STOCKING UP ON FEAR.

SEE PAGE 8-9
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cheating is an epidemic disease that will continue to spread and become prevalent in our schools unless drastic measures are taken in order to prevent it. According to the Campaign to Discourage Academic Cheating, 75 to 98 percent of college students reported having cheated in high school. The record numbers of students cheating in high school are a cause for concern.

The traditional school system in the United States was invented during the Industrial Age. The assembly-line method to teach and prepare students for tests and exams leaves many students struggling behind their peers while the class continues to move forward. This added with the increasing pressure to perform well in school prompts students to focus more on their grades rather than actually learning the concepts. Many students, such as myself, fail to see how our school prepares us for the real world. The tactics of following strict rules may have helped people get and maintain a job in a factory, but the modern world benefits people who pursue their own creativity and learn to communicate and cooperate with others. None of this justifies cheating of course; however, as students lose faith in their school system and become demotivated, it’s easy to see why they turn toward cheating.

Sincerely,
Ratan Satya
Junior

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

“A District discusses potential changes to final exams” details a vital progression for RSD’s homogeneous, outdated final exam policy. The amendment, making final exam formatting more flexible, will allow for exams that better represent knowledge and reflect university policies. In my physical education class, many of my peers and I had high As leading up to the final exam due to our effort. However, many of us earned Bs and Cs on the final as the traditional format of the exam did not correspond with the performance-based nature of the class. With the proposed change, non-traditional classes can deliver a final in the more relevant format of a presentation or skill performance that gauges student progress in ways a traditional multiple-choice final cannot. Moreover, Harvard University recently saw “only 23 percent of [its] undergraduate courses” give a traditional final exam. Given a high school’s role to prepare its students for college, its exam policy should reflect those of top universities. Many esteemed schools are reworking the limiting nature of a traditional final course basis because they recognize the need and the value of an exam that reflects the rest of the class and meets university policies. In my physical education class, many of my peers and I had high As leading up to the final exam due to our effort. However, many of us earned Bs and Cs on the final as the traditional format of the exam did not correspond with the performance-based nature of the class. With the proposed change, non-traditional classes can deliver a final in the more relevant format of a presentation or skill performance that gauges student progress in ways a traditional multiple-choice final cannot. Moreover, Harvard University recently saw “only 23 percent of [its] undergraduate courses” give a traditional final exam. Given a high school’s role to prepare its students for college, its exam policy should reflect those of top universities.

Sincerely,
Phoebe Calabrese
Junior
Legalization of medical marijuana

RSD reflects on how the legalization of medical marijuana in Missouri will affect district health policy.

mansi MAMIDI

As of right now, students with a doctor’s suggestion to use any variation of medical marijuana must be taken off campus by a parent or guardian to consume the drug and then come back to school.

Despite state legalization, the lack of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval is what Wehr said prevents school nurses from administering medical marijuana, along with the mandate that nurses cannot break state or federal law. As a result of the lack of FDA approval as a medication, students cannot be administered medical marijuana by a school nurse and could not use the drug on school grounds. In order for students to be able to leave campus and use the drug under parental supervision, Wehr said the student must have a doctor’s note suggesting medical marijuana would aid a specific issue such as chronic pain or anxiety.

“If suggested by a doctor, students and parents can come up with a solution to consume the drug at home,” Wehr said.

Wehr said the legalization did cause better outlined protocol to be set up for students to be able to consume the medication off school grounds and return to school. Principal Dr. Steve Hankins said MHS has no current cases of this situation, but expects this issue to become a topic of larger discussion as medical marijuana continues to be legalized throughout the country.

“It’s a special case, because marijuana is still under such a constraining category of drug within federal law, and is used recreationally, but is now considered a legitimate medicine,” Dr. Hankins said. “But whether you agree with it or not, the conversation will continue to open up as it continues to become more commonplace.”

Dr. Hankins said, for right now, administrators will follow the district policy to have a student consume off campus with a parent, with the permission of a doctor’s note. However, he said if increased prevalence causes more measures to be taken or it becomes necessary for nurses to reconsider policy, things could change.

Since the legalization of medical marijuana, Missouri lawmakers are reviewing the amendment and seeing if changes are needed to regulate the newly legalized drug.

Devin Allgaier, owner of American Shaman CBD in Ellisville, said product sales have actually gone down for his store in the wake of legalization.

“It’s honestly just market saturation,” Allgaier said. “You can get CBD products at every corner store, drug stores, and because consumers don’t yet understand how to tell a product’s quality, so they buy what they see.”

Allgaier said quality control differs from a company to company basis, and that, in conjunction with the lack of federal regulation, can make the market abundant with all sorts of products that might not be as authentic.

“This overabundance of products that are meant for medicinal purposes can seriously hurt consumers,” Allgaier said. “Better regulation and education are necessary now that it’s legal.”

The issue of the legalization for medicinal usage was put onto the ballot as Amendment 2 in 2018 and was approved with a 66 percent majority vote.

WHEN AUTUMN

Brown, senior, suffered an injury during basketball camp to her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), the tissue within the knee connecting the thigh bone and shinbone, she was prescribed painkillers to deal with the aftermath of the surgery.

“I went for a layup, and I landed wrong,” Brown said. “Everyone thought it was just sprained, so I kept playing on it, but I kept hurting myself, so I finally went to the doctor and found out that I actually tore my ACL.”

Brown said she was prescribed oxycodone to deal with the pain of the injury, but she couldn’t use them to get through the day at school because consuming her prescribed painkillers would still be described as being under the influence.

“It was really hard the first few weeks when school started,” Brown said. “I was on crutches, and my leg hurt really bad, but I just wasn’t allowed to take that medicine.”

Amy Wehr, supervisor of Wellness and Health Services, said that gray area has come to the forefront with the state legalization of medical marijuana in 2018.

The 2018 legalization law mandates that medical marijuana is allowed to be prescribed for any “chronic, debilitating or other medical condition” as determined by a physician, along with any terminal illness.

“Marijuana is still a class one narcotic and not legal at the federal level,” Wehr said. “So, as a district, students cannot smoke marijuana or consume cannabis oil (CBD) pills while on campus.”

With the legalization of medical marijuana, attaining it, along with CBD infused products, such as the water soluble Ultra-Concentrated Hemp Oil Supplement, as pictured in a transaction above, has become easier not only for adults but for students who are prescribed such products for issues such as anxiety. However, since marijuana is classified as a class one narcotic, issues can arise when students are prescribed marijuana for medicinal use, resulting in review of RSD policy. Photographs by Mansi Mamidi.
Students raise concerns about bus overcrowding

anika TALYAN

IN SEVENTH GRADE, ADELINE Chen, freshman, had to sit in the aisle because there was not enough space for her to sit anywhere else on her bus. A RSD staff member then had to rearrange her bus and made the seventh and eighth graders switch their bus sections to create more space.

Now, as a freshman, Chen has once again experienced a similar issue.

“I think that it is still a problem,” Chen said. “I feel like they are not addressing it, even though my bus driver said that he would do something about it.”

She rides Bus 41 and said the bus becomes overcrowded when students who usually aren’t on the bus or are from other buses come and ride her bus. It becomes overcrowded about twice a week.

“When I don’t get a seat, I get irritated,” Chen said. She said this is an overlooked problem that can be solved by adding more buses and by splitting up the routes.

Taylor Phillips, freshman, rides Bus 47 and said her bus gets crowded when it is raining or when activities are canceled. Her bus often crowds once or twice every two or three weeks.

Normally when it becomes overcrowded, people sit three to a seat, sit in the aisle and stand in the back of Bus 47, Phillips said.


Phillips said the Transportation Department could solve this problem by evening out the overcrowded and under crowded buses.

Lamar Merriweather, driver of Bus 39, said he is supposed to have more students on the bus than he already does but not everyone is there because some of them drive.

He said the bus becomes overcrowded when students who usually drive have to ride the bus.

“We need to adjust the situation by making sure that everyone rides the bus who is supposed to ride the bus because if they’re not, then it just overcrowds and then it’s uncomfortable,” Merriweather said.

Mike Heyman, director of transportation, said there is not an overcrowding issue because some students make an effort to sit alone until the bus driver has to come and make them sit with other people.

“We don’t really have an overflow,” Heyman said. “It’s a perceived overflow or an overcrowding.”

Heyman defines overcrowding as the stage when students are unable to sit on their seat completely with their backs touching the back of the seat.

Heyman said the carrying capacity of an average high school bus ranges from 71 to 83, depending on the fleet, which would mean three to a seat at most.

His ideal number of students on a bus is 48, which is about two to a seat.

“If the number of students on the bus goes over the capacity, then there would be a new bus called to deal with this overflow,” Heyman said.

Heyman said the issue of overcrowding has not been brought up to him this year, but if there was an issue, they’d deal with it.

DAMON LEUTHAUSER
DRIVER OF BUS 41

“Usually there are about 43 to 48 kids on my bus, but sometimes there can be 60 or more.”

Adeline Chen, freshman, crouches on Bus 41 on her way home from school on a Friday, which Chen said is the day the bus is the most crowded. “I think they should do something to fix it because we have a lot of subdivisions and areas that we go into and I feel like they should split that up more,” Chen said. Photograph by Anika Talyan

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Adeline Chen, freshman, crouches on Bus 41 on her way home from school on a Friday, which Chen said is the day the bus is the most crowded. “I think they should do something to fix it because we have a lot of subdivisions and areas that we go into and I feel like they should split that up more,” Chen said. Photograph by Anika Talyan

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AS A STUDENT PUBLICATION, WE HOLD ourselves to the highest standard to cover issues that affect our community, our faculty and, most importantly, our students. We often report on controversial issues, pointing out flaws and discrepancies in our school and district. We believe our publication serves a part in the student-administration relationship, giving students a voice. However, this voice, coming directly from students, seems not to be heard or listened to unless it’s published on a “professional” platform.

Last month, a Messenger staff writer’s letter to the editor was published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch describing the lack of diversity in Advanced Placement and higher level classes at MHS. Community members spoke out and as the letter was read by administrators, meetings were set up with the student to further discuss policy changes and other ways to solve the issue.

The Messenger wrote an article about this exact problem in last year’s May issue. But instead of being met with emails and phone calls for change, the administration gave no response.

The readiness with which the district approached the letter seemed to be fueled more from concern for public appearance than student satisfaction with their educational environment. This establishes not only the district’s disregard for student media, but the perspective that in order for student experiences to be validated, “real-world” media needs to get involved.

The ratio of local news such as KSDK, the Post-Dispatch, Leader Publications and Fox 2 News to student news stories on the district’s Twitter feed reveals this disparity. To name one instance in particular, the district retweeted a student profile written by KSDK that was weeks earlier published by The Messenger, so clearly it’s not a matter of content but authority.

The lack of accreditation of student publications is present in RSD news as well. As an educational institution, the district should be championing and empowering student work, rather than being in competition with them. Too many times has student writing been reproduced well-written student work, instead of celebrating it.

Student media should be linked on the “District News” of the RSD website as a truer reflection of what is actually going on at the high school level.

When the district has announcements, we ask them to let us break the news. We are here to document events, no matter how big or how small. Tell us when something is happening and give us the opportunity to cover it. We are the liaison of communication between administration and students, so let us act as such.

At the very minimum, read our work and share it on social media. Read the opinions of our student body. Read about their accomplishments. Read about the challenges they face and changes they wish to see.

After all, if anywhere, an educational institution is where student voice should be amplified and matter most.

We are the liaison of communication between administration and students, so let us act as such.

OPINIONS

SPEAK OUT

In Missouri, convicted felons of non-violent crimes have their voting rights restored, so The Messenger asked:

SHOULD FELONS ON PROBATION OR PAROLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE? WHY?

“Yes, they should be allowed to vote because they’ve learned from their crime and they’re probably not going to do that again. I don’t think that should affect their voting or like U.S. citizenship because as U.S. citizens it’s their right to vote.”

“Because they served their sentence in jail. They cannot vote in jail, so I think they have already served their punishment. A lot of people believe not being able to vote is a form of punishment for committing a felony, but the punishment should be jail.”

“Regardless of their mistakes, their opinion matters. When people go through prison, they learn so much and I think that could really bring a lot of insight into voting.”

“Yes, I think that they do. They still need to share their output even if they had been in jail.”

“They’ve served their time and are trying to make amends with society and should still have a say in how our country is run. As an active member of society, they should be able to participate in their civic duty like others in their community.”

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molly SILLITTO

Students should prioritize health over school

OFTEN DURING THIS TIME OF THE year filled with flu, stuffy noses and coughing, it is not uncommon to see a fellow peer in class coughing and hacking while struggling to keep their head up. But if a student is so ill, then why would they come to school to potentially further damage their body or harm others?

Because missing even a few days of school can prove to be detrimental to a student’s grades. Notifications buzz from Infinite Campus as absences are marked and quizzes, tests and assignments go in as missing.

It piles up, and before a student may even notice it, the perfect grade report has slipped down to three Cs and an F in the span of only a few days. And though those grades may only be temporary, students nowadays, especially those taking higher-level classes, are expected to maintain decent grades and are conditioned to prioritize health while struggling to keep their head up.

Coughing, it is not uncommon to see a yearly filled with flu, stuffy noses and coughing. OFTEN DURING THIS TIME OF THE

and getting a quick start on catching up asking for the work that was missed to take care of their body’s needs. justice. Just like mental health, students worth it in the end. Recovering from to maintain a high GPA, it is never needed amount of time. also spread the illness to others. possible delay on recovery, but it may to carry a sickness does not only put a problem. seems to be not a problem, it is indeed ping out on staying home at the time than miss school. And though skip tending to be magically cured of sickness Ferris Bueller, many would rather pre schoolwork.

Keeping up with material is one of my friends was initially heartbreak in the span of only a few days. And though skipping out on staying home at the time seems to be not a problem, it is indeed a problem.

Attending school while continuing to carry a sickness does not only put a possible delay on recovery, but it may also spread the illness to others. Causing a chain reaction of sickness if it is not properly contained for the needed amount of time.

Though it is understandable to want to maintain a high GPA, it is never worth it in the end. Recovering from illness requires medicine and rest. To continue trekking around the school halls like a zombie does no one any justice. Just like mental health, students should also know when to physically take care of their body’s needs.

To get caught up with schoolwork once recovered from an illness, it is important to communicate with teachers. Asking for the work that was missed and getting a quick start on catching up with material is one way to assure that you do not fall behind.

At the end of the day, missing a few days of school is not the end of the world, and health will always be more important than a couple of missing assignments.

Being skinny is a struggle

akhila SWARNA

MY MIND BEGAN TO RACE AS I made my way through a crowd to find my mom, avoiding the swarm of acquaintances. I approached my mom, who was speaking with her friend and reminiscing about gossip. My mom introduced me to her friend.

“Why are you so skinny? You should eat more,” was said to me. Do I laugh it off? Should I raise my eyebrows with concern? Or should I respond with a funny innuendo? Regardless of my response, this was the implication: I am too skinny. These words may seem easy to overlook and forget, right? Wrong. The days following my encounters with the body-shaming people sparked a frenzy of Google searches.

“How do I gain weight fast?”

“How to increase weight?”

“What are weight gaining hacks?”

These articles made it seem like it would take a long time before I was at my vision of “ideal weight.”

The time constraint finally made me realize I may never be able to gain the weight needed to impress my parents’ friends or myself.

However, I did quickly realize my personal opinion of myself matters more than what others think of me. I am not alone in this fight. There is less awareness about how the struggles of being skinny results in a lack of confidence, being overly conscious about appearance and even having a constant need to increase weight.

Some can’t gain weight because they physically aren’t able to. According to Harvard Health, having a high metabolism may prevent a person from gaining weight faster than their peers. Having a high metabolism means someone can “burn more calories at rest and during activity.” Similar to me, many people who try but cannot gain weight may not be satisfied with their body image.

Only 26 percent of women and 28 percent of men are satisfied with their body image, according to a study published by the journal “Body Image.”

According to the National Organization for Women Foundation, at age 13, about 53 percent of teenage girls are unhappy with their bodies. This is appalling.

In society today, women and men feel out of place in their own bodies. We have to fix this.

Let’s create a new mindset that allows people to understand that all people are beautiful, regardless of weight and appearance. It will take effort. But together, we can help everyone feel beautiful in their own skin, just like I do.

Keep religion out of education

will ROACH

MOST OF THE STUDENTS I GO TO school with today have been in the public school system their entire lives and don’t talk to private school kids on a daily basis.

So I can always get a good reaction out of people when I tell them about the part of my childhood spent at the private school St. Clare of Assisi.

Like most primary schools, St. Clare teaches its students basics like math and English, but because it is a Catholic school, there is a strong emphasis on teaching the religion.

I attended the school from Kindergarten until fourth grade, after which I transferred to Westridge Elementary School in the RSD.

Although losing contact with my friends was initially heartbreak-ing, I found my school experience at Westridge not only engaged me more in academics, but it also gave me a wider worldview than St. Clare could ever have hoped to.

My time at St. Clare is loaded with memories of over-reactive teachers and a restrictive curriculum.

Teachers all have varying teaching styles, and although working at different kinds of schools does not change that, the content that must be taught does. For St. Clare teachers, educating and instilling students with the teachings of Catholicism is part of the job; whereas for Westridge teachers, enforcing any form of religion is illegal. It should be mentioned, however, informing students on the workings of religion is perfectly fine.

Due to the difference in content, public school teachers tend to hone in straight to the point of education: giving students what they need to know to succeed in the future. Private school teachers can still achieve this goal, but they have significantly more work to do by including religion in the curriculum.

Religion, in and of itself, can be a wonderful part of one’s lifestyle, but when enforced in education, it takes away the chance for students to pick other elective classes. At Westridge, I had access to a typing class instead of a music class. Granted, it wasn’t the largest choice, but it still allowed me to improve myself on a more practical level than one that wouldn’t benefit me beyond my formal education.

Another con to enforcing religion in education is all evidence against religion, despite being grounded in reality, must be ignored. I don’t mean anything particularly edgy like “Jesus can’t exist because it’s impossible to walk on water.” I mean evidence more contradictory to concepts like creationism, the belief that the Earth is only a few thousand years old.

Religion should not be enforced in education. Faith should be picked up in one’s personal life. Doing so gives much more validation to a person’s beliefs rather than following a religion because an adult told that person to do so.
HOMELESS TO HONORS
Senior returns to St. Louis for a fresh start

carter VAN BUSKIRK

WHAT DOES HOMELESSNESS LOOK like? Is it the man begging for money on the side of the road? Is it the impoverished family living in a homeless shelter? Or is it the boy who aced his biology test right next to you?

Joe Stazzone, senior, is homeless.

Stazzone attended MHS his freshman and sophomore years; however, during the summer of 2018, Stazzone moved to Indianapolis with his parents, two older brothers and little sister.

Stazzone’s parents are both doctors. With his father being a surgeon and mother a radiologist, Stazzone said, “My parents were going crazy about when I moved back, and the counselors have been great about helping me succeed,” Stazzone said.

Dr. TERRY HARRIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF STUDENT SERVICES

HOW DOES ROCKWOOD DEFINE HOMELESSNESS?

“The definition of homelessness is whether or not you have fit, regular and adequate housing. Fit is whether or not you’ll be there. Regular means you stay there regularly. Adequate meaning it’s not a condemned building. There are some people with fit houses and you’ll find it’s condemn and not in great living condition.”

HOW DOES THE PERCEPTION OF HOMELESSNESS DIFFER IN RSD FROM WHAT PEOPLE USUALLY VIEW IT AS?

“At workshops I often say I want you to close your eyes and when I say a homeless person what do you think of. Most of us think of someone older in age, hair all over the place, they’re pushing a grocery cart and talking to themselves. The reality is students who are homeless are couch surfing, living in hotel and motels or living with other families.”

WHAT RESOURCES DOES RSD OFFER TO STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

“We want people to feel safe and talk to someone be it a classroom teacher, counselor or social worker. Once you talk to those people and let them know what you’re experiencing we will make sure we do all the things we can do. One, make sure you have free lunch. Two, make sure your transportation needs are met. Three, maintain sports and activities. Four, cover some academic expenses.”

HOMELESSNESS IN RSD
BY THE NUMBERS

Number of homeless students at MHS: 21
Number of homeless students in RSD: 185

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Joe Stazzone, senior, will attend New York University, where he will study biology. Specifically, he is interested in neurobiology, similar to his parents. Stazzone said MHS and St. Louis “St. Louis is great, because people were nicer to me,” he said. “It brought will still always be a part of him. me a home that I couldn’t find for the longest time. Truly, I will cherish that.”

Photograph by Jackson Estwanick

”[St. Louis] brought me a home that I couldn’t find for the longest time.”

JOE STAZZONE
SENIOR

by guaranteeing the right to education, despite being homeless.

Stazzone receives aid from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), an organization specializing in homeless young adults.

For youth separated from their parents or guardians during a difficult situation, the NCHE provides a stable and secure environment, offering structure and support to help them overcome the hardships they have experienced and regain their academic, social and emotional footing.

“The program is really nice,” Stazzone said. “You don’t have to pay for any college applications, and I get free lunch.”

Social Worker Brenda Casey is the homeless coordinator at MHS. Casey is responsible for helping students apply for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Casey said her job is to advocate for students and make sure students have access to education. Casey makes sure students have transportation to and from school, clothes and food. She also helps students get college counselling and funding for standardized tests, such as the ACT.

“I do anything I can possibly do to get students access to education and to make sure that their basic needs are met,” Casey said.

Kenzie Simmons, senior, has known Stazzone since kindergarten. Her family volunteered to accommodate Stazzone, giving him a house and a bed to sleep in.

“He has been my best friend for years and was already kind of like family to us,” Simmons said.

She said her relationship with Stazzone has strengthened in the past year.

“[St. Louis] has always been a tough, hard-nosed, competitive player,” Kenny said.

“We want people to feel safe and talk to someone be it a classroom teacher, counselor or social worker. Once you talk to those people and let them know what you’re experiencing we will make sure we do all the things we can do. One, make sure you have free lunch. Two, make sure your transportation needs are met. Three, maintain sports and activities. Four, cover some academic expenses.”

“[St. Louis] brought me a home that I couldn’t find for the longest time.”

JOE STAZZONE
SENIOR

ly as a mature individual. Stazzone has learned about money, household chores and how to live on his own.

“I understand people need time away, and I’m not going to deny him of an education and a home,” Julie said. “People need to understand what homelessness is. That is the first step to change.”

Stazzone said he hasn’t been in contact with his family in recent months, but is settling in with his new one perfectly.

This fall, after moving into his new home, Stazzone played varsity soccer.

Stazzone said he recalls showing up to his first varsity practices with only a trash bag to hold his shoes. He also wore Kenzie’s brother’s clothes to practice.

Chris Kenny, varsity soccer coach, said he met Stazzone freshman year.

“He has always been a tough, hard-nosed, competitive player,” Kenny said. "He seems to be very quiet overall but

he is pretty focused on what’s important to him.”

Stazzone has been in the program every year he has attended MHS. After taking a year off, he was eager to get back into the sport.

“I know coming back after being away was hard for him, but I think what I’ll remember was his willingness to take on his own challenge and overcome obstacles like he did,” Kenny said.

Off the field Stazzone has accumulated a multitude of academic awards. Since freshman year, Stazzone has acquired the Future Medical Leaders Award of Excellence, the National Society of High School Scholars Award and has been on the Honor Roll at Carmel High School and MHS.

“There are a lot of people at MHS that help provide for me, especially when I moved back, and the counselors have been great about helping me succeed,” Stazzone said.
Children attend a simplified Chinese class at the St. Louis Chinese Language School at Sedgeville Middle School. The teacher discussed the curriculum, how early it can spread and how a classroom does not have to show any symptoms to transmit it. Students raised $200 for Wuhan relief by donating spare change and their allowance.

With the rise of the new coronavirus, Chiu has increasingly been exposed to xenophobia and sometimes outright racist. It started off with her friends making sarcastic jokes, then progressed to strangers and people in her classes giving her dirty looks whenever the coronavirus was mentioned, and now even noticing people's fear and discomfort when she is out in public.

The coronavirus, named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization, originated in China and is closely related to the SARS virus. Coronavirus are mostly seen in animals and initial symptoms are typical of a common cold or flu. The first case on U.S. soil was confirmed on January 20th, 2020. A KRON4 Radio reported two positive cases in Illinois, March 11, and about 100 people in the St. Louis area are being monitored for exposure to the virus.

Chiu attends St. Louis Modern Chinese Academy on Sundays. However, she said the paranoia surrounding the coronavirus has led to the cancellation of Chinese School for three consecutive weeks. When classes resumed Feb. 23, she said they were mostly empty with two to three students per class and only half of the teachers in attendance. Chiu said out of the students that did show up, the majority were wearing surgical masks. “It was like something you would see on the internet,” Chiu said. “It didn’t seem like something you would witness in person. That’s all we are thinking of.”

In addition to canceling classes, Chiu’s Chinese school has taken other measures, including having a hand sanitizer at all times and installing hand sanitizer dispensers in every class. She said the main reason for the cancellation was to provide environment for teachers and students to keep careful distance to avoid transmission. She said the Chinese school has taken a mask to Chinese school out of fear. That’s when she started to learn that people in her family have been aware of germs and cleanliness and sanitation before the Chinese school has the coronavirus and “were always keeping themselves in a building that has already been spread, which she said he added to her family’s paranoia and continuousness.

JENNIFER SEIB nurse practitioner specialist

Seib said though people should remain mindful of COVID-19, the flu is a much more prevalent threat. “The news is making it seem dramatic,” Seib said. “I mean it is concerning, and they’re still learning more about it, but I wouldn’t fit anyone in the hospital at this point.”

Currently, people precautions should take people include routine behaviors like washing hands, sanitizing and wearing germ resistance. The fear of touching the face. She said people would not be wearing masks, but rather saving them for those who are sick.

Seib said schools should be making students aware of these precautions as well as wiping down disinfectants and disinfecting desks.
The coronavirus, named COVID-19, is a highly contagious respiratory illness that has spread rapidly across the globe since December 2019. The World Health Organization declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. As of March 2020, the outbreak has claimed thousands of lives and disrupted the economies of many countries.

The virus spreads primarily through droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can then be inhaled by a person nearby or land on surfaces, where they may remain spreadable for several days. People who are infected but have no symptoms can also transmit the virus.

The virus was first identified in Wuhan, China, in late December 2019. By mid-March 2020, it had spread to more than 180 countries and territories, with millions of cases and tens of thousands of deaths reported worldwide. The United States has been hit particularly hard, with over 1 million cases and over 50,000 deaths as of early April 2020.

The virus spreads quickly and can cause severe illness in some individuals, particularly those with underlying health conditions. The majority of people infected experience mild to moderate symptoms, such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. However, in severe cases, the virus can cause pneumonia, respiratory failure, and death.

Preventive measures include frequent handwashing, avoiding close contact with sick people, and practicing social distancing. Medical professionals are particularly at risk of infection, and healthcare facilities in affected areas are under significant strain.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on all aspects of daily life, from healthcare and education to work and travel. It has revealed existing inequalities and highlighted the need for global cooperation and solidarity in the face of this unprecedented global crisis.
Wacky Wardrobe:
Senior dons eccentric outfits

zara TOLA

WHILE MOST STUDENTS TEND TO STICK TO A simple pairing of a shirt and pants for their school attire, one student has defied this standard approach in his clothing. Brayden Haas, senior, walks the halls in one-of-a-kind outfits every single day.

After dressing up festively for spirit days, he said he wanted to start regularly wearing the unique ensembles he had previously worn to flaunt his style and show people he isn’t always focused on school.

Haas started this after first semester finals ended and was partially inspired because it is his last semester at MHS and he wanted to have fun, let loose and show people he’s not always focused on school.

“Every night at 8 p.m. I am scrounging around my house looking for anything I can possibly think of,” Haas said. “I usually latch onto one piece of clothing that seems very odd and noticeable and then I build costumes off of that.”

Haas has his outfits from various trips, thrift shop hauls with his friends and previous events like the Mr. Mustang pageant.

So far, Haas has dressed up as anything from gonzo to one of MHS' own teachers, Philip Schmidt. He said he hopes to keep his streak of wearing unique clothing going until Spring Break.

“My favorite so far has definitely been my Beastie Boys outfit. I dressed up like they did for their music video Intergalactic, where they wear these hazmat suits with yellow gloves and yellow boots,” Haas said.

Junior Annika Haas, Brayden’s sister, said that although she didn’t expect Brayden to come to school wearing such extravagant outfits, it truly reflects his loud and energetic personality.

“You don’t usually see that on a normal basis,” Annika said. “It’s a little strange because it just came out of nowhere just after the new year.”

Annika said Brayden’s positive, outgoing side is more apparent at school than at home.

“He and my sister Madeline are similar. They are more loud and talkative,” Annika said.

Brayden’s mom, Kerry Haas, confirmed Brayden’s quirky personality, but said he is devoted to his studies at the same time.

“I think that Brayden’s teachers and friends think of him as intelligent and hardworking, but as the year goes on and they get to talk to him, they get to see more of his personality,” Kerry said.

Kerry is happy Brayden decided to wear his eccentric wardrobe to school because it has allowed him to show his personality to others. She said his choice to wear such spirited costumes will allow him to end his high school experience on a high note.

“I usually latch onto one piece of clothing that seems very odd and noticeable and then I build costumes off of that.”

BRAYDEN HAAS
SENIOR

Beering plays dress up

“For me, it feels like you have a child’s hopes and dreams in your hands as you’re interacting with them.”

CAT BEERING, JUNIOR

marta MIEZE

CAT BEERING, JUNIOR, HOLDS A JOB UNLIKE the average. Her uniform is a wig, a corset and a full gown. She usually works only a couple weekends a month with various hours. On the job, she sings and dances.

Beering is a party princess.

“It’s really fulfilling to see the kids react to you in the way that they do, just because you are their dreams right in front of them,” Beering said.

Beering got hired by St. Louis Princess Parties in August and has since taken on roles of multiple Disney princesses, including Elsa, Anna and Aurora. Beering said she loves the uniqueness of the job, though sometimes she gets anxious about singing.

“You have to be on your game even more than I guess other people, just because it’s such a high interaction job,” Beering said. “For me, it feels like you have a child’s hopes and dreams in your hands as you’re interacting with them.”

She works at various events, anywhere from private birthday parties to large community events at the Missouri Botanical Garden.

During an event, Beering said it is important to make sure every kid’s experience is enhanced, which sometimes can be hard if some kids are shy.

“It’s really on you to pursue them but not scare them away and really draw them out and have them be enjoying their time,” Beering said.

To prepare for her roles, Beering said she rewrites the movies, listens to the soundtracks and pays close attention to the character’s mannerisms, one of the main being language, ensuring she doesn’t use modern colloquialisms.

She said it is important to keep body language and behavior close to the original character as it shows their individual personality and has to stay consistent for children to be able to enjoy their experience.

Beering was first introduced to the company when she was house hunting during her move to St. Louis from California. She met a girl who worked as a party princess while touring Westminster, who suggested applying. Beering said she filled out the application and submitted a headshot, though her hiring was not standard practice as she wasn’t in town for auditions.

Beering didn’t hear back until later in the year when she had already moved and then she suddenly got a call asking her to work at an event.

She said this job has helped her strengthen her confidence and given her a better sense of how she portrays herself.
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St. Louis Community College
Wildwood
The Wolf
15480 Clayton Rd, Ballwin, 63011

A regular spot for many students, the Wolf is the quintessential community hangout. With rustic log furniture, chalkboard walls, hanging umbrellas and cut out musicians, somehow the eclectic decor all comes together to make an outdoorsy, cozy coffee-house. The Wolf does it all for all: brunch, dinner, drinks and live music for people of all ages with all sorts of dietary restrictions. They do it well with locally sourced and clean ingredients.

Ramen Tei
14027 Manchester Rd, Ballwin, 63011

Tucked amidst a strip of restaurants, Ramen TEI offers a corner of casual, fast-dining Japan. A small, cozy eatery with traditional Japanese decor and small modern accents tucked into every detail, Ramen TEI offers a lesser known part of Japanese cuisine and opens the door to explore in West County. The menu, while limited, includes something to try for everyone. The ramen is nothing like the prepackaged dried noodles everyone has tried, rather an elaborate mix of flavors, including a broth, noodles and an assortment of other ingredients ranging from smoked chicken to seaweed.

Katie’s Pizza and Pasta
14171 Clayton Rd, Town And Country, 63017

If West County took a trip to Italy, the product would be Katie’s. In the dim lighting, the fresh flowers and candles on every table, brick walls, clean white tables and light wood interiors, makes Katie’s a chic spot for an intimate, upscale celebration or gathering. The menu, containing hand crafted pizza and pasta, made fresh every morning, represents a rich, authentic alternative to the Italian we are accustomed to. Katie’s is classy and its quality and taste is unparalleled.

Spend Local

For every $100 spent, $68 will stay in the community.
Independent restaurants return more than two times as much money per dollar of sales than national restaurant chains.
Small businesses accounted for 65% of net new jobs between 2000 and 2018.

Information taken from the U.S. Small Business Association.

Local Likes

The Messenger visited locally owned restaurants and asked staff to recommend their favorite place to eat around town.

Photographs by Jackson Estwanick, Kavya Jain and Marta Mieze
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Girls swim wins second straight State title

connor DEL CARMEN

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE 400-yard freestyle relay, athletes stared expectantly toward the scoreboard at St. Peters Rec-Plex knowing the outcome of the previous relay would determine which team would end up as State champions. When the results updated, MHS athletes rejoiced when they realized they had successfully defended their State title by a mere five points over Suburban Conference rival Kirkwood.

Haley Hume, junior, said the competition for the team title was far greater this year compared to last year. "Going into the last couple of events this year, we knew we would have to perform our very best in order to win," Hume said.

Although Hume said the team was nervous after the 400-meter free relay because a disqualification had been announced, but it was unknown which team had been disqualified. Ultimately, the disqualification didn’t affect the Mustangs or their team score. Esparza also said the team’s mentality throughout the season was different because of how many talented seniors graduated from the team.

"This year, every dual meet we went to we were excited and knew we had to compete to win," Esparza said. "And then we realized from our dual meet success that we were still one of the best teams in the state."

Even though Esparza said the obstacles of winning another championship are great, she knows the team is up for the challenge. "Some teams knowing the chances of winning State are slimmer next year would slack off, but I know our team would work harder to get back to State," Esparza said.

Joseph Schoedel, head swim and dive coach, said this year’s win was more impressive because of how many athletes improved in the off-season.

"I told the girls last year after State, we had a chance to be good, but we all have to get better," Schoedel said. Schoedel also said winning back-to-back State titles speaks to the positive culture of the team because the only other team across all MHS sports to do so was the girls swim teams from 1999 and 2000.

"We’re as good as we are because of the culture in our program of being the best every year," Schoedel said. "If you’re doing that each year, it’s not just because of one group of girls.”

STATE MEET MEDALISTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Medalist</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200-yard medley relay</td>
<td>Amanda Yu</td>
<td>fourth place</td>
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<tr>
<td>200-yard freestyle relay</td>
<td>Amanda Yu</td>
<td>first place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400-yard freestyle relay</td>
<td>Amanda Yu</td>
<td>fourth place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-yard freestyle (sixth place)</td>
<td>Amanda Yu</td>
<td>50-yard freestyle</td>
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<td>100-yard butterfly</td>
<td>Sydney Tolbert</td>
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<td>100-yard medley (sixth place)</td>
<td>Carsyn Cosman</td>
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<tr>
<td>500-yard freestyle (fifth place)</td>
<td>Abby Bomball</td>
<td>500-yard freestyle</td>
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<tr>
<td>100-yard breaststroke (third place)</td>
<td>Hailey Benting</td>
<td>100-yard breaststroke</td>
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<tr>
<td>200-yard individual medley (fifth place)</td>
<td>Hailey Benting</td>
<td>200-yard individual medley</td>
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Infographic by Connor Del Carmen

Amanda Yu, senior, pushes to finish strong during the last 50 yards of the 100-yard fly race during Conference finals at Kirkwood High School Thursday, Feb. 6. Photograph by Jackson Estwanick

Yu breaks her own record

jackson ESTWANICK

WHEN AMANDA YU, SENIOR, dove into the water to begin the 100-yard butterfly at the State, records were not on her mind. Despite this, Yu managed to break her own school record by 0.29 seconds and finish fourth in the event.

"It was really surprising and unexpected because I thought it would be hard to go for a personal best just two weeks after getting one at Conference," Yu said.

Two weeks before State, Yu broke an over twenty-year-old school record previously held by Sara Finan. She broke the record during prelims and swam a 57.34. This time was 0.05 seconds faster than Finan’s record. At State, Yu swam an even faster time of 57.05.

Yu finished with four medals. She said focusing more on helping teammates has helped calm her nerves before big races.

"Now that I’m a senior leader, I’ve taken more of a role of calming people down and helping them out rather than overthinking my own races," Yu said.

With one of the top 100-yard butterfly times in the state, Yu has been close to breaking the record for a few years. "I was telling myself behind the blocks, ‘I can do this, I can get the record.’" Yu said.

Joseph Schoedel, swim coach, met Yu at a swim camp before her freshman year. After working with her for the past three years, he knew she could beat the record this season.

"She is very competitive," Schoedel said. "She has a next gear that when she gets into a race she hates to lose."

The girls swim team kept their 58 dual meet win streak this season and won their Conference Meet for the sixth straight year.

"Amanda plays a very much a leadership role with all the younger girls in getting them up and prepared," Schoedel said. "She gets them hyped up to perform their best."

Abby Bomball, senior, has been close friends with Yu since their freshman year and is also a member of both the soccer and cross country teams.

"I knew she could do it all along and she’s always been close to the time," Bomball said. "It was cool to see it pay off finally for her."
Basketball celebrates seniors

alayna HIGDON • jeff SWIFT

EVERY YEAR THE VARSITY BASKETBALL TEAM honors the senior players with Senior Night, giving speeches and recognizing the athletes. At this year’s Senior Night, held Feb. 27, there was only one senior boy’s player honored and only two on the girl’s team.

After playing basketball for 13 years, Josh Merz, senior, is the lone graduate from the boys basketball program.

Eric Schweain, head basketball coach, said Merz is a role model and a leader for the underclassmen.

“A big part of who we are as a team is because Josh is that leader we have to have this year,” Schweain said.

Merz constantly communicates on and off the court, directing traffic, helping and encouraging players, Schweain said.

As the only senior on the team, coaches and players called basketball’s Senior Night “Josh Merz Night,” honoring Merz with speeches and acknowledgments of his achievements.

“I would take a ‘Josh Merz’ on the team any year, any season, for as long as I coach,” Schweain said.

As for the girls, Autumn Brown and Love Troupe were the only two seniors as well, and they were honored in their respective ways.

Brown, who has been out with an ACL tear for the entirety of this season, was honored by being a starter for the first play of the game.

“Things like tonight mean so much to me, and it’s probably the best way to finish this season for me,” Brown said.

As for the girls, Autumn Brown and Love Troupe were the only two seniors as well, and they were honored in their respective ways.

Brown spent her junior year as a leading scorer for the team and a dominant force on the court, averaging nearly five steals and rebounds per game.

Troupe played almost the full game and was applauded as she was called out with very little time to go. She put up seven points on five shots and had five rebounds.

“It’s always sad to finish, but I’m glad I was able to come out and play this season,” Troupe said.