

How much do you know about this deadly disease that can be prevented? It's not COVID-19; there is a vaccine.

Read page 2

We thank all of you: custodians, food service workers, administrators, faculty, support staff!

Read page 4

For more than five decades, Kennedy's football tradition endured. 2020 changed it all.

Read page 8

# The Eagle Flyer



November 2020  
Kennedy High School  
422 Highland Avenue  
Waterbury, Conn. 06708  
Volume XVII, Issue IV

## Thankful for 12 new staff, faculty who joined in 2020

By Jessica Carvalho  
News Editor

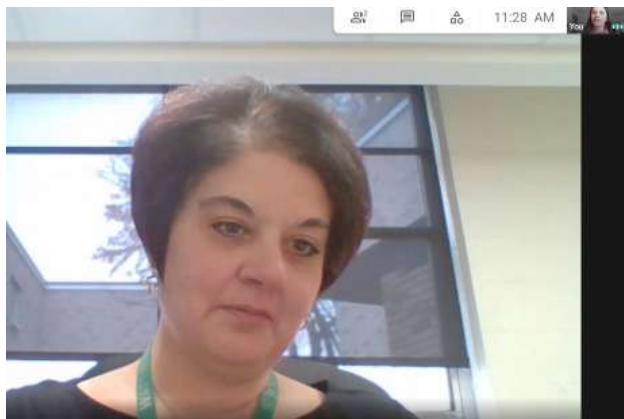
Warm welcomes continue for social worker, nurse, guidance counselor, new teachers

Calling all new Eagles!

As reported in the October 2020 issue, Waterbury Public Schools has assigned 12 new staff members to join Kennedy during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Those not yet introduced are guidance counselor Mr. Kereme Murrell, physical education teacher Mr. Mark LaChance, English teacher Ms. Kristin Iadarola (who departed Nov. 13 to teach in Stamford), social worker Mrs. Carmela Iannicelli, and school nurse Ms. Lois Breton. Other staff members were featured in the October 2020 issue.

"I was looking forward to working with high school students. I said 'hey, this is a dream come true.' I connected instantly with the staff members here at Kennedy," said freshman guidance counselor Murrell.



**NEW SOCIAL WORKER** Mrs. Iannicelli is interviewed by News Editor Jessica Carvalho via Google Meet Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2020 at 11:28 a.m.

All photos by J. Carvalho/staff



**NEW GUIDANCE COUNSELOR** Mr. Murrell is seen during his interview with News Editor Jessica Carvalho via Google Meet Tuesday, Oct. 23, 2020 at 12:25 p.m.



**NEW PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER** Mr. LaChance is seen in the new wing's auxiliary gym Monday, Oct. 26, 2020.



**NEW ENGLISH TEACHER** Ms. Iadarola is seen in Room 111 (previously Mr. Miller's classroom) Friday, Oct. 23, 2020; she departed Friday, Nov. 13 for a position in Stamford, Conn.

Murrell has been enjoying his time at Kennedy. Not only is he new to the building, but there is also a new group of freshmen. How can they contact Murrell?

"The easiest way to meet with me both in person and virtually is by my QR code. They can set up a Google Meet and I'll get back to them at a later date. They can also join my Google Classroom, I make sure to add in positive messages. Finally, they could always contact me via email," said Murrell.

Murrell was an academic advisor prior to Kennedy. He attended Eastern Connecticut State University for his bachelor's degree and completed his master's degree at Post University, and now enjoys this new experience.

"My experience has been everything I expected it to be. I expected to have a positive experience and it has been very welcoming. I've been enjoying myself," Murrell said.

He also said he visualizes himself doing great things for the school community. He shared details about himself

"I classify myself as an African-American. In my free time, I like watching sports games; particularly baseball. Besides sports, I enjoy going to the gym and spending time with (my) two daughters," said Murrell.

Next is Mrs. Carmela Iannicelli, the new social worker. "My favorite part of being a social worker is knowing that I helped somebody. Knowing that I helped someone understand something, made them happy, etc." she said.

Iannicelli mentioned everyone at Kennedy has been very nice to her and she has been able to adapt to technology. Now, how long has she been practicing as a social worker?

"I've been a social worker since 1991, therefore I've been working in this field for 29 years," said Iannicelli.

Initially, Iannicelli attended Sacred Heart University to become a respiratory therapist, then changed her career path. Iannicelli transferred to Teikyo Post University (now Post University) for a bachelor's degree in Sociology and then obtained her master's in Social Work from Springfield College. She has had much experience in her chosen field.

"In the beginning of my career as a social worker, I worked with juvenile delinquent boys," said Iannicelli. "After that, I worked for the state of Connecticut's Department of Children and Families. From there, I got laid off. I worked as a director at Wolcott View Manor, a nursing home. Two years ago, I decided to take an exam for my certification and further my horizons and possibly work in a school system."

Iannicelli even ran for office in 2003 in Waterbury. It was after this she decided to apply for a position as a social worker. Unfortunately, she didn't get the position. However, she applied for the position again this year and currently holds it. Iannicelli is a proud wife and mother to her 12-year-old daughter who is in 7th grade. What else is there to know about her?

"My parents are both from Italy. My sister and I were born and raised in the Town Plot area. I love spending time with family. We're currently in the process of remodeling our home and I love shopping and traveling," said Iannicelli.

Following her is Mr. Mark LaChance, a new addition to the physical education department.

"I wish there were more students at school. However, all the students (who were) in school are very nice. They have been willing to get to know me," said LaChance, who was looking for a comprehensive school setting.

He found that at Kennedy, he said. "My favorite part about the building has been the staff. Everyone seems to be on the same page and has the same objectives," he said.

Prior to Kennedy, LaChance was teaching in Waterbury. "I was teaching physical education and health at another school in the city for eight years and then prior to that I was out of the district," he said.

LaChance has been teaching for 16 years. He completed his undergraduate degree at Southern Connecticut State University, and obtained his master's degree at Springfield College. He is married to his high school sweetheart and they have three children: Sebastian, Leonardo and Estelle; ages 12, 11 and 6. He discussed an amusing part of his life.

"Presently, my family and I are raising six egg-laying chick-

ens! Our kids love them. We domesticated them as chicks so the chickens don't mind being held or chased around," said LaChance.

Next is Ms. Kristin Iadarola, who was the newest addition to the English department.

"I have been very welcomed by all my co-workers. Everyone has been really willing to help me and guide me in any aspect," said Iadarola.

Iadarola originally was a long-term substitute in Stamford. She has been teaching for two years. She also discussed her reasoning behind becoming an English teacher.

"I chose to teach English because I had a wonderful English teacher in high school. Even though I was always a person who loved school, I did have some classes in which I struggled and this English teacher really helped me find my place. I knew I wanted to be the person who was there for her students just like he was for us," said Iadarola.

Iadarola shared she is from Boston, and completed her undergraduate degree at Southern Connecticut State University; she is finishing up her graduate work at Quinnipiac University. She gave more details about herself.

"I am the oldest of two siblings. I have a one-year-old mini goldendoodle whose name is Rocco. I love staying active, reading and hanging out with family and friends. I also love going out to eat and trying various types of restaurants," said Iadarola.

Last but not least is Ms. Lois Breton, the new nurse.

"My experience has been quite different from what I had imagined. I expected all the students to be here but obviously we can't due to the pandemic. All the staff has been wonderful to me," said Breton.

Breton was floating between a middle school and a high school as an extra helping nurse. When school nurse Mrs. Owens retired, Breton applied for her position. Prior to Kennedy, she was an emergency room nurse. She obtained her education from Saint Mary's School of Nursing and Naugatuck Valley Community College. So why nursing?

"I don't have a specific reason as to why I decided to pursue nursing. However, I was working in the hospital and I was exposed to the healthcare field and I found that I enjoyed nursing," said Breton.

Breton has been practicing for more than 30 years as a nurse. She said she enjoys spending time with her family, especially her two grandsons. She enjoys walking with her dog Pearl, who is a white Labrador mix.

"I live along the Bridle Trail and I love walking my dog. It's a great way to relieve stress," said Breton.

Breton also left some advice for younger generations: "Pursue what you like and go to college," she said.



**NEW NURSE** Ms. Breton (right) is seen with retired nurse Mrs. Owens (left) in front of Kennedy in June 2020.

Photo above courtesy of L. Breton

# Meningitis rare but deadly: learn more

By Jessica Carvalho  
News Editor

Vaccines help against some types

NEWS COMMENTARY

Meningitis is an inflammation of the protective membranes connecting to the brain and spinal cord, typically caused by infection. Despite being around for many years, cases are still considered to be fairly rare, yet can be fatal.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) article on meningitis, there are six types of meningitis to be aware of: bacterial, viral, fungal, parasitic, amebic, and non-infectious meningitis.

Bacterial meningitis (also known as meningococcal meningitis) is caused by bacteria and can be deadly if not treated. Vaccines are available to help against some kinds of bacterial meningitis. Viral meningitis is caused by viruses. Viral meningitis is less severe than bacterial meningitis. It is said that people with normal immune systems can get better on their own. Fungal meningitis is quite rare to contract but people can get it by inhaling fungal spores from the environment. Parasitic meningitis is caused by various parasites that can affect the brain or nervous system. This form of meningitis is less common than viral or bacterial meningitis. Amebic meningitis is a rare and tragic infection of the brain caused by *Naegleria fowleri* (a free-living microscopic amoeba that lives in warm water and soil). Last but not least, non-infectious meningitis can be caused by certain conditions such as cancer, head injuries and so on.

"I look at the world differently now. I try not to let things get to me knowing how worse it all could be. People take things for granted every day and we should stop occasionally and take it all in before it's gone someday," said Blake Schuchardt, bacterial meningitis survivor and ICU nurse at Heartland Regional Medical Center (the same medical center where staff took care of him) in Marion, Illinois.

Schuchardt was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis (also referred to as meningococcal meningitis) at the age of 17. He had a 20 percent chance of making it through the first night when diagnosed. Schuchardt's symptoms varied from stiff neck, headache,

**“ Young adults are at exposed risk for meningitis. The CDC recommends that preteens ages 11 or 12 get the vaccination with a booster dose at age 16. ”**

fever, and chills, to complete weakness in his body. Meningitis is mistaken for the typical flu. Your health is on the line if you don't take care of yourself. It's very important to recognize the differences between the two.

"It wasn't until I had woken up from a medically-induced coma after a week of contracting it before I ever realized I had meningitis. I had never heard of meningitis before nor had any family and friends," said Schuchardt.

Schuchardt is now a proud husband and father. Luckily, he has no physical limitations thanks to his physical therapy sessions.

"Early on it was a lot of physical therapy and doctors visits. But as time went on I got strength back and I have been able to thrive from there," he said.

Young adults are at exposed risk for meningitis. In particular, the CDC recommends that preteens ages 11 or 12 get the Meningococcal conjugate vaccination (also known as the MenACWY) with a booster dose at the age of 16. Before heading off to college or anywhere else, teenagers should consider applying the Serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (also known as the MenB). Central Connecticut State University's admission counselor Ms. Francesca Testa can attest to the previous statement because she's lived with it herself.

"I was a senior in high school in 2006. I had been sick for a couple of days. The doctors believed it was the flu. I was unconscious. It was only until they performed a spinal tap that they found it to be meningitis," said Testa.

Testa was always athletic, healthy and energetic. She loved to swim. She was an excellent

competitor. However, did this guarantee she would be safe for meningitis? No. Testa had a fever of 104 degrees that night.

During a phone interview, she said, "One day we are fairly okay and the next day we could be fighting for our lives."

She wishes she would have taken the time to get the vaccine for Meningitis B. However, she doesn't regret anything that has happened to her since she uses her voice to spread awareness as much as she can. She is also a proud team member of the National Meningitis Association, as is Schuchardt. What is the National Meningitis Association?

"The National Meningitis Association (NMA) is the largest nonprofit in the country in terms of meningitis awareness and education," said Testa.

The NMA shares stories of many families and survivors who have been impacted by this disease. They include members who dedicate their time by using their voice to advocate for this illness and they spread awareness as much as possible. President of NMA, Mrs. Leslie Maier, also shared her personal experience with meningitis.

"My son was 17 and a senior in high school. Two weeks before he got meningitis, he scored the winning goal for his soccer team to be champions. He was healthy and really active," Maier said. "A couple of days later, he went to go and get his pictures taken. Chris said he wasn't feeling well. The next morning, we knew we needed him to miss school. We rushed him into the hospital and they performed a spinal tap on him and it was then when we noticed he had meningococcal meningitis. A half an hour later, staff members weren't able to revive him and we had to let him go."

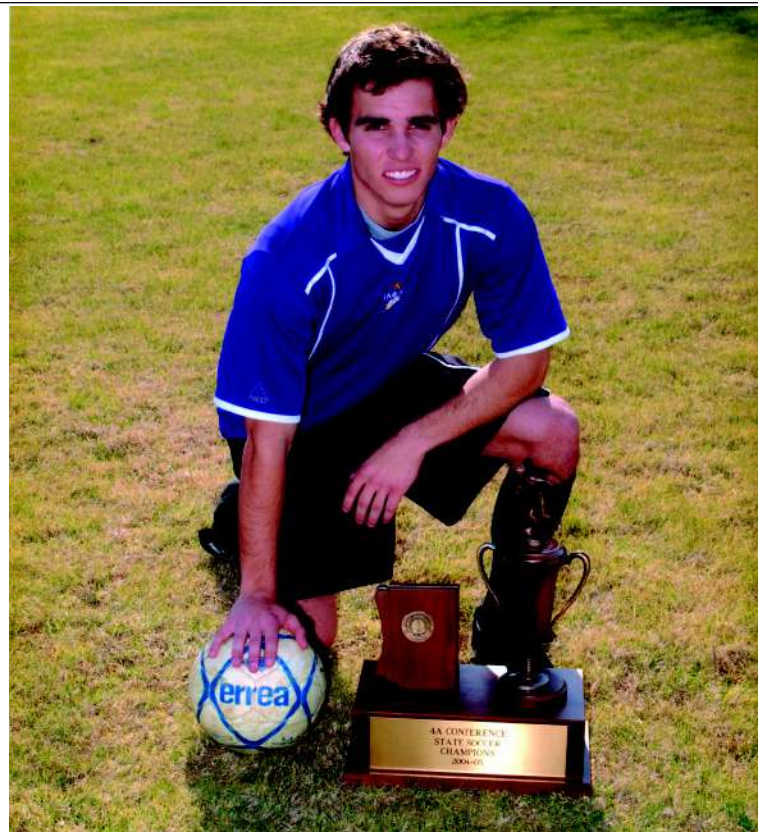
Maier lost her son Chris due to meningococcal meningitis. Humans often forget there's only one life to live and if you think it can't happen to you, you're mistaken. Along with many others, Maier was not aware of the life-threatening effects of meningitis.

"The pain of the shot is nothing compared to the pain of losing someone you love. Meningitis can take a life in less than 24 hours and it can be mistaken so easily for the flu," said Maier.

Maier believes people can tell their family and friends about the meningitis vaccines so they can all

**“ The pain of the shot is nothing compared to the pain of losing someone you love. Meningitis can take a life in less than 24 hours and it can be mistaken so easily for the flu. ”**

Mrs. Leslie Maier, whose son Chris died at age 17 from meningococcal meningitis



**CHAMPION** Mrs. Leslie Maier, the president of the National Meningitis Association, shared this photo of her 17-year-old son Chris winning a 2004-2005 state tournament game. 24 hours after the photo was taken, he passed away due to meningococcal meningitis. Photo above courtesy Mrs. Leslie Maier



**BE AWARE** Ms. Francesca Testa, an admissions counselor at Central Connecticut State University, shared photos from a campaign known as the 16 vaccine. Photo compiled by Jessica Carvalho/staff

stay safe and spread awareness. Maier had been a kindergarten/first grade teacher for more than 40 years. She is a proud grandmother who loves spending time with her grandchildren.

"You have to just take one day at a time and make the most of that day. Don't take anything for granted," said Maier.

Likewise, NMA's secretary and school counselor Ms. Lori Buher knows how this feels all too well.

"My son Carl had severe meningococcal meningitis at the age of 14. Luckily, he survived but had to have both of his legs amputated. We were introduced to NMA from a relative who had read about a survivor," said Buher.

Buher has been helping out with NMA's mission for 15 years. She felt as if it was necessary to give back since NMA was so helpful to their family. Buher's son went from being okay to being completely weak. Other symptoms common among meningitis patients are purple spots or rashes. This should be made aware to everyone. These purple rashes are better known as septicemia. Blood vessels may be damaged due to bacteria entering your bloodstream.

"We didn't know that meningitis was vaccine preventable or even that there was even a possibility our 14-year-old could get it,"

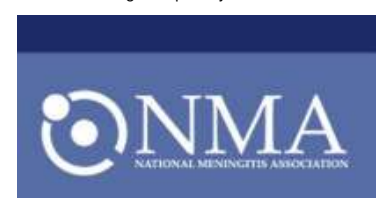
said Buher. It is extremely important that people know the truth about this illness and how it affects not only survivors, but everyone else in the world. This is no joke. As someone who has lost her older brother to this, there is no better way to keep his legacy going. He may not be in this world but there's a responsibility to keep people informed and give them the best information possible. In conclusion, please stay in the know that World Meningitis Day is April 24!

As Helen Keller would say, "keep your face to the sunshine!"

**For more information please visit:**  
<https://the16vaccine.org>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.html>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/vaccine-info.html>  
<https://www.nmaus.org>

**To read advocate stories, visit:**  
 Amanda Richter in People Health Magazine:  
<https://www.nmaus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/People-Health-Story.pdf>  
<https://www.nmaus.org/nma-stories/>

Logo compiled by Jessica Carvalho/staff



**CAMPAIGN TO SAVE LIVES** Ms. Francesca Testa, an admissions counselor at Central Connecticut State University, shared pictures of herself from a meningitis campaign known as the 16 vaccine. Image compiled by Jessica Carvalho/staff

## What is your favorite, and least favorite, Thanksgiving food? By Jessinya Severino Features Editor



*"My favorite food on Thanksgiving is definitely mashed potatoes with gravy and mushrooms on top, my least favorite is stuffing, it tastes like lint!"*

Kim Cosgrove, junior at Career Academy



*"My favorite food is baked mac and cheese, and my least favorite is turkey."*

Derek Yates, senior



*"I don't know: mashed potatoes go pretty hard. Turkey, gravy is good. Macaroni smacks, too. Stuffing is my least favorite, it's horrible."*

Romit Patel, freshman



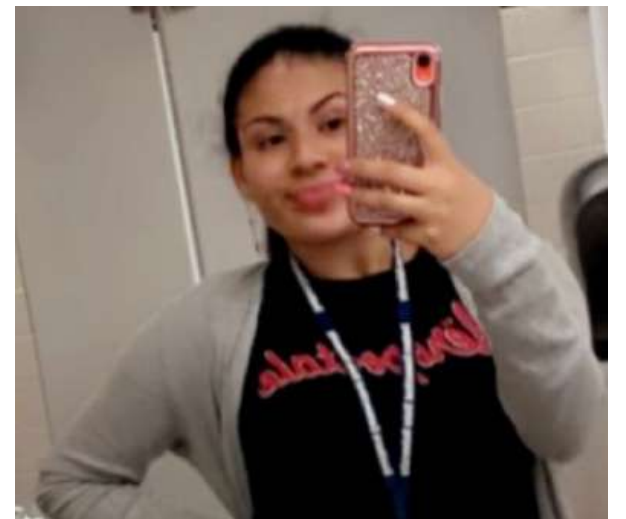
*"My favorite food for Thanksgiving is turkey, and my least favorite is mac and cheese,"*

Kelsey Darocha, senior



*"My favorite is turkey with stuffing and my least favorite is ham."*

Andres Arias, sophomore



*"Well, my favorite food is practically everything in Thanksgiving like, what's not to like? I don't really have a least favorite food because I'm a food lover."*

Loren Maradiaga, Class of 2019  
now sophomore at Southern Connecticut

## City bus drivers try to stay safe, deliver students, cope during pandemic

By Julissa Moran and Jadalee Martinez with Sasha Franco  
Staff Writers

With the rapid spread of cases that skyrocketed due to COVID-19 from March 2020 to the present, many essential workers were still forced to work or faced consequences of losing their job.

One group of those essential workers not everyone recognized were bus drivers across the United States. They tried to manage to stay safe during this pandemic while risking their lives driving students who opted to go in person, such as in Waterbury from Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2020 (the

first day of school) until Monday, Nov. 16, 2020 (the last day of in-school learning before superintendent Dr. Ruffin moved everyone online), not knowing whether they have the virus or are a carrier.

"I've been really concerned about my safety. We don't have any protection," said Dara Mendes, a Waterbury Public Schools bus driver.

Mendes said she has been driving a school bus for the past 14 years, and explained she was not allowed to refuse transportation to any child who may not be wearing a mask. Mendes said bus drivers will also be denied pay if the state chooses to go back into shutdown.

"I feel like we have been running the same schedule as before with no protection for us bus drivers," Mendes said.

This is not only putting other students who may ride the bus at risk, but also the families they go home to, and even themselves because they are the ones driving the bus.

The school bus driving system was a controversial topic due to safety measures. Junior Chyanne Ballard explains how she feels about the situation and how she believes people in society should give thanks to the bus drivers in the community.

Ballard is a driver herself, and said she did not ride the school bus because she felt during these times there is no real way of practicing social distancing because the bus gets too crowded and other students take off their masks.

Yet, bus drivers were the only method of transportation for some students, so they

said they disinfected after every ride, trying to keep students safe despite differing rules, as did city bus driver Kaleb Johnson.

"I'm new to this COVID-19 bus rule, but I like the fact we have to put our mask on, even the passengers. Between intercity and local, bus drivers are different; we have multiple rules and local bus drivers have less," said Johnson. "In my opinion I feel like we should have the same amount of rules and people should follow the expectations equally."

Many others would agree because it is just the same as simply walking into a store without a mask. If everyone played their part by trying to control and limit the virus, it will make things a lot easier and even help society go back to normal faster.

Therefore, another prime example of some of the extents bus drivers go through are extra routes. The average capacity of passengers for one bus is 10 people, and in some cases it can go up to 21 people. However, bus drivers whose limit is at 10 passengers have more stops to make because of the small amount. Driver Adelen Steven shared his thoughts.

"My bus stops are not that far from each other; Waterbury is small but I still have to do double the stops because of the amount of people I'm allowed to have (is low) during this pandemic. Before there were not many passengers but now the number has increased," said Steven.

Despite the restrictions on passengers, one parent mentioned the necessity of bus drivers.

"Without our bus drivers, how will our

children make it to school? Many parents, including me, leave it in the hands of the bus company to take all safety measures for children such as my own to get to where they need to go," said Beverly Santos, a mother whose son used to ride the bus.

Santos also said she was trying not to worry whether her son will get sick while riding the bus, or if it is crowded and if social distancing takes place while he rides. If he gets sick, the issue doesn't only affect him; he will also be bringing it home to the rest of the family in his household.

Likewise, Casey Rivera, another bus driver, shared her perspective on the safety of people near you.

"Some people don't think about the safety of other people and come on the bus without a mask. I have the authority to refuse their entry on the bus; however, I am a mother of two kids and have to be able to make it to my other stops on time, so I just have my own extra masks for them and ask (them) kindly to put it on," said Rivera, who has been a bus company employee for four years.

She said she doesn't believe bus drivers should buy masks with money that comes from their pocket; instead, the bus company should provide extra masks for students who may not have one so the issue doesn't become serious.

"This pandemic has been a life and death situation for me every day," said Rivera.

News Editor Jessica Carvalho contributed to the editing of this story.



### GUEST SPEAKER DURING COVID?

Yes, not only is it possible, but some classes enjoyed a guest speaker twice this fall, believe it or not! Check out our next Eagle Flyer issue to learn all the details. Pictured is professional journalist Mr. Paul Singley, who offered two decades worth of advice to two classes of Journalism via Google Meet.

Illustration by M. Lovos/staff

## Staff Editorial

### We truly thank you, our school community

Deep breathes and a long look around. Amid pandemic chaos and the intense election, November is a perfect opportunity to truly evaluate the positives surrounding you. Besides the turkey dinner and fall sales, Thanksgiving is a genuine reminder to be grateful for what and who you have by your side. In honor of thankfulness in 2020, *The Eagle Flyer* suggests readers compile a list of things and people they are grateful for. Of course, who would we be if we asked something and did not do so ourselves? Here is our list of all we are truly grateful for:

First of all, without such a trusting, supportive Principal, the *Flyer's* staff would not have the opportunity to write, print and share this newspaper. Mr. Johnston, we are grateful for your constant assistance and leadership, and for the connection you keep with your staff and students, which contribute to a safe and successful school environment.

Second, we want to express our gratitude for the vice principals, teachers and other staff who agree to our various interviews, photographs and requests. There would be no paper without quotes, and with all of the information and opinions shared with your contributions, Kennedy has become a connected, informative community. Another valuable part of our community are the custodians, especially this year, going the extra mile to keep school clean and tidy. We are grateful for the shoveled side walks, the perfectly mowed lawn and the maintenance of our classrooms. These things do not go unnoticed. We would also like to thank the food service workers for providing the daily lunch quickly at dismissal, as not to miss busses, and now 'grab and go' food in the lobby. Overall, Kennedy is a place full of things to be grateful for; it is our pleasure to provide a monthly newspaper to such a deserving audience.

Lastly, but certainly not least, the staff here at *The Eagle Flyer* would like to share their appreciation of our adviser Dr. Cybart-Persenaire. Her consistent belief in the staff's abilities, her helpful monthly ideas and the endless effort she puts into the paper by helping us edit and manage is a remarkable example of passion for a cause.

Now it's your turn. Remember, no matter how insignificant a couple words may be, by showing your appreciation to someone else, it could become extremely meaningful. Enjoy the holiday season now upon us. Write that thank you note. Voice your appreciation to military personnel even if Veterans Day is over. Hug that family member. To offer a final thought, make sure to celebrate Thanksgiving year-long with love in your heart and happiness in your soul.

"Thankfulness is the quickest path to joy." ~ Jefferson Bethke

"Don't let the sun go down without saying thank you to someone, and without admitting to yourself that absolutely no one gets this far alone." ~ Stephen King

"Reflect upon your present blessings--of which every man has many--not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some." ~ Charles Dickens



## The Eagle Flyer

*The Eagle Flyer* is published monthly and distributed free of charge to Kennedy High School and the Greater Waterbury community. Our mission is to educate, enlighten and inform our school and community while developing journalism skills in editorial and business areas.

*The Eagle Flyer* is a member of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the New England Scholastic Press Association and the Journalism Education Association.

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## Share your traditions

### 'TIS THE SEASON

Whether it's Day of the Dead (left), Diwali, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year, or something special you share with family and friends, holidays abound this time of year. Make the most of your time by taking photographs, writing journals and just enjoying traditions. We encourage you to research and read more about the above-mentioned holidays since not only is knowledge power, but you might have fun learning some new facts and history!



Illustrations by M. Lovos/staff

## Science of gratitude impacts us in positive ways

By Nirupama C. Nigam, Ph.D  
Chemistry teacher

### Gratitude journal brings empathy, positive outlook

#### COMMENTARY

Gratitude, derived from the Latin 'gratia,' means gratefulness or thankfulness. By conveying and receiving simple 'thank you' messages, we derive the same pleasure we seek everywhere else.

#### Gratitude and Happiness

Gratitude in all forms is associated with happiness. Whether we say 'thank you' to someone or receive the same from others, the feeling it brings is that of satisfaction and encouragement.

#### The Neuroscientific Research in Gratitude

Gratitude was significant in ancient philosophies and cultures; in the Roman culture, Cicero mentioned gratitude as the 'mother' of all human feelings. As an area of neuropsychological research, gratitude is a subject of concern from the last two decades (Emmons & McCullough, 2004).

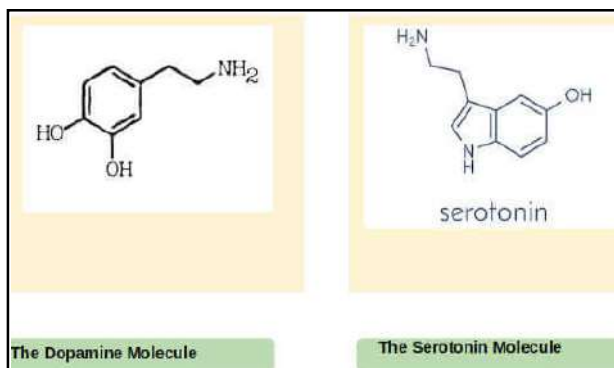
#### Gratitude and the Brain

Studies have demonstrated that at the brain level, moral judgments involving feelings of gratefulness are evoked in the right anterior temporal cortex. In the same study, it was revealed the reason some of us are naturally more grateful than others, is the neurochemical differences at the Central Nervous System. People who express and feel gratitude have a higher volume of grey matter in the right inferior temporal gyrus (Zahn et al., 2014).

When we express gratitude and receive the same, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, the two crucial neurotransmitters responsible for our emotions, and they make us feel 'good.' They enhance our mood immediately, making us feel happy from the inside. By consciously practicing gratitude daily, we can help these neural pathways to strengthen themselves and ultimately create a permanent grateful and positive nature within ourselves.

*A Shot of Dopamine* - whether expressing gratitude for what is good in life or showing gratitude to someone who has helped us at work, neural circuitry in our brain (stem) releases dopamine. Dopamine makes us feel good! And, because it feels good, we want more. It triggers positive emotions, we feel optimistic, and it fosters camaraderie. It also drives prosocial behaviors. Ah-ha! Put that under how to enhance performance, because dopamine has been linked to intrinsic motivation in goal accomplishment, whether academic, personal or professional.

*A Swig of Serotonin* - when we reflect on or write down the positives in life and at work, our brain (anterior cingulate cortex) releases serotonin. Serotonin enhances our mood (think anti-depressant), our willpower and motivation. And yes, serotonin has also been called the 'happy molecule.'



#### Gratitude releases toxic emotions

The limbic system is the part of the brain responsible for all emotional experiences. It consists of the thalamus, hypothalamus, amygdala, hippocampus, and cingulate gyrus. Studies have shown that hippocampus and amygdala, the two main sites regulating emotions, memory and bodily functioning, get activated with feelings of gratitude.

Consistent evidence has established what we call 'emotions' or 'feelings' are neural activations in the neocortical regions of the

brain (Moll et al. 2005). A study conducted on individuals seeking mental health guidance revealed participants who wrote letters of gratitude besides their regular counseling sessions, felt better and recovered sooner. The other group who were asked to journal their negative experiences instead of writing gratitude letters reported feelings of anxiety and depression.

#### Gratitude reduces pain

Counting Blessings vs. Burdens (2003), a study conducted on evaluating the effect of gratitude on physical well-being, indicated 16 percent of the patients who kept a gratitude journal reported reduced pain symptoms and were more willing to work out and cooperate with the treatment procedure. A deeper dig into the cause found by regulating the level of dopamine, gratitude fills us with more vitality, thereby reducing subjective feelings of pain.

#### Gratitude improves sleep quality

Studies have shown that receiving and displaying simple acts of kindness activates the hypothalamus, and thereby regulates all bodily mechanisms controlled by the hypothalamus, out of which sleep is a vital one. Hypothalamic regulation triggered by gratitude helps us get deeper and healthier sleep naturally every night. A brain filled with gratitude and kindness is more likely to sleep better and wake up feeling refreshed and energetic every morning (Zahn et al., 2009).

#### Gratitude aids in stress regulation

McCarty et al. (1998), in one of their studies on gratitude and appreciation, found that participants who felt grateful showed a marked reduction in the level of cortisol, the stress hormone. They had better cardiac function and were more resilient to emotional setbacks and negative experiences.

Significant studies over the years have established the fact that by practicing gratitude, we can handle stress better than others. By merely acknowledging and appreciating the little things in life, we can rewire the brain to deal with the present circumstances with more awareness and broader perception.

#### Gratitude reduces anxiety and depression

By reducing the stress hormones and managing the autonomic nervous system functions, gratitude significantly reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety. At the neurochemical level, feelings of gratitude are associated with an increase in the neural modulation of the prefrontal cortex, the brain site responsible for managing negative emotions like guilt, shame and violence. As a result, people who keep a gratitude journal or use verbal expressions for the same, are more empathetic and positive by nature.

Science wants us to live each day as Thanks Giving Day. Thank you for reading until the end.

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## Poetry Corner

### She is my Mother

By Danny Ruiz

I am different

Astonishingly advantaged  
More than her at least

Difficulty was common for her  
It is not for me  
For me food is common  
For her it wasn't  
Every day I show my thanks  
Recognizant of her sacrifices  
Entirely indebted to her  
Never stopping in my effort to honor her  
Thanks to her, I am different

To read more Flash Fiction,  
“(a) series of very short stories”  
originally created this summer  
(of 2020) by writers for  
The New Yorker magazine,  
visit [www.newyorker.com/books/flash-fiction](http://www.newyorker.com/books/flash-fiction)

## Flash Fiction

### The Turkey

By AJ Barbieri  
Staff Writer

It's always with me. In the woods. In my yard. Even in my dreams. I see the turkey.

He's always there. Pleading. Pleading for me to pardon him on Thanksgiving Day. I know I don't have that power. He knows I don't have that power. However, he still wants me to save him from the table. He wants to live.

I do all I can. I lead him deep into the unknown woods. I lead him farther and farther into the unknown until even I'm lost. At long last, he is safe. He is calm.

The big day comes. I know something is wrong when I see him in a spiritual presence on my plate. I regret eating that night.

## Holiday foods: learn origins

By Athalia Adouko  
Staff Writer

### COMMENTARY

Eggnog! Candy canes! Gingerbread cookies!

We all love them! But do we know the history behind these delicious treats? Whether you're looking forward to enjoying a minty candy cane or a cold glass of eggnog this Christmas season, let's look into the origin behind these festive treats.

#### Candy Canes

Every year it seems as if candy canes are a staple treat to any person's Christmas festivities! An article published by spoonuniversity.com, claims that “candy canes were made first to resemble the letter J, for Jesus.”

Another theory on the meaning behind the candy cane was that it was made to resemble a shepherd's cane. That'll be up to you to decide! Legend also has it that a Catholic choir master in Cologne, Germany would hand bent candy sticks for children to keep them quiet throughout the Christmas church service.

How about the colors? Well, the traditional colors of red and white are supposed to represent Jesus's blood (red) and his purity (white). In case you were wondering, the peppermint flavor of the delicious treat supposedly represents Jesus's purity, too.

#### Gingerbread Cookies

Whether in the shape of a house or in the shape of man, we all love it! The origin of gingerbread cookies dates back to the 16th century under the ruling of Queen Elizabeth I. Did you know “the Queen also had a royal gingerbread maker who created gingerbread men to represent foreign dignitaries and people in her court,” according to Jessica Booth's article published by redbookmag.com Dec. 11, 2018? At the same time, gingerbread houses became popular in Germany after the famous story of Hansel and Gretel was written by the Grimm Brothers.

So, maybe this time around when you have a craving for a gingerbread or candy cane you'll look past the delicious taste and deeper into the actual meaning of the treat!

Illustration by sugarspunrun.com



## History repeats itself in fashion trends like faux fur

By Destiny Hollister  
Fashion/Trend Editor

### COMMENTARY

“Don't wait until the fourth Thursday in November, to sit with family and friends to give thanks. Make every day a day of Thanksgiving,” said Charmaine J. Forde, an author, in her book *Over In Away*.

November is here, are you ready to adjust to all of the trends? As the leaves change colors and Fall sets in, be sure that you change up your inventory and stack up on scarves! Throughout the United States, everyone is adjusting to different trends and preparing for a new adventure, whether it's home-wise, fashion or makeup designs! Prepare for the adventure as the month of November arrives since there's lots of new things being released!

Because history repeats itself, we might see some of the trends seen in 2018, which include dark denim, faux fur, leopard print, hiking boots, pearls, high-waisted pants, wide jeans, stripes, and checkered patterns, sherpa, or even fanny packs, according to bestlifeonline.com, a website that highlights daily life.

In our previous year of 2019, trends were alike from what we've seen in 2018, however, some had their own twist to add onto history and make a fashion impact!

2019 was full of '70s throwbacks, including silhouettes, silky scarves, western hats and boots, oversized deminwear, pearl acces-

sories, hair clips, flared jeans, Dr. Martens boots, scrunchies, belts, and more, according to huffpost.com, a website that posts about news, politics, life, entertainment, horoscopes, and communities.

While speaking about 2019, fashion wasn't the only big impact throughout the month of November!

In addition to fashion trends, people took it a step further by adding rhinestone eye makeup as one of the biggest trends, wearing corduroy, decorating their home's entryway, and wearing heels with socks throughout the United States, according to business.pinterest.com, a website that posts tips for recipes, fashion, and home decor.

Now we're up to modern-day in 2020, a year that took a spin from what we might've expected earlier on, so what can we expect to see during November and beyond?

Besides the Presidential Election, we can see patchwork outfits, long fringe dresses, fuzzy cardigans, puff sleeved tops, quilt-patterned outfits, and faux fur as seen in previous years, according to cosmopolitan.com, a website that posts tips for politics, astrology, beauty, entertainment, and even more aspects of life!

What are you waiting for? Go out and update your inventory before everyone jumps on the fad train!

## Why change clocks twice yearly? Thank Ben Franklin

By Me'Ryah Carabello  
Staff Writer

### COMMENTARY

Daylight Saving Time was developed to allow better use of the sunlight hours of the summer. By shifting clocks forward an hour in March, we move an hour of daylight from the morning to the evening. On the first Sunday in November, we rewind our clocks to return to Standard Time.

But where did the idea of Daylight Saving Time originate from?

The idea of daylight saving was first conceived by Benjamin Franklin during his travels as an American delegate in Paris in 1784, and written in an essay, “An Economical Project.” The idea was later proposed to the British Parliament by Englishman William Willett 1907. However, it did not become a standard practice in the United States until 1966. Daylight Saving Time was originally instituted during World War I and World War II in order to take advantage of

longer daylight hours and save energy for the war production.

After World War II, individual states and communities decided whether to continue observing Daylight Saving Time and when to do so. This meant some cities were an hour behind others even though they were only separated by a few miles on a map.

To minimize the confusion, Congress passed the Uniform Time Act in 1966, which standardized the length of Daylight Saving Time for the country.

If you live near the equator, day and night are nearly the same length (12 hours). But elsewhere on Earth, there is much more daylight in the summer than in the winter. The closer you live to the North or South Pole, the longer the period of daylight in the

## Quotes for November

Compiled by Roshana Tilkuram  
Staff Writer

“The real gift of gratitude is that the more grateful you are, the more present you become.” ~ Robert Holden

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.”

~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

“You never know how strong you are until strong is your only choice.” ~ Bob Marley

### A short story for November

By Roshana Tilkuram  
Staff Writer

I was at the door when it started. I had just walked into the house after a long day of working, trying to put food on the table for my family. I have never been so tired in my life every waking moment that I have gone straight to work.

I never knew what my mother meant when she said, “you will have to do what you have to when you have one of your own,” but now I know exactly what she means.

I was 19 years old when my mother died. I never knew my dad. It wasn't just me she left behind: she left my other two sisters behind, too. There were three of us: Madison who was 21 when she left, and Ellie who had just turned 16.

I haven't spoken to my sisters in years because I didn't want anything to do with them. After our mother passed away, the two of them went off on their own and left me behind. After many sleepless nights I wanted

to have them over for Thanksgiving dinner to talk about the good old times and also, it would be a plus to make amends with them.

Yes, I hated the idea of them coming over and making me feel bad about things I worked hard for but, it would be the most grown up thing to do.

They came over and we had dinner. We all had things we were going through but for just this one night, we were able to put all of that aside and had a nice time as sisters because it's what Mother would have wanted. After we had dinner, we all sat down in the living room and said what we were grateful for.

I said, “I'm grateful for the good 19 years I got to spend with my mother, and I learned to how to become this amazing mother and wife and I learned how to work hard for the things I want.”

That night I was happy, at my best, because I was with the people who matter the most important to me. I was grateful to have them all in one place at the right time.

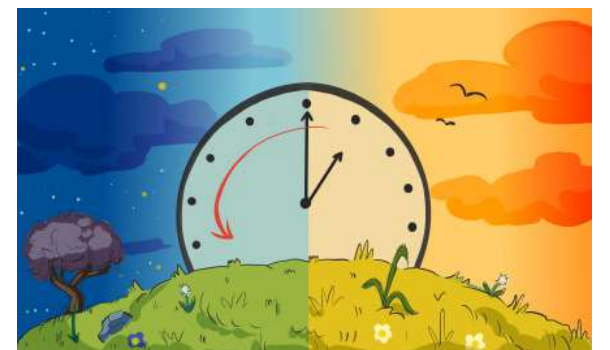


Illustration by M. Lovos/staff

summer. Thus, Daylight Saving Time (Summer Time) is usually not helpful in the tropics, and countries near the equator generally do not change their clocks.

Many equatorial cities and countries do not participate in Daylight Saving Time. In the United States, there are a few places that do not observe Daylight Saving Time, including parts of Arizona, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

# Church outside, through Zoom? St. John's Lutheran weathers storm

By Jessinya Severino  
Features Editor

*Waterbury church members find new ways to worship, stay connected despite pandemic*

Church services are outside and through Zoom now, who would have ever thought?

At St. John's Lutheran Church in Waterbury, Conn. the members and Pastor had to find different ways to stay connected with the church as the COVID-19 pandemic closed churches for a few months, silencing and closing doors to lifelong members.

"(I've been) a member of this church all my life, 84 years. The man who built this church, built our house," said Mr. Bob Beer, a member of the church and a lawyer.

Mr. Beer and his wife Mrs. Beer are the two most known in the church. They spoke about the church and the man who built it.

"He was from Germany and he had a heart attack before he came over here to this country," said Mrs. Ruby Beer, a former Kennedy Algebra teacher, a member of the church for 46 years, and Mr. Beer's wife. "He was only 40-something when he had a heart attack and he lived to be in his 90s. And his wife lived longer and lived to be 100."

The Beers have lived in Newtown, Conn. for about 50 years. They spoke about how they got through quarantine.

"It really wasn't a hardship, well, because of our faith. Since we are retired and we get along very well, it hasn't been a hardship to be home really, and our neighbors have been so good to us," said Mrs. Beer.

"As we left this morning (our neighbors) were cleaning our yard," said Mr. Beer.

As the Beers were able to have help from their kind neighbors, Pastor Joel Kotila

shares his hardest part of the pandemic.

"I think it's because not everyone can comfortably come to church, I think that's the hardest thing for me as Pastor. We get a select number of people but it's not our normal," said Kotila, who has been a Pastor at St. John's for two years.

Since not everyone could make it to the church, Kotila makes sure he reaches out to everyone.

"As Pastor, what I would do is continue to pray and ask God to bless this congregation and bless those who can't be with us," said Pastor Kotila. "I especially tried to reach out to those people who are unable to be here by calling them on the phone and sending letters to them. I've been sending those out every single week. I send something that is encouraging to them. Letting them know that I'm personally praying for them."

For a while the church was unable to open. Member Mr. Cliff Becker was able to connect with three other churches every Sunday: Christ the King in Newtown at 10 a.m., Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Terryville at 9 a.m., and his sister-in-law's church in Scottsdale, Arizona.

"Just not being at church...was difficult, then we started going with Zoom for church. We were connected to three churches. It kept us connected," said Becker, a 47-year member of the church. "It was something different. It's difficult not having social hour with our friends."

Becker and his wife did not fail to stay

connected to the church.

"It was an issue of safety. The avenue that was opened to us was Pastor Kotila would give private communion by appointment. That kept us connected to the church," he said.

Becker helps out and plans activities at church, some which contain surprises!

"We had our Mother's Day service outside. I had flowers for all the mothers. I like to surprise people," he said. "We had another outside service where I met everyone coming in and I gave everyone a roll of toilet paper because at the stores you couldn't get toilet paper. For Father's Day I brought Klondike bars and at the end of the service handed them out to the fathers."

The church has always been there for each of their members. Not being able to attend in person is a hardship for many.

"The hardest change was not getting up and going to church to get that in-person sermon and communion. Just not being with family and friends after 42 years I have been attending," said member Ms. Dawn Lorancitis.

These changes are challenging at first. Mr. Dave Donofrio told of several changes they had to make.

"The biggest change would be the lack of socializing. We could no longer have coffee hour. We no longer shake hands. Attendance is low. We are encouraged to wear masks. Also initially we had to do services virtually," said Donofrio, a church member's

husband who has been attending for 25 years.

Pastor Kotila explained what the church does to keep their members safe.

"I've been reaching out to our members during this pandemic more so than any other time before because I know that people are afraid and they don't want to get the virus," said Kotila. "We are distancing, many people are wearing masks, sanitize. The vulnerable, the elderly are certainly staying home."

Zoom, private appointments, and recorded sermons are options the church gives as a way to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) rules and social distancing. Zoom, however, is different than going in person.

"While not being able to be there in person I did attend church through Zoom, which was nice that we were able to do that but it just didn't feel the same," said Lorancitis. "In person you get to see the same church family that you have every Sunday. So it is hard to not get that same feeling of not being in church."

COVID-19's restrictions have affected going back to St. John's Lutheran Church, as the members are used to being so friendly.

"I am happy to be back going to church, but it will be nice when the restrictions are done so we will be able to have coffee hour and shake hands with the Pastor. And not have to walk by people fast with masks. We can stop and talk and laugh," said Lorancitis.

# Student theatre, cheerleaders lost their "outlet," "sanctuary" due to virus

By Ariel Pierre, Jamiah Stevens  
Staff Writers

*Members of extracurricular activities shut down due to COVID-19 miss their second family*

## COMMENTARY

Waterbury schools were shut down due to COVID-19 Friday, March 13, 2020. The school year was cut short, sports seasons were canceled alongside extracurricular activities. This made students, coaches, directors, and more upset and disappointed. How did the pandemic affect students' extracurricular or sport? What does their extracurricular activity mean to them? Also, why is it important to them? The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) decisions affected students when activities were canceled and authorities didn't speak about the extracurriculars. They were silenced. They were voiceless.

"Since the pandemic canceled the football and potentially the basketball season we don't have anyone to cheer for at the moment since we aren't having events like pep rally (so) there's not much for us to do," said senior cheer

captain Janaya Santos.

While everyone is thinking about sports cancellations like football and basketball, no one is talking about the cheer season and how it affected the cheerleaders. Since there are no sports to cheer for, the cheer team doesn't have a purpose or a voice.

"I feel bad for you guys, the team, the ones putting in the effort and (who) should be enjoying their high school years. This is something none of us have seen and it just breaks my heart for you guys," said cheer coach Ms. Kaitlyn Cocchiola.

Cheer means a lot to everyone on the team and with no cheer it greatly affects them. It becomes an escape from reality to some. Cheer isn't just jumps and stomping; it's a commitment they have made to be dedicated members.

"Cheer means a lot to me. I've

been cheering for years, it brings me peace--it is my peace actually. I love it," said Sanai Lee, a junior.

Cheerleading is an outlet for most of the girls. It's a safe place where the team can come together and be themselves with no judging and be able to have a support system behind them. Cheer became a family for team members.

"This team means so much to me. They have become a second family. Always there for each other and picking each other up while having a lot of fun and laughs," said Cocchiola.

Meanwhile, Kennedy's Student Theatre felt the same affects. Since the cancellation of spring musicals, theatre departments were impacted statewide and nationwide.

"When we were sent home in March, I was really upset. It was my last year in the Kennedy Student Theatre, and I had a lead role,"

said Samantha Valle, Class of 2020 graduate. "Being on stage and being with my second family helped me a lot. It was my source of happiness."

Her story is like many others. The arts were not a part of the conversation in many instances. Artists everywhere were put out of jobs. Even Broadway went dark. What was once a beacon of hope, passion, artistry, and light for many is now dark. The impact this has on students in the arts is substantial. All the while no one really gave a second thought to school theatre departments.

"I feel a little unheard, it makes me upset," said senior Thomas Bishop, a four-year member.

This is a common thought among students who do theatre and the impact on students is still ongoing. For most, being on stage is a place where they can therapeutically express themselves.

Without that space, a lot of students are stuck trying to cope. With that and not being able to have any other artistic space, most feel extremely unheard.

"What an outlet for students who've been labeled," said Mrs. Caryn Stellmach, guidance counselor for seniors, who herself performed in Kennedy as well as city theatre productions.

Many students had to try to come to terms with not having their outlet anymore. Whether it was theatre or cheerleading, students found it difficult. These extracurriculars provide an artistic sanctuary for students. Without it, some are still left feeling unheard and voiceless; when does it end?

"The Theatre Department and the cheerleaders have been put on the back burner, before and now," said Bishop.

# Some colleges make SAT/ACE optional

By Cindy Zheng  
Staff Writer

Amidst a surge of the coronavirus that caused the widespread cancellation of the standardized test in Spring 2020, some U.S. colleges and universities have recently dropped the requirement for SAT/ACE scores in the admission process.

It is estimated that "there are now over 1,000 accredited colleges and universities that don't require SAT," according to uo.people.edu, an online university.

This includes the nearby UConn branch with "test-optional undergraduate admissions process for the next three applications periods," according to today.uconn.edu, a website from the university. Other area schools following this include Yale University, Trinity University, Southern University, and Post University.

With this requirement off their backs, some seniors feel they could have more chances getting into the school they desired.

"I think I'll have a bigger opportunity to enter the college I want and try my best," said Mary Escamilla, a senior who plans on pursuing higher education.

On the other hand, senior Destiny Morales-Caban, feels that the SAT never really showed a student's true worth.

"I don't think it matters that much and the SAT (doesn't) really tell them much other than the fact that you're good at taking a test," she said.

# Homeless problem needs our attention

By Pavel Guerra  
Staff Writer

## COMMENTARY

In society there are many groups of people who are voiceless. It can be anybody. One example is people with disabilities like Down syndrome, or those with special needs. But this story will be about homeless people in Connecticut, and how they are one of those voiceless groups.

As of January 2020 the number of people homeless in Connecticut had gone down but after the coronavirus, many lost their jobs. This may have caused many in Connecticut to become homeless. One thing

we don't question enough is what they go through daily.

After reading a story from *The Hartford Courant* it seems three out of four people became homeless because they had lost their job, like Joe Krystofalski, who lost his due to an injury

"One day my right leg planted one way and my body went the other way, and I twisted and tore everything you could possibly do to your knee," he said.

This was obviously something he couldn't control, and he became homeless because of that. Some are becoming homeless because of COVID-19.

Another major thing causing

homelessness is drug addiction. Jacob Dudzik was a college student homeless then and in his mid 30s due to a drug addiction.

"I started living out of an abandoned house in Bristol filled with gang activity," he said.

This is one of the things homeless people have to go through and a subject we have to focus more on. This story should help you understand what could cause homelessness and how the homeless live. This is something we as a state or country have to start looking at more as many homeless don't have a voice and are unable to speak up.

# Change to virtual learning for all students puts end to winter sports

By Jazmin Estrella  
Sports Editor

Zooming into classes and missing the winter sports season.

Due to the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in Connecticut, Waterbury superintendent Dr. Verna Ruffin made the decision for a full shift to virtual learning as of Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2020 which ultimately means no winter sports.

“Based on the rise in coronavirus transmission in the city, and in collaboration with Mayor Neil M. O’Leary, the City of Waterbury Department of Public Health and the Board of Education, I have made the decision to transition ALL students to virtual learning effective tomorrow, Tuesday, Nov. 17 through Monday, Jan. 18,” according to [www.waterbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.waterbury.k12.ct.us), a site for information on Waterbury Public Schools.

The shift was rapid and unanticipated. While some students took it well, for others it was a bitter disappointment to find out they’d no longer be in school and no longer participate in sports.

“My initial thought on the season being canceled is heartbreaking. It’s senior year and I won’t

be able to run for my last year of high school. Some goals I wanted to set out was just to improve and get faster and to hype up track for the underclassmen and for the school to get potential and hardworking people to join,” said Justin Mattaboni, a senior on the track and field team.

“I know I’m not alone in thinking it really sucks to wait years for a senior season just to have it canceled because we go virtual. This would have been a great season too, many of my team mates would have made it to States for swimming,” said Aldin Sabovic, a senior on the swim team.

Students from all city schools are feeling the impact of this transition.

“For it being my last year to play basketball it’s heartbreaking knowing I might not get the season, but I also understand the regulations that need to be put in place because of covid. There definitely were goals to have a great season, not with just winning but with team bonding and growing stronger together as a whole. Teams make great families and I want the players to get that experience from their teammates,” said Iyanna Figueroa, a girls’ basketball player at Crosby.

With the absence of their final year of high school sports, seniors can only reminisce on the fruitful previous three years they enjoyed.

“Overall I will dearly miss my last year running and training with my coaches and seeing all the people and opponents I would have faced while attending meets. With all that being said, the cancellation really hit me in my heart just knowing I won’t be able to meet new people,” said Mattaboni.

“I’m going to miss everything, being in the court, running after any lost balls, hustling strong to secure the win. I love basketball so I’m going to miss every second of it. The cancellation really hit hard for me because I was one of the team captains this year and it’s not fun to know I won’t be able to help lead my team this year,” said Figueroa.

Despite the turn of events, it is better for some student athletes to remain optimistic, hope for the best, and work with what they have.

“I can only hope we will get a chance to do so in the spring when there is a chance for a return and although I agree the students’ safety should come first, you can’t help but miss the Saturday

practices and the late night meets followed by going out with the team,” said Sabovic.

Student athletes from the fall season share their condolences and thoughts on the situation:

“Truly, even though my senior season did not go the way I always dreamt, I am so grateful I was able to have a season. Being a senior during these hard times is hard enough as it is, and with everything we were looking forward to not going to be taking place this year, I’m appreciative I was able to spend time with my teammates for the last time,” said Janelle Obuobi-Djan, a senior on the volleyball team.

“It felt really nice to have a season this year because even though it wasn’t the same as past years, it gave a sense of normality in this storm of chaos. This year hasn’t been the greatest so being able to play games against other teams was very good for the players,” said Reis Muccino, a junior on the soccer team.

“I didn’t have much of a sports season because the cheer team couldn’t cheer for football but I was happy for those who got to play and finished their season,” said Brianna Bryant, a senior on the cheer team.

## Volleyball seniors wish for more

By Alexandra Ruales and Jessinya Severino  
Staff Writer and Features Editor

Acing their last season while serving their thoughts on the COVID-19 spike. COVID-19 has caused many changes in sports, including volleyball. Volleyball games have been cancelled left and right while the seniors hold on to what they can during these tough times.

“This year was supposed to be my peak. The season isn’t as magical with all of the restrictions. The lower classmen are nonchalant because they have more years to make up for this failed one, but I’m counting down my final days of high school, and it is not exciting,” said Vivian Bunker, a senior and captain.

Though this season has been different from the past three years for the six seniors (Bunker, Krystal Matos, Sara Way, Janelle Obuobi-Djan, Nataly Topolosci, and Elisa Bablusha), they managed to get accustomed to the changes surprisingly well until Nov. 17, 2020 when all schools went virtual.

“Our seniors have really kind of stepped it up and played it well, they adapted very well, though they want to practice more, play more and compete more,” said coach Mr. Stango, a physical education teacher.

“Our seniors make up half of the team,” said Evi Duro, a junior who plays for the Eagles. “Their leadership skills and experience really helped the team out.”

With COVID-19 still spreading in Connecticut, the Eagles adapted well and thought their season was almost cut short early, but now it is over.

“At one point it really did look like volleyball was going to get cancelled with football. I honestly didn’t think (the season) was going to happen, I really didn’t,” said Stango. “What saved the season mostly was the rule where you have to play with your mask on.”

When the season was ongoing, the Eagles were undefeated with their 9-0 record, led by senior captains Bunker and Matos. Bunker has been a varsity starter since her sophomore year as a middle hitter and Matos started as the opposite setter her sophomore year on varsity as well. The two captains helped the Eagles win their first Naugatuck Valley League (NVL) title in 2018 their sophomore season. The captains reflected on their season so far compared to the last three seasons.

“It doesn’t even feel like we are almost at the end of the season, it feels like it’s just starting,” said Matos. “In the past years we had much stronger emotions when facing other teams, now it’s like we just know what the result will be for every game.”

Even the coach acknowledged these two captains’ efforts.

“They’ve (Vivian and Krystal) done a great job of keeping everyone focused and upbeat through this season, their positivity has been uplifting the team through these tough times, and I’m very appreciative of them,” said Stango.

Since the season started, the Eagles received a schedule with only 12 games due to the pandemic, when in the past they played a total of 20 games. Although the Eagles played a maximum of 12 games, their season became even shorter due to games cancelling because of the spikes in COVID-19.

“We all wish we had more games and a longer season but for our safety we have to be comprehensive,” said Matos. “There’s nothing we can do about it so we just see it as a way to prevent getting sick.”

These seniors had wished for a longer, normal volleyball season, or at least for their cancelled games to be rescheduled.

“I feel frustrated as my already short season is only getting shorter. Hopefully we will be able to reschedule the cancelled games, so many important experiences are getting removed, I don’t want volleyball to be one of them,” said Bunker.

“It’s very aggravating, the whole team gets very excited to play and then our games get cancelled at the last minute,” said Obuobi-Djan, a senior middle hitter.

The team is all very close. Many of them were playing or were present when they won the 2018 NVL championship.

“It’s difficult not being able to play in a longer season when we had set the goal to make it far in the NVL tournament this year,” said Way, a senior outside hitter.

“If we had a real NVL tournament this year then I believe we would’ve been one of the top four teams competing for the championship,” said Stango. “I think we would’ve been one of the small list of teams that competed for the title.”

The past few years the team has been having great seasons, and 2020 was one of their best as they have gone undefeated.

“If we were to have NVLs this year I think the team would have played amazing, everyone has improved so much,” said Matos. “We would’ve probably gone to finals, and who knows, maybe win the title again.”

## John Wall’s life serves as inspiration, warning

By Kristian Ngjela  
Staff Writer

Look at NBA basketball player John Wall’s childhood: he went through tough times, was a point guard for the Washington Wizards, and recently got traded to the Houston Rockets. However, Wall’s childhood will haunt him. Raleigh, North Carolina was a dangerous place. Wall started committing crimes around his middle and high school years. Mental issues played a big part of his life and he decided to follow in his father’s footsteps after his father passed away from liver cancer. Take this time to think about your future life.

Life for Wall wasn’t easy. “Wall has a crazy against all odds story; he only got to visit his father while his father was in prison, and since his father passed away when Wall was young, he kept his father’s Randy Moss jersey, which he still has to this day, he uses it as a reminder to his father,” said Mike Korzempa, a Chicago resident and YouTuber who made a video on Wall’s childhood April 4, 2017.

Crimes committed by Wall were repetitive for him.

“Wall and his friends would break

car windows and drive stolen cars. Wall even got shot twice, but luckily he survived and he would fight people on his basketball team in high school,” according to Popular Playbook, a social media page that covers NBA coaching style, written August 20, 2017

Wall seemed to want revenge on his enemies for his father.

“It seems that Wall had a tough life because of his father and decided to go on the wrong path. I don’t understand why he decided to take the wrong path when basketball was his main priority,” said Clique Productions, a New Yorker and YouTuber, Dec. 23, 2019.

However, there were differences between Wall and other people, which made his life even more stressful.

“Wall suffered a lot of mental issues. He took his trauma differently than other people because of his background,” said Sami Sheshi, a Waterbury resident.

Wall is said to have controlled his anger because of the basketball he once picked up and never let go.

“People say to Wall, look at your face, look at your hair, and he decided to take those things personal by playing basketball and ignoring other people because he fell in love with the game of basketball,” said American Express, a

financial company who made a short video on Wall’s life posted on YouTube Feb. 10, 2015.

Wall chose one of the best college basketball programs, the University of Kentucky, and was drafted #1 overall to the Washington Wizards in 2010.

“Wall’s high school years made him a 5-star recruit and he has one of the most viewed high school mix tapes of all time, and was ranked #1 in the nation, he decided to take his talents to Kentucky,” said Korzempa.

Wall had a max contract (a contract of four years for \$100 million dollars or more) so fans said he has the worst contract in the league because he hasn’t played in the league in two years due to an achilles tear, making an estimated \$41 million a year, more money than LeBron James (small forward for the Los Angeles Lakers),

“In the summer of 2017, Wall decided to sign a contract for four years worth \$171 million, by 2022-23 he will be making \$47 million, having that amount of money is insane considering that he hasn’t played two seasons in the NBA due to a torn achilles from walking around his house,” said ClutchPoints, a social media page that covers the NBA, as of June 25, 2020.

## Jan Mysak joins Canadians for 2021 season

By Branden Halle  
Staff Writer

The Montreal Canadiens hockey team plans for the 2020-2021 season.

Here is a brief lesson on the history of hockey in Montreal, Canada and Montreal Canadians: it started when managed senior hockey first arrived in Montreal thanks to McGill University students, who started playing hockey at the Victoria Skating Rink in 1875. The club had written a set of rules for teams to obey by 1880, and they helped create the Amateur Hockey Association of Canada (AHAC) in 1886, which featured four Montréal teams and one Ottawa team; a Quebec City team would join the league in 1892. The Montreal Hockey Club, won the first Stanley Cup in 1893.

The Montreal Hockey Club won again in 1894 and 1895. The Montreal Victorias won in 1895, 1896, 1897, and 1898.

The team was founded in 1909 in Montreal by John Ambrose O’Brien, who named Jean-Baptiste ‘Jack’ Laviolette as the coach and general manager. In one month, Laviolette recruited 15 players, and they played their first game as a Canadian Hockey Association member Jan. 4, 1910.

Over the years they have raked up 24 Stanley Cup Championships: 23 in the NHL and one before the NHL was founded. The team has also been called the ‘New York Yankees’ of hockey. The team is still around and doing well, being able to get into the 2020 playoffs despite the virus but they didn’t get far, getting knocked out by the Philadelphia Flyers.

A potential asset was drafted Oct. 7, 2020 when the Montreal Canadiens drafted Jan Mysak, an 18-year-old from Litvínov, Czech Republic. Mysak was selected 48th overall by the Canadiens, playing junior hockey for the Hamilton Bulldogs in Hamilton, Ontario. Mysak faced obstacles: he had to move from his family, adopt a new language and a new culture, and even try new foods. Mysak faced his challenges by working on his hockey skills to be a better player.

“When I played against Canada in the World Juniors, they beat us 7-2,” said Mysak to Marc Dumont, a writer for [canadiens.com](http://canadiens.com). “I saw the players playing in the OHL, WHL and QMJHL, and I thought it would be a good step for me because my dream is to play in the NHL. It was a good step and a good decision.”

With the Bulldogs, Mysak hit the ground running, scoring his first goal in just his second game and stunning Hamilton fans with a pair of hat-tricks against Niagara and Sault St Marie just 14 days apart. 25 points were posted by Mysak in

just 22 games.

“I’m very happy that it’s over for me and that it’s Montreal, a club with a huge history. I can’t wait to go there and show what I can do,” Mysak said regarding his draft.

Mysak visited Montreal before with the help of Petr Svoboda, who was the youngest Canadians defenseman to ever make the jump to the NHL in the 1980s, having done so at 18 years old in 1984. Svoboda was a family friend of Mysak’s father and he played on the same Czech youth team as Mysak.

“The first thing that stands out with Jan is how professional he was when we first got him. He came over with an amazing focus and was diligent in not only his on-ice preparation but off-ice as well, which is impressive. He was trying to find out exactly what the coaches wanted from him, especially away from the puck,” Bulldogs president and general manager, Steve Staios, said to writer Marc Dumont.

Mysak joined the Bulldogs at age 17 in January 2020. Mysak wanted to learn fast. When he was playing with the Bulldogs he had 15 goals and 10 assists in just 22 games, establishing himself as not just an offensive threat, but an incredibly talented player impacting the game in every zone.

“His game sense, his hockey IQ, how well-rounded of a player he is at this age is very exciting. And that goes along with an elite skill set,” said Staios. “He’s got great, deceptive speed. Has a terrific release. And if you ask Jan why were you so interested in coming to Hamilton, he said he wanted to learn how to play in the smaller areas.”

Thanks to a successful period when the franchise was partnered with Montreal in the AHL and helped to develop current stars Brendan Gallagher and Carey Price, Mysak goes to an organization well acquainted with the Bulldogs. Since Montreal has also packed talented cabinets and added Mysak to a pool of young talent that includes former OHL champion Nick Suzuki and first-round picks Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Ryan Poehling, there will certainly be an opportunity for the Bulldogs star to learn and excel with talent around him.

Montreal Canadiens Assistant General Manager Trevor Timmins was glowing in his praise of Mysak:

“We’re excited to get Jan Mysak. We wanted to add some speed and skill, and he addresses that need,” Timmins said Oct. 7. “This is a player who played at the Under-20 World Juniors for the Czech Republic. He played mostly on the wing there. A player of his age playing at the World Juniors and doing what he did is a pretty good indicator of a strong prospect that has a good chance to play at the NHL level some day. We like what he brings: outstanding work ethic, energy.”

## Preserving 50+ years of memories despite cancellation

By Jessica Carvalho  
News Editor

Touchdown... Kennedy scores!  
But not this year.

Kennedy has always played in late November against their biggest rival, Crosby High School. No one knew things were subject to change in 2020. For the first time in 55 years, there will be no annual Thanksgiving game.

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (better known as the CIAC) cancelled full contact high school football Thursday, September 3, 2020, leaving the football community discouraged and upset.

Not only are the players left in distress (take the seniors, for example) but families, friends, coaches, teachers, and even fans are lamenting as watching players play from the stands and sidelines was enjoyable.

"High school football's cancellation is disappointing not just for the players and the coaches but for their families, friends and fans of the game," said Mr. David Rossi, Kennedy athletic director. "This tradition has never been stopped, it's just something we have to deal with but hopefully we'll get back to it next year."

History teacher and Kennedy football coach, Mr. Christopher Sarlo, has coached for 16 years and has never experienced a season like this before.

"I give the kids a lot of credit because we're still practicing with very little reward in sight," said Sarlo. "This is where I feel bad for the seniors because their last Thanksgiving game was last year, who would have thought? It stinks. This was just beyond our control."

The annual Thanksgiving game isn't the only thing that has been cancelled this year, other special football events have been, too.

"The two weeks that lead up to the final game were always memorable to the team," said Sarlo. "We're missing out on our annual pancake breakfast fundraiser (which is a big loss financially), our pre-game dinner where we would all eat as a team, and senior night where we would honor the players and their families."

Unlike other fall sports (who were able to play with restrictions),



### REMEMBER WHEN

The 2019 game day program cover (above) featured photographs from previous years. The Team Commitment picture (left) is a picture created by Coach Sarlo's son to be featured on Kennedy football's Instagram account.

the dedicated seniors who were a part of the team were unable to be honored on senior night despite having immense love and respect for the game. Even though they weren't recognized on senior night, *The Eagle Flyer* will do so in this article. Those four seniors are: #10 - captain Zechariah Rountree; #1 - Tre'Sean Graves; #7 - Terence Mallette; and #21 - Taeven Moshier.

Captain Rountree shared his stance on the cancellation.

"My first reaction when I heard the news was shocked. I didn't know how to take it, I was lost," said Rountree. "The team had just received their pads 10 minutes before the news broke out. I was still happy we had the opportunity to practice."

Rountree has played football all throughout high school and was looking forward to playing during his senior year. Football is a great passion of his.

"Football means a lot. My dad inspires me to get on the football field. I would watch football with him when I was younger. Then, I started playing and working at it," said Rountree.

Rountree also shared that the Thanksgiving game has a special meaning and dedication.

"The game means so much to the team. I wasn't playing then but the team has a tradition of dedicating the game to an old football coach of Kennedy who passed away. I decided to keep on carrying the tradition with me," said Rountree.

Fellow 2019 graduate and former football player, Marquise Blagmon holds football close to his heart and said he understands the players' disappointments.

"My reaction to the cancellation would be very upset because I wouldn't be able to give the sport I love my very best the last year I was able to play," said Blagmon, a

**2020 varsity football seniors**

#10 - captain Zechariah Rountree (bottom photo)

#1 - Tre'Sean Graves (second photo from top)

#7 - Terence Mallette (third photo from top)

#21 - Taeven Moshier (top photo)



sophomore at Southern Connecticut State University.

Blagmon said football was an incredible way to release any aggression that was built up; many people can attest to this. Football unites people with the love that generates around it, just like any other sport or hobby.

"Football allowed me to become outgoing and pushed me to do better in school in order to play. My biggest inspiration was my mother; she is my biggest supporter and she came to each and every one of my games to cheer me on," said Blagmon.

To wrap things up, Coach Sarlo shared a moment in his career as coach that he will never forget!

"When I took over as head coach in 2005, Kennedy had not won a game in four years. Kennedy was 0-43 and then Kennedy beat Crosby the day after Thanksgiving," said Sarlo. "This game was the first one I won as head coach. There was snow on the ground and it was cold out, the athletes grabbed and poured a bucket of water all over me and at that point I didn't care. It was a great feeling."

### COIN TOSS

Last year's captains head out to meet Crosby's captains for the coin toss before the 2019 Thanksgiving game at Municipal Stadium.



### MEMORIES

(far right photo) #7 Brian Overton (left) and #21 Devon Petty (right) with Coach Sarlo during the Thanksgiving 2009 game vs. Crosby at Municipal Stadium in Waterbury. (near right photo) The team celebrates their win over Crosby at Municipal Stadium in 2019.



Special thanks to Mr. Sarlo, his team and staff for all the photographs and images provided.