

Stillwater student takes first place at MN NATs competition

Mackenzie Vang

Junior Paige Klemenhagen recently won first place at the MN NATs competition. The NATs stands for “National Association of Teachers of Singing”, one of the largest professional associations of teachers with a background in singing. There are more than 7,000 members in the U.S, Canada, and more than 35 different countries.

Recently, a competition took place among finalists in November 2020. “I did not think I was going to win first place at all. I didn’t even see guys can get to the semi finals. I did the competition last year, and I did the age category for grades 9-10. And I actually ended up winning that one,” Klemenhagen said.

The organization was founded in 1944 and has been offering classes to individuals with a passion for singing. Their mission is to support and encourage individuals with their voice and share their creativity through singing.

Klemenhagen was able to have the opportunity to participate in this year’s competition. But things took a different turn, as events of COVID-19 were taking place.

“I just didn’t even know how to react and I was like can I go tell my family and I ran downstairs.”

Paige Klemenhagen

“I actually had the ability to do NATs last year as well, so I’ve gotten both experiences in person and then with Covid,” Klemenhagen said.

“Normally when NATs happens it’s like this big gathering and it was at St. Johns University last year. So everyone from all age groups like high school and college students. And so, it’s all these

singers and everyone signs up for their division,” Klemenhagen explained Pony Podcast.

NATs holds events, competitions and more among its members and students. Offering a variety of programs such as workshops, intern programs, master classes, and conferences all of these activities help individuals and their success with their singing and music career.

Some of the values NATs holds is to support, provide, advance, celebrate and encourage the variety of talents that individuals bring to the program.

There were many participants involved in the semi-finals when Klemenhagen auditioned, “I practiced a lot for it. I picked out my songs with my vocal teacher at the beginning of the summer, and we had to submit our recordings by.. I think it was around October.” Klemenhagen then added, “We worked on it indefinitely for a couple of months, and the process was definitely different because I’m not able to see my

music teacher in person.”

Recently, a competition took place earlier this year, with many students across Minnesota auditioning. Paige was one of the students who auditioned and when a list of winners was posted, Paige found herself at first place of 3B classical treble!

The 2020 NATs competition took place last November and Klemenhagen was able to take first place.

During the middle of her voice lesson, her teacher announced that Paige had won first place, “I just didn’t even know how to react and I was like can I go tell my family and I ran downstairs and I had a group huddle with my fam and it was pretty awesome. I was not expecting it at all. So it was pretty cool.”



Photo submitted by Paige Klemenhagen
Junior Paige Klemenhagen sings during her virtual audition for the MN NATs competition.

School Board approves one year contract for Superintendent

Alex Steil

After two weeks of political and volatile reactions from the community, the School Board approved a motion on Dec. 17 to offer a one-year contract to hire Interim Superintendent Malinda Lansfeldt beyond the 2020-21 school year.

“We need Superintendent Lansfeldt’s leadership in the coming year. We need continuity and stability within top administration... I think we need Superintendent Lansfeldt in her chair to accomplish those crucial goals,” Director Beverly Petrie said in a prepared statement she read at the start of the meeting.

One of the most contentious parts of the debate was whether or not to hire Lans-

feldt for a one-year or three-year contract. Petrie, who was an advocate for the one-year option, was most concerned with process, rather than the candidate.

“I had heard a fair amount



Interim Superintendent
Malinda Lansfeldt

of concern in the community and within the district itself, about the fact that we were going to be hiring a permanent superintendent, without

the usual process,” Petrie, who was part of the negotiation committee along with Board Chair Sarah Stivland, said.

“You get greater buy-in from the stakeholders, from the teachers, from the staff, from the community, so that’s why I felt that bypassing that process was going to just make it more difficult for Superintendent Lansfeldt. And that’s why I supported the one-year, because it helps us get through the really important levy, that we have coming up this fall. With that continuity, and I felt that was important, and so that’s kind of why I was supporting the one-year, rather than the three-year.”

Petrie commented on a future superintendent hiring process, “There will be a pro-

cess to choose someone, and she should apply, or it could be, you know, that she has proven herself so completely to all the stakeholders that

“We need Superintendent Lansfeldt’s leadership in the coming year. We need continuity and stability within top administration.”

Beverly Petrie

we won’t even need to have a process. And at this point in time, we just really don’t

know what that’s going to look like.”

The biggest issues facing the district are “the pandemic, with COVID, trying to get students back into school full time, as well as we have our operating levy that’s expiring next year that we’re going out for a vote next November. Then we need to look at space issues, capacity issues, especially down in the south, and we also have a lot of equity work to do,” Lansfeldt said.

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Find out why 3M will begin laying off employees worldwide
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Stunning Stillwater

Local businesses come together to light up city



Photo by Mairin Torgerson

On Dec. 3, Stillwater began their festive lights display which will be open through March. Visitors can walk through an LED lit path, and enjoy looking at ice sculptures and trees decked out with lights.

Joshua Bove

It may have only been one year since the city was last dressed in lights, but for many it felt like an eternity. It is no controversial statement to say 2020 has been a rough year, and even the holiday season ended up looking different. With COVID-19 restricting family gatherings and church services, it was a holiday season that was unique for all the wrong reasons. However, Stillwater businesses came together to ensure the holiday trappings of city returned, bringing a little more holiday cheer with them.

Almost every street is strewn with lights, wreaths and other decorations. Even the city's famous Lift Bridge was decorated with lights for the first time. This festive display would not have been possible without the many businesses who sponsored it. One business is the Midtown Antiques Mall. The manager, Kristin Schmitz, confirmed a positive response. "People seemed happy and cheerful. I've seen a lot of good feedback on social media about it," Schmitz said.

"It just made us feel better, and [it was] just something fun to do that's outside and the kids really appreciated it, and [to] get us in the spirit of Christmas," visitor Kristin Keyer said. Of course, the lights did not just cheer people up. They were also great for bringing people to the area and making them stick around a little longer, which was a boon for local small businesses, even ones who didn't directly sponsor the project. "We actually were headed down there to do some local takeout," Keyer said. "And then we saw the lights, so we just decided to eat the takeout and then head out and kind of check out all the Christmas lights that were downtown." The businesses have noticed this. According to Schmitz, "I think it's keeping our activity somewhat steady, I suppose, so maybe not increased but it's helping keep us, you know, keeping people here." Even though this time may seem hopeless and dark, this proves there will always be people willing to turn on the light.

3M lays off thousands of employees

Alexander Lamsam

"Especially because people don't know, it does create a lot of stress. My advice is always: you just don't want to borrow the stress, 'til it happens to you, and then you have to figure it out. But in that uncertain time, there's really not much you can do, so kind of try not to focus on that. Because, odds are you're going to come through it. You'll never know, you'll never really find out who was affected unless you know them personally. There is never a grand announcement about who left the company, so it's more of a quiet kind of thing," Erik Vanstrum, a Global Labs Manager at 3M, discussed what a period of time that involves a mass layoff can be like.

This is something that is ongoing within the company on a global scale as 2,900 employees are in the process of getting laid off. This roll out of layoffs was announced at the beginning of December as part of a progressing initiative to re-

structure the company amidst the global pandemic. This restructuring intends to streamline the company and increase their focus on markets that have shown to be resilient through the pandemic. Laying employees off is one step of that process.

At the beginning of December, 3M announced it would lay off another 2,900 employees globally due to the surging pandemic and suffering economy. This will cut 3% of their workforce globally. The restructuring will impact any and all geographies, business groups, and functions.

Laying off employees is not an unusual thing, but it does differ from firing. While getting fired is typically the employee's fault, layoffs are considered the company's fault. Additionally, layoffs involve more than one employee losing their job at once, whereas getting fired is individual.

On the topic of periods of layoffs, Vanstrum said, "It's kind of a natural cycle of companies," and "they typically do it as a way to keep a particu-

lar business healthy. Certain businesses kind of fluctuate in terms of profitability and business cycle and all this other stuff. So, it's a constant adjustment I think they're making."

This layoff was already in the works as part of an ongoing plan to streamline the company. A restructuring process that will cost the company up to \$300 million. This restructuring is part of an effort to adapt and be flexible, and aid the company in coming out of the pandemic stronger. The company will focus more on customer support and marketing capabilities.

"Companies are always trying to beat everybody else in terms of being a good investment, so they're manipulating all their assets and people to leverage that. A company can have explosive growth, when they're in a good position, and they're hiring people and investors are making money and they're pumped. It's just when you kind of hit the point where growth - actually, even if you decline and grow in those areas - it's usually their start of looking at what levers they can pull," Vanstrum explained his take on how companies decide when and who to layoff. He mentions factors such as investors, economic state, and markets that have either a rapid or slow growth. All of these elements, and more, are things that companies such



Photo by Libby Harter

Bill Harter, a longtime 3M worker, standing outside of his office building in St. Paul, Minnesota.

as 3M take into consideration all the time, but more specifically quarterly, when making decisions related to layoffs.

3M is a multinational conglomerate, or multi-industry, that is headquartered in Maplewood, which is only 15-20 minutes away from our high school. Because it is a Minnesota-based company, it employs a fair amount of Minnesotans. As such, it is not uncommon to know someone who works at 3M. The company actually employs over 90,000 employees, over 10,000 of which are located in Minnesota. Understanding both the local and global scale aids in the under-

standing of both the company's perspective as well as the employee's perspective. As the company decides what sectors to prioritize and which to downsize, the individual employees rely on their job as income and their livelihood.

"I think some of it is probably the fiscal year. You know, trying to make sure you're positioning the company right and of course, they're looking at what investors are doing too," Vanstrum added. "It's not always the most fun, and of course, you know, it's stressful for people in that time period."

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Gina Doe serves as interim principal at Brookview Elementary

Sophia Agnessi

In December of 2020, Gina Doe took the position of Interim Principal at Brookview elementary school. Brookview is one of Stillwater's many elementary schools and is also the newest. In this time of COVID-19 it is hard to connect and form relationships with people, but through Zoom and elementary schools reopening, Doe has a chance to do so. She has gotten to know other teachers and administrators through Zoom meetings, such as fifth grade teacher Sheryl Gutzman. "I've had a chance just in talking with her casually, through getting to know her a little bit. She definitely seems kids centered, and real easy to work with from my interactions that I've had with her so far. She's excited. My grade level is very excited because she has a lot of middle school experience," Gutzman said.

"Finding balance and trying to make sure everything is kept status quo and people are doing well moving forward."

- Gina Doe

As Brookview opens up, she gets to personally interact with students and teachers. So far she has met preschoolers and had the opportunity to go into the classroom to introduce herself and read to them.

"There's kids in the building and I'm so excited to actually get to interact with them. I've went in and read stories to them already for two days. Since they're still in hybrid right now, I went in on the A days and the B days and read to them. It was so fun to get to interact with pre-K, and answer their questions and see how excited and grateful they are to be back," Doe said.

Doe's role is an Interim Principal, as she is picking up where someone else left off. She really wants to listen to people and understand the ways on which to do things. It's important to her that she doesn't come in and change things half way through the year.

"Finding balance and trying to make sure everything is kept status quo and people are doing well moving forward. We are trying to challenge and push forward and make people always think about what's best for students," Doe explained.

Being an Interim Principal is a great fit for Doe. She's worked in the East Metro Integration, Forest Lake, Mounds View and Stillwater school districts. In these districts she's worked her way up to different positions. She started in the East Metro district as a science teacher, before moving to Forest Lake as a teacher instructional coach.



Photos submitted by Pam Weisbrod

Gina Doe reading Snow Friends to a kindergarten class.

At Mounds View, she became Dean of students, and in August of 2018 she was hired as Assistant Principal at Stillwater Middle School.

With her wide range of teaching experience Doe is able to bring a new perspective to things. For example, she's bringing her knowledge of the middle school to the elementary and with that she's able to better prepare students for that transition. Gutzman is looking forward to that opportunity to better prepare her students for that change.

"A lot of times fifth grade is kind of on their own, because there's a big difference between kindergartners and then fifth graders. Everything's kind of more childish than fifth grade. So it's fun to have her lens of middle school where somebody gets where kids are going," Gutzman explained.

The fifth graders at Brookview already get to experience a little bit of how middle school feels like with switching classes and meeting new people. They want to ensure that the students at Brookview all know each other, that way they know more people once they go to middle school. Doe also explains that it is important to have their voices heard. No matter how old you are it's crucial that you can communicate with one another.

"One thing with middle school students is that they want to be listened to, and they want you to hear what they have to say. You know that sometimes it's hard to get out how and why they feel the way they feel, and I have to remember that that's the same thing as elementary students; they just

have less words and might have a harder time expressing that," Doe said.

Ever since she was young, Doe has loved school, but not until she finished college did she really start thinking about being a teacher and was motivated to become a part of the educational industry.

"From a young age I always loved school, like that was my favorite thing. I couldn't wait to go to school. I was one of those kids that enjoyed summer, but I was ready to get back to school. I actually didn't get into the idea of teaching until I was getting my biology degree at the University of St. Thomas and I taught labs, and I continue to teach them. This is what I really like and so after I graduated from college, I went back and got a teaching degree," Doe said.

Bennett Schoenborn channels passion for art despite pandemic

Leigha Kraft

There has been a study on how passion relates to psychological well being, and how that boosts mental health. Senior Bennett Schoenborn had found his passion long before the pandemic, and he continued to keep up with it because it is something he is passionate about.

"Passion to me is striving to improve on what you really enjoy and always trying to explore the limits of what can be done. I've always been a very creative person, so art became a way for me to put my creativity on paper and let others see what I like to create," Schoenborn said.

It's no doubt Schoenborn has a passion for art. His favorite artwork he has done was a mix of his two favorite TV shows.

"I've gotten inspiration from many sources but recently it's been more from media such as anime or video games, books as well. Mostly since being cooped inside there's not a lot to do otherwise," Schoenborn said.

It's really important to stay positive when COVID-19 has given people many reasons to be negative. Having a good mindset can help people accomplish more. Finding a hobby is a great way to stay positive and continuing that hobby is what will help your mental health. Being creative and putting that creativity

into something when one is feeling down will help boost happiness and mental health.

A good way to keep positive until this pandemic is over, is finding something you like and are good at, and continuing to do that activity to help boost your happiness and positivity. "I think we are all born with God-given gifts that help us understand our purpose in life. Bennett's gift is art. Passion is about using those gifts to make the world a better place," Bennett's mom, Kristin Schoenborn said.

"We are very proud of our creative kid and are excited to see what his future brings," Kristin said.

Bennett's family is proud and supportive of his art and wherever it takes him. He shows a

lot of talent and a possibility for a future career with it. Bennett is successful because he is so creative and willing to try new things It'll give him the space he needs to show his talent and do many great things.

"I think no matter what I end up doing there will be art involved. Currently after high school I'll be going to UW-Stout for a Bachelors of fine arts, in Game Arts," Schoenborn said.



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Drawing by Bennett Schoenborn Senior Bennett Shoenborn draws inspiration for his artwork from his favorite TV shows. Shoenborn finds that channeling his creativity has helped him remain positive.

Chevells change how they compete

Tucker Wyland

In the ever changing world, much has deviated from normalcy. As a nation we have had to adapt in order to continue to do the things that we love in life that have been changed in a few short months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Competitive dance has adapted to the new restrictions and changes by implementing new ways to practice. By utilizing the use of masks at all times and keeping a distance between the dancers as well as not allowing team bonding activities to occur in an attempt to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Following the latest of a second round of lockdowns, practices for the Chevells have resumed but with a different format and more strict rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Junior Sophie Privette explained, "The two teams, JV and Varsity aren't allowed to interact with each other...whereas last year we'd ride the bus together...you can hang out with them and it's like they are very much separated. They're like their own separate teams."

In years past, both the JV and the varsity Chevells teams were similar to one single team that was only ever truly separated on the score sheet. Now due to the ramifications of COVID-19, these two teams have had to separate and on top of that they have had to cancel any team bonding nights or other bonding events that help introduce new dancers to the team and allow for them to become stronger as a team.

Another change has been that dancers are unable to receive awards in person at the competition, they instead have to wait until later and the results are then emailed to the team. Another change related to the COVID-19 pandemic is major changes to the routines as compared to

years past.

"It doesn't seem like much has changed but obviously a lot has, like, just having to be super careful with our routines and the rules have changed," sophomore varsity captain Chelsea Stahl explained.

The restrictions caused by the virus have changed the format for competitions as well. Stahl explained, "No

spectators or anything...we aren't seeing the JV team at all. We're usually at the school for like the whole night and we can stand next to other teams and do awards and stuff. But we can't do anything this year so we're literally just going to the school and competing then leaving, so like 30 minutes in total. So just a lot more strict on rules and our kick teams will usually connect, like our arms. So like social distancing and just nothing's really the same."

"We're not even really sure about buses or anything. We don't know if we can like be together," Stahl said.

"It looks like no bus-ing, and if

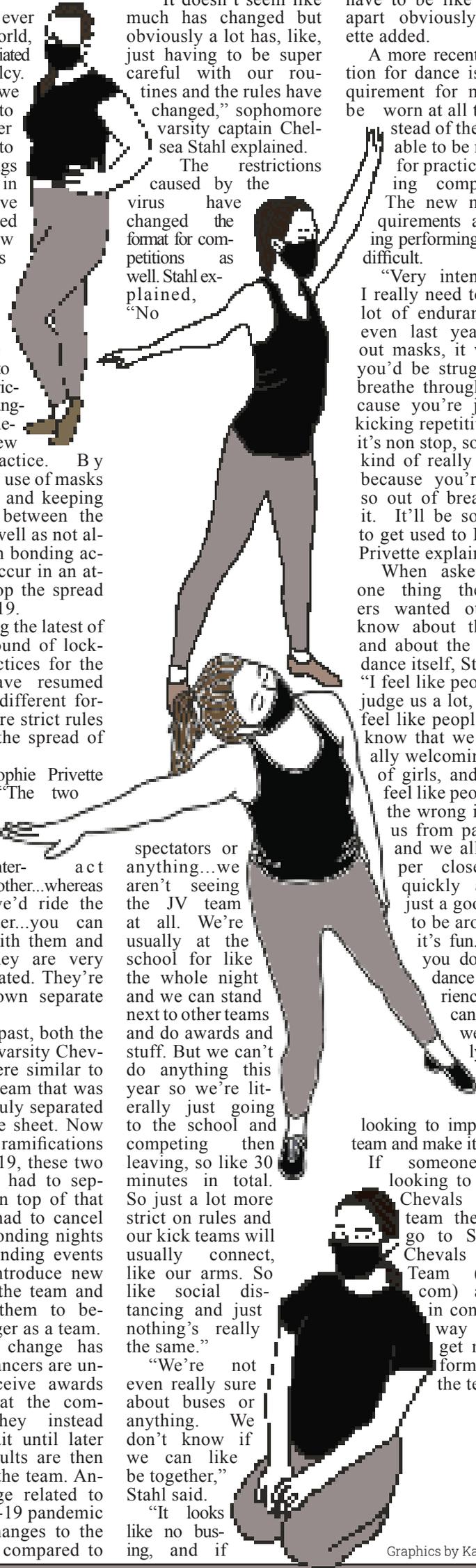
there were then we'd have to be like six feet apart obviously," Privette added.

A more recent restriction for dance is the requirement for masks to be worn at all times instead of them being able to be removed for practice or during competitions. The new mask requirements are making performing routines difficult.

"Very intense, like I really need to have a lot of endurance, like even last year, without masks, it was like you'd be struggling to breathe throughout because you're just like kicking repetitively and it's non stop, so that it's kind of really difficult because you're really so out of breath from it. It'll be something to get used to I guess," Privette explained.

When asked about one thing the dancers wanted others to know about the team and about the sport of dance itself, Stahl said, "I feel like people misjudge us a lot, and so I feel like people should know that we're a really welcoming group of girls, and boys. I feel like people have the wrong image of us from past years and we all get super close super quickly and it's just a good group to be around and it's fun. Even if you don't have dance experience, you can join like we really don't care, we're just looking to improve our team and make it bigger."

If someone were looking to join the Chevells Dance team they could go to Stillwater Chevells Dance Team (wixsite.com) and get in contact that way and to get more information on the team.



Graphics by Katie Kangas



Photo submitted by Joe Manning
Seniors Sam Kane, Hannah Gray, Lauren Benson, Kyle Magnuson, Zach Dillon and Joe Manning out on a frozen lake skating.

Optimistic Athletes

Sam McClaine

Due to the pandemic, sports have been delayed and everything has been moved online. Some students, however, continue to persevere through these challenges and although it has been tough, they have not given up yet. Some students have been keeping up their athletic skills by finding other ways to practice. Coaches have continued to help their players adjust to their new environment by making sure they get the help they need.

Senior Joe Manning, a player on the boys hockey team has kept up his skills by practicing with friends during the pandemic.

"[I] try to play hockey as much as I can but it's been kind of tough with the restrictions lately," Manning said. "I've skated on lakes with my friend, and just tried to keep my skills up that way."

Now that hockey tryouts have started, it has become a bit easier for him. "It is tough to be optimistic knowing that my senior season could be the last time I play hockey. But, I mean, we're starting tryouts now so it's exciting to finally

get going," Manning added.

Coaches, like the Boys Hockey coach Greg Zanon, have been trying their best to motivate their students and encourage them to stay optimistic during the pandemic.

"During the shutdown I just tried to make sure I reached out once a week with some positive comments and made sure I was available to them if they [needed] anything from a coaching standpoint," Zanon said.

Zanon was optimistic, telling his players there was always "a light at the end of the tunnel."

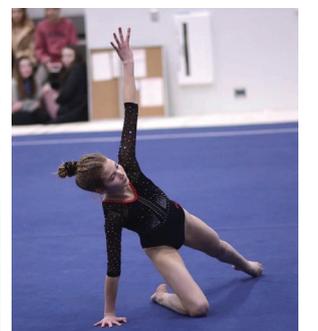
Having an optimistic authority figure in times like these is really helpful to motivate others to stay optimistic. Keeping a positive mindset during the pandemic is hard, but doing that could help a lot.

"Keep doing what you're doing and training as much as possible," Manning encouraged. "Even if it's not a normal season with fans or something like that at least you get to play, and I guess that's what's important."

Zanon's advice for other coaches was to "stay positive and help guide them through these crazy times."

Gymnastics at a glance

Members of the gymnastics team, Competing at a meet. In January 2020. At SAHS, Right before the initial COVID-19 lockdown, Showing off their skills and representing our school



Photos submitted by Heather Wiehe

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Hockey team back on ice Jan. 4 after delayed start to season

Ella Spitzer

Governor Tim Waltz has decided to lift the suspension on winter sports, allowing athletes to begin practices on Jan. 4. Hockey players will begin organized practices, with the addition of social distancing and the use of face masks throughout practice. Precautions such as wearing masks on the bench, in the locker room, and even on the ice. Hockey players have been anxiously waiting to hear if they would have a season or not and are very excited for Jan. 4.

Parents have noticed their kids are feeling down without sports; Brian Scheel, father of Sydney Scheel, said his daughter is “definitely restless and excited to get back.”

Players have not been able to have practices during this time. Many have been playing hockey on outdoor rinks or on ponds. Many hockey players will argue that outdoor hockey is not the same as playing in a rink, but playing on lakes, ponds, and other makeshift rinks has become their only option to skate right now, and is a fun way to connect with friends while staying active and safe.

“I’ve been skating with small groups of friends on backyard rinks and using running and weightlifting to keep in shape and ready for whenever the season does start,” junior and team captain Sydney Scheel explained.

The team has been uncertain about the fate of their season for a while now so it is important that they are prepared so they are ready to come back strong.

Hockey is certain to start the 4th, but after the holidays, COVID-19 numbers could rise. Players and parents are optimistic that the season will make it all the way through. Last spring, many sports were dropped before some could start due to Corona virus, but with rising cases and the need to be inside to play, it may be harder to have a full season. As well as the possibility of somebody on the team contracting COVID-19, forcing the team into quarantine. A two-week quarantine during an already shortened season would certainly not be ideal.

“With the newer lockdown restrictions I’m hoping the numbers will be down enough for us to start our hockey season,” Sydney said. “Finish it,” Brian added.

Teams have been staying connected over Zoom, some teams do workouts together, anything to stay connected during these times. For many, sports seasons are also about seeing their teammates every day, building relationships with others on the team, and having a schedule. Without having practices or games the last few months, teams have not had that. Luckily we live in a very technological age. Teammates have found ways



Photo by Cassidy Gilliam
Junior Sydney Schuster, pictured in white, and senior captain Jacki Kulzer, in blue, practice at the St Croix Recreation Center on Jan. 7, 2021. This is one of the first practices they have held due to the delayed start to the season because of COVID-19. Players wear masks to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus, in hopes to have a safe season.

to keep in touch with each other virtually, and outside in small groups while apart.

“We stayed connected with zoom calls every Monday and talk in our team group chat every once in a while,” sophomore Kylie Ligday said.

Players have been getting dressed and ready before they get inside so they do not crowd in the locker room. They will be wearing masks at all times and social distancing when possible. The girls

are willing to follow every guideline if it means they get to play. Many are bummed that there is a possibility their friends and families will not be able to watch them play, but all that matters is that they get to play together this year.

Ligday explained some of the precautions the team will be taking this year, including wearing masks, just being extra careful, and players will make sure not to share any water bottles with each other.

With everything changing so fast it is hard to know what the next few months may bring, but student athletes keep their fingers crossed that winter sports will be able to carry out their seasons safely with minimal interruptions from COVID-19.

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Basketball begins amidst COVID-19 pandemic

Maci Swanson

Many sports and events have faced the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the girls and boys varsity basketball teams winter seasons have been greatly impacted. There is an unknown future for the players and their season, but the hopes of playing might become a reality in the near future.



Graphic by Nissa Wilcox

There have been delays in fall and winter sports seasons, which have been pushed back several months or have even been rescheduled in the spring because playing indoors during the winter is considered to pose additional risks. High school athletic associations, club sports programs, and colleges around the country are postponing or cancelling events and seasons in response to COVID-19.

“We were supposed to start on November 16, and now we are starting on January 4,” boys varsity head coach Brady Hannigan said.

Because of the pandemic, many rules and regulations have been put into place regarding sports. These protocols will be put in place when teams return to playing and practicing in person. For both teams wearing masks and practicing social distancing are key factors in returning to having games and practice.

“We won’t use locker rooms and there will be things like wearing masks during practice, not sharing water bottles, sanitizing hands, being spaced out, avoiding the possibility of being in group situations,” Hannigan said.

Sports are not only a way for athletes to stay in shape, but they are also a way to build relationships with others, make friendships, and build skills while also having fun and something to look

forward to. Many teams are trying to stay connected and have found new ways to do so such as doing team zoom meetings for working out and staying in touch while they are unable to meet in person.

Although teams are able to meet virtually and stay connected through the internet they are missing out on things they would get to do in person such as team bonding. This has effects on many of the players, specifically new members of the teams or freshmen. It may be hard for them because they don’t know their teammates yet and the closure of gyms would prevent them from practicing.

“I think it is a whole different experience when you’re in person rather than virtually,” varsity basketball senior captain Gionna Carr said.

The Minnesota Department of Health provided that data is showing kids contract the virus in games and practice and spread it to others. This proves the concern and reasoning for the basketball season being delayed and has made the measures that have been taken necessary to keep players safe to get the most out of their shortened season.

Throughout the impact of the pandemic, teams have managed to find ways to stay connected and continue to work hard and prepare for their upcoming seasons.



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What to look forward to after COVID-19

A new beginning in politics

Alex Steil

After the Electoral College confirms Joe Biden's win on Jan. 6, Biden will be the oldest president ever to hold the office at 78. While the oldest, he will have some of the most daunting tasks faced by an incoming president, like the COVID-19 pandemic and a worsening economy. Biden will bring a radical departure of process compared to his predecessor, President Donald Trump. While he has been in public life for nearly 45 years, there is still much to be determined on how he will govern, and what politics in 2021 could look like.

Even though Biden will not directly impact the Minnesota State Legislature, state Rep. Shelly Christensen (D-Stillwater) still thinks his humility and professionalism will help set a better tone for the national stage. Professionalism that includes talking with other legislators, instead of yelling across the chamber floor. Trump has "definitely infected us," Christensen added, "Hopefully, just modeling what we see in Washington in terms of professionalism, and respect, and kindness,

and all those things, hopefully that will be a huge change." Biden has been vocal, especially regarding Congress's second stimulus package, about the federal government needing to do more, but specifically helping local and state governments just as much. Biden has urged Congress to extend the moratorium on evictions, has advocated for \$2,000 stimulus checks, all while urging support for local and state governments.

"[The stimulus package], it's a down payment. An important down payment that's going to have to be done," Biden said at a press conference Dec. 16. "I compliment the bipartisan group on working together to get it done." "There was an ask from local governments, state and county governments, for help from the federal government. Minnesota, we passed the bill last week [Dec. 15] to help businesses to help families," Christensen said. "But we're really one of the only states that did that. Most states are pretty damn broke right now, so we need federal help."

While some state governments and the federal government are working on COVID-19 economic relief, Young Republicans co-president senior Eliza Darby thinks that the vaccine is the most important milestone for politicians to achieve in the first months of 2021. Operation Warp Speed started distributing vaccines on Dec. 14. Even so, nearly 17 million

vaccines have been distributed, but only 5 million people have actually been inoculated.

"[The vaccine] was a big step for our country, and obviously for the entire world as well, to get the vaccine out," Darby said. "That's a really big leap that we were able to make. I think that that's kind of made a lot of people's stress go down. Not necessarily even in politics, but just once COVID can die down a little bit, I think in general [mental health] will improve, especially kids and teens. It's going to be really vital for us to get this distributed quickly to decrease the number of suicide."

While the pandemic itself will remain at the front burner through at least spring, there are many other issues that either have entered the mainstream psyche or, at the very least, were caused by the pandemic. Namely among these are business protection. A tally by the Star Tribune counted 94 Twin Cities restaurants closed in 2020.

"We need to take care of businesses, we need to take care of families. The virus has opened up all sorts of wounds that we knew were there, but now they're glaring," Christensen said. She went on to list education inequities have only been exaggerated through distance learning, that pay for health care workers is "embarrassing," and that Minnesota is "ground zero for the George Floyd issues and justice disparities."

While Darby also stated racial justice is the single biggest problem, aside from the pandemic facing the country, she specifically said Biden could be a reason the nation can see more progress. Some of the biggest racial disparities in Minnesota is education. The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis said that test scores for white students are around 20 percent higher than African American students. That gap has been consistent since 2002.

"We have Joe Biden as president, I think that he's going to probably take more steps

towards bettering lives for other minorities in the United States, but not on a large scale point of view. You can't end racism in a year," Darby said.

A study done by Pew Research said only 13% of Biden supporters and 5% of Trump supporters were hoping for "unity and rising above partisanship."

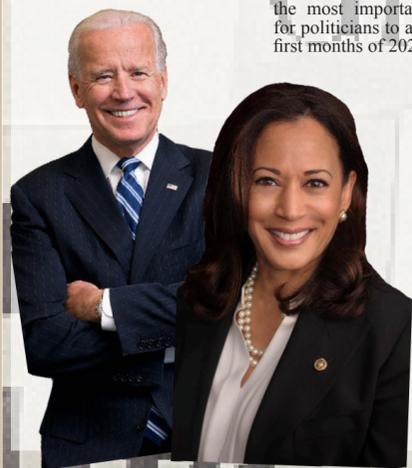
While neither Christensen nor Darby said political division is the biggest problem to be solved in 2021, they both hoped for a more unified approach to politics.

"I'm hoping that politics will kind of die down in 2021, especially once the vaccine is distributed and people, hopefully, back to their normal jobs and things like that. Politics won't really be at the forefront of everything, kind of how it was in 2020, where everybody was working from home and then politics really, honestly, kind of in your face this year. I'm hoping next year, it'll move out of the big light of 2020, and other things will come in, instead of just focusing on politics and COVID all the time," Darby said.

"There's always that opportunity to work together and be united Christensen said. "[Division] is the most difficult thing for me to handle, because it's not in my nature to be combative. It's not in my nature to, you know, publicly call people out. It's in my nature to care, sometimes too deeply ... For me to continue to practice and model civility, that's what I have to do. Because I don't have it in me to play the other side."



WIKICOMMONS IMAGE BY THE WHITE HOUSE



JOE BIDEN: WIKICOMMONS IMAGE BY DAVID LIENEMANN
KAMALA HARRIS: WIKICOMMONS IMAGE BY UNITED STATES SENATE

Adelee Wrightsman

There is no doubt after the crazy year of 2020, everyone's a little nervous to find out what 2021 has in store for us. Everyone is anxious to know if the pandemic will worsen and if so, how badly. Many also wonder how many more beloved celebrities will pass away so unexpectedly, or even if global warming will start to worsen again once life is back to normal after it's small recovery, causing more deadly and raging fires throughout the world. Although no one can answer these questions and be 100% accurate, we can still learn what we can to predict and prepare.

In October of 2020, The Medical Futurists wrote one of their articles off of a common question that many of late now have. In one of their surveys, 538 civilians asked how they and the public could be reassured that the vaccine is safe to take. The simple response given to them was, "trust science, not politics."

When asked what she hopes

for in the new year, Paediatrician Dr. Mollie Malaney of Stillwater, MN's Health Partners Medical Group, responded saying that she hopes "science becomes a bigger force for change rather than myth or theory."

Dr. Malaney goes on to explain how she hopes more people will start to trust science and get vaccinated allowing us to get some normalcy back in our lives. Just days before the announcement of the Pfizer vaccine, a new healthcare organization named Mira, wrote an article on public health citing Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Fauci explained that if we produce a vaccine that is only 70% effective by early 2021, by the end of the new year we should be able to be less strict about wearing a mask or cloth face covering but not be done with them all together.

As a counter question to this research, Malaney was asked if she sees us continuing to wear masks, even after our threat has weakened. Her partially hope

filled response was her belief that we will not be needing to wear masks all day, every day in the future, but she does believe in medical places, such as the Stillwater Clinic, that the requirement of face coverings will continue when doc-

"The pandemic was a gateway for so much more online use."

Ivy Lariviere

tors and sick patients meet. In a BBC article of the possible long term effects of our COVID-19 pandemic circling around the climate revolution, BBC wrote off of satellite data that revealed the drastic drop in atmospheric levels of nitrogen dioxide and how some regions in the world have dropped close to 30-40 percent. The slow down of the world has also dropped 2020's CO2 emissions by 8 percent.

Former Stillwater 2020 graduate, Ivy Lariviere, was questioned for her opinion on

this research. Lariviere explained, "I definitely think that there will be a rise in CO2 emissions, but I don't think it'll be as much as what it was before the pandemic."

She agrees that the newer advancements of staying at home will help us to keep our emissions down as more and more people will not be commuting, but staying at home.

In an interview of how this pandemic is changing our world, Professor Emily Landon from the University of Chicago expressed how she hopes more medical centers will go back in time a little by reusing gowns and masks by getting them laundered, helping us by cutting back on our medical waste by huge percentages.

After hearing of Professor Landon's hope and opinion, Dr. Malaney explained how the Stillwater Health Partners Clinic is already reusing and getting their gowns laundered. She explained how in the non-surgical fields, it's easier for them to be able to reuse them without the worry of cross contamination. On the point of reus-

ing masks Malaney expressed how surgical masks are better, by a big enough extent, at trapping particles that reusing cloth masks in a medical field would be too tricky and risky for people's health.

As some medical facilities take a couple steps back in time with cloth gowns, a McKinsey Global Survey of executives found that digitization of online interaction has been accelerated by three to four years just in this single year of 2020.

Lariviere purely believes and said, "the pandemic was a gateway for so much more online use." She goes on to explain how things for work and education were sped along but also technology for entertainment, giving an example of theater production.

The new year of 2021 is becoming to be known and named as the year of hope. After 2020 everyone is sceptical of what more is to come but with news of two new vaccines, our hope for the future is looking stronger and greater even though our lives may never be the same as they were before.

COVID-19 vaccine hits the public

Joshua Wallace

The United States came out with a COVID-19 vaccine that is now being distributed all over the country. This vaccine is currently available for people who work in hospitals and nursing homes, it will be open for the general public sometime in mid to early 2021, therefore this will change many lives and the way people are dealing with COVID.

Infectious disease experts say that the COVID vaccine is about 70% to 95% effective depending on what shot people get, but people would still be asked to wear masks. This being said, many people are eager to be able to see f a m i -

ly and friends again once the vaccine is open to the public. They trust the vaccine and the effectiveness, therefore many people will be more comfortable being around other people.

"I trust their expertise and I would feel comfortable being around people again if the numbers of those infected go down to safe levels and a fair amount of the population has been vaccinated... I look forward to seeing family and friends again. It has been really difficult not gathering for birthdays, celebrations, holidays or even for dinner," social studies teacher Kevin Klancher explained.

The COVID vaccine is very new and there is not a lot of information out there about all of the side effects and long term effects. Many people are

on board with this vaccine, but others are wanting to wait to learn more about it. Healthcare workers have been the first people to have the opportunity to take this vaccine and many are lining up right away. "I think the most important thing to be aware of is that this is a new type of vaccine and there is not a lot of data to prove

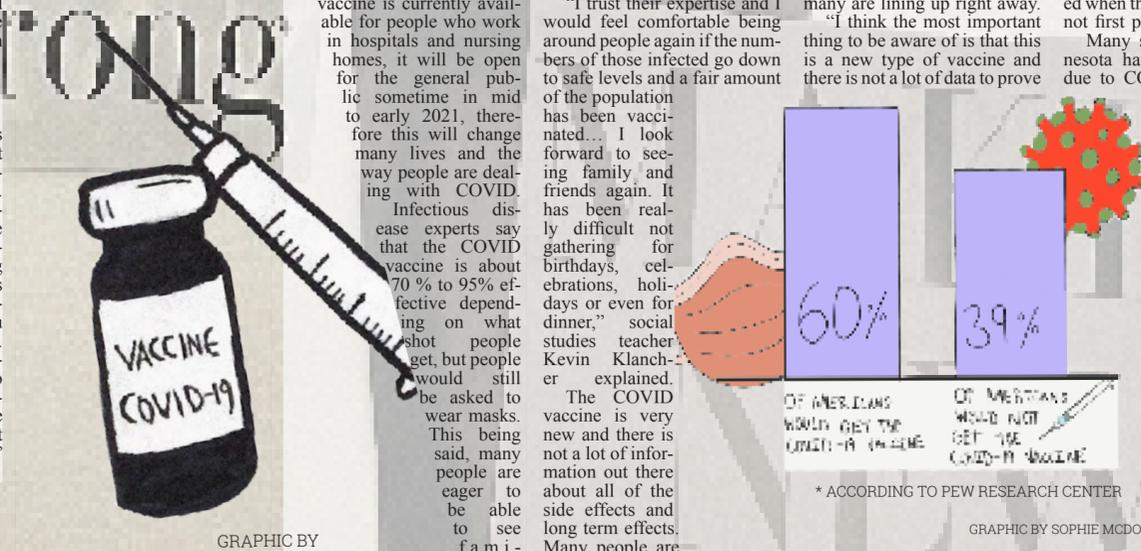
long-term effectiveness and long-term safety," Dr. Mark Hill added. "Most folks working in the hospitals were eager to get in line and some healthcare workers were disappointed when they learned they were not first priority in phase 1a."

Many schools across Minnesota have been shut down due to COVID including our own Stillwater schools. There is talk about students and staff, beginning with elementary, being back in school early in 2021, many teachers around the district hope that school will be somewhat normal by the end of this year (2020-21) or next year (2021-22). "I see our schools being fully open by next August with no limitations other than we still might

be required to wear masks," Klancher said. "I look forward to doing hands-on activities and labs again in my Psychology class and also group projects and partner work in my U.S. History classes."

COVID has changed many people's lives, especially those who are working in hospitals. In fact, many people have been quitting their jobs due to safety and because this is not what they "signed up" for. Therefore, many people working in hospitals can't wait for things to go back to normal in hospitals and everyday life.

Hill explained, "I look forward to not worrying about whether my N95 is fitting properly or if it is still functioning properly and whether I took it off and stored it correctly. Several little things affect the day to day workflow. But mostly I look forward to unrestricted socializing with family, friends and colleagues, and venturing out to restaurants, concerts, sporting events and skiing without reservations!" The COVID vaccine has the potential to change many lives but does not mean the virus will go away instantly.



* ACCORDING TO PEW RESEARCH CENTER
GRAPHIC BY SOPHIE MCDONALD

GRAPHIC BY JORGE SANCHEZ

America has a democracy problem

It is time to rethink the way government works

Michael May

U.S. President Ronald Reagan wanted us to believe that America is “the shining city on the hill.” America is supposed to be the champion of democracy, and a leader for the rest of the world to follow. This idea that America is this unstoppable force that can crush anything in its path is simply not true. The systems that were put in place either by the Founding Fathers, or by Congress in the years after have become outdated and have been used to abuse the system that we put in place, and could become a threat to our democracy.

The first thing we need to talk about is the electoral college, which is how we pick our President. In short, how the electoral college works is every state gets a certain amount of electoral votes, which is a combination of their two senators and how many House Representatives they have. An example would be that Minnesota has 10 electoral votes, and a state like Wyoming has 3. This all adds up to be 538 electoral votes, and to win the White House a candidate needs 270 votes.

The one main problem with this system is that it doesn't always match up with what a majority of Americans want. The electoral college has failed to match up with the popular vote twice in the 21st century, once in 2000, and again 2016. This failure to give the American people what they asked for is why we should get rid of the electoral college entirely in favor of just a straight popular vote.

This will ensure that everyone's vote will count equally, and that America's voice will be heard, without fear of the electoral college going against the will of the people. Going straight to a



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Stop the Steal protesters on Capitol Hill on Jan. 6, while the protest began as mostly peaceful, at its zenith protesters stormed the capitol, disturbing the joint session of Congress that was meeting at the time.

popular vote will help bring more people out to vote, as they won't have to worry about their vote not meaning anything since their state would normally lean another way on the electoral map.

“I feel like a popular vote defines our democracy.”

Olivia Hovland

Senior Olivia Hovland added, “I feel like a popular vote defines our democracy.”

Not everyone agrees with just the straight popular vote however, senior Joe Krenz explained, “I don't think there's another better way that we can try and solve it with just a two party system.”

This doubt leads to another major problem in our democracy, which is our two party system, as

most people don't really feel truly represented by either candidate, but don't want their vote to go to waste on a third party.

Another way to go about our electoral college issue and tackle the two-party system at the same time is to have ranked choice voting. Ranked choice voting would get rid of the winner take all system we have right now, and force to have candidates win a majority of votes, not just a polarity.

How it would work is you would get a list of candidates and you would rank them by your preference. Then when all the votes get counted up, if no candidate gets 50% of the votes, the candidate with the least votes would get taken out and the people who voted for him or her, their vote would go to whoever there number 2 candidate was. This process repeats until one candidate gets over 50% of the votes,

and that would reflect the will of the people possibly even better than just a simple popular vote, because it would allow for more 3rd party candidates to join in and have a real fighting chance.

“I don't think there's another better way that we can try and solve it with just a two party system.”

Joe Krenz

One final and major problem with how our democracy is run is how the senate is operated and structured. The way that each state gets 2 senators no matter the population has drastically thrown off the power balance in the chamber.

Super teams destroying competition, ruining professional sports for fans

Josh Wallace

Many professional sports teams are potentially ruining their sport by forming super teams. In the NBA the Brooklyn Nets just made a trade in which they acquired James Harden which made people either super happy or upset. Also in late December, MLB team San Diego Padres signed two of the best two pitchers Blake Snell and Yu Darvish, this instantly made them World Series favorites for this year. With many teams doing this it is losing fans and creating a less competitive culture throughout the sport.

Overall the players always get what they want and they will do whatever to make that happen. When it comes to James Harden he just wouldn't show up to any team events including practices and games. CBS reporter Bill Reiter wrote, “Harden again has what he wants. He, K.D. and Irving are

the most talented NBA trio since Miami's Big Three, at least on paper.” Professional athletes like James Harden always find a way to get what they want and will do whatever they



James Harden

can to get with the best couple of players from another team. They do this just so they have a chance at winning the championship. This is ultimately ruining the game because all of the other teams aren't even close to as good as these few teams, therefore they lose fans and or motivation. Also, these

players who are doing this are losing their own fans because they have no class or respect towards anyone but themselves.

Coaches and Owners are becoming too flexible with players and need to punish guys. If they don't show up or try to tell the owner what to do they should be fined or suspended. Junior Tanner Voight stated, “I think owners should stand their ground and punish players. For example, when Harden said he didn't want to be on a team with Westbrook the Rockets traded Westbrook away to keep Harden and then Harden wanted a trade and that is not fair and just a bad move by him.” Owners just feed into what the players want these days and the players don't get punished for violating team conduct or anything. Players have too much control over everyone and everything just because of how talented they are. No team wants to lose their all-stars, therefore they don't punish them hoping

they will come back on their own. Overall owners have a lot more control over these super teams than they think and they need to figure how to fix it to balance out the competition.

The MLB has had the least super teams in recent years. Although you get a few mixed in like the Yankees or Dodgers each year, it isn't like this year. New York Times reporter James

two elite pitchers, swelling the franchise's payroll at a time of deep financial uncertainty in the game and immediately becoming a favorite to win the 2021 World Series.” Besides the NBA other sports are now starting to really form super teams as well. The Padres are one of the few teams in the MLB to sign multiple all-stars at once. This year the world series is already favored towards them and other teams in the league won't even be able to compete with them. Overall the MLB doesn't have many super teams, but if it continues to happen, due to low competition, they will lose many more fans than they already have.



Russel Westbrook

Wagner published, “The San Diego Padres, long one of Major League Baseball's quietest teams, jolted the sport this week. The Padres grabbed

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EIC COLUMN



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Elaina Mankowski

Dr. Jill Biden should not drop the ‘doctor’ from her title regardless of the opinion of Joseph Epstein. Epstein’s op-ed article in the Wall Street Journal was misogynistic and discretionary towards Biden’s doctorate in education. She earned her title and will serve as a symbol to young women everywhere as a woman of power.

On Dec. 11, Joseph Epstein published an op-ed article for the Wall Street Journal calling future first lady, Dr. Jill Biden’s title ‘comic’ and ‘fraudulent.’ He suggests that since she has a doctorate in education and not a medical degree, she should not use it in her title. Controversy has arisen from this article as it was misogynistic, and Epstein finds a doctorate an easy title to earn, even though he only has what he call an “honorary doctorate.”

Epstein argues that earning a doctorate degree has become very easy and barely merits an ounce of prestige, as well as the idea that someone should not go by ‘doctor’ if they lack a medical degree.

“Madame First Lady—Mrs. Biden—Jill—kiddo: a bit of advice on what may seem like a small but I think is a not unimportant matter. Any chance you might drop the “Dr.” before your name?” Epstein wrote in the Wall Street Journal.

Epstein’s language, especially the use of the word ‘kiddo’ and choosing to address her as ‘Mrs. Biden’ instead of ‘Dr. Biden’ bluntly shows his misogyny towards women and their choice of title. Epstein comes off offended and disdainful with a superiority complex while discussing this topic, which gives Dr. Biden even more reason to stick to her title and stand by her education and achievement.

Later on in the article, Epstein comments that “in the social sciences and humanities,” using ‘Dr.’ in one’s title is thought of as “bush league.”

Epstein finds that someone using “Dr.” in their title is fraudulent because they do not have a medical degree. It should be pointed out that ‘Dr.’ is a doctorate, a level of education that can be earned in any field, while an ‘M.D.’ is specific to the medical field and those who have this degree, use ‘M.D.’ in their title. It is not ‘fraudulent’ or ‘comic’ for Biden to use the doctorate she earned as her title, but however a right of passage, not to be disregarded by a reporter writing an op-ed piece.

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Staff Ed: Negative effects of social media, large amounts of screen time has

Kate Johnson

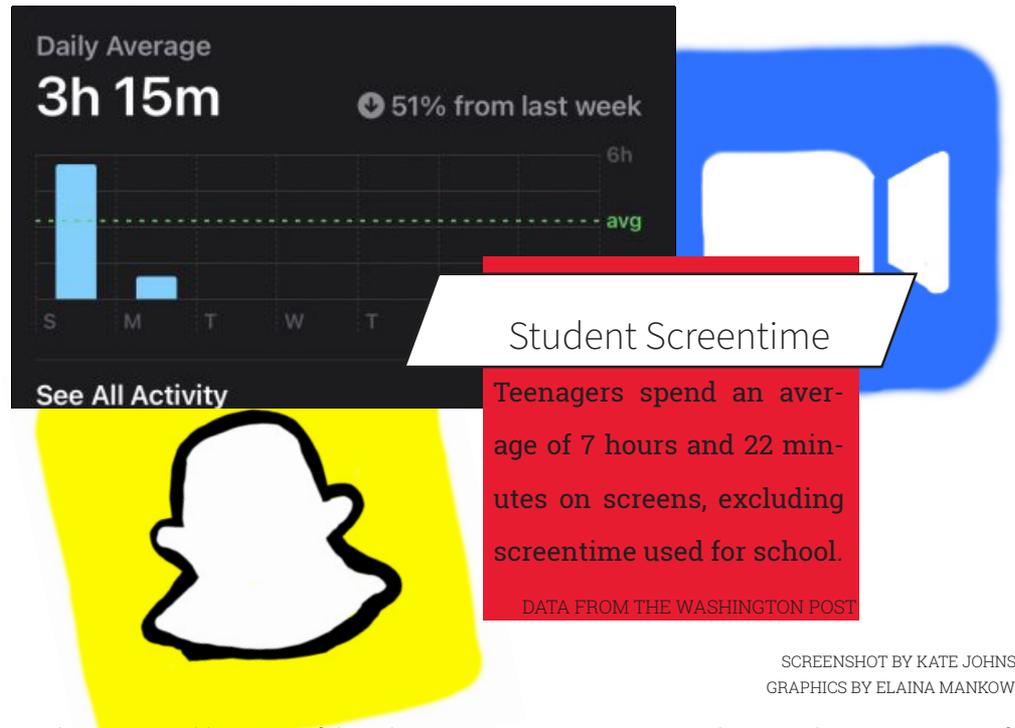
Social media is being used more than ever while everyone’s lives are being moved online, especially for students in school 100% online. Social media can be a large powerful platform that can affect many people in many ways. While everyone had to adapt to online learning and sports that included a lot of screen time, this could have a positive and negative effect on many.

iPhones come out with weekly screen time reports every Sunday, which tells users their average time on the device, and the percent increase or decrease from the past week. These reports really make people realize how much life has switched to online.

“My screen time has increased because of school and staying connected with my friends without seeing them on a daily basis like normal,” junior Annika Citsay said.

Junior Marissa Horwath added, “It had a positive effect because it feels like I am on it less now.”

Travis M. Andrews wrote in his article iPhone screen time reports that it is best to “balance increased screen time with a walk or hike, be intentional about taking breaks, and it’s important to be mindful of how that screen time is used.”



SCREENSHOT BY KATE JOHNSON
GRAPHICS BY ELAINA MANKOWSKI

Apple give a weekly report of the iPhone users screen time. Everyday it tracks your amount of time spent on the device and compares it to past weeks. Using this feature, students have been able to see how much more screentime they’ve been using since the pandemic.

Citsay and Horwath feel they definitely use their screens more often and that they have to. It is a new way of life. With losing almost every aspect of connection with people on a daily basis, everyone had to find their way to keep that connection alive. Citsay said Facetime was the best way to do that

because you still can have live conversations with friends, somewhat like normal. Horwath said Snapchat felt like the app that was the best way of communication. From Benjamin Williams article Living Life Online he said, “Many older adolescents have adopted strategies to manage their mental health and balance

their usage, whether by taking social media breaks, changing their settings, or avoiding certain apps.”

Read more online at

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The Editorial Board reserves the right to publish and edit letters: correction will be made in order to correct content, spelling, grammar and length. Letters and comments may be submitted to rooms D220.

The staff editorial is written by the Pony Express staff and headed by Editors-in-Chief. The Pony Express is a member of the High School Press Syndicate, the Columbia High School Press Association, International Quill and Scroll, National Scholastic Press Association and the Minnesota High School Press Association.

The Pony Express print and online newspapers strive to provide a form of media that embodies the strongest professional standards while working to present current and relevant stories about the community, inside and outside our building’s wall. The goal is to adhere to all legal and ethical standards of best journalistic practices, while informing, enlightening, and entertaining our publication’s readers.



Taylor Swift's 14-year-long career

Michael May

Taylor Swift just released her eighth and ninth studio albums, *Folklore* and *Evermore* to the public during 2020, marking another change in sound and aesthetic during the singer's 14-year long career. Swift has been through many ups and downs during her time in the limelight, and even with every headline or sound change, she has been able to maintain both the public eye and a cult following of fans that follow her with a very close eye.

"She's original, and she's very talented," junior Katie Liss said. "Her songwriting like they all connect over like she uses these easter eggs."

Swift has just made another sonic change in her discography, switching to a more Indie Folk type of sound that would not be lost on a Haim or Bon Iver record, both of whom appear on her latest LP.

The Easter eggs that Liss mentioned causes many fan theories that bounce around the internet, the most recent is that there will be a third sister album to round out a trilogy with her Indie Folk sound, called *Woodveil*. Swift tried to squash those theories in an interview with Jimmy Kimmel, but her fans are persistent, and the theory still runs strong.

With all these changes in style during her career, and with an audience that big, not everyone is happy with her new direction.

Junior Kaspar Millfelt explained that the new albums are "definitely not my favorites but like... they're definitely like, not the worst."

Her turn to a more pop-oriented sound no doubt has landed her some of her

biggest hits yet, but have also been some of her lowest rated albums by fans according to their Metacritic score.

One thing that has been consistent throughout her whole career, however, is her songwriting/storytelling ability. Swift has always been able to tell incredibly vivid stories while adding super minute details that could almost seem irrelevant at first, but what she actually does with these details is bring these stories to life as almost no one can right now.

The fact that these last two records are related to each other has allowed for story telling on an even larger scale, Liss said, "it's like a whole cinematic universe."

While these records are not conceptual, *Folklore* does contain a multi track storyline within it. *Cardigan*, *August*, and *Betty* is a teenage love story that is about infidelity, heartbreak, and forgiveness. The later record does not have a mini concept like this, but it is not lacking in stories, from Swift discussing her late grandmother in *Margorie*, to the murder mystery on *No Body No Crime*.

These stories, whether they are true or fictional, can really resonate with her fans and keep them coming back with each new release.

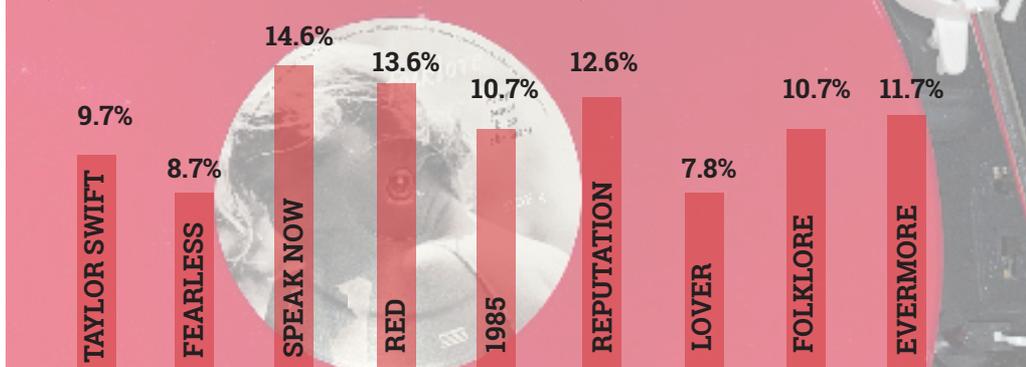
Liss added, "she's literally like my childhood, like I have like, memories from each of the albums like each of her eras, with my own life."

With so many LPs under her belt, Taylor Swift has grown a cult following of young adults who have been there for every release and every tour, and Swift has been a large part of their lives growing up, and she does not seem to be going anywhere anytime soon.



PHOTOS & GRAPHIC BY ELAINA MANKOWSKI

Taylor Swift's best album over the years: SURVEY TAKEN BY 103 STUDENTS



Dr. Colleen Bertsch to take over as interim Concert Orchestra director

Alex Steil

Principal Rob Bach sent an email to members of the Concert Orchestra on Jan. 13, announcing that Dr. Colleen Bertsch will be the interim music director during third quarter.

Bertsch is an adjunct lecturer at St. Olaf College and Augsburg University and was previously the Director of Orchestra Programs at Roseville Area High School, according to the email. As a lecturer, she teaches ethnomusicology and historical music the email goes on to read. As a member of the self-formed Orkestar Bez Ime, she was awarded a 2011 McKnight Fellowship for Performing Musicians and a 2012 Minnesota Emerging Composers Award from the American Composers Forum.

"The majority of music classes in Minnesota's public schools focus on western tonal traditions, like classical, jazz, Americana, and rock genres. My approach is going to be slightly different," Bertsch said about her background. "I will be presenting the western classical orchestra tradition within the context of historical and non-western musical sys-

tems so that we can explore what makes music-making the same around the world."

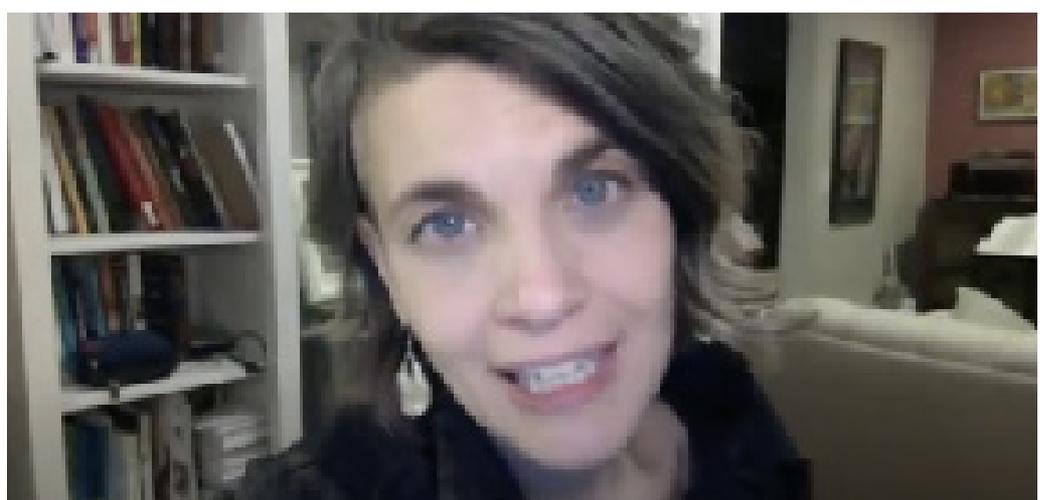
Bertsch's arrival comes at a time of instability for the orchestra. Zach Sawyer, who had been the director five years prior, abruptly resigned a few weeks before the school year started. Sawyer's predecessor, Jerry Jones, came back to teach during first quarter.

Even though students were angry and disappointed at the beginning of the year regarding Sawyer's departure, they grew to appreciate and value Jones and his style. Bertsch will pick up the torch left by Jones, such as leader in an ensemble and being a life learner.

"I'm thinking in terms of action and leadership: what you do matters. Your actions make things happen, not just in your personal life, but in your community and, by extension, in the world," Bertsch said.

Even though students have yet to work with Bertsch, the Concert Orchestra Officers have already met with her to exchange ideas and information on how the next quarter will look.

"When I first met her, I thought she was so cool,"



SCREENSHOT BY ALEX STEIL

Dr. Colleen Bertsch is announced as the interim Concert Orchestra director for third quarter. In an email sent to students in Concert Orchestra, she gave an introductory message.

Concert Orchestra co-president Olivia Hovland said. "Just how she presented herself, I thought that she seemed like really easy going. She seemed like she was really willing to cooperate."

Hovland added, "You know, it's gonna be kind of weird because with everything that's happening because we've had two teachers within the past year now. I think at first, it might be kind of hard for us to adapt to her teaching

style, but I feel like people wind up really liking her."

While Jones had unique challenges, such as building up an ensemble's rapport from scratch, and planning around the two orchestras only being able to meet on their respective A or B days, Bertsch will have to find ways to keep the orchestra engaged online.

Even with all of the online challenges the orchestra will face, Bertsch is still confident about the

tenacity of her orchestra.

The orchestra students are known for taking their musical training seriously and being highly engaged in the orchestra community," Bertsch said. "From a teacher's viewpoint, one who cares deeply about teaching others how to be life-long learners, I am most excited to work on the concept of ensemble and what it means to be a musical human being."

Students forced to take ACT in unique way due to COVID-19

Elizabeth Hartner

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, juniors and seniors are struggling to complete their ACT tests. Last spring, many tests were canceled, leaving students worried about when they would be able to take the ACT. This school year, the cancellation of tests has continued to be a stressor on juniors and seniors. Students are still preparing, but some in unique ways.

At the start of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, the ACT tests began shutting down, leaving students unable to take their tests. As this year's school year approached, many students encountered the wave of cancellations again. After preparing for the grueling test, the news that it was canceled was upsetting for some students.

Junior Tate Keiser said he was "very disappointed when it was canceled because I felt like I was ready to take it, but no longer could."

Students who are preparing for the ACT are having to go about their preparation in ways that may not be ideal. After being in online Zoom classes for their high school courses, some students are having to immediately log onto ACT tutor courses over a screen rather than face-to-face, making it more difficult to focus.

"I have been taking ACT prep courses through a private tutoring place called Huntington," junior Sydney Scheel said. "They are over a Zoom call and the tutors go through a book where we look at problems. It is kind of difficult to stay on the screen for two hours at a time after a full day of zoom classes and still be able to focus and take in what the tutors are saying."

10 Tips to succeed on the ACT

While preparing for the ACT this year may far more stressful than in the past, a lot of old, tried and true tips remain useful in ensuring a good round of testing. Here are 3 recommendations for how to be prepared for testing day.

A. Study the ACT With official Resources
A key to success on the ACT is study. There is a multitude of different resources from which you can get practice questions and resources from, however, the ACT publishes official practice questions on their site: <https://www.act.org>

B. Make sure to make time for sleep
Sleep is incredibly important when preparing for a test as it increases memory and concentration. Try to study throughout the week so that you have the night before the ACT to catch up on any lost sleep.

C. Gather your materials in advance.
In order to alleviate extra stress on testing day, make sure to gather all of your materials the day before you take the test. Double check before you leave the house that you have the most important materials: No. 2 pencils, a calculator and a mask.

Sources: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/all-nighters_b_1501263 and ACT.org

Senior Jake Ulrtich said regarding the test, "The set-up was pretty similar to before. Everyone was spread out in the beginning, but with COVID they just made us wear masks."

Due to the abundant amount of tests canceled or rescheduled, many colleges have become ACT test-optional, meaning that they do not require an ACT score during the application process. Many students are looking at this as a blessing in disguise, while a few handfuls of others are still submitting their scores.

"All of the colleges I applied to did not require a score to be submitted, but I still chose to share my score," Ulrtich said.

The unpredictability of the pandemic has made many students hopeful that the test-optional colleges will remain that way for a longer period of time than expected. No one knows how long this may go on.

"I think that colleges will have to keep the test-optional for now because many students don't have the opportunity to take the test before they must apply for college," Kieser said.

The unpredictable times students are going through has impacted that of normal standardized testing. As students hold on to hope that their ACT will be able to be taken, they are still keeping up with preparations.

Graphic By Drew Jurek for months ahead due to the restrictions on capacity.

Some students who have taken the test got to experience it through a mask. The health restrictions set forth by the FDA have allowed for tests across the state to run the same because in most cases, the students were already spread out to begin with.

Stillwater student earns academic all state

Jayden Leach

Senior Ian Hanlon earned academic all-state honors Dec. 9 after the 2020 football season. The award is granted to students who have excelled in the classroom as well as in athletic competition. Hanlon was the only player on Stillwater's team to win the award.

Hanlon has had an extremely successful 2020 year on the field and in the books. 2020 has led high school students to be extremely stressed. According to Stanford news, 50% of high school students are stressed, and 26% of students say they have anxiety. The struggles of online school and the global pandemic can really take a toll on the action of high school students.

"I stay focused in class and make school the priority. I stay organized and ask for help from teachers and classmates," Hanlon said.

Minnesota Football Coaches Association (MFCA) promotes an academic award to 18 people to recognize academic achievements in school. The player must have outstanding football and leadership ability plus academic excellence.

Stillwater football team achieved a silver academic award. A silver academic award is awarded to a team that must have a GPA of 3.00-3.25 for the whole official roster.

Throughout the 2020 year, sport teams have faced different challenges that no one has had to deal with before. Hanlon had

"I worked out a lot over the offseason and worked on my technique. It helped me to be more comfortable on Friday nights"

Ian Hanlon

an incredible football season as he achieved 2020 defensive MVP, Most Improved Defensive Player, and All Metro East. Hanlon was #7 and in 7 games had 18 solo tackles, 2 assisted tackles, 4 knocked down passes and received a punt return and took it to the

redzone for a touchdown.

"I worked out a lot over the offseason and worked on my technique. It helped me to be more comfortable on Friday nights," Hanlon said.

The Ponies finished their season 4-3. They were able to defeat East Ridge to become Metro East Champions. This was the first time the Ponies beat the Raptors since 2012.

"My favorite part of football is the relationships that are made with other players and coaches, and seeing all the hard work the whole team has put it pay off," Hanlon said.

Individuals like Hanlon are selected for this award on the basis of their athletic ability and academic proficiency. With over 85,000 students participating in high school activities, this award is the most prestigious honor the UHSAA presents to senior students. Hanlon is the 14th player in Ponies' history to win the award.

Players work hard in the off-season and during the season. The football team had team lifts in the mornings during the summer supervised by fitness trainer Derrick Schmidt.



Photo by Jayden Leach
Senior Ian Hanlon waits patiently for the next play against Centennial in the section championship.

"His work ethic was top-notch, he showed up all summer for himself and his teammates. He stayed consistent and it showed on the football field. Having his summer teammates around this summer added motivation and competition," Schmidt said.

The lessons learned in athletics, combined with the knowledge that student-athletes must do well in school to participate, motivates their persistence, and drive

for success. Hanlon is planning on going to college next year at the University of Minnesota to study business and psychology.

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Students reflect on dozens of titles leaving Netflix

Alexis Schmitz

All across the community family and friends gather around their televisions to watch their favorite programs together. One of the most popular streaming services Netflix is taking off many of their most popular pieces. These include titles such as *Pride And Prejudice*, Jim Carrey’s *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *“The Office.”* Shows and movies like these have given students a form of escape. Many are disappointed their favorite shows are going away.

With the holiday season coming to an end, there is no doubt that *“How The Grinch Stole Christmas”* (2000) is being watched next to the Christmas tree. *“How The Grinch Stole Christmas* is such a classic and it’s always watched in my household around Christmas time. I have a lot of good memories watching it with family and friends that I normally only see during the holidays,” senior Anna Gregory said.

The Christmas season is about spending time with family and friends, but due to the current state of the world,

that can not always happen. Watching a movie can bring back memories of a better time. Movies bring people together. It is something we use to bond with one another.

Junior Louisa Ward loves the movie *Pride And Prejudice* (2005), “It’s the movie my sister and I always turn on when we don’t know what to binge. Both of us love watching these Jane Austin book movies and it’s super sad that my favorite one is being removed by Netflix.”

This movie is a classic love story that touches the hearts of many. Watching a time period piece can make viewers feel transported back into nineteenth-century England. With lots of balls and galas, it is easy to be swept away in it all, or maybe it is just a way to spend time with your sister.

The hit television series *“The Office”* (2005-2013) is filmed as a documentary that follows the lives of a run of the mill paper company. With lots of pranks, crazy characters, and romance it is no wonder that the show was such a success.

“It was an easy watch, and I could just sit down



and watch it for hours while doing homework or painting,” Jowan Abdulla said.

Abdulla proves that shows do not have to be spent watching with a loved one in order to be important to

someone. Sometimes it can be the little things that make the day more enjoyable.

“My dad and I always watch *The Office* together and I have so many memories of us laughing and enjoying life,”

junior Mary Hammer said.

With different shows and movies constantly moving between platforms, it really worth it to purchase multiple subscriptions to different streaming services.

Students binge a variety of television genres

Nila Cooper

Since March, many families are stuck at home during the COVID-19 lockdown and the majority of them turn to TV shows and series to escape. There is a diverse range of shows and genres that have skyrocketed in popularity in the past few months. Streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are planning on adding and removing several popular TV shows going into 2021.

After putting out a survey to 100 students, over two-thirds of them have watched *The Office* during quarantine. *The Office* has 9 seasons, but according to senior Nick Schlender, “... the jokes never get old.”

It has also been announced that *The Office* will be leaving Netflix in 2021 because the owner of the streaming rights, NBC Universal, let their license with Netflix expire.

Another favorite TV show to watch during lockdown is *The Crown*, a Netflix-original drama. The history of *The Crown* as well as the characters make it a very fascinating title to watch.

“Claire Foy? Olivia Colman? Helena Bonham Carter? What more could you ask for?!” senior Sheryllyn Patterson explained.

The Crown also draws viewers in with its controversy and political arguments. It is accused of leaving out important details and characters that influence the Royal family; an example being the explosive relationship between Prince Charles and Princess Diana in the 1980s. All of this, however, just makes the show that much more intriguing.



GRAPHIC BY ALEXIS SCHMITZ

The most popular genres currently are drama and action/adventure, but these were on top even before quarantine. There has been an increase in popularity in the science fiction and crime genres. Shows like *The Flash*, *Stranger Things*, and *Criminal Minds* are among the favorites on Netflix right now.

“I’m still watching *Criminal Minds* because I think behavioral profiling is fascinating, and I like seeing criminals being brought to justice,” senior Madi Braun said. Braun watched *Criminal Minds* at the beginning of quarantine and is still hooked.

The Mandalorian has also been climbing the ranks of science fiction TV shows as it is the first live-action TV series in the *Star Wars* franchise. Math teacher Stephanie Nord said that she unwinds at the end of the day by watching *The Mandalorian*. This two-series show is action-packed, well written, and has some quality characters.

Nord explained that she watches about three hours per week of her favorite show.

About 70 percent of high school students spend 4-8 hours watching their favorite show a week.

Even college students find time to binge their favorite television shows like University of Minnesota freshman Nick Hong, “Generally, I will just put on some music or a sci-fi show while I do homework... so it’s not silent.” With students isolating at home, it can get lonely, so watching a TV show or two can help.

In terms of what to look forward to, many people are excited to see the new seasons of *All American*, *Stranger Things*, and *Outer Banks*. Teens are loving *Outer Banks* as the beach parties, scenery and boats allow them to dive into a new story and escape reality. Binge-watching a TV series or two can be a relatively healthy escape from the COVID-19 “quarantine blues.”

PONY EXPRESS STAFF PICKS

Leigha Kraft is watching...



“I like medical and crime shows. I also can relate to some of the characters which makes watching the show better.”

Leigha Kraft

Elaina Mankowski is watching...



“I like how it is a fantastical theme that combines aspects of the original show with a new darker elements.”

Elaina Mankowski

Isabella Godfrey is watching...



“It’s a really funny and feel-good show. I love all the elements the creators have added.”

Isabella Godfrey