

The Blue and Gold

Malden High School
Volume 111 Edition 4

maldenblueandgold.com

77 Salem Street
March 2026



Producing student journalism since 1915

MHS Meets New Principal Michael Sabin



Kyle Dang
Head Copy Editor

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Head of Local

After a search of two months looking for a new Malden High School principal, an official announcement was released on February 13th via the official Malden Public Schools website. In this statement, Superintendent Dr. Timothy Sippel welcomed Michael Sabin (SAY-bin) as the successor to principal Christopher Mastrangelo.

He will be put into position starting July 1st, 2026.

Michael Sabin is a Harvard College graduate, and prior to applying to Malden High, was a four-year executive director of Boston Public Schools, working in school transformation. In total, he has had 35 years of experience in education, which he started in Cambridge, Massachusetts back in 1991.

According to AdvocateNews, Sabin was known for his distinct roles, being principal in the districts of Waltham, Boston, and Somerville for a combined total of 12 years. Additionally, he was also a school leader of a combined Somerville elementary and middle school.

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Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea



Dolan, played by senior Kail Boswell, surrounded by his characters as the narrator's voice comes alive, starting the play. FATIMA HUSAIN

Fatima Husain
Head Copy Editor

Malden High's Play Production hit the road on February 28th, bringing their vibrant costumes and detailed props to Wellesley High School, where they competed in the annual Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild (METG) High School Drama Festival. They faced five other schools in this year's preliminary round: Billerica Memorial High School, Buckingham Browne and Nichols (BB&N), Manchester Essex Regional High School, Wellesley High School, and Reading Memorial High School.

Beginning their day bright and early, Malden's crew arrived at Wellesley at 8 AM. After unpacking,

the first production was performed at 9:30 AM. Billerica presented *The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas* by Ursula K. Le Guin, a utopian tale set in Omelas, where the city's livelihood depends on the anguish of a single child, raising questions about morality.

This chain would continue with BB&N presenting *The 39 Steps* at 10:30 AM, Manchester-Essex presenting *Bureau of Missing Persons* at 11:30 AM, Wellesley presenting *Fire in the Hole* at 1:30 PM, and Reading presenting *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* at 2:45 PM.

Sophomore Sabrima Bhattarai expressed her joy at being able to witness "Broadway-level shows" and interact with a larger "theater community," grateful for gaining such an experience for "free."

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NORTHERN LIGHTS DANCE



Juniors Cat Tuong Nguyen and Sofia Evoras monitoring the food corner at the back of Cafe B. FATIMA HUSAIN
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Senior Captain Danielle Harrington swimming the 100 breaststroke. ANNA BUI

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CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

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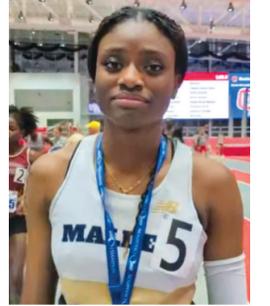


Cheer article on pages 14 - 15.



CCC Performance group dancing to "You are the Jasmine in My Heart". ANNA BUI

Khadijah Diagne: The Freshman Prodigy Shattering Malden's Track Records



Khadijah Diagne, from @baystaterun on Instagram.

Manny Perez
Lead Reporter

What is speed? Lightning McQueen would call himself the literal word "speed" for his infamous cartoon racing abilities. However, for Malden High, there's a new sprinter who can claim the title, one with such shocking times—bringing the word from cartoons into real life. And, she's only a freshman.

Meet Khadijah Diagne, the number 1-ranked 300-meter sprinter (38.25 sec) in the state, placing her 16th nationally. As well as holding the record for Malden High, in not just the 300, but the 55-meter dash as well (7.08 sec).

Diagne has always known she was fast. It's not just the simple, recess-speed, but the true step-for-step speed where the opponent is simply left behind. At the Division 2 MIAA state championship, she ran a staggering 3.31 seconds faster than the second place finisher, who was a senior.

Malden High's Senior Captain Yunus Yousfi said Diagne has "the talent of a professional sprinter," noting that since the start of the season, everyone could tell she was "different."

Diagne is no stranger to athletics; she was a soccer player her whole life, and it was not until her mother pushed her to try track that she finally realized her full potential. "My mom heavily influenced me, as she ran herself," Diagne claimed.

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Erin Craven smiling in her office. CHELMIE HYPOLITE.

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OPEN LETTER TO PRINCIPAL ELECT SABIN

THE EDITORIAL STAFF

Dear Michael Sabin,

Thank you for the time you took to answer our questions. We appreciate that you recognize the unsettled feelings of our community at Malden High School and how the sudden change in administration has affected the students. We felt comforted by your statement that you wanted to “hit the ground listening.” As editors of The Blue and Gold, we wanted to share our response to you with the community as our editorial to highlight what Malden High truly represents as we transition leadership roles for the 2026-27 school year.

Historically, Malden Public Schools has been a gateway for new immigrants, creates leaders in innovation, and prepares students to successfully pursue their passions. Malden is home to the historic Converse Sneaker company; we hold the second-longest public school football rivalry in the country against Medford; we were the first city to create our own Declaration of Independence in 1776 renouncing British rule, ratified even before this country’s Declaration, which shows that Malden citizens have a strong history of fighting for what they believe is right.

Malden High School is built on the moments that make students want to be involved. Events like Spirit Week and Pep Rally unify the school and provide students with a positive environment where they can challenge themselves and comfortably grow as individuals. We think you should take these strengths of our school into consideration and recognize their importance for the future to come.

As seniors, we believe you can learn from our school spirit and enthusiasm. We think Malden High School is great and that we need support from our principal, not someone who is looking to change who we are.

Many students of our generation have lacked the motivation and effort to be fully involved in school. Mr. Sabin, you should ensure there is a consistent flow of information to students and their families regarding their academic and social lives. You could create more events to engage both the student body and faculty, which could be done through a student board. You should work closely with all of the classes’ student councils to guarantee the events will be enjoyed by the students and faculty as well.

You should build stronger connections between teachers and families. The focus on caregiver conferences can be built on and improved.

Inclusivity is essential for our high school life. All students must feel valued and appreciated. The English Language Learner and Special Education population at Malden High is one of the most overlooked, and they are affected the most from the understaffing of our faculty. We need to hire more staff everywhere, but especially in these departments. We think the teachers are great, but we believe they should receive more support.

You have to work towards involving underrepresented communities in school events. We know you have hosted breakfasts at another school, and we want you to bring that here too, but for the many different communities that speak other languages.

One issue that the student body is repeatedly affected by is the lack of access to the school bathrooms. Currently, there are 22 functioning bathrooms in the building, but of the 22, only 8 bathrooms in the Boyle house are available. The bathrooms were closed to relieve the concerns around unmonitored and unsafe bathroom usage back in November of 2023, but since then, long lines and far distances have frustrated students and staff because of missing class time. Please find a way to staff and open every bathroom in the school.

Also, we think that there is a lack of transparency and consistency among teachers and administrators in terms of expectations: some faculty strictly enforce policies and some do not; some teachers allow for late work to be submitted and some do not; some teachers allow students to enter late without an escort but some do not; some teachers update their grades and some do not; some teachers are much harder than others in the same course—we don’t want to change teacher’s individuality or unique styles in the classroom, but we would like to see consistency and fairness in expectations before we walk through their doors.

We also noticed that teachers are often tasked with duties and meetings that are burdensome to their planning and grading. As principal, you can relieve them of unnecessary duties. Teachers seem to have less time for us than they did three years ago. As a result, students often feel turned away and disappointed after taking the initiative to better their education when seeking help. We believe that teachers would rather help us learn the material than doing duties and attending meetings that do not have a direct correlation to their classes.

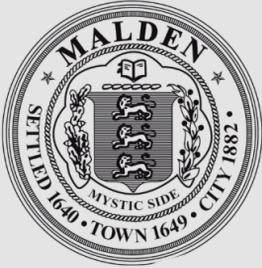
Finally, as appreciative as we are for the teachers we already have at Malden High, there just are not enough of them to have a fully functioning building, despite there being some improvement in staffing over the last year. We believe that we are home to some of the best teachers in the country, but we also need to hire more of them. The new staff being brought in need to be trained by our most experienced and best teachers so that there is consistency between all of the educators. We’ve seen examples of great teachers mentoring and training other teachers, but we’ve also seen examples of teachers who needed help but did not seem to get it. We want to see all teachers receive the training they need.

You are walking into a new environment with many new responsibilities. We, the community of Malden High—the students, families, and faculty members—are all depending on your leadership to guide the years to come.

*Chouaib Saidi
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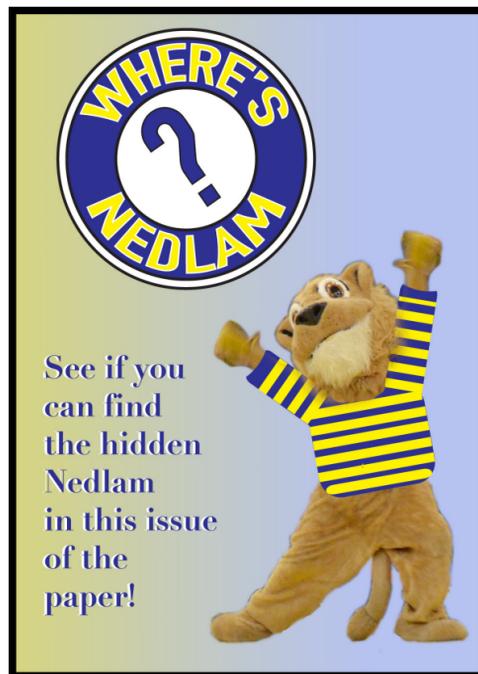
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We strongly encourage readers to respond to material printed in the form of signed letters to the editors. No libelous, malicious, defamatory, obscene, or unsigned material will be printed. The Blue and Gold reserves the right to edit the letters. Names may be withheld upon request. Not all letters will be printed.

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Any correspondence concerning this publication should be directed to Mr. Ryan Gallagher’s room in J387 or to his mailbox in the main office.

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Say It Once, Say It Twice, Students Will Not Put Up with ICE

Alexia Lima
Managing Editor

Exemplifying the strength found in unity, an empowered crowd of students proved to be a force to be reckoned with when they united and spoke for those who have been silenced. In light of recent heightened detainments by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) occupation in Massachusetts and throughout the nation, students peacefully organized a school walkout on February 12th, 2026.

Walkouts during the school day have become a popular form of peacefully protesting among students, as they can display their frustrations in a non-destructive manner. The walkout originated with the Instagram account @icedonotbelonginmalden; its initial post promoting the event garnered almost 300 likes and over 300 shares.

During third period extension, students gathered in front of the high school with homemade protest signs to march together to Malden City Hall. Upon arrival, junior Brayan Sorto addressed the crowd: "We speak for all those who have been detained, for all the little children and for all of the families that have been separated and are afraid to say something."

While the walkout itself did not have outlined legislative demands, its purpose was to advocate against the unjust treatment of immigrants and acknowledge that students are wanting to make a difference in their community.

Junior Michelle Hurtado faced the crowd to read off the names of people who have passed away at the hands of ICE agents or in detention centers. "We would be here for days if I sat here and named all of the immigrants and innocent people who have died in ICE custody," Hurtado emotionally added.

Sorto led students to bow their heads in a moment of silence to honor the lives lost in ICE custody. He followed this homage with a prayer for the families of those who have passed away, asking for protection of the families of everyone in the crowd.

Sorto then asked students to raise their hands if they are children of immigrants, inviting them to shout out their home countries. A symphony of cries ensued as students proudly represented their countries and why they were standing there supporting the movement. "We're here to support people that are standing against ICE as well as immigrants and children of immigrants," junior May Ihiri shared.

"This country has become a country full of hate, full of racism, but at the end of the day we can be more. We can be full of justice. We can be full of love because at the end of the day, nothing is stronger than love," Sorto expressed.

To conclude the walkout, students began chanting "say it once, say it twice, we will not put up with

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"Thaw the ICE" Protests Strike the US



A protester wears over 15 upside down American flags in the protest of ICE and the Trump Administration. KEVIN PRUM



Two protesters hold a "Resist the Capitalist Machine" sign in protest of ICE and Trump Administration in the "ICE Out of Everywhere" rally. KEVIN PRUM

Kevin Prum
Reporter

As of now, many groups like Mass 50501 have been protesting against the violence that many have endured against ICE, and thousands of people in places such as Minneapolis, New York City, Chicago, and Boston have rallied together against ICE and the Trump Administration.

On January 31st, a massive rally led by local advocacy groups such as Mass 50501, Mass Action and Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA) was held in Boston, where organizers and advocates dubbed the protest as the "ICE Out of Everywhere" rally, with some residents providing comments on ICE.

An anonymous Massachusetts resident expressed their thoughts regarding the incidents that occurred in Burlington's ICE facility, sharing that "it is breaking the law,

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Strikes and Protests against ICE

Continued from page 3 breaking rules and constitutional rights.” Having participated in Pride parades in the past, they used that as inspiration to create a bold statement by carrying an upside-down flag of the United States to share dissatisfaction with the current administration.

Another anonymous resident of Massachusetts shared a similar sentiment with the previous local, stating, “It is a complete embarrassment, and not the way we do things around here.” Furthermore, he advocated for his students in Ukraine, with his sign paying homage to them while protesting ICE.

The situation in the US reached critical mass, with protests, outward cries against ICE being planned and acted out in different states, and across social media sites. With this situation growing more than ever, we can see it bleeding into our very own school life; the January 30th general strike being a key example of this, when dozens of faculty and students partook in not attending school or shopping.

Many students and teachers have shown their disapproval of ICE and the current administration with many protests.

As characterized by an anonymous student, who speaks on why they disapprove of ICE, saying what sparked their anger was “Hearing about a 5-year old boy, Liam Ramos being detained and taken to a detention facility. There’s really nothing justifiable about this...” furthermore adding, “A plethora of my friends are people of color and have been affected by ICE, my heart breaks for them knowing they fear for themselves and their families.”

Adding on, an anonymous teacher had also extended their opinion on ICE, saying “ICE is a terrible organization” and that the agents are “poorly trained.” This opinion is echoed through channels like PBS Kids, with a former ICE Lawyer stating the organization has cut back on training hours for recruits and is directly violating the Constitution.

ICE officers have also been seen detaining children as young as two months old, with one eighteen-month-old in Texas being hospitalized for respiratory failure and pneumonia. As described by people, “Federal Agents brought her back to the center – where she allegedly given PediaSure in place of the medication doctors had prescribed her.”

With ICE Agents willfully disregarding the well-beings of numerous people within their custody, and killing non-violent protesters. There is no question as to why citizens of Massachusetts, will continue to speak out against this institution.

City Council Proposes Override

**MARCH 31st
GO OUT AND VOTE.**

PROPOSITION 2 1/2

Fatima Husain
Head Copy Editor

On Tuesday, March 31st, Malden residents will vote on the fate of Proposition 2 1/2. The measure proposes an override for the 2027 Fiscal Year for the first time in the city’s history.

In 1980, Massachusetts enacted Proposition 2 1/2, which states that a town cannot levy more than 2.5 percent of the total full and fair cash value of all taxable real and personal property in the community, limiting the annual revenue a town can raise. If cities or towns would like to amend the percentage, they must present it to their district’s voters.

The legislation was implemented due to Massachusetts’s high property tax rates, which were approximately \$60-80 per \$1,000 in value for both residential and commercial properties. In 2026, the residential and commercial tax rates in Malden have simmered down to \$11.40 and \$17.08. Overturning the proposition risks returning to inflated prices and less money for bills.

While this legislation prevents overtaxation on individual property and protects small businesses, it also creates obstacles for the city to collect satisfactory funds to support the community. For several years, Malden has met the 2.5 levy threshold, limiting its revenues to roughly the same amount and creating a wall between us and additional funds.

“In the United States, there are three forms of government: national, state, and local. The primary funding source for most cities and towns is property taxes,” stated AP Economics and History teacher James Hill.

These additional funds would be circulated back to its residents, allocating them to school, community services, and infrastructure. In doing so, the City’s budget would further “stabilize and support essential city services.” Even for the city of Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu has called for the proposition’s repeal multiple times.

Hill expressed that “additional funds would mean better resources, better books, and better equipment” for teachers to “deliver the best possible education to Malden students.”

On September 25, 2025, Mayor Gary Christenson asked the City Council to reevaluate the significance of the proposition and put the idea of an override on the table. After dissecting the topic through a careful lens, the council decided to offer two override options on the ballot: Questions 1A and 1B.

Similar to last year’s MCAS ballot question, voting yes implements the legislation. Question 1A would allow an additional \$5.4 million in real estate and personal property taxes to be collected and redistributed to city services, while 1B

would allow for an additional \$8.2 million. The question that receives more than 50% of support will be administered. If both receive more than 50% of support, 1B will be used instead. If neither receives the required support, the proposal will fail.

To spread information about the City Council’s plan and answer questions, public forums have been held at the K-8 schools on February 11th, February 28th, March 5th, and March 16th. The upcoming forum on Wednesday, March 25th, at Linden STEAM Academy’s Auditorium will be the last chance to attend.

To analyze the impact the proposed questions will have on residents, the City of Malden website has provided an online tax calculator to estimate the change in an individual’s annual property tax bills.

The challenge lies in inviting a large voter turnout. Malden is predominantly an immigrant town, with foreign-born residents making up 41.2% of the population. Many of these residents are not citizens, creating a legal barrier that prevents them from voting. Those who care cannot even represent themselves.

“Immigrant families who want the override to provide a better education for their children are barred, and so are those who would rather not deal with an increase in rent from landlords trying to reduce their own burden,” continued Hill.

A loophole around the proposition is to increase housing. Construction of new homes will inadvertently invite more homeowners, in turn, raising the annual property tax collected. However, people worry that such an action leads to gentrification—the process by which a poor urban area is changed by wealthy people moving in and displacing current inhabitants.

Although in this case, gentrification should not be a cause of concern, as adding more housing actually reduces pressure on existing neighborhoods rather than pricing people out. By increasing the overall supply of homes, Malden can stabilize rents, create more affordable options, improve infrastructure, and strengthen the city’s revenue.

“It’s like a game of musical chairs. If more people join and there are only a few chairs, only the quickest get a seat. Similarly, if housing in Malden remains the same, but people continue to pour in, only the wealthy will be able to keep up with increasing prices,” concluded Hill.

Ultimately, the path forward depends on the people who call this city home, so make sure your voice is heard on March 31st.



Local firefighter speaks at educational forum held at the Beebe School. KHKOLA NIAZI

MALDEN HIGH STUDENTS WALK OUT TO PROTEST THE INJUSTICES OF ICE

Continued from page 3 ICE” as they peacefully walked back to the high school displaying their signs proudly. Principal Christopher Mastrangelo supervised students on this walkout and on the

walk back. “I’m so proud of our students who are finding their voice and identifying things in their life that they think are unjust and they’re speaking up in a way that is appropriate and peaceful,” he

reflected.

This cause was especially special to the MHS community due to its rich diversity. Mastrangelo noted that ICE’s actions have “affected so many of our students directly.”

While the creator of the walkout wishes to remain anonymous, their initiative sparked a sense of unity in a time of fear for many students participating.

“I invite you to go

around and seek out those who are in need of help, so we can accomplish this together. Nobody is an immigrant on stolen land, this land has been made and built upon immigration,” Sorto concluded.

Stitching Together Community with Crochet Club

Anna Bui
Head Copy Editor

Crochet: a textile art that is most often made with yarn.

A single hook is used to interlock loops together to create a wide variety of items, ranging from clothing and accessories to stuffed animals. While the earliest forms of crochet date back to the 1800s, the craft experienced a major resurgence in the 2000s.

During quarantine, many people were confined to their homes and turned to new hobbies as a way to pass time. Crochet became a popular outlet, allowing individuals to express their ideas while also providing a way to slow down and relax.

Noticing the “rising popularity of crochet in younger generations,” along with her own love for the craft, junior president Fiona Lin was inspired to create the Crochet Club. Her goal was not only to provide a space and materials for students to crochet, but also to encourage a strong sense of community among them.

The club strives to make crochet accessible to everyone. Students who are new to crocheting are walked through the basics in a supportive and welcoming environment. Those with prior experience are motivated to work on projects of their own creative choice using the provided materials.

Beyond individual projects, the Crochet Club places an emphasis on giving back and building connections.

Members have the opportunity to earn volunteer hours by contributing and creating service-based projects. Not only for their own personal interests, students can create items such as “hats for cancer patients,” or “seat cushions for the school library,” giving their work a meaningful purpose, Lin shared.

Looking ahead, the officers wish to see growth from the club, hoping to introduce more students to the art of crochet and strengthen their community. Above all, the club values enjoyment, relaxation, and the satisfaction of creating something one can be proud of—one stitch at a time.

The Malden High PACE Program



Abyan Ali
Lead Reporter

Rebecca Griffith-Allan, a teacher at the PACE Program. ABYAN ALI

About 50 years ago, President Gerald Ford signed a law that helped establish special education in schools, which “guaranteed all children with disabilities the right” to a free education. As a result, many more schools started Special Education programs for those who are disabled.

Malden High is no different, as it has a special education program, the Practical Academics & Community Education Program, often abbreviated to the PACE Program.

Malden High’s PACE Program isn’t too well-known by a majority of students and tends to be overlooked. However, its role is essential in making sure students from different backgrounds can prosper, highlighting the staff in being specifically knowledgeable in caring for the students.

Some of the Staff

Some of the PACE workers have been here for a while; teacher Rebecca Griffith-Allen has worked at Malden High “since 2018,” being her “8th school year.” Some have just joined, such as Miltiadis Drakopoulos, known by “Mil”, who’s in his “1st year at Malden High School,” but has been “teaching for 13 years.”

Griffith-Allen was “placed in a medically complex classroom” and worked with those with a wide range of neurodisabilities for her “student teaching.” This prompt-

ed her desire in being a special education teacher, which she discovered she “loved that work.”

Teacher Elizabeth Lee has older students than Griffith-Allen, who are “working below grade level”. Her classes consist of a more “small group”, which works best for the student she works with.

Drakopoulos previously taught in math and science, in turn, having “worked with a lot of kids before,” and thinks “it comes naturally” to him. He emphasized “working with kids with special needs” being a highlight of his job. The staff in the PACE Program are quite skilled, as working with special needs students requires patience, tolerance, and empathy.

Inside the Program

The PACE Program includes students in grades 9-12, much like the rest of the school, also housing a transition program, which is designated to students up to the age of 22. The program has a diverse number of students taught by the teachers. Griffith-Allen explained that “the PACE program as a whole serves students with all types of needs.” She clarified each teacher is delegated to a different teaching role, specifically stating she works with students who have “more complex disabilities.”

The main goal for the PACE Program is “to prepare students to be as independent as they can,” Griffith-Allen put it, alongside having “as much control of their

lives as possible.”

On a normal day, Griffith-Allen stated they focus on a variety of skills, like “vocational training,” referring to skills related to practical jobs like healthcare and culinary arts. In the classroom, they “structure the whole day” learning math, English, and everyday life skills, preparing for when they age out of the program.

What to Know of the Students in PACE

Griffith-Allen highlights the importance of “showing interest and empathy in remembering that anyone with a disability generally wants the same thing someone else wants.”

“It just might look different. It might take a long time,” you should “presume competence” and be “open to different types of communication,” as some students may be non-verbal.

Drakopolous also mentioned to “think about if the positions were switched,” if you want to empathize with other students.

Respectful Discussion

Sometimes it can feel like a taboo to talk about disabled people, and one should try their best to not be intentionally ableist. There are many terms you should and should leave out of your vocabulary when referring to disabled people, especially those made to insult or those that are outdated. Try and read up online to

know what is generally acceptable.

At the same time, don’t be scared to discuss disabilities in the first place. “Disability is not a dirty word,” Griffith-Allen put it. “It’s okay to say someone is disabled.” It’s also important to know what one person is comfortable with, as they “may not be comfortable” with other terms. One person in a wheelchair may be fine with being referred to as “wheelchair-bound,” while another may not.

Ask them about it and “try not to paint with a broad brush,” as Drakopoulos put it. At the end of the day, the most important thing about disabled people is still treating them like how you would like to be treated.

Wrapping up

There’s always been unfortunate stigmas and mistreatment for those who are disabled, both physically and cognitively. This can isolate students—and adults, ostracizing them from society.

Even those who don’t mean to hate can fall into insensitivity when they don’t know enough.

Remember: students with special needs may have difficulties in life, but they are human, not just “special needs.” It’s important “any type of learning ability has the chance to learn,” Lee added. The best we can do is sympathize and support them. Taking small actions to be aware and accepting of those who are disabled, can help unite us as a community.



Left to right: Elizabeth Lee, a teacher at the PACE Program; Daniel Clementini, a teacher at the PACE Program, posed near books. ABYAN ALI

Massachusetts Honors Erin Craven as Administrator of the Year

Chelmie Hyppolite
Managing Editor

From future planning to personal matters, school counselors seem to know it all. Yet, have you ever wondered what goes into the work of these counselors?

Erin Craven, who has served as the Director of Counselors for seven years, plays a key role in ensuring that our counselors are prepared and supported. Craven has been working with Malden since 2006, and was a school counselor herself for 13 years.

As the director, Craven’s job consists of checking in with middle and high school counselors to ensure that every counselor is ready to “always help the students, to advocate for their need, to support families, to support teachers,” and “to make the student’s education better,” she emphasized.

Craven explained how different the planning is for counselors who work at a middle school in comparison to the high school. “A lot at the high school level is around post secondary success. A lot at the middle school level is about finding yourself and figuring out friend groups and social groups.”

To highlight Craven’s work and accomplishments, her colleagues nominated her for the Administrator of the Year award, which is presented by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA).

She was honored to win this state-wide award as it emphasized her immense contributions to the Malden district and students. This tribute “means a lot,” especially because it comes from educators that “work” in her “industry” and chose to nominate and help her “win across the state.” She will be presented her physical award at the MASCA Annual Conference on March 16th.

In the years before, Craven has been honored at Malden High School, once as the Mentor of the Year from the National Honor Society and having the Class of 2013 dedicate their yearbook to her, demonstrating the significant influence and impact she has at the school.

All in all, Craven has played a vital role in her twenty years at Malden Public Schools, from helping teachers to students, surely, this will not be her last time being honored for her outstanding work within the district.

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A Tough Case, a Strong Team

Israa Howard
Joana Vassao
Reporters

Knock! Knock! The noise of the gavel told the Malden High Mock Trial team that the verdict was reached. On January 20th, the Mock Trial team was dismissed from school to prepare to face Malden Catholic at the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse in Boston, Massachusetts. Unfortunately, they lost the tournament.

Mock Trial is a course offered at Malden High School led by Richard Tivnan who is also a History teacher. In this class, students get the opportunity to act as attorneys, witnesses, victims, and judges in a fictional case that's assigned to them.

Weeks prior to the trial, the team would practice and run through the case during class as well as practice sessions at the Malden Public Library. Senior Nour Howard was a witness in the case and shared that she would have her siblings ask her the questions pertaining to her character to help her memorize when she was not in class.

"As a witness, you have to make sure you're not only aware of the information in your affidavit, but you also have to make sure to be aware of the information in every single affidavit because the cross-examiner will surprise you with questions or statements from other witnesses," Howard shared.

The case was based on a previously used fictional murder of an elderly woman, DK Liberson, who had many health issues. Liberson's nephew was investigated for her murder because he controlled all her medication intake. Based on that murder, Netflix wanted to do a show on the case years later.

In the case being argued, Ava Maru, who would play DK Liberson was allergic to almond milk and died on set. Malden High Mock Trial was set to charge the director, Audrey Raysau with the first degree murder of Maru. Raysau allegedly did not use Maru's EpiPen while she was struggling to breathe and decided to administer a Rapid Aller Pen instead.

Malden Catholic argued that the defendant, Raysau, was not at fault for the murder. Howard, who played an understudy to Maru recalled that the defense was trying to blame her character, Lugansky Cook, for the murder because Cook was "stirring up drama for clicks" because they were a social media influencer.

Malden Catholic, having one of the best teams in the state, was able to work with five attorneys who helped the students

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Fatima Husain
Head Copy Editor

A spread of polaroids taken from by Malden High students from the photo booth. FATIMA HUSAIN

When students stepped into Malden High School's Cafeteria on February 6th, the familiar lunch spot had been transformed into something almost unrecognizable—filled with starry projections and music, it felt as though the iconic orange Boyle walls had vanished entirely. That evening, the student council for the Class of 2028 hosted a semi-formal winter dance, themed after the Northern Lights.

Starting at 6:00 pm, students filtered through the front door and walked under an archway built by the council to enter the dance. The archway was decorated with fairy lights and colored lace to create a mystical atmosphere for attendees from the moment they arrived. Moreover, a coat rack was provided, so no student had to haul their winter jacket all night.

To create an "authentic feeling" as described by Vice President Sabrima Bhattarai, the walls were adorned with black curtains, the pillars were covered with "black construction paper and LEDs," the lights were dimmed, and tiny lanterns sat atop the tables. "We wanted students to leave with an unforgettable experience and a good time," Bhattarai expressed.

Tickets had either been purchased ahead of time at lunch for \$10 or were sold at the door for \$12 by Treasurer Sophia Zhang and Event Coordinator Vanessa Pham. In comparison to past dances, ticket prices were usually set at \$5; however, the CO '28's decision to raise the prices came with the advantage of attendees having free food, drinks, a DJ, and a photobooth at their disposal.

The food station was placed near the back, where a variety of items lined the table, including vegetarian-friendly options. Tuna, ham, and roast beef rolls, spinach and broccoli calzones, chicken tenders, a veggie tray, fresh fruit, and an assortment of condiments were available as the main dishes. After a while, brownies, cupcakes, and cookies were dished for dessert.

The highlights of the night were the live DJ, Justin Pham, and a photobooth with printable polaroids, operated by Meghan Le, who worked with the DJ. Sophomore Alexis Lee commented on how Pham ensured that there was not a single dull moment, and students remained "hyped" by playing popular songs, remixes, and mash-ups to cater to different music tastes, even in other languages.

Ranging from "Gasolina" by Daddy Yankee to "Golden" from the Netflix movie KPop Demon Hunters to the "67" audio clip, Pham showcased his talents as a DJ "to keep the crowd engaged," with nearly everyone joining to play musical chairs at the end of the dance, shared sophomore Satvinder Sidhu.

Similarly, sophomore Lyra Heining voiced, "the dance floor was a place" she "could take a break from everything and let loose."

In light of Memory Shop's popularity in Boston among Malden High students, the council believed a strong advertising point would be to arrange a similar resource at the dance. Located to the left of the cafe's door, Le had set up a backdrop and photobooth, proving it to be a magnet for students. Friends rushed to get in line to

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Malden Reads Celebrates History at the Malden Public Library



Beatriz Oliveira
Lead Reporter

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the United States of America and with that, history follows. Malden Reads has been a tradition in Malden for 16 years and to celebrate, the committee organized an event in the Malden Public Library on February 9th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. At the front door, attendants were given a brochure with all the information of the event's night and then redirected to the left wing of the library.

To commemorate these two milestones, Malden Reads decided to choose the book *Our Missing Hearts* by Celeste Ng as this year's reading. According to Goodreads, this book is a dystopian novel about "twelve-year-old Bird Gardner [who] lives a quiet existence with his loving but broken father," and that "for a decade,

their lives have been governed by laws written to preserve 'American culture' in the wake of years of economic instability and violence."

Given all that's currently happening in the country, *Our Missing Hearts* was specifically picked to parallel what people see today. "Even though it's an interesting fiction read and it's set kind of in a slightly dystopian future, some of the themes resonate now with what's happening, in terms of what we see with ICE, and the idea of who gets to define patriotism," Heather Barry, steering committee member for Malden Reads, explained. Beginning the event, the band Tale Spin, consisting of David and Sue Stein along with Bill Alldredge, performed acoustic protest music of the last century. Following their per-



Tale Spin's performance before the event's beginning. BEATRIZ OLIVEIRA

formance was historian Mark Linehan's presentation on Malden's background and revolution. Linehan is the creator of "Malden's Revolution," a show on YouTube where Linehan speaks about the long-winded history Malden holds while visiting multiple places in the

area.

"I loved hearing from Mark Linehan and all of the local history that he's doing, that's really special. That's really about this place and the people who lived here, and it was really good to hear about all the work that he's done," commented

Councilor-at-Large, Carrey McDonald.

After Linehan's rich presentation, Malden High senior students Sophia Chan and Eldana Abrhame, dressed in revolutionary war costumes, recited excerpts from *Our*

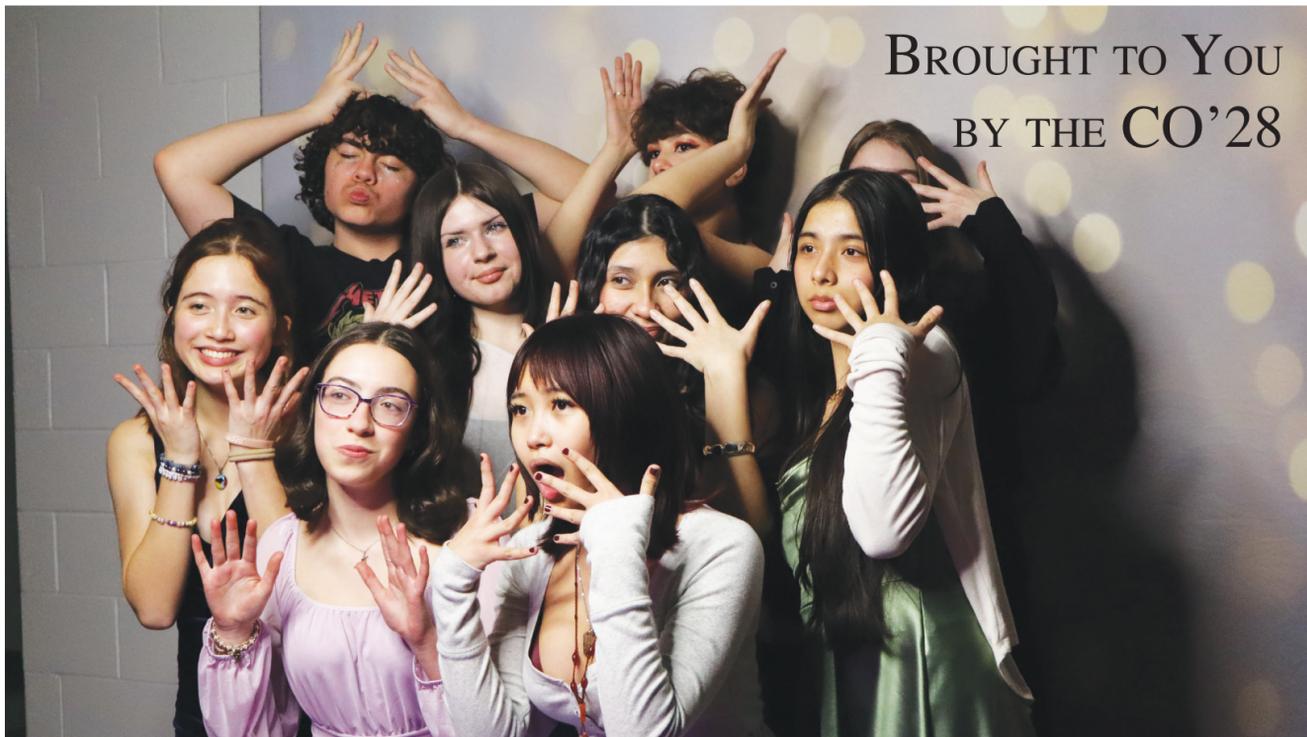
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From left to right: Sophia Chan and Eldana Abrhame reciting excerpts from *Our Missing Hearts* by Celeste Ng. BEATRIZ OLIVEIRA

CLASS OF 2028 HOSTS EVENT

Mock Trial



Continued from page 6

The Play Pro crew gathering to take a group picture at the photobooth. FATIMA HUSAIN

take home a printed polaroid as a memory of the dance. For many, it turned out to be their “favorite” part of the night, shared senior Moisha Howse.

The Class of 2028 had been looking forward to hosting a winter event since the beginning of the school year, and finalized on a semi-formal dance before winter break. Preparations began two to three weeks ago and required “intense planning” to arrange a plan that would “check all boxes,” noted Zhang. Frequent meetings were convened to sort out all of the fine details, such as the date and theme, materials needed, volunteers, the menu, budget, and layout necessary to make the dance a success.

Their main goal was to attract as many buyers as possible and earn a reasonable profit; however, Zhang added that many council members had low expectations due to the “slow rate of sales,” and Event Coordinator Pham thought it would “fail.”

“There is a stigma around school dances being unenjoyable—we wanted to break that,” stated President Julius Scott.

Fortunately, the council was able to make a satisfactory profit

due to a large number of attendees, with over 30 sales made at the door, marking it as a night of triumph. Besides the Harlem Wizards tournament held in the Finn Gym last school year, the semi-formal was the CO’28 first major event marketed to highschoolers. Bhattarai hoped to try their “hardest to produce a dance that people would enjoy, remember, and leave knowing what we can offer in the future.”

This accomplishment would not have been possible without the support of their class advisors, science teachers Shannon Votaw and Kristen Kirby, who never once hesitated at doing what is best for their students.

In a single night, Malden High’s student body was able to experience a dazzling event where they could dance with their friends, immortalize memories at the photobooth, and enjoy never-ending food and chilled beverages, marking the Class of 2028’s semi-formal as a successful feat.

Sophomores Maya Morelli and Madison Rodriguez Cideos embracing each other to take a cute picture at the photobooth.
FATIMA HUSAIN



Sophomores Aya Bihi and Gesselle Rodriguez Portillo posing with a digital camera and lantern against the black curtains adorning the orange Boyle walls.
FATIMA HUSAIN



Haset Tesfaw
Lead Reporter

The staircase leading up to the art exhibit. HASET TESFAW

At first, it may just seem like another quiet area in the building. But soon you’ll discover you walked into the Malden Public Library’s often missed photo exhibit.

It’s located by the old entrance, which served as the library’s main gathering area, before the renovation was completed in 1990, making it hidden

from the public eye.

As you walk inside, paintings fill every wall. Each painting tells a story that captures a moment from America’s history. Senior student Ismail Elbahlwan explained how he had never known about this art gallery until recently and explained how he “didn’t expect to learn as much” just by “walking through a few rooms.”

One painting in particular tends to catch people’s eye more than the rest. Towering over the rest is Lincoln at Gettysburg, which librarian Marita Coombs shared some information about that most viewers may not know. “General Howard, who is in this painting, actually came back to this very library and saw this painting. Rumor is that he cried when he

saw this.” Knowing that someone depicted in this piece came and saw it for themselves adds so much depth to this artwork.

Coombs gave more information on the other men included in this painting. “Edward Everett, who was the most prominent speaker of his day, was invited to give the keynote address at the national cemetery before Lincoln did.” She ex-

plained the significance of Everett, and how his speech lasted two hours, contrary to Lincoln’s two minutes.

“When you look really close while creating a painting, I can’t imagine seeing the outcome,” Coombs emphasized her awe with every painting in the photo gallery and the process by which they were created.

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Continued from page 6 study every aspect of law, ultimately helping them win the tournament. Tivnan revealed that a former student, Terrica Dang, who is enrolled at Suffolk Law School came back to work with the team before the tournament and also accompanied them on the day of the trial.

Junior Kailey Bae shared that the team could have done better with responding to objections from Malden Catholic, but they did great with doing the objections and having a clear voice and tone which she felt they had improved on “a lot.”

Though Malden took hits from Malden Catholic, they were able to persevere throughout the rest of the tournament. “Our opening and closing statements were really good. You’re supposed to not really have anything in your hand, and you just go up and tell the whole story of the case in front of the judge. We were in a real courtroom. We did great on those, I thought we did really well,” Tivnan expressed.

Senior Nour Jaayfer, who presented the opening statement and the cross examination, also communicated that the defense’s opening statements were very good and that the team did great at presenting themselves in the courtroom. “For prosecution I feel like we could’ve prepared memorization and objecting more, but overall I feel like we prepared very well but now we know what to do for next time,” Jaayfer shared.

“I think the trial went pretty good considering it was my first time being in an actual trial, and the fact that we went against a team that’s good at mock trial and ranked high, but I do think we have some parts to improve on,” junior Maliya Kazadi, who was a part of the prosecution, voiced.

While juniors and sophomores will likely take the class again next year and have more tournaments; Malden Catholic was the last tournament for seniors in the class. Howard expressed that even when she will not be there next year, she knows they will “improve and do better next time.”

“I’m excited to see the new kids start to learn how to do it. Some of the kids next year will be in their second or third year. So having those kids will help the newer kids when they come in. I’m just looking forward to next year and building on what we did this year,” Tivnan shared.

If the environment and roles of a courtroom interest you in any way, share your interest with your current history teacher so they can offer you an application for the class where Tivnan will review your application and eventually determine if you are eligible for the class for next year.

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Malden Reads
Celebration*Continued from page 6*

Missing Hearts to give attendants a feel of what the book would be like.

Malden Reads first began with Jodie Zalk, member of Malden Reads steering committee, and her mother, reflecting on another city creating a similar project. "We looked at it and said that it would be wonderful to bring here to Malden, to have a program where we focus on a book and have conversations with different people," added Zalk. With this initial help from her mother, the Oak Grove Improvement Association (OGIA), and others, they began this project. Although they no longer collaborate with OGIA, the program continues to run smoothly.

Throughout the night, attendants had the chance to interact with Malden High School's Love 4 Kids club to partake in different arts & crafts activities as well as decorate heart shaped cookies. Attendants also had access to an art gallery in the library's original building from 1885.

"I don't know if you've had a chance to see the art gallery before. It is really one of the great little secret things about Malden that people may not realize that we have," shared Malden High School's librarian, Stephen Nedell.

In the book, the main character, Bird Gardner, is enrolled in High School. Zalk shared, the room was set up in such a manner as to resemble life as a student. Details like the long line of food in the cafeteria, as well as the community bulletin board, designed by Ron Cox, former director of Urban Media Arts, gave the feeling of what it's like to be a student in high school.

Overall, the night was a success with people from all over Malden attending and engaging in the multiple activities provided. "Hopefully it inspires people to kind of pick up a book, sit down, think about it, whether it's this book or another book and keep reading because it helps us think more," Barry noted.

"Reading helps connect us all and have conversations together and learn about our community, and being able to read one book together as the whole city is a really special way for us to have a conversation and ground ourselves together in a common understanding," commented Zalk.

This program has "done a tremendous job in bringing the community together and making sure that there is representation for our very diverse community," concluded Nedell.

Hazel Queen's Library Art Exhibit



Abyan Ali

Hazel Queen next to a "Portrait of a Caged Bird." ABYAN ALI

Lead Reporter

Inside Malden Public Library, on February 10th, from six pm to seven pm, people came to witness sophomore Hazel Queen's new art gallery. A week before, her paintings were hung on the hallway, exhibiting her creative talent.

During the event, parents and friends shared their interest in the works presented, and everyone had fun discussing the paintings.

Queen states she has been painting since she was around ten in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic started. She said she "started painting landscapes early on," but did not enjoy it, so she "switched to portraits," which she found more fun.

Hazel "does all different kinds of mediums," according to her mother, Nicole Queen, although she mainly does oil paint.

Soon enough, Queen began submitting her artwork to the library every January, as they have an artist of the month where you can submit your art to be displayed, according to her mother.

Her mother said "she tells me in January if she has submitted (her artwork) and (if it) is going to be hanging" in the library. Queen has submitted "every year" and every year she's "gotten accepted," she mentioned. This is her third year in a row being chosen.

According to Queen, she asks her friends for permission to paint them, and rewards them with the finished paintings as gifts. For example, her portrait of sophomore Edyth Howse was made for the latter's birthday. In fact, she paints "a portrait of her (Howse) every year for her birthday."

Queen's favorite piece is her Maya Angelou piece, which is her "biggest painting." She believes "size is

very powerful," because of how "daunting" it feels.

Queen finds it her favorite because "it's pretty personal" to her, as Maya Angelou was "very important" to her. She began "reading her biography and researching her [...] troubled childhood."

For her painting, she "decided that I (she) wanted to combine her very powerful gaze with a more serious look," to portray how Angelou had "been through a lot in her life."

Another portrait she opened up about was one involving flying pigeons. She "wanted to incorporate [...] subtle movement," which she thought "can bring a painting to life."

Queen mainly "wanted to play with the composition and make it seem dynamic," which is why she used birds in the painting, "They're fast and unpredictable." "It's a very empowering experience just to know that your art is here, and other people can see it," Queen mentioned about her gallery.

Queen thinks the library gallery is not "as competitive as people think it is," as "it's always good to just apply just because it can't hurt."

"If you were to look on the library website" or "Instagram account, I believe it's all Malden Public Library. At the beginning or at the end of every single year, they post a call for art."

Queen believes entering the library gallery is "not as competitive as people think it is, and it's always good to just apply just because it can't hurt."

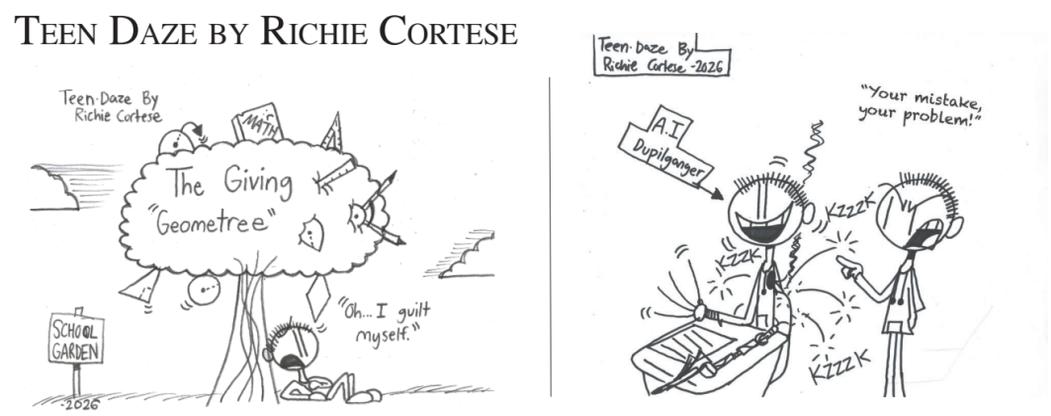
"It doesn't cost any money [...] they'll pick you, and you can put in what months you would be available to show art," she added. Remember that sharing your artwork with the world and having a purpose can be uplifting and motivational.



Various paintings by Hazel Queen. ABYAN ALI



Parents and students at Hazel Queen's art gallery. ABYAN ALI



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maldenblueandgold.com



Raincloud, played by sophomore Sofia Rivera, consoling Midi, played by sophomore Sabrima Bhattarai, after her efforts to find Ralmond fail; Ralmond, played by senior Matt Jason Chan, expressing his hurt after Midi's rejection. FATIMA HUSAIN

Finally, at 3:45 PM, Malden would step on stage to perform Julia Izumi's *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea*, a retelling of the beloved Disney classic, *The Little Mermaid*. The production explores themes of unrequited love, sexuality, and denial by creating parallels between the characters on stage and Hans Christian Andersen, the author of the said fairytale.

"I picked this show because it was inspiring to me, and the minute my students saw my interest, they told me to go for it. As a director, you're often thinking about what's going to be best for our students, what's going to get them engaged and excited to work on the show. It's not often that they see your excitement, and it's contagious," remarked Play Pro teacher Ariana Messana.

As the lights flickered away, the narrator's voice came to life, describing Raincloud's, the main character played by sophomore Sofia Rivera, curiosity about the strange human standing beneath her. Unlike others, Ralmond, played by senior Matt Jason Chan, stood under the rain with no umbrella, "outstretched arms," and proclaimed to love the rain—and just like that, the personified Raincloud came crashing down into Ralmond's arm.

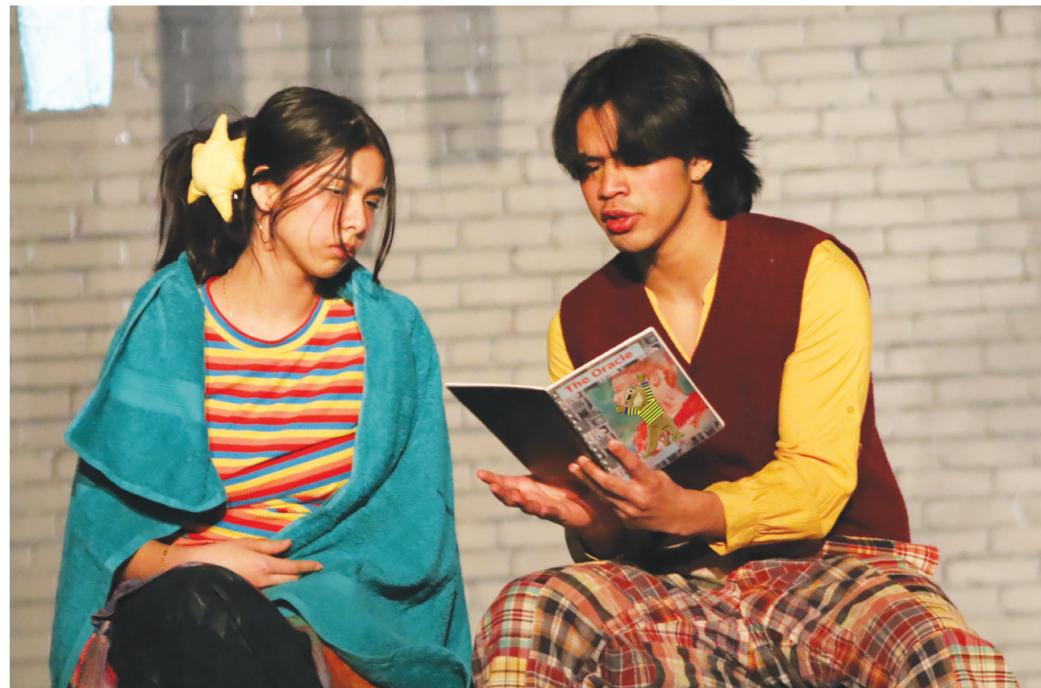
it. The slip exposes how little control he actually has over the story he's supposed to be telling.

Boswell shared that to mirror Andersen's character, he "researched his life" to understand how to "sculpt the character to fit" the 19th-century author.

As the story continues, the audience is taken to Midi and Ralmond's home, where it is learned just how different the two are. Midi is a passionate climate activist, while her boyfriend teaches seventh grade. Though they care for each other, their relationship shows clear strain when Midi forgets their planned dinner and when the two clash over *The Little Mermaid's* true meaning.

Once more, the scene abruptly shifts to King Edvard and Ina, before Dolan frantically jumps in trying to reign in the narrative. From this point onward, the play gradually reveals its layered plot, with constant clashes between Dolan and his characters, who represent lovers from Andersen's life.

"The biggest challenge in this production was understanding the plot. It was a complex show, which made it difficult at first to figure out what angle we should approach it from and how our characters



Ralmond, played by senior Matt Jason Chan, showing his girlfriend, Midi, played by sophomore Sabrima Bhattarai, the book (*The Little Mermaid*) he read with his class that day. FATIMA HUSAIN

Rivera described Raincloud as a "ball of energy" and explained that to embrace the persona, she often "jumped around and waved her hands" before performing.

Having seen and heard Ralmond's appreciation for the rain, Raincloud becomes infatuated with the boy holding her in his arms, declaring her love, only to be turned down by his admission of having a girlfriend—Midi, played by Bhattarai.

Unaware of human customs, Raincloud cannot understand why having a girlfriend would pose a problem, claiming that she, too, has a cowfriend, Bessie, but loves Ralmond. Determined to find a solution, Raincloud goes to Bessie, played by junior Grayson Herrera, whose only dialogue happens to be "moo!" For a comic effect, Bessie's every moo is translated by side characters, shedding light on the love advice she gives to Raincloud.

Getting across different ideas with only "moo" was a challenge, but Herrera explained how he "practiced the action and various tones in front of the mirror each day."

Suddenly, the scene shifts to a young man gushing over a lady despite her disinterest and repeated rejection. The characters are revealed to be King Edvard, played by senior Liam Gallagher, and Ina, played by sophomore Lillyanna Keogh.

"At the end of the day, it's how you portray a character. For me, that was a lovestruck, royal fool," described Gallagher.

However, as Ina and King Edvard leave the stage, the fourth wall is broken by Dolan, played by senior Kail Boswell, who awkwardly arrives on stage. He steps forward as the author of *The Little Raincloud* and admits to the audience that the moment between King Edvard and Ina was not part of his script, urging them to disregard

echoing the real-life relationship between Andersen and the Danish dancer—Harald Scharff—whose engagement to Camilla Petersen ended the bond Andersen had treasured.

Becoming aware of the audience's watchful eyes, Dolan changes the narrative again, this time pretending to be Bessie to influence Raincloud's actions. Throughout the play, the setting has been unintentionally plagued by heavy rainfall and flooding caused by Raincloud. Wanting her to win Ralmond's affections, Dolan recommends drowning and then saving him.

Raincloud hesitates and questions whether what she feels is truly love, once again transitioning into Andersen's life. This time, Andersen argues with Louise about their relationship, who declares Andersen a brother and nothing more. Andersen fell in love with his childhood friend Louise Collins and later her brother Edvard Collins, maintaining the theme of the author's complicated love life.

Performing in her first METG show, Rivera described feeling "sur-real" and "proud" of herself at reaching such a milestone, after having "an interest in theater from a young age."

We are then taken back to Midi and Ralmond's apartment, where Ralmond gets down on one knee to propose; however, taken by surprise and caught in a flurry of emotions, Midi blurts out, "This is seriously not the time." Hurt by the rejection, Ralmond leaves the apartment, while Midi realizes she does not want things to end in a misunderstanding.

As she goes to follow Ralmond, Dolan appears, the scene shifts, and now the two are Riborg and Andersen. Riborg Voigt was betrothed

should interact with each other," noted Boswell.

As Dolan concludes his rant to the audience, Raincloud and Ralmond appear on stage. After being away for 12 days, Raincloud confesses that she has been learning to "woo" Ralmond and attempts to kiss him; however, Ralmond turns her down and says he loves Midi and wants to marry her.

This time, Dolan steps into the story on purpose and tries to speak with Ralmond, but the scene abruptly shifts as the lights wash the stage in blue-green and the two men become Andersen and Harald. In this transformed moment, Andersen confronts Harald about discarding his letters,

New Principal Michael Sabin Introduced to Students

Continued from front page

This final decision was made after consecutive rounds of interviews with Maldonians across the city, involving Malden High School staff, students, parents, and caregivers.

Sippel highlighted Sabin's excellence in leadership, noting how "he is very committed to people, both the adults in the building and also, most importantly, the students in the building."

The process first began with an open-ended survey on January 16th, 2026, which was distributed via StudentSquare and email. Then, a series of three listening sessions were held to assess the qualities students valued in a principal, consisting of: a random selection of students, non-English speakers, and any volunteers.

Sippel commended Sabin's goal of wanting to foster an environment at Malden High that challenges everyone to their utmost abilities.

"I think what was a consistent theme is how deeply committed he is to making sure that students are really given what they deserve, and he really cares about making sure that that happens," Sippel noted.

"Sabin is bilingual, fluent in Spanish, including seven years as a bilingual teacher in Cambridge and Lawrence, as well as a year abroad, teaching at a high school in the South American country of Colombia in 2007-2008," Sippel stated in an interview with AdvocateNews. This aspect of Sabin was one of the things that distinguished him from the rest of the finalists.

"He's very committed, he's very humble from this standpoint. He comes to work not thinking that he has all the answers, but that the people who are teaching the students have a lot of answers, that if they are given the opportunity to work with each other and given some really consistent support and direction, that they can become stronger and support students better than they could on their own separately," concluded Sippel.

As for Sabin's plans for the school year, he wishes to take everything in and "hit the ground listening," learning the wants and needs of Malden.

Since Sabin's official announcement, he has met and introduced himself to various groups of students, teachers, parents, and caregivers.

Senior Linh Do, and juniors Amelia Berliner and Sophia Chen, who met with Sabin in his formal introduction to the students, voiced their

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Michael Sabin Visits MHS

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opinions in response.

Berliner, who is president of the junior class of 2027, expressed an initial reluctance with the transition of current principal Mastrangelo to Sabin, yet she is willing to get to know him better.

Berliner also wondered how his experience as a middle school principal will transfer to a high school. She wondered "how he will be able to support our class and the duties," naming specific annual events like Junior Varieties and prom, as well as how he will specifically adjust to the culture of Malden High. She stated that the experiences of middle school and high school are vastly different from one another.

"He has an outgoing personality, and he seems like he will be able to learn, grow, and integrate himself into this community, but it will no doubt take some time. It's always hard to start something new, whether that's sports, a hobby, or a new school. Whenever you try something new, it will be an adjustment, but I do think once he finds his footing here at Malden High, he will make a fitting principal," continued Berliner

Given the circumstances of how Mastrangelo's departure was received with a protest and walkout from the students, there have been initial doubts about how Sabin will be perceived by students.

On the contrary, junior Student Advisory Board representative, Chen, welcomed him with open arms. "At first glance, he seemed like a person who had a lot of experience with teaching. I was surprised with his willingness to accept Malden as his own and his strong opinions."

Chen expressed how students may be reluctant to adjust to a new authority figure since a principal's role "has so much emphasis on the students." She added, "Filling Mr. Mastrangelo's shoes is definitely going to be a challenge, where students will approach with curiosity and a new avenue of learning."

To listen to this interview, scan the QR code below:



Play Production Brings Fairytale to Life



Raincloud, played by sophomore Sofia Rivera, being bored of the world at the beginning of the play; Sophomores Sabrima Bhattarai and Lillyanna Keogh acting as translators for Bessie's "moos!" FATIMA HUSAIN

Continued from page 9

to another man from childhood and could not marry Andersen, despite loving him. The scene reveals Andersen's consistency of unrequited love and societal challenges.

Continued to be tormented by his past loves, Bessie appears as Carl Alexander, a Grand Duke, who shared a deep and long-term friendship with Andersen. In the scene, Alexander jests about Andersen's proposal to the famous opera singer, Jenny Lind. Lind was another one of Andersen's infatuations and ended up rejecting him.

Meanwhile, Ralmond stands under the sky, declaring to love the rain, finally accepting Raincloud's advances and kissing her. This is the scene Play Pro referred to as the "magical girl transformation," where Ralmond and Raincloud switch souls, transforming Ralmond into a raincloud and Raincloud into a human, as pages descend onto them. Bhattarai claimed it to be her "favorite part of the show."

However, upon this soul switch, Ralmond faints, causing Raincloud to panic and bring him to Midi. There, Midi and Raincloud's awkward encounter reveals the kiss, while Ralmond vanishes in the background. Dead set on finding Ralmond, Midi runs out of the apartment in a hurry, but to no avail.

Sitting down in defeat, Midi and Raincloud have a conversation about Ralmond, their feelings, and the rain. With tearful eyes, Midi looks up into the sky and breathes out, "I love the rain." As soon as those words come out of her mouth, Ralmond comes crashing down into her arms, repeating the Raincloud's lines from the beginning of the play.

Due to MTEG's time limit of 40 minutes per play, Messana had

to cut major scenes and while still keeping the production's essence; therefore, concluding the show with a raincloud falling in love with a human again.

With all the productions performed, the judges soon announced the advancing schools and handed out awards to students. Unfortunately, Malden did not progress in the competition, and the advancing schools were Manchester Essex Regional High School, Wellesley High School, and Reading Memorial High School.

For awards, Bhattarai, Keogh, Chan, and Gallagher received theirs for the translation scene with Bessie, Rivera received one for her portrayal of Raincloud, Herrera and junior Esther Mei Noche were awarded for costume design, and the set team was acknowledged.

Originally, the play had a Cast A and B, with Cast B preparing to perform in the Jenkins Auditorium on February 26th; however, due to several schedule changes and snow days, the home show was cancelled.

Keeping with the theme of parallels, sophomores were attending the competition for the first time, while seniors were attending it for the last time. "It was, as always, such a fun experience to perform on stage for people who understand what you went through to get the performance to the point it is," voiced Boswell.

Rivera reflected that the event was "very exciting" and despite backstage nervousness, as soon as she stepped foot on the stage, all of her anxiety "floated away," leaving her as light as a raincloud.

Despite struggling with "time and technical hiccups," the crew was able to bring a fairytale to life, showcasing their dedication and "optimism" to produce a memorable play, concluded Messana.

Michael Sabin Interviews with the Editors of The Blue and Gold

When people are asked about our school community, they usually respond to the diversity of our community. Besides our diversity, what specifically about the Malden High community has piqued your interest?

I don't think you should discount the diversity too quickly. It's a pretty special thing, and I've worked in a lot of different kinds of schools. It's a pretty great thing about your school and about your community. So that is something that everybody loves, and I'm sure they all do give that as an answer. Malden is also a pretty special place; it has a lot of history—it has a really interesting history all back before the Revolutionary War, but it also has culture in the present. I've learned in Malden, there's also a real tradition of community engagement, whether that's students speaking up or parents being involved with the schools. I think Malden has a lot more community engagement, not just in the schools, but in politics and in running the community than most places and that's pretty special. I have friends who live in Malden, and I like the

idea of being principal of the school where some of my friends' kids will go. I better do a good job!

We assume that you learned a lot about Malden High School during the interview process, both because you probably researched and prepared during the interview process, as well as when you were touring and meeting faculty and students. What are the strengths you see within Malden High School that you would like to keep in place? What are some places for improvement that you recognize and want to address in MHS?

I do not think I've spent at all enough time there to really be able to answer that question. I don't know what grade you all started there, but I've spent one day in the Malden Public Schools, and you've all spent thousands. So the real trick as a principal is to come in listening. There are things that people are very proud of at the school. The Blue and Gold newspaper being one of them. I saw a lot of those things even just in my one day there in the school, but I don't know what all

those things are. It's the sports; it's the activities; it's different classes that are special there. It's the relationships that people have. There's so many things, and I don't want to pretend that I know those things. One of the biggest jobs coming in is to ask lots of people—students, teachers, and families—what the things are that they care about most. I think it's the job of the principal to help strengthen those things and support the people who have been leading them. The flip side of that is to ask people what needs to be better. Hopefully you can build enough trust that people will really answer that question, because I'm sure every single student in the school and every single teacher has something that they think could be better, even if it's just the needs of a few people who aren't being met, or maybe programs that haven't been developed. But I don't know what those things are, and I don't think you would want a principal coming in pretending that they know what those things are. A superintendent I once had, had the phrase, 'I'm going to hit the ground listening,' a version of 'hit the ground running.' I really like that phrase. I'm going to try to



Michael Sabin meeting with the students of Malden High School. Photo submitted by Timothy Sippel.

hit the ground listening and learn as much as I can from all of you and all the teachers and families and try to shape that into a good plan to help make the school even better.

How do you plan on building connections and gaining the trust of the students and staff at the high school?

I think that's an easy thing to do if you're an educator and you love meeting people, talking to them, listening to them, trying to accomplish things together, and appreciate what they're doing. The only hard thing is that it takes time and there's a lot of people. So, I think you have to be visible, you have to be active, you have to be interested, and little by little you form a lot of relationships and you hear a lot of things. I've been a principal before, and right now

I'm not a principal. I work in a central office, and I'm really excited to be a principal again because I love doing that. Being a school principal, think of how many people you get to meet. You hear what they need or what they want. You get to try to help them. It's a really great thing. I'm lucky to get to do it.

What about your background has most prepared you for this new role?

We all have different backgrounds and different paths, and I think one of the things you have to learn is what's special about your path. We all want to be a hero of some kind, but most of us are not, and we just have a normal path. And then you learn, what does your path give you that can be helpful? I would say the thing about my path is

New Principal Interview

Continued from page 10

that I've been in a lot of different kinds of schools. When I was your age, I went to a fancy private school for three years, so I got to see what that was like. I was an undergraduate at Harvard College, and I got to see what that was like. Through most of my career, I've worked in some very challenging schools in Lawrence, in Boston, so I've seen what that's like. Then I've had my own kids go through schools in Lexington Public Schools, which is another school system. I think the thing that I have is that I've seen a lot of different kinds of schools, and so the thing that I can bring is experience seeing what lots of different students in different places have and love. Even though I don't have roots in the community, I've moved from community to community, what I can bring is an awareness of what other schools are like. I even taught in a school in South America, in Bogotá, Colombia, and I've worked in schools in Guatemala. So my thing, I guess, is awareness of education in lots of places. Then I need to work with people who have deep roots in the community so together we can give you the best experience possible.

What's one question that you'd wish we had asked you? What would your answer be?

Maybe "what were you like as a student?" I think that's pretty important. Even though we get trained, we have lots of experience as adults: we also carry with us what we were like as a kid and as an adolescent, and that impacts us a lot. I think that shapes the way I work a lot. I didn't really like school. I was an okay student; I had too much energy. I was always out of my seat. I was always bothering people, but I was also interested, and I played sports, and I did community service and all kinds of things, but I was not good at sitting still and listening. And so, I got in trouble a little bit in school for being like that because I was the kind of kid that was just running around too much. It was probably tiring to be my teacher. I think that makes me appreciate that even the kids that aren't perfect in school, they're just as good as everybody else. I really appreciated the teachers who could get past that and form a good relationship with me. Then, in the end, I grew up a little bit and kind of calmed down and was able to find my way. So, I think what you're like when you're your age and younger, it impacts you for your whole life. I guess that's something that I bring with me, even though I'm getting kind of old.

One more question. We'd like to follow up more about your experience in Guatemala and Colombia.

It's a really special thing to me that I've gotten to do this. I've worked in a children's home in Guatemala. I worked in a private school in Bogotá, Colombia, and then I led some tours for teachers and visited schools a number of times in Guatemala. I've been to a lot of different schools. The school in Colombia that I worked in was a private, Catholic school. There were about 1,000 students in the school. They were all Colombian, and they were all Catholic, except for my kids. It was really interesting to compare that to this country. We take for granted the diversity we have, but this was a school where 997 kids had all grown up in that country, and then three of them didn't, which were my three. It was interesting to see a place that doesn't have as much immigration and a school that didn't have as much diversity as all the schools I've worked in here. Then, in Guatemala, I spent time in rural schools. That is really eye-opening because they're really glad to have a classroom and to have a teacher, but there's nothing there. There's no materials. Maybe there's the national curriculum, which is just one book for the subject area. There's no computers. Kids are walking sometimes an hour to get to school or more. It makes you realize how lucky we are and how privileged we are, and that even when we compare one school to another in this country, we sometimes forget what we have. Then when you look at many places in the world that are just trying to get a school kid to be able to go to school, you really appreciate more what we have. In Central America, in Guatemala, for example, you have to pay to go to middle school. There's no public middle school. You have to pay, and a lot of families don't have money. So you only have to go to school through 6th grade. Many, many, many people are done with school at the end of elementary school. You know, we sort of take for granted that we get to keep going through high school. I think it's good to appreciate what's been built, even though it can always be better. I think that's made me a more appreciative person. It also just makes education seem much more important when you realize what people are—some people in the world are trying to get access to it. And we're pretty lucky to have access to it. We just want to take advantage of it. So I hope that didn't sound like a big lecture, but it's been very, very interesting. I hope maybe some of you have seen those kinds of schools. But if not, I hope you get a chance to.

Galloping into the Lunar New Year



Anna Bui
Head Copy Editor
Collage of performers at Chinese Culture Connection Lunar New Year Festival: Lion dancers raising the lions' heads during their performance. Mayor Gary Christenson posing with Chinese Culture Connection performers. ANNA BUI

Lunar New Year, also known as Chinese New Year or Spring Festival, marks the beginning of the lunisolar calendar and symbolizes renewal, reflection, and hope for prosperity in the

in Vietnam.

In an effort to foster Malden's spirit, the Chinese Culture Connection hosted their 17th annual Lunar New Year celebration on February 7th, 2026. Held at Malden

loud beat of gongs, cymbals, and drums. Traditionally, the lion dance is meant to ward off evil spirits while bringing in good luck, prosperity, and joy.

Following a speech

together as a family and spending quality time with each other," emphasizing the importance of unity during the holiday.

Sophomore Liliana Lin agreed with this sentiment, recalling how



Chinese Culture Connection Performance group dancing to "You are the Jasmine in My Heart". ANNA BUI

year ahead. Each year is assigned to one of the twelve Chinese zodiacs; this year is the Year of the Horse, symbolizing rapid change, freedom, and energetic, bold action. In Asian communities around the globe, streets come alive with vibrant red decorations, fireworks, and festive gatherings.

Unfortunately, some areas do not celebrate the new year with the same intensity. For families who have moved away from their motherlands, the holiday can feel quieter and less spirited than the celebrations they are used to. Revere High School freshman Mel Vo described her first Spring Festival in Malden as feeling "pretty bland and boring," compared to the lively festivities she experienced

High School, the event transformed the halls of the school, filled with stands offering different hands-on activities, crafts, and traditions centered around the festival.

The highlight of the event was the festival performances. The program kicked off with an energetic lion dance, immediately captivating the audience. Performed by two dancers inside a single lion suit, the pair skillfully mimicked a lion's movement to a

from Chinese Culture Connection executive director, Mei Hung, and Malden Mayor, Gary Christenson, the show continued with a showcase of artistic acts. The stage filled with a variety of performances, including traditional and modern dances, vocal performances, poetry recitations, and storytelling.

For many, a big part of the tradition around the Spring Festival is the opportunity to bring together family and community.

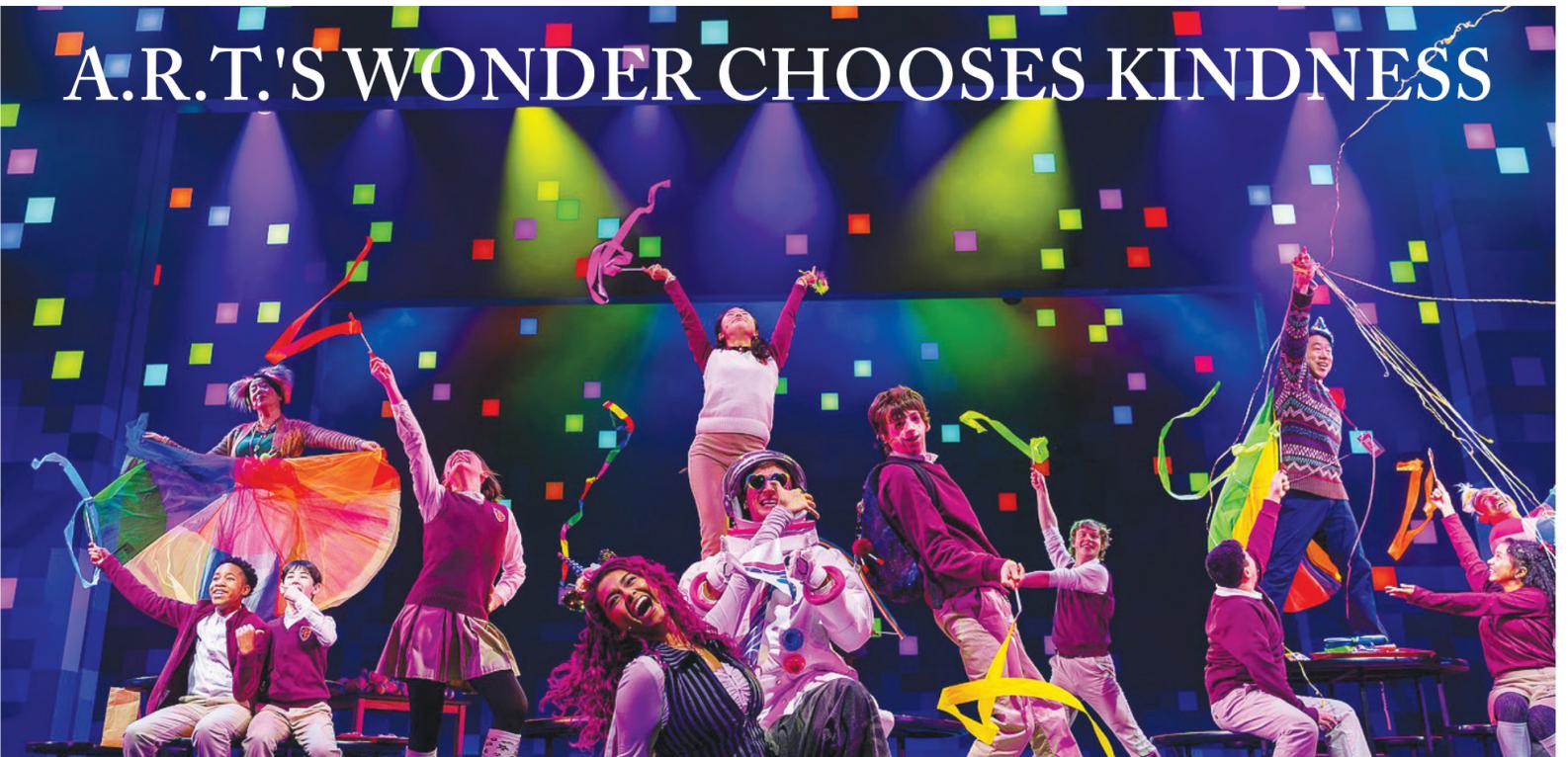
To sophomore Ella Wong, "Chinese New Year means coming

luck, such as avoiding cleaning during the festival period as to "not clean away any fortune or luck," Lin explained.

Others find ways to welcome more luck into their lives through symbolic gestures, "I always make sure to put a tangerine on my desk as it symbolizes a sign of good luck for studies," Wong shared. Meanwhile, other families spread fortune by going around their neighborhoods and "saying good things and wishing people luck," said Vo.

While the new year represents "a fresh start for every Asian family that celebrates," as Vo stated, Lin concluded that it also serves as "a reminder to look around us and appreciate" the fortune and community that surrounds us.





Alexia Lima
Managing Editor

Whether you are blasting off into space or battling the school cafeteria, American Repertory Theater's (ART) premiere musical *Wonder*, directed by Tai-bi Magar and based on the similarly titled novel by R.J. Palacio and Lionsgate and Mandeville film, reminds audiences that when presented with the option between being right and being kind, choose kind.

The stellar musical adaptation features a score by Grammy Award-winning duo A Great Big World and book by Sarah Ruhl, bringing Palacio's beloved best-selling children's novel to life on the stage of Harvard University's Loeb Drama Center.

Wonder follows August "Auggie" Pullman and his family as he transitions from being home-schooled his whole life to navigating seventh grade amongst bullying due to his facial difference, known as Treacher Collins syndrome or mandibulofacial dysostosis, a rare genetic disorder affecting the development of one's facial features. Through celebrating the power of choosing kindness, *Wonder* embraces prioritizing empathy and authenticity when finding one's identity.



Malden Learning Lab students posing at Wonder photobooth prior to beginning their workshop. ALEXIA LIMA

Learning Lab lead Vahdat Yeganeh returned to Malden High School on January 16th to immerse students in the first Levine Learning Lab workshop for the penultimate show in ART's 2025-2026 season. Students explored the complexities of friendship by building and listing the

Promotional image of members of the cast of *Wonder* in "Choose Kind". Photo taken by Hawver and Hall

qualities of their ideal imaginary best friend and reflecting on how realistic it'd be to adhere to such characteristics in their own relationships.

Heeding the workshop's lessons, Malden Learning Lab students joined two other high schools apart of ART's Levine Learning Lab, Boston Green Academy and Boston International Academy, on January 20th to participate in the traditional pre-show workshop and viewing of *Wonder*.

The workshop consisted of students creating and performing adaptations of their own principles, a synonym for motto used repeatedly in the show. "I think it prepared us for the show by letting us expand our imagination and how to make it come to life. I'm glad we had this experience because it opened my eyes," Boston Green Academy student Leilani Ruiz conveyed.

Students had the honor of being joined by Max Voehl at the workshop, one of the double-cast actors who plays Auggie alongside Garrett McNally. Both Voehl and McNally have facial differences like Auggie's, highlighting how the musical adaptation prioritized authenticity in not only the storytelling but

with the meaning behind the show," senior Moisha Howse reflected.

Auggie is extremely well-versed in astronomy and science; the fascination materializes in both the astronaut helmet he uses to shield his insecurity and the presence of his imaginary astronaut friend, Moon Boy, who often speaks and sings for Auggie throughout the show to reflect his mental escape to space when life on land becomes overwhelming.

Moon Boy narrates the introduction of the opening number "3-2-1 Blast Off!" by warning audiences to prepare for take-off as he flies down onto stage. Auggie and his rocketship bed join him in flight as the pair performs the duet. The revolving stage soon reveals the company of *Wonder* clad in celestial attire, synchronously dancing to the lively song.

Auggie introduces himself as a typical kid in "Ordinary", listing his common interests like video games, such as *MinerCraft* and movies such as *Star Wars*. Auggie's mother proposes that he go to school to expand his learning and socialize with kids his age, debunking Auggie's claim of being ordinary by telling him, "you can't blend in when you were born to

for the life we lead."

In his first day of class, Auggie starts getting picked on by Julian and Amos, shattering any confidence Auggie had on his first day. Back home, his mother consoles him and reminds him "what rarity and you are" in the heartfelt rendition of "You Are Beautiful".

Wonder reflects the difficulty of navigating judgment from one's peers in middle school: "The minute they said that they were in seventh grade, everything just clicked, because disrespectfully, seventh grade was the worst year of my life, and usually for most middle schoolers. There's just something about seventh grade that makes people evil creatures," sophomore Minerva Davenport added.

Gathering the courage to return to school, Auggie finds a fast friendship with Jack after he defends him for being called a teacher's pet due to his intelligence. The pair becomes inseparable in "Best Friends", the Pullman family rejoicing on Auggie finally finding a compassionate friend.

Shifting the perspective, Auggie's older sister Olivia "Via" Pullman narrates how she has always been overlooked by her family in "Around the Sun," depicting how she and her family are planets orbiting around the sun, Auggie.

"It's Halloween" introduces Auggie's favorite holiday, where he can embrace being different without being treated as such, the students of Beecher Prep rejoicing in the festivities with extravagant Halloween costumes and the repeating phrase in the song "weird is awesome."

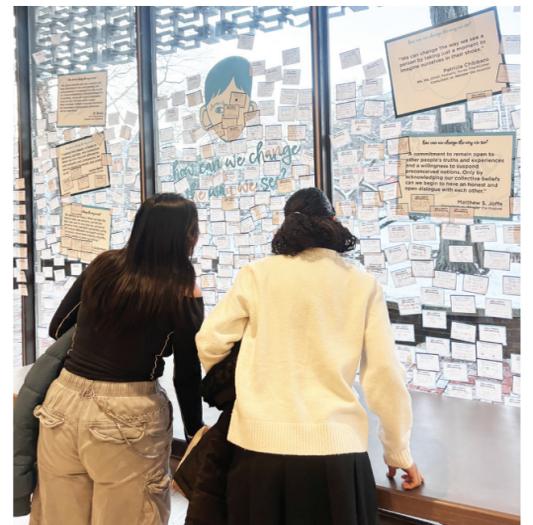
Auggie's spirits are soon defeated as he secretly overhears his friend Jack insulting him with Julian, ending Act I with "Black Hole" reflecting the depths of Auggie's insecurities and desire to be accepted by his peers.

Charlotte begins Act II by gossiping in "You Didn't Hear That from Me" about how Auggie has not been in school since Halloween, causing Jack to reflect on how his words and the actions of

his classmates hurt Auggie in "Choose Kind", rekindling their friendship.

"The first half of the show ended very sad, and after intermission the play livened up with the songs about kindness and being confident in one's self, like 'Choose Kind.' It was a good way to lighten the mood; it was

at Beecher Prep's end of the year award ceremony, where his acceptance speech about embracing what makes him different receives a standing ovation. The musical ends with the company taking various pictures at the award ceremony, contrasting Auggie's initial hatred of having his pic-



Seniors Julia Cardoso and Zahira Acosta Ganan reading the responses to the musical's essential question: "How can we change the way we see?" ALEXIA LIMA

all rainbows and butterflies and brought so much happiness to me," senior Julia Cardoso shared.

A fight ensues in "This is War" as Jack has had enough of Julian's comments and defends Auggie. As Julian's suspension for bullying lingers, the school principal reminds his arrogant mother, trying to defend his actions, that she is lacking empathy in "Change The Way We See".

Following the conflict, the school goes on a nature retreat where Auggie and Jack are threatened by older kids in the woods, his classmates who were originally against him coming to his aid and defending Auggie in "Stare", a powerful song where Auggie accepts his differences and becomes united with his peers.

"One In A Million" depicts Auggie being recognized for his bravery

ture taken and displaying his growth.

The cast of *Wonder* consists primarily of children, and Play Production teacher Ariana Messana voiced, "As a teacher, it was so overwhelmingly exciting to see young people getting into theater. The vocal talent on these kids is insane, and genuinely just seeing all of this hard work being put in from both the actors and the tech team is so exciting to see this new adaptation taking the stage and hopefully taking a bigger stage on Broadway one day."

Wonder highlights the importance of friendship and empathy, emphasizing that through the power of kindness, the world can be a more accepting and better place. The premiere musical is an out-of-this-world experience that is a wonder to those graced by seeing it.



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Israa Malhouni
Head Copy Editor

Malden's swim team posing for a group photo. ISRAA MALHOUNI

After numerous practices, meets, and aching shoulders, the Malden High swim team dove into the GBL Championship meet, prepared to prove how far they had come this season.

The focus at GBL extends far beyond first place considering the team's early-season loss to Medford. The swimmers entered the championship with shared goals: to improve their times, qualify for States and sectionals, and close the season off on a high note.

"I feel like going into the GBL meet, everyone had the mindset of getting their best times and qualifying for states or

team prioritized personal growth and long-term goals as opposed to dwelling on setbacks

The mindset was evident in the team's performance. Malden finished second overall in the GBL, an accomplishment the swimmers embraced with pride given the season's challenges. "We were all very nervous at the start but by the end of the GBLs we were all very comfortable and content with what we have achieved," said Junior Weiqi Du.

The road to the championship had its obstacles; several swimmers described time management as one of their biggest struggles. "Balancing school, practices, and my

With encouragement from coach Jessica Bisson, she learned to stay patient and trust the process, focusing on her mindset rather than immediate results.

The team faced other challenges, such as having many newcomers learning to adjust to the techniques and intensity of high school swim. "At first, the team was a bit challenging to manage because of lots of new-comers that weren't adapted to what coach Bisson expects from us," Harrington explained, but by the end of the season, communication and cooperation skills had significantly improved.

Maya Sanh, a freshman and "first year" swim team member expressed how she initially felt nervous trying to keep up with her more experienced teammates, but over time, the team "grew comfortable and supportive."

Despite losing to Medford earlier in the season, swimmers described that moment as a turning point rather than a defeat. "It was kind of a bummer," Harrington continued, "but as a team we prioritize qualifying for states, sectionals, and obtaining personal best times; that mentality definitely kept us from being

discouraged." From that point forward, the team focused on cutting time and pushing through difficult practices, a shift that resulted in numerous personal records.

The season also produced standout achievements. Sophomore Sophie Tran and freshmen Katie Rice and Alden Deronja qualified for the State Championship, Tran extended her streak of making it to states to four consecutive years, Rice qualified for the second year in a row, and Deronja earned his first, a promising sign for the team's future.

Throughout injuries, competitive pressure and demanding workouts, the team continued to improve. "We have drastically improved since day one," expressed Du. By the time GBL arrived, the growth in times, confidence, and unity had been clear.

While the championship title may not have returned to Malden this year, the season ultimately reflected something just as important: resilience. As junior Yingyan Xia put it, "The team grew so much from the first meet to GBL, and she felt "so proud of my team and the growth they made throughout the season."



Sophomore Raphael Kinuthia swimming the 50 free. ISRAA MALHOUNI

sectionals," Captain Danielle Harrington claimed. Despite the disappointment of losing the GBL title earlier in the season, she explained that the

stuff outside of school was difficult at times," shared sophomore Tara Villatore. She also noted the frustration of not seeing immediate improvement.



Aundrea Cifuentes
Head of Sports

Boys' Basketball seniors gather with their families before the game. GABRIELA PARINI CORDOVA

On February 5th, proud friends and family of the Malden High School Boys Basketball team accompanied the senior players with warm hugs, flowers, and moral support as they prepared to play one of their last games of their high school basketball careers. Senior Night brought a bittersweet feeling to the gym, a celebration of dedication and memories, but also a reminder that this chapter is coming to a close.

Malden came out strong in the first quarter, setting the tone early. Ryan McMahon kicked the game off strong by scoring the first few points in the game, igniting the crowd right away. The Tornados' defense approached the game with a strong drive, forcing shots throughout the quarter, leading to loud praise from the bleachers. By the end of the first quarter, Malden held a 14-12 lead, further fueling the ecstatic energy in the gymnasium.

In the second quarter, Medford began to catch up, battling hard to close the gap; but Malden fought against it. The crowd was sent into a frenzy with back-to-back points from Medford and Malden. However, when Malden's defense tightened up again, they were able to catch and secure the lead once again.

The game remained neck and neck throughout all four quarters, neither team giving the other a break. When the final buzzer sounded, the scoreboard revealed a tie, forcing an intense overtime period and a fifth quarter of play. Every possession felt like the season depended on it.

In the final moments of overtime, Malden held strong. With grit and perseverance, they secured a thrilling 57-55 victory. The seniors closed out their final home game not just with a win, but with a performance defined by resilience, defense, and heart.

Ismail Elbahlwan to States



Ismail Elbahlwan after winning his match. HASET TESFAW

Haset Tesfaw
Lead Reporter

The whistle blows and chaos ensues on the mat. Bodies clash and hands fight to take control of the opponent. Wrestling never waits for anyone to catch up, one must always be quick to take control.

With senior wrestler Ismail Elbahlwan, there is never any hesitation once he steps on the mat.

During the 2026 wrestling season, Elbahlwan placed at Division 1 sectionals at 215lbs, something that "someone from Malden has yet to claim until now," explained wrestling and football coach Kevin Isaza who further added how "This helped him secure a spot at States, where he fought hard against other opponents from across the state."

Let's rewind to the beginning of his story.

Elbahlwan's wrestling journey began in his junior year of high school. A senior wrestler had been attempting to recruit Elbahlwan since his freshman year. "My favorite part about wrestling is the physical challenge. I love competing and pushing myself every day," expressed Elbahlwan.

The coaches strongly believed that anyone could reach States with the right mindset and effort that they display, however when they first saw Elbahlwan, his competitiveness stood out.

"Even when he had no idea what he was doing he was still frustrated when losing, showing he had the innate drive to win. That is when I knew he was going to be successful," coach Eli Guttentag stated.

When the 2026 season came about, Elbahlwan planned to return to the sport. Things progressed smoothly until he unexpectedly injured his shoulder during the first week of practice, causing him to miss half of the season.

"When I got hurt, I honestly thought about quitting and was contemplating if it was even worth it. Later on, I had my first tournament, came in unseeded, and got extremely close to winning by pinning the 1st seed for almost a whole period. I unfortunately lost due to a technicality, but that tournament showed me that I could go far," Elbahlwan explained.

While his comeback showed his commitment to the sport, it also highlighted what sets him apart from the rest of his team. "As much as wrestling is a team sport, it is also a sport that relies heavily on self-commitment and the personal progress you make through your career in wrestling. Ismail was a fast learner and was able to attain a lot of wrestling in just two years," Isaza expressed.

His teammate, senior Omar Chouiki, also noticed how much Elbahlwan had improved since he had started. Chouiki reflected how in the beginning of the season, most of his wins would come from "rushing in and overpowering the opponent," but added how as the season progressed, "Ismail had gotten smarter" especially in "training techniques that would usually take him down."

Elbahlwan making it to States "goes back to the principle and the rich history that comes from being a part of the Malden community, both as a student and also an athlete. It was a testament to his hard work and dedication," Isaza noted.

His teammates, such as junior wrestler Ammar Ibrahim, acknowledged how much Elbahlwan contributes in every practice, specifically "the enthusiastic energy he always brings."

Elbahlwan believes that reaching States was a team effort because of all the support he has received from his teammates and coaches. "Just because I was the only one [to make States] doesn't mean my teammates' hard work and effort were meaningless," Elbahlwan explained.

As Malden continues to grow its wrestling program, Elbahlwan qualifying for States in only his second year lets "the younger wrestlers know that if they work hard, they can achieve success in a relatively short amount of time," Guttentag concluded.

Wrestling Defeats MC at Senior Night

Emilly Weihrauch
Head of Local

After a tireless season of weekly tournaments, restless practices, and frequent meets, the GBL Wrestling Team officially reached the end of their season after facing Malden Catholic on February 2nd for the team's Senior Night. The turnout was hefty; friends and family of competitors on both teams filled the bleachers and cheered in support of the players, with the energy of the loved ones matching the output on the mat.

The team this year had many highlights, including breaking Malden's meet record and making GBL history.

Salina Shresthra from Everett was the first to step out onto the mat, fighting for the 113-pound weight class. In her match, despite having a strong start, even getting three points, she was pinned, which resulted in a loss against the Malden Catholic wrestler. The loss did not discourage the team's performance, however, and the matches continued with each wrestler being filled with determination.

Ryan Posada, also from Everett, fought for the 132-pound weight class. With a determined resolve, he fought a hard match, lasting all three periods, but he lost to his opponent by three points, with the outcome being "decision", declaring whoever has the most points the winner after running out of time.

Captain David Parada from Malden's match, fighting for the 144-pound weight class, was one of two forfeits that night, walking on with a smile as the referee lifted his arm up to declare him the automatic winner of the match.

Mateus Philype-Pereira from Everett, fighting for the 150-pound weight class, turned his outcome around. Fighting a difficult match, he was close to losing the fight, going into the second period. His opponent had the upper hand, scoring 7 points while Philype-Pereira had only one. He changed the tide by getting a pin on his opponent, securing his win.

Captain Angel Chinchilla from Everett fought a difficult yet playful round. Toying with his opponent, he had several chances to pin him, but instead waited for the right moment to get his de-

Continued on page 15

WINTER CHEER SENIOR NIGHT



Evelyn Ruan
Head of Sports
Cheerleading team doing a dance while trying to hype up the crowd and Boys' Basketball Team. EVELYN RUAN

On February 5th, 2026, Malden's cheer team's Senior Night was filled with flowers, gifts, memories, and applause that echoed through the gym as they cheered on the Boys' Basketball team one last time, starting a new chapter in their lives as the season ended.

That night, cheer coach Briana Silva-Couture individually announced the team's eleven seniors as they each walked towards the middle of the gym, taking photos with their families and friends. The seniors consisted of Captain Claudia Hernandez Escobar, Captain Taliyah Lauture, Captain Patricia Mukasa, Rachel Valladares Lanza, Delina Yohannes (also Editor-in-Chief of Web and Mobile for the Blue and Gold), Nour Jaayfer, Aaliyah Lopes, Sorin Mamouzzette, Ndiaye Oliver-Destine, Olivia Sateriale, and Lorella Beechin.

Captain Escobar started cheerleading at five-years-old when her mother put her into the sport. "I've been competitive cheering for around twelve years now. What made me want to continue in the sport is just my love for it and my passion for wanting to get better and better." She has been on the team for three seasons, joining the winter cheer team in 2024. During Senior Night, she "felt a lot of emotions at once, happy, relieved, and sad" that her last time putting on a cheer uniform was Senior Night.

Captain Mukasa has been on the team since the Winter cheer season of 2022. "What made me want to continue was that I found much passion in cheer, and it was very fun for me," adding that she had also made many friendships.

Although it was Beechin's first year cheering for Malden High School, she had a passion for cheer since she was five-years-old. She stated, "I started out with Malden Pop Warner for about nine years, then went into all-star at JAG cheer, which I am on my third year cheering at this gym."

Enjoying her time here, "Senior Night experience was very fun, and it was nice getting my accomplishments recognized. I feel very proud of what I performed during the game," she continued, expressing how she loves showing her classmates, friends, and family what she can and loves to do.

Lanza started cheerleading in her junior year during the winter season and continued for the love of the sport. Lanza commented on how Senior Night felt surreal, knowing that once fall cheer season was over, and as soon as the winter season came, she knew that it would be her last time doing cheer. "I felt my performance was amazing, especially with the competitive game; it all felt like something out of High School Musical."

Mamouzzette has been on the team since the winter season of 2024 and has always been interested in cheerleading since she was younger. She had also done dance and gymnastics, and wanted to try something new. She continued for her friends and the memories she made, and the support from her teammates. She said, "I believe I performed to the best of my abilities, and I always pushed myself to keep going."

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End of the Season Gymnastics Showcase



Fatima Husain
Head Copy Editor
The gymnastics team posing with Coaches Katie Bowdridge and Michael Nicholson for a team picture. FATIMA HUSAIN

As winter finally shows signs of easing after days of heavy, historic snowfall, Malden High's gymnastics team brought its season to a close on February 10th with a spirited end-of-season showcase.

Taking place in the high school's gymnastics room, the showcase gave athletes a chance to perform their routines one last time—this time not for scores or ranking, but for their teammates, families, and coaches who supported them throughout the season.

The night highlighted the team's progress across all events, with students performing on the vault, beam, bars, and floor. For many gymnasts, it was a stress-free opportunity to demonstrate skills they had been refining for months.

Coach Katie Bowdridge, a former gymnast who has been coaching gymnastics for over 30 years, began the night by welcoming the audience and sharing her immense pride for the team, emphasizing their "willingness to work hard and never giving up."

Beginning in the vault room, sophomores Sophia Zhang and Phalangecia Jean Charles, and freshmen Taya Rubin-Wilson and Maria Diniz, lined up to tackle the oncoming challenge. Each gymnast ran down a certain length before jumping on a springboard to fling themselves into the air and soar over the vaulting table to stick a graceful landing. After the event was completed,

the audience and gymnasts returned to the gymnastics room, where the rest of the night's activities would take place.

Zhang's mother expressed the amazement she felt while watching her daughter "progress in a sport she had never participated in before." She continued, "Seeing the process move and her moves becoming cleaner filled me with immense pride."

Up next was the beam, where those who wanted to display agility and balance could do so. Gymnasts carefully mounted the narrow beam, stabilized themselves, performed their chosen skill, and then backflipped or jumped off the equipment to conclude their routine.

During the routine, some walked back and forth across the beam, some performed leaps, while others decided to take it up a notch by leaning forward and lifting a leg into the air to form a stable platform with their body, such as sophomore Arielle Leconte and Diniz. The last gymnast in this event was Junior Captain Sofia Vargas, who left a memorable impact by initiating a cartwheel on the beam, after which, the team continued to the bars.

"There was no stress to throw us off—it was just a time to appreciate all the hard work we have put into the season," commented Vargas.

On the bars, Zhang, Rubin-Wilson, Jean Charles, Vargas, and sophomore Mackenzie Hartin would take the stage. The following athletes flipped themselves on the first bar multiple times, waiting to find the

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UNDERCLASSMEN GIVE FAREWELL CHEERS

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Lopes started cheering at the end of her junior year to push herself out of her comfort zone. “I initially treated tryouts as a form of exposure therapy, never expecting to make the team,” she added, “however, I made it, and I continued cheer throughout my senior year because I found that I enjoyed learning new skills, performing, and the friendships that came from it.” She hopes that the team learns “to try new things and go out of their comfort zone because you never know what may happen.”

Jaayfer joined the cheer team in the winter of 2024 due to the fact that she had always wanted to be a cheerleader like the ones she saw online when she lived in Morocco. Once she moved to the U.S and began attending Malden High, she made it her mission to join the team. “Ever since then, I promised myself I’ll keep going since that’s been my dream since a little kid.” Jaayfer added, “I hope the underclassmen understand that it’s okay to mess up and it’s okay to feel like you did not give your best at times because that’s all a part of sports in general.”

“I hope that my underclassmen just learn patience and honesty. Being a captain isn’t just a title. It takes time and things not everyone sees. I hope they all learn how to just be patient and let things happen,” stated Captain Escobar.

Having to balance sports, schoolwork, and extracurriculars all at the same time can be tiring, especially for Captain Mukasa, who felt that “some obstacles were having competition, practice, and game day practices where we couldn’t be in the same place at once.” However, the team eventually resolved the problem by having returning cheerleaders help the new members, “which helped a lot,” said Captain Mukasa.

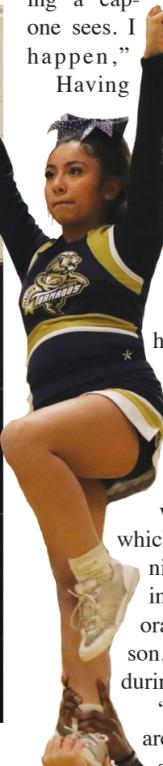
“Some obstacles I encountered were not hitting a stunt hit. It would bother me that I couldn’t get it or I didn’t understand it. Thankfully, I had such nice teammates to tell me what I was doing wrong and how to fix it, which helped a lot,” commented Mamouzette.

Despite the obstacles, a special thing about doing sports is being able to look back and make memories with the team. For Lanza, it was the cheer banquet in which she received an award for “Silent Hero” during her junior year and a carwash fundraiser in the summer going into senior year. In her senior year, some of the most memorable moments were her Senior Night during the fall season, performing at the pep rally, and senior sign-out posters during the last practice of the winter season.

“My most memorable moments during my time cheering are all the girls making me feel okay, whether I’m having a bad day, or if I felt as though I messed up. They always made sure to be there for me,” concluded Jaayfer.



Sophomore Hannah Coggsell and Senior Captain Claudia Hernandez Escobar taking a photo together in front of Escobar’s senior poster. EVELYN RUAN



Wrestling

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sired outcome. With the match ending in 17-2, the 157-pound competitor won with a “tech fall”, getting the option to finish with a 14-point up or to finish the pin.

Sahelert Lemus from Chelsea fought for the 165-pound weight class and fought hard to get the outcome he wished. Lemus’ main goal was to pin his opponent, causing him to chase the pin with determination throughout the periods. Despite many attempts, he wasn’t able to get it in the first place. In the second period, he was able to pin his opponent, securing the win, ending in 6-0.

Omar Chouiki from Malden, similar to Lemus, sought a pin, leading to a longer round. His match for the 175-pound class lasted longer because he kept chasing a cradle; ultimately, in his second period, he caved and pinned his opponent with a “half-nelson”, driving his opponent’s shoulder to the mat. He walked off the match with a win, ending in 6-1. Captain Joseph Alayane from Malden stepped onto the mat with a clear goal for his match. Fighting for the 190-pound weight class, he pinned his opponent in record time, taking 30 seconds to secure the win. Walking off the mat with a 3-0 win, there was one final match remaining for the night.

Captain Ismail Elbahlawan from Malden, fighting for the 215-pound weight class, fought a hard match—possibly one of the most anticipated ones of the night. Going against a wrestler ranked 12th in the state, Elbahlawan kept his composure and walked confidently on the mat. After fighting a hard match, he ultimately got tech-falled, only having one point by the end of his match.

Last but not least, the final senior competitor, Javi Lopez from Everett, won his match

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GYMNASTICS FLIPS AND TRICKS TO HIGHLIGHT SKILLS

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precise momentum, before attempting to swing to the next bar.

To conclude the night, gymnasts who prepared a choreographed dance routine took to the floor to exhibit their floor exercise to a song of their choice. Due to the low stakes, first-time performers sophomores Eva Nguon and Derline Hyppolite, began the event with a dual performance.

Several other gymnasts would follow, such as Zhang performing to “Come Over” by Le Sserafim, Hartin performing to “Rose” by The Chainsmokers, and sophomore Alyssa Lynch performing to a mix of Disney classics. Nguon humorously shared, “Well, everyone was already doing a parting performance, so I dragged Derline to do one with me.”

With each floor exercise, the applause and excitement from

the gymnasts only grew, with Lynch’s aerial—a no handed cartwheel in the air—earning her excited cheering.

With the season’s end, coaches and gymnasts alike leave the season filled with pride at their successes and cherishing the bonds formed. “As a freshman, this sport became a place where I was introduced into the high school environment and expanded my social circle,” voiced Vanessa Huang.

Beyond the flips and scores, this season highlighted the incredible grit and teamwork these athletes brought to the mat each, with Coach Michael Nicholson urging them to “continue” to practice their skills to ensure no “skills are lost for the next season.”

“Working with this group of kids has been a wonderful experience, and seeing as we only had one senior on the team, I’m hoping to see familiar faces on the team next year,” concluded Nicholson.



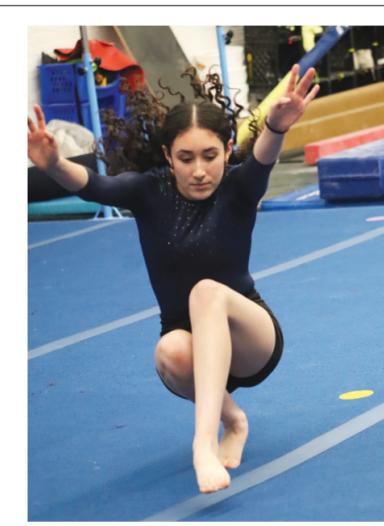
Mackenzie Hartin. FATIMA HUSAIN



Alyssa Lynch. FATIMA HUSAIN



Eva Nguon. FATIMA HUSAIN



Isabella Portillo. FATIMA HUSAIN



Phalangecia Jean Charles. FATIMA HUSAIN



Sofia Vargas. FATIMA HUSAIN



DIAGNE SETS NEW STANDARD

FRESHMAN KHADIJAH DIAGNE BREAKS MALDEN HIGH SCHOOL RECORD, RANKING 1ST IN 300-METER DASH IN MASSACHUSETTS



Continued from front page

Freshman Khadijah Diagne in position to begin sprinting as she starts out on her blocks. Photo taken by Vanessa Diniz.

Her adaptability and leadership are what stand out the most. Her willingness to try something new and expand her array of talents is what makes her such a strong athlete. "She has a great work ethic, and she adapted quickly to the track team," Yousfi added. "I want people to always try out something new because you never really know how great you could be," Diagne

proclaimed. Adaptation is what got her this far and is what will continue to take her further into the future, aiming to make her an even better athlete. For the upcoming outdoors season, her training has only intensified. In addition to Malden Track, Diagne also runs for the 'Metro-Cobras Track Club', which has enabled her to "work on various aspects of racing

that wouldn't be possible by just working in Malden." Her goals for this outdoor season are to "claim the school record in the 100, 200, and 400 meters, to make States, and Nationals." As for the far future, it's very bright. With being so highly ranked, offers from colleges will eventually start to roll in. "I'm hoping to get a scholarship to col-

lege with track and in the future eventually go professional," Diagne shared. "As a teammate, I am happy for her growth and am excited to see where she ends up," Yousfi concluded. The entirety of Malden is backing up this generational talent, hoping to see her go far. It's only a matter of time until her name is a national headline.



Khadijah Diagne laces up her cleats preparing to face the track. Photo taken by Vanessa Diniz.



Khadijah Diagne bolting ahead of competitors. Photo taken by Vanessa Diniz.

Girls' Basketball Senior Night



Girls' Basketball seniors posing with their friends and family. GABRIELA PARINI CORDOVA

Read Yen Nguyen's article "Malden Girl's Basketball Senior Night against Lynn Tech" by scanning the QR code:



Wrestling Team Faces Watertown



Before the match, the coaches bring everyone together for a quick talk. BILAL PSARLY

To watch Bilal Psarly's video, scan the QR code:



Diagne Interview with BayStateRun



Freshman Khadijah Diagne in preparation to start sprinting. Photo taken by Vanessa Diniz.

To watch Khadijah Diagne's interview with BayStateRun on YouTube, scan the QR code:



GBL WRESTLING TEAM SENIOR NIGHT



GBL Wrestling seniors pose after receiving roses on Senior Night. JACOB FUENTES

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Mateus Periera attempts to pin down his opponent. JACOB FUENTES

through the aforementioned forfeit from Malden Catholic. The heavy-weight competitor left the mat with a smile, concluding the matches for

that night, marking the end of the competition. The night ended with a heartfelt ceremony, in which Head Coach Eli Gutentag announced each

senior on the team, highlighting their strengths, contributions to the team, and their performance throughout their time on the team, handing a flow-

er to each senior. The team went on to compete for the final time in the den this season on February 14th, where they competed in and hosted

sectionals, which allowed Elbahlawan and Lopez to qualify for wrestling's state championships. These seniors have left their mark on the mat,

setting a precedent for the underclassmen to surpass their accomplishments and carry on the successful legacy that the team has created.