

Students walkout for change



Photo by Alex Steil



Photo by Morgan Delaney

Students hold Black Lives Matter walkout

At the end of second period on April 19, students walked out of class to “stand in solidarity against police brutality.” The walkout was suggested by a friend of senior Will Raymond, initially saying it was an event to be held in the coming weeks.

After learning later in the day there was going to be a statewide walkout in response to the killing of Daunte Wright, Raymond reached out to friends and the Student Council presidents to share the flyer on social media.

Both Raymond and senior Gionna Carr spoke at the walkout. Raymond gave introductory remarks, whereas Carr shared a poem she had written in response to the recent social turmoil, explaining her experience of being pulled over and worrying about her personal safety.

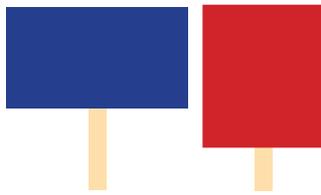
Both Carr and Raymond concluded a safe and equal environment needs to be established within Stillwater. They hope standing up for their beliefs will inspire advocacy among other young adults.

Note from the Editorial Board

As an Editorial Board, we struggled with how to approach this issue and the events that have transpired over the past month, especially as it relates to social justice and how it impacts our school community.

Nonetheless, we knew that these events were necessary to report, important, and emotional for everyone involved. We do not want to take sides, nor endorse one ideology over the other, but still do our best to give equal coverage.

We do our best to report the facts and the stories, as we saw them happen.



Students host Back the Blue walkout

At the end of second period on April 29, students walked out of class to display their support for law enforcement, as part of the Back the Blue movement. They held a gathering, holding thin blue line and American flags while visiting with peers.

The students explained that they wanted to thank men and women within the police force for choosing to protect their fellow citizens. Junior Trent Tillet has two police officers in his family, “they wake up every morning risking their lives for people they

don’t even know. Our law enforcement officers will always be heroes in my mind.” Students in attendance believe that police need to be appreciated within the community.

A few minutes into the walkout, students were disrupted by counter protesters. Students believed that the walkout was successful in conveying their message.

“We were aiming for the walkout to be seen by police officers in our area so they could see student support and possibly brighten their day,” junior Trent Tillet commented.

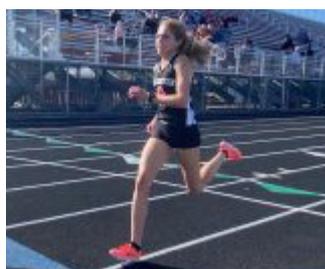
Read full length articles ‘Students host walkout April 19’ and ‘High school students walk out April 29 to support of law enforcement’ at sahsponyexpress.com



Girls golf is back in full swing!
Photo submitted by Caroline Monty
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YouTube brings Bush Bros together
Photo submitted by Bush Bros
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Ana Weaver leaves girls cross country team
Photo by Abby Anderson
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Brookview Elementary receives new principal
Reprinted with permission from Dr. Christopher
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Brookview Elementary to receive new principal and classrooms

Henry Jansen

Brookview Elementary School in Woodbury is set to receive some upgrades for the 2021-2022 school year. This includes the addition of eight new classrooms and a new principal.

Though eight classrooms does not sound like a lot for Brookview's growing class of roughly 500 students, Mark Drommerhausen, the district's director of operations and former principal of Brookview, said they will be significant.

"The eight classrooms will get us about 200 more students of capacity space at Brookview Elementary, which will allow us to do two things: one is to allow us to make sure that all of our classes and learning spaces have a classroom area dedicated to them, as well as accommodate some of the growth that's been happening in the southern end [of] Woodbury [...] over the last few years," he said.

The school faces overpopulation issues, which will be alleviated by the new classrooms. Depending on the speed of construction, they are expected to be completed as early as the middle of the 2021-2022 school year, and

as late as the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.

"We had reached our programmatic capacity at Brookview Elementary, so we were looking at the need to expand Brookview with additional classrooms to make sure that we had adequate learning spaces for all of our students from pre-K through 12th," Drommerhausen added.

More impactful is a major staff change for this upcoming year. Brookview has been devoid of a permanent principal during the current school year. However, Christopher Rogers, EdD., who is the interim principal at Afton-Lakeland Elementary this year, will be Brookview's permanent principal next year.

"My heart, my mind and my soul are happy to have this chance to be the principal at Brookview. Honestly, I am so ready to learn with the Brookview family, and lead beside the Brookview family," he said. "There is nothing like five-year-olds looking up at you every day when you walk in the school with a smile on their faces. The love you get working in an elementary school is like no other. So to have this opportunity, it feels surreal."

Rogers, who earned a doctorate in education, has a background in restorative practices, having worked as a treatment facility manager, being a Level IV special education teacher, and as an assistant principal. He also has a love for culturally responsive teaching, and is a certified equity practitioner. It was his dream at the age of 12 to become a school principal.

Rogers is the first principal of color in the Stillwater Area School district. He sees this as an opportunity to be a role model for students.

"There is something to say about being a young, educated, black male principal because it is not something that scholars don't get a chance to see often. [...] My position as a principal allows them to see a glimpse into what the future could be for them as they chase their dreams," he said. "For white scholars it also allows them to see a change in leadership and lets them see diversity in leadership as diversity in leadership has the potential to confer unique benefits on white students by preparing them to live and work productively with those from other racial groups and to counteract their exposure to racial bias."



Photo reprinted with permission Dr. Rogers' Twitter feed

Dr. Christopher Rogers, who will be Brookview Elementary School's new principal starting this fall, visits classrooms and exchanges air high fives during his first day as interim principal at Afton-Lakeland Elementary in the 2020-2021 school year.

"My goal as the principal of Brookview this upcoming year is to make it the best year yet. I think we will work together as a team to provide academic experiences for our Brookview scholars that are rigorous,

relevant, and real world-connecting. As the principal, it is important to me that everyone who steps through the Brookview doors - teachers, students, and parents - feel valued and excited to be there," Rogers said.

School board lays out 3-part plan to address district funding

Morgan Delaney

The school board has created a plan to renew an expiring operating levy. However, when needing more money to go towards levies, the board must ask the taxpayers to vote. They are given an opportunity to raise their taxes to support the district, or they can vote to not fund the levy, but this is a majority vote and will affect everyone in the district.

The current operating levy that funds the district is expiring and needs to be renewed, or the district will lose around \$12 million of funding for the schools. The school board has devised a three part plan to address finances and facilities within the district.

"The levy that is expiring, is an eight year term. We're going to have to ask the community to either renew it at the same level that we have right now, or we can make the case to the community that in the intervening eight years, since they last said yes to it, that we now have greater needs. And so we may ask them to give us a larger annual operating levy," School Board Chair Beverley Petrie said.

The plan addresses three separate parts including a lease levy to fund the expansion of Brookview Elementary. The district has expanded, while surrounding districts are losing many students. Brookview Elementary has become overcrowded due to the increase of students.

"We ask the community to say yes or no on levies and bonds, but we also

have some ability to be able to levy on our own. That's what the lease levy is all about; we have the ability to do that on our own without asking the public, and frankly, it is a necessary thing," Petrie explained.

However, this elementary school was constructed in 2016 and has caused a lot of controversy surrounding the way taxpayers' money is being used. This issue may affect the way taxpayers vote and trust the school board's decisions.

"Districts provide neutral information and do not promote a specific election outcome. The school board works with the superintendent and other district leaders to decide on the levy amount and determine how those funds would be invested. We then work together as a team to create the messages to share with our community. We create a variety of informational materials to share with voters prior to an election," Director of Communications Carissa Keister said.

Secondly, the board will be having a levy referendum, or vote, in November 2021 to renew the expiring levy. The board also wants to either expand the operating levy currently in place, or they would like to add a technology/capital projects levy. District 834 is one of the few in Washington County that do not have a technology levy for their schools.

"Technology has just become part of the fabric of our daily lives, and Stillwater has been paying for all of our technology needs for instruction out of our general

fund. Whereas, all these other districts have a dedicated fund that pays just for technology.

It was one of the reasons why when we had the pandemic this year that we were a little disadvantaged compared to some of the other districts that had a lot more technology resources at their disposal. They were able to make distance learning work well, and we did not have all those resources at our disposal, because we don't have a technology levy," Petrie said.

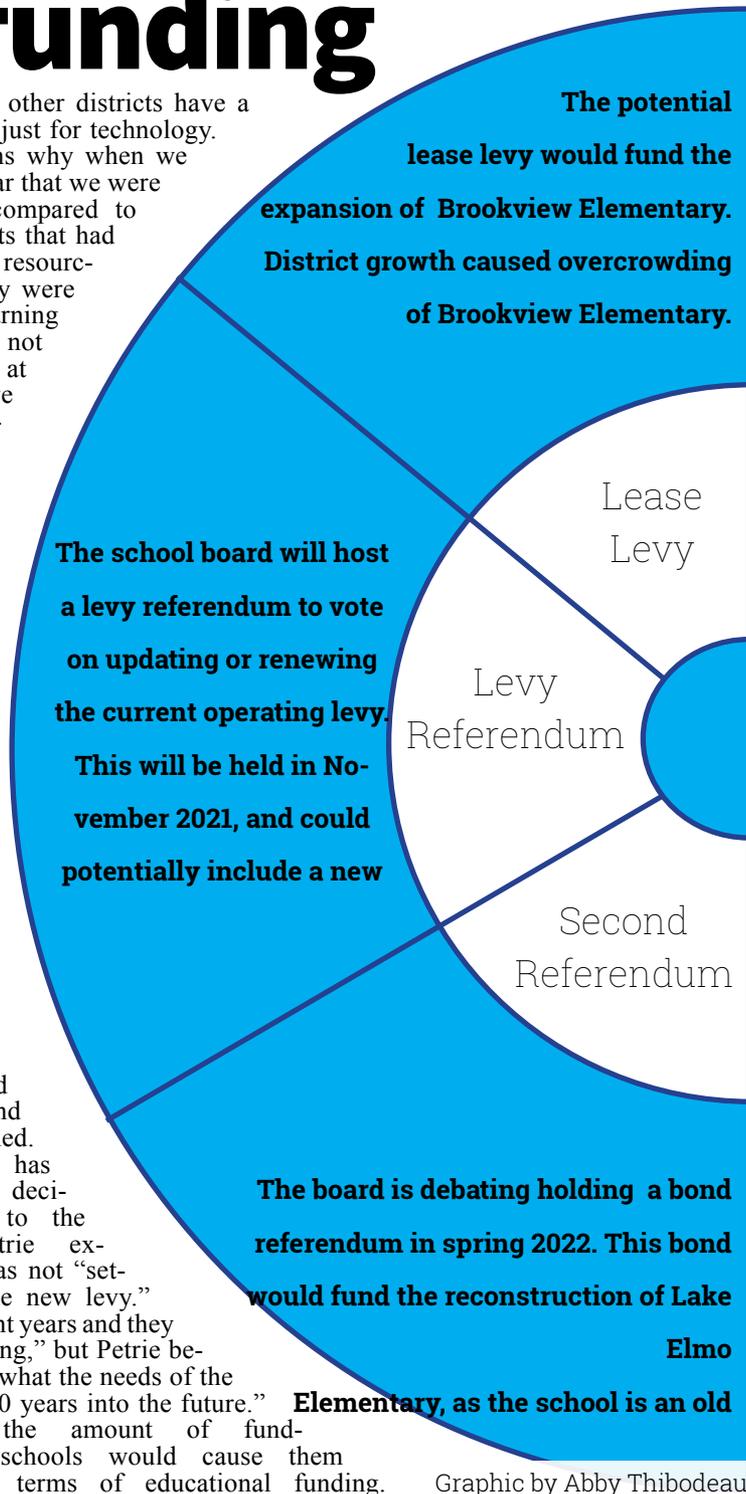
Finally, the board is debating whether or not to hold a bond referendum in spring 2022. The bond would be responsible for funding the reconstruction of Lake Elmo Elementary which is an old building in much need of a tear down or remodel.

"When you sell bonds, which is what we're asking the community to support, those bonds pay for the construction of buildings, or the remodeling of buildings. If you have a big project to remodel a building, you would probably go with the bond for that," Petrie explained.

The school board has a lot of important decisions to make prior to the levy referendum. Petrie explained that the board has not "settled upon a term for the new levy."

The current levy is eight years and they "can be up to 10 years long," but Petrie believes "it's hard to know what the needs of the district are going to be 10 years into the future."

Under estimating the amount of funding needed for the schools would cause them to fall far behind in terms of educational funding.



Sophia Pietan and Amelia Bretl win Student Body Co-Presidents for upcoming school year

Lindsey Crain

Juniors Sophia Pietan and Amelia Bretl have been elected the new Student Council presidents. Their campaign was based around change and what students can do to make this a safe and healthy learning environment for all. With many issues these two students are ready to face and take head on, the impact they are striving to accomplish will separate them from the rest.

Pietan and Bretl won the election for the 2021-2022 student council president position on April 17. Many students have been intrigued by their campaign and what they stand for. With COVID-19, the two representatives had to find new ways to reach their ideas and what they stood for with students in a safe way. For example, they provided buttons to students and faculty members to wear around school.

“It’s for working towards making a better cultural climate at our school, and just making sure, for example in dealing with race, racism matters at school. Students are really disrespectful towards people of color at our school, or just in general. It’s just not specific, maybe it’s not targeting a person specifically, but it’s just an overall disrespect towards different cultures and backgrounds,” Pietan explained.

The two co-presidents of student council are finding ways to reach students and to help have their voices heard, especially on serious topics that many students

find important and needed to be addressed. With a strong support system of students and teachers relating and liking their ideas, many people have a strong mindset coming into the 2020-2021 school year.

“We know that there’s been a bunch of reports on students of color being mistreated and their voices not being heard. We don’t really want that to happen anymore, obviously, but we just want to create focus on that,” Bretl said.

Many faculty members have also seen the changes throughout various student council presidents, but with changes in the environment inside and outside of school, this past year has really stuck out to many.

“I don’t know Phia as well as I could during a traditional school year, but I would say based on my interactions with her, I definitely get the sense that she is a great listener and very empathetic to others. She seems like she has a lot of thought and care towards other people. Which is something amazing to have going for you if you’re to be in a position of power,” AP U.S. History teacher Ryan Miller added.

Although COVID-19 has been a huge influence, that has not stopped the two in working out ideas to help make this upcoming school year the best one they can make it. They have found ways to adapt and overcome the events and things we have missed this year, such as homecoming, sporting games, after school clubs and extracurriculars. Despite COVID-19,

the effects of the global pandemic has caused mental health issues not only for students, but adults as well. Statistically, 4 in 10 adults have been affected by an anxiety or depressive disorder caused by COVID-19.

“With COVID-19 people are having a really hard time. During this understandably, and with people who already struggle with mental health problems we want to make sure that they feel really supported in our school. We are thinking we should be open or facilitate different groups like mental health support groups for students to talk about their issues in a safe space where they won’t be judged and can relate to people who are going through the same things as them,” Bretl said.

Bretl and Pietan have already been in Student Council for a year previous to this upcoming school year. Along with the experience, the ideas and role models that have been provided and that have helped these two have shaped them into the leaders they are today.

“Me and Amelia just decided to run, just for fun as an extracurricular activity. We didn’t really know what it was going to be like with COVID-19, but I would say the main thing that inspired me by this year was the Student Leadership council. They deal with making a better cultural climate at our school and just making sure the equality in the school and handling racism. The leader of the Student Leadership Council is Mr. Rish,” Pietan said.



Graphics by Rachel Palmer



Students runners up in Project Green Challenge

Alex Steil

Juniors Claire Abbott and Addie Foote won second place in the international Project Green Challenge. The two competed against 4,572 other students in all 50 states and 82 countries. Their project aimed around energy conservation and sustainability, specifically at the high school, but also the district at large.

Together, Abbott and Foote worked against the rest of the competitors in a 30 day sustainability challenge. The preliminary challenge was to expose to the students how much energy they use on a daily basis and how to conserve energy.

“We wanted to advocate for solar at our school as well as promote energy efficiency,” Foote said as the reasoning for joining the challenge.

After gaining eligibility and applying to be finalists, Abbott and Foote started a six-month climate action project. They decided to focus specifically how to achieve and get solar energy at the high school, as a way to get resources on the upcoming levy.

“Our biggest project is definitely solar. That’s probably our most ambitious,” Abbott said. “I know they’re still taking proposals, but if we could get some sort of action or approval on that before we graduate, that would be great.”

Abbott and Foote initially

bonded over their passion for environmental conservation when they founded the Environmental Club.

“My friend, [Claire], wanted to make an environmental club,” Foote said. “I was like, ‘Yeah, I’ll join. Yeah, I’ll find it with you.’ And then we joined Project Green Challenge where just learned a ton of stuff. That’s really where it all started.”

Even though the Project Green Challenge is over, they and their club still have a long list of goals they want to achieve before Abbott and Foote graduate.

Abbott said they are navigating with the district’s bureaucracy to create a pollinator garden at Lake Elmo Elementary, put solar panels on the high school, place a solar tree in a local garden, create a community garden for students, give students drone experience in conjunction with Century College for college credit. Not to mention, this is all done in addition to regular activities their club sponsors, such as plastic bag drives, local clean-up, and regular community out-reach.

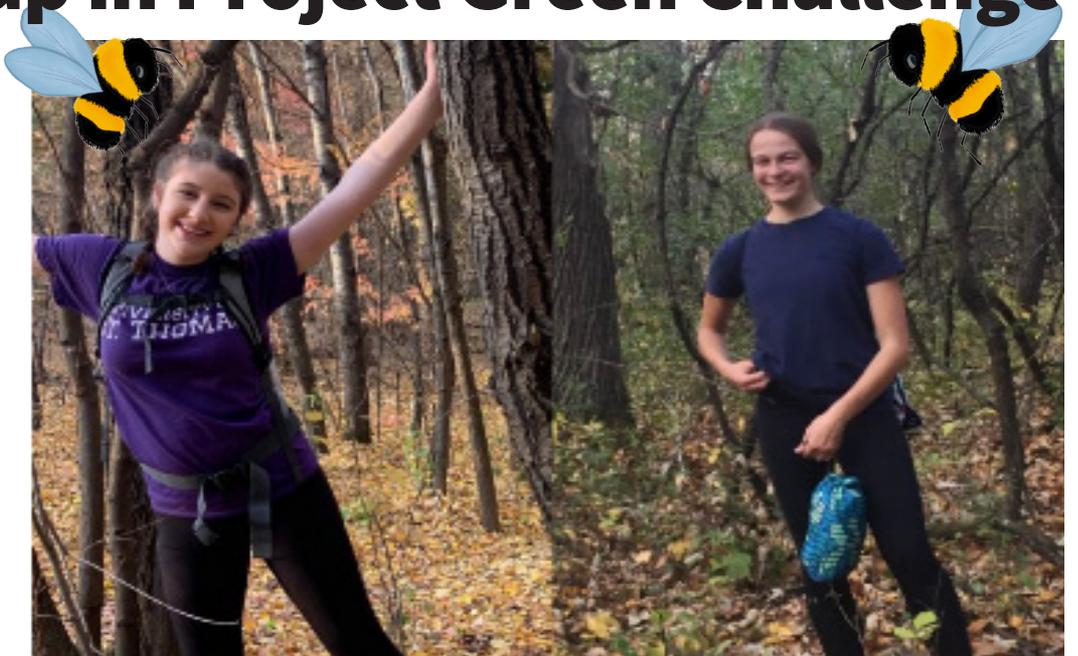


Photo courtesy Claire Abbott Juniors Claire Abbott and Addie Foote pose for their photo for the Project Green Challenge. Abbott and Foote were recently announced as second place winners in the international competition.

Keep an eye out for more on the story online on May 24

sahsponyexpress.com



Graphics by Rachel Palmer

New head coach has high hopes for season

Girls lacrosse pushes forward into new season with victory

Jenna Maddux

This spring, the girls lacrosse team hired an all-new coaching staff after their former coach retired. The team also has some obstacles to face with not having a season last year due to COVID-19. Ali Crofts, the new varsity head coach, hopes to bring her team far into sections and the state tournament by becoming a more unified team.

Crofts moved to Stillwater in January 2020 and was interested in getting involved in the community. When she heard of the open coaching position for the girls lacrosse team, she thought that would be an excellent way to get involved.

"I had a lot of support and encouragement from my own friends and family knowing my lacrosse experience and background and put in for it and interviewed and got the job offer, which I was thrilled about," Crofts stated.

Crofts has played lacrosse since she was young and has consistently engaged in some lacrosse wherever she has lived. She played for the University of Connecticut, a D1 school, for four years and was captain of the team her senior year. When she moved to St. Paul she took a job as an assistant lacrosse coach for Hamline University.

Junior Isabel Knowlan said that she relates to Crofts because she has played and went through the high school and college program so she knows what it feels like to be a student-athlete.



Girls varsity lacrosse team runs drills at practice after winning their first home game against Mounds View high school with a score of 17-2, the previous Friday. They start preparing for their next game the following day.

Photos by Libby Harter

This is the first time having to hire a new coach since the girls lacrosse team was established 13 years ago. The previous coach, Rick Reidt, built the girls lacrosse program up from the start and taught the girls the basic fundamentals of the game at a young age to get the team to where it is today.

"They are a phenomenal program with a very strong foundation built by the prior head coach, so I was really

excited to have the opportunity to coach at a high level, highly competitive, high school program such as Stillwater," Crofts said.

Not only does the team have to adapt to a new coaching staff this year, but they were also faced with the challenge of not having a season last spring due to COVID-19. The team has now been practicing with each other for the past two years and are ready to take the field.

Although it has been a difficult adjustment after their loss of practice junior Ally Carle said she "can already see a difference in how [the team] has all connected."

Most of the players also participate in summer lacrosse programs and clubs to keep in shape for their upcoming season. In previous summers, most girls participated in the Eagles program that was run by their former coach. This summer, the girls are encour-

aged to participate in summer lacrosse whether that be through Eagles or any other club. Many girls are choosing to participate in Monkeys, a lacrosse club based out of Concordia University.

"It's a more intense program and it's with different people from all different schools this time, not just from Stillwater," Knowlan said.

The girls lacrosse program has won their section the past ten years and hopes to continue this winning streak this season. Winning the section tournament also allows for the lacrosse team to participate in the state tournament.

"We would like to have a very high standing and ranking in our conference and win out in the section tournament, to have a bid into the state tournament and compete at the highest level of high school lacrosse in Minnesota," Crofts said.

Carle would also like to make it to the state tournament this year with her new coach, "I'm hoping that we can find the courage and perseverance to make it to state and hopefully compete well against other teams."

"I think it's going to help us a lot with her knowledge of the game and just her coaching style," Carle said. "When we are faced with adversity, she just has a positive attitude and also has been bringing a bunch of new plays into our program, so I think that's going to help us a lot in the long run."

Girls softball returns with new season underway



Photos by Mairin Torgerson

The Stillwater girls varsity softball team plays rival White Bear Lake on May at the Stillwater varsity field. The team is currently ranked 1st in their section, with a record of 11-0-0.

Josua Bove

Girls softball has returned to SAHS, albeit with minor differences.

"It's changed because we need to wear masks, of course, although yesterday that just changed and now we don't have to wear them when we're practicing or competing outside," coach Angie Ryan explained. "It's also [different] because of social distancing, just trying to keep six feet apart at all times."

With these new conditions and the year-long hiatus, it would make sense if their numbers dropped. Still, no matter how long the break and

how much changes, the players remain devoted.

"I don't know of anyone who didn't come back after the pandemic...and actually, we have two ninth grade teams filled with student athletes from seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth grades," Ryan said. "We haven't had two ninth grade teams as part of the program for a long time."

This is Ryan's first year as the head coach at Stillwater, but she did serve as the assistant coach from the 2018 season onward. She enjoyed it a lot, especially the connection she feels with her players.

"I love my players," Ryan said. "They're great people, they work really hard. I wouldn't do this unless I really enjoyed working with young women."

The players in turn love working with her. They do a lot of activities outside the games, and are all good friends. All of that only made the loss of the last season more devastating.

"Losing the 2020 season was really disappointing," senior Allison Benning explained. "I was so excited to be with my team and hopefully make another run for the state championship. However, that's in the past, and now my focus is on this season."

The season is well underway, with only four games left against Park, Mounds View and Woodbury at Stillwater, and East Ridge on their own turf. Things have been going well, giving the team a lot of ambition.

"We want to win the conference championship, and we do that by playing consistently everyday, and showing up for every pitch, (being) mentally in the moment," Ryan explained. "We're in section 444A, and we want to win that, and then we want to win the state championship."

Making the most out of time is important because this is seniors' last season.

"I've thought about playing professionally after college, but I think as of right now I want to pursue a job or internship," Benning added.

Most players are following Ryan's advice—being mentally in the moment, not angry about the last year's loss, or worrying excessively about what the future has in store. They will focus on playing their hardest and having fun here and now.

Benning summed up much of the team's sentiment: "It feels great to be back with my teammates this year. I was really excited for the season and couldn't be happier now that we're playing."

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Girls cross country running team says goodbye to Analee Weaver

Weaver has also been named Gatorades player of the year for a second time



Photo by Abby Anderson
2020-2021 MINNESOTA

GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY
PLAYER OF THE YEAR

ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- 5K STATE RECORD -
16:42.6
- FOURTH PLACE -
XC TOWN USA MEET OF
CHAMPIONS

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- WEIGHTED 4.20 GPA -
- COMMITTED TO RUN ON
SCHOLARSHIP AT BRIGHAM
YOUNG UNIVERSITY-

Ella Gag

“Running is basically my life. I mean, I eat, sleep and breathe running,” senior Ana Weaver said. Weaver is approaching her last track season of her high school career. Weaver has stayed in the spotlight for the past four years by breaking records and obtaining countless awards; she received a full ride scholarship to Brigham Young University.

Weaver has recently been awarded Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year for the second time. This award recognizes outstanding athletic achievement in a company with academic achievement and leadership on and off the field. Not only did she receive Gatorade Player of the Year, she also received the Athena Award. The Athena award recognizes athletic and academic excellence. Weaver is able to obtain a high GPA while setting records in the meantime.

Weaver explained that the awards she received put in place that hard work does pay off and that she has a huge support system that she is grateful for.

Weaver began to train with the boys team under Scott Christensen, who is known to train champions. Christensen has high intensity workouts

which intrigued Weaver. On the boys team, Weaver is around the sixth or seventh runner so it pushes her to be better and improve every day at practice. Boy runners are normally given most of the attention when it comes to successes, but having Weaver practice with the boys team has given both the boys and girls motivation to improve.

“It showed our boys that you know what, females are every bit of an athlete,” Christensen explained.

Weaver has accomplished many milestones in the past four years. Weaver holds the state record in the 5k race as she ran a 16:42.6 time at Forest Lake Middle School in the fall of 2020. She wiped out the previous record set of 16:55 by Emily Covert of Minneapolis Washburn in 2018. Weaver’s time is ranked fourth best in the nation this year. Weaver puts in hours to accomplish these kinds of goals.

Teammate Morgan Peterman added, “Not only does she spend hours running, she also eats healthy, and spends extra time preventing injuries and working out in the gym.”

Weaver received a full ride scholarship to run cross country and Track at BYU. The BYU women cross country team won the 2021 NCAA Cross Country Champion-

ships. This is the fifth national title in the program’s history. Weaver will be training with the best of the best next year. She will have to fight for spots and up her training. It is expected that Weaver will be a part of an NCAA championship in years to come.

Weaver explained that as long as she keeps working hard, staying mentally and physically strong she have a great experience at BYU.

Not only does Weaver have athletic excellence, she excels in leadership. Weaver motivates and inspires not just her teammates, but younger runners as well. Being that Weaver is from Stillwater and walks the same hallways as others, it can show anyone that hard work truly does pay off. It is an honor to be able to train with Weaver and see her set these goals because it motivates people to achieve their goals like Weaver did. Weaver is a leader for her team, she gives pep talks, leads by example, and is a team captain.

“Ana influences me to run with 110 percent effort and try my very best in everything I do. Her determination and perseverance continues to push me to become the best possible athlete I can be,” Peterman explained.

Weaver has an outgoing personality and way of life.

Running is a huge factor in her life. However, there is more to her. Weaver is intelligent and optimistic. Her friends and family mean a lot to her and she spends a lot of quality time with them.

“But running is not her whole life; she’s adventurous. She’s curious. She’s got a lot of other things going, she’s got athletics just in a good place in her life. And that’s good modeling for the rest of the team, both the girls and boys,” Christensen added.

Weaver is approaching her last season and her goals are to just have fun with her teammates. Weaver is leaving behind a legacy here. Weaver will go down in history as one of the strongest athletes to walk in these hallways. Weaver has shown that hard work pays off, grit and perseverance, academic importance and leadership will take you a long way. She is leaving the cross country program and school in a better place. Weaver will be missed, but she will continue to achieve greatness at BYU.

“What she’s left so far is a new bar of greatness. A new bar of sportsmanship. And just a new bar of keeping athletics in perspective, she’s great at it. Possibly, I think”, Christensen explained, “she may be the best ever.”

Girls high school golf team back in full swing

Kate Johnson

Spring sports have started, and girls golf is back in full swing, ready to be returning to the Oak Glen greens. The team practices Monday through Thursday from 3-5 p.m., with matches two to three times a week. The girls are excited to be back playing as a team.

Junior Caroline Monty, a player on the JV team, has been on the golf team since seventh grade, and started playing at a very young age because of her family’s interest in the game. This year looks a bit different for her because it is her first year playing without her sister, Catherine Monty.

There are three senior team captains for the team : Sam Kane, Savannah Vincent, and Peighton Lynskey.

Being a captain of the team comes with responsibility. “Captains pick out the uniforms for matches, they are also in charge of planning all out of practice activities so either team bonding activities or if the team goes to dinner after a match,” Monty said.

In years past, there have been three teams the players could make; varsity, junior varsity, and junior varsity B team. This year because of COVID-19 there are only two teams—varsity and junior varsity. With no JV B team, girls who would normally

make that team are set to play JV matches.

The golf team has a history of wins and uses great teamwork. Monty said, “I think it’s just having good friendships and being able to practice together and do things outside of golf together.”

This year, golf courses around Minnesota are required to have a limit of people who can be on the course at one time. This affecting the team in many ways, one being the amount of players that can be on the team. In the beginning of the season, the coaches were only going to keep 16 players. They changed the rule when only 25 girls showed up to try-outs.

This golf season the limited amount of girls on the team has been a blessing in disguise. There is more time for players to get to know their coaches and have more one-on-one time with them. Another being the girls on the team get to participate in more matches.

The matches have some restrictions and players are not allowed to warm up on the course. “This has changed the game for our matches, because we don’t know the speed of the greens,” Monty said.

In a normal year they would arrive at the match an hour early, but this year they get there 30 minutes before the match starts. Then the

whole team meets and then it’s time to play.

All members playing on the course are required to wear a mask and social distance while playing. When all players arrive at the course they warm up by hitting on the range then the rest of practice they normally practice chipping or putting on the greens.

Something special about the golf team is that it allows students from 7th grade to 12th grade play so it includes all ages. The girls golf team is off to a great start to this season and can’t wait to see how the rest of the season goes.



Photo by Cassidy Gilliam

Junior

Caroline Monty

Plays for JV team

Joined the team 7th grade

Practices at Oak Glen

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YouTube brings Bush Bros Together

Emily Hornbuckle

Juniors Austin and Mason Buck, Hugh Hanlon and sophomore Otto Hanlon have been making YouTube videos for a couple years. They have always been interested in the outdoors and they have been exploring and learning since they were little. The first day they all went out together was in the winter of 2018. On the bus on their way home from school, one of the boys suggested that they go out in the woods during the snowstorm. They started to become independent with these trips in the fall of 2019, their freshman year of high school. They started filming at the suggestion of the Buck's dad.

"We started because our dad had told us that we should just start filming and then we started with his phone, eventually we got a camera and more equipment... We have been into the outdoors since we were young, so it was just another step up," Austin explained.

Where they are now

Bush Bros Outdoors currently sits at 4.05K subscribers, but the goal in the beginning was solely to share their adventures with their friends and family. As they have been met with success, they strive to be better and continue to make videos.

"None of us want to do this full time," Mason explained. "Even if we could, I don't think any of us would want to, because we just like doing it as a hobby, for fun, not as a job." They hope to continue to gain success, but are happy with their progress.

"We started filming because we wanted to show our parents, friends and our family what we were up to. If you would have told us that we would be at this point when we started freshman year, then we would be amazed, and we're very pleased with where we are," Hugh said.

The boys have very full plates; they balance sports and school, and they still manage to make time to do extra things they love. They prioritize school and sports first, then add in the other things, like these trips when they can.

"They're super busy kids, they're very well balanced, you know, I still see them with friends, their sports and getting good grades, they're kind of the whole package, they just seem to have it all together. So, very impressive," Debbie Drew, video production and Cutaway Productions teacher said.

What they learned

Going on trips together and making YouTube videos creates a strong bond. Over the last few years, they have created this strong relationship which is one of the best things to come out of it as a whole. It is more than just a couple videos, they have learned life skills, grown and become overall well rounded people while they travel on their YouTube journey.

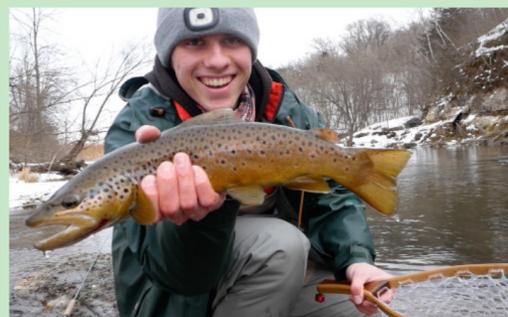
Austin explained that they have learned things that help them in life: the qualities of a good friendship, how to work hard, how to put their mind to something, have it really pay off and have a feeling of accomplishment.

These trips consist of a lot more than just an outdoor adventure like some might assume. They use bush craft, which is essentially the learning of skill and developing of knowledge, in order to survive and thrive in the natural environment. A memorable trip they have and like to look back on is when they, in four days, paddled 100 miles on the St. Croix River. This very difficult trip enhanced their friendship as they had to persevere and be determined to get through it.

"Once we completed it and landed on the dock, we all had the best feeling ever, the feeling that we completed our goal of a very tough trip and we did it together. It was a very proud moment we had persevering through the tough times," Mason said.

Being passionate about something is important because it taught them how to see something through and motivated them to finish it. As seen on the "Bush Bros" they endure these trips and work hard to successfully complete them. Along with having passion with these adventures, they strive to do well in school, sports and everyday activities.

"Having different passions is important to the quality of life beyond high school. If all you have is sports or a club, they aren't going to last forever, so having other things that you really enjoy like the outdoors, or that kind of thing I think is really important," math teacher Michael Parker said.



March's podcast brings faith amidst crisis

Vatuazenj Vang

When the pandemic broke out last year, many people lost hope as the virus took root and everyone was experiencing the same turmoil. However, some people like senior Olivia March were inspired. She started a small podcast called "Mustard Seed Mentality," to restore faith to folks in this new bleak world. Since April of this year, March has released a weekly podcast on Spotify to share her Christian views on news and society. Her voice spreads hope to those who are especially hit hard by these dark times.

As the pandemic became the new reality and two weeks after lockdown, social media experienced a huge spike, increasing by more than 50 percent in usage. Because of this spike in interest and everyone staying in place, people found solace in sharing and creating content to express their feelings, experience and thoughts about life. This was March's story. She discovered the Anchor platform from a friend

through TikTok which inspired her to share her story.

The inspiration

When asked why she wanted to start a podcast, March said, "I kind of started the podcast because I noticed that there wasn't a lot of Christian podcasts that were created by people our age, for what people our age struggle with. So, I decided to create it. It's about having faith as a teenager, and it's about struggles that Christian teenagers go through."

In early fall 2020, March explored making her idea of creating her podcast a reality when she discovered stories told through audio episodes. Podcasts became more popular as evidenced by Brandstix which revealed that each month, more than 100 million people listened to podcasts at a rate that continually increased each month.

How it started

Initially, March lacked the confidence because there were so many choices available to people. It took months but she finally built up the courage gained from her friendship with a listener who believed in her stories. The social media group March was following introduced her to another Christian teenager who ran a podcast called, "Chin Up Dude." From that point on, she had enough tools to take a leap of faith to develop her podcast. A month later, March released her first episode called, "What does mustard seed mentality mean?" through the Anchor platform, which can be found on Spotify.

Another source of inspiration that led March to fully develop her podcast was from being a part of AVID, AVID provided a strong support system for her. "I'm in AVID at Stillwater and AVID has always been a big support system about getting your voice out there, getting what you're pas-

sionate about out there, and telling the world about it. So I think that's one of my biggest things that got me into it."

Growth in challenges

As COVID-19 continued to keep people locked down in their homes, March's podcast slowly and steadily developed. The success in the growth of a podcast depends on its steady growth rate in the first month. March released her second podcast, where she invited her friend Helen Al Rabidia to be her guest speaker. This second episode allowed her to explore difficult subjects such as Faith, Racism, society and so forth. As her podcast grew in interest among her listeners, she decided to include more guest speakers and more topics to her programs. Currently, she plans to release a future podcast about her life from now to death as well as inviting Christian rapper Caleb Joshua to join her on the set.

Ethan Crew, a dedicated follower of March's podcast finds comfort and a sense of belonging while listening to her episodes. "I like how she brings other people; it's not just her talking, so she can bring other opinions on there as well. In my area, there's not really many people that have the same opinions as me or Olivia, so it was nice to see more people like her out there to have the same opinions in our faith."

With two episodes under her belt, March hopes to continue her journey to bring hope and to inspire people who are in need of religion and Jesus in their lives. While March is in her last year of high school, she is not letting that stop her from continuing to develop her podcast to spread her message about God. More listeners are welcome to join her every week for a new and fascinating podcast with special guests and enthralling stories about her faith.

In March's own words, "I think one last word that I'd like to say is just, follow your dreams. If they want to do something just do it. Who cares if you get hated on, it's your passion so just be bold about it."



Photo submitted by Olivia March. The podcast can be found on Spotify.



Photos submitted by Hugh Hanlon, Austin and Mason Buck. The bush bros document their adventures through their growing you YouTube channel. They fish, canoe and find other outdoor adventures.

Minnesota rape law outdated, harmful

Adelee Wrightsman

In May of 2017, a 20-year-old woman took five shots of vodka and prescription pills outside a bar in Minneapolis, Minn. As the young woman stood outside with her friend, a man with the last name of Khalil approached the couple, asking if the two women would like to join him at a party. After eventually finding out there was no party and being separated from her friend, the young woman blacked out only to wake up to the man assaulting her on his couch. The young woman blacked out once more and woke up to find her shorts around her ankles.

Nearly four years after the attack, the Minnesota Supreme Court overturned Mr. Khalil's original conviction of third-degree criminal sexual conduct. The court ruled that since the young woman had not been forced to drink or take the pills, the alleged assault did not meet the grounds to convict a rape case.

This outdated intoxication-based law, found in approximately 40 states throughout the U.S., portrays Minnesota as a misogynistic, victim-blaming state, where sex offenders are given loopholes to escape the punishment for their heinous crimes.

The New York Times was one of the few publications to report on this recently discovered law, explaining how the Minnesota Court's decision hinged on the meaning of "mentally incapacitated." In Minnesota, "mentally incapacitated" is defined as an individual under the influence of alcohol or narcotics against their will.

Minnesota State Representative Shelly Christensen

responded to this statement explaining "the current definition is really a roadblock to prosecuting cases." Christensen and her colleague, Minnesota State Representative Kelly Moller, the author of the state's new bill to the Minnesota Supreme Court, are altering the statute by changing "the word from involuntary to voluntary."

The New York Times article also explained how the outcome of Khalil's trial had been met with outrage and uproar from women's rights activists and survivors of sexual assault, specifically those who follow the global #MeToo movement.

Junior Ella Sorensen said she sees no positive outcomes happening from this law if it is not changed. She said that this old law is built on the basis of victim-blaming, and the enforcement of this law only encourages the victim-blaming to continue.

Legal expert Karrin Long, a women's rights lawyer for The Advocates for Human Rights, expressed

she is worried the Minnesota court's decision and law could impact women and victims nationally by making them more hesitant to come forward and report their cases.

Christensen expressed her thoughts by saying how she hopes the alteration of the mentally incapacitated definition to include voluntary intoxication helps more women and victims come forward and report the sexual crimes committed against them.

According to RAINN, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network in the U.S., one out of every six American women has been the victim of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault at least once in their lives. That adds up to nearly 55 million women in the U.S. alone who have experienced these horrific crimes.

In response to this, Sorensen, a young woman in the U.S., stated how she is not surprised at this statistic at all,

but is very "wary of men" because of it.

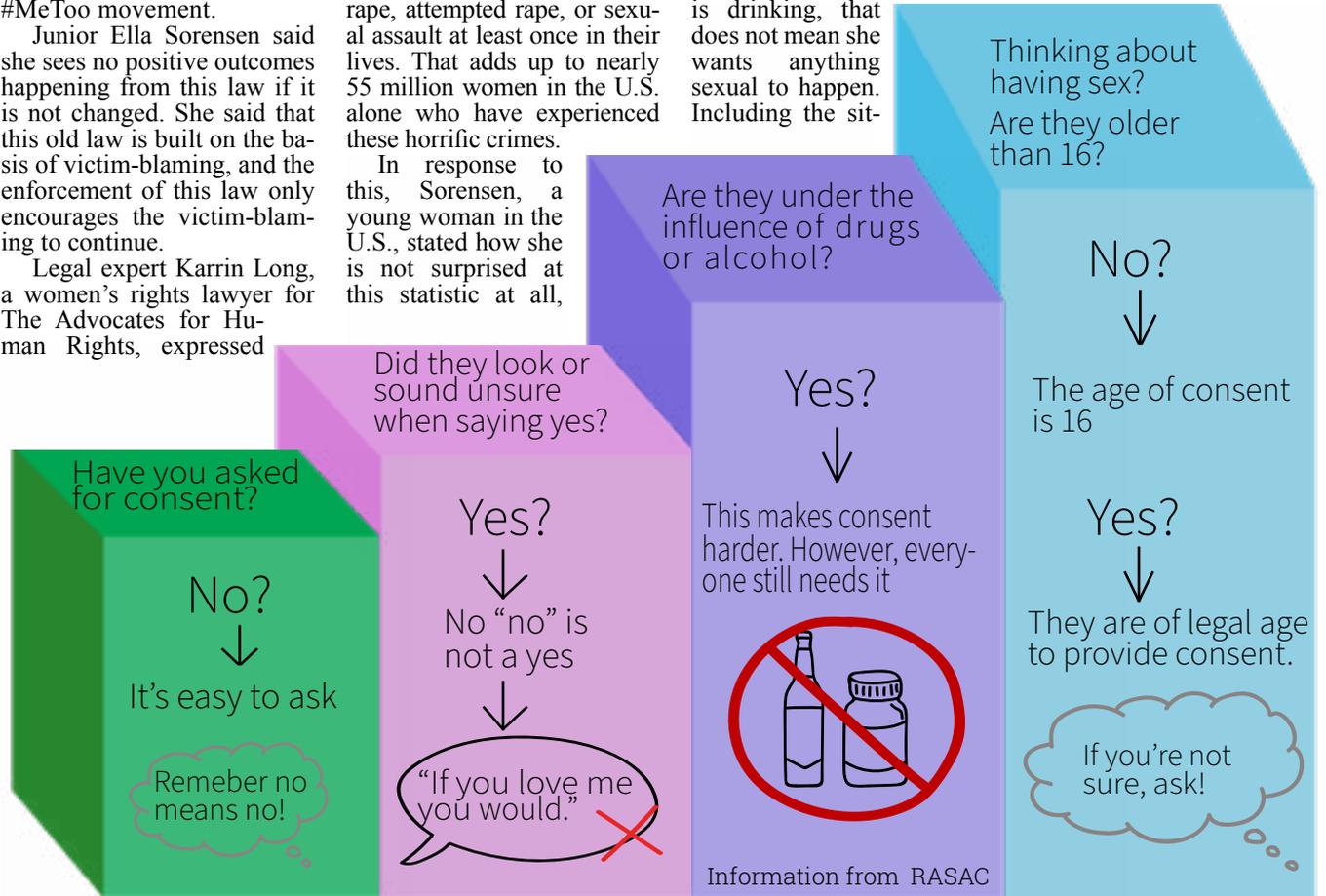
The story of Khalil's victim and this court case could very well be said to be the re-spark of the #MeToo movement that continues to empower the mass amount of sexual assault victims in the U.S. and across the globe. It is disappointing for far too many women and victims to know that laws such as this one still exist today. Laws that provide offenders with significant loopholes to jump through helping them to avoid their crimes.

As Sorensen said, just because a woman is drinking, that does not mean she wants anything sexual to happen. Including the sit-

uation where the victim chose to drink or take the narcotics she had and is at any level of incapacitation.

The path for female voices to be heard in legislative and judicial decisions has been long and difficult for women in this country. Victims can only hope that the alteration of this law in Minnesota by Representative Moller, Representative Christensen and others pushes the other 40 states with the same or similar law to do the same and help deliver justice to today's and future victims.

Graphic by Kady Peltier



Vaccine lets Americans step toward normalcy

Lucille Miller

With COVID-19 vaccines getting more and more accessible in America, Americans are finally getting their hands on them. Trying to slow the spread of COVID-19, people are getting their vaccinations and getting back to normal. The vaccine is the key to finally get out of this slump and start living again. The vaccine means getting to hug grandparents, going to concerts, and not have to worry in a social setting. It is such a crucial step right now, especially with rising numbers. Therefore, people need to do their part and get the vaccine.

Pfizer and Moderna are our messenger RNA vaccines, and then there is the Johnson and Johnson one that delivers DNA in a little vesicle. The body creates spike proteins that are specific for COVID-19 and then the cell releases that, which allows the immune system to see these spikes and recognize that they're foreign then mount an immune system response. The whole point of any vaccine is to allow the immune system to recognize the pathogen without causing any harm. This creates herd immunity after two doses.

Many myths are being spread about this vaccine more than others. Things being said such as: it can lead to death, it can cause strokes, and even that the vaccine can produce COVID-19. Multiple

studies have proven this to be wrong, yet people still disregard all the science behind it.

Biology teacher Stacy Bartlett explained "Vaccines can't cause disease" because they're inactivated viruses that are just a part of the brain.

Furthermore, with the scientific evidence above it is clear that not everything that is published is true. There is a vast amount of fake news being spread about this vaccine, especially now that COVID-19 has sprung into a political topic, and it is necessary to read and get educated on what this vaccine legitimately has to offer.

In addition, it is said that with the Moderna and the Pfizer vaccine there will be "side effects" from the injection. While this is true, they are only mild side effects and do not last very long. Just like a flu shot; drowsiness, sore arm, and maybe ill for a day.

"After my second dose I felt a little tired, and that was it, but I still compare it to having COVID, I was so sick from COVID and I still don't have my sense of smell back. So take your 24 hours of feeling kind of gross, because it is so much better than feeling gross for weeks," nurse Traci Torseth said.

It is important to understand that people might get a little sick after getting the vaccine, but the benefits make the shot so much more worth it in the long run, especially comparing the effects to COVID-19.



Photo submitted by Addie Demars

Junior Addie Demars gets her second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at Allina Health pop up clinic. Demars is an essential worker at Boutwells Landing, a senior home, and getting this vaccine is more than just for herself.

Nevertheless, this vaccine has been researched and tested numerous times and it is safe to say it is effective and healthy. It has been proven that Pfizer and Moderna are safe for ages 18 and up. Though Johnson and Johnson's vaccine was put on hold, that does not mean the other two are harmful.

"I have enough understanding of the vaccine and trust in my particular doctor. I read the research studies, and the science was there to support it. Science is that way there either is evidence to support something or not and sometimes we get it wrong and, and hopefully we don't

get it wrong," Bartlett added.

There is so much science behind this vaccine and so much need for it. This vaccine is a crucial key for slowing, and in turn, ending this pandemic. While it is scary how little is known about this vaccine, science does not lie and there are further facts for this vaccine to go wrong.

However, many believe they do not need the vaccine because COVID-19 won't physically harm them. While in reality, it is possible to be a carrier of the virus and be asymptomatic, leading to further spread of COVID-19, only more potentially more dangerous because it

can go unnoticed.

Junior Addie Demars works at Boutwell's Landing, a senior living home. She got the vaccine to not just protect herself but also protect any patient she comes into contact with. By getting the vaccine, Demars has an extra layer of protection.

The vaccine is more than for personal usage. The vaccine is injected to create immunity against COVID-19. Getting the vaccine is a safe and selfless way to prevent the spread and keep others safe.

On the other hand, even with all the evidence and science given, it is understandable to be hesitant about this vaccine. This is one of the fastest created and distributed vaccines in history. A majority of Americans were already against vaccines in general, and this fast-tracked vaccine gives them even more doubt. Even though there are a very small fraction of bad reactions due to the vaccine, it goes to show that it is not 100% safe, concluding that it is reasonable to be skeptical and apprehensive of getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

In the end, one thing Americans can agree on is that everyone wants this pandemic to be over. Adults want their normal life back, and kids want to go to school again. Getting this vaccine will lead us in that direction, so do your part and get vaccinated because this pandemic is not going to end itself.

EIC COLUMN



Pony Clapback

Alex Steil

President Joseph R. Biden signed an Executive Order April 9 establishing the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court of the United States. Among the questions the commission is set to find is whether the size of the high Court should be expanded.

The signing comes two days after Justice Stephen Breyer, the oldest Justice on the Court and one of three liberals, said expanding the court would erode the “trust that the court is guided by legal principle, not politics.”

The announcement comes nearly a month after Biden announced his support to endorse a talking filibuster—liberals quickly used this momentum to further their calls to completely abolish the filibuster.

The state of our republic is at its most precarious point since the eve of the Civil War. This time, however, Senator Daniel Webster will not stand on the floor of the United States Senate arguing for the continuance of our Union. Elected officials have seemingly abdicated their belief in the Union, and have placed their beliefs in their political power and personal political fortune.

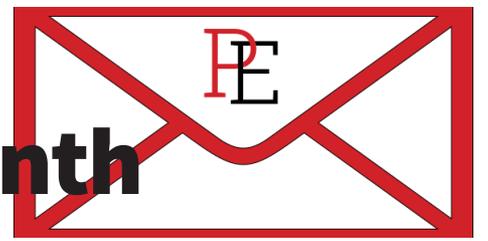
Abolishing the filibuster is the first step towards anti-republicanism. The current silent filibuster is being used to “block the will of 59 Senators,” which, according to Harvard professor Dr. Steve Levitsky and author of How Democracies Die, “is unusual in a democracy,” but is safe to use when politics enlist extreme forbearance, or restraint.

The current silent filibuster is no longer a tool to help build dialogue, instead it has become a tool to obstruct and destroy real policy goals. The silent filibuster is no longer an effective tool for legislating.

The current problem is not solely that of the Republicans or solely the Democrats. The first extreme use of filibusters for executive appointments was employed by Democrats during former-President George W. Bush’s administration. The favor was returned by Republicans during former-President Barack H. Obama’s administration, where they blocked virtually every executive appointment. Rather than accept the price for obstructionism they employed during Bush’s term, when Senate Democrats regained a majority they in turn stopped the use of filibusters for all executive appointments except for Supreme Court nominations.

While Democrats historically have never been the party to step up Constitutional attacks, they have always returned the attacks, only pushing the country towards the brink of permanent political statement.

Letter to the Editor: Autism Awareness Month

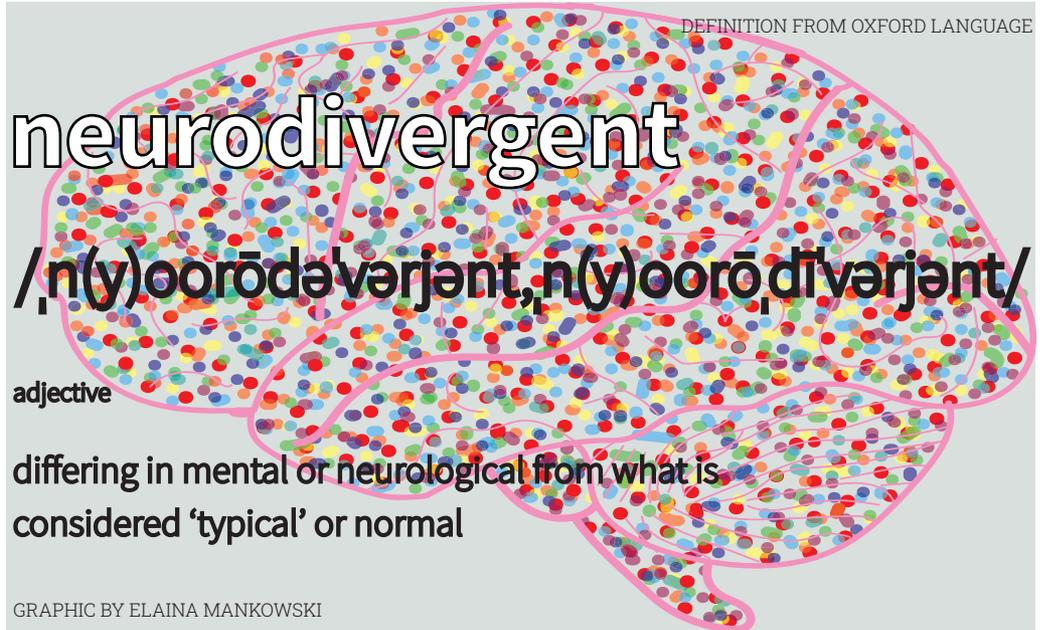


Submitted by Adam Guinee

When I first heard about autism awareness month, I was excited. I was hoping that our community would finally reach out to neurodivergent people, learn to understand us more and better help us. Unfortunately, I was thoroughly underwhelmed. While individuals made posts on their instagrams stories about how to treat autistic people and which organizations to donate to, from the school I saw nothing. No panels, no class discussions, not even a poster. This offends me not only because an already marginalized community is being ignored, but because recently, a lot of serious issues regarding autism and how it is viewed by society. If any readers wish to truly help the autistic community, this is what I ask they do.

First, the world needs to stop seeing autism as a disease. For me, autism is a gift, and in many ways a superpower. It has given me an insurmountable passion for everything I do. My passion is what motivates me to achieve my goals and to live my life how I want to. It has also made me more empathetic, more loyal, and a better judge of character. In addition to this, many of history’s most successful and revered figures have been autistic, including Issac Newton, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Darwin, Nikola Tesla and Albert Einstein.

To that end, stop looking



GRAPHIC BY ELAINA MANKOWSKI

for ways to cure or prevent autism. Not only is autism not a disease, but talking about curing our condition and preventing it from showing up hurts us a lot. It makes us feel like we do not have the right to exist, and in the eyes of everyone else, the world would be a better place without us.

In addition to this, if you want to help the autistic community, be very careful who you listen to. Many organizations who claim to represent and support the autistic community do not. The biggest example of this is Autism Speaks, an organization that many members of the autistic community have called a hate group. Amongst the things they have been criticized for are refusing to have autistic

leaders, supporting the idea that vaccines cause autism, supporting finding a cure for autism, supporting ABA therapy (which has given children PTSD), supporting prenatal testing for autism (which many criticize for promoting aborting autistic children), and choosing to give most of the money that they earn to their executives. If you wish to support organizations that actually help the autistic community, look for these things.

Are these organizations led by autistic people? Do they treat autism as something that needs to be cured or overcome? Do they use ableist language or treat autistic individuals as less capable? What do members of the autistic community say about them?

This may feel difficult, but a failure to do this can have serious consequences. This ignorance is also what led to the passing of the deeply ableist and dangerous Combating Autism Act of 2006, whose objective was to find a cure for autism, and the improved but still deeply flawed Autism CARES Act of 2019.

Just like any other community, we want to be seen and heard. We want neurotypical people to stop seeing themselves as saviors and instead as allies. We don’t want to see society fight for or against us, but rather with us.

Email Letters to the Editor to stiltwaterpe@stillwaterschools.org or drop them off in D220

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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

Read more online at sahsponyexpress.com



Concert Choir makes preparations to close school year with home concert

Jay Lohr

In the midst all of the craziness this past year, Concert Choir has been preparing for one last concert to lay rest to their year of hard work and preparation. The "Home Concert" will be held at Stillwater Area High School. The choir will prove they can still could bring choir together even through the pandemic.

To the choir Director Angela Mitchell, the special thing about the Stillwater Choir is when everyone gets to this Home Concert. It's a celebration of their year's work, every piece of music that they have sung that year as a solo is performed in this concert.

There is more meaning to the Home Concert than meets the eye. The message behind the "Home Concert" was to showcase the journey the choir students went through.

For Mitchell, it is a tradition. When you "go out on tour, you have traveled together, you've learned from clinicians, you've performed all over you know the country or local wherever you've gone on tour."

When they come home for the final concert of the year it is called the Home Concert, because they have returned home from the choir tour.

The choir has been practicing and preparing this concert for a long time coming. However, that does not mean they have not faced obstacles as a group on their way to prepare for the Home concert. One of the biggest struggles the choir has faced with the upcoming concert is just being together as a community.

"One of the big struggles is just having everybody on



Stillwater's top choir, Concert Choir practiced May 5 for their upcoming concert on May 24. Singing with a mask and social distancing has its challenges, but choir director Angela Mitchell is finding a way to teach.

Photo by Abby Anderson

the same page," senior Choir President Noah Goodland explained. "Whether that be people staying at home because that's what they're doing at this time or people get Covid and then they have to leave for the two weeks, all that kind of stuff. It's hard to keep everybody kind of on the same path, when you have people online, and then people in person."

Choir rehearsal these days

might look extremely bizarre when compared to rehearsal in the past. Although many of the choir members may be at home, Mitchell uploads practice videos onto Schoology. It allows students to practice wherever, and whenever.

"Our choir director, Miss Mitch, also puts practice tracks out on our Schoology page for students to help us practice, you know, singing along with peo-

ple singing along with choirs. Doing it so they can just get practice instead of doing it by themselves and not just having choir rehearsal as their only practice," Goodland said.

The choir will be performing a plethora of songs they have been rehearsing. Although rehearsals have been difficult, the choir has been able to practice songs that are meaningful for them

and their journey back home.

Some songs the Concert Choir will perform are "Even When He Is Silent" by Kim Andre Arneson, "Ich Bin Die Auferstehung Und Das Leben" by Schutz, and "Light Of A Clear Blue Morning" by Craig Hella Johnson. Additionally, some songs Vagabonds will perform are "Trois Chansons" by Claude Debussy, "I'm A Train" by The King Singers, and "And So It Goes" by Billy Joel senior Robe Wrangler, Julie Xiong explained.

With the Home Concert drawing near, many may wonder how the concert will work. This concert in particular will allow seniors to bring four family members each. Not only that, but the concert will be live streamed through Valley Access for everyone who wants to watch.

Mitchell explained because of capacity rules, the choir still has to still perform the Home Concert in the Stillwater gym. It will be on May 24, senior tributes are at 7:15 a.m., while the concert is at 8 p.m. in the main gym.

"We are going to do it in the gym because we can have an audience of about 250," Mitchell said.

With this hectic school year drawing towards the end, choir never ceases to provide a space where friendships are made and memories are cherished.

"Being a part of choir has made my school experience very memorable," Xiong said. "I am very thankful for all the close friends I've made through choir and hope to continue singing,

Wind Ensemble prepares for first outdoor concert

Ella Hamilton

A year ago, Stillwater band students would not have imagined doing an outdoor concert this spring, much less forced outside because of a pandemic. With so many changes this school year, classes, such as band, have had to be flexible with their learning schedules. Despite that, students and teachers still find ways to make it enjoyable for all.

Wind Ensemble conductor Joel Bryan has been conducting this and for five years. The Wind Ensemble is a full band mostly made up of 10 and 11 graders. This year, with so many changes in the school, band has especially looked different.

"Typically, you know, we don't really run our rehearsal cycles on a quarter schedule. And that whole schedule has been thrown out the window," Bryan said. "Playing together has been completely thrown out the window, we've found some ways to do it creatively by doing recordings and everything but it hasn't been the same," Bryan explained.

Despite many differences between this school year and past years, the band has found ways to work around

these challenges. One of the biggest challenges is concerts. With COVID-19 safety guidelines it is difficult to have concerts that are typical in other years, so the band teachers have had to be creative. An outdoor concert will be held May 18 at Autumn Hills Park, and on May 25 if it is rained out.

Sophomore Isabelle Knighton said the concert will be outdoors and will most likely have chairs set up for the band students in the grass.

This concert, unlike other concerts this year, will have a live audience. Due to the live audience, this concert will not be live streamed, but family members are encouraged to come and listen to music outside while being appropriately spaced out.

"There'll be an audience there, you know, I'm encouraging them to bring a picnic if they'd like and just enjoy a nice evening outside and have music making and being together in the way we can outside right now," Bryan explained.

Music classes are difficult to conduct when they are held during a virtual class period. Now that students are back in person, it is much easier and enjoyable to be playing and creating music together.



Photo by Ella Hamilton

The wind ensemble practices for its concert in the band room during class. The band, mostly made up of sophomores and juniors, will spend the coming weeks preparing for their outdoor concert.

"Just hearing the warm ups, and hearing the kids listening and interacting and making changes, and hearing the harmonies integrate with each other. It was honestly hair raising. I didn't know how much I missed it until I had it back. And I think a lot of it. I think a lot of the students are noticing that too, it's just, it's fun to do this together," Bryan said.

The pandemic has changed the course of the school year for all classes with the option to log on virtually. Due to the necessary involvement of all students in band class, playing together has changed quite a bit.

Knighton explained the online students' role in class, "they're kind of just like playing along without their sound on so we can't really hear

them so it's kind of weird having the different parts."

Bryan reflected on the year, "If there's one thing I've learned with COVID, it's how much music can bring people together. . . And that element of creating art, where you're an equal contributor, but it's also bigger than just your own idea. I think there's a lot of power in that. I think we're really enjoying that together."

Stillwater hosts annual Nerf war

Students arranged another successful school-wide Nerf war, which began April 8



Harper Estenson

This year's annual Stillwater Nerf War started on April 8. With the first kill from junior Alazar Jamal on senior Anthony Toscano at 11 p.m., by April 10 there had been 69 recorded kills, 20 of which had already been revived. This was just a start to the war. This is a great way to take some pressure off kids and help them be kids again, there are also many safety concerns. The Stillwater Police Department sent out a Facebook message on April 14 reminding kids to be safe, as they have responded to a few calls regarding the game and questionable activity.

For more background, this is a competition of Stillwater High School students created as a school-wide game with three admins, who "regulate the game, answer players questions, handle the money, and oversee and record kills," senior admin Joe Krenz said.

Students sign up in teams for \$5 per person to try and beat others. Each team has four to eight people, and you and your team try to shoot

other people on other teams with nerf guns. Once a person is killed they are out of the game unless they get "revived." To get revived your team needs ten kills, or your team needs to find a care package. A care package is hidden somewhere in Stillwater and admins give hints to where they are. Although not all care packages are to get revived it is one way. Each team needs three kills a week in order to keep all alive team members in the game. The winner is decided by the last team standing, with no specific end date, the winning team gets all the money raised in entry fees.

Many parents and people in the community are worried that this war is dangerous and that kids may be going too far to get a kill.

Junior Addie DeMars explained this is actually not the case at all, and sometimes the rules of the game are what strikes controversy.

"The rules are clear, but the way people listen to them or not. There's a lot of fighting on people who were shot or were not shot," DeMars

said. "It is also what is keeping the game safe."

Krenz, senior admin Carson Arco and Tayo Afuye would consider making and obtaining these rules as their main job. There are many rules regarding cars to keep kids safe such as no shooting into cars and no shooting out of cars. On top of this, there are also rules on "safe zones" such as school, home, place of work, and church to help keep privacy and safety within the game as well as penalties for those who don't obey the rules, whether that means they are disqualified from the war or their kill is taken back.

"If a player violates the rules we contact them right away to address the situation," Krenz said.

With the worry of dangerous behavior many look past the fact that other things such as inclusivity could be a problem in the war.

DeMars, on the team "Bad Butchers," assures people that this is not the case. "It is inclusive, but you have to get yourself involved."

"It is open for everyone except freshmen. They can't

drive which makes it harder," Krenz said.

"I just really paired up with my friends. Some of them are strategic for people who I'm friends with but are kind of predominantly in other friend groups so that we could possibly set up and kill their friends that I don't know as well," DeMars said.

It is a great way to get to know new people in a fun light-hearted way. With all of the stress and pressure of school and home life, this may be just the way to get student's minds off everything and have fun with friends.

The point of this game is to bring not only the school but the community together. This war is a great way to get to know new people and get closer with those you do know. This war is so fun for all of the community, even those not directly involved in the game, it is so fun for people to follow and watch as friends battle.

"The point of the war is ultimately to have fun and of course win, a downside is some kids lose sight of that during the game," Krenz said.

69
Recorded Kills

20
Kills Revived

4/8
Start date

4-8
Players per team

Data from April 10

Voices of Change conference impacts students

Mackenzie Vang

Cultural Liaison Cornelius Rish and several other student leaders held a virtual conference called The Voices of Change conference on April 16. This was intended to openly communicate to school administration about issues that involve the school environment regarding racism, inequality, the structure of the curriculum and more.

Junior Rachel Dagbovie attended the conference and was able to discuss and learn about her experiences.

"During the conference, we brought up racial disparities in our school. We talked about the importance of having more BIPOC staff members so that students feel more comfortable," Dagbovie said. "We also discussed what it feels like to be a BIPOC student in a predominantly white school and the challenges we face. We focused on solutions to these challenges."

Many students gathered and shared their thoughts about important topics and gathered new perspectives about real-world issues. This was an opportunity for students to learn more from their peers and their experiences, as well as listening to people and their conversations.

Dagbovie heard similar ideas regarding racism. "A big issue we addressed is racism. Many BIPOC students, including myself, have witnessed a plethora of incidents that have been pushed under the rug by the administration."

The energy around a school environment is crucial, especially to discuss the impact school communities can have on students of color. It's important to understand and see how these ideas are connected, since school should be a safe environment for students to be comfortable in. The Voices of Change virtual conference not only discussed topics of racism and culture but also how a school setting can contribute to negative things regarding those topics.

"The school's actions toward this act of change could very much change the relationship they have with the BIPOC students of the school because there will be more willing to come to the staff about these issues," sophomore Faith Yang said.

There has been evidence of disparities in school along with education and income gaps. For instance, teachers might be less likely to spot Black students who excel academically. Data from an Early Childhood Longitudinal Study found that colleagues found Black students 54 percent less likely than white students to be recommended for gifted education programs, after adjusting factors such as standardized test scores. The outcomes impact how students learn greatly, which is why it is important to focus on these issues.

"It's important to keep students educated about these sensitive topics because once they graduate and go out into

the world, they'll likely interact with people with different experiences and points of view, hence why it's important for them to hear diverse voices and learn how to be open and compassionate," Dagbovie explained.

According to data from the CDN, students of color are often concentrated in schools with fewer resources. Because schools with 90 percent or more students of color spend about \$733 less per student per year than schools with 90 percent or more white students. These kinds of statistics show how schools have a divide, and because of these divides, it has major effects on students of color. Together students can work together on these issues to have a better idea moving forward can change our community.

"The school could help by announcing and spreading the word with just as much enthusiasm as the SLC at Stillwater is giving," Yang said.

The importance of listening and amplifying the voices of the BIPOC student community is the first step people can take. As a whole, to take action and spread awareness creates changes for the better in the community and school.



Graphic by Nissa Wilcox

"It's important to keep students educated about these sensitive topics because once they graduate and go out into the world, they'll likely interact with people with different experiences and points of view."

Rachel Dagbovie

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Swift's new revival album 'Fearless (Taylor's Version),' instant hit

Ella Spitzer

Taylor Swift has been a country and pop music icon for over a decade. Young girls have looked up to her since 2006 and it is all well deserved. Swift has catered to many different styles of music and given everyone something to enjoy. She is one of few child-appropriate singers nowadays that older age groups can enjoy just as much.

"I listened to the original 'Fearless' album when it first came out when we were little kids, and her first album, 'Taylor Swift', junior Mayona Jones said.

Swift now has nine albums. She has explored many types of music and several styles and tones. She had a country pop stage, a heartbreak stage- (several of those)- an independent stage, a mysterious stage, and then back to the original love song, country-pop Swift we all know and love with her remake of "Fearless."

Swift announced that she will be rerecording nine albums total, meaning more unreleased songs and remaking of the old ones. Swift's top selling song as of right now is "Shake It Off", released in 2014 as part of the "1989" album. It is definitely an up-beat song, but many might agree that it was very overplayed, on every radio station, all of the time. "It's not my favorite, I think another song should be the one that really represents her," sophomore Maya Hanlon said



Photo by Ella Spitzer
Junior Mayona Jones listens to Taylor Swift's Fearless (Taylor's Version). Swift's new album includes 6 released songs "from the vault" that she did not release the first time around.

recorded album was that she technically did not own her old albums, so she wanted to remake them under her own copyright so she could earn the profits from them, as well as tweak them to be the best they could be. There is a slight instrumental difference between the two, and her pitch control has improved over the years, (not that anyone could complain that it wasn't also great before.) The new album is extremely similar to the old one. Besides copyright issues with her old one, it's hard to say it was really worth it to re-record the old songs, but because of the legal things it does make sense why Swift chose to do so. I couldn't really tell the difference between the old and the new one to be honest, besides the new songs," Hanlon said.

Swift also released six "from the vault" songs for this album, ones that she did not release the first time around, but thought were good additions for the new album. "Mr. Perfectly Fine", "You All Over Me", "That's When", "Don't You", "Bye Bye Baby", and "Love Story" remix were the titles. Both Jones and Hanlon's favorite songs of the entire album was "Mr. Perfectly Fine," which is a popular opinion as it hit number one on the iTunes charts almost instantly. Personally my favorite song of the album was "You belong with me" as it was a childhood staple, but of the new

when asked if she thinks that "Shake It Off" is worthy of Taylor's number one song.

The album "Fearless" came out nearly 14 years ago, and it was a hit then too, but last month when Swift released "Fearless (Taylor's version)" it broke the charts instantly. Old and new fans alike enjoyed this album.

For some it was just new fun music to listen to. For others it was a throwback to childhood. This album of course appeals to everyone, younger and new fans alike, but the people who appreciate this the most are Swift's fans who listened to the Fearless album 13 years ago when it was released. Whether or not they

continued to listen to Swift through those years varied, but anyone can appreciate the nostalgia.

"I haven't listened to her since I was a kid, until my friends started playing this new album and I actually liked it, but till then she kind of just fell off," Jones said.

The point of Taylor's re-

Graphics by Alexis Schmitz
Information from Good Morning America

- Swift's original "Fearless" album has sold over ten million copies since 2008
- "Fearless (Taylor's Version)" features the thirteen tracks off of the original album, plus fourteen more bonus tracks.
- "Fearless" won the Album of the Year award at the 2010 Grammy's
- The album features Colbie Caillat who originally dueted Swift on the track, "Breathe"

Duo Silk Sonic releases new single 'Leave the Door Open'

Michael May

This past March, the RnB duo Silk Sonic released the first single to their upcoming LP, "An Evening With Silk Sonic" which does not have a scheduled release date. The leading single of the record is titled "Leave the Door Open" and has been immediately receiving widespread acclaim from both the public and critics alike. They have had a successful Grammy performance, and the song has spent six weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, peaking at number one. The two main forces behind Silk Sonic are Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak, both of whom have huge followings on their own, and have both had chart placing singles and tracks in the past.

Bruno Mars is a household name at this point, from his soaring vocal talents to his brilliant songwriting, he has made a big name for himself. Mars has been relatively absent since 2016, when

he dropped his last LP "24K Magic", so his comeback to the spotlight was unexpected. Despite his mainstream success, not everyone was sold on his name alone.

"I have never been a big fan of Bruno Mars. It's always been super poppy for me," junior Kaspar Millfelt said.

However, Mars felt right at home on this new track. His ability to time travel with his music, throwing his audience back to a more glamorous time of RnB during the 70s and 80s, is a one of a kind talent, and is what makes him stand out in the current landscape of the music industry.

Anderson .Paak has been much busier these past few years. His fusion of RnB and Hip Hop has made him have one of the most exciting discographies over the past decade, and his raspy but yet beautiful voice fits perfectly with the sound that the group is trying to recreate.

"It reminds me a lot of Ventura," Millfelt added.

Ventura is the studio album released by .Paak in 2019, and is known for its "easy going vintage soul" according to Apple Music. This is the exact type of sound that the duo were trying to achieve on the new single, and is what has made this "the most refined and crisp song to come out this year," junior Kiran Kumaran added. .Paak's very distinct style of very loose and relaxed drum beats are prevalent on both the aforementioned Ventura, and "Leave the Door Open."

The pairing of Mars and .Paak was unexpected to say the least, but it is nevertheless creating a buzz that the music scene hasn't felt in a long time. If these two come out with a record that is even half as catchy and sophisticated as this recent single, Kumaran added that "this could be a modern day classic," and the music scene will have to buckle up for what could be one of the best projects in a long time.



Fair use image from Silk Sonic

This past March, the RnB duo Silk Sonic released the first single to their upcoming LP, "An Evening With Silk Sonic" which does not have a scheduled release date.