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STEAM showcase brings district, community together

Organizations, student groups present at event

By Anna Garth
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Forty-one students and community members presented at the fourth annual district-wide STEAM showcase, high school Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater said.

The event had a variety of science, technology, engineering, art, and math-themed booths in the high school cafeteria and gymnasium. It took place on March 18 from 5 to 7 p.m.

Drinkwater and Joe Janack, the middle school dean of students, organized the event. Drinkwater said they received grants through both the Spaulding Education Fund and the Hooper Fund to help pay for some materials and outside presenters.

Janack said the outside presenters are one of the biggest benefits of the showcase.

"Having that opportunity to see what is available in the STEAM subjects as a possible career path

is great," he said.

Drinkwater said many of the outside organizations knew about the event because of connections that science department chair and teacher Kristin Umile made in the past.

Umile, who previously organized the event, said she got to know who was interested in presenting just by reaching out, having conversations, and networking.

'I think that it is a great opportunity to see the interdisciplinary nature of many of the subjects that we teach.'

- KRISTIN UMILE

This year, Umile ran a biotech booth with her biotechnology class. She said that the showcase is a valuable chance to learn about STEAM outside of school.

"I think that it is a great opportunity to see the interdisciplinary nature of many of the subjects that we teach," Umile said.

Drinkwater said there is value in seeing the presentations from the district students and staff, too.

"Sharing and seeing what [students'] peers are doing or what other grade levels are doing is always a fun opportunity," she said.

Student presentations included the high school Robotics Club, Green Team, science classes, math classes, and art classes, along with individual presenta-



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

Seniors Elliot Davis, Anna Gardner, Penelope Riggs, and junior Alex Montaresi present to sophomore Cordelia Riggs at the physics table, showing weight distribution through paper birds.

tions.

Middle school and elementary school students also presented.

Juniors Maggie Whitman and Peter Langendorf worked with Drinkwater and Janack to coordinate students and teachers who were interested in presenting at the showcase.

They reached out to different societies, clubs, and student groups to ask if they wanted a booth at the event. Whitman said she thinks it's beneficial for students to show off what they are doing in school.

"It's a good experience for students to have to present in front of such a fluid group of people," she said.

Students from the contemporary band, jazz band, Soundwaves, and chorus performed in the lobby.

High school band director and music teacher Harry Wagg said it was an important event for the students who performed.

"The arts and the creative process are an integral part of anything that's having to do with the rest of STEM," he said.

Students who attended said they found value in going and seeing what the showcase had to offer.

Junior Katie Crompton said she came to "see all the different stations and what everyone's doing across the district," and she

also helped run a physics booth.

Many students were excited to help their teachers run a booth, Whitman said. She said she saw many proud teacher moments and people of all ages having fun.

Attendees also had the chance to go outside to food from the food truck Butter "UR" Biscuit.

Janack said this is one of his favorite events at the school because he wants it to bring the community together and help people see the work of students and teachers.

"I'm hoping that this event will continue to build on its success from the previous three years and just strengthen the community partnerships," he said.

DECA students compete at state competition

Eight competitors qualify for international contest

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Eight students qualified for the International Career Development Conference (ICDC) at the annual DECA state competition on March 12 to 14 in the Boston Seaport.

The international competition will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, from April 25 to 28.

According to DECA adviser Barrett Alston's email to the high school, senior Connor Dickson, juniors Alex Hatfield, Benjamin Rubens, Sarah Cort, Kiernan Day, and sophomores Keira Flynn, Cody Mears, and Saskia Kue-

hnemund all advanced to ICDC.

Junior Alex Hatfield said he and his partner, Benjamin Rubens, improved this year immensely and are excited to move on to ICDC.

"This year ... I felt more ready and more prepared to go into states and succeed, ... I am excited that we moved on. I think it's an incredible opportunity to grow connections nationwide," Hatfield said.

Alston said the students performed well, with 14 students being placed as finalists.

He said the competition changed from last year because the students had to take their business competition exams at the

event, rather than before arriving in the Seaport, making the event go longer on Saturday.

"So this year, the exam was taken on paper in person there, and so that

meant that roleplays went all day long on Friday, and then [on Saturday morning] we had our final role plays," Alston said.

The exam was originally online and taken before the event. However, due to a large increase in scores from certain districts on the exam, the exam is now taken at the event.

When the students are not participating in the competition, DECA hosts workshops for students, he said.

'I think it's an incredible opportunity to grow connections nationwide.'

- ALEX HATFIELD



COURTESY OF BARRETT ALSTON

DECA ICDC qualifiers include senior Connor Dickson, and juniors Ben Rubens, Alex Hatfield, Kiernan Day and Sarah Cort.

"There's a lot of workshops about various kinds of things to develop your career and develop your leadership skills. There were a lot of other fun activities that you could participate in," Alston said.

Alston said the new event location, from the Boston Prudential Center, where it was held two years ago, to the Boston Seaport, made the event more professional and accommodated the growth in DECA chapters.

"It feels very professional, like being able to kind of do everything in conjunction with the convention center... we [also] have more space here," he said.

The students were able to walk around the Seaport in between events and ceremonies, Alston said.

"I'm a fan of having it there. I hope it stays there," he said.

Alston said he hopes that more students will advance past the

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Guest speaker warns about dangers of social media use

Encourages importance of self-knowledge

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Guest speaker and Major League Baseball agent Mark Leinweaver spoke to students about “Why Character Matters” on February 11.

According to Principal Julie SgROI’s email to students, Leinweaver represents over 75 professional baseball players and has over 20 years of experience. He teaches college classes at the University of Southern California about careers in sports.

According to Leinweaver’s website, “Why Character Matters,” he has visited over 100 high schools in the last four years to educate students about social media, bullying, and leadership.

During the presentation, Leinweaver asked students who would purposely be selfish and mean.

“If you choose to be selfish and mean, let me fast forward to that life ... You’re going to be an 18-year-old, new on a college campus, and you are going to run into a 21-year-old man or woman who’s going to hate you ... When you [ask] why is this happening to me? ... It is karma, and it always finds people who are selfish and mean,” he said.

‘It is karma, and it always finds people who are selfish and mean.’

- MARK LEINWEAVER

Leinweaver said it is important to remember the dangers of social media and the impact it has on future careers.

He described a situation in which a student posted an offensive Snapchat as a freshman, which later resurfaced and cost her a scholarship to a national championship team.

“She’s only a freshman. It’s a three-second Snapchat. Fast forward, senior, scholarship to a national champion team. And all of



BISSY MITRANO PHOTO

Major League Baseball agent Mark Leinweaver emphasized the importance of being present while warning students that he would put them up on stage if they tried to use their cell phones.

a sudden, the three-second Snapchat... comes back to you,” Leinweaver said.

Leinweaver said that everyone has a special “ability” in life that will be useful in the future.

“Before you walk back out of these doors, think about your ability that you’d be better than everybody else because you’re go-

ing to account for it. It is going to separate you from everyone else,” he said.

Junior Léonie Lopez said her favorite part of the presentation was when Leinweaver showed an image of a boy who would often get bullied.

“He showed a picture of a kid that was overweight, and he asked

us to guess who that is. And it was him,” Lopez said.

Senior Jessie Philpott said Leinweaver reinforced ideas about the digital footprint.

“He reinforced some ideas that I already knew about online ... and how you should be kind to people, even when no one is watching,” Philpott said.

International Week presenters share their travel experiences

By Riley McKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Presenters of International Week emphasize the importance of traveling to experience different cultures.

International Week lasted from March 18 to 20, where 15 presenters spoke to classes about their experiences going abroad.

According to an email from world language department head and event organizer Michelle Magana, the World Language Department has been holding International Week for 30 years.

Magana begins planning in January. The World Language Department alerts parents and faculty about the event, and she puts an announcement in The Cricket

so that community members can get involved, she said.

Once she gathers her presenters, Magana usually schedules around community members

‘I feel like I’m international, you know. I’m from another country, so I felt like it was good to do it.’

- LÉONIE LOPEZ

first and faculty and students second due to everyone’s busy schedules, she said.

Magana emphasized that it’s important to get as many people as possible involved to

fill up the schedule and have the most variations in presentations.

Junior Léonie Lopez created a presentation that compared her experiences of attending high school in France and the United States.

“I feel like I’m international, you know. I’m from another country, so I felt like I was good to do it,” she said.



COURTESY OF MICHELLE MAGANA

Digital learning specialist Matt Tangney was one 15 presenters during International Week. He presented on his travels to Italy on March 19 during D Block at the middle school in room A224.

Lopez said that she finds the food, people, and daily structure are the most different between the two countries.

“I think [people] can learn the culture, like how people live there ... their personality because

French personality is very different than here,” she said.

Middle school social studies teacher Matthew Aumais gave his presentations on his travels through Europe, focusing on going to Amsterdam as part of his

graduate program.

Aumais said that one of the best parts of traveling outside of his native country was getting to experience new cultures that he wasn’t previously exposed to by growing up in Massachusetts.

“There’s a lot more to the world than just the United States ... you get to experience different ways of life that you might not get to experience,” he said.

Music teacher Ben Icenogle has presented on his multiple trips to Colombia for the past two years, this time focusing on the country’s relationship with music.

“The focus was more on traditional music of Colombia and then connecting it to modern reggaeton music,” he said.

Icenogle said he participates in International Week because of how beneficial it is to the school.

“We get so few opportunities to bring in outside perspectives, in our school here, that it’s great to just have some time solely dedicated to that ... it’s a tradition that I want to support,” he said.

NHS runs bi-annual blood drive in gym

By Maddy Holsomback
INDEPENDENT STAFF

The National Honors Society (NHS) ran another blood drive, partnering with the Red Cross.

Less student participation was expected due to the DECA state competition being on the same day as the blood drive, March 12.

The school usually has 20 donors, with a maximum spot being available at 30.

This year the drive had 17 blood donors, said senior and NHS class officer Annie Pinkin, who runs the blood drive.



MADDY HOLSOMBACK PHOTO

Junior Isabella Hilton was one of the high school students who volunteered to help run the front check-in table for the blood drive.

She works with the Red Cross doing the advertising for the blood drive, setting up, and ensuring enough students are willing to give blood.

Pinkin said it can be difficult to find students who are able to donate, as some are turned away due to being athletes or to other aspects that would make them

unable to donate, including having medical conditions.

Pinkin will graduate this year, but the NHS will continue to run the drive that she started, she said.

“I’m excited for next year, I know the Communications Officer for NHS is planning on continuing the blood drive, so I’m really excited that it will continue to live on,” Pinkin said.

Tony Borrelli, a donor recruiter at The Red Cross, came to the school during the blood drive to assist Pinkin and the other volunteers.

“Manchester Essex is an excellent high school in my experience, in my staff’s experience, working with the National Honor Society and also the folks that come out to donate. All generous with your

time, generous of the understanding of the need for blood,” Borrelli said,

Borelli said, over 500 blood drives across the country have been canceled due to the large amount of snow, leading to a blood shortage in January, which has since been resolved, but the cancellations still led to 20,000 units of blood that normally would have been donated being lost.

Science teacher and NHS faculty adviser Joshua Wladkowski hopes more people give blood in the future.

“I just hope when people see that they can donate blood, that they really consider doing it, because it is very helpful to a lot of people,” he said.

Sophomore class watches historical film '12 Years a Slave'

Students, teachers observe positive reactions

By Riley McKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Sophomores watched the 2013 film "12 Years a Slave" as part of the English and social studies departments' curriculum on slavery in America.

The entire sophomore class viewed the movie on March 4, a half day, in the auditorium.

The film tells the story of Solomon Northup, a free man living in New York who is kidnapped and sold into slavery for 12 years of his life.

The film is based on the 1853 memoir of the same title.

The English and social studies departments have been showing the film to students since 2020, with a break in 2021 due to the pandemic, social studies teacher Jennifer Coleman said.

In U.S. History I, the current unit covers the institution of slavery in America, and the class studies the experiences of enslaved people, she said.

"Watching '12 Years a Slave' gives students a direct visual to connect with everything we've been reading in class and learning about," Coleman said.

Coleman said the film was well-received by students, despite its dark subject matter.

"There were students who were crying in the auditorium after the film was over. But on the whole, students reacted very positively to the experience because they feel like it helps them gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of enslaved people," she said.

After students reflected on the film through graded discussions in class, English teacher Allison Krause also found that the film had the desired effect on students.

"I was really impressed with the connections that they've been able to make ... and, just, I've been impressed with the level of maturity and respect in which they've approached the subject because it's difficult," she said.

Students commented on how they felt that implementing a visual with what they've been studying benefited their understanding of the topic, Krause said.

Students used their classwork from the social studies and English classes, including literature, like "Incidents in the Life of a



Slave Girl," and other works, to learn about slavery and abolition and to understand how literature was used as a tool of both oppression and resistance, she said.

Krause said showing this particular film about slavery is important. Because the movie is about the real-life experience of someone, it exposes viewers to the reality of enslavement.

"Even more than that, I think that this film just looks slavery right in the face, and it certainly doesn't attempt to sugarcoat any part of it," she said.

One of the scenes in the film that Krause said finds the most impactful is when Northup is crying for help in Washington, D.C. after he is kidnapped, and then the camera pans to the U.S. Capitol.

"It's just such a powerful visual, I think, of how our nation was founded on the contradictory idea of all men are created equal at the same time slavery is legal in all 13 colonies," she said.

English department head Debra Isensee, who doesn't teach sophomores this year but has taught this unit in the past, also finds the film to be incredibly impactful.

She said she found the process in which Northup has to crush up berries to make ink while in en-



WIKIPEDIA.COM

Directed by Steven McQueen, "12 Years a Slave" stars Chiwetel Ejiofor as Solomon Northup, Lupita Nyong'o as Patsy, Michael Fassbender as Epps, and Benedict Cumberbatch as Ford.

slavement to be one of the most devastating parts of the film.

"Everything he has to go through ... to be able to write for his freedom. Like, that to me was like, wow. That was the most touching," she said.

Isensee said that both the film and the unit on slavery help students to prepare for English classes in the future by understanding the origins of the texts that they read.

"The study of slavery, in terms of 11th-grade English, becomes important because of the systemic racism that they will encounter when they read 'A Raisin in the Sun,'" she said.

Sophomores found that the film not only aided their learning for this year and the future but also their emotional connection to the subject.

"They do a good job depicting how awful it was ... I think seeing it together makes people take it more seriously," sophomore Teddy Pinkin said.

Students agreed that seeing visual depictions of violence was more impactful than reading.

"Just seeing it visually kind of helped me understand it more ... even though it was uncomfortable at times. I'm so glad I watched it, and I think everyone feels the same," sophomore Cordelia Riggs said.

Riggs said that the most memorable moment for her was watching the finale when Northup finally returns home to his wife and children.

"I think it was just showing how long he was away, and he was apologizing to his family. Just seeing that reunion between

him and his family, that was really powerful," she said.

Sophomore Tess Taylor also found the ending to resonate with her.

"When Patsy was watching Solomon leave without her, and she was just so devastated, I thought that was so sad," she said.

Taylor agreed that the film helped her understanding of the two departments' units.

"I think the film has benefited my learning because I did learn some new things about slavery that I wouldn't have found in books. I think it's more like you need to watch it," she said.

English teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon said that when she surveys her students about which works were most impactful when learning about slavery, the movie is always first on their list.

CONTINUATIONS

DECA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 DECA district competition to experience other DECA events.

"I mean, you always want to have more students qualify. I mean, we had almost two-thirds of our students qualify ... I always want more kids to

be able to have the opportunity," Alston said. Senior Samantha Brigham, a student participating in the Hospitality and Tourism Pro-

fessional Selling project, said she would recommend DECA to other students. "It does give you networking opportunities, especially if you

want to go into business as a career because of the wide range of categories you can be in, and it helps meet new kids from different schools," Brigham said.

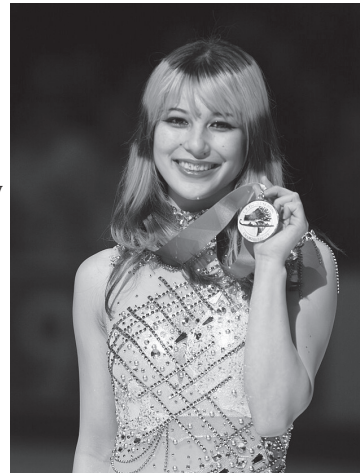
Celebrating women for women's history month

By Anna Garth
INDEPENDENT EDITOR



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Winning the Nobel Prize at age 17, Malala Yousafzai is now the executive chair and co-founder of The Malala Fund, an organization that strives to make education more accessible to girls around the world. She was born in Mingora, Pakistan, on July 12, 1999. When the Taliban took over, girls weren't allowed to go to school, which prompted her to speak out publicly, she said on the Malala Fund "My Story" webpage. She blogged about her experiences for BBC Urdu, which made her a target for the Taliban. In 2012, a masked gunman came onto her school bus and shot her. Ten days later, she woke up in a hospital in England. According to the Nobel Prize website, she had to flee to England and live there in exile because a fatwa (religious decree) was issued against her in Pakistan. On her 16th birthday, she spoke to the United Nations about girls' equal rights to education.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Alysia Liu is an American figure skater who won gold in the 2026 Winter Olympics. She was born in California in 2005 and began skating at 5 years old. Liu is the first U.S. woman to win two golds at a single Olympic Games in 2026. She is also the first U.S. woman to land three triple axels in a single competition. In a Rolling Stone interview with Alex Morris from March 7, 2026, Liu said figure skating was her life growing up, so after she went to the Olympics in 2022, she quit. After that, she lived a regular life that she said helped her feel like her own person. However, she realized she missed the thrill of figure skating when she went skiing for the first time, she told Rolling Stone. A Yahoo Sports article by Paolo Songco from March 2026 says she returned to skating on her own terms, making sure to prioritize her mental health over skating. The article says she inspired other people to do things on their own terms.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Marie Curie was a scientist who discovered the elements radium and polonium and received two Nobel Prizes, becoming the first woman to win the award. Curie was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1867 as Maria Sklodowska and later moved to Paris, France, in 1891. She married Pierre Curie in 1895, and together, they researched the newly discovered phenomenon of radioactivity. According to The Science History Institute, after Pierre died by being struck by a horse-drawn carriage, and before World War I, she studied the scientific and medical uses of radium. During the war, she organized a field system of portable X-rays to help wounded French soldiers. The Live Science article "Marie Curie: Facts and biography" by Jessica Leggett and Mary Bagley from December 2021 says she died of aplastic anemia, likely due to prolonged exposure to radioactivity, in 1934.



FLICKR.COM

Maya Angelou was a poet, author, performer, producer, and civil rights activist. She was born in 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri, and grew up in St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas. She wrote seven autobiographical books; "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," her most famous, was published in 1969. She was the northern coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an African-American advocacy group. Her spoken poetry albums won Grammys in 1995 and 2002, and in 1972 she was the first African-American woman to have a screenplay produced. She was awarded the National Medal of Arts, the National Book Foundation's Literarian Award, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Caged Bird Legacy, LLC, a foundation dedicated to Angelou and her work, says she is the first African-American woman to appear on a quarter. She died in 2014.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Sally Ride was the first American woman in space. She was born in 1951 and died in 2012 in Los Angeles, California. According to The California Museum, she cumulatively spent over 343 hours in space over her career. Her first mission was on the space shuttle Challenger for STS-7. Her bio from the San Diego Space and Air Museum Hall of Fame says she was the only person to serve on the investigation boards for both the Challenger and Columbia incidents. She was also president and CEO of Sally Ride Science, an organization that created science programs for upper elementary and middle-school students. Besides being an astronaut, she was a physicist, professor, and author. The first LGBT astronaut, Ride died of pancreatic cancer in 2013. She was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Wilma Mankiller was an activist and the first woman elected chief of the Cherokee. She was born in 1945 in Oklahoma, and moved to San Francisco when she was 11 as part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' relocation policy, according to the National Women's History Museum. The museum says she worked with local Native American groups until she moved back the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma. When she was elected principal chief she doubled tribal memberships and revenues, according to the Oklahoma Historical Society. She opened three rural health centers, expanded the Head Start program for Cherokee children, was a director of the Cherokee Nation Community Development Department, and started a prevention center for drug abuse. She helped establish the Office of Tribal Justice in the Department of Justice. Mankiller was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998. She died in 2010.

1960s puppet Lamb Chop returns as trending dog toy

By Rosie Renahan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Ventriloquist Shari Lewis's 1960s sheep sock puppet, Lamb Chop, is popular again, though in a new way: Americans have been buying Lamb Chop as a dog toy.

Over a decade ago, Lamb Chop was turned into a plush dog toy by a company called Multipet International that now sells millions of the toys annually, Angel Madison wrote in a 2025 Country Living article titled "A Complete History of the Viral Lamb Chop Dog Toy."

Shari Lewis, the creator of the Lamb Chop character, was an entertainer in children's television. A performer from an early age, she began to learn magic tricks from her father at the age of 13. Lewis was able to take

lessons in acrobatics, juggling, and ventriloquism, as well as piano and violin.

Lewis first voiced Lamb Chop on television in 1956, when the two made a guest appearance in the series "Captain Kangaroo."

Then in the 1960s, "The Shari Lewis Show" aired on NBC, and Lamb Chop became a star.

In the 1990s, Lamb Chop starred in "Lamb Chop's Play Along," a television series aimed at toddlers. The series had two seasons and ended in 1996.

Although Lamb Chop was a major TV character from the 1960s to the 1990s, her rise in popularity as a dog toy is fairly recent and unprecedented.

"Frankly, I think the toys remain popular because my generation [Gen X] remembers the kids' show with Shari Lewis, and we feel nostalgic," Shari Lewis fan Robin Rothman shared in a 2025 interview with Kinship.

"The Lamb Chop Dog Toy is our number one most popular dog toy," said Allen Hughes, President of Retail at Chewy.com, in an interview with

Country Living.

The toy comes in many variations, such as the Birthday Edition, Rainbow Edition, or even different types of options for holidays and occasions, like the toy's Easter Edition. Many owners collect variations of this stuffed animal, Leslie Yellin, a senior executive at Multipet International, said.

"Whether it's summer-themed prints, shamrock-holding Lamb Chops for St. Patrick's Day, or heart-adorned designs for Valentine's Day, there's always something fresh on the horizon," Yellin said in a 2025 interview with Angel Madison for Yahoo! Life.

Students at the high school, including sophomores Lila Braier, Olivia Hickey, and Kalin Bennett, and freshman Ellen Gilson have their own Lamb Chop dog toys for their pets.

"I never really knew that these were popular ... I don't think we knew that [Lamb Chop] was a character," Hickey said.

These toys may be such popular choices for pets because



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

English teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon's 4-year-old dog Roo has four Lamb Chop dog toys that he carries all over the house.

Lamb Chop's design gives a sense of comfort, veterinarian Dr. Sabrina Kong said in a 2025 interview with Marti Trgovich of Kinship.

"Over the years, I've seen countless patients — from Terriers to Retrievers — cling to their Lamb Chop as a comfort object," Kong said.

It's common for dogs to become attached to a certain toy, wrote Sydni Ellis in a January

2026 article for A-Z Animals.

"Just like humans, dogs crave companionship—whether from their favorite toy, their favorite human, or another pet," Ellis wrote.

While Lewis passed away due to pneumonia in 1998, her legacy lives on through her daughter Mallory, who is a puppeteer and ventriloquist like her mother and now performs with Lamb Chop, according to her website.

Team USA secures gold medal victory

Hockey success brings national pride

By Sophia Eagan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Both the U.S. women’s and men’s hockey teams defeated Canada in 2-1 overtime victories at the 2026 Winter Olympics on Feb. 19 and 22, bringing national pride, recognition, and inspiration.

The women’s team won gold for the first time in eight years, and the men’s team won gold for the first time in 46 years, marking the first time that both teams have won gold in the same Olympics.

The men’s team’s last win was the “Miracle on Ice” in 1980 against the Soviet Union.

According to the CNN article “Trump skates on Team USA’s hockey wins during State of the Union address” by Betsy Klein, this victory was a breath of solidarity in the divided social climate of the United States.

“[Trump’s] recognition of the team marked one of the few bipartisan moments of the speech, receiving lengthy, raucous applause and chants of ‘USA’ – and proving that sports, even in a time of intense political polarization, can bring people together,” Klein wrote.



THE WHITE HOUSE/FLICKR.COM

President Trump recognizes the men’s Olympic hockey team. This is the first year that both the men’s and women’s hockey teams won gold. Both teams boosted national pride.

The women’s hockey team also brought media recognition to women’s sports.

In the Los Angeles Times article “Flavor Flav is hyping up a women’s sports celebration in Vegas. Here’s what we know” by Chuck Schilken, Flavor Flav, an American rapper, offered to host a celebration for the women’s hockey team’s success on a social media post.

“If the USA Women’s Hockey team wants a real celebration and invite, I’ll host them in Las Vegas,” he wrote.

While both teams have left their own impacts on the country and women’s sports, they have

also left a collective impact on young male and female hockey players.

In a Yahoo Sports article “Team USA’s gold medal wins inspire growth of youth hockey in Central Arkansas” by Jurnee Taylor, Little Rock Aces youth hockey coach Jack Windley said that watching Team USA’s success made the sport feel more real for young players.

“They see the professionals on TV, they realize they’re playing the same game that they play here in Central Arkansas, and it really just helps inspire their dream to go to the next level,” he said.

New Formula 1 season brings changes

Lighter cars accompany new regulations

By Claire Masters
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Formula 1 kicked off its season on March 7 EDT (March 8 AEDT) at the Australian Grand Prix with Mercedes’s George Russell winning the race. His teammate, Kimi Antonelli, won second, and Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc was third.

At the second race of the season, the Chinese Grand Prix on March 15, Antonelli won his first race, with Russell second, and Ferrari’s Lewis Hamilton third.

The Japanese Grand Prix, the third race this season, on March 29 had Antonelli winning, with McLaren’s Oscar Piastri second, and Leclerc third.

This year, Formula 1 has changed immensely, wrote ESPN sports journalist Laurence Edmondson, in “2026 F1 rules: What’s new on the cars; how will changes affect the racing,” a March 3 article from ESPN.

“Formula 1 has undergone the biggest regulation change in its history ahead of the 2026 season, with new rules impacting the car’s power units, aerodynamics, tires, and fuel,” Edmondson wrote.

These new cars are smaller, lighter, and more aerodynamic; they have new power units and

sustainable fuels. Plus, new modes such as overtake and boost have been added, Edmondson wrote.

This year, a new team, Cadillac, has been added, with drivers Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas.

“We have bold ambitions, but we are realistic, committed, and respectful of the challenge ahead,” Cadillac team principal Graeme Lowdon said in “Cadillac confirms first upgrades for Australia as they look ahead to debut Grand Prix,” a Mar. 3 article from Formula 1.

The team Kick Sauber has transitioned into the Audi Formula 1 Team for the 2026 season with drivers Nico Hulkenberg and Gabriel Bortoleto.

“We want to make Audi the most successful F1 team in history. There are milestones on that journey, and we are starting it today,” Audi team principal Johnathan Wheatley said in a Feb. 17 article from BBC Sport.

On March 20, it was announced that Wheatley will depart from Audi with immediate effect.

The only rookie on the grid is 18-year-old Arvid Lindblad, who is driving for Racing Bulls Formula 1 Team.

“This is what I’ve worked towards my whole life,” Lindblad said in a Feb. 25 BBC Sport article, “The ‘rare combination’ behind Britain’s youngest F1

driver.”

Last year, McLaren won the Constructors’ Championship with driver Lando Norris taking the Drivers’ Championship by just 2 points over Red Bull’s Max Verstappen.

This year, because of the new regulations, things could turn out differently, wrote Anna Francis in a Feb. 8 article from Formula 1.

“Amid the introduction of new technical regulations, however, [McLaren] will face the additional challenge of trying to [win another championship] whilst also navigating the rules reset,” Francis wrote.

Team principal of McLaren, Zak Brown, knows that everything can change this season, considering the new cars and regulations.

“We’re still learning, but I think we’re in a good starting position,” Brown said at the team principal press conference during pre-season testing in Bahrain.

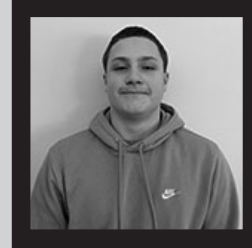
Formula 1 is stepping into a new era in driving; nothing is certain, and 24 races will decide the champions of 2026, Edmondson wrote.

“But the nature of the new rules means it is more likely that success and failure will be dictated to some extent by convoluted elements of the regulations,” he said.

Next, Formula 1 travels to Miami for the Miami Grand Prix on May 3. There are no races in April because the Saudi Arabian and Bahrain Grand Prixes have been cancelled.



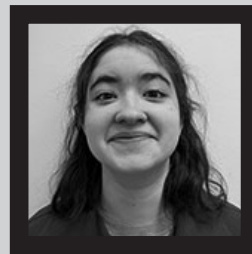
Freshman Annabelle Kerivan:
“My friends and my dad’s friends, they always come over, and my dad makes a big boiled dinner.”



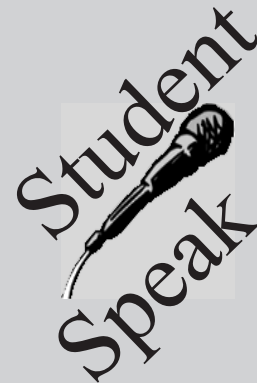
Freshman Owen Peyla:
“I just eat rice.”



Sophomore Keira Flynn:
“A St. Patrick’s Day tradition that my family does is my dad will make a traditional Irish meal.”



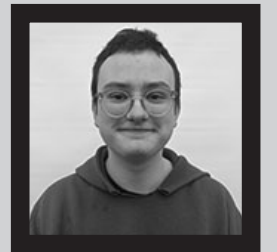
Sophomore Milo Mavarez Perez:
“I dress my dog in green, and I dress in green, and we just eat Lucky Charms in my room.”



What are your St. Patrick’s Day traditions?



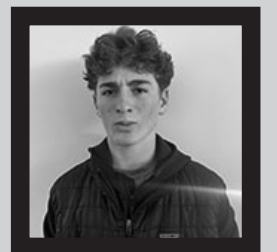
Junior Riley Corrigan:
“My mom usually makes traditional Irish meals and stuff, including soda bread.”



Junior Liam Grace:
“We have this tradition with another family, and we all meet up, and we have a big Irish breakfast together.”



Senior Anna O’Leary:
“My family is very into the fact that we’re Irish, so I have all my cousins come to my house. We make a bunch of food.”



Senior Jack Macavanagh:
“My grandparents come over and my dad makes some delicious Irish soda bread.”

Leprechauns evolved in folklore from their first mention



WIKIPEDIA.ORG

FUN FACTS

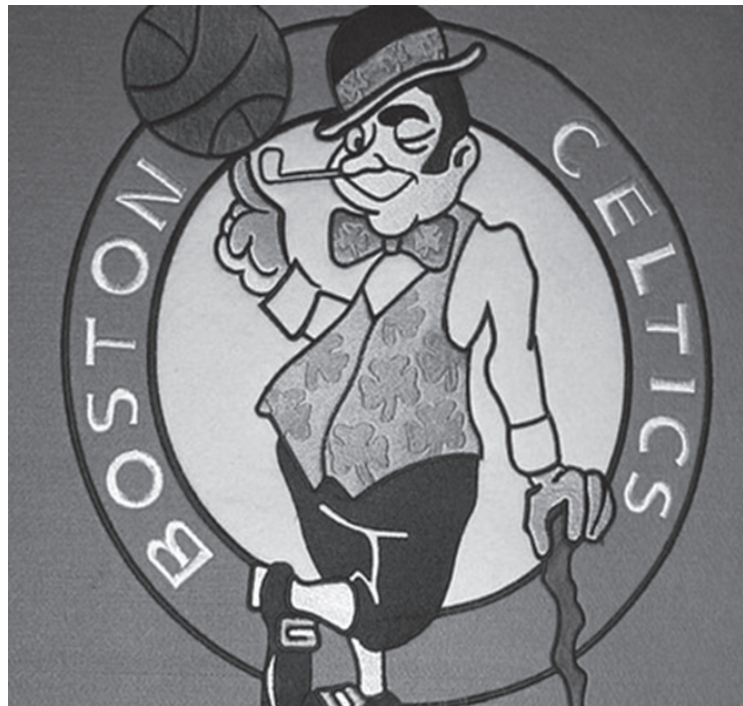
- Leprechauns are solitary fairies from old Irish folklore associated with wealth, luck, and trickery.
- They are usually described as tiny old men, as the word "leprechaun" is derived from the Old Irish "luchorpan," meaning little body.
- The first known mention of leprechauns was in the 8th century in the book "Adventure of Fergus son of Léti."
- Leprechauns are likely the descendants of gods in Irish folklore. Lasky wrote that leprechauns are either descended or evolved from the Tuatha Dé Danann, a Celtic group of gods.

Modern appearances of leprechauns:

- The mascot of the Lucky Charms breakfast cereal.
- The mascot Lucky the Leprechaun of the Boston Celtics.



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Scoop N Scootery launches fourth store in Danvers

Custom sundaes, delivery available soon on North Shore

By Rosie Renehan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

The Scoop N Scootery ice cream shop is opening its fourth Massachusetts location in Danvers this April, offering custom sundaes and late-night ice cream delivery.

One of their menu items is The Garland sundae, which includes campfire s'mores ice cream topped with marshmallow fluff, frosted rice crispy treats, doughy sugar cookie bites, fudge, graham crackers and whipped cream.

A seasonal offering is their Nightmare Before Christmas sundae.

The Scoop N Scootery also offers custom sundaes, where customers can choose their own ice cream flavors and toppings.

Prices range from \$6.49 for a Mini up to \$14.19 for their largest size, according to Grubhub.com.

The business was created by Austin Crittenden and his friends in the summer going into his junior year at Tufts University, the business's Yelp page says.

He originally started the business as an ice cream delivery service.

"Ten years ago we flew to Orlando, Florida, hopped in an ice cream truck bound for Boston, never having scooped a cup of ice cream in our lives," the website says.

In 2014, they opened its first retail location in Arlington. They then expanded to open Massachusetts locations in

'North Shore - we hope you're hungry. Get ready for sundaes like this.'

-SCOOP N SCOOTERY



RESTAURANTNEWS.COM

A staff member holds a row of loaded dessert cups under a "The Scoop N Scootery" shirt, showcasing the fun, over-the-top treats coming to the new location of Scoop N Scootery in Danvers.

Allston and Cambridge.

Now, they can also be found in Fort Worth, Texas; Jacksonville, Florida; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Red Bank, New Jersey.

The Scoop N Scootery still offers a delivery service despite having in-person locations.

The company's website says

that most locations are open until 2 a.m. on weekdays and Saturdays and until 10 p.m. on Sundays.

The store has amassed a large social media following, with over 21,000 followers on their Instagram page.

"North Shore - we hope

you're hungry. Get ready for sundaes like this," an Instagram post from March 4 says, with an image of two chocolate sundaes attached.

The grand opening of the Scoop N Scootery's fourth Massachusetts location will be April 13, at 44 Maple St, Danvers.

Playing Music

Is streaming music better than listening to music on vinyl?

Pro
Maya Frangioso

Instant and easy access to millions of songs continues to drive listeners toward streaming platforms instead of to vinyl records. Streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music provide access to large music libraries without having to purchase physical albums.

Convenience remains one of the strongest advantages of streaming music. Users can search for songs, create playlists, and change artists in seconds for free with advertisements or for \$5 to \$12 a month.

Vinyl records require a turntable, storage space, and careful handling to prevent damage. Turntables can cost \$100 to \$500 or more, and records typically range from \$20 to \$40 each. The equipment is expensive and needs extensive care.

Digital music can be accessed on a phone, tablet, or computer without an internet connection.

Streaming also reduces long-term costs for many listeners. A single monthly subscription typically costs \$5 to \$12, while vinyl records usually cost \$20 to \$40, making streaming more affordable over time.

Revenue data from streaming services demonstrates this shift in listening habits.

According to the RIAA, streaming now dominates U.S. music revenue, while vinyl remains a smaller, growing segment.

Sound quality also attracts listeners to digital music.

In the article “Which Sounds Better, Vinyl or Digital Music?,” SVS Sound said, “Many music enthusiasts really appreciate the pristine accuracy, wider dynamic range, and lack of noise that uncompressed (lossless) digital audio offers. Plus, unlike vinyl records, digital audio files require no care whatsoever, and they don’t wear out after many spins around the turntable.”

Vinyl records can become damaged with improper storage, too much heat, and physical mishandling.

“What happens when vinyl gets scratched? It will not play the same, or might not play at all, adding to costs by having to buy a new record,” Michaela Vehslage said in “Cross Currents: Should I Listen to Vinyl Records or Digital Streaming.”

The easy use of streaming platforms also contributes to their popularity. Digital music requires little setup and works quickly on devices.

“Let’s face it—digital audio streaming is easy. It’s carefree.” Cayla Menges said in the article “Vinyl vs. Streaming: The Debate Over Audio Quality.”

Portable devices allow listeners to carry entire music libraries anywhere. Streaming continues to change how people listen to music by offering convenience, reliability, and instant access, making it a faster and more efficient option for listeners.

Con
Charlie Baker

Vinyl’s primary advantage is that it provides a more active listening experience that lets the listener form a deeper connection with the music.

On streaming, music is quickly consumed. Songs are either added to a playlist or discarded and never heard again. They are searched, skipped, and sorted by algorithms that only push new and trendy music to the top.

Truly connecting with and evaluating a piece of music takes multiple listens and time to sit with it. Vinyl forces the listener to do this because when someone owns a physical record, they have it forever and end up listening to it many times.

On a record player, a tracklist can only be played in its intended order, but on streaming songs usually end up jumbled into playlists. The ordering of tracks and grouping them into sides and discs is an artistic choice that has become a lost art because of streaming.

Take, for instance, the Beatles’ “Abbey Road.” Side one ends with “I Want You (She’s So Heavy),” which cuts off abruptly, and side two starts with the much gentler “Here Comes the Sun.”

On vinyl, the listener must lift the needle and flip the record, so the cut-off ending creates a musical shift between the two sides. On streaming, when the tracks just play back-to-back, the transition is jarring and doesn’t make sense.

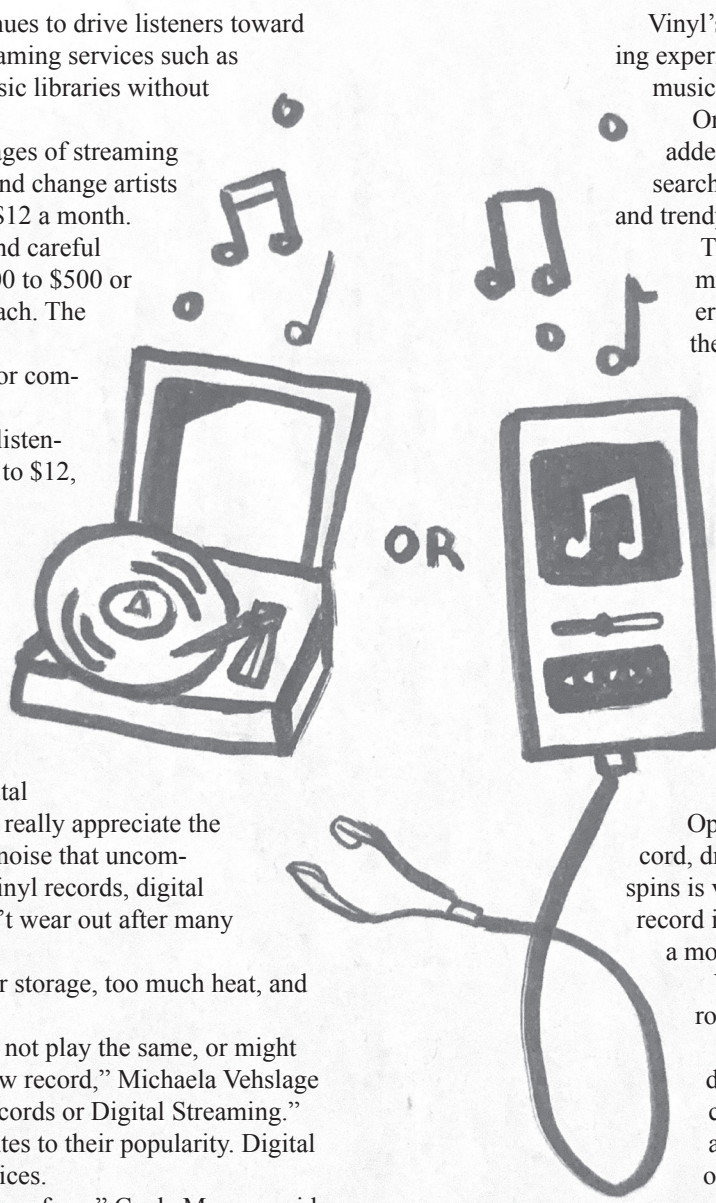
Opening an album, seeing the extra visuals, touching the record, dropping the needle, and watching the music play as the disc spins is very different than just pressing play. Listening to a vinyl record is hands-on learning that encompasses more senses to create a more holistic listening experience.

Vinyl also sounds different. It is a warmer sound that fills a room, doing a better job of creating a vibe.

Additionally, records offer a more natural process of music discovery. Vinyl albums are added to a collection from combing through record bins at a store, seeing something at a yard sale, being given a dusty old collection by a relative, or seeking it out after a word-of-mouth recommendation.

Meanwhile, streaming algorithms only push music that is popular already or brand new. Even though streaming offers a huge library of music, it will only promote a tiny fraction of that library.

Vinyl isn’t perfect. It is naturally limited and can get expensive. But it offers a much more intimate connection to the music, making it the best way to experience your favorite albums.



AUGUST CAPOTOSTO ILLUSTRATION

Animals demonstrate deep emotional maturity

By **Bissy Mitrano**
 INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Panchi-kun (Punch), a monkey in the Japanese Ichikawa City Zoo, known for carrying a stuffed monkey toy everywhere he goes, demonstrates that animals possess emotional depth and form attachments that are often overlooked by humans.

Punch is a 6-month-old baby macaque who was rejected by his mother shortly after birth. He could not be raised normally within the zoo habitat due to his lack of parental guidance.

According to Maya Yang’s article published in Feb. 2026 from The Guardian, the caretakers stepped in to help care for him.

In order to provide comfort to the monkey, they gave Punch a big stuffed orangutan toy from Ikea.

“Without maternal guidance to help him integrate, Punch has

turned to the toy for comfort,” Yang wrote.

Punch faced harassment from other monkeys, who often scolded him for his behavior.

“Early clips showed him wandering alone with the toy after being pushed away by other monkeys, and clutching it tightly,” she said.

Punch grabbing his monkey mirrors how children get attached to stuffed animals.

According to Dr. Saul McLeod’s 2023 Simply Psychology article, a 1958 study was conducted by psychologist Harry Harlow to test the learning theory of attachment on infants using newborn monkeys.

The monkeys were placed into a controlled environment with a wire-and wood monkey “mother” that provided food, while the other “mother” monkey was made of foam rubber and

soft terry cloth but had no food, he said.

The psychologist then placed a scary animatronic animal to cause fear in the infants. In response to their fear, the monkeys ran to the cloth monkey, even though it did not have food, McLeod wrote.

The importance of attachment and emotional bonds in the animal and human world has been proven countless times. Punch is just one of the multiple examples.

Humans are part of the animal kingdom. Animals, like humans, have emotional needs and responses.

Some may argue that animals cannot truly experience emotions in the same way humans do. They believe behaviors like Punch’s are simply instinctive responses or learned habits, rather than evidence of genuine feelings.

Yet dismissing these behaviors ignores the growing body of research on animal emotion. If a young monkey shows signs



DAIEI ONOGUCHI/WIKIPEDIACOMMONS.ORG PHOTO

“Punch,” a monkey in a Japanese zoo, finds comfort in a plush monkey from Ikea, after being abandoned by his mother.

of seeking comfort, it becomes difficult to argue that animals operate purely on instinct without emotional experience.

Monkeys and other animals have been observed to experience and demonstrate empathy.

“One of the most complex on the list of emotions is empathy, the ability to understand and share feelings of those around us ... Do animals do the same? Research points to yes.”

Since animals have the ability

to understand the most complex emotions, they must be able to understand and experience the less complex emotions as well, such as sadness and happiness.

Rather than viewing Punch’s story as an internet trend, it should encourage people to reconsider how they think about animals. Punch demonstrates that animals may experience emotions and attachments in ways that are more similar to our own than many people realize.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Bad Bunny's Super Bowl Halftime Show sparks national debate

Through his predominantly Spanish-language set dominated by political overtones, Bad Bunny's Super Bowl LX Halftime Show delivered a powerful message and made international headlines.

The Grammy-winning Puerto Rican rapper, singer, and producer, whose full name is Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, is widely renowned as a global sensation.

This is exemplified by his being Spotify's most-streamed Wrapped artist, according to

a 2025 article titled "Listeners Worldwide Crown Bad Bunny Global Top Artist for the Fourth Time and His Latest Release Takes Global Top Album," published by Spotify.

Last year was the artist's fourth year being awarded this title, gaining 19.8 billion streams just in 2025.

The halftime show on Feb. 8, 2026, faced both passionate enthusiasm and harsh criticism before it even began.

Those in support of the artist's performance praised the elaborate set design and overt visual and verbal messaging of Puerto Rican pride.

The set featured a multitude of detailed scenes that Bad Bunny traveled through during his per-

formance. From the sugar cane fields showing Puerto Rico's most essential yet exploited resource in its agricultural history to utility poles demonstrating the country's chronic energy crisis, Bad Bunny contrasted these large-scale issues with scenes of everyday life showing Puerto Rico's unique and rich culture.

However, many critics argue that the absence of English-language songs, aside from a salsa-infused version of "Die With A Smile" by Lady Gaga, ignores a large percentage of the event's audience, saying

Everyone in this country needs to be there for one another, regardless of social barriers.

that the Super Bowl, one of the most widely viewed broadcasts in the United States, should cater primarily to English-speaking audiences.

Moreover, the performance was openly criticized by President Donald Trump, who posted on X on the night of the show that it was inappropriate and offensive.

"Nobody understands a word this guy is saying, and the dancing is disgusting, especially for young children that are watching from throughout the U.S.A., and all over the World," he wrote.

The announcement naming Bad Bunny as the event's headliner faced such backlash that conservative organization Turning Point USA put on its



APPLE MUSIC PHOTO

Bad Bunny performed at the Superbowl, holding up a football, inscribed with the words "Together, We Are America," as the screen displayed, "The Only Thing More Powerful Than Hate Is Love."

own halftime show running at the same time, featuring country musicians and headlined by musician Kid Rock, wrote Chandelis Duster in NPR's 2026 article titled "Here's what happened at Kid Rock's alternative halftime show."

However, this alternative headliner has faced criticism for explicit lyrics discussing topics that conflict with conservative ideals, such as drugs, pornography, and sex.

In his song "Cool, Daddy Cool," written for a PG-rated live-action/animated family comedy called "Osmosis Jones," Kid Rock delivers lyrics describing relationships with female minors.

"I like 'em underage, see / Some say it's statutory / But I say it's mandatory," he wrote.

This repeated choice of explicit lyricism in Kid Rock's songs makes arguments supporting the alternative halftime show falter, considering much of that support is accompanied by criticism directed at Bad Bunny, calling the performance's dancing inappropriate and not child-friendly enough for young audiences.

The alternative performance was self-titled the "All American Halftime Show," a label born from individuals incorrectly calling Bad Bunny a "foreigner," although Puerto Rico is a territory of the

U.S., and Puerto Rican citizens are U.S. citizens.

This intense negative response highlights how divided our country currently is, as an artist who embodies the American ideals of equal opportunity and self-expression is degraded by fellow Americans for not catering to their image of patriotism.

More than ever, everyone in this country needs to be there for one another, regardless of social barriers. To be open to experiencing and educating yourself on another culture is just the first step to a collective national understanding vital to transforming the American narrative into one that is curious and empathetic, not close-minded and insular.

Some biopic films don't honor truth

By Sophia Eagan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

While biopics can educate audiences on important people or events, altering facts to fit the Hollywood narrative can fuel sensationalism and reduce complex people into two-dimensional characters.

In recent years, biopic films have become increasingly popular. In a Variety article, Owen Gleiberman noted that audiences connect to historical figures rather than fictional characters.

"Where we once looked to fictional characters to reflect us,

we now look, increasingly, at the stars of history to become the figments of our inner lives," he wrote.

As biopics become more popular, filmmakers often feel pressured to make their stories appeal to the drama-craving audience of Hollywood. This leads to the over-dramatization and disrespect of real people and their families.

The 2026 biographical anthology series "Love Story" has faced backlash for its depiction of the tumultuous romance and marriage of John F. Kennedy Jr. and Carolyn Bessette.

JFK Jr.'s nephew, Jack

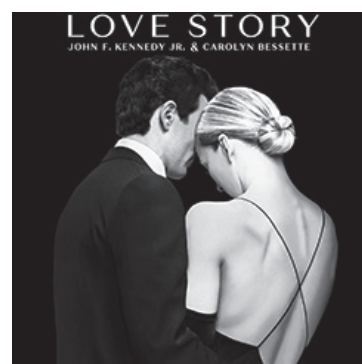
Schlossberg, criticized the show's executive producer, Ryan Murphy.

In a People magazine article, by Meredith Kile, Schlossberg spoke out against the show's insensitivity.

"The guy knows nothing about what he's talking about, and he's making a ton of money on a grotesque display of someone else's life," he wrote.

Schlossberg argued that profiting off of his family's tragedy, rather than donating a portion of the revenue to the JFK Library, was very disrespectful.

While some biopics are insensitive, certain biopics can have



FX PHOTO

"Love Story" angered JFK Jr.'s nephew, Jack Schlossberg.

an educational purpose.

In the Redbrick article, "Feature: Is cinema becoming oversaturated with biopics?", author Simran Bains argues that biopics are more effective than books.

"At a time when exposure to the humanities in general, and history in particular, is lagging in colleges, and when the reading of serious nonfiction books is in decline, biopics are probably the single most effective educational tool," she wrote.

When biopic films are created, producers are not just creating a form of entertainment; they are shaping the way history and people's lives are remembered in the media.

While these films can be informative, producers need to focus on the ethical obligation to respect the figures and their families, rather than on the potential revenue and sensationalism that can come from exploitation.

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INDEPENDENT

The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class.

We welcome letters to the editor from MERHS students, faculty, and community members. All submissions must be signed. The Independent reserves the right not to print letters and to edit the content for clarity and length. While letters can be critical of an individual's actions, they cannot slander or libel.

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

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

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

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BOYS' LACROSSE

Coach: Wyatt Chittick

Captains: Seniors Aaron Crompton, Charlie Thurlow, Connor Dickson, and Jack McCavanagh

Record last year: 17-5

Current record: 0-0

Goals: Beat rivals Ipswich, Weston, and Lynnfield on senior night. Win the state championship, and get better over the course of the season.

Rivals: Ipswich, Weston, Lynnfield

Impact players: Seniors Connor Dickson, Jack McCavanagh, Charlie Thurlow, Luke Renzi, and juniors Turner Valeo, Noah Cohen, and Conrad Garfield.

Coach's quote: "The goal is to continue to get better throughout the course of the season and better these players as individuals and, of course, the team as a whole, and seeing that steady progress throughout the year is what we are after." - Wyatt Chittick

Captain's quote: "Making it to the final four is not a goal; it is an expectation this year." - Charlie Thurlow



Aaron Crompton



Charlie Thurlow



Connor Dickson



Jack McCavanagh

GIRLS' LACROSSE

Coach: Gianna Huet

Captains: Abby Kent, Laila Mears, and Teyah Fleming

Record last year: 12-7

Current record: 1-0

Goals: Focusing on rebuilding, staying competitive, and maintaining confidence

Rivals: Ipswich and Hamilton-Wenham

Impact players: Senior Harper Brooks and sophomore Harper Brooks

Captain's quote: "I think that everybody has been keeping up with conditioning over the course of the winter, which will be really helpful to our team in the spring."

- Abby Kent



Abby Kent



Laila Mears



Teyah Fleming

BASEBALL

Coach: James Weed

Captains: Seniors Adam MacLeod, Chris Heim, Parker Woodman, and junior Connor St. Laurent

Record last year: 9-11

Current record: 0-0

Goals: Win the CAL, be competitive and execute wins, and win the state championship.

Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham

Impact players: Seniors Adam MacLeod, Chris Heim, Parker Woodman, juniors Connor St. Laurent, Jackson Bartlett, sophomores Kevin Heim, Mikey Harris, Anton Gilson, Cody Mears, Nico Catanzaro, Cam Barber, Slade Gorton, Nick Glass, Andrew Vasadi, and Teddy Pinkin.

Coach's quote: "We've had two players starting since eighth grade; so we have a good sophomore class, but we also have good seniors leading this year." - James Weed

Captain's quote: "Coach Weed really puts into our minds that you can't be complacent, because you can't execute when you're okay with losing, and that's one thing that we've decided we're not okay with anymore." - Adam MacLeod



Adam MacLeod



Chris Heim



Connor St. Laurent



Parker Woodman

SOFTBALL

Coach: Frank Sarro

Captains: Seniors Abby Aiello, Anna Gardner, Penelope Riggs

Record last year: 12-10

Current record: 0-0

Goals: Improve on a power ranking, get in the Division IV state tournament again, win CAL Baker, play more competitively, bond as a team, and have a fun season.

Rival: Hamilton-Wenham and Ipswich

Impact players: Seniors Abby Aiello, Cami Friedrich, Anna Gardner, Sydney Hemme, Lucy Parmelee, Penelope Riggs, and sophomores Cordelia Riggs and Aliyah Doyon.

Coach's quote: "I think our goal will be to improve on a power ranking and get in the tournament again," - Frank Sarro

Captain's quote: "I think our team chemistry is honestly like a sisterhood; we're all really close, and have really good connections with each other." - Abby Aiello



Abby Aiello



Anna Gardner



Penelope Riggs

BOYS' TENNIS

Coach: Robert Bilsbury

Captain: Senior Ernest Taylor, junior Alex Montaresi

Record last year: 22-1

Current Record: 0-1

Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham, Lynnfield

Goals: Win state championship for third year in a row

Impact Players: The entire team: Seniors Andrew Cahill, Ernest Taylor, Ben Tobin, Carter Smith, Leo Roessler; juniors Alex Montaresi, Peter Langendorf, Charlie Athanas, Luke Pilaud, Morgan Nichols; sophomore Teddy Cahill; freshman Freddy Jakes and Alex Chafe.

Coach's quote: "I'm hoping to see a lot of growth mindset and growth as they challenge each other and work hard to add something to their game this season."

- Robert Bilsbury

Captain's quote: "I hope we do well in the state tournament. Hopefully we can make it to round four. That would be nice." - Alex Montaresi



Alex Montaresi

OUTDOOR TRACK

Coach: David Coleman

Captains: Seniors Cia Donohoe (Manchester), Hope Castellucci (Gloucester), Georgana Cauthers (Gloucester), Leo Cosentino (Gloucester), Lyall Cunningham (Gloucester), Jeferson do Carmo (Gloucester), Gabe Pate (Gloucester), and juniors Seamus Linehan (Gloucester) and Grace Castellucci (Gloucester).

Record last year: Boys and Girls' - 4-0

Current record: Boys and Girls' - 0-0

Rivals: Swampscott

Goals: For both the boys' and girls' teams to compete for the NEC Lynch Division title, to place highly in the NEC Championship meet, and to have as many kids as possible in the Division IV championship.

Impact players: Seniors Cia Donohoe, Hope Castellucci (Gloucester), Georgana Cauthers (Gloucester), Madison Jewell (Gloucester), Leo Cosentino (Gloucester), Lyall Cunningham (Gloucester), Jefferson do Carmo (Gloucester), Gabe Pate (Gloucester); juniors Grace Castellucci (Gloucester) and Semus Lineham (Gloucester); sophomores, Gus Hall, Tess Taylor, Isaish Nicaastro and Vinnie Mannone (Gloucester)

Coach's quote: "We have many key athletes on the team, who I hope make a big impact this year."

- David Coleman

Captain's quote: "We lost a good amount of people, and it's like a newer team, so I definitely want to have everyone be more integrated, and everyone know the names of people, and just create an overall good experience that I got in my first year." - Cia Donohoe



Cia Donohoe

GIRLS' TENNIS

Coach: Barrett Alston

Captains: Senior Grace Scarbrough and junior Sarah Cort

Record last year: 9-12

Current record: 1-0

Rival: Hamilton-Wenham

Goals: Make it to the state championships again

Impact players: Senior Grace Scarbrough and junior Sarah Cort

Coach's quote: "We made the finals last year, and I have every reason to believe they'll make a deep run into the playoffs again this year." - Barrett Alston

Captain's quote: "We'll see how the season goes. We have a lot of young people, so it will be fun to see what they can do." - Sarah Cort



Sarah Cort



Grace Scarbrough

SAILING

Coach: Anthony Leggett

Captain: Junior Nicholas Bock

Record last year: 7-3

Current record: 0-0

Rivals: Pingree, Gloucester, Marblehead

Goals: Make A-Division

Impact players: Juniors Nicholas Bock, Greyson Brooks, and sophomore James Donohoe

Coach's quote: "I think we're going to have a really good team in the form of three very good skippers." - Anthony Leggett

Captain's quote: "We would like to make A-Division and do well in regattas." - Nicholas Bock



Nicholas Bock

'Wuthering Heights' prioritizes dark, romantic, fantasy themes

Film receives backlash after controversial casting of Elordi

By Riley McKinnon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

While receiving a mixed reaction from audiences upon its release, director Emerald Fennell's 2026 film "Wuthering Heights" is closer to a dark fantasy-romance with elements of the source material than a faithful adaptation.

"Wuthering Heights" was produced by LuckyChap Entertainment, MRC, and Lie Still and distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures. The film was released on Feb. 14, 2026.

The film made \$34.8 million in North America, which was lower than its predicted \$40-50 million and \$76.8 million globally opening weekend, making it the biggest opener of the year so far.

Based off of the 1847

novel "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Brontë, the film tells the story of childhood sweethearts, Catherine Earnshaw (Margot Robbie) and Heathcliff (Jacob Elordi), as they grow up together in a turbulent environment on the English moors.

When Catherine's attention is turned to their new wealthy neighbors, Edgar and Isabella Linton (Shazad Latif and Alison Oliver), and Heathcliff's impulsive tendencies cause him to run away, Catherine chooses to give up a part of herself by marrying into wealth in hopes of a better future.

Heathcliff returns years later as a richer man, and the two attempt to see if they can find their way back to each



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other amid the predicament that they are in.

With an amazing original soundtrack by Charli XCX and beautiful cinematography enhanced by the actual Yorkshire moors, many segments of this film can be appreciated and feel similar to its source material.

However, with the small portion of the film that is faithful to the book, the remaining screentime diverges from the plot into Fennell's own imagination, hence the quotations around the title.

"All I could do was make a movie that made me feel the way the book made me feel, and therefore it just felt right to say it's 'Wuthering Heights,' and it isn't," Fennell said to The Hollywood Reporter.

Some major differences from the book included the exclusion of Hindley Earnshaw, the second generation, the reasoning behind a major character's death, changing character personalities and appearances, and altering iconic scenes and dialogue.

The costumes and buildings were also changed to appear more whimsical than historically accurate.

For example, Catherine ap-



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pears in a reflective dress made out of a cellophane-like material on her wedding night to symbolize her being presented as a gift to her new husband.

Some might argue that the film attempted to modernize the classic story, similar to what director Baz Luhrmann did to films like "The Great Gatsby" and "Romeo & Juliet," but the major difference is that Fennell changed the entire spine and ending of the storyline.

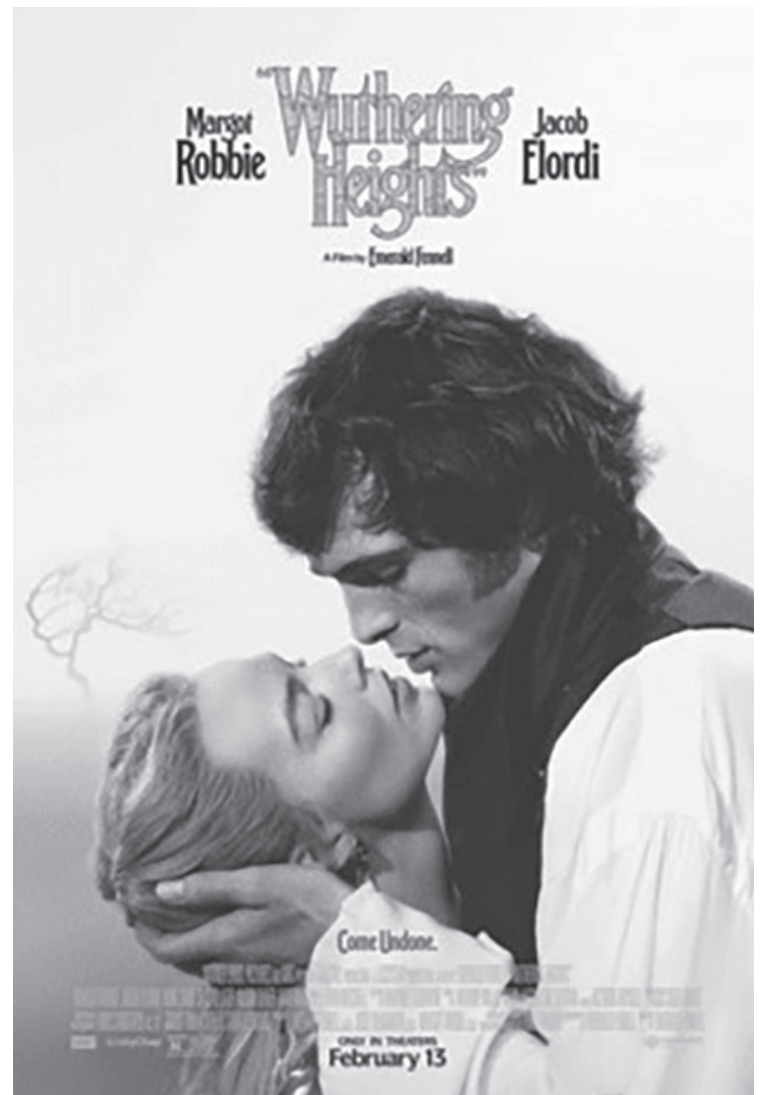
Even the gothic scenery felt as if it was a secondary character when it came to the prioritization of the steamy romance storyline.

While the landscape settings are beautiful, the film leans into the imaginative aspect both in theme and in visual effects.

The Earnshaw residence, Wuthering Heights, looks to be more of a blend between a Victorian townhouse and David Bowie's lair in "Labyrinth."

One of the biggest disappointments was the relationship between Isabella Linton and Heathcliff.

Instead of the two being stuck in an abusive, loveless marriage,



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The 1939 version of "Wuthering Heights" starred Laurence Olivier as Heathcliff (left). The 2011 film adaptation of "Wuthering Heights" (upper left) is the only depiction of Heathcliff as a person of color, as played by James Howson. In 2026, Jacob Elordi played the character, reverting back to the original white-washed Hollywood image.

Fennell transforms it into a hyper-sexualized joke, destroying a vital arc that draws attention to the realities of the time in which it was written.

What has received the most backlash from audiences was the choice to cast Elordi as Heathcliff.

Historically, Heathcliff has been played by white actors, notably Laurence Olivier (1939), Richard Burton (1958), Timothy Dalton (1970), Ralph Fiennes (1992), and Tom Hardy (2009), in all but one Hollywood adaptation, James Howard (2011), despite the character being portrayed as Romani or Middle-Eastern in the

novel.

Given the opportunity to represent Heathcliff with more diversity in a modern-day setting, Fennell's choice to cast yet another white man in his place feels to be in poor taste for many viewers, especially after her reasoning being that Elordi looks just like how she pictured him when she first read it.

Overall, the movie itself can be enjoyable for many to see on their own, but it may also be a major disappointment to fans of the original novel.

This film is rated R due to explicit sexual content, violence, and language.

Drama Fest reaches semifinals for first time in four years

By Kiki Campbell
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Drama Fest competitors performed their show six times, their final show taking them to semifinals. The show, "The Bureau of Missing Persons," follows two kindergarten teachers, both on their path of grief after the loss of two students.

Semifinals took place on Saturday, Mar. 14 at Peabody Veterans Memorial High School. The competitors gave six performances at various high schools.

The co-directors of Drama Fest this year were Ian Tomarakos and Sophie Collins.

Junior Anne Stevens was a member of the ensemble in this year's performance.

"The story unfolds quite beauti-

fully," Stevens said.

The cast was made up of six characters and three ensemble roles. There were about 10 students involved in the crew as well, she said.

Junior Peter Langendorf said it was his first year being a part of Drama Fest in his role as lighting designer.

"Everyone is really good friends. It's basically like one big friend group in there together. So everyone's super friendly and very welcoming," he said.

For the competition day, usually around seven schools come to the host site, and each school puts on a 40-minute show. The groups are given a five-minute load-in and -off for the set, and if the group per-



COURTESY OF THADDEUS BARSDLEY

Eight students performed in "The Bureau of Missing Persons" in the 2026 Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild Drama Festival.

forms for longer than 40 minutes, they are disqualified, junior Simone Argento said.

This year was the first year that the competitors made it as far as semifinals in four years, Argento said.

"I'm really proud of our cast for the long hours that we've put

into it. I'm also really proud of our monologue work that we've done in this play," she said.

A few people from the cast received individual awards.

Seniors Wren Shanks and Olivia Burbage won acting awards; sophomore Gavin Bolduc and junior Riley Corrigan received

costume designing awards, and junior Maggie Whitman won a stage managing award.

Tomarakos said he was proud of the students' work.

"The most rewarding part for any director is always the moment when you get to step back during that final rehearsal and see it all come together. Seeing the acting, the crew, and the technical elements all onstage working together to tell the story of the play is one of the most special experiences you get to have. I enjoyed watching every second of that final run of the show, and I couldn't be more proud of the work that all the students did," Tomarakos said.

If anyone would like to join Drama Fest, they are always welcome, Langendorf said.

"No matter what you want to do... there's always a spot for anyone who wants to do it," he said.

Country-pop album debuts at No. 1 on US Billboard 200

Includes layers, different themes throughout album

By Maya Chaghouri
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Megan Moroney's new album "Cloud 9" displays an impressive mixture of country and pop music.

Moroney is a rising country music singer and songwriter. Her most recent album came out on Feb. 20.

"Cloud 9" has 15 songs.

Debuted at number one on the US Billboard 200, "Cloud 9" has reached impressive

popularity, leaving some listeners dissatisfied while others are obsessed.

This album has also recorded the highest first-week total consumption for a country artist this year, with 147,000 equivalent

album units. "Cloud 9" is creative and layered, representing emotions ranging from jubilation to heartache.

Including a mixture of wistful songs, like "I Only Miss You (feat. Ed Sheeran)," "Wedding Dress," "Table for Two," and "Who Hurt You?," a portion of this album is inspired by a breakup.

"The whole time I was creating this album, I took care of myself. In a way that, as soon as I started to not be treated the way I knew I deserve to be

treated, I left," Moroney said, in an Apple Music interview with Kelleigh Bannen.

"Liars & Tigers & Bears" can be seen as a message to all women that feel

the pressure of working in the entertainment industry.

"That is straight up calling out the loser behavior of just constantly comparing women, successful, great women," Moroney said.

This album can be eye-opening for many teenage girls who find themselves worried about boys and life in general.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES CANADA

Country-pop singer songwriter Megan Moroney's Cloud 9 album cover; depicted above pink clouds climbing up a ladder. The album released Feb. 20, gaining much attention from listeners worldwide.

Additionally, "Beautiful Things" was written for Moroney's niece but also to a younger version of herself, Moroney said.

This song includes the lyrics "You're pretty and you're smart / God made a work of art / Girl, don't pick yourself apart."

This album can be eye-opening for many teenage girls

who find themselves worried about boys and life in general.

There is a cheerful, light-hearted aspect to the inspiration behind the album.

"People say that they're on cloud 9, but I feel like I'm way above it," Moroney said.

A major part of "Cloud 9" is the humorous aspect to multiple of the songs.

For example, Moroney writes, "And I know he can't read his watch / I bet that's why he didn't show," in her song "Stupid."

This level of personality in her music makes Moroney stand out.

Moroney skillfully manages to mix emotions, expression, and genres in her music. This album is no different, leaving listeners with a sense of internal joy.

Local gallery hosts AP Art show in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea

By August Capotosto
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Beach Street Studios and Gallery, located in Manchester-by-the-Sea, hosted a show where high school AP Art students presented their work in an open gallery walk, free to the public.

Starting at 6:00 p.m. on March 20, the event featured the works of AP Art and Photography students.

Senior AP Art student Elsa Healey said the event was exciting and widely enjoyed by those who participated and attended.

"It was really fun to go with my friends to see all of our works and hang out outside of school," she said.

Healey said that when she went to the studio for the first

time, she thought it was the perfect space for the event.

"It was cute and warm and open. It was lovely; I definitely want to go back there," she said.

Art teacher Tamera Burns said Beach Street Studios and Gallery contacted her mid-fall, suggesting the event.

Beach Street Studios and Gallery co-owner Kat Chrzanowski said the gallery has held events such as clothing swaps, yoga sessions, and book clubs, as well as art classes and shows.

To give the students structure on what to submit, Burns said she chose to have them approach it by trying new mediums.

"So, doing other things, doing image transfers through print making, doing, if you're a digital artist, then using paint. So just

extending your process," she said.

Healey said that while students experimented with new mediums in preparation for the gallery show, they have been working on sustained investigation pieces all year, and some decided to use one of those works to display.

"It was fun looking through all of our works and choosing which one we liked and best represented us," she said.

Burns said one new aspect of the experience for students was learning how to present their art by using hinge mats.

"That presentation part of it in Massachusetts; the standards for visual arts are not only to create, but connect, respond, and present," she said.

Burns said this skill is vital to showing students how a quality exhibit happens.

"All we had to do was deliver the artwork, matted and labeled.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO PHOTO

Members of the public view the work of seniors and juniors at the AP art show at Beach Street Studios in downtown Manchester.

And they did all the rest, so it was just great," she said.

Healey said she was glad to have had the experience of displaying her work in a gallery.

"It was really rewarding, and it made me feel very accomplished... It was a cool thing to have happened during my high school career," she said.

Contemporary Night replaces Evening of Jazz

By Rosie Renehan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Members of the music department performed in the first annual middle-high school Contemporary Night on March 19.

Featured acts included middle school Rock Band, a middle school Clarinet Quartet, middle school Jazz Band, high school Jazz Band, and high school Contemporary Band.

Contemporary Night replaced the annual Evening of Jazz, which only featured middle school and high school Jazz

Band.

Harry Wagg, middle and high school band director, thought that Contemporary Night's performances were "up there with our best, if not our best."

"More importantly, the groups seem to be having a lot of fun [with the performances], and you could not only see that in the students, but you could also hear that in their playing," Wagg said.

Wagg directs middle school Concert Band and Jazz Band, as well as high school Concert

Band, Contemporary Band, and Jazz Band. He and chorus director Ben Icenogle co-direct the new middle school Rock Band groups.

'Jazz has been going great this year. People have been taking more chances in terms of improvisations.'

- HARRY WAGG

concert, and the kids seem really engaged in it so far," Icenogle said.

Two high school groups performed: Contemporary Band and Jazz Band. Contemporary Band was first offered this year,

on schedule days two, four, and six during U Block. Students can take Contemporary Band in addition to concert band or chorus.

"We saw a place where we could have a little bit of flexibility with our schedule, and there were some students currently in concert band that were playing instruments that aren't used authentically in concert band," Wagg said.

He said that Contemporary Band is a place where students playing instruments such as guitar, bass, drums, or contemporary piano can have an experience aligned with their goals.

"There's also a lot more choice for student voice and repertoire," Wagg said.

Sophomore James Donohoe has enjoyed his experience in

Contemporary Band so far.

"I get to play the instruments that I like to play... With contemporary, there's the drum set, there's guitars, there's bass guitars," he said.

The high school Jazz Band had a successful performance as well, Wagg said.

"Jazz has been going great this year. People have been taking more chances in terms of improvisations," he said.

Wagg's goals for the rest of the year regard student interest.

"After the Contemporary Music Night, we have gotten a little bit more interest in middle school Jazz Band, especially for some eighth-grade students, and I hope to see some of them join the high school Jazz Band next year," he said.