

# *the* MESSENGER *n. VI*

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## STOCKING UP ON



# FEAR.

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8-9**



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# INSIDE



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The Messenger is published eight times a year by students enrolled in the Newspaper Production class at Marquette High School, Chesterfield, MO, 63017. The publication office is located in Room 226, (636) 891-6000 ext. 26228

Opinions of Messenger columnists or the Editorial Board are not representative of the opinions of the entire Messenger staff, the newspaper or the administration. The Messenger

takes responses for any issue. Send these in at [mhsmessage@rdsdmo.org](mailto:mhsmessage@rdsdmo.org).

The Messenger reserves the right to edit submitted material and to refuse to print material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief and adviser deems appropriate, including advertisements and letters to the editor.



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Cheating is an epidemic disease that will continue to spread and become prevalent in our schools until 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 academic dishonesty may suggest the problem lies within the school system rather than the students themselves. 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

## FINAL EXAM POLICY

"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 is to prepare its students for college, its exam policy should reflect those of top universities. Many esteemed schools are reworking their final exam policy on a course-by-course basis because they recognize the limiting nature of a traditional final when applied to course's material and structure. In today's hypercompetitive world, RSD must embrace progress to prepare students for the unique challenges and expectations of higher education. This requires a more flexible final exam policy.

Sincerely,  
Phoebe Calabrese  
junior





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*

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 shin-bone, 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 cannabidiol (CBD) pills while on campus."

## 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."

## AT A GLANCE



Dr. Cathy Farrar, science teacher, is the Teacher of the Year.



Seniors Kaitlyn Chan and Sriya Kosaraju earned the "Aspirations in Computing" award presented by the National Center for Women and Information Technology.

The History Bowl team placed second at the History Bee and Bowl Feb. 8 at Webster High school and qualified for Nationals.

Wellness Day is Thursday, April 9.

The next Board of Education meeting is Thursday, March 5.

There will be no school Friday, March 13, as it is Teacher Compensation Day.

Spring Break will start Monday, March 16, and end Friday, March 20.



# 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 over-

crowded, people sit three to a seat, sit in the aisle and stand in the back of Bus 47, Phillips said.

"I think that it's annoying and an overlooked problem," Phillips said "The [district] isn't doing anything about it."

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 over-

crowded 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 over-crowds and then it's

uncomfortable," Merriweather said.

Damon Leuthauser, driver of Bus 41 noted that on Fridays, the number of kids on his bus tends to be higher than the average weekday.

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

Mike Heyman, director of transportation, said there is not an over-

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

DAMON LEUTHAUSER  
DRIVER OF BUS 41



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

crowding 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.



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The Messenger has covered multiple district-centered issues, including lack of diversity in the curriculum, faculty and enrollment in higher-level classes. Photograph by Kavya Jain

# editorial BOARD

## DISTRICT STUDENT PRESS SUPPORT

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-

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

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 the district news 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.

# 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?



DJ MCCASLIN, freshman

"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."



ALLYSON BARTH, sophomore

"Yes, 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."



AARUSHI BOINEPALLY, junior

"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."



ARJUN HIREN, senior

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



TRACEY WAECKERLE, Associate Principal

"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."





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 fear falling behind. Being absent from school slows the ability to keep up with schoolwork.

Times have changed, and unlike Ferris Bueller, many would rather pretend to be magically cured of sickness than miss school. 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.



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

## Being skinny is a struggle



Photo Illustration by Mansi Mamidi

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 in 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.



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-

## Keep religion out of education

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.

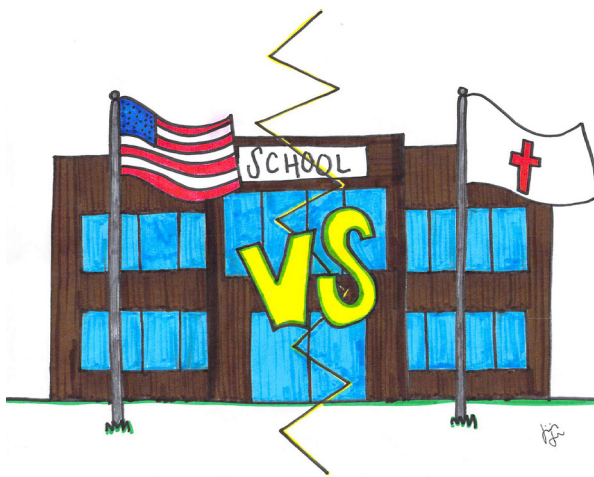


Illustration by Jilian Bunderson



# 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, often times, his parents would not be around to take care of him.

"My parents were going crazy about what was going to happen to me after high school. It made things stressful," Stazzone said.

In Indianapolis, Stazzone attended Carmel High School, where he struggled to find his niche.

"My new school had 5,000 students, so it was very crowded," Stazzone said. "The classes were a lot easier, but it was harder to find my place."

Stazzone said living in Indianapolis was one of the hardest times in his life.

When Stazzone finished his junior year at Carmel High School, he packed up his belongings he had and drove himself back to his hometown, St. Louis.

In St. Louis, Stazzone had few belongings. He recalls not having clothes or a phone. These obstacles made it hard to focus on being a teen.

Days later, Stazzone legally classified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This means, Stazzone did not have a fixed and adequate residence to live under; therefore, the federal law provides stability and support to Stazzone

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.

"He has made us smile, laugh and he brings humor," she said.

Julie Simmons, Kenzie's mother, said Stazzone has grown up great-

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

JOE STAZZONE  
SENIOR



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

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.

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 condemned 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 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



# PANIC SURROUNDS CORONAVIRUS

As seen on pg. 1

arpitha SISTLA

WHEN JENNY CHIU, SOPHOMORE, was walking through the cereal aisle of Target shopping with her family, she noticed a woman staring at her. As Chiu walked past the woman, she was surprised to see the woman point to her and remark to another shopper, "stay away from them, you could get infected."

With the rise of the new coronavirus, Chiu has increasingly been exposed to xenophobia and sometimes outright racism. 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 re-

lated to the SARS virus. Coronaviruses are mostly seen in animals and initial symptoms are typical of a common cold or the flu.

The first case on U.S. soil was confirmed Jan. 21. KMOX Radio reported two positive cases in Chicago, Ill. and about 20 people in the St. Louis area are being monitored for exposure to the virus.

Chiu attends St. Louis Modern Chinese School 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 were thinking of."

In addition to canceling classes, Chiu's Chinese school has taken other measures, including keeping windows open at all times and installing hand sanitizer dispensers in every class.

She said the main reason for the cancellation and drop in attendance is the fear and paranoia of Chinese parents. Chiu's own mother instructed her to wear a mask to Chinese school out of fear. The coronavirus has made everyone in her family hyper aware of germs, cleanliness and sanitation.

Chiu's friend in China has the coronavirus and her grandparents are currently living in a building where the coronavirus has already spread, which she said has added to her family's paranoia

and cautiousness.

She said the paranoia has affected her personally as well. While having the common cold, Chiu said she couldn't help but fear the worst.

"I knew it wasn't possible, but in the back of my head I was like, 'what if I have it?' I was so paranoid," Chiu said.

Chiu said that, even more than the paranoia and fear, racism has been affecting the Chinese community the most.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

When it comes to joking about the coronavirus and treating it as a meme, Chiu said it is mostly okay with her to joke about it. She said it is funny rather than offensive, and she enjoys being able to relate to other Asians through jokes. However, Chiu acknowledges that it truly matters who is joking and the tone and intentions behind it.

Sarena Yeung, senior, said, while she isn't particularly offended with jokes about the coronavirus, she is annoyed when people joke about it while misinformed. She'd like people to know the coronavirus is not as fatal as it is made out to be and that the deaths that have occurred have only happened to the elderly or people who have pre-existing conditions.

"People are just derogatory and degrade other people without knowing their culture and their story," Yeung said.

She said the first time she learned about the coronavirus was not through a reputable news publication, but through the internet. Yeung researched the virus, but she understands most people have no further knowledge about the coronavirus outside of it being a meme.

Though she has not seen racism personally, she said she has seen it on

the internet and through media, where people use the screen as protection to say whatever they want.

"This is definitely an easier way to slip in some of the comments you cannot normally say outwardly because you would offend someone who would probably call you out on it," Yeung said. "Since this is such a mainstream topic at the moment, you can get away with it because people have become more desensitized to it."

Yeung attends dance classes at the St. Louis Chinese Language School. She said she has not gone for a couple of weeks and that her mother has put her on "house arrest" from there.

She said the main reason Chinese parents aren't sending their kids to Chinese school is misinformation blowing the virus out of proportion.

Yeung said she wishes people do their research before talking

about it to avoid misinformation and its harmful effects, such as unintended racism.

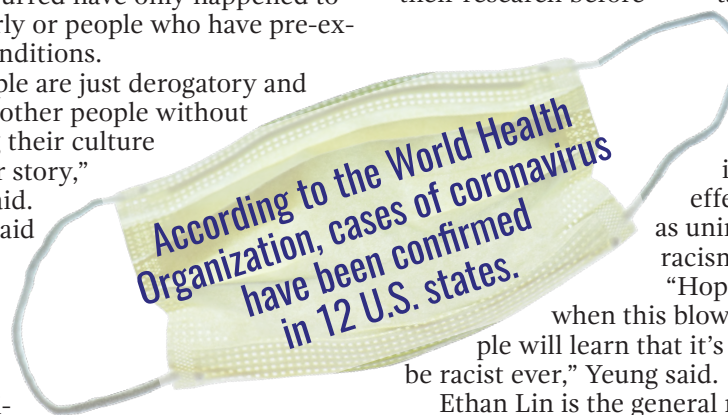
"Hopefully, when this blows over, people will learn that it's not cool to be racist ever," Yeung said.

Ethan Lin is the general manager of Pan-Asia on Manchester Road, the largest Asian supermarket in the state. Lin said sales have dropped by about 10 percent since the beginning of February when the coronavirus started to gain significant attention from the media.

He said 30 percent to 50 percent of his customers are East Asian and the



Children attend a simplified Chinese class at the St. Louis Chinese Language School at Selvidge Middle School. The teacher discussed the coronavirus, how easily it can spread and how a carrier does not have to show any symptoms to transmit it. Students raised \$200 for Wuhan relief by donating spare change and their allowance. Photographs by Jessica Li



## 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 find it worrisome at this point."

Currently, precautions people should take include routine behaviors like washing hands, sanitizing and avoiding touching the face. She said people should 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 doorknobs and disinfecting desks.



Jerry Lin, employee the beginning of February and instant at the door for carts. Photographs by Mar





of Pan-Asia, stocks the fruit at the mostly empty store. Lin said he'd noticed a decline in sales at the beginning of February; however, recently sales have surged as people want to stock up on the essentials like rice, noodles. "I'm not scared, I don't care," Lin said. Lin also said Pan-Asia has added disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers by checkout to make sanitization more available to customers and staff.

Marta Mieza



# Q AND A

Amy Wehr  
BSN, RN, NCSN  
Rockwood Supervisor  
of Wellness and Health  
Services

## WHAT PROMPTED ROCKWOOD TO SEND AN EMAIL TO PARENTS CONCERNING THE CORONAVIRUS?

"So we had discussed it a couple of days before that and then it was really the headliner in the news saying that there were more cases. The community transmission, it was that day that we decided that we have a case now in the U.S. They can't link it to travel or a case in China, so that's when we decided to go ahead and send that information, and as much as anything to let parents and staff and the community know that we are watching the situation and following all the recommendations that are out there just to raise the awareness that we are not ignoring the situation."

## WHAT IS ROCKWOOD'S PLAN OF ACTION?

"Our plan is to just follow the guidance and plan put out by St. Louis County Health Department, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and anything that the CDC puts out that is specific for school. At this point there hasn't been anything that says 'if there is one case you close the building,' but we'll see. I imagine that maybe within the month, there will be a school-related case somewhere in the U.S."

## IS THERE A POSSIBILITY OF SCHOOL CLOSING?

"That would be a decision made from the guidance that we would take from our public health agencies on what we should do."

## WHAT ARE WAYS TO STAY SAFE?

"The best thing we can do is the same stuff we do to prevent influenza. Things like washing your hands, covering your cough, staying home if you're sick and staying away from people that are sick are the basics. Right now, there is no medication or vaccine for it so that's really all that we can do."

paranoia in the East Asian community has affected business at Pan-Asia.

"I think that's why they try to stay at home," Lin said.

Lin said sales improved at the end of February after action taken by the government helped reduce the fear of the virus. On Feb. 26, President Donald Trump put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of the government's response to the virus, after denying entry to foreign officials who recently traveled to China back at the end of January.

Lin said the Chinese media is partly to blame for Asian customers wanting to stay home rather than going out to shop at Asian businesses. Even though the risk for getting the virus is very low, Lin said the media makes it out to be much more than it is.

"Customers would rather be safe than take that risk," he said.

Lin said Asian employees at Pan-Asia, especially those who have family in China, have expressed concern about the coronavirus. Lin provides the staff with surgical masks, and though they

are not required to wear them, many employees choose to.

There are two other Pan-Asias in the U.S., one in Nebraska and the other in Kansas. Lin said it has affected the Manchester Pan-Asia the most because St. Louis has a higher Asian population and, consequently, more Asian customers.

"In the three years since Pan-Asia opened, this is the single most [significant] political incident that has impacted our sales," Lin said.

## COMMUNITY

Ed Bolton, chemistry teacher and sponsor of the East Asian Student Alliance, said what makes the coronavirus seem like a bigger threat than it actually is is the connectedness of the modern world.

"Viruses like that can be scary because of the freedom of movement we have," Bolton said. "It's hard to isolate them and to treat them because of that."

INFLUENZA	vs.	COVID-19
At least 32 million illnesses in the U.S.		64 cases in the U.S.
18,000 deaths in the U.S.		2 deaths in the U.S.
40 deaths in Missouri		20 people being monitored in St. Louis area

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and KSDK as of March 3.  
Infographic by Marta Mieza



# 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 gon-dolier 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.

"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**

"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.



Brayden dressed as Spongebob Squarepants and a track runner. Photographs by Ben Hughes

# 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 rewatches 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.



Cat Beering, junior, hugs a child as Elsa at a Missouri Botanical Gardens event in October. Beering met with children and performed "Let It Go" at the end of the night. Photograph by Marta Mize




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### 3 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.

"I think having a menu and having an atmosphere that invites people but also pushes their limits in terms of what they're used to and what they want to see in a restaurant is really important."

TADHG DUHIG  
general manager



Pork Belly Steam Buns

RECOMMENDED

### 2 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.

"We make our pasta every morning. We make all of our dough. We locally source as much as we can. We also really are trying to be authentic to Italy... and I think it's cool to be able to be a part of that."

KRISTIN PRIEST  
host



Fiori Arrabiata



Black Garlic Bucatini

#### 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

RECOMMENDED

### 1 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. And they do it well with locally sourced and clean ingredients.

"As a community cafe, where we have, as far as the food goes on the menu, I feel like we have something for everyone, whether you are vegan, vegetarian, gluten free, carnivore, any of that."

ROBERT BIRIBIN  
owner



Acai Bowl



The Slinger

## Local Likes

kavya JAIN • marta MIEZE

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 Mize

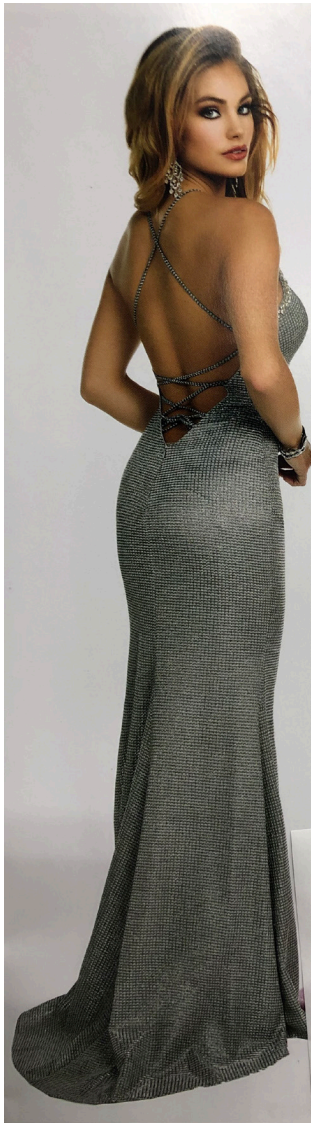




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A large advertisement for Six Flags St. Louis. The background features two roller coasters: a yellow one on the left and a green one on the right. In the center, there is a yellow banner with the Six Flags St. Louis logo and the text "NOW HIRING visit sixflagsjobs.com (636) 938-5300 ext 6314". At the bottom, there is a group of five smiling employees in various colored shirts (blue, green, red, yellow, and purple).



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- **School essentials:** pencils, sharpies, locks
- **Spirit wear:** hoodies and sweaters
- **Food/ snacks:** candy, cup noodles, chips
- **Drinks:** Gatorade, juice, water

# MHS School Store

**Open Hours:**  
Monday - Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 12.20 p.m.





Abbey Bolt, senior, competes in a regular season Dual Meet against Eureka. MHS went on to beat Eureka 129-59 in this meet. Bolt would help bring the team to its second straight State title. *Photograph by Jeff Swift*

# 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.

Hume said a big factor in the win was the contributions from the athletes who don’t swim year round. She said last year the team was carried by many of their elite club swimmers, but this year many of the non-club athletes played a big role in the victory.

Although Hume said the team is losing many talented athletes to graduation, the seniors on the team helped to set a tradition of excellence.

“The seniors this year are some of my best friends and I look up to them in swimming and life, and they definitely have shown us how to compete and bring it every meet,” Hume said.

Maya Esparza, sophomore, said this year’s State victory felt more special to her because of her role in the win.

“Last year almost didn’t seem real, but to be a part of it this year was amazing because I look up to all these girls, and to know I contributed is

awesome,” Esparza said.

Esparza 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 will 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.”



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.”

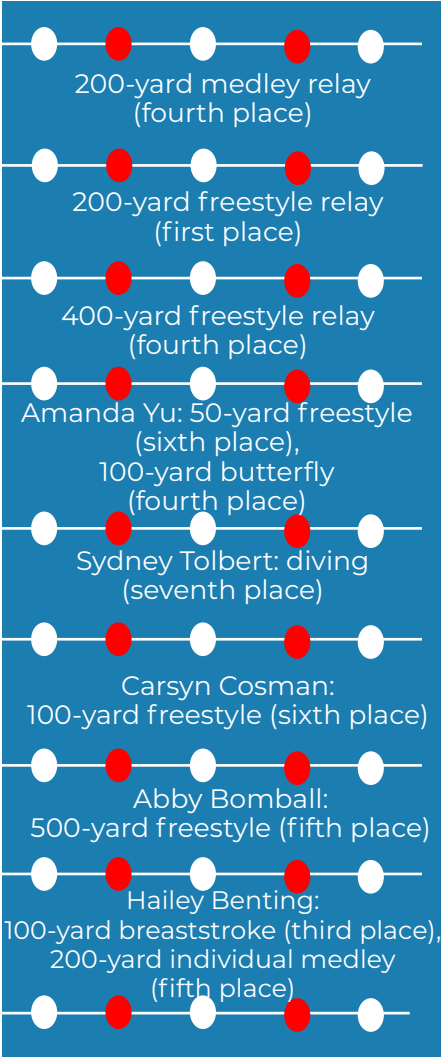
The girls swim team kept their 58 dual meet win streak this season and won their Conference Meet for the sixth straight year.

“Amanda plays 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 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.”

### STATE MEET MEDALISTS



Infographic by Connor Del Carmen



## AT A GLANCE



Isaiah Brisseaux, senior, finished fifth in the 220 weight class at the State wrestling tournament Saturday, Feb. 22.



Paige Hartmann, senior, and Abby Kaber, junior, prepare to somersault during the basketball game, Tuesday, Nov 26. Photograph by Jeff Swift

Cheer won State for the second straight year and finished fourteenth at Nationals.



Molly Johnson, senior, dances during the Mystique performance at the game, Tuesday, Nov 26. Photograph by Jeff Swift

Mystique finished third at State last weekend and began competing in Nationals Wednesday, March 4.



1. The family of Autumn Brown, senior, holds up signs to show their support at Senior Night Thursday, Feb. 27. Brown has been sidelined for the season with a torn ACL, but she still started for the first play of the game. 2. With little time left in the game, Love Troupe, senior, is called out of the game to get her final applause. 3. Josh Merz, senior, runs out to cheers and applause after being introduced as "Big Josh Merz." 4. Seniors Emma Hartmann, Claire Scognamiglio and Camryn Kesselring perform a stunt for the crowd during the girls basketball game. The senior cheer team celebrated by wearing their next school's colors as well as MHS'. 5. Ethan Jenkins, senior, alongside many other members of the Senior Class, cheers on the boy's team's only senior, Josh Merz. Photographs by Jeff Swift

# 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.

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.

On Senior Night, boys basketball defeated Webster Groves 72-69 and girls basketball defeated McCluer North 57-30.