By Sydney Gunner

In early January, Mount Mercy’s business class revealed the culmination of months of hard work through the grand opening of the Magic Market in the former Wellness Center.

Faculty began brainstorming ideas for a business in the 2020-2021 school year after Mrs. Roberts found an extremely generous donor who presented Mercy with ten thousand dollars. Mrs. Melligan first conversed with Mr. Govern, our longtime math teacher and now business teacher, about running the market and taking on the new course last May. In regards to how he felt about spearheading this project, he explained, “I was definitely a little nervous and anxious to see how it all would unfold, at the very beginning of it.”

Despite any previous apprehensions, he and his students jumped full force into planning for the market this fall. “Everyone was very on board, excited, and all-in from day one, which has made this much easier for me,” Mr. Govern revealed when asked about his experience with the business class at the beginning of the year.

The class invented and chose every aspect of the market, including its name, logo, menu, and prices. Sketches of brand labels and name ideas constantly covered Mr. Govern’s whiteboards this fall. Members of his various math classes could also observe the gradual growth of the market as business students voted for certain designs or ideas on his boards. Not only did the business girls anxiously await the debut of the market, but so did the whole school.

As the year progressed and the opening of the market inched closer, our business scholars altered ideas to create the best possible store. They vetoed some original ideas and improved upon others. In one instance, students realized that they could not make blended beverages like smoothies in advance, and thus, these drinks could not be offered. However, smoothies have recently been added to the menu: now that the business is running smoothly, students are able to perform multiple jobs in the morning, including making fresh smoothies.

In one of the final steps before the market was ready to conduct business, students learned about budgeting and financial planning as preparation before buying supplies. After understanding how to keep track of finances, the business class ordered a fridge, a toaster, two coffee machines, a latte maker, a freezer, an ice machine, and a microwave.

Following countless hours of preparation, Mercy’s very own Magic Market was open for business. Business students buzzed around the new store as orders for one-dollar hot chocolates and coffees came flooding in. While some manned the coffee pots, others handed out free yogurt parfaits or toasted plain bagels. Student customers excitedly chatted as they waited for their beverages and breakfasts.

“Because of the Magic Market, I can sleep in a little later instead of stopping at Tim Hortons for my coffee fix,” said senior Aubrey Monaco.

When reflecting on the successful opening of the market, Mr. Govern credited the student body’s interest and his pupils for their willingness to work hard and create the best possible business. He experienced a “pretty proud moment” upon seeing his students’ enthusiasm to help out in the store.

As for the future of the Magic Market, the business team is working to perfect their menu according to customers’ wants. They’re also looking into creating promotions for holidays or other special occasions. Even without any alterations to the store, the whole school is proud of the impressive effort and tireless work of our business students and Mr. Govern.
Behind the Mask: Student and Staff Spotlights

Mr. Zubler

Mr. Zubler, the new physics, earth science, and physical science teacher for Mount Mercy Academy’s science department is amazed by the discoveries that his students have made. He says, “A lot of times, what’s really cool from my perspective is, students don’t understand how smart they are, or how amazing their questions or their findings are.”

Mr. Zubler has always naturally sought to understand the world around him. One of his favorite things about science is that it allows him to explore and investigate his curiosities himself.

Physics is one of Mr. Zubler’s favorite subjects, and he has his bachelor’s degree in physics. In his opinion, physics is the “epitome of understanding the world around you.” He is also passionate about environmental sustainability and trying to find out how we as humans can be more environmentally friendly and reduce our impact [on the planet].

Prior to teaching at Mount Mercy, he taught 6th grade science at West Seneca West middle school, as well as a few lab classes at his undergraduate and graduate schools.

Not only does Mr. Zubler have a bachelor’s degree in physics, but he also holds a master’s degree in sustainable engineering, and is currently taking teaching classes at UB.

Mr. Zubler is always working to be a better teacher for his students. “I love teaching students who also have the curiosity that I do. They question the things around them and do their own investigations, and follow their own interests,” he said.

Zubler emphasized how pleased he is with the outcome of the first science fair held at Mercy. He enjoyed having a similar experience when he was in school, stating that it “gives students a less stressful and more positive way to share what they’ve learned.”

Overall, Mr. Zubler hopes to continue to foster his students’ abilities and fondness for science, as well as his own, while at Mount Mercy.

Ms. Startek

Ms. Startek, Mount Mercy’s newest addition to the English department, always wanted to work as a teacher. “[I would] set up a whole classroom…in my basement and pretend to be a teacher when I was younger,” she said. Her first big inspiration was her freshman year English teacher at Nardin. “She was really sweet and nice, and just helped us foster our love of reading and literature in general,” Startek recalled with a grin. From then on, Ms. Startek found interest in a career involving English and literature.

After working as a long-term substitute at both Nardin and Mount Saint Mary for a year, Ms. Startek spent another two years teaching seventh and eighth grade before coming to Mercy. “I love it here,” she exclaimed. Her favorite part of teaching is building relationships with students, and Ms. Startek thinks that Mercy is great because it’s such a small and close-knit community.

One of Ms. Startek’s joys as a teacher is connecting her students with a book or character, just like her high school English teacher once did. Ms. Startek herself loves reading when she wants to escape and delve into another world, and conversely, loves writing when she wants to create her own worlds. Her favorite genre is historical fiction, which she shared with her English I Honors class when they read the novel, We Were the Lucky Ones by Georgia Hunter. She particularly enjoys books set in World War II, such as The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah.

In addition to her love for reading and writing, Ms. Startek finds happiness and light in her one-and-a-half-year-old son, Declan. She describes Declan as fun, sweet, energetic, and “very busy.” Startek is also engaged to her high school sweetheart and in the process of planning a wedding for next November. “We got engaged in October…It was not a surprise. I knew it was coming because he designed my ring,” she revealed. Ms. Startek is elated to begin this new chapter in her life. Congratulations and best of luck, Ms. Startek!

Grace Kruse

Grace Kruse is a senior at Mount Mercy Academy. She came to MMA in the middle of her sophomore year after moving in with her dad. Mount Mercy may not have been Grace’s choice when first having to move schools, but she now says that she loves everyone here and it is the best education she could have ever gotten.

Grace loves Mount Mercy now, but she did have a bit of a rocky start. “I was looking around and nobody was in their uniform beside me,” Grace said. It was spirit week on Grace’s first day, which she was not aware of. She made the best of the situation and it was a really good conversation starter between her and other students.

After school, you might find Grace in Miss Greenan’s room singing with Sparks, the new acapella group at Mount Mercy. Singing is something that Grace enjoys and it’s something she has been doing since she was little.

In fact, she has been involved in various music groups since elementary school. She has been in chorus and school musicals including Beauty and the Beast and Shrek where she got cast as young Fiona.

This year, her final year in high school, Grace realized that it was going to be her last chance to participate in any sort of school-related music group. “If I do not sing now, I am never going to be able to sing in high school,” she said. “I might as well try to get a solo and be the senior of the group.”

College is a typical topic among seniors in high school, and usually a pretty stressful one too. Grace has her future pretty well planned out, though.

She has been accepted into many colleges, but she has chosen to attend SUNY Buffalo State College.

Grace is going to major in public relations and advertising but she could not have made that decision without her English teacher, Ms. Kaufman. Grace says that Ms. Kaufman “made me realize my love for writing.” She was truly inspired in her creative writing class, in particular.

After college, Grace hopes to either write articles for Buzzfeed or manage social media.

Grace has strong ambitions for the future and we cannot wait to see what more amazing things Grace does.
I opened my eyes and heard my wife’s voice. “I miss him so much. I just wish that I could feel him in my arms one more time.” Was she talking about me? I looked around. I was lying down in my bedroom. When was I sent home? I looked down at my body as I lay in my bed that I missed so much. Linda still hadn’t changed the memory foam mattress that we bought together when we first got married four years ago. I was still in my uniform and read my dog tag. Jonathan Stewart.

“Mommy! What happened to him?” Was that Addie? What happened to whom? Linda, crying hysterically, walked into Addie’s room. I stormed into Addie’s room behind Linda, the way that I stormed into the homes of Afghan soldiers, to see what was going on.

“Linda, what’s wrong? I miss you, honey. You look great! Addie, you’ve grown so much, baby girl. Give me a big hug!” I walked over to both of them, but they did not even acknowledge my presence. Instead, they just cried as they hugged each other. Not even a glance came out of my daughter’s big brown beautiful eyes.

My eyes were overwhelmed with worry that they were mad at me. Why weren’t they answering me? I screamed with a shaky voice, “Addie, look at me, please. I love you, baby. I just want to help you. I’m sorry that I have been gone for so long, but I’m here now. Look, it’s me.”

Linda let go of Addie and walked over to her closet filled with clothes. All of her little outfits were so colorful, but Linda decided to choose a black dress. Were they going somewhere? Addie stared at the dress, turned over to her pillow, and scrawled to tuck herself into bed and continued to cry as if she never wanted to step out of her door again.

Linda wept and walked into our room, overwhelmed with sadness. Her soft brown hair was a mess. Her green eyes were as puffed as marshmallows, and they were surrounded by a ring the shade of cranberries. I looked at her but said nothing. She changed into a skin-tight black dress. I thought maybe she and Addie were going to match. I was heartbroken, but I understood why they were so mad. I really was gone for so long. So, I tucked myself into my bed which still molded perfectly to my body like playdough, and fell asleep.

I opened my eyes, and we were in my car. I missed the scent of the leather and Linda’s ocean breeze air freshener. Addie was in the backseat. Tears ran down my cheek as I realized that her little feet were not too little to be in a car seat anymore. I could not take the silence anymore, so I pleaded, “Linda, look at me.” For the first time in four years, she looked at me. Her eyes pierced mine yet were gentle at the same time. Then she shook herself back into reality and continued driving. All of a sudden, my eyes were closed again. Why was I so tired? I then heard Addie slam the car door and awoke.

I hopped out of the car only to notice that we were at a cemetery. It explained why Linda was so upset. It must be the anniversary of her father’s death, I didn’t even think of that. But, as we walked closer, I remembered from one of her letters that her father passed away in winter, and the sun was gleaming on us, though I was still cold. I felt as if I was dry ice letting off cold air, and I could see Addie shiver every time I got closer to her. They stopped walking. I leaned over and read on the tombstone Jonathan Stewart 1971-2011.

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French Bread Recipe

By Corynn Held

During the past year and a half of the pandemic, I experimented with many different hobbies. The activity that has stuck with me the longest is baking French bread. My father and I created this recipe on a boring summer day. With many failed trials, we have practically perfected it. I enjoy this bread the most when the weather gets colder. This recipe is also a great way to impress anyone at a gathering, and I use it as a way to relax or keep busy.

French Bread

Ingredients:
- 2⅔ Cups warm water
- 8g Sugar
- 18g Yeast
- 8g Salt
- 720g White or all purpose flour

Materials:
- Baking Sheets
- Parchment Paper
- Measuring Cup & Scale
- Large Mixing Bowl
- Cutting Board

Directions:

Step one:
- Once all the ingredients are measured out on the scale, combine the sugar, yeast, and 2½ cups of warm water into a small separate bowl or measuring cup. Set this combination out for around 5 minutes to proof. The mixture should look foamy and bubbly. Stir the flour and salt into a bigger bowl along with the yeast mixture. Once the ingredients are combined, stir with a metal spoon.

Step two:
- When mixing, make sure that the ingredients are all combined. When you think that the ingredients are blended together well enough, place a dish towel over the top of the bowl. This is the rising process. Let the dough sit for at least 30 minutes in a dry, warm place. My personal preference is to make the dough at night and then wait until the morning to bake. Preheat the oven to 460 degrees once the rising process is about halfway done. When it is time to check on the dough, the changes are very noticeable. The dough should have expanded immensely. LIGHTLY cover a clean surface (cutting board or counter) with flour and place dough onto the surface.

Step three:
- Find a baking sheet and cover it with parchment paper. Place your loaves onto separate baking sheets and place in the preheated oven. Bake for around 15-18 minutes. Make sure to keep a close eye on the loaves because they bake rather quickly.

Step four:
- Let cool for a few minutes and enjoy!

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Ode to My Mother

Poem By Amarria Barnes

Oh gorgeous mother,
You are so brave
Giving birth at such a young age
Only 19 years old

Sweet, sweet mother,
You are always there
With answers to everything
Like my personal Google

Precious, precious mother
You chose a life of hardships
Yet you always persevere

Always there to tie my shoes
Or make me soup
Help with homework

Dear mother,
this is an ode to you
Seniors Win Mount Mercy Spirit Week

By Alexis Garmong

From February 14 to February 18, Mount Mercy Academy celebrated its highly anticipated Spirit Week for the 2022-2023 school year. Each grade went head to head in daily and weekly competitions, collecting points toward the final deciding count.

The theme for this year’s Spirit Week was television channels. Each grade was assigned a channel: freshmen had PBS Kids, sophomores had Universal Studios, juniors had Disney, and the seniors had Nickelodeon.

This year, the students were able to compete in more of our traditional competitions, with COVID-19 being a slightly less deterring factor than last year. On Monday, a hallway decorating contest kicked off the competition that students so passionately participated in. The seniors’ rendition of Nickelodeon’s Kids Choice Awards secured them a win in this contest, as well as quite a few Spirit Week points.

However, Spirit Week goes beyond competitions with daily dress codes and themes. Monday’s dress code was to dress as a character from the assigned channel given to each class.

Tuesday became “Tuneyday,” when students and teachers dressed up as their favorite music genres and artists. This day did not have any special competitions, but each day of the week gave students a chance to collect “random acts of kindness” points. Paper products and toiletries were also donated to the Peace House, a process managed by sophomore Brogan Maloney, as another way to earn Spirit Week points. The grade with the most kindness points and donations gained even more spirit points. The seniors won and racked up points that gave them a steady lead.

Wednesday’s theme was “The Circle of Mercy” and each grade dressed up as a different stage in the life of the circle of Mercy: the freshmen were babies, sophomores were teenagers, juniors were moms, or satirical “Karens,” and the seniors were the senior citizens of the building.

The beloved Pin Dodge Tournament took place on Wednesday and was a day of intense rivalry. After an afternoon of fierce competition, the juniors emerged victorious in the tournament. “It was surprisingly nerve-racking but fun to watch,” said junior Molly Oar. The tournament was also live-streamed, so those not in the gym could keep up with the competition.

Thursday left the halls swarming with cowboys and golfers for “Country vs. Country Club” day. Those who signed up for the lip-sync battle that would help decide the ultimate Spirit Week Winner used this day to perfect performances and get on the same page. With one day of competition remaining, tension and excitement levels were high.

Friday was the last day of Spirit Week. All the students anxiously went to classes, waiting for the final competition, carrying “anything but a bag.” Home Depot buckets, toy Jeeps, baby strollers, and shopping carts trekking through the hallways kept things even more exciting.

Dancers and lip-syncers competed in the gymnasium while the other classes cheered for whoever they were rooting for. Freshmen and juniors competed first with the juniors winning the first round. Then seniors and sophomores followed with the seniors winning more Spirit Week points.

Next, the juniors and seniors competed with their dance ensembles that featured “Boom Boom Pow” and a mashup of other songs. After a short voting period and tons of drum rolls, it was announced that the seniors had won the gold! It had been close with about a 100-point difference, but the lip sync battle victory gave them what they needed to win.

After their first time winning Spirit Week, senior spirits were high. Senior Kyra Soto kept the crowd hyped up throughout the lip sync. “It was definitely an underdog situation,” she said, after their big win.

Basketball Senior Night: Magic Fights Gators

By Abigail Mailloux

Two great high school basketball careers ended on Monday, February 14, 2022. The Mount Mercy Varsity Basketball team took on the Nardin Gators for their “Senior Night” game. Seniors Mya Wood and Desiree Diaz-Torres were honored for their commitment and dedication to the team.

Wood played basketball at Mount Mercy all four years and was named one of the top 170 scholar athletes (having a 90% or higher average as an athlete). Diaz-Torres played during her freshman year and made her way back to the court as a senior. Mercy girls, boys from Mercy’s brother school, Timon, family, and other friends came to cheer on the team.

Despite the loss, the Magic put on a fight as the Nardin Gators outplayed them in both the third and fourth quarter. Mya Wood had 14 points and Desiree Diaz-Torres had four.

Senior Mya Wood said, “Both teams played hard until the end, and it was great to see Mercy come together as a team to play hard for the Seniors.”

Coach Jeremy Rowe said, “I am very proud of every single one of my players and I am looking forward to next season.”

Next year, Wood will continue her athletic career at Hilbert College, where she will play both basketball and soccer for the Hawks.

Seniors as “senior citizens.” Photo by Miss Rachel Kaufman

Seniors Adrianna Awald, Annie Bernard, Abbie Dziadzio, Aubrey Monaco, and Natalie Radwan display their senior Spirit Week t-shirts. Photo by Kennedy Cerrone

Left to right: Seniors Desiree Diaz-Torres, Mary Bea Lulley, Kyra Soto, Mya Wood, Mara Santana, Grace Thie, Grace Kruse, and Madison Edwards pose at the basketball senior night game. Photo by Miss Rachel Kaufman
My Future

By Olivia Machoeth

In the future I imagine love
The cherry blossoms of spring
Skipping down the sidewalk hand in hand
Smiling about little things

A graduation cap and gown,
Degree in my hand
In an auditorium filled with people
Cameras flashing everywhere like stars

Sitting in an office
A nametag for the director on my desk
Guiding others through the job.
Receiving a check at the end of the week

Children running around the room,
Sitting in a rocking chair with a blanket,
Calling them my grandchildren with a smile,
Spoiling them with gifts and love

Promises You the World

By Vayana Stoyanova

What do you do when he promises you the world?
What about when he says you're his world?

When he says you're the most beautiful girl he sees?
Or gives you the lock for his heart keys?

Promises you that you're his love,
"Always and only," saying he won't go,
But easily lets you go like a dove.

Let's you go into a roaring furnace of a world,
having taken all that he wanted,
leaving you there to just crinkle, bend, and fold.

Where's the remorse?

What kind of a man does such things?
"Well, he was just a boy, and he said 'I'm sorry.'"
What does "I'm sorry" do for the pain that he brings?

I love him. I still love him, my heart choruses.
He promised me the world, "I promise."
But my heart aches for my world, because mine, mine weren't empty promises.

The Violin Girl

By Amarria Barnes

Blonde hair
Flowing in the wind
Under the spring Cherry Blossom tree

She plays so beautifully
Painting a picture,
so vivid that you can imagine

Oh violin girl,
The one who speaks her mind
Never afraid to try new things

Oh violin girl,
The one who puts up a front,
Is actually scared of everything

Oh violin girl,
The one who hides behind her playing
Afraid of what people will say

Dear Black Girl

By Amarria Barnes

Misunderstood by your own men,
Misunderstood by your own women
Dear Black Girl,
You are too loud,
You are ghetto
Your life does not matter
You are the most unprotected
NO ONE CARES

You are subjected to the same stereotypes
Year after year.

Dear Black Girl,
You have to try harder if your skin is darker
You'll be pregnant by 15 anyways

Dear Black Girl,
Your natural hair is unprofessional
You should straighten it

Dear Black Girl,
Don't wear shorts in the presence of ANY man
It makes you "fast"
It turns them on

Dear Black Girl,
DON'T RELY ON BLACK MEN
They won't protect you
They'll let the white men have their way with you

Dear Black Girl,
You go through so much.
You are strong
You are smart
You matter
YOUR LIFE IS WORTH PROTECTING
Dear Black Girl, I CARE
Sparks Come out Singin’

By Kyra Soto

This school year a new music group has been introduced to the Mercy community. The Sparks is an acapella group that is made up of students at Mount Mercy Academy and created by Miss Grace Greenan. Greenan is the new music director and campus minister at Mercy and is a former student as well.

Greenan was inspired by the movie Pitch Perfect which is a comedy about an all girls acapella group. This movie caused acapella to become more popular and can be seen on social media platforms like TikTok.

Grace was a former Pure Magic performer and wanted the Sparks to give the same feelings to students that she had. Greenan said, “I feel responsible for giving the same experience I had.”

In college, Greenan was the president of her acapella group. Through this, she learned how to direct a group, so it made the process much easier with the Sparks. Since she has been part of different ensembles, she is excited to be able to share her “life and educational experience with girls younger than [her].”

Mount Mercy has a smaller student population compared to most schools, so Greenan was very surprised by the turnout of girls auditioning for the group.

Adrianna Awald, who is a senior, and junior, Kayla Pietrzkiewicz are two students involved in the group. Before Sparks, they were both in Pure Magic so choosing to join Sparks was a “no brainer” for Kayla.

Adrianna shared that prior to high school she was involved in her middle school choir and musicals. She has performed in The Little Mermaid and Peter Pan in the past.

The two feel that music is a huge part of their lives. Kayla expressed that music is her “life” and that she listens to music and sings to help her moods. Adrianna also uses music to help her when she is feeling down.

In December, the Sparks had their first concert as a group. The group performed three songs: “Santa Baby” by Ariana Grande, “White Winter Hymnal” by Pentatonix, and “All I Want for Christmas is You” by Mariah Carey. The girls sounded amazing and looked like a professional group!

Adrianna also had a solo, singing “The Christmas Song.”

Both students are passionate about singing and thanks to Greenan and the Sparks, they feel their skills have improved.

Adrianna said, “I owe a lot of my progress to the Music Department at Mercy. Performing has always been really scary for me but with time it has gotten easier. Walking across the stage to get to the microphone still seems to go in slow motion but when the music starts and the nerves fade, it’s peaceful. I hope that with time, I will be able to feel that peace without the initial nerves.”

Greenan feels that the Sparks are one big family. It’s a place where the students can relax, make friends, and do what they love. They all have one common goal that brings them together as a group.

As the year is coming to an end, the girls are getting ready for their spring concert on May 11. Greenan said that the girls sound “beautiful” and they are ready for the performance.

Performing, Kayla explained, “is like a whole different world. Being on stage, you see all the people staring at you and lights are shining in your faces. It’s amazing!”

For the spring show, Sparks will be singing “Rumor Has It” by Adele. Adrianna is “really excited to perform” this song in particular.

The Sparks are open to expanding their music and trying different styles. Kayla is hoping to cover local artists in the area and Adrianna wants to try jazz.

During the year the Sparks have big plans. They are going on a Christmas tour and a spring recruitment tour to different schools in the Buffalo area. They hope by doing this more students will come to Mercy and join the Sparks as well.

Greenan also wants the girls to have more independence. She wants them to be more involved in the process of choosing the songs, costumes, and themes for the shows.

Adrianna is graduating this year and is hoping to join an acapella group in college. Kayla has one more year with the school and Sparks and is excited for the future.

The Sparks also have a student-run Instagram account called mmerycysparks. Follow it for updates and information about the Sparks!

MMA’s Christmas Concert Features Soloists

By Vayana Stoyanova

This year, music teacher Miss Grace Greenan encouraged students to audition for solos in the Christmas Concert. Amelia Cooke, Erin Hudson, Vayana Stoyanova, and Adrianna Awald were the four soloists in Mount Mercy’s Annual Christmas Concert. They are all currently part of Mount Mercy’s “Sparks” acapella and show choir group. For a little insider perspective, Merciette interviewed them each about their experience.

Amelia Cooke, a freshman at Mount Mercy, was chosen to sing as the soloist in Ariana Grande’s song “Santa Tell Me,” with the Sparks. When asked if she was surprised to have been chosen, Amelia said, “Honestly, yes, I was pretty surprised! I was expecting to just audition for the experience of doing an audition. It was a really pleasant surprise when [Miss Greenan] told me I was going to be singing a solo, especially with the Sparks.”

This experience for her was, “So, so amazing!” Amelia added, “Everyone in Sparks is really talented and devoted to the group, so having all of these talented people behind me singing backup was really cool. I felt kind of famous having these really cool backup singers behind me.”

For Amelia, it would be a dream come true to write music professionally or pursue a career in music, and she plans on doing as much as possible to achieve this dream during her high school career and beyond.

Erin Hudson, another freshman at Mount Mercy, performed the hit song “Believe” by Josh Groban from the movie The Polar Express at her first MMA concert. When asked why she chose this song, Erin said, “When I was little, I always loved that song and would sit through the credits of The Polar Express just to hear it! So when I was picking out a song to audition with, I heard “Believe” on the radio, and it was perfect!”

Erin also has previous experience performing that helped her audition and feel more confident for her solo. “I think having a love for music really helped me. During the auditions and performance, I was really nervous because I can get bad stage fright, but being able to do something that I love doing made it a lot easier!” Erin said.

Erin would love to pursue music professionally and wants to always have it in her life, at the least as a hobby.

Sophomore Vayana Stoyanova was the first soloist of the Christmas Concert. She sang a magically haunting Disney hit, “Once Upon A December,” from the movie Anastasia. When asked why she picked this song, Vayana said, “I chose this song because it was winter-themed, but also because this movie has also been translated to Russian, so I could sing it in both English and Russian, adding a fun surprise to the performance.”

Vayana also sought out a ballerina to perform during this song. “I asked Arey Adamczak, my friend and fellow classmate, if she would like to perform a dance solo, and she graciously agreed, excited for the experience it could provide. Seeing her shine with a beautiful ballet solo was awesome, and we had a lot of fun working together!”

Vayana would encourage others to audition for future concerts, picking a song from the heart and making sure to have fun, above all else! She would love to continue to pursue music as an extracurricular for as long as she can.

Senior Adrianna Awald sang a classic jazzy number, “The Christmas Song,” leaving the audience with a warm, homely feeling. Having been in choir and Pure Magic at Mercy throughout her high school career, Adrianna had some great advice for students who think they may be interested in joining the music department and going for a solo. “I would recommend for every person to go after solos at Mercy. The music department has some of the best support from students and faculty. Most people also worry about embarrassing themselves on stage which is also a huge fear of mine, but I realized that it doesn’t really matter what other people think about your singing, as long as you enjoy doing it,” Adrianna said.

Even though it can be scary, Adrianna would encourage others to give singing a solo a chance. “If you love to sing and want a solo, go for it. What’s the worst that could happen?” Adrianna said.

After Mount Mercy, Adrianna plans to major in political science/government in college. She hopes to continue pursuing her passion for music by singing in an acapella group in college and maybe even joining some musicals!
**MMA Ventures From Typical Christmas Concert, Creates Inspiring Show**

By Kayla Pietkiewicz

On December 15, 2021, Mount Mercy Academy’s musical group, “Sparks,” hosted the school’s yearly Christmas concert. The concert consisted of members from both Sparks and Women's Choir, as well as soloists, and members of two dance groups at Mercy. Rehearsals for this concert began at the start of the school year, and although some performers in this show were brand new to the spotlight, many had never sung in a chorus group before. However, the music department's welcoming and supportive atmosphere made it easy to adjust.

Songs featured in the show included “Mistletoe” by Justin Bieber and “Winter Wonderland” by Richard Bernhard Smith, to name a couple. This concert veered away from previous styles of Mount Mercy Christmas productions. The music department worked with ACP Production to give a stronger sense of professionalism to the show. The production company gave students and staff alike insight into the inner workings of “show business.”

Miss Greenan, Mount Mercy’s music director, remarked, “The Mount Mercy Academy Christmas Concert was much different than shows that the Department has put on in the past, with the new live performance group, and Sparks hosting the event. There was also comedic commentary, professional lighting, and high-quality audio.”

Many soloists throughout the night had great moments to shine. Vayana Stoyanova, Erin Hudson, Adrianna Awald, and Amelia Cook all took to the stage to showcase their beautiful voices.

Miss Greenan directed the show and was a great coach to each party performing. She put a fun twist on this show by incorporating newer and different styles of Christmas music.

Many faculty and staff members attended the show as well. MMA marketing coordinator, Miss Rachel Kaufman, said, “The MMA Winter Concert was beautifully done, and it was incredible being able to see all the students’ hard work pay off. For someone who is not musically inclined, it is always very powerful to watch others express their gift. Also, as a new staff member, I loved being able to see the students outside of the school day participating in an activity they are passionate about.”

The show was a huge success, and in the future, the music department is excited to incorporate more professional aspects to the show, including Sparks merchandise, stage crew, and high-quality video recordings for those who are unable to make it to shows!

Having the support of family and friends always helps to make performers shine, so be sure to catch the music and dance groups in their next performances!

**Over 100 New Species Discovered in 2021**

By Aubrey Monaco

In 2021, many new and interesting species were discovered. What exactly is a species? According to Discover Wildlife, in general, a species is a group that contains two individuals capable of reproducing fertile offspring.

Approximately 275 species go extinct each day, stated Discover Wildlife, due to several factors, most pressingly, climate change. A loss of species causes a loss of biodiversity, and this will lead to unstable ecosystems, which is why it is so important to defend and protect all life forms throughout the world.

There were many species discovered in the last year, and information has been provided for a handful of the new organisms.

In India, the Churah Valley Kukri snake was discovered. Graduate student Virendar Bhardwaj found this snake in his backyard. When scientist Zeeshan Mirza saw this snake, she stated that it did not align with others of the same species. Further analysis proved that this snake was indeed a different species, and was named under Oligodon churahensis, as it was discovered in the Churah Valley.

A worm that looks like a hair follicle—appropriately named the Horsehair worm—(scientifically Acutogoridus olivetti) was discovered in Peru. This worm was discovered when a bush-cricket was killed in a light trap set up by researchers. The worm had lived inside of the cricket until it was killed, and sensing that its host was no longer viable, it exited, and the researchers were able to collect it.

In Mexico, tiger beetles were found. These insects have beautifully colored shiny blue and green backs. In the 1990s, there were 18 tiger beetles discovered, and they were privately collected or kept in museums. The region of this insect’s habitat is not fully known, but it is theorized that these bugs may be present in Texas and surrounding areas.

In Australia, the killer tobacco plant was discovered, which is the first wild tobacco plant to be found covered with glands that trap insects.

The Synapturanus (a frog) was discovered in the Guinea Shield. This frog has a brownish color and a narrow mouth. It has been called the “zombie frog” in the media.

An incredibly small chameleon, appropriately named the nano-chameleon, was discovered in Madagascar with a body just 13.5 millimeters long! The habitat of these reptiles has been placed under protection as it was beginning to degrade, and because these animals are so small.

This list could continue, and these are just a few of the new amazing species discovered in 2021. It is so important that people work to protect these new species, as well as the ones that we know well, in order for everything in this world to work in harmony.

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A nano-chameleon perches atop a finger.
MMA Works to Create an Equitable Community

By Grace Kruse

Students of color are facing racial discrimination in schools globally every day. According to Nichole Chavez in the article “Students are Fed up with the Racist Slurs and Bullying. Now They’re Walking Out of Class,” in the 2018-2019 school year there were “1.6 million students who were subjected to hate speech due to their identity. Among those incidents, half were targeted a student’s race.” For some students, school is where they face racial slurs and bullying.

In order to deter discrimination and racism, we can strive to educate our school community on making an environment where everyone is accepted and given equal opportunities. Mount Mercy Academy has been working to educate everyone in their school community about racial discrimination and social injustices inside and outside of school. One of the first steps was creating the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion group at Mercy.

The goal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is to create a culture of belonging in the school for everyone. Sister Jenny Wilson has been the director of DEI for five years and she has been pushing to make Mercy a place where nobody is discriminated against. Mercy works with the Education Collaborative of Western New York (EdCo) to provide training in the school for faculty, staff, and students.

Educating staff about racial injustice is just as important as educating students. DEI at Mercy has been working with EdCo to educate teachers on how to recognize microaggressions, stereotyping, and the impacts of bias. Some faculty members, for example, read the book Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria by Beverly Daniel Tatum, a book that highlights racial and ethnic divides. Education is a crucial step in advocating for diversity. It is particularly important to educate educators before they can educate students.

Sister Jenny enjoys teaching about social justice because it gives students the tools to make a change. “I may not be able to change every problem in society, but I know Mercy graduates can leave the school and make a difference,” she said. Sister Jenny hopes Mercy gives girls the education they need to educate others about racism, microaggressions, discrimination, etc. Mercy girls can create a significant difference in a big world.

The student leadership DEI team at Mercy is a group of young women who are passionate about creating a world where discrimination isn’t a problem. The DEI leadership team sets the direction for what the school does regarding anything having to do with diversity.

For example, students participate in a year-long training with EdCo. EdCo has worked with the Catholic and private schools for the past four years, and they provide a grant to schools to support with DEI initiatives.

Senior Adrianna Awald is the most active member of DEI. Adrianna works extremely hard to make diversity, equity, and inclusion possible at Mercy. She organized a workshop and has even presented a workshop on Indigenous Intersectionality. Adrianna has a great passion for DEI. “Organizing DEI field trips is fulfilling. It is so inspiring to see everyone join together to create an event that helps so many people. The unity and community that is created from planning these events make them all the more impactful,” she said.

At DEI conferences all the participants get together, meet one another, and share ideas. Adrianna gets joy out of sharing workshops and links to present issues so everyone can educate each other. Then, all of the participants meet once more to discuss what they have learned and what to do with this new information.

Adrianna’s favorite memory was from the DEI conference at Nichols where she attended a workshop on generational trauma. “I learned that trauma does not just disappear when someone passes, their struggle races down every limb of their family tree. We have to address our trauma and learn from past struggles to overcome our pasts,” she said with passion.

DEI conferences allow students to share their ideas and educate each other. Senior Kyra Soto looks forward to these field trips. “I love being around people who have the same goals as me. Having those important conversations are what we need to create change,” she said. When students come together and share these ideas in a safe environment, it empowers them to share their learning in new settings.

With successes in DEI at MMA also comes struggles. In every community there may be people who are not educated. This is why education on diversity, equity, and inclusion is so important.

Mercy also practices restorative justice so that when someone is discriminatory the focus is on educating, rather than punishing, them. “Suspension is part of the solution but reflecting and talking about it is the best way to move forward,” Sister Jenny explained. Educating is the best way to help prevent discriminatory behavior in schools.

Educating students and staff about DEI issues is the best way to start working towards creating an equitable society. With knowledge comes change. When students and staff learn about the social issues of the world, how they’re perpetuated, and what we can do to solve them, they can begin to make tangible changes in their schools. Then, these students and staff members can take what they’ve learned and enact change in their communities to create a more equitable world.

Seasons Change

Flash fiction by Ellie Godsoe

I stand backstage behind the curtain and take a breath, preparing to face the culmination of 13 years’ pain on the other side.

The night is cold and dark, and snow falls like silent stars. The skin at the base of my throat is cool and bare, and I find myself wishing I’d worn a scarf. Although, I remind myself, I couldn’t even if I’d wanted to—my only scarf is in our old house, where you keep it.

I wore that scarf when we went upstate together. It bellowed over my shoulders on the same breeze that sent autumn leaves tumbling down. You joked that I’d made a poor choice to wear the same color as the foliage had. “If you’re not careful, you’ll get lost.” You held my hand, wrapped an arm around my shoulder, kept your soft lips locked to mine, to ensure that I didn’t. It was the first time I felt the tickle of flames, a golden fire that grew stronger throughout those fall months and warmed me from the inside.

But dark clouds and harsh winds whipped away the last of the leaves, and with them, the warm golden glow of our autumn love. Frost crawled over the grass, our windows, the fire in your heart that we had ignited together. I remember watching the flames in the fireplace die, fanning them to make them higher, pulling my scarf tighter when they did not rise. I remember watching your heart harden to ice; I remember what it felt like for that ice to creep into my own. The fire disappeared in a whoosh of cold wind, our flame nothing more than a ghost of smoke. My scarf tumbled to the ground, no longer of any use.

Ice chips lived in my heart for months; they slowly thawed out in long torrents of tears. I glared at walls, at full frames and empty fireplaces. I stared blankly at the pages of books, willing the right words to come forward and heal my aching heart. It was not until my 21st birthday, months later, after I had watched the door for you wistfully amidst candles and congratulations, that I received the gift of healing I’d been wishing for. I realized the words I needed to hear lived inside of me. I picked up a pencil, a chisel, and put words on paper. I chipped away the last of the ice and created a waterfall of words.

Now, 13 years later, those words are bound together with a light blue cover, my name stamped across the bottom in red, and I prepare to share them with the world for the first time. I clutch a copy and watch my deep breaths curl towards the dark sky in tendrils. I look down at the page that is opened against my chest. “I’m a soldier who’s returning half her weight.” I read the line over and over again, allowing it to sing its way into my heart, when a flash of red catches my eye. I peek beyond the curtain and see a scarf fluttering in the wind, waving like a flag above the sea of winter coats. It’s wrapped around a pair of broad shoulders that are shrouded inside a leather jacket. Dark eyes that sparkle like jewels against the scarlet slowly turn their light upon me, and I feel my heart skip a beat...they’re eyes I remember all too well.
Mystery in the Streets of London

Short Story Continuation By Megan Amicone and Catherine Klodzinski

*The beginning of this story appears in the previous issue of Merciette*

Our story resumes with the investigation of the four murders that took place in the streets of London where the houses were placed tightly next to each other, and rarely any crime took place. These incidents started on a quiet evening and ended after four nights, four mysterious loud bangs, four people dead, four crime scene investigations, and zero suspects, leads, or evidence.

This was all until intelligent yet quiet townsperson by the name of Eleanor Jones decided to take the investigation into her own hands. With this, she discovered the four bullets that had mysteriously disappeared, hidden in a dark alleyway. Eleanor decided to take this to the police, but when they seemed unphased, she figured something wasn’t right. That was until she saw something that would point the evidence right to the main suspect, which is where our story resumes…

On the desk of the lead officer of the investigation, hidden under a stack of files, was what Eleanor thought would change the whole course of the murders. Eleanor saw a journal. Not just any journal. This journal had leather covering with twine tied around it, a journal Eleanor would recognize anywhere if she were to see it. It was her brother’s journal. But why would it be in a police station with the files of a serial murder investigation? She had to get her hands on whatever was inside of that, but while standing in the police station she was quickly asked to leave for legal and suspicious reasons.

Luckily, as she was walking out, a plan was quickly forming in her head. When the sun began to set and all of the lights in the city of London began to dim, right around the same time the police would begin to roam the streets patrolling for the murderer, Eleanor would slip into the office and take the journal. This is exactly what she did. When the last of the police cars left the station, she crept in through the front door at the time when the secretary had taken her evening break. When she reached the office where the journal was kept away, she began to tiptoe towards the journal sitting on top of the files. She quickly grabbed it and left before anyone had seen. Eleanor rushed into her flat on 4th street, turned on her desk lamp, and flipped open the journal.

Like Eleanor, her brother was also very interested in mystery and crime, and they used to love to watch shows based on that topic together. Her brother knew enough about crimes, though she hoped he didn’t know enough to actually commit one. The thoughts rushed through her mind as she flipped open the first page of the journal. Could her brother have been behind all of this? As she flipped the page, she read the three words she had hoped to not read: “It was me.”

Eleanor sat there in complete silence, but something caught the corner of her eye, something that looked like her handwriting on the next page. She flipped through the journal not only to see pages upon pages of her handwriting but pages upon pages of a murder mystery story she had written herself in high school. Eleanor knew the current investigation had seemed too familiar to her, almost like a sense of déjà vu. This was because she had written the crime herself. Her brother had committed the crime that Eleanor wrote, and the police officers had this as evidence. Why was nothing being said or done about it? When had the officers found the journal? Most importantly, did they think Eleanor committed the crime herself? So many questions to be answered, she wondered where her brother was currently and if the police even caught him.

This was when she realized, it was the fifth night since each murder had taken place. No loud bang had been heard, no fifth investigation. Eleanor wondered what would happen next. Why did the murders stop all of a sudden? But she held the answers right in front of her in the journal. She quickly flipped to the end of her story where it read the fate of the murderer, and to her surprise her fate as well.

The story told that the murderer had framed someone he knew well, this someone being Eleanor, and set her up in such a perfect way that the police would have no choice but to believe it. Eleanor was the one who found the bullets, the one who stole the journal, who wrote the story in the journal, and who lived in the house that the last murder had taken place in front of. It was almost too perfectly written to believe it could happen. Eleanor stood up in a panic realizing that all the evidence pointed to her. She tried to think of another plan, and escape, but by then it was too late.

Police sirens wailed outside of her house and following them were the sounds of footsteps running up the stairs to the room Eleanor occupied. As she was walked out of the house for the framed murder, she stopped in her tracks staring at her brother walking on the sidewalk, waving to her, and smiling.

Pom Pom Squad Beautifully Blends Soft Sounds, Loud Themes

Review By Aubrey Monaco

Pom Pom Squad’s 2021 album *Death of a Cheerleader* provides music for all listeners. Pom Pom Squad is known for their indie and grunge sound, as demonstrated on their 2019 debut album, *Ow*.

The addition of pop elements in this new album has expanded who they are as a band, and has allowed them to reach a much wider audience. While the album is classified as alternative by Apple Music and Spotify, it has allowed them expanded who they are as a band, and has allowed them.

According to NPR, Berrin confirmed that the album indeed contains themes of romantic love, but also of finding love for oneself. She revealed that through journaling, she found how to become more confident and self-assured in herself and with her decisions, and Berrin wanted the album to reflect that development.

Listening to this album is a fun and energetic experience. It can also satisfy any listener and any mood, as it incorporates so many genres while exploring feelings of anger, sadness, longing, confidence, love, and happiness all at once. *Death of a Cheerleader* is a complex album that makes intricacy look effortless. Five out of five stars!
Review By Sophia Nasca

Joji introduces *Nectar* with “Ew.” a gorgeous, piano-filled track. We begin on an airplane. It is nighttime, and darkness spreads throughout the small cabin of the plane like a thick haze. You’re resting in a window seat. You sigh deeply, years of stress releasing and your bones settling into the chair. The window shade beside you is shut tight. This journey, this new start, fills your mind and leaves you content. Joji’s voice resonates, “Teach me to love just to let me go.” The place you’ve left lets you go with nearly infinite memories. The physical home where you learned to love releases you into your future. Its loving hand urges you on a new path.

This song, with its exceptional use of piano and strings, sets up *Nectar* to be a wonderfully emotional and deeply relatable album that transcends any of Joji’s previous works.

“Tick Tock.” The clicks of hands on a clock pervade your mind, loud and persistent. Turbulence rocks the plane. Overhead luggage and carry-on items rattle loudly around you. A flash of light permeates through the window shade, crashing over you for merely a second before disappearing. You sit up, push the shade completely open, and stare into the darkness, puzzled. You realize that the flash was fighting. You’re caught in a storm. You’re left vulnerable and on your own. Joji repeats, “With my hands in the ocean, I pray.” Your heart sings over your mind. You lay back in your seat and close your eyes, drifting to sleep. The mess and chaos around you are infinitesimal compared to the new possibilities before you.

“Daylight” presents an upbeat, summery pop single collaboration by Joji and Diplo. This song has slightly better production than the rest of the album, likely due to the addition of Diplo. After the melancholy of “Tick Tock,” you emerge out of the night, renewed. The lyrics glimmer: “Sun’s up, I don’t really wanna fight the daylight.” The long nights alone, soaking in darkness and fighting the light, fall away from you. You push the window completely open and let the shining rays of sunlight warm your frigid skin. You feel the cold rush away for the first time in a long time. Happiness creeps into your soul, spreading as each stream of sunlight spills onto your skin. The sunrise is fully visible from your small vantage point in the sky. At that moment, the saturated oranges and purples seem to shimmer, and you think you can hear music playing in the distance.

A piano melody tinges in: it’s “Upgrade.” Joji’s voice seems to be the main instrument used here, as evinced by unique harmonies placed near the vocals. We also hear the unfamiliar use of the ukulele here. The empty time you are left lets you go with nearly infinite relationships to new opportunities and dreams arising in the future. Its loving hand urges you on a new path. You lose time on this flight. It slips through the cracks and trickles down like rain.

“We’re alone in the world. The seats surrounding you are vacant. Everyone around you is suddenly gone. The emotions are too much, but the destination is imminent. Landing. The wheels touch the runway, rumbling the airplane around you. A sigh. A tear rolling down your cheek. Joji releases us: “You’re the one I can’t lose, no one loves me like you do.”

*Nectar* is a project about love. You can feel the warmth of love in “Sanctuary,” and the chills of it in “Like You Do.” The pain, the happiness, the spectrum of passion. Joji’s tone and lyrical level convey this theme spectacularly. These visions envelop us as we listen. We can traverse this album as needed, as these songs are applicable to everything from lost relationships to new opportunities and dreams arising in our lives. Any meaning can be made malleable. Our flight ends with a meeting of old and new, the past set aside for new beginnings. A dream fulfilled. You run headfirst into the future, “Your Man” narrating, “Don’t be down when it’s over.” You’re smiling and running, the tears from “Like You Do” dried on your cheeks.
**Life’s Complexities Emphasized In How To Be a Human Being**

Review By Olivia Macholeth

Everyone knows how tough life can be and how hard it is to meet expectations. Every person you meet or simply see walking down the street has a different story to tell with different memories, feelings, and opinions. Even the people who we dislike the most may hold riveting stories and experiences inside of them, or they may even have immense talent that you have never noticed before. How To Be A Human Being by Glass Animals encompasses the highs and lows of life while telling the stories of different characters through music.

Before we get into the album, simply take a glance at the album cover. There are people dressed in different outfits, seemingly from different backgrounds and lifestyles. Each person you see on the album cover is an embodiment of one of the songs on the album. Lead vocalist, Dave Bayley, said in various interviews that he met hundreds of strangers on the road and listened to their stories, using these as inspiration for the album.

*How To Be A Human Being* was made with the intent of embodying the good, bad, and ugly of life and love through heavy basses, zestful drums, and addicting choruses. If I were to score the album out of ten, I would give it solid 9.5. The album has Glass Animals’ unique sound and indie brand, but some of the songs can leave the listener begging for more.

With “[Premade Sandwiches]” serving as an interlude, the album consists of ten songs, each one of them averaging out at around four minutes in length.

My picks for the best songs on the album would have to be “Youth,” “Pork Soda,” “The Other Side Of Paradise,” “Take A Slice,” and “Agnes.” That would leave “Season 2 Episode 3,” “Life Itself,” “Mama’s Gun,” “Cane Shuga,” and “Poplar St” as the worst songs on the album, in my opinion. The best songs not only bring their own style, but the lyrics also stay consistent with the theme of the song and match each of the characters they’re supposed to represent. The weakest songs may have addictive beats and melodies, but the lyrics and choruses seem repetitive and overall aren’t as wowing as the other tracks on the album.

As the album comes to a close, the meaningful yet gentle lyrics and melancholic tone of “Agnes” serve as the curtains closing to a play.

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**How To Be A Human Being was made with the intent of embodying the good, bad, and ugly of life and love through heavy basses, zestful drums, and addicting choruses.**

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**Spiderman: No Way Home Seamlessly Entwines Nostalgia and Ingenuity**

Review By Aubrey Monaco

[Includes spoilers]

*Spider-Man: No Way Home* elevates the usual idea of a superhero movie with layers of relatability, comedy, tough decisions, and more. The film premiered on December 17, 2021, providing a spectacular closeout for film in 2021. It earned a 94 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, and an 8.8 out of 10 on IMDb.

The film picks up where the 2019 film *Spider-Man: Far From Home* leaves viewers: Spider-Man’s identity is revealed. In a stroke of rage due to being defeated, the main antagonist of the previous movie, Mysterio, reveals to the world in a short video that Spider-Man’s name is Peter Parker.

*Spider-Man: No Way Home* kicks off with Peter facing the hateful comments and threats he is receiving due to defeating Mysterio, who was believed to be a true hero. Viewers then switch to watch Peter, his girlfriend MJ, and his best friend Ned beginning their college application process.

Peter, MJ, and Ned apply to MIT- their dream school. However, Peter is rejected because Spider-Man is generally hated at this point, leading to MJ and Ned being rejected as well, because of their association with Peter. This event spurs the movie into action, as Peter meets with an admissions officer to try and change her mind regarding these decisions. While doing so, Peter comes face-to-face with his first villain: Doc Ock (Alfred Malina), who is the main antagonist of *Spider-Man 2* (2002) with Tobey Maguire.

Fans of Marvel movies were extremely excited for the release of this movie, as it was rumored that both Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire, the predecessors of Tom Holland in the role of Spider-Man, would appear in the new movie, and the rumors proved to be true. Other villains of their previous iconic films, including Green Goblin (Willem Defoe), Sandman (Thomas Haden Church), Electro (Jamie Foxx), and Lizard (Rhys Ifans) also played central roles in the movie.

Watching Maguire and Garfield make their appearances was an emotional moment in theaters. Those familiar with each portrayal were able to feel all the nostalgia and satisfaction seeing each Spider-Man together and united.

Callbacks to the previous movies occurred in both little and big ways. Ultimately, each Spider-Man played an essential role in conquering the evil forces at work. Moments that intertwined the new with old, along with moments of love and humor, truly made for a great movie.

The film overall provides a fantastic experience for old and new fans of Spider-Man. It is a mix of sadness, happiness, and love, which leaves viewers with an open ending as to what may be next. But for now, this instantly classic movie will momentarily satisfy any want of a new film.
Dear Catherine

“Catherine” is just another Mercy girl, like you. She’s trying her best to give you the best advice she can, but her responses still reflect her views, not absolute facts. She hopes to give advice that can help, but acknowledges that these are her opinions and she is not always right.

Would you recommend playing a sport at Mercy?

Yes! Many questions I answer don’t have black and white responses, but this one is a definite yes. Playing a sport, at any high school, is a great way to get involved, make friends, and feel connected in your school community. I know that many Mercy athletes have friends in all grade levels because of their connection through sports. Sports are also great in that they give you something to do outside of the house, a routine, and a way to stay active. Even if Mercy doesn’t have a sport that you’re interested in, there are club sports you can join too! We have Mercy students playing for a local girls hockey team, rowing team, and swim team. I hope you’re considering joining a new sport soon and I wish you luck!

How can I be more confident when trying something new and challenging?

This is a question that I think we all wish we had a clear answer to. Trying something new, especially when that “something” proves a challenge, feels awkward and scary. You have to be vulnerable when learning a new skill or pursuing a new activity, and vulnerability is uncomfortable, especially when there are others around you! However, every person, despite how cool and collected they seem, struggles to show confidence when trying something new.

The cliche, “Fake it till you make it,” exists for a reason. Acting confident will eventually trick your brain into having actual confidence. You should also remember that you’re capable of any activity that you set your mind to, and even if mastering a challenge takes time, practice makes perfect! If you’re worried about others judging you when you first try something, keep in mind that people are often more focused on themselves than those around them. Humans are naturally self-centered, and I can almost guarantee that others will not notice any failings. Just keep in mind, “I’ve got this!” and repeat such affirmations until you truly believe it. Best of luck!

Winter can be a hard time. How does one get through school, a job, sports, family, and homework during the hard winter blues?

This is a tricky question to answer as I look outside and see the bleak skies of winter. Even so, I’ve learned some skills that help me balance a plate full of activities and obligations in gloomy weather that I’d love to share with you.

First, make sure your body is receiving enough vitamin D. I know it sounds silly, but us Buffalonians have some severe “sunshine vitamin” deficiencies. My whole mood changed when I started regularly taking supplements! You can find them at any drugstore or on Amazon, but be sure to talk to your doctor before adding any supplements to your daily routine.

Second, try your best to make time for some Pinterest-worthy self-care. Put on some comfy socks, pull out your favorite feel-good book or sitcom episode, and settle down for a face mask. Attempt to devote one night a week, or even just an hour, to only yourself. Prioritize your comfort and relaxation. These small acts of gentleness towards ourselves do much more than we can imagine! I hope these tips will help you better handle the dreary weather and manage all of your responsibilities.

How do you handle not feeling included in your friend group?

Feeling not included in your friend group can seem like one of the worst parts of high school. I understand that a situation like this makes you feel small, unworthy, and just generally sad. I’d first recommend evaluating when you feel excluded. Before you take further action, make sure your friends are actually excluding you, and you don’t only feel that way. Feelings aren’t always facts, but if they are leaving you out, talk to them! It’s possible that they don’t realize that they’re excluding you, and they may easily fix the issue.

You should also make sure there isn’t a specific reason why they’re not including you. Did you accidentally hurt one of their feelings? Do they hold any misconceptions about you? In these situations, it’s best to be straight-forward. The only way to address issues in relationships of any kind, whether friendships or romantic relationships, is to openly discuss them! If they’re not responsive to the conversation and continue leaving you out, it might be time to reevaluate your friendship. True friends wouldn’t purposely exclude or do anything that they know will hurt your feelings. You should surround yourself with people who care about you and act on it. It’s difficult to realize that your friends aren’t treating you well and decide to discontinue your friendship, but most times, you’ll find kinder people who appreciate your presence in your life. I’m sorry that you feel excluded, and I hope it works out! Best of luck.

Have a question for Catherine?
Access the Google Form that was emailed to you to submit a question!

Dear Catherine

Discretion.

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Second, try your best to make time for some Pinterest-worthy self-care. Put on some comfy socks, pull out your favorite feel-good book or sitcom episode, and settle down for a face mask. Attempt to devote one night a week, or even just an hour, to only yourself. Prioritize your comfort and relaxation. These small acts of gentleness towards ourselves do much more than we can imagine! I hope these tips will help you better handle the dreary weather and manage all of your responsibilities.

How do you handle not feeling included in your friend group?

Feeling not included in your friend group can seem like one of the worst parts of high school. I understand that a situation like this makes you feel small, unworthy, and just generally sad. I’d first recommend evaluating when you feel excluded. Before you take further action, make sure your friends are actually excluding you, and you don’t only feel that way. Feelings aren’t always facts, but if they are leaving you out, talk to them! It’s possible that they don’t realize that they’re excluding you, and they may easily fix the issue.

You should also make sure there isn’t a specific reason why they’re not including you. Did you accidentally hurt one of their feelings? Do they hold any misconceptions about you? In these situations, it’s best to be straight-forward. The only way to address issues in relationships of any kind, whether friendships or romantic relationships, is to openly discuss them! If they’re not responsive to the conversation and continue leaving you out, it might be time to reevaluate your friendship. True friends wouldn’t purposely exclude or do anything that they know will hurt your feelings. You should surround yourself with people who care about you and act on it. It’s difficult to realize that your friends aren’t treating you well and decide to discontinue your friendship, but most times, you’ll find kinder people who appreciate your presence in your life. I’m sorry that you feel excluded, and I hope it works out! Best of luck.

Have a question for Catherine?
Access the Google Form that was emailed to you to submit a question!

Goodbye, Seniors!

Kudos to our seniors and best of luck at your future schools!

Sydney Ardanuy: University at Buffalo
Jessica Askins: ECC Fall 2023
Adrianna Awald: Princeton University
Annie Bernard: Canisius College
Melissa Courtney: Canisius College
Desiree Diaz-Torres: Buffalo State College
Abbie Dziadzio: Niagara University
Maddie Edwards: Mercyhurst University
Estella Estus: Delaware State University
Sydney Gunner: Smith College

Dominique Khoury: University at Buffalo
Grace Kruse: Buffalo State College
Marissa Kurucz: Hilbert College
Mary Bea Laolley: John Carroll University
Heaven McAdory: Canisius College
Amaya Mikowski: Xavier University
Aubrey Monaco: University at Buffalo
Carolyn O’Keefe: Manhattanville College
Izzy Radwan: Daemen College
Natalie Radwan: Daemen College

Cassidy Reid: Mercyhurst University
Mara Santanta: Mercyhurst University
Kyra Soto: SUNY Fredonia
Grace Spero: Ohio State University
Grace Thie: Mercyhurst University
Mary Vattes: Mercyhurst University
Myla Wood: Hilbert College
Bitsat Yitayeh: Mercyhurst University

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Joyce Hibbs
Eve Janak
Novella Keen
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Disclaimer: “Catherine” is just another Mercy girl, like you. She’s trying her best to give you the best advice she can, but her responses still reflect her views, not absolute facts. She hopes to give advice that can help, but acknowledges that these are her opinions and she is not always right.