-FORMAL

And because it was so expensive, a lot of my friends weren't going, which made it a lot less appealing

to go to," senior Margaret Henry said.

However Martino is pleased with the amount of students that attended. "The turnout of the students was exactly what we were expecting. Every year it's between 120 and 132 students. This year we had 125 students come to the dance," he said.

Students enjoy the new feature of being able to choose the music ahead of time online. Martino said the team tries to find new ways for them to do this. "This year I was offered one of the six dancing robots in the world, but it was simply too expensive. But we will be looking to see if we can get it for the highlighter dance, which is on January 6," he said.

VETERANS DAY

to acknowledge as a school because the freedoms we experience each day are due to the people who have fought for them.

"Nov. 11 is a time that we can step back and acknowledge the veterans and all they did for us," Murphy said.

Twombly said he wanted his speech to help students understand the meaning of brotherhood.

"In the military, it's when you're actually putting your life in someone else's hands and he's putting his life in your hands," he said.

Twombly described his experience in Vietnam as "harrowing." He said he did not want to get too

close to his patients because of the tragic circumstances.

"I didn't want to know their last names. I knew their first name, but once I knew their last name, I felt I was too close, and I didn't like that," he said.

Murphy said the speech appealed to the students and that Twombly spoke eloquently about his experience in service.

Sophomore Neil Henry said the speech was inspirational, especially the part where Twombly described giving his purple heart to a disobedient child on the plane coming back from service.

Twombly said his overall experience in Vietnam gave him a better appreciation of life and of people and their personalities.

Happy Holidays!

From
The Independent



Health Matters



Staying safe on snowy roads

By Nabila Mahmud
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Making one wrong move while driving on a snowy road can turn into a near death experience. Even the most experienced driver can suffer from the inevitable ice skid, while rookie drivers are even more susceptible. No amount of knowledge is enough when it comes to staying safe while driving in slippery conditions.

AAA recognizes adverse weather can be the trickiest to drive in because of the general lack of awareness about risky conditions.

The best advice about driving in the winter is to maintain a solid concentration. Driving while fatigued is a poor idea in general; driving in the winter requires a higher level of concentration in order to recognize obstacles such as black ice or snow sheaths.

Furthermore, keeping your car in the best condition possible is imperative. Ensuring your gas tank is at least half full will prevent a fuel line freeze while keeping your gas tires properly inflated will provide for a smoother more efficient trip.



AAA.COM

AAA recommends maintaining concentration while driving in wintry conditions such as black ice and snow sheaths. Drivers should accelerate and decelerate as slowly as possible to avoid slippage.

During the winter, the actual act of driving is the most critical. The number one rule is to accelerate and decelerate as slowly as

possible to avoid any slippage. Once you lose control of the wheel, gaining control back becomes an anxiety-induced, frightening, and difficult task. Remember: it takes longer to slow

down on icy roads.

The obvious incident most people would like to avoid is an accident. The typical distancing rule of three to four seconds be-

hind the preceding car turns into eight to 10 seconds in icy conditions. Rear-ending a car on a below-zero day typically involves awkwardly waiting for police while an angry driver is silently (or obviously) cussing you out—that's not fun.

Another way to avoid this awkward scenario is threshold braking: braking with the heel of your foot on the ground and the ball of your foot firmly on the pedal. This enables the driver to break more effectively.

The best winter driving advice anyone can offer is the following: Do not drive unless absolutely necessary. Stay inside and enjoy the snow rather than trying to drive in it.

The best advice about driving in the winter is to maintain a solid concentration.

Peer tutoring helps biology students grasp new topics

AP, former AP students aid sophomores when studying for tests or reviewing

By Isadora Decker-Lucke
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Biology teachers Erica Everett and Maria Burgess have a system in which biology students can come in for tutoring by the AP biology students.

Not only does this system give the biology students a chance to increase their knowledge of the material, but it also helps the AP students review the major concepts and gives them a chance to receive extra credit points.

Senior Andrew Randall took AP biology junior year and still takes advantage of the tutoring opportunity. "It's useful because it's a good skill to develop, being able to teach someone a topic, and it's useful in that you really know you understand something if you can teach it to somebody else," he said.

Senior Alden Burnham also continues tutoring. "It's really useful for me to go over old topics and overarching themes," he said.

Both Randall and Burnham feel like they are returning the



ISADORA DECKER-LUCKE PHOTO

AP Biology student junior Matt Baker tutors sophomore Alex Taliferro. The science department arranges the after school program.

favor when they tutor. "[I tutor] because I remember how difficult biology can be for some people and as someone who understands the topic it's nice to extend my knowledge to help others succeed," Randall said.

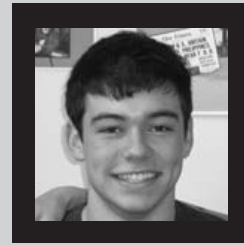
Sophie Neligan is a sophomore in Burgess' honors biology class who often receives peer tutoring. "I go before every test, and it's really helpful!" she said. Students can come for tutoring at any time, as long as they post on the tutoring Facebook page.

Jack Freed, a sophomore in Everett's honors biology class,

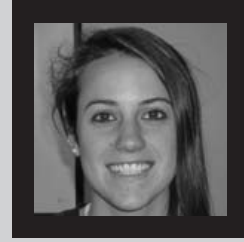
finds the peer tutoring to be an invaluable experience. "It's a helpful tool for a challenging class," he said.

Ellie Zwart, a sophomore in Everett's honors class, takes advantage of the opportunity for tutoring. "The tutors are very helpful they understand what parts of the material are more difficult and help us review them," she said.

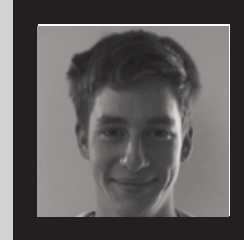
According to Zwart, the fact that the tutoring is mutually beneficial increases the amount of students that show up both to tutor and to receive tutoring.



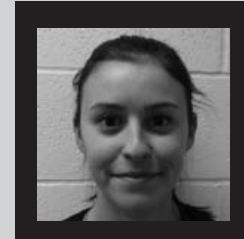
Senior
Graham Shaw:
Gary Coleman



Senior
Eliza Rohner:
Ian Somerhalder



Junior
Alex Walder:
Israel Kamakawi'ole

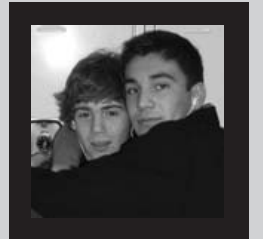


Junior
Maddi Bistrong:
Mr. Alger

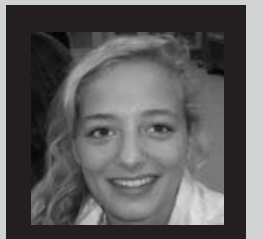
Student Speak

If you could have anyone dress up as Santa or Mrs. Claus and sit on his/her lap, who would it be?

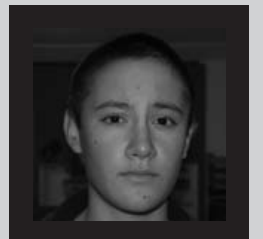
Sophomore
Sean Gutierrez:
Charlie Hoff



Sophomore
Sarah Lewiecki:
Ryan Gosling



Freshman
Troy Ciarametaro:
Chumlee



Freshman
Olivia Lantz:
Johnny Depp



BY MELISSA MOORE

Green Team expands influence

Green Team Scholars work to expand influence outside of school



By Anna Tyler
INDEPENDENT STAFF

As Green Team continues to promote the importance of “going green” throughout the school, it is also working hard to expand its influence to surrounding communities. The team has transformed into classes where members have more time to develop ideas and solutions for the many environmental issues the school encounters.

The Scholars program is a new program this year that is split up into two classes: Scholars 1.0, which is taken first, followed by Scholars 2.0. Students are able to “choose what [they] want to do as a project, and it requires [them] to have a lot of responsibility and independence,” said junior Jackie Rose, a member of the Scholar 2.0 class.

Director Eric Magers’ original design of Green Team was for the students to take control of the program, allowing for them to make the school and community green. This vision of the layout of Green Team led to the creation of the Scholars program.

The Scholars each have an independent project that either works toward expanding or promoting the program, helping to reduce the school’s waste, or educating staff and students about being green and saving the environment. There are some “effective, awesome projects,” said



ANNA TYLER PHOTO

Junior Green Team Scholar Maddie Monagle works on reducing the school’s waste by correctly placing waste on the Lucidomatic.

Magers, who is very satisfied with the outcome of the Scholars program.

“Mr. Magers is preparing the students to not only live in the world, but to be sure that they have the knowledge and information in order to help change it,” Director of Curriculum and Institute Technology Scott Morrison said.

Recently, all of the Scholars attended a presentation about climate change at the University of Massachusetts Lowell accompanied by the Gloucester and Rockport environmental clubs, according to Magers. He hopes

that these three towns will in time join forces.

According to Magers, other future plans consist of raising \$80,000 for the team and making partnerships with several local organizations such as Project Adventure’s North Shore Sustainability Project and the Gulf of Maine Institute.

The team is working on trying to obtain an onsite compost facility that will cut the school’s waste by about 40 percent, Magers said. However, cross contamination issues, especially with the Lucidomatic, are putting the plans on hold; “It’s frustrating,” Magers said.

Rubik’s Cube competition:

Six students compete, team achieves fifth place

By Maya Shnider
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Math teacher David Alger took six students to the Museum of Science to participate in former Patriot all star Ty Law’s Rubik’s cube competition on Nov. 19. The team won fifth place out of eight schools and also won a check for \$100.

Sophomores Lila Hughes, and Josh Brewster, juniors Nicole Bradley, and Jacob Martz, and seniors Daria Shnider, and Jeffrey White participated in solving Rubik’s cubes.

Alger started the school’s Rubik’s cube team this year. “There are a lot of cubing fans at our school, and I was invited to this competition, so I jumped at the opportunity,” he said.

The team practiced individually aside from one scheduled practice. According to Alger, he met with each of the students to brush up on their cubing skills.

“The competition consisted of two different events. There was the solo competition



COURTESY OF DAVID ALGER

Seniors Jeffrey White and Daria Shnider, sophomores Josh Brewster and Lila Hughes, juniors Jacob Martz and Nicole Bradley, and teacher Mr. Alger compete in Rubik’s Cube competition.

and the team competition, which was to solve 25 cubes as fast as possible,” Bradley said.

According to Alger, the limit for the team competition was eight people, and the team consisted of six, so they were a bit short-handed. White participated in both the solo competition and the team competition. “I would definitely

do it again, but first we need more people to join. Once people do join, the practice will make us better,” he said.

According to Alger, the team was at a severe disadvantage in terms of size; other schools had 15-20 kids.

All students will have the chance to participate in the school’s team in the future. “I am planning on having another team in the spring, but I’m not quite sure if that is going to happen yet. But there will definitely be one next fall, and it will be a lot more organized,” Alger said.

**‘There are a lot of cubing fans at our school...so I jumped at the opportunity.’
-DAVID ALGER**

Student

Profile

Dylan McClure



KELLY MOORE PHOTO

By Kelly Moore
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Where did you move from?
Tallahassee, Florida

Favorite song?
“Float On” by Modest Mouse

Least favorite song ever?
“Friday” – Rebecca Black

Favorite movie/ TV show?
“Dune”

What’s your favorite holiday? Why?
All of them

Coollest place you’ve ever been too?
Class trip to D.C.

Team Edward or Jacob?
Team Edward

“Southpark” or “Family Guy”?
“Southpark”

“Twilight” or “Harry Potter”?
Neither

Do you play any sports?
I used to play soccer, I run, and I ski. I’ve skied since I was 2, starting in Denver, Colorado

Favorite place to ski?
Copper Mountain in Colorado

Favorite Disney movies growing up?
“Balto” and “Aladdin”

Favorite Class? Why?
Chemistry, because I want to be an engineer, and it relates to me the best.

Favorite Color?
Orange

If you could have any superpower what would you want?
Ability to fly

What college do you want to go to?
MIT

Ugly sweater contest fosters excitement, holiday spirit

By Anna Tyler
INDEPENDENT STAFF

The last day of school before winter vacation marks the annual "Ugly Holiday Sweater" contest.

Teachers compete for the ugliest sweater, which is judged by the entire student body.

A few of the competition's past participants realized the newfound intensity of the tradition, compelling them to plan their

sweaters well in advance. "My family and I plan it over Thanksgiving break," math teacher

Sarah DeLuca said.

Even though fairly new to the competition, history teacher Jennifer Coleman created "a sketch of [her] design" and began thinking of ideas not long after last year's competition.

The competition's reigning champion is math teacher Rick Brown. He hinted that his sweater will be "over the top" but "keeping with past tradition." According to Brown, teachers have indicated he is "going down" this year, so he knows it will

be competitive. "It's going to have to be big this year," Brown said.

DeLuca likes "to [have sweaters] that tend to be 3-D."

Coleman hinted that her sweater will be "amazingly tacky and wonderful."

Teachers agree their biggest competitor is Brown. However, both are excited for the contest.

Students cheer and scream for their favorite sweater, bringing excitement and holiday pep, according to junior Ashley Deschenes. "I enjoy the sweater contest because it's a good way to end school before vacation," she said.

According to sophomore Jacob Tyler, the contest is a way of showing the teachers' true personality. "Students are able to see another side of the teachers," he said.

"It's a really strange tradition that I'm really glad to be part of. I don't entirely understand it, but it's just a lot of fun," Brown said.

'It's a really strange tradition that I'm really glad to be a part of. I don't entirely understand it, but it's just a lot of fun.'

-RICK BROWN



COURTESY KAITLIN MCDONAGH

Teacher Rick Brown celebrated his "Ugly Holiday Sweater" win last year. Brown is once again the favorite to win this year.

Robotics team prepares for FIRST robotics competition

By Maggie Lehar
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Excited for what they hope will be their best year yet in the FIRST Robotics competition, the Robotics team is already preparing to compete in March, according to senior Sean Halloran, the captain of the team.

"I am extremely excited to start robotics this year," junior Dustin Ferzacca said. The team's first meeting was Nov. 29, and now the team meets regularly, every Tuesday.

"The team is ready to get back to work and has a lot to do to prepare for our build season in January," Halloran said.

In the first week of January, the team will go to Manchester, NH, to a kickoff event for the FIRST ("For the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology") robotics competition, where they will be pre-



MAGGIE LEHAR PHOTO

Former teacher Bob Meltz assists robotics team members Sam Carlberg, Dustin Ferzacca, Sean Halloran, and Loyd Waites as they prepare for the FIRST ("For the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology") robotics competition in March. Meltz occasionally visits to assist the team because of his vast knowledge of robotics and the FIRST robotics competition in general.

sented with a new challenge. Then the team will have six weeks to build their robot before

they compete in the FIRST robotics competition.

"We have a lot of work to do

before then," Halloran said.

The team is convinced that this will be their strongest year ever,

according to Halloran. "I'm really excited about our chances of moving on from regionals to the nationals this year in the FIRST robotics competition. We compete against the best of the best. They have better facilities, but our strength is the ingenuity of our team. Our team members drive the team," he said.

A captain, an adviser, and volunteer mentors lead the team, according to Halloran.

The robotics team currently has about 20 members, but anyone interested in building, designing, science, or robots should join, according to Halloran. "We are open to any new members, but they should sign up as soon as possible!" Halloran said.

Any girls who are interested should definitely join the team, according to junior Chrissy Pries.

"The team also has a website: <http://robotsbythec.com>, and anyone interested in joining should check it out," Halloran said.

New electronics class performs hands-on labs instead of listening to lectures



RACHEL DALEY PHOTO

Seniors Max Rodier and Joe Burgess collaborate on a lab in the new Electronics class. The class is focused around students' participation in hands-on activities to better learn information.

By Rachel Daley
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Electronics is a new course for students interested in a hands-on education. 40 students are split among two classes and complete weekly projects to maintain the basic principles of the class.

According to Electronics teacher Steve Cogger, students need to have an interest in the class to understand it better. "Students like it, but it's difficult. We have already done 24 labs this semester, which shows all the information they need to take in."

Sophomore Michael Phelan said that doing labs helps the

class understand the material. "It helps to see what happens instead of trying to take all the information in from lectures," he said.

The class teaches the principles of electricity, constructing circuits, and the electronic components which make up today's technology.

According to Cogger, the class recently examined the electric circuit using a comparator, which can be seen in a thermostat. To help the students, Cogger gave them a picture of the circuit with labeled directions.

"I use pictures to help the students understand the labs and how to build the given objects or circuits," Cogger said.

According to senior Eric

Wright, the students' effort shows in their grades. "Electronics forces students to put themselves in the situation," he said. "The stuff we learn is interesting, and the class is enjoyable."

The class is open to all students; however, according to Cogger, 40 boys take the class as opposed to only three girls.

Regardless of gender, Electronics, according to some students, is seen as a class where the students need to want to learn and understand the information provided.

"Most of the principles we learn are in the labs, which shows that in electronics, it is vital for the students to pay attention and want to learn about the topic," Phelan said.

Lunch

Should students be allowed to leave?

Pro

Morgan Kennedy

Lunchtime is meant to be spent in the cafeteria, but as long as classes are not disturbed, nothing is wrong with escaping from the madness and volume of 100 hungry teenagers to get work done in the library.

Many students do not have the luxury of a study hall, and with demanding academic and extracurricular schedules, students often save a homework assignment for lunch block the following day. Just as often, students are forced to finish assignments in between lunch bells after waking up with a book on their face when exhaustion wins the fight against homework.

One might argue that work can be done in the cafeteria after eating lunch, but many students are without laptops, which eliminates the ability to do online work. The dining hall is not just a place to eat; it also serves as a social haven for students who haven't seen their friends all day, and the nonstop noise makes it nearly impossible to focus on work. Students should be able to work during their only free time without distractions.

The library is meant for student use, so even if kids don't need to complete work, they deserve the right to use it as a place to relax in peace and quiet during lunch if they so choose. If students abuse the privilege by going anywhere other than the library, and seniors to the senior room, then they should lose it and receive detention, the current punishment for leaving the cafeteria during lunch.

Wandering the school and disturbing classes are not legitimate reasons to leave the dining hall, but if students are only going to the library and senior room, without causing any trouble on the way there, they should not be stopped from doing so.

By leaving the cafeteria students are unsupervised and unaccounted for; however, this is no different than a study hall. Once a student signs out to the library or the senior room, they can essentially wander to wherever they choose in the school.

Students are trusted to go only to the designated study areas, so why can't this same system be applied to the cafeteria during lunch? A sign out sheet in the cafeteria would keep track of students by recording where they go and when.

If a student leaves lunch and causes a disturbance, the situation should be handled individually. Otherwise, they should have the ability to use the resources available to them when they are not in class.

Con

Ellen Burgess

Despite students' common belief, the faculty keeping students from leaving lunch early is not because of a desire to torture students and make them sit through an entire lunch period; members actually have a reason why students are not allowed to leave lunch early: safety.

Although it might be nice to slip out of lunch before the bell rings, maybe go to the bathroom before class or just get there early, allowing students to do so would decrease safety throughout the school.

"Students aren't allowed to leave because of safety issues. If they leave, we don't know exactly where they are in the school, and if anything were to happen, that would not be okay," Assistant Principal Paul Murphy said.

Because teachers are assigned to certain lunches, the faculty members monitoring the lunch have access to how many students, and the specific students themselves, who are supposed to be in the cafeteria at a time.

If students could leave at will, they would be at risk of not being accounted for in the case of an emergency.

"We need to know where students are at all times. That's why we do attendance. We need to know where students are just in case anything were to happen," Murphy said.

Aside from going to the bathroom and getting to class early, students have no reason to leave lunch early. It might not be a favorite place in the school, but the cafeteria

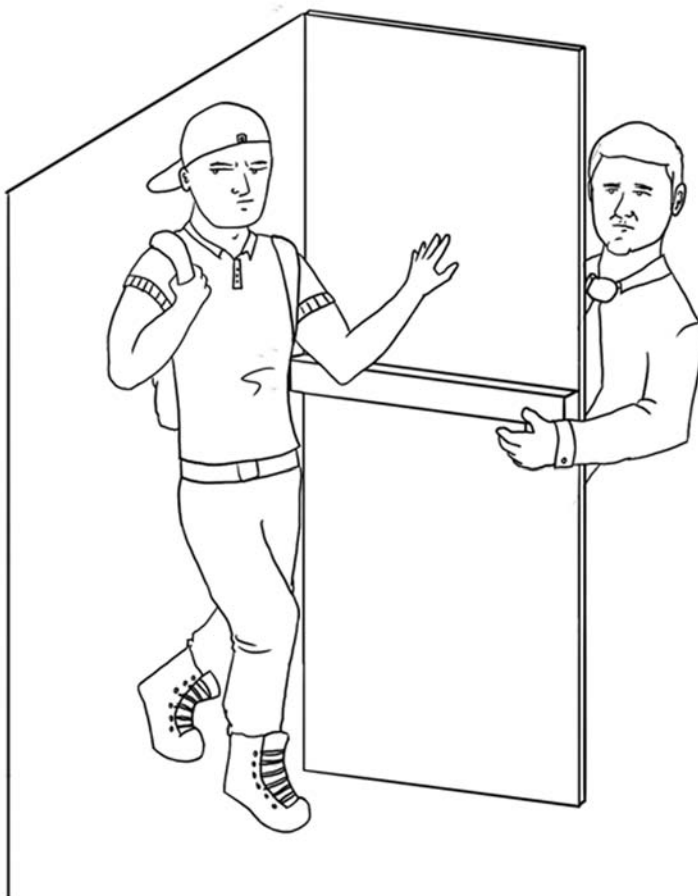
is definitely bearable for less than a half an hour.

Students are allowed to go to the bathroom during lunch, as long as they agree to return to the cafeteria after finishing, which eliminates that reason for leaving early.

Some argue that it can be difficult to get to class on time after lunch, but not only do faculty members do not only release students a few minutes early from lunch, but students are also given the additional four minutes between bells. If students are able to get from class to class on time, they are surely able to get to class promptly after lunch.

Students who attempt to slip by the monitoring faculty members are not accomplishing anything; they are putting themselves at risk.

Because they are putting students' safety first, the faculty is justified in preventing students from leaving lunch before the bell rings.



EMMA JAKES ILLUSTRATION

Teachers assigning homework over vacation is detrimental, unnecessary

By Kendall McCormick
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Vacation is defined by www.dictionary.com as a period of rest or freedom from duty, business, etc. The fact that many teachers choose to assign homework over vacations contradicts this exact definition.

Whatever happened to vacations being a time of rest, a week when students do not have to think about anything school related? Don't we deserve that after all? Students work for hours every single day, both in school and out of school. Even weekends no longer provide a break.

Moreover, many students participate in extracurricular activities

after school such as sports and clubs as well. Maintaining good health is a difficult feat for students with so much going on in their lives.

According to the American Psychological Association, "Insufficient sleep has also been shown to cause difficulties in school, including disciplinary problems, sleepiness in class, and poor concentration."

One of the only opportunities for students to catch up on their

rest is during vacations. Vacation is supposed to serve this very purpose by relieving stress while allowing students to catch up on sleep.

When teachers assign homework over vacations, students no longer have this period of rest from school that is so necessary to both their physical

and mental health.

Furthermore, many families plan trips and events during vacations. Having to do homework over vacation takes away from the time students can spend with their families.

Homework over vacation is unnecessary as well. Although some teachers feel that students need homework to keep them sharp and refreshed on the topic, those days gained during vacation make little difference in

the long run.

Without homework, students will be more focused when they get back to school, allowing for

more productivity after vacation.

Assigning homework over vacations is extremely annoying and does not allow students

the break from school that is so necessary and vital for maintaining both their physical and mental health.

'Insufficient sleep has also been shown to cause difficulties in school, including disciplinary problems, sleepiness in class, and poor concentration.'

-APA

Although some teachers feel that students need homework, those days gained during vacation make little difference in the long run.



Improper disposal inhibits Green Team's recycling efforts

MARIAN SILJEHOLM

Despite Green Team's efforts, students' inability to correctly separate lunch byproducts continues to undermine environmentally friendly initiatives in the middle and high schools.

According to faculty Green Team leader Eric Magers, since the installation of two Lucidomatic systems in the elementary schools, the machines have worked seamlessly to separate trash from reusable materials.

Only in the middle and high schools has rampant cross-contamination between recyclables, compost, and trash resulted in all items deposited in the Lucidomatic having to be thrown away, a problem that generates an extra 12 bags of trash per day, according to Magers.

After months of work creating a cafeteria waste system complete with descriptive pictures and clear instructions, Magers is frustrated by the students' lack of respect for the system.

"The fact that the school has had to buy plastic silverware because students are not only throwing away their stuff in the wrong places but also throwing away silverware and trays highlights their lack of consideration both for the school and the environment as a whole," he said.

Junior Jackie Rose, who has dedicated her Green Team Scholars project to this issue, articulated similar frustration. "It's like students don't care. They don't understand how many other systems are dependent on the Lucidomatic," she said.

Rose raises a relevant point; the Green Team is currently constructing an on-site compost system, an effort that will be rendered useless if the problem persists, as the compost will be unusable.

In a school that has put as much time and money into being environmentally conscious as Manchester-Essex has, the idea that 12 bags of compostable and recyclable materials are being thrown away every day represents not only a waste of resources but also an unnecessary financial burden, as each trash bag costs \$2 to dispose of.

While this may seem like a negligible number, over the course of a school year it amounts to \$4320 of taxpayers' money wasted because students refuse to take the extra minute to dispose of their waste in the appropriate bins.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Facebook photo contest is inappropriate

Facebook was originally made for teenagers to communicate and socialize with one another online, but recently, the website has turned into a medium for expressing grossly superficial and sleazy ideas and photos.

For the past few weeks, news-feeds have been clogged with headlines and photos for the page "Competition for the most beautiful teenager."

This competition allows people to post photos of themselves on a completely public wall. Not only can Facebook users all over the world view the photos.

Though the competition states that it is looking for the most beautiful teenager, the word "beautiful" has certainly been interpreted in many different ways.

Girls have posted photos which, while they may appeal to the male users of Facebook, look like they belong in a Playboy magazine. As for the male photos entered into the competition, though some have been slightly suggestive, they have not been nearly as revealing.



FACEBOOK.COM

The competition's Facebook page features photos and comments

Not only are these pages inappropriate due to some of the images, the idea itself is morally wrong. Though seeing comments on a photo saying "hot" or "sexy" may be flattering such contests are incredibly degrad-

ing. High numbers of "likes" and comments on scandalous photos send out a message that "beautiful" means showing off one's body in a risqué manner.

Posting a photo on the wall is like intentionally setting oneself

up for harassment in the form of deliberately offensive, as well as crude and dirty comments.

People have the audacity to write incredibly insulting and offensive comments on the photos of people they have never even met, and they use Facebook as a way to voice remarks they could never have the courage to say to someone in person.

Sadly, thousands, if not millions, of people have participated in these competitions. Many girls post a photo because they are looking for approval and positive feedback, but why should they need approval from strangers? The contests should not be taken seriously because there is nothing important or rewarding about them. In fact, they should be taken down from Facebook for good.

The contest stands for misguided impressions of what really makes a person "beautiful." True beauty is represented in many forms such as intelligence and kindness; a single photo on Facebook cannot solely determine how attractive someone is.

Guidance should calculate class rank to help high achieving students

By Fiona Davis
INDEPENDENT STAFF

With all of the commitments that high school brings, balancing a busy schedule and achieving high academic standing is a difficult and praiseworthy feat.

When applying to colleges, those students who have achieved academic honors should have the opportunity to benefit from their hard work through the calculation of class rank.

Many small, competitive schools, like Manchester-Essex, do not calculate class rank, which negatively affects hardworking students.

In fact, to the opinion of the guidance department, class rank

actually benefits high achieving students by rewarding their success.

According to the National School Board Association, class rank should be calculated because, "students who are working hard in taking the honors and AP classes should get that reward sent to colleges."

What many schools fail to realize, is that by taking away class rank, many students who would benefit from class rank lose their edge in the college application process.

Many argue that class rank harms students who are not ranked as high due to extremely competitive environments, but leveling the playing field by not calculating class rank puts all students at the same level in the

eyes of colleges, which is unfair to hardworking students.

If class rank would harm some students in the application process, they have the option omit it from their applications; however, students should have the choice to include their rank if it is beneficial.

Furthermore, most colleges still use class rank to determine which students are hardworking and deserving of college acceptances.

According to a New York Times article, many college admissions officers do not approve of the trend away from reporting class rank because it forces colleges to "make less informed decisions or overemphasize results on standardized tests."

Standardized tests, such as the

Scholastic Aptitude Test, do not reflect the effort students put in to their regular classes, which is ultimately a better indicator of how well they will succeed in collegiate level classes and the working world.

Because the guidance office does not calculate class rank, students apply to colleges without the added advantages of class rank, which is unfair considering the difficult standards for achieving a high class rank.

Successful students deserve to reap the full benefits of class rank, enabling them to compete in the application process.

The school should reward the many successful students who put an emphasis on being at the top of the class by utilizing class rank.

the INDEPENDENT

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

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

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

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

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

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Duane Sigsbury
Captains: Seniors Sean Nally, Casey Weld, Joe Burgess, and Chris Bishop
Impact players: Seniors Sean Nally, Joe Burgess, Casey Weld, David Wright, and Chris Bishop.
Goals for this year : To get a spot in the tournament and get another Cape Ann title.
Record : 2-0
Captain's quote: "We share the ball; we're not selfish. Look out for all of us on the court," Nally said.



Casey Weld



Chris Bishop



Joe Burgess



Sean Nally



Jelisa O'Hara



Jess Crossen



Leanne Ciccone



Ellen Burgess

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Lauren DuBois
Captains: Seniors Ellen Burgess, Jelisa O'Hara, Jess Crossen, and Leanne Ciccone
Impact players: Ellen Burgess, Jelisa O'Hara, Jess Crossen, and Leanne Ciccone
Goals this year: To improve on the record from last year and make the tournament
Record: 1-2
Coach's quote: "I want to help each girl and the team improve as a whole."

GYMNASTICS

Coach: Alexandra Gabriel
Captains: Seniors Suzy Balk, Becky Moffat, and junior Katherine Hennigan
Impact players: Katherine Hennigan
Goals this year: Win some meets, improve on last year's record, help all gymnasts learn new skills
Record: 0-0
Coach's quote: "I expect my gymnasts to come to practice ready to work."



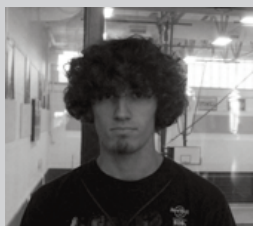
Katherine Hennigan



Melissa Moore



Anya Ciarametaro



Joe O'Neil



Stephan LaForge

TRACK AND FIELD

Coach: John Barbour
Captains: Seniors Anya Ciarametaro, Joe O'Neil, Stephan LaForge, and Melissa Moore
Impact players: Anya Ciarametaro, Joe O'Neil, Stephan LaForge, and Melissa Moore
Goals this year: To win more meets and qualify people for states
Record: Girls: 1-0 Boys: 0-1
Coach's quote: "Our captains have committed to this team in the past and all they want is the best."

GIRLS' HOCKEY



Brittany Smith

Coach: Emily Hudak
Impact players: Seniors Ally Healy and Keelin Fallon of Marblehead, and sophomore Brittany Smith.
Goals: To make it to tournament and communicate well on the ice.
Record: 0-2
Smith's quote: "I expect our team to hold our own throughout the season."

BOYS' HOCKEY

Manchester-Essex players: Sophomore Emmett Ryan, and freshmen Alex Tognazzi and Cole Spencer
Coach: Derek Papalegis
Goals: The goal is always to make the state tournament, and make a far run in it to have a winning season.
Record: 2-0
Captain's quote: "[The Manchester-Essex players] are hard working kids who come to practice every morning with the desire to make themselves better players," senior captain Beau Gauthier

SKI TEAM

Coach: Tim Wonson

Captains: Juniors Megan Jones and Brian McAuliff

Impact players: Megan Jones, Brian McAuliff and freshmen Alex Marshall and Chris McAuliff.

Goals for this year : To get more members to the state championship

Captain's quote: "[Wonson] is so dedicated to the team which really gets us motivated." Jones said.



Megan Jones



Brian McAuliff

SWIM TEAM



Brianna Malik



Alex Walder

Coach: Katie Garvin

Captains: Seniors Brianna Malik, Sal Lupo (Rockport), and juniors Alex Walder, and Dustin Ferzacca (Rockport)

Impact players: Dustin Ferzacca, Alex Walder, sophomore Easton Ehler (Rockport), and freshman Olivia Painter.

Goals for this year: Qualifying for states and sectionals, and coming together as a team.

Record: 1-0

Coach's quote: "We're looking to be as competitive as we can be."

Field hockey players travel to Arizona

Juniors, sophomores play at National Hockey Festival

By Melissa Moore
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Instead of sitting down to a turkey dinner, four Manchester-Essex students opted to play field hockey in Arizona at the National Hockey Festival over Thanksgiving break.

Juniors Kelsi Field, Megan Jones, and Coco Bradley and sophomore Anna Heffernan attended with their club teams. Field, Jones, and Heffernan went with Cape Ann Coalition while Bradley played for Northeast Elite. Jones and Heffernan played on the same under 16 team, and Field played for the under 19 team.

According to Heffernan, she

definitely enjoyed knowing Jones would be on her team. Though knowing someone else helped at the beginning, her team of 16 got "really close," eating meals and going shopping together.

Jones also enjoyed getting to know her team. According to her, the team dynamic was incredible.

"This was one of the closest teams I've ever been a part of even though we had only spent a couple hours of practice with each other prior to the tournament," she said. "We all came together so quickly on and off the field.

Field attended "Festival" to see what competition may be like at the college level. According to her, the level of play was



COURTESY OF ANNA HEFFERNAN

Junior Megan Jones and sophomore Anna Heffernan traveled to Arizona with the Cape Ann Coalition team in their under 16 division. Juniors Kelsi Field and Nicole Bradley also participated.

much higher than in high school.

"The players on my team were insane, so I knew the competition would be just as tough," she said. "The atmosphere was intense and sort of intimidating at first, especially seeing all the

scouts...but it was also fun."

Despite having two girls from Watertown on the team (Manchester-Essex field hockey's rival), everyone was "really nice and accepting," Field said.

Bradley, playing for Northeast

Elite, was "so excited...but very nervous because [she] didn't know the girls on [her] team," she said. According to her, the atmosphere was incredible. Everyone strived to play her best and had "a great attitude."



MAYA SHNIDER PHOTO

Games are scheduled during holiday vacations, encouraging coaches to plan practices during the break as well. This forces players to compromise family and relaxation time.

MIAA scheduling leads to games, practices over holiday vacation

By Rachel Daley
INDEPENDENT STAFF

The girls' and boys' basketball teams will not relax during vacation this year. According to head varsity girls' coach Lauren DuBois, games will be held over break.

Although conditioning over break is beneficial for the team, the purpose of a vacation is to recover from the stresses brought up by both school and sports.

Senior varsity captain Jelisa O'Hara said all vacations should be free of sports. "Sports can cause stress, so individual stu-

dent athletes aren't getting the recovery they need," she said.

Stress isn't the only negative impact on the players. They feel pressured to cancel their plans for the holidays because of the practices and games.

"Last year, I was supposed to go to the Caribbean, but I had to cancel because of basketball," O'Hara said. "Now I know not to schedule anything."

As coach of the team, DuBois shares a different opinion. "The break is a full week; if we stopped practicing, we would have to start conditioning from scratch."

According to DuBois, players will not get kicked off the team if

they don't attend the games over break, but they may lose playing time.

Due to the penalty players will face if they miss the games and practices, they feel pressured to neglect the holiday family time.

Sophomore Casey Cook normally goes to Pennsylvania to visit her grandparents over break, but in fear of losing playing time, she is staying home for the holidays.

"Because of basketball, my family isn't going to celebrate Christmas at my grandparents' house this year. It's definitely what's good for the team, but I don't get to see them very often," Cook said.

Seven students selected to perform in District festival concerts

By Caroline Wood
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After 14 chorus and band members auditioned for the Massachusetts Northeastern District Senior Music Festival on Nov. 19, seven students were chosen to represent the school during the Festival Chorus, Band, and Jazz Band Concerts in January.

The students selected to participate in the festival are seniors

Leanne Ciccone, Ian Gillis, Sam White; sophomores Vanessa Kelley, Alexandra Valenti, and Lindsey Duff, and freshman Tucker Evans.

On the day of the audition, the students drove to North Andover High School.

"I'm very proud of the way the

students conducted themselves at their auditions," band director Joe Sokol said. "I'm also very happy to congratulate Sam White for making it on jazz guitar and receiving an All-State recommendation."

According to Gillis, students prepared outside of school for their auditions; however, choral director Donna O'Neill worked with some students on their songs and all the chorus kids with their sight-singing.

"The sight-singing is a significant part of the audition," O'Neill said.

"The students have been working on sight-singing during chorus over the past 2 to 3 years." O'Neill

was also

pleased with the students' preparation for the audition. According to her, the students were well prepared and represented the school beautifully, which is

'I'm very proud of the way the students conducted themselves at their auditions.'

-JOE SOKOL



COURTESY OF DONNA O'NEILL

clearly indicated by the breakdown of scores the students received.

"Most of the students received a score of eight out of 10 or higher on the sight-singing," she said. "I'm very proud of the students who auditioned and the ones who were accepted, especially Tucker Evans, who is only

a freshman and received high praise from the judges and an All-State recommendation."

The students will participate in two rehearsals before performing in the Festival Concerts, which will take place on Jan. 6. At the end of January, both White and Evans will audition for All-State in Shrewsbury, Mass.

The following seven students were selected to participate in the Senior District Music Festival. From left to right: Ian Gillis, Tucker Evans, Sam White, Lindsey Duff, Leanne Ciccone, Vanessa Kelley, and Alexandra Valenti.

Annual Winter Concert features performances by band, chorus, SoundWaves



COURTESY OF NICOLE D'AMBROSIO

The high school band, chorus, and SoundWaves performed on December 15 for the annual winter concert. A NAHS induction took place during the intermission of the performance. The chorus performed songs such as "Edelweiss," and "Jingle Bells" while the SoundWaves performed new selections "True Colors" and "Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." The Band ended the concert with the newly formed Percussion Ensemble, Rhythmic Ride, and a traditional holiday song: "Feliz Navidad."

By Kelly Moore
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Parents, friends, and family

members gathered on Dec. 15 for the annual winter concert, which featured performances by the high school chorus, band, the SoundWaves,

as well as the induction ceremony for the National Art Honor Society.

The full chorus began the concert, performing: "Light the Candles of Freedom,"

"Noel/Pachelbel's Canon," "Edelweiss," and "Jingle Bells."

The a cappella group the SoundWaves performed four se-

lections: "True Colors," "The Turtle Dove," U2's "Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," and "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year."

Seniors Leanne Ciccone and

Ian Gillis performed solos during the U2 performance, and Gillis also accompanied the full chorus on violin during their earlier performance of "Noel/Pachelbel's Canon."

The SoundWaves "have had many performances in the community, and they very much [looked] forward to performing for the school community," music teacher Donna O'Neill said.

Intermission between the chorus and band featured the National Art Honors society induction, during which previous

and active members welcomed the new inductees on to the stage where art teacher Caroline Epp read their pledge.

The band opened their half of the concert after intermission with "Christmas Carol March" which was a "nice way to open [their] portion of the concert," band conductor Joseph Sokol said.

"I was excited to play the 'Christmas Pop's Medley' because it's a mix of classic Christmas songs," sophomore clarinet player Julia Paccone said.

Rhythmic Ride, the band's new percussion ensemble, consisting of seniors Brianna Malik, Sebastian Wooding, Erik Keefe, Savannah Repucci, junior Dylan Crawford, and sophomore Noah Gilbert also performed two selections, "Holiday for Drums" and "Viva Percussion."

"I [was] so excited to perform in my last winter concert," Repucci said.

'I [was] so excited to perform in my last winter concert.'

-SAVANNAH REPUCCI

Creative writing students partake in national novel writing competition

By Maggie Lehar
INDEPENDENT STAFF

During the month of November, three students from the creative writing class were very busy writing a 50,000-word novel in one month in order to participate in "National Novel Writing Month," according to Gloria Tanner, creative writing class teacher.

"National Novel Writing Month," also referred to as "NaNoWriMo" is an Internet-based creative writing challenge that takes place annually and is open to anyone who wants to participate, according to Tanner.

The challenge is to write a

50,000-word novel from scratch, between Nov. 1 and Nov. 30. If the participants are able to complete their 50,000-word novels

and upload them to the National Novel Writing Month website by the deadline, then they receive a certificate stating that they have completed the challenge.

Three students, freshmen Teddy Economo, Katie Furber, and Devon Mus-

grave-Johnson partook in National Novel Writing Month, Tanner said.

Only one of the three students, Katie Furber, was able to finish her 50,000-word novel by the deadline, but they all put in a great effort, according to Tanner.

"It was very rewarding, and I'm really glad that I did it," Furber said.

Writing a 50,000-word novel in such a short amount of time was definitely a

challenge, according to Musgrave-Johnson.

Although Musgrave-Johnson and Economo did not finish their novels by the deadline for National Novel Writing Month, they still completed them, which is quite an accomplishment, Tanner said.

"I wish I finished it by the deadline, but even though I did not it was still a great experience, and it was pretty fun too," Economo said.

The three students worked very hard and are very proud of their novels, Tanner said.

People can learn more about National Novel Writing Month or see the list of winners on the website, <http://nanowrimo.org>.



MAGGIE LEHAR PHOTO

Freshman Katie Furber took part in the National Novel Writing Competition. She wrote a 50,000 word novel and submitted it to the "NaNoWriMo" website and received a certificate for her efforts.

'I wish I finished it by the deadline, but even though I did not it was still a great experience, and it was pretty fun too.'

-TEDDY ECONOMO

'The Muppets' return to big screen a success

New film hits home for faithful followers of the franchise

By **Caroline Wood**
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

MOVIE REVIEW

After 12 years, Jim Henson's loveable marionette puppets return to the theaters in the film "The Muppets," starring alongside Jason Segel ("How I Met Your Mother"), Amy Adams ("Enchanted"), and Chris Cooper ("Seabiscuit").

This triumphant return of these loveable characters raised more than \$25 million during its first weekend at the box office and in just five days grossed at least \$41.5 million, according to IMDb.com.

The film begins with Segel's character, Gary, his girlfriend Mary (Adams), and his Muppet brother, Walter, as they travel to Los Angeles in order to meet Kermit and the Muppets.

Upon their arrival, the trio discover the old Muppet Theater is in danger of being demolished and dug up for oil by the film's antagonist, Tex Richman (Cooper).

Walter persuades Kermit to get the Muppets back together in order to put on a show at the theater in order to raise the \$10 million needed to save the theater.

This musical comedy is riddled with hilariously clever songs, such as "Life's a

Happy Song," "Me Party", and "Man or Muppet," written by featured musical supervisor, Bret McKenzie ("Flight of the Conchords").

Other classic Muppet songs, such as Kermit's "Rainbow Con-

nection," are featured during the telethon the gang holds in order to help raise the money. Things do not go exactly as planned during the telethon when Richman, the villain, attempts to stop the telethon before the Muppets raise enough money.

Additional celebrities, such as Neil Patrick Harris, Selena Gomez, Whoopi Goldberg, and Zach Galifianakis, provide comical cameos during the Muppets' struggle to save their theater, adding to the already fantastic cast.

Rated PG for mild, rude humor, "The Muppets" depicts a heart-warming story of perseverance, hope, and the value of true friendship that tugs at the heartstrings of The Muppets' faithful followers.

"The Muppets" depicts a heart warming story of perseverance, hope, and the value of true friendship.'



DISNEY.GO.COM/MUPPETS

Jason Segel, Amy Adams, Kermit, and Miss Piggy star in "The Muppets," which entered theaters November 23. The movie received over \$25 million during its first weekend at the box office.

New format provides incentive for students in Video Production Club



CAROLYN HESLOP PHOTO

Juniors Tierney McTiernen and Ellie Mortillaro work on their film projects for the Video Production Club. The club meets after school where the students work on their videos

By **Carolyn Heslop**
INDEPENDENT STAFF

In hopes of continuing with their success, the Video Production Club has changed both its name and format this year, club adviser James Wallimann said.

According to Wallimann, this year the club is doing three main documentaries, and the concept is for small teams of students within the club to come together to essentially be "hired help." These documentaries include videos regarding the DECA program, the Green Team, and a senior class video yearbook, he said.

"This process simulates what it

would be like for someone to work with an actual client regarding a video. The students must ask their client what they want for a video, and then they go and make the video, and sometimes have to make changes and com-

promises," Wallimann said.

This new format gives students incentive to get the work done themselves, according to Wallimann,

because there are multiple people relying on them to complete their part of the project.

Junior Ellie Mortillaro said she has learned that a lot more goes into making these films than originally meets the eye because there are so many different elements and people involved with

the design process of each scene.

The Video Production Club is a fun way to brainstorm different techniques for making videos, as well as learn how to make different types of videos, Mortillaro said.

Junior Tierney McTiernen has been part of the club since her freshman year. She said the club is not as big of a time commitment as other after school programs; however, students also have the responsibility of checking in with Wallimann after school.

Wallimann said that he is thrilled to get the club going this year and to use the new equipment that the club acquired to aid them with the film-making process.

McTiernen added that through the Video Production Club, she has learned that creating a movie is not only long and tedious, but it can also be very enjoyable.

Epp invites new members, National Art Honors Society has first meeting

Emily Arntsen
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Photography teacher Caroline Epp invited approximately 100 art students to join the National Art Honors Society to promote art in the school and community.

Like years past, the requirements are that students have taken at least one semester of art class and gotten a grade of a B or above.

This year, in addition to the original requirements, Epp decided to have students apply to

become a member through teacher recommendations and by submitting a piece of art in any medium that reflected "the artist inside."

A short induction ceremony will be held during the winter chorus and band concert which, Epp said, "will be nice because it's like the arts supporting each other."

Parents and friends are invited to view the artwork that will be on display in the halls of the high school starting December 15. Because of the school's new art boards, all the art can be on display at once.

Once students are a member of NAHS, they are required to do seven hours of art related community

service and have regular attendance to monthly meetings.

Members of NAHS will learn new techniques from guest artists, work on group community service projects and prepare for college art programs. Epp encourages anyone who is serious about art to take a summer program.

In January NAHS will have its first meeting. Epp said, "The only thing we have planned so far is to make Valentine cards to be donated to a local senior citizen's home. We'll start with that, and then we'll move on to doing other things promoting art in the school."

FAST FACTS

•100 students were invited to join.

•Inductees required to take at least one semester of art and received a grade of B or above.

•Once inducted, students must complete seven hours of art related community service.

'The only thing we have planned so far is to make Valentine cards to be donated to a local senior citizen's home.'

-CAROLINE EPP