February is Black History Month, and Mount Mercy Academy engaged in activities helping students learn about our history as Americans, especially the contributions of Black Americans. In homeroom, we watched and discussed videos about Black history and researched some of the highlighted topics. These videos were from a PBS series called Say it Loud. They are fun and informative at the same time, and cover subjects such as Black beauty, Black inventors, Black musicians, and migration patterns.

The intention of the programming was to highlight, in a meaningful way, the impact of Black Americans in our nation’s history as well as their struggles. Adrianna Awald, a junior who assisted in the planning, said, “When the Mercy Girls and Sister Jenny were planning our activities for Black History Month, we had one specific goal in mind: to educate. We wanted all of the students and staff to understand the importance of Black History Month as it is not just a time to hear names read off of a paper but to recognize and dedicate time to people and movements that made a true impact upon society.”

Junior Dominique Khoury, who also helped to plan the homeroom activities, added, “Black History Month draws attention to the contributions of Black people in America. It is also a time for those of us from other races and cultures to learn about Black culture.”

Students found the activities both meaningful and engaging. “By doing activities in homeroom that recognized Black History, we were able to acknowledge all of the amazing things that Black people have contributed and all of the things that they have had to overcome,” said freshman Rosalie Bandura.

The black beauty video highlighted the struggles that Black women faced, and continue today, in the beauty industry, including having no makeup shades to match their skin and no colors that showed up on darker skin. Having limited makeup access caused Black women to struggle in the beauty industry compared to white women. Black women also struggled with finding hair products that worked well for them. Watching this video broadened many students’ perspectives, opening their eyes to issues that some of them may not have personally faced.

Another video, one focusing on Black inventors, showed students how important Black inventions are in our everyday lives. “My favorite activity was the one involving invention. It was so cool to learn about the role Black inventors play in making the world what it is today, and I didn’t previously realize how important they were,” said freshman Addison Barth. There are many Black inventions that are commonplace in our everyday lives such as seatbelts, nerf guns, yellow traffic lights, laser eye surgery, home security systems, refrigerated trucks, gas furnaces, and more. However, students also learned that it was difficult for Black inventors to secure patents due to segregation laws.

The video about music highlighted many popular Black music artists that are impactful to this day. “My favorite activity was learning about Black musicians because music is something that can unite everyone,” said Bandura. Music is something many students can bond over and talk about readily, resulting in a better understanding of the struggles Black musicians faced. Black men and women have played a crucial part in the music industry for many years and continue to be integral. Students learned about the pasts and struggles of many of their favorite artists including Beyonce, Travis Scott, and Drake. This widened their views on how racial injustice is still very present in our world today.

“It is important for Mercy to celebrate and highlight Black History Month because it gives us the opportunity to learn about important figures of our world that we may not have known about before, as well as the impact they make on our daily lives,” added Barth. These activities allowed students to see the problems facing our country today that they may not have thought about before and encouraged them to fight for what’s right.

Khoury was proud of the program, especially its focus and impact. “I feel that the homeroom activities that we planned out and completed were very informative, and helped us see the importance of Black culture in our society, especially through its influence on our music and beauty industries,” she said.

Though there is always more to be done, the Black History Month activities were largely seen as a success as they were both informative and powerful.

As Awald noted, “Our mission was to spread awareness and educate not only others but ourselves as well because no improvements can be made in a state of ignorance.”
Behind the Mask: Student and Staff Spotlights

Addison Barth

Spotlight by Catherine Klodzinski

Addison Barth previously attended Nativity of Our Lord in Orchard Park and is a current freshman here at Mount Mercy Academy. You may see her in the hallways or even in your classes or clubs! Addison is actively involved in many things here at Mercy and is definitely someone who leaves an impact on the people she meets.

With this being Addison’s first year here at school, she said that she is enjoying it and that it is going well despite Covid-19 changing the things that were once considered “normal.” “I have made so many new friends and all of the students were very welcoming at the beginning of the year,” Addison said. Her favorite part about Mercy is “the environment and atmosphere.” “Mercy feels like a great place to learn and grow,” she added.

As Addison journeys through her first year here at Mercy, she has continuously decided to become highly involved in many clubs and sports. She is a part of the STEAM club, mock trial, and a fellow member of the Merciette team! You may also recognize Addison as the freshman class president! She participated in the golf and cross-country season and was successful enough to go to All-Catholics for both sports. She also has the intention to play tennis in the spring. Aside from school, Addison loves to ski, draw, make collages, and do photography.

Addison Barth has also achieved many accomplishments that were well deserved! Starting in seventh grade, Addison has been taking math classes at the University at Buffalo, and she hopes to continue with this advanced math program through the end of her high school career. You may have also seen her name at the CEPA Gallery in Buffalo, as she has had two photos that she had taken on exhibit there!

When asked about her future, Addison said that she would “like to do something in engineering, probably aerospace engineering—not the type with airplanes though. I would like to work at NASA. I have always loved it.” With experience in STEAM from her middle school, Addison has learned to love engineering and hopes to continue refining this skill as she moves forward in her life.

When asking Addison what’s the best advice that she has ever received, her response was, “I know it sounds cliche, but just always keep a positive mindset. You will feel a lot better about yourself and your work if you aren’t dragging yourself down.”

Addison Barth is a kind and friendly person to everyone she meets and is easily approachable. She is always working hard to achieve success and she will continue to be actively involved at Mercy through clubs and sports.

Ms. Rauscher

Spotlight by Addison Barth

After 2020’s rough start, Mercy found itself in need of a new science teacher. Ms. Rauscher stepped in to fill the gap. After swiftly overcoming the challenges of moving to a new environment, she now teaches Living Environment, Living Environment Honors, and Animal Behavior.

Although there was about a three-week period at the beginning of the year before she started, Ms. Rauscher got caught up in no time. Even though it was difficult, “Everybody here made it possible and easier,” she said. “The students were welcoming, patient, and helpful. The faculty always checked in on me and made sure I was okay.” It is also Ms. Rauscher’s first year teaching in a school, as she previously taught home instruction, helping students who needed to work at home.

Ms. Rauscher has had an idea most of her life that she would end up teaching. “I used to set up classrooms at home and force my siblings to be my students,” Rauscher said lightheartedly. Interestingly enough, she began school at Niagara University with the intention of becoming a nurse, and then made the switch to bio-education. When further questioned about her decision, she said her high school science teachers were integral to the development of her love for the subject.

It is clear that Ms. Rauscher does everything she can to help her students and is passionate about her profession. It is this passion that drives Ms. Rauscher to strive for an interactive learning environment in her classroom. She believes that in order to learn, students need to experience the topic and discuss it as a group. Her motto is T.E.A.M., or “Together Everyone Achieves More.”

“I don’t think that things have to be so dry to the point where it’s just me speaking,” Rauscher stated. “I couldn’t imagine myself speaking with no feedback,” she added.

She likes to use presentations and activities like having her students dress up for class as opportunities to show what they have learned. For example, during the Christmas season, her Living Environment classes created organelle-themed ugly sweaters. This system seems to work well, as many of her students truly enjoy the class.

Finally, Ms. Rauscher would like to share a message with the students of Mercy: “High school is an experience, and it isn’t only about academics. There is so much social growth and personal development. It is where you find yourself.”

Ms. Rauscher is a fantastic addition to the Mount Mercy faculty. We are lucky to have Ms. Rauscher!

Mrs. Melligan

Spotlight by Kayla Pietrkiewicz

2020 was a year to remember. Not only did we endure a global pandemic Covid-19, but we also welcomed Mrs. Michele Melligan to Mount Mercy. She was hired July 1, 2020 as principal and became our Head of School on November 1. Mrs. Melligan is not only our Head of School, she is a former student of Mount Mercy (“92). When she is not working at Mercy, she is a wife and mom.

Outside of school, Mrs. Melligan enjoys activities that help her keep a positive mindset. “I need to do yoga to keep me balanced. I also love to travel and go on vacations with my family,” she said.

Not only does Mrs. Melligan love having fun outside of school, she also wants to create new, positive traditions at Mercy as well. Mrs. Melligan said enthusiastically, “I am working and planning for a shift in education and how we instruct students.” Mrs. Melligan wants to bring new ideas of culture to Mercy. “There are many possibilities at Mercy that were not only created by Catherine McAuley but the Sisters of Mercy,” she said.

Even with a clear plan for the future, there are many challenges as a Head of School that Mrs. Melligan experiences. Not only did she become the leader of an entire school, she also faced (and continues to face) the challenges of the coronavirus and having to put strict guidelines into effect to keep everyone safe.

However, Mrs. Melligan was still very excited to become Head of School not only to interact with all the students, faculty, and staff, but to walk the halls of the school that she once called “home.” After graduating from Mercy she knew that if she had a daughter she would want to send her to Mount Mercy. She wanted her to create memories like she did when she was there. One of her daughters, Maggie Melligan, is currently a freshman here at Mercy!

As a Mercy community, we want to thank you, Mrs. Melligan, for what you have done for our school so far and wish you luck in the years ahead!
Mrs. Lynch

Spotlight by Amanda Solomon and Ashley Cirbus

Mrs. Lynch is the gym teacher here for all of the students at Mount Mercy Academy. Her life as a gym teacher did not start here though. She began her physical education learning at Canisius College, and also attended Erie Community College for community recreation.

At first, she was not very interested in being a teacher. She instead was planning on working at a bigger place like the YMCA. Her interest in teaching started when she did her student teaching. That led her to be a part-time teacher at an elementary school for 7 years. She then got called to part-time teaching at Mercy at the same time as her other job. She was teaching at Mercy for about 2 years until she got hired full-time here.

Mrs. Lynch says that teaching at Mercy differs from her previous job because of the change in environment. She does like working with teenagers better than she did elementary kids. Mrs. Lynch’s experience at Mercy for over 27 years has led her to see many things and different personalities, but she does say that this is one of her favorite things about working here.

These past almost 2 years have changed her teaching methods though, largely due to the pandemic. The coronavirus really changed how she does things in gym class. For example, kids are not allowed to share equipment, she cannot allow team activities, and the number of activities that are allowed is very limited.

Mrs. Lynch says that her favorite thing to teach in class is jump rope because she is an “excellent jump roper” herself. Mrs. Lynch not only teaches gym, but she is also the Mercy golf coach. She has been coaching golf for 16 years and loves to see how much the girls can improve their skills.

Sometimes students can forget teachers have a life outside of school, but Mrs. Lynch has some favorite activities she likes to do while she isn’t teaching. These include playing golf, going to the beach, and watching Law and Order. Mrs. Lynch has been married for 39 years and has 3 children, one boy, and two girls who are all grown now and in adulthood. Her daughters both went to Mercy and she loved teaching them.

Mrs. Lynch loves her students and hopes that every individual can learn at least something from her class. She hopes everyone learns to accept others as they are, see that everyone is at a different skill level, understand that not everyone is great at certain sports, and, most importantly, she wants every student to feel comfortable in her class doing the activities, no matter how good they may be at it.

Movie Reviews

The Invisible Man: Greatest Thriller of 2020

By Paige Angle

The horror/mystery movie, The Invisible Man, is directed by Leigh Whannell and stars Elisabeth Moss, Storm Reid, Oliver Jackson-Cohen, Harriet Dyer, and Aldis Hodge. The Invisible Man is rated R and was released on February 24th, 2020. This movie is based on the 1897 novel of the same name written by H.G. Wells.

This movie is about a man named Adrian Griffin (played by Oliver Jackson-Cohen), who lives with his wife, Cecilia or “Cece” Kass (played by Elisabeth Moss). Adrian is a mad scientist who fakes his death to terrorize Cece, her close family, and her close friends. He invents an invisible suit to “haunt” Cece so that she thinks she is going insane. He sets up cameras around his house to watch Cece’s every move and to moderate what she is doing. Adrian also tells her when she can eat and sleep.

Because of the psychological damage Adrian has caused, Cece decides to run away and stay with her friend, James Lanier (played by Aldis Hodge), and his daughter, Sydney Lainer (played by Storm Reid). They become close, like family, until Adrian decides to step in. After Cece has stayed with James for some time, Adrian fakes James’s death and starts to carry out his cruel plan. Later on, Cece has had enough of Adrian’s games and decides to fight back.

The Invisible Man is a great film for people who enjoy horror and mystery movies. The movie has a spine-chilling ending and an interesting storyline that will keep you thinking even after watching it. I rate this movie five out of five stars because of the frightening yet intriguing plot. If you enjoy watching the movies The Turning or Hush, The Invisible Man is the movie for you.

Doctor Sleep: Sequel to The Shining Delivers

By Jenna Angle

The film Doctor Sleep is directed by Mike Flanagan and stars Ewan McGregor, Rebecca Ferguson, and Kyliegh Curran. Doctor Sleep is the sequel to the 1980 film, The Shining, and is also based on the novel Doctor Sleep, written by Stephen King and published in 2013.

Doctor Sleep is about an adult Danny Torrance who struggles with alcoholism due to past events at the Overlook Hotel. While trying to forget about the spirits from the past, Danny meets a teenage girl named Abra, who can also “shine,” or see things before they happen.

Danny and Abra join forces to fight against a group of people who call themselves the “True Knot” and their leader, Rose. Rose and her gang feed off of the souls of those who “shine.” Danny and Abra must travel back to the Overlook Hotel to protect everyone who can “shine.” Although we see Danny struggle, we also watch Abra and others who “shine” save Danny from his past.

If you are a fan of It, Room 237, Pet Cemetery, Before I Wake, or Stephen King’s novels, you should seriously consider watching Doctor Sleep. Although, to fully understand certain moments in the movie, you have to watch The Shining first. I enjoyed the several flashbacks to previous events at the Overlook Hotel, which appeared in The Shining. The impact on Danny from the spirits of the past is very engaging. I rate Doctor Sleep five out of five stars for its exciting storyline and mysterious hook.
The Dangers of Climate Change

By Megan Amicone

Global climate change is the long term changes of the climate on the Earth’s surface and atmosphere. Climate change shows itself through global air temperatures rising, wildfires and other extreme weather events, and melting glaciers which contribute to the rising of sea levels. Climate change is an undeniable issue and we see it in our everyday lives in many ways. Some people, however, don’t understand that our planet is in a dire situation due to this problem. We, as human beings, are affected by climate change, and so are the land, oceans, and many different species that live on Earth.

One effect of this dreadful phenomenon is species shifting. Species shifting is the act of species adjusting their lives and habitats in order to survive climate change. The animals experiencing species shifting are affected by the constantly changing land, sea, and air resulting from climate change. Some people may believe that animals will continue to adapt to new climates like they have in the past, but they don’t understand just how quickly climate change is altering the environment. Whether it is because of forest fires, the rising sea levels, or the warming of the air temperature, many animals are losing their habitats and some species are disappearing.

Another issue resulting from climate change is that temperatures on Earth have increased significantly in recent years and continue to spike. Due to advances in human technology and machinery, carbon dioxide is being released into the atmosphere in much greater quantities than ever before. As recorded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in the last 60 years, carbon dioxide emissions have increased by almost 100 percent. The increases in temperature are caused by greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, absorbing excess heat in Earth’s atmosphere. According to NASA, “Nineteen of the 20 warmest years have occurred since 2001.” The climate has rapidly grown hotter in recent years.

Although this may seem insignificant, slight changes to the temperature also have a massive effect on different organisms. Many species require cooler environments to survive. One such species is green turtles. Warmer temperatures produce more female green turtles than male green turtles, and with fewer male turtles, their species is in danger. Rising temperatures are also affecting Asian elephants who aren’t getting enough water due to the hot temperatures in their habitat. As the temperatures rise, the number of suitable habitats for certain species decreases.

Another impact of climate change is wildfires and extreme weather. Warmer temperatures cause dryer air, which can lead to forest fires and an increase in droughts. Little precipitation and droughts mean that when fires arise, they are more difficult to put out. The Golden-Cheeked Warblers are one victim of forest fires. These birds’ habitats are highly sensitive to fires, which threaten this helpless species. Other weather phenomena influenced by climate change are hurricanes. According to NASA, hurricanes’ intensity, frequency, and duration have all increased since the 1980s. While some people believe that these facts regarding an increase in extreme weather conditions are just an over-exaggeration, these are legitimate reasons to be concerned about climate change.

Sea levels also rise as a result of climate change and increasing temperatures. With the climate warming, icebergs at the poles are beginning to melt, leading to an increase of water in the ocean. NASA reports that “Global sea level has risen by about 8 inches since reliable record-keeping began in 1880. It is projected to rise another 1 to 8 feet by 2100.” Rising water levels also destroy habitats. One species affected by this issue is the Piping Plover. These little birds nest on beaches and coastlines, and with rising sea levels and flooding, their nests and habitats are destroyed.

Coral also faces challenges from underwater temperatures rising. The corals release algae when the water becomes cooler, causing them to turn white or “bleached.” Bleached coral doesn’t mean that they are dead, but that they are under “stress” and in danger. If corals do die, a habitat that houses over 4,000 fish species and 25% of marine life disappears. It can be difficult for people who live in continental areas to believe that sea levels are rising and the poles are melting, but this is certainly true and having disastrous effects on our planet.

While climate change is a frightening occurrence with disastrous effects, scientists believe that we are able to slow down these processes. We are all able to make an effort to live more sustainably. We can put solar panels on our houses, wash our clothes in cold water, unplug energy sources when we are not using them, and easiest of them all, we can recycle! As citizens of the Earth, we must come together and make an effort to save our planet.

By Joyce Hibbs

The State of Wildlife in 2021

The world around us is ever-changing, and is often negatively affecting our wildlife. Sometimes we focus on what's front of us and what we see on the news, but many news channels do not show us much of what's going on with wildlife. Our wildlife is currently suffering greatly, and some of the reasons are because of what we do in our everyday life. For instance, some of the struggles that wildlife are facing right now are because of humans moving into their habitats and because of overexploitation, such as over-hunting, fishing, and harvesting.

Although it may be hard to notice in our everyday lives, many species of animals are experiencing a population decline more than ever. For example, poaching, the practice of illegally hunting an animal, greatly threatens the rhino population. According to Save the Rhino, a rhino is killed for its horn every 22 hours in South Africa, where the population of rhinos is greatest. That’s one rhino a day. Save the Rhino also reports that from 2007 to 2014, rhino poaching grew 9,000%!

Unfortunately, humans are much to blame for population declines. NPR reported that in the last 50 years, the world has lost two-thirds of its wildlife population. On a positive note, for the first time in a very long time instead of decreasing, the tiger population is increasing. This is largely due to coordinated conservation efforts. Sadly, this positive reversal is not the norm for many other endangered animals, who may not survive long enough for humans to intervene in positive ways.

Though many associate the phrase “save the turtle” with “vsco” girls, the reality is that this saying is a serious one. About 4,600 loggerhead turtles die each year in the U.S alone, according to Oceana.

Many other sea animals are endangered such as whales, dolphins, porpoises, sea lions, and manatees. There are also several endangered land animals such as dholes, monkeys, African wild dogs, cougars, macaws, pangolins, jaguars, snow leopards, chimps, gorillas, black-footed ferrets, primates, snakes, orangutans, lions, other leopards, polar bears, elephants, wolves, pandas, most bears, and the list goes on. With such a long list, it is necessary for us to recognize how much wildlife is being affected by our lifestyles.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species, there are currently over 134,400 endangered species, “with more than 37,400 species threatened with extinction, including 41% of amphibians, 34% of conifers, 33% of reef building corals, 26% of mammals and 14% of birds.” This staggering statistic begs the question, what can you do to prevent species endangerment?
Effects of the Coronavirus

By Megan Amicone and Catherine Klodzinski

The coronavirus is a highly infectious disease that turned into a disastrous pandemic within a matter of weeks. This virus originated in Wuhan, China, and has spread to 121 million people in over 219 different countries, according to CNN at the time of this publication. Worldwide, 2.7 million people have lost their lives due to the coronavirus and these numbers are still rapidly increasing.

The United States, specifically, has faced many struggles as a result of the coronavirus. A small number of cases of the virus increased at such a fast rate in the nation that it became uncontrollable. Due to this, many states began going into lockdown without knowing when it would end.

Thousands of schools moved to distance learning, while sports and extracurriculars were canceled because of how easily transmittable the virus is.

The coronavirus is known to be spread through respiratory droplets, making simple interactions, such as talking to others, dangerous to one’s health. Due to how fast the virus hit and how unprepared we were, thousands were already sick before health orders could be taken. It became necessary to wear a face mask when leaving the house to prevent the spread of the virus.

Although masks help to reduce the risk of spreading and contracting the virus, they were not enough to reduce the number of cases in the United States. Hospitals became overloaded because of the number of people who needed to be put on ventilators and treated professionally. At one point, thousands of hospitals had to turn sick people away due to a lack of hospital beds, ventilators, and necessary materials. Essential workers were also faced with a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE). Many nurses and doctors had to wear the same equipment day after day, and their health was at more risk.

This spiked the need for masks, gloves, and sanitizers. Factories that do not normally produce these types of goods had to step up to make supplies and PPE.

Additionally, small businesses experienced a major fall in business, resulting in little profit and, in some cases, closure. The most heartbreaking effect of the pandemic is that over half a million people have died as a result in the United States alone, leaving many families with a hole in their hearts.

Not only has the world and the country experienced struggles as a result of the coronavirus, but our very own school, Mount Mercy Academy, has faced many challenges. In the middle of March 2020, we heard that our school would be temporarily closing and moving to distance learning. Thinking we would only be in quarantine for about two weeks, many students were excited to have a little break. We had no idea what was to come.

Once quarantine and distance learning turned into a long-term situation, many students struggled with their mental health and a lack of social interaction. Unfortunately, we ended last year’s school year online, but we had hope that a brighter 2020-2021 school year was to come.

In September, we had the choice to come back to school to learn or stay online. The majority of students came back, with masks of course, and many precautionary measures were implemented. Every morning, the students have to get their temperature checked before starting the school day. Lockers are spaced out with three lockers in between each to prevent people from standing too close to each other and spreading the virus. Students have to walk on a certain side of the hallway to follow social distancing rules and desks are spaced six feet apart to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.

Almost every part of school has been affected, from lunch tables to gym classes to group work. “So many things have changed this year. Even simple things like rearranging my desks from groups to rows has adjusted the way I do things in the classroom,” said Ms. Kaufman.

“Even though so much has changed and there have been countless new challenges, I am happy that the safety of our school community has been a priority,” she added.

Compared to the spring of 2020, the 2021 school year at Mount Mercy Academy has thankfully moved more smoothly and we hope to be able to stay in school with as little spread of the virus as possible.

The coronavirus has had such a big impact on both the country and the world, but it has shown us that we are all in this together and we will continue to work towards a positive outcome.

Climate Change Affects Buffalo, Too

By Aubrey Monaco

Climate change affects everything around us, and we, in turn, affect climate change by what we do or do not do. In Buffalo, this issue affects our health, weather, and seasons. Climate change can be defined as the change in average conditions, like temperature, over a long period of time. Especially now, temperatures are increasing rapidly due to the rise of greenhouse gases, which trap heat in our atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide and methane.

In Buffalo, the health of many may begin to be more affected by climate change. Because climate change increases temperatures, summers may become much hotter than normal. As reported by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), this can lead to heat-related illnesses, like heat stroke, as many people in Buffalo, and the North in general, are not acclimated to these higher temperatures.

Besides this, increased heat can also lead to higher risk of flooding, especially due to Buffalo’s proximity to Lake Erie and other water sources, according to the NYSDEC. This is because warmer air can hold more water. Thus, rainfalls will be heavier and increase the risk for flooding. Natural disasters such as this can lead to injuries and even deaths. They can also lead to a reduction in our clean water supply, as water can be contaminated by pollutants from dry land.

Our weather will be affected by climate change as well. As stated, the risk for flooding will increase because of heavier precipitation levels. The States at Risk Project showed that these levels have been continuously increasing since 1900, and they have demonstrated that we now receive more precipitation in the winter and less in the summer. This trend will continue and bring harsher and more frequent storms. Along with this, the temperature of New York state annually has risen by more than two degrees since 1970.

Climate change will also influence our seasons. As described by the New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse (NYSCC), it is proven that spring now begins a week earlier than in past decades. This is illustrated by the migration patterns of insects, such as bees, returning to the Northeast much earlier than in past years. Also, animals such as birds and fish have migrated back North much earlier due to the warmer climate. Overall, we now have shorter periods of cold temperatures, and longer periods of warm temperatures.

Despite these factors, many say that the city of Buffalo will be a haven from places majorly impacted by climate change, and eventually, people will begin to migrate here, as effects are less prominent and there is enough space available, which is shown by the Western New York Youth Climate Council (WNYCC). Even still, Buffalo will be affected by climate change if citizens here, and people worldwide, do not implement new habits.

In the world, climate change will lead to other irreversible effects such as increased droughts and wildfires, depletion of natural resources, and displacement of many species and people near high-risk areas for natural disasters.

However, there are still ways to contribute to the halting of climate change. In How to Save the World for Free by Natalie Fee, the author suggests that walking, biking, or taking a bus instead of driving a short distance is one way to cut down on transportation pollution. Taking shorter showers and turning off the faucet while brushing your teeth are also two simple ways to save a natural resource that is affected by climate change. Another small change that can combat the climate crisis would be to choose foods that are sustainably grown, as well as clothes that are sustainably made, because these items will not undergo processing and other manufacturing that releases greenhouse gas emissions.

For Buffalo and the entire planet, climate change is and will continue to throw the balance of nature off of its course. Many animals will become extinct, and ecosystems will cease to exist. The climate crisis is something that we do not often associate with our city, but its effects will be disastrous without the help of everyone, including the citizens of Buffalo.
**Book Reviews**

**Salt to the Sea Depicts Greatest Maritime Tragedy**

By Vayana Stoyanova

*Salt to the Sea* by Ruta Sepetys, #1 New York Times Bestseller and winner of the Carnegie Medal, is a captivating story that describes a great tragedy through the eyes of four unique and deep characters. When I first picked it up, I was told that it was a standalone, though loosely related to a previous novel of Sepetys’, *Between Shades of Gray*. Even though I had not read any of Sepetys’ prior work, I understood that this was a historical fiction young adult novel (one of my favorite genres), so I dove-right into the story.

After only a few pages, I was enthralled. Set during World War II, *Salt to the Sea* follows four fictional, though historically accurate, characters who come from different backgrounds but all end up on the same German cruise liner, the Wilhelm Gustloff. The Wilhelm Gustloff was part of Operation Hannibal, meant to evacuate German military personnel and civilian refugees from the ports of East Prussia as the Red Army neared. It was headed to western Germany, but the ship never made it.

On January 30, 1945, about 9,000 people died aboard the Wilhelm Gustloff after it was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine and sunk into the frigid Baltic Sea. This is regarded as the greatest tragedy in maritime history because it was the deadliest.

Sepetys’ four principle characters are Joana Vilkas, a young Lithuanian nurse motivated by guilt; Florian Beck, a Prussian restoration artist on the run with valuable treasure who is motivated by his own predetermined fate; Emilia Stozek, a Polish girl motivated by shame who has experienced very severe trauma over the course of the war; and Alfred Frick, an unhinged character, loyal solely to Hitler, who is motivated by fear. Each of these characters end up on the Wilhelm Gustloff, cross paths, and develop relationships with one another.

Lies, secrets, and even a tiny bit of romance drove this story into my mind so deeply that I could barely put the book down after first picking it up. If you enjoy reading historical fiction and older YA novels, this is definitely the story for you. With so many main characters, it can be hard to give them depth, but Sepetys does a brilliant job making the reader feel for the characters, whether the feeling is disgust for some or hope for one another.

Nine thousand passengers aboard the Wilhelm Gustloff perished in the Baltic Sea. The question to ask yourself, if you do decide to give this story a chance, is *will these characters survive?*

Six of Crows: Addicting Fantasy Novel Guaranteed to Please

By Shannon Kersten

“No mourners. No funerals. Among them it passed for ‘good luck.’”

Leigh Bardugo’s young adult fantasy novel, *Six of Crows*, is an action-packed book that contains relatable characters, gritty world-building, and clever dialogue. Set in the dirty slums and back alleyways of Ketterdam where ruthless gangs battle each other for territory, Kaz Brekker, leader of the Dregs, is faced with a choice that would make him rich beyond measure. Along with five other criminals and outcasts from his crew, Kaz sets out on a heart-pumping heist into enemy territory, facing multiple obstacles along the way.

I would rate *Six of Crows* 4.5/5 stars because I found myself enamored by it from beginning to end. The world-building was one of the main appeals to me about *Six of Crows* because it allowed me to fully immerse myself in the story. Each place that the characters travel to throughout seems palpable, and I found myself wanting to read more about the lore and history of this world.

The character diversity in *Six of Crows* has also been praised many times, which I find to be another one of its strengths. It is refreshing to see a novel that priorities diversity without making it seem forced or fake. All of the characters are also fleshed out in that they have their own traumas and obstacles to overcome along with their overall goal of managing the heist.

Although at the beginning the characters are mostly unrelatable and appear cruel on the surface, Bardugo weaves their backstories throughout the narrative so that each character becomes more complex by the end. Along with the fascinating development of the world-building and characters, nearly every scene is fast-paced and exciting, which made it extremely hard for me to put my book down once I started reading.

While I thoroughly enjoyed the banter and chemistry between the characters, the only reason I did not rate this book 5 stars is because of a few flaws I noticed in them throughout. I felt that at some points their personalities were a bit stereotypical and at other points that their actions were too unrealistic. However, this did not hinder much of my enjoyment reading this book and you might find that it won’t bother you at all.

If you like dark fantasy, interesting and morally gray characters, suspense and action packed scenes, then I would strongly recommend reading *Six of Crows*.

**Senior Shout Outs**

By Hannah Vattes and Sydney Gunner

Our Mercy seniors have accomplished some impressive feats this year. Congratulations to everyone who has received their college acceptances, and special congratulations to Lara Groves, Maddie Lickfeld, Claire Mullen, and Kathryn Ryan.

Lara Groves deserves recognition for her commitment to Daemen College and its nursing program. Lara is one of 50 applicants chosen to participate in a highly-competitive program during which she studies at Daemen for her first and fourth college years, and studies at ECC for her second and third years of school. She was also nominated to participate in the annual Scholars Day at Daemen and received the Presidential Scholarship.

Maddie Lickfeld, the class of 2021 valedictorian, was accepted into the University at Buffalo, Georgetown University, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, although she is awaiting notifications from other schools. In regards to what she will focus on in college, Maddie said, “I plan to study biomedical sciences with a pre-med track.” One fact about Maddie is that she can solve a Rubik’s cube.

Claire Mullen, the class of 2021 salutatorian, has been accepted into Cornell University, University at Buffalo, SUNY Binghamton, and Canisius College. Acceptance into Cornell University is monumental because of its 10.9% acceptance rate. Claire plans to study psychology at Cornell and later pursue a career in the medical field. An interesting detail about her is that she has two extra ribs called cervical ribs!

Kate Ryan has committed to Daemen College. She was recruited by the volleyball coach to play on Daemen’s Division II team, and she also received a scholarship in Academics and Athletics. In addition to playing volleyball, Kate will study business and marketing. One fact about Kate is that she loves to go shopping.

We are very proud of ALL of our talented seniors and wish them all the best in college and beyond!
**Mercy-Themed Crossword**

By Madison Serafini

Answers below

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**Crossword Answers**

**Down:**
1. They are strong and powerful; make up 49.6 percent of the population.
2. A critical concern; a long process; often impacts families.
8. Required due to COVID-19; comes in many colors and patterns.
10. Spins at 1,000 miles per hour; has a core; 71% water.

**Across:**
3. A critical concern; has been happening for centuries.
4. Founded in 1904 by the Sisters of Mercy.
5. A critical concern; opposite of aggression.
6. Street located in South Buffalo; a school is located here.
7. Five themed days; grades compete for points; most enthusiastic class wins.
9. Born in 1778; Irish; helped those who were economically poor.

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**Celebrity Gossip: Kim and Kanye Call it Quits**

By Amanda Solomon

As many people know, Kim Kardashian and Kanye West have recently filed for a divorce. There have been multiple rumors as to why, one of the most bizarre being that Kanye cheated on her with a famous YouTuber, Jeffree Star. Is that really the truth though? BuzzFeed News says differently. According to BuzzFeed, Kim and Kanye both had very different dreams that just could not work together as a couple.

Kim wanted to go ahead with her life and take her bar exam to become a lawyer, as she is very serious about it and wants to do more than just be a reality TV star. The problem seems to be that Kanye’s goals are not aligned to Kim’s. He was talking about running for president, for instance.

Another issue they experienced was that they had a difference of opinion on how to raise their four children. Many rumors have been spread about this marriage, and the lingering question has been whether they would file for divorce or not. Kim did officially file for a divorce, ending their almost seven-year marriage. Although it was initially reported that Kim intended to gain full custody of their kids, the couple has agreed to joint custody.

Not much further information is known about this topic, but the divorce proceedings are sure to be highly publicized.

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**Answer Keys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Down</th>
<th>Across</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. They are strong and powerful; make up 49.6 percent of the population.</td>
<td>1. Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A critical concern; a long process; often impacts families.</td>
<td>2. Immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Required due to COVID-19; comes in many colors and patterns.</td>
<td>3. Nonviolence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Spins at 1,000 miles per hour; has a core; 71% water.</td>
<td>4. Mercy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Merciette Spring Playlist**

“My Future” by Billie Eilish recommended by Ashley Cirbus

“A Guy with a Girl” by Blake Shelton recommended by Vayana Stoyanova

“Higher Love” by Whitney Houston and Kygo recommended by Vayana Stoyanova

“How Will I Know” by Sam Smith (originally by Whitney Houston) recommended by Vayana Stoyanova

“How Will I Know” by Miley Cyrus ft. Dua Lipa recommended by Olivia Macholeth

“Disco Man” by Remi Wolf recommended by Olivia Macholeth

“More & More (English Version)” by TWICE recommended by Olivia Macholeth

“My Name” by Destination’s Child recommended by Madison Serafini

“Stay Down” by Phoebe Bridgers, Julien Baker, Lucy Dacus recommended by Sydney Gunner

“Cherry-Colour Funk” by Cocteau Twins recommended by Sydney Gunner

“Where’d All the Time Go?” by Dr. Dog recommended by Sydney Gunner

“Baby” by Justin Bieber ft. Ludacris recommended by Madison Serafini

“Live Forever” by Liam Payne recommended by Catherine Klodzinski

“California” by Joni Mitchell recommended by Aubrey Monaco
Despite Changes, Spirit Week Excites

By Brogan Maloney and Joyce Hibbs

Every Mercy girl knows that Spirit Week is one of the best parts of the school year. The week excites with fun dress-up themes every day, various fun games, and of course, good old-fashioned competition! This year, things were a little different due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but that didn’t stop us from having fun. Everyone still had a blast participating in fun activities with their classmates and building friendships and maybe a little class rivalry.

Spirit Week started off with some hallway decorating fun! Laughter rang through the hallways as the students worked hurriedly to arrange their decorations. This year each class was assigned a movie as their hallway theme. The freshmen placed balloons around the hallway in honor of the movie Up. The sophomores placed seaweed on lockers and balloons around the doorways to create the “under the sea” vibe of the movie The Little Mermaid. The Juniors taped up a burn book and covered the hallway in pink to represent Mean Girls. With doorways hanging from the ceiling and “scare files” decorating the lockers, the seniors did an amazing job representing Monsters, Inc.

On the second day of Spirit Week, everyone dressed in tropical wear. Upon entering the building, you could hear the tropical music flood through the speakers. The day’s activity: trivia. The freshmen struggled as they tried to figure out what do Miss Luhr and Miss Kaufman have in common? (Answer: they both attended Niagara University!). All classes impressed with their Mercy trivia knowledge.

Spirit Week continued the following day with everyone dressing up in sports gear. Many students chose to show support for the Buffalo Bills who had a tremendous season this year. As each class headed to their homerooms, they sat together and discussed strategies for the day’s scavenger hunt. Students searched high and low to find the cards scattered throughout the building. Every class finished by finding at least eight of the ten cards!

On the fourth day of spirit week (Throwback Thursday), each grade dressed up as their assigned decade: freshman as the ‘50s, sophomores as the ‘60s, juniors as the ‘70s, and seniors as the ‘80s. In keeping with the dress-up theme, we started the morning out by dressing up a classmate. Every class did something a little different. It was really fun getting to see the effort every class made just to make a classmate look a bit silly. Students used trash bags, little buckets of flowers, and other assorted materials to dress up their classmate. Judging by all the laughter, everyone enjoyed this fun activity.

Friday, the final day of spirit week, was class color day. Everyone dressed up in their class color to show class pride! At the end of the day, Miss Luhr and others provided several activity options for students. Outside, the snowman contest was tough, and everyone was bursting with competitive energy. But, somehow, the freshmen managed to win with only four students building their snowman! Inside, everyone who wasn’t building snowmen helped clean the hallways, played Just Dance, or played other games.

The seniors ended up winning Spirit Week. (Congrats seniors!). By the end of the week, through “Jar Wars,” the school had raised over $1,000. We donated the money to Mrs. Sanscrainte’s husband, who is currently in treatment for cancer. All the competition helped to support a great cause. Mrs. Sanscrainte said, “We are so grateful for the donation! It takes some of the financial burdens off of us for a little bit!”

Everyone had so much fun this year, regardless of how different it was due to the pandemic. We can’t wait to see what next week’s Spirit Week brings!

Guess Who?

By Madison Serafini

Merciette has selected 4 girls (one from each grade) for this new section of Merciette. Below are clues that describe each student. Guess who you think is being described! Turn to page 7 to find out if you were right!

First up is a senior...
1. She plays soccer here at Mercy.
2. She is involved in the student government.
3. She has blonde hair.
4. If you saw her in the hall, you may notice she is very tall.
5. Finally, this senior is a student ambassador.

Who am I?

Next up for juniors...
1. She was born in a different state.
2. She is left-handed.
3. She used to have blonde hair.
4. She has 3 siblings.
5. Lastly, she wants to go to an Ivy League college.

Who am I?

Our sophomore...
1. You may see her walking home from school.
2. She takes many advanced classes.
3. She has blonde hair.
4. She participates in Mercy sports.
5. She is also involved in student government.

Who am I?

For freshmen...
1. Her favorite colors are red and black.
2. She has 2 sisters.
3. She has a dog.
4. She likes to hang out with friends.
5. You might just see her mom walking through the Mercy hallways!

Who am I?

Above: Seniors Megan Reilly and Emily Kessler, dressed as members of the Child Detection Agency from Monsters, Inc., work to “decontaminate” the hallways during Spirit Week.

Above: Members of the junior class go to great heights to decorate their hallway to represent the movie Mean Girls.

Left: On Tropical Tuesday, spirited sophomores Megan Amicone, Paige Lapadat, Sophia Nasca, Amanda Solomon, Alexis Garmong, Catherine Kloszinski and Joelle Polojo (kneeling) show off their Hawaiian shirts and leis.

Photos by Miss Burns
Dos and Don'ts: High School Edition

Advice compiled by Madison Serafini

• Don’t be afraid to make new friends. Branch out from your middle school clique!
• Don’t try to be the most popular. It won’t work. Use your high school moments to become you, and stop trying so hard to fit in.
• Do try your hardest, but realize that it’s okay if you have a rough quarter.
• Don’t take things too seriously. Lighten up and enjoy high school.
• Don’t try and sneak anything past Ms. Luhr because, I promise you, it will not work.
• EAT. DON’T FORGET TO EAT. Your body needs fuel and you need energy. You are beautiful and you deserve to eat. Being energized will help you with your school work.

Lucy Duggan

• If you miss school, make up all of the work you have missed. If you don’t do this, it will be harder for you in the future because you will have many missing assignments and it will bring your grade down.

Alison Mysiak

• Do not procrastinate your work. Think of homework as less of a chore and more of a great way to get your grades up. It might seem like you have time to get your work done if you wait, but it is more stressful and doesn’t always work out the way you would like.
• Make a schedule for yourself. Set aside certain times for specific pieces of homework. As you get individual pieces of work done, you feel like you are making real progress, which is encouraging.
• USE YOUR AGENDA. It is so much easier to stay on top of assignments and not forget them when they are all written down right in front of you.

Alicia Reid

• Your teachers are always willing to help, so ask for help if you need it.
• Don’t be afraid of the upperclassmen— we will always help if you need it.
• Use your study halls wisely.
• Participate in Spirit Week, Halloween, and other events. It makes the overall high school experience better.

Kayla Pietrkiewicz

• Friendships grow and change, don’t let it ruin the present and affect your grades.

Marlee Ventura

Seniors Comment on High School Expectations, Give Advice

An interview by Hannah Vattes (featuring Lara Groves and an anonymous senior).

I asked fellow seniors about their high school experience, expectations they had before going to high school, and advice for incoming freshmen.

Hannah Vattes (HV): What were some expectations you had about high school before coming to Mount Mercy?
Lara Groves (LG): I expected high school to be drama-filled, challenging, and quite nerve-wracking. I also expected high school to have a lot more choices on what you could learn because in grammar school you didn’t have a choice as to which courses you can take. On the other hand, high school allowed me to take more of the courses I was personally interested in, like science, and it allowed me to take fewer courses I wasn’t so personally interested in.

HV: How is high school different from your expectations?
(LG): The change to middle school and high school came much easier than I expected. I was especially nervous because I am not a fan of change, but it was quite an easy transition in terms of going to grammar school and into high school. I was very nervous first coming into high school, but once you get used to everything, Mercy is homey. High schools give you a much bigger variety in what you may participate in and learn. In movies and television shows, high school is portrayed as one might call it, a “viper’s pit,” but at Mount Mercy, that was not the case at all.

HV: If you were to advise an incoming freshman, what advice would you tell them?
(LG): I would tell them to not procrastinate on their work, try new things, and try to make new friends. I would also tell them to participate in school events, clubs, or sports because the Mercy community is very welcoming and friendly.

To get more of an insight and another perspective on how high school is different from someone’s original expectations, I decided to interview another senior. They’ve requested to stay anonymous.

Hannah Vattes (HV): What were some expectations you had about High school before coming to Mount Mercy?
Anonymous Senior (AS): I had always thought that high school would be more fun and social. I am nearing the end of my senior year and I have never been to homecoming, a formal dance, etc. I wanted to save all my fun for my senior year, but with Covid, all the fun events have either been canceled or postponed without a future date, like the senior trip, outdoor Halloween movie night and so on.

HV: How is high school different from your expectations?
(AS): High school is nothing like it is in the movies; it is much more relaxed. Also, there are no pop quizzes in real high school (thankfully).

HV: If you were to advise an incoming freshman, what advice would you tell them?
(AS): I would tell the incoming freshmen to please take homework seriously. For example, get as much of your homework done Friday night instead of rushing to finish it Sunday night or Monday morning.

The National Speech and Debate Association, the oldest honor society in the United States, has recognized Mount Mercy Academy senior Emily Rhoads, as an Academic All American! The NSDA promotes leadership though speech and other forensic areas such as debate and public speaking. Of the 141,000 students members of the NSDA fewer than 1% earn an Academic All American award annually. This honor puts Emily among the top percent of all student members across the country.
The Fate of the Telegraph Operator

Short Story by Shannon Kersten

There is a ring in his teacup.

It doesn’t make much sense for it to be there, but nothing in Jacob’s life has made sense for a while now. Even he has always appeared slightly out of place in the standard white uniform of a telegraph operator. Jacob looks like a child in the jacket, which is much too big for his slight and bony frame. He had often joked to his first wife, Leah, that if the breeze blew just a little too hard his way, the man might just fall over and never get back up again. Now he trembles slightly, as if the wind is already pushing.

It had started a few months ago. Now and then something would be in a slightly different place than where he’d left it, a few inches to the right, a few to the left, or even hidden behind a stack of papers. Sometimes things would disappear altogether, and Jacob could not entirely shake the feeling that something was toying with him, seeing just how far he could go before he lost his mind. Just the other night he had woken up to every piece of furniture in the living room rearranged, all tidied up for him to find in the morning.

Even when Leah was alive, Jacob was always prone to neurotics. In the beginning, she’d often scold him for writing by candlelight in their bedroom and disturbing her sleep, or when he went on midnight walks, which made her jealous. He’d had to slap her then, remind her that it wasn’t her place as a wife to prod at all his nightly habits, and even now, the memory brings a slight smile to his face. What fire she used to have! He still sometimes mourned her enduring spirit, but obedience gave Jacob a much-needed touch of beauty. And now that she was gone from his life, Jacob was free to go about his nightly habits without criticism. He assumed what happened to the furniture was just that: anxious, silly habits. Maybe he had moved the furniture at night to calm his nerves and was just so tired that he forgot about it by morning. At least he could explain that.

But not this. He had set down the cup just a few seconds ago, how would he have missed a ring? He would surely have noticed it as he drained the last few drops. In fact, Jacob doesn’t remember letting that little teacup out of his sight at all, placed conveniently beside the telegraph machine to sip at while he worked. Someone would have needed to drop it in before he drank it, but that wouldn’t make sense because the man was the only one on shift that night. His heart still. He was the only one on shift.

The candle does not provide much light in the suffocating dark, but Jacob holds it close to his chest anyway. He covers by the desk like a scared animal, searching the shadows for predators. He picks up the ring from the teacup, ready to face the mystery of it all, and almost drops it when he recognizes the initials inscribed upon its golden surface.

The ring is his Leah’s. Jacob is sure of it. It is the ring he had slid so gently over her finger on their wedding day, the one that followed her to the grave, and the one that at this very moment should be buried six feet under. And Jacob wants to cry because none of this makes sense: not the misplaced items, not the furniture, and not the wedding ring right now. He realizes then how much he truly misses Leah, more than even his newfound freedom, and wishes more than anything that she was alive and everything made sense in the world.

“C-Come at me then, coward!” Jacob shouts, voice wavering as his frightened eyes flick around the office. “Show your face!”

Something like a very strong breeze approaches him from the side (but that doesn’t make sense, all the windows are closed), and Jacob collapses onto the floor. Something giggles, familiar and feminine, and the man’s head forms a dull ache. I know you, he thinks. A pool of red gathers at his temple.

He does not think he will get up.

The Pressure To Look “Perfect”: The Toxicity of Social Media

By Madison Serafini

There is way too much pressure put on young women to have “perfect” bodies. What even is perfect? According to the Oxford dictionary, perfect means “having all the required or desirable elements, qualities, or characteristics,” but how do we even define what the required or desirable elements are? If you asked a hundred people what their ideal body type is, you would most likely get a hundred different answers. This is because everyone has different opinions and interests. At the end of the day, young women should not have to worry about what other people think about their bodies. Every person’s body is special and unique to them.

Social media is like poison for our body image. It is where most people are vulnerable to body shaming.

Let’s just say you had a really hard day at school: you didn’t feel yourself, you felt like you were being watched, and all day you’re in a funk and you can’t figure out why. So, when you get home you decide to open Instagram, and right as you open the app BOOM there is a picture of Kylie Jenner with Gigi Hadid posing in their new swimsuits ready for summer. You start to think to yourself. Wow, they are gorgeous. I wish I had their skin. I wish I had their hair. I wish I had their bodies. And then suddenly you want to start working out and eating healthy so you spend all night coming up with a workout routine and diet plan instead of going downstairs and enjoying dinner with your family.

Let’s stop right there and think for a minute. Why do we compare ourselves to these people? Maybe it’s because they are seen as “perfect.” But what does perfect even mean?

Social media is such a toxic influence on how we view ourselves. My sister is 11 years old and she is always on her iPod watching Tiktoks or Face-timing her friends. When I was 11, I was playing with my dolls. The other day my sister even said to me that she was “too fat” to have an Oreo. I was so taken aback by that comment. Imagine an 11-year-old thinking her body isn’t “perfect” enough. Her body isn’t even done developing, and she is already insecure about it.

Another huge influence on body image is sizing charts. Every single store has different sizes, so why do we think it is ok to judge people on their size? You could be in a size small at Hollister and a large at PINK or vice versa. Clothing sizing is practically arbitrary.

People need to recognize what is beautiful and be more open to a broader definition of beauty. Stretch marks are beautiful. Scars are beautiful. Being slim is beautiful. Being thick is beautiful. The color of your hair, no matter what, is beautiful.

Instead of showing off their new designer bags and big houses and fancy cars, social media influencer need to start showing people that it is ok to love your body for how it is. This is one way to show social media users that they are beautiful and don’t need to change.

Few can say they didn’t once struggle with how their body looks. It’s a common experience, whether you are standing in a dressing room thinking your arms look too chubby in your dress, or you’re staring at the mirror picking at your face because you can’t stand your acne, or you are not comfortable enough to wear a certain swimsuit. We all have experienced some internal monologue critiquing ourselves because we do not, in our eyes, measure up to what social media shows us is “perfect.”

Everyone of us needs to learn that every body is beautiful. Yes, even yours. There is no such thing as a “perfect” body anyway.
### Recipes: Sweet Treats

#### Scotcharoos Cheerios Bars

By Hannah Vattes

**Ingredients**
- 3 tablespoons of butter
- 1 10 oz package of mini marshmallows
- 1 tsp of vanilla
- ½ cup of creamy peanut butter
- 6 cups of Cheerios
- 1 12 oz bag of semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup of butterscotch baking chips

**Instructions**
1. Grease a 9 x 13 inch baking dish. Set this dish aside for now.
2. Melt butter in a large pot over low heat.
3. Add marshmallows and stir until the marshmallows are completely melted. Then, fold in the peanut butter.
4. Remove from heat and add the vanilla in. Then, fold in the Cheerios.
5. Transfer the contents to the baking dish. Using waxed paper (or your fingers) lightly greased with cooking spray or butter, gently press the mixture in the pan until evenly distributed.
6. Microwave semisweet chocolate chips and butterscotch chips in a medium bowl for 30 seconds in the microwave; stir. Continue to microwave in 15-second intervals, stirring until completely melted.
7. Spread over the Cheerios bars; allow to set before cutting into squares. Store in an airtight container.

#### Banana Bread

By Emma Labby

**Ingredients**
- 1 stick (½ cup) butter
- 3 large ripe bananas
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp cinnamon

**Instructions**
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a loaf pan with non-stick cooking spray or grease with butter and set aside.
2. Add the stick of butter to a large bowl and microwave for 1 minute, or until melted.
3. Add the bananas to the same bowl and mash with a fork.
4. Add the vanilla extract and egg to the bowl and use the same fork to mash and stir until no yellow streaks of egg remain.
5. In a second large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon.
6. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and mix together with a spatula until combined.
7. Pour the batter into prepared loaf pan and bake for 45-55 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center of the bread comes out clean.

#### Dreamsicle

By Hannah Vattes

**Ingredients**
- 1 small box (sugar-free) orange juice
- 1 cup of boiling water
- 1 cup of cold water
- 1 8 oz container (fat-free) Cool Whip
- 1 box instant vanilla pudding
- 1 15 oz can of mandarin oranges (very well-drained)

**Directions**
1. Mix Jello in boiling water until dissolved.
2. Then, add cold water.
3. Put in the fridge for five minutes.
4. Beat in the instant pudding with beaters or a whisk.
5. Fold in Cool Whip and then add oranges.
6. Put in the fridge for several hours before serving.

#### Say “Cheese”

Left: Sophomores Evelyn Radecki, Jill Schneck, and Joelle Poleto make bath bombs as part of “Wellness Wednesday.”

Right: Art One students work together on their projects.
I'm a senior, and I really do not know any of the sophomores or freshmen largely due to the lack of events. How can I get to know the underclassmen better in ways that are not virtual?

It is very important to get along with your peers and welcome them into the circle of Mercy. You will be able to give them advice on how to get through high school since you have been successful. You mentioned that you want to talk to them in ways that aren’t virtual, so that eliminates social media. I still think that social media is a great way to connect with students. However, routinely saying hello to underclassmen in the hallway can help form a connection. It may be awkward at first, but I am sure that they want to make new friends also. Saying hello is a polite way to start a conversation that used to be started with a smile! Also, if you see an underclassman eating lunch by herself, go and sit with her or invite her to your table. I am sure she will appreciate it. Or, if there are a couple of students sitting at a table and you see an open seat, take that opportunity to have a conversation with them. At the end of the day, you are all Mercy Girls, and you should all feel comfortable talking to any other students at this school.

I am so overworked, from studying for tests, to going to extra meetings. From trying to be a role model, to using all of my time to produce the best quality work. I try so hard to be perfect, but I am afraid all of my hard work will not pay off. I am so stressed that I am pushing people away. I want to let things go to allow myself to relax, but I know I need to get into the colleges I want. I don’t want that to happen to me. I am at a point where I barely sleep or eat. Any advice?

I want to start by saying that I understand the stress you must be feeling because of the standards you’re putting yourself under. Being an involved high school student requires so much time and energy! I think that the most important thing for you to realize is that you cannot achieve perfection, no matter how hard you try. Trust me, I struggle with perfectionism too, but it’s just not possible to always be flawless. Practice being gentle with yourself by letting yourself rest and cutting yourself some slack. Take my word for it, you deserve it! I also think that you should start making your needs more of a priority. Your well-being is more important than any achievement or acceptance into a school. Taking care of yourself is what matters most! Please, do not let eating fall under your radar. Food is so important for energy and your health. I understand, though, how it’s easy to forget about these things when you’re really busy and stressed. When I’m dealing with this issue, I have my mom remind me to eat. You could ask a loved one to make sure you’re eating properly or remind you to eat as well. Sleep is equally as important. I know that it can be very difficult to go to bed at a reasonable time while also balancing homework and extracurriculars, but do your best. Life feels a lot less stressful and overwhelming when you’ve had a solid night of sleep! I hope you can also vent to a close friend or family member. I know when I’m overwhelmed, I always feel better after an intense stress-cry session with my best friend. I would also suggest finding some time in your day to set aside for “me time.” Give yourself the chance to do something you enjoy - even if it’s just 15 minutes of listening to music, watching an episode of a favorite TV show, or reading a book. Make sure to give yourself that time to do something you love. I sincerely hope that you are able to prioritize your needs, and I wish you the best!

Meet Marvin, Ms. Rauscher’s Charming Chinchilla

Right: Senior Megan Quinn and junior Sydney Gunner take turns holding Marvin during Ms. Rauscher’s animal behavior class. Students observed the animal’s behaviors and discussed what they mean.

Is distance learning easier than going to school in-person? Whenever I do distance learning, I lose motivation.

I think we’ve all wondered whether distance learning or in-person learning is the right fit for us during this whirlwind of a school year. As someone who has switched between in-person and online learning, there are definitely pros and cons for both. In-person allows you to socialize and leave your house, but it also requires you to wake up earlier and take time out of your day to travel to school (whether you walk, drive, or take a bus). Distance learning, on the other hand, makes the day feel a lot shorter and you have more time in between classes to decompress. As you said, though, it’s more difficult to stay motivated at home. I think that you just have to decide which is the better fit for you based on your learning style and traits. If the COVID-19 situation requires you to switch to distance learning, you can try different methods to be more productive! I like to set timers during my study halls and only let myself take a break from working after a certain amount of time has passed. I will reward myself (like with a piece of candy or by spending some time on Tiktok) if I complete an assignment. Good luck with figuring out which type of schooling is best for your situation!

I feel like all my classmates do not like me and I always feel left out especially when everybody is doing group costumes/outfits. What should I do?

We do not always get along with everyone all the time. It may be hard to make friends especially in a small school where there are seemingly small friend groups. Also, many girls came from the same middle school which can make it feel like friend groups are predetermined. If you did not come to high school with a close-knit friend group, it may feel like you don’t fit in. It may not seem like it, but this is an experience shared by many current Mercy girls. Not to worry, there is a solution to your problem. You need to be confident, but if you aren’t yet, just “fake it til you make it.” If you convince yourself that no one likes you, they will feel your insecurities and may be nervous to talk to you. We often make problems bigger in our heads rather than taking actionable steps to address the problem. Start slowly by talking to girls who are in the same class as you. A conversation could spark up simply by confirming directions or getting help with an assignment (as long as the teacher allows that!). Also, if you are struggling to make meaningful connections with your classmates, there are three other grade levels of students with whom you could be friends! You are a part of the circle of Mercy, and you should feel like you belong here because you are a Mercy Girl. When you cannot find anything in common with your peers, remember that you go to the same school. You can talk about a class that you have together, a club that you want to join, or what is on the lunch menu that day. There is not a rule that forbids students in different grade levels from dressing up together, so reach out to other students. Joining a club or a sport can be a great way to meet students in other grade levels. Whatever you decide, it may be scary and force you out of your comfort zone, but you absolutely have it in you to expand your community of supporters.

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

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.