Our package this month is titled “Living In Faith.” We wanted to share individuals’ stories about their experience with their own faith and religion, its impact on their life, as well as highlight the different religions that can be seen at MHS. We felt this was important because religion is a major part in people’s lives, and we wanted to highlight some of the diversity at the school.
news briefs

tardy sweep
Due to the increase of 726 tardies compared to the same point in the 2018-2019 school year, a tardy sweep policy is being implemented by administration in hopes of decreasing this number. These sweeps will be made at random days of the week. Students who are caught will be sent to the Little Theater and will receive a closed lunch the following day. Further punishment for additional offenses may be implemented as well.

Fiddler on the Roof
The production Fiddler on the Roof will perform April 23-25, and roles have been recently cast. The story is about a Russian family that struggles with the practice of traditions, and issues with identity. Some cast members include AJ Rock as Tevye, Emma Massey as Tzeitel, Alexandria Bressette as Hodel, Meredith Brookens as Chava, and more.

paddleton tournament
On March 2, seniors Griffin Clark and Ty Pritchett were declared champions of the paddleton tournament, while Carter Hazen and Lucas Rabideau came in second place.

From March 2-6, MHS held its first-ever waffle week. Mitchell McMath, along with other students such as Jennifer Tsaras, Mallory Fenskie, and Owen Jozwiak, helped organize this event. McMath thought of this idea months ago and believed that the week after One Billion Rising would be a good week to have fun in between other events in March. Leadership teacher Monique Albright was enthusiastic about the idea and helped students make the dream reality. Events took place during both lunches. Some activities included waffle games (such as syrup pong being played by freshman Janelle Harris, pictured above), a waffle eating contest, and free waffles on Friday.
Alex Black has been dancing all his life. Growing up, he would spend hours at Dean/Black School of Performing Arts, where he met his mother, Sandra Black, in 1961 and currently runs the center. Alex said that he had a love for dancing and decided to turn that love into a career.

“I decided I wanted to be a professional dancer in middle school,” Black said. “When I got hired to dance with the Minneapolis Dance Theatre at 16, I knew it was what I wanted to do.”

Black was in 9th grade when he went to both Saguin Arts and Science Academy and was preparing for attending MHS in the morning and SASSA in the afternoon. He said that he “was like ‘I want to take dance seriously. Because I danced there too.’” Black said. “But I wanted to stay at Midland because I felt like I was missing the high school part because it was very serious at SASSA. They’re getting you ready to be a dancer.”

He was hired to dance with the Minneapolis Dance Theatre when they came to Midland to perform Wye Yewtitcher at the Midland Center for the Arts. After auditioning for an artistic director to be in the show, he was given the opportunity to join the professional company.

“I just was so excited and I knew that I was going to dance so much, so I put me up in an apartment and I got to live the adult life that a dancer would be living,” Black said. “Once we felt that we had done our competition pieces we need to work on, we take class time to really work on that and we’ve honestly gotten so much better over one year.”

Perz also said that she and the students have improved their technique as well as their cohesiveness since Alex and Rochelle have begun teaching. Another way the two have helped Perz is by having connections in the professional dance world. Perz plans on becoming a professional dancer, and having dance teachers that were in the industry has helped.

“When we go into conventions you go ‘Oh I’m going to go talk about this person,’ and making connections,” Perz said. “When I was auditioning and applying for U of M and a bunch of other schools, they would say Oh I’ll send my approval to the director here over for you.” That’s always nice because they have connections that I don’t have because they worked in the professional world. They know everyone because it’s such a small community but also huge.”

Sandra said that the two bring a nice, youthful influence to the studio, and that Alex stays abreast with the current music and movies. She said that that is what makes a studio evolve. “They [the students] really like his ideas, his choreography, the music that he uses, and he’s still with them.”

Sandra said, “I mean he’s a fun teacher, and they both are, but the students have to know that they’re also here to teach and that’s our goal.”

Rochelle said that choreographing is probably the most positive and creative outlet there is. She enjoys being able to hear music and create an entire piece and see it all come together. Alex also likes this aspect of choreographing. “He loves choreographing, and I think he got a drive that too would change as well, so I don’t know how I feel about it, but we’re dance family. My dad was a dancer too, and I think that just was passed on,” Sandra said. “We’re all one family and we’re all one people. He feels most at home here.”

Alex said that being a professional dancer has been the most fun he’s ever had and that he uses skills he’s learned in his career to his everyday life. “And that he teaches his students things he’s learned along the way to become a better person, not just a better dancer, but a better human, on top of better dancers. “I’m teaching all the kids, giving my own teaching flow because even though Rochelle and I are very different teachers, we both teach the same way at the same time, so it was just getting my style here where I grew up.” Alex said.

“Those are the people that I feel are the ones we really connect with,” Sandra said. “In those rooms, my grandmother taught me. It’s kind of a full circle for me.”

Alex teaches his advanced contemporary class on Tuesday nights from 7-8. He is walking the class through the dance. Jess Perz is in the middle of her second year with the company and teaching at the studio. She and Rochelle have begun teaching classes for every age, and is also on the studio’s competition team. Alex teaches all of his classes except ballet and tap, and Rochelle choreographs many of her competition numbers. “I really like him both for directing the company and teaching at the studio because we work on stuff that we’re going to be competing in class,” Perz said. “So we have a step in one of our competition pieces we need to work on, we take class time to really work on that and we’ve honestly gotten so much better over one year.”

On top of their many performances, both Alex and Rochelle continue to teach regularly. Alex said that he always knew he wanted to return to Midland and teach at the studio; it was just a matter of when.

“It’s a very challenging industry as far as the lack of stability,” Rochelle said. “You always have to find something new or not make ends meet, every show ends. There’s no nine to five job to go out to. You’re going from show to show, or movie to movie. So, you get older you start to create a little more stability, especially when we decided we were going to start a family. That was something that had become a little more important to us.”

Alex and Rochelle knew they were at a point in their careers where they were ready to move on, and the two moved to Midland in September of 2018. Rochelle said that they were ready to start the next chapter of their lives.

“My grandmother opened their studio in 1961 and he’s always known that eventually he wanted to end up back here. So, once we felt that we had done the things we wanted to do with our careers, and when we felt like we were ready, we figured it out.”

Sandra Black, Alex’s mother and the current owner of Dean/Black, was surprised to find that Alex wanted to return to the studio. She actually found out about Alex’s plans through Rochelle, who told her that after they did work with their professional careers, they wanted to come back and teach.

“I was surprised, and I said ‘He really wanted to come back to Midland?’ and she said ‘Yeah I really wanted to come back,’” Sandra said. “He knew that was where he was most successful when he was going through high school, and that he really had a love for choreography and the kids.”

Alex and Rochelle are both directors of the studio’s competition team, Dance Theatre Unlimited. Alex also teaches full time, and Rochelle teaches rec classes Monday and Tuesday nights. They also do choreography for DTU along with their weekly classes.
Senior Kaitlyn Bremer started her own business selling succulents last year and has since been selling her plants all over Midland and the surrounding areas. Op/Ed Editor Mary Kent | Staff Writer Isaak Zimmerman | Staff Writer Amiya Zissler

Senior Kaitlyn Bremer’s first interest in entrepreneurship was not a sudden occurrence. Bremer said that her first exposure to having any business was in fifth grade. As part of a class activity with the task of turning the classroom into an economic system where fake currency was used, Bremer had a job of selling patents to her fellow classmates.

“I just kind of hit a rut last year and was like ‘I wanna do something,’” Bremer said. “Especially thinking about business schools and stuff, I was like, ‘Well this would be something to dip my toes into and see if it’s something I love’—and it is.”

Starting in January of 2019, Bremer had been in the process of creating her own succulent business called Rooted: Plant Art & Design. After months of brainstorming, Bremer was finally able to sell the plants. Since then, her business has gained traction in the community and is still continuing to grow.

As for plants specifically, Bremer said that she would often pick out plants when she would go places with her mom and enjoyed caring for them when she was younger.

“I always loved plants,” Bremer said. “I think it started when I went to a garage sale in fourth grade and I bought a cactus for 25 cents. It was growing out of this coffee mug and I kept it for so long, I just loved it.”

Along with her long-time experience with them, Bremer enjoys the stress-relieving aspect of caring for plants. She started seeing them as a financial opportunity when the idea of caring for succulents became more popular with her peers.

“That whole botanical theme is super popular with the youth,” Bremer said. “Being in high school, I knew how people thought, I figured this was probably a good place to start at least. I really didn’t know what other hidden talents I had, so I thought, ‘Plants. Nobody else is doing it, so why not me?’”

Bremer has had a lot of success with gaining multiple opportunities to sell her products at local establishments, such as the Makers Market, which acts as a winter farmer’s market and is held at Live Oak Coffeehouse. Bremer said that a really important aspect that has kept her business going for the past year has been getting her name out and establishing a name for her company.

Bremer said that having her own business has felt the most fulfilling, and that she feels like she found a place for herself in selling succulents. She feels that this is a rewarding part of the journey.

“I think one of my favorite things about having my own business is the fact that I did it,” Bremer said. “No one else was telling me to do it. Looking at what I built and what I’ve done, it just feels good. It’s really rewarding.”

Bremer said the idea of Rooted came entirely from her own imagination and has enjoyed seeing it grow into something larger than she ever expected. Along with the support of her friends and family, this sense of independence has made owning her own business that much more enjoyable.

As for the future, Bremer said that she intends to keep Rooted going and hopes to start including more products and finding more creative ways of selling succulents.

“We’ll just see where things take me,” Bremer said. “I don’t know if next year I’ll find even more passion somewhere. Especially since I am attending Northwood University in the fall, you never know. I think that I’ve gotten a valuable lesson out of starting all of this.”

Succulent Care Tips

- Keep your plant on a windowsill to get lots of sunlight
- Succulents need to be watered more than other indoor plants, but less frequently
- Store them at room temperature in a dry area

(Top) Kaitlyn Bremer posing with one of her smaller succulents. Bremer buys all of the plants she sells from a farm in California rather than from bigger stores in order to ensure that they are of a higher quality.
(Bottom) Bremer holding a succulent. Each succulent costs $6 for one or two for $10.
Photos: Spencer Isberg
The varsity cheer team competed in the District competition on Feb. 22 in Grand Blanc. Placing fourth, the team qualified to compete at Regionals for the first time in Midland High history. With the introduction of coach Ben Fuller, the team made strides throughout their season. Photo Editor Carter Hazen | Design Editor Noah Jacobson

(Right) Sophomores Kiley Haring and Lexi Giddings repeat their round one performance during practice. Coach Fuller critiques continuously in effort to get the best score possible at the upcoming competitions. The team also had their best finish in the SVL tournament, where they placed second overall.

(Left) Sophomore Maddy Rhead, freshman Mallorie Hollenbeck, and junior Trinity Thomas join the rest of their team in executing a synchronized toe touch. This part of their round two routine is where the team scored a total of 205 points, which contributed to the teams overall score of 727.88. They edged Oxford into fifth place by only .42 points to earn the fourth spot.

(Right) Sophomore Kiley Haring, and freshman Mallorie Hollenbeck hoist junior Chloe Blackmore into the air during round three of the district cheer competition. They executed a “pyramid” in which multiple members of the team lift singular flyer’s into the air. This round also included stunts involving team members being thrown into the air, and caught all while being scored for points.

(Left) Sophomore Maddy Rhead rehearses the regional round two performance at practice on Thursday, February 27.

Photos: Carter Hazen
While young people typically make up a large percentage of eligible voters, this group has a tendency to be less likely to get out and vote. This is highly influential population in elections, but most young eligible voters do not feel as if their vote truly matters. While the numbers of the participants in elections fluctuate, many MHS students who just turned 18 plan to vote next week.

Senior Ryan Kenosh will be a first-time voter for the Michigan Primary Election. He believes that young people should vote because the decisions made based on this election will greatly influence our future.

It is important for our generation especially because we are stepping into new roles in the workplace and in society.

Kim Steinke, president of The League of Women Voters of the Midland Area, concurs with Kenosh in the idea that young people are the future of our society, and that voting is only a positive thing for them. There are no cons to young people voting, only pros," Steinke said. "Young people are the future of this country, and as such have real staked in decisions that legislators and government officials make, as they have a huge impact long into the future.

Steinke also believes that citizens have the right to vote, and that voting is the ability to have input into our democratic processes. The vote is a chance to make the democratic work of our democracy. According to that, everyone who is eligible to vote should do so.

"We are the ones who are rising up into new roles in society," Kenosh said. "We’re going to be getting jobs, paying taxes, and trying to raise families in America, so it’s important we make our voices heard so that our world under good leadership so that we can live and thrive.

Browne also said that researching candidates is very important in the voting process, in that it exposes voters to information to a report on a candidate and that how they feel about them.

Emma Breaux, a freshman at Saginaw Valley State University and 2019 MHS graduate, agrees that newly registered voters can make a big impact on which politicians are elected. She also believes that young people should have a say in fixing issues that impact the next generation as a whole. "Voting in the primaries is important because it’s how the nominee for the general election is chosen," Browne said. "Voting in the primaries is the warm up for the presidential election, and how you can affect a candidate one step closer to the presidency."

Browne believes that the youth should have a large voice in politics because of how important it is.

"You look at education costs, minimum wage, potential war, and all the things that benefit mostly young people," Browne said. "It doesn’t hurt to have college without student debt, has job security, and an everyday job to fight for the decisions."

Kenosh shares the same thoughts on this generation has a different set to make sure I’m voting for someone who protects and supports what I am passionate about," Browne said. "There are a lot of people who will vote for someone solely because of their party loyalty without actually knowing anything about the candidate, and that can be dangerous."

"Candidate Matthew Starling agrees that it is highly important for everyone, especially students, to be well-informed about all the candidates. It is something that being educated about the issues and candidates is always the best policy."

"Know all of your information, look critically at your sources because there is a lot of misinformation out there," Browne said. "There are lots of issues that are going to affect them from national security to college loan forgiveness that will be voted on in the 2020 election they need to know about." Starling also said that though students are educated on these issues, the youngest generation of people voting remains much divided than united.

"I think there is a split of how young people vote," Starling said. "There’s a lot of loud conservative voices and liberal voices, and I guess I haven’t noticed a huge difference in one over the other. I think it’s going to be divided just like the country is and it will be very close election. Every vote counts and that it’s not just about the presidential election. There’s a lot more at play and you should take advantage of the opportunity." Browne believes in voting for her beliefs rather than the political party. This is why she identifies as an independent. However, her ideal candidate is someone who is looking out for others just as much, if not more than, themselves. She wants someone that will support social security, immigration, making sure young people can afford college, legal, marriage equality, gender equality, and destroying systemic racism.

"The more people everyone is engaged and that’s someone who wants to see change be made to our system. Browne also said that researching candidates is very important in the voting process, in that it exposes voters to information to a report on a candidate and that how they feel about them. However, Browne worries that people can be influenced by the political party and that their vote can shape the future.

"Voting in our democratic process is the key to ensuring our survival," Steinke said.
THE GREY AREA

Since the founding of the United States, religion has played an important role in American society. However, the notion that religion and government should be separated has also been prominent. The question of what violates this separation is often answered by the Supreme Court. Staff Writer Erica DesJardins | Staff Writer Abby Haag | Staff Writer Garrett

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”
First Amendment 1791

IN THEIR WORDS

The Volleyball and Cross Country teams began to pray before their respective sporting events. This caused controversy throughout the community.

OLIVIA DEPIERRO
Junior Volleyball

“There was a lot of the negativity. I honestly didn’t pay much attention to it at all. We didn’t really talk about the negativity surrounding it as a team much. We were just like we want to do this so were going to do it. We weren’t doing it for anyone else, we were doing it for ourselves. You can be a religious person and people will accept you for that. Some people may disagree with it but that’s not a problem.”

NATHAN STRIEBEL
Junior Cross Country

“It’s a tough conversation to have. People would rather just take the easy way and not talk about it but I think by starting conversations we’re making a little bit of progress. Like with One Billion Rising--sexual violence, that’s a tough conversation we’re starting to have—I certainly hope having those tough conversations about religion is steps forward we can get more comfortable taking.”

Living in Faith: THE GREY AREA

6 in 10 MHS students believe that student-led prayer at school-sponsored events is appropriate

67% YES
13% NO

based on a survey of 207 MHS students

THE LEMON TEST

Lemon v. Kurtzman, 1971

The Supreme Court decided that the government should have no hand in any sacred matters without a good reason. The litmus test they established is as follows:

1. The action must have a secular purpose
2. The action must not prohibit or promote religion
3. No excessive government entanglement.

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<td>Prohibited school-sponsored prayer, even nondenominational prayer, in schools.</td>
<td>Prohibits the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools.</td>
<td>Ruled that student-led prayer over the loud speakers at football games is against the establishment clause.</td>
<td>Ruled that schools could not suppress a student sponsored religious organization.</td>
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Source: Oyez.org
Although senior Andrew Chatman has multiple leadership roles and connections throughout the school, his strongest tie is to his faith, Pentecostal Christianity. Chatman has attended church his entire life and began to attend the Christian Celebration Center while in sixth grade.

During his time at the church, Chatman has grown in his beliefs through his involvement with his church. He currently interns with the church and plays the bass guitar during his youth group’s worship. He has also revamped the Midland High Bible club.

“I would say God is everything in my life, God is the center of my life,” Chatman said. “I know for a fact that I can never accomplish anything great or anything good without him. I don’t want to accomplish anything without him.”

In Chatman’s freshman year, his youth group went on a winter retreat. At this time, Chatman said he was having some doubts about his faith, so he asked God to confirm his existence and help fix his hurt knee. Chatman said his knee was healed instantly and years of pain came to an end.

“At that moment, I was just in awe because all my life I was a ’believer’ and it wasn’t until then I came to believe in God and believe in the power of God,” Chatman said. “Ever since that camp, my life has had so much more joy in it because he’s in my life.”

Chatman’s role in his church has grown over time, especially with the Christian Celebration Center’s Youth group, Thrive. On Wednesday evenings, he arrives early to help set up, rehearse with the worship group, and do a pre-service prayer.

“Thrive is, in lack of better terms, the best youth group I have ever been a part of in my entire life,” Chatman said. “It’s where people come together and are not judgmental and we have these conversations and we are friends and family. It’s so refreshing to be there every Wednesday because you are around people who want to encourage and help you. They just want to be by your side every step of the way.”

Jewel Chatman, Andrew’s mother, also has a deep connection with her faith. She supports Andrew as he continues on the path he feels God has for him. She says that his plans seem very similar to the path she took after graduating from high school.

“Over the summer, I remember meeting with Andrew and he was just really at a spot where he was seeking after God. And those steps aren’t always clear at times,” Sorget said. “He was really feeling a tug that he needed to be more involved in the ministry, maybe as a vocation. So he really was praying, ‘God I will do whatever you want me to do.’ You know, and that’s really when I saw him get involved.”
...
Maya Attal, junior, remembers her first Midland-Dow soccer game as the hardest game of her life. It was the hottest game of the season, with heat radiating through the turf. While her teammates celebrated a 7-0 victory, Attal found herself short of breath and had to be taken off the field. Prior to this game, Attal hadn’t drank or eaten anything for close to 24 hours, because she was fasting for Ramadan.

Ramadan is an Islamic Holiday celebrated all over the world. It has many traditions, including fasting. It lasts 30 days and participants are not allowed to eat, drink, or chew gum from sunrise to sunset. They fast unless it is unsafe for them; like if they are pregnant, diabetic, or ill. Despite the difficulty fasting brings, it is the most cherished holiday in Islamic culture. Ramadan is a time of peace for the Muslim community, along with respect for her faith.

During Ramadan, junior Maya Attal fasts during the day, which creates multiple obstacles when she plays sports. Attal and Safadi notice stereotypes not only in sports, but in the community as well. They believe that the comments are due to a lack of appreciation and understanding about their culture.

Maya Attal sits at Grove Tea Lounge, where she often comes after practice and working out at the Community Center or the school.

“I can cheat in front of my parents, but I can’t cheat to God or to myself.”

Maya Attal

During Ramadan, junior Maya Attal fasts during the day, which creates multiple obstacles when she plays sports. Ads/Exchange Editor Rachel Applegate | Staff Writer Abbey Brooks | Staff Writer Tyra York

Photo: Rachel Applegate

During Ramadan, junior Maya Attal fasts during the day, which creates multiple obstacles when she plays sports. Ads/Exchange Editor Rachel Applegate | Staff Writer Abbey Brooks | Staff Writer Tyra York

Photo: Rachel Applegate

During Ramadan, junior Maya Attal fasts during the day, which creates multiple obstacles when she plays sports. Ads/Exchange Editor Rachel Applegate | Staff Writer Abbey Brooks | Staff Writer Tyra York

Photo: Rachel Applegate
ATHLETE OF THE MONTH: Jason Davenport

At the age of just four, freshman Jason Davenport was introduced to basketball by his dad. He instantly fell in love with the game. Davenport has found himself a place on the varsity basketball team, playing a pivotal role as a guard although he is the youngest player on the team at only 14 years old.

Despite being such a young player on the varsity level, Davenport said that he doesn’t feel any pressure when he goes out on the court. Davenport said that the reason for this is due to head coach Eric Krause wanting the team to go out there and have fun when they play.

Davenport said that he’s had a lot of fun playing basketball and that it comes mainly from his teammates.

“It’s a team sport and you bond with your teammates, it’s just fun when you win and have fun all together as a team,” Davenport said.

However, playing on varsity as a freshman against stiffer competition and older players does come with some challenges.

“It’s hard getting used to the speed of the game,” Davenport said. “It’s a lot different from middle school, coming from eighth grade all the way up to varsity level and just knowing how to score and make the correct pass, or just knowing the new scheme is difficult sometimes.”

Krause saw glimpses of Davenport’s potential and made the final decision to bring him up to varsity because he believed Davenport could be a very good player for his program.

“I’ve brought up a decent amount of freshmen in my career and I think the one common thread for all of them that I think Jason shares is that he’s serious about basketball,” Krause said. “He has played the game a lot, and he has a good grasp of the understanding of the game as young as he is.”

With such a long career ahead of him, Davenport has set goals and has expectations for his next few years playing basketball for Midland High.

“I hope to win a district, and just to be a good teammate and help the younger kids grow and become even better than me,” Davenport said.
Why are you going for the IB Diploma?
“I started out my freshman and sophomore years in an international school in Mumbai. When I moved to Midland before my junior year, IB helped with the transition. I was able to transfer all of my credits easier. It helped make my life easier in a way. It might be a rigorous course, though it does set you up pretty well for the future. It also helps you think like a global citizen, makes you more open-minded, and you know how to feel in those situations.”

Was it difficult completing classes online?
“It actually wasn’t as bad as expected because I was able to do all my homework in the morning time while everyone else was asleep. From a homework standpoint, I would say not really. However, as time progressed into mid-December, it started getting a bit harder because in all of my subjects they were learning new material. It was a bit hard for me to keep up with, but I was still able to manage it.”

What are the challenges of not having a teacher face-to-face?
“I guess when we started learning all the new stuff, like all the new concepts in school that I wasn’t there for. Trying to learn those concepts on my own from reading the textbook was kind of hard. But once I read up, I typically read like a little bit of the textbook and I got a bit of the gist of what we were doing. So for some subjects, it was fine. As for other subjects, it wasn’t really the best scenario I was hoping for, but I was able to make it work.”

How much contact did you have with your teachers in India?
“I would say I did have quite a bit of contact. I talked a bit with Mrs. King and Mrs. Murphy, I talked quite a bit regarding some of the stuff I had to do in English, and even with other subject teachers like Sra. Aviles, Mr. Fawcett, and Mr. Root. So I kept in touch with my subject teachers. However, with Mrs. Murphy, I spoke to a total of two, three times over the entire course.”
The administration’s recent move to limit the number of tardies has two unquestionable characteristics: it is bold and unpopular.

On Feb. 14, the first tardy sweep was announced and drew intense criticism from the student body and even some teachers. Whether this new policy has been held in high regard or not, we admit that it has sparked conversation about tardies and the rules regarding them.

Although we, The Focus, respect that the administration is attempting to respond to a real problem, we hold the opinion that implementing a tardy sweep is both ineffective and unfair to students.

Principal Tracy Speaker-Gerstheimer has said the policy is in response to an increase of tardies that she noticed after reviewing numbers from first semester. After the first semester in 2018, there were a reported 2,507 tardies, while at the same time during this school year, there were 3,233. This is an increase of 726 tardies, so it makes sense to implement something to combat this. She also said that the policy attempts to address another problem: students who wander hallways during class periods.

In a 26-3 vote, The Focus staff determined that the policy is ineffective. Instead of providing students the incentive to get to class on time, it has the potential to hurt attendance as students skip class altogether to avoid punishment. Implementing a system that encourages students—even indirectly—to skip class doesn’t align with the institution’s basic purpose. We also think that a policy like this is likely to be ineffective as it’s not enforced at all times; rather, its implementation is planned to be sparse and at random. Even when it is enforced, there are “sanctuary classrooms” in which the teacher allows students to enter after the sweep has started, greatly limiting this policy’s effectiveness.

The Focus voted unanimously that the policy is unfair to students. We dispute with the original wording that this policy aims to, as stated in a recent Friday Parent Email, “reward the students who do the right thing.” Instead, we recognize this policy’s intent to punish those who don’t align with the administration’s attendance standards.

Sometimes a student’s attendance is outside of their control. For example, a student who doesn’t drive might have a late bus or a parent who drops them off late, or a student might get caught up in the bathroom. Although Speaker said the target of the sweep are the habitually tardy students, the policy is enforced on all students, regardless of attendance record.

It’s also worth noting that there already exists a tardy policy that directly addresses habitual students, and had it been enforced by teachers, a tardy sweep probably wouldn’t exist. Per the 2019-20 Student Handbook, “Tardy #4 and any additional tardies may result in a referral to Student Services for additional discipline.” Enacting more policies on students is senseless when the problem is that pre-existing policy isn’t enforced consistently.

We recognize that the school is responsible for students while they are in class, but we also question whether or not a student’s attendance is administration’s personal business.

Implementing more policy tightens the leash that administration has on students and limits their judgment. They use the argument that timeliness is a life skill to justify the policy. We agree that timeliness is an important skill to possess, but another important life skill is being able to use proper judgment. Students can’t practice using judgment if they aren’t allowed to judge for themselves. This is a trade-off that administration has made by enacting this policy.

A real solution to attendance issues is to make school a place that students want to go to and to address why students have been increasingly tardy and skipping class. Attendance reflects on the student’s grades, and on the school and its reputation. With current attendance numbers, administration sees unruly, troublemaking students. For students, this reflects a result of being at a school that they don’t want to be at.

If they want an effective solution, administration should focus on making school attractive to students, not forcing them into something they don’t like.
March 6, 2020   FOCUS

THE LOCH does so many things right in so many different ways. It’s impossible to deny how much of an impact they’ve had on the coffee culture of Midland. Since 2016, The Loch has become a coffee powerhouse after drawing recent eye set on its beverage innovation and nightly open. Everything from its coffee to its atmosphere compliments everything that it strives for. It is a coffee rich, and to the coffee lover, it is heaven. Its menu is the highlight of the Loch, easily being their best item. Its atmosphere is pleasing as well, with an aesthetic of slight monochrome minimatism mixed with brown hardwood and the occasional orange and green tones. However, we find that the quietness and quietness of the environment often serves better as a place to study than to hold conversations in a group setting, which is the only real downfall.

Recently opening in 2018, LIVE OAK has become one of Midland’s most prominent and well-known coffee shops. With a wide variety of beverages and pastries, it has something for everybody. But, if you can’t find the slightly watered-down floor that is noticeable with most of their hot drinks. Regardless, the coffee is simply lacks in flavor. It makes up for in its atmosphere, which is practically unmatched by any other coffee shop. As soon as you step inside, you can hear music, conversation, and laughter from all the various rooms. It’s welcoming, aesthetically pleasing, and a great space for studying, meeting, relaxing, and hanging out with friends.

ESPRESSO MILANO is one of Midland’s longest standing and most popular coffee shops. It’s almost assured that you have been here at least once, and Espresso Milano is one of those places that you will most likely return to, even after one try. It has a very unique atmosphere. Everything from the menu to the color of their drink colors to the massive menu written completely and beautifully in chalk screams an early 2000’s aesthetic. Their coffee and food reflects that notion as well. The coffee isn’t too hardy or too smooth, but their espresso is a little bit more watery than most. The only major problem is the seating arrangement. The building is more long than wide, making the seating feel quite cluttered. However, to some, it just adds to the strange yet soothing vibe that this shop holds.

The perfect place to go if you’re looking to relax and enjoy high-quality coffee, ESPRESSO CHAOS provides an open and calm environment, welcoming to soccer parents and a middle-aged clientele. The vibe at Coffee Chaos doesn’t compare to The Loch or Live Oak, yet it’s still a suitable environment for studying or simply having a conversation. Coffee Chaos provides a diverse seating arrangement, ranging from couches to tables and chairs, giving their customers a wide range of seating options. Focusing on their coffee, Coffee Chaos provides the best coffee Chaos has to offer with very high quality coffee. Coffee Chaos also has a very large selection of pastries, which we agreed was the strength of their shop. It’s safe to say the hardest part of our review was selecting what we wanted due to their large menu.

JOURNEYS is a small coffee outlet tucked right by the entrance of Messiah Lutheran, not far from the Bullock Creek area. Journeys has been in Midland for longer than most other coffee shops, but seems to lack what other shops bring to the table. Journeys is devoted, though slightly better than Live Oak, with a richer and more complex flavor. The food selection is limited, mostly Clif bars. The coffee shop is in the corner of a massive, high-ceiling church lobby. Our main issue with Journeys is the atmosphere, or rather, the lack thereof. The shop is the outlet’s list for far too many from the crusty owners of Midland. It lacks decor other than standard, very coffee shop feel. In addition, it being in a large mall, it lacks any atmosphere it attempted to create. Even with their decent drinks and food, the atmosphere can’t compare to that of most cozy coffee shops.

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With Midland being home to many different coffee shops, it can be hard to choose which one is best for your needs. We look through some of the most popular local shops to help you decide. Web Editor Spencer Isberg| Sports Editor Brandy Voelkers | Staff Writer Tristan Gaulther
Although I have had no past experience with beginning journalism or working with a newspaper of any sort, The Focus so far has been a radical experience and I do not regret joining it whatsoever.

Before I joined the staff, I only looked at joining it for two reasons: one, because a lot of my good pals were staff members and I was always amazed with all of the hard work they put into every story, photo and neat little design that was put into every page; two, I gotta admit, it was cool to see myself in the paper. Not that I am a self-centered weenie that doesn’t pay attention to any of the other great things on the rest of the pages, but it was just rad to take a little peek and be like “Ope, that’s me.” In fact, the first time that I saw myself in the paper was when a good fella of mine that’s an editor needed a picture of someone smoking a joint for the front cover because there was a story on the legalization of marijuana. I was nervous that taking this picture would make me late for work, but I said, “Screw it,” and we rolled some green tea in a notepad and snapped some pics.

It wasn’t until the end of my junior year that I decided that I should join the official Focus family. I have always enjoyed English class, so I figured it would be a fun little time. That doesn’t mean that I don’t suck at writing in a professional and newsworthy manner, but I’ve been learning as I’ve gone on.

On my first day, I was a little nervous. I usually get along with people very easily, but because most of the people in the class had started in beginning journalism freshman or sophomore year, then went on to become staff writers and then editors, I was just left feeling like a fool. I knew absolutely nothing about how to come up with a great lead to a story or how to grab a reader’s attention. There was also a lot of pressure on me when I was put on a story because I didn’t want to be carried and have someone do all the work, but I also didn’t want to do all the work and have the story end up sucking and get yelled at and cry. So to conquer these little fears, I asked as many questions as humanly possible. No matter how dumb they were, I put my heart into every piece I wrote. If I made a mistake, I took it as an opportunity to learn and avoid doing it ever again. From then on, I’ve only gotten better, which has made me feel confident in my ability to write personal opinion pieces.

I haven’t shared a class with most of these people since middle school, so it is definitely great to be sharing our last year of high school together before we all split. This brings me to another thing: The Focus staff. I extremely enjoy being around these goons. They are a great bunch of kids. In class, we are absolutely dedicated to doing whatever we can to craft a real good paper. But on the days when we are not cranking’ out the best dang paper in all of Midland, we are absolute animals. Not the bad animals that viscously attack, but the good kind that gets along very well. Sometimes it can be hard to get along with the other kids at school because they can be way too much, but I can honestly say that I have no beef with any of these guys. Now that I think about it, it’s kind of like The Office: we are more than just a school newspaper, we are an absolute family unit that tries to be there for each other. Whether it’s stressing about school, the depressing feeling of workin’ at a sucky job, or just life in general. No matter the situation, there’s someone in the family you can count on.

It’s been really good so far, and I am looking forward to making many more great memories in this class. For example, one time we had to take a photo for a story that involved underage drinking. So, we all headed out to my ratchet, musty garage after a long day of working on the month’s paper, grabbed some cameras, cranked up the volume on my boom-box to blast some punk metal music to get the vibe going, and laid empty beer cans all around the floor (don’t worry, they belonged to my parents). After all of that, my ma had some chicken fingers and fries fresh out of the oven for the whole gang, which completed the night.

I’m not gonna lie and say that I don’t have a couple of regrets in the back of my pocket. In fact, the only regret I have about this class is that I didn’t join it sooner. But, I know for a fat fact that this is one of the highlights of my senior year. I will definitely miss everything about this class: the goofy memes, the random quotes, whipping out a quality column for my fellow chemics; the silly photos on the wall, the awkward silence after someone tells a bad joke—it’s all just too good.

If you are itchin’ to find a great class to fill up your schedule and expand your knowledge by learning of the great importance of real and true news, while also meeting the most absolute righteous group of kids in your whole life that you had no idea you would meet, join this class. There has never been a moment where I have not smiled, not learned, and not bonded. It would be a shame to not give it a try.
Right Hand - Odd number page

In the spring of seventh grade, I took a two-month class at the community center, which only solidified my feelings for the sport.

That summer, I earned a part in a musical called No Strings Attached, a Pinocchio spinoff, which included different styles of dance from jazz, to ballet, to hip hop. At one of our first rehearsals, we learned hip hop steps that would be in the show, and I was in paradise. Dancing, even just at rehearsals, just felt so right.

I’m not quite sure what led her to this conclusion, but based on the small amount of hip hop she had seen me do, the show’s choreographer believed I had somewhat of a talent for dance and decided to put me into a ballet trio at the top of the show. Who with? Two girls who had been in ballet since they could walk. It was a crazy experience, considering nearly all of the steps I had to learn were practiced and perfected in rehearsal rooms merely a month or two before opening night, whereas they had been doing them for years.

Following the show, I was on the receiving end of many compliments on my dancing, and heard a lot of, “How long have you been dancing for?” I then informed people I hadn’t had formal lessons since I was seven, which was usually met with some shocked faces.

The start of eighth grade, I finally began dance lessons, which was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made (though I now attend a different studio, as to improve in ballet).

It’s crazy how much learning to do something as seemingly insignificant as the splits has impacted my life. It has taught me determination, and that you really can do anything if you have passion, a plan, and the drive to achieve it. Without it, I may have never become a dancer, making me forever grateful to the little sixth grader inside of me who was fed up with being just a few inches away.

I’m sure at some point in your life, you’ve attempted to do the classic flexibility move: the splits. Whether it was on the playground in elementary school or at a sleepover in middle school, everyone’s tried it, yet most fail to achieve it.

I can do the splits. Plain and simple, right? What most people don’t know, however, is that I once was that person. All through elementary school, I watched in awe as my dancer friends made a straight line with their legs. I desperately attempted to push myself into the same position, to no avail. It was annoying yes, but what could I do to finally get them? Nothing-- or so I thought.

In sixth grade, I decided to sign up for pom. I wasn’t very flexible, and my high kicks weren’t looking all too great that year, but honestly, I didn’t mind. Most of the other girls weren’t very flexible and couldn’t do the splits either, so it was never a big deal.

Sometime during that year, I decided that I would achieve my splits. I began taking a few minutes a day to stretch, but I wasn’t seeing the results I wanted. I got from about two feet away to around six inches, which was great, but the progress was happening a little too slow for my liking.

Once the school year ended, I kicked it into high gear. I started finding stretching routines and learned to push past my limits. No pain, no gain, right?

One day, I finally did it. I had achieved the splits. It was an amazing feeling, achieving something I had worked so long and hard for. The progress was addictive. Instead of stopping there, I made stretching a part of my daily routine, and was soon able to do the splits with both legs, and eventually the over-splits (the splits, but with one leg elevated above the ground.) With my continued progress, I began being able to do things like leg holds and jumps, both commonly done in dance.

At this point, I began to realize I wanted to try dance. In the spring of seventh grade, I took a two-month class at the community center, which only solidified my feelings for the sport.

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A fter slipping on my pink tights and black leotard, I glanced at myself in the bathroom mirror and began to tear up. Suddenly, those few tears turned into a never-ending waterfall. I was under the impression that I looked horrible and disgusting. I rarely don’t want to go to dance, but this was one of those times. As a sixth-grader, I was beginning to hate my body.

I never starved myself. That was the one thing I, fortunately, didn’t do. But just because I ate doesn’t mean I was healthy. I was obsessed with checking nutritional labels. I practically lived off of Lean Cuisines and other prepackaged, “health” meals. Whenever I went to a restaurant, I googled the healthiest meals available. Water was one of the only drinks that touched my lips. With the exception of holidays, I avoided all desserts and treats like the plague. Most of these habits could be seen as “healthy-ish”. But as healthy as my eating habits may have been, my self-esteem was in critical condition.

My eyebrows were all over the place, my acne was constantly flaring up, my abs were covered in a layer of fat, my legs jiggled, the list went on and on. Not only was I starting in a layer of fat, my legs jiggled, the list went on and on. Not only was I starting to have those thoughts as a middle-scraper, I was beginning to hate my body.

In my mind, I was ugly, and no amount of positive comments were going to convince me otherwise.

My battle with food and my self-esteem is constant, and it probably always will be. Do I wish I had a super toned stomach and skinner, cellulite-free legs? Yes. Do I wish I was self-motivated enough to eat healthy 24/7? Yes. Do I wish I could take my love of Froot Loops, Panda Express, and Coke and rip them into shreds? Yes. Do I wish I weighed a lot less than I do? Yes.

That isn’t living though. That’s locking yourself in a dietary prison with a life-sentence of self-hatred and low self-esteem. I’m not a perfect Barbie doll, and I never will be. And learning to accept that has been one of the largest pills I’ve ever had to swallow.

I’m still guilty of staring at myself in the mirror and picking apart my body from time to time. I still delete Instagram posts once in a while. And I am still constantly in my head about what I should and shouldn’t be eating. After I put some effort into improving my self-esteem, one thing has actually gotten better: I am beginning to live my life and let things go. So what if I pig out after a competition or performance weekend? So what if I get cheese curds or french fries with my friends once in a while? I can’t take it back, it’s not going to kill me. I’m always trying to improve my diet and get in better shape, but if I get a craving for chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream once in a while, you better believe I’m going to have some. And I’m going to enjoy every second of it.
One thing that’s always surprised me is how quickly life can change. You can go from feeling on top of the world to feeling completely isolated and alone in a matter of minutes, but you just have to accept it because “that’s life!”

I’ve never been particularly good at adjusting to change, mostly because I like having a set routine in life. I’ve always enjoyed the feeling of security that comes with having as little unknowns in life as possible and everything being exactly the same no matter what. Yet as a senior, especially in my case, the inevitable is staring right at me: everything is about to change.

Next year I’m attending Oakland University, which I’m super excited about. I get to live in a dorm and finally have that taste of independence that most teenagers dream of having when they reach college. The only thing is, it’s located in Rochester, which is two hours away from Midland, where I’ve spent most of my life.

The thought of having to basically start my life over is a bit nerve-wracking. I’ll be surrounded by people I don’t know in a city that’s totally new to me, living without my parents. I always wanted to branch off away from Midland, but the reality that I’m going to be leaving behind my friends and family, as a result, is terrifying.

I know that I’ll be able to quickly make friends in my new environment, but the thing I’m most dreading is my first night there. I think the reality of the situation will fully hit me then when I’m sleeping in a bed that’s not my own, without the luxury of having my best friends just a short drive away. If I’m completely honest, I don’t know how well I’ll adjust to being away from home and having to rebuild my life from the ground up.

I’m sure there will be many tears involved, and maybe an occasional breakdown maybe, but I also know that I will get through it, and I’m sure that in a few weeks of being at college that I will have made dozens of new friends and be excelling in all of my classes. I feel so lucky to be able to start over. I know that for a lot of my classmates who have chosen to go to college closer to home, it will feel like just an extension of being in high school. Don’t get me wrong, it’s definitely not a bad thing choosing to stay near Midland, but I can imagine that it’s a bit more difficult if you’re like me and want a fresh start. It’s as if I have a blank slate in life to do and be whatever I want, and even yet there’s a part of me that wants to stay in this same routine that feels normal and safe.

And that’s just it. Safeness. Change is risky, no matter how big or small it is. There’s always a chance that the grass isn’t greener on the other side, or you find that it doesn’t fit you and your goals, but it’s important to take that leap sometimes. You will never know who you are or what your potential is until you break free of those barriers you’ve made for yourself and accept change as what it truly is: a new start.

Will college be scary? Absolutely. Will being in a new town feel uncomfortable at first? Of course. Change is part of growing and growing is vital to achieving your dreams, all you have to do is take the risk.
Junior Theo Rammidi cheers for the varsity basketball team as they play the district opener against Dow High School in Mt. Pleasant. The Chemics lost 54-40, ending their season.

Sophomore Allison Stiffler participates in the One Billion Rising fashion show Feb. 26. The goal of the movement is to end domestic violence and sexual assault against women, men, and children. The show, in which students were directed to find clothes from thrift stores in Midland for less than $20, raised more than $600 for Shelterhouse.

Photo: Fischer Genau

Photo: Lauren Revord