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Photo: Carter Hazen & Ryan Pelletier

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## PACKAGE

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.

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# publication policy

The Focus, established in 1977, previously the Vic Tribune established in 1936, is the official school sponsored newspaper of Midland High School. Focus is published monthly by the journalism classes at Midland High School and is distributed free of charge. It is a member of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA), the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association (MIPA) and Quill and Scroll. Adviser membership also includes the Journalism Education Association (JEA).

Focus is designed as a forum for student expression and as a realistic lab experience. Court cases like Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier (1988) have restricted this right to free expression. As a result of the Hazelwood case, Focus may be subject to prior review by Midland High School administrators, who legally reserve the right to pull or censor articles and/or graphic elements (artwork, graphs, photos) planned for publication. Focus and its adviser(s), editors and staff writers, however, reserve the right to contest the challenge of an administrator who attempts to censor and/or remove an article or graphic element.

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Letters of the editor are welcomed and encouraged. Letters are required to be a maximum of 250 words in length and must be signed to insure that the writer's intent is serious. Any letter that is unsigned or uses a pseudonym will be refused. Focus reserves the right to edit letters as long as the writer's opinion is unchanged and the facts presented in the letter are kept intact. Focus also reserves the right to remove from the letter the name of the individual toward whom it is directed or oriented.





# the bulletin

## 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.

### paddelton tournament

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

## MHS SPOTLIGHT



Photo: Spencer Isberg

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.

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Midland High V Cheer  
@ChemicCheerTeam

Today wasn't about winning. Today was to show that Midland is fighting hard to making ourselves known. First ever Regionals for this team was a memorable experience. Blue is Rising, fast. 💙💛 #whoarewe #midland

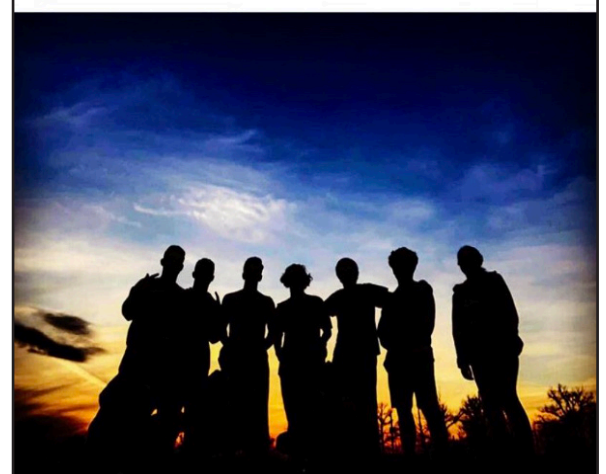
@mhs\_focus



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living\_like\_a.man  
Ultimate Frisbee



Liked by j.w.may and 11 others

living\_like\_a.man Ultimate frisbee never gets old  
#ultimatefrisbee



# COMING BACK HOME

Before graduating from MHS in 2006, Alex Black danced and taught at his family dance studio, Dean/Black. He continued on to the professional dance world, where he worked non-stop for ten years, during which he met his wife, Rochelle. The two moved back to Midland in 2018 to teach at Dean/Black. *Staff Writer Jack Miller | Editor-in-Chief Jenna Spencer | Managing Editor Hannah Woehrle*

Alex Black has been dancing his entire life. Growing up, he would spend hours at Dean/Black School of Performing Arts, the dance studio founded by his grandmother in 1961 and currently run by his mother. Overtime, he developed 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.”

When Black was in 9th grade, he went to both Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy (SASA) and Midland High, attending MHS in the morning and SASA in the afternoon.

“I 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 SASA. 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 *The Nutcracker* at the Midland Center for the Arts. After auditioning for an artistic director to be in the show, he was asked to join the professional company.

“I got to travel there, so they put me up in an apartment and I got to live the adult life that a dancer would be living,” Black said. “Once I got a taste of that, I thought, ‘This is what I’m going to do.’ Once I got into it, then I saw all the details of what it did entail. But, it was basically then when I was like ‘I want to go down this road for sure.’”

Black graduated from MHS in 2006, and since then, he has traveled across the world, dancing in Broadway touring shows, theatre festivals, movies, and more. He spent ten years splitting his time between teaching dance and performing.

“I have been lucky enough to travel the world with what I do,” Black said. “I have been to every state, Canada, South America, Europe, and Dubai all because of dance.”

While auditioning for the North American tour of the Broadway show *Movin’ Out* in 2008, he met his wife, Rochelle Black. Rochelle is also a



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 the formation, and has been one of Alex’s students since he returned. He has been her teacher for a year and a half. *Photo: Jenna Spencer*

professional dancer, whose career started when she was twelve. She was in many films, such as *Confessions Of A Teenage Drama Queen*, *Suicide Squad*, and was a principal actor in four seasons of the FX series *The Strain*.

“As long as I can remember, I knew that I wanted to be a professional dancer,” Rochelle said. “I loved dance so much and I never thought of doing anything else. It was just something I wanted to do and knew I needed to do. I just love it.”

Alex said that his proudest accomplishment in his career would be that he worked non-stop for ten years straight. He was able to get gigs in between shows and have an influx of money, where other dancers may wait between shows and not have a consistent paycheck.

“It’s so hard for performers to go from show to show,” Alex said. “When I didn’t have a show in between shows, I would gig or I would do an industrial, or do a random music video, or stuff like that. I was lucky enough to put things in the middle of shows because I went more the musical theatre route.”

On top of their many performances, both Alex and Rochelle continued 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. “It’s always one job to another, every job ends, every show ends. There’s no nine-to-five job as an entertainer, you’re going from show to show, or movie to movie. So, as you get older you start to crave 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 points 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.

“Alex grew up here,” Rochelle said. “His 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 to settle down and start a family, we started seriously thinking about moving back here.”

Sandra Black, Alex’s mother and the current owner of Dean/Black, was surprised to find out that Alex wanted to return to the studio. She actually found out about Alex’s plans through Rochelle, who told her that after they were done 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 he said ‘Yeah I really wanted to come back,’” Sandra said. “He knew that that was where he was most successful when he was going through high school, and that he really had a love of 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.

One of their students, senior Jessica Perz, started dancing when she was in second grade, making this her eleventh year at Dean/Black. Along with taking regular classes, she assists in ballet classes for every age, and is also on the studio’s competition team. Alex teaches all of her classes except ballet and tap, and Rochelle choreographs many of her competition numbers.

“I really like them both being directors of the company and teaching at the studio because we will work on stuff that we’re going to be competing in class,” Perz said. “So if 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.”

Perz also said that she and the students have improved their technique and work ethic 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 they go ‘Oh I’m going to go talk about you to 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 over there for you.’ That’s always nice because they have connections that I don’t 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 moves. 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 stern 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 learn 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 chance to do that too while he was away, so I don’t know how he fell into it, but we’re a dance family. My mom was a dancer too, and I think that’s just how it ended up,” Sandra said. “These are our people. He feels most at home here.”

Alex said that being a professional dancer impacted his life very much, and that he uses skills he’s learned in his career in his everyday life. He also said that he teaches his students things he’s learned along the way to become a better humans, on top of better dancers.

“[I was most excited about] learning all the kids, giving my own teaching flow because even though Rochelle and I are very similar as teachers, we’re different at the same time, so it was just getting my stuff here where I grew up,” Alex said. “In these rooms, my grandmother taught me. It’s kind of a full circle for me.”

## STYLES OF DANCE

### BALLET

Ballet is smooth and graceful, with pristine technique necessary through training. After a number of years, many ballet dancers will advance to pointe shoes and begin pointe work as well.

### CONTEMPORARY

Contemporary combines many different styles of dance into one expressive art form. Dancers move to the accents, beats, and lyrics of music, leaving more freedom than in other styles.

### ACRO

Acro blends dance and acrobatics together to create an extremely athletic style of dance. Acro requires strong technique, flexibility, stamina, and overall strength.



(Left) Rochelle teaches an acro class, among others, on Tuesdays. She also choreographs dances and helps select music for them. *Photo: Carter Hazen.* (Below) Alex goes over choreography with his students during his advanced contemporary class. The class is rehearsing their routine for their recital, which will be the weekend of May 9th at the Center for the Arts. *Photo: Jacob W. May*





# SPROUTING BUSINESS

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 continues 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 enjoying.

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.

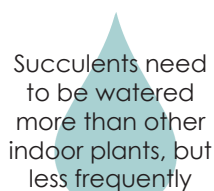
"We'll just see where things take me," Bremer said. "I don't know if next year I'll find even more passion somewhere. Especially since I am attending Northwood University in the fall, you never know. I think that I've gotten a valuable lesson out of starting all of this."



## 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*

# MAKING HISTORY



(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) 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.



(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



# OUR VOICES



**AIDEN ZOOK**  
SENIOR

**Q: What qualities do you look for in a candidate?**

A: I think, for me, the thing I look for most in a candidate are integrity of character, as I feel that is the most important trait in how well an individual would be at leading the country. This includes a strong environmental policy, and a strong plan as to how they would go about achieving what they want when in office.

**Q: Why do you think it's important for young people specifically to vote?**

A: Different age groups tend to have different ideas, and focuses on what issues are most important to them, so it is important that younger people vote to keep the issues most pertinent to them in mainstream discussion and relevance.



**SAM LONGLET**  
SENIOR

**Q: What qualities do you look for in a candidate?**

A: Transparency is important to me. I also like candidates that talk about the real issues, not the ones that make them sound the best.

**Q: Why do you think it's important for young people specifically to vote?**

A: It's our future we're voting for. We are going to inherit the world in the next 30 years and it's important that we understand that the actions we take today will change the future. Issues like global warming are a danger to our future, and to our children's future.

On March 10, the Michigan Primaries will be the first time that many MHS students will be able to vote. This is the chance to have their voices heard and represent the American youth. *News Editor Aleah Ward | Copy Editor Lauren Revord | Staff Writer Savanna Willis*

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 a 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 Kreusch will be a first time voter during the Michigan Presidential Primary Election. He believes that young people should vote because the decisions made based on this election will greatly influence our future.

"I think it's important for our generation especially because we are going to be the ones living with this president for the next 4 to 8 years," Kreusch said. "It is during the most influential part of our lives where 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 Kreusch 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 eligible young people voting, only pros," Steinke said. "Young people are the future of this country, and as such have a real stake in decisions current legislators and government officials make, as they can have impacts long into the future."

Steinke also believes that citizens have the civil duty to vote and be informed about who they are voting for. She said that young people can provide valuable insight to our democratic process.

"This on-going project of making democracy work for all of us must include the voice of young people," Steinke said. "The more people exercise their right to vote, the more power people will have over their elected leaders' decisions. There is strength in numbers and huge turnouts to vote make it clear whether those in elected office are serving the will of the majority of people, or if they are potentially serving their own will, or the will of the minority."

Emma Browne, 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 national election is chosen," Browne said. "Voting in the primaries is the warm up for the presidential election and is how you can aid a candidate one step closer to the presidency."

Browne believes that the youth should have a large voice in politics because of how much they are impacted.

"You look at education costs, minimum wage, potential wars: all things that benefit mostly young people," Browne said. "It doesn't make sense for someone who has finished college without student debts, has job security, and is no longer fit to fight make the decisions."

Kreusch shares the same thoughts in that 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."

Government teacher Matt Starling agrees that it is highly important for everyone, especially students, to be well-informed about all the candidates. He believes 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 tons of information out there," Starling said. "There are lots of issues that are going to affect them from national security to college loan forgiveness that will be issues in the 2020 election that they need to know about."

Starling also said that though students are educated on these issues, the youngest generation of people voting remains more divided than unified.

"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 a very close election. Every vote counts and that it's not just about the presidential election. There's much more to it 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 would be someone who is looking out for others just as much as, if not more than, themselves. She wants someone that will support social security, universal healthcare, keeping abortion legal, marriage equality, gender equality, and destroying systemic racism.

"Overall, voting is important because it's our civic right," Browne said. "It's a chance to shape the future. Not voting when you're able to means you shouldn't complain."

Steinke agrees with Browne in the fact that every vote counts, and that young people can help shape the future.

"Investing in our democratic process is the key to ensuring its survival," Steinke said.

Investing in our democratic process is the key to ensuring its survival

Kim Steinke

of struggles, and so the next generation can live well underneath the leadership of a candidate that can make changes to benefit the country.

"We are the ones who are rising up into new roles in society," Kreusch said. "We'll 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 is under good leadership so that we can live and thrive in."

Browne also said that researching candidates is very important in the voting process, in that it exposes voters to information that could impact their vote. However, she warns people of the propaganda that lies within the accurate information.

"With so many candidates, I have

## HOW TO REGISTER:

### Where To Vote?

- Secretary of State Office
- County Clerk's office

- [www.Michigan.gov/sos](http://www.Michigan.gov/sos)



### What do I need for Application?

- Drivers license OR
- Last 4 digits of Social Security number OR
- Copy of a government document that list your name and address

### How do I turn it in?

- Mail it in or drop off form to your city/ township clerk's office

### When will I know if I am registered:

- Voter registration card will come in mail

## ONE VOTE

Brought Texas into the union

Gave America the English language instead of German

Changed France from a monarchy to a republic

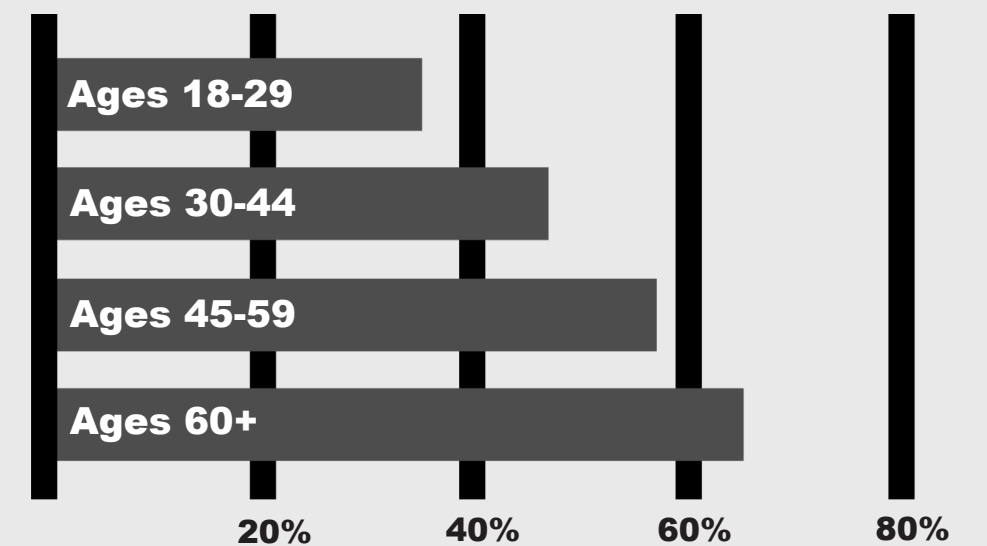
Gave Adolf Hitler leadership of the Nazi party

Gave Oliver Cornwall control of England

Caused Charles I of England to be executed

## VOTE TURNOUT BY AGE GROUP

Based on the 2018 election

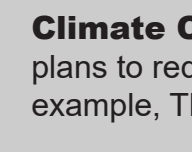


## MOST CONCERNING ISSUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**Free In-state College Tuition:** Some candidates have proposed programs to forgive all student debt.



**School Safety:** This has become a very concerning topic for students. Some candidates hope to combat this issue by gun laws or other measures.



**Climate Change:** Various candidates have proposed plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, The Green New Deal.



**Mental Health:** With new research emerging showing increase in anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses, this topic has been a frequent topic of discussion.



**Education:** The topic of education has always been a concern. Proposals of year-round school and no homework policies have been suggested.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, [lovetoknow.com](http://lovetoknow.com)



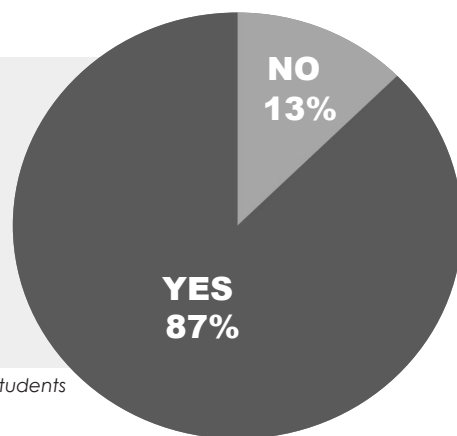
Living in Faith:



# 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*

Is the separation of church and state important?



based on a survey of 207 MHS students



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

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

First Amendment  
1791

## 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.

1962

1980

2000

2001

### ENGEL V. VITAL

Prohibited school-sponsored prayer, even nondenominational prayer, in schools.

### STONE V. GRAHAM

Prohibits the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools.

### SANTA FE INDEP. SCHOOL DISTRICT V. DOE

Ruled that student-led prayer over the loud speakers at football games is against the establishment clause.

### GOOD NEWS CLUB V. MILFORD CENTRAL SCHOOL

Ruled that schools could not suppress a student sponsored religious organization.

## 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.”

Source: Oyez.org





# Living in Faith: **DIVINE DEVOTION**

Throughout the years, Andrew Chatman has deepened his faith and plans to follow God's lead in the future. *Arts and Entertainment Editor Caitlin Quinn*  
| *Staff Writer Julian M. Longlet* | *Staff Writer Ryan Pelletier*

Chatman raises his hand in praise to God while on stage at Thrive. Worship at the Christian Celebration Center is led by Chatman on bass and other youth members. On Wednesdays, the Youth Group has discussions with their Pastor on a subject that he feels God wants him to preach, or the youth will be divided into groups by grade for individual discussions. *Photo: Ryan Pelletier*

## DAY BY DAY

Chatman spends time throughout his week helping out with many different religious events.

### Sunday

Ushers and greets at the Christian Celebration Center.

### Monday

Prayer group for missionaries around the world, led by Pastor Pat Rusch.

### Tuesday

Morning Bible club meeting from 7:00-7:40 am at Midland High School.

### Wednesday

Thrive from 3:30-8:00 pm. Thrive is a lively and spirited youth group.

### Thursday

Afternoon Bible Club meeting to discuss a selected chapter from the Bible.

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.

Jewel interned in Mexico after graduating from a Bible college and can't remember a time when her son wasn't involved with the church. After high school, Andrew plans to follow after his mother. He believes he is called to attend a Bible college in order to become certified and ordained, then he will

decide on his career based on the path he is led down by God.

"My biggest future aspiration is to obey God no matter what he says and I believe that he has called me into full time ministry," Andrew said. "As of right now, I feel as if I'm called more towards youth ministries and that could be because of my age."

Jewel has seen Andrew grow in his leadership. Over the years, she has seen him work through challenges supported by his religious beliefs and the relationships formed through the church.

"I would say he has more wisdom now, more wisdom for insight," Jewel said. "He has overcome a lot of adversity, and I think the adversity has made him a better person and a stronger person."

Karl Sorget, Youth Pastor at Christian Celebration Center, has known Andrew for around five years, and got to know him better through Andrew's internship with the church.

"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."

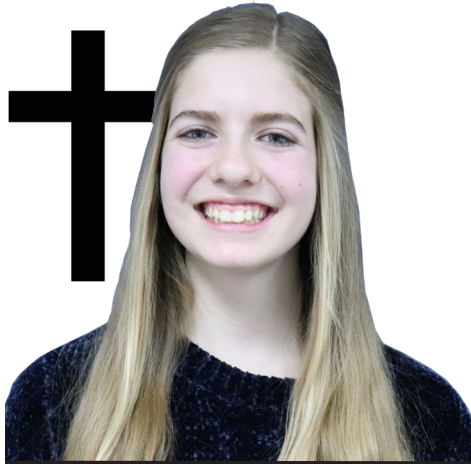


LIVING  
IN FAITH:

DEVOUT DIVERSITY

With more than 1,300 students, Midland High has a variety of religions represented throughout the student body. Here, followers of Mormonism, Islam, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Judaism discuss how their religions are incorporated into their lives, and point out common misconceptions about their beliefs. *Features Editor Jacob W. May | Staff Writer Oliviah Klinski | Staff Writer Ty Passalacqua*

Nicole James:  
Mormonism



Nicole James, a junior, is a member of The Church Of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, informally known as the Mormon church.

“My religion makes me want to try and be a better person,” James said. “I try to help others out, I try to do things to make the world a better place. Personally, that’s what I think the purpose of religion is: to guide you through life and help you to understand your purpose, how you can do the things you’re doing with a good heart, and to make other people feel welcome.”

The main component of the Mormon faith is the belief in God, his son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Contrary to many other Christian faiths, people that practice Mormonism believe that these

three people were separate individuals. The addition of The Book of Mormon, on top of the Bible, is also an important difference. Mormons, including James, are taught to dress modestly, not partake in pre-marital sex, and avoid all addictive substances, such as alcohol, drugs, nicotine, coffee, and some types of tea.

Mormonism is often incorrectly believed not to be Christian, and even though James has heard people voice this misconception, she is still grateful to live in Midland.

“I’m glad that I live in an area where religion is important,” James said. “I have many friends that practice different religions. I have several friends who are Muslim, Hindu, Catholic, Protestant—the whole spectrum—and I think that has

definitely opened my perspective. I think the most important thing is to focus on what you have in common.”

When discussing Mormonism, or any other religion, James believes the most important element is to find credible sources, and above all, remain respectful.

“I think the good way to go about asking questions would be going to somebody of that faith,” James said. “If someone has questions after reading this article about what I believe in, feel free to talk to me. As long as you’re respectful about it, I’ll be respectful and help to try and answer your questions to the best of my ability.”

Juwairiya Iqbal:  
Islam



Sophomore Juwairiya Iqbal was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and lived there for eight years before moving to Midland. Pakistan has the second-largest Muslim population in the world. Iqbal wouldn’t consider herself religious, but her parents are devout Sunni Muslims. Iqbal said that she practices Islam more as a philosophy.

“I try to read the Quran every day, it’s a good self-care thing,” Iqbal said. “I don’t necessarily pray five times a day, every day. But when I do, it’s a self-care moment for me.”

One way Iqbal says Islam promotes this is wearing a hijab, which she wears regularly.

“It made me stand out, and because of

the message it sends across, which is that you’re beautiful for who you are and not because of your appearance,” Iqbal said.

She said that her family isn’t especially strict about the faith, but they take some aspects of it very seriously.

“A lot of it is clothing, you have to be modest,” Iqbal said. “And then eating kosher food, I can’t eat pork and I can’t consume alcohol. That’s a sin if you do. If I consume beef or chicken, it has to be cut and prepared in a certain way.”

Iqbal said that she has faced criticism due to her faith and heritage. She recalled an altercation that happened in the Fashion Square Mall.

“I was talking to my mom in Urdu, and this lady walks up to us and says, ‘This is

America, you need to speak English,’” Iqbal said.

According to Iqbal, the woman was upset that she couldn’t understand Iqbal and her mother, who were only conversing about purchasing a sweater.

Although Iqbal may find challenges in her way of life, she still enjoys practicing Islam since it offers her a connection with God, an opportunity for growth, and a community that she feels special to be a part of. In a heavily Christian community, she educates those who carry misconceptions.

“If you don’t have anything nice to say, keep it to yourself,” Iqbal said. “I am ready to sit down with you and educate you.”

Elizabeth Wendor:  
Catholicism



Senior Elizabeth Wendor was raised in the Catholic church, and continues to follow the traditions and beliefs she was taught as a young girl.

Many aspects of Wendor’s life revolve around her faith. She attends Mass every Tuesday and Sunday, Word and Communion three times a week, and Adoration on Wednesdays. Wendor also begins each day by praying and thanking God for the new day ahead of her, and finishes the day by praying the Rosary with her family.

“I don’t want to imagine my life without my faith because I wouldn’t have a purpose,” Wendor said. “God gives me my purpose and I would be miserable

without him.”

Catholics share the strong belief that there is one, true god. Many Catholics attend Mass every Sunday, as well as celebrating the major holidays of Christmas and Easter. Catholics also observe Advent and Lent, which are periods of time before these major holidays.

This year, Lent began on Feb. 26, and will continue until Holy Thursday (April 9). During Lent, which is a period of preparation and fasting before Easter, many Catholics choose to give up certain objects or actions to foster personal growth. Wendor’s goal for Lent this year is to work on being less vain, and to continue making her relationship with God her main focus.

“Being Catholic has taught me how my

eyes should be on God and what he says about me, and not what others say,” Wendor said.

Wendor continues to follow the teachings of the Catholic Church and deepen her faith. She tries to make every second of her day a constant prayer, thanking God for his blessings and asking Him for guidance when necessary.

“I know that God isn’t going to give me anything that I can’t handle,” Wendor said. “I know he will take care of everything. So when I have a long list of things to do, I can remain calm knowing that he’s got my back and he’s going to give me the grace to be able to do it.”

Meghana Reddy:  
Hinduism



Born in India, junior Meghana Reddy spent the first eight years of her life surrounded by Hinduism. Reddy’s entire family practices the religion, but Reddy admits she isn’t very religious.

Originating in India, Hinduism is a polytheistic religion, meaning that Hindus worship more than one god. Hindus also view cows as sacred, making beef off-limits. Members of the Hindu faith celebrate multiple festivals each year, including Diwali and Makar Sankranti. Pujas are also a common practice, which are daily worship rituals. Many families even have a puja room, Reddy’s family included.

Reddy’s mother is very strong in faith, worshipping, praying, and performing

pujas every day. Reddy believes that if she had lived in India for longer, she may have been more religious as well.

“I feel like I would be more religious if I was there because more of my family lives there, and they’re all religious so I would be more religious,” Reddy said.

Even though Reddy’s family is more religious, Reddy is fine with her faith as it is. She goes to festivals when necessary, follows dietary restrictions, and participates in her mother’s pujas every so often. Reddy has no desire to further her faith, but enjoys and appreciates being able to identify as Hindu.

“I don’t know whether I believe everything or not yet,” Reddy said. “I like Hinduism culture though. Being around people and going to festivals.”

Tyler Shapiro:  
Judaism/Lutheran



Freshman Tyler Shapiro practices two different religions, since his mother is Lutheran, while his father is Jewish.

He claims not to identify as one more than the other. However, he spends more time practicing Christianity due to the fact that he lives with his mother and mainly practices Judaism when he is with his father, who lives in New Jersey.

“Here in Midland, we go to church, but when I’m with my dad we go to temple,” Shapiro said.

Shapiro only goes to temple once or twice a year, but he participates in Jewish traditions such as bar mitzvahs and Rosh Hashanah. He also celebrates both Hanukkah and Christmas.

“Usually, I’m with my mom so we do Christmas,” Shapiro said. “But he’ll send us gifts in Jewish-themed wrapping paper with Stars of David and menorahs and a card that says ‘Happy Hanukkah’ with a Jewish blessing.”

Shapiro said that with his father he follows kosher dietary rules. However, he doesn’t observe these same rules outside of when he’s with his father.

Shapiro has noticed that Midland only has one temple, and he wishes that there were more opportunities for Judaism to be seen in Midland. He invites people to ask questions about his faith.

“Just ask,” Shapiro said. “Chances are that you’re not really being offensive, you just think you are.”

MISCONCEPTIONS

Sources respond to false ideas about their religions. These misconceptions came from students who were prompted, “What do you know/ think you know about [religion].”

“Catholics are homophobic.”

“That is very false. Anyone is welcome in a Catholic church. Unfortunately, you will have biased people who are against those people and will give them hate. But we are called to love the sinner and hate the sin.” - Elizabeth Wendor

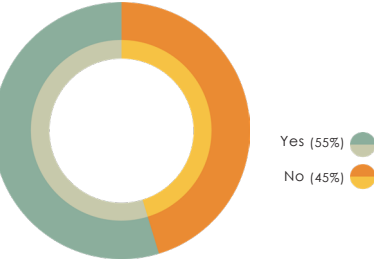
“Jewish people don’t believe in an afterlife.”

“Everyone genuinely thinks that there is a heaven. It’s just not exactly the same. But there is a place. There’s a heaven and there’s a hell.” - Tyler Shapiro

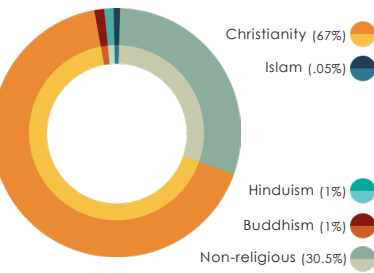
RELIGIOUS DATA:

207 students participated in a survey regarding religion.

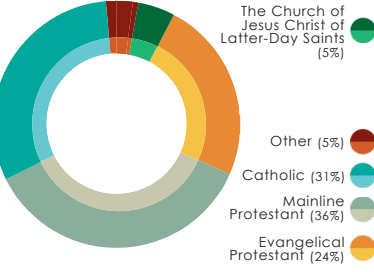
Would you consider yourself religious?



What religion are you a part of?



If you’re Christian, what denomination do you belong to?



“Mormonism is not a Christian Faith, and Mormons don’t believe in Jesus Christ.”

“Both are totally fake. I 100% believe in Jesus. Our religion is founded upon Christ. Our name is The Church of Jesus Christ [of Latter-Day Saints].” - Nicole James

“Muslims pray to a god named Muhammad.”

“Muslims don’t pray to a God named Muhammad. Muslims worship ‘Allah’. Allah literally means God in Arabic. Muhammad is a Prophet and Muslims believe that there is only one God and Muhammad is his last prophet.” - Juwairiya Iqbal

“Hindus pray to an Islamic god.”

“I haven’t heard anything about that. There’s a lot of Hindu gods. The big ones are Shiva, Brahma, and Krishna. There are also goddesses.” - Meghana Reddy





# LIVING IN FAITH: RUNNING ON EMPTY



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*

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

**M**aya 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 family, parties, and reflection.

"It teaches you a lot of patience and to feel for people who are less fortunate than you," Attal said. "The majority of it is to feel for the poor and understand that there are things greater than yourself."

Attal first started fasting when she was 8 years old, but would only fast for a half a day, eventually getting more serious about it in middle school, fasting the full day. Despite her parents' warnings, she decided to fast while playing sports. She found fasting extremely difficult starting in seventh grade, because she hadn't played any sports that overlapped with Ramadan before.

"The night before, I usually try and

eat as much as I can, until I physically cannot," Attal said. "During the morning I try and not stress out and not overwork myself if possible. Before a game, I will get ice from the trainer, and all my teammates will put water on me and try to hydrate my skin."

Yasmine Safadi, a junior at Dow High, has been family friends with Attal since birth. They grew up doing everything together, including playing soccer. Safadi has been able to relate with Attal because they are both part of the Muslim community. Although Safadi doesn't fast while she plays sports, she understands

accommodate her," Barassi said.

During a game last season against Grand Blanc, Barassi ran onto the field after Attal collided with an opponent and had to tell the trainers that they could not give her water in order for her to continue fasting.

"We could only mist her because they tried to give her water," Barassi said. "I said, 'No you can't give her water.' It's one of those things I had made sure that everybody understood."

Although she loves celebrating Ramadan, it does take a large toll on her body when she plays soccer to the point

**I can cheat in front of my parents, but I can't cheat to God or to myself.**

**Maya Attal**

how challenging it is to perform in a game.

"When we are on a water break or she was starting to get dizzy, I'd tell her, 'Maybe you need to sit down for a little bit and take a break,'" Safadi said.

Varsity soccer coach Rodrigo Barassi was able to help Attal throughout the season. With his previous experience with other players who practice the Islamic religion, he was familiar with her situation.

"When Maya was playing with us, we had to do everything we could to

where she has had to be removed from the field during games.

"Every time I go into it, I think that I should quit, because every year Ramadan gets earlier and earlier," Attal said. "It takes a whole part of a season and I can't perform as well as everyone else can."

Attal and Barassi agree that Attal's teammates were very supportive of her during Ramadan. Some players decided not to drink water around her out of respect for her faith.

"They were wonderful teammates," Barassi said. "They would not drink

## WHAT IS RAMADAN?

### WHAT IS IT?

It is when adult Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. During fasting, the time is used for prayer, charity, spirituality, and purifying the mind and the body.



### WHERE DID IT COME FROM?



Muslims believe that in 610 A.D the angel Gabriel appeared to prophet Muhammad and revealed to him the Quran. They fast during that month to commemorate the revelation of the Quran.

### WHAT ARE SOME TRADITIONS?

Pre-dawn breakfast, or *suhoor*, usually occurs at 4:00 AM before the first prayer of the day, *fajr*. The evening meal, *iftar*, can begin once the sunset prayer, *Maghreb*, is finished.



### WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?



After the last day of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate Eid, which is three days of festivities where Muslims gather to pray, eat, exchange gifts, and pay respects to their dead relatives.

Source: National Geographic

water in the game either, they felt bad chugging water when she couldn't."

Even though Attal has found that her teammates and the majority of the people around her are supportive, she has heard some negative comments regarding her eating.

"People would say, 'Oh that's not that hard,' or 'Why don't you just eat?'" Attal said. "I can cheat in front of my parents, but I can't cheat to God or to myself."

Both 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.

"If people are trying to be rude about it, it's none of their business, it's not your religion, you don't need to get involved," Safadi said.

Attal hopes that people will appreciate Islam, despite the negative views and stereotypes it has in the media.

"I wish more people would realize that Ramadan isn't terrible because a lot of people think it's bad," Attal said. "They think it's teaching people to starve themselves, but instead it's just teaching us patience. It's very overlooked and under appreciated about how peaceful our religion can be."



# SPORTS ZONE



## game on.. game off?

*Brenden Granzo*

Ah, Super Bowl Sunday. The most important day of the year for many football fans, but a bittersweet occasion to be sure. It represents the biggest football game of the NFL season, but it also represents the end of this football season, and the beginning of a tragic seven months without professional football. That's why on that special Sunday, I happily park myself in front of the TV for 4-5 hours to really take it all in.

After all the pregame predictions and endless football analysis required before all big games, the time is approaching. It's been months in the making, but this is

it... It's finally time for kickoff!

Wait a second. Commercial break. The old man in the Google ad is apparently tragically forgetful but tech-savvy enough to tag all of his pictures so they appear when he asks Google about them. Very heartwarming, but this old dude's story doesn't have me convinced. This is followed by some Bostonian's who get to admire a self-parking car. I wonder if people who actually live in Boston find this funny, or if they don't get the joke.

Anyway, with that over, it's back to the game, and the players are lined up for kickoff. The 49ers win the coin toss and choose to give the Chiefs the ball. I speak for just about every football fan when I say that I'm excited to see the Chiefs' amazing offense do their thing, and...

Hold on. Commercial break, once again. In a well, unique, Rocket Mortgage commercial, I am treated to a ripped Jason Momoa removing his CGI muscles. It's kind of funny, but that CGI was a little much, and I'm not seeing the connection to football. This is followed by Ellen's comical musings about the origins of the Amazon Alexa. Also funny, but also not what I've parked myself on the couch for. It's all entertaining, but by this point I feel like I'm walking through the set of an infomercial. A funny

infomercial, but not a football game.

To make a long story short, the second half is much like the first, with roughly 25 more minutes of ads and an actual exciting game.

In a recurring theme lasting through the entire postseason, the Chiefs managed a crazy come-from-behind victory. The final score was 31-20 Chiefs, and it was a great game, but I get the feeling that a relatively large number of people don't actually care. The talk at school the next day is mostly about the halftime show, then the commercials, and finally, at the bottom, the actual football game.

See, I like Super Bowl commercials and all the other entertaining events that surround the Super Bowl. But I'm in it for the game. I watched the Super Bowl this year hoping that the game would be a good one, and that more than 16 total points would be scored like last year. I was not disappointed in that respect, but I long for a Super Bowl that's more about the game of football itself. The point is there's just too much fanfare around the things that accompany this game, and not enough about the actual game.

*Brenden Granzo*

# [ 2 ]

Junior Izaac Goergen placed second at the boys' division 1 individual regional for bowling on Feb. 29. Goergen will compete in states on Saturday at Thunderbowl in Allen Park.

# 103

Junior Connor Schelb (103 pounds) advanced to the wrestling state tournament after placing fourth in regionals. The state tournament will be held at Ford Field on March 6-7.

## 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.

Staff Writer: Zach Streich | Photo: Carter Hazen





## 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."

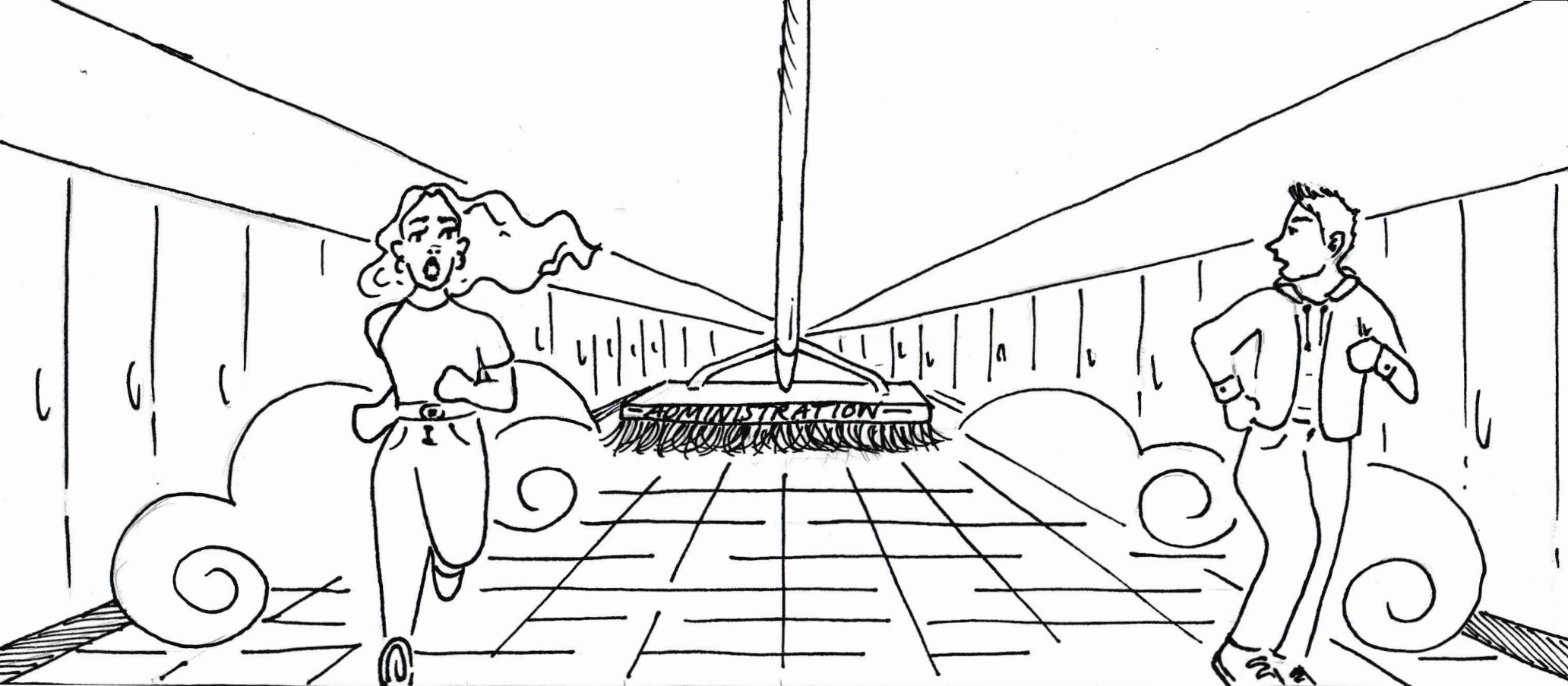
Abhirup Banerjee works on his lab in organic chemistry. The lab consists of him cutting an orange and squeezing it into a beaker to test the pH levels of different sizes of oranges. Photo: Drake Kunst

# LEARNING 7,863 MILES AWAY

## HUMANS OF MIDLAND HIGH

Senior Abhirup Banerjee kept up with his IB classes when he and his family recently traveled back to India for two and a half months. Staff Writer Sophia Bergey | Staff Writer Drake Kunst





*The Focus* addresses:  
Tardy Policy

*The Focus* believes that the recent tardy sweep is ineffective and unfair. It doesn't address the root of the problem and is the result of an inconsistent enforcement of previous policy.  
Illustration: Abigail Haag

**T**he 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 sweep because they had to use 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.



# The Best Press



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 Brady Woods | Staff Writer Tristan Gauthier*



Photos: Spencer Isberg



**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 having recently set up its second location downtown, and rightfully so. Everything from its coffee to its atmosphere compliments everything that it strives for. It's coffee is rich, and both well made and presented. Its waffles are the highlight of it's food menu, easily being their best item. Its atmosphere is pleasing as well, with an aesthetic of slight monochrome minimalism mashed with brown hardwood and the occasional orange and green tones. However, we find that the quaintness 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.



Originally opening in 2016, **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— that is, if you don't mind the slightly watered-down flavor that is noticeable with most of their hot drinks. Regardless, what the shop slightly lacks in flavor, it makes up for in range. They offer standard coffee brews in addition to several teas, miscellaneous drinks, and even kombucha. If their drinks aren't your style, you'll likely enjoy their food selection, which consists of snacks like yogurt parfaits, fruit trays, muffins, and more. What ultimately makes Live Oak stand out is 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, reading, relaxing, and hanging out with friends.

**ESPRESSO MILANO** is one of Midland's longest standing and most prominent 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 remember, even after one trip. It lies in its rusty, grungy charm. Everything from the flames on the side of their drink coolers 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 brew 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.



Recently opening in February of 2019, **GROVE TEA** has directed their establishment in the right direction. With more of a focus on tea rather than coffee, Grove Tea provides a diverse menu for their customers. We enjoyed the large variety of pastries, including hand made energy bites and cinnamon rolls, and it's safe to say you get what you pay for with portions and flavor. In addition to their large variety of pastries, there are also healthy options, including egg white bites. The overall atmosphere of the building is also quite relaxing and comes across as organized and mature. However, we didn't feel as if it was your typical coffee shop due to the colors on the inside and the giant Elsa sticker in the window. However, another positive note is that they provide a high chair bar area with several outlets, giving customers opportunities to work on their computers or charge their phones. The building (a former bank) also has a drive-through if you're in a rush or don't want to go inside.

The perfect place to go if you're looking to relax and enjoy high-quality coffee, **COFFEE 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 coffee tables and couches to tables and chairs, giving their customers a wide range of seating options. Focusing on their coffee, we agreed that Coffee Chaos provided us with very high quality drinks. 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 coffee is decent, though slightly better than Live Oak's, with a richer and smoother taste. The food selection is limited, mostly Clif bars. The coffee shop is in the corner of a massive, high-ceilinged church lobby. Our main issue with Journeys is the atmosphere, or rather, the lack thereof. The truth is that the outlet is too far away from the urban areas of Midland. It fails to deliver on that standard, cozy, coffee shop feel. In addition, by placing it in a large room, it kills any atmosphere it attempted to create. Even with the decent drinks and food, the atmosphere can't compare to that of more cozy coffee shops.







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 crankin' 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 boombox 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.

*Isaak Zimmerman*

## MY FOCUS FIRST



Illustration: Sophia Bergey



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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 addicting. 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.

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.

*Myah Shelton*





# dietary prison

Olivia Klinski

After 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 teeth were crooked and yellow, I had man shoulders, my abs were covered 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-schooler, but I continue to have them as a junior in high school.

I started eating like a normal thirteen-year-old--for the most part--when I started high school. Along with finally hitting puberty and getting curves, I started eating a lot more due to the stress of high school. I was still pretty

healthy, but I wasn't as devout as I was in middle school. My self-esteem continued to decrease by the second though. I was constantly weighing myself and was incredibly frustrated that I was never under 100 pounds. In my mind, I was ugly, and no amount of positive comments were going to convince me otherwise.

I continued to hate my body. I downloaded all the dieting apps, read all of the online articles, and made dozens of Pinterest boards with at-home workouts, healthy meals, and self-care tips. If I would slip up and enjoy a piece of candy or a bowl of

sugary cereal, I would be down on myself for days. I would tell myself that if I hadn't indulged in the slightest amount of sugar, I would be that much skinner or that much prettier or have that much less fat on my body. It wasn't a healthy way to approach food.

I shouldn't be flinching every time someone touches me. I shouldn't be deleting my Instagram posts because I hate the way I look. I shouldn't be lying about my weight

on my driver's license. I shouldn't think of lightheadedness as a badge of honor. I shouldn't be crying over a pint of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream because other people aren't eating ice cream and those people are going to look better than me and ice cream will make me gain weight and ice cream will make me hate my body more and I shouldn't be eating the ice cream, so why I am?

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-

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

## "HEALTHY"



Illustration: Sophia Bergey

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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.

*Olivia Klinski*



## CHANGE IS A PART OF GROWING

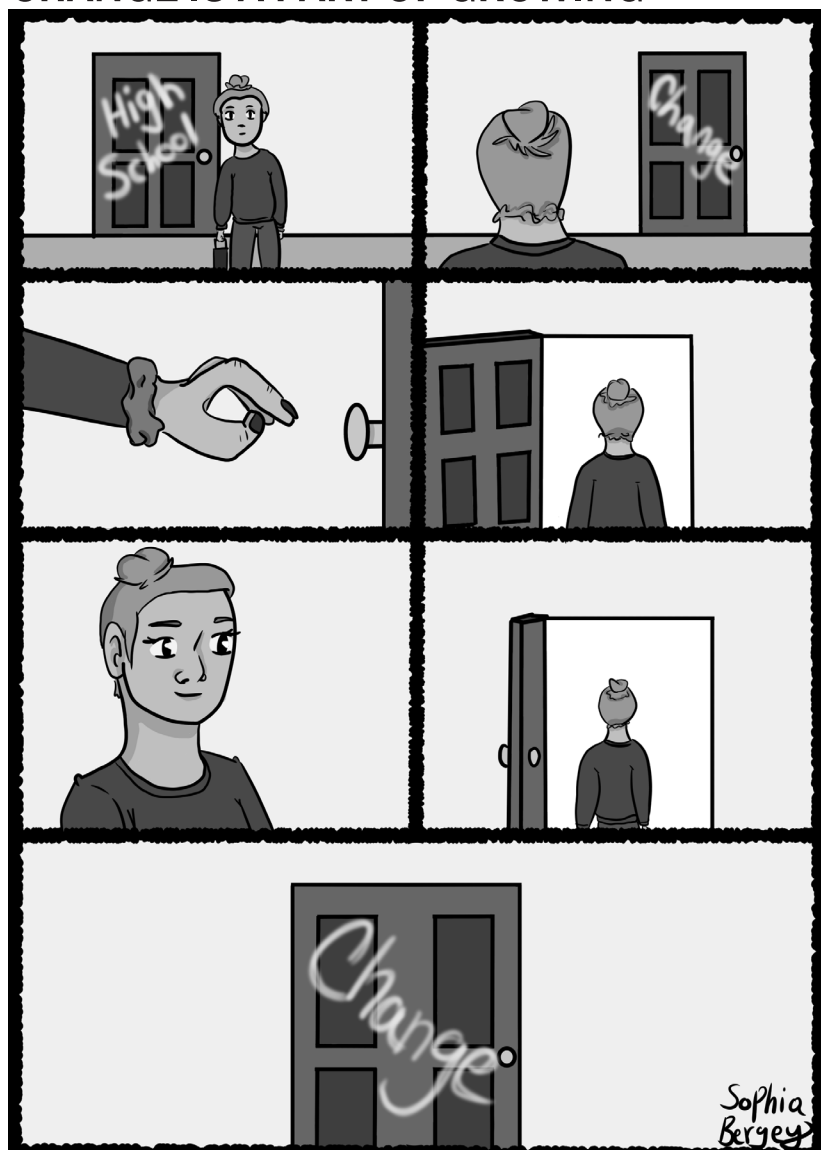


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## big changes

Mary Kent

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.

Mary Kent





## MODEL STATUS

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: Lauren Revord*