

# The Eagle Flyer



Kennedy High School  
422 Highland Avenue  
Waterbury, Conn. 06708

December 2025  
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## 2nd water main break causes school closure

By Adrianna Perez  
Staff Writer

Tens of thousands of residents in Waterbury, Conn. and other neighboring towns have lost running water due to another water main break because of the cold, which then caused an old section of a 36-inch transmission main line to fail Wednesday Dec. 10, 2025, causing the superintendent to close schools Dec. 15-17.

“The initial break occurred on Wednesday, and crews had difficulty containing the damage. As a result, an old section of a 36-inch transmission main failed,” according to wtnh.com, a website for News Channel 8 based in New Haven, Conn.

Although it happened in Waterbury, other towns are affected, too.

“The city went on to share that since the high-pressure main has failed, in addition to the majority of Waterbury residents who will



**ANOTHER WATER MAIN BREAK** Water can be seen flowing from a water main break on Thomaston Avenue in Waterbury, Conn. Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, causing school closures Dec. 15-17. The first water main break was Wednesday, Sept. 24. Photo by Mark Pazniokas, CT Mirror

lose water, the neighboring towns of Wolcott, Watertown and Prospect will also experience a loss of water,” according to wtnh.com.

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**WATER MAIN BREAK IMPACTS SCHOOLS** One side of Sprague Elementary School (brick building above) on 1443 Thomaston Avenue in Waterbury, Conn. can be seen along with water gushing from the water main break as of Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, causing school closures Monday-Wednesday, Dec. 15-17. Photo from NBC CT News

*Continued from page one*

Due to the severity, officials don't know when it's going to be fixed, so Superintendent Dr. Darren Schwartz sent a ParentSquare message Saturday, Dec. 13 at 12:12 p.m. notifying everyone of the schools' closure. A message was sent Monday at 1:34 p.m. closing school Tuesday, and another message sent Tuesday at 11:13 a.m. closed school Wednesday.

"The length of time required to complete the repair is not yet known. Crews remain on site and are working to assess the damage and determine the safest and fastest path forward for

restoration," according to [waterburyct.org](http://waterburyct.org), a website for city residents to get local news and information.

Mayor Paul K. Pernerewski gave a response about the situation while overseeing the scene.

" 'This is a serious infrastructure failure, and our priority is protecting public health and safety while restoring service as quickly as possible,' said Mayor Pernerewski," according to [waterburyct.org](http://waterburyct.org).



## Important dates

|                                   |                        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Tuesday, Dec. 23, 2025            | Full day               |
| Wednesday, Dec. 24                | Christmas break begins |
| Friday, Jan. 2, 2026              | No school              |
| Monday, Jan. 5, 2026              | School resumes         |
| Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026             | No school              |
| Monday - Friday, Jan. 12-16, 2026 | Midterm exams          |
| Friday, Jan. 16, 2026             | Marking period ends    |
| Monday, Jan. 19, 2026             | No school              |

# Meet new attendance counselor

By *Bryan Cruz Santiago*  
Staff Writer

Mr. Dallas Swain joined Kennedy High School as the new attendance counselor due to his interest in school environments after a lengthy process thanks to the position being a civil service one, his first day being Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025.

“I was always involved in school,” said Swain. “It’s a community.”

During his time in high school, Swain was involved in various clubs and extracurricular activities, having attended Crosby High School.

“I don’t know if it’s just the way I’m wired,” said Dallas.

This position isn’t his first job in the educational field either, having majored in interdisciplinary studies.

“I worked as a paraprofessional for Special Education,” said Swain.

But what responsibilities does his current job of attendance counselor actually include?



**NEW ATTENDANCE COUNSELOR** Mr. Dallas Swain, a Crosby High School graduate, is seen at work at his desk in the main office Tuesday Dec. 9, 2025. Photo by Dr. Cybart-Persenaire

“Keeping attendance data...meetings (with students),” said Swain.

Overall, Swain had to endure the system in place for selecting the newest attendance counselor.

“It’s a whole process,” he said.

If you’re wondering why the school hasn’t had an attendance counselor since the school year began, Dallas explained that it was both a long process and a lack of applicants.

“The job was listed as an open competitive exam,” said Swain.

He had applied for the exam, and later took it in October. Between then and now, he had interviews a couple weeks after moving to the next stage, and was finally selected among the three other applicants who had made it that far.

# Teacher of the Year offers advice, thanks

By *Joslyn Tremblay*  
Managing Editor

When you were in sixth grade, do you remember what you wanted to be when you grew up? This person did!

Special Education teacher Ms. Anton was interviewed for winning 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year (TOY) because it's a good achievement from all the hard work she's done, plus offered advice, especially with midterms approaching Jan. 12-16, 2026!

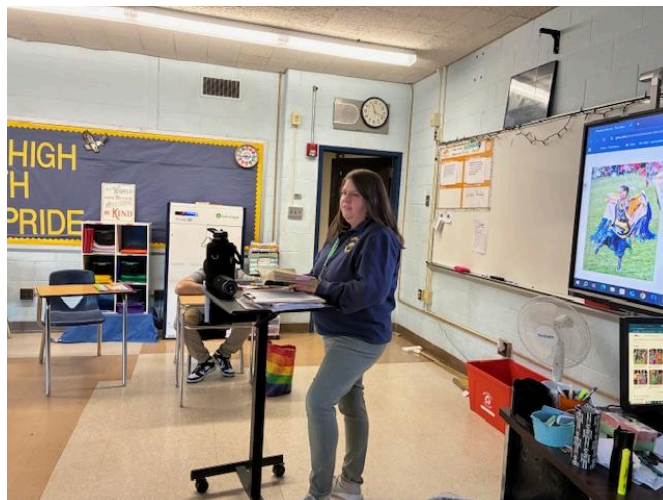
"To not be scared, to try new things with your students in class. Ignore all the negativity to focus on the positives and students," said Anton

Did she always know she wanted to be a teacher?

"Yes, ever since I was in middle school. I had a great sixth grade teacher who inspired me," said Anton.

Not only does she run the Coffee Cart with her students, she also does more!

"I'm the assistant coach of Unified Sports," said Anton, who has great gratitude for all who supported her winning TOY in Spring.



**STAY POSITIVE, TRY NEW THINGS!** This is advice from Ms. Anton, seen teaching Period 1B in room 231A Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025. Photo by Dr. A. Cybart-Persenaire

"I was completely shocked...I have deep gratitude for my colleagues. I'm very appreciative to everyone who supports me and my students," said Anton.

Coming out of a pandemic is hard but one project made it a little easier:

"I would say the Coffee Cart coming out of the pandemic," said Anton.



**FLY HIGH WITH EAGLE PRIDE** This is Ms. Anton's bulletin board to show Eagle pride in her classroom 231A. Photo by Dr. A. Cybart-Persenaire

# Hanukkah begins Dec. 14

*By Shirlyn Castillo*  
Staff Writer

Hanukkah is a worldwide holiday that is celebrated by people of Jewish descent and it's celebrated to remember a miracle and is usually celebrated by lighting a special nine-branched candle holder for eight nights, adding one candle each evening beginning Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025 and ending Monday, Dec. 22, 2025.

People celebrate Hanukkah to remember rededicating their Temple, as well as a single jar of oil lasting more than a week.

“Over 2,000 years ago, the Jewish people were oppressed by the Syrian-Greek Empire, which restricted their ability to practice their faith. A small group of Jews, the Maccabees, fought back and emerged victorious, reclaiming Jerusalem and the Temple. When they rededicated the Temple, a single jar of oil miraculously lasted eight days, and this miracle is commemorated during the eight-day festival of Hanukkah, celebrating faith, freedom, and the triumph over oppression,” according to [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), the United Kingdom’s public service broadcasting system for news.

This is how they celebrate and light the Hanukkah candles:



## **LIGHTING A CANDLE FOR HANUKKAH**

Families mark Hanukkah with a menorah, which holds eight candles and one more named the shamash that is used to light the other candles. The first candle on the left is lit the first night, with one more candle added and lit each subsequent night, according to [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org). In 2025, Hanukkah begins the evening of Sunday, Dec. 14 and ends Monday, Dec. 22. Photo from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

“On the first night, we light just one flame. On the second night, an additional flame is lit. By the eighth night of Chanukah, all eight lights are kindled,” according to [www.chadbad.org](http://www.chadbad.org), a division of the Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center sharing Judaism and Jewish information online.

Hanukkah treats are quite the delightful thing! Here are some edible treats that exist.

“Traditional Hanukkah foods include deep-fried jelly donuts called sufganiyot and potato pancakes called latkes. Both dishes are fried and represent the long-lasting lamp oil,” according to [kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com), the National Geographic Society website offering educational content.

# Keeping Christ in Christmas

By *Bryan Cruz Santiago*  
Staff Writer

Christianity and its denominations annually celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ as the mark of salvation through the incarnation of God, observing the holiday globally through modern and ancient traditions mostly Dec. 25, though some celebrate Jan. 7 based on the Julian calendar.

“ ‘Fear not, I bring you good news’ (Luke 2:10). This is the true meaning of Christmas—the Good News—that God sent His only Son to Earth to save people from their sins,” according to Rev. Billy Graham on [au.thegospelcoalition.org](http://au.thegospelcoalition.org), the website for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which aims to spread the Word of God.

Everyone knows about the common ways to celebrate Christmas, with a tree, hot drinks, presents, movies, and snow, but here are some traditional methods to celebrate.

“The Jesuit method, from St. Ignatius Spiritual Exercises, tells us to imaginatively place ourselves into the Gospel stories. The older Augustinian method tells us to look for elements of the story in our lives,” according to [catholiceducation.org](http://catholiceducation.org), a public online archive which aims to formulate arguments for the Faith.



**NATIVITY SCENE** Many different images such as this Nativity Scene (above and below) with Mary, baby Jesus and Joseph, exist for Jesus Christ’s birth, highlighting the monumental moment for Christians. Image above from Live Like You Are Rich On Any Income/Image below from Google

In the end, anyone can celebrate in any unique way; the important part is focusing on the significance of the birth of Jesus and His teachings.

“The teachings of Christ stand as a beacon of hope, eternal life, love, and forgiveness, forming the very essence of the Christmas spirit,” according to [www.ccu.edu](http://www.ccu.edu), the online website for Colorado Christian University, Colorado’s premier Christ-centered private college.



# Learn origins of Kwanzaa

*By Ivana Camacho*  
Staff Writer

Kwanzaa is a Pan-African and African-American holiday that was established to help African Americans reconnect with their African culture and heritage, and is typically celebrated with feasts, African drumming and reciting original poetry with the celebration lasting seven days: Dec. 26, 2025 to Jan. 1, 2026.

Why is it named Kwanzaa?

“The name Kwanzaa comes from the phrase ‘matunda ya kwanza’ which means ‘first fruits’ in Swahili. The phrase refers to the first harvest celebrations of Africa,” according to bpl.org, the website from the Boston Public Library, the first large free municipal library in the United States.

Why was Kwanzaa celebrated and why was it established?

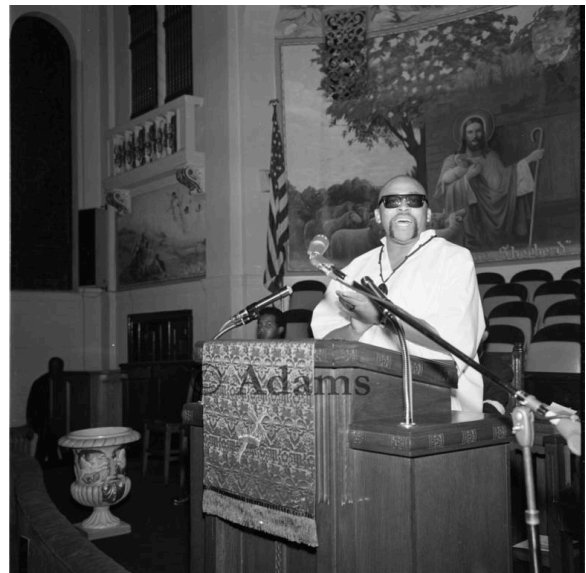
“Kwanzaa was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, an activist and professor, during the Black Freedom Movement. His goal was to celebrate African heritage while promoting cultural unity and self-determination,” according to ciecee.org, a website that offers a variety of college study abroad programs, which have been offered for the past 75 years.

The holiday was not meant to substitute.

“Kwanzaa was not created to give people an alternative to their own religion or religious holiday. Many African Americans who celebrate Kwanzaa do so in addition to observing Christmas,” according to blackdoctor.org, a website that leverages culture, content and technology to transform people’s lives for the better.



**SEVEN DAYS OF CELEBRATION** African drummers (above) perform at a Kwanzaa celebration. Kwanzaa is Dec. 26, 2025 to Jan. 1, 2026. Photo from the Kuumba Cultural Collective of Southern Colorado



**MEET THE FOUNDER** Dr. Maulana Karenga, the founder of Kwanzaa, speaks from the podium of the Second Baptist Church during the Los Angeles Black Congress First Annual Recognition Awards Presentation Night in 1968. Photo from the Tom & Ethel Bradley Center Photographs

# Wreaths Across America aims to honor veterans, show gratitude

By *Aisha Ahmad*  
Staff Writer

COMMENTARY

During the season of giving and merriment, how can we show our gratitude to those who risk their lives to protect us every day?

Wreaths Across America is a nationwide project working to honor U.S. veterans by placing wreaths each December upon the graves of those deceased, done through generous donations and volunteers who manage all responsibilities to facilitate the event on National Wreaths Across America Day Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, although anyone can volunteer all year long.

“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself,” said American writer Joseph Campbell.

U.S. veterans have chosen to fulfill the task of being American heroes, risking their lives to defend this country and all those within it. It is important that the sacrifices being made are acknowledged, appreciated and returned. A small way this can be accomplished is through Wreaths Across America.

“Sponsor a veteran’s wreath in honor of or



**WREATHS**  
*across*  
**AMERICA**

**WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA** is an annual ceremony held in December to honor and remember fallen U.S. service members by placing wreaths on thousands of graves. Image from [friscoleigion.org](http://friscoleigion.org)

in memory of a loved one who served in our Armed Forces,” according to [wreathsasscrossamerica.org](http://wreathsasscrossamerica.org), an organization committed to remembering the fallen and honoring those who served.

The holidays always reignite the generosity among many; it is vital that this spirit of giving is habitual year-round. True kindness should not be limited to a single season, rather it should become second nature. Find ways to give back every day; the changes one can make are larger than it seems; you can even raise funds to purchase wreaths!

“Because so much charitable giving happens at the end of the calendar year, nonprofit development staff and leaders are continuously searching for ways to even out their fundraising calendars and forecast projects. Recurring grantmaking helps ease the burdens,” according to [nptrust.org](http://nptrust.org), an organization with philanthropic expertise.

“(In 2025), National Wreaths Across America Day took place at 5,598 locations. Volunteers placed over 3.1 million sponsored veterans’ wreaths. At Arlington National Cemetery, over 30,000 volunteers helped place wreaths at 265,000 gravesites,” according to [wreathsasscrossamerica.org](http://wreathsasscrossamerica.org). [freshdesk.com](http://freshdesk.com). Dec. 19 is the 2026 event.

# Heroes among us: Sarlo family legacy inspires

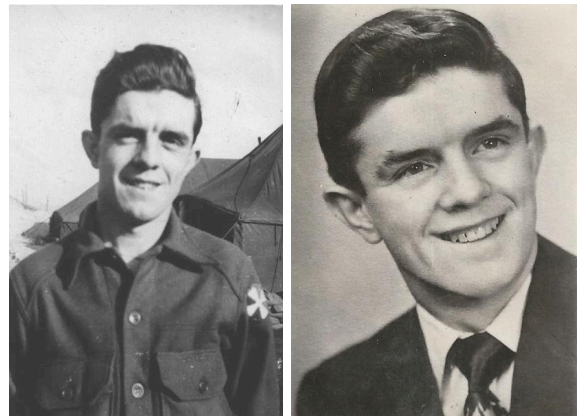
*Note to readers:* Veterans' Day (Nov. 11) is celebrated to honor all who have served in the U.S. Military. Wreaths Across America (Dec. 13, 2025 and year round), honors the fallen as well as those who served plus teaches the value of freedom. We at *The Eagle Flyer* also wanted to recognize heroes in our school community.

*By Coach Sarlo* COMMENTARY  
U.S. History teacher, Varsity Football coach

My dad was drafted into the U.S. 8th Army. He arrived in Korea near the end of 1953. That was after the cease fire and one of my dad's favorite jokes is that 'they' heard he was coming over so they ended the fighting!

The civilian photo is my dad's high school yearbook photo. He graduated from Leavenworth High, Class of 1951.

The top right photo shows my dad and my Uncle Tony and that was taken in a professional studio in Seoul around Easter of 1954. My Uncle Tony enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in Korea (1952-1954) while it was a 'hot' war. Before my Uncle Tony left Korea, he was given permission to meet up with my father. They took this picture and sent it home to their mother, my paternal grandmother. I never got the chance to meet my Uncle Tony because he



**WATERBURY HEROES** (Top photo) Tony and John Sarlo, Coach Sarlo's uncle and father respectively, both served in the U.S. Army in Korea. John Sarlo (bottom left photo) was inducted into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame, Class of 2019, and is seen in his Leavenworth High yearbook photo (bottom right). Photos courtesy of Coach Sarlo

died in 1963 while he was a doctorate student at Notre Dame. *Continued on page 10*

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My father had two other brothers, Joe and Mario. My Uncle Joe served in Korea after my dad. My Uncle Mario served in the Army, but he remained stateside. My father had a younger half-brother, my Uncle Mark. He was my Godfather, and he served in the Vietnam War in 1968-69.

I have a long history of family service in the U.S. military. My great uncles on my mom's side and some of her brothers all served in the wars of the 20th century. Thankfully they all served so we didn't have to. I will be forever grateful for their service and sacrifice to our family and this nation.



#### **VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE**

City native Mr. John Sarlo (far right), who served in Korea, is the father of History teacher and Varsity Football coach Mr. Christopher Sarlo. John Sarlo is seen holding his certificate during his induction ceremony at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, Conn. Dec. 6, 2019. Photo by Tim Koster, CT National Guard Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

## Sarlo member of CT Veterans Hall of Fame

*Compiled by staff reports*

Mr. John Sarlo, city native and father of History teacher and Varsity Football coach Mr. Christopher Sarlo, was inducted into Connecticut's Veterans Hall of Fame during a ceremony in Hartford, Conn. Dec. 6, 2019, and still serves his Waterbury community in 2025.

"At the time of his Honorable Discharge for his service in Korea, John earned the Korean Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and the United Nations Service Medal," according to his daughter, Cynthia M. Sarlo.

John Sarlo, now a grandfather of 14 and great grandfather of 10, also served as the National Commander of the Italian American War Veterans, travelling extensively nationwide to support veterans and veterans' organizations.

"One of his highlights as National Commander was an invitation to attend a luncheon at the White House to discuss veterans' affairs with President Jimmy Carter," according to Cynthia M. Sarlo.

He has worked to improve the quality of life in Waterbury, co-founding the Italian Heritage Club, then the annual Italian Heritage Festival at Lakewood Park. He is a SS Peter and Paul Church 60-year parishioner, 20-year usher and 40-year Master of Ceremonies for Memorial Day/Veterans Day ceremonies on the city Green.

# Truly, night to remember at Kennedy High!

*By Corinna Hunter*

Staff Writer

COMMENTARY

Kennedy students got together for the Homecoming Dance just days before the annual Thanksgiving football game, with tickets at \$15 being sold until the day of in the main office and in senior class adviser Mr. Clark's room. The event at school was run by students, selling refreshments and hyping you up as you walked down the entrance hall and the vibes were super positive Friday, Nov. 21, 2025.

It all started when they announced in late September the coming of a homecoming dance, leaving it up to the seniors to pick from five different themes as a senior privilege. This allowed them to shape their last year however they'd like! The most popular vote was for "An Ethereal Evening," promoting spirals of purples and blues.

In order to go, not only did you have to not have any disciplinary actions taken against you, but you were also required to be present that day at least until third period.

The doors opened at 6 p.m., and when you entered they had sort of a red carpet where you walk down the hall and the students hyped you up, you got your picture taken,

the whole bit. It was very feel-good, and confidence-building. When you entered the cafeteria, there were student volunteers serving refreshments like water and chips. Everyone was dancing and enjoying the music due to the fact students were allowed to add songs to the playlist by recommendation, allowing students to pick the vibes they wanted for the night!

The fun ended at 10 p.m. After the announcement of the king, senior Vagner Soares and queen, senior Isabella Martin, music played for around 20 more minutes and then students called their rides and went home, undoubtedly storing the memories of that night in their heads forever.



## **DANCE THEME: AN ETHEREAL EVENING**

(clockwise from top left) Seniors Rosyvelisse Guerrero and Corinna Hunter; senior Tefta Mino; junior Melissa McLaughlin; and senior Rahmel Thompson enjoy the Homecoming Dance Friday, Nov. 21, 2025. Photos by Dr. A. Cybart-Persenaire

# Students, staff share favorite holiday movies

By London Antrim and Corissa Hunter  
Staff Writers

Students and staff at Kennedy were asked what their favorite movies to watch during Christmas time were and ... gave a variety of answers. The highest ranked movie at Kennedy was *Home Alone* with *Miracle on 34th Street* being just as popular.

The teachers seemed to have picked movies that were more heartfelt and nostalgic for them.

“My favorite Christmas movie is definitely the *Polar Express*. I like how the magic of Christmas is still very real to the kids and I like how it’s directed by Tom Hanks and the style of the animation I like also,” said Mr. DuBois, History teacher.

A few teachers picked an uncommon film and seemed to have loved and connected with the magic and Christmas spirit embedded in these movies.

“My favorite is *White Christmas*. I like the musical storyline and it has a heartfelt feeling. I like when the two sisters perform a song called ‘Sisters’ and when they perform the final show all in Santa Claus clothes,” said Ms. Benton, Math teacher.

Classic Christmas movies that are very heartwarming and wholesome are also loved by the teachers, one in particular is *It’s a Wonderful Life*.

“The story line behind it... you don’t have to have the most successful life as long as you have friends and family to support you,” said Mr. Heron, History teacher.

“No man is a failure if he has friends,” he said, quoting from *It’s a Wonderful Life*.

Older, classic Christmas movies are special since they have been able to stay well known after all of these years. One of them being *Miracle on 34th Street*, which earned the second highest ranking among people interviewed at Kennedy.

“*Miracle on 34th Street*. I don’t know – it’s just a classic Christmas movie. I don’t want to say it was simple but it’s very easy to follow and is very heartfelt,” said Ms. Bosworth, History teacher.

The main part of a classic Christmas movie and its significance is the nostalgia it can bring, especially for teachers.

“My favorite is *Home Alone* because it reminds me of my childhood, but also *Christmas Vacation* if nobody said that yet,” said Mr. Clark, Senior Class Adviser and TAG (Talented and Gifted) teacher who is well known around the building for his love of movies.

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“I love *Home Alone* and my favorite (thing) about the movie is when Kevin wakes up and there is nobody in the house,” said De’Jaunae Thompson, a freshman.

*Home Alone* seems to have been a part of everyone’s childhood and stayed in people’s memories for decades, as did certain scenes from the movie.

“My favorite Christmas movie is *Home Alone*. (I like) when Kevin was in his brother’s room messing around with his stuff. My next favorite part in the movie is when the guy popped out of the doggy door,” said Eli Rivera, a sophomore.

As popular as the original *Home Alone* movie is, the sequel is also highly recognized.

“My favorite Christmas movie is *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*. My favorite scene in the movie is when the ravens are attacking the robbers from catching Kevin,” said Menahem Desamour, a freshman.

Some movie scenes are hard to forget.

“My favorite Christmas movie is *Almost Christmas* and my favorite part of the movie is when the guy finds his wife’s cooking and baking recipe book. (Another favorite) part is when the lady was out the window and the guy was trying to pull her back in the house,” said Christine Brand, a sophomore.



**FAVORITE FILM: *HOME ALONE* (1990)**

Starring Macaulay Culkin as Kevin McCallister, an 8-year-old who was accidentally left home alone on Christmas, this film ranks as one of the favorite Christmas movies for Kennedy students, while some staff picked *Miracle on 34th Street* (below) as their favorite Christmas movie. Images from Google



# Americans spend around \$778-\$1,100 on holiday gifts

By Josiah Brown and Arielle Henry  
Staff Writers

COMMENTARY

Americans typically spend around \$778 to more than \$1,100 on Christmas gifts every year, and keeping up with this amount shows how expensive Christmas is for Americans each year. People tend to spend a lot during the holidays, especially families with many children.

Do you ever wonder what kind of gifts people buy for their families on Christmas?

“Christmas spending for 2025 is anticipated (to be on)... clothing, toys, and gift cards. Around 76 percent of consumers buy each of these items every year” with “shoppers projected to spend an average of \$1,638 on gifts, travel and entertainment, representing a 7 percent rise from 2023,” according to [www.demandsage.com/christmas-spending-statistics/](https://www.demandsage.com/christmas-spending-statistics/), a website with holiday statistics.

Americans have spent hundreds of dollars on Christmas for the last few years.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) noted the average American planned to spend \$826 in 2022 on Christmas gifts, food and

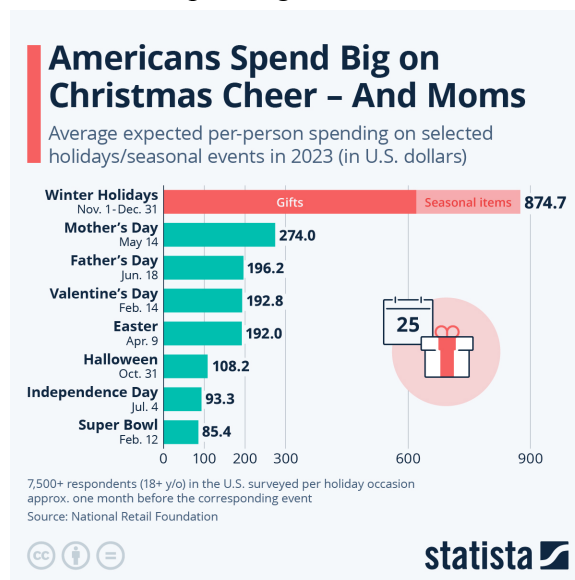


Artwork by London Antrim

decorations. Of that \$826 dollars, around \$500 are spent on gifts,” according to [www.whartonwomen-penn.com/walnutstreetjournal/christmasspending](https://www.whartonwomen-penn.com/walnutstreetjournal/christmasspending), a website from the Wharton Women student organization at the University of Pennsylvania.

Where do most people go to buy gifts?

“Online shopping continues to be a popular choice for consumers during the holiday shopping season. 55 percent of people say they plan to make their holiday purchases digitally, and 44 percent of people say they plan to shop at department stores,” according to [simplifytheholidays.org/](https://simplifytheholidays.org/), a website with spending statistics.



# Community volunteering during holidays: why it matters

*By Alexi Knott*  
Staff Writer

COMMENTARY

During the holiday season, many people focus on giving back to their communities. This commentary explains why holiday volunteering is important, how it helps people in need, and how students and community members can get involved to make a difference.

Many families struggle the most during winter months. Some cannot afford enough food, warm clothes, or heating, while others feel lonely during the holidays. Food banks, shelters and nonprofit groups often see more people needing help at this time of year.

“The holidays can be a difficult time for families facing hunger,” according to Feeding America’s website.

Volunteering also helps the people who give their time. When people help others, they often feel happier and more connected. The Cleveland Clinic online explains that helping others can “improve your mental health and give you a sense of purpose.” This shows that volunteering is not only

good for the community, but also good for the volunteers themselves.

There are many ways people can help during the holidays. Some people serve meals at shelters, pack food boxes at food banks, or collect toys and coats. Others help organize community events or deliver meals to elderly people who cannot leave homes.

“Volunteers are at the heart of everything we do,” according to Habitat for Humanity.

High school students can also get involved. Volunteering can look good on college applications and help students learn responsibility and teamwork. More importantly, it helps students understand the needs of others and feel proud of making a difference. In the end, holiday volunteering brings communities closer together. It spreads kindness, hope and support when people need it most. Even small actions can have a big impact during the holiday season, according to [newsroom.clevelandclinic.org](http://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org).



**SOMETIMES THE BEST GIFT IS YOUR TIME**  
Volunteers make a lasting impact on the community during the holiday season. See Dr. Cybart-Persenaire in room 105 for some volunteer opportunities. Photo from Google Images

# Three winter sports begin, cheerleading continues

By *Tefta Mino*  
Sports Editor

The winter sports of boys' swimming, girls' basketball and boys' basketball began the first week of December with informational meetings and tryouts, while cheerleading continues since they cheer for football and basketball teams, plus they have a competition season.

## **Boys' swimming seeks new members**

Boys' swimming had their first meeting here at Kennedy because more people are needed, by putting flyers around the school for promotion Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025.

"Right now we have like seven people that signed up," said Emre Azizoglu, a junior who has been on the team since freshman year.

Azizoglu's goal is to gather more boys who actually enjoy swimming. Whether they have experience or not, he wants people to compete and take it seriously.

"I also hope to get more people," said Azizoglu.

Practices help the boys improve their times, but swimming is also really good cardio: "Usually just have drills from the coach," said Azizoglu. "He sets drills to make us improve our times."



Azizoglu encourages people to join as it is a good environment, many health benefits exist, and no experience is needed.

Another member of the team was asked about the status of members, to which he replied...

"More than last year, that's for sure. A lot better than how it was last year," said John Acero, a senior, while also mentioning that everyone seems "pumped" to be on the team.

Acero has been on the team since last year.

"Since last year, junior year; (I) had my picture taken and everything," he said.

Unfortunately, Acero sustained a leg injury that stopped him from doing many things; while it is not fully healed, he is able to walk and drive.

"It's still broken but I love swimming so I do what I gotta do," he said.

Acero hopes to see...

"People try their hardest and enjoy it more than anything," he said. "It's pretty exhausting and challenging. It's always gonna be pretty difficult," he said, but the team is good for helping you become a better, stronger swimmer!

Some advice Acero would like to share is to "try your hardest everywhere. School, work, dreams. Give it your all," he said. *Continued on page 17*

## **Cheerleaders start competition season**

Cheer season is still going strong!

“We are currently preparing for competition season,” said Head Coach Mr. Joshua Saliva.

Competition season starts from the middle to end of January and goes until the end of March. There is no exact date since Saliva said he is still waiting to hear back from registration.

“We will participate in six or seven competitions depending on how ready we are,” he said.

The cheerleaders have a lot on their plates, having to learn many routines while still supporting school teams.

“We cheer for football, basketball and regular cheer competition season,” Saliva said.

He mentioned the NVL (Naugatuck Valley League, based in the Greater Waterbury area) and state competitions where they participate.

“As we prepare for our next season, we need to be more ready,” Saliva said.

If you have not noticed, Saliva was absent for a few days and here is why...

“I run different teams,” he said, including seven cheer teams, so he was in Florida for Nationals for two of them.

His Waterbury Knights Cheer Team placed seventh in Division 14 and his CT Elites Cheer Team placed fifth in Division 12.

Saliva also hopes to help Kennedy’s cheerleaders rise up that point too, since:

“We have the potential, everybody just needs to be committed,” he said.

Practices are usually Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., but are switching to 5 p.m. until the end of any games occurring since basketball season has an effect on their regular practices.

The team is looking for tumblers. If anyone can do a back handspring or tuck, do not hesitate to talk to Saliva and be added to his team’s roster!

## **Basketball player shares success secret**

*By Aiden Robinson*  
Staff Writer

Boys basketball season is starting up soon! Here’s some information from a varsity player.

The team’s record was 10-13 as of the 2024-2025 school year. They plan on maintaining a positive record this season with new additions to the team and revised game plans, said Jadiel Richiez, a junior.

So what drives him to succeed on and off the court?

“Showing up every day is huge,” Richiez said. “If you’re not putting in the work, you’re falling behind.”

Regarding his team’s strategy: “You gotta learn the plays, know your way around the gameplan, and most importantly, trust your teammates,” Richiez said.

So what is his secret to continuous improvement?

“It’s about becoming a better player every day, whether it’s working on my shot, my defense, or just generally being a better teammate,” Richiez said. *Continued on page 18*

## **Girls' basketball aims for 10 wins**

*By Matthew Twasam*  
Staff Writer

The Kennedy Eagles Girls' Basketball Team of 2025, captained by senior Tanaiya Clarke, reflect on their previous season with aims of achieving new goals both on a team level and a personal level. That is because after an overwhelming last season, a new season arises with the final chance to prove to themselves and the league their aims of becoming a better version of themselves.

"After a 2-18 season, one of our main objectives this season is to get a minimum of 10 wins," said Clarke.

This brand new season means new goals and a new setting.

"A personal goal of mine is to receive an offer from New Haven Chargers Women's Basketball Team," said Clarke.

An unexpected turnout resulted in new players.

"About 18 girls tried out for the team and they all made it," said Clarke.

The captain is well aware there is no 'I' in 'team,' and shared one of their team goals.

"Another one of our team goals is to make NVLs (Naugatuck Valley League)," said Clarke.

There is at least one new player on the block who has set specific goals for herself to earn:

"Statistically at least a double double but as a player I want to create trust between my teammates and I since it's my first year," said Khalia Jules, a junior.

Aiming high is the standard for a member of the junior varsity team.

"My goal for this season is to be superior by the end of the season and improve from my errors so eventually I can be on Varsity; and not only that (but) build beautiful bonds with my teammates, coach and always be the best version of me," said junior and JV player Marlen Hernandez-Luna.

Practice makes perfect, or least helps on the road to improvement.

"My goal is to get better at my game and just improve my skills in the game and (overall) just get better and be more aggressive," said senior and varsity player Illiana Perez.

For more information on school teams, listen to morning as well as afternoon announcements during the day in school, plus visit [www.maxpreps.com/](http://www.maxpreps.com/).

# Dec. 10 marks milestone for human rights

*By Jose Lopez*  
Staff Writer

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights signed in Paris, France Dec. 10, 1948 “as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations,” drafted by representatives with different legal, cultural and backgrounds from all regions of the world.

“In the late 18th century, human rights were poorly protected. In many countries, people’s physical integrity and private and political civil liberties were not respected by their governments,” according to [ourworldindata.org](http://ourworldindata.org), a website that turns their attention towards poverty, disease, hunger, climate change, war, existential risks, and inequality.

Ever since then it was all downhill from there, so awareness of injustice was needed.

“Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind... the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,” according to [www.un.org](http://www.un.org), the website for the United Nations, whose mission is “peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet.”



## PROTECTION IS WHAT MATTERS

While human rights matter every day, Dec. 10 is a day to cherish: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed then in 1948. Image from [ishr.org](http://ishr.org)

Believe it not, this document was the very first legal document setting forth basic human rights for all people.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, was the first legal document to set out the fundamental human rights to be universally protected. Its 30 articles provide the principles and building blocks of current and future human rights conventions, treaties and other legal instruments.” by [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org), a website that represents the world’s commitment to the promotion and protection of the full range of human rights and freedoms set out in UDHR.

So what is the impact of this document?

“The UDHR is widely recognized as having inspired, and paved the way for, the adoption of more than 70 human rights treaties,” according to [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

## December Scrambled!

Unscramble these five words/phrases related to articles in this issue, and tell us on which page the word appears.

LIWHSAI

ESWHART

YNGFSIUTOA

ELORTVUENGIN

HRETEELA IEGENVN

Email answers to [acybart-persenaire@waterbury.k12.ct.us](mailto:acybart-persenaire@waterbury.k12.ct.us).

First to email receives a \$5 Dunkin Donuts gift card. Separate prizes given for students and staff.

A festive poster for the 2025 PAL Annual Holiday Party. The background is dark blue with white stars and snowflakes. At the top, there are green pine branches, red and gold ornaments, and a Santa hat. In the center, the text "2025 PAL Annual Holiday PARTY" is written in white and red. Below that, the date and time "December 19th 6-8 pm" and the location "64 Division St." are listed in white. At the bottom, a light gray box contains the text "UPDATED: OUTDOOR DRIVE-THRU EVENT" and "TOY GIVEAWAY!!!" in red.

**2025  
PAL Annual  
Holiday  
PARTY**

**December 19th 6-8 pm  
64 Division St.**

**UPDATED: OUTDOOR DRIVE-THRU EVENT  
TOY GIVEAWAY!!!**

# Wicked: For Good

By Autumn Bohlman

Staff Writer

MOVIE REVIEW

Have you seen *Wicked: For Good*?

Finally, in a clock-tick, the wait for the second half of the movie adaptation of *Wicked*, based on the Broadway musical that continues the story of Elphaba and Glinda in the magical land of Oz, starring actors such as Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo, Jonathan Bailey, and even Jeff Goldblum, is over, as it was released in theaters Friday, Nov. 21, 2025 and is still playing as of Dec. 9, 2025.

“The most beautiful part though is seeing how people have interpreted it and taken things away,” said Erivo, who plays one of the main characters Elphaba, in a recent interview with Apple Music.

During *Wicked*, fans were amazed with the visuals as well as the emotion the actors put into their roles, grasping the audience’s attention.

“I love the real friendship that’s come, I mean, it’s the wicked



**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: WATCH IT IN THEATERS** The first half of the movie version of the Broadway musical *Wicked* was released Nov. 22, 2024 and the second half, *Wicked: For Good*, was released Nov. 21, 2025, making both releases only one year and one day apart. Image from the movie’s official website

effect, you know, like that’s what happens,” said an Apple music reporter interviewing Erivo and Grande.

While watching *Wicked*, the magical experience surrounds the audience, pulling them into the land of Oz and living up to its expectations of excellency with new songs like “Girl in the bubble” sung by Grande, and “No place like home” by Erivo.

It is recommended that everyone see this movie in theaters before it is gone!