

Hopewell Hi-Lites

1215 Longvue Avenue, Hopewell, PA

Issue 48: February 2024

Hopewell Considering Consolidation

BY: GRACE GOLD

At Hopewell, some big changes may start happening. Hopewell's superintendent, Dr. Jeff Beltz, the school board, and DRAW Collective, a Pittsburgh-based architecture company, are determined to improve Hopewell's school buildings.

There are several different plans. In most of the proposed designs, the three elementary schools would be demolished and combined. Another common thread in the design is the idea of moving grades 7-8 to the High School. According to the DRAW collective presentation the organization of grades to schools is still under debate.

The goals of the school board include the following: providing 21st century learning environments; eliminating educational, facility and staffing inequities; consolidating school buildings into 2-3 facilities; adding efficiency; and reducing operational costs and improve quality and long-term maintainability of facilities.

According to the presentation, each school has a certain number of students that is the maximum capacity, and there is a sizable difference between the maximum capacity and actual number of students enrolled. The elementary schools are either near or at full capacity, but the Junior and Senior High Schools have a lot of room, as the functional capacity for the Junior High is 1,278 students, but there are only 648 students enrolled, and

for the Senior High School, the functional capacity is 1,195 students, but there are only 628 enrolled. According to Dr. Beltz, school and community "consolidation" are very necessary for these plans to come to fruition.

Funding the project is another issue. According to Dr. Beltz, "While we have ongoing bond repayment obligations continuing from decades-old remodeling efforts, it is difficult to map out a longitudinal plan." The district is in the process of identifying available funds, while also projecting future funding and potential savings.

Freshman Sadie Lubert described how it will likely affect Hopewell's next generation of students; "I know there are other districts that use the K-6 system, but for our district, so much change at once would be difficult. The move from the elementary buildings to the middle school is really important, and it helps

students mature, in a way, and I think that's really important."

Speaking of transitions, timing of when all of the potential change will take place is not exact at the moment. Many parts of these plans are still in the works and being voted on; however, the current timeline is sometime during the next 2-6 years. However, the board and superintendent have assured the community that the process will not affect next school year, "There will be no changes to the district's current educational model in 2024-25 to allow for an authentic planning and communication process. The district will operate in 2024-25 in the same manner as is ongoing in 2023-24, with grade levels and school building locations remaining intact."

The next proposed meeting on this topic is March 12, while May 14 and May 28, 2024 are designated as decision-making meetings.



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Caught in Hi-Lites



MURDER ON THE MESA

BY: LAHNA MURRAY

English teacher, actor, director—what can't Mr. Spinnenweber do? Mr. Spin has recently written *Murder on the Mesa*, which adds to his collection of the numerous plays he has created.

Murder on the Mesa is not just any ordinary murder mystery. "It is western, silly, and random," Mr. Spin said. When writing murder mysteries, he always adds a twist to it. For this play, it was putting his own twist on old, western themes.

Mr. Spin has always liked to

write, but what really got him into playwriting was his theater company.

"To be honest, our theater productions had hit a low spot where we did not have much money. To perform a play, you have to pay royalties to the production company. And someone said to me, 'Could you make one?'" he said. From then on, his passion for writing plays has never stopped.

Opening night for *Murder on the Mesa* is May 4th at St. Monica's, Chippewa.



Aretha: In Honor of Black History Month

BY: JALISE GARY

Aretha Franklin demanded respect. In Memphis, Tennessee, a girl named Aretha Louise Franklin went from a young girl in church choir to a world-famous vocal prodigy.

Aretha started to sing at church with her father, who was the pastor. Aretha's parents got divorced when she was a little girl, and she lived with her dad. Her mother died when she was 10.

Aretha and her father traveled to different cities as a gospel duo. She recorded her first gospel album at age 14. Aretha was heavily influenced by a family friend who was a musician and other "gospel greats," according to Britannica. When Aretha turned 18, she began her solo career in New York

City at Columbia Records.

She sang mostly Broadway ballads and rhythm & blues and later became the "Queen of Soul" because of the positive attention her music received during the Civil Rights Movement. It wasn't the type of music that mattered; her vocal ability was unmatched at the time. Her bright, warm energy, and passion she put into her performance made her the icon she is today.

She has received many awards including Rock and Roll's hall of fame first woman inductee, a National Medal of Arts, four Grammy's and one Tony Award. Most importantly, she was the first role model for black female singers who didn't see much of themselves in a lot of the mainstream

media through the decades.

Aretha battled pancreatic cancer for 8 years. She kept it a secret from her fans, kept performing and died on Aug. 16, 2018. She was a generous and beautiful inspiration to countless people.



The Grammys

BY: HAZEL INWOOD

The Grammy, an award that has been around for 65 years, defines careers. Everyone wants a Grammy. While originally there were 28 categories, there are now 91 chances to become a music legend.

Speaking of legends, Taylor Swift won two Grammys this year. Her latest album, *Midnights*, earned her Album of the Year and Pop Vocal Album of the year. Jack Antonoff, Swift's producer, won the Classical Producer of the Year as result of *Midnights*' success. While on stage, Swift announced her newest album, set to release in April, *The Tortured Poets Department*, triggering media backlash.

Nobody knows public backlash better than Record of the Year and Best Pop Solo Performance winner, Miley Cyrus. Her viral song, "Flowers," speculated to be about her ex-husband, was what granted her one win amidst her six total nominations.

The Best Pop Duo Performance was granted to an unlikely pair: SZA and Phoebe Bridgers. SZA and

Bridgers teamed up to make the Grammy winning, "Ghost in the Machine." The two also won awards separately.

SZA performed songs from her 2023 album *SOS* and won Best Progressive R&B Performance as well as "Snooze" being declared the Best R&B Song.

Phoebe Bridgers, alongside bandmates Lucy Dacus and Julien Baker, won the Alternative Music Album as Boygenius for their debut, *The Record*. From this album, the trio performed their most popular song "Not Strong Enough" and earned themselves Best Rock Performance and Best Rock Song. Best Rock Album was given to Paramore for *This Is Why*, their first publication since their speculated break-up in 2017. The band also won Best Alternative Performance for "This Is Why".

Victoria Monet, under the genre of R&B, won the Grammy for Best New Artist and went home with Best New Album for *Jaguar II* while Coco Jones, a nominee for Best New

Artist, won in the category of best R&B performance for "ICU."

Similarly, "Good Morning" by PJ Morton and Susan Carol were awarded the Best Traditional R&B Performance of this year.

And finally, song of the year was given to Billie Eilish and her brother Finneas O'Connell for "What Was I Made For", written for the film *Barbie*.



Second-hand Vape

BY: KENDALL HINEMAN

Have you ever used the restroom and smelled something fruity? Well, that would be second-hand vape.

What is second-hand vape and what do you really know about it? Second-hand vape comes from burning or heating nicotine. A vape contains nicotine which comes from tobacco. Senior Haley Hineman says, "All I can smell is the vape fumes from the person in here before when I go into the bathroom."

What are the effects of second-hand vape? Second-hand vape can cause asthma. So every time you hit a vape in the bathroom think about it affecting others around you. The smoke only stays in the air for 10 seconds after you've hit your vape, but it may increase the risk of cardiovascu-

lar disease.

If you are unaware that someone was vaping before you enter the bathroom, you can't protect yourself but of course, if you knew you could choose to remove yourself from the bathroom. You could also protect yourself by keeping your house and car tobacco and nicotine-free.

Although you might think that first-hand vaping is worse than second-hand vape, in some cases you are wrong. second-hand vape exposure may be worse than first-hand vaping for respiratory systems in youth, according to a 2021 Thomas Johnso PA-C study.

Are the school bathrooms safe? Ultimately with all the information gathered, the answer varies. If you come in ten seconds after the vapor

has been released into the air then yes it is ok. If you walk into the vapor then you could be at risk of health issues.

So at the end of the day, you should definitely be careful when coming into the school bathrooms, but realistically you or your friends should be okay on a health risk scale. Although second-hand vape in the restrooms can be dangerous, that is not always the case.





PIN IT TO WIN IT

BY: KENDRA ONUSKA

The Hopewell High School wrestling team has recently dominated against local schools this season. Hopewell's most dramatic victories have included Central Valley, a difficult opponent, 43-30, Beaver, 59-11, North Catholic, 51-15 and Ambridge by a great 63-6.

Followed by all of these wins, most of the players on the team believe they have room for improvement, but are doing well this season.

Junior wrestler Gavin Price believes that wrestling teaches many important lessons. "I learned that if you practice enough, it makes great progress. Things don't come easy and the amount of work you put in will show. I don't think practice makes perfect. Practice makes you a better athlete, a better student, a better everything," said Gavin.

The wrestlers are determined to work hard on and off of the mat. "Hard work beats talent, remember that," said junior Jacob Bauknight.

Followed by hard work, the team has learned to be independent. Wrestling is a one-on-one sport and they can't depend on anyone else. As a result, the team feels

that everyone should somewhat have a background of self defense. "Self defense teaches a lot of discipline and makes you a better athlete," said Gavin.

As the current season is coming to an end, the boys have started sending their farewells to their senior teammates. The two senior athletes, Isaiah Pisano and Brettan Cooper, have certainly put in great efforts throughout their wrestling careers. "Gold medals aren't really made of gold. They're made of sweat, determination—and a hard to find thing—called guts," said Isaiah Pisano. Brettan

Cooper is upset that he wasn't able to wrestle his senior year due to an injury, but he believes that it is most important to work hard in things you enjoy.

Brettan will attend Slippery Rock University for sports medicine while Isaiah has committed to the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown to wrestle and study nursing.

With the ongoing wrestling season, remember to send good luck and spirit to your Hopewell wrestlers. It's never too late to support the Hopewell wrestling team.



Track is Back

BY: EMMA DICICCO

The track season is running again, with practice starting March 4.

Mandatory practice is Monday-Friday. On Saturday athletes gather at the high school to travel to Youngstown State University (YSU) to compete. All grades compete with one another; breaking personal records (PRs), trying out for events, making new friends and hopefully earning a title for themselves.

"Track is a great way to work out and hang out with your friends," states freshman Michael Biesenkamp, a thrower for Hopewell.

Before initiating track practice, all athletes perform warm-ups. After warm-ups, runners, jumpers, and throwers separate into their designated events.

Coach Brunton and Coach Million teach runners and long jumpers, Coach Bum and Coach McDonald teach throwers and Coach Wolf teaches pole vaulters.

"All the athletes have potential," says Coach McDonald. Athletes can try out for a maximum of four events. The running events are categorized as sprints, middle and long-distance events, relays, and hurdling. Regular jumping events include long jump, triple jump, high jump, and pole vault, while the most common throwing events are shot put, javelin, and discus.

Athletes who want to throw practice heavy weight training. Exercises such as medicine ball throws, Romanian and trap-bar deadlifts, variations of benching, front and back squats, cleans, jerks, snatches, and other exercises are performed by throwers to improve their overall speed and strength.

Athletes who want to run practice top-speed sprints, weighted chain sprints, and running drills such as bounds, striders, and cycles to improve their form. "Track helps you gain a variety of skills from a higher vertical to an

enhanced running performance," states freshman Luke McGrail, a sprinter and long jumper for Hopewell. They also weight train to increase their strength, speed, and explosiveness.

Athletes who want to pole vault practice standing plant drills, handstands, and hand placement to get the groundwork for the complex event. Long jumpers practice frog jumps, rhythm runs, and proper take-off/landing form.

Applying yourself to a sport can be beneficial physically, mentally, and emotionally. Track coaches encourage all high school students to try out for track and field because there is an event for everyone. "Track allows people with similar interests to come together and socialize to create a family-like team because of a great coach," states Luke McGrail.



WPIAL Bound

BY: NATHAN MCGEE

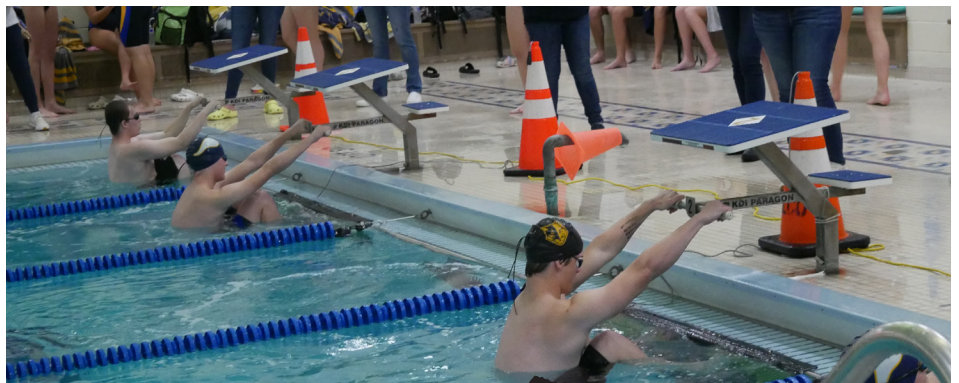
The swim team is back in business as usual. The girls are 5-1 and the boys are 3-2 in their section so far this season.

The team lost a lot of good talent due to three senior boys and two senior girls leaving. This year they only added one freshman boy and two freshmen girls. They sit at 27 kids rostered this season, one of which being Captain Emmet McCowin. "The team is doing great so far this season, and I have high hopes for the rest of it. We have a lot of good talent this year, and I have high hopes for us to perform at the WPIAL meet this year."

From last season to this one, the team has lost three very talented boys, and filling the holes in the team has been a big obstacle for them this season. "We've struggled to fill the

holes that Patrick and the other seniors left in the team, but we've had a lot of swimmers step up to fill those spots this season," said Emmet. Though the boys have had some downs, losing two section meets to Riverside and Blackhawk this season, three wins against Quaker Valley, Beaver, and Cornell put them at 3-2 in their section. After this season, eight more seniors will gradu-

ate, putting the team at the smallest it's been since before COVID. Though the team has had some downs, Emmet and the team hope to overcome the adversity they are faced with and have individual as well as team success at the upcoming MAC and WPIAL meets on February 17th and February 29th-March 1st respectively.



The Boys are Back

BY: BRANDON CLARK

The boys volleyball team will return to games and practices in March. After making it to the playoffs last year and losing D1 college player Jake Strinsa, the boys volleyball team is ambitious to keep winning.

After a very successful season last year, there's anticipation building. Boys volleyball in Hopewell is on the rise, and looking at the signups it's become quite popular. A side effect of the influx of new players could require the coach to trim down the squad. However, this does offer a positive, since the team will only have the best on the team which allows stronger practices and more competitive games. Having to make cuts is a rare situation at Hopewell due to the relatively small size of the student body.

But they will still have to put in the work to make up for the loss of a 1st team all-state player Jake Strinsa last year, one of the six seniors this year will have to step up, and they are ready to take the reins.

Senior middle-hitter Max Bridgman is looking forward to the new talent and dynamic that comes as the coaches finalize the roster. Max is excited to see how the roster fills out and finds his role on the team. "Being a good role model and turning the younger guys into great leaders."

Max also has hope for the team to have a positive attitude, "I think the morale will be arguably the greatest it's ever been." With this positive attitude, Max believes the team will have positive results, "I think that will only benefit our performance and

push for playoffs."

With popularity being as high as ever the boys volleyball team will be looking to continue previous success. The boy's first home game is coming soon and will be against Moon on March 26.





Unbreakable Diamond Bonds

BY: ALLISON HONEYWILL

Hopewell softball is back and hoping for a home run this season. The girls are prepared to step up to the plate with a new emphasis on playing as a team.

The 2023 season included the team being named Section Champions, setting a standard for 2024. Despite the graduation of many pivotal players, the girls feel confident in their team and training.

Coach Ronda Senskey said, "This team will be stronger than last season. We lost 3 seniors, yet have a couple freshmen that will fill those roles." The team is also gaining a junior who was injured the entirety of last season.

The home opener is on March 15 against Blackhawk. While that may seem soon, the girls have had ample practice and are ready to face their competition. To live up to the success of the 2023 season, the team started training in October.

"For the past 3 seasons, we have had pitcher and catcher practice

es 2 times a week beginning in October through December," said Senskey. This season the team has, "added a hitting rotation for any player wanting extra reps," said Coach Senskey.

Something else different the girls are doing this year is weight training. Junior Elizabeth Jones said, "It's improving our mental toughness as well as our physical strength."

These practices also serve as a bonding experience between the girls. Pushing through challenging exercises and encouraging each other has worked to bring the girls "together as a team," said Lizzie.

Yet, the physical aspect is not the sole component of the team's success. Welcoming new players, saying goodbye to seniors and building chemistry are other feats the girls tackle to produce a winning season.

Lizzie said the team is working to change their mindset and to build chemistry on and off the field. "Our team captains really do a good job expressing 'We do things as a

team.' No one gets left behind, no one gets put down, no one goes without help," she added.

The benefits of this mindset are already paying off. "Every day I see great things from everyone on my team. It truly makes me feel so excited for this season," said Lizzie.

Coach Senskey and all of the girls have high expectations for this season. With a new training regime and a united mindset this team is expected to be repeat Section Champions.

"We have the talent to make State Playoffs," said Senskey. Other hopes for the season include, "winning our first WPIAL playoff game and being the first Hopewell softball team to exceed the playoff journey," added Senskey.

Ambridge, Blackhawk, Central Valley, and Quaker Valley are among the tough contenders the girls battle against this year, but with their newfound chemistry and sense of team, they can take on any competitor.



It's A Party on 5th Ave

BY: DANIEL J. EARLEY

Pitt Men's basketball is heating up! In the past couple weeks Pitt has defied the odds and beaten powerhouses such as 9th ranked Duke and 21st ranked Virginia. Currently sitting at 17-8, Pitt continues to persevere to make March Madness for the second year in a row.

In their win over (19-6) Virginia, Pitt snapped the Cavaliers 23 home game win streak with an 11 point victory. Pitt star forward Blake Hinson went off, putting up an impressive 27 point performance. Pitt dominated Virginia on the offensive glass, out rebounding them offensively by more than triple. The Panthers shot excellent from deep, shooting 43% on 32 attempts. In a field where Pitt has struggled they were able to shoot better on the charity stripe as a team going 8/11.

Noah Hills from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette wrote, "Entering this week, no team in the ACC is hotter than Jeff Capel's group. Winners of five straight and seven of its last eight, Pitt has gone from the near bottom of the league's standings

to the NCAA tournament bubble."

Recently Pitt demolished a struggling Louisville team, and Blake Hinson couldn't be stopped all night.

"Entering this week, no team in the ACC is hotter than Jeff Capel's group. Winners of five straight and seven of its last eight, Pitt has gone from the near bottom of the league's standings to the NCAA tournament bubble."

He shot 14-24, and 9-13 from 3, scoring a massive 41 points. The Panthers continue to out rebounded their opponents, against the Cardinals, Pitt out

rebounded them 36-27 respectively. A crazy thing about Pitt's most recent matchup was that the Panthers only turned the ball over 3 times while Louisville lost the ball 12 times. Pitt continues to improve their free throw shooting as well, which is a vital piece for the Panthers to continue to win.

Now the Panthers have a serious shot of making the tournament. One, they continue to stay hot, and two they play as a team. I would not be surprised seeing this team in the tournament.





The Elective in the Room

BY SUZY DEPACE

Scheduling season is upon us, and everyone is scrambling to make the right choice. As it is both exciting and stressful, it is also important to aid you in your future. In my

experience, scheduling always meant taking the easiest electives, but scheduling electives should reflect what interests you. Scheduling, no matter what grade you are in, should be treat-

ed as an academic adventure, exploring all aspects of learning. As a senior, and just realizing this now, I set out to look into some electives that are new, overlooked or not yet popular.

Sports Management

If you are interested in the sports industry, try Mrs. Valentine's newest elective: Sports Marketing. In this course you will learn skills in sports and entertainment marketing, covering all the newest trends in the marketing world. "Students will learn about marketing concepts and theories that apply to sports and entertainment industries and their economic impact," says Mrs. Valentine. Sports and entertainment marketing is quickly gaining popularity for students interested in sales, business, public relations, advertising, broadcasting, sports and fitness management, event coordination, branding or athletic directing.

Hot Topics

Spark your curiosity in Mrs. Dufalla's class: Hot Topics. Critical thinking is not just encouraged- it is practiced-through class discussions, formal and informal. Students have access to The Week and Upfront, both magazines geared toward high school students. Mrs. Dufalla says, "The class is fun. You get to have input about the current hot topics. You have to read and write, which is a part of life, but all opinions are valued and respected." This class helps with literacy and writing skills while keeping you up to date with noteworthy world events.

Computer Applications

Expand your ability on computer utilization in Mr. Homziak's class: Computer Applications. In this class, you will cover basic and advanced applications for Microsoft and Excel. This class is a semester long, and can be taken for 2 semesters. Mr. Homziak says, "Most students do not know how one or both Computer Applications courses can benefit them after leaving Hopewell, whether they are going on to further their education or enter the workforce. There have been many former students who have said that they wish they knew about the courses, as they are learning Excel in college for the first time."

Accounting

You can broaden your knowledge on business in the same classroom. Mr. Homziak also offers another elective: Accounting. This full-year course is offered for two years maximum. This course covers the terminology and applications all sole-proprietorships use for the financial records of their business. "Most students think that Accounting is going to be difficult from a math viewpoint. If students can complete basic math skills, such as, adding, subtracting, and calculating percentages for sales tax or discounts, they can successfully complete the work in the courses," says Mr. Homziak.



ART IN HER HEART

BY: ALEXIA BRUNTON

“I knew in kindergarten. I told my kindergarten teacher that I was going to grow up into an art teacher one day,” said Ms. Lauer, Hopewell’s art teacher.



Art runs through Ms. Lauer’s veins, as her mother and grandmother were art teachers. In addition to having a mother and grandmother who cherish art, Ms. Lauer also has a brother who is an art teacher.

Her mother and grandmother ran a summer art program for Ms. Lauer’s elementary schools. Every summer, Ms. Lauer would go with her mother and grandmother to three elementary schools to do art. “I got to go to each building with them, making and creating art. That’s how my interest in art started.”

Art as a career is a tricky business. Nothing is absolute, and it’s hard for artists to go out on their own, selling their art for a living. “That’s a scary thing, to know whether or not you would be able to sell enough of your work to make a living.” Ms.

Lauer said, “If I had to do something to make a living outside of teaching, I would do ceramics.”

Ms. Lauer enjoys every aspect of art, but she admits that her least favorite type of art to teach is portraiture. She and other art teachers use the ‘grid method’ to help students work on portraiture. “They realize that a teacher who says they are not good at it can be really successful with it,” said Ms. Lauer.

Portraiture can be challenging, but Ms. Lauer finds that, in all art projects, it’s easier for students to make art when they have a connection to what they are creating.

Art is not for everybody, but it’s important anyways. “Well, whether you’re good at art or not, you are using the other side of your brain. When you use both sides of your brain, it makes you a better and well-rounded learner. Creativity is very useful even if you are not good at art,” Ms. Lauer says. “If you take a job in the field of science or in the field of math, but you can’t think outside the box, it’s very unlikely you would make forward strides in those fields.”

While art is not something everyone is good at, Ms. Lauer stresses that it’s still important to partake in. “It’s like phys. ed., if you exercise you

stay healthy, but you don’t have to be an athlete to do it.”

From the love of art her family gave her, Ms. Lauer passes it on to her students.

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English Perspectives

BY: DESIREE SHEPHERD

Mr. Slapikas has been at Hopewell for close to 10 years. There hasn't been a new English teacher since his hire, so he is the "newest" member of our English department. Mrs. Dufalla on the other hand has been with Hopewell Sr. High, longer than other teachers.

Mrs. Dufalla is the head of the English department and is the most experienced. "I have worked with my colleagues for many years, and we work well as a department. We advocate for our students and best teaching practices," said Mrs. Dufalla.

When it comes to getting her students excited for class, she lets them know who is in charge. She is in charge, and it is very clear. She teaches a variety of English subjects: British Literature 12, Speech and Hot Topics.

"One example is when students were required to complete Senior Projects, they were proud of their final accomplishments," says Mrs. Dufalla.

Mr. Slapikas would teach History if he couldn't teach English. He actually majored in history, but he was taking English classes at the same time, and it happened to interest him, so he switched.

Mr. Slapikas teaches with energy, "I think that I hype my class up by showing my enthusiasm for the lesson." Mr. Slapikas says loves working at Hopewell. He feels he has established a reputation and identity here. He has a lot of fun memories, one of which is the honors banquet.



Relax Like a Real One

BY: KIRA SHAKESPEARE

Is your family thinking about vacationing this summer? Maybe to some place outside of the United States? Whether you like sightseeing or just going to the beach, here are a couple vacation recommendations from teachers.

Ms. McClintock has been to quite a few places: Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Ireland, England, Switzerland, Canada and France. Out of all these places, her favorite vacation out of the country was to the Netherlands. She enjoyed seeing all the canals, and the way people there lived. The experiences she had with locals there was good overall. She felt safer in the Netherlands than in some other countries she has been to.

In Amsterdam, her favorite parts were the museums. The Anne Frank house is in Amsterdam as well

as the Van Gogh Museum. Another museum she traveled to was the Rijksmuseum which has some of the most famous Dutch art. "The Netherlands offers so much between the travelers, the museums, and the people. I think everyone would love it," said McClintock.

Ms. Heranic hasn't been to as many places as Ms. McClintock, but she has been to a few. Her favorite place was the Grand Cayman Islands in the Western Caribbean. She enjoyed the weather and how it was always

warm. She and her husband went there on their honeymoon. It was a "magical and enchanting" honeymoon. There were a lot of fun things to do. She got to snorkel with stingrays and relax on the beach. The beaches were beautiful with clear water. The restaurants there are "exquisite," she said.



What's Going on in the Background?

BY: CODY GRUBER

Silence can be maddening. While some find it better, lots of people like to have something going on in the background as they complete their tasks. This could include a music playlist, podcast, movies or TV shows, the news and many other things. But reducing silence is only the tip of the iceberg. So why do people like background noise so much?

One reason that may seem obvious is that it can help increase focus. According to BetterSleep, it is believed that having background noise helps to stimulate the brain and improve attention span. Listening to music can even be suggested for students who struggle to focus. One Hopewell senior said, "It's in my IEP to listen to music to help me concentrate."

Another benefit of background noise is that it can improve your mood. "I love music," said senior Bella Gold. "I think it's a way to help me relax, and I think that just the art of music is beautiful. I just love to experience that as much as possible." Depending on what you listen to, it can help relieve stress and make you feel happier.

Even though background noise can be helpful, too much of it can be distracting. BetterSleep also states that, "Studies have shown that mild background noise can improve focus and creativity, while too much noise can be distracting." This can also depend on what activity is being undertaken. Some people can focus better while studying or working with music or other sounds, while others prefer fewer distractions.

"When doing homework or studying, I can't listen to music," se-

nior Nola Watters said. "It honestly just distracts me when I am trying to focus. Math is especially hard to focus on when music is playing." She added, "When I do chores, it's pretty rare that I don't have music playing. Chores are a little more lax for me, so I am able to balance getting the work done while also enjoying the music."

So, while background noise can be distracting for some, it can also be helpful for those looking for a helpful tool for their work.



Feel the Rush

BY: KATIE WITHROW

Do you ever need an umph to get the day going? Milo Collins is part of the 94% of the US population who drinks caffeine regularly. A lot of people depend on caffeine to give them the boost of energy they crave. Do you need the rush?

Although caffeine can be a good resource to wake up, if you don't drink it in moderation you may become highly addicted and dependent on it. Milo believes that, "If I stopped drinking caffeine my life would be better as many health benefits would

come from cutting down on the daily consumption of caffeine." Feelings of withdrawal are even possible when cutting down on intake of caffeine, but negative symptoms can also lead back to drinking caffeine." For example, increased feelings of anxiety, lack of sleep or insomnia, jitteriness or moderate shaking, headaches, and irritability.

Caffeine can negatively affect your daily life, and it should be thought about and taken more seriously, and might be something to look into. Do you still need the rush?

