



Manasquan High School

# The Blue & Gray

## Spirit Week Traditions Live On!



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# Mr. Lee Awarded MHS Teacher of the Year!

By: Natalie Goble

Manasquan High School recently honored Mr. Lee (better known as “Blee”) as Teacher of the Year, honoring his years of dedication as a PE teacher, coach, and mentor. Recognized for his energy, passion for sports, and ability to motivate stu-

but his connection to the school goes back further. As a former MHS student, he grew up admiring the teachers and coaches who came before him, especially Peter Cahill, who inspired him to return to MHS.

“I always said I wanted to grow up and have the same job,” he explained, grateful that he is able to fulfill that dream.

Coaching has been a major part of his career.

Whether on the football or baseball field, Mr. Lee says the most rewarding part is watching students improve. “It’s fun to stay close to home and watch the growth of our athletes every year,” he said. Among

his many memorable moments, the 2016–17 school year stands out, winning a sectional title in football and a state title in baseball with two special groups of student-athletes.

Beyond wins, Mr. Lee hopes his athletes carry the character lessons he em-

dents, he has shaped the school community in ways that reach far beyond gym class.

Reflecting on the award, he exclaimed, “I was very surprised and tremendously honored to be named Teacher of the Year. It was truly an incredible honor.”

Mr. Lee has been part of the MHS staff since 2003,



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# A Well Deserved Winner

By: Amelia Steger

Manasquan High School has long been recognized for its strong athletic department, from the players to the coaches, and of course, our athletic trainer, Mr. Hyland.

This year Mr. Hyland has been recognized for his hard work and dedication to the students here at MHS. He won the support

staff of the year award! Mr. Hyland has proved himself more than worthy and deserving of this award throughout his 33 years of working here at MHS.

“It feels great to be recognized by the school district as the athletic trainer in the high school. It has been a very rewarding career here with the student athletes and it’s nice to be recognized,” said Mr. Hyland in response to winning his award.

As said before, Mr. Hyland has worked here at MHS for 33 years and before this he attended West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He majored in science and sport medicine and got his New Jersey license in athletic training.

Right out of college, Mr. Hyland began working at Manasquan through No-

vaCare as a physical therapist, and after a few years MHS hired him full-time.

When he began at MHS he was a professor for Rutgers and taught medical classes which students could take and earn Rutgers college credits. For 29 years, he taught medi-

knee in a soccer game. Mr. Hyland was so nice, and he made sure I got the best care,” said MHS junior Kelsey Kelemba.

Outside of school Mr. Hyland lives a life full of family, travel, and hobbies. He has two sons, who are both MHS alumni, and alongside his wife they all love to travel. Some of Mr.

Hyland’s favorite places to travel include Atlantis in the Bahamas, Florida, and of course Straton in Vermont to go skiing.

Additionally, Mr. Hyland loves to spend outside time with his family golfing, fishing, or even camping.

From his kind, understanding, and amiable personality Mr. Hyland is an all-around loved staff member here at MHS. His recognition as staff member of the year is extremely deserved, and everyone at MHS thanks him greatly

for his hard work and commitment to the student athletes.

“Congratulations for being the best support staff person, you really deserve it and thank you for everything you’ve done for me!” said MHS senior and athletic trainer volunteer Sophia Covert.



cal terminology and sport injury classes; today these classes are taught by Mrs. Kozic.

After teaching and working long hours as trainer, Mr. Hyland decided to focus on rehabbing student athletes. And he is the best.

“I had to go to Mr. Hyland because I hurt my

# Squan Falls in Thanksgiving Rivalry Game

By: Darcy Furniss & Natalie Goble

The Manasquan-Wall football rivalry is one of the most anticipated matchups on the shore. Played almost every year since the early 2000's, the game is a highlight for both communities, drawing crowds, traditions, and intense competition. Fans and players know that this rivalry is about more than wins and losses; it's a chance to show pride, school spirit, and resilience on a familiar stage.

Junior wide receiver Zach Esdale said the atmosphere this week reflected that history. "We handle the pressure by showing up and working hard at practice," he said. He added that the team stays close during hard moments. "We keep each other's heads up after a bad play. It's all about 'next play' mentality." Esdale says the rivalry's history was keeping the Warriors focused. "The traditions hype us up.

It reminds us what we're playing for."

Junior running back and linebacker Dax Klein said he was expecting a lively crowd. "I think there will be a really good atmosphere. It's gonna be loud, hype,

and just a fun environment to play in," he said.

Klein also noted that the team had been more focused than usual "We've had more time to go over game plans, so we're taking everything step-by-step and making sure we're locked in on the details." On defense, he said the strategy for their top offensive threats was clear. "We're planning to shut them down by switching up how we play. We've got different blitz packages and coverages we're gonna throw at them." Klein added that playing in the rivalry is always special, "It feels great. The energy is crazy, and it's always a fun game whether you're on the field or watching from the stands."

Senior left guard Jack Poland said extra practice, the



Above: Junior QB Kyle Dow fires a pass.

teams' brotherly bond, and their pre-game pasta party, helps them handle the pressure. "We feel ready for whatever comes our way," he said. Coach Brian Lee reiterated their confidence. "The main focus this week is preparing for a tough opponent," he said. "We've had a few weeks off, so keeping them mentally prepared is probably the biggest concept," he stated. He emphasized their composure, "We want them to stay calm and not let the game get too big."

Unfortunately, the Warriors entered the rivalry matchup at less than full strength. Several standout starters were sidelined due to injuries, which required other players to step up in key offensive and defensive positions.

Above (left): Squan runner breaks free; (right) senior Frankie Tackett jumps to make the catch for six.



# The Harlem Wizards Come to Manasquan for a Night of Basketball Against Local Staff

By: Cameron McLaughlin

On Thursday, November 20th, the Manasquan High School gym shifted from its usual after-school quiet to the steady rhythm of music and sneakers as the Harlem Wizards made their entrance for the night.

The traveling show team, known for mixing the game of basketball with comedy and fun crowd interaction, visited the school for a Thursday night game showing support for a fundraiser organized by Ms. Koenig. The event drew families, students, and staff who packed the bleachers to watch the Wizards face a team of local teachers.

"The Wizards really go out of their way to make the night special," said Ms. Hodnett, a teacher who played in the game two years in a row. "I love the balance of putting on a show and high-level basketball skills going on."

From the moment the team entered the gym, the energy and vibes of basketball and comedy were there. Students were "up and out of their seats from the time they walked into the gym until they left," Math teacher Mr. Minutoli stated. The players of the Harlem Wizards mixed impressive half-court shots and high-flying dunks with comedy routines and playful moments woven throughout the game.

Throughout the night, it was made clear that the Wizards' connection with the crowd set the tone for the night. "They really go above and beyond to make the night memorable for the students," Ms. Hodnett informed,

adding that the players "try to make as many connections with all of the young students." Teachers from Manasquan Elementary and Brielle Elementary School took the court as well, which was said to be an even greater experience for the students watching. "The students love seeing some of their teachers on the court having fun, playing some good basketball, or in my case, terrible basketball!" Ms. Hodnett exclaimed.

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Above: Harlem Wizards players

## Warriors

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Despite their preparation, the Warriors struggled to keep up with Wall's offense. The Crimson Knights scored a touchdown in the first quarter and added another in the second to take a 14-0 lead at halftime. Manasquan fought back in the third quarter when senior Jack O'Reilly made a sensational catch for a 51-yard gain to the Wall 4-yard line. Shortly after, senior Frankie Tackett scored a touchdown. Senior Jack O'Reilly then connected with junior quarterback Kyle Dow for

a successful two-point conversion, making the score 14-8. Wall added a late field goal to secure the 17-8 victory.

Despite the loss, Manasquan had standout moments. O'Reilly recorded multiple receptions, including key plays that helped set up Tackett's touchdown. The defense forced several turnovers, showing resilience despite falling behind early.

The rivalry remains fierce, and despite the loss, the Warriors and their supporters remain united. For Manasquan, it is not just a game; it is a tradition they compete in with heart, effort, and pride.

# Caught Living Like a Warrior



November's character theme was Citizenship, which Dr. Kukoda defines as "actively contributing to your school, community, and the world." He adds, "It's about being informed, responsible, and engaged while working toward the common good." The Warriors pictured above were selected as MHS students who met that goal by serving with pride and purpose.

## Mr. Lee Named Teacher of the Year

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phasizes. "We always talk about being the right person at the right time, acting as if no one is watching and always doing the right thing," he said.

Students describe him as enthusiastic, supportive, and fun. Sophomore Sammi Conway shared that his excitement and encouragement make gym something to look forward to each day. She added that he makes everyone feel included, remembering volleyball games with laughter. "He creates a positive environment that motivates and really inspires students," she said.

Co-workers reiterate that sentiment. Fellow PE teacher Mr. Voskian praised Mr. Lee's leadership, impact,

and passion for teaching, noting that students respond to both his knowledge of the game and the energy he brings to it. "He's a fantastic coach, mentor, and role model," Vosk said.

Outside of coaching, students might be surprised to learn that Mr. Lee is a lifelong Boston sports fan, something he admits he tries to keep quiet in New Jersey. He treasures school traditions, especially the Thanksgiving parade and Saturday game-days, featuring the band's iconic rendition of "The Chop."

Mr. Lee's dedication to teaching, coaching, and character-building continues to shape Manasquan High School. His influence, both on and off the field, is what makes him truly deserve Teacher of the Year.

# MHS Hosts a Successful Academic Bowl

By: Stella Brady

Manasquan High School was buzzing with energy on Saturday, November 22nd, as students and visiting teams filled the building for the annual Jersey Shore Academic Bowl. Unlike a typical weekend morning at MHS, the halls were full with



Above: Image of Academic Bowl Trophy

competition and quick thinking. The event brought together high schools from all around for a full day of academic fun. As the host school, Manasquan had students from Science National Honor Society volunteering to help the day run smoothly. The students did a lot - from setting up classrooms to keeping score during matches.

According to Academic Team advisor and Science teacher Mrs. Crowning, MHS played a key supporting role throughout the event.

"Our role at Manasquan High School for the Academic Bowl was to host the Long Island

Quiz Bowl Alliance," she said. She then explained that her team of volunteers made sure the building was set up, staffed, and welcoming for all participating students.

Manasquan's Academic Team featured various different competitors: seniors Owen Murphy, Sierra Dunn, and Jackson Bramley, along with sophomores Cooper Bodnar, Harrison Bodnar, and Harry O'Hea.

Sophomore Harry Bodnar said the event went quite well.

"The day ran very smoothly," he said. "We won six out of ten matches."

The competition featured a wide range of questions giving students the opportunity to answer questions in various different areas. For sophomore Cooper Bodnar, one question in particular was his favorite.

"My favorite question was "Who played the fiddle while Rome burned?" I correctly answered Nero," he said.

In addition to the competitors, many Manasquan students volunteered their time to help make the day possible. Sophomore Grace Uliano assisted with preparing the building before teams arrived. She said the preparation work she did made her see all the work which went into the event.

"For the setup, we arranged the desks and helped get the school in order," Grace said. "It was really cool to see all of the work that goes into prepping for the event." She added that "it was interest-



Above: Members of MHS Academic Team

ing to see how all the schools came together and participated in such a fun event."

For Mrs. Crowning, seeing her students engage with others from across the region was the highlight of her day.

She said, "My favorite part of the day was seeing all of my students interacting in some way with students from other high schools, whether they're scoring or competing against them."

From the team's strong performance to the high participation, this year's Academic Bowl was a success for Manasquan High School. The event showcased the teamwork, enthusiasm, and academic talent that define the Manasquan High School.



Above: Image of Academic Team in competition



## Manasquan Unified Sports Beats Wall in Feel-Good Victory

Competitive attitudes, fun participation, and strong school spirit struck the field as the Manasquan Unified Sports team played in their flag-football game

The Warriors battled it out against rival high school, Wall on November 24th and took the win with a 21-14 win over the Crimson Knights capping off a wonderful day full of fun and teamwork. The football game included cheerleaders, fan-zones, and even a popcorn station, all which

By: Myles Carstens & Richie Conklin

added to how fantastic the event was.

Sophomore and player during the game Robbie Luccarelli explained how, "It was a fun game, and I am also glad that we got to beat Wall. I enjoy being apart of the Unified Sports program because it is a lot of fun."

The Unified Sports program at Manasquan allows those with and without special needs to come together and experience

the excitement of athletics through interactive games and team comradery. Manasquan High School takes all into account and highlights the importance of everyone having the chance to be included.

Administrator of the Program and Assistant Principal of the high school Mrs. Eldridge explained, "It allows for partnership between the special needs and general education population. I know it will create long lasting relationships between everyone who par-

## Key club comes together to help families during Thanksgiving!

By: Jazmin Rodriguez

Key clubs brings joy to MHS, helping families in need with bundles of food for Thanksgiving.

Some families struggle to get food on Thanksgiving, but there is no need to worry! The MHS key club is here to help provide food and drinks for families who are in need.

Mrs. Hoeler, one of the volunteer leaders of the key club, gathers the food and drinks into lovely baskets to be delivered to people's homes.

The food supplies are all donated by volunteers, mostly students who are members of Key Club.

All members and volun-



Above: Key Club baskets filled with food and ready to be delivered

teers come together to help bring smiles to families.

Mrs. Hoeler describes it as "Joining together as a community."

Mrs. Hoeler gets help from Mrs. Basaman, who talks to families who call for a basket and then delivers the food to

them.

These events bring so much joy to the people who are in need as the community comes together to help each other out. People are very grateful for Key club's service in helping others during these holiday's.

## Unified Sports

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participates and overall, it "unifies" the student body!"

Not only is playing sports games and winning a major goal for the team, but the building of relationships between all students is a very important part to what makes this program so special. With its presence, differences between students become nonexistent, and everyone comes together as one team, playing the same games, and having the same amount of fun.

Student member of the club, and participant in the fan-zone Myles Carstens said, "I like how it brings everyone together. I appreciate that I get to be apart of something so special that not only means so much to me but other people in the program, and our school community as well." He also had the chance to cheer on the team from the fan-zone "It was really fun cheering on the team, the band and cheerleaders were very good and added lots of fun."

With the football game being played, the team will now shift into the end of their fall season, playing soccer, before moving into their winter season which includes both Basketball and Bowling.

# Manasquan High School Honors Local Veterans at Town Plaza

By: Allison McCoy

On Veterans Day, select students and staff from Manasquan High School stepped out of the classroom and into the center of the community to honor those who have served. During the school day, members of the school's choir, band, and several faculty volunteers gathered at the Manasquan Town Plaza for a special performance dedicated to local veterans. The event not only drew students, but families, community residents, and veterans themselves, creating a shared moment of gratitude and reflection.

The school's choir participated in the ceremony with patriotic selections that set a respectful tone for the morning. Their performance of "America the Beautiful," encouraged attendees to pause and think about the meaning of the day. The band also performed a series of pieces chosen specifically for the occasion, adding a sense of pride and sincerity to the atmosphere. The music carried through the plaza and invited everyone, students and veterans alike, to feel connected through the shared experience.

MHS band member Maeve Korth noted that, "stuff like this is important because it builds a sense of community and something greater than yourself."

Teachers who attended helped students stay organized and gave brief remarks to guide the crowd through the program. Their involvement highlighted how



**Above: veterans saluting a monument in Manasquan.**

the school values not only learning but also building empathy and civic awareness. For many teachers, the event served as a chance to remind students of the importance of acknowledging the people whose service is the reason we enjoy the freedoms we have today.

Ms. Schille, the MHS choir teacher who helped to add music to this event said, "We often focus on what makes our lives

**Below: MHS choir performs for veterans and their families.**



difficult and we don't realize that we wouldn't have the freedom to have the problems we have without the people who put their lives on the line."

For the students, being able to step away from the routine of the school day and participate in something so community-centered left a large impact on them. Many students found themselves thinking more deeply about the people behind the uniforms and the experiences veterans carry with them. The event encouraged students to see Veterans Day not just as a date on the calendar, but as a moment to recognize real individuals who have helped their community and country.

Paige Petruzzello, a Manasquan choir member, said, "One man we met was the past music teacher at Manasquan High School and Middle School, and he was also a veteran, and we got to talk to him about music and choir and all that," adding, "it was really interesting to know that some of them have similar hobbies to me and that I was able to have a full conversation with someone so different from me."

Instead of ending with one dramatic moment, the biggest impact of the event came from the shared feeling it created—one of appreciation, understanding, and connection. As those who attended began heading back to their daily routines, many carried with them a renewed sense of respect for the veterans who were present and for those who were honored through the music and recognition.

# Veteran's Day Breakfast: A Friday to Remember

By: Blake Daniel and Jane Marks

On Friday, November 14th, MHS Students and staff gathered in the media center to treat Manasquan's veterans to a wonderful breakfast! Plenty of conversations, stories and speeches followed, as students got to thank the veterans for the sacrifices they made for our freedom.

It all started at the beginning of block 1, with an opening speech from a representative from Wreaths Across America and some of the veterans, who recounted their stories in the military.

Throughout the morning, students and staff stopped by the media center to join the veterans for breakfast—paying respects and celebrating those who have sacrificed so much for them.

"I enjoyed the conversation and the food and seeing all the veterans happy," said English teacher Mr. Harvey. "[Be-

**Below: A representative from Wreaths Across America speaks before breakfast commences.**



**Above: Students listen as a Wreaths Across America representative talks prior to breakfast being served.**

ing around veterans] always reminds me of Ron Kubik and the sort of therapeutic value of being able to share what happened to you and know that you're not alone in experiencing these things."

Prior to the breakfast, the Manasquan Choir held a performance on Veteran's Day to further honor their sacrifice.

"I was so proud of the choir," said choir director Ms. Schille. "And it was even more special because my brother, who was in the Navy, was there to celebrate in honor of the veterans."

"This performance is for them, not us," Ms.

Schille added.

Although Manasquan's Veterans Day traditions aim to honor those who have made many sacrifices for our community, students also gain a lot from their time participating in these events.

Seniors Maeve Korth and Ciara Dunne had this to say about the choir's performance.

"It was good to see how people's lives are impacted after they join the military and to have that perspective," commented Ciara.

Maeve added, "Even though I don't have firsthand experience fighting, it's very nice to be able to do something for the people who did, and you can really tell that it means a lot to them."

Overall, the Veteran's Breakfast made what would've been an uneventful Friday morning a pleasant day to remember.

# Midnight Masquerade, MHS' 2025 Homecoming Dance

By: Sydney Lynch and Caitlin Young

Manasquan High School has continued its yearly tradition of hosting a homecoming dance on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025. Every year, a new theme is suggested and voted for by students and staff.

This year's theme was Midnight Masquerade, and students dressed accordingly with formal clothes and stunning outfits. The event was lively and a great time for everyone who attended.

With a professional DJ, photobooth, and free snacks, students had an amazing time dancing along to the fun music played by DJ Hicas throughout the night.

"My favorite part of Homecoming was seeing all the students that came and dressed up," said MHS teacher Mrs. Galizio, who was one of the chaperones at the dance.

The dance wouldn't have been put on without the help from our staff and students here at MHS. From selling and advertising bids around school to ordering decorations for the gym, many students and staff members worked

together to prepare for the dance and their hard work proved to be a success, having around 400 students in attendance at the dance.

"I felt like the night was really good, and I thought the dance went off very well," said MHS teacher Mr. Mawn, another chaperone. "Looked like everyone was having a lot of fun."

Throughout the night, students were able to vote for court and for king and queen. The music and dancing slowed down near the end of the night, and the winners were announced.

The Court was separated by grade, and the winners were freshmen Brielle Myer and Max Weinseimer, sophomores Harley Walsh and Parker Basaman, juniors Morgan Feeney and Rey Weinseimer, and lastly, king and



Above: The Homecoming Court

queen Jackson Bramley and Elle Vitanzo.

"When I won, I was so excited. My favorite part was when they put a crown on my head and gave me purple flowers because they are my favorite color," said queen Elle Vitanzo. "I was so happy to be up there with my close friend Jackson because we were equally as excited to have one."

The dance was a fun way for students to end the long week, with the week after being cut short and all half days for Thanksgiving.



Above (left): group of boys posing for a photo; (right): students dancing with friends in a line

# Powderpuff Princesses

By: Kelsey Kelemba and Amelia Steger

With the sun shining down on the field, junior Gabby Restivo receives the ball from junior quarterback Dana Lopez and sets her eyes on getting a touchdown. Just as she goes to score for the junior team, she gets pushed down by senior Gwen O'Connor and the chance is lost.

On Sunday November 23, the annual powderpuff game took place at Manasquan High School.

The senior girls won this year's powderpuff flag football game against the juniors 20-6. They showed a dominant performance on both offense and defense, only allowing 1 touchdown and scoring 3.

"It felt amazing to win because last year's game was so close, and it felt great to win because it is our senior year," said senior Natalie Goble.

In order to prepare for the big game, junior and senior girls sign up to be part of their grade's team. Once in, they attend practices to figure out everyone's positions and their strategies to win the game.

Junior girls had two out of school practices and one during lunch while senior girls had two out of school.

According to junior Katie Fitzgerald, "Practices were fun and they were very helpful to me understanding how the game worked. We practiced many plays, and they were all effective in the game."

After positions were handed out, jerseys were put on, and it was time for the big powderpuff game.

Before the game, both teams had an effective warm-up to prepare for the big game. The seniors came ready with a big speaker, eye black and even a few shiesties to intimidate the junior players.

At the start of the game, the referees called both



Above: Junior Dana Lopez running to get a touchdown



Above: Junior Sophia Fontanez tries to stop senior Gwen O'Connor; Below: Junior Boys giving their pregame speech



teams out and gave a talk to everyone, telling them to play fair, have fun, and not to tackle. Everyone was pumped up, and the coaches gathered everyone around for a pregame speech.

According to junior Kelsey Kalemba, "The pregame speech by Rey, Zach, Keiran, Kyle, and the rest of the junior coaches got me fired up for the game. They were all very positive and encouraging and helped the team have fun."

During the game, there were many great touchdown drives by the seniors, especially by senior Ellie Sitar who ran the ball from way down the field to score a touchdown at the start of the game.

The defense on both sides was great, with many awesome stops. The seniors were able to stop many touchdown opportunities from the juniors, and their performance on defense helped them gain momentum on offense.

Even though the juniors were losing, they were still able to have fun on the sidelines. According to junior Drew Lockwood, "Vibes were high on the sidelines and junior coach Luke Barry was playing great music to get us hyped up."

At the end of the game, the seniors celebrated their big win by running on the field and celebrating joyfully. They were so glad to be able to win, especially after losing to last year's seniors.

Reflecting on the game, junior Katie Fitzgerald said, "A message for the upcoming juniors is that we are going to redeem ourselves for next year and they better watch out!"

# MHS Puts the "Pep" in Pep Rally!

By: Angelina Lomas and Olive O'Reilly

Manasquan High School's favorite weekend of the year just came to a close, and the Warriors made their excitement clear at the annual Thanksgiving Pep Rally.

On Wednesday, November 24th, the students gathered in the gym for an eventful afternoon, offering a fun break from classes. It started off with wrap-up videos of each sport's season, made by the teams. Then, the cheerleaders performed their extravagant routine complete with stunts and tumbling. Lastly, teachers and students competed in a series of games like Knockout, Tug-of-War, Nerf Football, and a relay race.

"This year's Pep Rally was raging with school spirit," said Mr. Buss, self-recognized as 'Master of Ceremonies.' "People were excited."

The pep rally started off with videos made by the teams that showcased their personalities and character.

*Below: Cheerleaders pose in a stunt.*



While the surf and soccer teams' videos truly depicted their friendship and dynamic, the cross-country and tennis teams showed off their amazing work this past season.

Mr. Buss, the "resident MC" at Manasquan High School, also put in a lot of hard work toward the pep rally. Mrs. El-



*Right: Teacher Mr. Buss announces the pep rally games.*

dridge explained that he's given a script and studies it in preparation.

Class representatives decorated their halls with their class colors, which was a fun way for them to bond and get closer. As explained by Mrs. Griffith, the sophomore class advisor, a lot of extra after-school hours are put into making the school



*Above: Sophomores Quinton Whiting and Ryan Olson compete in relay race.*

look its best so they "pepped" the best. After that, it comes down to planning the games and how smoothly they will run.

The excitement that builds around this pep rally is mainly in anticipation of the rivalry football game against Wall every Thanksgiving morning. This is one of the school's most notable sporting events, followed closely by the St. Rose basketball game. Unfortunately, the outcome of Thursday's Thanksgiving game was not what students had hoped for; however, it was a fight to the end. The spirit built at the pep rally carried through the entire student section.

"I think our routine went really well. No one messed up," said sophomore cheerleader Sammi Conway. "It was a really good way to start a long weekend."

# Spirit Week Fun at Manasquan High School!



# Deck the Halls: Student Council Style

By Charlotte Leible and Susannah Patterson



*Pictured above: Freshman red carpet and photo booth*

On Monday, November 24, student council transformed the halls of Manasquan High School with posters, paint, and pride.

Here at MHS every year student council works hard to decorate the halls for homecoming. Every grade gets to work to transform the halls of Manasquan High School into a colorful runway of school spirit. Each grade is assigned a class color for Spirit Week, and using that as inspiration, they create a theme for their hallway. From Freshman Funhouse to Sweet Sophomores... every year gets increasingly more creative.

There is lots of preparation leading into the decorating. Student council members meet during lunch and after school to collaborate on ideas and plan out their hall. Once themes are set, student council members team up with other students to bring each hallway to life. Its absolute chaos... kids are running around with lad-

ders, paint is everywhere, tape is getting unrolled and glitter is on every student's hands.

Mrs. Koenig the STUCO advisor for all grades loves hallway decorating but her favorite part is seeing the result of all the hard work. "After seeing all the students work hard at lunch and after school, I love seeing it look so good coming together at the end!" Mrs. Koenig said.

The freshman class kicked off their very first Homecoming hallway with the color white. After careful consideration, they went all out with a Hollywood-inspired theme: Freshmen on Film! They worked very hard making posters during lunch and planning how they wanted their hall to look. Walking through the hall, there were many cool features like freshman Annabelle Mantones' favorite red carpet with a photo booth. All over the halls the freshman school photos were printed in black and white. Everything looked great and overall Freshmen on Film hallway was a success and an impressive debut for the Class of 2029.

The sophomore class took their green class color and spun it into Shimmering Sophomores: Wizard of Oz theme. Bringing the beloved movie to life with glitter, posters, and countless creative touches. Fan favorites included the hand-drawn characters, the swirling tornado, and a standout poster by Ella McCarthy. She created the hilarious spin off when Dor-

thy expresses her confusion landing in Oz and said "Oh! We are not in Kansas anymore!" Instead, she changed into the funny pun... "We are not in Canvas anymore!" The sophomore class advisor Maestra said her favorite part was the yellow brick road. The students worked hard putting the brick road on the floor. Maestra said... "I have never seen anyone ever use the floor as part of the decorations, so we tried our best to incorporate it and the yellow brick road fit the vibe perfect!" With so many features from the classic film, the sophomore hallway felt like its own Emerald City.

The junior class turned their orange class color into a Jammin' Juniors theme, filling their hallway with music inspired creativity from wall to wall. Everyone loves the big blow-up headphones at the entrance of the hallway. It instantly catches everyone's attention and fits perfectly with the music vibe. The hall was packed



*Pictured above: Students working during lunch on posters*



*Pictured above: Shimmering Sophomores*

with posters, album covers, music notes, and all kinds of creative symbols that made the space feel like a walk-through playlist. Their decorations were bold, bright, and full of energy. Junior Ella O'Rielly reflected on the experience, saying, "We should have done a better job planning out where everything goes, next year I hope we'll be better with that." Either way, the juniors proved they know how to turn up the volume on school spirit.

The senior class took their navy class color and turned it into a bold Star-Spangled Seniors theme, filling their hallway with patriot-



*Pictured above: Freshamn On film*

ic pride. The hallway lit up red, white and blue! There were flags hanging everywhere. One of the most memorable touches was the hilarious "senior presidents", featuring students' faces edited onto presidential portraits. Not a single inch of wall was left undecorated. Many students said the seniors had their favorite hallway. Sophomore Travis Levy agreed, saying, "The seniors did a really good job." The entire display proved that the Class of 2025 knows how to make an exit in style.

Senior Addison Gunnell, who has been on STUCO all four years, summed it up perfectly:

"Last one, best one!" Sophomore Katie Loughlin loves homecoming week... "When I walked into the school in the morning, all the hallways looked so good and so fun, it just put me in such a good mood!"

The decorating not only builds excitement for the Thanksgiving parade and homecoming festivities but also brings students together and shows true MHS pride. The halls look incredible, and school spirit is all over.

And with the halls finally cleaned, STUCO is already gearing up for next year!



*Pictured above: Star Spangled Seniors*



*Picured above: Jammin Juinors*

# Teacher Feature...Madame Thieme!

By: Charlotte Leible

Bonjour! Voici Madame Thieme, la chère professeure de français de Manasquan!

Madame Thieme has been teaching French for twenty-two years. She began her teaching career at Rumson-Fair Haven High School and has been part of the Manasquan community for the past few years. Madame Thieme loves MHS because of all the teachers and her lovely students.

Madame is loved by many of her students and

*Pictured Below: Madame Thieme*



peers. One of Madame Thieme's students in her French II Honors, Maya Amorelli described Madame Thieme as... "Very smart, fun and hardworking" Her kindness and enthusiasm make learning French an enjoyable experience for everyone in her class.

Madame fell in love with everything about the French culture when she was younger and traveled around the French Islands with her parents. Surrounded by the sound of the language, she instantly fell in love. The French food, art, music, fashion and even the history makes French culture so unique and beautiful "What's not to love?" said Madame Thieme.

Madame Thieme went to the University of South Carolina and Rutgers where she majored in French. She started learning French in high school with Madame Rae! French was just one of those things that came easy to her and clicked. Once she started speaking the language, she just could not stop!

Madame Thieme is very talented. She can speak intermediate level Spanish and took Arabic in collage for two years! Another one of her students in her French II Honors, Harley Walsh said "Madame Thieme knows so much about French, I learn



*Pictured Above: Harley Walsh*

not only new words everyday but new fun facts every day in her class."

"Travelling is my passion!" Madame Thieme said. She has been to France more than a dozen times and has visited many French-speaking countries. When she travels, she's in her element—non-stop speaking French wherever she goes. If Madame Thieme had to teach another class, she would happily teach a travelling class. She would love to teach kids about what they need when travelling and share her knowledge about the many wonderful cultures around the world.

"Madame is the best!" said Mrs. Radzinsky the Spanish teacher next door.

# SENIOR SHOUTOUT!

## Senior Sophia Balances It All

By: Cameron McLaughlin



*Above: Senior Sophia Covert sitting down for dinner*

In the blue and gray halls of MHS, senior Sophia Covert knows what she wants and strives to get it.

Whether striving means being a captain on the Manasquan varsity cheer team where she enjoys tumbling, a National Honors Society member, or managing for her job at Playa Bowls, Sophia is driven to achieve her goals.

Originally from Tallahassee, Florida Sophia relocated to Sea Girt, New Jersey years ago, but plans to attend Florida Gulf

Coast University despite now being a resident to The Garden State. There, she is looking forward to becoming an accountant.

When asked when she decided she wanted to become an accountant, the prodigy herself answers, "I wanted to become an Accountant during my freshman year when I found out I was good at math. I have a love for math, and I love doing it."

Ever since Sophia realized her love for mathematics, this has been a goal she's been looking to achieve for a while. She is currently in statistics and pre-calc and is not only a successful hard-working student but also has great character.

"We're only a month into the school year but she's shown she's diligent, asks thoughtful questions, and takes down notes," Mrs. Hodnett Sophia's statistics teacher states. Mrs Hodnett also doesn't fail to mention that Sophia works great with her classmates. If she had to describe Sophia with one word it would be "positivity" due to her happy personality

in class and her readiness for learning.

Despite enjoying math and looking to become an accountant, if Sophia could have any other jobs, it would either be a crime scene investigator due to her love for criminal investigation, a teacher because she loves working with kids, or even a special education teacher due to her patience and love for her two siblings with autism.

Away from her incredible dedication to school and work, Sophia also loves spending time dedicating herself to other things. Whether playing with her adorable husky Rambo, feeding her goldfish Chris, or hanging out with friends, Sophia continues to be that role model even away from Manasquan High School doors.

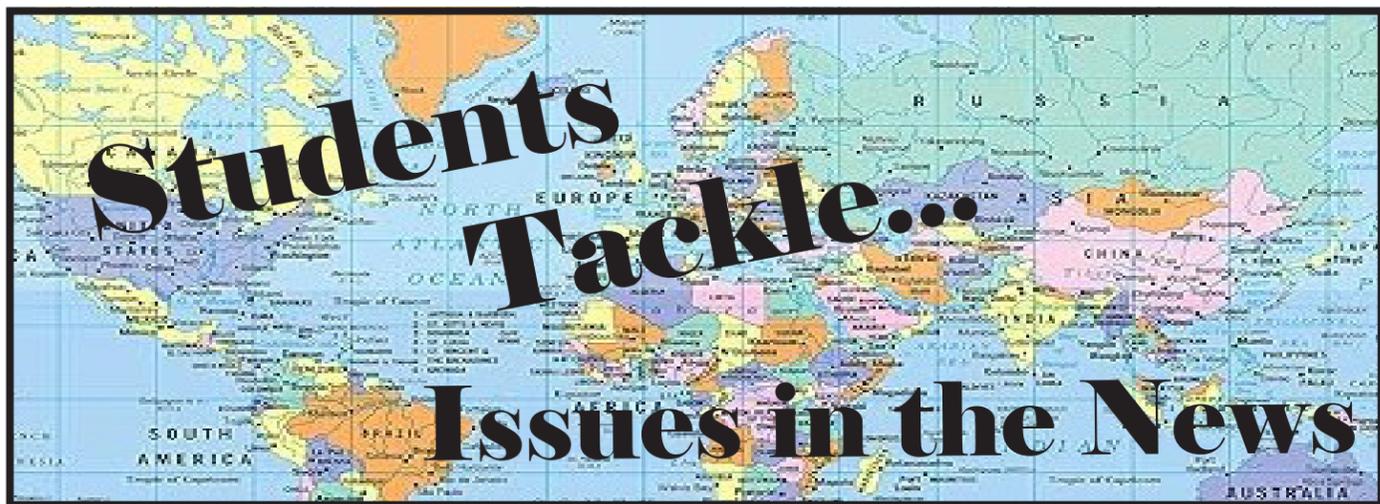
Meghan Mccafferty, a member of the Manasquan girls' varsity volleyball team and a friend of Sophia's since Junior year where they met in class, shares what she admires about her friend. "I admire Sophia's drive and how hard she works in school. She cares about her grades a lot and I aspire to be as driven as her."

When asked what keeps Sophia motivated to continue being an inspirational friend and student she replies, "My family because they all have something controlling their lives everyday including autism and epilepsy." She also mentions how her father has been in the army which inspires her to keep moving forward.

As graduation nears, Sophia Covert continues to balance school and life with determination. With Florida and a future in accounting, she's ready to take on what's next just as she always has.



*Above: Sophia and Megan posing with their nutrition flower babies*



# A Wickedly Terrifying Red Carpet

By: Allison McCoy

At the Singapore Premiere of 'Wicked: For Good' on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, singer and actress Ariana Grande had a frightening moment when a man rushed past barricades, wrapped his arms around her, and began jumping up and down.



Above, the cast of *Wicked: For Good* at the Singapore premiere.

This man who was later identified as Johnson Wen, is known online as "Pyjama Man". He later posted a video on Instagram talking about the incident with the caption "Dear Ariana Grande Thank You for letting me Jump on the Yellow Carpet with You."

As the scene escalated, Cynthia Erivo, Grande's co-star in the *Wicked* sequel sprang into action. She physically placed herself between Grande and the self-proclaimed "stage invader", pushing him away and shielding her while security moved in. Later, Michelle Yeoh was seen comforting a visibly shaken Grande.

The man was arrested very shortly afterward and charged with public nuisance. At his sentencing, District Judge Christopher Goh, described his behavior as "attention-seeking" and "a pattern" saying, "you will do it again," referencing his history with similar stunts. Wen pled guilty and received nine days in jail, a relatively short sentence compared to the possible three months.

To the press, Erivo later reflected on the emotional impact the incident had, saying, "even this last week, we've had to really deal with some stuff,"

and that making the movie brought the cast "closer as people, as friends, as sisters." She added that the experience forced her to examine "some of the things I had been putting under my feet because I was too scared to look at them."

Grande has remained mostly silent on the incident. In an Instagram post after the premier, she simply wrote "thank you Singapore we love you."

I think this event is really important to take note of, especially in how it exposes the risks that public figures—especially women—face, even in settings that are supposed to be happy and celebratory. It's unsettling to realize that someone can just jump over a barricade and grab a celebrity. It is this moment when the line between "enthusiastic fan" and outright threat can get dangerously blurry. The

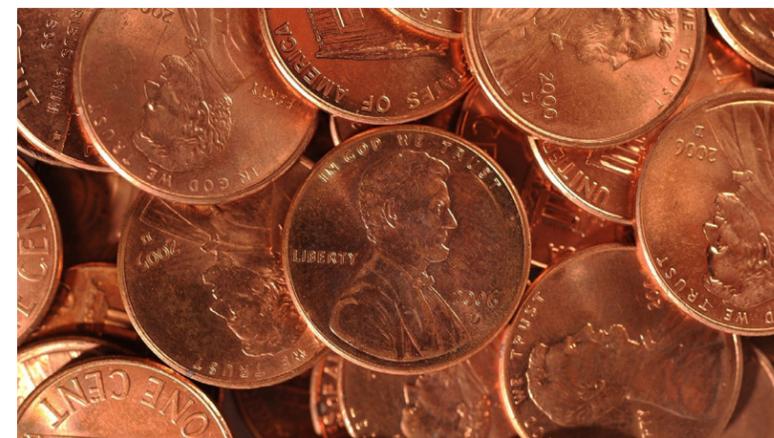
# The Penny Dies after 232 Years of Service

By: Richie Conklin

After 232 years of service, the United States has minted the final batch of American Pennies. The plug was pulled on November 12, 2025.

The cause was due to its irrelevance and the fact that nothing can be bought with a penny anymore. Not even candy! On top of this, pennies are expensive to make, costing 5 cents to make which is 4 cents more than they're worth.

The final batch of pennies were minted on November 12<sup>th</sup>, in Philadelphia. While the penny remains legal tender, banks and merchants are already reporting shortages.



Above: A batch of new pennies.

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# Wicked

continued from previous page

fact that Cynthia Erivo intervened so quickly shows not only her character but also how unprepared security can be at some of these high-profile events. Let's be honest, there is security at every one of these events, but how many of them do you actually think see action?

As a teenager, I feel for Ariana Grande a lot, because I know how much people idolize her. But this incident makes me think that there have to be consequences when fan culture goes too far? It's not harmless — it's dangerous and potentially traumatizing. Grande has openly discussed her anxiety and PTSD in the past, so this kind of breach in safety could have real emotional impact, not just for her, but for other artists who might fear similar incidents.

In addition, the fact that Johnson Wen had done this before — at concerts for other big-name stars like Katy Perry and The Weeknd — shows a worrying pattern. He didn't seem deterred before, and even though he got jail time now, it feels like there is a larger problem that isn't being addressed: people craving internet notoriety at the expense of boundaries and safety.

On the positive side, this also shows how much the cast of *Wicked* supports each other. Erivo calling the people around her "family" and reflecting on personal growth is powerful. In a way, the scary moment turned into a demonstration of strength and care.

All in all, the incident matters because it's not just a one-off celebrity mishap. It raises questions about security, mental health, fame, and how we define boundaries — both for fans and for public figures.



Above, Ariana Grande as she is grabbed by a crazed fan.



Above, Johnson Wen after his arrest for a previous disturbance.

# Global Girl Group KATSEYE Speaks Up on “Gnarly” Comments from “Mean Girls” on the Internet

By: Jane Marks

Since their formation in 2023, KATSEYE has proved themselves as artists that cannot be ignored.

Recently, during an interview with BBC’s Mark Savage, the girls opened up about the influx of death threats that they have received since entering the public eye. The online audience—commonly referred to as “netizens”—rarely see the members as humans, resulting in the extremely dehumanizing comments and attacks that they see every day.

“People see us as women to rank,” said singer Lara Raj. “They’ll grade us based on how pretty we are, our singing skill, dancing skill, and then add it up and give us a percentage.”

This “dystopian” way of thinking has made people online feel comfortable with threatening KATSEYE and making comments to their families—going as far as to report Raj’s family to ICE, even though they are American citizens. Though the six-piece remains strong and has continued to promote despite these challenges, it does take a toll on them mentally.

“We know what we signed up for being so public,” comment-



Above: KATSEYE posing in their “Beautiful Chaos” shoot. Pictured Left to Right: Manon, Megan, Daniela, Lara, Yoonchae, and Sophia.

ed Sophia Laforteza, the leader of the group. “We know it’s a part of fame. But it doesn’t change the fact that we are human.”

This flood of hate and threats was described as “terrorizing on the mind” by singer Manon Bannerman, who has received the brunt of the hate throughout her time with KATSEYE due to her absences in performances caused by health complications.

The sextet—made of members Sophia Laforteza, Manon Bannerman, Daniela Avanzani, Lara Raj, Megan Skien diel, and Yoonchae Jeung—debuted last year and immediately blew up. Their EP “SIS (Soft Is

Strong)” put the group on the map, with hits like “Debut” and “Touch” gaining international attention. More recently, they have been exploring a new side of KATSEYE in their latest album “Beautiful Chaos”—featuring songs like “Gameboy”, “Gabriela”, and the controversial “Gnarly”. Their achievements and growth have gained them much recognition, resulting in two 2025 Grammy nominations for “Best New Artist” and “Best Performance”.

Regardless of the negative opinions of netizens, the girls feel comforted knowing that they have each other to lean on in the face of hate.

KATSEYE hopes to be a figure that young girls can look up to and feel represented in. Their diversity as a group has been a main focus in promotions—representing Switzerland, Cuba, India, South Korea, the Philippines, and China—with each feeling proud to share their culture with the world.

“We pride ourselves so much that our group is so diverse,”

Below: KATSEYE performs at the 27th NRJ Music Awards Ceremony in Cannes, France.



Above: KATSEYE during their performance at Lollapalooza 2025.

said Bannerman. “It’s our number one priority to show the girlies out there to be proud of where they come from, no matter what they look like.”

“We’ve all come from different places with different cultures and upbringings,” Laforteza further commented. “Yet we’re able to come together and create magic through music.”

Although KATSEYE has been through many challenges only a year into their career, they have proved themselves to be artists who will not back down in the face of hate. Their bond with each other and with their fans—dubbed “EYEKONS”—has helped them navigate being in the public eye during an era where being hateful has been made so easy.

As someone who is very involved in keeping up with pop culture, I wouldn’t say I’m surprised to see such hateful reactions to KATSEYE, but it doesn’t make it any less frustrating to see.

I would consider myself a fangirl, especially when it comes to music. Throughout

each phase of my life, I have always had a band to obsess over—like Inhaler, The Neighbourhood, ATEEZ, and others.

KATSEYE was formed through a collaboration of the companies HYBE and Geffen Records, with HYBE being a South Korean music label. The idea behind the group was to use K-pop-style training to form an international girl group that would touch the hearts of the entire world.

Unfortunately, this meant that KATSEYE was bound to have

Below: The girls pose for their viral GAP campaign.



a lot of overlap with K-pop fans—which, I’ll say from personal experience, can be extremely toxic.

I have been a fan of various K-pop groups like BTS, P1Harmony, BOYNEXTDOOR, Itzy, and way more than I can even remember, and one thing that has always been a constant in these various fans is toxic fans.

Something about the intimate nature of these fan-artist relationships—fueled by things like fan-calls, fan-signs, and other fan-meeting events—give some people the idea that they are entitled to these performers.

They think that in return for their support, the members of these bands need to be pillars of perfection. It’s clear that KATSEYE has been no exception to this treatment.

It is extremely frustrating to see this pattern happen time and time again, not only in K-pop related settings but also beyond—like with Chappell Roan, who skyrocketed to fame and immediately faced intense backlash from netizens when she did not follow the mold that people had created for her.

I’m so happy that KATSEYE was brave enough to speak up about this treatment, and I’m even more happy to see that they have

each other to lean on. In this era, where parasocialism has reached its peak, it is so important to have a good support system when in the public eye.

The behavior of netizens has been disgusting, and I hope that KATSEYE’s bravery in calling out these people will help stop the cycle from repeating itself.

# A Night of Northern Lights

By Susannah Patterson

view. Some people say the northern lights look better in the camera, some say they look better in personal vision, but everyone loves to enjoy and take pictures no matter the difference because everyone is grateful to enjoy this unique experience.



*Pictured above: Lighthouse in Mears*

The answer to “what color is the sky?” is usually the obvious answer - blue, but that changes every once in a while, for around 30 minutes!

The northern lights, or sometimes called aurora borealis, are bright, colorful lights that shine in the sky near the North Pole. They happen when energy from the sun hits the air around Earth. In 2025, the northern lights were expected to be stronger and easier to see. Many people visit places like Alaska and Canada to watch the lights move and glow. Seeing them is a beautiful and exciting experience.

The most recent northern lights were special because they were much stronger than usual. A big storm from the Sun made the lights bright enough to be seen far south, even in places like Florida and Alabama. This almost never happens. Scientists say 2025 is a very active year for the Sun, which is why the northern lights have been showing up in more places and looking extra bright.

Many people love to go outside when they hear that the northern lights are happening and love to enjoy the awesome

dreds of times a year, but you can only see them when the sky is dark and clear, so even though they happen often, people don’t always notice them.

The northern lights can show many different colors. The most common color is green, which most people see first. You can also see pink, purple, and red when the lights are very strong. Sometimes there are blue or yellow shades too!

I loved reading about the northern lights because I didn’t know much about them before, other than the fact that the sky changes color for a little while. Learning that they are caused by particles from the sun hitting Earth’s atmosphere made them seem even more amazing to me.

This year, I didn’t get the chance to see the northern lights, which was disappointing, but I’m still glad I got to experience them last year. When I saw them, the sky looked like it was painted with glowing greens and purples, and it felt almost magical. It was a very cool experience, and reading more about how they work makes me appreciate that moment even more.

The lights can look very different depending on where you are looking at them from and when, according to Nasa Space News “it requires careful timing, location selection, and weather conditions,” Nasa Space News(NSN) says the best times to see the lights are between 9pm-2am local time.

Moon phases also have a big impact on if weather you can see the lights or not. “Bright full moons can wash out auroral colors, making new moon periods ideal for photography and observation,” says NSN. “Prime viewing locations remain in the traditional auroral oval—Alaska, northern Canada, Scandinavia, and northern Russia—though strong storms can push visibility boundaries significantly southward, occasionally reaching as far as northern Pennsylvania, Iowa, or even Mexico during extreme events.”

In very active years, the lights might appear hun-

*Pictured below: people spectating*



# Raging Hurricane Melissa Strikes Jamaica

By: Caitlin Young



*Above: Hurricane Melissa taking its strike.*

One of the strongest Atlantic Hurricanes has hit the Caribbean Sea up to 185 mph.

On Tuesday, October 28, 2025, the extremely dangerous category 5 storm hit Jamaica causing 19 deaths and 32 deaths in nearby countries. The storm caused widespread damage, hospital evacuations, and flooding across the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba and the Turks and Caicos Island, where many fatalities were reported. The storm’s path also includes The Bahamas and Bermuda. Over \$2 billion worth of damage created across the country. A majority of homes, schools, stores and many buildings across the community have been destroyed. Around 35,000 households have been cut off electricity, clean water, and medical care. Melissa delivered 30 inches of rain that caused landslides and flooding.

Scientists even discovered that climate change made the hurricane 30% stronger than it would have been without global warming. This made it 6 times more common to happen. According to the Jamaican government, the economic damage was way more major than the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The pandemic didn’t wash away bridges, destroy roads, disrupt the water supply in the way that this particular incident has,” Samuda, Jamaican cabinet minister, stated.

Three weeks after Hurricane Melissa hit, around 477,000 children are experiencing disturbances to their schooling due the closed schools across Jamaica, Haiti, and Cuba. Children have been forced to miss classes or study in certain places that may not be provided for proper learning. UNICEF is providing life-saving supplies, repairing damaged schools and helping ensure that children can safely go back to school as soon as possible. In Cuba, UNICEF organized supplies to reach 21,000 students, including school kits and other materials. In addition, 30 temporary school tents and 500 tarps will be assembled to the eastern provinces most affected. These extra supplies will benefit another 39,200 children and teens.

In some parts of Jamaica, people were forced to dip buckets into rivers eventually giving them muddy water for everyday use.

“Everyone is homeless right now,” Rosemarie Gayle said.

Melissa has left devastation in its path, snapping power lines, destroying buildings, disrupting food and water supply.

Once vibrant-looking towns turned to dirt and rubble, leaving people in shock. Some people have been walking for miles in search of basic goods and to check on loved ones, as more than 60% of the island remained without power. Helicopters have been dropping off food in communities with outages. Tons of people are in shock and waiting on relief. On Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, the United Nations’ World Food Program received 2,000 boxes of emergency food assistance shipped from Barbados, to be given out in shelters and in the most-affected communities. Citizens were also warned about the risk of increased mosquitoes, waterborne diseases and food poisoning.

I feel that this disaster is the most devastating and unfortunate storm I’ve ever heard of throughout my lifetime. I can’t even imagine what the poor families are going through who don’t have homes, food or water. It is so terrifying for a disaster like this to happen because there is nothing you can do but take shelter. I hope these families can successfully recover from the destruction and build their country back up together.

*Below: Communities destroyed*



# Operation Charlotte's Web Sparks Fear Across North Carolina Communities

By: Nicole Mendoza

Immigration enforcement activity intensified across North Carolina this week, drawing widespread concern from residents, local officials, and business owners who said the federal presence created an atmosphere of fear in everyday community spaces. As Border Patrol units appeared outside homes, shops, and schools, many people described the sudden enforcement activity as unlike anything the region had experienced in years.

Immigration enforcement swept across North Carolina as federal agents mobilized in Charlotte and prepared to move into Raleigh, alarming residents and business owners who reported spotting Border Patrol units in normal neighborhood areas. With more than 130 arrests tied to Operation Charlotte's Web, the city's mayor urged federal authorities to respect residents' rights and reassured immigrant communities that "your city stands with you."

Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry McFadden said the presence of Border Patrol had created significant fear throughout

of deportation," McFadden said. According to parents and teachers, between 300 and 500 children did not attend school on Monday. Restaurant workers also reported that many employees stayed home out of concern about potential immigration raids.

Many Businesses and organizations in Charlotte have closed, including a local Colombian bakery that has only closed



Above: Manolo Betancur

their doors one other time in the bakery's 28-year history. This Colombian bakery is family owned and the family is unsure of when they will re-open. The owner, Manolo Betancur made the decision to close their doors after witnessing agents tackling people outside of his shop Saturday morning, the agents appeared from unmarked vehicles.

Border Patrol units moved into Raleigh on Tuesday. State lawmakers had been notified the day before but were told that activity there would be much smaller in scale than the enforcement underway in Charlotte.

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein said Monday that he is aware of the developing situation. "I call on federal agents to target violent criminals, not neighbors walking down the street, going to church, or putting up Christmas decorations," Stein said in an X post. "Stop targeting people simply go-

ing about their lives because of the color of their skin, as you are doing in Charlotte."

As communities wait for answers on how long the federal operations would last, local leaders continued urging calm while calling for the truth. Residents, meanwhile, hoped the increased enforcement would end soon so schools, businesses, and neighborhoods could return to normal.

What's happening in Charlotte is really scary and heartbreaking. It feels like we're slipping back to a time when racism was just accepted, and that's not something anyone should have to live through. There are people just trying to work, take care of their families, or simply get through the day, and now they have to worry about whether they'll even make it home safely. It's painful to see families being torn apart and people being treated so unfairly just because of their skin color or immigration status. The videos going around of agents hurting people are horrifying, and it's not okay. Something needs to be done, and the people responsible should be held accountable for intentionally harming and endangering others. We are now living in a world where political views divide us and people are just full of hate. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own community. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and basic humanity. It shouldn't be controversial to say that people deserve dignity, compassion, and the chance to live their lives without fear. We can't stay silent about this, things won't get better unless we speak up and demand better for one another.



Above: Governor Josh Stein



the county and that local officials were not told when the operation would end, "I don't think you can make someplace safer when you are in fear of your life, fear in being retaliated against, or fear

# Harlem Wizards Come to MHS

continued from previous page

For many, the event was more than just entertainment, it counted as a moment of coming together for the school community. When asked how he thought events like this impact the school community Mr. Minutoli replied, "It grows the school community and brings everyone closer together." Ms. Hodnett added that the fundraiser was special because it wasn't just about raising money: "It's a great night for the community to come together... creating memories as well."

For future Harlem Wizards versus Manasquan games, Ms. Hodnett both hoped the event could shift to a weekend to accommodate more families, while Mr. Minutoli wished to see a spring matchup featuring the school's boys' and girls' basketball teams. But both agreed that the Wizards' return, whether next year or the year after, would be awesome and welcomed. Ms. Hodnett summed up that she'd recommend the event to



others with a simple, "Always!"

By the end of the night, the event acted as both a fundraiser and a community gathering. Students, families, and staff left with positive impressions of the night and a stronger sense of connection to the school. Whether the Wizards return next year or in the future, the visit proved to be a meaningful addition to the school staff and a reminder of how activities like these can bring the school's community together.

## The Penny

continued from previous page

into circulation with the other pennies in the world.

"The American penny was born in 1793 in Philadelphia. Its parent was Alexander Hamilton, the first secretary of the Treasury, who was the chief author of the Coinage Act, which birthed the penny and its siblings," said The New York Times, in their article about the penny.

Pennies were made of pure copper (a cheap metal at the time) and featured a woman with flowing hair symbolizing liberty. Lady Liberty stayed on the penny for more than 60 years. In 1857, the penny coin got smaller and cheaper to make. The design also changed, featured a flying eagle on the obverse (heads) and a wreath on the reverse (tails) from 1857 and 1858 and the "Indian Head" design from 1859 to 1909. In 1909, Abraham Lincoln became the first president featured on a U.S. coin, done so in honor of what would have been his 100th birthday. The penny continued to be made of a mix of copper and nickel throughout the 20th century.

U.S. Treasurer Brandon Beach told Forbes, "Each penny costs more to make than it's worth, ending production saves taxpayers an estimated \$56 million a year."

I think that the decision to end the production of the penny is a smart decision because it ends up saving money for America. While a couple of cents will not make much of a difference now, it will show in the long run. Having something that costs more to make than the actual value of itself should not continue to be made. In addition to the cost, the price of metal has been increasing and the Mint was actually losing money with ever penny they produced. They lost about 3.69 cents per coin.

The last batch of pennies will be auctioned off and will not go

But now the question of whether the nickel should continue to be made is asked. Pennies used to cost nearly 5 cents to make. 4 cents more than they're worth.

The nickel's net loss is nearly 9 cents per coin!

My belief still stands that if something is costing us money to make then we should not continue to produce it. Even if this means getting rid of the nickel.

But the nickel's problems don't end with the production costs. Like the penny, the nickel is limited in its usefulness. Americans are using coins less and less often, even when they use cash.

Mark Weller, executive director of Americans for Common Cents, told MSN, "It just so happens that copper and nickel are two of the more expensive metals you could be using," Weller said. Getting nickel production costs to close to 5 cents per coin could be completed within a year, he said, with a "new" nickel that looks identical to the current nickel.

Weller does not expect the nickel to go away anytime soon. The Mint lost money on every penny and every nickel it had made since 2006, Weller said, and it only stopped making pennies this year.

Many people are used to using credit cards and Apple Pay straight from their phones instead of using cash and or coins to pay for things these days and this is also a major factor to these coins not being produced any longer.



# Manasquan's Favorite Holiday Meals



Sohmores Chloe Stevens and Abigail Dwyer said that their favorite holiday treat is Pepermint hersheys.

By: Stella Brady

## The Blue & Gray 2025 Holiday Fun Guide



Rose Healy and Chloe Stevens said that their favorite holiday food is ham.



Jack Bryant said his favorite holiday treat is scones.



Annie Lomas said her favorite holiday treat is the Pumpkin Cream Chai from Starbucks



Mashed Potatoes were a fan favorite! Olive O'rielly, Owen Korth, Rebecca Shivone, and Grace Uliano said it was their favorite dish.



Christmas sugar cookies were a popular choixe! Brenna Gordon, Avery Koblan, Grace Uliano, Nora Hoppe, Kelsey Ross and Tess Friedman all said that this was their favorite treat.

# Whisking Up Holiday Cheer

By: Caitlin Young



Above: freshly baked gingerbread cookies

Want to get into the Christmas spirit? Try baking some Christmas cookies!

Christmas baking is one of the coziest parts of the holiday season, filling the house with warm spices, sweet vanilla, and the feeling of togetherness. Whether it's decorating cookies, rolling out gingerbread dough or making a batch of fresh chocolate chip cookies, each treat becomes its own little tradition. The kitchen turns into a festive mess of flour, icing, and sprinkles, but that's part of the fun. Christmas baking isn't just about the desserts, it's about creating memories and sharing homemade treats with people you love and showing kindness. It's a way to bring extra warmth and magic to the holidays.

Below: Peanut Butter Blossoms



"I love Christmas baking! It's a way to spread holiday cheer and brighten up the Christmas spirit," said Freshman Rylan Gavin.

Some delicious treats you can bake for this Christmas season are thumbprint cookies, gingerbread, sugar cookies, peanut butter blossoms and classic chocolate chip cookies. Thumbprint cookies include a soft and buttery texture with a small thumbprint center filled with strawberry, raspberry or apricot jam. They might be simple, but they're delicious.

Gingerbread cookies are a classic cookie that is cozy, spiced, nostalgic and perfect for decorating with friends and family. Christmas sugar cookies are simple, sweet and super fun to cut into festive shapes like snowflakes, candy canes and Christmas trees.

Peanut butter blossoms are soft, chewy peanut butter cookies topped with a Hershey's Kiss pressed right in the center. They have a little crisp on the outside from the sugar coating with a perfect com-

bo of sweet milk chocolate and salty peanut butter goodness. The chocolate kiss gives it a little Santa hat look.

Chocolate chip cookies might not be as festive as gingerbread or peanut butter blossoms, but they bring warmth and love to Christmas. Chocolate chip cookies are golden cookies filled with gooey chocolate chips or chunks. Kids love to leave them out for Santa Claus. To make them more festive, you can add red and green M&M's, holiday sprinkles or peppermint pieces.

You can bring in more holiday spirit into your home by filling the house with warm vanilla, pine or gingerbread scents. You can start little traditions such as watching Christmas movies, making hot cocoa with gooey marshmallows or wrapping presents early. Make your house pop by adding red and green around your space with cozy blankets and warm drinks. Hang soft, glowing lights around windows or doorways.

Christmas is always the most warm and comforting holiday of the year, especially when it comes to baking a fresh batch of cookies.

Below: Thumbprint Jelly Cookies



# Remembering Christmas

Students share their favorite memories of Christmases past!

By: Jane Marks

Ciara Dunne, a senior, remembers a story about one of their special purple tree ornaments. Each Christmas, her father recounts the same story about how he proposed to her mother using it. He set up a scavenger hunt for her mother, and the last thing—the ring—was next to the ornament. He had placed it in the middle of the tree, so her family lovingly calls it "the heart of the tree". Now, as Ciara's family decorates for the holidays each Christmas season, her family gets to remember a heartwarming story about love and the holidays.

Senior student Maeve Korth's favorite holiday memory is from Christmas when she was around ten years old. That year, Maeve—along with her brother and sister—got roller skates for Christmas. To celebrate the gift, they skated around in their kitchen together. They may have fallen once or twice but were having too much fun together to care.

My personal favorite Christmas memory would have to be my family's annual Christmas Eve tradition. Every year, my family follows the same routine, prior to me even being born. On Christmas Eve we go to mass in the evening, and when we come home, we eat my mom's homemade tortellini with vodka sauce. It used to be penne vodka, but the tortellini is tastier. After dinner, we sit in the living room together and watch The Muppet Christmas Carol while eating huge candy canes. After watching the movie annually for over 18 years, we each know all the words, and tend to call out phrases and lyrics together. It's a tradition that has never failed to fill me with that warm, fuzzy feeling that the holidays tend to bring.



Deals Are Just a Click Away

# SHOP SMART, SAVE BIG

By: Darcy Furniss

The day after Thanksgiving is one of the busiest shopping days of the year, and some people even say it's more exciting than Thanksgiving itself. Black Friday is a day that many look forward all year because of the big sales and discounts at popular stores, both in person and online. For many, it marks the start of the holiday shopping season, with the excitement of finding great deals, creating a sense of urgency. But the way people shop on Black Friday has started to change in recent years.

When sophomore Sammie Conway was asked about her Black Friday shopping this year, she said, "I went to a few stores, but I ended up finding everything I wanted and even more online." In the past, shoppers would line up outside stores hours before they opened to ensure they could get the best deals. Now, many people prefer shopping from home, scrolling through apps, and comparing prices without leaving the couch. According to Businesswire, "Fewer people visited stores: one report found in-store foot traffic dropped about 3.2% compared to last year."

Sophia Covert shared her approach, saying, "I actually did my Black Friday shopping early because I didn't want everything to sell out." Stores have noticed this change and are adjusting by extending their sales beyond just one day.

Many stores now start their deals days or even weeks before Black Friday, giving shoppers more time to find what they want. Online shopping has become a big part of the holiday season, with websites offering special discounts, limited-time sales, and faster shipping to encourage people to shop early.

Even with these changes, Black Friday is still a big event. Stores like Target, Walmart, and Best Buy see lots of online traffic, and some people still enjoy visiting physical stores for the excitement. Experts say that while fewer people are rushing into stores early in the morning, overall spending hasn't dropped much because online shopping is growing. Shoppers are getting smarter about planning ahead making lists, checking apps, and comparing prices before buying.

Retailers are also finding new ways to attract buyers. Many stores offer options like buying online and picking up in-store, special rewards programs, or deals only available through apps. Social media is a big influence too, with TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube showing Black Friday hauls, deal tips, and shopping videos that make people excited to shop.

Even though the chaos of Black Friday is not as strong as it used to be, the thrill of finding a deal is still there. Shoppers are becoming more organized, shopping early, and using online tools to get the best bargains. Stores are changing their strategies to match this, making sure Black Friday stays a major part of the holiday season.

Whether people choose to go to the stores or shop online, finding a good deal is still a big part of the holiday excitement. Lines may be shorter, and crowds may be smaller, but the appeal of Black Friday shows no signs of going away.



Black Friday 2014: Lining Up for LEGOs



Black Friday sign leading the way inside.

# What is your favorite part about celebrating the holiday season?



"My favorite part of the holiday season is spending time with my family and giving out gifts to people I love."

- Caitlin Young, MHS Sophomore



"Spending time with family and friends, I feel like being around celebrating with each other is nice."

- Jazmin Rodriguez, MHS Sophomore

"Food and decorations. The best."

- Kaylin Paserler, Freshman



"Favorite part about celebrating the holiday is hanging out with my mom, my dad, and my sister, and having a great time."

- Mr. Savacool, MHS teacher



"Probably hanging out with family, most of the time we just hangout and watch TV together and christmas movies. A nice calm Christmas eve is what we like to go for."

- Blake Daniel, Senior



"Hanging out with my family."

- Aiden Delsalto, Junior



# The Top 10 Stocking Stuffers for The 2025 Holiday

By: Myles Carstens

1. You might have guessed it, but you can never go wrong with some plain white socks (Nike, Adidas, Reebok, etc.). Although socks might seem like a non-essential gift every year, trust me there are lots of people in need of some fresh socks.



6. A new phone case. If a person you know is known to be the one with a messed up or ugly phone case, I strongly advise you to invest in a phone case. Amazon has plenty of high quality phone cases for cheaper than you might expect that will last and surely look nice.



2. Body soap (Method, Dr. Squatch, Monday). You never want someone to smell like they do not take showers. Get them some body scrub to ensure that they will smell nice but also stay clean and fresh. Hygiene is very important for the human body!

7. Phone Charger. A phone charger is an essential for the house, car, or even travel necessities. It is something that people use every day and is very essential towards today's life style. Make sure that you get an apple cord because they are the most durable and they work the best.



3. Lotion or Skin-Care products (CeraVe, The Ordinary, Bubble). Self-care is not something that people should prohibit themselves from, make the effort to get someone into a self-care kit, even if you might not think that they would want it. Introduce them to the practice, and if they are struggling try and provide them with a routine that they could follow.



8. Water Bottle or Mug. A nice water bottle for school and everyday life not only ensures that someone will get their hydration, but it also is nice for someone to have. Brands like Yeti, Owala, or Stanley are great options and are very popular today because of their reliability and long-lasting traits.



4. Gift Cards or some cash (Amazon, Brave New World, Ulta). Gift cards might come off as a bit lazy, but it ensures that you will not choose the wrong thing to buy for someone. Gift cards or cash allows you to express your thoughts of them and what kinds of stores that the receiving person likes, and it is a safe option to go for.

9. Wallet. A wallet is a great necessity for high schoolers to have especially as they approach their upperclassmen years. As more kids start to drive, they will have to carry their license in a wallet that they may or may not have. I suggest the modern wallet brand Groove Life which is something not annoying to carry around.



5. Cologne or perfume (Travel size or Full size). Smelling nice is not only good for the person wearing the scent, but it is also nice for those around the person as well. A nice fragrance is always nice to have, and it is certainly a great gift too.



10. A favorite candy or snack. A reliable, thoughtful, and easy stocking stuffer. Very common but very appreciated and appropriate every holiday season.

## Christmas songs we can't stop singing!

By Susannah Patterson

### 1. All I want for Christmas is you:

This song "All I want for Christmas is you" by Mariah Carey was the most voted song by our students and staff this song is very upbeat and brings great Christmas vibes. Every midnight on November 1<sup>st</sup> Mariah Carey does her famous "defrosting" where she says, "Its time" and starts singing this iconic song. Sophomore Gemma Francello said she loves listening to this song because "it gets her in the Christmas spirit."

### 2. Last Christmas:

In second place is "Last Christmas" by Wham. Even though last Christmas is about a heart break its very catchy and fun to sing along to. Plus, its mix of festive, cheerful, and dramatic romance. It hits the perfect holiday mood every year. Not only is this a great song its also a movie! Mr. Petrilla says " I love it because reminds him of the first time I saw the movie with my wife."

### 3. It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas:

Third we have "it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas" by Bing Crosby. This song is such a great song because it instantly creates a cozy, festive atmosphere with its nostalgic lyrics. It can make anyone feel like the holidays have officially arrived! Sophomore Charlotte Leible says "It makes me feel like Christmas is right around the corner!"

### 4. Rock'n Around the Christmas Tree:

"Rocking Around the Christmas" by Brenda Lee brings so much joy during this season and is great to excite you to rock around the Christmas tree and even better when it's up and you're having the best time enjoying the holiday season again. "This song makes me so excited to put up my Christmas tree" says Carys Devine.

### 5. Jingle bell rock:

Bobby Helms famous "jingle bell rock" is such a great song to listen to because it has a lively beat and a fun, catchy tune that makes it easy to enjoy. Its fun rhythm and classic holiday feel help boost your mood and bring excitement to the Christmas season. "This song makes me feel so festive" said Maestra.

### 6. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

The Red Nosed Reindeer everyone loves...Rudolph brings so many great Christmas memories to lots of people. Whether it's from the nostalgic movie or the famous song! Maris Voorhees says she loves this song because it reminds her of when she was little.

### 7. Let it snow:

"Let it snow" by Dean Martin is a great song for the holiday season but its also great for all winter! This song has such cheerful lyrics that make it perfect for enjoying winter moments. " I love listening to this song because it makes me excited to ski" said Lorelei Voorhees.

### 8. Baby its cold outside:

Another great song by Dean Martin. This song not only brings a warm feel, but it also feels like a playful conversation between two people on a cold winter night, making it nice to listen to on a cold winter night. Mrs. Radzinsky says this is her favorite because "it reminds me of my grandma singing it when I was little."

### 9. Joy to the world:

"Joy to the World" by Phil Wickham is a such good song to listen to because it sounds happy and exciting. The strong, cheerful music makes people feel joyful and full of holiday spirits.

### 10. Blue Christmas:

Lastly "Blue Christmas" by Elvis Presley is a great song for the holidays because it has a slow, sad-yet-comforting feel that matches the mood of missing someone during the holidays. Its smooth melody and classic style make it a memorable and emotional Christmas song.

## What Do I Watch?

With the holiday season in full swing, what better way to get festive than by watching a Christmas movie? I'll be the first to admit that it can get a little boring watching the same films year after year. Sure, the nostalgia can be fun, but if you're looking for something new, or at least new to you, I've put together a list of five christmas movies you may or may not have seen.

Every year I try to find at least one fresh holiday film to watch with my family, and this list reflects a mix of classics, family fun, romance, and more. So buckle up, because this sleigh is about to pull away.

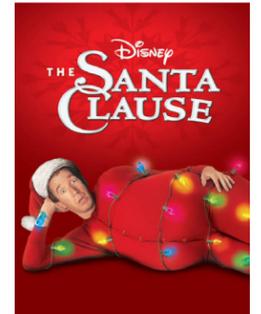


### It's a Wonderful Life

This classic follows George Bailey, a man who feels overwhelmed by life until an angel shows him what the world would be like if he had never existed. Through the journey, he rediscovers hope, love, and the impact he's had on others. Its themes of gratitude and family capture the true spirit of the holiday season.

### The Santa Clause

After accidentally causing Santa to fall from his roof, an ordinary man finds himself magically chosen to take over the job. As he transforms into the new Santa, he learns about belief, responsibility, and family. It's funny, imaginative, and full of classic holiday charm that appeals to both kids and adults.



### Love Actually

Set in London during the weeks leading up to Christmas, this movie weaves together multiple stories of love. Each story overlaps in charming and emotional ways, creating a cozy patchwork of holiday tales. It's full of humor, heart, and feel-good moments that remind us how love shows up in unexpected ways during the holidays.

### Miracle on 34th Street

The story centers on a department store Santa who claims to be the real Kris Kringle, leading to a court case that tries to determine his true identity. Along the way, he brings hope and belief back into the lives of a skeptical young girl and her mother. It celebrates faith, wonder, and the magic of the season. It is perfect for anyone wanting a heartwarming



### Klaus

A young, unmotivated postman is sent to a remote frozen town, where he meets a reclusive toymaker and accidentally sparks a new holiday tradition. Together, they transform a bitter community through kindness and small acts that grow into something magical. Its animation, warmth, and message about generosity make it a perfect modern Christmas movie with tons of heart.

# What Are You Most Excited for This Break?

After asking around, we came to a conclusion. Manasquan High School Students and Staff have tremendous amount to be excited for this winter break! Let's see what they have to say...

"I am most excited about spending time with my family and going snowboarding with my friends," said Sophomore Carys Devine



When prompted, Mrs. Martucci said "My favorite thing about Christmas is all the tradition and I love spending time with my family. We don't get to go away for Christmas because of sports, so I'm looking forward to just relaxing and slowing down a little bit."

Mr. Hyland, Manasquan High School's newest Support Staff of the Year, enthusiastically answered "I am excited for Santa to come."



"I am excited for Christmas break and I also play a lot of music in my free time, so I'm excited to do that more," stated Nico Agostini, Hyland's right-hand man.

Junior Michaela Kelly answered "I am excited for Christmas and my birthday. I am also excited to see my family and hangout with my sister."

"I am excited to go skiing with my friends in Massachusetts," said Sophomore Samatha Conway



"This winter break I go to Canada to see my grandparents, so I'm excited for that," stated Junior Samatha Price.

Junior Grace Bonavita answered, "I'm most excited to go skiing with my friends Rose and Mariead."

