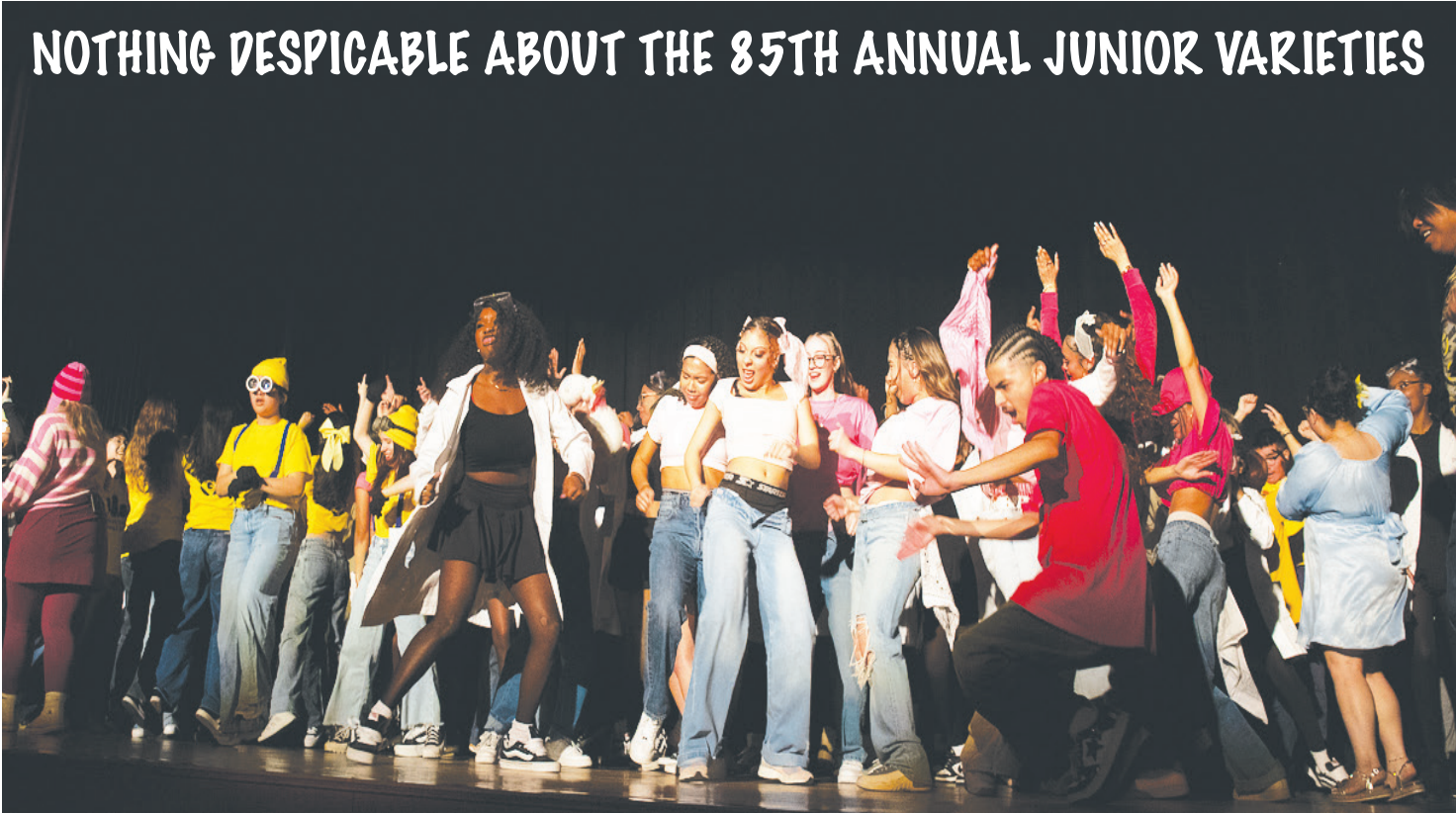


Class of 2026 Hosts JVs

NOTHING DESPICABLE ABOUT THE 85TH ANNUAL JUNIOR VARIETIES



Junior Varieties cast takes the stage at the end of the show to celebrate together. JACOB FUENTES

Chouaib Saidi
Head Copy-Editor

On January 17th, 2025, the Class of 2026 student council officially announced the 85th annual Junior Varieties (JVs) theme on their Instagram account. The post displayed an image that read, “Despicable Me: Junior Varieties Heist”. The council also announced that the tickets were to

be sold after February break during all lunch periods for \$10, or for \$12 at the door. This announcement received immense positive feedback from students as the post earned more than 100 likes and 80 shares. Before any praise toward the night itself, it is important to address the foundation of this despicable night and all the hard work put into it to make it an enjoyable and

memorable experience. The Class of ‘26 has made incredible efforts regarding organization, preparation, and all the necessary aspects to make this night a success. The crew mainly consisted of student council members, but some volunteers agreed to help set up for the night. “It’s been pretty organized considering that we started pretty early

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Frustrating Forecasts for the Future of Financial Aid

Bo Stead
Editor-in-Chief of Web and Mobile

Spring is a time of year for hope. The weather begins to warm, flowers bloom, school slows down, and summer sports are beginning to be played. For seniors in high school, it is one of the most exciting times of the year. Four years of hard work and dedication lead to the moments when they open their college decision letters. Some will be rejected from their dream schools, some will be accepted; but no matter what, they ultimately prepare to take control of the next four years of their lives.

However, after the euphoria and adrenaline fill your body from opening your acceptance to your dream college, one thing cannot get off your mind: How am I going to pay for this? College tuition has skyrocketed in just the past 15 years. For example, Amherst College is one of the most expensive colleges in the country, with tuition nearing 70k—and that is not even factoring in room and board and other costs. Essentially, college has become

Continued on page 19

The History of Islamic Faith: Ramadan Mubarak



Mayor Gary Christenson posing with people at the Eid Prayer for a picture in 2022. From Pine Banks Park website.

Fatima Husain
Reporter

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Hijri calendar—Islamic Lunar calendar—which is recognized as a time of fasting, devotion, and reflection by Muslims worldwide, practicing discipline, self-control, and empathy. During this holy month, Muslims refrain from eating and drinking between sunrise and sunset, using the time to recite the

Holy Quran, strengthen their iman¹, and bond with their families. **A Brief History** To fully understand the significance of Ramadan, we have to travel back to 610 A.D. when a man named Muhammad PBUH was meditating in a cave named Hira on Jabal-Al-Nour, near Mecca. During this meditation, the Angel Gibreel visits the prophet with a revelation known as the first five lines of Surah Al-Alaq. This first meeting with

Gibreel is known as Laylat-ul-Qadr, or the Night of Power, which many believe occurred on the 27th of Ramadan. It is widely considered that the Quran continued to be revealed to Prophet Muhammad during the months of Ramadan over the course of 23 years by Allah SWT. Included in these revelations were the five pillars of Islam, which build the groundwork of the faith. These incorporate:

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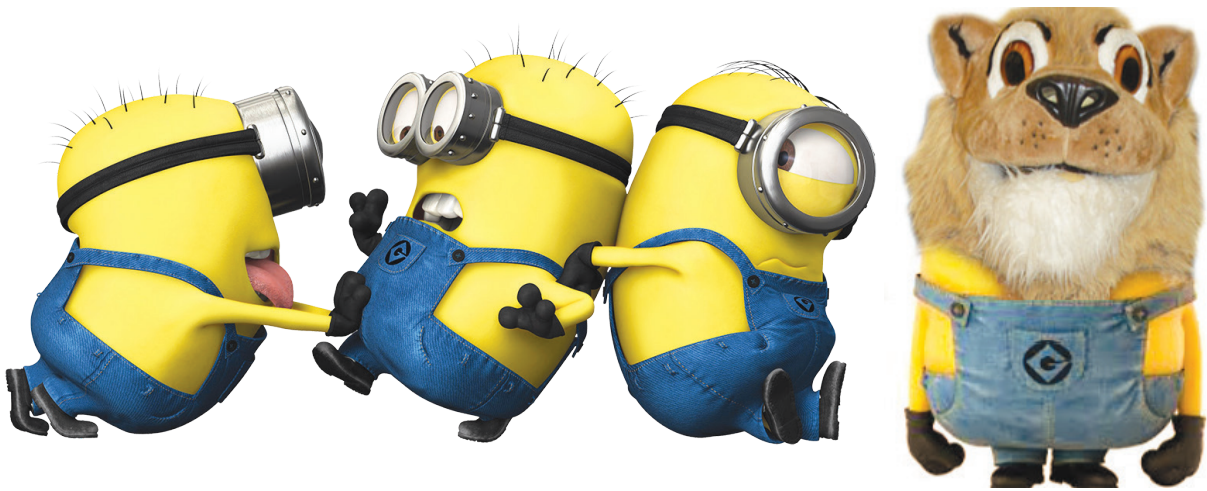
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Word search grid containing letters for finding words.

Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden ↑ ↓ → ← and ↘ .

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| ANNUAL | COMIC | GIRLS TENNIS | SENIORS |
| APRIL | DESPICABLE ME | HOMEWORK | SOFTBALL |
| BASEBALL | ESSAY CONTEST | JUNIOR VARIETIES | SPRING |
| BEHIND THE VEIL | FACULTY | MALDEN | STEMSTERS CLUB |
| BOXING | FBLA CLUB | MINION | STUDENTS |
| BOYS VOLLEYBALL | FINANCIAL AID | PHONES | TEEN DAZE |
| COFFEE | FIRST GENERATION | RAMADAN | THE BLUE AND GOLD |
| COLLEGE | FOURTH QUARTER | SEASON OPENER | TRAVEL |



The Blue and Gold

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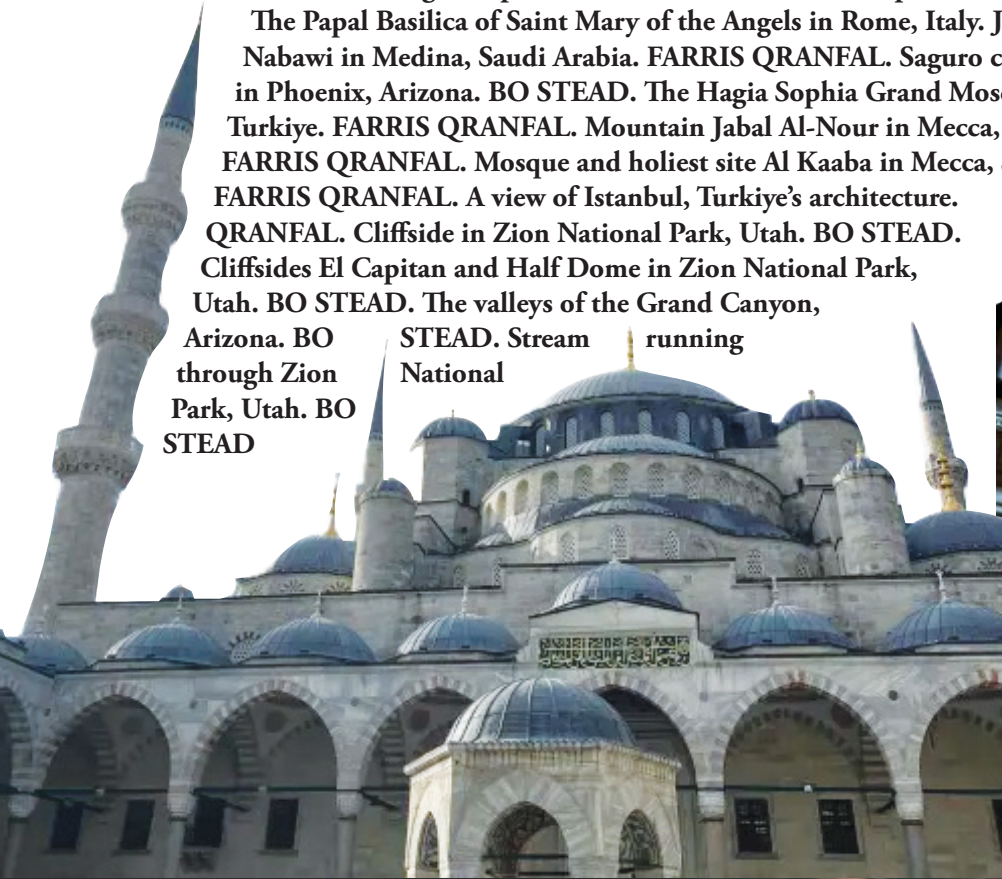
From left to right: Editor-in-Chief of Print and Design Abigael Fesehaie, Editor-in-Chief of Social Media and Print Jaslie Fang, Editor-in-Chief Jessica Li, Editor-in-Chief Mack Keating, Editor-in-Chief of Web and Mobile Bo Stead, and Editor-in-Chief of Web and Mobile Lily Nguyen. GABRIELA PARINI CORDOVA

From left to right: Managing Editor Thomas Tierney, Head of Sports Gabriela Parini Cordova, Head Copy-Editor Chouaib Saidi, Head of Local Delina Yohannes, and Managing Editor Ashton Calixte. JESSICA LI

The Blue and Gold Travels

From left to right, top to bottom. Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Istanbul, Turkiye. FARRIS QRANFAL. The Papal Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels in Rome, Italy. JACOB FUENTES. Al Masjid an Nabawi in Medina, Saudi Arabia. FARRIS QRANFAL. Saguro cactus by the side of an interstate in Phoenix, Arizona. BO STEAD. The Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in Istanbul, Turkiye. FARRIS QRANFAL. Mountain Jabal Al-Nour in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. FARRIS QRANFAL. Mosque and holiest site Al Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. FARRIS QRANFAL. A view of Istanbul, Turkiye's architecture. FARRIS QRANFAL. Cliffside in Zion National Park, Utah. BO STEAD. Cliffside El Capitan and Half Dome in Zion National Park, Utah. BO STEAD. The valleys of the Grand Canyon, Arizona. BO STEAD. Stream running through Zion National Park, Utah. BO STEAD

Zion National Park, Utah
Grand Canyon, Arizona
Medina, Saudi Arabia
Mecca, Saudi Arabia
Istanbul, Turkiye
Rome, Italy



Behind the Veil

Everyone has different sides to them. The side they show adults, their friends, and the side that most people do not see. The side they only know about, the one they hide. Depression, anxiety, substance abuse, PTSD; the person next to you may have the brightest smile but could be going through the worst, feeling inferior and jealous of the “normal kids.” This is my story.

Words have power and an impact; words can save, and words can kill. Growing up, I never allowed myself to show weakness and tried my best not to be emotional. The first time I ever felt bad about myself as a person was not when my parents would yell after every little thing I did wrong. It was when the people I thought were my friends spat words of hate towards me every day in my sixth-grade year in middle school. Each word hit me like a hammer with a nail; it stuck like gum under a table, but every day, I hid behind my veil. My fallacious smile fooled those around me, but not once did someone use their words to ask: “Are you okay?”

I began not to trust people. For each new person I met, I kept my guard up and never shared much about myself for fear of it being used against me to be the topic of a joke. They saw I was not giving in and persisted even harder, making me resent coming to school every day. I noticed I began to stop going to lunch in hopes of not running into people and spent most of my day in the hallways. Teachers kept asking why I was skipping, but even if I tried to explain, they would not have understood that in each class, I had someone who felt the need to say something. Anything just to get a reaction almost like little kids continuously poking until you get annoyed.

Day after day, month after month, I hid my emotions like an overfilled balloon ready to pop, my thoughts wishing to escape the reality that had become hell. I stepped into those double doors into the burning flames of a building that was supposed to “foster a loving and caring environment.”

Depression, anxiety, suicide. Hidden, broken, lost. In health class, the teacher always goes through the topic of mental health, and every single time they say the same thing, “You are not alone.” As a student and individual, I think that if they truly understood the feeling of being alone, going day by day without a check-in, it got to a point.

Sometimes, I find life as a water balloon. It fills up, and it empties. My emotions kept the water filling. My depression and anxiety when people started to see me as the quiet kid who stayed to himself. The balloon kept filling up as my emotions got clustered in my head until, one day, the balloon popped.

Once the balloon popped, my mom realized that if I stayed, she would have lost her son, so as soon as 6th grade ended, she took the first opportunity she saw and transferred me to another middle school for a “fresh start.”

The feeling of walking in a room knowing that nobody knows who you are is scary but at the same time, refreshing.

To survive is to continue to live or exist, especially despite danger or hardship. I knew what I needed to do. Thinking about my family, my brothers and sisters, I knew I had to keep pushing, to survive.

I was twelve years old and in sixth grade when my mind first per-

ceived depression and anxiety. Now? I am an 18-year-old senior in high school with my future and life ahead of me. Earth is a world of people, with everyone going through the same thing at least once in their life as if it was hardwired into humans to feel that mental suffering. Some days, I sit and talk to god and say, Why me? Why did I get chosen to be someone’s punching bag with harmful words? Then I ask myself... Why not me? Going to hell every day, surviving, and managing to keep a smile on my face turned me into the person I am today.

I found my way in the world and found my belongings. I realized over the years that there would always be bumps in the road, but no matter how big or how small, I had to get over them. When first transitioning into high school, I was terrified of going through that same experience that would stay with me forever. Instead of letting people find a reason to talk, I did what I could and made as many friends as I could. I was exposed to many different things that I didn’t even know existed. The exposure changed me and my thought process. I was seeing the world through a different lens.

I did not have the perfect four years of high school, and in the first two years, I struggled with my behavior and how I would act without thinking. A problem I had until it slowly became overthinking and watching my every move before acting. I learned that not everyone wants to be your friend and sometimes the only person you need is yourself or a small circle of people you know have your back when times get hard.

If I could go back, would I do it over? Yes, I would. The thought of starting sixth grade over again constantly runs through my mind. Was it my fault? Was it something I did that made people treat me like that or see me differently? I asked myself these questions time and time again to try to figure out what the motive behind the torment was.

The next time you are in class or surrounded by people, look around. From left to right, see all the faces, stories, and different sides. You never know what someone may be going through: the one kid who dresses with all designer could be the kid whose parents are going through a divorce or the kid who people make fun of based on their looks and clothes could be a kid whose family struggles with money and all they need is a friend or someone they know is there for them. Instead of seeing everything as superficial, consider that everyone has a life and things they need to deal with daily. They all have their veil.

I still have my veil—the quiet kid who always has his headphones in and keeps to himself. I fought my battles and still fight them daily, but I will not let go of my future or let anything put me down. I walk with my head high and push the negative energy out of my life. A survivor is to have endured a challenging experience and continued to live and function despite it. This is my story. I am a survivor.

Ashtan Callisto

Managing Editor

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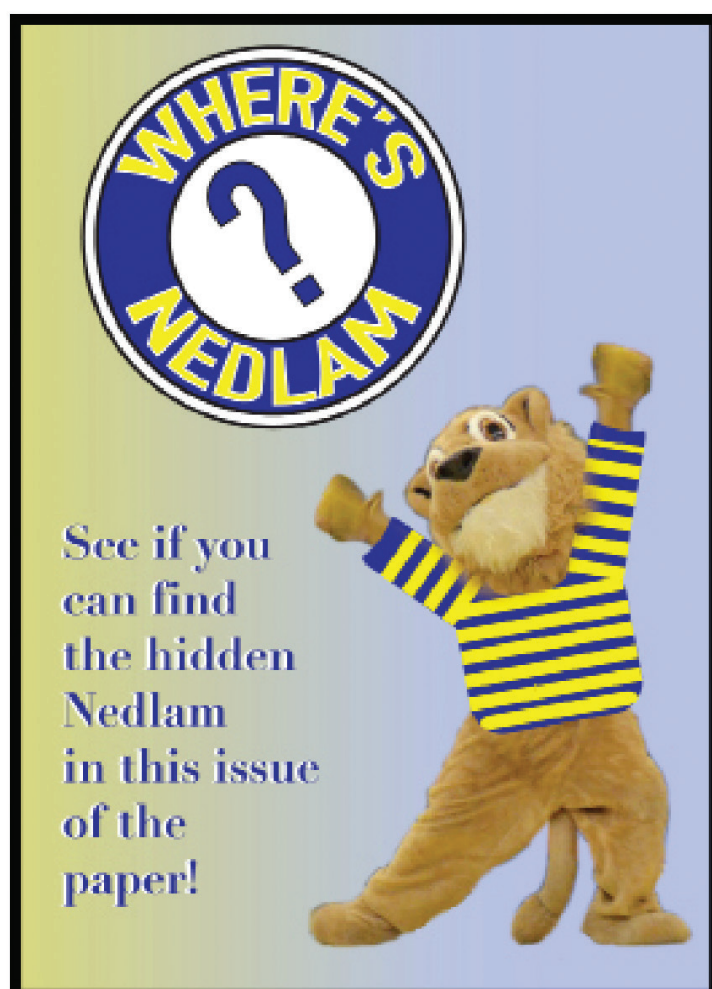
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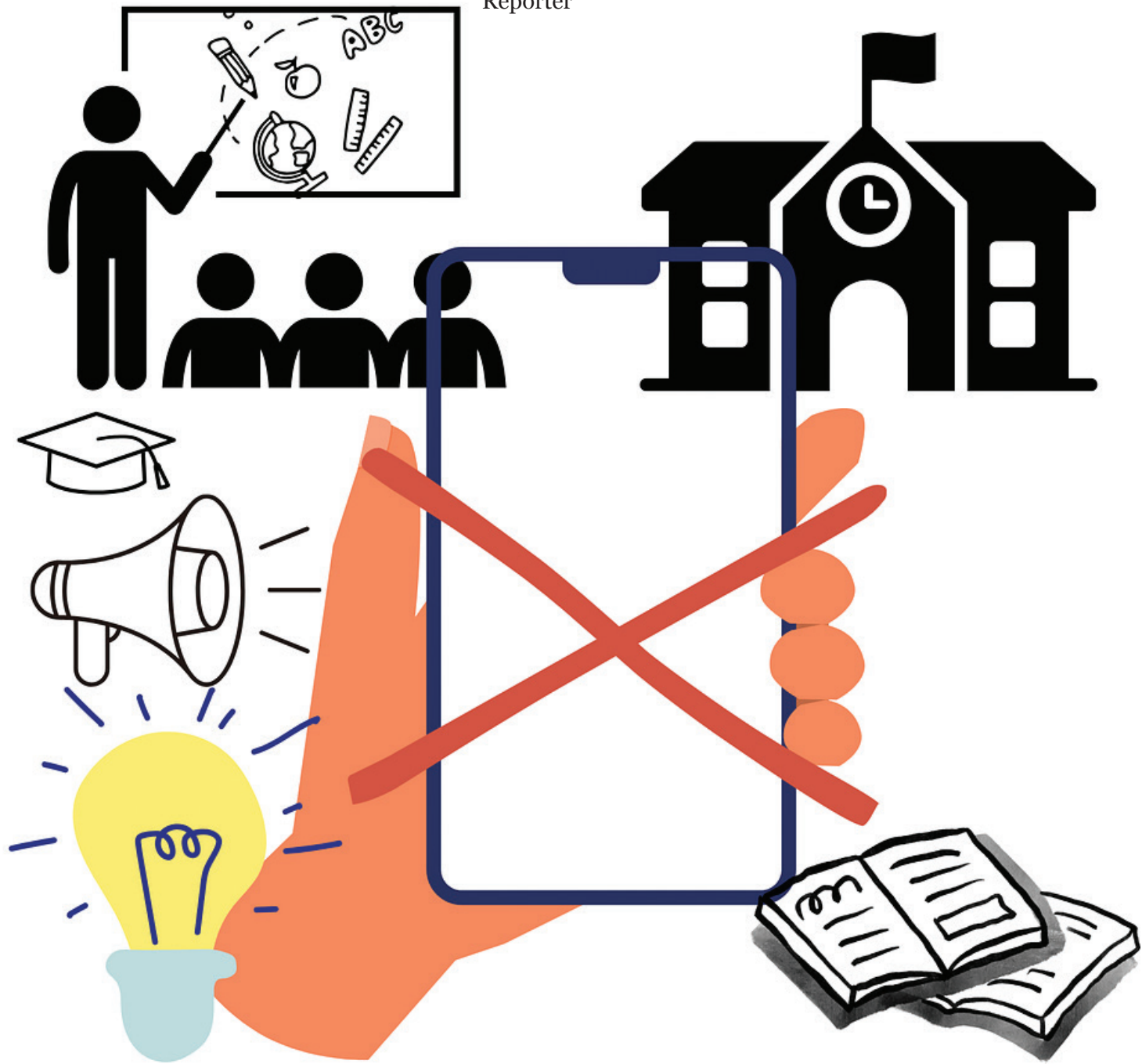
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The Blue and Gold
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77 Salem Street
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Should Schools Restrict Phone Use?

Reva Upadhayay
Reporter



“It is frustrating as a teacher when you’re trying to give instructions and kids are using their phones, and you don’t know who is and isn’t paying attention.”
-Jasleen Anand

while they’re at school, as well as eliminating a lot of circumstances that lead to bigger issues,” she explained. However, she acknowledged that students and staff are deeply attached to their phones, making it a difficult issue.

Students, however, have opinions on a wider spectrum. Some, like sophomore Anniyah Azhar, believe that phone restrictions would “improve the overall concentration of staff and students.” Others argue that banning phones completely would be unrealistic and even harmful.

Junior Yasser Belatreche believes that limiting phone access could backfire. “People would feel threatened without being able to have their phones and be able to text their friends or talk to anyone,” he said. He also suggested that students might try to get around the ban: “People are going to be urging to use their phones and might find ways to get them,” stated Belatreche.

Sophomore Wongel Yohannes raised another concern, emphasizing that phones serve an important purpose beyond social media and distractions. “An ultimate banning of some sort shouldn’t happen because we have a huge population of ESL students at our school who communicate with the help of phones,” Yohannes explained. “There are so many factors that go into it aside from our concentration and well-being. We must think wisely before implementing something like that.”

The conversation about cell phone use in schools is not new, and no easy answer can be given. While limiting phone use may improve focus, it also raises many concerns. Phones are more than just distractions: they are tools for communication and learning and a comfort to most.

Phones are everywhere. Whether they are used in class, while strolling the hallways, or even during lunch in the cafeteria, students are constantly checking notifications, scrolling through social media, or texting. With this, an ongoing discussion has come to light in recent years: should our school implement stricter cell phone policies? While some believe that reducing phone use would improve focus and classroom engagement, others argue that phones are useful tools for communication and learning.

Many teachers believe that limiting phone use would help stu-

dents stay engaged. History teacher Courtney Braz supports the idea, stating that “you have it, you put it down, and you will have it right back in your hands. Because we are all on them 24 hours a day, I believe taking them out of the equation is a good idea.” With this, she emphasized that phone restrictions are a way to improve both classroom management and students’ overall well-being by giving them a break from screens.

English teacher Jasleen Anand agrees that restricting phones can help boost productivity, mentioning that in the English department,

teachers have already started to collect phones at the beginning of class and note a difference. “I think it helps the students be productive. Students complain a little bit, but they are generally very easy going about it and get their work done,” Anand claimed. Acknowledging the challenge teachers face when students use phones during lessons, she said, Boyle house principal Caitlyn Quinn recognized the potential benefits of reducing phone use but also sees the difficulty in enforcing strict rules. “I think it would go a long way in terms of students being able to focus on the task at hand



Sofia Vargas emphasizing a message. REVA UPADHAYAY



Kingston Willcox and Dorothy Michel standing by the lockers. REVA UPADHAYAY



LeBlanc Ranks: Where Is the Best Iced Vanilla Latte in Malden Center?

Sophie LeBlanc
Lead Reporter

Coffee: a bitter and comforting beverage that unites people across all ages and backgrounds. According to a study conducted with 1,300+ people across the US, nearly 73% of people drink coffee every day, with 51% of people purchasing coffee from a coffee shop at least once per week. Malden, given its diversity and vibrant food scene, does not lack fantastic places to pick up coffee. But which is the best one? To determine this, I visited three of the most popular coffee spots around Malden and, through various very official and ‘serious’ parameters, decided which one is superior.



Small iced latte with oat milk held in front of Dunkin sign. SOPHIE LEBLANC

To judge each spot fairly, I ordered the same thing: a small vanilla iced latte with oat milk. With that, I rated the spot out of four categories: taste, atmosphere, affordability, and distance. Also, to ensure a diverse array of opinions, I brought my friends along to try them too, adding their insight to the final verdict.

Dunkin’ Donuts

It is no secret that Dunkin’ is a fan favorite among Malden High students, Malden residents, and all of New England. Every morning, swarms of high schoolers enter and exit the establishment on Main St, a mere one minute walk from Malden High. Its convenient location and general efficiency (with the mobile app) make it a clear frontrunner against all other options, incentivizing students who need a caffeine fix before school without the fear of being late.

“For me, Dunkin’ is a place of comfort,” said senior Dunkin’-enthusiast Natalie Keating. “It’s just really convenient. I like to try all the things I haven’t tried yet: the different sandwiches, refreshers, and limited-time specials.”

“I love trying every single flavor that they bring out. I am currently in a pistachio phase. I spend so much money here. I love Dunkin’,” added senior Sean Retotal.

One notable advantage to Dunkin’ is its affordability. My latte, even with all the fix-ins, cost a mere \$4.27 for 530ml of coffee, compared to other establishments pricing upwards of \$8 for a similar beverage. One who wields a five-dollar bill can be assured that they can purchase a special drink or a delicious breakfast sandwich, making Dunkin’ a reliable and affordable place that many students turn to daily.

But while affordability and distance are strong suits of Dunkin’, general coffee quality is a noteworthy downside. My latte lacked a clear coffee/espresso flavor, tasting mostly of vanilla syrup.

Regardless, while many feel that Dunkin’s caliber may be lacking, its general charm makes up for it. As Keating puts it, “It’s not quite like eating at the Ritz, but it’s ours.”

Taste: 3/10

Atmosphere: 2/10

Affordability: 10/10

Distance: 10/10

Starbucks

Starbucks has become a popular spot for Malden High students and locals alike since its opening in 2021. Originating in Seattle, Washington, Starbucks does not quite have the cult following that Dunkin’ has on Bostonians; but still, many flock there to enjoy delicious lattes, refreshers, and cake pops.

Despite having quality drinks and a comfortable ambiance, many find that, due to its distance from the high school, Starbucks caters more to professionals compared to students looking for a quick fix.

“Starbucks is, from an objective standpoint, better quality. It tastes better, and if you get coffee, it tastes more like actual coffee and less like fake syrups,” admitted Keating. “It’s further from the high school, which is part of the reason I don’t go there as much. It feels like much better quality, but it lacks the sense of community that Dunkin has.”

Another major drawback is the price. My latte cost a hefty \$6.15 for 330 ml, compared to Dunkin’s (\$4.27 for 530 ml). At Starbucks, drinks can cost up to \$7 or \$8, while at Dunkin, practically nothing costs over \$6.

That said, the quality of my latte was noticeably better: it had a much more refined coffee taste, with real vanilla bean specks in the vanilla syrup.

“It’s gotta be a special occa-

sion,” summarized senior Kimberlee Smith. “I’m not going to lie, Starbucks is a lot better. But I also think the world would be a better place if Starbucks was cheaper.”

Taste: 8/10

Atmosphere: 6/10

Affordability: 3/10

Distance: 4/10

Tous Les Jours

Tous Les Jours, a French-Asian bakery cafe in Malden, has quickly become a favorite for both students and locals since its opening in 2021. Known for its wide array of freshly baked pastries, as well as its delicious coffee and matcha, it is a cozy spot for those looking for a sweet treat or a relaxing place to work.

Though the bakery offers fresh, high-quality options, Tous Les Jours lacks convenience due to its higher prices and further location, making it a less practical option for Malden High students.

My latte cost a solid \$6.50 for 440ml, a significant jump from Dunkin and even Starbucks’ prices. But still, the quality was exceptional: a rich, smooth espresso taste paired perfectly with just the right amount of vanilla, making it one of the most refined options in the area (and my personal favorite).

The atmosphere at Tous Les Jours is calm and inviting, and I found that their seating was by far the comfiest and best for working or studying. It feels upscale, but in a way that is still cozy and not overly fancy.

Taste: 9/10

Atmosphere: 9/10

Affordability: 2/10

Distance: 5/10

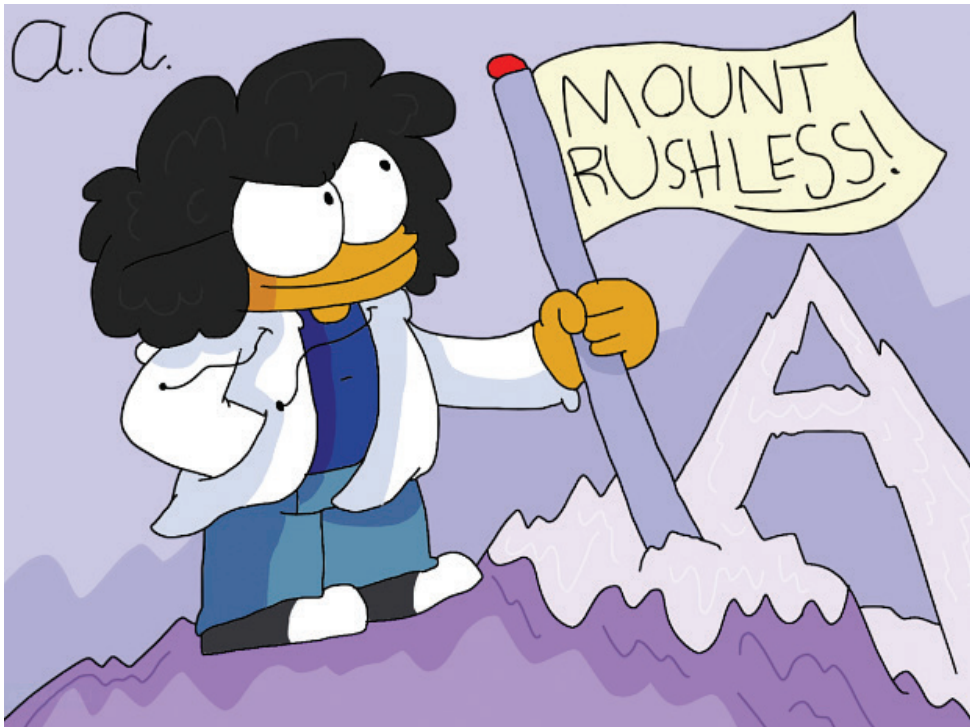
Ultimately, each coffee has its own unique charm, and the best



Maldonians occupying tables in Starbucks. SOPHIE LEBLANC

choice depends entirely on what you are looking for. That said, my personal favorite had to be Tous Les Jours, given its delicious coffee and calming atmosphere.

Sometimes, treating yourself to an iced coffee is more than just a habit, it is an act of self-care—a small pause in the day. I feel that we often forget how many amazing resources we have, as Malden residents, at our disposal, ranging from parks, restaurants, and of course, coffee. Take this as your sign to go out and try something new and exciting today; you deserve it.



studentm best put it. Homework is not just work for the sake of work; it's work for the sake of growth.

How Homework Impacts Students

Regrettably, despite the great benefits that come with homework, there's a reason it doesn't have the best reputation among students. To put it straight, homework is not fun. If you come across a student who genuinely enjoys hours of tedious homework, then they either are highly intelligent and motivated or they've finally cracked and resigned themselves to their insane amount of homework. Possibly both. Vargas best summarized it as "I've never been the biggest fan of homework." While Christalin commented, "I wish I didn't always have to worry about school while I was at home."

Senior Steven Rios said the class he gets the most amount of homework in is "Examining Criminal Justice," where "a lot of the homework is research-based, and we have to summarize articles to annotate."

Nedell revealed he also "did not like homework in high school," and thinks "it's better to air on the side of assigning less homework." After a while, homework can "just become a burden," in which it's "no longer learning," and something students "resent," Nedell also admitted. When that happens, "it's not productive anymore." Nedell is also a father and remembers seeing his own child as a student, and how homework was "very frustrating, especially when he was younger."

It's also important to keep in mind that some students may fall behind in their homework if they don't understand the subject. "Some struggle with skill level [so] it becomes a challenge for them; some of them rise up and meet the challenge and others procrastinate or put it off," said Tivnan. There's also a "language barrier" for English Language Learners.

Another noticeable calamity of homework is the fact that it can add to and glorify burnout. Burnout is when you get so exhausted by your workload you start to lose track of yourself, often stressing more, rushing, or neglecting personal health.

An opinion article in the student newspaper at McKinley High School titled "Students Face Burnout Epidemic" revealed the truth behind burnout being on the rise in schools, as of October of 2022, about "71% of [McKinley High School] students reported having experienced teenage burnout at least once in their life."

There's no doubt that the pressure to keep your grades up can be a contributing factor. You have to handle your relationships, extra-curricular activities, clubs, home life, and personal endeavors, all on top of homework, so it can become stressful and cumbersome. Because education is always a priority, a student's schedule can become quite packed, and drain the energy that they need to keep on trucking.

Burnout is inevitable in every student, and senior editor of the Blue and Gold, Jaslie Fang has had plenty of it due to the homework overload, to the point where "sometimes even over break or over vacation, I'll just wake up and think about homework and the next thing to do," causing her "day to become so stressful." Fang handles burnout by stepping "away for a second" and "realizing "that even though it's important, you should take some time for yourself." She chooses to "step away for a day or two, and I'll resume back to my work after I feel like I'm in a healthy mindset again." Christalin also tries to "take breaks" between work sessions to keep his mind fresh.

Despite the infamous stereotypes, there are still plenty of students who enjoy homework, which in turn seems to be a result of how much you like the subject, the type of homework, and how well you are at completing the assignment.

Vargas has warmed up to homework in response to improving her grades. "I've gotten more lenient towards homework," Vargas claimed, "The homework has helped me and I understand the topics a little better." Vargas claims to have been a below-average student in middle school. "I kind of lost my motivation to do things, and I just didn't feel like doing work," which led to her grades dropping. However, going to high school and handling the homework demands allowed her to develop better study

habits.

It is important to realize that sometimes you have to go through a dull and egregious experience in order to succeed. You have to remember "not everything's a happy fun time; like if you're at the gym and if you're lifting weights," Nedell put it, "It can be very tiring, but you need to be in shape; it's the same thing with homework; sometimes you just have to know work is something you have to do."

So, how much homework should be assigned? Who knows. Thankfully, knowing the pros and cons of homework assignments can help both teachers and students manage the workload.

The Types of Homework

How much homework should be assigned is a difficult process in itself, but there are a lot of types of homework teachers must choose from. Homework has changed a lot throughout the decades, and "the culture around homework has changed a lot," said math teacher Joshua Sellers. He explained that when he was assigned homework, it was actually "optional and extra credit."

As we have advanced into the 2020s, more assignments have become digital, which some teachers prefer over paper. Paper homework is "a lot of wasted paper," as Fitzpatrick put it. Christalin prefers digital homework because "I'm already on the computer a lot." Online assignments also require less precaution as they can not be lost, stained, ripped, or crumpled, which can be "irritating from the perspective of the teacher." "Some kids lose things very easily, so it's easier if it's all in one place," Fitzpatrick also commented. It also means students cannot conveniently "forget" assignments at home, because all you have to do is click a link.

Digital assignments also have the benefit of easily revealing student progress. Mayer assigns VHL, which allows her to "look at the amount of time that students spent on a given assignment so that I can see if they were struggling with something or if they breezed through it." She can then use student skill statistics to decide if she should "backtrack and reteach that lesson," to help guide students further. Online assignments also give immediate feedback, so students can learn and correct their errors. Paper homework is harder to gauge progress on, and doesn't report mistakes once they are made.

However, it is also incredibly easy to cheat online by simply copying and pasting. Mayer says the biggest drawback of assigning digital homework in Spanish has to be "Google Translate." It is so easy to get away with it, but it also harms you in the long run. The point is not to get the questions right immediately; it is to practice what you do know and grow from there. Making mistakes helps you slow down and recall what you learn. There's no growth if all you need to do is copy and paste text into a translator. Sell-

ers also mentioned math websites like DeltaMath and IXL can also be finicky and "nit-picky" if you don't use the correct notation, so the right answers can still be wrong. This could vex students.

Also, it is way easier to get distracted on your Chromebook or phone than if you have to write out the assignment using pencil and paper, and "I think that sometimes it gets in your brain better."

Tivnan, who describes himself as a "traditional and old school," teacher also prefers assigning paper homework. He thinks that "when it's on the computer, it's too easy," which is a byproduct of "cut and paste, googling stuff, and internet AI." He noticed that students after COVID especially had a "drop in actual production," and when he "made the switch back," to mainly paper assignments, he got "way more production." The fragile state of paper homework may also be a good opportunity to "teach organizational skills," like sorting through your papers in a binder.

The type of homework that benefits students most is impossible to figure out because all students prefer different formats of the same thing. This is why some teachers would prefer it if "students had options to do homework," and chose the one that best fitted their abilities or "connects to their interests," whether it be drawing a comic book, presenting a slideshow, or submitting an essay. Not only would it be less repetitive, but you would have more fun with it.

Pass It In!

An important fact about homework is that it has to be passed in at some point. Some classes have students pass in their homework more often than others. Sellers estimates his Math 2 Honors class has a "completion rate around 90%," while his Statistics CP class only has "a completion rate of 60%." Tivnan's AP government class does spectacularly with passing in their work, which he presumes is due to the fact that "they are mostly seniors [and] a few juniors," so "[they're] academically driven, I mean, these kids are going off to top-notch colleges".

One of the most familiar problems with homework that every student has encountered is procrastination, the infamous strategy where you "make something tomorrow's problem," even if tomorrow happens to be the day it is due. Senior Mina Nguyen said that she "usually" does homework "every day and then on the weekends, I procrastinate and leave it up to Sunday night and do it the day before."

Nedell suggested that "if the student does not feel connected it can feel like a drudgery." When you do not connect enough to complete the assignment and have a goal, you're less likely to put your maximum effort into it, and your grades won't reflect your intelligence. It is especially hard to connect to homework when it is interrupting your free time. "School can be work, and when [students] are out of school...

you feel you should be free,” only to run into “another chore, added Nedell.

It’s especially harder in our modern world, where there are “a lot of distractions that kind of, just, throw me off,” as put by Nguyen. After all, if you ask a high school student if they would rather play video games, chat with their friends, eat some food, or write a single paragraph of an essay, they will laugh in your face. Sometimes, “stuff going on at home” can be too distracting and busy for students, as Christalin mentioned.

We all know one of the biggest distractions can be the little cellular devices we carry everywhere, every day. It is an endless world, but also an endless distraction. Mayer suggested that “you should not be multitasking, doing things on your phone,” while doing other activities, as the time can quickly pass by, and before you know it, half an hour has gone by and you still haven’t finished the assignment.” It is important not to focus on the devices too much, as they are designed to suck you in. Phones are not inherently a distraction as long as you use them responsibly. It is best if you mute your phone throughout the day, and turn it off while you are working.

Another huge obstacle in homework is poor punctuality. So many students either submit incomplete, minimum effort, or late assignments due to rushing, which can take a hit to their grades. A late assignment now and then probably will not hurt you, but consistently being untimely may cause problems in the long run.

Mayer believes there are “many factors” that cause tardy work, and that the biggest one is “time management; if you have a lot of things to do, knowing what is and is not a priority can be very hard.” Mayer is forgiving on late assignments, only dropping 10% of points and allowing it to be submitted two weeks late at most.

However, some teachers are less lenient than others, so being late by a day can really cost you something. How lenient teachers should be about late homework is a difficult question to answer.

“Unfortunately, fairness and equity are not always the same thing. We also have to take into consideration people’s unique situations,” Mayer commented.

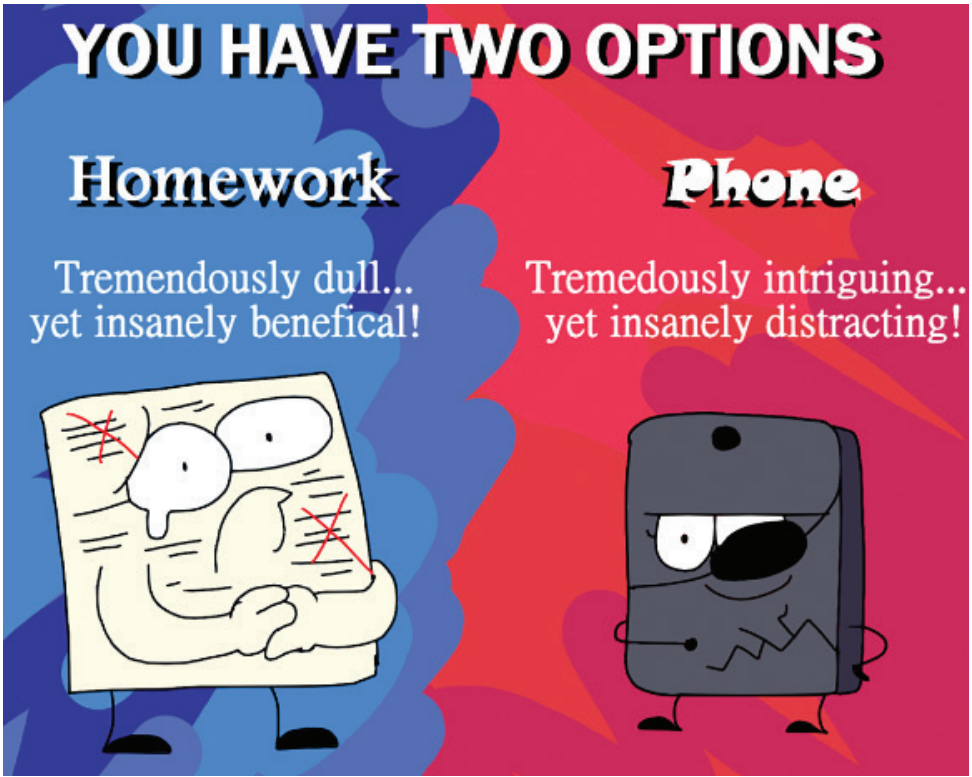
Homework Strategies for Astute Students

Now that we understand the whole deal with homework, it is time to return to the question from earlier: How can students get control of themselves and prevent an after-school meltdown from their homework? There are plenty of ways!

First of all, time management is key. “Budget a time and figure out when you’re going to sit down and do it,” said Christalin. Take advantage of the “Blue-Gold” day schedule. Christalin “usually” finishes his homework “a day after I get it.” Complete homework assigned on Blue days on Gold days. If you go fast enough, you may not have to catch up on the weekends.

Some students, especially forgetful ones, may also benefit from “an agenda book system,” suggested Tivnan. Agenda books are “little books with the days in them, and you can write your assignments,” so you can keep track of all your work in one place.

Also, try to find a good place to work on homework. If you tried to focus on writing an article for journalism while in your messy room inside a noisy house, you are probably going to end up distracted. Find a place you can regularly use to do your homework, like a quiet space outside or in the library. Most students also try to “finish it at school,” which is why some teachers offer time in class to finish homework. Sellers tries to dedicate the first 20 minutes of class to catching up with



Mathia, and the last few minutes to working on the new worksheet.

Earlier, it was established that phones can be a problematic distraction, but you can also use your phone wisely to work on your assignment, such as listening to an interview transcript or “setting reminders to help me finish on time,” which Christalin uses.

One of the best ways to complete your homework on time is to avoid overestimation. Students tend to exaggerate how much workload they actually have, so they are more likely to avoid it. If you’re worried that your homework is going to take 3 hours to complete, chances are it actually will take less than two hours if you keep up a good pace.

You can also break up your homework into manageable chunks instead of an entire unbreakable bar. Say you have three chapters to read, notes to take about recent articles, a science worksheet to complete, and Spanish vocabulary you need to recite for an upcoming test, all of which are due by the end of the week. And it is Sunday. Sounds like a completely unmanageable handful, but that only is if you try and do

everything all at once.

Pause and focus on one task at a time. Nguyen likes the “high priority [class assignments to] get done first and then lower priority classes get done last.” Start with the hardest tasks before the easier assignments, as it will make the work easier over time. Let us say that you have the hardest time doing vocabulary reciting, are decent at reading, and are excellent at science. Start by practicing your vocabulary to the best of your ability. Once you get decently far with it, continue your work by reading or notes. End it off by working on the notes. And you do not have to complete each task completely! Take your time and break each task down into more chunks.

One of the hardest things to do with homework is admitting you cannot do it on your own. Do not be scared to ask for help, whether it is from a friend, a teacher, or a counselor. Some students do their homework with their peers to complete it faster. “Late at night, I’ll Facetime one of my friends and we’ll have a study group,” Fang explained. Just do not get “help” from an AI generator!

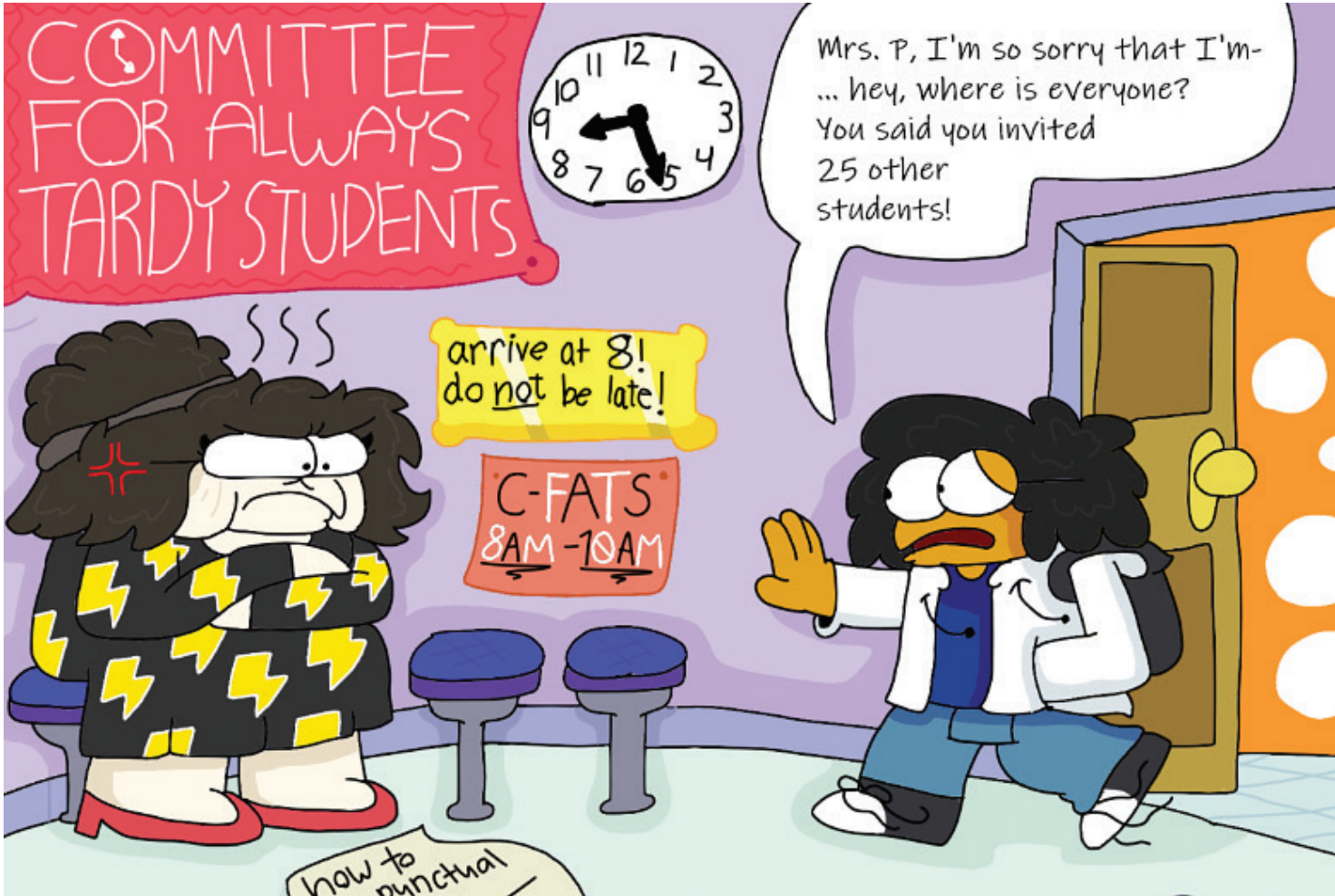
Whatever tactic you use to complete your homework faster, remember: it is not about completing with flying colors; it is about absorbing the material, learning new things, and keeping up with the demand.

Conclusion

If there is one thing to take away from this article, it is that homework is an inevitable fate of every student, regardless of their age, grade, or desire. What really makes homework such a debated topic is the question of how much it helps students. Homework is assigned to improve students, but how it impacts them is complicated. Homework can be terrible, spectacular, alright, intriguing, or boring, it all depends on your attitude. Teachers try their best to give you a great education, so respect them by handling your homework.

In the end, no matter what you think of homework overall, we can all agree that the best part about homework is...

Finishing it!



MassBioEd

Brings Lab Experience to Students

Chouaib Saidi
Head Copy-Editor

On Thursday, March 20th, MassBioEd came to Malden High School and held an open lab in which students of all grades could participate. The lab attracted students passionate about getting an opportunity to engage in an activity about biotechnology. Sandra Luikenhuis, the assistant director of Biotechnology Education Programs, shared some insight in regards to MassBioEd and how they operate.

“MassBioEd does workforce development and education to increase the diversity in the biotech workforce to build a sustainable future for people coming through the pipeline,” stated Luikenhuis.

Luikenhuis holds a PhD in Molecular Biology and Genetics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and hopes to use her achievements to help bring out the scientific passion of all students interested in enhancing their STEM skills.

“I hope to get students interested in biotech and in science. I hope to teach them that science is not sitting in a classroom and listening to your

teacher, and learning a bunch of facts. There’s some of that, but once you get into the life sciences, there’s a lot to do; it’s what we’re gonna do today, and I’m also hoping to make some connections with the students so we can mentor them if they’re interested,” expressed Luikenhuis.

“I hope to teach them that science is not sitting in a classroom and listening to your teacher, and learning a bunch of facts.”

Freshman Aya Bihi, a student who took part in this lab, shared her experience and what she learned by taking part in this lab.

“It was a very educational and fun experience. We got to do gel electrophoresis on different cows,” claimed Bihi.

Gel electrophoresis is a form of bacterial transformation and laboratory technique that separates DNA and RNA fragments from genetic material. The students first prepare the gel, which is used to help sort the material, then load the sample (which in this case was different cow material), then the electrophoresis, which uses an electrical charge to separate the genetic particles and distinguish them.

“I learned how to differentiate between different alleles of a gene,” stated Bihi.

MassBioEd did not just randomly come to Malden High School. MHS is one of the access districts in which scientific resources are abundant, which is a great opportunity for students to explore these resources and take advantage of the opportunities provided.

“We run the ACCESS program,

and the Malden School District is one of our ACCESS districts,” explained Luikenhuis. “We also, in several other districts where we partner with schools, apply for grants together and help them purchase equipment.” In addition, they “come in and help the teachers teach laboratory signs to their students with the idea that after three years they can then be self-sustainable.”

Opportunities like these are always available at Malden High School. This MassBioEd lab is one of the many examples of useful resources here at the school, where students who have not had enough learning from the school day can further train their brains during after-school time.



From left to right: Rahma Aboukhalil, Abby Lin, Aya Bihi, Fatima Husain and Sandra Luikenhuis posing for a picture in front of the MassBioEd logo. CHOUAIB SAIDI

Malden High FBLA Club

Empowering the Next Generation of Future Business Leaders

Lily Nguyen
Editor-in-Chief of Web and Mobile

The new Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) Club aims to increase student access to various opportunities focused on business and leadership development, from regional conferences to competitive events with categories like public

speaking, finance, and marketing. Importantly, through these opportunities, they can practice a crucial skill needed to succeed in the corporate world: networking. The FBLA hopes to connect students to business professionals, experts, and simply other like-minded peers.

However, the core idea behind

and cybersecurity,” added Nie, who assured that the club “tailors our events based on what our members are interested in.”

“After going to the first meeting, I became more and more interested in the club,” expressed sophomore Ian Ian Ho. “I could definitely see myself more involved in the future, and I want to be an officer to keep the club going and expand it to more people.”

Currently, the club members are preparing for the FBLA’s Massachusetts State Leadership Conference (MA SLC) coming up in April. This year’s state competitions are all objective tests, which they will take

in the coming week.

To participate in this competition and more, members must pay dues: \$65 for the MA SLC, \$10 for national competitions, and \$10 for state competitions. However, they are committed to lowering these costs for members. “We have already fundraised more than \$280+ and put it all towards lowering the membership and competition fees,” said Tse.

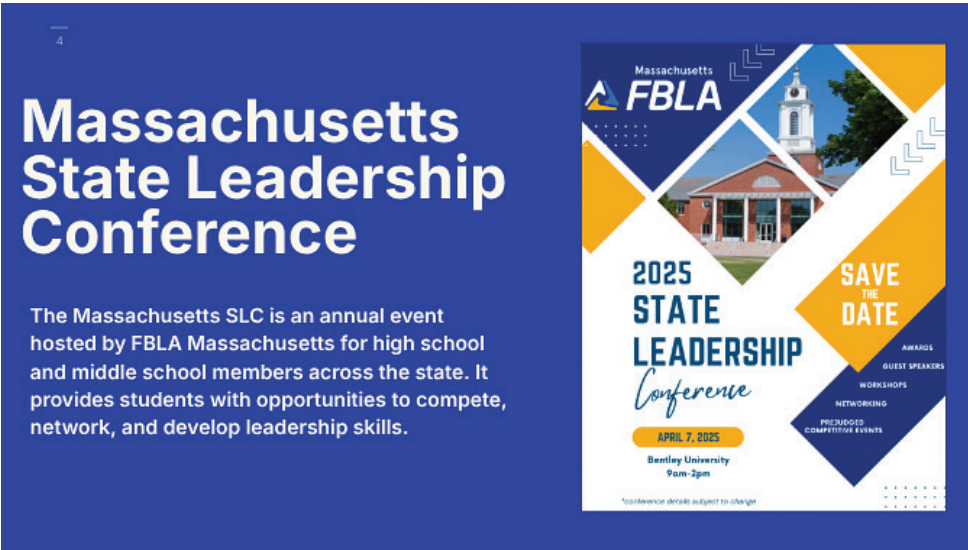
“I hope to inspire members to find their passion and pursue their ambitions,” concluded Nie. “I believe that the core of success lies in hard work, and I would like to inspire others to live by it.”



A graphic for Future Business Leaders of America. Graphic designed by Lily Nugyen

the club was finding a way to address the “lack of opportunities for business extracurriculars at Malden High,” said Junior President Helen Nie. Motivated to help MHS students succeed with a path in business, Nie was joined by juniors Alex Tse, Mengyao Huang, and Jessica Chen in founding the club.

However, the FBLA Club extends beyond corporate business: it caters to students in “all sectors and different areas of interest,” said Tse, who serves as Vice President. These include “healthcare and administration



A description of the Massachusetts State Leadership Conference, which FBLA members expect to participate in in the coming weeks. Graphic designed by Lily Nguyen

NHS Rebuilds Supply Closet

Emily Weihrauch
Lead Reporter

The National Honors Society (NHS), founded in 1921, is one of the most widely known organizations for high school students, recognizing students who are not only exceptional in their academics but also demonstrate character and leadership abilities.

Students who are a part of the society in the first semester must complete a specific number of community service hours, and the following semester, they are required to participate in a project—either solo or with collaborators—that will bring positive change within the community.

Sophomores Charlotte Berliner, Elinor Donaghey, and Keira Celicourt's NHS project has taken full swing, collaborating with MHS alumnus Abigail Morrison and her father, physics teacher Brian Morrison, to not only improve their existing "Supply Closet," which provides help for students who do not have access to hygiene-related items, but to also expand their cause to the other middle schools in Malden.

"When brainstorming for our project, we were given three main guidelines: Touch, Move, and Inspire. Touch refers to making a meaningful impact on those we serve, Move is about involving others in our mission, and Inspire means ensuring the project can continue even after we're gone," Celicourt explained.

"We were three of the four sophomores who joined NHS this year, and we didn't know many other members of the club. Once we found out about the team project, this group just made the most sense," clarified Donaghey.

Berliner was the one behind the idea for the project, which involved refurbishing the existing closet. She "originally mentioned to Nora and Keira how important Mr. Morrison's supply closet was to many kids in the high school," collectively agreeing that they "would aim to help replenish the closet while trying to expand into the middle schools," Berliner shared.

Morrison, who graduated last year, entrusted the three girls with continuing the legacy of the closet, letting them refurbish it and spread its influence to the middle schools.

The team worked with Beebe's Principal, Dr. Kari-Ann Murphy, Vice Principal Justeen Franzese, and gym teacher Michael Nicholson. With the help of donations and support from the community, they were able to establish a closet in Nicholson's office in the locker room.

The project is funded through donations from Malden's community. The group has an Amazon wishlist and they receive many in-person donations, where many kind buyers have contributed to uphold-

Gambling Disorder Screening Day

Chelmie Hyppolite
Lead Reporter

Bringing the Malden community closer together throughout the years, the Chinese Culture Connection (CCC) continues to mark its place in Malden.

The CCC is a non-profit organization originally founded in Reading, MA, in 1985. It relocated to Malden in 1999 in hopes of supporting the growing Asian community and promoting intercultural harmony. "Through our East Meets West Initiative, we provide educational programs, cultural events, and community services that empower individuals and promote intercultural appreciation," stated Jonathan Dong, the program coordinator of the CCC.

The CCC fits hand-in-hand with MHS and Malden Catholic High School students, with their Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program (YLMP) consisting of student leaders from both schools. In note of this, Dong believes that the YLMP "engages young leaders in community service, advocacy, and personal development, equipping them with the skills to create meaningful change in their communities."

In hopes of providing volunteer opportunities to students, Dong also meets with the MHS Key Club members during their biweekly meetings to announce certain volunteering opportunities provided by the CCC. Additionally, the CCC has hosted various events to help unite the Malden community, such as the Thanksgiving Potluck on November 23rd. Showcasing their everlasting determination to help Malden grow, the CCC hosted its first-ever Gambling Disorder Screening Day on March 11th at Malden Center Station. This event was hosted to "engage the community, educate people about gambling risks, and



From left to right: Annayah Azhar, Kailey Bae, Derline Hyppolite, and Sofia Vargas posing for a picture during volunteering. CHELMIE HYPPOLITE

connect individuals to resources," mentioned Dong.

Gambling Screening Day is a national annual day on the second Tuesday of March, tying into Problem Gambling Awareness Month. This month raises the well-needed awareness about gambling-related harms while encouraging the early detection of gambling problems.

Prior to the event, Dong reached out to members of both the YLMP and Key Club with an invitation to participate. Those who were interested attended a Zoom meeting to receive training about conducting screenings for the event "using the Brief Biosocial Gambling Screening test (BBGS)," Dong explained, adding that these volunteers "played a key role in educating the community and conducting the screenings." In planning the event, CCC took a multifaceted approach. "We reached out to Malden Center MBTA Station, and they kindly allowed us to provide free gambling screening services for the Malden community," Dong avowed. "Once the location was secured, we prepared informational materials and giveaways, supported by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Office of

Problem Gambling Services and the Division on Addiction at Cambridge Health Alliance."

The various aspects of planning played a major part in the event's success, as there were over 150 participants. Respondents who took part in the survey received gifts from CCC as a thank-you.

Recalling the success of the event, Dong felt that the event "effectively provided crucial information on gambling risks and shared available support resources." Many student volunteers felt the same way, such as sophomore Sofia Vargas, who expressed how "the event was pretty successful as all the volunteers, including the event organizers, seemed to get a decent amount of survey responses."

The results of the surveys help raise awareness, improve future screening and prevention trends, assess gambling-related risks, and much more as all the information is collected anonymously.

The CCC plans to continue hosting this event annually in order to raise awareness about this issue that affects many individuals globally.



Respondents with their free gifts and Jonathan Dong posing for a picture. CHELMIE HYPPOLITE

ing the closets.

"The closet remains stocked thanks to the generous donations we receive, and every donation makes a meaningful impact on the lives of our students. We appreciate any and every donation and thank the community for their continuous support!" expressed Berliner.

For the entire week of March

31st, they are hosting a fundraiser at Pisa Pizza, where a percentage of takeout or dine-in will go toward raising money to restock the closet with new supplies. The team will be there in person on Wednesday, April 2nd, from 4-8 pm.

"I'm hopeful that our fundraiser at Pisa Pizza will not only help us expand our closets to more middle

schools but also foster greater community involvement," voiced Celicourt.

If you are in need of hygienic materials, you can visit the Supply Closet at B444 in Mr. Morrison's room and follow their Instagram for more information at @supply_closetmhs.

Continued from front page

maldenblueandgold.com



The Malden Islamic Center hosting Eid Prayer at Pine Banks Park in 2022. Photo from the Pine Banks Park website.

Shahadah – The declaration of faith and the belief that “there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.”

Salat – To pray; Muslims are required to prostrate five times a day at sunrise (Fajr), noon (Dohr), afternoon (Asr), sunset (Maghrib), and nightfall (Isha’a).

Zakat – Charity

Sawm – Fasting

Hajj – Pilgrimage to Mecca during the last month of the lunar year, Dhul Hijjah.

As observed today, Ramadan honors the fourth pillar of Islam, Sawm, which encourages Muslims to practice gratitude, as it is “a time for us to not only add more good habits but to remove bad ones,” shared Sabrina Kharkhach, senior and Co-President of the Muslim Student Association at Malden High.

Common Practices

Just like any other holiday or cultural practice, Ramadan consists of rich traditions from Muslims globally, whether it be worship, food, or social etiquette. For instance, Egyptians decorate their streets with colorful lanterns called “fanoos,” symbolizing unity and joy, while drummers wake civilians up for Suhoor in Turkey. Meanwhile, in India and Pakistan, girls apply intricate henna designs on their hands as a way to welcome the upcoming fasting season.

A common practice exercised by all Muslims is a “prayer specific to Ramadan, Taraweeh, which occurs at night with the whole community at the mosque,” added Kharkhach. Taraweeh is a special Sunnah² prayer involving reading long portions of the Quran and performing up to 20 rakats³. The entire Quran is recited in the Taraweeh prayers at a mosque, typically at a rate of one Juz⁴ per night. The prayer brings together Muslims to worship

and encourages kinship between individuals.

The Malden Islamic Center, located on Pearl Street, holds Taraweeh every night during Ramadan and offers iftar/suhoor gatherings as fundraisers. Those who cannot fast or are excused—the elderly and the sick—are encouraged to feed a congregation of people during the holy month as replacements for hasanat⁵. The mosque also holds an annual Quran competition between contestants of all ages for prize money ranging between \$50-\$500 in which contestants are required to choose and memorize a Surah⁶ from the provided list to perform in front of the judges.

Along with fasting, Muslims who are financially eligible are mandated to give zakat, which is an obligatory 2.5% donation of one’s annual wealth to the needy. For example, if one earns \$1000, they are required to pay \$25 as charity. Other types of non-obligatory Islamic charities are Sadaqah, Khairat, and Fitrana, which are given whenever, to whomever, and with any amount of money.

The Fasting Schedule

A typical day in the life of a Muslim fasting begins with waking up an hour before dawn to perform the Tahajjud prayer and read the Quran—most Muslims make it “a personal goal” to finish the holy book over the month, stated freshman Aya Bihi.

Before the commencement of the Fajr athan⁷, those fasting are to eat suhoor, a meal consumed early in the morning to ensure nutrition and energy throughout the day, differing in each country.

The rest of the day until Maghrib depends on the person; they may choose to rest, continue worshipping, assist in making food, go to the masjid, or bond with their

community through gatherings and charity work. Sophomore May Ihiri expressed, “In the five minutes before Maghrib athan, which is known for being the best time to make dua⁸, my dad recites a long dua, and we break our

Finally, at sunset, or the hour known as Maghrib, Muslims sit together with their families to break their fast with a meal called iftar. Traditionally, the fast is broken with a dried sweet fruit called a date and a glass of water, following the example of Prophet Muhammad. After that, each culture indulges in its diverse food, ranging from Sambousek, a meat-filled fried dumpling from Lebanon, to Sheer Khurma, a sweet dessert made from vermicelli in Afghanistan.

Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan in a festival called Eid-Al-Fitr by thanking Allah for giving them the strength to fast throughout the holy month and share this happiness with their families through food, gift-giving, and prayers.

Impacts

The holiday has many Muslim students high-spirited with specific goals, plans, and traditions to follow during the month. The encouragement of self-reflection helps create and maintain a positive environment at MHS by “practicing extra friendliness and working on ourselves,” commented freshman Wiam Saadouni. Not only does it breed good behavior, but it promotes “empathy” and “awareness” toward those without “basic needs such as



Sireen Machouk reading the Holy Quran at the Malden Islamic Center. FATIMA HUSAIN

food and water,” mentioned Abrar Bouchenafa, a student at Pioneer Charter School of Science.

The Muslim Student Association plans to increase activity by “holding iftar for students” and involving themselves within our community via “volunteering and fundraising,” elaborated sophomore Shahd El-Kendi and Kharkhach.

This year, Ramadan will be observed between March 1st and March 30th from 5-6 am and 5-7 pm. Students who wish to perform prayers or spend lunchtime away from the cafeteria are welcome to utilize B324 whenever needed. For those who do not celebrate Ramadan, “remember to be mindful, support your peers, and make them feel welcome,” concluded Nierika Nims, advisor of the MSA.

Iman – an individual’s faith.

Sunnah – Practicing followings carried out by Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

Rakats – Unit of a prayer, typically there are four.

Juz’ – A volume of the Quran; there are 30 in total.

Hasanat – Credit for good deeds.

Surah – A chapter of the Quran; there are 114 in total.

Athan – Islamic call to prayer.

Dua – Making prayer to Allah.

Top right: Jinan El-Kendi reciting the Holy Quran at the Malden Islamic Center. FATIMA HUSAIN



The Malden Islamic Center hosting Eid Prayer at Pine Banks Park in 2022. Photo from the Pine Banks Park website.

maldenblueandgold.com

Immigrant Learning Center Hosts Essay Contest

Dani Licona-Cruz
Lead Reporter

Recently, the deadline for the Immigrant Learning Center's (ILC) Teen Perspectives Contest passed on March 4th. Their main prompts for

this year were: "What cultures and traditions do immigrants bring to your school, community, and/or the United States?" And "How do these cultures and traditions make America a better place?"



Student imagining a diverse group of friends while writing. Graphic designed by Dani Licona-Cruz via Canva.

Immigration has become a hot topic of discussion because of President Donald Trump's first acts since he took office and the effects they have had across the country. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the ILC cannot proclaim being for or against any laws or elected officials, but that does not mean that they are not susceptible to being affected by the government's actions. However, despite these uncertain times, they remain strong.

Ariana Moir, the Education Program Manager at the ILC, stated that their Teen Perspectives contest has "had more submissions than [they] have in the past." She believes that "there's been a desire for people to share their opinions."

This contest is open to students at Medford High School, Everett High School, and Malden High School; it serves as a way for these communities with large immigrant populations to demonstrate how immigrants enrich America with their cultures and traditions. With this year's prompt, the competition is sure to produce beautiful works that embody the influence immigrants have had on their community.

After all, Moir said that the ILC expressed that "immigrants have always contributed to American society" and that "they always will."

While some submissions have been anonymous or only used their first name, the contest is still thriving. Where one might suspect worries or declined activity, the opposite happens to be occurring. Moir also mentioned that different organizations have reached out in order to collaborate and ensure that teachers can inform students of what their rights are to keep them safe.

One of their main goals is to educate people, specifically on how immigrants have contributed to history and how they continue to contribute to American society via aspects such as the economy. Moir feels that they are "staying the course... not wading into politics" and trying to educate as they have always intended.

As their contest continues to grow, Malden High School has offered to host this year's contest celebration in the gallery as the ILC's conference room could not fit the huge and wonderful crowd last year.

Arts Collaborative Medford has also offered their space to display the works of the contest. The showcase will be free, open to the public, and held on April 17th at 6 pm. They hope to have students share their pieces as well as drawings for gift certificates.

STEMsters Club Stems New Opportunities

Jenayah Moreno
Lead Reporter

Are you an aspiring STEM-induced student? Are you struggling to find opportunities for STEM at Malden High? Then Malden STEMsters are for you.

Malden STEMsters is a new addition to the STEM community, opening up a new world of possibilities for all students regardless of their experience.

The STEMsters opened up their introductory meeting strong with high attendance. Prior to the meeting, the room was vibrant and chatty, with many intrigued and aspiring students. The meeting opened with snacks being passed out, giving students a sense of relaxation after a long school day and a welcome to the new community of the club. As students snacked, the officers projected a slideshow to introduce the STEMsters.

Throughout the introductory presentation, the premise of the club was explained to the new members. The STEMsters explained various volunteering opportunities, which would consist of using STEM topics to educate and practice with younger children. "There's basically a set curriculum for STEMsters, and the chapter that we have established with has a wide variety of STEM topics, whether it is related to introductory programming or some other middle school activities we'd find at regular STEM classes involving ar-

chitecture and design," sophomore Treasurer Shannel Zab explained.

The origin of STEMsters started in a place where many people reside today in search of opportunities to add to college resumes. Hoping to expand access to such opportunities for students at Malden High, an ambitious group of sophomores set out to make a change: President Sophia Chen, Vice President Emma Yu, Secretary Ness Tiah, Zeb, Media Coordinators Suyog Shrestha, and YingYan Xia.

"What inspired me to start this club was that originally, during advisory, we had an assignment where we had to fill out a resume, but I realized that a lot of people didn't fill out their awards or volunteering hours," explained Chen. When she asked them why, they said that they wanted to earn volunteer hours that were also "impactful for their resume."

Chen continued, "So I was like, okay, maybe we could create something with that. So I went online, and I typed in, 'What can I do to solve this problem,' and STEMsters popped up, which is why I created this club: to help students earn awards for volunteering."

President Sophia Chen explained, "The PVSA award, which is the Presidential Volunteering Award, is something everyone can be eligible for and put that on their resume, which I think is why a lot of people are attracted to this club in

the first place."

Such volunteering opportunities inspired many students to have the interest to join in a time when many students are looking to fulfill hours for transcripts and resumes. In addition to the phenomenal volunteer opportunities, the club brings a new aspect most clubs at Malden High do not offer: an opportunity for members to obtain an award.

With opportunities for volunteering and awards, many students were interested in what this club would bring. At this point, students formed lines to ask the officers more about the possibilities within the club. "There were a lot more people than we expected. I feel like there are a decent amount of people who are interested in STEM, especially people who messaged me curious about what we were doing," Yu pointed out.

The officers hope to do much

more with STEMsters and provide more than just volunteering opportunities. "In the future, I really want to help people find their internships around STEM, or I know we talked about how we wanted to have some go get some more awards like go into competitions," Chen mentioned.

Xia expressed the message they hope others will take away from STEMsters: "We want to introduce or have more younger kids be interested in the field of STEM, whether it's building roller coasters or having more hands-on learning. One thing is, they should be learning about this, but most of all, have fun while doing it."

Malden STEMsters meets bi-weekly in math teacher Evan Mauser's room, BR472. If you're interested, stop by, bring a friend, and check out their Instagram @malden_stemsters for more information.



85th Annual Junior Varieties



Continued from front page
on, " said junior Art Director and performer Moon To. "We started planning around October, so we had a lot of time to prepare for auditions; then right after auditions ended in December, we immediately started to call people for our ad book and started to prepare all the things we needed to buy: the decorations, the actors, everything."

The maestro of this memorable occasion was junior Event Coordinator Vin Chau, who played a crucial role in the preparation and success of the night. Chau has been preparing for Junior Varieties since they were elected event coordinator, speaking volumes about their dedication and tenacity to their role.

"I had an idea of how I wanted to schedule and organize events leading up to the show, and I had prior experience due to being involved in the Class of '25's Junior Varieties. It was stressful at times, but the hard work paid off," Chau passionately stated.

Class of '26 President, Linh Do, offered her perspective in making sure everything went well with the preparation of the night holistically, while also preparing for her audition with junior Sarah Fontaim.

Junior Gabriela Lemus, who was one of the show's hosts, talked about her

involvement in the night and how she felt excited to paint the picture and storyline.

"There was a lot of preparation for script writing. We had to come up with the storyline and introduce each act while still developing the story for it to make sense and still have enough time for each setup, for each act. It was pretty exciting. It was fun to be up on stage and have friends on stage and be able to be up there and just do that, and it was really fun," expressed Lemus.

Junior Treasurer Oscar Luc, who had been tasked with performing on the AO Step Team and playing Gru in the cast, discussed his experience and impeccable balance of multiple responsibilities at once.

"It's been pretty stressful," stated Luc. As a student council member who is also on the Step Team, "I already had some

Members of GalXC pose at the end of their performance. JACOB FUENTES

things on my plate. However, it's been really organized and we've had tremendous help from the crew, the rest of the council, and especially our JV coordinators and our advisor (Nancy Wentworth). With all the additions of the acts, making of the ad book with different companies, and making of the script, let's just say it was a lot!"

The night opened with the band Frequency, who captured the audience's attention with a rapid and uplifting rendition of "American Idiot" by the punk rock band Green Day. Junior head guitarist Nicholas Li was not scared to perform for the first time in front

of a large audience.

"Despite what everyone might imagine a first performance would feel like, it was not nerve-racking whatsoever," affirmed Li. "Whether it be confidence in the role played or the auditorium's great ability to hide the audience, any pre-stage nerves would be washed away in an instant."

Frequency vibrated the crowd out of their seats as they blew the crowd away with an exhilarating opener to the night. "Our performance being the perfect energetic start as an opener. I had no expectations to be measured up to. If anything, I hope their reactions were genuine, I can't ask for anything more," claimed Li.

Next up was senior Fa-

ela Jasmin, who performed "Rise Up" by Andra Day; the crowd was speechless as they listened to her voice being echoed across the auditorium. Some students even rose to congratulate her with a standing ovation after her performance.

The audience continued to be astonished as the following act, the Afro-Caribbean Dance Team, danced to their remix of classic Caribbean songs. "It felt really really good. I love representing my country and seeing others on the same page as me. It's who we are and we are proud of that," claimed junior Alecia Louigene, an Afro-Caribbean Dance Team member. "The dynamic and similarities are something that is very special, unique, and appreciative."

Then, junior Jasmin Diaz Gomez stood alone and expressed her projecting, yet sentimental voice by singing "No Me Queda Más" by Selena. The crowd was in awe, observing her taking control of the night.

Afterward was the long-awaited Aromatherapy band, which consisted of To, as well as seniors Jennifer Slawson, Beverly Tong, Milan Nguyen, and Heitor Soares. They performed the song "Get You" by Daniel Caesar. It seemed as if every person was waving their phone and chanting the lyrics to the well-known song.

To, while multitasking her duties on the student council, also performed with Aromatherapy and had high expectations for her and her group. They have performed consecutively for two



years, making this year their second chance to shock the audience.

"I think we're gonna do really good this year. We sound pretty good. I'm excited. I'm really excited," To expressed before the performance.

After the Aroma died down, GalXC, a K-pop dance group comprised of seniors Zi Jefferson and Nashalyn Rubert, along with juniors Christina Robinson-McCaskill, Sorin Mamouzette, Aaliyah Lopes-Teixeira, and Ndiaye Oliver-Destine, took the spotlight as they performed "Drama" by aespa. Their dance moves, choreography, and synchronization were a testament to their hard work and preparation for this night.

Do and Fontaim were up next, in which Do was on the piano and Fontaim was on the vocals.

"I was actually kind of hoping that people would sing along and have their flashlights. That's kind of the engagement that we wanted, especially when choosing the song because I knew it was going to be a song that enough people knew to sing along with. And after the performance, everyone said that we did a really good job and everyone said that we had a really good act," Do stated.

"It was honestly pretty nerve-racking because even though I am used to singing on a stage; it's different when you're singing in front of people from your school," Fontaim claimed.

The duo performed "When I Was Your Man" by Bruno Mars, which evoked emotional and amiable feelings from the audience.

After this performance, an intermission began in order for the minions to formulate their plan some more.

Rusty Screw was up next as they took the audience back in time with a classic: "Just the Two of Us" by Bill Withers and Grover Washington Jr. Seniors Slade Harding and Sean Retotal were in charge of the guitars, and Soares with the vocals.

"Getting onto that stage just felt so natural to me, performing is honestly one of my favorite things, and being able to have the space to perform for others is just so amazing. The crew did such an amazing job on getting amps and chairs and the drumset in place so it made the process of performing just so much easier," said Retotal.

Soares, who has performed in both acts, offers his perspective and what it means to be a part of this experience.

"Performing two times was definitely a challenge," stated Soares. "I was actually meant to be in three acts, but unfortunately one



From left to right: Rusty Screw band members Slade Harding, Heitor Soares, and Sean Retotal. JACOB FUENTES

cut, so I only had two. My first act was definitely the harder one for me because the song was pretty high for me, but I still did good. My second act was my favorite simply because it was way calmer and it gave me a lot of chances to express myself through the music I was playing."

Next was senior Stephanie Wong. As she played the ukulele, she offered a sweet and different performance of the song "Fictional" by Khloe Rose.

After that was a phenomenal performance by the Bald Ensemble as they were "fein'ing for more" after their performance of "FE!N" by Travis Scott.

The AO Step Team was next and made an impressive entrance with the song "Antidote" by Travis Scott. The Step Team had no problem stepping on stage and doing what they do best: performing.

The second to last act was senior Natalie Keating, who sang a solo rendition of the song "They Just Keep Moving The Line" by Smash Cast.

"As someone who does get the opportunity to perform on stage more than the average person, I will say that this experience differed in the fact that I had so much liberty and control over what I was doing," voiced Keating. "I got to choose my song. I was given so much creative freedom in where I wanted to stand, how I wanted the

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lights to look, my costume was my own dress, all of these different things."

"I was happy that people seemed to enjoy my performance," Keating continued. "A lot of people came up to me after the show or during school in the following days, saying that they enjoyed my performance or that they thought I was talented." Keating concluded that it was "really nice to see that I wasn't a forgettable act, because Junior Varieties is, of course, about celebrating all different kinds of people who have something that they wanna share and put on stage."



Kenny Diaz Osorio and 'The Bald Ensembles' performing "FE!N" by Travis Scott. THOMAS TIERNEY

Because they are seniors, this will be Keating and Soares' last JV performance.

"It felt really nice to perform again at JVs. It's my last performance, so it definitely meant a lot more for me than any other performance and I'm definitely going to miss it," claimed Soares.

Last but not least, the Powerful in Pink Dance group performed, creating a vibrant atmosphere as they danced to "Sticky" by Tyler the Creator.

Juniors Keith Vien and Yeschi Dorjee, audience members, both agree that the night was bittersweet and memorable as they share their

opinions on this outstanding night.

"The moment that will stick with me the most is seeing all of my friends and classmates succeed so well inside their performances during the show. It was great to see everyone perform very exceptionally," said Vien.

"I think the performances were pretty good. I was very impressed with how coordinated and how well planned it was and like the performances are really nice to see," claimed Dorjee.

"JVs was an amazing experience, I went this year and I had an amazing time watching the whole event. I didn't go to JV's last year; I went this year to support my class, and I don't regret going this year because it was great," stated Vien.

"Just the thought of being together with friends and just watching performances together in that moment was really something that I can cherish," Dorjee voiced emphatically.

Outstanding is an understatement. The grandeur of these performances will be echoed throughout Malden High's history, as it already has been throughout these 85 consecutive years. Catch the next JVs and be prepared to be blown away by all the talents ranging from many different proficient skills and hard work that is sure to compel emotional and exciting nerves and feelings!



MTEC Offers Boxing Lessons

Farris Qranfal
Reporter

The Malden Teen Enrichment Center (MTEC) has always been where people can pass the time and

unwind with friends. Nowadays, having fun almost always involves spending money, whether shopping or visiting an amusement park. The teen center offers a space where you can enjoy it all for the incredible price of nothing. Most Malden High students know the teen center provides free games and food after school; however, it also hosts a variety of classes to cater to

These drills emphasize footwork and precision, applying various techniques to prepare them for the ring. Students then engage in partner work, transferring what they

lot of self-discipline. There is a lot of teamwork that is needed, a lot of camaraderie, but it is very much internal when it comes to what you can learn, and that is one of the best



Jay Ortiz doing mitts with Julian Jean Gilles. FARRIS QRANFAL

have learned from the heavy bag to each other. One person initiates while the other defends. The goal is not to hurt each other but to test what they have learned against a moving target. These drills are conducted back and forth so that both participants can experience offensive and defensive roles.

“Training in boxing, or any martial art for that matter, takes a

things to go through, especially as a kid,” expressed Ortiz.

After warming up, there is free time to return to previous exercises or work one-on-one with Ortiz on the mitts. However, you are also free to do the most effective drill: sparring.

Sparring is a practice match in which participants wear headgear and boxing gloves. It is often con-

For beginners, the coach, Jay Ortiz, reviews the four basic punches: the jab, cross, hook, and uppercut. Once they grasp the fundamentals, Ortiz will perform a sequence of punches that the rest of the class must follow; this practice is known as shadow boxing.

Shadowboxing is the act of boxing with an imaginary opponent. The purpose may differ, but it mainly fits into three categories: strength, speed, and, most importantly, technique. Depending on the goal, some choose to shadow box with weights for added resistance.

Ortiz will typically continue to display combinations, yet this time, they are executed on the heavy bag.



Ryan Xiao posing with Justin Flores. FARRIS QRANFAL



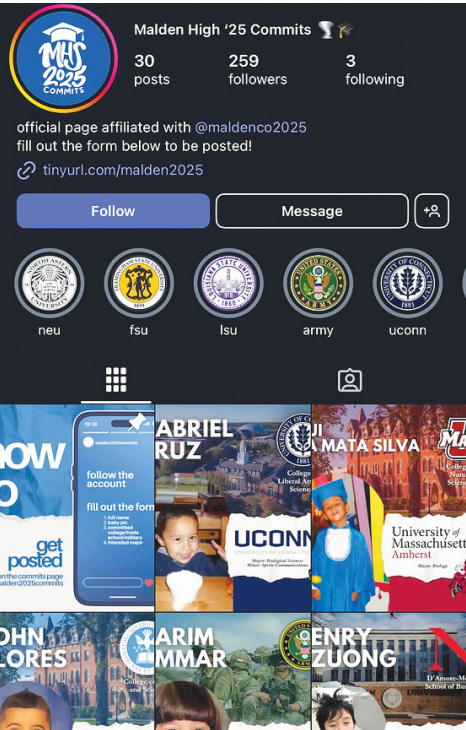
Justin Flores sparring with Kenny Turcios. FARRIS QRANFAL

MHS CO’25 Commits Page

Abigael Fesehaie
Editor-in-Chief of Print

As the college decision season has started to come to a close and students are receiving their offers for postgraduate opportunities, Malden High’s class of 2025 social media coordinators have created an Instagram page (@malden25commits) dedicated to celebrating the postgraduate plans of the graduating class members.

The page is run by the class’s social media coordinators, Jaslie Fang, the Editor-in-Chief of The Blue and Gold Social Media and Print, and Jessica Li, the Editor-in-Chief



The Malden High Commitment Instagram page @malden25commits

of The Blue and Gold. They created the page with the intention of recognizing the efforts of the students in the senior class and quickly realized that the page also highlighted the community Malden High students have built over the past four years.

The page features posts that showcase the student’s school, trade school, or military branch they’re committed to with a song of their choice and a baby picture. Li noted that the page was a “cute way of showing how far we’ve grown up with each other,” as the inclusion of baby pictures instead of recent pictures, which has been used in years past, provides students with a feeling of nostalgia and allows students



Post of Helen Xie’s commitment to Northeastern University on @malden25commits

Continued on page 17



Sophomores Wongel Yohannes and Naomi Yohannes discussing during club meeting. REVA UPADHAYAY

First Generation Sisterhood

Reva Upadhayay
Reporter

Starting high school can be challenging for anyone, but for first-generation students—the first in their families to navigate the American education system—it can feel utterly overwhelming. That is where Malden High’s new club, First Gen Sisterhood, comes in.

Founded by sophomore President Rosalyn Ruan, the club provides a supportive spot for first-generation students to connect, share experiences, and express themselves with one another. “The club’s main mission is to support first-generation students at Malden High School,” Rosalyn explained. “We want to create a stronger bond with each other, empower students, and overall, create an environment where everyone feels welcomed.”

Sophomore Vice President and Lead Reporter for The Blue and Gold, Evelyn Ruan, shared that “I know that Rosalyn has been wanting to create a club for some time now, so I’m proud of her for accomplishing this.” She added, “My job is to make sure it goes smoothly and to support and help her with anything and everything along the way.”

First-Gen Sisterhood meets every Blue Tuesday in J372 and offers discussions and activities centered around the first-generation experience. “Every week, we try to come up with different types of activities or discussions, just trying to make it more social,” said Rosalyn. “We do want to plan bigger events in the future, like bake sales and movie nights.”

For members, the club has already made an impact. “I decided to

join First Gen Sisterhood to connect with other first-generation students at MHS,” noted sophomore Naomi Yohannes. “The atmosphere of the club is welcoming and friendly.” Similarly, sophomore Wongel Yohannes added, “I felt as though this was a great opportunity to get more involved in my community and connect with other first-gen students.

Apart from meetings, Rosalyn hopes to expand the club’s reach. “In the future, I plan to organize vari-

ous events, fundraisers, and activities to strengthen our connections and engage the community. Additionally, I hope to visit local K-8 schools to share our club’s mission,” she said.

Both Rosalyn and Evelyn hope to see the club grow. “My personal goal is to get enough people to join and participate,” mentioned Evelyn. “I also hope the environment is a positive one and that people coming into this will learn a lot from other first-generation students’ experiences.”

While First Gen Sisterhood was created with first-generation students in mind, all students are welcome. “This club isn’t just for first-generation students or immigrants, it’s also an opportunity for others

to learn about our experiences and gain a deeper understanding of our upbringings,” stated Rosalyn.

Long-term visions? Expanding the club beyond Malden High. “My goal is to create a space where students feel supported and reassured that they are not alone,” stated Rosalyn. “I hope this club can grow into an official organization, allowing other schools to establish their own First Gen Sisterhood chapters.”



Sophomore Venusia Teklu during a discussion. REVA UPADHAYAY



Club’s Google Classroom QR code

School Lunches

Farris Qranfal
Reporter

Over the years, the quality of school meals has been repeatedly reformed across the United States, emphasizing student health and food taste. School meals are now free in eight states, including Massachusetts, helping many save time and money; however, some remain skeptical about what, how, and why.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a government-funded initiative in public and private schools that provides children with free, nutritionally balanced lunches. Established by President Harry Truman under the National School Lunch Act in 1946, this program aims to ensure that students receive healthy meals during the school day.

In 1996, Massachusetts Education Commissioner Robert V. Antonucci announced that families struggling to afford breakfast or lunch at school could now apply for free or low-cost meals. This initiative is made possible by a “Millionaires Tax”, which generates around a billion dollars in revenue through the extra 4% income tax on certain high earners in the state.

These sacrifices are considered necessary, as healthy dietary habits are directly linked to higher academic scores, according to a 2019 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Nearly 200,000 children, or about one in eight children, struggle with hunger in Massachusetts alone.

To maximize the health of school meals, it often feels like you have to sacrifice taste. In 2010, President Obama signed the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, which required schools to serve more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat milk. Students from previous years often complained about the reform, with many still nostalgically recalling when strawberry milk was a popular option. These changes are still common today, with the more recent removal of chocolate milk.

Compared to the past, school lunches are much healthier; however, significant progress is still to be made. Common unhealthy ingredients in present-day school meals include high-fructose corn syrup, enriched wheat flour, hydrogenated oils, artificial flavors and colors, preservatives, soybean and vegetable oils, excessive added sugars, and high-sodium additives.

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to reflect on the memories they’ve had during their time in school.

The creation of a commitment page has been a tradition passed down to incoming seniors for years, and it creates a sense of pride and school spirit for seniors who are in the last months of high school. “The commits page connects to the student council’s goal of getting more school spirit,” claimed Fang.

Over 20 seniors are currently

posted on the page, and Helen Xie, a senior at Malden High, posted her commitment to Northeastern University because it provided her with “a way to showcase my hard work.” Xie believed that the page “inspires others to post” and that it highlights “our class’s success, and people posting on the page shows how we’ve bonded together.”

Class President Christina Anasthal has also recently posted her commitment to Salem State University because Anasthal “saw every-

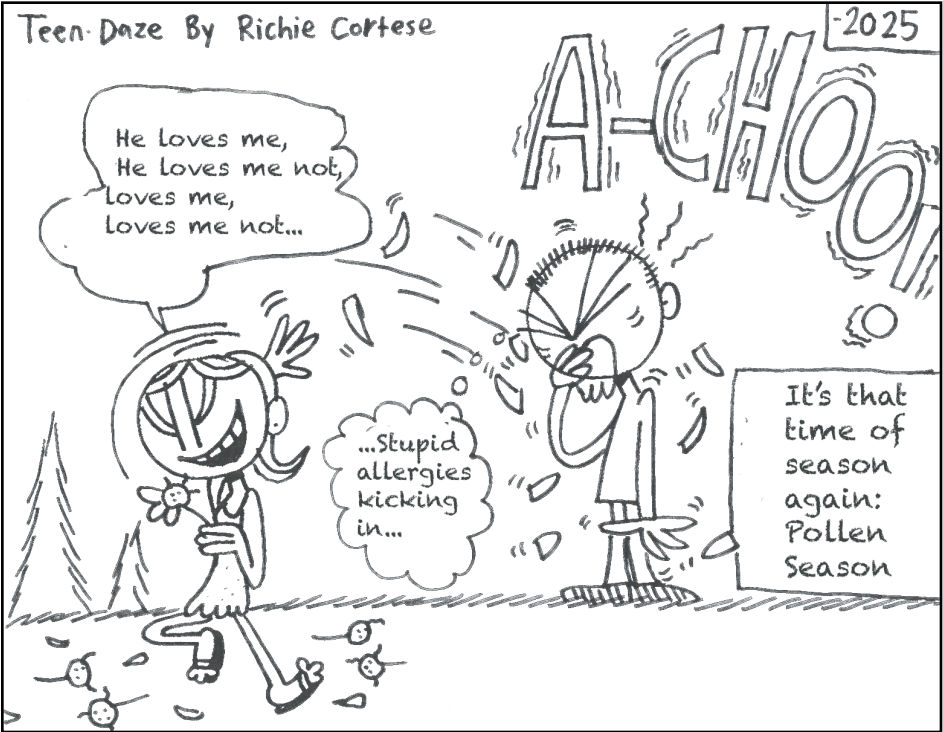
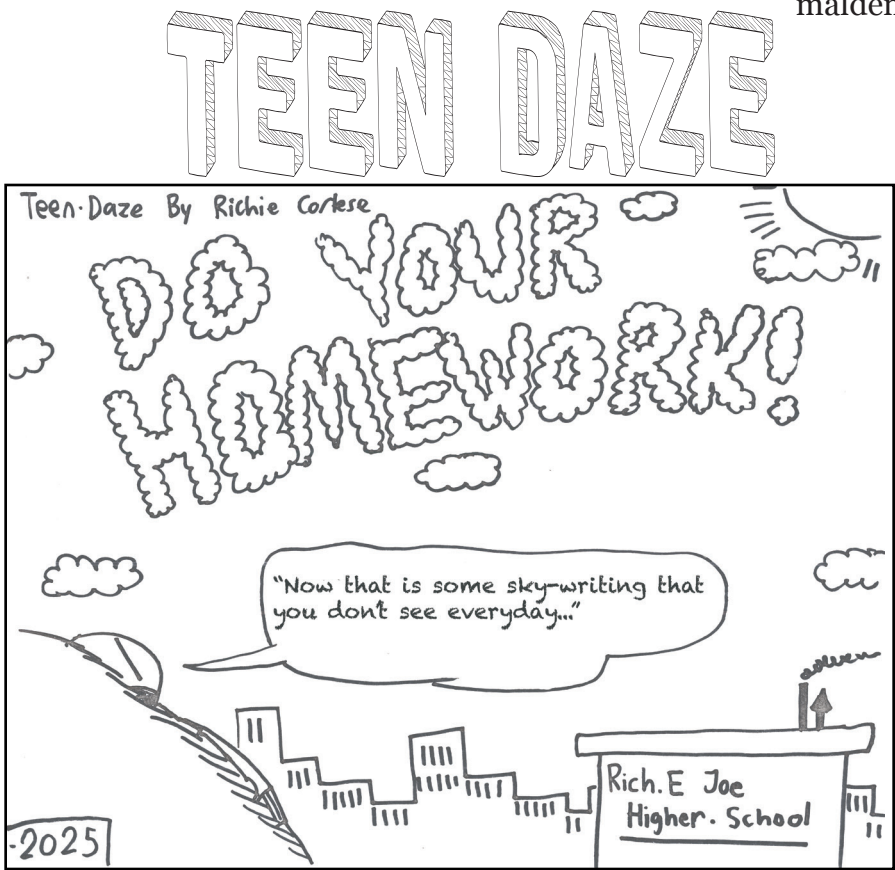
one else do it and it inspired me to show off where my next steps will be”. But the uniqueness of the page made the Class President reminisce about her high school experience as “the funny captions, baby pictures, and songs make it feel like a farewell, and it shows that we’re really moving onto the next step in our lives.”

Dulmiah Amiscar is a senior who still hasn’t decided where she’ll be attending in the fall but is excited to post on the page because of the

page’s creativity in every post and the way it highlights “a new path in our lives.”

Although every senior hasn’t decided on their next steps, the commitment page provides seniors with a way to commemorate their class’s hard work and look back on the memories gained with their peers during high school.

If you’re interested in keeping up with the Class of 2025’s commitments, follow @malden25commits on Instagram.



Comic series by Richie Cortese

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BLOSSOM

Her ORGANIZATION

Blossom Her Organization was born from a deeply personal journey. It all began when I witnessed firsthand the resilience and untapped potential of women in Vietnam. Inspired by the stories of courage, determination, and strength demonstrated by women in our communities, we felt compelled to take action.

READ MORE

01. INTENTION


Personal encounters have ignited a passion for advocating for women. The beauty and intricacy of Vietnamese textiles, pottery, embroidery, and other handicrafts serve as a source of inspiration for our organization, driving our commitment to preserving and promoting these traditional while fighting gender equality.

02. INSPIRATION

We draw inspiration from the tireless efforts of individuals and organizations around the world who are working to dismantle barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create opportunities for women to thrive

03. MANIFESTATION

Blossom Her is building a shared vision for a better future—a future where every woman in Vietnam has the opportunity to blossom and fulfill her potential. We are driven by a belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every individual and a commitment to building a world where women are empowered.



Continued from front page

entirely unaffordable for many, causing some to choose cheaper options even when they get into better schools.

With recent news of the Department of Education's layoffs and possible dismantling, many are wondering what will happen to FAFSA and other federal funding programs, which if they were to go away, or be defunded, would leave millions of Americans unable to pay for college.

Even without the programs going away, many argue the system is broken in its current state. Middle-class families who are also unable to afford the mammoth price tags of colleges get little to no federal aid, and low-income families do not get nearly enough to be able to afford their tuition.

Malden, being a low-income community, runs into many issues with the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) and College Scholarship Service (CSS) profiles required by colleges to determine financial aid awards.

Many seniors in Malden run into this same frustration with not being able to afford the top colleges in which they get into. Senior Helen Xie noted that the financial aid system should be more "individualized to help students more personally," which would "create more of an understanding between the student and their situation to however much they need in aid."

Similarly to many, senior Remi Santos, who is committed to Northeastern University next fall, commented that the system is "flawed," and that it barely "takes a student's whole story into account, which devalues them into just their parents' income." Santos affirms that reform is needed to the financial aid system—especially because of the climate of the country economically with high inflation and unemployment.

Another senior, Jennifer Slawson, does understand that colleges cannot meet the needs of every single student; however, it disappoints her that "students often have to

choose their decisions solely based on money, rejecting their dream school due to a lack of financial aid."

Slawson herself noted she has "been really unlucky with receiving aid for colleges that are not willing to negotiate despite my circumstances, and some schools have even given me zero dollars in aid." She is concerned with "changes in recent administration that may make financial aid even more limited for those that truly need it the most. This is because education is something every student deserves, and the income of your family should not determine your opportunities for success."

Senior Merari Flores had her own issues with the process. "I think they don't take into consideration a lot of circumstances," voiced Flores. "If they do, the process for these circumstances to be considered is so long and such a hassle... There needs to be a change in the way they handle cases with students, like possibly hiring more people to review these cases and have more time... they just need to have more people and more time in order for students to properly be 'examined' on their financial aid."

Amanda Rosario, the uAspire College Affordability Advisor at Malden High who helps students sort their financial aid documents out and choose more affordable options, was asked different questions regarding financial aid and the current issues with it:

1. What is the most common problem students have when applying for financial aid?

Some of the most common issues students run into are:

Account issues: For the FAFSA, MASFA, CSS Profile, most students get stuck creating their accounts. The most common issues for the MASFA and CSS Profile are confirmation emails not sending to finish account setup and these can usually be resolved by a customer service call. The FAFSA is a bit more difficult to troubleshoot because if the Social Security Administration can't match you or you have to reset

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don't notice because they haven't checked after an acceptance or they can't find the financial aid to do list. Schools can't give out aid offers until all these papers and verification steps are finished.

2. What do you think can be fixed about the FAFSA/CSS

system to make the process easier for students?

CSS Profile

Noncustodial Parent Profiles: This is more on the end of the schools but most CSS schools require info from all biological parents in addition to any spouses they may have. Some students are able to provide this and do a noncustodial profile, but it is difficult to connect sometimes. It is easy to get confused reading the instructions, I still do after filling them out for three years, so they should have a system similar to the FAFSA invite that's NCPProfile specific. They also need to standardize the waiver process. More schools are moving toward the College Board waiver but there are still some schools that make it difficult to request their school-specific waiver.


Cost to submit: If your family makes over \$100,000 or you have a parent who lives outside the US you need to pay to submit because the College Board charges you.

Massachusetts has the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) for students who have lived here for a while and are not FAFSA eligible and don't have a student visa. While the form is pretty straightforward this year the steps for what to do after aren't so clear because the process of students who can't fill out the FASFA being eligible for state aid is still evolving.

Increase staffing for FSA: Last year it was almost impossible to get through to Federal Student Aid when the new FAFSA experienced its many glitches. They hired more people and it was easier for the majority of this school year to get access to help from a trained employee at FSA. Recently it's been harder to get through for help because their staff has been downsized. I'd love to see them back at full capacity because it made a visible difference in students being able to access help

Connection To the Common App Portal: Probably never going to happen because of security/privacy reasons, but there are too many portals and accounts to keep track of. I'd love to see something similar to or connected to the common app where students could get their decisions and aid offers in one place.





What is the FAFSA?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the key to opening the doors of your future. FAFSA gives you access to federal grants, work-study opportunities, federal loans, and numerous state scholarships.

Explanation of FAFSA. Screenshot from @bigfuture.official on Instagram.

3. Will prices for colleges keep going up?

Unfortunately, yes. College prices have risen and are expected to continue rising. For example, when I went to Suffolk, tuition in 2020 was \$35,440 (before aid!), but it has risen to \$47,500 for students starting this year.

Free Community College: Community colleges are free to low-income students in the state of MA as long as you've lived here a few years and submitted a FAFSA/MASFA.

Free tuition programs: At some public schools students can get their tuition and fees covered (only have to pay room and board if they dorm) if their family makes under a certain amount according to the FAFSA/MASFA. UMASS system is \$75,000. Bridgewater is \$100,000.

4. What can help make the financial aid process easier for students?

Apply early: There's more money available and it gives you time to troubleshoot.

Ask for help: It's free and it's literally my job to help out!

Stay organized.

5. How would the Department of Education being eliminated affect student aid/loans?

When President Trump signed the executive order dismantling the Department of Education, he said that the student loan program will move to another agency. This is a separate agency from the Department of Education. Specifics of a plan to move the loan program have not been announced. The loan program has not moved. Furthermore, current law says the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) is the administrator of the student loan portfolio. It is not clear how these responsibilities could be legally moved without a vote of Congress. We do not know if the student loan program will ultimately be moved. If it is, we expect there will be an additional lawsuit against it.

For any further questions contact Amanda Rosario at arosario@maldensps.org



BigFuture

2025-26 FAFSA Now Open to All Students

Students can submit their 2025-26 FAFSA form now during the current beta testing period.

Announcement for 2025-26 FAFSA opening. Screenshot from @bigfuture.official on Instagram

an old parent account you have to call for help. Since they're understaffed you may be on the phone for a bit trying to get to someone who can fix the issue.

Verification: Many students are asked in their application portals to send extra information because the financial aid office needs it but they

Annual Students vs. Faculty Basketball Game

Hannah Coggswell
Reporter

Aliana Lloyd
Reporter

On March 11th at 3:00 pm, the student-vs.-faculty basketball game was held here at MHS. Student vs. faculty basketball has been an event at Malden High since 2012. This event raises money for the Tornado Travellers. This April, they are planning to go to Paris and London. Advisor for the Tornado Travellers and Science teacher Shauna Campbell is very involved with this event. “It’s a fun way for staff to come together and to interact with students outside of the classroom”, Campbell stated.

The Tornado Travelers is a club at Malden High that allows students to achieve their dreams and travel across the globe. The club is led by science teacher Shauna Campbell. The tickets for this event were only 3 dollars but those 3 dollars for each person benefits the club more than you would think. “This event helps with providing scholarships to students that are signed up”, Campbell mentioned. Many people attend this event. What student doesn’t want to see their favorite teachers play against their peers?

The bleachers were filled with students eager to watch the game. The anticipation builds up as the



Student team coach giving speech before the game. ALIANA LLOYD

students and teachers prepare for the event. The players warmed up for about 20 minutes before the actual game. After that time was up the buzzer projected throughout the gym and it was time for the game.

The student’s team is composed of kids straight from the Malden High girls and boys basketball teams. It is a good opportunity for the students to continue playing basketball a little bit after the season is over.

Both teams sent out their starting lineup to the court. The clock began ticking and students started strong with a 4-0 lead. The teachers started falling behind fast but that did not stop them from giving the game their all. After the 1st quarter, the staff started to pick up the pace but could still not catch up to the high-spirited students. With the students in the lead, it gives the faculty that extra push to defeat the students.

their team. Teachers on the other hand were falling behind fast. With only 5 seconds left of the game Player on the faculty team Daniel Jurkowski attempted a 3-pointer right at the buzzer but was unsuccessful. The buzzer went off and the gym exploded with loud cheers and exhilarating yells.

The students overcame the teachers with a final score of 57-32. The faculty team didn’t let this loss get to their heads. They stayed optimistic and cheerful even after being defeated by the students.



Ethan Phejarasai attempts to block Daniel Jurkowski. ALIANA LLOYD

Halftime approached, and the students still had a lead in the game. Both teams cheered with high energy and liveliness to keep the players motivated. The teachers kept fighting but just could not catch up to the students.

Throughout the third and fourth quarter, the students stayed consistent and kept earning points for



Faculty dribbles away from defending student. ALIANA LLOYD



Brad Gelling wins the tip. ALIANA LLOYD



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Senior Sofi Le prepares to serve. MACK KEATING

Mack Keating
Editor-in-Chief

The Malden High School Girls' Tennis team launches its season with five competitive matches, showcasing both individual triumphs and areas for improvement. The team battles hard, securing several victories while also identifying key areas to refine as they set their sights on another successful season.

Senior captain Sarah Pham delivered an impressive performance, winning both of her singles matches 6-2 and 6-3. Despite the victories, Pham was not entirely satisfied: "I thought I could have done better. I'm a little disappointed, but, you know, it's still a win," she explained. Her powerful serves played a crucial role in her success. "My

serves at the beginning, my God, they were beautiful. I had a few aces in there, too." In tennis, an ace is when the point is awarded after an unreturned serve, with no rally.

Fellow senior captain Julianna Lin also secured two wins, both at 6-3, overcoming initial nerves and adjusting to the frosty 38°F weather. "I was nervous, but as I kept playing, I warmed up, especially because it was so cold. I was thinking, 'oh my God, it's going to be so cold,' but as I warmed up, it got better, and I got more confident as I kept playing."

Lin, having recently purchased a new, heavier racket, acknowledged that she was not as prepared as she could have been but remains confident in her ability to improve. "My backhand needs to be better," she noted. "I need to get used to [the new racket] to improve."

Unfortunately, Pham and Lin were the only players successful in winning two sets, with senior Ivana Marinkovic losing both of her matches and the doubles teams both winning one set, losing another, and losing in the tie-breaker round.

Despite the losses, the team remains optimistic about the season ahead. Pham reflected on her journey with the team, emphasizing how far she has come. "I started out four years ago, only learning tennis two weeks before tryouts. I've gone very far, from JVs to varsity singles, today singles three. Being around really good players has really helped me."

Lin echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the team's camaraderie and growth. "I think my mentality has gotten better throughout the years. I remember the first time I played a game, I was super nervous: I was shaking. And the more games I played, the more confidence I gained."

With a team full of dedicated

players, Malden looks to build on their skills and aim for another championship run. "I would love to see us grow as a team, grow skill-wise, and win GBL champs again," Pham emphasized.

Lin added, "They're all super fast learners. I'm really proud of every one of them. I want to see them play better and better every day because they're all really passionate about it."

As the seniors prepare for their final season, emotions run high. "It's bittersweet because I really love the team this year and how much dedication they put into tennis," Lin professed. "I really love tennis, I don't want it to be over. But, y'know, when a chapter closes, a new chap-



Junior Remi Yang throws the spare balls to her opponents for their turn to serve. MACK KEATING

ter begins." With a mix of experienced players and rising talent, the girls' tennis team is ready to take on whatever challenges lie ahead.



Senior Ivana Marinkovic dives to hit the tennis ball before it bounces again. MACK KEATING



Jacob Fuentes
Lead Reporter

Players on the team hold up ones as they celebrate their first win of the season. JACOB FUENTES

On Friday, March 28th, 2025, the Malden High School varsity baseball team prepared to compete against Salem Academy Charter. This at-home, non-conference season opener was also the first of two matchups for the fourth annual Tornado First Pitch Classic.

Both teams arrived with friendly and respectful attitudes since Mike Barbati, the current coach for Salem Charter, was also a former coach for Malden. Malden came into this “classic” clash confident as they are looking to earn their fourth consecutive championship title for this tournament.

Although this game had a friendly environment, Malden did not hold back in any of the seven innings. Malden started off strong with their base running, having

their first two runs coming in from third base on different pitches. These runs came from Billy Gavin, a junior on the team, and Ryan McMahon, one of the team captains.

Now, while Salem was able to respond with a run of their own, Malden made sure that was their only one. One of the biggest factors for the team’s defensive success was their pitching. The team’s main



Junior Billy Gavin puts his weight on his left foot as he releases a pitch. JACOB FUENTES



Players from Salem hold up Malden Tornado shirts as they pose for a photo after the game. JACOB FUENTES



pitchers were juniors Ryan McMahon and Billy Gavin. As a combined force, they were able to keep a nearly perfect game and gain confidence

leading into the season. Gavin reflected on this success, saying, “It felt really good to shut down Salem this year. One of the biggest concerns going into the year was the pitching, so shutting down Salem is gonna give me and Ryan and all the other pitchers a lot of confidence on in the later year.”

But this success and confidence did not arrive overnight. Gavin made sure to show his gratitude to coaches Stephen Freker, Kenny Runge, Phil Cook, and Mike Nicholson. Throughout the winter, the team would “hold practices to get



Captain Ryan McMahon stares at home plate after hitting a triple. JACOB FUENTES



Billy Gavin turns to his left as he prepares for any ball that may come his way. JACOB FUENTES

us back into the swing into baseball cause most of us play different sports.”

But as mentioned before, Gavin was not alone on the mound. McMahon stated his optimism for the season and adds, “It felt great to start off the year with a win. Our team this year has a lot of younger guys, but they all seem like they’ve played at the varsity level,the boys all love each other and expect to win and keep on winning.”

Overall, Malden’s varsity baseball team demonstrated that they are a force to be reckoned with. They have shown that they have the potential to be powerhouses within the league. Baseball fans around Malden should definitely keep an eye out for this group.



Softball Swings into the Season

Ashton Calixte
Managing Editor

As the sun shone on the diamond, the Golden Tornadoes softball team gathered on the field for their warmup, each dressed in blue and white and buzzing with excitement. The determination to win was clear on their faces with each swing, throw, and the sound of the ball hitting the glove.

The start of a season is always the start of new friendships, determination, victory, and teamwork. With a crowd gathering on the side to watch the girls play, there was pressure to do well, with friends and family cheering. After each batter gets a hit and coach Krigman rewards them with nerd clusters every time they make it to first base.

Though starting strong, the Golden Tornadoes fell short of Waltham after falling behind and

finishing the game with a 23-5 loss. They did not let that put them down and still congratulated the opposite team on their win with smiles on their faces. They will continue to fight and put that loss behind them to have a successful season.



Senior captain Kimora Ha-Trinh prepares to swing. THOMAS TIERNEY



Softball team huddles up to discuss the next inning. THOMAS TIERNEY

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL FIRST MATCH



From left to right: the team huddles before their second set; Matthew Ren, Adrian Lee, and Ethan Nguyen prepare for the next rally; Ethan Nguyen tosses ball before serving; Bill Fang prepares to serve; Kenton Nguyen receives and sets the ball; Kenton Nguyen prepares to serve; Adrian Lee spikes the ball over the net, back to Braintree; Kenton Nguyen jumps to spike; Nicholas Li spikes the ball. MALIYA KAZADI