



A day of service

Calhoun carries on MLK's legacy

by London Basco
Staff Writer

In order to carry on Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, Americans come together and give back to their communities on the third Monday of January every year.

During that week and the weeks prior to the MLK Day of Service, people around the country gather items for soup kitchens, volunteer at organizations, and participate in other activities that will benefit those in need.

Students and teachers at Calhoun took part in the Day of Service once again, strengthening the relationship with the community by hosting a drive that gathered items to be donated to the Community Cupboard and eventually reach the homes of the less fortunate. These items included shower products, toothpaste, paper towels, and other necessities.

Over the course of the week, other activities were planned to celebrate the life of Martin Luther King Jr.

Calhoun students learned about Dr. King and his activism on Long Island during their social studies period.

"Our chairperson organized a wonderful learning opportunity for the students where volunteers from the Leadership Class came in and taught our classes about Dr. King's visits to Long Island," said Ms. Beth Finneran, social studies teacher. "They read us a children's book by Allison Singh called 'MLK and LI,' and it was wonderful to listen to and learn about all the



(photo by Ava Kamlet)

Calhoun students visit the Community Cupboard with all the items they collected. things he did here."

Ms. Finneran said the informative book also led to great classroom conversations.

"The book touched upon his trips to Roslyn Heights, Long Beach, Hempstead, and more. By making appearances at churches, schools, and synagogues, Dr. King gathered support for civil rights and raised money for the cause," Ms. Finneran said. "We then discussed our prior knowledge of MLK and the new things

we learned throughout the lesson, all shocked at his involvement in Long Island."

Even the smallest of deeds are acknowledged during the MLK Day of Service.

During the week, students were encouraged to wear a different color each day to highlight unity, acceptance, love, and peace. Inspirational MLK quotes were posted all around the building, and students were given compliment cards as they came into the building and

encouraged to pass them around to others.

"I always like to put inspirational quotes on the whiteboard in order to motivate my students," said Ms. Dakota Melo, science teacher. "During the week I put various MLK quotes that I hoped would encourage my students to participate in their community and strive to make a difference."

This celebration was not limited to Long Island, though, as services were taking place all across the nation. The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation hosted an event to clean litter in the parks of the five boroughs.

Also, in association with the Afya Foundation, Volunteer New York created many opportunities for locals to get involved. These opportunities included interactive workshops, designing community murals, food drives, film festivals, and much more.

People in California also did their part in appreciating MLK at the same location he addressed issues of division among people to locals of the area: the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. "L.A. Works" continued its long tradition of honoring Dr. King's legacy by empowering Angelenos to collect food and fight for climate justice.

Though many devote the MLK Day of Service to assisting those in need, it is strongly encouraged to continue such important actions even past the federal holiday.

Even if the goal of volunteer work is to improve the lives of others, it can do the same for oneself, and it can be done year round.

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Hope for Haiti**

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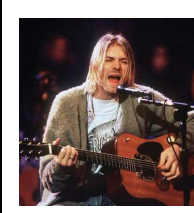
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Giving hope

by Kate Ammirati
Staff Writer

Calhoun students expanded their love and hope outside of the school hallways in order to help those in need.

The Hope Project, a school-wide fundraiser managed by the Racial Equity Club, is an event that demonstrates the power of hope to bring together communities.

From September to January, the fundraiser became a success and included every other school in the district. Students from the three high schools and two middle schools joined in on the effort.

Junior Nickolas Mascary, a Haitian-American who visited Haiti many times during his childhood, said he came up with the idea and brought it to the club.

Mascary saw how sad the conditions were in Haiti, where people lacked basic necessities, such as clean water, food, and proper shelter. He noticed that many of the people he saw were kids his age who dealt with these conditions, which is when he felt it was necessary to start the Hope Project with the REC.

"I hope throughout 111 days, The Hope Project could foster a sense of altruism within every student in

Bellmore-Merrick," Mascary said. "The Hope Project taught us that we should not just do community-oriented activities based on our own benefit, but rather the benefit of others."

Mascary, who serves as the president of the Racial Equity Club and the project manager for The Hope Project said the efforts kicked off in September, when the club sold t-shirts.

"Additionally, the project made its first appearance at Colt Fest, and the project expanded from there. Through events such as the Chipotle fundraiser, school supply donation drives, and bake sales, The Hope Project was able to raise over \$3,500 so far with over 28 events and fundraising options," he said.

Many students have already felt an impact from this organization and are inspired to see that it will benefit many Haitian lives.

"This project has unknowingly yet irreversibly strung our community together and made us realize the power of a little hope," said junior Grace Miller.

Along with fundraising, The Hope Project also emphasizes the

importance of teaching younger generations about different cultures, as well as how young people can give back to their community and to other communities in need.

Members of the Racial Equity Club have visited Merrick Avenue Middle School's International Buddy Club, where middle school students were taught about Haitian culture.

Club members also visited all three North Merrick elementary schools where they taught young students about gratitude and leadership, as well as having awareness toward those in need.

Rather than just simply asking people to donate, The Hope Project makes a difference by teaching younger generations why it is important to give back and the importance of having awareness about different cultures.

"The Hope Project has raised awareness and brought the Calhoun community together to help the Haitian people," said junior and volunteer Ashleigh Coyne. "The project has made a difference and inspired me and others to learn about different cultures and give to those in need."

While many charitable organizations are not entirely transparent with where their funding goes, Mascary said his research to help Haitians in need led him to the non-profit organization, Hope for Haiti, that aims to improve Haitian lives.

"After the earthquake in 2010, many homes were destroyed in Haiti, and Hope For Haiti helped with that. In 2021, Haiti faced another earthquake destroying many homes and progress that was made within the 11 years," he said.

Among the collaborative efforts, the Racial Equity Club has also partnered with Kennedy High School's Diversity Equity Inclusion Club, presented information to Calhoun's Voices of the Past classes, met virtually with Ben & Jerry's co-founder (and Calhoun alum) Jerry Greenfield, and held countless raffles.

"This project means a lot to me as a Haitian but also can encourage people to be generous with their money and to help those in need," Mascary said. "Hopefully students can walk away from this fundraising project willing to help others and donate."



(photo by Grace Miller)

Nick Mascary, Jillian Grossberg, and Ayana Mascary sell raffle tickets to add to the over \$3,500 raised so far this school year by the Racial Equity Club for The Hope Project.

On another level

Athletes discuss college recruitment

by Sofia Mescolotto
News Editor

How many little kids play sports only because their parents signed them up?

As players get older, the sports get harder, and those who are overcome by other enjoyments or opportunities are weeded out. Come high school, athletes who love their sport and are good enough might move on to a higher



SUNY Binghamton.

Maldonado described her recruiting process as fun and exciting. She has been working toward this goal for a long time, but her optimistic mindset paved the way. She said she looked forward to discovering new opportunities with different programs in different areas and kept the mindset that, "The right fit will come. I just need to keep going."

While she enjoyed a great deal



Both Maldonado and Keene said hard work and a strong mindset are important.

level: college.

College athletics is a whole new pool of talent. Every player on that field, court, or rink is going to be good at what they do, so what does it take to get there?

Depending on the person and the sport, there is so much variation. There are students who have committed right off the bat in junior year and others who commit mid-senior year. Whatever path they are on, it takes a great deal of time, mental and physical strength, and energy to achieve the level of greatness needed to carry on in college. It's best to not underestimate the journey and how much effort will be required for success.

Calhoun has had countless athletes break through and continue their athletics in college, including a handful in the graduating Class of 2022. Three of them recently sat down to provide helpful information young aspiring athletes can use throughout their college recruiting process.

Jack Keene will be attending SUNY Geneseo for men's swimming, Jill Conlon is headed Hofstra University to play Division I women's soccer, and Ella Maldonado will be playing volleyball at

of her process, Maldonado also noted the stress and pressure of playing her best knowing that college coaches were watching.

Conlon recalled the stress of her process.

"Talking and communicating with coaches can easily get overwhelming," she said. "It depends on the coach because many coaches vary in style of coaching and the way in which they go about recruiting."

Many student-athletes crumble from the pressure placed upon them by parents and coaches and give up on their dreams of playing in college. Understanding that this process will test one's mental strength is vital to continue; it might be discouraging for a teenager working to play a sport in college.

"Being told I wasn't good enough was a struggle, but you must remain confident in yourself, your ability, and your skills," Conlon said.

Fortunately for Keene, his process was not terribly hard on him. His said his parents were key players his recruitment process, aiding him in reaching out to coaches and setting up visits.

The proactive approach landed Keene at a great school where he will continue to grow as a swimmer and student. His mom went through this process, so he received a great deal of advice.

Swimming is a difficult sport on the body, and it's hard to practice outside of the pool, but Keene still made his way to the weight room multiple times a week. One concept that he emphasized is showing up; showing up to practice every day, preseason workouts, or team gatherings is crucial to better the mind and body.

"I think of it as every day I take off, someone else is out there getting better than me," Keene said. "It starts with the mind. Having the mental strength to get up out of bed and work on that Sunday morning when everyone else is in their beds. It's pushing yourself to work at building yourself on days when practicing feels like a chore."

Keene said it's important to be patient and not compare your own process with anyone else. So many great athletes commit to amazing colleges "later than usual."

Kenne said instead of getting down on himself, he turned it into motivation to strive for the offer he wanted.

An important piece of advice all three athletes shared is to start the

process early. Many coaches can't technically contact the athlete until September 1 of junior year; however, coaches can express interest to other current coaches.

Conlon committed to Hofstra just weeks ago. She watched most of her team commit before her, but she stayed calm, never lost faith in herself, and ended up committing to a great school to play soccer.

"Coaches will come and go, but you must remain consistent with contacting coaches and staying in shape," Conlon said. "Every player has their own time frame, so don't worry when you see others committing before you."

Similarly, Maldonado emphasized being persistent throughout the journey, so when college coaches are watching, you players are ready to show their skills.

"It was hard to be seen, and coaches can only be at your games for a little amount of time, so when they get the chance to watch you, it's important to take advantage of that opportunity and push yourself to give 100 percent," Maldonado said.

The recruiting process can be stressful for aspiring athletes, so it's important to learn more about it. Hearing from other athletes offers perspective on what to expect throughout the whole process.



(photo by D.J. Toback)

Senior Jill Conlon will be playing Division I women's soccer at Hofstra University.

The kids in the hall:

Hometown's best features?

by Julia Baguiao
Sports Editor

Ellie Brous - Sophomore

"The best thing about my hometown is the fair. I have always loved going to the fair with my family and friends since I was a kid. I love walking there with my friends and meeting up with everyone to go on rides, take fun pictures, and make great memo-



Ellie Brous - Sophomore

ries. Nothing compares to the day when you're finally allowed to go to the fair by yourself and friends.

Eating cotton candy and all kinds of fried fair food is one of my favorite parts of going, though it does come second to bringing home a goldfish."

Paulina Kakalos - Sophomore

"My favorite thing about Merrick is the school activities. I love going with my friends to all the field trips, school games, class nights, and sports events. I have made some of my favorite memories with my friends at sports games when we are all cheering in the crowd together.

In addition, I love making so many good relationships with



Riley Kazan - Senior

people in my town I have met from school throughout so many years."

Skylar Bruno - Senior

"My favorite thing about Merrick is its location. Our town is in close proximity to the beach, the mall, the city, and other great places. Merrick is walkable with a cute little town area, and we are around so many fun opportunities.

My favorite part is how close we



Paulina Kakalos - Sophomore

are to the beach. There is no better way to spend the summer or any day in the year than to just watch the sunset with a great view."

Sara Manson - Senior

"My favorite thing about Merrick is our main street, Merrick Avenue. From North Merrick all the way to the corner in South Merrick, there are all kinds of restaurants, boutiques, ice cream shops, and fitness centers.

Merrick Avenue is the heart of our town. Especially on Friday and Saturday nights, many non-locals will come to our fine restaurants and get ice cream afterwards at Ralph's. In the spring and summer, the flowers and trees are bloomed, adding a touch of color to brighten



Randy Wickramishge - Senior

up the town even further."

Riley Kazan - Senior

"My favorite thing about my hometown is the small town atmosphere. It has only three schools in the district for grades K-12 and is a very tight-knit community in the suburbs of northern New Jersey. It contrasts with the upbeat and fast-paced life of living in New York, where everything is constantly in



Skylar Bruno - Senior

motion, especially in the city.

For some, it might be too small or lack things to do because of its condensed size. But I still love that it's mellow and quiet, as it holds some of my best memories."

Randy Wickramishge - Senior

"My favorite thing about my hometown, Sri Lanka, is the tuk tuk. Similar to a taxi but having three wheels, a tuk tuk was my go-to method of transportation in Sri Lanka when there was no car around.

The feeling of zipping through traffic with the wind blow through my face was always exhilarating. The drivers always had great stories to tell, and haggling fair prices with them is an experience I'll nev-



Ryan Menghi - Senior

er forget. As much as I am grateful for my life in America, I miss the good times."

Ryan Menghi - Senior

"My favorite thing about Merrick is the competitive culture. At any Calhoun sports game, you'll find a crowd of people cheering for their friends and family. Students always pack the stands, and you'll find an even bigger crowd

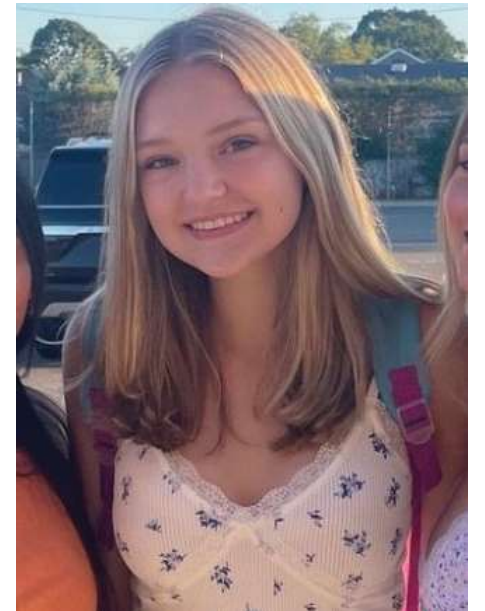


Sara Manson - Senior

at games against the other two schools in our district. We love to go to any games, especially when teams play their rivals or for big events like a county matchup. This makes games not only fun to go to and watch, but it makes it even better for the players to play in."

Kinga Brulinska - Senior

"My favorite thing is all of the memories I've made here. While I didn't grow up in Merrick, every time I leave the house I'm reminded of fun days and nights I've spent here with my friends in my four past years of living here. Whether that be at a restaurant, a friend's house, or simply just a coffee spot we go to, I can't help but relieve the memory."



Kinga Brulinska - Senior



Undercover songs

by Ella Stanek
Staff Writer

We all have our favorite songs that are constantly played and universally loved.

But true fans enjoy the songs that are not as well-played and fly below the radar of the mainstream. These are the undercover songs that are worth listening to.

Harry Styles - Harry's undercover song is "From the Dining Table." Compared to his more well-known and more streamed songs, "From The Dining Table" is one of my favorites.

This song is on his first album, "HS1," and is slower than the others and has more harmonies. It's about going through a break-up and watching the other person move on. Although many people may consider this song sad, his voice sounds amazing, which is why this song is one of my favorite undercover songs.

Harry also has covers of songs that may be more undercover such as "Girl Crush," as well as unreleased songs such as "Medicine," "Anna," and "Talk." "Medicine" is typically performed at a few of his concerts as a special treat for the audience, so not everyone gets to hear that song.

Lana Del Rey- Although Lana Del Rey has a ton of popular songs such as, "Brooklyn Baby," or "Young and Beautiful," her undercover songs include "Salvatore," "In My Feelings," "Swan Song," "Ride," "Freak," and "Get Free."

These songs are not nearly as popular as her other more streamed songs. I love the sound of Lana Del Rey, and I think her less popular songs that aren't overplayed on TikTok or other social media platforms are better than the more popular ones.

The Smiths - The Smiths are one of my favorite bands and always



(photo with permission/Film Magic, Paramount Press Express)

Lana Del Rey's less popular songs worth a listen include "Salvatore" and "Get Free."

will be. I love the sound they have and because of this, I listen to their music very often.

This leads to me finding less popular and undercover songs, such as "Is It Really So Strange?" "These Things Take Time," and "You've Got Everything Now."

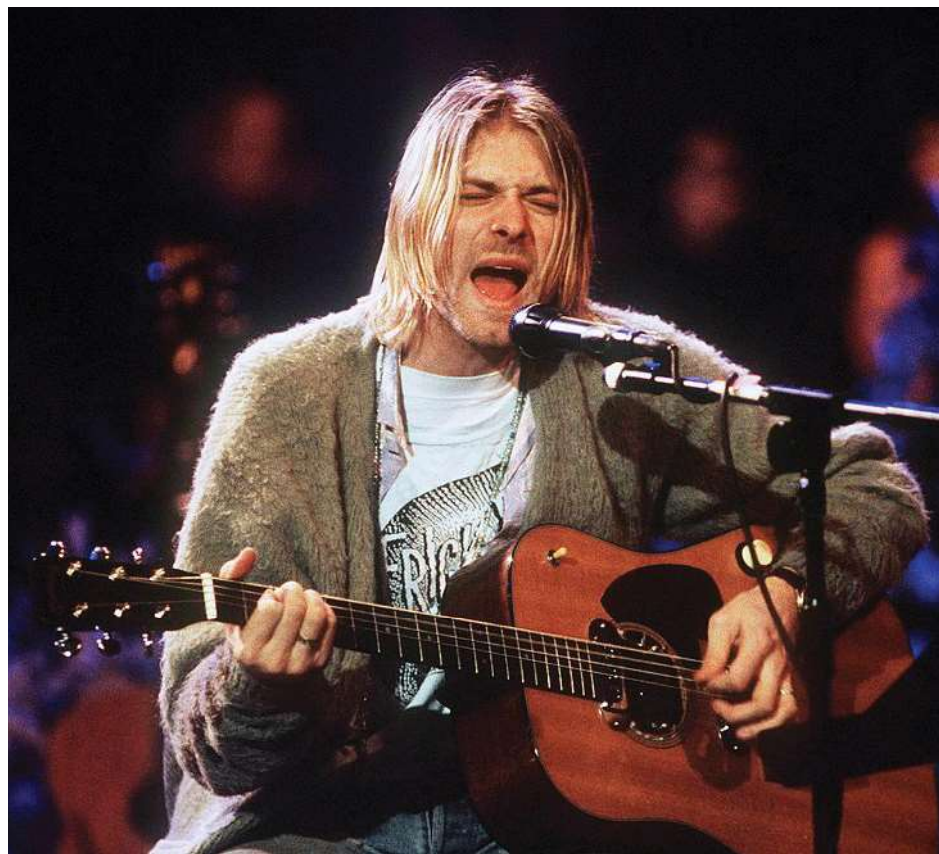
I love the vibe their songs give off. Their most popular songs such as "Back to the Old House," "This Charming Man," "How Soon Is Now?" and "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now" are also some of my favorites.

Nirvana - Although Nirvana

is a popular band, there are some songs that I've never even heard of until very recently. Some of these songs include "School," "Silver," "All Apologies," "Lounge Act," and "On a Plain."

These songs should be as popular as the more popular ones. In the band's short run together, they had five songs make the Billboard 100 including "Smells Like Teen Spirit," and "Come As You Are."

With Kurt Cobain's cool-sounding voice and Dave Grohl's talent, they make all of their songs worth the listen whether they are super famous or not.



(photo with permission/Paramount Press Express)

Kurt Cobain and Nirvana had five Billboard 100 hits, but other songs are just as good.

Manic misogyny

by Hannah Friedman
Contributing Writer

She is fun and quirky and horribly clichéd. She is the Manic Pixie Dream Girl, and it's time to put her to rest.

When it comes to films and TV shows, there are countless tropes and character types that are often repeated. For decades now, whenever there's a pensive, brooding, young male character, there's often a cute, free-spirited female character whose sole purpose is to help elevate the man to a better place.

The Manic Pixie Dream Girl is a term coined by film critic Nathan Rubin, who describes the stereotype as a girl who "exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures."

Though the MPDG seems to be a harmless stereotype that shows the protagonist a new and exciting way to navigate growing in a

harsh coming-of-age environment, this archetype is misogynistic.

This quirky stereotype should represent a strong and independent person who doesn't need to submit to society's strict gender norms; however, the MPDG seems to have the opposite effect in the media. While the creator of the character may strive to lift women, he is pushing her harder into a place in society where she is stuck in the supporting role.

The male character grows at the expense of the girl whose only purpose is to make the man better. What these film writers and directors have ignored is that women are not here to only help men improve and better themselves. Not only are male characters capable of doing the work themselves, female characters also have themselves to improve.

The OG Manic Pixie Dream Girls are characters like Claire, played by Kirsten Dunst in "Elizabethtown," Ramona Flowers in "Scott Pilgrim Versus the World," and

Kate Hudson's Penny Lane from "Almost Famous."

The Script Lab describes these character types in stories as "the perfect recipe for making a depressed 20-something dude see his purpose in life," and Alyssa Maio of The Studio Binder wrote, "She usually aids in his transformation without ever showing any real agency of her own. She is a vivacious character whose main purpose is to teach the male protagonist that life is worth embracing."

In almost every movie or book that she is in, she is depicted as unconventional, highly romanticized, and "not like any other girl that the main guy has ever seen before." Her backstory is near non-existent, except when the main guy needs to learn more about her in order to reach the end of his own journey of self-discovery.

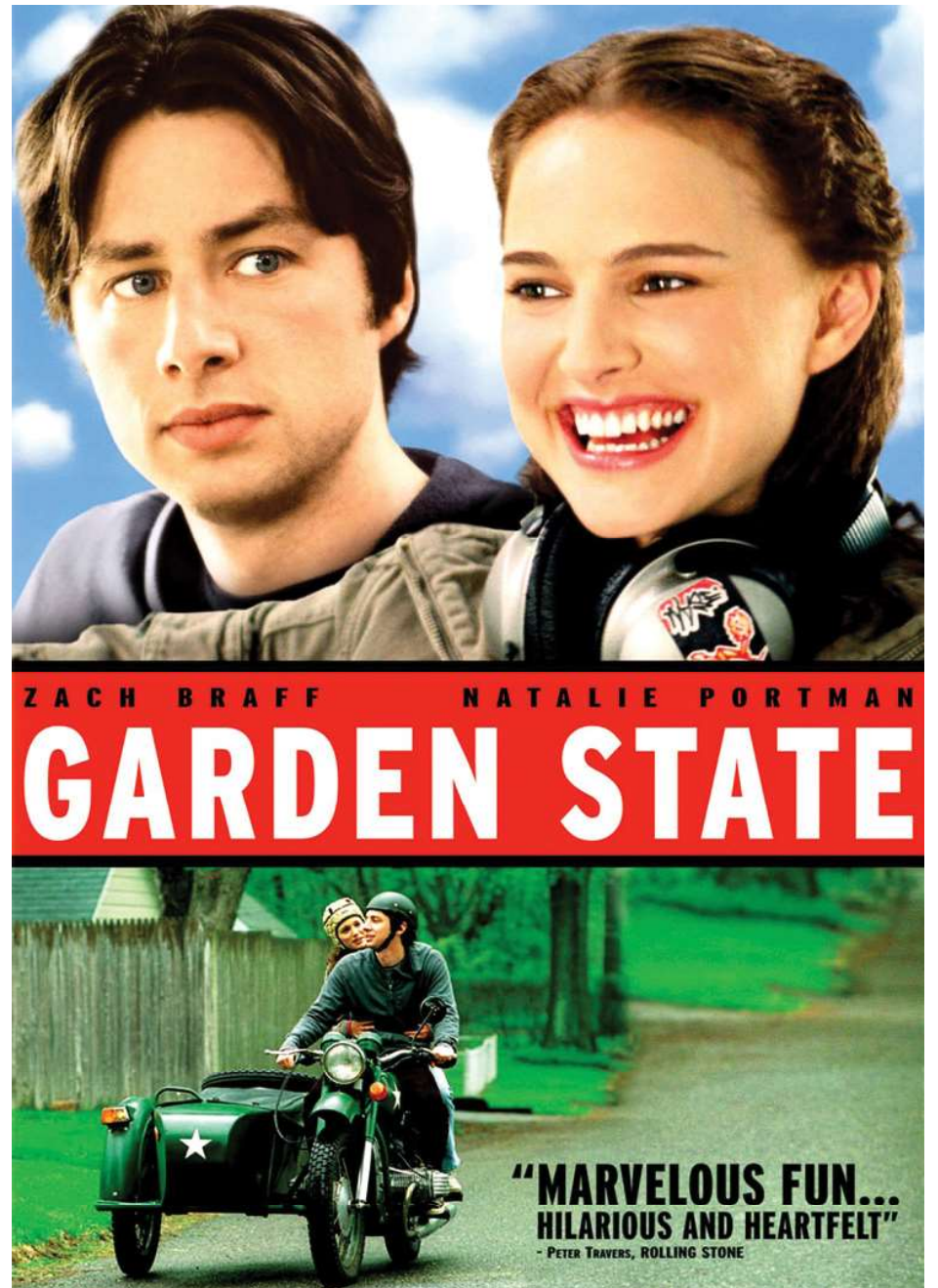
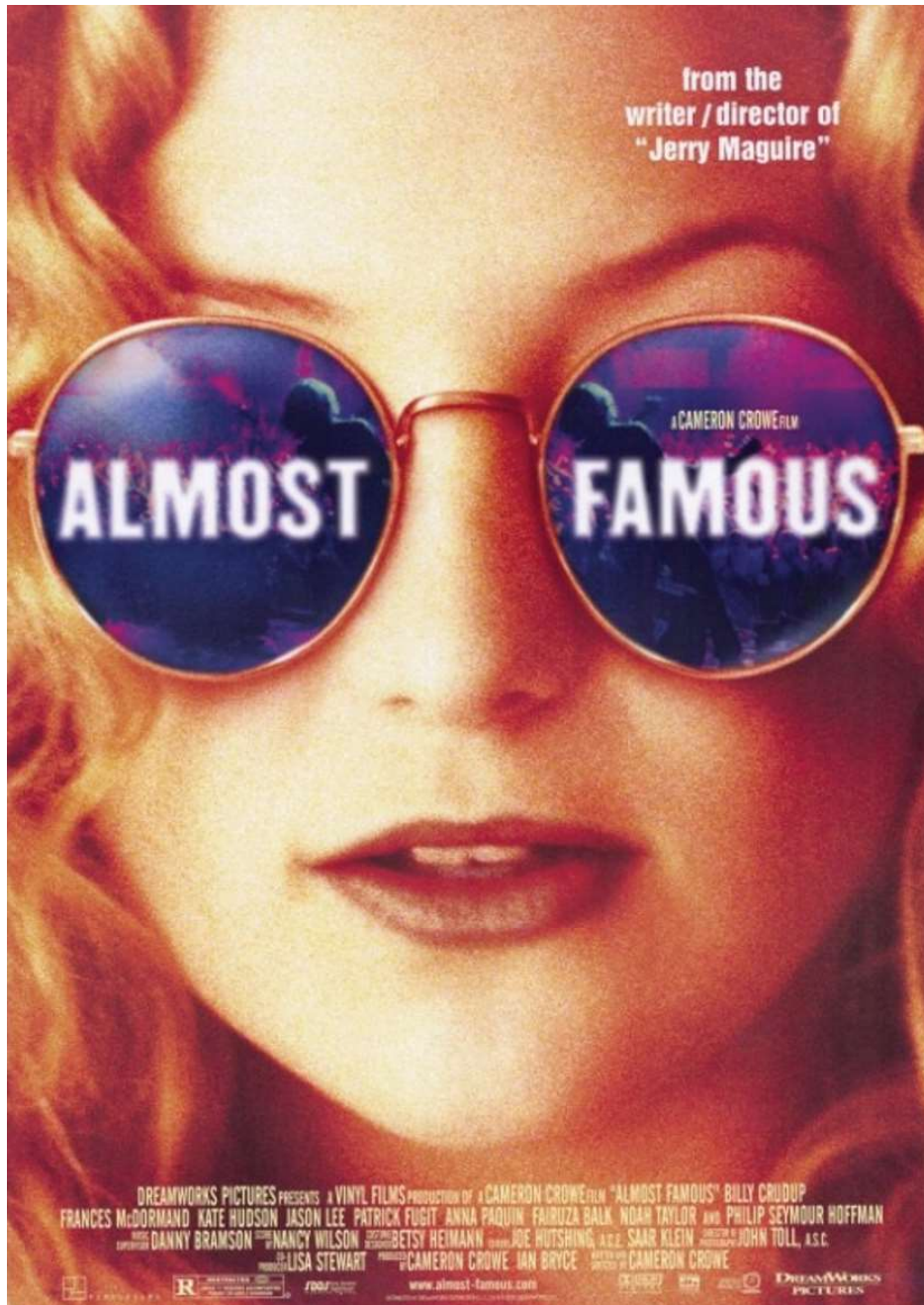
Other examples include Natalie Portman in "Garden State," Meg Ryan in "Joe Versus the Volcano," Charlize Theron in "Sweet November," and Winona Ryder in

"Autumn In New York."

An article from Women's Network adds, "Many times, this character ends up dying or in a situation in which they need saving, allowing the man to be the 'hero' of the story and still fit a masculine stereotype. Why should she be used as a tool rather than having her own form of agency?"

Many girls look up to the MPDG because "fiction creates real life." They romanticize the unrealistic expectation that men — and society in general — value them only when they are unlike other girls. If they don't read the right books or listen to super-cool underground music, they fear they will be seen as "basic." It is simply not good enough to do what appeals to you; you must be a fan of only the right music and other forms of media.

We are losing the sense of what the Manic Pixie Dream Girl should stand for: a role model for young women who helps them feel comfortable with being unique and following their passions.



Both "Almost Famous" and "Garden State" have cute and quirky female characters whose sole purpose in the movie is to elevate the male character to greatness.

Is Jane a feminist?

by Penelope Orlando
Staff Writer

Though it is lauded as an early nod to feminism, Jane Eyre is ultimately a subtle appeal to traditional hierarchy and gender roles.

Jane Eyre is an essential piece of classic literature acclaimed not only for its riveting storytelling but also for its “feminism.”

Written by Charlotte Brontë, the book was published in 1847 under the male pseudonym “Currer Bell.” Female writers like Charlotte and her sisters, Emily and Anne, faced extreme criticism and often struggled to get their work published.

The Brontës chose to use male pseudonyms to hide their identity at a time when female writers were not taken seriously. The act of writing novels as a woman, alone, was a great triumph for the time.

Though the Victorian saw some expansion of women’s rights as they joined the paid workforce, women were still limited by strict gender roles. While men were allowed to express emotion through writing and art, women were bound to less passionate jobs such as governesses teaching the children of the wealthy or factory workers if they were uneducated.

Spoilers ahead if you have yet to read the novel.

Jane Eyre follows the story of an orphan girl from her early years through adulthood. Through love and loss, the reader experiences Jane’s life as she tells it. Jane is witty and unfettered, though at times she restrains herself.

As a character, she is set apart from other Victorian heroines due to her unconventional personality and looks. Jane is self-described as “poor, obscure, plain, and little”—far removed from the conventionally beautiful Elizabeth Bennets in the novels of the time. The unusualness of Jane’s character is what makes her loved by so many and why the book is considered to be

early feminist literature.

The Victorian Era experienced the first wave feminist movement inspired by female theorists like Mary Wollstonecraft, who emphasized the importance of female independence.

Jane Eyre certainly aligns with these early liberal feminist ideas, but compared to the modern-day movement, it falls short.

Jane is independent, strong-willed, and controls her own life despite the influence of prominent male characters. Feminist, right?

The problem is Jane repeatedly makes choices that limit herself and benefit others. Choices that suppress her abilities, personality, and religious views.

Jane struggles with her independent nature, which she is conditioned to perceive as a negative trait during her years at the Lollwood Institution. Although once a defiant child, Jane grows up and conquers this rebellious side of hers.

As Jane becomes a young adult, she learns to suppress her defiance, a quality that powerful characters slander her for. She continually subdues herself to the ultimate advantage of Mr. Rochester, Jane’s morally grey and Byronic love interest.

Even more, the reader is meant to be sympathetic to the sexism of male characters while the female characters who resist this oppression are demonized. Bertha Mason, the “mad” first wife of Mr. Rochester, is kept locked away in the attic of Thornfield Hall while he pines after the young and ignorant Jane. Of course, Jane is blind to Mr. Rochester’s manipulation until Bertha’s existence is revealed to her.

Jane Eyre falls under the literary genre “bildungsroman”—a combination of the German words “bildung,” meaning education, and “roman,” meaning novel. The genre denotes a storyline that focuses on the development

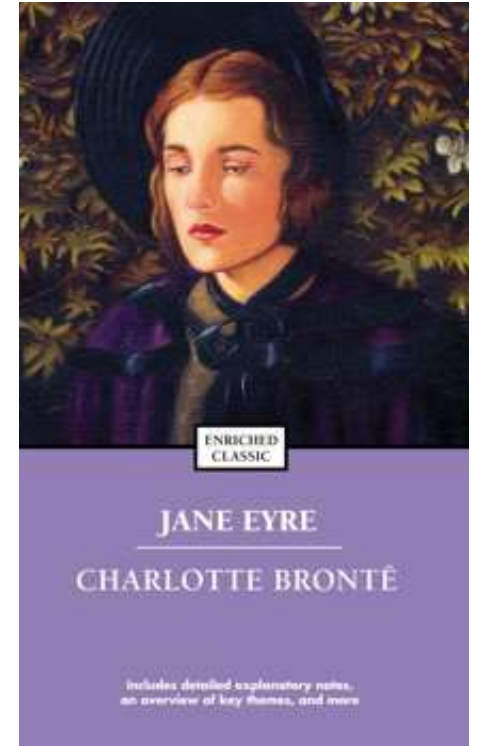
of a character from adolescence through their formative years, spiritual growth, and maturity.

Although Bertha is portrayed as insane and savage, there is wisdom that only she holds. Jane, our “feminist” heroine, simultaneously villainizes Bertha while attempting to suppress the thought that they are in similar predicaments or that her fate is that of Bertha’s.

Despite this, Jane decides to marry Mr. Rochester with the knowledge that she was deceived. This demonstrates Jane’s passivity. While Jane certainly fails to condemn the system that both she and Bertha Mason are ensnared by, she is fully aware of its existence.

Although the ending of the novel is seemingly happy, there is a subtle sense of something unsettling. Ironically, the “liberated” Jane becomes the wife of and has a child with the man who she initially fled from to be free.

Jane’s willing ignorance allows her to be under the illusion that she is liberated by her choices.



Brontë’s novel is still relevant today.

Getting ready



(photos by Ava Kamlet)

In preparation for Class Night 2023, the junior class works on the banner to reflect this year’s theme.

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Fighting in latex

by London Basco
Staff Writer

Black Widow, one of the six original Avengers in the MCU, is known and loved by Marvel viewers for her mastery in martial arts, her mysterious character, and... her butt?

The character was introduced in "Iron Man 2," making her first appearance during Tony Stark's training with his Head of Security. Dressed in a tight-fitting button-down shirt with the top buttons opened, Natasha Romanoff was often pictured at angles that exposed her bra underneath.

Not only that, photos of the future Avenger modeling in lingerie were, pretty insignificantly, pulled up and ogled at by Mr. Stark. Two minutes after knowing Natasha, Tony says, "I want one," while referring to her as just another object he can possess.

Were these details really there in order for us to gain an understanding of the new character, or was it to provide a sexual appeal to the male-dominated audience?

From the perspective of a girl, it's very easy to tell what Marvel's motive was for including such scenes, especially when comparing it to the first sightings of the major male heroes in the rest of the franchise.

They all had insanely interesting

backstories, amazing uprisings, and, not to mention, really cool gear and outfits.

Meanwhile, Natasha was sexualized within the first 10 minutes of her appearance. She doesn't even receive an in-depth story until her standalone movie about a decade later. Eleven years is definitely a concerning amount of time to realize the value of character is more than just their body.

Black Widow wears a body-con dress in the majority of her scenes in "Iron Man 2." But what's the problem with what she wears outside the villain fighting job? She couldn't possibly perform combat effectively in such a style of clothing anyway, so it's logical that she will be given gear and a suit that could protect her in a situation like that right?

According to the minds of behind producing and directing "Iron Man 2," that information was irrelevant and the practicality of Natasha's fighting attire was completely disregarded.

She's finally shown in something else besides a tight dress, but this time comes into frame styled in an even tighter latex bodysuit with no legitimate protection and, of course, an introductory butt shot. Don't see that often for a male character in action movies though, do we?

In one scene, Natasha is wearing

a low-cut dress, which leads Tony Stark to say, "You look fantastic, but that's unprofessional."

There's even a scene where she is changing her clothes in the backseat of a car while the distracted driver not-so-subtly tries to watch her in the rearview mirror.

Actress Scarlett Johansson has acknowledged the sexualization and representation of Black Widow in her beginning appearances. She often criticized Marvel, once saying in an interview with Hello-Beautiful, "You look back at 'Iron Man 2,' and while it was really fun and had a lot of great moments in it, the character is so sexualized."

However, Johansson didn't always feel free enough to speak her mind on the topic. Her male co-stars would receive the interesting questions during interviews while she would be left with what she referred to as "rabbit food questions." These would consist of questions regarding her diet and tips on how to stay fit for such a role. Feeling an obligation to provide an answer for the sake of promoting the films, she would learn to settle for them until it became a recurring problem that she could no longer stand.

That feeling of obligation to sell is what frightens me the most; if an adult woman like Johansson can fall into a routine of self discomfort for the comfort of others, how

easily can young girls do the same after being constantly exposed to male-directed media? Is it possible for them to worry about their weight, shape, or beauty just by watching their favorite movies?

To answer that simply, it's terrifyingly easy. In a 2016 study by Professional Association for Child-care and Early Years (PACEY), it was concluded that children as young as 3 to 5 years of age are able to develop body image issues.

According to PACEY adviser and child development expert Jacqueline Harding, body image issues in toddlers can derive from "images on TV, images in storybooks and animations and the general chat by adults about their bodies, dieting, cosmetic surgery, etc."

Thankfully, Marvel has significantly improved with female representation in their films, decreasing the possibility of causing serious insecurity among young audiences. I'd say almost to the point where female characters stand close to equal with the male characters.

Black Widow's long-awaited standalone movie is just an example of that improvement. First, female Marvel director Cate Shortland aimed to switch from the male to female gaze in the film.

"I think what I wanted to bring into that was her humanity," she stated in an interview with Polygon. "I really wanted to feel the violence. That's what, to me, is sort of female [about the action]."

I think the director perfectly captured the idea that heroines are just as capable as heroes are in action. Rather than simply looking pretty and being saved by a male comrade every moment she seems to be in the slightest need for help, Natasha had multiple opportunities to let herself get messy and redeem herself using her own strengths.

Though there's obvious improvement in the Marvel franchise, there's still a long way to go with fixing the problem of sexualizing female characters overall.

I've been in love with superhero films since I was introduced to them. The drama, the action, the visuals, the character development — what more could a movie fanatic ask for?

As a naive kid in 2014, it was easy to settle for what was given, but now as a young woman in 2023, it's easy to spot what isn't.



(photo with permission/Marvel Studios)

Actress Scarlett Johansson has acknowledged how Black Widow was sexualized in the character's first MCU appearance.

The era of the Sad Girl

by Isabelle Pan
Culture Editor

Taylor Swift, Lizzy McAlpine, Olivia Rodrigo, Gracie Abrams, Billie Eilish.

These are just some of the names of women who have developed their artistry on a “bedroom” or “indie” pop that is framed around sadness. This type of music has skyrocketed in popularity in the last few years.

In the past, these women would probably be viewed as obsessive, crazy, and dramatic. They would probably be burned at the stake if we go far enough back.

But it is now 2023, and things have changed. The sadness motif is something that is celebrated rather than criticized.

There are a multitude of reasons why this sad girl trope has become so enticing.

The most obvious reason is that we live in a time of sadness. Pandemics and other world tragedies have become something that is accepted and routine. Art imitates life, and those feelings are reflected in art such as music.

The stigma against mental health has begun to shift into something else. It’s not something that we have to hide in order to be accepted in society.

Celebrities nowadays promote



(photo with permission/Amazon Studios)

Brett Gelman and Phoebe Waller-Bridge star in “Fleabag,” the British comedy-drama series written by Waller-Bridge.

therapy as if they are the ones who are profiting off of it. Plenty of the artists uses their pens to write something other than heartbreak.

Gracie Abrams, specifically, has had a speedy rise, and part of the reason is the honesty in her writing. Songs like “Block Me Out” and “Camden” touch on things such as anxiety and depression.

The biggest shift toward the era

of the Sad Girl is how women treat their emotions.

Women are emotional creatures, and that is often seen as a weakness. “Man up” or “Are you on your period?” are just some phrases that insinuate that emotions are the problem, but many women are beginning to embrace the sadness within them.

There’s this amazing scene from the show “Fleabag” (highly recommend) where one of the characters says, “Women are born and built with pain. It’s our physical destiny. Period pains, sore boobs, childbirth, you know. We carry it within ourselves throughout our lives. Men don’t. They have to seek it out. They invent all these gods and demons and things all so they can feel guilty about things, which is something we do very well on our own.”

Biologically, women are built with pain within us. As you grow up in the world, as a girl, there’s nothing you can ever do that will please everyone. Something will always be wrong. Your body is something that defines who you are, and, quite honestly, becomes an object for others desire.

With social media it becomes so much easier to find out what the world has deemed is wrong with you and exploit what it’s like to be a girl.

Go on any social media platform, and it jumps from telling you what type of fat to remove to what diet will make you the skinniest to a podcast of guys saying how ugly make-up is on women to

another video of women warning other women how to stay safe at night. And the list goes on.

This idea of pain within a woman’s life could also apply to any point in history.

Therefore, it is not a shock that we are seeing this expression in music. Although this genre is popular now, it has existed well before where we are today.

Fiona Apple and Alanis Morissette are just two of the women who have previously written real emotional music that isn’t filled with fluff or the bubblegum pop music the world has grown accustomed to.

If you take a look at this sub genre of music from a surface level, you probably just have the view of any man listening to a Taylor Swift song in 2012. That mindset has expired, and it’s time that honesty and emotion prevails within writing.

Most of the strongest powerhouses within this genre are also teenage girls. They are an underestimated group, despite most of the music industry being built off of their backs.

There’s quite a fluidity and diversity within the genre. From SZA to Conan Gray to Phoebe Bridgers, this growing genre has room for everyone to fit within it.

No longer are we living in the age of the bright and flashy pop girls such as Brittany Spears and Christina Aguilera.

In 2023 it’s about truth, honesty, and vulnerability in your song lyrics and in your music.



(photo by Isabelle Pan)

Gracie Abrams writes honest lyric in songs like “Block Me Out” and “Camden.”

Know when to take off

As many underclassmen begin to think about their futures and choose classes for next year, one thing to consider is putting an off period in your schedule.

Off periods can be the pride and joy of your day. We go to a school that has a catalog of courses to offer, specifically AP classes. If you've been on the honors track since middle school, you probably have the immense pressure of taking as many rigorous classes as you can. It is always good to work hard, but there's a difference between working hard and overworking yourself.

The effort you solely devote to your classes in middle school has to eventually spread out as you're older. Especially by junior year when you run clubs, have SAT classes, play sports, take driver's ed, and have a job, the amount of

free time you have to dedicate to these classes is slim, especially if they are APs. The benefit of having an off allows you to catch up in these classes and study. The library and the computer lab will become your best friends in-between the loads of work thrown at you during your stress-inducing day.

Every year of high school is important, but juniors know the pressure really grows by your third year. You are physically exhausted because you stay up late doing homework and mentally exhausted because there's just so much to keep track of. The amount of naps you take might skyrocket because you are so burnt out. There just isn't enough time in the day.

Having that one break period during the school day just to be a person and not nose deep in books

is the thing you need the most. In order to do well in your classes you need energy, and you will be desperately lacking that. Being able to relax, or even leave the school is such a necessary thing for your mental health.

Senior year also has a brand new factor: applying to colleges. The research process and the common app provides the work of a whole other class. But this work is super important because it directly affects your future.

Perfecting your Common App, your college essay, and your supplemental essays are so important for success. Off periods can really help with having enough time in a day to get your school work and college work done.

And as much as it is important to work hard in high school,

it's nice to have an off period to be able to spend time with your friends. Later this year, seniors will be surrounded by a whole new group of people and will probably be living in a whole new city. Everything will be different. Spend as much time as you can with those important people.

Obviously, it is important to work your hardest and not take too many off periods. Colleges certainly don't want to see a senior with hours of missing time in the middle of their easy schedule. But an off period will help you get the work done necessary to succeed in all of your classes.

Having an off period will give you time to yourself that you need to get through high school. That one 40-minute block of time will re-charge your battery and might make your hectic days a little bit more enjoyable.



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Our worst rival

by Kimberly Fagnoli
Contributing Writer

We have all faced this rival at some point in our lives. Some of us have won, while others are still battling against it.

The "it" I am talking about is procrastination. Whether it's delaying your homework until the last minute or postponing something you have to do, procrastination is a terrible habit to get into and can have detrimental effects.

Procrastination is embedded in our muscle memory — a bad habit you learn over time. The good news is that you can outgrow it and correct something your body is used to doing every day without thinking. You need to focus on practicing the correct way to approach something over and over again until your muscle memory does not revert to procrastination.

When we procrastinate, don't end up doing our best work. It causes unnecessary stress and anxiety. Studies have shown that procrastination can even have a negative effect on a person's mental health.

You may be reading this saying, "Yep, that's me." Well, you are not alone. I am also guilty of procrastination and realized the negative impact it has had on my life. From not studying until the night before a quiz or rushing to submit an assignment on Google Classroom at 11:59 p.m., we have all been there.

Between our academics, extracurricular activities, making time for our families and friends, and more, high school is a busy time for students. There are also students who have jobs after school on top of everything.

If you are trying to win the battle of procrastination, here are some helpful things to keep in mind.

Many of us have limited time to study and do work once we finally get home. In order to use your time wisely, try to get some work done on an off period. Just make sure to give your mind a moment of rest.

Instead of getting lost in social media scrolling away, set a timer so that you can get back on track.

If you are feeling overwhelmed and stressed, try taking a 20-minute nap instead of pushing your work aside. Studies have proven that a nap improves a person's learning, memory, and alertness.

Assignments don't go away; they just pile up. If you study for a few minutes each night instead of the night before the test for hours, you will feel less stressed and retain more information.

We need to start developing healthier time management skills and good habits for the future. You will be thankful for the healthy habits you have adopted if the issue is fixed before we go off to college and then into the real world.

Your time is valuable. Let's beat one of our biggest rivals by breaking the habit of procrastination.

The impact of inflation

by Jacob Graber
Staff Writer

With the rising cost of everything from groceries to gas to homes, many people's lives have become significantly more difficult.

Inflation is defined as the general increase in the prices of goods and a decrease in the value of money. When the dollar bill becomes less valuable, it is less powerful and can be used to purchase fewer things.

Usually, inflation occurs steadily over an extended period of time. However, we saw a significant increase in the prices of consumer goods in the year 2022. According to rateinflation.com, the U.S. annual inflation rate in 2022 was 8.003 percent. This is almost double the 4.698 percent rate in 2021, which is almost quadruple the 1.234 percent inflation rate in 2020.

Some could say this was due to the pandemic, but even though that is a large factor, these numbers are still astonishing.

The rising cost of food has had a large negative impact on the lives of many Americans. According to ers.usda.gov, in 2022, food prices increased by 9.9 percent as a whole. At-home prices increased by 11.4 percent, and away-from-home prices increased 7.7 percent.

The 11.4 percent leap for food is the largest annual increase since May 1979, according to CNN.

Anyone who has been to the grocery store lately has seen that food items are way more expensive than they were last year. The price of eggs, for example, is 39.8 percent more, flour costs 23.3 percent more, and milk rose 17 percent.

For the top third of the financial population, this may not have been such a big deal. However, the other two-thirds of the population have been significantly impacted by this dramatic increase.

Many have speculated what the main cause of this large increase is. According to ndtv.com, an ING Economist said, "Rising energy and fuel bills are a major contributor to higher costs in agriculture."

This is simply put, but extremely factual. The base of the entire food process starts in the producing industry (farms, etc.). If it costs them more to produce the food, it's going to affect the whole chain causing everyone to have to charge more. When it finally gets to the consumer who walks into the supermarket, they are looking at as-

tounding prices for something as simple as a gallon of milk.

Hopefully, change can be made, but for now, many Americans have to make adjustments when purchasing food due to the extreme rise in cost.

The large increase in the price of gas has caused unrest among many Americans. Millions of people commute to work every day by car and to commute, they need gasoline.

As of the beginning of the month, the national average for a gallon of gas was \$3.509. According to eia.gov, about six months ago, gas was averaging nearly \$4.70 a gallon, up more than \$1.50 from that time a year before.

The rising cost of gas prices all comes back to the raging war between Russia and Ukraine. Not only has this war caused devastation for millions of people, but it has also sent the cost of oil through the roof. No industrial powerhouse wants to fully engage in the war between Russia and Ukraine fearing it will spiral into World

War 3.

That being said, they provide support by sending loads of materials to Ukraine, the majority of these materials being oil. President Joe Biden has gone into oil rigs to provide America and its allies with oil, but it's only going so far. The U.S. continues to struggle with gas prices, and it will be difficult to recover from the deep hole they're in surrounding this topic.

The ups and downs of the housing market have caused millions to struggle to find a home, as inflation has caused the prices of homes to widely vary. Regardless of whether you're a buyer, seller, or agent, you have been affected significantly by inflation.

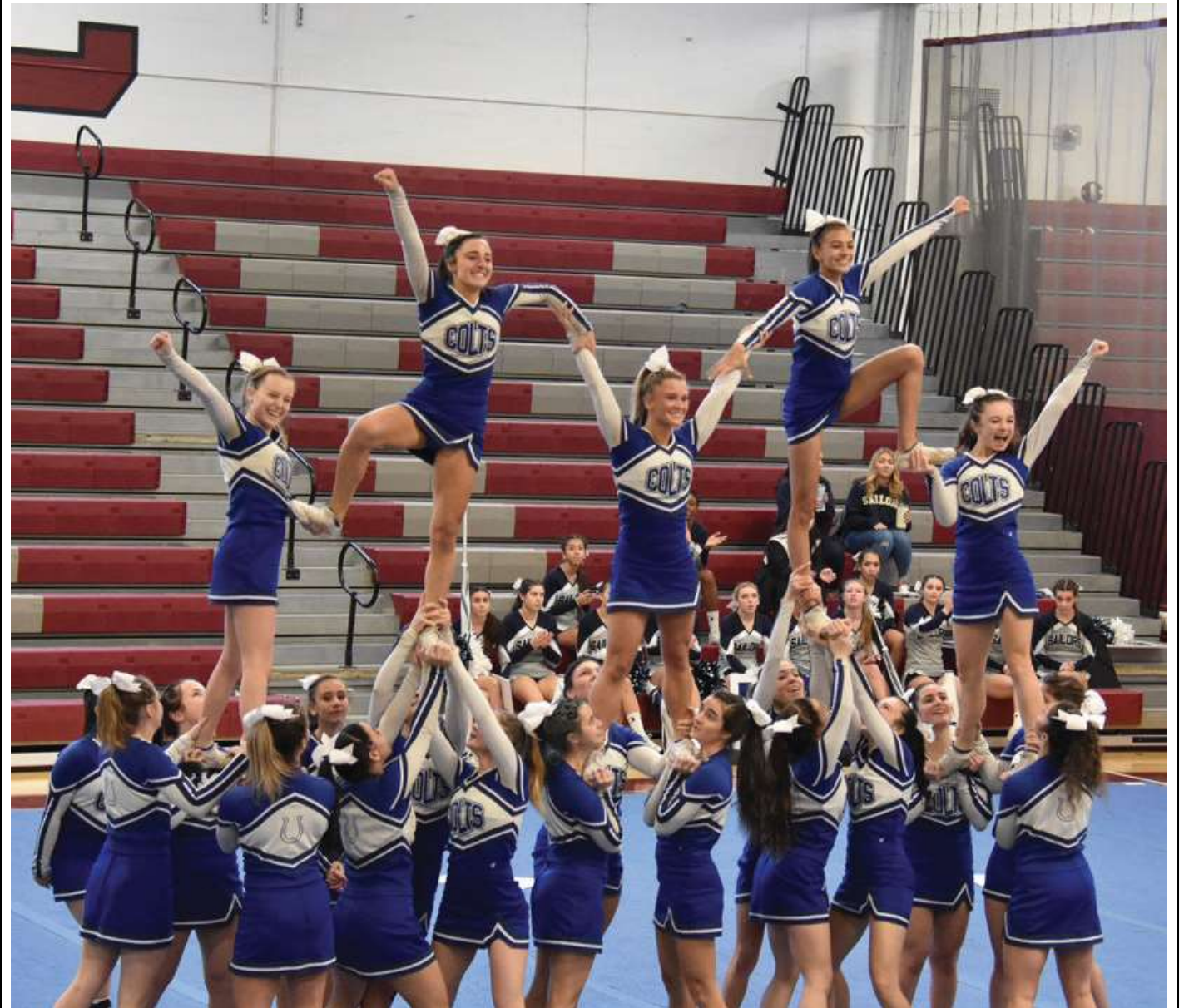
While prices of homes have varied, inflation's impact on the price of houses is nothing compared to inflation's impact on interest rates. According to Forbes.com, at the start of 2023, the average mortgage rate for 30 years is a whopping 6.48 percent. This is more than double the 3.22 percent rate at the beginning of 2022.

The increase in 15-year mortgage rates is also astonishing, currently being 5.67 percent compared to 2.43 percent at the beginning of 2022.

Millennials and Generation Z will be greatly impacted by housing inflation as they become the next generation of home owners. Many Americans already struggle to put a down payment on a home, and now with these astronomical mortgage rates, it makes the situation 10 times more difficult. It will be interesting to see going into the future how the impact of inflation on the housing market plays out.

Inflation has had an enormous impact on our country as we know it, and it will continue to impact America and the rest of the world for the foreseeable future. From here on out, it should be a goal of our country to try and limit inflation, especially limiting the negative impact it has on our country. Hopefully, we can fix this problem so the next generation doesn't have to deal with the same problem.

Pom and circumstance




(photo by Brooke Saban)

The varsity cheerleading team has won second place in the last two Section VIII cheer competitions at Clarke High School.

Pt./Counterpoint:

Summer camp or stay home?

Fill your days with fun and memories



So many options when you are home

by Ava Fisher
Editorial Editor

Undoubtedly, we all appreciate summer break, but there is one right way to spend it: summer camp.

Summer camp provides kids with the remarkable experiences and opportunities.

For older kids, sleep away camp is the best way to spend summers. It allows you to escape from reality and the constant drama that seems to always occur at home. Most sleep away camps don't allow their campers to have their phones during the summer, so kids are truly unplugging and getting a break from social media and the constant pressure of keeping up with the world.

Attending sleep away camp allows children to grow, mature, and experience things they wouldn't otherwise. At sleep away camp the campers are spending weeks without their parents, and they are able to become independent. They clean for themselves, experience living on their own, and must be responsible for their own well-being.

Sleep away campers have experience being on their own before attending college, which gives them an upper hand while everyone else is experiencing leaving home for the first time and being overwhelmed. These kids know how to survive and deal with their own issues without heavily relying on their parents.

For me, sleep away camp's biggest gift and advantage was the friendships I've made over the years. Living with the same people for weeks creates a special bond, which is virtually impossible to obtain elsewhere. While spending that much time with the same people, you learn everything about each other, and they become like your siblings. The best part is that they are from totally different places. They don't go to school with you or know the reputation that you may have at home, so they have a completely unbiased opinion on you going into the summers.

My best memories from sleep away camp are staying up late in the bunk and telling my camp friends all about my home friends and our memories and drama. When we were home during the

year I was always able to text my camp friends if I was upset or dealing with something at home, and they brought the escape of camp during the school year. The bonds created throughout camp are strong and everlasting and one of the best things I've taken from summers.

While sleep away camp is the way I believe all kids should spend their summers, going to day camp is also an amazing option. Day camp provides parents the opportunity to get their children off their hands during the summer, so they can go to work or get things done without the interruption of their children. It benefits parents, but children are reaping the true benefits of going to camp.

In today's age, kids spend hours scrolling through their phones and racking up screen time. They get lost in TV or playing video games and waste their summer days away. Going to camp prevents this from happening. Kids are spending hours outside playing sports or hanging out with their friends, away from their phones and beds. They are able to experience the pleasures of sleep away camp without having to stay over. They are able to attend camp during the day and still be able to hang out with their friends at night.

At camp, kids never have the opportunity to be bored because they are constantly presented and scheduled with something to do. It keeps them active and outside during the warmer months of the year.

If kids don't attend camp, they are more likely to waste the day sleeping in, going on their phones, and staying inside. Summer is the season kids are supposed to go outside and enjoy the sunshine. Going to camp presents the perfect opportunity for them to do just that, and most day camps have trips throughout the week. You could be going to the beach, an aquarium, the movies, or a baseball game. The options are endless.

There is no better way to spend the summer than going to camp. Whether it's sleepaway or day camp, you'll have days filled with action and fun.

All kids should have the experience of camp because once they go, they won't be able to imagine their summers without this escape and experience.

by Julia Baguiao
Sports Editor

Summer break is the most coveted period of time by any student or young person.

Warm weather, beach trips, and a 100 percent open schedule to do whatever you want is the only thing we look forward to after a long school year full of stress. Without a doubt, the only way to spend summer vacation is by staying home and adventuring with friends.

When you're young, being home with your family is something that school takes away. It can be hard for a little child to be away from their parents for seven hours every day, and going to a sleepaway camp would not allow for this opportunity.

Since I was a toddler, I have belonged to Silver Point Beach Club and had a cabana, and my experiences there are truly remarkable. I made so many friends that were not from my school and was able to adventure to the playground, the pool, and my other friends' cabanas, which taught me many things about socializing and the importance of being outgoing.

Every friendship I have made since then, I still maintain now, 16 years later. Spending morning until night there meant I got to be out with friends all day and then return back to the cabana and have family dinners, a time that was prioritized to share our daily experiences and strengthen our bond.

Having a beach membership also meant that I appreciated nature a lot more and how significant time away from technology was. It made my siblings and I more creative, imaginative people because when boredom struck, we came up with games to play and ways to spend our time.

Going to the beach is not the only way to spend time at home in the summers. Simply staying home to adventure with friends from school can be just as, if not more, effective than summer camp. Continuing to grow friendships outside of an academic setting will make strong, lifelong friendships.

Getting physical activity like bike riding, hiking, or taking late night walks are good for your body and can induce good conversations between people.

When at sleepaway camp, the

kids must follow a strict schedule of "electives." Not every child may be as athletic as the others, or they may just be uninterested in doing the activities that are required of them that day.

When kids have their own free will to decide what they want to do, they will be more likely to make choices like bike riding or going to a local field to play sports. Maybe you stay in the cool air conditioning and do whatever hobby you're interested in.

Teens and older kids have the privilege of having their driver's license and can go anywhere they want while also getting better at driving. If the same age group was at summer camp, they would be stuck doing the same activities they have done since they were children, with children.

Not to mention, the price of sleepaway camp is incomparable to the relative cheapness of parents having their kids stay home.

Finally, no one can put a price on the value a teen would get from having a summer job. As teens get older and earn more responsibility, many begin to get jobs or have the desire to have their own money. Especially when they start to drive, buying a car, gas, and insurance can get pricey on top of already wanting to go out with friends. Having a summer job leads teens to earn money, learn budgeting skills, and feel a sense of independence. High school students will also learn time management skills, communication skills and how to work as a team.

If a teenager were spending their time at summer camp, this great opportunity would be lost. In order to even get a job at a sleepaway camp many require years as a camper, two years as a Counselor-In-Training, and then at the age of 18 you can become a fully paid counselor. Next, leaving 16-18 year olds in charge of toddlers and elementary school aged children can be a lot more stressful than working at an ice cream shop or even just a day camp at home.

Staying home is the better, more cost-effective way to have a fun summer. The options at home are limitless. From nights with friends and family, going to the beach, or even getting a summer job, there is just more time to fit all kinds of fun into daily life than going to a sleepaway camp.

Beware the influencer

by Ava Fisher
Editorial Editor

As a high school student in 2023, it's impossible to have not heard about the rising popularity of social media influencers.

They're everywhere, and they're taking the world by storm. Social media apps have enabled a few select "celebrities" to completely blow up. Because of these apps, they've gone from normal teenagers and young adults to celebrities; their lives have completely changed, and it is all thanks to an app used to pass time.

Just because the public sees them as influencers, though, does not mean we should allow them to influence us. These freshly-crowned celebs should come with a warning.

A common question most older adults ask is what do these influencers do? Honestly, it's hard to say. Some influencers seriously do nothing. While scrolling through

social media, my feed is flooded with videos, pictures, and promotions, and they're all coming from influencers. Some post videos with friends, some may do a day in the life, and some work with brands to promote their products. It's not like they have a specific talent that we can pinpoint.

Being an influencer gives people power, but how they use that new-found power is important. The internet is filled with children, teenagers, and young adults who are extremely impressionable and most people will listen to what they hear without a second thought. If they constantly share false information, or talk negatively about a certain topic or idea, it's probable their followers will hold the same ideals and begin to share this information, despite it having the potential to be false.

More influencers should use their platform for good and share information that can help people. For example, they can promote a

charity that is dedicated to helping those in need or spread awareness about a topic too few know noting about.

Who are these influencers? A newly popular influencer took the world by storm after blowing up on TikTok. Alix Earle is a senior at the University of Miami, but she is more than that now. She is one of the most popular influencers on TikTok. She gained 2.5 million followers by posting make-up routines and get ready with me videos.

The University of Miami is known for its night life, so by constantly uploading these videos, Alix was able to gain the attention of millions of people and revolutionize her life. She went from a girl from New Jersey to an internet sensation in what feels like overnight; now she is meeting celebrities, recently Selena Gomez on a brand trip for Rare Beauty, and living the life that most of us wish we could have. She's sold out

products and has become a TikTok staple in a lot of peoples' lives. She has the potential to do huge things, and her followers and fans are eagerly waiting to see what she will do next after graduation.

I love social media influencers. Watching their videos makes it feel like they're my friend or older sister giving advice; they are constantly keeping me entertained, and they are always introducing new products that are "must haves."

It's crucial that popular influencers share correct information, or the idea of social media influencers will quickly go awry. These 20 year olds are capturing the attention of millions of people, and because they blew up, their lives will never be the same. One day they were normal teens and now, they're truly living the life.

However, it's up to each influencer to use their fame to positively impact the millions of people who might be watching.

Scapino on stage



(photos by Isabelle Pan)

The On Tour Company transformed the stage to Naples, Italy, for the recent performance of the show, "Scapino."

Playoff

(continued from page 16)

“Whether it be from suspensions or travel hockey obligations, there have been numerous big games where we’re missing key players and have been forced to adjust as a result. Fortunately, thanks to Coach Braglia, we’ve had a gameplan to make up for missing these guys and have battled adversity,” Greco said.

Another key game was a 4-1 win against long-time rival, Long Beach High School.

The Bulldogs and Long Beach Marines have been in a “Surf n’ turf” showdown for years on end, as they are always competing for the top league spot or county title.

After getting knocked out of the semi-finals in the previous season, causing many seniors to head home heartbroken, the team rallied to defeat the rival.

“Long Beach ended varsity and JV’s season’s last year, so everyone got a little bit of revenge. Everyone on the team put their hearts into the game, and we played for each other. We haven’t beat Long Beach since I’ve been on varsity, so it was especially meaningful to beat them seeing it will probably be the last time I play them,” Presti said.

“The win against Long Beach proved the fact that we play as a team and rely on team play rather than skill like previous years. This is a special year and was our first win against Long Beach in a long time. This shows at our best play, we can be the best team,” added Cacciatore.

With this in mind, the team is ready to dominate the playoff rounds for the county championship and the first round of states, taking place March 3 to March 5.

“Our game plan to win the county title is to play our system. We have a fast and skillful team that is also responsible defensively,” Presti said.

In addition to Presti, the Calhoun senior, the team’s defense is bolstered by Noah Zinman and Chris Cacciatore.

Attempting to do something really special, Cacciatore believes, “We need to stay in the moment and face our current challenges.”

Keeping a determined mindset, the Bulldogs are seeking revenge for their premature ending of the previous season.

“I love this group and feel very good about where they can finish this year,” said Coach Braglia.

Letters to the Editor...

Music on TikTok

To the Editor:

When I saw the counterpoint titled, “Is TikTok Ruining Music?” [Editorial, December 2022], I knew I had to write about it.

In 2022, the line “TikTok killed the bridge” started trending on Instagram. This line refers to how music artists want to trend on TikTok, so they make their songs shorter. TikTok only allows for short clips of songs to be played, so artists create shorter songs, which allows people to listen and be interested in the artists.

Normally songs consist of verse 1, chorus, verse 2, chorus, bridge, chorus, outro. There are some variations to this. Sometimes people want to add an intro, or they want a pre-chorus. But because of social media, artists do not want to cut out anything from the chorus or the verses, so they decide to take out the bridge of the song.

The bridge of a song is the part that provides contrast to the rest of the piece. For example, in the song “Since U Been Gone,” by Kelly Clarkson, the bridge consists of the lines, “You had your chance, you blew it. Out of sight, out of mind. Shut your mouth. I just can’t take it. Again, and again, and again, and again.” This part of the song is much more syncopated than the rest of the song. It also feels more powerful, and the bridge is what makes it feel that way.

There are a few singers who have a great voice but do not know how to write. There are also people who just make music in order to be famous. An example of this is Dixie

D’Amelio.

Dixie was originally famous for being Charli’s sister and then wanted to be even more famous, so she started to make music. But the songs that she sings are so basic that I could only listen to the intro of one of her songs, and I immediately had to turn it off. The lyrics of “Be Happy” are, “Sometimes I don’t wanna be happy. Don’t hold it against me. If I’m sad just leave me there. Let me be sad.”

I understand that this song has a meaning behind it, but there are so many other songs about depression and feeling alone. Songs such as “Eleanor Rigby,” by The Beatles, “Dancing on My Own,” by Calum Scott, and “Under Pressure,” by Queen and David Bowie tell a story about loneliness, but they do not directly come out and say it. These songs make people dig for the meaning and that is what makes good music.

Songs are meant to tell stories instead of it just being a line over and over again. Songs are supposed to be like novels and not haikus.

— Dylan Levinter, Class of ‘24

More than sports

To the Editor,

I completely agree that not enough attention is paid to lesser known teams. Like the article said, basketball, baseball, football, volleyball, and soccer are not the only sports [“More teams need support, Editorial, December 2022].

That being said, sports as a whole also aren’t the only important activities. American high school culture treats athletic sup-

port as the prime way to show school spirit. Whether it’s standing in the bleachers or wishing people good luck in the playoffs, we are encouraged to cheer on athletes as if they represent the entire school.

Sports are great activities with physical, social, and emotional benefits, but they are not the only hobbies that improve healthy behavior.

Calhoun has a variety of clubs that all carry their own importance. Medical Club and the Math team both aim to improve students’ STEM abilities for future applications. Racial Equity Club and Gender Equality Club both aim to minimize the injustices of the world through discussion and charitable events. Model UN teaches students about the world’s affairs and how to write structured papers about information gathered.

We are known for having the best theater program in our district, which is why many students from Bellmore and South Merrick apply to attend our school. Despite knowing this, we consistently decide to promote homecoming and other games way more than any of On Tour’s plays. Although I am not a member myself, I am close to many participants of this program and can say that they are some of the most dedicated students in this building. On top of their clear talent, they devote practically entire weeks to planning entertaining shows, while still managing to complete work for other classes.

I don’t mean that we shouldn’t acknowledge the impressive physical training and accomplishments of our beloved sports teams. It is still extremely ignorant, however, to buy into the social norm that they are somehow more important than the studies of arts and sciences at Calhoun. By limiting emphasis on academics and arts, we further stigmatize the principles education was built on.

This is why we have to promote all of our student body, not just a select group of athletes. We don’t need to draw attention away from sports, but Calhoun needs to be a home for all. A home for artists. A home for athletes. A home for scientists and historians.

While high school shouldn’t be cliquey, it should be a place for differences, like our world. But much like society as a whole, it’s the celebration of these differences that prevents anyone from feeling like an outsider.

— Tobias Seabold, Class of ‘24

Helping hand



(photo by Gabriella Klimov)

Officers of the Gender Equality Club deliver boxes of items they collected to the Bethany House in Baldwin.

New chapter for bball

by Sara Mascitelli
Staff Writer

After finishing as co-conference champions last season, the girls' basketball team is off to another hot start.

With returning Head Coach Dan Catapano and new Assistant Coach Anthony Rizzo, the team has a great rhythm going with a 8-4 conference record.

The Lady Colts recently defeated Jericho, 57-33, in a sound road victory. Junior Gabriella Facciponti led the way with 12 points. Dana Wauchope had 11 points and pulled down 10 rebounds.

It was the team's second win against Jericho this season. Earlier in the year, they won, 53-33.

In that game, Mia Licari scored 11 points, and Angie Kasimatis had 10 points and 10 rebounds.

Last year the girls finished tied with Garden City for first place in their conference and made it to the playoffs. Their 9-3 record this year has them in second place in Conference A1 with several games left to play.

With returning players Licari, Margaret Casimano, and Marissa Lewis, the Lady Colts are a tough matchup against any opponent they face.

These three girls are part of the starting five and have been a key component to the team's success for a couple of years now.

"Mia is the leading scorer and is a fantastic defender who always gives 100 percent on every play," said starting guard Ashleigh Coyne. "Margaret is a great outside shooter and comes in clutch whenever the team needs her most. Marissa plays down low, posting her girl up, and getting all of those rebounds off the backboard.

Over their time on the team, these girls have definitely added to the team's accomplishments and have helped to create such a diverse, compelling group.

All three played a part in the team's 59-37 recent win against Long Beach.

Lewis had a double-double, scoring 20 points and bringing down 10 rebounds. Licari scored 16 points, and Casimano had six.

Days earlier the Lady Colts also scored 59 points on the road in a 59-31 win against Great Neck South.

Casimano led all scorers with 13 points, and Coyne added 12.

"The team is doing pretty well overall," said starting guard

Ashleigh Coyne. "We are doing great in our conference and finally found our tempo as a team."

The team's chemistry is hard to beat. Every player is on the same page, and they all want the same thing: a new trophy to look at as they walk by the gym in the hallway.

"The team is the best. We truly care about each other during the sport and outside," Facciponti said.

Bonding as a team is definitely something that these girls have and it's what gets them to motivate each other on and off the court.

"Everyone has a good vibe and energy and knows how to pick each other up. We are a very quick, athletic team, so we kind of just outrun teams to win games," Facciponti said.

Even in defeat, the girls said they learn lessons. In a 55-52 loss against first-place MacArthur, their biggest competition, they came back from a big deficit to only lose by three.

"During the game, we proved that we could battle adversity by coming back from a 12-point deficit," Coyne said.

Marissa Cordon scored 18 and Licari scored 15 in the loss.

Despite the defeat, the team was able to challenge themselves and prove to each other that they are confident in their abilities, individually and together, as one unit.

In another high-scoring win, Calhoun defeated Great Neck South, 62-26.

Coyne scored nine points, Licari scored eight, and Danielle Lawrence added seven.

The team's dynamic and work ethic is what gets them pumped every practice and what helps them to tally up those wins, game after game.

Opening the season, the team set a tone early on with a 60-32 non-league win against Bellmore JFK.

Coyne scored nine points to lead all scorers. Licari scored eight points, and Lawrence had seven.

Team chemistry also benefits the varsity girls; their connection also makes them so successful. They often have pasta parties before big games to be able to bond with one another and build their team chemistry, Coyne said.

All of the players have great energy and a passion for playing the game, which allows them to focus on big games, while also having fun along the way. This is why the sport has become more than just a

sport for all of them.

"That love and excitement to play brings us together as a team and allows us to be successful," Coyne said.

The Lady Colts found success in both of their games against New Hyde Park.

In the first match-up, Calhoun won, 46-37.

Marissa Lewis led both teams in scoring with 15 points and had 12 rebounds.

When the teams met later in the season, the Lady Colts were victo-

rious again, 42-35.

Kasimatis led the Lady Colts with nine points, Casimano scored eight, and Coyne had seven.

The season is not over yet for these girls, and they have worked so hard to be able to achieve all of their goals and new ones to come. They plan to go all the way this season and with the dedication and mindset that each girl possesses.

Making the playoffs for the second year in a row is a goal that they can want to check off their list.

Standing tall



(photo by Julia Baguiao)

The boys' varsity basketball team is off to an 8-4 start, which is tied for second place in Conference A1.



Playoff bound

(photo by Julia Baguiao)

After making the playoffs for the first time since 2019, the Bulldogs defeated Roslyn, 2-1, in their opening postseason game

by Julia Baguiao
Sports Editor

For the first time since 2019, the Bellmore-Merrick Bulldogs secured a place in playoffs, and, even better, a spot at states.

The district team completed their regular season with a record of 15-2, coming in second place in the league.

"Every year it's expected that we are a top team," said senior captain Keith Presti.

In the playoff semi-finals, the Bulldogs defeated Long Beach, 4-3. The thrilling double overtime win sent them to the county finals where they will face Syosset.

Brady Marszalek's second goal of the game won it for the Bulldogs in the second overtime.

The boys have made an appearance in the semi-finals, counties, and states many times over the last decade. With the 2020 season can-

celled because of the pandemic, this year marked their return to the postseason.

In their first playoff game, the No. 2 seed Bulldogs defeated No. 7 seed Roslyn, 2-1.

Mephram's Gregory Pelini broke the 1-1 tie in the third period with an amazing goal. Brady Marszalek scored a power play goal in the first period, and goaltender Ben Greco (JFK) stopped 17 shots.

To finish the regular season, the boys improved their record and clinched their playoff spot with wins against Syosset and Port Washington.

Until they faced the Bulldogs, Syosset was on a quest for a perfect season and had a 16-0 record. Goals by Marszalek and Calhoun's Nico Buglione and Tyler Marcus helped give Syosset its first loss.

On senior night, the Bulldogs defeated Port Washington, 10-1. Collin Roulston (Mephram) scored

a hat trick in the blowout.

"We have dedicated this year to playing as a team rather than previous years of selfishness and relying on talent alone to win the league," said Chris Cacciatore.

With a 9-1 victory over Oceanside, numerous players from each of the three schools scored goals.

After that, they performed flawlessly against Massapequa, winning 2-0 thanks to goals from Pelini and Brian Justiniano (Mephram), with Greco recording yet another shutout.

Greco has allowed only 18 goals the entire season.

They then won the final game of the three-game set against a top Roslyn team, 2-1.

Lucas Lucchi and Nick Drogan scored the Bellmore-Merrick goals. Greco and the defense came up big against a high-scoring Roslyn.

The defense on this team is incomparable to past years.

"Our defensemen win their battles in the corners to limit scoring chances and keep shots to the outside" Presti said. "The strongest point on this year's team is without a doubt the level of skill and grit the defense has shown and will continue to display."

The most difficult challenge the Bulldogs have overcome is the loss of graduating seniors last year.

Head Coach Braglia said, "We graduated 16 kids from last season, so I wasn't really sure what to expect. I knew I had some real good players. I knew how my returners would be, but I got a lot more from them and the underclassmen have far exceeded my expectations."

The Bulldogs overcame this adversity by filling the gaps of past players and utilizing every person on the roster. Facing adversity and going against the odds is not unexpected from this team.

(See PLAYOFF on page 14)