

WESTFORD ACADEMY GHOSTWRITER



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Priceless

WPS set to say goodbye to 244 years of dedication from retirees



Photo by Katie Fonden

WA's ten upcoming retirees -- (left to right) Christopher Gorham, David Delong, Bill Bowen, Joan Mitchell, Karen Halloran, Tracy McLaughlin, Stephanie Gosselin, John Nidzgorski, Mark Miller, and Erik Ruhmann -- pose in front of the school. After a collective 244 years of service to the district and its students, these esteemed staff members will be leaving by the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year. While they will be missed by the WPS community, their countless contributions cannot be forgotten. To read more about each of the individual retirees, flip to pages 10 through 13.

Carmichael commits to Ohio State University

TESSA CZADO
Co-SPORTS EDITOR

Most high school athletes spend their off-season in recovery or practicing their sport with the aim of playing on one collegiate team. However, senior Cassidy Carmichael braves not only the ice in the winter but also the field in the spring, and has climbed to the highest level in each of her athletic pursuits.

Carmichael committed to The Ohio State University (OSU) for both hockey and lacrosse when she was in her junior year of high school due to the school's focused environment and its competitive D1 sports programs.

The reason she chose OSU rather than Boston College or Penn State, which she had previously looked at, was because she felt The Ohio State University best suited her own personal needs and her goal of being a dual sport athlete.

Ever since she first started playing lacrosse and hockey at around five years old,

Carmichael knew she wanted to pursue both sports at a higher level.

"I've played hockey and lacrosse since I was about five or six [and] I've always wanted to play both sports [in college]," Carmichael said.

For Carmichael, her dedication to athletics extends beyond WA. Every year since she was a freshmen, Carmichael has transferred to the North American Hockey Academy (NAHA) in Boston to play for their ice hockey team in the winter. After the winter season, she comes back to Westford Academy to join the girls' lacrosse team and becomes a key player in their spring season.

Carmichael has been the captain of the WA Girls' Lacrosse team for two years and, according to WA Girls' Lacrosse Coach Julie Oliver, Carmichael has been a great asset to her team.

"Kassidy is focused, she drills in as soon as she steps on that field, and is always thinking strategically. She

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Dua awarded '25 valedictorian

GRACE HSU
Co-MANAGING EDITOR

After four years of dedication and hard work, senior Sahil Dua has earned the title of Class of 2025 Valedictorian. In addition to this accomplishment, Dua has contributed to Westford Academy in many aspects.

Whether it be as co-captain of the varsity swim and dive team, vice president of DECA, treasurer of National Honor Society, or one of the representatives of Student Council, Dua serves as an example of what someone can accomplish when they

are dedicated and have a genuine desire to challenge themselves.

Despite balancing several different extracurricular activities during his high school career, Dua has felt the most drawn to the business field, with his passion culminating in his commitment to the Stern School of Business at New York University and his major in Finance. In the future, he hopes to get his master's in business and become an investment banker.

For the full interview with Dua, flip to page 8.

Bulat named '25 salutatorian

KATE KELLY
Co-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Following four years of commitment, perseverance, and risk taking, senior Kaylee Bulat has been recognized as the class of 2025 salutatorian. With no regrets, Bulat spent her time at WA doing what she loved and finding ways to expand her horizons.

She has committed to Boston College and will be majoring in biology come fall. Eventually Bulat hopes to enter medical school and become a doctor. She has channeled these passions into HOSA and aiming

to get her EMT certification. As she describes it, this career is a perfect combination of her two priorities: science and helping others.

Bulat has spent her time at WA constantly challenging herself and taking risks, whether that's in AP Chemistry or teaching herself how to bake. Despite a consistently rigorous workload, she expresses how a genuine interest in learning has motivated her.

For the full interview with Bulat, flip to page 9.

Griffin the Band's rise to fame

NYLAH GAUDREAU
Co-NEWS EDITOR

At 7:00 a.m., they are just your classmates, lugging backpacks and weaving through long cafeteria lines. Once the bell rings, they are Griffin the Band, entertaining 700,000 people from LA to the Netherlands. Recognized by stars like SZA, they have riveted the world with their shockingly impressive impersonation of Lois Griffin from Family Guy and heavy-hitting riffs. What started as jam sessions in a bedroom has morphed into hundreds of thousands of likes across all platforms, proving even high schoolers can birth the next big thing in heavy metal.

Each band member's journey to music is uniquely personal to them. Junior Daniel Fonck's passion for metal came later due to his family's disinterest in the genre. As he started to expand his music taste, he felt a desire to learn the guitar on his own accord. Meanwhile, junior Asha Ghai, sophomore Maddox Chartier, and junior Keira Timlin were first introduced to the genre through their parents who took part in the punk and goth scene throughout the 1980s



Photo by Katie Fonden

Timlin, Chartier, Fonck, and Ghai pose for a photo together.

and 90s.

"My dad has always been in a band throughout my entire life, and drum sets have always been lying around. I've played almost every day since I was four. I just love the drums. It's so much fun," Chartier said. "My parents were really into rock music, especially punk [rock] in the 90s. Picturing my dad with spiked hair, a mohawk and nose and eyebrow piercings is always really funny to think about."

The meeting of the band-mates was a long, triumphant process that spanned multiple

years. Ghai and Timlin were first acquainted with one another while they attended the same elementary school. A friendship blossomed after they started to message through Instagram. Ghai then started to perform in a band but it failed due to the absence of a drummer.

Chartier was a known and experienced drummer, so when he expressed an interest in joining a band to one of their mutual friends, he was quickly added to a group chat to set their plans in motion. However, they still had one more spot

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It's okay to let
your inner kid
shine through

ELITSA KOLEVA
GRADUATING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

If I were to write up a description of each year of high school, put it in a pretty box, and tie a bow around it, it would probably go something like this: freshman year was a shock. Sophomore year was growth. Junior year was intense. And senior year, well, unironically, people think of it as the year of self reflection.

In high school, everything seemed like a simulation of real life; the responsibilities of leading, of organizing events, of turning in work on time, of collaborating with my peers. It often felt like I was already an adult living in a world where every minor flaw would impact the whole trajectory of my life. And this world all fit into a 5-block, 7:35 a.m. to 1:55 p.m. rotating schedule, with frequent after school activities.

I became so used to this kind of structure and the responsibilities I put on myself, that I failed to realize that life doesn't always need to fit a schedule. It's the moments that make us human, the imperfections that we admit to, that make us feel free.

Now, here I am in my

senior year of high school, with my driver's license and eighteen years of living on this earth and...yup, last time I checked, I still felt like a kid.

But that's okay too. Actually, it was my senior year, when I officially became an adult, that I started acting more like a kid than I ever did during my time at WA. I had more time to hangout with friends, sleep in late, even enjoy my classes without having all of the stress that came with having to be perfect all the time. It was then that I realized how, all this time, the scores I got in school mattered little compared to the person I've built myself up to be.

The thing is, you determine your own worth with the goals you set for yourself, the choices you make, or even by just being a good person. So I'm here to tell you that, if you ever feel lost, stressed, or a little bit overwhelmed, maybe giving into that chaotic energy isn't a bad thing.

Me? I am always going to be ten minutes late to every hangout. I'm always going to procrastinate on stressful assignments. I'm always going to blow every minor test out of proportion. And I most certainly will continue sprinting to my morning classes in college too.

Writing a letter to
my 14-year-old self

SAANVI ARORA
EXECUTIVE NEWS EDITOR

A hazy grayish tint lines your vision, convoluting your thoughts. A fleeting moment passes by when you feel dizzy, but you ignore it. "Must just be sleep deprivation," you think to yourself. Even though you know you don't feel well, you still push yourself to take the test, go to the practice, attend the meeting. "It's okay, I'm okay," you say.

You push yourself until you reach the limit where you've pushed yourself too far. And I know that you, my 14-year-old self, definitely reached that limit one too many times.

Looking back on the beginning of my high school career, I know now that I should not have ignored my body telling me to give myself a break. I remember the all-consuming thought I would have in those moments -- that if I missed a single day of school or my extracurriculars, I would fall behind. I would dwell on the thought that stepping off the expected path would cause irreparable damage to my chances of getting into college.

I wish that you, my 14-year-old self, realized the importance of slowing down and enjoying the moment, because at the end of the day, you were only 14 once. There was no point in rushing through high school, ignoring the physical and mental health struggles you faced, in an attempt to chase after a future that will come no matter what you do.

As I sit here, finally having the answer to the college question that I stressed myself out over for years, I can safely say that giving yourself grace would not have hurt your college prospects. Now I know

And always
remember, it is
okay to not be
okay.

that taking
a break
if you're
having a
bad day
or week
is more
important
than
appearing
perfect for

a transcript. Whether it's a physical or mental discomfort, please do not ignore it. If you need a break, take it. Utilize help to get better because, no matter what, the thought of getting into a good college doesn't matter if you cannot sustain yourself through it. And always remember, it is okay to not be okay.

Love,
Your 17-year-old self.

GHOSTWRITER MISSION
STATEMENT:

The Westford Academy *Ghostwriter* is dedicated to delivering relevant and accurate news to the Westford community. We aim to uphold the highest standards of journalistic integrity in all of our coverage, while also emphasizing the cultural diversity and different backgrounds of our student body. We hope to act as a forum for allowing productive debate and devote ourselves to the representation of underrepresented voices. As an award winning publication, we strive to foster the creativity of our staff, respect the varying ideas and perspectives of others, and make a commitment to grow as journalists and as people.

The *Ghostwriter*, as a student newspaper, keeps in mind these goals:

- To increasingly utilize aspects of multimedia in stride with current trends in professional media and journalism
- To deliver fair, unbiased coverage of school and community news and events
- To keep integrity, respect, and ethics at the forefront of our reporters' and editors' minds.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Submissions to the *Ghostwriter* are welcome from members of the WA community. Please email thewaghostwriter@gmail.com to set up a meeting with the advisors and the editorial board to discuss any necessary revisions. All submissions are subject to edits and clarifications. Letters to the editor are published as independent works that are not affiliated with the *Ghostwriter* staff.

Elitsa,
Congratulations on your graduation!
We are so proud of the kind, smart,
wonderful young woman that you are!



Love,
Mom, Dad, Vicky, Uncle Peter,
Aunt Vihra, Grandma, and Krum

Senior reflection: what I wish I'd known

DEEPA GAUTAM
GRADUATING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I spent a lot of high school worrying about what I didn't know. Whether it be with classes, clubs, or friendships, it was during these years that my indecisive side shined. I was constantly afraid of making mistakes and finding myself deep in regrets by senior year. Now that senior year has finally arrived, I'm surprised to say that I'm not even close to feeling the regret I once feared.

Looking back, there's so much I wish my freshman self had understood earlier.

I wish I'd known earlier that everyone is learning as they go too.

When I moved to Westford the year before high school, I quickly realized that the school system was well known for a reason. Classes were hard. Students were driven. And, compared to the two sole clubs at my old school, opportunities were endless. It was easy to feel like everyone else had it all

figured out; they were joining the right clubs, taking the right classes, and finding the right friends.

Everyone but me knew exactly what they were doing, right? Four years (and hundreds of very relatable conversations) later, I can guarantee that they didn't.

I wish I'd known that growth isn't always a glamorous feeling. Sometimes it feels like staying up too late, rewriting the same paragraph for an article ten times. Other times, it's speaking up in a meeting and regretting how you worded it. Growth is being able to look forward, knowing that confidence means simply accepting that you're not perfect.

I wish I'd known that you don't have to be confident to get involved. I wish I'd known that, by the end, you'll actually question why you were nervous at all.

I wish I'd known that the assignments I spent the most

time worrying about would not be the things I remembered most. That you can fail a test, cry some tears, write a bad essay and still come out grateful for all the things that went right.

I wish I'd known that I somehow wouldn't end up regretting anything. While taking Algebra 2 sophomore year came close, I've come to appreciate even my hardest classes. The moments where I decided it was okay to struggle, get better, and stop taking everything so seriously were what really defined my high school experience.

The more I think about it, however, I realize that maybe the point isn't to know any of this in advanced. It was only by learning to live through all the moments, no matter how awkward, uncertain, or overwhelming they were, that I actually learned why these lessons matter.

So, above all, I wish I'd known that it's okay not to know.

Griffin the Band's rise to fame

Continued from page 1

they needed to fill: a guitarist. On an eager scroll through Snapchat, Ghai landed on Fonck playing an impressive cover of the legendary musician Dimebag Darrell on his guitar. With one swipe of hand, Griffin the Band, decidedly named after Lois Griffin from Family Guy, was officially born.

Originally, the band did covers of renowned metal musicians and musical groups. However, when that did not seem to work, they turned to more improvised methods which currently involve jamming out together and seeing what comes out of it. When a general idea is formed, Fonck and Chartier curate a beat that Timlin later follows on bass. Ghai then listens to the final product, constructs lyrics, and establishes a tempo. The different elements are mashed

together to create a song that they will later record and publish for the public to hear.

To announce Griffin's debut, the four decided to post their improv sessions on social media. Ghai was already accustomed to the spotlight since she had previously posted a video of her doing the vocals to the song "Twist" by Korn. Shortly after posting, the clip went viral, with fans clamoring for more. With this in mind, the four posted their most recent song onto TikTok in April, an improvised piece featuring an impersonation of Lois Griffin that would unknowingly become a viral sensation.

"I told them that I wanted to do a breakdown where I talk as Lois Griffin and then it just turned to metal and they improv over my screams of terror. I had the video footage, and I just decided to post it and see what happens," Ghai said.

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Thank You to All of Our Graduating Senior Journalists!



DEEPA
GAUTAM



ELITSA
KOLEVA



JACKIE
CLAY



SAANVI
ARORA



CARISSA
SCHUTT

Congratulations Saanvi!



You did it! We are so proud of you and are so excited to see how great you do in college and beyond.
Love, Mom, Dad and Kavya

Congratulations, Carissa!



You've worked hard, made lasting memories, and now it's time to take on the world! We are so proud of everything you've accomplished and can't wait to see where your next adventure leads. No matter what, keep dreaming big, embracing every challenge, and staying the kind, passionate person we admire so much!

Love always,
Mom, Dad and Tyler

Drum beats & Family Guy: Griffin the Band's rise to fame

Continued from page 3

"Within the first five seconds of the video being posted, it had 120 likes. I went home and it went up to 100,000 likes and people were yelling at us to make a Spotify account and release a single," Ghai said. Griffin has many different

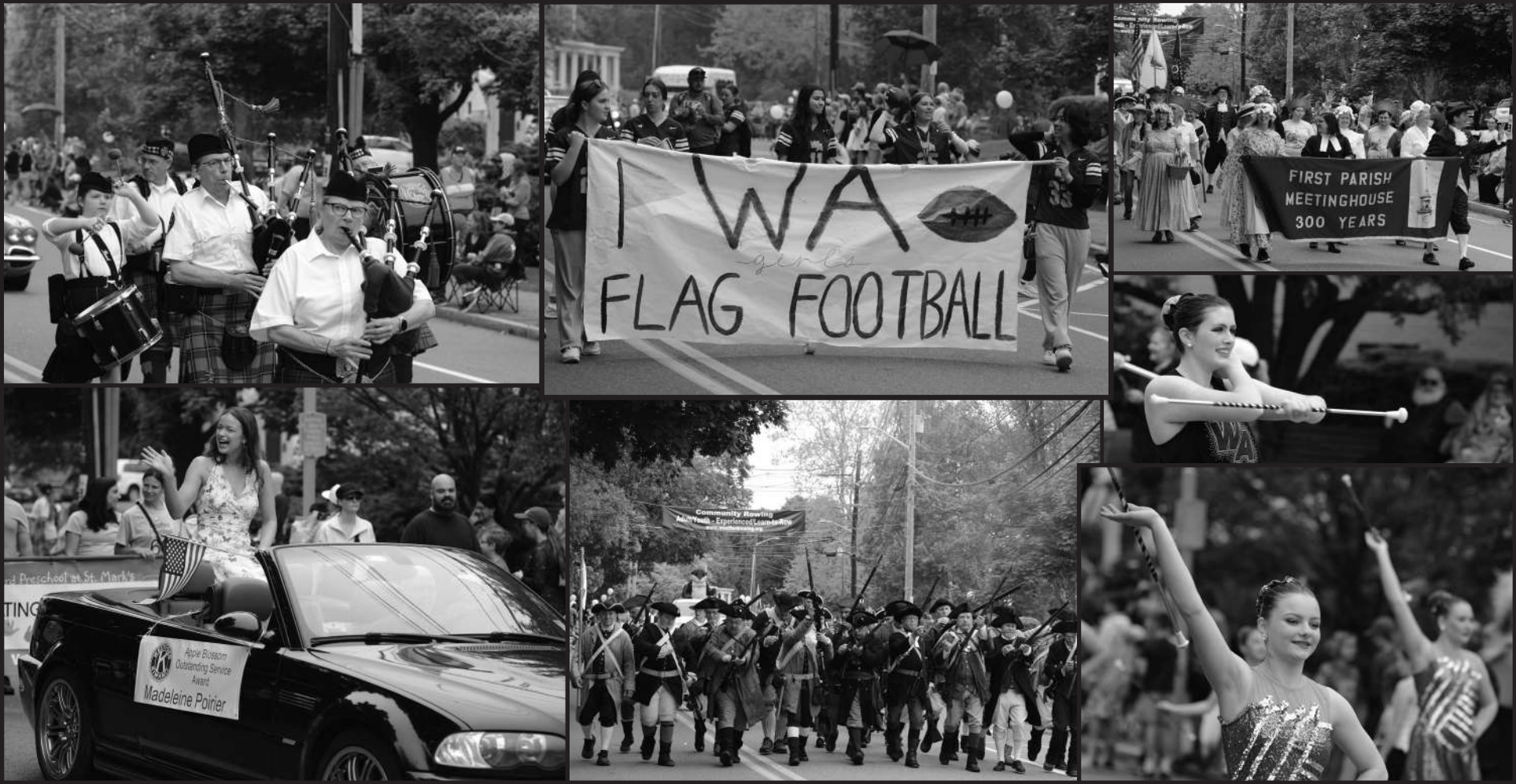
aspirations for the future of their musical career. At school, they hope to appear in more Listening Lunches, an opportunity for musicians of all abilities to sing and play instruments in the library while others listen as they eat their lunch. On a larger scale, fans of Griffin have been begging the

band to tour in various places around the nation, including Los Angeles, Chicago, Las Vegas, Ohio, and Rhode Island. "We have a lot of fans in the Netherlands. They're our second most popular listeners on Spotify. It's insane," Fonck said. "Someone from New Zealand was asking us to

come there. We have tons of Australians in our DMs asking us to come to Australia." As a very community-oriented group, the band plans to commission WA students to film their upcoming music video and make cover art for their most recent project: an album. "We're really excited to

start this next step of our musical career and we have lots of ideas of what we're going to be doing next for the album," Timlin said. Follow Griffin the Band @griffintheband on all social media platforms. Listen to their music on Spotify through the username Griffin.

Apple Blossom Parade reaches 56 years of celebrating Westford



Photos by Gabriel Freeman

(Clockwise starting from upper left): The musicians of Westford & District Pipe and Drums perform, Westford Academy's Flag Football team holds up their banner, the First Parish Church celebrates 300 years, a Westford Academy color guard member twirls her baton, a twirler of the Suburbanettes Twirl Team performs with her baton, the Westford Minutemen reload their muskets, Westford Kiwanis award winner Madeleine Poirier smiles at the crowd.

Alana,
Congrats to our WA Graduate! We're
incredibly proud of all you have
accomplished—Tulane is lucky to
have you! Roll Wave!



Love, Mom, Dad & Heath

Caroline,
You are awesome! We love your motivation,
tenacity, independence and your wry sense of
humor. Congratulations on all your achievements.
We can't wait to see what the next year brings.



Love,
Mom, Dad, and Kyle

WA sports teams affected by Nutting vote

IMAAN CHOUDHRY
Co-News Editor

A motion to appropriate \$2,000,000 to fund the installation of new synthetic turf at Nutting Field failed at Westford’s annual Town Meeting on March 2, 2025, causing concerns about the condition and safety of the current turf field.

After the failure of the motion, there have been talks of changing the field to authentic grass. A non-binding resolution to install natural grass was put to a vote later in the meeting, passing 347-66. The Westford Parks & Recreation Commission met on Monday, May 5 to address the vote and plans for the field.

“The biggest concerns are maintenance and the translation between grass and turf,” WA senior and Boys’ Soccer captain Lucas Dos Santos said. “Turf is really easy to maintain but with grass you have to mow consistently [...] in many cases [the] field is impossible to play on at a high level.”

Multiple WA teams currently play at Nutting Field, including Girls’ Field Hockey in the fall and the Boys’ and Girls’ Lacrosse in the spring. Not only would this decision affect WA teams’ training, but it could also create more safety concerns in the future.

As both turf and grass fields grow older, the divots and patches that form due to continued use can heighten the risk of athletic injuries. According to WA Boys’ Soccer coach Jeffrey Lamy, typical injuries that he has seen on the field have been sprained ankles, ACL and MCL injuries, groin

injuries, and sprained knees. Resurfacing the field would eliminate the irregularities, as the process involves reinstalling a new layer of synthetic turf.

Lamy also stated that changing the field to grass would create a disadvantage for WA sports, as the teams WA plays against in the DCL are getting upgrades and repairs to their own turf fields.

“My hope was that the field would be resurfaced. Many teams we play in the DCL are getting upgrades to their fields and stadiums, and

it seems as though this vote will have a negative impact for Westford Academy sports,” Lamy said. Additionally, altering the surface material of the field would cause difficulty when attempting to translate those skills to other fields. For example, the WA Boys’ Soccer team’s style of play is based on possession of the ball and short passing, which is aided by the consistent bounces and rolls from the synthetic surface. “Grass slows down the speed of the ball. The ball will move slower when passing and dribbling [in longer grass] and this year we played at a fast tempo. Next year, practices will be harder to imitate in-game scenarios,” Dos Santos said.

According to WA Athletic Director Jeff Bunyon, with the amount of teams that practice at Nutting, the field is a necessity to many sports teams at WA. He believes that once the potential risks of leaving the field as it is are reported on, then the town will consider the vote more seriously.

“I am confident now that there’s more focus and more discussion around the importance of these fields that when the sports community comes out to take a re-vote, they will vote positively in favor of resurfacing those fields,” Bunyon said.



Westford Academy Boys’ Lacrosse practices on Nutting Field.

Photo by Imaan Choudhry

Yondr curbs distractions

GABRIEL FREEMAN
Co-Sports Editor

Westford Public Schools introduced Yondr pouches at the two middle schools, Stony Brook and Blanchard, last November with the intention of helping students stay focused in class by restricting phone usage during school hours. Now, several months into the initiative, teachers are noticing significant shifts in student behavior, such as increased attentiveness.

Yondr pouches are small, fabric cases designed to securely lock away students’ electronic devices. Once sealed, the pouches can only be unlocked by a special magnet at the exit of the school, preventing students from accessing their phones throughout the day. Initially introduced as a way to curb distractions in the classroom, these pouches have become a part of daily routines for middle schoolers.

“[Class] was often a time kids would check phones at their lockers or in the bathroom. Taking that distraction away helps all of our students to be more focused on their learning,” Stony Brook principal Allison Hammer said.

Student feedback so far has been mixed. According to Blanchard 8th grader Akshaya Parthibhan, there are three common complaints among students: the crowds to get to the magnets, the pouches being a requirement for every student, and staff forgetting to re-attach the magnets at the end of the day.

“Most, if not all, of the students I interact with [...] do

not like the pouches, and think that they are unnecessary and irritating to use,” Parthibhan said.

The middle schools have not had much time to adjust to this new reality, but some students have already risen up and taken responsibility for the new aspect of their routines.

“Throughout the year, as students get new phones and devices, they come to the office to pick up their Yondr pouch,” Hammer said. “[This] shows that even with the excitement of a new phone, they understand that it is not something to be used in school.”

WA currently does not have Yondr pouches, but as Hammer mentions, middle school students have different developmental needs than high school students. This means that Yondr might not be the best option for high schoolers, but for now, the program remains a fixture at Stony Brook and Blanchard.

“Given the positive outcomes [...] I think that [Yondr pouches] will likely continue as part of the normal procedures for middle school,” Hammer said. “I do not want to go back to a time when kids have that distraction throughout the day because it is not good for their social-emotional well-being or for their ability to focus on their academics.”

It is worth noting that there’s still plenty of room for improvement.

“I would give every class their own magnet, so there would be less crowding in the hallways, and students would not have to rush to a magnet to unlock their pouches.” Parthibhan said.

Andrew,



Congratulations on your graduation!

Today you close a special chapter in your life and begin an exciting new adventure: college.

We are so proud of you!

We’re also deeply grateful to your teachers who inspired, supported, and guided you along the way.

We’ll always be here cheering you on and celebrating every one of your accomplishments.

With all our love, Mom, Dad, and Ava.
GO Ghosts!

Congratulations, Grady!

You are well on your way to making your dream a reality. We are so proud of you and cannot wait to watch you soar! The sky’s the limit.



All our love,
Mom, Dad, Braden, and Gavin

Aanya,

Your perseverance, dedication, and ability to turn challenges into triumphs never cease to amaze us. Whether in gymnastics, swimming, volleyball, or academics, you’ve always pushed yourself to be your best, and that resilience has brought you to this incredible moment. We are beyond proud of you for being accepted into NYU – your hard work and strength are truly inspiring. The future is yours, and we can't wait to see the places you will go!



Love,
Mom, Dad, Bhaiya

Jackie,

We love watching you grow! Congratulations!



Love, Mom, Dad, Lily & Anna

Zinn lives the American Dream through a year-long stay at WA

NYLAH GAUDREAU
Co-News Editor

Through the hustle and bustle of the hallways in WA, it can be difficult to identify every person who fills the building. However, many have the ability to become a familiar face along the way. With his kindness and personability, junior Noa Zinn has quickly become one of those people for the students at WA through his full-year stay with the German Exchange program.

Originating from the small town of Nörten-Hardenbergin, Germany, Zinn is no stranger to the exchange experience. Initially, he wanted to spend a semester in Canada, but after partaking in the three-week partner exchange WA offered in August 2023, everything changed. Zinn was transfixed by the beauty of Westford and the welcoming environment he was greeted with.

After some research, Zinn found that his school offers German students the opportunity to spend one to two semesters living and attending school in Westford. He quickly seized the opportunity to pursue his America-filled dreams and promptly started in the fall of 2024 with a plan to stay here for the entirety of the school year living with his previous host family.

"I really wanted to get to know a high school and the life surrounding it," Zinn said.

"During those three weeks [in August 2023], I made some great friends which was my reason to apply for the long-term program. The United States always had an important spot in my mind."

The community at WA has been a highlight of Zinn's stay. He quickly made many friends and was embraced by the supportive and helpful nature of the people he encountered. Zinn was also a part of WA Boys' Swim and Dive, where he was able to meet like-minded people who shared his passion for swimming.

"Recently, it's almost been like a reunion since our time together during the German Exchange back in August. That's when I'd say Noa had the most significant impact on me—when I lived in his house for a month," Zinn's host exchange partner and senior Rithvik Raghunath said. "He has been instrumental in shaping the person I am today, and I am certainly a better person with a broader lens on the world thanks to him."

Through the full-year exchange, Zinn was exposed to many opportunities that the members of the shorter exchange did not have. Instead of following someone around during the school day, he was able to choose classes and electives that catered to his interests. Zinn took this

Zinn experienced was that, opposed to his school in Germany, students at WA have classes with multiple grades. Additionally, German students register for up to 16 standard level classes, rivaling WA's required seven courses that range in difficulty from college

prep to advanced placement. "I do enjoy [fewer] classes more than having all those classes because I have more free time to spend with my friends and live in the moment," Zinn said.

Along his journey, Zinn encountered some problems. Although he was very skilled in the English language, he was not completely versed in the little nuances embedded into how Americans speak. According to Zinn, it was difficult for him to absorb every aspect of a lesson or things classmates said in



Zinn poses in front of German flag in one of the German classrooms.

opportunity to delve into one of his passions and enrolled in three different science classes: AP Chemistry, Honors Physics, and Forensic Science. He was also able to attend events that take place later in the year, including winter and spring sports games, and Cotillion.

A major difference that

Parks hopes to remind peers what graduation means

IAN STRAUSS
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Beginning a new path in life can often be as terrifying as it can be promising. The Class of 2025 still remembers entering WA for the first time after a year of uncertainty and remote schooling. Now, with the class moving on from WA, little is known about what is to come, but the 2025 class speaker, senior Alana Parks, hopes to remind students what new beginnings truly mean by recognizing the courage her class has shown in the face of fear.

Just like many class speakers who came before her, Parks started writing her speech in performing arts teacher Michael Towers's public speaking class.

"I took public speaking with [Towers] during semester one, and one of the assignments is to write a grad speech," Parks said. "I wrote my speech and presented it in front of the class [...] and then, around April, Dean Ware sent out an email and said you could submit a grad speech if you wanted to be the class speaker. And I did, and I auditioned twice, and then he told me that I got it."

Although the judges unanimously chose her to be class speaker, Parks was still surprised to hear that she was selected for the role.

"I originally started with a pretty rough draft for [my public speaking] class, because I never thought I [was actually] going to perform a speech at graduation [...] then I edited [the speech] a little bit for my first audition, and then [for] the second audition, I really

changed [the speech] a lot, because I went over it with [Towers], and he helped me out with it," Parks said.

Towers teaches the public speaking class at WA, and even though the class speaker does not have to be from his class, the speeches often originate from an assignment given by Towers that tasks students with creating a graduation speech.

Towers has had a seat on the selection committee for the class speaker for a number of years, but this year his role has been to coach Parks and prepare her for presenting her speech at graduation. "Oftentimes, a student like [Parks], who has been exposed to the exercise of writing a graduation address, feels good enough to submit to [the committee] because it is open to every graduating senior," Towers said. "So this year, [Parks] was a public speaking student in the fall section and wrote what I thought was a very striking, moving, and thoughtful piece. So when I heard it initially in the fall, and certainly that was clear to the selection

committee too."

Having worked with the senior class in his public speaking course, and having worked at WA even before the class speaker role was established 20 years ago, Towers has a unique view into the thoughts and feelings of seniors entering graduation.

"[Parks is], like many seniors, [who] come into the classroom in the fall of their senior year, and there's a lot of things that are scary, the process that they're about



Parks smiles for a photo outside of school.

to embark on, this selection process of applying to schools, that can be overwhelming and scary for most of us," Towers said.

One thing that Towers was able to observe over the course of the year that he has worked with Parks is her growth as a speaker and student.

"The transformation that I've seen in her from September of her senior year until now is a remarkable thing. Now, what I see is a confident, aware, conscious, self-conscious in a wonderful way, student who is proud [of her] thoughts, feelings, reflections, and [she] is capable in delivering that," Towers said. "So it's been really wonderful to see her maturity and growth [...] I'm proud of her, and I can see that she is proud of herself

and knowing that she's got something to offer in this regard." Parks chose to take some time in her speech to recognize the challenges her class faced, especially as they entered WA. "We were misbehaving a lot [when we first came to WA]. So we were

called to the PAC, and I think it was five or six seniors that were in there, and they gave us a talk, and they said, 'You guys got to shape up.' So I mentioned that as well as COVID briefly," Parks said.

The larger theme Parks hopes to express in her speech is the new beginning that

passing. However, he was able to overcome this hurdle with support and aid from different staff and students throughout the building. By the second semester, he didn't encounter any language barrier whatsoever.

Zinn also battled with homesickness in the first couple of months due to the thousands of miles that separated him and his family.

"I couldn't really sleep, couldn't really focus. But after the third and fourth month came around, I realized that I could do so much better for myself," Zinn said. "That was a turning point for me and I struggled less and less."

As the school year comes to a close, Zinn is filled with a variety of emotions towards the conclusion of his exchange. The experience gave him lifelong, happy memories that he'll always look back on fondly. He was able to pursue his childhood dream of the American high school experience with a group of friends he will remain close with for years to come.

"I went through nine months at this school, and they just flew by. I don't know where the time went, but I had a great time. The next few months I have left, I will do the best I can to look forward to my return," Zinn said.

graduation will bring.

"The biggest theme of the speech as a whole is beginning, and what it really means to graduate, because I think there's so much lead-up to graduation itself that it's easy to forget what [graduation] really means," Parks said.

The class speaker is a position with no academic or extracurricular requirements. But that doesn't mean that it doesn't take skill to rise to the occasion.

"I want for everybody to know that [the class speaker] could be anybody," Towers said. "I know that people [ask], 'Do you have to be the captain of this team? Do you have to be the valedictorian? Do you have to be in this series of classes? Do you have to be a theater student?' Certainly not. It could be anybody, but the skill or the quality that this person needs to have, is for them to embody the spirit of this class."

Graduation provides seniors with an opportunity to look back on their journey through high school, where they have come from, and what they accomplished.

"I think we have a pretty impressive class as a whole. There's a lot of really hard workers in the Class of '25 and a lot of really impressive accomplishments. I want that to be highlighted the most. That as a class, we persevered. We started out rough, and we ended up in a great place," Parks said.

Sahil Dua announced as WA Class of 2025 valedictorian

GRACE HSU
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

Q: What is your perfect idea of happiness?

A: I like knowing [that] what I do with life has a purpose to it.

Q: What is your greatest fear?

A: That's probably spiders. I'm afraid of insects and all kinds of spiders.

Q: Who do you most admire?

A: My mom and dad. I look up to them as people.

Q: What is one piece of advice you would give to younger students?

A: Don't procrastinate. And also sleep on time, because sleep is very important.

Q: What talent would you most like to have?

A: Being able to do cool magic tricks would be [a talent] I would like to have.

Q: What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?

A: Last year, I got second place internationally in DECA. The event was for the business finance series, the corporate finance event.

Q: If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?

A: It would be a dolphin so I can swim freely in the ocean. I love swimming.

Q: What is your most marked characteristic?

A: I speak really fast sometimes, so I think that's probably my most prominent characteristic.

Q: What is one regret you have from high school?

A: Maybe not trying out different sports, I wanted to play volleyball before, but I never got a chance because of swim and other commitments.

Q: What are your goals for the future?

A: Finish my undergraduate, possibly work for a couple [of] years, do a master's in business probably, and then settle down, have a family and have a good career.

Q: What was the most memorable class you took in high school and why?

A: It was AP Chemistry because [Timothy Knittel] was an amazing teacher, and all [of] the labs are always fun as well.

Q: What is your favorite memory from high school?

A: Going to all [of] the spags with the swim team for our

competitions.

Q: What teacher has had the largest impact on you?

A: Mr. Knittel [...] He's an amazing teacher. He made chemistry really fun and my favorite subject last year, my junior year.



Dua smiles in front of DECA's bulletin board.

Q: What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?

A: [My parents told me] to work hard, but also to enjoy yourself and play hard as well.

Q: What's the quality that you admire the most in others?

A: When people are honest and open to communicating.

Q: What is a challenge that you have had to overcome?

A: I broke my arm [near] my elbow in my junior year

in August, and then I had to come back from that injury and swim in December, so [there was] a short time period to turn myself around and get back in shape. That was quite a challenge.

Q: Describe your perfect day.

A: Waking up late, going to the gym, hanging out with friends, watching some TV or playing video games, and then sleeping late.

Q: What is one thing people should know about you that they probably don't?

A: I find it enjoyable to take tests and exams. It's kind of like a nerdy thing to say.

Q: What would you like people to remember you for?

A: For being there for others and helping people out.

Q: What is a hobby of yours that, when you do it, you lose track of time?

A: Playing classical piano pieces. I like the Nocturnes by [Frédéric] Chopin.

Q: What is the toughest decision you had to make in high school?

A: How to balance my time between sports, clubs, academics, [my] job, and all these different areas of my life.

Q: Which song, movie, book, or TV show best defines who you are as a person?

A: I think it would be Shark Tank, because I'm a pretty entrepreneurial guy. I watch it a lot.

Q: If you could only bring three things to a deserted island, what would they be?

A: It would be a knife for hunting or cutting wood, a water filter because [of] filtering ocean water, dirty water, then finally, a tent for housing.

Q: People consider being named the valedictorian a great achievement. What is one time when you did not succeed?

A: Freshman year in my swim season, I wasn't able to qualify for Sectionals or States, but I worked hard to qualify and score in my future years. I didn't make anything my freshman year, but I made Sectionals as a sophomore, and then I made States [in] my junior and senior years.

Q: What made you realize that NYU is perfect for you?

A: It's known for its amazing finance program and business school, but also, the location is really optimal because of all the finance companies located in Manhattan, and it's good for internships or networking.

Zoe,



Congratulations! We wish you all the success and happiness in the world and can't wait to see what you do next.
Good luck at SCAD!!
Love, Mom, Dad, and Kali

Maeve,

We are so excited to see all of the amazing things you have coming in the next chapter! You amaze us everyday and we love you!



Love,
Mom, Dad, Dylan and James

Kaylee Bulat named class of 2025 salutatorian

KATE KELLY
Co-EDITOR-IN-CHEIF

Q: Which living person do you most admire and why?

A: It's kind of a cliché answer, but probably my mom. She's the most hard-working person that I know, but she also has a really positive outlook on life, which I admire, and I really hope to be more like that.

Q: What's one piece of advice you would give to younger students?

A: I would say that the purpose of school is to learn. I think a lot of people — and I struggled with this too — get really wrapped up in the grades and the GPA and that kind of thing. But if you approach school with a learning attitude and you try to really be present in class, you're gonna get a lot more out of it. [...] I think over time I realized I was kind of miserable in school, and I didn't really know why. When I started trying to focus less on the numbers and more on what I was actually learning, it was a lot easier to feel happy.

Q: What was the most memorable class you took in high school and why?

A: I would definitely say AP Chemistry. It was pretty challenging, but it was really interesting. [...] Me and my partner once got to handle fully concentrated sulfuric acid, which is kind of scary because if you spill it it will burn right through your skin. But it was definitely memorable.



Photo by Kate Kelly

Bulat smiles for a photo in front of WA.

Q: What teacher has had the largest impact on you?

A: I would say Mrs. Hart. English has never really been my strong subject. I've struggled with it the most out of all my classes. But I really love how she has been able to make connections between what we're reading and real, relevant issues. She's made me more confident.

Q: How do you maintain work and personal balance in your own life?

A: When you're studying and working on homework, there's a certain point where doing more isn't going to be better. I find it really important to try to study efficiently. Or if there's a problem on your homework that you don't know how to do, for me it's better to just leave it there and go try to get help the next day. I think spending hours and hours on things a lot of times isn't that helpful.

Q: What is your favorite memory from high school?

A: This isn't specifically in high school, but last year over April break my family took a trip to Disney World, and it came at the perfect time. It was a couple weeks before AP exams, and [during] junior year, it kind of felt like my whole life depended on my scores. So it was really nice to go on that trip and to have a chance to breathe and relax.

Q: What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

A: Someone told me once that it's better to try something and fail than to not try at all, because at least if you try and fail you've learned something. [...] I think that really helped me change my perspective, because I spent a lot of my life being really afraid to do new things, and that's really helped me realize that it's always good to take a risk if you can.

Q: What's something that gives you hope?

A: Just seeing people that are able to be kind. The world is kind of a confusing, terrible place sometimes. And seeing people who are able to hold the door for someone else, or give someone a compliment even when they're having a bad day, that really gives me a little bit of hope.

Q: What would you like people to remember you for?

A: I just want to be someone that leaves the world a little bit better than I came into it. I don't need to save the world or anything like that, but I'd like to be able to help at least a few people.

Q: What does being named salutatorian mean to you?

A: I am really shocked that I got it. I'm obviously really grateful, really honored, but it was definitely not something I was expecting because it was never really a goal of mine. Some of my classmates started bringing it up around junior year that I might have the potential, but I never really took it seriously because it was never in the front of my mind. But I'm definitely really grateful and proud of myself.

Q: What song, movie, book, or TV show best defines who you are as a person?

A: I would say I really like the song "Out of the Woods" by Taylor Swift. There's this one line where she says, "The

monsters turned out to be just trees." I kind of live my life by that idea, that things might seem scary, but they're probably not as scary as they seem in the moment.

Q: Being recognized as salutatorian is a huge achievement; tell me about one time where you didn't succeed.

A: There was a while where I really wanted to get into baking and cooking, and I thought to myself, "You can't really be bad at that sort of thing." I was definitely wrong. I made a batch of brownies one time, and I was sneakily watching [a family member] eat one of them, and they spit it in the trash because it was so bad. But that just motivated me more. I was like, "I have to prove that I can be good at this." So I just started baking something new every single week, and eventually I managed to make a nice batch of fancy French macarons.

Q: What made you realize that Boston College was the right place for you?

A: I realized the first time I visited there. My family was just taking me around to a bunch of college campuses last summer, and we visited BC, and it just kind of felt right. I don't really know how to describe it, like the campus, the way that the students and staff described it, it just felt like a place where I would belong.

To read the full interview, visit our website waghostwriter.com

Joslyn and Connor,

We are so proud of the wonderful people you've become. Keep being yourselves and doing your best! We look forward to watching you achieve your goals!



Love,
Mom and Dad

Congrats, Shelby!

We are so proud of you and can't wait to see what your future holds.



Love,
Dad, Keith, Wesley, Jesse,
Cindy, Sabrina, Chucky
and Rita

Thirteen years later, Gorham retires

AARSHIA BHATTACHARYYA
Co-MANAGING EDITOR

History teacher Christopher C. Gorham's love for history has been present since he was a young boy. Mesmerized by his World War II veteran grandfather's library and cigar box of medals, photographs, and newspaper clippings, Gorham's passion for history has been instilled in him since the earliest stages of his life. Now, after 13 years of sharing his beloved subject with countless students, his teaching career will end at the same place it began.

The 2024-2025 school year will be Gorham's last year teaching, as he will be retiring in June. He hopes to pursue a book deal that arose from the success of his narrative non-fiction book, *The Confidante*, when he retires.

Gorham's teaching career began at Westford Academy in 2012, after he spent 15 years practicing law.

"It's been the job of a lifetime for me," Gorham said. "Almost 15 years of my life [were] spent in the company of terrific colleagues and wonderful students. It's been a real joy to be here for these years."

During his time at WA, Gorham has primarily taught U.S. History, although he did spend a number of years teaching *Criminal Minds*. However, according to Gorham, his proudest accomplishment is launching the Westford Academy Journal of History. The Journal publishes the final

research papers of students that are deemed exemplary each year. It is currently managed by history teacher Michael Martell, who has also shared a room with Gorham for several years.

"He's very easy to share a classroom with. He's a positive addition to the school, to teaching, and he'll be missed," Martell said.



Gorham smiles for his professional headshot.

For Gorham, the best part of teaching was the energy brought forth by his high school students. He believes that the enthusiasm keeps teachers young and makes him look upon his teaching experience with joy. This energy is also the aspect of WA that he will miss the most in his day-to-day life.

"I think the process [of aging] gets arrested a little bit because we're in the company of these brilliant young people," Gorham said. "I feel very fortunate to have spent so much time in the company of wonderful colleagues, wonderful administrators, and a lot of energetic, smart kids that have made my time here one to remember fondly."

One of these kids Gorham remembers so fondly is senior Maggie Eckroth, who had Gorham in her junior year for

U.S. History II. "[Gorham] combines history [with] what's happening in modern politics," Eckroth said. "He's such a great person, and it's really clear that he cares about the students and what's best for people."

As he prepares to leave WA, however, Gorham notes the difficulties of being a modern American history teacher in the present. He believes that presenting the story of the United States with its heroes and villains is difficult when its pillars of democracy and social equality are being purposefully destroyed by people who are entrusted with running the government.

"It's a very tricky and difficult thing to be a modern American history teacher right now, because it seems like you're teaching about a country and a people that no longer exist," Gorham said.

Despite the obstacles of the career, according to many of his former and current students, Gorham has done a wonderful job teaching. Senior Sofia Cannistraro recalls him striving for connection with his students and demonstrating that he cares about them outside of the classroom, noting the significant effect he had on her as a person.

"He's just a genuine, good teacher," Cannistraro said. "He's made so much of an impact on me [...] and I think he makes an impact on all of his students. He's not a teacher I'll ever forget."

Photo by Joshua Pickering

Ruhmann says goodbye to WA

VICTORIA FARLEY
Co-SPORTS EDITOR

Filling every room with smiles, prepared to answer any questions that come his way, math teacher Erik Ruhmann brings a positive attitude to his classroom every day.

Following 6 years of teaching formulas, functions, and life lessons at Westford Academy, Ruhmann is set to retire from his 32-year career in education at the Westford Public Schools at the end of this year.

Ruhmann began his teaching journey at Abbot Elementary School as a 5th grade teacher before moving to several schools around Westford including Blanchard Middle School and Robinson Elementary School.

Ruhmann's interest in teaching was sparked in high school when he had a part-time job instructing kids how to ski at Nashoba Valley. In

college, Ruhmann completed his undergraduate studies in Business, but after graduating, he realized that this profession did not suit him and he transitioned to a career in

on time, ready to provide a positive learning atmosphere for their students.

"When you're a teacher, you can't be half an hour late to work because of traffic," Ruhmann said. "Teaching is different than other professions in that way."

Over the course of his time at WA, Ruhmann has created meaningful friendships with his colleagues, especially those he works closely with in the Math Department.

"Mr. Ruhmann is always in a great mood and willing to have a fun conversation," math teacher Gil Fuhr said. "He has always enjoyed working with kids, and every class is his favorite. A great quality of Mr. Ruhmann's is that he always believes in the best for everyone, and works to help every student succeed."

Photo by Victoria Farley



Ruhmann stands by WA's entrance.

education.

Although a teacher's schedule can be demanding, Ruhmann appreciates the commitment that comes with the position. Unlike other professions, teachers cannot arrive late to work and must show up to school each day

Continued on page 22

Bowen retires after 32 colorful, storied years

SRIVAS ARUN
Co-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Life doesn't always follow a straight path, and after 35 years in education, physics teacher Bill Bowen's journey to Westford Academy and the impact he has left on the community are perfect lessons on the beauty of uncertainty and the fulfillment that waits at each unexpected turn.

"I was not planning to be here for 30 years," Bowen said. "I was always saying, 'Five to seven years and I'm out. I'm moving on to the next thing.' And I just was having fun. There wasn't any reason to leave."

Bowen has been teaching at WA since 1993, but his career in education began three years prior and thousands of miles away in Izmir, Turkey. After more than three decades of teaching engineering, robotics, and all three levels of physics, as well as coaching multiple

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts for its small school atmosphere and programs on alternative energy sources, a new field at the time. It was here that Bowen started teaching physics through his part-time job tutoring other students.

One bachelor's degree and an associate degree in business later, Bowen was looking for a new experience before he settled down at a long-term job. According to Bowen, he considered taking a gap year, but after learning of a company that offered teaching positions abroad, he jumped at the chance to explore the world. Although he received offers from Honduras, Nicaragua, and numerous other countries, Bowen chose to travel to Izmir, Turkey, a coastal city on the Aegean Sea.

Despite having never heard of the city and being unfamiliar with the country, Bowen made the pivotal decision to take the



Photo by Srivas Arun

Bowen jokes with students while working on a mouse trap car.

sports teams, Bowen will be retiring on Sept. 17, his 65th birthday.

"Mr. Bowen was always in class with a smile and was never mad. He could always make your day better," junior Will Poirier said. "He's been a great teacher and deserves his retirement more than anyone."

A career in education was not always a certainty, according to Bowen. In fact, after high school, Bowen immediately joined the workforce, jumping between trade jobs such as plumbing, carpentry, painting, and electrical work. Bowen's turning point came three years later when he decided to pursue a degree in physics upon hearing about his friends' positive experiences with college.

"I just sort of happened [to fall] into education. [I had] no plan. And anybody that thinks you're planning to go to school and you're going to be doing that for the rest of your life, you have no idea [who] you truly are," Bowen said. "You're going to change jobs and you're going to change what you do, and if you don't, then you either know yourself really well and you're perfectly content, or you're settling for what you have."

Bowen decided to attend

job which not only led to his first full time teaching position, but also led to Bowen's introduction and marriage to his wife.

"I had a job offer in Izmir, Turkey. Didn't have a clue where it was. Before the internet, I actually had to open an Atlas to look through the book," Bowen said. "And so I took it and met my wife there, and life happened after, but Turkey is a wonderful country. Everybody in this world needs to go see Istanbul. [...] It's an amazing city."

Bowen then returned to the U.S. and began teaching at a preparatory school in New Hampshire as a temporary measure to support his wife and newborn daughter. About a year later, Bowen moved to Westford and started teaching at WA in 1993. He set a time frame of five to seven years until he would move on to pursue his original goal of developing renewable energy sources and solar panels.

Yet even with this plan set in place, Bowen grew more and more comfortable with Westford and formed a special connection with the community.

Continued on page 16

Mitchell leaves legacy of warmth after 25 years at WPS

GRACE HSU
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

Compassion. Fairness. Empathy. These are the core values that Director of School Nurses Joan Mitchell carries with her when she walks into Westford Academy each morning. Whether it's to fill up a water bottle, get some Advil, or say hello to a friendly face, WA's nurse's office is often visited by students and faculty. Not five minutes go by without someone new entering the office, hoping to relieve physical pain or simply to have a conversation and a good laugh. After 15 years as one of WA's school nurses, 18 years as the Director of School Nurses, and 25 years in the Westford Public Schools system, Mitchell will be retiring at the end of the 2024-2025 school year, leaving behind a legacy of unwavering dedication and heartfelt care. Mitchell has been an avid member of Westford's community throughout her career, serving on many of the town's health-related committees. She has also coached a variety of youth sports, including field hockey, track, and cross country at Blanchard Middle School and Stony Brook Middle School, as well as JV field hockey at WA. Her impact reaches every corner of Westford, touching town policy and elementary, middle school, and high school students as she has also worked as a

school nurse at Colonel John Robinson School. "What I love about working with WA students and staff is that I just think everyone's so different," Mitchell said, "[WA nurses] never have the same day twice. We never know what we're getting. We could end up calling three ambulances, giving two EpiPens. Sometimes it's quiet, sometimes it's not. So we just always have to be [powered] on." Though Mitchell believes that being a school nurse is a major part of who she is, this was not always the case. Mitchell originally went to Providence College for Health Administration, hoping to combine her passions for science and business into one career. However, once she was in college, Mitchell realized that the path she really wanted to pursue was nursing, so she graduated with

a bachelor's degree in Health Administration and enrolled in Newton Wellesley School of Nursing. "What made me want to pursue nursing was that I think it was always a passion of mine," Mitchell said. "I think at the time I went to college, there was a big push on women getting into business. So I thought I would do business, but then I figured out that I was probably better at nursing." After graduating from nursing school, Mitchell worked at St. John's Hospital as a medical-surgical nurse, then transitioned to school nursing after taking a few

years off to spend time with her kids. She first started working in the Westford Public Schools system at the Robinson School in 2000, but switched to working at WA in 2007. According to Mitchell, she prefers helping high schoolers because elementary school students are more physically demanding, and with high schoolers, there is more of a focus on mental health. However, this shift from physical health to mental health has not only been prominent in Mitchell's shift from elementary school to high school, but also in the entire world of healthcare. "Nursing approaches more mental health issues now, we just [have more] students that need support," Mitchell said. "So we picked up many courses on how to deal with students with mental health issues, so that we can deal with this appropriately. Students come in and need counseling. We've taken courses on that, on how to approach the student

in the best way, to help them through their crisis." Mitchell believes that she has created great connections with students and has loved seeing them grow from freshman to senior year. Many of the people who enter the nurse's office are regulars, looking to brighten up their days with warm conversation or friendly banter. "I met Mrs. Mitchell at the beginning of last school year," sophomore Isla Hummer said. "I stop almost daily in the nurse's office, sometimes to grab something, but mostly to fill my water and talk to her about what's going on. She is going to be missed because of how kind she is, she makes conversation with everyone, and [she is] overall such a kind person." According to Mitchell, she will miss working with WA school nurse Kathy Bordeau the most, along with her interactions with students. As the years have gone by and healthcare has changed, one of the constants in her career has been Bordeau. They have worked together for fifteen years, and according to Bordeau, they have built a strong bond of friendship and admiration. "Change is hard," Bordeau said. "[But] I am forever grateful to have worked beside a strong leader and a dear friend for so many years."



Photo by Grace Hsu

Mitchell sits at her desk with two photos of the beach, a place where Mitchell will visit frequently after her move to Cape Cod.

Gosselin retires from Westford

KATE KELLY
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

From Google Docs essays to digital presentations, technology has quickly become one of the most crucial assets to teaching. It is hard to imagine WA without its countless chromebooks, projectors, and speakers, though their importance is often overshadowed by the bustle of the school day. What has now become the foundation of learning started with just one person. Because of Digital Learning Specialist Stephanie Gosselin, education at WA has never been so accessible.

Following her 21 years at WA and five at the Day School, Gosselin has made the decision to retire at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. Among many other things, she has worked to make learning easier and more accessible for the community. WPS will be replacing Gosselin's role at WA with a district-wide position, meaning she will be WA's first and last Digital Learning Specialist. "What keeps me coming back [to digital learning] is there's always something new. There's always ideas to share, always strategic thinking that challenged me," Gosselin said. "Every year or two, I was

learning something new. [...] I always enjoy it, because I like challenges. I like learning new things. So I've always pushed myself to do new things with [the position]."

for the kids, but also to reach the struggling learners. [...] Sometimes it just takes a different venue. It's meeting the learners where they're at, offering different types



Photo by Kate Kelly

Gosselin smiles in front of a chromebook charging station, one of many ways WA has made technology more accessible.

Gosselin began to devote her time to digital learning after her interest was piqued by her son's elementary school technology lessons. What started as independently learning about new programs flourished into a Master's degree and lifelong career. "I could see the engagement that my own children had and the skills that they were learning as nine, ten, eleven-year-olds that they were going to be needing, because that's the direction that the technology was going," Gosselin said. "They were using educational games to enhance learning

of ways to learn the same thing." After switching career paths, Gosselin began volunteering in the Westford school district to gain experience and help classrooms integrate technology into their learning while also submitting these projects toward her certification. She worked at Norman E. Day Elementary School for four years, but when a new position opened at WA in 2003, Gosselin was quick to put her skills to work. "I started with one cart of 24 laptops, pushing it around. And then we went to two carts, and then we went to three," Gosselin said. "And for the longest time pushing around carts was how we did it. We didn't even have a lab." Gosselin's primary challenge entering her new job was integrating technology into core classes. This started by developing computer labs that teachers could use

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Miller leaves WA

SRIVAS ARUN
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Lights blink on and off as a man turns knobs and dials, conducting a technological symphony. His voice fills the gymnasium as a ball swishes through the net, declaring WA's victory over the roar of the crowd. He stands in the back of the PAC ensuring presentations go smoothly, inspects malfunctioning tools in classrooms, and never hesitates to offer a helping hand. His face is instantly recognizable, but few know the full scope of audio-visual coordinator Mark Miller's contributions to WA. "If you told me in 1983 that I'd be retiring in 2025 from Westford Academy, I never would have believed it," Miller said. More than four decades of commitment will cement anyone in the very fabric of their community, but when that person has been as integral as Miller in WA's growth and daily functioning, his legacy and influence interweaves with the past, present, and future of the school. "There are so many things around this building that nobody really understands or knows how it operates, but you just put Mr. Miller on something and he would appear and fix it and it would be done, over with," WA Principal Dan Twomey said. "He's somebody who wears an incredible amount of hats around here. His role has continued to change throughout the years, but he's been somebody that makes the inner workings of Westford

Academy operate every single day." Miller will be retiring at the end of the 2024-2025 school year after 42 years of highlighting students and their accomplishments. Among other roles, Miller has controlled the shot clock for multiple WA sports teams, installed modern technologies in classrooms, and helped plan the design of several buildings within the Westford Public School (WPS) district. When Miller began working at WA in 1983, no one could have predicted the magnitude of devotion he would demonstrate in the following decades. According to Miller, he initially applied to an audio-visual position at the high school simply as a stepping stone to broadcast television. "I did an internship at Channel 25 [...] but things didn't fall into place, so when I saw this position open up as an ad, I applied, and I kind of did this as a [way to] get me going," Miller said. "I thought I'd do this for a couple years until I actually get into television production, but I fell in love with this place and with the people." As Miller continued to work at WA and his connection to the community strengthened, he began to realize his passion for using his knowledge of audio-visual technology to broadcast student achievements. One of the most enduring ways Miller has called attention to remarkable students involves his work in WA athletic broadcasting. From his introduction to high school athletics and announcing, Miller has been known for his

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McLaughlin to retire after 22 years

ELITSA KOLEVA
GRADUATING CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The bell rings and the hallways flood with students, their laughter joining in with a chorus of sounds. Surrounded by the constant bustle of high school, it can be difficult to notice the note of nervousness in someone's laugh, the slight frown on someone's face. But amidst this buzz, there is one person that seeks to piece these nuances together, finding the sense of connection that may be missing amongst students: guidance counselor Tracy McLaughlin.

Finding the connections that are missing between students requires a deep intuition, something which McLaughlin has gained after working with students for most of her life. After 22 years at WA, McLaughlin will be retiring at the end of this year, proud of the work that she has done to form a more open and inclusive community.

It has been a goal of McLaughlin's to find outlets through which students can feel seen. During her time at WA, McLaughlin has been active in advising clubs that may be fading out or in need of a substitute adviser including Best Buddies, Human Rights Club, and Mandarin Club. Just last year, McLaughlin also helped form the Black and LatinX Club after noticing that some students were not feeling seen in the school community.

"Black and LatinX Club was started because I'd noticed for years that students could be in the building without seeing another person that looked like them the whole day,"

McLaughlin said. "So we wanted to help people build connections, and those are the kind of clubs I'm drawn to."

Being a guidance counselor has been the best of both worlds for McLaughlin. Having worked in the mental health field as a social worker for 10 years and later in admissions at Boston University, McLaughlin has had a multitude of experiences in her professional career that have guided her to

out," senior Maddie Poirier said. "She's super welcoming [and] she's always looking to help people. She's never in one spot, which I love, and I think it's so reflective of her character."

McLaughlin's experience working in mental health and the college admissions process has established her as someone who students, as well as colleagues, can always talk to. For guidance counselor Susan Lynch, who has worked

with McLaughlin for over 20 years, it is McLaughlin's infectious positivity and ability to make people laugh within the guidance office that has made her a vital part of the staff.

"I think, with any decision she makes or anything she does, she always has her students' best interests at heart, and she infuses humor [in everything]," Lynch said.

While the decision to retire is always difficult, McLaughlin feels good about opening this next chapter of her life. In fact, she plans on staying active outside of WA by volunteering and involving herself in charitable organizations. Looking back, one of the biggest things she will miss is having that window into students' lives and hearing their stories.

"I've just been fortunate to be a part of people's lives, [so] I will probably miss talking to students the most, just keeping young listening to your world," McLaughlin said. "A door is going to be shut to a world, and that's okay, but I will [definitely] miss that world."



McLaughlin poses in her office.

Photo by Elitsa Koleva

the position of a guidance counselor, even if working at a high school was not something she intended to do.

"I like working [here] because for me high school was challenging in a lot of ways, and so I like the fact that I [can] be there for someone," McLaughlin said.

Today, McLaughlin's office space is often crowded with students seeking to ask a question or simply in search of a break from the overwhelming environment around them. For many of her students, her office has become like a sanctuary.

"She's wonderful with students, and she always has kids in her office. Even on a day she's absent, kids will be in her office just hanging

Halloran moves forward

IAN STRAUSS
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

High school life can often feel challenging as students take risks and adapt to many changes. Among the inner workings of WA's counseling department, counselor Karen Halloran makes sure that students are given opportunities to face these challenges. By organizing scholarships, orchestrating career exploration breakfasts, and being present as a supportive student counselor, Halloran helps WA students navigate the next steps of their lives. Now it is her turn to enter a new phase of her life as she retires from WA after 13 years.

At WA, Halloran has coordinated 153 currently available scholarships for seniors, and organized almost 50 speakers for the Career Breakfast just this year. However, Halloran has also worked a variety of jobs in her life prior to the multiple responsibilities she has taken on as a counselor.

Halloran grew up in Syracuse, New York, and attended the Rochester Institute of Technology for college. While she was there, she met her future husband and graduated with a degree in hotel management. Halloran then moved to Texas and worked for Marriott before moving back north to Chicago. There, she got engaged to her now-husband of 35 years, while she worked at a Hyatt Hotel.

"I worked for the Hyatt in Chicago for a year, but that's 50 hours a week with nights, weekends, and holidays, all the time, and very low pay. Even so, I love the hospitality industry," Halloran said.

After leaving Hyatt, Halloran worked selling insurance, moved to New

Hampshire, then left insurance to sell office supplies. Soon after, Halloran entered one of the biggest challenges life can throw at a person: parenthood.

She stayed at home to take care of her kids before going back to work as a director for the lifestyle magazine Southern Living. Around that time, Halloran's friend and then-counselor, Dean of Students Betsy Murphy, offered her a position as an intern at the WA counseling department. They met through the Pan-Mass Challenge, a more than 100 mile biking fundraiser for fighting cancer, which both Murphy and Halloran's husband were participating in.

"Halloran was there with a couple of the wives serving us lunch when we made our 100 mile trek," Murphy said. "And so I sat on the beach and talked with her, and she told me what she did for a living and that she was thinking about getting into school counseling. And I said 'You know what? I just took a course, and I have a voucher at Rivier if you want to take one. I'll give you the \$500 voucher. Go take a course and see if you're interested'. And that's how it started, on a beach."

So Halloran ended up getting her masters at Rivier in order to be a counselor.

"I went and I signed up to take a class that I didn't need any prerequisites for. It was called Abnormal Psychology, and I loved it," Halloran said. "At that time, Southern Living was going out of business, and I wasn't earning trips anymore. It was time for the next thing anyway, and I got my master's."

Having worked all the jobs she did in all the places she did, Halloran was able to learn more about herself in the process of frequently moving around.

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RUBY & CASH DAVIS

We are endlessly proud of the unique individuals you have become, caring and supporting each other every step of the way. To have had a front row seat in watching you both grow up and become young adults has been profound. Remember to always be kind, honest, humble, and passionate as you follow your dreams. Don't be afraid to take chances, travel, be optimistic or adventurous – and you will always continue to shine bright.

♥♥♥ Mom, Dad & Louie

Nidzgorski constructs a legacy

SARA METIVIER
EXECUTIVE FEATURES EDITOR

Growing up with a shop teacher for a father, math teacher John Nidzgorski always knew he wanted a career in education. His dream involved more than just sitting in a classroom, however, as he always wanted to get into coaching as well; teaching in more ways than one.

Despite his interest in teaching, Nidzgorski initially entered a field relating to a different aspect of his father’s job: construction. After graduating from Lawrence Institute of Technology with his undergraduate degree in engineering, Nidzgorski spent 23 years as a construction engineer manager for commercial and residential companies.

However, his itch to teach was still prominent after more than two decades in construction, so he began working at WA in 2009 while getting his master’s degree in mathematics education from Rivier University. As Nidzgorski retires in October, he will leave behind an impact over 16 years in the making.

Although Nidzgorski did not grow up in Westford, his daughters were raised in Chelmsford which led to his consideration of teaching positions in other nearby towns. However, even after observing many different schools, the tight knit community of WA was his number one pick.

“All of the teachers would [...] try to help each other, and I knew that I would want that,”

Nidzgorski said. “Then I also sensed that the administration backed the teachers [...] and that was true, they really stand behind us.”

Even though Nidzgorski loves teaching, some of his favorite memories are from his coaching experiences. Nidzgorski started off coaching the girls’ basketball team at Stony Brook Middle School. Over the years he has also coached WA Girls’



Nidzgorski sits at his desk.

JV Tennis and WA Girls’ Freshman and JV Volleyball.

“I became close to those players, and I’m still close with one of the [basketball] players,” Nidzgorski said. “I even though] she wasn’t one of my students, we were close throughout high school [...] and she looks at me as a mentor.”

From teaching to motivating students and athletes, Nidzgorski has influenced many young people’s lives. No matter who he is trying to teach, Nidzgorski finds a way to reach each and every one of his students. According to Nidzgorski, he encourages his students to find different solutions and methods to

solve problems.

"[With] geometry and trig there’s usually a few different ways to get to the answer and I like to explore that with the students,” Nidzgorski said.

According to sophomore Ishi Kashyap, Nidzgorski’s class is always a welcoming place to enter. From sharing personal remarks to demonstrating interest in his students’ lives, Nidzgorski does more than just teach to the test.

“He is always open to questions and is available for extra help if needed,” Kashyap said.

Throughout the years that Nidzgorski has been at WA, he never gets tired of seeing students finally understand something that they had previously been struggling with.

“My favorite thing is when a student [is struggling on a topic] and all of a sudden they get it [...] and I literally get chills,” Nidzgorski said.

Since Nidzgorski is not set to retire until October, he will still be in WA for the first few months floating around from classroom to classroom and doing anything that the school may need help with, such as DLT duty or subbing.

During retirement, Nidzgorski is looking forward to spending more time with his family, biking, and building furniture. However, even though he is leaving WA soon, he may not be leaving the classrooms or courts forever, as Nidzgorski may come back to substitute or coach if an opportunity does arise.

DeLong plans to retire

AARSHIA BHATTACHARYYA
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

Geometry. Trigonometry and Precalculus. Calculus. Math teacher David DeLong has taught it all. In the process, DeLong has turned what is many students’ most dreaded subject into a class to look forward to. After 23 years of finding derivatives, writing proofs, and converting rectangular coordinates to polar, DeLong plans to retire from teaching in the fall.

DeLong will retire in the fall of the 2025-2026 school year after over two decades of teaching at WA and nine years of coaching WA’s varsity golf team. His retirement comes after a long teaching career; prior to teaching at WA, DeLong was a math teacher at Brockton High School for four years and North Reading High School for five years.

For DeLong, math had always come easy, allowing him to grow comfortable with the subject and the idea of teaching it to other people.

“It’s just something I’ve always been good at,” DeLong said. “I feel like I understand it enough that I can explain it to everybody else in front of me.”

According to DeLong, the reason he chose to come to WA was due to its reputation paired with his desire to work at a higher-ranking school.

“[Westford Academy] made me feel like professionally, it was the best place to be,” DeLong said.

As DeLong’s teaching career at WA began, he discovered that one of his favorite parts of being at the school was the energy of the

students. He believes this is due to the fact that WA students are driven and have a strong desire to learn.

“[WA students] know why they’re here,” DeLong said. “They get along well together.”

According to DeLong, another aspect of WA that brightened his day was the support he felt from the people he worked with. His coworkers feel the same way about DeLong, as members of the math department have much to say about DeLong’s radiant personality. Fellow math teacher Kathleen Aylward, who began teaching at WA at the same time as DeLong, cites his kind and helpful nature.

“He’s just a good go-to guy,” Aylward said. ” If you need something, you know you can ask [DeLong] and he will help you.”

Aylward believes that what she and the WA students and faculty will miss the most about DeLong is his sense of humor and how he was never absent from school. Additionally, the two taught Calculus together for a number of years, and she recalls his unique ability to find ways of solving certain problems that others would not think of.

Still, according to Aylward, she and the rest of the math department are happy for DeLong and excited for his retirement plans, which involve moving down south to where many of his friends live and playing plenty of golf.

“He deserves a lifetime of happiness,” Aylward said. “It’s a big loss, but we’re excited for his next chapter.”

Families Congratulate Graduating Seniors

Erin Keefe

Erin,
We are so proud of all you have accomplished at WA. The future is bright for you as you head off to college. Keep being awesome. We love you!
Love,
Mom, Hannah & Murphy

Anoushka Badkar

Anoushka,
Watching you grow into the amazing young woman you are today has been a joy. As you step into the next chapter, remember this is just the beginning of all the incredible things you will do. We will always be here to support and cheer you on!
Congratulations.
With all our love,
Mom, Dad and Aaroosh

Ryan Campbell

We are so incredibly proud of the person you have become as a student, athlete and all around good man! Continue to be true to yourself, take what you’ve learned and go learn some more. Look out Fairfield, here comes Ryan Campbell!
Love you tons,
Mom, Dad & Taylor

Ashley Vinith

Congratulations, dear Ashley! We are so proud of you and everything you have achieved. All the best for an incredible journey at UConn!
Lots of love,
Appa, Amma, Ammu, Dadi, Nanima and Mowgli

Isabella Hesse

Congratulations, Isabella! What an amazing adventure these school years have been:
"Behind you, all your memories...Before you, all your dreams...Around you, all who love you...Within you, all you need." All of your energy, hard work and passion paid off, and we are so excited to watch you fly!
We love you to the moon and back,
Mom, Dad, Carter, Mason and Luna

Sam Chaput

“Shall we play a game?” Sam, we are so proud of you and can't wait to see your future creations!
Love,
Dad, Mom, Ben, and Aldo

Sarah Josie Cunniffe

Congratulations, Sarah Josie! We love you and we are so proud of you. The best is yet to come!
Love,
Mom, Dad, Julia, and Ollie

Shuban Bala

Shuban,
We are proud of all your accomplishments and cannot wait to see what the future holds!
Love,
Sister, Mom and Dad

Ethan Koehr

Ethan Koehr,
Congratulations! We are so proud of you and cannot wait to see what the future holds!
Love,
Mom, Dad, Aidan & Avery

Best of luck to

And so the next

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UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
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ARIZONA
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
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SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE
Ruby Davis

the Class of 2025!

chapter begins...

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY Kassidy Carmichael Matt Stuparu		UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS Somya Lunavat		FREEDOM TRAIL REALTY SCHOOL, INC. Violette Bernier

Hello '25,

The time has come for you all to close your high school chapter and move on to the next phase of your educational/ career lives. It has been a pleasure to see you experience four years of high school here at WA. I applaud you for your perseverance and gratitude during this journey. As you continue to move forward, please remember that you are ready to take on the challenges ahead of you. Use the skills and work habits that you have developed over the years and take your obstacles head on. Always believe in yourself! May your future be happy and healthy and may you all have the best of luck in what you seek to accomplish. Being the Dean of this great class made coming to work each day enjoyable. I will always remember and appreciate this opportunity.

- Dean of Students, Mr. Ware

Class of 2025,

You have come so far since we first met in the PAC on your very first day of high school. You were nervous and excited freshmen then... and today you leave Westford Academy as cool and confident graduates. We are so proud of you! You have grown as individuals, you have grown as a class, you have learned so much, you have conquered challenges, and you have shown resilience throughout your time here. Hold the friendships you've made close to your heart and move forward with integrity and kindness. Don't be afraid to be true to yourself and remember that you have big supporters here at WA. We'll be cheering you on every step of the way. We are proud to have been alongside you these last four years. We are confident that you will do great things and wish you the best of luck for what the future holds.

- Class of 2025 advisers, Mrs. Bostrom & Mrs. Conti



Scan this QR code to view our college commits Instagram page, @wagraduates.

Learn where the class of '25 is going to college, what they are majoring in, and what extracurriculars they participated in at WA! Posts will be continuing throughout the next couple of weeks.

Speech and Debate speak their way to State Competition

EVELYN BURKE
STAFF WRITER

The 2025 Massachusetts Speech and Congressional Debate League (MSDL) Tournament was a challenging state-level competition that WA Speech and Debate handled with confidence, using the knowledge and experience they have gained throughout the years to achieve multiple successful placements.

There were two annual state tournaments that WA competed in, one for speech in Walpole on April 5 and another for debate in Boston on March 28. At the debate competition, sophomore Kishan Prajeesh placed 9th, and sophomore Raghav Behara placed 17th in the Lincoln-Douglas Debate category. At the speech competition, sophomore Phillis Lu placed 4th in the Group Discussion category.

During the debate competition, there are multiple categories that students may participate in. The categories include Congressional Debate, where students act as the Senate, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, where students debate one-on-one, Policy Debate in which students debate in teams of two against each other, and Public Forum Debate which, similarly to Policy Debate, involves two teams debating against each other.

WA competed in the

Lincoln-Douglas category on the topic of artificial intelligence, proving to be a worthy competitor in the tournament. Additionally, WA participated in the speech competition under the categories Impromptu Speaking and Group Discussions, where they also achieved significant success.

Two of the Speech and Debate leads, junior Aaryan Zaman and senior Catherine Zhu, are proud of how the two teams placed and how they performed. Zaman, who was acting as a judge for the debate competitions, fondly reflects on the experience.

“Everyone was on their A game, because this is the last tournament of the year. Everyone was trying their hardest,” Zaman said.

According to Zhu, she took pride in all the students' performances and believes they did their best. It was an emotional moment for Zhu and she believes that anyone watching would be moved to tears.

“I'm proud because even though only one person placed [in the speech competition], I know we gave a solid performance and they will improve next year,” Zhu said. “All those people in those events are amazing performers and can easily move you to tears.”

A great effort was put

into preparing for the MSDL State Tournament because of its difficulty. Moreover, all students involved had been nominated because of their positive record and past winnings to participate in the tournament, meaning they were bringing the club's best competitors.

Speech competition preparations entailed brainstorming different ways to speak about various topics. Zhu taught team members anything she believed was important to their success, from conversing with the judge to navigating controversial topics.

For the debate competition, the team prepared with brainstorming sessions where they would think of any and all arguments that could help win. A lot of preparation goes into a debate round because competitors have to be ready for anything their opponent might argue, which ranges from prepared answers to niche, spontaneous statements.

The Speech and Debate Club's overall takeaway from the State Competition was an amazing experience for those who participated and, in the future, the club hopes to find more people who would want to join.

“I want to make it [Speech and Debate] more accessible for people,” Zaman said.

Bowen corrects his final test

Continued from page 10

"The people here are wonderful, inviting, friendly, collegiate, always willing to share materials, stories, ideas, educational wisdom. I think it's the strength of what we have in this building," Bowen said.

According to physics teacher Tim Burns, Bowen has contributed to the strength of the community in a large way with his positivity and physics knowledge.

"Almost all the Honors Physics curriculum all started with Mr. Bowen. So basically what we're doing now is what he laid out," Burns said. "It's been really rewarding working with Mr. Bowen. He's got a great level of optimism, which kind of rubs off on you."

As a former high school athlete, Bowen also expanded his role in the WA community by taking on positions as the throwing coach for the track teams as well as the assistant coach for the boys' and girls' volleyball teams. Throughout Bowen's years in the different communities of WA, his overarching philosophy of viewing each student as an individual has guided both his teaching strategies and personal interactions.

"Be patient. Be understanding. Be kind. Be forgiving. Be hard when there's a need, crack the whip when there's a need," Bowen said. "Some kids hate when you yell at them. It's coaching. You need to know how to approach everybody."

With Bowen approaching retirement, many of his plans center around seeing the world at times when he would otherwise be in the building. He plans to hike during a weekday, travel outside of school vacations, and potentially even pick up some pickleball. However, Bowen still plans to continue teaching on a smaller scale by tutoring students outside of school.

Although his warm smile and friendly jokes will be absent from the building, Bowen hopes that the impact he has left on his students remains with them when they look back on their high school experiences and the memories they created in his class.

"I hope that people that took my class or had me in class, enjoyed the class and had a laugh every now and then and enjoyed my stories. You know, it's always the stories that you tell that the kids remember," Bowen said.

SARAH,



WE ARE SO PROUD OF THE PERSON YOU HAVE BECOME!
WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE
HOLDS FOR YOU!
LOVE DAD, MOM AND BEN

Logan,



You have mastered at being a military child. You have been through 5 moves across different states and countries, uprooting every few years to a new location, making new friends and then having to say goodbye to them, and we couldn't be prouder of your resilience this far in your life. We are impressed by your musical talents and couldn't be more proud of your hard work. We look forward to seeing and supporting you in what you choose to do!
We love you!

WA Robotics Club presses on the gas and expands community outreach

CARTER CHIARA
STAFF WRITER

WA Robotics can be a place where like-minded students can hone their robotics and teamwork skills while competing for a championship, but it can also be so much more. Through one of their several outreach programs, WA Robotics modified a toy ride-on car to support a child with a mobility disability last year, and their work isn't done.

GoBabyGo is a Ghost Robotics outreach program that provides customized miniature cars to children with special needs. The initiative began when club advisor Jeffrey Warren decided it would be a good alternate activity for club members. The group built their first car last summer for a five year old girl. This year they set out to modify two more cars, and plan to continue at this pace.

"The goal is to give them

the same freedom of movement that other kids their age would have," sophomore club member Omkar Naluvala said. "We install controls that they'll actually be able to use, because a lot of the time with these mobility disabilities it can be really hard for them to control [the car]."

Although the main goal of Ghost Robotics is to compete in and win the FIRST Tech Challenge every year, they spend a considerable amount of their time devoted to their community outreach projects. participate in their outreach programs.

"[GoBabyGo] can be really rewarding. [...] It's been a really positive experience for



Omkar Naluvala and Nicolas Lokuta work on modifying a GoBabyGo car for the robotics club.

Photo by Jeffrey Warren

with mobility needs. Hurley puts Ghost Robotics in touch with the children's physical therapists, who then provide specific details about the child's required modifications. Once the students have the necessary information, they get to work.

"The hardest part was getting paired up with a doctor that was familiar with the program and had access to the children that were a proper fit for the cars that we build. I contacted

dozens of doctors in our area and only [Hurley] replied," Warren said.

According to Warren, some common modifications can include replacing the pedal of the car with a button, adding steering ropes for the parent or caretaker, adding improved padding and a harness, and creating an emergency stop mechanism. Each car takes around three months to complete from start to finish.

For the club's most recent car, they had to 3D print a custom battery mount so that they could move the battery and make more room for the seat.

Through GoBabyGo and other community outreach projects, Ghost Robotics is able to apply their robotics skills to the real world, while also being provided with a unique, fulfilling and creative challenge.

A story they can understand: Bringing Mandarin into classrooms

AYANNA GUPTA
STAFF WRITER

In the back corner of Miller Elementary School's library, a group of kindergarteners flip through a popular picture book. Their teacher points to a QR code on the front cover, and with a quick scan, a video pops up on a screen. The kindergartners smile as they hear the story told completely in Mandarin, their first language.

This new project was created by Westford Academy's Mandarin IV students, who have spent the past few months translating and recording the narration of popular children's books for young students at Miller, delivering them around the end of March. Their hope is to make elementary schoolers who speak Mandarin at home feel more welcomed in their

classrooms, and provide them with access to stories that they can actually understand.

"Miller Elementary School has a large number of non-English speaking students. They speak Mandarin at home and they come to school for the first year in kindergarten and they have no idea [what people are saying]," WA Mandarin teacher Ying Ma said. "It's hard for little kids to learn a totally new language at the beginning of their school year."

The idea of books narrated in Mandarin came from Westford Academy's Language Department Chair, Stephanie Devlin. Miller has been battling the issue of non-English speaking students feeling lost for years, and Devlin suggested this solution as a way to connect

high schoolers with younger students who need help.

In order to carry out this plan, the Mandarin IV students were given books from a collection provided by Miller Elementary School. The students then translated the stories into Mandarin, recorded themselves reading the books aloud, and flipped the pages on camera so the elementary schoolers could follow along with them. A QR code was then printed and placed on the book for the teachers to scan and show the video in class.

According to Ma, despite this being the first year of the project's implementation, it has already made an impact on both the elementary and high school students involved.

"For both the high school

students and the elementary school students, [the project] has been meaningful," Ma said. "The Mandarin students feel that what they learned for four years can help someone, they feel that it has meaning."

Ma also witnessed the reaction of two kindergarteners at Miller who got to watch these videos.

"They [were] super excited, because they heard the audio and saw the video at the same time. They are very engaged [...] you can see the smiles on their faces," Ma said. "They understand and are involved; they feel as if this community has a special way to welcome [Mandarin speakers]."

Aside from the evident impact the books have had on Miller students, Ma has also

noticed a shift in how the high school students see the language.

"Some students, when they are studying in the classroom, I don't feel like they have a great passion for the language," Ma said. "But when they explore this program and project a little deeper [...] they feel more passionate about the language."

Next year, the WA Mandarin program hopes to improve the project by increasing their book production or using more efficient translation apps.

"It was gratifying to know how much of an impact our efforts were making, not just now but in the future as the books are shared with more incoming children for years to come," senior Mandarin IV student Rebecca Ward said.

Congratulations Emma!

We are so proud of your dedication and hard work. Your future is bright, and we cannot wait to see what the future holds! Keep shining!



We love you,
Mom, Dad and Connor

Kieran,

We couldn't be more proud you. You have grown to become a gentleman, a role model, and a hockey legend. You have faced challenges and worked hard to accomplish your goals. We have every confidence that you will continue to rise to whatever new challenges present and become stronger and better as a result.



Love,
Mom and Dad

WA welcomes a wave of inclusivity by evolving Best Buddies

PENELOPE ZAMBRANA
CO-OPINIONS AND
REVIEWS EDITOR

For many high school students, it can be incredibly difficult to identify exactly where they belong. For some, it can even take years to discover a group with a solid foundation where they can be completely themselves. Luckily, Westford Academy has spent the last few years building a club where people can do exactly this. It involves a diverse group of students across grade levels collectively coming together for one purpose. This club is called Best Buddies.

Best Buddies is not only a club at WA, but also an international non-profit organization. At WA, Best Buddies brings together students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD's) and students who do not have IDD's to foster an inclusive environment for friendships, as well as allowing students with IDD's to be involved in everyday school activities they may not otherwise be able to access.

Best Buddies has been a significant part of the WA community for many years, but the club has taken a turn for the better over the past decade as their efforts to increase inclusivity have paid off. This led to last year being Best Buddies' most successful year

and largest class yet, with seven graduates with IDD's walking across the stage and securing their diplomas.

Now, to keep last year's efforts going, Best Buddies

and they did everything with [the students]," Dean Betsy Murphy said. "They really doubled down on everything last year, and I think it's really set the tone moving forward."



Best Buddies and WA Girls' Basketball pose.

Photo by Deepa Gautam

has roughly 90 highly involved members who are working to hold and attend club meetings every Wednesday after school. During these meetings, they

year with Unified Track, this year Best Buddies has already added on Unified Basketball. Both of these sports teams have drawn in large crowds who cheer on the students involved.



Buddies Eric Godfroy and Meggie Norton cheer at the Polar Plunge.

Photo by Kate Kelly

organize fun events such as crafts or games to strengthen the bond between students with and without IDD's. Best Buddies also holds events to fundraise and bring awareness to the club.

"The best part of last year was [how hard we worked] to give the [students with IDD's] an outlet for things to do,

"I think the school does a good job of voicing the events and making them known, and everyone is also really good at showing up and getting involved," sophomore Best Buddies Junior Officer Amelia Brown said.

Moreover, not only does Best Buddies offer Unified Sports, they also established the Special Olympics, which they began two years ago. This large event contributes to Best Buddies by helping fundraise for the club and bringing together students with IDD's from multiple towns. Many students, whether a part of Best Buddies or not, gather together to cheer on their peers.

Unlike other sports at WA that encourage a highly competitive environment, Unified Sports and the Special Olympics do not have a winner. Instead, they aim to simply bring everyone together and provide another way for students with IDD's to feel included in the community.

"Unified [Sports] are great, it really gets the kids into the sports," Murphy said. "[...] It's just fun for everyone to do the same events that everyone else is doing in track and basketball, just in a different space."

Since Best Buddies has made such an impact on the school and formed such a large community, this year

has benefitted the students without IDD's participating in it. According to Murphy, years ago they had trouble recruiting people to be part of the club, and now their biggest problem is having too many participants. However, the reasons behind the club's widespread popularity are no mystery. Best Buddies is both a way for people to feel a part of something larger and create connections with others, while also being able to give back to the community, letting both parties make the most out of the experience.

"I think just being there for the buddies and being involved in their activities makes a big impact on their lives, and also creates lifelong bonds,"

Brown said. "You're making an impact on somebody's life, and you know that you're being a good person not only for the buddies but everyone around you. It's just a great way to spread positivity."



A buddy takes a shot at a Unified Game.

Photo by Deepa Gautam

they were able to introduce yet another fundraising event. By working with Student Council (STUCO), WA organized the Polar Plunge, which served as a fundraiser for the upcoming Special Olympics this spring.

"STUCO did such a great job organizing WA's first ever Polar Plunge," senior Best Buddies Vice President Leah Bordenca said. "Best Buddies was so lucky to be able to raise money and also be able to jump into the pool."

Not only has Best Buddies become a much larger movement at the school for students with IDD's, it also

Best Buddies has made a huge impact on the school, especially in the last few years. It fosters inclusivity, creates connections among groups and grades, and allows people to enjoy themselves while doing so. With the environment that has been created, Best Buddies plans to keep growing and optimizing their resources as best as they can in future years.

"Best Buddies [has] always been something I look forward to going to, I enjoy spending time with everyone involved and it gives me a great sense of pride knowing the impact it has on others," Bordenca said.

Zhu packs her stethoscope and scrubs for medical school

MISHA SINGHAL
CO-OPINIONS AND
REVIEWS EDITOR

From an early age, senior Catherine Zhu has been drawn to science and the human body, a fascination which has led her down the healthcare path. This set her on a route that would eventually earn her a spot in the early acceptance program for osteopathic medicine at Lake Erie College.

Zhu is participating in a combined undergraduate and medical degree program which will lead to a Bachelor of Science (BS) from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) degree from Lake Erie College. This comes with many benefits, including not having to take the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) and the opportunity to graduate debt-free.

"It was a tough decision, especially with the financial offers from other schools, but the chance to have a [medical] school seat waiting for me made it an easy choice," Zhu said.

Zhu's interest in the medical field began early in middle school. According to Zhu, she specifically remembers being fascinated by anatomy and

physiology, which intensified when she took the class based on those subjects in high school. Another important moment in her journey was when she joined Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), an organization created for those interested in learning about different healthcare professions.

"HOSA definitely played a role [in] getting to know different networking opportunities and learning about different healthcare occupations. I competed in CPR, first aid, and I traveled to compete at these events," Zhu said.

Outside of HOSA, Zhu's real-world exposure to healthcare consists of volunteering at Emerson Hospital for her senior capstone project. Zhu has received hands-on experience in the hospital environment

by helping out with discharges, working in patient transportation, and having face-to-face interactions with the resident doctors and patients at the hospital. Due to this experience, Zhu's desire to pursue healthcare has solidified, and her interest in

as well as her academics and extracurriculars.

While Zhu was busy with her academics over her high school years, she also participated in diverse extracurricular activities and leadership roles. On top of keeping up with her academic duties, Zhu teaches taekwondo and holds a leadership position as co-captain of the WA Speech and Debate team.

Additionally, she is the head of the HOSA Middle School Committee, which is a separate program that provides guidance to students from sixth to eighth grade who are interested in healthcare professions. When participating in all of these activities, Zhu's focus

has always been on doing what she loved, rather than meeting the standards for college applications.

Outside of leadership positions, Zhu has volunteered within her community, worked as a waitress, and volunteered at her church.

"I did a lot of different things, but the most important thing was that I was genuinely passionate about all of them," Zhu said. "Colleges can tell when you're just doing things to fill a resume. I wanted my experiences to be authentic."

Zhu's success did not come without its obstacles. She has faced struggles with mental health and the stress of maintaining high academic standards, especially while working through challenging courses. However, she persevered and found the ability to balance her mental health by incorporating things she loved to do in order to steer through the highs and lows of high school.

"Mental health is crucial. I struggled with it, and it definitely impacted my grades during sophomore year, but taking care of my mental health became a priority as I moved forward," Zhu said.

Zhu is excited to start the next chapter of her life. From early interests in science, to her commitment to osteopathic medicine, Zhu believes that the journey to college isn't about intelligence, but is rather about caring for others and maintaining a healthy balance along the way.



Zhu poses for her senior picture.

Photo by Veronica Sun

the field has deepened. Another factor that played a role in Zhu's interest was her mother's influence. Zhu's mother is a pharmacy technician, and Zhu was inspired by her mother's work-life balance. Her mother's resilience and influence taught Zhu to prioritize her home life,

TESS, WE COULD NOT BE PROUDER OF THE PERSON YOU ARE, THE SMILES THAT YOU SHARE,
AND THE RESILIENCE YOU HAVE BUILT. WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHERE YOUR JOURNEY LEADS YOU!
"IT'S HARD NOT TO FIND IT ALL A LITTLE BITTER SWEET."



LOVE, DADDY, MOMMY, LIV AND TEDDY

David,

We are so proud of all you have accomplished, you embody the phrase
"Per laborem, omnia possibilia sunt". We look forward to the next
chapters in your journey.



Love,
Mom & Dad

Gosselin retirement

Continued from page 11

for lessons, and eventually she led a push to make computers commonplace in the classroom. Now, she has become a go-to support for any teacher or student struggling with technology, while also managing the endless stream of new technological programs and developments.

Aside from her rigorous commitment to upholding the digital foundation of learning, Gosselin has also been heavily involved in WA Theater Arts (WATA). She started as a parent volunteer when all of her children participated in the program, and eventually began managing anything from the box office to poster designs.

"I wouldn't have been able to accomplish the kinds of things that I have accomplished without [Gosselin's] stability, strength, and intelligence. She brought us into the 21st century [...]," WATA Artistic Director Michael Towers said. "But, to me as a person, she's been a very good friend. She's smart. She's a tremendously hard worker. She's got a good eye. [...] You know whatever she does, it's going to be professional, it's going to be sharp, and it's going to be beautiful. Those things I will miss."

Whether it's giving classes technology demonstrations for an upcoming project or reviewing student access to new programs, Gosselin has been an instrumental advisor in the building. She's responsible for providing students with personal chromebooks and teachers with laptops, yet she remarks how much the WA community has given to her.

"I think one of the reflections I have is I've always learned so much from my students. Westford Academy is a rigorous school, and there are some students that I've talked to that have just persevered," Gosselin said. "I admire the students and I love seeing the way they've gone out to the world and brought what's true to them. Things that they as freshmen, sophomores probably never thought they'd do in the world, but they have."

Gosselin has made the decision to retire after achieving a fulfilled career, and describes her excitement to start a new chapter of her life. According to Gosselin, she wants to find a remote technology position in the future while also traveling, but reflects on the reciprocal impact she has had with the school.

"I think what I take away is a sense of community and a sense of support and understanding that has so many different layers. [...] You have your students, you have your teachers, administration, you have your community members, it keeps getting bigger and bigger and that is your community," Gosselin said. "I can walk away knowing I impacted the lives of many, even though some kids have no idea who I am. [...] You just know that you've impacted a community, and that's what's important."

Miller retires after four decades

Continued from page 11

professionalism and dedication to his work.

By 1996, Miller was well known both in Westford and in surrounding towns for his proficiency in audio-visual technology, and more recognizably, his iconic sports announcing. In fact, Twomey was first introduced to Miller when he was a high school basketball player at Groton-Dunstable High School. According to Twomey, even then, Miller was held in high regard for his impressive control of the shot clock and his captivating commentary.

However, the announcements and analysis that have become cornerstones of WA's athletic culture used to be a source of dread for Miller due to his anxiety surrounding public speaking. According to Miller, his breakthrough towards gaining confidence was viewing the public announcements as a spotlight on the players rather than a magnifying glass on any potential mistakes he makes which also falls in line with Miller's long-term goal of highlighting student achievement.

"I hated public speaking, so I've kind of overcome that hurdle [...] I've never really been in theater [but] I kind of look at it the same way. You're in a character, and I feed off the audience, the audience feeds off me," Miller said.

Another one of Miller's largest contributions to the school is the Westford Academy Broadcasting Club (WABC). In the early 2000s, with help from administration, Miller organized the collection of resources to create the morning broadcast that still airs between 8:35 and 8:41 each morning. He also set up the technology for both recording and televising the announcements, and developed the process to execute each recording.

During his career, Miller's influence has also extended beyond WA to other schools in the district. His expertise was applied at a much larger scale, however, as Miller played a key role in determining the designs and providing recommendations for the auditoriums and other audio-visual aspects of certain school buildings. When John A. Crisafulli Elementary School, Rita Edwards Miller Elementary School, and Stony Brook Middle School were being built in the late 1990s to the early 2000s, Miller made multiple recommendations to the architects and designers. Miller also provided input for WA's current PAC, the science wing, and other additions when the building was being renovated in the late '90s.

Aside from the larger contributions to WA, Miller is also responsible for fixing many day-to-day operational issues and tinkering with malfunctioning equipment. With a utility belt around his waist carrying a flashlight, walkie talkie, and various other pieces of equipment, Miller can often be spotted throughout the day, moving from room to room, always on his feet.

"He shows up every single day. He works countless hours. He never says no to anything. He's here on vacations, he's here on the weekends [...] whatever the task is that needs to be fixed, he gets it done, and it's well beyond 7:35 to 1:55," Twomey said. "He's just a quiet human being [who] does his job the right way every single day. I think every organization needs somebody like Mark Miller who just goes about and does his job the right way every single day."

It takes a deep passion to stand by a community for more than half a lifetime, and according to Miller, this love for WA has not only kept him at WA since the early '80s, but will also keep him in the announcer's chair and present at after school activities, even after retirement.



Miller stands in the recording studio of WABC with a camera beside him.

Photo by Srivas Arun

Juliette Travassos

"I'm a peacock, Captain. You gotta let me fly!"



Go spread your wings kiddo! We could not be more proud of you.

Love,
Your crazy family

Congratulations, Alyssa!

You have worked so hard and we are so proud of you! We are excited to see what your future holds! Wishing you all the happiness and success in the world, and you will always have our love and support!



Love,
Mom, Dad, and Melanie

TechPals teaches seniors all they need to know

ELIZABETH LAWRENCE
FEATURES EDITOR

As society continues down the path of digital integration, those who have not grown up surrounded by technology may feel left behind or lost when trying to navigate these new innovations. Luckily for the senior citizens at Cameron Senior Center, TechPals is here to help guide them. TechPals, headquartered in New Hampshire, is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to provide senior citizens with in-person tech support. Westford Academy junior Nathen Ombalayil has brought TechPals to Westford and is also the local group’s president. TechPals answer any questions the seniors may have about their devices, and enable them to be more knowledgeable about the tech world they now live in. “I have two grandparents at home who aren’t really tech savvy and don’t know how to

use technology as well as teenagers,” Ombalayil said. “[Although] it’s a big stretch for the older generation to become as tech literate as us, I believe that they should be given the opportunity and the chance to become tech wizards [too].”

Some of Ombalayil’s friends were eager to be a part of this community, and jumped at the opportunity to become cabinet members. The cabinet consists of club president Ombalayil, junior

vice president Zayan Shamim, junior secretary Pranav Yellanki, junior outreach coordinator Edwin John, and junior treasurer Rohan Kaushik. “[TechPals] sounded like a great opportunity to get involved with the community and give back a little,” John said. “I’d say we’re all pretty tech savvy, we love playing games together and we are all pretty knowledgeable about tech, so putting those skills to use sounded like a great opportunity.” Although they currently only operate at the Cameron Senior Center, over the summer the group plans to start a partnership with the Littleton Senior Center as well. TechPals is currently meeting once a month and for a session that runs from 2:30-4:00 p.m. at the Cameron Senior Center. With consistent attendance rates of about 16 seniors per session, the group always makes a plan to ensure that each senior gets the personal help that they need. “We like to say that it’s like tech support, but in-person and more friendly than a random guy screaming at you,” Ombalayil said. To make sure that the

seniors don’t grow dependent on the club to deal with any digital confusion, TechPals make an effort to educate them about larger technological issues that establish broader skills. “Phishing schemes, learning about AI, we teach them about all [of] these things because we don’t want to create a dependency where they just need to go to us every time there’s an issue,” John said. “We want to teach them real literacy, where they can become savvy with technology.” According to John, a guiding philosophy of TechPals is giving the seniors the gift of independence when it comes to technology. “The main point we emphasize with our volunteers is the philosophy of not just fixing the problem for them, but showing them how to fix it for themselves,” John said. The mission of TechPals isn’t limited to those in the senior center either—many people who are not part of the Cameron community have attended sessions as well, and have recommended that the organization takes its sessions to their towns as well. “We are always looking to grow. We have a good amount of volunteers and we would like to spread out [our technology knowledge] more, and reach more seniors everywhere,” Ombalayil said. According to the club members, the key to being an effective volunteer isn’t necessarily extensive

technological knowledge, but rather the ability to communicate with others and ask for help. “If I don’t know something [...] I’ll ask one of my friends, volunteers, or cabinet members how to fix it. We may not always have the solution, but one of our peers might,” Ombalayil said. “We are always looking for volunteers. As long as you know how to use a cell phone, laptop, or [understand] simple stuff for us teenagers, then you’re set to be a volunteer.” Communication is not only crucial for working as a team, but also for supporting the seniors in a respectful manner, according to John. “We make sure that [volunteers] know how to interact with seniors, because our main job here is to support [them],” John said. “We want to make sure that they are right with knowing how to communicate with [the seniors] and doing [so] in a respectful manner.” Even from their first meeting, it was clear that this new chapter of TechPals was going to become a successful and supportive community. “[At] our first meeting our turnout was pretty good. A lot of people showed up and it felt really good to help,” Shamim said. TechPals encourages any senior centers interested in hosting a session to reach out, search them up on Instagram: @TechPals.westford, and join their google classroom with the code YUVWOTG.



(Left to right) Yellanki, Ombalayil, Shamim, John, and Kaushik stand in front of Cameron Senior Center

Photo provided by Nathen Ombalayil

Congrats, Natalia!

Nat, we are so proud of your accomplishments, this is just the beginning. Boston College is waiting for you!

Love,
Mom and Dad

Matthew,

Congrats on your graduation from WA and decision to go to Merrimack College! We are so proud of you! You are more than ready for so many great things to come and we are excited for all the opportunities that lie ahead! Work hard, have fun, and know that your family will always be there for you!

We love you,
Mom, Dad, Emily, Sarah and Megan

Ruhmann says goodbye

Continued from page 10

Throughout his teaching career, Ruhmann has emphasized the importance of connecting with students as individuals and integrating personal interests into lessons. He believes that this lightens the day for students who carry intense class loads, and aims for his class to be a place where students feel comfortable and take a breath during a stressful day.

“At the beginning of the school year, Mr. Ruhmann had us give him a music artist that we liked so while we were working independently he would play music that we all knew,” junior Elizabeth Chilicky said. “He would also have us work together to go over our homework so we all had a better understanding of the material.”

Come this June, Ruhmann will retire in Massachusetts but continue to teach at Pinkerton Academy in New Hampshire.

“I have been hired to teach next year at Pinkerton Academy and will be taking advantage of the ‘double dipping’ arrangement,” Ruhmann said. “I’m collecting my retirement [through Westford], and on top of that, getting the whole salary from New Hampshire.”

Each of Ruhmann’s teaching experiences have made him more passionate about being an educator, but WA has made the biggest impact on him due to the great environment created by students and teachers.

“WA has really great people here,” Ruhmann said. “I enjoy the kids, and I really enjoy working with my colleagues. The administrative team that we have here at WA, including deans, the guidance counselors, and [Principal Dan Twomey] are some of the best people that I’ve ever worked for.”

Westford's 2025 Art Show showcases creativity

NITHYASHREE VELAVAN
STAFF WRITER

Westford Academy hosted its annual district-wide art show on May 8, 2025 to celebrate the artworks of students from K-12. The art show is a collaborative event where students have the opportunity to showcase their artwork to friends and family.

The Westford District Art show is one of the biggest nights of the year for the art department according to Visual and Performing Arts Curriculum Coordinator Andrea Mejia. Seniors Ani Masterson, Zoe Seiger, Natalie LaCoste, Rebecca Ward, Izzy O’Hearn, Andrew Mejia, and Keerthi Isanaka helped to arrange the showcase as part of their senior capstone project.

According to the organizers of the showcase, holding the event was important because it created a feeling of community and sparked enlightening conversations among the viewers about the art pieces.

“We just hope that

people will look at the artwork and have conversations about [the art], and celebrate the work of our students,” Andrea Mejia said.

Immediately after entering the school, visitors were given a brochure containing a map of the gallery. They were then met with a display of collaborative and individual

The hallways of WA were lined with art work for the art show. (Srivvas Arun) In the bell lobby, there was a small coloring station for young children to interact with and enjoy creating their own art. The seniors also arranged for the WA jazz band to perform on the stairwell above the bell lobby,

station that was popular among young visitors as well.

The hallway leading to the flag lobby was filled with art pieces created by middle schoolers. The art show also featured family portraits along with some prints for sale

In the flag lobby, there was a wide variety of artworks by high schoolers, including digital art and photography in the hallways. Additionally displays of charcoal, paint, and various other mediums were showcased in the area.

The seniors working chose the exhibit to be their capstone project for a variety of reasons, including their own passion for art and because organizing the showcase would allow them to learn important life skills.

“I was looking to gain some organizational and planning skills,” Isanaka said.

The seniors were excited to see the children’s joyous reactions when they saw their artwork on display.

“A lot of the little kids [coming in were] looking for their artwork and they [were] so excited to see it, along with their parents, who want to see their children’s artwork,” Masterson said. “Everyone [was] just so happy.”



A painted banner playfully welcomes visitors to the art show.

artwork by students from grades K-5. On the ceilings, there were garlands created from colored paper airplanes and vibrant origami flowers.

creating a friendly and light atmosphere for everybody to enjoy. Near the music room, there was a face-painting

Photo by Nithyashree Velavan



The hallways of WA were lined with artwork for the art show. Created by students from grades K-12, the art show exemplifies the creativity and skill of the entire school district.

Photo by Srivvas Arun



A large collaborative piece created by Nabnasset Elementary School students hangs near the entrance. Surrounding it are assorted pieces created from different mediums, including watercolor paint, markers, and colored pencils.

Photo by Nithyashree Velavan

New experiences ahead for Halloran

Continued from page 21

“I realized I like every day to be different. I like to be in charge of my schedule, and all of those jobs do that, and all of those jobs talk to the public in some way or do some type of customer service,” Halloran said.

A large portion of Halloran’s

provide relevant information on the opportunity to students, and registrations have to then be presented back to the scholarship selectors. For the Career Breakfast, Halloran has to reach out to individuals in each of the fields students might be interested in, to ask them to present their experiences in that field.

Now, after 13 years as a counselor and a lifetime of changes, Halloran has parting advice for the students at WA. “Experience new experiences, because this is the

perfect time in your life,” Halloran said. “You don’t have any ties, you don’t have any major responsibilities, [...] So I would say, go for

it [...] just step outside your comfort zone a little bit [...] Don’t let the fear of failure get in the way.”

Halloran has learned not to be afraid of failure after years of experience. She recalls one specific moment where she almost didn’t take a job because of a fear of rejection.

“I remember when I was going to become a consultant for Southern Living [...] and my husband said, ‘Go for it. You’ve got nothing to lose.’ And I thought to myself, ‘Yeah, the only thing I have to lose is, “what if I fail?”’” Halloran said. “And you have to get over that. You have to go for it. It doesn’t matter what other people think, you have to do what you have to do, what you want to do, for yourself.”

Halloran has learned from all the risks she took over the years, and the people that stood by her through it all. Halloran plans to spend her retirement going on river boat cruises, seeing Europe, and playing lots and lots of golf.



Halloran smiles for a photo in her office.

job as a counselor is servicing students and communicating with organizations or individuals. Every scholarship has selection boards who communicate with Halloran to

Photo by Ian Strauss

JOIN THE GHOSTWRITER!

The *Ghostwriter* is a collaborative club where students can expand their writing, speaking, graphic design, and photography skills. We meet every Thursday in room 250 from 2:25 p.m. to 3:25 p.m.

Scan here with your smartphone to visit our Instagram and Facebook pages!



Instagram



Facebook

**Westford Academy Theater Arts congratulates the
Westford Academy Graduating Class of 2025 and
recognizes the 25 Seniors who contributed so much of
their Time, Energy, Love, and Art to our community.**

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Prahlad Chakravarthy | Megan Piendak |
| Natalia Cincotti | Rithvik Raghunath |
| Leoria Dantes | Anika Ravichandran |
| Ruby Davis | Lara Rodriguez |
| Daniel Engdahl | Aubrie Rose |
| Keira Grenier | Tyler Santos |
| Natalie LaCoste | Zoe Seiger |
| DJ Maillet | Ian Skinner |
| Ethan Mandile | Brady Smith |
| Andrew Mejia | Campbell Twitchel |
| Téa Munichello | Carissa Wong |
| Kanishka Murugallangan | Karen Wong |
| Maeve O'Toole | |

2024-2025 Season

*HARRY POTTER AND
THE CURSED CHILD*
Directed by Maggie Sulka ('09)

EVERY BRILLIANT THING
Directed by Megan Piendak ('25)

A MASTERPIECE OF COMIC...TIMING!
Directed by Téa Munichello ('25)

STUPID... BIRD
Directed by Michael Towers

A REFLECTION OF US
Written and Directed
by PlayLab Honors Students

SIX: TEEN EDITION
Directed by Michael Towers

THREE DAYS OF RAIN
Directed by Maeve O'Toole ('25)

Congratulations, Elizabeth!



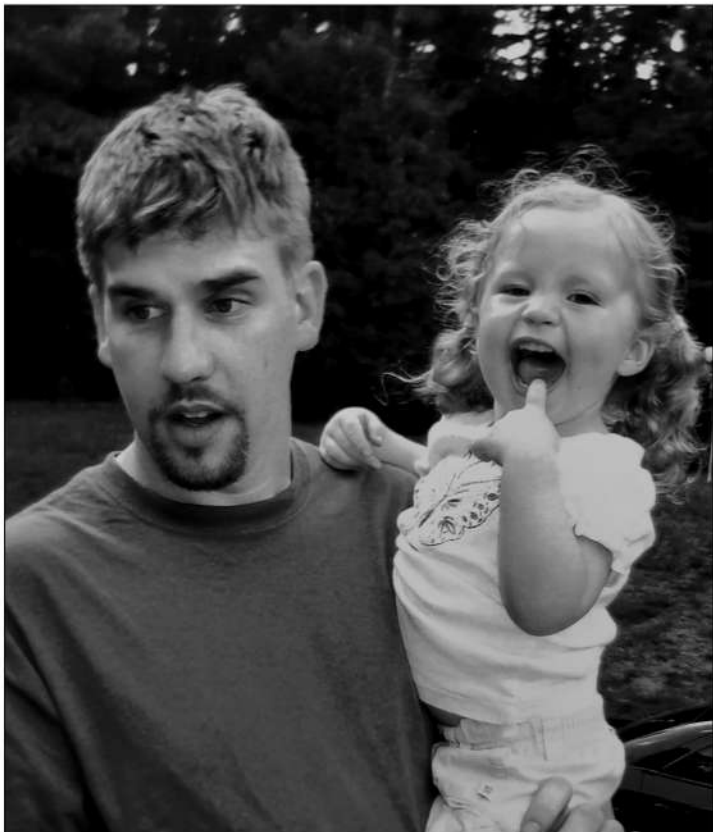
You are successful because of your heart, hard work, and dedication. I'm so proud of you and all that you have accomplished, and I'm excited for you and your next chapter.

“Take pride in how far you’ve come. Have faith in how far you can go. But don’t forget to enjoy the journey.”

With all my love,
Mom

Makenzy,

Not sure how you are so grown up! Daddy and I were proud of you since day 1! I don't think you could ever imagine how much WE love you! I hope you never forget who taught you how to use a spoon and to always think "Be a man, use your sleeve." when times are tough! Love you Forever, Like you for always!



Love, Mom

Freshman newcomer to college commit: Creighton’s softball journey

KATIE McDERMOTT
FEATURES EDITOR

Earning the chance to play a sport in college takes more than just talent. It requires discipline, resilience, and years of dedication both on and off the field. For many high school athletes, balancing academics, training, and the demands of the recruiting process can be a difficult feat. Still, those who stick with it often find that the reward is well worth the effort.

Senior Mikayla Creighton recently committed to Colby-Sawyer College, where she will continue her athletic journey as a member of the Division III Chargers softball team. Although Creighton only started playing the sport four years ago, her quick rise to excellence reflects her commitment, work ethic, and passion for the game. What began as a low-stakes high school activity has now led to a new and exciting chapter in her life.

Many athletes who make it to the collegiate level of competition have spent most of their lives working at their sport, but Creighton is a prime example of how hard work and dedication can take one further than they may expect.

Creighton had been looking for something new to do during the spring season of her freshman year, which is when her friend-and now fellow senior captain-Anya Gesin introduced her to softball.

“I began pretty late. I started my freshman year due to my friend Anya Gesin who has played softball her whole life. I wanted to try something

grew stronger.”

During her time in club and high school softball, it became clear to Creighton that when good coaching is paired with hard work, any talent can be turned into something exceptional.

However, the impact of softball on Creighton’s life extends beyond its effect on her athletic abilities. Not only did this sport help shape

coaches I’ve had; not only on the field but off the field as well,” Creighton said. “This opportunity has taught me so many life lessons such as responsibility, time management, defeat, leadership, and how important dependability is.”

Softball certainly played a role in the college decision process, yet Creighton knew that even if she was not

playing softball, Colby-Sawyer would still be where she would truly thrive for the next four years.

“I always wanted to be in a small school which is what Colby-Sawyer is. I wanted to be able to have that personal connection with my teachers and fully get the education I need,” Creighton said. “But overall the coach really implied that she

cares about me as a student and person because she understands softball is not our whole lives and we won’t be playing forever. She does want us to do well on the field but it was nice to see she is going to be supporting us off the field as well.”

Westford Academy Softball

Head Coach Gina Mustoe has had the privilege of watching Creighton go from being completely new to the sport in her freshman year to becoming a strong and independent leader for everyone on the team.

“As a freshman and sophomore, Mikayla was a valuable member of the JV team. She was a leader on and off the bench who learned the sport as a freshman player,” Mustoe said. “She has empathy and first-hand understanding [about] being newer to the sport.”

Mustoe noticed from day one that Creighton had a special work ethic that was going to take her far. She is very optimistic that Creighton will have a positive impact on the Colby-Sawyer softball program just like she has had for WA.

“I am extremely excited and proud of Mikayla for making this commitment,” Mustoe said. “If she continues to do the work off season and just be her positive self, she will be a valuable asset for the Colby-Sawyer program.”

As Creighton looks ahead to her future on the field and in the classroom, she hopes other players who are just starting out know that progress takes patience and belief.

“Honestly it’s so cliché but [...] believe in yourself,” Creighton said. “Not every game or practice is going to be rainbows and sunshine so being able to use that to push you into improving instead of giving up is what’s going to make you play at the next level.”



Crighton hustles in from the outfield.

Photo by Katie Forden

new for the spring and I was on the fence about softball but [Anya] pushed me towards trying out, and she even taught me all the basic skills,” Creighton said. “I then went on to play for a club team out of Westford [...] and that was where my love for the game

Creighton as an athlete, but she also feels as though it shaped her as a person.

“I personally really have loved my high school experience. I’ve made some of my dearest friends due to high school ball and I’ve been so supported by the

Dearest Sophia,

We are SO very proud of you! You have faced many challenges in your 18 years and you have risen above them and succeeded. You are kind, artistic, intelligent, compassionate and thoughtful. You are not afraid to advocate for yourself and others. We are impressed every day by how well spoken you are and how well you communicate with others. You are unapologetically you -- and we love you for that! We cannot wait to see what you accomplish in the next stage of your life -- you CAN do hard things.



Love you more!
Mom, Dad & Marissa (Stella & Figaro, too!)

Congratulations, Mikayla!



We are proud of you and can't wait to experience the next chapter of your journey!

Love you,
Dad, Ms. Ash and Emery

Wang’s volley of victories wins commitment to Smith College

DIYA PATEL
STAFF WRITER

The players line up behind the net, preparing for the game to begin. As feet stomp from the bleachers in anticipation and coaches anxiously grip their clipboards, senior Emily Wang keeps her eyes on the ball. Drop shot after drop shot, Wang is persistent in scoring the deciding points for Westford Academy. Not only does she win yet another game for WA, but she also wins a commit to Smith College.

Wang committed to Smith College and their Division 3 tennis program earlier this year due to the college’s supportive community and personalized recruitment process. A college athletic commitment is a milestone that signifies a mutual agreement between a student-athlete and a college. For Wang, the recruitment process started during her

junior year, when college coaches started reaching out to her.

“Overall, you are looking for the college that is right for you, and the college coach is looking for players that would fit into their program in all aspects,” Wang said.

Wang’s journey with tennis began at the age of five when her mother enrolled her in recreational classes. She played in tournaments from the age of eight, and upon entering Westford Academy, Wang immediately established herself as a standout player. Since her freshman year, Wang has played first singles for the varsity team, and she

has served as captain since her junior year.

Within the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), Wang

earned the prestigious title of Player of the Year for the Dual County League (DCL) and has also been recognized as the team’s Most Valuable Player (MVP) for two consecutive years.

According to Wang’s fellow captain, junior Haasini Sriraman, the impact Wang has made on the team, as well as Westford Academy as a whole, has been overwhelmingly positive.

“We couldn’t be prouder of her. She’s [had] a well-known name in Westford tennis, and she’s worked incredibly hard to get where she is,” Sriraman said.



Photo by Katie Fonden

Wang aims a forehand at the ball.

“Her dedication and passion for the sport [is] truly inspiring. I hope she has the best time at Smith, and continues to be the silliest person I know.”

As Wang prepares for the next chapter of her athletic and academic career, she looks forward to playing at the collegiate level while also studying neuroscience on the pre-med track.

For younger students looking to follow in her footsteps, Wang’s one key piece of advice would be to take risks.

“There is nothing worse than looking back and wishing you could have done something differently,” Wang said. “Taking these risks could make or break your position in the lineup on JV, and could even possibly bump you up to varsity. The coaches take note of the dedication and effort you put in.”

WA Sports Commits

Gavin Guo Rutgers Newark University Track	Ryan Kyle University of Rhode Island Track	Alexa Pantoja University of Tampa Track	Leah Bordenca Worcester State University Track
Jack Graffeo University of Colorado XC & Track	Charlotte Aeder University of Rhode Island Crew	Elizabeth Bellomy Sacred Heart University Crew	Nicholas Scarano Marist University Crew
Will Eddy Siena College Golf	Nick Burns St. Anselm's University Lacrosse	Kassidy Carmichael The Ohio State University Hockey & Lacrosse	Fin McKeon Assumption University Lacrosse
Mikayla Creighton Colby-Sawyer College Softball	Anya Gesin Bay Path University Softball	Alex Wilson Trinity College Football	Emily Wang Smith College Tennis

Carmichael commits to Ohio State University

Continued from page 1

always puts in 110%, and strives against a challenge. She really inspires others to push harder,” Olivier said. While Carmichael will have her hands full playing for the lacrosse and ice hockey teams at Ohio State, she also plans to stay focused on her studies. “Ohio has a lot of resources

a result of her hard work and aspirations. Although Carmichael is looking forward to starting this new chapter in her life, she is also grateful for the support she’s gotten from her family and coaches. “She owned the whole [commitment] process. I spoke with her Ohio State [lacrosse] coach once it was all said and done to say, ‘Do



Photo by Katie Fonden

Carmichael dodges a Groton Dunstable player.

that will help me balance both athletics and academics,” Carmichael said. While in Ohio, Carmichael plans to pursue a major in the sports industry. She also knows a handful of people who will be attending OSU from her hockey team at NAHA and her club lacrosse team. Carmichael has been lucky enough to have already met her future hockey and lacrosse teammates as well. Carmichael took initiative during her commitment process, and secured both her position on the team, and interviews with colleges as

you know how lucky you are to have such an outstanding athlete coming your way?” Olivier said. While Carmichael is excited for the new opportunities and changes that college will undoubtedly bring, she also feels proud of her own experiences and journey that has brought her to this point. “[Some] advice I would give other players is everyone has their own unique path in committing to a college, so stay focused on yourself and work hard,” Carmichael said.

Charlotte Aeder to row at URI

SAANVI ARORA
GRADUATING EXECUTIVE
NEWS EDITOR

With frozen shaky hands, Charlotte Aeder walks to the front of the boat and lifts her side up. The coxswain begins to shout out directions, and with no one to look to for help, and no previous knowledge of any of the calls, she tries her best to keep up. As the rain splatters against her face, and the cold wind cuts through her mom’s purple jacket, Aeder helps carry the boats and docks into Forge Pond.

As a 14-year-old getting her first glimpse at what being on the crew team looks like, this experience was less than ideal for Aeder. Little did the eighth grader know, she would go on to win many races and accolades, and earn herself a D1 commitment to the University of Rhode Island (URI).

Aeder had been considering several schools, however she eventually realized that she had always held a love for URI. By the beginning of her freshman year, Aeder had already toured around 20 schools because her sister was applying to colleges at the time. She had been to campuses nationwide, but URI stuck out to her the most. “Going into my sophomore year, I started emailing coaches and trying to figure out what I wanted more,” Aeder said. “And I started touring schools again, looking at it not just as a school but [if] could I row there as well. And the first day my mom was like, ‘What schools do you want to tour this year?’ and the first school I said was URI. So I think it was meant to be.”

Though she could not imagine her college life without rowing now, the sport has not always been so crucial for her life past high school. The turning point for Aeder was when she was rewarded the ‘Most likely to go D1’ superlative by the team during her freshman year. “I was like, ‘Wait, maybe I could do that’. I’ve never seen myself as athletic growing up, because I was never really good at the other sports [I did],” Aeder said.

Aeder has been swimming since the age of 7, and has also played

softball and fenced, however, she never really loved any of these sports. After she had quit her softball team, and her fencing club shut down a year later, Aeder was searching for a new sport. That’s when her close friend senior Jake Patterson began to persuade her to join the crew team with him. After finally being convinced, Aeder joined in April 2021, and not only found a sport that she loved, but also one that she excelled at.

“Watching her become the seniors that we used to look up to, [...] there was always that one person, those few people,

Though Aeder no longer fences or plays softball, she still swims competitively for WA, and in past years, swam during the summer for Chelmsford Swim & Tennis. Despite Aeder wanting to quit swimming for as long as she can remember, she realized how beneficial it was in making her faster at rowing due to them both being cardio sports.

Balancing being a four-season athlete with rigorous school courses is something Aeder has to relearn at the start of every school year. Just her senior year course load alone includes AP Economics,



Photo by Saanvi Arora

Aeder poses for a photo as she carries her boat back after finishing practice.

that are really fast, really good. They motivate the whole team, and everyone wants to become them, everyone wants to be them, because they’ve got the best times, they’re the biggest, they’re the strongest. [...] And it’s just been cool to see her get better, [and] then become the best pretty quickly,” Patterson said.

Some of Aeder’s best memories from rowing come from her first season on the team. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, she and Patterson were able to row in a double seat boat the entire season. Aeder recalls one time when she and Patterson had just been able to row a full length

AP Environmental Science, Honors English, CP Calculus, and Honors Mechanical Engineering. However, by maintaining a rigid study schedule, Aeder is able to complete all of her work while also managing to fit in time for herself.

Even with such a heavy workload and tight athletic schedule, Aeder sees the importance of making time for herself. After learning from her grandmother, Aeder has gained a love for sewing, and has since made quilts, clothes, and even made her Homecoming dresses and altered her Cotillion dress. Her favorite things to make are pants and



Photo by Saanvi Arora

Cautious not to tip the boat, Aeder carefully makes a turn.

of Forge Pond together when suddenly, it started raining. They began to complain about having to row in the rain, when unexpectedly, the rain subsided and a perfect rainbow spread out over the entire pond, and Patterson and Aeder were able to row through a rainbow together.

Aeder still looks up to those seniors from her first few seasons on the team and credits them as large role models in her life. Even now, she will call them if she has problems, and meet up with them when their breaks overlap such as for Friendsgiving in November.

dresses. Another thing that Aeder does outside of rowing and school is volunteer work and community service. As a part of Westford Community Rowing, a non-profit rowing club based in Westford that supports the WA crew team, Aeder helps out with the ‘Learn to Row’ programs. Additionally, Aeder is a peer counselor at WA and lifeguards over the summer at a local apartment complex’s pool. For many years, Aeder and her family have been

Continued on page 28

DEAR EMMA,



WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU! WE ARE SO
EXCITED FOR YOUR NEXT CHAPTER AT
ASSUMPTION! YOU HAVE SUCH A BRIGHT
FUTURE AHEAD OF YOU.

LOTS OF LOVE DAD, MOM, JOEY, MARTIN,
MELODY AND RUSTY XXXXX

Kyle sprints to the next leg of his running career at URI

TESSA CZADO
CO-SPORTS EDITOR

Runners approach the line, get set, and wait for the gun to fire. As soon as the sound of the shot reaches their ears, the athletes race along the track, sprinting and launching themselves over hurdles. After senior Ryan Kyle clears the first one, he’s off, meters ahead of the other runners.

Kyle committed to the University of Rhode Island (URI) at the beginning of his senior year. After originally looking at other colleges, he decided that URI was the best fit for him due to its competitive Division 1 team and active campus. Kyle’s commitment journey began when he reached out to URI coaches during his junior year.

According to Kyle, who in the 2025 DCL’s recorded a Massachusetts state record for the 400 meter hurdles with a 52.72, while also securing gold in the 110 meter hurdles and the pentathlon, he only started running when he joined his middle school track team, and viewed the commitment as a way to stay fit. However, he ended up loving the sport and stuck with it throughout high school.

“I did [track] in middle school just to stay in shape for football

and soccer, and then I stuck with it through high school and enjoyed it, so I just kept doing it,” Kyle said.

Kyle originally thought he would play football in college,

with Kyle for the past three years and admires how hard he has worked to achieve his goals and how much Kyle puts into practice day in and day out. “[His work ethic] is kind of

Kyle had previously looked at Northeastern University and University of Massachusetts Amherst, but eventually decided that URI was the best fit for him. He enjoyed the

place to compete and grow as an athlete. “I started reaching out to coaches my junior year and then kept them up to date throughout my season, and then I took some unofficial visits over the summer going into my senior season, and then official visits in the fall. After I finished my official visits, I was able to call the coaches and let them all know what my decision was and where I was going,” Kyle said.

According to Kyle, he feels ready to embrace his new team and the upcoming season at URI. Kyle’s confidence about his future collegiate career stems from his deep passion and enjoyment of the sport, which has kept him committed through each difficult year.

“You have to love it. That’s definite. It’s not like high school. It’s basically a job when you get to college, and I haven’t even gotten there yet. You definitely have to love the sport if you want to do it at that high of a level,” Kyle said. “[You] have to be determined through high school. But your senior year accolades and times, at least for track, still count just as much as your junior year or sophomore year, especially at the end.”



Photo by Katie Fonden

but during his junior year, he tried hurdles for the first time and, with the encouragement of his coach and P.E. teacher William Meuse, he decided he wanted to pursue it at the collegiate level.

Meuse has been working

Kyle races over hurdles on WA track.

unmatched to what I’ve seen and what I’ve come across in my long career as a track coach [...] he’ll do anything for his teammates and for his coaches,” Meuse said.

campus, which he first visited in the summer going into his senior year, and his feelings were only reinforced during the official tours he took in the fall. Kyle enjoyed the track program and the winning culture of URI, feeling like it was a good

Burns scores a commit to Saint Anselm for lacrosse

AARSHIA BHATTACHARYYA
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

For the past 11 years, lacrosse has been a part of senior Nick Burns’s life. Although his earliest experiences with the sport are a blur, Burns remembers the sheer enjoyment and thrill of the game, as well as the itch to come back to the field even better every time. Little did he know that doing what he loved with a passion would score him a commitment to New Hampshire’s Saint Anselm College just over a decade later.

Burns made his official commitment to Saint Anselm College for lacrosse on July 26, 2024. The decision came after a lengthy process spanning from September of 2023 to July of 2024 where he had been in contact with coaches from several schools around the east coast from all three divisions. Burns, a current captain of WA’s own varsity boys’ lacrosse team, eventually decided on St. Anselm in late July, a college with a competitive lacrosse team that has made it to the final four in Division 2 during their most recent season.

Burns’s lacrosse journey started when he joined Westford Youth Lacrosse in first grade. The program introduces young children to the sport at an early age. Teams are formed based on grade pairs and play other towns’ teams of the same age group.

“My experience [with Westford Youth Lacrosse] was awesome because we were good

[as a team] and I was able to bond with my friends,” Burns said. “The program was the foundation for me and many other players’ lacrosse careers.”

This foundation allowed Burns to develop a positive

personality make it easy to understand his commit opportunity, according to his brother and lacrosse teammate, junior Peter Burns.

“Nick has always been a great athlete all around and it didn’t just happen,” Burns

this past spring and as I was scouting I could [not] help but notice the physicality that Nick brought to his game,” Bourdeau said. “He dodged very hard and used his size to create scoring opportunities for himself and his teammates.

He was also willing to do anything for his team.”

According to Burns, Bourdeau was a significant deciding factor in his decision to commit to St. Anselm.

“I think he will continue the lively and competitive culture within the team, which really interested me,” Burns said.

Another influence in Burns’s decision was his family’s connection to the school. The athlete’s older



Photo by Diya Patel

Burns playing lacrosse on the WA Trustees Field.

attitude towards the sport, even after disappointing losses. Rather than dwell on negative feelings, Burns looks forward to finding ways to change the outcome of future games for the better.

“[I’m] mostly motivated to come back in the upcoming season and beat [the winning team],” Burns said.

Outside of lacrosse, Burns also plays on WA’s boys’ varsity ice hockey team as a captain. He is dual-enrolled at Middlesex Community College and takes classes two days a week at the Bedford campus.

Burns’s work ethic and

said. “He always puts in work to keep getting better and that’s what caused him to get where he is today as an athlete, student, and a great person in general.”

This aspect of Burns, as well as his performance on the field, was detected quickly by current St. Anselm men’s lacrosse head coach, Drew Bourdeau, while playing in a game against Bedford High School. Bourdeau was previously the head coach for the lacrosse team Burns played against at Bedford before being hired by St. Anselm this past July.

“We played Westford

brother attended and graduated from St. Anselm in 2013, later getting married at the school’s church. This longtime history with St. Anselm allowed Burns to be well informed on the school and its culture even prior to his recruitment.

However, Burns credits much of his talent and desire to pursue lacrosse at the collegiate level in the first place to his WA coach, Scott Corcoran.

“Coach Corcoran helped motivate me to be a better player and pushed me to achieve more out of the sport,” Burns said. “I would not be a good enough player if it weren’t for him.”

Aeder commits to University of Rhode Island

Continued from page 27

participating in the Pan Mass Challenge, a bike-a-thon aimed to raise funds for cancer research. Although this began as a fun event her mom suggested for her sister and her, the challenge became much more important with the diagnosis of her dad. Last year Aeder completed her first in-person event, and found fundraising for the cause to be extremely rewarding.

Aeder’s dedication to not only her sport, but also her academics and passions is what her teammates believe to be the reason she has earned herself a spot on the URI rowing team. Though Aeder is not completely sure what she would like to major in just yet, she knows it will have some relation to STEM.

“Everything [Aeder] does, she’s dedicated to it,” Patterson said. “Especially with rowing, before test pieces which are indoors and the gym, you just try to go as fast as possible. But watching her, she makes a note card, with all of the splits she wants to hit, everything she wants to do, and her mantras. She’s all in with the mental and physical capacity, and it makes sense why she’s so good. [...] It’s because she commits hard.”