

WESTFORD ACADEMY GHOSTWRITER



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Priceless

Student-driven decisions remain at forefront in face of budget deficit

SRIVAS ARUN
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

Because of the failure of the override of Proposition 2 ½ at the May 7 Town Election, Westford

Academy and the Westford Public Schools will be facing severe budget cuts and reductions.

According to Principal Dan Twomey, however, WA's administration is working to ensure that the needs of students remain at the forefront of their decisions for the upcoming school year.

"Westford Academy is still going to be a wonderful school, and we're still going to do everything we can to drive the best educational model [...] based on what student interests are," Twomey said.

WA will be facing a reduction of 13.4 full time employees, which is approximately 10% of the teaching staff, six courses, and a reduced number of class

are Mandarin IV, Latin I, French I, Painting I and II, and Foundations of Art II.

Because of shifting plans and the reorganization of classes, the process of creating student

course loads has been pushed two weeks behind schedule.

The process of inputting all student requests into an algorithm to find the most widely successful student schedules will remain the same, but the limited class sections and changing class sizes has made it

more difficult to accommodate for requirements and elective choices.

"We've always had a pretty high success rate for students'

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Photo by Anushka Tekade

During the annual town meeting on April 27, citizens raise their hands to vote using electronic vote tabulators. The override passed at town meeting but failed at the ballot vote on May 7.

sections running for each course. All of this will factor into universal growth in class sizes. Currently, the courses that will not be running in the 2024-2025 school year

Trehan unplugs after 28 years at WA

KATE KELLY
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

A melody of keyboard and mouse clicks overlaps with laughter and conversation. Screens that line the wall blink with codes and colors, illuminating the faces of students. In the center of

the vibrant technology sits computer science teacher Anjali Trehan — the face of technology at WA for nearly three decades.

After 28 years of teaching at WA, Trehan has made the decision to retire at the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

In light of her resignation, Trehan feels nothing but joy for the countless communities she has been a member of within WA.

Despite her constant devotion to the school and computer science, Trehan initially began on an alternate, unrelated career path to

teaching. Until her early twenties she lived in India, where she had originally studied and received her bachelor's in History Honors from the University of Delhi. It was through this program that she experienced an interest in culture and travel that she still carries with her

chance," Trehan said.

However, when she married her husband and moved to the U.S. she soon realized that the degree would not serve her well. Inspired by her husband's career in engineering, Trehan decided to learn more about the realm of technology. This interest

quickly expanded as she received her master's in computer science, beginning with undergraduate level courses at Boston University until she was accepted to her master's program at Rivier College. Once equipped with the educational background, Trehan was

inspired to teach young students these skills,

but on a more comprehensive level. This is when she first began composing her own computer science programs and independently teaching them to after-school groups in three surrounding towns.

"I got a master's in computer science and [...]"

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Photo by Kate Kelly

Trehan smiles for a photo, surrounded by the computers in her classroom.

today, having been to over twenty countries.

"The more countries that you're exposed to, you widen your horizons. And I think it [...] just opens your eyes, and that's why I always encourage everybody to travel, whenever you have a

Korchev earns title of Valedictorian

SAANVI ARORA
NEWS EDITOR

The end of senior year brings a time when students often reminisce about their accomplishments throughout their academic careers. And for senior Alex Korchev, he has one more accomplishment to add to the list: Class of 2024 Valedictorian. This title attests to his work ethic and ability to bounce back from

home, as well as the good balance between an urban and rural environment.

"I like to dabble in some science. My parents are both chemistry majors [so] I kind of want to do a bit more of that," Korchev said. "Or just some architecture [or] engineering [since] I also find that pretty interesting."

Korchev has undoubtedly taken some of WA's most rigorous course offerings, with



Photo by Elitsa Koleva

Senior Alex Korchev poses for a photo in the library.

difficult situations.

Korchev will be attending Brown University in the fall, majoring in applied mathematics and economics. Though he has a strong interest in these subjects, the university's open curriculum is what drew Korchev to select this school, in addition to the school's many avenues to explore whatever he wants. He also appreciates the school's location which is close to

his senior year course load alone including AP German, AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, AP European History, and AP English Literature, along with a Dual Enrollment math class. Though he has always had a fascination with math, this transcript is a testament to Korchev's variety of interests in all subject areas.

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Whitman sprints to Notre Dame

SCARLETT BARNES
STAFF WRITER

As senior Jack Whitman embarks on his next chapter, his decision to commit to the University of Notre Dame is the culmination of his high school journey filled with many remarkable achievements. From securing a perfect score on the AP Chemistry exam to excelling as a four year athlete and captain on the cross country team, Whitman will be remembered at WA for his wide range of talents. Furthermore, Whitman has also been awarded the title of 2024 Salutatorian at WA.

On April 3, Whitman made made his official commitment to the University of Notre Dame, where he will be majoring

in electrical engineering, specializing in the research and design of microchips.

Whitman found numerous aspects of the Notre Dame atmosphere enticing, specifically the on-campus facility offering undergraduates the chance to engage in research and development of computer chips—a remarkable opportunity he has been fascinated with his whole life and is eager to embrace.

"They allow undergraduates to do research in it too, [and] I just thought it was such a cool opportunity. It's definitely one of the things that added to its appeal," Whitman said.

Other aspects of Notre Dame that led to Whitman's decision are the university's vibrant atmosphere, particularly captivated by its

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Dear Westford: Thank you for my people

JAMES FARLEY
GRADUATING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Over the past 13 years, Westford Public Schools has granted me some of the most valuable gifts in my life. I will always look back and remember my favorite classes filled with my friends, sporting events with high energy and school spirit, class trips, and even the anticipation for the upcoming weekend. While all of these moments are memories that I will always cherish, the piece that I will miss the most about WPS is the people that it has given me the privilege to grow up with.

Ranging from my peers, to teachers, to administrators, to my best friends, the people that I have been surrounded by throughout my childhood have helped me become the person that I am today. It is truly the people that I have been around that have made my journey through WPS so great.

As an active participant in sports growing up, I have gotten to become incredibly close with several of my teammates. These relationships started as early as elementary school, and I lean on them for support in my everyday life to this day. I have played a wide range

of sports up through the high school level, but basketball has always been the one I care about the most. Starting in fourth grade, I met some of my very best friends through the Westford travel basketball program, and these bonds have carried on all the way up through high school athletics.

"The people that I have been surrounded by throughout my childhood have helped me become the person that I am today."

These teammates are people I can rely on whenever I am down on myself, and I am thankful to have grown up alongside them on the court.

I am also grateful for all of the teachers who have played such a positive impact on my life over the years. The teachers of WPS make school a safe and welcoming environment that I could look forward to being a part of on a daily basis. Their ability to bring their subject to life within their classroom has been so valuable to my education.

My closest friends that I have made over the years

are also instrumental to who I am as a person. Having friends who I know that I can count on everyday is a special feeling that I cherish. Some of my best memories throughout my time in WPS have come when being with

my friends, and I am very thankful to continue having them as friends as we enter college.

As I have grown as an individual, I have learned that it is not necessarily what one does that is important, but rather who they do it with. While I will remember the great things I have done in Westford throughout my life, it is the people I have done them with that will stick with me most moving forward in life. I have been lucky to have such quality people by my side for the past eighteen years as they have truly made me a better person, and this can be credited to the quality individuals that fill WPS.

So, thank you Westford. Thank you for giving me my people.

JOIN THE GHOSTWRITER!

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

GHOSTWRITER MISSION STATEMENT

THE GHOSTWRITER STRIVES TO: inform, entertain, and address the issues in the Westford Academy community with integrity. It is Our mission to accurately deliver relevant news, represent the voice of the students, to celebrate the successes of the school, and to engage the community in debate and discussion.

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

- To increasingly use aspects of multimedia in stride with current trends in professional journalism.
- To deliver fair and 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.



Congratulations Leah!



We are so very proud of all that you have accomplished, but we are even more proud of the person you have become. We are so excited for you to begin this new chapter of your life, we know you will do great things!

We love you,
Mom, Dad and Sarah

Every moment counts

JACK ZWIRN
GRADUATING CO-MANAGING EDITOR

All things must come to an end. Whether it be a fun weekend with friends, summer vacation, or high school, it all comes to an end eventually. That is why you need to make sure to enjoy things while they last.

High school is one of those things that throughout the process, you want it to be over as soon as possible, but when you do get to the end, you wish you had enjoyed it more while it lasted. Obviously each chapter of your life comes with its own exciting adventures and fun times, but you only get to experience each moment once.

You must cherish those moments in high school. Remember that funny story your English teacher told your class. Remember the field trips. Remember the group projects where you and your friends did more talking than working. If you don't, then what was the point? Sure you go to high school to learn and to figure out your next steps and who you are, but you also go to high

school to mess around with friends and create memories. Personally, I don't like math class, but I will always remember sophomore year geometry with Mr. Archambault. He would poke fun at the class, making jokes, which actually made geometry tolerable for me and I know for others as well.

For those of you who are trying to get through high school as soon as possible, I understand, but don't rush it. High school is a time to take risks, to make new friends, and a time to learn about yourself.

I am definitely guilty of waiting for the end, but now that I am there, I realize that while that might have sounded like a good thing at the time, it really isn't. I wish I had spent more time with my friends and not studying for that test that in the back of my mind I knew I was ready to take. I'm not saying that I didn't enjoy my four years at WA, but I do wish I had taken the time to relish them more. Don't make the same mistake that I did.

A new perspective

JAMES McDERMOTT
GRADUATING CO-SPORTS EDITOR

Four years of high school come with a lengthy set of challenges and distractions no matter who you are, what school you attend, or what your priorities are. At a school as academically rigorous as Westford Academy, these stressors and distractions are even more inflated. Things such as GPA, SAT's, deadlines, friends, social events, sports, clubs, and much more are all causes of stress in high school, but at the end of the day, most of them truly do not matter as much as you might think.

Four straight years are spent going 100 miles per hour trying to balance all of the things I just listed. Monday through Friday all come with their own daily challenges, and then the weekend comes, 48 hours goes by like a flash, and then Monday comes once again. We spend four years just trying to get to the next thing, waiting for the next weekend, half day, or vacation. Then one day, it is all over. Graduation day comes, and all of the worries that existed for the last four years

simply vanish into thin air. Personally, I wish I could go back and restart high school with the perspective I have now. Looking back, these worries have become a distant memory, and I can only imagine how much more I would have enjoyed day to day life if I had instead prioritized the right things. Now heading into college, I,

"I wish I could go back and restart high school with the perspective I have now."

along with all other graduating seniors, will experience an entire new set of challenges and stressors. I am going to challenge myself to use the perspective I have now, and do everything I can to prioritize only the things that I know will matter to me five years from now.

For all of the underclassmen, juniors, and even fellow seniors, my advice is to try to implement this same mindset as we all navigate through the next five

years of our lives. With that being said, I also understand that what "matters" in life is different for everyone. Some may argue that grades, GPA, and SAT's are the most important thing and should be the number one priority. Some may think that sports and other extracurricular activities should be the main focus. No matter what you personally believe, maintaining this perspective will not let you down, because at the end of the day spending all four years of high school prioritizing the things that you know will still matter to you in the future will help you graduate with no regrets.

The next step will always bring a new set of challenges, from starting college, to entering a field of work, to even starting a family. Despite this, always maintaining perspective about what truly matters to you can help weather the storm that is the unknown. I will be forever grateful to WA for teaching me this lesson alongside many more, and look forward to what is up next.

Thank You to All Our Senior Editors!



JAMES
McDERMOTT



NOAH
BROWN



PRAVAR
MUKKALA



Jack
Zwirn



James
Farley

Pravar,

We still remember the first day of your school like it was yesterday, and in a blink of an eye, we are seeing you as a wonderful young man!



We want you to know that we are proud of you and want you to always be happy! - Amma & Nanna

Jack,



We couldn't be more proud of you. You will be amazing at anything you strive for in life. Here's to your next adventure!

Love always,
Mom, Dad and Riley

A look into Sephora culture: are kids even kids anymore?

ELITSA KOLEVA
Co-Editor-in-Chief

It's the weekend, and after a busy school week, you finally decide to pay a visit to the mall. As you enter Sephora and peruse the store aisles, you come across two girls, seemingly around the age of 11, giggling as they swatch shades of concealer. Across the room, you are surprised to see a mother fighting with her child over an expensive cream. You decide to open a lip gloss tester, —only to notice the damaged wand and used up product.

We all know the culprit for this: the Sephora kids.

In today's world, seeing preteen girls, as early as age 8, going to Sephora and buying \$80 face creams is a regular occurrence.

With the growing culture surrounding these beauty products, whether it be on social media or with fellow classmates, many girls have begun to worry about their appearances at an increasingly early age. And while taking care of one's skin is not necessarily a bad thing, the toxicity of the Sephora culture has become a massive problem.

Instead of collecting the Shopkins or American Girl dolls of my generation, young girls today collect Sephora products. Bottles and bottles of skincare products and makeup line little girls' dressers, a much sought after staple in their bedrooms. For many girls, having these

products is something to be proud of; many of them have spent months collecting them, gaining inspiration from the latest TikTok trends.

For me, a lot of this feels familiar; I can't help but look back to when I was a little girl. From Littlest PetShop,

are exposed to today. That difference is that they're not toys; these are makeup and skincare products containing a variety of chemicals and ingredients meant for adult skin.

And yet, I can see how Sephora has managed to

parents to fund their kids' extraordinary splurges, a common practice only facilitated by the "Sephora hauls" seen on social media, is unrealistic, placing parents in a precarious financial situation.

Not to mention, watching all of these videos of older women—even child influencers their own age—talking about anti-aging, that girls begin to worry about how they look, comparing themselves to people on social media who use filters and excessive amounts of makeup to alter their appearances.

But do 10 year olds even need creams that contain salicylic acid, retinoids, and peptides?

In an article by USA Today, dermatologist Dr. Brooke Jeffy recalls an instance in which an 11 year old patient came in with a rash around her eyes after using retinol in her skincare routine. Occurrences like these are alarming; kids should not be using these adult products, especially if they don't even need them. If anything, these girls need to embrace their natural beauty just the way it is, and enjoy their clear, smooth skin while they have it.

Still, the increased popularity of make-up and skincare products has marked a shift in our culture, one in which kids feel the need to grow up faster. Instead of enjoying their preteen years for what they are—carefree, fun, and full of awkward situations—kids are brushing

past all of this and jumping straight to adulthood. They are feeling pressured to act like grownups, buying expensive, anti-aging skincare, and then reciting the benefits of said skincare. Sephora, once meant for adults, has now become the go-to store for these young girls.

This twisted view of the world is the result of the Sephora kid trend. Though customers and Sephora employees alike have expressed their concern over kids taking over Sephora stores—destroying testers, stealing products from their packaging, and generally being rude to everyone—the implications of this trend go way beyond that.

Though it is hard to pull young girls away from this glitzy, toxic world, there are a plethora of ways for parents to take action, whether it be keeping their kids away from social media or taking the time to research the products their kids wish to buy. Parents should offer their kids alternatives to the popular skincare that they want so that they do not feel left out. Instead of buying them that expensive anti-aging cream, opt for CeraVe SPF 50 moisturizing lotion. Instead of getting them that overpriced Dior lip oil, why not buy them that equally popular, yet cheaper one by Gisou?

Above all, parents and older siblings alike should do everything they can to encourage kids to do what they know best—be kids.



The front entrance of a Sephora store in Burlington mall.

Photo by Elitsa Koleva

to Rainbow looms, to fidget spinners and slime, each year was a new beginning in the world of trends. I very clearly remember the excitement I would feel in the toy store, finally getting the toy I wanted.

Evidently, the consumerist society we live in today has been targeting innocent kids for a while now. However, there is a real difference between the popular toys I grew up with and the Sephora products young girls

become the new Toys "R" Us for Generation Alpha. Whether it be Glow Recipe's pink watermelon-themed serums or Gisou's signature lip oils, these are the types of sleek, shiny new products kids are attracted to. But at what cost?

From Glow Recipe's \$45 Pomegranate Peptide Firming Serum to Drunk Elephant's famous \$90 T.L.C. Framboos Glycolic Night Serum, many of these products are well beyond the price range for kids. The demand on

Martin,
We are so proud of you and wish
you every success!



Lots of love,
Mom, Dad, Joey, Emma,
and woof from Melody xx

2024 Class Speaker Alex Kwon emphasizes connection

SRIVAS ARUN
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

The mention of the year 2020 never fails to stir up memories of desks distanced far apart, makeshift remote classes, and near constant feelings of isolation. However, within that shroud of hardship lies equally strong memories of perseverance.

Senior Alex Kwon hopes to emphasize her class's perseverance and close knit community when she takes the stage on Friday, June 7 as the Class of 2024 class speaker.

After a particularly unique four years at Westford Academy, Kwon could not dismiss one major accomplishment despite the many awards the current seniors had garnered while at WA.

"We had faced so many challenges together, [such as] entering our freshman year in the midst of COVID, and remote learning," Kwon said. "My main takeaway was that we had built this incredibly close network and community and [we should] keep that strong connection after high school."

As with many class speakers, Kwon's speech initially began as her final assignment for theater arts teacher Michael Towers's public speaking class. Kwon's motivation to submit the speech originated from her inherent interest in public speaking.

"I've always enjoyed public speaking and the anxiety that surrounds it," Kwon said. "It's a skill that I've always wanted to

work on and develop."

Improving her public speaking skills has been a goal of Kwon's largely due to the business major she will pursue at Bentley University. Kwon was also inspired to submit a speech by her good friend Madelyn Haley, the Class of 2023 class speaker.

Unlike Haley, Kwon built up the speech bit by bit over the course of multiple days, with each part focusing on the importance of the community they had built through the radical changes to their lives and high school experiences.

Throughout the process of writing, Kwon wanted to keep the mood of the send off optimistic in contrast to the uncertainty of the beginning of the Class of 2024's high school journey.

"My main focus was on the connection and [a reminder that] we shouldn't forget the foundation we built here in high school," Kwon said. "We don't want to forget the connections we have here and that graduating is a happy thing [...] so I focus on the positive emotions, rather than the sad ones."

Returning to school after remote learning was no simple task. Adjusting to the once normal schedule and resuming classes after periods of isolation would have made any kind of connection difficult, much less while entering a nerve-wracking high school setting.

Nevertheless, the Class of 2024 not only managed to form strong bonds, but also succeeded in building

a community which fostered growth and excellence.

Instead of focusing on the uncertainty of leaving high school, Kwon wanted to remind her classmates of the journey they had completed and the unprecedented challenges they had overcome.



Kwon stands in front of WA.

"I think the students in this particular class are so much more connected with the community, things that are going on in the country, things around the world," Principal Dan Twomey said. "I feel they learned all those things [...] and they experienced much more than other groups have."

After completing her speech for the class, Kwon entered it into the running without many expectations.

"I didn't think I was going to get the role because I threw my hat in the ring and just wanted to see what happened," Kwon said.

During the last round of decisions, the final four

students performed their speeches in front of a committee made up of Towers, Twomey, Class of 2024 Dean Betsy Murphy, senior class representative, Mitali Deshmukh, and class advisors.

"It was obvious how much they all cared about doing a

that truly represents the class," Murphy said.

From leading a varsity sports team to being a member of NHS, Kwon's variety of experiences throughout high school allowed her to capture the many emotions unique to the Class of 2024.

"I think she is somebody who can walk into any different group of students [...] and she's very respectful as a student in the classroom and as a student athlete," Murphy said. "I believe that when she's up there on that stage, she has already gained the respect of her classmates and will gain more from those who don't know her as well."

Murphy introduced the role of class speaker to WA administration in 2005 in order to provide a student who had passion for public speaking with the opportunity to present a speech to the class.

"It's important for students to hear from someone that they've sat with [for multiple years]," Murphy said. "The class speaker is a moment where students can get lost in the ceremony and get to think about where they've been and where they're going [...] and Alex does a nice job with that bridge from WA alum to a huge new chapter in the student's lives."

As the date of graduation approaches, Kwon understands the weight of the task, but her nerves have not overtake her excitement for the role.

"I'm relieved that I got the role and knowing that all I have to do now is practice. I am a little nervous, obviously, but it's more just excitement," Kwon said.

Photo by Srivas Arun

William,

You did it! We are so proud of you and can't wait to see what amazing things you do as you head out on your next great adventure!
Congratulations!



Love,
Mom, Dad & Sophia

Juliana!



We are beyond proud of you and all your accomplishments! You are going to do amazing things. I look forward to watching all your dreams come true!

Love, Mom and Dad

Korchev awarded Valedictorian

Continued from page 1

His passion for math led him to explore extracurriculars pertaining to the subject. Korchev was a part of WA’s Math Team for three years and became the team’s co-captain this year. Additionally, he has been participating in math competitions for a very long time, and one of the accomplishments he is most proud of is qualifying for the highly selective American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME) all four years of high school.

However, even with his rigorous academic schedule, Korchev was still able to balance his school and personal life by managing his time as efficiently as possible. Throughout his time in high school, he would make sure to make time to unwind, oftentimes utilizing workouts as a stress reliever.

Still, everybody’s high school career is full of ups and downs, and Korchev is no exception. The Class of 2024 has a unique experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic, completing their first year of high school mostly through computer screens. Because of this, Korchev found it difficult to adjust to the fast paced high school courses whilst working in isolation. However, he was able to bounce back and join several clubs during his sophomore year to put himself out

there and make up for his freshman year.

“[One piece of advice I would give is] join as many clubs, do as many things as you can freshman year, and then you can dial it back a little bit later once you hone in on what you want to do,” Korchev said.

Hoping to pursue his interest in mathematics, Korchev aspires to be an actuary when he is older, a profession that analyzes the financial cost of risk and uncertainty through statistics and math. Their work is essential to the insurance industry. To become an actuary, one must pass close to 10 exams, each varying in different topics such as probability, investment, and statistics. These exams are recommended to be taken during undergraduate school, and each take around 300-500 hours of studying. This path is not daunting for Korchev, however; in fact, it excites him and has become a goal he would like to achieve.

“That’s something that is a career goal of mine,” Korchev said. “In 10, maybe 15 years, hopefully, I can be done with most of [the tests] or all of them. That’s something that takes a lot of hard work and it’s something that I want to strive for.”

Whitman sprints to Notre Dame

Continued from page 1

rich football culture and the college’s ability to balance the importance of both athletics and academics.

“When I visited [Notre Dame] with my family, I just got the feeling that everybody there genuinely wanted to be there,” Whitman said. “It felt like a place where I would not only excel academically, but also socially with the culture.”

Throughout his time at WA, Whitman has always been regarded by his teachers and peers as a driven and remarkable student. His many years of hard work and dedication have led to him receiving the title of WA’s 2024 Salutatorian.

“[Salutatorian] is certainly a great achievement, and it speaks to the excellence I’ve striven to put forth in the last four years,” Whitman said. “Pushing the edges of your comfort zone is where you grow—and through that growth, you find out who you really are.”

A prime example of Whitman’s impressive achievements was his perfect score on the AP Chemistry exam in his junior year, being one of 23 students worldwide to achieve every point possible on the exam out of the 141,000 students who took it.

“Jack is outstanding, I think in both regards, as a student and person,” Whitman’s AP Chemistry teacher Timothy Knittel said, “He just invested himself

completely in everything that he does, and he does so many things. I haven’t seen that very often.”

In addition to his academic pursuits, Whitman has been involved in many diverse extracurriculars and activities, some of his personal favorites being the Spanish Exchange and Nordic Ski.

Whitman was also on the varsity cross country team for four years, obtaining captainship his senior year. He has also been participating in triathlons for the past 10 years, challenging himself physically.



Senior Jack Whitman poses in front of the University of Notre Dame.

Provided by Jack Whitman

ranking as an All-American athlete.

“I think [the aquabiking] was [...] such a positive thing that would never have happened if I hadn’t gotten that injury,” Whitman said.

Whitman is on two club teams for triathlon, TriFury Triathlon Team and Bothwell Triathlon. Although he will have to leave the teams when he moves to Indiana in the fall, Whitman plans to continue competing on the Notre Dame Triathlon team.

Whitman will be competing in both the Massachusetts and New Hampshire state-wide triathlons this coming July. Additionally, he is gearing up for a challenging half Ironman event encompassing a 1.2 mile swim, a 56 mile bike ride, and a 13.1 mile run, with the goal of tackling a full Ironman within the next six years.

As he bids farewell to WA, Jack leaves behind a legacy of excellence, ready

to embark on his next chapter at Notre Dame with determination and hope.

“The classmates and teachers with whom I’ve interacted have made me the best version of myself during my time at WA,” Whitman said. “I’m grateful for the connections I’ve made, the experiences I’ve had, and the preparation that WA has given me for college and beyond.”

Dear Adam,

You did it - congratulations! Your hard work and dedication have paid off and brought you to this next milestone on your amazing journey. Be beyond proud of all that you have accomplished thus far.



We can’t wait to see what the future holds for you at Providence College. Go Friars!

**Love always,
Dad, Mom, Emily & Jonathan**

Sarah,

Congratulations on your graduation.



We are so proud of all that you have accomplished and are excited to see where your journey takes you next.

We love you!

Dad, Mom, and Cole

No Phone Week held to collect data

GRACE HSU
CO-FEATURES EDITOR

Westford Academy students were required to put away phones during “No Phone Week” from Monday, May 20 to Friday, May 24. The purpose of the trial was to gather data to determine the best course of action regarding the usage of phones during the school day next year.

With this trial, the administration team aimed to increase engagement in classrooms, combat plagiarism and cheating, and promote more face-to-face interactions during the school day. They also hope to decrease the sharing and taking of photographs without permission, which they believe is becoming a more prevalent issue.

Students followed a schedule in which the time phones could be used decreased throughout the week. On Monday and Tuesday, students were required to keep their phones turned off and out of sight in their bags or in a phone caddy during class time, which was based on the teacher’s discretion. On Wednesday, students were only allowed to use their phones during lunch, with no usage during class or passing time. On the last two days of the trial run, phones were required to be off and out of sight for the entire school day.

Dean Betsy Murphy believes that the trial week went well and that a policy limiting phone usage will certainly be set in place next year. However, administration will determine the specifics of the plan over the summer, including whether the policy would allow for phone

use during lunch or passing periods.

“It was a good week to test the waters. I thought it was good for teachers to rethink what they want in the classroom. But regardless of what we do next year, they are going to do that because they now understand that the gray area hasn't been great,” Murphy said.

Administration was able to learn from the trial week in order to make additions and improvements to the policy for next year. The trial week showed that the policy would have to require certain rules for smartwatches and earbuds, and that additional education about phone use and digital citizenship may be needed.

“I don't believe the freshmen and sophomores have ever been educated on phone use and digital citizenship,” Murphy said. “And whether that was [because of] COVID or some other reason, we're sitting here frustrated, why there's some that are so over the top. So maybe we have to do a little education, when we come back, and hopefully we can correct that.”

While some students did not have an issue with keeping their phones off and away during class, many students felt strongly that requiring students to put phones away during lunches and passing periods was unreasonable.

“I feel like the phone week was long and it got harder as the week progressed,” sophomore Ava Mascarenhas said. “For the first few days

though it didn't really feel [very] different as many students don't use their phone in class anyways but towards the end of the week it was definitely restricting.”

On the other hand, teachers shared mixed feelings about restricting phone use during lunches and passing periods. Some teachers believe that restricting phone use during the whole school day could improve students' mental health, but others feel that restrictions during unstructured time would lead to a negative impact on mental health.

“During unstructured times, in the hallway and/or the cafeteria, I feel it's fine for students to have their phones. For some kids, it may be their only 'social interaction' during lunch,” English teacher Rashmi Kumar said.

Overall, administration hopes to maintain a level of consistency across all classrooms. Currently, teachers have the flexibility to decide whether students are allowed to use their phones during class or not. Some teachers have already implemented the phone caddy, others require students to put their phones in their bags or out of sight.

“We hear from students that it's hard. It's hard because some teachers are flexible and some teachers aren't and then the ones that are trying to go by what we've asked them to do, look like the bad guys. So we're just trying to make more consistency in the school,” Murphy said.

Opinion: Minimize phone restrictions in halls and cafe

PENELOPE ZAMBRANA
STAFF WRITER
NATALIE BEARFIELD
STAFF WRITER

It is no secret that cell phones and social media have made a large impact on the minds of teenagers and adults alike. Many can use up hours of their days mindlessly scrolling through apps or talking to their friends and it has become a regular activity for many. But when it comes to restricting screen time, how far is too far?

Recently, Westford Academy ran a trial on restricting cell phone usage from Monday, May 20 to Friday, May 24 that has sparked both negative and positive conversations schoolwide.

This experiment was called “no phone week” and the limitations on cell phone usage increased as the school week progressed.

Based on the experience of no phone week, we believe that cell phones should only be restricted in class and not in the hallways or cafeteria. Along with this, while restricting phone use is completely acceptable, completely prohibiting it is not.

According to administration, the goal of this week was not to upset students and cause an inconvenience, but to improve communication among them and eliminate distractions.

The biggest annoyance observed among students was the restricted use of phones during lunch and in

the hallways. Out of a nearly 6 ½ hour school day, lunch is the one period that students have to enjoy a break from schoolwork. While the school claims to be promoting social interactions, many modern day social interactions involve phones, whether it be texting a friend or sharing content on a phone with peers during lunch time.

Furthermore, there are many students who struggle to find friends to sit with during their lunch, and using their phone acts as a safety net. Using their phone gives them something to divert their attention to so that they aren't awkwardly sitting off to the side surrounded by people they don't know, or even alone.

Social anxiety is another problem that many students face. 1 out of 3 adolescents ages 13-18 have been diagnosed with social anxiety disorders that prevent them from socializing with others in person. Using a phone allows them to either communicate over social media apps or even just serve as a distraction in largely populated areas such as the hallways or cafeteria.

While some may argue that phones can help students come out of their shell and reduce anxiety, it is apparent that our future is technology. Rather than eliminate it, we should instead move towards integrating it into our lives seamlessly. By doing this instead, it can work to regulate anxiety and prepare many for the future ahead of them.

Continued on page 21

Griffin and Stephen,



You are such hard workers.
We are so proud of you
and all that you have
accomplished. This is an
exciting time as you go on
to the next chapter. We love you!

Love, Mom and Dad

Nevi!!!



**You did it! You have made us so
incredibly proud, and we cannot
wait to see what the next 4 years
hold for you at Merrimack!
We love you so much!!!

Love, Dad, Mom, Bode,
and Grammy**

WPD provided senior internships

VICTORIA FARLEY
Co-SPORTS EDITOR

Throughout the Westford community, Westford Academy is known for specializing in many facets of education, such as its high-level academics, impressive Theatre Arts program, and strong DECA organization. However, another layer of WA that makes it so unique compared to most high schools in the area is the capstone internships that seniors

partake in during the fourth quarter. For weeks, four Westford Academy seniors could be found in the Westford Police Department (WPD). Whether it be listening to 911 calls or reading reports, they are an example of a group taking full advantage of WA's unique capstone opportunities for seniors.

These seniors, Brandon Murphy, Mackenzie Fannon, Nicholas Doney, and Brooke Downey conducted their internship since April 5, and will continue to throughout the end of May.

Fannon had a positive experience at the Police Department and has learned a lot from the officers she was teamed with. In the first few weeks of her internship, Fannon learned the importance of doing

work that you love and how to manage her own stress and the stress of others in intense situations. "Getting to see people in moments of stress and trying to understand how and why, as well as the psychology behind it [was a positive experience and takeaway] at the Police Department," Fannon said. "[I have also learned] the importance of having a good work community and enjoying

Planning to pursue a Criminal Justice degree, Murphy felt that the WPD would allow him to understand the duties and responsibilities of law enforcement officers. "Starting senior year, it was my intention to do a major in business, however I always had an interest in Law Enforcement," Murphy said. "Taking business classes at WA gave me a good intro into the business world, however the only class that taught me a bit about Law Enforcement was Mr. Martell's quarterlong criminal minds class, so I felt I should maybe try for a spot in the Westford Police as my capstone."

The interns are grateful for the opportunities they have participating in this capstone. They are especially thankful for this the officers who made their internship a positive experience. "All of the officers have been super amazing to us during this experience," Murphy said. "Captain Michael Breault. He is an amazing captain to talk to and super kind and understanding as well."

what you do." A day in the life for these seniors at the Police Department consisted of doing dispatch and listening to records and 911 phone calls, reading reports, and occasionally a ride-along in a cruiser with an officer. "When we are doing ride-alongs we put on the bullet proof vest and hop in the passenger seat of the cruiser," Fannon said. "Then we can ask questions and learn about their patrol routes and how to give tickets and hear stories from past calls."



Fannon, Downey, Murphy, and Doney (left to right) stand for a picture in front of the Police Department.

Photo by Brooke Downey

Seniors hosted concert

MARIKA KANAYAMA
STAFF WRITER

Most senior capstones involve internships at workplaces, painting murals at WA, and helping teachers at the elementary schools. However, seniors Sammy Waterhouse, Teddy Nordhougen and Ryan de Mars took a particularly unique approach to their senior capstone: organizing a concert in the courtyard that would allow them to do what

they love and raise money for the failed override. Their band, Mandible, played hard rock and metal songs for an hour after school from 5:30 p.m. to around 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 16. The band members had spent the past few months preparing for the concert. The fundraiser will help the music department get more funds because of the recent budget cuts.

Nordhougen, who plays the drums, was inspired by a similar capstone that he witnessed his freshman year, when a senior band had performed on the football field. After seeing the capstone, Nordhougen was set on finding a band to perform with him by the time he was a senior.

He eventually found de Mars, their guitar player, in July of 2023. In December,

Waterhouse joined as their bass player and in February, the band's last member, Kyle Goucher, another senior, joined and does a little bit of everything for the band. While Goucher is part of the band, he isn't part of the capstone project, though he has already started working on a different



Mandible performs in courtyard.

project for capstone. The recent failure of the Proposition 2 1/2 override at the Annual Town Election on May 7

meant that funds for the music department will be reduced. The band hoped to raise money for the department through the concert. Although the cost of admittance is free, there is a suggested donation of five dollars.

"It's really great because it's so rare that we get to talk about that process with students [to teach them] how to put it on and all of the other stuff that goes into that was really cool," Adam Shekleton, the band director said.

According to the band, the whole experience has been very valuable. They feel like they are more responsible since they are planning the concert as opposed to letting the teachers plan everything.

"It really does teach you to be responsible and to be forward thinking [...]. It's really just our initiative that gets things going," de Mars

Continued on page 9

Photo by Brooke Downey

Cal,
Congratulations, you have an amazing path ahead! We are proud of you and love you very much. Keep lighting up the world with your smile.



Love, Mom, Dad, Ben & Kate

Sammy,



We cannot wait to see what you do next! Congratulations on your very successful years at Westford Academy!

Love,
Mom, Dad, Dustin & Ryleigh

Robotics club relocates 3D printer

ADITYA BHARDWAJ
STAFF WRITER

Robotics is a pursuit that is largely defined by the process of making and learning from one’s mistakes, something that is also crucial to the lives of high school students. This year, seniors Connor Weiss, Nick Franklin, Jonathan Tang, Jacob Bluestein, and Renée Michaud ran a capstone in which they made the 3D printers available for all students to use.

The capstone focused on getting the 3D printers relocated to the hallway below the math copy office. Franklin initially was looking for a capstone to provide more space for the robotics team when the group came up with the idea to establish a robotics space that other students would be able to use and benefit from.

“Over the past year or so, we have been investing a lot of robotics funds into 3D printers [and] some of the high schools we got to have makerspaces where you can go, pay a little money, and print whatever you want,” Bluestein said. “So, we decided it’d be great if we could make one of those for Westford Academy and then we could argue that you need a little more space to make that happen, and move out of the math copy room and out of the teachers’ way.”

The goal of this project was to allow more than just the

engineering classes to use the 3D printers. There is a manual near the 3D printers where they are set up to provide students with instructions. Currently, 50 people have received commissioned prints for the capstone that they are working on.

“We can print the designs for them and deliver them to the classes,” Weiss said. “It’s just like a nice way how we can still get things printed for them without having them actually do it at the moment.”



(Left to right) Leaders of the robotics capstone Renée Michaud, Connor Weiss, Nick Franklin, Jacob Bluestein, and Jonathan Tang pose for a picture in front of one of the 3D printers.

Both Michaud and Weiss are new to the engineering aspects of robotics, but were able to make their way through the process with ease.

“I designed a model using Blender, which was the application I was taught in the 3D modeling animation class. And then I had it sent through the form which was then printed out and I used to paint which

is going to be on display for the actual presentation, so it’s a good process,” Michaud said.

One challenge they faced was finding the budget for the printers, which cost about \$2,500. The budget for the 3D printer was solved with funds from sponsors, their own summer robotics camp, and the Holiday Bazaar, where they have sold their 3D printed items. The club is also thinking of modifying one of the 3D printers so that it can 3D print chocolate in different shapes in hopes to

sell more at the Holiday Bazaar in future years. Students were allowed to use the printer free of charge for classwork. However, if it is for something personal, students have to pay for the 3D printed object they desire based on the amount of filament and whether or not a student requested help from a robotics team member.

“A lot of [the capstone] leans more towards the engineering classes and more like manufacturing engineer applications, where you can design something in CAD and then print it out,” Franklin said. “It makes everyone more handy with the software, as it is becoming more and more relevant in today’s world.”

Photo by Srivas Arun

Senior Concert

Continued from page 8

gets things going,” de Mars said.

While looking for bandmates, Nordhogen realized how few musicians, specifically rock musicians, are in Westford. According to Waterhouse, they didn’t know how to play an instrument before joining the band but have found the experience of learning to play one to be very enjoyable.

“Our genre is a bit more hardcore, but we’re hoping that we can still reach out to a wide audience of people, and connect with them to the music,” Goucher said.

While music is important to all of the members, it isn’t something that they want to do for a career. However, it is something they are interested in

continuing out of high school. “I don’t want to view it as like a job. I don’t want to have to view it as a task. I just want to view it as something I want to do for fun in the future,” Waterhouse said.



Sammy Waterhouse singing during the concert

Photos provided by Sammy Waterhouse



Left to right: Ryan DeMars, Sammy Waterhouse and Kyle Goucher playing in the concert

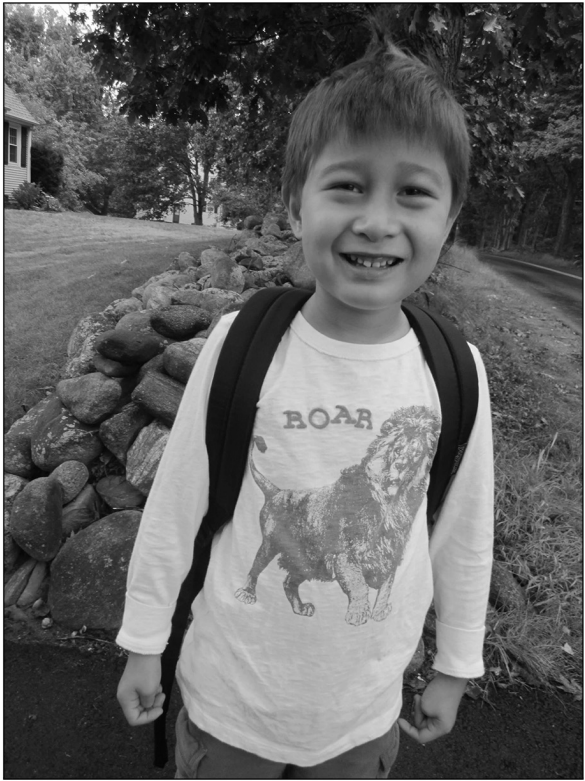
Dylan "It's Showtime!"

You have made your mark in the studio, on the stage, and in the hearts of many of us. Continue to use your talent and big heart to make your dreams come true!



We love you!
Mom, Dad, Austin and Chiara

Connor,



Congratulations on your big day, Connor! We are so proud of you and all that you've accomplished, but even more proud of the person you've become. Here's to your next chapter!

Love always, Dad, Mum, and Syd

Black & LatinX Club provides safe space for students

ELITSA KOLEVA
Co-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The feeling of belonging — whether it be while sharing a laugh with friends or connecting with people over shared cultural experiences — is a vital part of one’s happiness and well-being at school. For some WA students, however, finding a community where they can truly express all aspects of their identity has not always been an easy task. Hoping to change this is WA’s first-ever Black and LatinX Club, which seeks to create a safe space where all students feel accepted and understood.

The club, which debuted at its first meeting on Thursday, Feb. 29, aims to promote Black and Hispanic cultures, facilitating student connections and discussions. The club was founded by juniors Aniya Pittman, Iralys Santiago, Nathan Pitts, and sophomore Ranya Fortune, with the help of guidance counselor Tracy McLaughlin. The advisors of the club are WA detective and School Resource Officer Anthony Bernadin, as well as WPS Director of Equity, Curriculum, and Instruction Magaly Ronan.

For the club’s first meeting, students were given the opportunity to get to know one another over shared snacks and discuss ideas for future meetings. According to the club’s student founders, the turnout for the first meeting was surprising, yet incredibly encouraging to see students’ enthusiasm.

“We just want to build a community, that’s really the

baseline, and also outreach to people. Some people that [came], I didn’t even know that they were in the school because the school is really big,” Pitts said. “We want to invite some kids that may be shy [and feel like they are not] really friends with anybody that looks like [them] or is the same ethnicity as [them]. At this club, everybody’s welcome, not just Black and LatinX people, and we can just have fun and be a community.”

For many Black and Hispanic students, having a club that focuses on celebrating their cultures allows them to have a place where they can feel supported. In Westford, just 0.8% of the town’s population is Black, and 2.9% is of LatinX origin, often leaving many Black and LatinX students feeling isolated, especially when they first move in to Westford. With this club, these students have an outlet through which they can more easily connect with students who have similar experiences.

“When I moved here and they told me about the diversity, which [had a town-wide Black population of 0.8%], I was always concerned about that because I wanted to be with people I knew could understand me about some stuff. So with a club like this, I feel like [to have more people feel understood] would be cool,” Fortune said.

The club’s formation is a historic moment for WA, as it is the first time the school has had a Black and LatinX club, a recurring need in the community. According to McLaughlin, WA faculty and the WPS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee have spoken about the initiative for years prior to the club’s formation. What spurred it on this year were discussions about how to best commemorate Black History Month and Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the most thoughtful of ways.

After talking through the idea with Principal Daniel Twomey as well as Bernadin and Ronan, McLaughlin reached out to the student founders to see whether they would be interested in getting involved. From there, Pittman, Santiago, Pitts and Fortune took the reigns on the idea

and began advertising through posters and the morning announcements to spread the word.

“I am beyond proud of the four students that put work and time into this just because they wanted to, [and] because it was the right thing to do,” McLaughlin said. “I think the students will be the ones that drive it and they are going to make it a success. We’re the people in the background but I am confident that these students are going to just take this and run with it and make it a great resource.”

Joining the students in this initiative are the club’s advisors, who hope to support the students in whatever way they can, helping facilitate activities and foster meaningful interactions.

“Being a person of color, I wanted some of them to have someone that they could

identify with and I’ve thought it would be a great group,” Bernadin said. “My hope for the club is that we could expand and it’s just a unified front for anyone that could come forward and have a safe space so that they could discuss however they feel about who they are.”

Looking to the future, the club is planning to have field trips together and celebrate different cultures from all over the world, as well as holidays like Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Another way they hope to bring people together is by having a potluck, where students can bring foods in that they grew up with and that are unique to their culture. With so many new members, the club’s founders are looking forward to listening to everyone’s ideas.

“We just want to build a community where you can just celebrate everyone’s culture and have a fun time,” Pitts said. “We might be doing some things to change the school, but we’re open to ideas with our whole entire group, so we’re going to be asking them. We might plan trips, [...] but we just want to build a community, that is the foundation of the group so far.”

The club will meet every other Thursday from 2-3 p.m. after school in room 103.



Students attending the Black and LatinX club’s first meeting pose for a photo.

Photo by Elitisa Koleva

Lauren,

We are so proud of what you've accomplished. We can't wait to see what you do next. The sky's the limit! Best of luck next year at FSU.



Love,
Mom, Dad & Ryan

Ivy,



Freshman year at the dining table, but you emerged a leader. You returned to campus, and distinguished as a scholar. You found your clubs & soulmates, and blossomed as a friend. You discovered your media and bloomed as an artist. We love you for all that you are. May your adventures be filled with frog wizards, fairy wings, green gardens and homemade goodies. Inspire!
Always, Mom, Dad & Iz-beh

Freshman Phoenix Dailey awarded with German scholarship

SARA METIVIER
STAFF WRITER

When freshman Phoenix Dailey applied for the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) scholarship to go overseas to Germany this summer, he wasn't expecting too much from it. Too busy navigating different extracurricular activities as a freshman, the scholarship went to the back of Dailey's mind. Until, one day, Dailey opened up his computer to find a stray email sitting in his inbox informing him that he had won the scholarship.

Dailey was one out of over 15,000 students that took the National German Exam (NGE) this year, but he was also one of 2,000 students who were able to score within the 90th percentile and be awarded with a gold medal.

The students who scored in the 90th percentile were presented with an opportunity to apply for a scholarship from the AATG which would take them to Germany for three weeks this summer. However, even with the hundreds of students that submitted an application, only 37 students nationwide were awarded with the scholarship with one of those students being Dailey. His impressive 99th percentile score on the NGE and his high grade average in German class made him the perfect candidate.

Once finding out that he was one of the 2,000 possible candidates for this scholarship, it was a no-brainer to Dailey that he had to apply. The application was a long and hard process including lengthy

essay questions, an interview, and a four-hour German exam. During the process, Dailey admitted that he had felt doubt about applying for something that would take him so far away.

"It was definitely stressful because [the application process] was just so long," Dailey said. "But [I was] also scared because it's Germany [and] I've never been across the ocean before. So I was like, 'oh gosh, do I even want to do this?'"

Even with the initial nerves of applying, Dailey's uneasy feelings quickly subsided when he learned he was accepted. However, even with the excitement of being accepted, Dailey realized the miles that would come between him and his family while he is away.

"I'm excited, but I'm also scared because I've never been away from my family for that long," Dailey said. "And it's with people that I don't know, so I'm hoping to make some new friends that could be longer than a three week friendship."

In this long and hard application process, Dailey

had many people behind the scenes rooting for him who have known him since he started his German journey.

"[Dailey] totally deserves it. I'm very happy for him and proud," freshman Oliver Holway said.

During their time in Germany, the scholarship winners will be able to

also be going to school with their host families' kids, experiencing the German school setting and culture firsthand.

"I think he's going to be exposed to so much of Germany [...]. It's so different once you're actually there and getting to see it firsthand and experience it in your day to

day life," German teacher Ashley Smith said. "Also, the language exposure — hearing actual authentic German spoken all around you every day is going to do phenomenal things for him [and I think] it's

going to help him improve his language."

In addition to scoring in the 90th percentile or higher on the NGE, the candidates applying for the scholarship also had to have very specific eligibility to apply, such as a minimum of a B average in their German class, and not regularly speak the German language at home. Dailey met all of the requirements and exceeded expectations, making him a standout candidate.

"He's very much engaged in class [and] I think you can tell he genuinely enjoys and genuinely is interested in German," Smith said. "It's

one of his passions and that comes across in class. He gets excited about learning new things [and] he's always eager to participate. So I think that that's a sign of someone who really, really enjoys German."

His love for German started three years ago when he was in sixth grade and was able to take all four languages throughout the year to test them out. At the end of sixth grade, he fell in love with German and knew that he wanted to take the language for the remainder of his middle school career. With his older brother and mother also having taken German, it was just another reason to continue to take the language. Over the next two years he was immersed in the language in the classroom and loved attending class each and every day to learn something new about the German language and culture.

"I really liked my teacher in middle school and so that could have been a big factor [in why I wanted to stick with the language]," Dailey said. "But also, I found the culture really interesting and the language wasn't like other romantic languages. It's much different and I find that interesting."

Now that the trip is so close, Dailey is getting ready to absorb as much information on German culture and language that he has yet to learn in the classroom while he is there.

"I think it's still surreal that I'm actually going and I don't think I'll understand it until I'm actually on the plane and [it's going to be a] 'Holy smokes, this is happening' kind of thing," Dailey said.



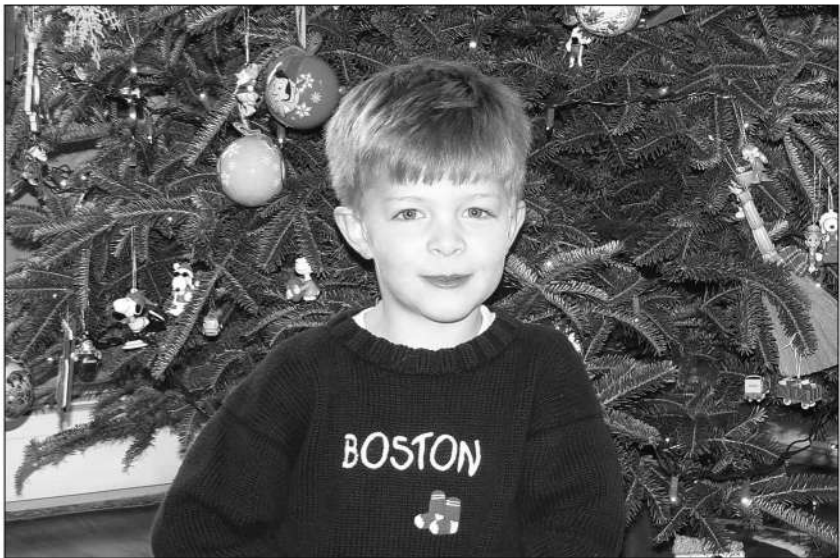
Photo by Sara Metivier

Phoenix Dailey poses for a photo in front of the German flag.

experience many different aspects of the country. Each student will be staying with a host family throughout those three weeks. During the weekends, each host family will be able to bring the student that is staying with them on fun adventures that the AATG may not be bringing them to.

Monday through Friday, the students will be brought to many different places to sightsee and go on excursions with the AATG. They will be brought to explore nearby cities, museums, monuments, and the big tourist attractions. During the week, they will

Nathan, Congratulations on your high school graduation!



We are so proud of you, and you should be very proud of yourself too. You have earned this moment of celebration!

We can't wait to see all the amazing things you will accomplish in college and beyond. We have no doubt that you will achieve even greater things in the future.

**We love you,
Mom, Dad, Matthew, and Nicholas**

Congrats Alicia!

Alicia, it has been an honor and a pleasure to watch you grow into an accomplished, intelligent, young lady! We are so proud of you! Always remember how much we love you! All your dreams can come true if you have the courage to pursue them.



**Love,
Mom, Dad, Hayden and Charlotte**

Keefeer pursues Wildlife and Conservation Biology major

ELITSA KOLEVA
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Senior Meg Keefeer hikes up a mountain during the winter, the cold air brushing against her face and the snow crunching underneath her boots as she makes her way up the steep slope. Though Keefeer’s legs are tired from the effort, the sweet moments of support from her friends continue to drive her forward. Finally, she reaches the top, and a stillness sets in as she soaks in the gorgeous mountain range, floating above the clouds.

For Keefeer, this experience of hiking to the peak of Mt. Washington last January has cemented itself as one of the most memorable hikes of her life with the WA Outing Club. After participating in both the Outing and Cirrus Clubs since her sophomore year, Keefeer hopes to continue her passion for the outdoors by pursuing a Wildlife and Conservation Biology major at the University of New Hampshire.

Though joining the Cirrus and Outing Clubs was never something she considered before her sophomore year, Keefeer decided to go to Cirrus’s first meeting after one of her friends saw a morning announcement advertising the club. As she became more seriously involved in both clubs and meeting new people in the process, Keefeer appreciated her decision to explore this new hobby.

While both Cirrus and Outing Clubs seek to provide meaningful outdoor activities and experiences for their members, Cirrus focuses more on camping, backpacking, skating, and other activities which are done locally, while Outing Clubs is involved in hiking the intense 4,000 footer mountains across New England.

Although Keefeer was unfamiliar with these outdoor activities when she first joined, she later

whether it be in advertising the club activities or simply being there for new members.

“[Keefeer] gets along with everybody. She’s like the kindest soul [and] she’s such a great kid,” Jones said. “Cirrus is one of those clubs where it’s not for everybody. You have to like to be outside and it’s not [like] WATA which has a lot of people in it and it’s not a sports team [...] but Meg’s always been so welcoming and so kind and she’d talk to anybody and just get them

career. As a child, Keefeer recalls wanting to be a marine biologist, and although she soon realized that was not the path for her, she continued exploring her different interests when she took an environmental science course in her junior year of high school.

“I just thought it was really interesting to learn about the environment and the different ecosystems and animals that live in it. I just thought that was quite interesting

wildlife biologist for pushing her to study Wildlife and Conservation Biology in college. At her job shadow site, Keefeer enjoyed being in nature and the hands-on experience that she received, in addition to accompanying her job shadow mentor as she checked the development of bird nests, identified different bird species, and did trail maintenance.

In fact, it was this hands-on approach to learning about the natural world that led Keefeer to choose Wildlife and Conservation Biology as her major, as opposed to other fields she considered.

“[The field is] very much outside. That’s what I gathered from all of the tours I’ve gone to for [the University of New Hampshire],” Keefeer said. “It’s the major where [I will] be outside the most and be able to interact with the wildlife. I also was considering doing zoology but that one is more in the classroom studying.”

For Keefeer, being in nature has always been an outlet through which she can relax and feel at peace. During her hikes for the Outing Club, her favorite moments were those where she remained still as she took in her surroundings.

“It’s just peaceful. [...] When I’m hiking, there’s usually a certain spot where I’m just standing there and just taking up all [the surroundings] and then [I] get complete silence,” Keefeer said. “I encourage going out [in nature], especially if you need to think.”



Photo by Elitisa Koleva

Senior Meg Keefeer stands outside for a picture near WA.

became an active hiker in Outing Club, as well as a student instructor for Cirrus members. According to Cirrus and Outing Club adviser and educational support professional Lynn Jones, Keefeer has always been an enthusiastic club member,

excited.” Keefeer’s interest in nature and the outdoors has always been something that she has wanted to explore further, though it never truly materialized into something she wanted to pursue until later on in her high school

compared to all my other classes and it was also nice because I had a really nice teacher [Sara Blomgren],” Keefeer said.

In addition to the environmental science class she took, Keefeer credits her junior job shadow with a

Nora,

“Hold onto the memories, they will hold onto you.”



We are so proud of all you have accomplished and are excited to see where your next chapter takes you. Enjoy the journey!

Sláinte!

Love,
Mom, Dad and Siobhán

Congratulations, Jack!



We are so proud of you, your kindness, and the young adult you have become. We are excited for your next chapter, as you continue to set goals, work hard, and enjoy your experiences along the way.

Love Mom & Dad

Families Congratulate Graduating Seniors

Kai-Xing Yue

Congratulations! We would like to express our appreciation to the teachers and administrators of Westford public schools. Thank you for everything you have done!

Will Esteves

Congratulations!! Your hard work, dedication and effort have paid off. We are incredibly proud of you and know you will succeed as you move on to the next chapter of your life. Love, Nana & Bop

Charles Bonenfant

We are so proud of you and look forward to all the future holds for you. Congratulations! Love, Mum, Dad, Pete, Tommy and Mikey

Tyler Olsen

We are so proud of you and hope you have enjoyed your time at WA! We are excited to see where your future takes you! Love, Mom, Dad and Linlee

Ethan Goff-Chervin

Congratulations on the amazing job you did in this chapter of your story. Go make history the next four years. We love watching your story unfold and being part of it. Lots of Love, Mommy, Madison and all your posse

Brandon Murphy

Congratulations on your Graduation! You've grown to be responsible, honest, and hard working. You make us so proud and we can't wait to see all you achieve in the future! Love, Mom, Dad, and Ethan

Devin Marshall

We are so very proud of you always and cannot wait to see what the future holds at the University of New Haven! GO CHARGERS!!! Love, Mom & Dad

Congratulations Meg!

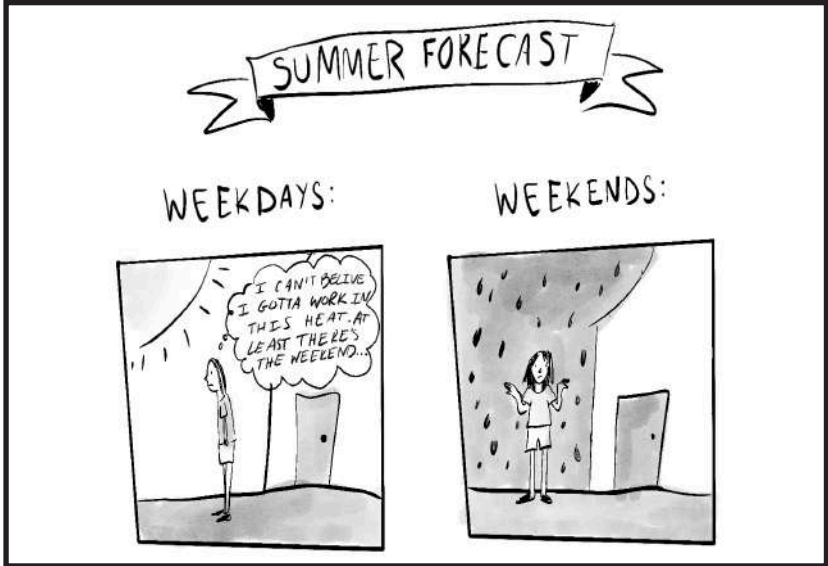


We are so proud of you! We're looking forward to seeing you soar at UNH. Stay true to yourself and enjoy your journey.

We love you!
Love Mom, Dad, and Matt



By: Josh Lawrence



By: Sachi Rasne

Caps off to the

And so their

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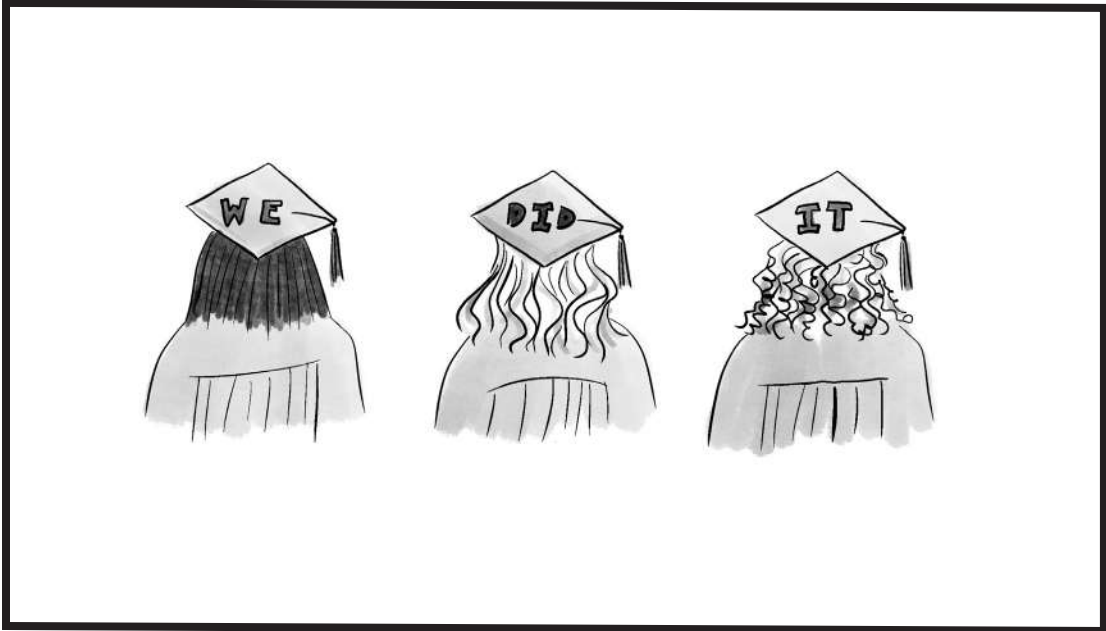
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Vincent Midura
Harshal Nookala
Meggie Norton

VALLEY COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM
Aditya Mohan

Alan Quan to bring enthusiasm to UMass Amherst

DEEPA GAUTAM
CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

At WA, senior Alan Quan is often found with a smile on his face. Not only is he a friendly presence throughout his classes, but his impressive list of involvements throughout WA have only furthered his active role in helping the community throughout the years. By day, he takes part in WA’s various clubs, from DECA to Ghosts & Goblins. By night, he can be found sitting behind the WATA ticket stands, greeting students and parents as he checks them in, or cheering by the football field as team manager.

Throughout all of these vastly different involvements, one thing is clear: Quan’s ability to find passion and enthusiasm wherever he goes. While Quan was born with a visual impairment that prevents vision completely in his left eye and partially in the other, he has not let this stop him from thriving in and out of the classroom over the past four years.

“I think people think that people who are blind or visually impaired are less capable than sighted people, which is absolutely not true,” Quan said. “A lot of things, like checking in tickets, people assume you need vision, but I love doing it and you can modify it to suit your needs. [...] We do all the same things. Do I do things differently? Yes. But the end result is the same.”

In line with this, Quan describes himself as an avid researcher who loves delving deeper into topics, such as public transportation, the airline

industry, or new technologies. This enthusiasm for learning is something that Westford teacher of visually impaired students, Susan Cantos, has noticed in Quan since he was young.

“[He is] very, very excited about learning, and loves to research,” Cantos said. “He is a student that never let his disability get him down. He

classroom.

During his classes, Quan often relies on verbal presentations or has slideshows shared to him ahead of time, in addition to the text-to-speech features on his devices.

“The biggest challenge is making sure [Quan] and all my students have all the skills they need, and keeping



Senior Alan Quan poses with a sign for UMass Amherst.

always is a can-do kid, who loves being with people and is very excited about topics that he’s interested in.”

Quan points towards Cantos, his teachers, and the ever-evolving world of technology as a huge factor in assisting with accessibility in his day-to-day life. Since he was three, Quan has worked with Cantos to learn braille, a writing system formed by raised dots, and to smoothly incorporate these accommodations to the

up with latest and greatest technology,” Cantos said. “But I see his maturity level, his responsibility level, wanting to get his work done, wanting to advocate for himself, and that is huge.”

While there may be slight differences in the way Quan approaches activities, student support services teacher Bruce Rich ultimately describes him as a “go-getter” who is persistent in finding opportunities he is interested in.

“When [Quan] walks into a room he lights up the room,” Rich said. “He’s just always in a good mood [...] We love having him around in our space. [...] And if we’re not [accessible], he’s gonna make sure we are.”

Outside of school, Quan’s passion for public transportation has most recently manifested in his Youtube channel, Alan’s Transits and More.

While Quan’s channel began as a seemingly random decision, his videos have accumulated over 15,000 views. They include footage of him using elevators and even self checkout machines.

“There’s no editing, no music, it’s very no thrill, and I don’t have a fancy camera. This started as a random thing but then, by popular demand, I’ve kept posting,” Quan said. “It’s about, if [you] were to go out on [public transportation] today, what would it really be like?”

Although sharing these videos is a casual hobby for Quan, they also carry a larger goal: to share the realities of public transportation and accessibility today, both as an enthusiast for the topic and someone who is visually impaired.

“Unfortunately, the world is still really built for people who are sighted,” Quan said. “For those of us who are can’t see very well, it is harder. For example, the way intersections

are designed, and cars on the road, or baselining, they don’t take into account people who are blind and visually impaired. [...] Sometimes [companies] prioritize cost saving over what will help people.”

Ultimately, these last few years have culminated in his commitment to UMass Amherst, where he will be majoring in Business Tourism and Hospitality. Among the factors that led him to the school include its accessible campus and support systems, along with its welcoming environment and proximity to home.

Although he had not originally anticipated this major, his years of competing in Hotel & Lodging for DECA, along with his recently-found curiosity for the tourism industry were what solidified his decision.

“I love going on vacation, as I think all of us do. But just the way that my mind works it has turned into more of an obsession,” Quan said. “I do research, I love that kind of thing, and I’ve loved the industry. I bookmark all the industry news on my phone, but I never thought it was something I could major in.”

As with any student, going into college is a huge marker of independence for Quan. This shift will also mean that he will no longer have support from the Westford system, instead shifting to the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind for assistive services and technology. As he looks to the future, Quan emphasizes his appreciation for WA and how much the support he has

Photo provided by Alan Quan

Tom,

With every step you take, know we are right behind you, cheering you on with all our love and blessings. Here's to you and the adventures that await.

Te iubim, Mama, Tata, and Nick

Congratulations Megan!

We are so proud of all you've accomplished at WA and can't wait to see what the next 4 years hold at MARIST! Remember to always trust and love yourself, enjoy the journey and know we are in your corner, always!

Love, Mom, Dad, Caitlin & Sara

Devin Marshall follows firefighter dreams

VICTORIA FARLEY
CO-SPORTS EDITOR

A fair amount of high school students go into college undecided, unsure of what to major in and where life will take them. While this is the path for some students, it is not the case for senior Devin Marshall, who committed to the University of New Haven in Connecticut for Paramedicine

going down the paramedicine path. “I never really had a plan of what I wanted to do [in the future] going into high school,” Marshall said. “When I started to get more exposed to the Westford Fire Department through my friend’s dad around freshman year I started to get more and more interested.” Marshall knew all along

the field of paramedicine and become a firefighter. “Just being at the Fire Department and feeling the energy of the people who work there is really something you won’t find in many other places,” Marshall said. “You can just tell these people really enjoy what they are doing.” Marshall’s older brother graduated from WA in 2022 and committed to New Haven

for Marshall, and he was able to spend the majority of his application process time on New Haven. “[The application process] was relatively easy for me because I was able to focus most of my time and energy on this one college because I had a plan laid out in front of me,” Marshall said. “I ended up getting a great scholarship and I was able to commit very early on.” At New Haven, Marshall is looking forward to the experiences his major will allow him to be a part of. He will be granted the opportunities to work in hospitals nearby, and he even has the chance to study abroad. “I will be able to work out of local hospitals and get real life experience of being in the back of an ambulance,” Marshall said. “I also get the opportunity to study abroad in Italy with the local emergency service departments. I’m very excited for all of the opportunities that are laid out in front of me right now.”

Out of college, Marshall hopes to work in Boston as a firefighter where he would come across an abundance of difficult problems. While he is still young, he aims to work as a first responder in bigger and busier places, such as Boston. “When I’m older and need to slow down, maybe I’ll come back to Westford and work at the Fire Department I grew up with,” Marshall said.

Photo by Victoria Farley



Marshall stands in front of a firetruck at the Nabnassett Fire Station.

and Fire Sciences. Marshall’s plan is to major in paramedicine and minor in fire sciences, and has had the intention of becoming a firefighter since the beginning of high school. He began working with his friend’s dad who works at the Westford Fire Department, and he influenced Marshall into

that he wanted his career to include helping people, and becoming a firefighter appeared to be the perfect fit. The people Marshall volunteered with at the Fire Department had a positive impact on him and his ultimate decision to go into

two years ago. Marshall did not initially intend on following in his brother’s footsteps, but a firefighter he was volunteering with informed him that the paramedicine program at New Haven would set him up for success to become a firefighter himself. This sealed the deal

Aamir Kapasi wins Best Actor in the State

AARSHIA BHATTACHARYYA
STAFF WRITER

When Westford Academy Theater Arts won its three awards at the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild state finals, senior Aamir Kapasi was not disappointed that his name was not called. Instead, he was filled with pride and joy for his fellow cast and crew. It was only minutes later, as the winner for Best Actor in the State was called, that he melted into his seat in shock and disbelief. Kapasi won Best Actor in the State award at the METG festival finals on Saturday, March 23 for his performance as Amir Kapoor in the play *Disgraced*. Written by Ayad Akhtar, the play takes place in 2001 and tackles difficult themes such as islamophobia, domestic violence, and anti-semitism.

The main character, Amir is a Pakistani Muslim lawyer who lives with his wife, Emily. He continuously rejects his heritage and religion and tries to hide it from his law firm, but ends up getting exposed due to a case he was involved in. After a series of events at a dinner party, including a tense conversation about religions and their perceptions that escalates into violence,

Continued on page 18



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Congratulations Brendan!

You have accomplished so much. We are so proud of you and can't wait to see what the future brings! We love you!

Love, Mom, Dad, Lauren and Keeva

Aamir Kapasi wins Best Actor in State with *Disgraced* performance

Continued from page 17

Aamir ends up “disgraced”, losing his wife and his job. This was Kapasi’s first award at state finals, as he had never gotten to participate in the METG festival prior to his senior year, save for when he was in sixth grade and a member of crew. However, he has been in theater every year since then.

“Any play that I’ve ever done, I’m glad that it was [*Disgraced*] that I was recognized for because it is an important play for right now,” Kapasi said. “It’s an important play for me as well [...] getting to play a role that speaks to my community and [to] be acknowledged for that is an incredible opportunity and experience.”

Other than sharing a first name, Kapasi and his character, Aamir, share their religious identity and South Asian heritage.

“Typically, when you’re able to construct a very detailed, authentic character, you do share things, you share something,” *Disgraced* director and theater arts teacher Michael Towers said.

Towers has known Kapasi for several years, ever since he first started acting over the summer between sixth and seventh grade. His character in *Disgraced* isn’t perfect, although to many in his life, Aamir appears to be put together.

“All characters in plays are very flawed, [...] all human beings are very flawed. But this was hard for [Kapasi], because there were things that were very personal to him that were embedded in the play,” Towers said.

Towers believes that Kapasi’s ability to connect with his character is what made his performance on stage so powerful, granting him the title of the Best Actor in the State of Massachusetts. The actor revealed that before

just songs from [...] the show,” Kapasi said. “I think ‘Runaway’ by Kanye West was on there because that’s the final song [Amir] falls down to.”

Yet, despite their surface level similarities, the actor is

O’Toole has known Kapasi since her freshman year, and was working under the mentorship of Towers during the preparation for the play. Senior Gaby Sanders, who starred in *Disgraced* alongside Kapasi as his

Towers, that is a major aspect of being a good actor.

“All great characters, just like all humans, are not only flawed, they have vulnerabilities. [...] If you don’t create those vulnerabilities, you’re creating superhumans, you’re creating superheroes. And that’s not what plays are,” Towers said.

Many of the life lessons the senior has learned and the experiences he has had during his time with WATA have made him the person he is today, Kapasi said.

“There’s so much good that comes from [theater] that has changed my life for the better,” Kapasi said. “It’s the end of high school, and I’ve been thinking back on all of it. [...] If I did a sport, for example, versus theater, I think I would be a totally different person.”

Kapasi also had a few words to say to those who were on the fence about joining theater, whether it be in middle school or at Westford Academy.

“Oh my God, just do it. [...] High school is a time to just do whatever you want to do. [...] There are so many examples that I could name, [with] people who were hesitant, and they joined, and they loved it in the end,” Kapasi said.

According to Kapasi, he wants to keep theater in his life, especially when he goes to college at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

“I really hope that I can continue with that community in the future,” Kapasi said. “[...] It’s just been such an amazing part of school.”



Kapasi is congratulated by senior Megan Metivier (left) and sophomore Viktoria Kariuki (right).

his performance, he would start walking at the pace that he, as Aamir Kapasi, would walk, and would slowly transition into how his character, Amir Kapoor would walk. He stated that he had a few other strategies to better ‘become’ his character as well.

“This was a little silly, but I had a playlist that was

a very different man from his character, according to Towers and several of Kapasi’s cast mates. While the character is angry and violent, Kapasi is kind and caring.

“Aamir is probably the kindest person you will ever meet. He truly does not have a bad bone in his body,” junior and *Disgraced* assistant director Maeve O’Toole said.

character’s wife, Emily, shared a similar sentiment.

“We’ve gone to school together forever,” Sanders said. “[...] He’s actually the warmest, most affectionate person I’ve ever met in my entire life.”

Despite Kapasi’s immense talent, he has his vulnerabilities, like every human being. According to

Ethan,



We are so proud of you and can’t wait to see all you will accomplish in the future!
Have an amazing 4 years at UTampa!

Love Mom, Dad and Jonathan

Congratulations Mars!

We are all very proud of you! Always remember that you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think, and loved more than you’ll ever know.



Here are some wise words from your favorite person -
“The old rules are crumbling and nobody knows what the new rules are. So make up your own rules.” – Neil Gaiman.

Love, Mom, Appa, Mihir, Akshay, Sanchari, and Ash

Talbott gallops to UNH to pursue a professional horseback riding career

SAANVI ARORA
NEWS EDITOR

She holds the memories of her childhood close to her – lining up small horse toys given to her by her mom as she watches her favorite cartoons, a rotation of any show with horses in them. As a little kid, her fascination with horses preoccupied her. Little did she know, that small interest would manifest into a lifelong passion.

Senior Lauryn Talbott’s fascination has certainly grown from watching horse cartoons. She is now placing in competitions her younger self would never have dreamed of, including the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) and several mini grand prix. With all these accolades under her belt, Talbott has one focus: a career in horseback riding.

Though this has been Talbott’s passion from a young age, she fully realized that she wanted to pursue horseback riding as a profession after attending the World Equestrian Festival (WEF) in Florida during the past two winters. The WEF is a globally recognized competition, where equestrians from all over the world compete at various levels. Talbott competed last year, however she was unable to compete this year due to her horse, Zaza, being injured. Despite this, she was able to work at the competition, and the difficult manual labor and long hours validated Talbott’s longtime dreams.

“Obviously horses have been such a huge part of my

life, and Florida really helped me confirm it because I was like, ‘if I can’t get through the 5 am wake ups until 5 pm, like 12 hour days [and] hard work in the sun, I can’t do this as a professional,’” Talbott said. “Because as a professional, you’re not just riding, you have to do the

the profession she wanted to pursue after high school.

Throughout her riding career, Talbott has had many horses that have been injured, which has been difficult for her to navigate. The first time it happened was the most difficult, and that intense frustration of being unable to

rehabilitation process.

“I spent a lot more time on the ground with my horse throughout the rehab process, and that kind of helped me rediscover what the sport was really for, rather than just the riding all the time, it’s also for the horses,” Talbott said.

However, Talbott’s parents

helped her get this far.

“My parents are my biggest supporters because they’ve seen me [go] through it all. There have been moments where I’ve gone through really tricky spots in the sport, and I’ve been like, ‘I want to quit, I’m done’, and my parents have always been like, ‘No you can find a way through it’, and help me [get through it],” Talbott said.

Talbott often has to be out of school for weeks at a time for her competitions, which creates a lot of stress surrounding her school work. However, history teacher Christopher Gorham believes that her discipline and ability to compartmentalize and focus on several tasks showcase the true makings of a professional. “In today’s world, people, even adults, have multiple careers. They might have two or three or four different positions before it really gels into a career,” Gorham said. “But for Lauryn, it seems like this is a lifelong love that she’s had since she [was] quite little.”

Talbott will be attending The University of New Hampshire in the Fall to major in equine sciences and minor in either business or communications. The equine science major is a pre-vet program specific to horses, where Talbott will learn about the anatomy and science of horses. At UNH, Talbott will also get the opportunity to ride for their team, carrying over a decade long passion into the next stage of her life.



Talbott poses for a photo with her horse Zaza.

manual labor behind it to keep the horses. So I think that decided that I was ready for it, and I also just can’t see myself being happy doing anything else.”

Though she is sure now that her career path will incorporate horses, Talbott has not always been certain of

determine the problem steered her in the direction of wanting to quit the sport entirely. However, because her family had just moved to a new house with a farm for her riding, she was able to rediscover her love for the sport through the

were a large part of the reason that kept her motivated to continue her riding journey. From getting her started in riding, to taking her to competitions, and even live streaming competitions they were unable to attend, Talbott believes her parents’ constant support is what has

Photo by Saanvi Arora

Samson,



As you take these next steps into the world, be sure to carry music in your heart and laughter in your soul. I can’t wait to see what you do next! So very proud of you - love you googol infinity.

Love, Mom

Congratulations Katie!

Your years at WA have gone by in a flash, and we have watched proudly as you’ve learned, grown, and persevered through the challenges that have come your way. You have put yourself on a path to achieving every success, knowing that “good gets good” will guide your choices.



We love you!
Mom, Dad, Madelyn, Grace and Quinn

**Westford Academy Theater Arts congratulates the
Westford Academy Graduating Class of 2024 and
recognizes the 36 Seniors who contributed so much of
their Time, Energy, Love and Art to our community.**

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Aamir Kapasi | Katelyn Robinson |
| Aiden Carrasco | Kyle Goucher |
| Amelia Margetts | Leah Alexander |
| Caroline Fulton | Leah Stafford |
| Clem Bower | Madison Kay |
| Colin Walsh | Maia Gosselin |
| Cora McWade | Malvika Bardhwaj |
| Corleigh O’Connell | Maria Sampson |
| Dylan Leiwant | Megan Metivier |
| Edward Melanson | Mia Kuo |
| Elizabeth Sielian | Natalie Weinberg |
| Estella Cui | Nicholas Franklin |
| Gabriela Sanders | Owen Krzywicki |
| Haley Burns | Ryan de Mars |
| Jacob Bruder | Sammy Waterhouse |
| Jefferey Laflamme | Serena Caney |
| Jessica Materazzo | Shailaja Gillett |
| Joshua Lawrence | Trey Hansen |

2023-2024 Season

- | | |
|---|--|
| <i>LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS</i>
Directed by Michael Towers
& Maggie Sulka (‘09) | <i>VOICES FROM THE HIGH SCHOOL</i>
Directed by Leah Stafford (‘24)
& Liz Sielian (‘24) |
| <i>VERONICA’S ROOM</i>
Directed by Gabriela Sanders (‘24) | <i>BREADCRUMBS</i>
Directed by Natalie Weinberg (‘24) |
| <i>A REFLECTION OF US</i>
Written and Directed
by PlayLab Honors Students | <i>DISGRACED</i>
Directed by Michael Towers
& Maggie Sulka (‘09) |
| <i>THE LAST FIVE YEARS</i>
Directed by Michael Towers | <i>9 TO 5</i>
Directed by Ariana Feliciano (‘18) |

Trehan retiring after 28 years at WA

Continued from page 1

I had a lot of very lucky breaks,” Trehan said. “I worked really hard at that time because I wanted to do something that would make an impact on kids. I was always very attracted to doing something with students, with kids, rather than in industry. So that’s what attracted me to teaching.”

Then, by chance in the summer of 1996, WA principal Dr. Joseph Lisi happened to cross paths with Trehan in the midst of a two week course she was teaching through Rodenbush. Having just lost the school’s previous computer lab technician, Lisi reached out with a job offer. Agreeing to the new opportunity, Trehan was hired and quickly became a full-time teacher at the school. In the same year, she was also a part of the first batch of STEM teachers in Massachusetts to receive a Professional License in accordance to new mandates from the Department of Education.

At the time of her hiring, she stood as the face of the computer science department, a subject that was considerably new to students and continued to rapidly evolve. As such, Trehan would eventually create nine different courses for WA, independently establishing the curriculum and developing materials for each. Though some have grown outdated, a handful including Video Game Programming and Java Honors, are still taught today.

“[Computer science] is a field of study I feel very passionately about because I feel that [...] it’s going to serve you well in life,” Trehan said. “There’s a lot of stuff going on in AI these days, and security, and a lot of areas that are very promising for the future. So I feel that students, if they’re interested in this, have a good career path ahead of them.”

Still, this feat is one of many ways Trehan imbued herself with the enrichment of communities at WA. Presently she stands as the advisor of both the SMASH club and the Programming Club. However, at some point in the past 28 years, she has been a leading member of the SADD Club, NHS Faculty Council, Scheduling Committee, and a chairperson of the previous Computer and Business Department. All of these are just a few of the many ways Trehan expresses her passion to interact with new people at the school and in life.

“I think it’s part of your responsibility as a teacher that you should be able to get involved with a wide spectrum of not just your classroom, which you’re responsible for. But you’re also part of a broader community,” Trehan said. “You’re part of the school. The children belong to the town. So you’re part of the town so-to-speak, even though you may not live in that town. [...] I enjoy doing it, nobody asked me to do it. This is what I wanted to do, and I got involved.”

With a well-spent career in mind, Trehan has made the bittersweet decision to retire this coming year, in hopes of seeing her newborn granddaughter on the west coast, and in part because she wishes to travel with her husband outside of school vacation. All the while, she keeps the students she has met in the back of her mind, carrying the lessons of teaching wherever she chooses to go.

“I think [there are] thousands of students I’ve taught over the years, and some of them still are in touch with me [...].” Trehan said. “So it’s kind of interesting to see that I have kind of shaped

the future of so many of my students. You know, [teaching] is very rewarding as a career. I feel working with kids is probably one of the most rewarding careers you can have.”

As she nears the end of her full-time teaching career, Trehan is nothing but grateful for the interactions she had along the way. And though she will no longer spend her days in a classroom, she aims to continue expanding her horizons, encouraging students to do the same.

“Each student is different. Find out what is the most challenging [for you], because I feel that we should all be lifelong learners. I set by example here — I’m going to start Spanish now, you know at this age, because I feel it’s important to keep learning [...].” Trehan said. “I feel that it enables you to be a lifelong learner; if you try and push yourself, challenge yourself, and take the most challenging courses that you would be able to achieve success in.”

Though she is officially retiring, Trehan aspires to maintain her connection with the WA community, possibly as a substitute teacher, in the future while also keeping contact with other WA retirees.

“I’m sad about leaving WA and all the wonderful students, and I will miss the student interactions a lot. But [retirement] is going to open up new opportunities. It’s a new chapter in my life that will be opening up, which I’m looking forward to [...].” Trehan said. “I’ve worked with some amazing people; staff, as well as faculty, as well as students. And I am sad to see [WA] go. I had mixed emotions, that is really true. It’s bittersweet emotions.”

Opinion: Minimize phone restrictions in halls and cafe

Continued from page 7

Moreover, for some students, this new rule will not have a significant impact. Unless the teacher allows it in that moment, students do not typically use their phones during class anyways. Creating a new rule around it only creates unnecessary tension.

We are not oblivious to the fact that phones can be a large distraction and cause students to procrastinate their work in class. According to the National Library of Medicine, 68% of students reported that the most common external distraction in class is ringing and buzzing phones and 21% of students end up distracted from it.

While it is understandable for teachers to not want phones in classrooms as it is a proven distraction, when you bring this situation out to the lunchroom or hallways, it does not have a significant enough impact on students' focus to warrant this policy. Whether it be a five minute break in between classes or during lunch, these are some of the only times that students can gather themselves for a moment during what can be a very stressful school day.

Outside of the classroom, students will often have to coordinate with parents about how they are getting home. However, scheduling a ride may take more than five minutes between finding someone for a ride and confirming a time and place for pickup, so time in the

hallways and during lunch is the only viable time to do so.

Some may argue that if students need to coordinate rides or are dealing with a mental health struggle, they should simply ask their teachers to use their phones at certain moments. The problem with this, however, is that it can be stressful to ask teachers for certain favors. If one is already dealing with anxiety or stressed about their ride home, the last thing students want to deal with is fear of rejection or embarrassment in front of their classmates.

Society is constantly changing and evolving—older generations do not understand the dependency younger generations have built on phones just as the generations that came before them did not understand many of their habits. The truth of the situation is that phones are normalized in society and many depend on the benefit of immediate communication. Revoking something that has been the standard for most of our lives is more obstructive to daily life than it is helpful to communication.

It is evident that students are not going to let this phone policy pass without a fight. The best thing the adults in our lives can do is try to understand this from our perspective. Although phones can be considered a distraction in class, aside from learning time, they are valuable tools for students to utilize and they should not be excluded from day-to-day life.

Owen,

We’re very proud of the effort and commitment you gave to your academics, sports, family and community. This is an exciting time with many wonderful opportunities and experiences for you to explore. We look forward to seeing you grow and learn in the years ahead.



Love,
Mom, Dad, Jessica and Paige

Congratulations Emily!



We are so proud of you and all you’ve accomplished! Your future is bright and the possibilities are endless.

Love,
Mom, Dad, Aidan, & Katie

Unified Track Team sprints into new season with inclusivity in mind

SOPHIA WILLIAMS
STAFF WRITER

Inclusivity at WA is one of the core ideals the school strives for. Students have made clubs promoting diversity and equality but never an all-inclusive sports team until this year. With the creation of the Unified Track & Field team, which had their first meet on March 19 and their last meet on May 28, WA had a sports program that was accommodating to all students, making WA an inclusive place for everybody.

For Athletic Director Jeff Bunyon, creating this program had always been an aspiration. After hearing that Unified Track was an MIAA recognized sport, Bunyon was eager to put together a program for the athletes even if he was unsure about all the entities of the program.

“How would it work? Do we have enough? Do we have the athletes available for it? There were just a lot of unknowns for me, but it is something I really believe in,” Bunyon said. “It’s something I’ve wanted to do for the students.”

Unified Track & Field is a program in which intellectually disabled athletes run in track and field events with the aid of athletic mentors.

“We want to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels comfortable and everyone can participate in what they want,” junior mentor Laney Mach said. “Everyone comes to Unified Track knowing this is the hour after school where they can give back

to their community and enjoy themselves.”

Before starting the season, the two program leaders, educational support teacher Joe Van Gelder and special education aid Tadhg Murray, worked with members of the Unified Sports in Boston, Massachusetts to learn about leading a Unified Track team.

doing different activities over the course of the school year. The Best Buddy members were excited to step up and get the team running. They also involved some students to become program leaders as well as mentors for the athletes.

With both mentors and athletes making up the

Acton-Boxborough & Concord-Carlisle and Cambridge Ridge & Latin as well as sectionals against Dracut.

Throughout the Unified Track team's season, some big unknowns for both Bunyon and the leaders were running the track meets. This came as a result of modified accommodations that

realized it was all worth it,” Mach said.

The Unified Track & Field team has brought together many people, with many of the athletes and mentors making new friends. They have also grown as athletes, getting faster and working on their speed and agility throughout the season to help them become better track and field athletes.

The athletes also shared memories that made the meets special. For the athletes, one of the most special moments has been getting to run with their parents and friends, such as senior Eric Godfroy who loves running with Mach and junior Leah Bordenca.

Overall, the athletes experienced a great team environment filled with happiness and support from the coaches and mentors, helping them to become better athletes. When asked about the expansion of the program at WA, Bunyon said it was a possibility.

“Perhaps, the two sports that have excelled in unified sports are track and field and basketball. And we will look to try to do basketball. But that’s something that would be down the road,” Bunyon said.

Looking forward, the team would like to promote the program’s initiative throughout WA.

“We want to promote the inclusiveness of everyone and try to make sure everyone has an opportunity regardless of their disability,” Bunyon said. “To make sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in athletics and to show the overall school spirit.”



The Unified Track team poses for a photo.

Photo provided by Laney Mach

needed to be met, and also keeping the environment safe for athletes and mentors.

“We have run track meets before but it’s modified slightly. It’s just different and we were concerned but I took a deep breathe and said, ‘I’m sure it will take care of itself’” Bunyon said. “And it did. The Track and Field kids helped out in measuring the distance in the shot-put and helped out with javelin [...] which overall helped with the team's success.”

During their first home meet on April 22, Mach saw all the hard work shine through in creating the team when all the athletes ran their races. She felt proud of what they had accomplished, mentioning senior Harshal Nookala in particular.

“After Harshal finished his race, he just looked at me and gave me the biggest hug and said ‘I did it!’ he was so happy. And that is when I

“They gave us information, some videos, some training supplies,” Gelder said. “That was kind of giving us the rules and what we need to do on our end because we are still new to the whole program, we are still figuring it out.”

Bunyon first talked to the Best Buddies Club at WA that works with the intellectually disabled students after school

team, the Unified Track and Field team was able to begin practices and meets. According to Mach, they practiced Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays with Monday afternoons typically being competition days. Some meets they had during their season included a meet against Lincoln-Sudury, and a double meet against

Congratulations, Sarah!



We are so proud of your amazing journey and all that you have accomplished. We can't wait to see what you do in the future!

Love,
Dad, Mom, and Sam

Congratulations on your graduation Tarun!



We wish you the very best in college and all your future endeavors. We love you.

Hacha, Amma and Paru

Graffeo commits to University of Tennessee

NIHAL MARK
STAFF WRITER

When the COVID pandemic hit, many people lost touch with their passions and found themselves with little to do with their newfound time. However, junior Jack Graffeo used the extra time to delve into a new hobby that has allowed him to accumulate numerous records and awards: running.

This extra practice due to the pandemic fueled his passion for the sport, ultimately leading him to decide to continue his track career into high school at the D1 level. After a successful 2023 cross country season he decided to take the college athlete path, committing to the University of Tennessee.

"I didn't know I wanted to compete at the college level until my freshman year of high school, [when] I competed at my first ever nationals and got 3rd place," Graffeo said. "The passion came that season when I realized I could be pretty great at this given a few years of work and after I started taking the sport seriously I started to really enjoy the process of improving every day and every season."

Graffeo put his name on the map after a breakout 2023 cross country campaign. He ran the fastest 5k in the state with a time of 14:47. Along with that milestone, he won the DCL Cross Country Championship filled with hard competition from nearby schools. Graffeo also finished 3rd at the State Championships and qualified for his first ever Cross Country Nationals out in San Diego with his Stanford-commit teammate senior Paul Bergeron, winning

37th place. Alongside his cross country achievements, he started off on the right foot at the New Balance Track in Boston with a mile time of 4:21:60.

Graffeo's decision to go to the University of Tennessee also involves an interest from off the race track. He plans to attend the business school at University of Tennessee.

"The Haslam School of Business is highly ranked amongst the top public schools in the nation and I hope to become a business major there in the future," Graffeo said. "I would say the climate attracted me down south, I'm really looking forward to getting out of the cold winters."

Track and Field practice at Westford Academy occurs everyday of the week, besides competition days, so balancing academics and athletics can be tricky for some. Graffeo is able to manage his time between these two activities.

"I prefer to separate the two from each other and I've picked that up during winter," Graffeo said. "By separating [academic and athletics] in my head I can be completely present in school when I need to be

doing school work and present at practice when I need to be running. I don't think of my school work when I'm running and I don't think of my running when I'm in the classroom."

Runners need to have a strong mentality to help them before and during the race and Graffeo excels in this leading to his success.

"My mentality changes from race to race but recently what's helped me is keeping

super important," Graffeo said.

Graffeo is always trying to improve his running ability on the track and off. While off the track, Graffeo analyzes professional runners such as Gaylen Rupp, one of the greatest American distance runners, because of his mentality and work ethic.

Similarly, Westford Academy track played an important role in Graffeo's development as a runner.

"Running with a group of guys that really love the sport like I do taught me to be extremely disciplined," Graffeo said. "We just put in the work necessary with no questions asked, and that has carried over to every aspect of my life. If you want to be great at what you do, it takes what it takes."

Even with a high school career filled with numerous accolades, Graffeo refuses to slow down his pace, setting his sight on a life of record-breaking running.

"I am hoping to extend my career to compete at the highest level possible. I'm looking to hopefully

be fortunate enough to win an NCAA title at the collegiate level," Graffeo said. "Afterwards I would love to become a marathoner and make an attempt at the Olympic Qualifying standard."



Provided by Jack Graffeo

Grafeo sprints to the finish line

Bergeron to Stanford

JAMES FARLEY
GRADUATING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
VICTORIA FARLEY
SPORTS EDITOR

Everyone is going to want to remember the name Paul Bergeron. Since his freshman year, he has taken the Dual County League (DCL), by storm in cross country, indoor track and field, and outdoor track and field. His accolades are numerous, stretching from holding the school record in both the one and two mile races, to finishing in 7th place in the Foot Locker Cross Country National Championship.

These incredible feats have led Bergeron to national prominence, and he will continue his remarkable running career next year at Stanford University.

Bergeron's college search process centered around finding the school that could offer him a home away from home, has a nationally ranked cross country and track and field team, and is academically prestigious. His final four choices were Stanford University, Harvard University, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Virginia, before before he ultimately decided on Stanford.

"The guys and coaches at Stanford were the best out of any school I visited. It was definitely where I felt I would be the happiest," Bergeron said. "It's been my dream school since I decided to really devote my time to the sport."

Continued on page 24

Raegan,

We are so proud of you and all of your accomplishments! Be happy, dream big and enjoy your journey as you head off to Elon!



We love you so much!
Dad, Mom, Luke & Mia

Griffin,

We are so very proud of you...not only for what you've accomplished but also for the wonderful person you are! We look forward to all that lies ahead!



Our love and support always,
Mom, Dad, Emme and Delia

Cullen ranked seventh for Baseball in Massachusetts

CARISSA SCHUTT
STAFF WRITER

Senior baseball captain Jake Cullen was ranked the seventh best player in Massachusetts by the sports website BVM Sports this year. This comes after he ranked during his sophomore year on the website Perfect Game.

Cullen has been playing baseball since he was seven years old. Unlike most young kids who start out playing tee-ball, he started with baseball. He has been a pitcher since he started playing, but he has played all other positions at one point in his career.

Cullen plays for the baseball Club New England Baseball (NEB) during the summer months. He has been on this team for three years now, and used to play for the War Dogs and Wolf Pack, but he has always been most comfortable at NEB.

“NEB is for sure my favorite, just the environment and people have been the best,” Cullen said.

Cullen's favorite part about baseball is the environment, including the players and coaches who have fostered his passion.

Ultimately, his passion for the sport has led him to play baseball in college, committing to the University of Rhode Island (URI) where he will be a part of their baseball team. Although multiple colleges reached out to him with an interest in pursuing him as a strong addition to their team, Cullen chose URI because of the

environment and benefits they had to offer.

“I chose URI because of all the love the coaching staff and team showed me. I also had a really good scholarship offer,” Cullen said.

Having scouts watching games and paying attention to the way that Cullen reacts to different situations and how he can be a team leader has taught him that first impressions are huge when it comes to sports.

After finding out about his ranking, Cullen knew he would have to be more competitive and prepared for intense gameplay due to the exposure. He understands that other players from the ranking list will try to get in his head now, and that there will be times where they win against him.

In the offseason, there is a lot that pitchers have to work on, more so than other positions. They have to lift, throw to make sure their arm stays strong, as well as finding different techniques to increase the velocity speed

of their fastballs.

Managing academics on top of sports was difficult for Cullen, however, WA's support system helped him manage

of the coaches are younger and were in his position just years before.

At WA, Cullen is also the quarterback for the varsity



Photo by Katie Fonden

Cullen throws the baseball back to the pitcher.

athletics and schoolwork. His club team knows and understands that he is a student athlete, especially because a lot

of the coaches are younger and were in his position just years before. At WA, Cullen is also the quarterback for the varsity

Living a life as action-packed and busy as Cullen's, it is important to have family support and guidance when it's needed. He is grateful that his family does everything they can to help him be successful.

“I would get home late after NEB workouts and they would always have food on the table for me showing their support,” Cullen said.

In the future, Cullen has the goal of being in Major League Baseball (MLB), and has been working towards that for most of his life. He has been reaching out to pro scouts for when he plays in college, and will continue working towards his ultimate goal, which the ranking definitely helped with.

Cullen is on track to pursue his goal of playing baseball professionally. He has kept the same mindset throughout his high school career, and encourages others to do the same.

“Work hard. Don't just do something that you're not going to enjoy. It will bring you down, do what you love and don't take anything personal.” Cullen said.

Bergeron to Stanford for XC

Continued from page 23

To get to Stanford in the first place, Bergeron had to dedicate immense amounts of time and effort to perfecting his craft. This meant training nearly every day, and keeping his body in peak condition. With this process comes setbacks and struggles, but Bergeron has a knack for fighting through adversity.

“I talked to a lot of athletes from the Class of '24. We got a lot of top recruits and

best people I can.”

Another appeal for Bergeron that Stanford offers was the coaching staff's dedication to the program. This includes the distance coach Ricardo Santos and the head director of track and field is JJ Clark. Santos was previously a coach at Harvard as well as a professional team in Boston.

“My relationship with Santos is great and it feels really natural talking to him about my goals and aspirations. I believe he will best foster my growth as an athlete,” Bergeron said.

“[Santos] knows the area I'm

different schools with seven runners per team. Out of these 224 athletes, Bergeron placed first over all of them. This all-state meet is competitive and holds high stakes, so his success was a big deal for the team.

Bergeron's winning streak continued throughout his spring track season as well. In March at the New Balance Indoor National, he secured second place in the 5000 meter with a time of 14:14:57.

With such a successful senior season, Bergeron feels very grateful to his coaches, other runners he got to meet, and WA as a whole for

Emma Belle,



Well, we have no idea how it came so fast, but it's here...the day of your high school graduation. We are so, so proud of you! Now, it's time for new adventures... your college era awaits. Know that you will always have all our love with you wherever you go. ❤️ The best is yet to come, Sweets!

Love,
Mom, Dad, Sofie and Jack



Photo by Noah Brown

Paul Bergeron appears with the XC State Championship trophy minutes after his win.

just some of the best and hardest working people in the class. I was in Colorado for a bit this summer and got to train with one of those future teammates,” Bergeron said.

“I'm really excited to experience the culture at Stanford firsthand. I just want to surround myself with the

from, which is always nice.”

During his time as a Ghost, Bergeron has achieved many accomplishments, including his two first place victories at the Massachusetts MIAA Cross Country State Championship. On Nov. 18 2023 at Willard Park in Devens, Massachusetts, Bergeron was named state champion for the second year in a row, finishing the 5k (3.1 miles) race with a time of 15:06.

The meet consisted of 32

cheering him on throughout his high school journey. Overall, Bergeron is thrilled to be taking his talents over to Stanford, and hopes to help the Cardinals fight for a PAC-12 championship starting next year.

“I am grateful for all the people I got to meet and the high-level meets I got to compete in,” Bergeron said. “It's been awesome representing my hometown on a big stage.”

The shoes fits: Liona serves an ace on his way to SHU

JAMES FARLEY
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Having recently won the United States Tennis Association Individual State Championship on May 27 after battling through 64 of the state's best players, senior captain and reigning Dual Country League [DCL] MVP Connor Liona has certainly made his mark on the WA tennis community. Moving forward, Liona has committed to play Division 1 tennis at Sacred Heart University.

Liona announced his commitment on Saturday, March 9th, choosing Sacred Heart over his other two college finalists, Duquesne University and Ithaca College, because of its strong tennis program, having his major, and its pretty campus.

Tennis has played a significant role in Liona's life since he was a kid. Liona began playing when he was four years old, pairing it alongside a variety of other sports throughout his childhood, including basketball, baseball, and soccer. However, it wasn't until his freshman year of high school that he turned his focus to tennis entirely, playing the sport year-round.

"It was my goal to play college tennis since middle school," Liona said.

This decision proved to be a vital one for Liona, as it gave him the time to compete in USTA tournaments year long.

"The USTA tournaments really matter in terms of official results against high quality opponents," Liona said. "The results in these tournaments are what drove me to be able to be recruited."

In order to get to the place where he is today athletically, Liona had to dedicate a great deal of time and hard work. Alongside the high school season with WA in the spring, Liona trained with club coaches for many years. At 12 years old, he began working with Mike Dizuzio from the New England Tennis Academy, and as of last year, he has worked with Paco Morato from the New England Tennis Center. This exposure to extra coaching has been a key factor in Liona's progression as a player.

"[My coaches] helped me focus and decide if I was really willing to put in the work to play in college," Liona said. "I owe most of the development of my game to Mike [Dizuzio], and the refining of my strengths and weaknesses with both the playing and mental aspects of tennis have come from Paco [Morato]."

Playing for WA has also made a big difference on Liona's overall growth as a player. Not only have the coaching and chance to play throughout the spring benefited him, but also the intense one-on-one matches

with junior teammate Saunak Manna.

"I love playing high school tennis with WA. I thrive in the team atmosphere," Liona said. Ultimately, all of his dedication to the sport has prepared Liona to play tennis at the Division 1 level in college. At Sacred Heart, Liona will play tennis all year

match them up against more competitive opponents.

"The MAAC is a little bit higher level [than the NEC] in terms of schools across all sports," Liona said. "It is a more competitive conference that everyone is excited to be heading into."

In the process of deciding on a school, Liona visited

players. Currently, there are players from Venezuela, Cyprus, France, El Salvador, New Zealand, and the Czech Republic on the roster.

"It will be a very unique experience, and I am really excited to play with them," Liona said.

At Sacred Heart, Liona will take part in a 3+3 Exercise Science program on an accelerated academic track, allowing him to finish his undergraduate requirements in just three years, and then move into a Clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT).

On the road to Sacred Heart, Liona's family has played a major role in supporting him along the way.

"My dad ran at Brown, my brother currently runs at WPI, and my mom played high school basketball for three years and grew up in a competitive family, so she played a lot of sports, as well," Liona said. "We are always competitive with each other, and they have really helped me out along the way."

Through great hard work and passion for the game, Liona has made a positive mark on the WA tennis program, and he has learned to accept his mistakes, and use them as learning experiences to help him become a better player.

"Practice is where mistakes are going to be made, and I think getting upset about them is human nature," Liona said. "However, mistakes are going to happen to everyone, so you might as well figure out where your mistakes are coming from and work on them so that you are ready when you compete."



Liona returns a shot during an MIAA State Tournament singles match.

Photo by James Farley

for the school. Throughout the fall, the team will play in several individual tournaments, have off-season training in winter, and then play around two matches a week during the regular season in the spring.

Liona will take part in a significant change to the Sacred Heart athletic program. The Pioneers will be leaving the Northeast Conference [NEC] to join the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference [MAAC], a jump that will

Sacred Heart several times, meeting with head coach Mike Guastelle and spending time with current members of the team. These experiences were one of the deciding factors in his final commitment.

Joining the team next year also provides another special opportunity for Liona, as he will be able to play alongside many players from countries around the world. Tennis is a popular sport internationally, thus making half of Sacred Heart's roster international

CONGRATULATIONS JOE!



WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU!

LOVE,
APPA, AMMA, AND CHETTA

Jason,
Congratulations on your
graduation!



We are proud of you and all that you have accomplished. We can't wait to see what the next chapter holds for you.

We know you'll do great!

Love always,
Mom and Dad

Murphy and Spinney stick the landing, place at Nationals

KATE KELLY
PENELOPE ZAMBRANA
VICTORIA FARLEY
GHOSTWRITER STAFF

Westford Academy senior gymnasts Maggie Murphy and Leah Spinney competed and placed in the Nationals meet in Fort Myers, Florida on May 17 and May 18. Competing against about 100 other gymnasts, Murphy placed second overall at the meet, placing second on floor, third on beam, tenth on bars, and first on vault. Spinney also placed in both of the events she competed in, sixth on bars, and eleventh on floor.

Murphy will be attending the University of Maryland for gymnastics, and majoring in criminal justice next fall. Despite the fact that she will be leaving Westford, Murphy's legacy will live on in both the WA and DCL records she holds.

Spinney made her official commitment to Springfield College on March 3, where

she will be continuing gymnastics, and be taking part in their six-year physical therapy program where she will get her degree in Physical Therapy.

Gymnastics has been a part of both girls' lives for well over a decade, and they are looking forward to continuing their athletic careers as gymnasts at the collegiate level. Murphy and Spinney have put an uncountable number of hours of work in at the gym, and have been admired by their coaches and teammates for their dedication.

"For me, Maggie stands out in the fact that she is always happy with her performances. Her smile in the gym just shows that she

loves this sport with so much heart," WA gymnastics coach Stephanie Coburn said. "If she has a rough event, she gets back up with the 'I know what to fix next time' and an 'it's alright' attitude."

Similar to Murphy, Spinney has a positive attitude that can lift up everyone else in the room. Murphy acknowledges Spinney's drive to bring out

the best in herself along with her teammates.

"Spinney is always cheering me on and pushing me to be the best I can," Murphy said. "Even when mistakes happen, she gets right back up and is flawless." Murphy announced her verbal commitment to the University of Maryland in the spring of 2023, before her junior year ended.

Everything about the University of Maryland was appealing to Murphy. The gymnastics coaches showed interest in her, the atmosphere was enticing, and she felt that the campus was a perfect fit.

"Just meeting the coaches

made me realize that's where I wanted to be because they were so amazing," Murphy said. "After that, they offered me [a spot] and I spent a week there with my parents. It was like I was ready to say 'yes' right at that moment."

Spinney is excited to study physical therapy at Springfield College. In fact, she did her senior capstone at a physical therapy facility called Kinisi in Westford, where she prepared for what she will be learning at Springfield.

Murphy and Spinney have left a mark at WA for their athletic excellence, and are set up for a bright future ahead.

"WA has helped me grow my confidence on each event and helped me to remember the team support of cheering one another on especially the coaches and what they offered," Murphy said. "I can't wait to carrying those memories onto college."



Murphy (left) and Spinney (right) compete at a DCL meet.

Photos by Kate Kelly

WA Sports Commits

Jenny Alexander
Gordon College
Volleyball



Alin Aydogan
Carnegie Mellon University
Track



Paul Bergeron
Stanford University
XC & Track



Nic Bonica
Bentley University
Baseball



Shane Clark
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Football



Jake Cullen
University of Rhode Island
Baseball



Chris Fahlman
Assumption University
Swim



Davis Haines
Marist College
XC & Track



Devesh Khamitkar
Williams College
Track



Connor Liona
Sacred Heart University
Tennis



James McDermott
Assumption University
Baseball



Maggie Murphy
University of Maryland
Gymnastics



Leah Spinney
Springfield College
Gymnastics



Jeremiah Small
University of Maine
Diving



Adam Wedlake
Providence College
XC & Track



Check out the Ghostwriter Instagram for live sports coverage!

Student decisions drive budget deficit plans for 24-25

Continued from page 1

schedules [in regards to] getting the classes you want and the electives. That will certainly be impacted, but we're not quite sure of the extent yet," Twomey said.

Similarly to previous years, guidance counselors will be reaching out to students to discuss requests and possible rearrangements of schedules and electives throughout the end of May and June. Students can expect schedules to be released over the summer before school begins.

Across the board, the most significant, and possibly detrimental, change will be the increase in class sizes to 23-30 or more students. According to English teacher Brian Mahoney, small class sizes have been an integral part of WA and are a large reason for the school's high ranking amongst high schools in Massachusetts.

He also added that several subjects, such as English and social studies, thrive when classes are small due to the discussion based learning that drives the curriculum. With larger class sizes, beneficial aspects of small group discussions will be lost and widespread participation will be a struggle to achieve.

"It's gonna be tough for teachers to figure out who's spoken [...] and I do think that certain students who are quiet or whom are more reserved, will be able to hide better because it's gonna be such a large group of students that I don't think teachers are going to be able to catch all their students," Mahoney said.

Moreover, teachers will

be facing a much higher workload which will make grading large papers and projects much more difficult and time consuming. According to Mahoney, still allowing students to practice their writing will be a priority, more so than assigning graded projects.

"You get the experience of writing but you may not be getting as much feedback because I just won't have the time to do that," Mahoney said. "It is readjusting how many assignments I'm assigning but I have to then get the students to buy into that process."

In addition, seniority will have a greater effect on course selection than in previous years in order to limit class sizes and allow seniors to earn their remaining required credits. AP Statistics, a math course often taken by sophomores, will only be available for juniors and seniors, and the option to take three science courses in one year will no longer be allowed.

"A lot of schools don't let sophomores take APs, and I thought it was good that WA let sophomores take at least AP Stats," sophomore Anushka Chilukuri said. "Now with that taken away, I feel bad for the next sophomores because it is a really interesting class and now they have to try to fit that in with the other classes they want to take as upperclassmen."

According to Chilukuri, learning that students would be able to double up on

science courses was a relief, but not being able to explore as many specific courses to prepare for a future career is still disappointing for many students.

The 2023-2024 was a year of new experiences not just for students, but for Twomey, whose first year as the new principal of WA is coming to a close. This year he was faced with multiple challenges and difficult decisions. Throughout the process, the needs of both students and teachers weighed heavily on his mind.

"I knew we'd be looking at some budget difficulties. [We knew that] this budget was going to be challenging. Education is not like a lot of other things," Twomey said. "It's trying to do what's best for the students, but also have a large faculty here [who] you're trying to put in the best position to succeed. And, [Westford Academy] has an outstanding academic reputation and I want to keep that going. So that weighs on me, but I've learned a lot."

When students first heard of the cuts that could be taking place, an atmosphere of stress and anticipation filled the building, but, according to Twomey, the work of the guidance counselors, deans, and curriculum coordinators have aided him in creating a plan that leaves many students feeling more optimistic.

The department cuts that will be taking place next year include combining classes, reduced sections, and shifting teachers.

Certain classes in the Foreign Language Department

will be undergoing a significant change with several courses combining CP, honors, and AP students into single classes that may exceed 30 students.

WA students who want to switch to Latin or French after entering high school will no longer be able to do so due to the elimination of Latin I and French I. Mandarin IV will also not be running although the other Mandarin classes will continue to be available. The School Committee and WA administration are currently researching ways to allow students to continue pursuing Mandarin in the absence of the class.

Within the English Department, three teachers will be reduced at WA and only one section of the English electives Journalism, Creative Writing, and Film and Literature will be running. As a result, enrollment in the courses will be limited.

In the math department, two teachers will be retiring, class sections of AP Computer Science and Exploring Computer Science will be reduced, and AP Computer Science and Java Honors may be receiving a reduction in prerequisites to allow students more flexibility with scheduling.

One biology teacher and one physics teacher will be reduced in the science department.

As for the Social Studies Department, there will be a reduction of one teacher and only one section of AP Economics, with the number of students in other electives

being limited as well.

In the Art Department, one teachers will be reduced, and in the Music Department, one teacher will be moving to a position at Stony Brook Middle School. A chorus ensemble course, a band ensemble course, and an orchestra ensemble course will also be replacing specific electives.

Other changes include one Library Media Specialist being transferred to an elementary school position, and research and citation lessons and access to library spaces being significantly reduced.

Multiple teachers across departments will be shifting the classes they will be teaching. Thus far, a math teacher will be moving to teach Computer Science, and a science teacher will be teaching both physics and chemistry.

Going forward, Twomey hopes to foster strong relationships between students and staff through larger classes, minimize teacher burnout, and ease student worries. Although adapting to larger class sizes and the 10% loss of WA staff will be a daunting task, Twomey believes that the WA community will persevere and continue to create an environment that fosters growth and exploration.

"My biggest goal is continuing to make WA the excellent academic institution it is [...]. I also want to continue to do everything we can for students' and teachers' emotional well-being," Twomey said. "I know this year has been different for students [but] I will continue to do what's in their best interests. We're going to be okay."

Natalie and Matthew,



We are so proud of the person you have each become and look forward to watching you keep learning, growing, and loving as you continue the journey!

Love, Mom and Dad

Sophia,

We are so proud of you and all your accomplishments. You are the best big sister and an inspiration to all. Looking forward to seeing what your bright future holds. Wishing you happiness, joy, and good fortune.



Love,
Mom, Dad, Laura, and Matthew

Budget cuts: Students and teachers share thoughts



Provided by Clem Bower

SENIOR CLEM BOWER

“It’s extremely disappointing and easy to complain about but we can’t change what’s happened and can only move forward, adapting along the way. [...] It’s hard for me, as a graduating senior, to move forward with a positive outlook on the legacy of Westford Academy. I know I will always be able to look back at the past 4 years with fondness because of the amazing faculty, teachers, coaches, directors, and fellow students who made WA such an accepting environment. Even with the budget cuts, that is the one thing that will remain constant in Westford Academy. When these changes happen, we must focus on what stays the same to stay strong during the transition.”



Photo by Saanvi Arora

SENIOR LIZ SIELIAN

“I think that it's a little unfair that it was something that affected so many people that are not able to vote. Like even as a senior, I’m still not old enough to vote and it's not going to affect me, but is going to affect the sophomores, juniors, and freshman, and they didn't even get a say on the matter.”



Photo by Saanvi Arora

JUNIOR CATHY ZHU

“I think the override [not passing] is really bad for our town. I think that is something most residents don’t realize, because with the override [not passing] the school system ranking will tank, and the housing prices will tank, which will be ultimately bad for even people living in Westford without children, as they won’t be able to make as much of a profit when selling houses. Not to mention, just the impact on students because the whole reason that a lot of families move here is because of the school systems. And you know Westford Academy usually takes a lot of pride in that we prepare our students really well for college. And with these budget cuts, we won’t be able to do that as well.”



Photo by Saanvi Arora

JUNIOR ANIKA RAVICHANDRAN

“I know my physics teacher was talking about being cut, and it's a possibility that she’s going to be cut because she’s new. And a lot of the teachers that have been here for a while, even one of my English teachers, she's going to get cut. I just think it's overall really terrible and a lot of students won't get the same opportunities we did. We're lucky because we will be seniors, but for all the incoming freshmen, it's going to be really bad for them. They won’t get to have all the experiences and classes we got to have.”



Photo by Deepa Gautam

HISTORY TEACHER ANDREW NORANDER

"Class sizes will go up, which I am disappointed about. It’s easier to do my job with smaller classes and it allows me to do more things with the class.

Then, as history teacher, Westford has a really strong tradition, going back to our founding in 1792, of really supporting education and making it a priority and it’s just disappointing that the community didn’t approve the override. It is also kind of scary moving forward because the budget and the economic issues are not going away. I am also worried that year 2 or year 3 may be even worse than next year. Worried that, in the Social Studies Department we are losing some of our electives which are really getting popular with upperclassmen. So, I’ll cross my fingers, hope for the best, but I would be lying if I said I wasn’t worried and it isn’t going to impact us. Also, we are losing a member of our Social Studies Department, specifically our Mock Trial advisor who has done a really great job with our program. So, I feel really bad about that and all the other staff members who aren’t going to be here next year."

SOPHOMORE ALEX DUNNE

“I think the town put us in a really bad position because the two options we had were forcing people out of their homes or having a lot of cuts to our school system. I just think we should have discussed better ways to avoid this rather than what we were just put in."

SPANISH TEACHER SCOTT ST. DENIS

“It seems my classes will be a bit larger, which, unfortunately doesn't provide me the opportunity for more individualized instruction."

ENGLISH TEACHER BRIAN MAHONEY

“I think what we need to do as a school is come together. If students and teachers are staying positive, we can grow like a stone that you drop into still water, letting the ripples of positivity spread. When people face adversity together, they come together in rich ways. I think there's strength in that so I have hope for this community for sure."