



The Survey

**Reporting Wildcat News Since
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*A note from the Warwick
Valley High School student
journalism staff:*

Dear Reader,

*We hope you enjoy our
second edition of the 23-24
school year. This edition
highlights some of our
school's recent sports
signees, new club and
course information, as
well as some holiday fun.
We wish everyone cozy
and happy holidays!*

*We would like to thank
Ms. Taylor for guiding us
through the publication
process.*

*The content of this paper
reflects students' writing
efforts and views which do
not necessarily represent
WVCSD or The Survey staff.*

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FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER AT WVHS

Written by Ava Sheils

Edited by Madison Pacelli

Mr. Vanderstar is a third-year Warwick Valley High School global history, U.S History, and economics teacher. He is one of Warwick's amazing JV football coaches and loves his job and students.

He began at Warwick as a student, and he played football and baseball. He did not take part in any clubs, but he had many favorite classes and teachers. He said, "I had a lot of favorite teachers. Mrs. Gray was great, and Mr. Mita really changed my opinion on how a classroom can run." Mr. Vanderstar became a teacher because of the teachers he had when he was a student. He named teachers who were really important to him, like Mr. Burns, (who retired), Mrs. Bugasch, and Mrs. Glover. It's weird now to be friends with the people who used to be my teachers. He says they changed his life and he wants to replicate that with his students now.

Next, he recalled his favorite memories from when he was a student at WVHS. He told me how he enjoyed baseball, and he thought powderpuff was a lot of fun. "Junior prom and senior prom were really great times too." He is still close with many of his friends from high school, as many of them still live here in Warwick.

We also discussed the many struggles that we face as high school students. He can relate to us having challenging classes. As he explained, he "took Algebra 2 and trig with Mrs. Fothergill, and if not for her being a [skilled] teacher, I would not have gotten through that. Things like chemistry, math, and science really were [difficult] for me." Unsurprisingly, he found social studies and English classes comparatively easier.

Lastly, we talked about life now. His favorite part about being a teacher is "taking someone who has no interest in a social studies, government, or

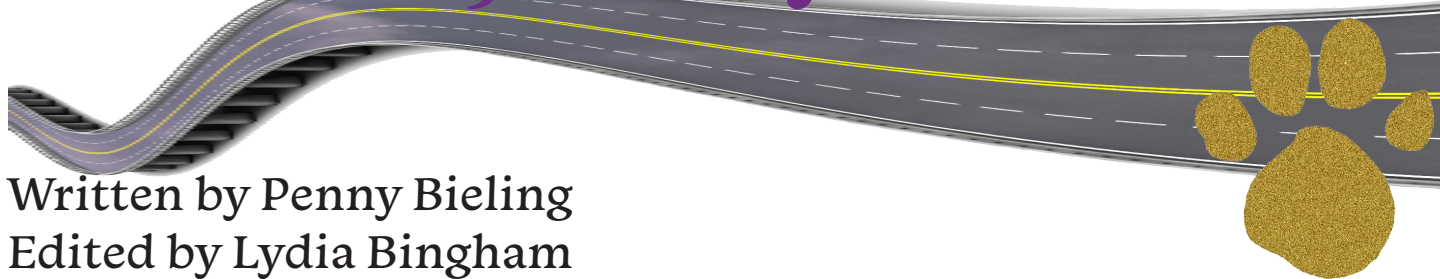
economics topic and helping them understand that a lot of this stuff affects them and will continue to affect them as they move throughout their lives." Interacting with his students allows him to connect with them and build relationships that can help them to improve as students and people. His transition from a student into a teacher has changed his perspective on many things. He talked about how some students might feel "teachers are out to get you. Once you're on the other side, you realize they have your best interest in mind."

He knows it is easy to lose motivation when it comes to schoolwork; however, the work that teachers assign is given for a reason. He described how "90% of the time it's moving towards a goal whether that be [to pass a regents exam], to create an understanding, or to set something up for the next lesson."

Overall, Mr. Vanderstar described his life as "very different" now. He joked how he actually does his homework, but "the school still feels the same." Transitioning from a student to a teacher has helped him realize that "Warwick is really lucky that we have so many great teachers that put the students first." When Mr. Vanderstar was my teacher, his class was always the highlight of my day. To me, Mr. Vanderstar is one of the teachers that he once looked up to in high school. After having him as one of my teachers, he has changed my perception on school and inspired me to keep working towards my goal of one day becoming a teacher. He has always taken an interest in getting to know his students beyond the surface, and actually gets to know them outside the classroom. Warwick is so lucky to have teachers like Mr. Vanderstar, and I am grateful to have had him as a teacher and role model.



Ponesse's journey to Warwick!



Written by Penny Bieling
Edited by Lydia Bingham



Many high school students feel overwhelmed with the unknown. Often, students are asked what career path they would be interested in taking, but deciding your future at such a young age can be

scary. While some of us have known exactly what we've wanted to do from a young age, others are facing a predicament. What do you do when you don't know what to do? This is when high school counselors come in to assist students to find their paths. Many schools, like Warwick Valley High School, have counselors who help students in finding their future. Mr. Ponesse, who started in 2022, is one such professional who helps students.

Mr. Ponesse grew up in Newburgh, New York and attended school in Valley Central. He was surrounded by supportive parents, baseball, and the idea of becoming a lawyer running in his mind. "Everybody told me that I would be a good lawyer. When everybody tells you that, you kind of have an obsession to do it as well... When you are a kid you always think about making money and becoming rich... people don't tell you what comes with it." He said he was a very talkative person: "Growing up, I could talk to a wall." Mr. Ponesse therefore believed that he would become a successful lawyer when he was a child.

In 2014, he graduated high school and continued his academic career at SUNY Oneonta playing DIII baseball. He majored in political science, and he was a pre-law.

"That major at Oneonta was very short, being 36 credits out of 120 credits needed to graduate... so I picked up another major. I took an intro to sociology course and the teacher was so interesting." This major also allowed him to receive the remaining credits

to graduate in the next two years. In 2018, Mr. Ponesse graduated from SUNY Oneonta but was still unsure with what he wanted to pursue. I talked to him about the pressure of knowing what you want to do with your life, even for high school students. "Fifteen to eighteen year olds [can find it difficult] to figure out what they want to do for the rest of their life. I went to college and I graduated, still having no idea what I was going to do even with two majors."

After acquiring a bachelor's degree in political science and sociology, Mr. Ponesse spent a few years working with his dad for the town highway department. He also became a high school baseball coach at Newburgh Free Academy for about four years. "That is where I found the passion for working with kids and wanted to make a difference [in their lives]." His parents, especially his father, pushed him to pursue other options, though he was unsure. At this point in his life, he had decided that he wanted to go back to school to get a master's degree in school counseling, graduating in May of 2022 from Mercy College. Mr. Ponesse is thankful that he took a sociology class at SUNY Oneonta. He said, "I am glad I picked it up because it ended up bringing me to this path, and I don't really know where I would be without it."

Mr. Ponesse was offered a school counseling position at Warwick Valley High School in July of 2022. He has enjoyed his time at the school: "The students make it worthwhile," he said. This year, when I injured my shoulder, he went above and beyond to help me. Even though he was a brand new counselor, he knew exactly how to make me feel comfortable going into freshman year. Not only does Mr. Ponesse love to work with the students, he loves the uniqueness from student to student. I really appreciate what Mr. Ponesse has not only done for me, but the whole student body. He fits in well with our Warwick community.

D1 SOFTBALL TWIN COMMITS

Softball is very intense and competitive. Many girls play this widespread sport, and so many of them have the dream of playing it at a collegiate level. Twins, Etta and Eva Garofalo, juniors at Warwick Valley High School, committed to play Division 1 softball at the University of Rutgers. She and her sister are getting to play in the Big 10 together. This has always been a dream of theirs, and now they get to live it out together. They have worked so incredibly hard and have since they were young. I interviewed Eva about it.

What inspired you to start playing softball?

"Probably my mom. My mom taught me how to play softball since I was in tee ball and she taught me everything there is to know about this sport. She has worked with me every day and pushed me to get where I am today. She is my biggest inspiration and I thank her for introducing me to the sport I love so much."

What was your process like?

"My process was very long and tiring. It took me a lot of traveling and a lot of long hours of sweat, hard work, and tears, but in the end it was all worth it because I got where I wanted to be. There were times where I didn't know if I was capable of finding a perfect fit, and that caused a lot of stress in my process."

What made you choose Rutgers out of all the other schools you looked at?

"Out of all the other schools I visited, Rutgers was my last one. When I visited, everything was just so much bigger, better, and fancier, and everything about it was the college feel that I was looking for. A lot of the schools I visited were really nice, but Rutgers just blew me away."

What other schools looked at you?

"[Yes,] Seton Hall, UAlbany, St. John's, Holy cross, Providence, UMass, Hofstra and Delaware."

Did you want to go to the same college as your sister?

"Since the beginning of our softball career, we never thought about a time that we wouldn't play on the same team. As we got more competitive we knew we were at the same talent level and could accomplish our goals together. Although there were people who doubted us going together, we found the perfect school that showed us equal interest."

What other interests or hobbies do you have outside of sports?

"I love weight lifting and occasionally running around my block. Building my strength is just as important as working on my softball skills. I also enjoy math class because it comes easy to me. I love listening to all kinds of music and finding new songs to listen to. And most importantly I love

spending time with my friends, family and my dogs Fred and Ethel."

What would you tell other student-athletes that are going through the same process right now?

"I would tell others to remind themselves why they play their sport. Remembering why you started will spark your love for the game and make a lot of stress go away. Everybody's time will come and everyone will find a future home. I would also advise others to stay patient. There are so many colleges that people find at all different times. There really is no rush to commit; it's all about finding a school that fits what you're looking for."

With hard work and dedication Eva got to where she is today. I can't wait to see all the great things these two incredibly hard working athletes will accomplish at the college level. We will be cheering them on and looking forward to watching them play and live out their childhood dream.



Photo provided by Etta and Eva Garofalo

Lights Up Behind the Scenes

Written and Edited by Lena Jodry, Co-Editor-in-Chief

The famous saying “many hands make light work” is especially true in any theatrical production where there are so many various elements occurring besides the ones on stage. There are many people working tirelessly for the weeks leading up to a performance to ensure that everything goes smoothly, some of whom are not given the proper credit. There are many people running around making sure that the lights work, the sound works, the set looks right, all the props are in place, the costumes are intact, and the audience enjoys the performance. This requires a strong dedication of time, which is important when the rehearsal process itself isn't very long. This is especially true to the Warwick Valley High School's recent fall production of the murder mystery play, *The Butler Did It*.

With under a two month time period to get all the pieces of the production in place, the cast and crew had to work extremely hard. To recognize this dedication, the director, Ms. Trovato, a French teacher at Warwick Valley High School, spoke to *The Survey* about the necessities of putting on a successful production. She said, “In the theater, the roles on and off the stage are absolutely vital to putting on a show. The actors spend weeks learning lines and embodying complex characters. Without a technical crew running the lights, mics, and sounds, you wouldn't be able to see or hear the actors on the stage. Costumes bring the characters to life and make them even more real. The stage crew ensures that things run smoothly in the wings, keeping track of props, making sure the scenery is where it needs to be, and nailing the curtain opening and closing cues. We're so fortunate to have wonderful volunteers with different areas of expertise who come to help and to share their knowledge with the students. All of the students, volunteers, and creative team, on the stage and behind the scenes, work together and create a truly special production to share with our community.” Without all of the people who dedicated their time to this production, the audience would not have been able to experience it at the same value.

To get a further understanding of the amount of energy placed into the production, junior Caidyn Parsons spoke to *The Survey*, about her job within the Warwick Valley High School auditorium, and what she enjoys within it. Caidyn said, “I am the auditorium manager and the sound director for the plays and musicals at the high school, like in *The Butler Did It*. I really enjoy working in tech since I can see the progress that is made by both the cast and crew until closing night.” Caidyn and the rest of the tech crew spend countless hours, including weekends, making sure all is right with the lights and sounds, and are crucially involved throughout the rehearsal process. Not only are there students working this, but many volunteers also become involved to help mentor the students in this field, especially as some of them pursued a career in this industry. Ms. Trovato's father worked with the students on the tech crew to help show them tips and tricks on ways to work in this field, even at the high school level.

All in all, without the countless hours of dedication of everyone involved, *The Butler Did It* would not have been the success it was. A vigorous effort was made by the entire crew and everyone deserves a huge round of applause, not only the people who got to take one on stage. The people behind the scenes, whether in stage crew, tech crew, costume crew, student direction, or more all deserve lots of gratitude for their significant contributions to the success of this play.

Mrs Folger Interview: Interact Club

Written by Kate Gobinski, Staff Writer

Mrs. Fogler is the head advisor for the Warwick Valley High School's Interact Club. This club was first established by the former assistant principal, John Buckley, who was a part of the Rotary Club himself. He asked her to be the head advisor and 20 years later, she has still kept the club up and running! "Oh, I love this club! This is a great club and that's why I've been doing it for 20 years," Mrs. Fogler says when she describes her experience with this club.

The Interact Club is an extension of the Rotary Club which is an internationally recognized organization. It is a community sponsored club that provides student members with a connection to their local communities as well as enabling service experience. In order to form an Interact Club, the organization must first be sponsored by a Rotary. The Interact Club must also complete a local and international project each year. Their motto is "service above self" which in her words means, "to give service where service is needed and to become more aware of the international community and international issues."

Every year, the Interact Club holds two primary food drives, a Thanksgiving and Christmas food drive. These fundraisers do extremely well as this year for the Thanksgiving food drive, the club received 76 bags that each went out to a different family. Mrs. Fogler says, "We have great success. Our students and our faculty are so generous and they never disappoint." The food is distributed by the Warwick Ecumenical Food Pantry located in the Methodist Church to the families that signed up to receive a meal.

Why should people donate to these fundraisers run by Interact? "Whatever the Interact Club is working on is a worthy cause. We are extremely conscientious about doing research and making sure that we are supporting good organizations." With the help of donations to the club's fundraisers, Interact has donated over \$60,000, between money and food, to various charities. It is very important to help out and donate to your community because Mrs. Fogler stresses that "when people get a broader view of what other people are going through, they become more sympathetic and empathetic."

"I work with some of the greatest students in the district. This year we have over 135 members and it just seems to keep growing! Everybody asks to be a part of it and it's really rewarding to see kids have service in their heart," says Mrs. Fogler. I have been a part of Interact for two years and I can say that Mrs. Fogler does the best job running it and it is the most rewarding club you can be in! It looks great on college applications because it proves you have a broader view of your community's needs.



Stat-ertainment 101: A Rollercoaster Ride

Written by Molly Hewitt, Editor in Chief



If you are a sophomore or a junior thinking about what you should put in your senior schedule, you should seriously consider Mount Saint Mary College Statistics: a class where you get college credit, learn about something you will use in the future, and you don't need to take an AP exam. The course can be taken by juniors and seniors and consists of twelve units with a final exam at the end of the year. It also includes a final project where you apply the skills you've gained to a real world activity that most students find very fun. You will receive three college credits for about \$80 each. You will learn how to use Excel and Google Sheets to analyze data, make graphs, and do hypothesis testing. Mrs. Fothergill, the teacher of this course, expressed that "you learn how to take data that drives the world and understand it through statistics." She also explained that the class is one where you have to participate in activities and complete homework in order to be successful. It is very participation-heavy, and not an elective class. There is an attendance policy, so if you think you will fall victim to senioritis, it might not be the course for you.

If you find long equations overwhelming, this is a more straightforward course with a 10% weighted math credit. The long decimal solutions you see in classes like algebra and geometry are mostly replaced with many sentence-based responses explaining the problem. My peers and I work together on our daily activities following the lessons which brings us together as classmates. I look forward to attending this class every morning because I know why I am learning each aspect, and where I can apply it.

Sabrina Carpenter: Pop Princess on the Rise

Written by Madison DeSantis

Edited by Brenna Belasco

Sabrina Carpenter is a 24-year-old pop princess. From her enchanting outfits and on-stage presence, she is adored by millions. Her passion began with singing when she was ten, but she also had a place in her heart for acting. Shows like *Girl Meets World*, and films such as *The Hate U Give* have made her a recognizable face. Her career is focused on acting and singing, but she is most known for her music.

Sabrina's music evolved from teen pop to pop. She released music in the past, such as the song "Thumbs" under Disney in 2016, which was a hit and gained popularity. It wasn't until she signed with her current label, Universal Music Group's Island Records in 2021 that her music appeared on Billboard's "Hot 100."

Both Sabrina and her music had matured and were found even more relatable by her audience. The song "Skin," released in 2021, explores themes of insecurity, resilience, and self-acceptance through a breakup. This song allowed her to stray away from the image she made with Disney and instead become her own artist.

In 2022, she released her album *Emails I Can't Send*, which helped her reach 23 on the Billboard 200. I believe the song "Nonsense" solidified her ability to become my generation's princess of pop. It went viral on social media and held 56 on the Billboard's "Hot 100." This song is a fan favorite for many reasons, one being how personalized it is.

On the tour for Sabrina's album, *Emails I Can't Send*, she performs the song "Nonsense." The special thing about this song is how she adlibs based on what city she's performing in. For example, for her concert in Boston, she added "You're so hot I must proceed with caution, it's wicked awesome to be here in Boston, if your ex wants you back it's gonna cost him." This elicits mass excitement in fans, with @swifttbrams on TikTok commenting, "I remember going WILDDD with the outros of my shows, i miss her [sic]." Even those who don't know who she is find her performances captivating: "I am not so familiar with her but this is awesome. Makes

every show different & the personalization for each place is cool" (@bammitrachel on TikTok).

Not only do her adlibs and songs attract people to her, but so do her outfits. When Sabrina performs, the attention isn't just on her vocals, but on what she's wearing as well. Her concert wear is described to be both Barbie and angel-like. Most of the time she's wearing something that features hearts, hairbows, and platform boots. One of her most famous looks was when she performed at Lollapalooza. The outfit featured a short, hot pink skirt matched with a hot pink heart-shaped sequin top with rhinestone straps. She finished her look off with her famous white platforms. Her closet allows her to be associated with an aesthetic that makes her emit a pop star glow.

Currently, Sabrina sits at number 170 on Spotify's top listened in the world, with 26,324,661 monthly listeners. I believe we will see her climb the ladder and achieve a higher spot very soon. Right now Sabrina is an opener for Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour*, which takes place at stadiums across the world. This is a larger-than-life opportunity that she has earned will expose more individuals to her music and gain Sabrina more fans. Between Sabrina's outfits, music, and personality on stage, she gives people an incredible concert experience. I don't think this will go unnoticed. More people will see her as the pop star icon she is.



Getty Images/Pascal Le Segretain / Staff



Taylor Swift: Carbon Credit Accountability

Climate change is an unavoidable issue plaguing the world, that's an undeniable fact. However, many environmentalist celebrities are trying to offset it, for example, Taylor Swift. Previously, Swift has made strides to be more environmentally friendly. Some examples include making her clothing more sustainable by wearing a sweater made of 90% recycled cashmere and rocking more vintage clothing; also, at the end of her "Wildest Dreams" music video she pledged the revenue she generated from it would be donated to the non-profit organization Africans Park Foundation of America (which plays a big role in fundraising to save wildlife and natural terrain throughout Africa).

Despite her efforts to help the environment, she has been heavily criticized for her negative contributions to climate change, specifically because of her private jet use. In 2022 it was alleged that Swift's jet made 170 flights; though not all were made by her, the carbon emissions alone were almost 1200 times the amount of carbon emissions that a non-celebrity makes in a year. This year she cut back to around 103 flights and a spokesperson for Swift revealed on *Insider* that, "Before the tour kicked off in March of 2023, Taylor purchased more than double the carbon credits needed to offset all tour travel."

This brings up the question, what even are carbon credits? Carbon credits, as explained in the article "Carbon Credit Explained: An Introduction to Carbon Markets" by Choose.today, "Carbon credits are market-based instruments that allow companies, governments, and other organizations to address their greenhouse gas emissions by funding projects that reduce or remove carbon dioxide or other harmful gas (GHG) emissions from the atmosphere."



Of course businesses aren't the only ones who can access carbon credits. There's voluntary carbon credits which anyone can buy and are still worth the same amount of credits as the ones given to businesses. Carbon credits go to sustainable energy as well as reducing carbon emissions. Carbon credits are made by farmers and anyone who contributes to restoring the environment, for example, people who work on restoring marine life. Of course there is a verification process when it comes to carbon credit producers to ensure your money is going to help the environment.

The article "A Taylor Swift Moment for Carbon Markets" by Debra Kahn, Allison Prang, and Jordan Wolman makes a good point, however: "Carbon market watchdogs ... [are] looking for more details on how the standards will differentiate projects that avoid additional emissions from those that actively remove carbon from the atmosphere, for example, as well as distinguish between temporary and permanent carbon reduction... Taking these issues seriously would likely result in excluding the majority of credits available in today's market." There's no way to tell if the carbon credits bought by Swift will have any positive impact. We can only theorize whether or not she and her team put the effort into researching and buying the correct carbon credits.

This isn't your average TAYLOR SWIFT ARTICLE

Written by Madison Pacelli

Edited by Molly Hewitt

Taylor Swift. Everyone knows her but does everyone love her? The answer to that question is no. Yes, she does have a very large and loyal fanbase, but the rest of Gen Z and older generations are tired of seeing her in the media. When Taylor Swift does anything, such as breathe, it makes top headlines and her fanbase can't get enough. At this point we ask ourselves, "Is it her fault for being so popular?" On any media platform, if there is Taylor Swift, there is her fanbase watching said media. Her fans reel in insane amounts of money and views, so they see no reason for bringing a stop to the unnecessary press. From a producer standpoint, there is no reason to stop talking about Taylor even though plenty of viewers are sick of her.

Taylor has made history for winning 6 Grammys in one night and 12 in total. She has also won 40 AMA's, 100 Guinness World Records and 14 MTV Video Awards. With Taylor's popularity, her fellow runners up had no chance of winning owing to the fact that her fans are listening from every part of the world and rank in the votes she needs. At Taylor's concerts there is not a single seat left, no room in the nosebleeds or the pit. A fan died at her concert in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in November. Have you heard this in the media at all? Because I certainly haven't. This is because

it isn't the fun loving news that a "Swiftie" wants to hear, so it gets swept under all of the Travis Kelce and *Eras* Tour news. That is an underlying issue; when the media criticize Taylor it gets shut down by her enthusiastic fans.

This is seen in football media, which is currently dominated by Taylor's relationship with Chiefs player Travis Kelce. I'm sure you

know exactly what I'm talking about because there is no avoiding those headlines. You probably wouldn't even know the Kansas City Chiefs' record because the NFL media team is too focused on Taylor Swift cheering for her boyfriend of three months...Need I say more? Football fans are tired and bored of seeing this singer. When your dad and his friends go to a football game, they don't expect all of the attention to be on their daughter's favorite pop star. There have

even been reports of "boos" from crowds when she is shown on the big screen during the game, because if football fans wanted to see her, they would go to her concert or see her film.

Now, this article is not meant to hate on Taylor's looks, music, personality, or even her fans. It is simply an opinion piece that shares strong viewpoints, and to be frank, if the opinion of this article was the opposing side, I don't know how many people would read it.

Nothing
ruins your
day more
than getting
a bad
review.
-Taylor Swift

St. George's Ghosts Restore the Church

Written by Reese MacFarlane

Edited by Jaralynn Cruz

Lukova is a little over two hours away from Prague, Czech Republic. The small town is home to Saint George, a church that has been standing since 1352. The building was mostly abandoned for a long time. The town held mass outside beginning in 1968 after the roof collapsed during a funeral. This summer I had the pleasure of being able to visit Saint George during my trip to Prague.

In 2012, a local student and artist, Jakub Hadrava, created the ghost-like statues as a thesis for art college. The statues are made out of plaster from the figures of real people before covering them with the fabric, which involves wrapping the person being molded "in plastic and a raincoat to protect their skin then adding the different textiles dipped in plaster to create the overall shape and their hood," according to Hadrava. The statues were then placed into

the church; there are more than a dozen. Ever since then the installation has gained popularity through social media such as youtube and now receives about 150 visitors almost whenever it's open on Saturdays from 1-4. Petr Koukl, a volunteer caretaker at the church, told Lonely Planet that over 600,000 koruna has been raised so far and the town was able to put the roof back on. He also told Lonely Planet that occasionally mass and concerts are held in the church.

Although I have no personal connection to the culture, being able to visit this church was not only a meaningful experience because of

the story of Saint George's but also because of people from all over the world that came to visit the same day as me. The two and a half hour long ride from our hotel in Prague was worth it when we arrived at the town and I could see dozens of people making their way out of their cars and up a steep hill to the bright yellow church at the top. Outside of the church is a stone wall which surrounds the graveyard which accompanies

the building. Inside the church it's dark except for the light coming in from the windows. The statues appear to be hollow, so it gives the look that the clothes are sitting up by themselves which adds to the creepy atmosphere. At the front of the church at one of the altars there was a book where people can sign their name and add messages. The book was filled with all languages and places from all over the world.

The trip became a lot more important to me because I realized that

art can be appreciated without words and even through language barriers. People who were speaking in many different languages could all understand and enjoy this piece of art together. The statues were able to restore the church in a town located in the middle of nowhere with a population of a little over 700 hundred people. People from all over the place, some with no connection to Lukova or the Czech Republic, came to see this piece of art and raise money. The trip helped me see people and how we can come together in a totally different light.



Picture provided by Reese MacFarlane



Don't Judge a Book by its Cover

Written by Hannah Gardiner
Edited by Molly Hewitt and Kyle Gluckstein

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “more than one-third of adults 45 and older feel lonely and one-fourth people 65 and older are socially isolated. Older adults are more at risk for social isolation because of loss of loved ones, illness, hearing loss, and living alone” and “Nearly 12 million people suffer from trauma and PTSD in a given year” (Brainline.org). This is why in spring of 2000, Ronni Abergel created The Human Library or “Menneske Biblioteket” in Danish, a non-profit organization based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Abergel’s motive is to check out a human book to learn about people’s struggles, challenge stereotypes, and hear their stories. You can take out a “book” and hear stories from a veteran, a body modification extremist, a refugee, or a survivor of abuse, and the goal is to “unjudge them.” This benefits both the storyteller and listener; it can be therapeutic for the “book” to open up and share life discoveries, and it can comfort the “reader” by preventing loneliness, expanding knowledge, and hearing advice.

The interested reader selects a story from a catalog, and is able to deep dive into a story for thirty minutes. The “books” open up, explain their stories, and answer any questions their readers may have. In order to “get published,” the authors fill out a survey on the Human Library website, then they can become an open book. Along with the books and readers, there are also leaders. When becoming a leader you can help other companies with diversity and inclusion training and the importance of challenging stereotypes. These leaders bring the books to these organizations and host a reading hall event, then the workers can also become books for their coworkers to break down barriers.

The July book of the month for example, “Amputee,” is about a man named Filip and his challenges with amputations. Filip was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma in 2020. At age 46, he was told he had little time to live and fell into a coma for six weeks. Due to his coma, he developed gangrene in his legs. Despite being declared cancer free, Filip now had to navigate an amputation of both of his legs. The Human Library provided Filip a safe space where he didn’t feel judged; he explains, “I was at a place where I didn’t know where I would be..met with prejudice or not.” After being used to people laughing and staring it was refreshing for him to be able to open up about his cancer and have therapeutic conversations without feeling criticized.

This organization has become world wide and now has been brought to six continents and eighty-five countries with thousands of volunteers and over six hundred events. The events are held in libraries, schools, colleges, conferences, and public spaces. However, as well as in-person readings, you find the book of the month on their website to experience the Human Library without having to leave your laptop. Within the recent years of COVID-19, the online Human Library created human interaction within the safety of people’s own homes. Many people suffered from loneliness during the pandemic, so joining the Human Library organization allowed for a sense of community and fellowship. The Human Library allows everyday people like Filip to express themselves and share their struggles openly in a way that they typically wouldn’t be able to. Therefore, Ronni Abergel is helping to form bonds and create knowledge by not judging books by their covers.

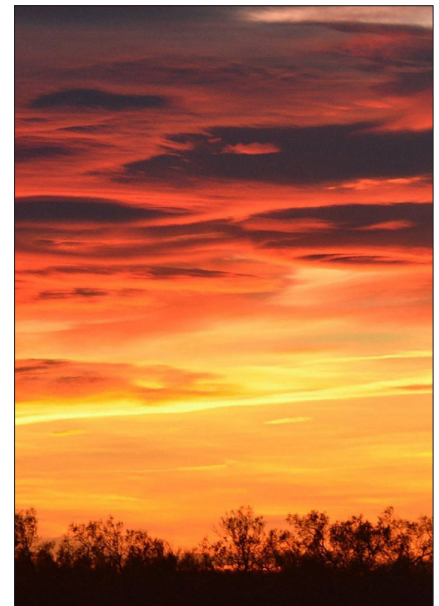
Sunrises vs. Sunsets: What's better?



Written by Abigail Broking

Edited By Madison DeSantis

Which one is better? This compelling question has been a popular debate for years. Some side with sunrises, saying they are better because your eyes are just adjusting to the light in the morning. When you wake up and see beautiful tones of yellow and blue, it can seem more magical. Sunrises are also associated with hope and new beginnings, as they signal the start of the new day. However, as the day comes to an end, your eyes have already been adjusted to an overwhelming amount of colors and hues, so seeing a sunset could be less special. Sunrises are proven to be incredibly peaceful too! Imagine standing on the beach as the sun creeps over the waves for the first time. The world starts to wake up for a new day and so have you! Furthermore, sunrise light is just cooler, says Nasim Mansurvoru: "At sunrise, the color temperature of the light is always going to be cooler with more bluish tones, because light bounces off less particles in the air..." (Photographylife.com).



So sunrises are better, case closed, right? Not quite. Studies show that sunsets can be just as beautiful as sunrises, maybe even more. They are usually related to romance, love, and a long day spent. Their gorgeous tones of orange, red, and pink hues will be in their full glory this winter. "When it's colder out, it's generally less humid, meaning there's less water vapor in the air," says Brian Resnick on Vox News. This means the colors you experience during a sunset will be more intense. You can already picture the sun sinking into the mountains as you stand over the snowed-over grass, maybe spending time with a loved one or reflecting on your day! Also, during the winter, days are longer; "As we approach the winter solstice, the time the sun takes to set lengthens due to the angle the sun takes in setting into the ground." Meaning, we can take and enjoy those beautiful shots of sunsets longer! Whatever you think, we can all agree that sunsets and sunrises are both beautiful in their own way, so remember to take the time to watch and enjoy them both!

Why Do We Like Music?

Written by Milo Shaw-Smith Gendelman
Edited by Jaralynn Cruz

Music is a universal medium. In every culture, in every country, in every nook and cranny, you'll find people who experience music in some way. But why is that? Why do we like the music we like? How can we tell "music" apart from just ambient sound? Music's structure and tonality affects the brain in two major ways, with a dopamine release from the nucleus accumbens, and a dopamine release from the caudate nucleus.

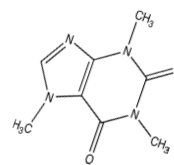
The nucleus accumbens is the section of the brain that releases dopamine in response to pleasurable stimuli in our environment, like tasty food or an enjoyable activity. Likewise, music often acts as a pleasurable stimulus. It causes our nucleus accumbens to receive much more dopamine from the brain releasing pleasurable chemicals throughout your nervous system. This causes a surge of happiness or excitement when listening to it. The caudate nucleus is another structure within the brain that processes higher function; however, the caudate nucleus specializes in the anticipation side of the reward/pleasure process. The excitement and anticipation derived during the emotional build up of a song, when the chorus slowly climbs and the instrumentals build, is received through the caudate nucleus. When we listen to music, our body is gleaned two forms of enjoyment from it, and the structure of the music is even perceived and dealt with in two separate spots of our mind. The combination of these two, the anticipation and the "in the moment" pleasure, are why we enjoy music on the most basic biological level.

These factors are not the only elements that control our reaction to music; both the frequency and BPM (beats per minute) also affect our bodies. A study conducted by Ed Large at the University of Connecticut analyzed rhythm's affect on our brain's activity. He discovered that the rhythm can be directly monitored and observed through scans of our brain whilst they are exposed to said rhythm. How we perceive the rhythm directly affects how we recognize music, some studies even showing that test groups showed the same piece of music twice with different rhythmic sections didn't recognize the identical melodic section. Rhythmic pieces help to synchronize brain activity, and the BPM of a piece can affect your mood and behavior. Harvard medical school conducted an experiment by exposing athletes to higher and lower BPM music while measuring their heart rate and performance. At the end, the researchers discovered that while exposed to higher BPM music the athletes' heart rates and the intensity of performance increased. The frequencies of music also affect how our brains register it in contrast to blank sound. Higher frequencies activate the same parts of the brain that we use to recognize and process visual arts.

The hidden processes that our bodies undergo in contact with sound are incredibly important to how we develop opinions on and react to music. Every year we discover more and more about how sound is registered in our brains, and that information helps us progress further, not only analytically but also artistically.



CAFFEINE: HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?



Written by Kristina Correa

Edited by Milo Shaw-Smith Gendelman

Every day millions of people start their mornings with a cup of coffee, but do people know how much caffeine they really consume in a day? In 2022, college student Sarah Kats, who had a heart condition, died at only 21 after drinking Panera Bread's Charged lemonade. She was not aware of how much caffeine was in the drink and drank a large cup which contained more caffeine than a can of Red Bull and Monster combined. Her family is now attempting to sue the company. The lawsuit calls the beverage a "dangerous energy drink" and



says that Panera failed to properly warn consumers about the drink's contents. This made many people reconsider their caffeine consumption and intake and how much caffeine is in their everyday drinks.

Just how much caffeine is really contained within these special energy-boosting beverages like energy drinks, refreshers, and sodas? Many caffeinated drinks such as one cup or 8 ounces of coffee contain about 95 mg of caffeine, and most 16 ounce energy drinks contain about 170mg. While energy shots are much smaller, they contain more amounts of caffeine in them with about 200 mg. The recommended limit of caffeine for an adult is 400 mg, but most adults on average drink about 135mg a day or about 1 cup. Adolescents 12 and older should limit their caffeine intake to no more than 100mg a day (Sidebar.com).

Many companies such as Starbucks have a variety of caffeinated drinks. For example, a 16 ounce "grande" dark roast has 260 mg of caffeine, but a 14 ounce medium Dunkin cold brew contains 210 mg of caffeine. Most 8 ounce drinks contain about 95 mg of caffeine in them which is a perfectly healthy amount of caffeine to have every day. On the other hand, concentrated powdered coffee has been shown to have toxic levels of caffeine in them. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has warned that one teaspoon of pure caffeine powder contains the

same amount of caffeine as about 28 cups of coffee.

Drinking more than 4 cups of coffee a day can cause serious health problems such as headaches, insomnia, fast heartbeats, and muscle tremors. Caffeine also reacts differently to each person's body. It can make most people very jittery, and it can affect sleep if consumed too late in the day. Caffeine can also interact with medications and medical conditions and can cause serious problems, such as strokes and seizures, and in some cases, even death. Caffeine takes up to 45 minutes to be absorbed by the blood stream and its effectiveness peaks anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours after consumption.

I asked my friends about their caffeine intake throughout the week and the results varied. My one friend, Alexa Millazzo, grade 10, said she consumes between 200 to 300mg of caffeine every day, 6 to 7 days a week, which adds up to 1200 minimum to 2100 maximum through the week. Another friend of mine, Victoria Martinez, grade 10, said she consumes about 210mg of caffeine or a medium-sized coffee from Dunkin Donuts, about twice a week which adds up to 420 mg through the week.

Many teenagers, including myself, drink more caffeine than recommended. Energy drinks range from 200-300 mg in one can, and even some teas and sodas have low amounts, so getting many refills is just as dangerous once added up.



I think caffeine consumed in a healthy amount is perfectly safe, but when companies are selling caffeinated drinks that are over the recommended amount, especially if people are unaware of the amount in their drinks, it could be serious to people's health. A suggestion for many coffee places is to have the amounts of caffeine in bigger, brighter letters and not just in small unnoticeable lettering. Another suggestion is to place the over-caffeinated drinks behind counters and cash registers. In fact, some local Panera locations did just that.



The Dark Side of Reality TV

Written by Asania Williams

Edited by Olivia O'Brien

Reality TV has been around for years, entertaining us with drama filled setups. They are great for us to binge watch on a weekend, alone, or even with our closest friends. But why are we so interested in reality TV? What makes it so much fun to watch, and why are we always waiting for that new season or episode to release? *Bad Girls Club*, *Baddies South*, *Hell's Kitchen*, and *America's Got Talent* are examples of the toxic but entertaining environments these shows create for our enjoyment.

All these shows have one thing in common. These shows are constantly embarrassing their guests and actors for entertainment and a few laughs and giggles. These people are portrayed in the most gruesome ways and usually it isn't what it seems. For example, in 2012 on *X Factor*, Zoe Alexander got told beforehand to sing a Pink song because the producers thought it would "fit her look better." Zoe then got rejected by the judges and was told to "find herself." She ended up getting embarrassed and ridiculed by thousands of people because of her reaction. After eight years of being a "meme" and getting massive hate for how she reacted, she decided to speak on it on Tiktok and the internet was quickly on her side. This doesn't change the fact that her video is still online for people to see, and this could possibly hinder any type of future opportunities. But this isn't the first time that this has happened in reality TV (Insider.com).

People in the media sometimes make the

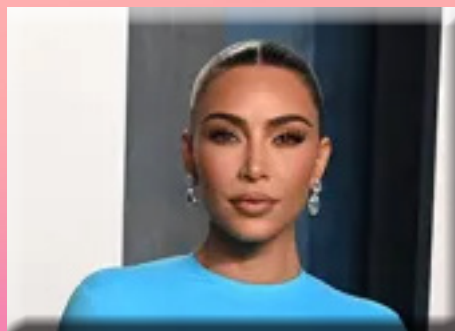
excuse that clout chasers "signed up for it," but invasion of privacy, scripted scenes to make people look like the "bad guys," and being completely disrespected on live reality shows is messed up in different ways. Another example is *Baddie's South* TV star, Chrisean Rock, who constantly got embarrassed while being on the show, from getting caught by bounty hunters to getting treated like an animal on reality TV, she is a good example of people getting treated horribly.

What makes us keep watching? In the article "Hello Giggles" by Ariella Tschinkel she states, "Every genre of television, but reality television in particular, gives us a false sense that we really know the people we see on the screen each week. This sense of having a personal relationship is amplified with the 'reality' label, even though we are well-aware that the reality piece is often greatly exaggerated." In fact, many of these reality shows are manipulated a lot. For example, when clips of a show are recorded it is heavily edited. Producers cut out scenes to make people seem worse than they actually are and this could be carried with them for the rest of their lives. But maybe that's what makes it so interesting for us.

I personally think that we go to reality TV to invest in other's lives because we are simply bored with ourselves and we need that drama. It also can make us feel as if everyone is going through something and everyone is human. At the end of the day we all bleed the same, and that's what makes us feel accepted.



Zoe Alexander
X Factor/YouTube



Kim Kardashian
David Fisher/Shutterstock



Chrisean Rock
Arnold Turner/Getty Images

LIFE ON THE MOON

Written by Isabella Simpson

Edited by Madison Pacelli

Have you ever wanted to live on the moon or another planet that is yet to be discovered in this universe? Well NASA is attempting to turn that dream into a reality. In years to come, there will be much more knowledge and heavily advanced technology that could make this possible.

The last visit NASA made to the moon was in December 1972. The spacecraft they used for the flight was Apollo 17, which was the last mission of the NASA Apollo 17 program. On their way back to Earth, Apollo 17 crashed into the Pacific Ocean. The trio of astronauts was in good condition, but NASA hasn't gone on another mission since then. However, NASA is hoping to discover more about the moon, while also making it possible for people to live there full time.

In order to do so, NASA has been planning ways to make houses that can endure being on the moon. The most feasible option is to create homes using the dust from the moon. The process seems easy enough since homes on Earth can successfully be 3-D printed from the soil. According to *The New York Times* article "Maybe in Your Lifetime, People Will Be Living On the Moon or Mars" the powder is "so abrasive it can cut like glass. It swirls in noxious plumes and is toxic when inhaled...The dust is a problem, yes. But it could also be the solution," states Debra Kamin, the writer of the article. The good thing is that the powder can withstand temperatures of 600 degrees. The process to build the houses will take a lot of effort. They have already created sample houses.

NASA's first return to the moon since 1972 was with their new spacecraft which they called Artemis, the twin sister of Apollo. Last year, Artemis launched into space with robots and landed on the moon successfully. Now they plan to make another comeback in 2024 with real people. Until then, NASA is testing equipment here on Earth to make sure it can withstand the moon. This entails sending materials out to space to see if they can survive the trip. NASA has also created test chambers on Earth that have the same conditions as the moon, such as very cold and hot temperatures. They put materials in the chambers for a certain amount of time to see if they can handle it.

The future plans NASA has for us seem out of this world, but is it really going to work? NASA states that their technology is not advanced enough to pursue these ideas. Even when technology does advance, there's still many other factors to consider. In order to get to the moon, multiple people will have to travel in a spaceship. Spaceship launches can be very dangerous and even fatal. For those who know nothing about space, if something were to happen to the spaceship, these people wouldn't know how to properly keep themselves safe. Not to mention, people need fresh air to be healthy and a good amount of sunlight. That would be impossible since there's no oxygen outside of the homes.

There's many other things to consider, but perhaps in the future these ideas will expand into something that will change the world forever.

HOW THE BLACK FRIDAY SHOPPING CRAZE CAME TO BE

We all know of the beloved tradition Black Friday which is even celebrated as a holiday in 20 states. A day where there are unmatched deals, bargains, and sales. A whole day devoted to shopping for all people to enjoy and save money. But have we ever thought about where Black Friday comes from? Why is it called Black Friday? How did Black Friday begin? Are we actually saving money on Black Friday? How has Black Friday impacted holiday shoppers and businesses?

The phrase “Black Friday” got its start all the way back in 1869, but it was not in reference to a post-Thanksgiving holiday. The term was first used to identify the crash of the U.S. gold market on September 24, 1869. Two wall street financiers, Jay Gound and Jim Fisk, worked together to buy as much gold in the nation as they could in hopes to sell it for much more than it was worth. This caused the market to crash and marks the first use of “Black Friday.”

In the 1950s, the police of Philadelphia used the term to describe the chaos and madness of the crowds as they flooded the city the day after Thanksgiving. This was due to the big Army-Navy football game that happened on that Saturday annually. According to Sarah Pruitt in her article, “What’s the Real History of Black Friday,” she

states, “Not only were Philly cops not able to take the day off, but they had to work extra-long shifts dealing with the additional crowds and traffic.” By 1961, the concept of “Black Friday” in Philadelphia had stuck and eventually spread nationwide by 1985.

In the late 1980s, retailers wanted to put a positive spin on the term and created a day for sales and bargains to reflect positively on customers. As time went on, the most commonly believed story behind Black Friday connects back to the work of retailers. The History Channel states, “... after an entire year of operating at a loss (‘in the red’) stores would supposedly earn a profit (they ‘went into the black’) on the day after Thanksgiving because holiday shoppers blew so much money on discounted merchandise.” Therefore, they named it Black Friday due to the monumental sales.

After seeing the major success of Black Friday, many other smaller retail holidays were created around the holiday weekend. These include Small Business Saturday/Sunday and Cyber Monday. Ultimately, Black Friday has forever transformed our country’s shopping habits during the holiday season for the better and for the worse.

Jayln Rosario, Staff Writer

THE INSANITY OF BLACK FRIDAY

With the holidays coming, and more specifically, Christmas, people are on the prowl for gifts for loved ones. With customers seeking discounts, stores get crowded, rowdy, and dangerous. Knowing the history and what Black Friday’s all about, we look at examples of this shopping tradition being negative and unsafe.

The first example is located in the Port Ranch section of Los Angeles. A shopper named Matthew Lopez was going to Walmart to see what they had to offer. Moments later his throat was stinging and his eyes were watering. A woman at the Walmart pepper sprayed other shoppers trying to get to the more discounted merchandise. Twenty customers were hurt in the incident including children. It is said that the woman who was so desperate for sales used pepper spray all throughout the store to get better access to items. This travesty is just one example of the horrors people face on Black Friday.

Looking further, we see another instance where a man, Walter Vance, was shopping at a Target in South Charleston, West Virginia. He collapsed while shopping on Black Friday. Not one person stopped to help him. Both of

these events show humanity being absolutely cruel for sales.

In one of the most devastating scenarios of Black Friday, we see an incident in Valley Stream. Hours before the store opened, customers flooded to sidewalks and parking lots outside of the Walmart in Green Acres Mall on Sunrise Highway. By 4:55 the crowd rushed into the store pushing, stepping, and knocking over anything in sight. A worker, Jdimytai Damour, in an attempt to contain the traffic, was pushed over and trampled to death by hundreds of customers.

During the holiday season, giving and kindness is supposed to prevail, not decrease due to a simple sale at a store. Yes, consumers should be careful when out amongst crowds, but if we were all a bit more considerate of others instead of focusing solely on discounts, then Black Friday could be a safe, enjoyable experience for everyone. That is really the meaning of the holidays.

Written by Lydia Bingham, Staff Editor
Julia Cimino, Page Editor

BROADCASTING POLICE CHASES

Thomas Hamersma, Staff Writer

Ava Sheils, Staff Editor



In modern day news some channels have a regular allotted time slot designated just for police chases. We also see people going viral for posting their encounters with police as they endanger others while evading them. Many of these channels go unchecked on platforms like TikTok, Youtube, and Instagram. “If it’s allowing them to be monetized for a day or two, that might be most of the money the video makes anyways,” Damon McCoy, NYU Professor, said. He continued, “the videos can also net the users new subscribers who boost their earnings.” These thrill seekers are basically getting paid to break the law.

Many people may ask what gives these daredevils the confidence to commit these crimes. For most it would be the fact that they are rarely getting caught, and even if they do, there is minimal punishment, comparable to a slap on the wrist. An example of this posted on the *New York Post* was a man who goes by

Sean Sean on social media claiming that after he was caught all he got was 5 points on his license and zero jail time.

Another common question is, “How are they not tracked by their license plate?” The answer to this is much simpler than one might think. People are simply buying license plate hidings. These can be purchased for next to nothing online and even on sites like Amazon. These devices can switch your real plate out for a fake one with the push of a button making it easy to go from driving normally as a law abiding citizen to racing on public roads. People can also purchase films that make it impossible for cameras to read.

Whether you watch these viral online videos or not, maybe just think with each view and like, you reward these law breakers and only encourage them to keep doing it and others to follow in their very reckless footsteps.

Israeli and Palestinian War: Impact Within the United States

Written by Harrison Gratzel, Staff Editor

Edited by Kyle Gluckstein, Staff Editor

For decades, conflict within the Middle East has grown exponentially. Disputes over territory and spiritual beliefs have resulted in continuous bloodshed. Israel is considered to be the home of the Jewish population since it was founded on May 14th, 1948. This was right after the ending of World War II. Land was petitioned off to the Israeli population separating Jewish and Arab states. This eventually led to the first warring period between the Arab and Jewish states which lasted approximately 8 months. Western powers got involved, ending the conflict, expanding the nation's territory and displacing 760,000 Palestinians. Marking the exposition to one of the most prominent religious strifes in global history.

Due to advances in communication and other innovations, nations worldwide have experienced some influence or effect from these types of controversies. Since history tends to repeat itself, Israel was invaded again by Hamas, an Islamist Militant group, on October 7th. The surprise attack on Israeli civilians killed more than 1,300 Israelis, wounded 3,000 and 222 people were abducted. In comparison to the population of the United States, the casualties of this attack would be equivalent to the death of 40,000 Americans. Promptly, Israel declared war on Palestine.

The war in the Middle East presented two sides, the Palestinians and the Israelis. Due to the severity of the situation, nations worldwide expressed their opinions on the matter, especially the United States. The United States backed Israel by deploying two aircraft carrier fleets into the Mediterranean Sea. However, the same cannot be said for all United States citizens. The privilege of freedom of speech in the United States has allowed people to express their own beliefs. In places such as college campuses and universities, the saying "Free Palestine" has frequently been used. This has occurred at colleges such as Binghamton and Harvard where protests and movements have been held. This has been very upsetting to the Israeli population within the United States who see this as an insult or provocation. In support for Israel,

Israeli supporters held a "Stand with Israel" rally in Washington D.C. This drew in tens of thousands of supporters calling for a "no ceasefire." The ceasefire they are referring to is the withdrawal of the United States military and end of the involvement in a foreign war. This has infuriated the other side, increasing the tension between the two groups. However, protests and rallies haven't been the only sources sharing their opinions.

Political figures and representatives have also expressed their support or displeasure with the situation. Rashida Tlaib, a democrat congressperson from Michigan was censured by the house of representatives for her remarks concerning the war. Remarks such as, "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" were seen as an anti-semitic slogan. She later took to social media, posting a video supporting the Palestinian people. She ended the video by saying, " Joe Biden supported the genocide of the Palestinian people. The American people won't forget." This is a serious statement considering the intensity of the history behind the word genocide. All of this resulted in her censoring, meaning that she was publicly condemned for her actions, but won't face any other punishments. Republican presidential candidate, Vivek Ramaswamy, also has been calling for the end of U.S. aid to Israel. However, he claimed his views are anything but anti-Israel. All of these political, economic, and social effects have led to the controversy's height within the United States.

We, as United States citizens, have been cautioned by the founding fathers since the beginning of our country to not involve ourselves with foreign affairs. As stated in George Washington's Farewell Address, he explained, " Inveterate antipathies against particular Nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded." As any conflict ensues, sides will be taken and issues will present themselves. Humans have to learn to understand and accept one another, otherwise history will continue to repeat itself in the way it tends to do.

Christmas Movies or Memories?



During the holiday season everyone knows and watches the classic Christmas movies *The Grinch*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Polar Express*, *Elf*, *Home Alone*, and *A Christmas Story*. When we think about these movies, we think about the nostalgia they bring back. Flashbacks to sitting on the carpet in kindergarten with hot chocolate, the day before Christmas break, and yearly viewings of *It's a Wonderful Life* are the true meaning of Christmas. These movies bring back what we miss, our childhood memories, lasting family traditions, and the feeling of holiday warmth. Everyone has their own stories, and holiday movies seem to hold a place in most of them.

While *Elf* is a Christmas classic, it is also a very funny and unrealistic movie which I believe is most of its appeal. The most iconic scenes in this movie are the ones that make the entire family laugh. I took the time to ask sophomore Erin Kelly what she thinks of the movie *Elf* and in return she told me one of her family stories that took place on Black Friday: "I was shopping in the mall with my aunt and my mom and they were being funny, so they stood on the escalator and they did what Buffy the Elf did in the movie." I'm sure if you have seen this movie you know the exact memorable scene Erin is talking about. Buddy is trying to figure out how an escalator works and almost does a full split. Adults, teens and kids can all laugh over this movie and remember what Christmas really feels like. *The New York Times* review said, "*Elf* is a charming, silly family Christmas movie more likely to spread real joy than migraine, indigestion, and sugar shock. The movie succeeds because it at once restrains its sticky, gooey good cheer and wildly overdoes it." The real acting of *Elf* is overlooked because of the feel and nostalgia it holds: New York City during Christmastime; the iconic New York City Macy's; the reindeer in Central Park; this is a place many have dreamed of visiting. After gathering memories and opinions, I think I can sincerely say that *Elf* has the

Christmas spirit everyone is looking for and it's less about the actual movie and more about when, where, and with whom you have seen it.

The Polar Express is another movie that I'm sure most kids have watched growing up. Many kindergarten students watch this movie, but the plot is not a great example of how young kids should behave. A young boy sneaks out in the middle of the night to get on a train with a man he does not know. We don't think about a children's Christmas movie this way, and personally, I didn't notice the plot as much until I was older. When I think about it I definitely believe that *The Polar Express* has a creepy, scary feeling to it. However, I think that is me over analyzing what is supposed to be a movie about Christmas spirit for children. Warwick Valley High School sophomores Erin Kelly and Madelyn McSweeney told me about their memories from when they were younger and I received similar answers from both. Madelyn told me, "When I was in kindergarten, my whole entire class and our k-buddies sat down and watched *Polar Express* in the dark." Erin said that the movie "makes me think of when we used to have K-buddies in fourth grade. [My best friend and I] were sitting on the rug in Ms. Diermeier's room watching *Polar Express* with our k-buddies."

After hearing many Christmas memories, that made me feel nostalgic about my own. I realized how influential a movie can be, but it's not about the movie; it never has been. Many objects and symbols in our lives bring out different emotions and very much so during the Christmas season. A long lasting family tradition isn't about what movie you watched, it's about the years you've been watching it or the people that you miss and only see on Christmas Eve. It's the scene that always reminds you of the same person and the traditions that will be passed on. In the end these movies really are Christmas memories.

Johannah Bradley, Staff Writer

NOVEL WINTER BREAK ACTIVITIES

Written by Juliet Thomas

Winter break is always fun--until the holidays are over and then it's not. Unless you go somewhere tropical, you probably spend your days off bundled up in bed wishing for summer to come sooner. But this year will be different. Take advantage of your free time and enrich yourself with this list of festive activities that probably didn't cross your mind.

The Jewish Museum: Immerse yourself in Jewish culture this winter at the Jewish Museum in NYC. Though Hanukkah doesn't fall on winter break, the museum is open the entire holiday and over winter break. Current displays include Scenes from the Exhibition, their main collection of antique and modern art, and Gaby Aghion and the house of Chloé, the first museum tribute to the fashion visionary. Bonus: children are admitted for free.

Dates: Ongoing and October 13 - February 18

Kwanzaa: A Regeneration Celebration: Head to the famous Apollo Theater in Harlem to experience their annual performance of dance, music, and spoken word in honor of Kwanzaa. Contemporary, West African, house, and hip-hop dance styles are blended in this lively performance.

Date: December 30

Christmas Train: A one-of-a-kind Christmas experience departs from the New Hope Railroad. Enjoy the scenic view with a complimentary cookie and hot cocoa while being serenaded by carolers. Afterwards, explore the quaint town in Pennsylvania.

Dates: November 18 - December 31

Cirque du Soleil: 'Twas The Night Before...: Inspired by the poem "A Visit from Saint Nicolas," a heartwarming holiday tale is told in the form of an extraordinary acrobatic performance. This magical show that takes place at Madison Square Garden is accompanied by remixes of traditional Christmas music.

Dates: December 7 - 28

Boxing Day: Participate in this holiday celebrated primarily in the United Kingdom. It started off as a day when the wealthy gave presents to their servants in honor of the previous day, since they worked on Christmas. The almsgiving tradition continues today in donations to charity. Boxing Day is also known for spending time with family or friends that were not present on Christmas.

Date: December 26

Why not partake in a unique activity this winter break? It's the perfect opportunity to learn about festivities in different cultures or extend your own celebration. You can only rewatch holiday movies at home so many times before you're counting the days until school starts back up. So, take action to beat the post-holiday boredom with these five ideas.

Edited by Lena Jodry, Co-Editor-in-Chief

