

The Blue & White

Holiday Traditions

by Marissa Mahoney

During this time of the year, many holidays are celebrated, which means many different customs and traditions.

Christmas is one of the most popular holidays in the United States. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. There are many different traditions that are celebrated during this holiday including decorating Christmas trees, exchanging gifts, going to church, and being visited by Santa Claus.

About 30-35 million real Christmas trees are sold in the United States each year, according to the National Christmas Tree Association. Part of this is due to the tradition of getting and decorating one for Christmas, which dates back to the sixteenth century in Germany. Displaying a tree in your home was a Pagan tradition, symbolizing life in the dark winter nights. Now, many people will have a tree full of ornaments in their home during the Christmas season.

Giving and receiving gifts is a tradition of Christmas, symbolizing the gifts the Three Wise Men gave Jesus when he was born.

Another Christmas tradition is Santa Claus visiting homes to give gifts to children on Christmas Eve. This tradition started with the monk, Saint Nicholas. Saint Nicholas would give away all of what he owned and

would travel to aid the poor and the sick. Saint Nicholas then became known as the protector of children. After the saint passed away, Dutch families would gather to honor his death. They can to know him as “Sint Nicolaas” or “Sinter Klaas,” which is where the abbreviation, “Santa Claus” came from. Saint Nicholas became more popular in the eighteenth century, bringing joy to many people, even through darker times.

Hanukkah is an eight day celebration of the reaffirmation of the ideals of Judaism. The Jewish holiday holds special traditions like lighting candles of the menorah, playing dreidel, and eating traditional foods.

During the eight day celebration of Hanukkah, a menorah is lit. A menorah is a type of candelabra consisting of a shamash (the center candle) and eight different branches. On the first night of Hanukkah, two candles are lit: the shamash and the first branch. For the next seven nights of the holiday, one candle is lit each night using the candle from the shamash.

Another tradition of Hanukkah is playing Dreidel. Dreidel is a game using a four-sided spinning top with one Hebrew letter on each side. The winner depends on which side the dreidel lands on. “Gelt” is the rewards or winnings, which is usually real money or chocolate coins.

Food is also another part of Hanukkah. Some traditional foods of Hanukkah are, latkes, sufganiyah, challah bread, and briskets. A latke is a type of potato pancake, and a sufganiyah is a round jelly doughnut fried in oil that is filled with jelly and sprinkled with powdered sugar on top. Challah is a braided bread, loved by many. Brisket is a type of meat, made in a Dutch oven.

Kwanzaa is an African-American celebration of life. Kwanzaa was introduced to the United States in 1966 as a ritual to invite the harvests to homes. Some traditions of Kwanzaa include: having a Kwanzaa display, reflecting on the principle of the day, and sharing talents.

Many people display decorations during Kwanzaa. Before displaying the decorations, a mat is put down for the rest to be placed atop. The mat represents laying a foundation for one’s abilities and potentials. On top of the mat is a candle holder that can hold seven candles, one candle for each principle of the celebration. Another decoration is a unity cup. Crops may also be displayed, representing the historical roots of African-American agriculture and rewards for hard work. The decor of Kwanzaa has much of a deeper meaning than what comes to mind.

There are seven main principles that are reflected upon, one for each day. They are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Each night, a candle is lit, and one of the values is discussed. Those that celebrate Kwanzaa take the principles into deep consideration.

Those that celebrate Kwanzaa honor their ancestors during the holiday and share their talents. People dance, sing, play music, and make crafts. Kwanzaa is similar to Thanksgiving in the sense that it is also celebrating thanks.

There are many holiday traditions from each culture, each having its own meaning to every individual.

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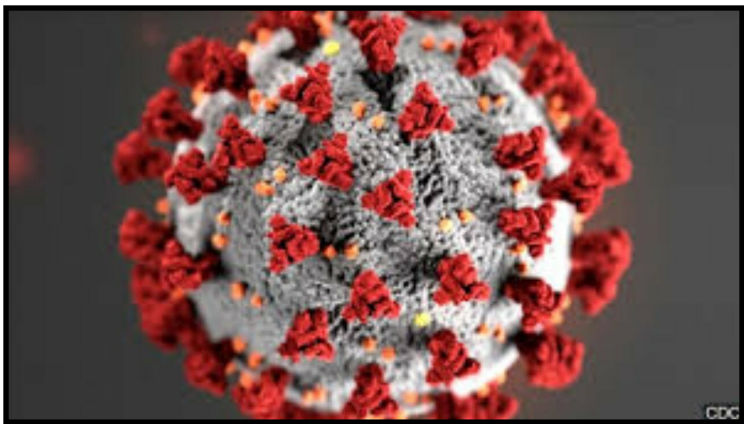
by Devosha Pearce

Omicron is the newest COVID-19 variant that has been designated a VOC, or Variant of Concern, by the World Health Organization. It was first reported to the WHO on November 24th, 2021.

Omicron was first discovered in South Africa, and has since been reported in other countries as well, including America. As of this writing, all states except for Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Oklahoma have had at least one Omicron variant COVID-19 case.

According to WHO’s epidemiologists, “It is not clear whether Omicron is more transmissible compared to other variants, including Delta.” It is also unknown whether this strain has any symptoms that are different from other COVID-19 strains, or if the new strain causes more severe symptoms.

Thankfully, the Center for Disease Control has made it clear that Omicron is not the major strain we need to watch out for right now, even if it does need to be on our radar, saying, “Delta continues to be the main variant circulating in the United States.”



Still, they recommend wearing a mask, “regardless of vaccination status.” Just because you’re vaccinated doesn’t mean you get a free no-mask pass!

Even though so little is known about Omicron, the WHO has reported that “current vaccines remain effective against severe disease and death.”

In order to remain safe from Omicron, it is recommended by the WHO to keep a one-meter distance from others, wear a mask, open windows, avoid poorly ventilated and crowded spaces, keep your hands clean, cough and sneeze into your bent elbow or a tissue, and to get vaccinated and receive your booster shot as soon as you are eligible.

Feature

No Homecoming for 2021

by Jessalyn Alessandri

The homecoming for the fall of 2021 has been canceled. For many, including this reporter, this would have been the last homecoming of our high school careers. I asked my fellow students what they thought about the fact that we do not have homecoming, and they gave mixed responses.

One sophomore, Victoria, said, “I think that it’s taking away the fun of high school, and a lot of parents are upset because they want us to experience the things that they experienced in high school...” Most students interviewed had a similar opinion, one that expressed frustration at the outcome the student council decided on.

A senior, Jordyn, said, “I’m kind of annoyed because it’s frustrating seeing other schools having homecoming because we don’t get one.” These frustrations have a solid background, because many local high schools, like Central Catholic High School, have

homecoming dances.

Our sense of community at Methuen High is so big, it often feels like one big family. One senior, Charis, said, “I think it’s disappointing [that we don’t have homecoming] because homecoming is such a big part of the community of Methuen high and it’s such a fun event.” Another student even brought up the fact that there may be a double standard. Makenna, a senior said, “I feel like we should have homecoming because we go to football games with no masks on, really close together. We literally just took senior photos, elbow to elbow for a picture, but we can’t have fun with homecoming?”

Although these events have been outdoors so the lack of masks makes sense, it is still frustrating. We do classes while wearing masks, walk the hallways with masks, and do clubs wearing masks, so why can't we do homecoming wearing masks?

Some students didn’t seem too bothered over the lack of homecoming this year. One senior, Bri, said this about how she feels about not having homecoming, “I feel fine because I have Band Comp, so I can never attend. But I feel like a lot of people are mad because that’s what they look forward to.” People who have never gone to homecoming and didn’t ever plan to probably feel the same way as her, simply indifferent. I even talked to a freshman, Bethany, and asked her how she felt. She told me she kind of felt indifferent, saying, “I’ve never had homecoming.”

Overall, some people didn’t like the decision, and some people didn’t care. In the end, this is just another example of huge experiences Covid-19 has taken from all of us, some of which we can’t get back.

The Texas 'Heartbeat' Bill

by Allison Kelly

A Texas law banning most abortions after six weeks was put into effect on September 1, 2010. The Texas Heartbeat Act was introduced on March 11, 2021 and was signed into law by Greg Abbott, the Governor of Texas, on May 19, 2021.

The law has no exceptions for cases that involve rape or incest. The law does, however, make exceptions for medical emergencies.

The law specially looks at when cardiac activity is present, and argues that six weeks is around when cardiac activity becomes detectable. For many women, though, six weeks is often before they even know they are pregnant.

A controversial feature of the Texas law is that it allows any private citizen to sue anyone who “aids and abets” an illegal abortion. Under this law, any private citizen who sues an abortion provider or anyone providing assistance to an abortion can be awarded up to \$10,000. A “whistleblower” website was created where people can submit tips about anyone they think is violating the law.

The Texas law would appear to contradict two Supreme Court decisions. *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), decided that all women have a right to an abortion, and that states cannot ban abortions before viability.

Other states have tried to enact bans but have been blocked from going into effect. The reason why Texas passed the law was because it was a “private civil right of action.”

The Texas law cannot be challenged until a private citizen seeks damage.



Protesters gather in opposition to the Texas 'Heartbeat' Bill

Courtesy of Google Images

Science National Honor Society Induction

by Lauren Schena

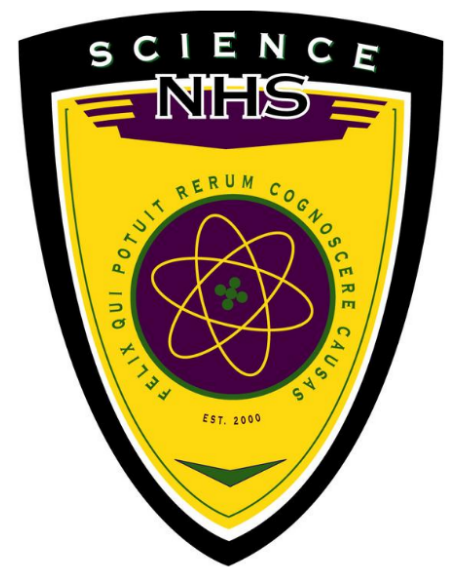
On Monday, November 15, the Methuen High School Science National Honor Society held its annual induction ceremony to recognize both new and current members who have exemplified academic excellence in their science courses.

As a way to make up for the unexpected virtual induction last year, SNHS advisor Mrs. Melanson planned a ceremony where everyone could experience a true, in person, induction. At the ceremony, 32 new members were inducted along with 41 current members.

Students were presented with a SNHS membership pin along with a glow stick (which the students symbolically lit at the end of the ceremony to represent the start of a new academic journey), solidifying their membership.

With the effects that COVID has had on large gatherings, it was a great victory for Mrs. Melanson and the students to experience a normal induction ceremony.

“Last year was great, we did the slideshow and the virtual presentation but it was much more personable, obviously, in person and it was nice to see everybody’s faces and make that connection,” Melanson said.



The Science NHS Crest.

Courtesy of Google Images

When asked how she felt about hosting an in-person ceremony as opposed to a virtual one, Mrs. Melanson said, “It was so nice to have everybody recognized one at a time and to include the recognition of people inducted last year as well.”

It’s clear that the effort and dedication put into this year’s induction ceremony was worth it because, although COVID has made things difficult, these hard working students deserve to be recognized.

With an in-person induction ceremony and the cracking of a new light (with glow sticks that is) the SNHS is off to a great start!

Be on the lookout for their upcoming science and service projects throughout the year. Their first project will be the science fair which is happening in the upcoming months. Hope to see you there!

Feature

Meet the Blue & White Editors!

Salma Boulal (Editor In Chief)

Salma Boulal is a junior at Methuen High School and she is the Editor-in-Chief for the Blue and White. She became a part of the Blue and White staff during her freshman year. Salma is also involved in Mock Trial, NHS, BIPOC Club, and the Multicultural Club. The Blue and White allows her to pursue her passion for writing. Salma hopes to major in political science in the future on a pre-law track. Her favorite subject is history and her favorite teacher is Ms. Nunes.

Allison Kelly

Allison Kelly is a senior at Methuen High School. She is the Feature Editor for the paper. Alongside Alexsa, she took journalism in her sophomore year and joined the Blue & White. She works at Perfecto's Caffe in North Andover. Allison plans to major in biomedical engineering and hopes to attend the University of Lowell. She found a hidden passion for writing articles which led her to joining the club. She enjoys interviewing her friends and teachers. Her favorite teachers are Ms. Brooks and Ms. Garlick.



Lauren Schena

Lauren Schena is a Methuen High School senior and she is our Arts and Entertainment Editor for *The Blue and White*. Lauren participates in numerous clubs outside of the paper including SADD, Student Council, National Honor Society, Science National Honor Society and the Relay for Life Leadership Committee. Lauren holds the role of President in Student Council and Historian in National Honor Society. Currently, Lauren is a baker at Crumbl Cookies but in the future she hopes to attend a four-year university and study broadcast journalism.

Alexsa Carreiro (Sports Editor)

Alexsa Carreiro is a senior at Methuen High School. She is our Sports Editor for the paper. She took journalism in her sophomore year and joined the Blue and White that same year. She plays lacrosse for the school team. She works at Atkinson Country Club in Atkinson, NH. Her favorite subject in school is science. Alexsa wants to be a pediatric nurse practitioner when she is older. Her favorite teacher is Ms. Brooks. Her favorite type of articles to write are the sports articles.



Crystal Castro (Digital Media Editor)

Crystal Castro is a ninth grade student and this is her first year as a Blue and White staff member. She hasn't written any articles yet but if she were to, she would enjoy writing in arts and entertainment. She joined the Blue and White because she is passionate about getting involved in the school community. Crystal's favorite thing about the Blue and White is creative liberty and the opportunity to learn about certain aspects of the school community through reading peers' articles. Her favorite subject is English and her favorite teachers are Dr. Kahn and Mr. Bellistri.

National Honors Society Induction

Congratulations to the Class of 2022!

Alexander Borrelli	Riley Rena
Alexis González	Julia Rowe
Emma Kwong	Meghan Ryan
Kylee McCue	Daniel Sullivan
Anailys Moreta Garcia	Diogo Zapata
Brady Morris	Carolyn Zorrilla



Congratulations to the Class of 2023!

Hannah Angelari	Michaela Henrick	Caitlyn Nims
Alyssa Archetti	Samantha Jabak	Eunice Njoroge
Ella Barron	Meghan Johnson	Kyleigh Norton
Henry Becuti Ortiz	Samantha Kendall	Lisa Patel
Joseph Becuti Ortiz	Owen Kneeland	Hailee Pickles
Salma Boulal	Celia Langone	Klea Pocoli
Ariana Castiello	Jessie Le	Gianna Silverio
Julianna Csizmadia	Emily Lindtveit	Rory Smith
Callie Delano	Ella Maclaren	James Sugden
Daniel Donahue	Makayla Mahoney	Brooke Tardugno
Samantha Driend	Alexander Martinez	Anesti Touma
Peyton Florence	Lyndsey McNulty	Mika Vuong
Hannah Forget	Muriel Merheb	Katrina Wong
Mazen Halloul	Domenic Miller	Jenevieve Young
Nathaniel Hashem	Philip Nguyen	

Relationship Goals

by Lauren Schena

The Methuen Ranger Cross Country team is Methuen High’s secret family—the secret being that not everyone knows how close this team really is.

Cross country may seem daunting to those on the outside, but it’s an entirely different environment within the group. “Cross country is more than just a team to me, over the past four years these people have become my family, my home away from home,” said senior captain, Olivia Rosano.

The accomplishments of this outstanding group are fueled by their commitment to each other and to their team. Not only do their bonds make them better runners, but they make them a closer family.

After being asked why she loves cross country, senior captain Emily Charest said, “I love it because the people I run with are not only my teammates but my best friends.” Having such a close knit environment allows this team to make friendships that will last a lifetime. When asked the same question, senior Julia Bryant said that she loves the support she gets from her teammates on and off the course. “The people I have met quickly became my best friends and they have helped me so much,” Bryant said.

Having a supporting team really makes a difference for these athletes because cross country poses physical challenges but it’s also a mentally difficult sport. “Cross country not only makes me a better runner, but a

better person because I have to overcome so many physical and mental obstacles,” said junior Alyssa Rosano. That’s why runners believe that even though it can be difficult at times, “the hard work we put in today will carry us into the opportunities of our future,” said junior Elise Anderson. Throughout it all, cross country teaches athletes that working hard and supporting each other creates earned success.

Senior captain, Miana Caraballo, can agree with this concept. Miana says that cross country makes her push through her own barriers and put the pressure aside. “It not only shows me that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to, but that hard work pays off,” she said. Being able to work as a part of a team and be successful all comes from the hard work and dedication that our cross country team puts in every single day.

For this group, teamwork comes from having close relationships. That’s why, you’ll likely find the cross country team bonding and spending quality time together even after they run a race. In regard to her experiences with the team outside of practice, senior Olivia DeNaro, said that she loves hanging out with her teammates away from practice and races, especially when the team goes out for ice cream at Jay Gees. “It’s a chance for all of us to get together, the boys team and the girls team, and since we don’t always spend a lot of time together at practice, it gives us time for more team bonding,” DeNaro said.

For a team as closely connected as this one, having fun and staying close is a key aspect of cross country. Varsity girls head coach, Marissa Nunes, says that she loves all of the athletes and, “they make it so easy to be a coach and so much fun.” These athletes and their coaches all know that they’re able to excel in such a difficult sport because of each other’s support and their close friendships.

Junior Ariana Castiello says that she loves cross country because of the success she’s had with her friends alongside her. She said her favorite part is that, “I get to have my best friends by my side throughout it all.”

In the end, the cross country team has had a very successful season, with a 7-3 record for both the boys and girls team, but the relationships within the group have always been their secret weapon. Newcoming runner, Karmen Goggin, can attest to the quick relationships formed within the group. “I’ve met so many amazing people who I’ve become so close to,” she said. Even being a new runner, close relationships within the team form quickly.

Even after a long season, the team was able to come together and support state qualifiers Freddy Coleman, Miana Caraballo, and Alyssa Rosano at their final race of the season and finish off strong. In the long run, this team knows that cross country can only go so far, but friendships like these last a lifetime.

A Leader for Girls' Soccer

by Allison Kelly

Emily Pfeil is a senior and captain of the Varsity Girls Soccer team. She started soccer 15 years ago; going from the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association (MYSA) Thunder Team to 4 years of High School Varsity.

This year, Pfeil and the girls varsity team made it to the second round of the state tournament as well as winning the Merrimack Valley Conference Division 2 (MVC2) title. As a defender she had one goal and three assists.

Her favorite game memory is singing the team’s chant after every game won. Her favorite practice memory was the “Rozzi Cup Competition.” The Rozzi Cup Competition is a 5v5 tournament the team does every Wednesday.



Emily Pfeil
Photo courtesy B&W Staff

In addition to her success on the field, Emily recently received the SOAR math award. The SOAR awards recognize academic achievement in a single subject area. She is also part of three different clubs: Students Helping Others, SADD, and Key Club. In her spare time, she also works at Heav’nly Donuts.

Emily plans to go to a business-focused 4 year college. She wants to receive a job in accounting and/or finance.

When asked to give advice for the girls on the team, Emily said, “I hope everything we accomplished this year pushes everyone forward next season and gives confidence to all that our hard work paid off and we earned every bit of it and you girls can 100% go very far next year!”



The team goes in for a huddle.
Photo courtesy B&W Staff

Atlanta Braves Take the World Series

by Jessica Voutour



The Braves celebrate their victory
Image Courtesy of Google

After 6 games in the World Series, the Atlanta Braves walked away with the 2021 title.

The Braves started game 6 with a 3-1 series lead in Houston. In the top of the third inning, the Houston Astros' starter pitcher, Luis Garcia, allowed a single by Ozzie Albies and walked Eddie Rosario. Jorge Soler then stepped in the box with two outs and two men on, and hit a 446-foot homer making the game 3-0.

Later, in the top of the fifth, Albies walked to lead off. Dansby Swanson then hits a two run homer 411-feet deep. Soler was walked on four pitches and Freddie Freeman hit a double, scoring Soler. This brought the game to 6-0.

During the top of the seventh, Freeman hit a home run to extend the lead to 7-0.

To end game 6 and the 2021 World Series, Yuli Gurriel grounded out to short as an easy out at first.

With the victory, the Atlanta Braves finally got another title after 26 years of waiting.

Girls Varsity Volleyball

by Ayva Aziz



The Methuen High School girls varsity volleyball team

Girls varsity volleyball is in the tournament!

The girls volleyball team, coached by Matthew Twomey, is one talented team. After having their season cut short last year, they came back this year better than ever. With summer workouts and a clinic, the Lady Rangers were ready for the season ahead.

Despite bus delays and postponed games the Rangers didn’t lose their energy, but battled and fought for every game. They had some amazing team wins, such as beating Central Catholic 3-0 with 29 assists by Avry Nelson, 20 kills by junior captain Sami Driend who then set a career high with 30 kills against Masconomet Regional, 7 kills by senior captain Kat Delap, 17 digs by Carolina Rodriguez, and 13 digs by senior captain Kaitlyn Tierney.

The team not only shows amazing teamwork on the court, but also outside of it. On one of their days off, the team helped landscape and renovate a home of a U.S. Marine.

With all their hard work they ended the regular season with a 12-8 record. With their 3-0 win over Chelmsford, the Rangers reached their goal and made it back to the tournament.

The Lady Rangers are now ranked 3rd in the Merrimack valley conference. They not only ended their season with a spot in the tournament but with 1000 team digs. Senior Avry Nelson ended with 500 assists and Sami Driend ended with 415 kills.

After this year the team will be losing 5 very talented seniors: captain Kat Delap, captain Kaitlyn Tierney, Avry Nelson, Julia Rowe, and Julianna Buck. While these 5 players will leave the the team will keep very talented players who will continue to grow. There is no doubt that this team will continue to put up a challenge.

MHS Boys Soccer Season Review

by Alexsa Carreiro

Methuen High School Boys Soccer is having their best season in years!

With their current record of 6-6-3, they sit at first place of the Merrimack Valley Conference, Division 2. They are currently ranked 18th in the Massachusetts North Division 1 and only need a few more points to qualify for the state tournament after tying Andover(2-2) and Billerica(0-0 & 1-1).

The teams wins this year include: Lawrence High(2-0), Dracut High(3-0 & 3-0), Haverhill High (3-1 & 6-0) and Tewksbury High(4-0). The team is on track to win their section of the MVC or become co-champions with Billerica. This will be based off of the outcomes of both teams final games.

In 2020, the team was unable to

play in the fall season because of multiple Covid-19 cases. This allowed the Rangers to be eligible to play in the newly created Fall 2 seasons.

Due to the majority of local teams having played in the normal fall season, the Rangers were forced to play a very select few teams that they normally would not have gotten the chance to. They played teams such as Winthrop High, Kipp Academy, Haverhill High and a few club teams who were also looking to build a schedule.

This year, the Rangers will graduate 10 seniors, including their three captains: Colby Keaney, Ethan Donahue and Johnathan Diaz. The Rangers will, however, be left with many talented underclassmen.

The Rangers are coached by Henry Marin, currently in his 4th year with the team.

MHS Football Captains

Captain Alexander Borrelli



Captain Joseph Pinto

Captain Samuel Kalivas



Captain Jason Silverio

Opinion/Arts and Entertainment

Busing Issues

by Aiden Howard

Many issues with buses have



Plenty of buses, but often not enough drivers.

Courtesy of Google Images

gain enough to make a living, and not many individuals are up to the task as well. They also have poor working conditions, especially during the pandemic.

A clear possible solution is to raise the salary per hour for bus drivers. They have done the same for nurses and doctors since they are in high demand, so it is fair if the same is done with bus drivers so they get enough pay.

Additionally, many states across the U.S. are attempting very different, yet also plausible

solutions to this bus shortage. As stated prior, Massachusetts is the only state as of now who is using the National Guard to transfer students, which these soldiers did not expect at all to be their assignment. For New York's case, they are attempting to speed up the licensing process for individuals in order to gain more bus drivers. Philadelphia is taking even a step further by encouraging parents to drive their own children to school in return for pay.

Of course, bus drivers are not the only careers the country is struggling to get more workers for, as there is fierce competition to hire nurses, waiters, daycare employees, and others.

Whatever the solution is, hopefully this dilemma is solved soon enough and children can all head to school safely and easily.

arrived all over the country. Many states, including Massachusetts, are being impacted by problems from the results of Covid-19 and generally low pay.

Many kids every day now do not have transportation to school and others do not even get the chance to go to school due to lack of transportation. This has gotten to the point that Massachusetts has sent the National Guard to drive students to school.

This could be a very common problem that may continue until Covid-19 settles down. In the meantime, there are some solutions to this situation.

With an average salary between \$20-25 per hour, this may at first seem enough to suffice as a living wage, but bus drivers often do not have the opportunity to work enough hours. Some drivers earn less than \$15,000 a year, which explains the decrease in bus drivers who cannot

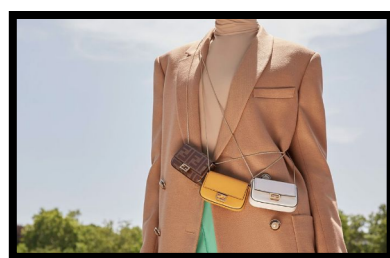
Popular Trends of 2021

by Ariana Castello

As 2021 comes to an end, it's time to look back to all the memories we have created.

This year saw many new phases and trends come and go. There were new food recipes and workout routines. But some of the choices we made when it came to fashion in 2021 were questionable. So here are my top fashion trends this year that I believe were the most unusual:

Micro Bags



Micro Bags are designer purses that can be from the size of a penny all the way to an iPhone, yet still cost thousands of dollars. Many designer brands such as

Burberry and *Le Chiquito* have also released their versions of the bag. *Dior* even came out with a micro bag that cost \$4,300! It was seen in *Chanel's* spring collection

of 2021 with many different types of accessories. They have been used as necklaces and bracelets as well.

Pit Viper Sunglasses

For something slightly more low end, Pit vipers are next on the list. *Pitviper* is an eyewear company particularly made for snow activities. The *Pitviper* company has a very bizarre marketing strategy and promotes itself as a "fun" brand. It wasn't just the glasses



that were unusual themselves, but the time period when they began to gain popularity. The brand came out in 2012, but many individuals suddenly bought the glasses around June of this year, since it

The SAT — To Take or Not to Take?

by Devosha Pearce

The Scholastic Assessment Test, or SAT, has been used by colleges nationwide for over a century to determine whether a student has the proper level of intelligence and academic skill required to attend and succeed at their school.

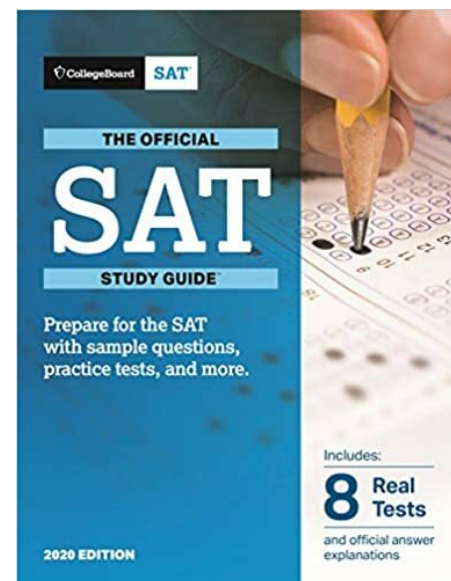
As modern scientists learn more about the human mind, and about intelligence reflecting on test scores over time, it has become public understanding that a standardized test is not often a proper reflection of a student's scholastic success, nor is it a clear reflection of their intelligence.

Cody Kommers, who studied social psychology at Oxford University, describes it best in his article for PsychologyToday.com, saying, "The only thing that standardized tests *can* measure is whether or not a student falls short. They're designed to poke and prod until a soft spot is found. Once the weakness is exposed, the shortcoming is cataloged and the process continues until another is identified. The best thing a standardized test can say about you is that you don't possess readily identifiable weaknesses. Standardized tests only measure the absence of weakness. They do not measure the presence of strength."

A standardized test such as the SAT does not show intelligence, nor does it show success in school. It only shows how well you can take a test.

This understanding led to the practice of not requiring the SAT, ACT, or other standard test in order to apply to college. Instead, you could submit your grades and use those as a reflection of your academic performance instead.

Some colleges, such as Bowdoin College in Maine, have been allowing



The SAT test--once an accepted requirement for college applications, has become optional for many higher education institutions.

Courtesy of Google Images

"test-optional" applications since 1969; however it has only recently gained popularity among a majority of colleges. Now, elite schools such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton are not requiring a standardized test score on their applications. Since schools aren't requiring them, the question becomes: do you really even need them?

My simple answer is no. If you don't have the time to study for the SAT, or don't have the money, or simply don't want to, and your colleges are test-optional, then don't take it.

The only time I would suggest taking the SAT when your colleges are test-optional is if you have the time and money, and are confident you will receive a good score. If your score is average, or lower than the average for the schools that you are applying to, then you don't want to submit it, since it could reflect poorly on you. However, submitting a high score to a college will show your aptitude, and will help your application.

I took the SAT this year, and am choosing not to submit the score because I am not satisfied with it and I don't have the time for a retake. It's that simple. You don't need to, and there is no incentive to unless you are an exemplary student, so don't! Spend your weekend doing homework, or sleeping in instead.

outfits during the summer season.

Jibbitz...or Just Crocs in General...



Jibbitz are little charms that have a variety of symbols to stick on Crocs. The Jibbitz either come in theme packs or individually, with their

most famous jibbit being the sloth this year, according to Spy.com. *Crocs* alone are questionable footwear, as their "best seller" is made of rubber and has multiple holes in the shoe. The Jibbitz have existed for a while, but are now coming back with new ways to style them, and there is a very large selection of Jibbitz and themes for everyone to choose from. Some people who own these products completely cover the entire front of the shoe, and some put only a few. It's left for the buyer's liking and customization!

Devastating Tragedy at Astroworld Festival

by Jessica Voutour



Crowd at AstroWorld



Travis Scott performing at AstroWorld

On November 5th, 2021, a fun day quickly turned into a traumatizing night for the fans of Travis Scott.

A deadly crowd surge left eight dead and many others injured. The sold-out festival had way more people than the 50,000 fan capacity. Videos show hundreds of people breaking down chained fences and barging through security. This

caused the festival to be over capacity, resulting in injury and death.

"They passed out. And they were on the ground and basically getting trampled. And no one would pick them up," witness Billy Nasser told CNN. The famous rapper claims he was unaware of what was happening in the crowds, but video evidence shows two fans climbing on stage

informing the camera crew and screaming at Scott to stop the show because people were dying.

The cameraman scolded the fans and threatened them to get off the stage or they would be escorted from the event.

This tragic event continues to be played out in ongoing legal battles.



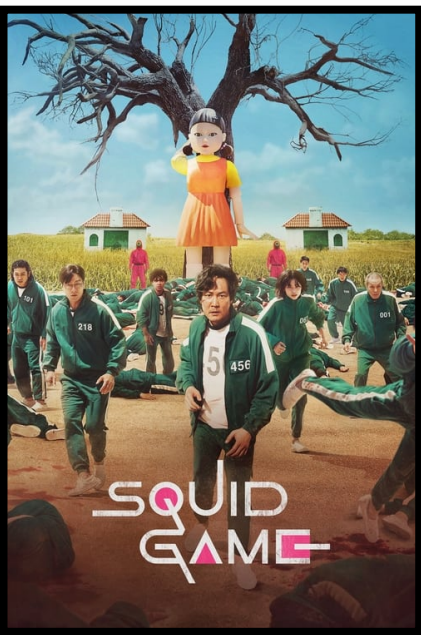
Victim Memorial



AstroWorld Victims

Squid Game: The Most Popular Netflix Show

by Taryn Roux



The Netflix hit *Squid Game* is a South Korean drama directed by Hwang Dong-hyuk. It's a show about people who are in debt, and is set in South Korea. The people in debt are lured into a contest where they must play a series of kids games to win a huge prize. The catch is, if you do something wrong or lose, you die.

In *Squid Game*, the contest is run by workers who wear red suits and masks with shapes of squares, circles, and triangles. They carry weapons on them and rarely speak.

The people who are fighting to stay alive and win the



prize money wear green suits with numbers on them. There are 456 people that take part in the game. Over time, the fear of others and the hunger to kill other competitors grows intense.

45.6 billion won, or roughly \$38 million, is waiting for the winner of the game. For the players, it all feels amazing until they become friends with

someone and later find out that person has to die.

Some of the games that they play are classic, like red light, green light and tug of war. They also had games that you may not have seen before, like ddakji, dalgona, and marbles.

In *Squid Game*, six games are played in total. The final game matches up the last remaining contestants to decide the winner.

The show is an intense look at what happens when people are in debt and need the money, and will do whatever it takes to get all the money and win the game.



Squid Game cast from left to right: Lee Jung-Jae, HoYeon Jung, Hwang Dong-hyuk (director), and Park Hae-Soo

Adele's New Album

by Hailey Boumel

After six years, Adele has finally announced a new album, titled ‘30.’

Adele released her new single “Easy on Me,” which climbed through the Billboard's Hot 100 Singles chart and is currently at number 1. The song broke the record on Spotify with 24 million streams in a single day.

Her inspiration for her new single is her divorce with her former husband and her pursuit for happiness.

Her divorce greatly influenced her new album. It has almost been three years after her divorce and she is now able to tell her story through what she does best, music.

Adele told Vogue that the album feels, “like self destruction, then self reflection and then sort of a self redemption.”



Adele has talked about how her son was the one that pushed her to write “Easy on Me” as well as other singles on her upcoming album. Adele said after their divorce he would ask simple questions such as, “Why don’t you love my dad anymore?” She answered his questions in her song.

So why the title ‘30?’ Adele states that this is when her life “fell apart.” She got married when she was thirty, but that didn’t last as long as expected. After this split at the ripe age of 30 she has been through hell and back on her journey to find happiness.

Since it has been so long since her last released album, it is expected that this album will be huge in the music industry. The rest of the album was released on November 19, and has currently sold over a million copies.

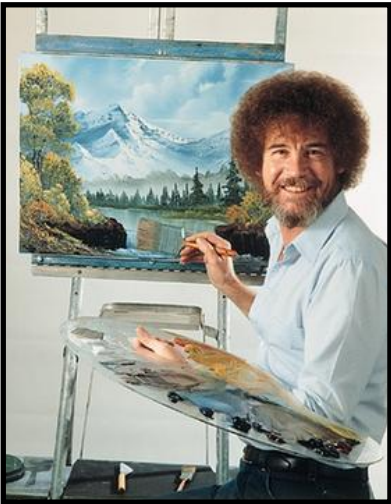
Seven Wicked Simple Halloween Costumes

by Marissa Mahoney

It's that time of year to get into the Halloween spirits, so I’ve prepared a list of seven simple costume ideas that can easily be put together at the last minute.

1. Cat: A cat is a good choice for a simple Halloween costume, because it is open to change. You can do whatever you want with the outfit, but as long as you have the cat ears, nose, and whiskers, everyone will know what you are being. All you need is... a black outfit, a cat ears headband, and some sort of face paint or makeup to draw on a nose and whiskers.

2. Bob Ross: Bob Ross is a nice choice for a simple Halloween costume, because it is fairly simple



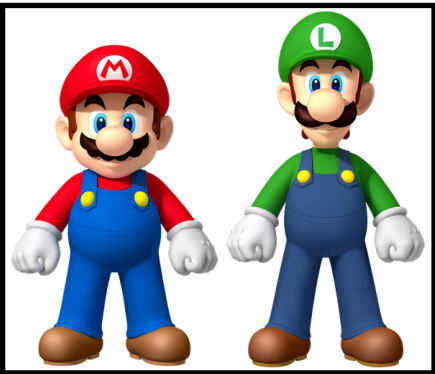
to put together, and many people know who he is. Plus, who doesn’t love Bob Ross? All you need is... a simple button down shirt, a pair

of jeans, a wig and beard that looks similar to his, a paint pallet, and a paint brush to top everything off.

3. Identity Thief: An identity thief is a good choice for an easy Halloween costume because it is not as popular as others. All you need is... any clothes you want (preferably black), “Hello, my name is...” name tags, and some sort of Halloween face mask. Write random names on the name tags

and stick them all over your clothes.

4. Mario or Luigi: Mario and Luigi are good choices for Halloween costumes because they are a very popular duo, so everyone will know who you are. Another plus to these costumes is, the outfits can be fit to your style. They don’t have to be set to a certain style, you can choose. All you need is... a red or green top, jeans, or overalls, a red or green hat, a fake mustache, and white gloves.



5. Sports Commentator: Being a sports commentator for Halloween is not a bad choice considering the simplicity of it. All you need is... a fake headset and some sort of sports outfit.

6. Athlete: An athlete is a good choice for a simple Halloween costume because most, if not all, of the components of it can be found at home. All you need is... a regular outfit with a sports jersey of choice, and any accessories if you want. (i.e. wear a baseball cap or a baseball glove with a baseball jersey)

7. Burglar: A burglar is a good choice for a simple Halloween costume because it is easy enough to replicate. All you need is... a black shirt or a black and white striped shirt, black pants, and a domino mask (a mask that covers around the eyes).

Fall Fashion Trends 2021

by Victoria Blanchette

Now that summer is out of the way, fall fashion is in full swing.

Teens and young adults ages 15-24 are seeking out new fall fashion trends. Pinterest is one of the biggest inspirations for creating outfits during the fall time. These outfits can be cute, comfy and spunky. Fall fashion brings out the fun in people because it allows them to be creative with how they dress.

Hailey Boumel, 15, sophomore at Methuen High School says, “There’s a lot of new trends going around that I’m quite excited for and I’m excited for fall thrifting.” Boumel gets a lot of her cute fall outfit inspiration from thrift shopping. “You can find a lot of cute fall sweaters and layering pieces at the thrift store.”

Thrift shopping is an amazing way to find pieces of clothing to make fall fashion as cute and comfy as possible. Jessalyn Alessandra,17, senior at Methuen High School says, “ I think this fall academia is really in, like with white collar shirts underneath sweaters.” Alessandra believes that bootcut jeans are also a part of making fall fashion fun. “ I think wider leg jeans or straight leg jeans are in right now. At first I wasn’t on board with those jeans , because I hate bootcut jeans, but now I think I’m fine with it.”

Sweaters, leather jackets, blouses, and so many other pieces of clothing have made so many fall fashion statements that have been trendy recently. Teens and young adults all over the world see fall fashion as a fun, comfy and unique style that brings out so many personalities.



Arts & Entertainment

Spider-Man: No Way Home

by Lauren Schena

Whether you're a Marvel fan or just a person with a cell phone, by now you've probably heard about the new Spider-Man movie.

As the days grow closer to the Spider-Man: No Way Home release date, December 17, 2021, fans have been going wild. With debut posts from starring actors Tom Holland, Zendaya, and Jacob Batalon receiving millions of likes and views, this release is sure to be a smashing success.

In addition, the [official YouTube trailer](#), which aired four weeks ago, has gained over 60 million views, leaving fans peaked with excitement for the highly sought out premiere.

Through a whirlwind of rumors, theories, and hopes for the new movie, it's clear that Marvel has high expectations to live up to. When lead actor, Tom Holland, confirmed on his Instagram that "the multiverse is real," fans (including myself) suspected that the movie would unveil characters only seen in previous Spider-Man movies.

Now that the trailer has been released, confirmation of this



Photo courtesy of Google

theory has fans (quite literally) marveled. Returning villains from previous Spider-Man movies include Doctor Octopus, The Green Goblin, and Electro.

Now, one of the most widespread rumors (that still remains unconfirmed by Marvel Studios) is the chance of guest appearances by previous Spider-Man actors Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield. With the official trailer already revealing the appearance of previous villains played by the same actors, this rumor has only grown in popularity. This creates an interesting concept because having these actors could tie together the different dimensions of the spider-verse.

It's clear to see that No Way Home, through its built up excitement and promising unknowns, has fans on the edge of their seats.

With tickets on sale, it's the perfect time to reserve your spot in the theater and see what all the rage is about (and if you're anything like me, your tickets are already good to go!).

Best Winter Coffee Flavors

by Victoria Blanchette

As the fall season quickly comes to an end, winter coffee flavors are becoming people's yearly favorites.

When it comes to coffee lovers, they have a certain soft spot for flavors that bring loads of joy during the winter season.



Jordyn Graves, a senior at Methuen High School, states, "I don't drink coffee but the peppermint mocha hot chocolate from Starbucks is a good flavor and fits the Christmas season."

Graves, 17, enjoys the excitement of the peppermint flavor getting her ready for the holidays.

"Peppermint is a key winter coffee flavor to have because with the holiday season coming up, peppermint reminds people of candy canes and it gets them excited for the holidays."

If you are like Graves and don't normally drink coffee, winter is a great time to try new coffee flavors that might become your new obsession. The comfort and joy coffee brings to so many during the winter time helps make



it be the best time of year. Sophomore Hailey Boumel, 15, explains, "I personally think the best winter coffee flavor is sugar cookie, especially the sugar cookie almond milk latte at Starbucks." Boumel finds the sugar cookie latte to be comforting. "It is so sweet and such a comforting drink and definitely something you should try."

What is the reason for coffee lovers' obsession with winter coffee flavors? According to coffee service Joe's Garage, "Winter is prime time for flavored coffee." During the winter season people tend to lean towards winter flavors because it reminds them of what emotional connections the holiday season brings.

The winter coffee flavors that have brought joy to so many, so get ready to add some spice to the incoming start to a brand new year!

Hawkeye Review

by Kate Fitzpatrick



Hawkeye is the latest chapter in the Marvel television universe. Debuting on Thanksgiving and wrapping just before Christmas, the show features Jeremy Renner as Clint Barton/Hawkeye, along with Hailee Steinfeld as the expert archer, Kate Bishop.

Based on the 2012 comic series, *Hawkeye*, created by Matt Fraction and David Aja, the new Disney+ series reveals many newly discovered facts about Hawkeye's character, including his deafness.

This action-filled mini-series also introduces us to new characters such as Bishop, Jacques Duquesne, and of course, Lucky the dog, all of which are featured in the comics.

Yelena Belova, who was

featured in Marvel's *Black Widow*, makes a crucial appearance after she was told by the mysterious Valentina Allegra de Fontaine that Barton was the one responsible for her sister, Natasha Romanoff's, death.

New viewers can expect to get six episodes of the sarcasm, comedy, drama, and dramatic irony that they have come to expect from a blockbuster Marvel production.



Marvel Studios' Hawkeye Cast and Crew



Taylor Swift's “All Too Well”

by Hailey Boumel



Taylor Swift is one of the most iconic artists of this generation. Recently she has re-released her song “All Too Well” and even made a short film to go with it starring Sadie Sink and Dylan O’Brien. What can’t this powerhouse of a singer do?

Taylor Swift originally released “All Too Well” in 2012 in her album “Red.” This album was inspired by her relationship with Jake Gyllenhaal.

Gyllenhaal was 29 at the start of their relationship, while Taylor was only 20. Her song “All Too Well” explains her relationship with Jake Gyllenhaal.

In her song she sings “You said if we had been closer in age, maybe it

would have been fine, and that made me want to die,” and, “ I was never good at telling jokes, but the punchline goes, I’ll get older, but your lovers stay my age.”

This reflects Swift’s view on how Gyllenhaal treated her during their relationship. Currently Gyllenhaal is 40 and dating a 25-year-old model.

Swift never initially intended to release her unedited version, but she couldn’t resist the requests of her fans. On her Twitter she posted “The next album that I’ll be releasing is my version of Red, which will be out November 19. This will be the first time you hear all 30 songs that were meant to go on Red. And hey, one of them is even ten minutes long.”



Top 5 Nostalgic Animated Christmas Movies

by Jessalyn Alessandri

Watching holiday movies is one of the best parts of the holiday season. Sitting by the fireplace and turning on the TV to watch an animated movie just fills me with nostalgia. These are, in my opinion, the top 5 best animated holiday movies to watch this Christmas if you want some nostalgia. I celebrate Christmas, so this piece will not include Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Yule, and many other holidays in these winter months.

- 1. *Santa Claus Is Comin’ to Town*. Released in 1970 by Rankin/Bass Productions, it’s a stop motion Christmas TV special. It tells the story of how Santa Claus came to be as we know him today. I love stop motion movies, so this is great. It has cool songs, a cute theme, and fun animations.
- 2. *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Released in 1964 by Videocraft International, Ltd. (which later was known as Rankin/Bass Productions), it is another Christmas stop motion TV movie. The

story of Rudolph is a classic about acceptance and tolerance for others who are different. It has an elf dentist, a prospector, an abominable snowman, and a reindeer with a luminescent nose. It is kind of bad that everyone hated Rudolph until he was useful (lighting up the front of the sleigh) and up until he defeated the monster. It was still kind of cute though, especially with the songs. I liked, “We Are Santa’s Elves,” and “Silver and Gold.”

- 3. *The Year Without a Santa Claus*. Released in 1974 by Rankin/Bass Productions, it is a TV stop motion Christmas special. It tells the story of how Santa Claus decided to take a vacation from Christmas, and how two elves have to find proof that people still believe in Santa. By far the best part of the whole movie is the songs, “The Snow Miser Song,” and, “The Heat Miser Song.” They are absolute bangers and deserve more

recognition. The rest of the movie is okay, it’s cute and all, but the songs are really the best part.

- 4. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* Released in 1966, this animated Christmas TV special is a classic, at least to me. It is based on a book from 1957 with the same name, by Dr. Seuss. The movie tells the story about the Grinch, someone who lives on a mountain above Whoville and tries to ruin Christmas for them. My favorite part of the movie is the song, “You’re a Mean One, Mr. Grinch” which had lyrics written by Dr. Seuss himself.
- 5. *Frosty the Snowman*. Released in 1969 by Rankin/Bass Productions, (evidently a favorite of mine) it is an animated Christmas TV special (not stop motion this time!). It’s Frosty the Snowman, the song is cute and the hat is cool. It’s pretty good.



Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer



The Year Without a Santa Claus



Frosty the Snowman



Santa Claus is Comin' to Town



How the Grinch Stole Christmas

The Blue & White

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