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Castleton, Vermont

Thursday, November 16, 2023

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON



JACOB RUBEN

Optimization 2.0 has sparked uncertainty on the VTSU Castleton campus.

Students, faculty upset over admin. cuts

By Camille Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The echoes of protests and chants from the Oct. 26 rally against Optimization 2.0 did little to quell the divisive decision released later that day.

In an effort to achieve administrative savings of \$3.1 million and attain fiscal sustainability by fiscal year 2027, the Castleton community was abruptly reduced by eight key members.

“They are seeing the man behind the curtain, and I think that really impacts morale,” Executive Vice President of the Castleton Student Government Association Adsel Sparrow said.

The ‘man behind the curtain’ alludes to the executive administration, silently puppeteering the organization of Optimization 2.0, and culminating in a vote of no confidence by the joint VTSU Student Government Associations at Castleton, Johnson, Lyndon and Randolph, excluding the Castleton SGA president serving on the board.

The parliamentary procedure indicates the joint SGAs have lost trust in the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees (excluding the student trustee), the Vermont State University Office of the President, and the vice president of Business Affairs, according to the statement released on Oct. 2.

Detailed in the statement is the overarching position that the



AVERY BOUCHARD

Students rally at Hoff Hall to address state legislators about cuts.

means of achieving fiscal sustainability does not “have the best interests of students in mind when making important decisions regarding essential staff and faculty on our campuses” as the cuts “include crucial student-facing personnel on each campus.”

SGA members suggest the loss of these vital positions challenge the ability of the geographically dispersed university to acknowledge the needs of each campus

and student.

In an effort to ease the transition on students, Castleton SGA ignited “something called ‘transformation talk,’ where we have these periodic presentations to give students the opportunity to learn about difference aspects of the Vermont State College transformation,” according to President of the Castleton SGA, Perry Ragouzis.

Nov. 8 marked the initial ‘trans-

formation talk’ when professor Helen Mango “presented on the fact that the cuts that were made would be saving the system \$3.4-ish million, and that includes salaries and benefits, and this structure alone represents \$11 million in salaries,” Ragouzis said.

The ‘structure he spoke of was a complex flow chart portraying position hierarchy within the upper administration, indicating position title and accompanying

salary.

It was those positions “the faculty meant when they said upper administrators” who needed trimming, Ragouzis said.

The Board of Trustees responded to the Vote of No Confidence on Oct. 9, commenting, “change is hard, particularly change on the scale of the two optimization plans currently underway. As the Board of Trustees for the entire Vermont State Colleges System, our responsibility as fiduciaries requires us to take steps to ensure the financial strength of the organization, which is what this work does.”

The digital debate fevered as the SGA noted in the same email exchange “not only do we want to recognize that this comment is inflammatory (re. “Change is hard”), but we also want to recognize that this phrasing does not make any decisions underway easier on the students, faculty, or staff.”

The interdependent nature of a university environment was reinforced Business Administration Department Program Coordinator and professor Dennis Reilly, who said, “we can’t survive without staff, as they can’t survive without faculty, and the university can’t survive without students.”

Professor Michael Talbott, the grievance representative of the union representing faculty, reflected on the cuts saying they “were made by someone who is wholly detached from the reality of what a college campus and a college ex-

perience needs and is.”

Harkening to the recent murder of a former dean on the Delaware and Hudson Rail Trail, Sparrow stressed what is needed on campuses.

“Matt Patry (associate dean of students) was here immediately. He spent overtime hours on Thursday and Friday, he spent the whole weekend over break at this campus, working with and coordinating efforts to address that need for the students,” Sparrow said.

The late Honoree Fleming’s death was a catalyst to understanding the necessity for critical student-facing positions.

“One Dean cannot be at five campuses at once,” Sparrow said. “How do you split your time, what do you deem as more important?”

Talbott said the cuts were a misrepresentation of the collective Castleton will, as “it’s very frustrating that President Smith said that the faculty asked for those cuts to the staff, because that is a misrepresentation. The faculty asked for cuts to administrators, and the administrators we are talking about are the associate vice presidents who don’t ever come to the campus, the people we’ve never met, who we never interact with.”

See ‘Admin. cuts’ on page 6

Devastated by destruction

Student from Gaza scared for family and friends

By Dovud Akobirov
Castleton Student

On Oct. 13, Israel instructed residents in northern Gaza Strip to move southward. But as people began their relocation, they were subjected to airstrikes.

Among those affected were family members of Vermont State University at Castleton student from Palestine, Mahmoud Alyazji, who survived the attack and subsequently returned to the Western part of the Gaza strip.

Alyazji is an international student majoring English language and literature. The ongoing situation in Gaza is causing him deep concern for the safety of his family and friends.

He strongly condemns the actions that have resulted in the loss of thousands of Palestinian lives and that he says have broken international laws.

He said every day, hundreds of people are getting killed and this is the act of genocide.

“The situation in the Gaza Strip is disastrous on all scales. Under the light of the continuous bombardment, so far, 10,022 Palestinians have been killed, including 4104 children and 2,641 women. This barbaric killing and bombing hasn’t stopped yet,” he said in a recent interview.

“Everything is being bombed; hospitals, schools, universities, media offices, mosques, churches, ambulances, journalists, and civilian houses. The hospitals are running out of fuel, which will result in catastrophic results for the more than 25,000 injured in different hospitals around Gaza; plus, they have no capacity to take more people. The gap between a Gazan citizen and death is as thin as a rope. It’s as long as the missile takes to fall from the F-16 to the house. In one second, I might lose a friend, like my friends Mohammed, Yousef, and Mossab. In one second, I might lose my family.”

The conflict between Israel and Gaza is headlining news world-

wide. Israel’s aggressive retaliation began after the Palestinian Hamas group’s attack on Israel on Oct. 7, aiming to reclaim their occupied land. Israel blames Hamas for killing hundreds in the attack at the music festival and for taking Israeli hostages.

But Alyazji feels that media coverage isn’t balanced. He believes that media is being used to spread misleading information. He points out that even celebrities are sharing misinformation, and on his Instagram, he is committed to sharing every piece of accurate information he receives from Gaza.

“There is no doubt that media is a very strong weapon. What frustrates me very much is the false propaganda. In many cases, we had celebrities, such as Justin Bieber, literally posting a photo of the Gaza strip and writing “Praying for Israel.” What made people do this is the fake Israeli propaganda. People still believe that there were 40 beheaded babies! They

still talk about 40 fake beheaded children with not even a single photo to prove it, and they ignored the real 4,104 children that were murdered in cold blood. Our job as Palestinians and as humans is to share the truth. Every view counts. I often share what is it like to live under the bombings and between the distractions in the Gaza Strip. I invite people to follow journalists, such as Motas Azaiza, who film the truth and the harsh reality of the people there right now. People should not be misled by propaganda,” he said.

The Gaza Strip is home to about 2.2 million people, nearly half of the population are children. Alyazji mentioned that following the airstrikes, the city has been so extensively demolished and ravaged that even the familiar streets he once walked on are now unrecognizable.

See ‘Devastated’ page 6

First snow!



AVERY BOUCHARD

The first snow fall of the year captured at VTSU Castleton.



JOE VVIAL

Guest editorial: Punishment of Gaza can't be the solution

Before anything else, let me say this. When I say Israel, I mean the Israeli government. When I question or criticize Israel, I am questioning or criticizing the choices made by the Israeli government.

I do not and will not fault all Jewish people, or all Israeli citizens, for the horrifying actions of the Israeli government.

But I also don't want to let the fear of being misunderstood keep me from speaking up. Especially when Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian American in Congress and a much braver woman than I, was just censured. Why? For posting a video of pro-Palestinian protestors chanting "from the river to the sea." It's meant to be a chant for Palestinian liberation, but the House deemed it antisemitic.

To simplify this, let's briefly ignore the decades of Israeli occupation over Palestine and any past tragedies, regardless of what side they were on. Let's say that the conflict between Palestine and Israel really did begin Oct. 7.

On Oct. 7, Hamas attacks Israel.

It's awful, and 1,400 Israelis are killed. It's deeply sad, and on top of that, traumatizing for Jewish people across the world who are facing a rise in antisemitism.

Then, Israel takes action. And by action, I mean that since Oct. 7, Israel has dropped over 10,000 bombs on the Gaza Strip alone.

The Gaza Strip that is only 25 miles long and between four and eight miles wide. The Gaza Strip that has a population of 2.2 million people, almost half of which are children.

The Gaza Strip that only has three crossings through which people can leave (or enter), two of which are controlled by Israel. The third, controlled by Egypt,

was bombed by Israel, blocking humanitarian aid from entering Gaza.

On Oct. 21, Israel did allow 20 aid trucks (just a small portion of the trucks waiting outside the Rafah Crossing) into Gaza. But according to U.N. officials as stated in an article from Reuters, at least 100 trucks a day are required to cover urgent needs in Gaza.

The ActionAid Communications and Advocacy Coordinator Riham Jafari said in an article from The Guardian that prior to this, "around 500 aid trucks would normally cross the border every day."

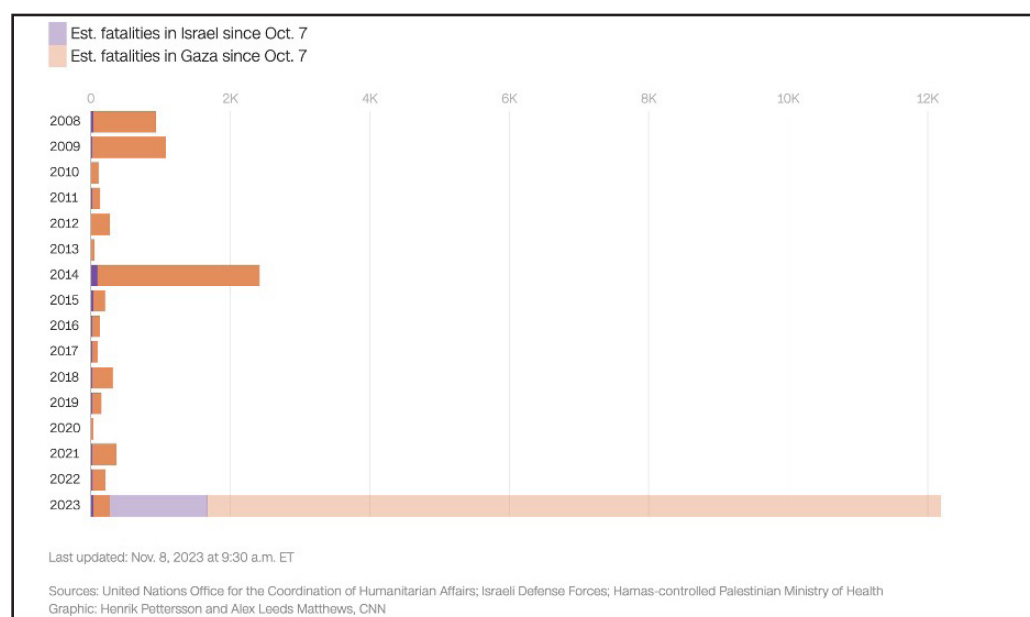
This humanitarian aid is so desperately needed not only because of the continuous airstrikes, but also because Israel has cut off access to electricity, water and fuel in Gaza.

This cut-off, according to Israeli energy minister Israel Katz, will continue until Hamas releases all Israeli hostages. Which is to say that every civilian stuck in Gaza — regardless of whether or not they have any affiliation with Hamas — is being punished.

In saying this, Katz effectively admitted that Israel is committing a war crime, as outlined in the Geneva Conventions.

The crime of collective punishment, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, "refers not only to criminal punishment, but also to other types of sanctions, harassment or administrative action taken against a group in retaliation for an act committed by an individual/s who are considered to form part of the group. Such punishment therefore targets persons who bear no responsibility for having committed the conduct in question."

The first response to any of this is often that Israel has a right to defend itself from Hamas. But does the right to defend itself give



Last updated: Nov. 8, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. ET
Sources: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Israeli Defense Forces; Hamas-controlled Palestinian Ministry of Health
Graphic: Henrik Pettersson and Alex Leeds Matthews, CNN

Israel the right to commit war crimes? Does the right to defend itself mean that Israel also has the right to continuously drop bombs that have killed over 10,000 Palestinians in Gaza? About 40% of which were children?

We don't even know how many of those people were involved with Hamas. Even if we made the completely outrageous claim that all of the adults killed were members of Hamas, that still means that over 4,000 innocent children were killed.

And what happens to the Palestinian children who live through this? What kind of environment does this violence and brutality leave for them? How do you expect them to feel about the Israeli government after watching their parents, their siblings, their friends and neighbors, suffer and die? Is it inconceivable to think that being so deeply hurt, traumatized and dehumanized by the Israeli government might just continue the cycle of violence?

As reported in Time magazine, the Palestinian Ministry of Health

issued a report on Oct. 15, stating that 47 families were wiped from the civil registry. Meaning that every member, every generation, of 47 different Palestinian families is now dead.

Is that justified? Has Israel defended itself enough? And if not, how many more Palestinians need to die before Netanyahu and the rest of the government are satisfied?

And what of the 150+ Palestinians killed by Israeli military and settlers in the West Bank, an area that Hamas has no access to? How exactly are those deaths defending Israel from Hamas?

Even without the context of the 1948 Nakba and the displacement and oppression of Palestinians that followed, Israel's military actions since Oct. 7 are horrifying.

There have been deaths and tragedies on both sides, from the beginning. But the ratio of Palestinian deaths compared to Israeli deaths is staggering. This is not to invalidate the mourning of Jewish and Israeli people, nor is it to reduce their lives simply to

numbers. But it is to point out that there is a clear power difference between Israel and Palestine and we're watching the devastating effects of that unfold.

But why should we care all the way over here in the United States? How is this affecting us?

According to the U.S. State Department website, since 1948, the United States has provided Israel with over \$130 billion that "has helped transform the Israel Defense Forces into one of the world's most capable, effective militaries and turned the Israeli military industry and technology sector into one of the largest exporters of military capabilities worldwide."

Was there nothing else that \$130 billion could have been used for over the years?

I urge you, even if you disagree with everything I've written, to look into this more. Especially if you disagree with everything I've written.

Look at how mainstream Western media is covering this, look at how independent publications are

covering this, look at how Arab publications like Al Jazeera and Israeli publications like Haaretz are covering this.

Find journalists from Gaza on Instagram and look through the photos and videos they've been posting since this began. Donate to the UN Relief and Works Agency, the Occupied Palestinian Territory Humanitarian Fund or the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. Join the boycott against Starbucks, McDonald's and Disney for their support of Israel.

Call or email your representatives and share your stance. The majority do not support a ceasefire, despite protests across the country and in the capital, which lead to over 100 congressional staffers staging a walkout Nov. 8.

Even our own Bernie Sanders, loved in part for his progressive (and, historically, anti-war) stances has rejected the idea of a permanent ceasefire.

So, what's the solution then? We sit idly by while thousands and thousands of innocent people are killed? We let our tax dollars, which are meant to be used to provide us with needed services that we are still begging for, go instead toward funding what looks like a complete genocide of the Palestinian people?

I can't stand by that. Truthfully, I don't know what the long-term solution is. But I do know that I am more inclined to listen to the journalists on the ground in Gaza, to the medical professionals from Doctors Without Borders and to the former IDF soldiers asking for a ceasefire, than I am to listen to politicians sitting in D.C.

- Lily Doton, former editor of the Castleton Spartan

CASTLETON SPARTAN

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Letters to the editor: Former president rails against merger cuts

The faculty, staff and students of Castleton were stunned on Oct. 27 when President Mike Smith announced he was eliminating 33 "administrative" positions at Vermont State University. For weeks, Smith had been promising he would reduce the number of administrators in an effort to quell the outrage over his recent cuts to faculty and to academic programs.

So, what stunned us on Friday was not that he made cuts, but that his proclamation — which he misleadingly titled "Administrative Optimization" — did not cut any administrators. In actuality, he cut only staff members. What's the difference? Administrators work for the central office; they are paid well over \$100,000; and most have never been in a classroom or even set foot on the Castleton campus. By contrast, the staffers he fired are local folks who work every day on the Castleton campus where they directly serve our students, and most of them are paid well below \$100,000.

In sum, the administration lied when they said they were going to reduce the size of the administration. It was all a ruse to mislead the public into thinking they were trimming the overpaid bureaucrats in Montpelier, when, in fact, they cut only the lower-paid staffers who do the real work of the university.

One of the many tragedies of this scheme is it will do nothing to stem the university's budget deficit. In fact, all experienced educators know that the cuts will actually hurt the bottom line because enrollment and retention — and therefore, revenue — always drop when you eliminate the hard-working, mission-critical individuals on campus who assist students and operate the physical plant.

In 2020, many far-seeing people spoke against the forced merger of Castleton with Lyndon, Johnson and Vermont Technical College into "Vermont State University." But we were promised that the merger (which has already cost hundreds of millions of dollars) would result in more students, more programs and more revenue. Sadly, but predictably, every one of those promises has proved false.

And now we have the latest broken promise: that cuts to faculty and to programs will be matched by cuts to administrators. Incredibly, the number of administrators — and their salaries — has only skyrocketed with each passing year.

It is, indeed, stunning. It is also very, very wrong.

- Jonathan Spiro - former Castleton University president

Student upset diploma won't say Castleton University

Dear Editor,
I'm a student who had started my college career at the school formerly known as Castleton University. When I first heard about the merger with the other schools to create what we all now know as Vermont State University, it's safe to say I was apprehensive. If I'm being completely honest, I hadn't heard of the other schools before coming here. Now, to further the integration, they aren't allowing current students to get the diploma they may want. I started when Castleton was Castleton and I want my diploma to reflect that.

The official email that went out from the university's new interim president states that "We understand that there may have been previous communication that indicated graduates would receive diplomas from their respective legacy institutions. Unfortunately, this was an oversight, as the legacy institutions no longer exist. Consequently, it is not feasible for us to distribute official diplomas from these legacy institutions."

In short, they told the students who attended before the merger that they would get the choice of which diploma each student wanted. This is now untrue, and students' official diplomas will only read VTSU. They are giving students the choice to get a commemorative diploma, in other words something to put on a shelf, but it won't have any actual value to the graduate.

In summary, the communication around this subject has been awful and I truly hope that the students can once again band together and change this action. If I had known about the merger before starting here, I probably wouldn't have even come to Vermont.

- Colby Tucker

The return of Safe Ride among several SGA projects to serve students



SPARTAN FILE PHOTO

Program Safe Ride provides transportation for Castleton students back to campus Friday and Saturday nights. It is one of many projects proposed by SGA delegates.

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

Student Government Association delegates are hard at work on a wide range of projects, with the objective to serve student needs on campus and beyond.

Kayon Morgan has recently re-started Safe Ride, a student-run program to provide reliable transportation back to campus for students who go out on the weekends.

“With our current campus climate, it is not sustainable to tell people to stay indoors,” said Morgan. “What we can do as delegates is provide people with resources to ensure that when they’re going out, they can feel some sense of safety and security. It’s a further reminder that SGA is here for the students.”

The program officially begins Saturday, Nov. 11, and continues for consecutive school Friday and Saturday nights until the end of the semester. Students may call in at 802-712-4214 from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. More information can be found in the school-wide email sent out on Nov. 11.

Jacqueline Nash is working to provide an interactive touch table in the Calvin Coolidge Library for the multi-purpose of displaying announcements or working collaboratively among peers.

Nash said the stand is adjustable, meaning that it can lay flat, be at an angle, or be standing up, allowing for many different uses. It proves an effective tool for group work as well.

“Say I’m working on a presentation, and you’re creating on the

works cited, I could slide you my tab, and we could be working at the same time on different things. It’ll be a great collaborative workspace for students.”

So far, Nash has successfully had the funds approved by SGA and met with the provider company Ideum, staff of VTSU Castleton Information and Technology Services and the Calvin Coolidge Library for a product demo. The next steps are to purchase and install it at the back of the library. Once it’s officially up and running, students may check it out at the front desk.

Delegates like Nash are working on several projects at a time. She is also undertaking the task of checking the functionality of all accessibility buttons around campus, as well as identifying where accessibility is still needed.

The idea was sparked upon noticing the third floor of Castleton Hall, in which “suites are handicap accessible, but to get from the elevator to the main hall of the suite, there’s a heavy metal door and no [accessibility] button.”

Nah plans to present her findings to facilities and help find grants to make the renovations attainable.

A third delegate’s project underway is Sharon Asolmia Aganah’s plan to put a minimum of five hammocks around campus.

“Students need more places on campus to vibe, especially when it’s a nice day out,” said Asolmia Aganah, adding that her funds have been approved, and she will soon make the purchases. However, due to the current season, she plans to put them up in the spring.

Yoga may return for faculty and staff

By Heather Dwire and Grace Wright
Castleton Contributors

From reducing stress and anxiety to enhancing flexibility and strength, meditation and yoga are more than just a trend; it’s an overall approach to wellness, those who practice say.

The Staff and Faculty Wellness Committee was working with the Wellness Center at Vermont State University Castleton campus last year to provide the staff and faculty with yoga sessions two days a week.

The workshops were held in Haskell Hall and taught by a fellow faculty member who volunteered her time to teach yoga.

This year, however, there have been no wellness opportunities for the staff members at Castleton, but with the help from the community in Rutland, it looks like there might be in the future.

“I spoke to True Yoga Vermont and hopefully we can have them come in once or twice a week and provide yoga for faculty and staff,” said Brittany Green, director of the McNair Scholars Program. “In terms of meditation, hopefully we can partner with Pyramid Holistic.”

Green was very enthusiastic about the possibility of adding this to the VTSU Castleton community.

“I loved it,” Green stated of past opportunities.

She is not involved with the wellness programs, because she spends most of her time working with her scholar students, but she knows of their value.

“When I became director, I really wanted my students to learn about different wellness opportunities we had,” Green said.

Bringing this program back to Castleton would be a great way.

Along with the yoga, Green commented on how another location in Rutland, Pyramid Holistic has different great opportunities.

“They do sound baths and meditations. She is a sound healer,” Green said.

Why aren’t the Wellness Workshops available at the moment? In simple terms, according to Martha Coulter, it was an issue of funding availability.

“Last year, we had funds available from the president for each campus to spend on Wellness Activities,” Coulter said in a recent email exchange. “We were able to offer yoga and tai chi, fitness training by supervised students, massages offered by athletic trainers, and subsidized lunches for employees to gather.”

Funding was uncertain this year, until recently, she said.

“We just learned, by the way, that there are again funds for each campus that can be used. We literally learned that last Friday,” she said on Oct. 25.

Coulter said Jessica Duncan, director of Career Services and Workforce Development, has volunteered to head up a committee to plan Wellness Activities for this year.

VTSU grad researches banned books

By Aurora Champine
Castleton Spartan

Where is the line between protecting children from the unknown and denying children information? This question is at the heart of VSC graduate, parent, and librarian Stephanie Hull’s research on banned books as part of the McNair Scholars Program.

Hull’s journey into education advocacy actually began as a professional chef after leaving what she called an unfulfilling English degree program.

While extremely fulfilling, her life path changed yet again with the arrival of her first born when she knew she could no longer maintain the long hours required for running a hustling kitchen.

After dedicating time to her family, she later returned to school as her two youngest were starting second grade, not as a fellow student, but as a substitute teacher. Yet before long, Hull was maintaining several positions at the school full-time including her favorite role as a library assistant.

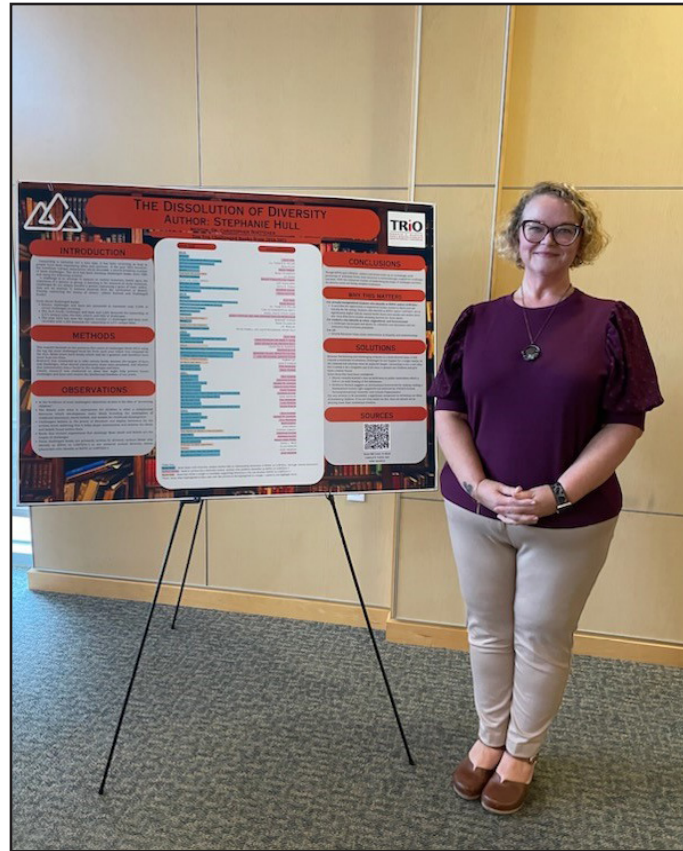
It was there where she rekindled her lifelong love of books and storytelling.

Sensing another change for the sake of passion and creativity, Hull said she knew in the library was where she wanted to end up.

“Librarians are like these super mythical creatures who seem to know everything and have the best stories,” Hull says when recalling her decision. “Liberians are magical by association.”

The subject of book banning was introduced to her as a student and spurred by her strong beliefs of intellectual freedom, especially for children. Her McNair project, titled “The Dissolution of Diversity,” focused on how diverse authors and stories, specifically the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ community, made up most of the top 10 banned books in the country from the past five years, despite making up less than 5% of published works within the industry.

According to the American Library Association, 2023 saw a 20% national increase from 2022 in attempts to censor or challenge library materials, services, and books. That means between Jan. 1



STEPHANIE HULL

Stephanie Hull pictured next to research poster.

to Aug. 31 there have been 1,915 documented challenges to unique titles, most of which are either written by people of color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, or contain even a mention of either subject matter.

But the issue is going beyond our libraries as well.

Just last month, Scholastic, a multi-billion dollar educational and publishing company best known for their annual Book Fairs, was accused of diversity censorship in light of a new company policy amidst the recent surge of nationwide book banning. However, many teachers and librarians, including Hull, said their intentions actually contributed more to the problem than it solved.

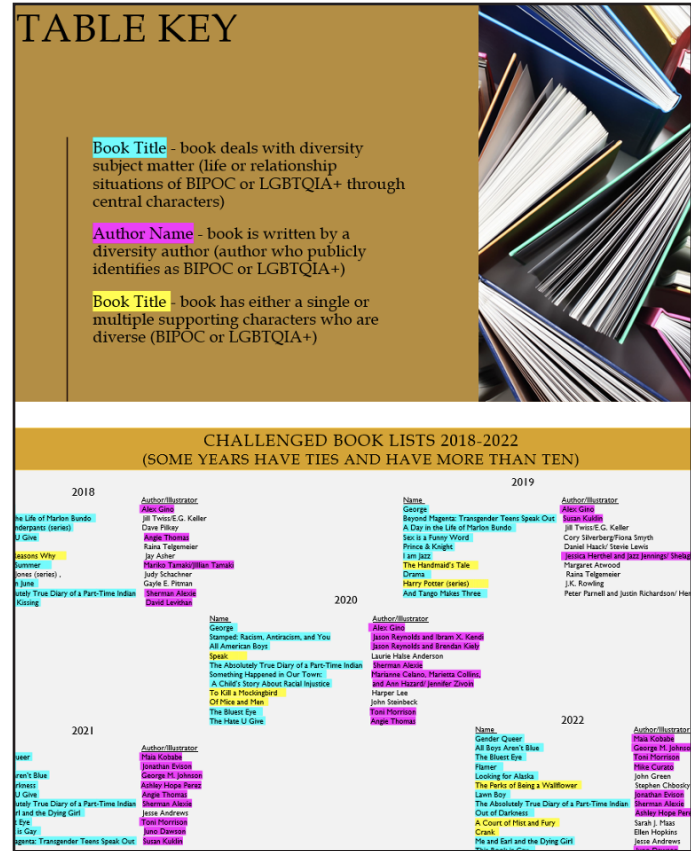
“I was appalled when [they] offered the sort of ‘selective banning’ for book fair. Especially because I had just written this huge research paper on how diverse stories are imperative in building empathy and understanding in communities. It just made my heart sink and made me realize that there is

much more work to be done so that diverse authors and stories can do just that,” she said.

When asked her opinion on how Vermont potentially contributes to this turbulent culture, Hull was optimistic but remained cautious.

“I think that Vermont is generally more open-minded and has not greatly contributed to book-banning culture. We have very few instances of challenges and bans and generally, books are retained in circulation,” she said. “However, not all Vermonters have those beliefs. The idea of book challenges and bans encompasses so many different things such as morals and religion and political beliefs... it would be so easy for a shift to happen in the direction that books are being pulled and banned and burned that it is really a terrifying thought.”

The average person may not share Hull’s concerns or even find them exaggerated, but librarians nationwide know they’re certainly founded in truth. A story from



STEPHANIE HULL

Screenshot of presentation showing banned books.

TIME magazine reported that in September of 2021, a library in Victoria, Texas was threatened with eviction by the county commission after the director of library services refused to remove over 40 books from the shelves at the request of a group of residents over concerns that certain materials contained “pornographic or obscene materials.”

Many of the books evaluated were LGBTQ children’s books.

Although the county didn’t provide funding for the library, they did own the library building’s lease. The mayor of Victoria additionally stated that if the library didn’t revise its collection and limit the availability of “alternative lifestyle children’s books” by that October, the City Council could decide to freeze the library’s budget.

When asked how students, parents, and citizens can help support our libraries, Hull was quick with some advice.

“Stories cannot be silenced if we keep buying them and read-

ing them and promoting them. The ALA has wonderful recommendations for advocacy, equity, diversity, and inclusion... The biggest and best thing you can do is to continue to seek knowledge. Walk into that magical library, ask the librarian to help you find one of these diversity stories, and read it. That story becomes part of you and now you have a little magic to pass on to someone else.

McNair Program Director Britt Green spoke highly of Hull’s work on the book banning research project.

“Stephanie is truly passionate about the topics that she researches and plans to continue this journey in a Master of Library and Information Sciences Program (MLIS). She has already been accepted into an incredible MLIS program with an amazing funding offer! I am very excited to see the groundbreaking work that Stephanie brings to her next academic institution,” Green said.

Email restrictions inhibit communication to students

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Currently at Vermont State University at Castleton, only a handful of people have the ability to send out mass emails and students and faculty are being greatly affected.

An email was sent out on Nov. 8 addressing updates to the use of the “all students” email list.

In the email, Kelley Beckwith, vice president of Student Success wrote, “Currently, Vermont State relies on mass emails as a primary means of communicating with our students. This practice has led to an overload of emails on a daily basis. To address this issue, we are working on a project to introduce new communication tools in about a year, which will help reduce our dependence on email as the primary means of communication.”

The email contains two documents, the first being an “Addendum to Student Email Policy” that states, “This addendum outlines which mailboxes can send to the Students@VermontState.edu list. Before sending, one or two approvers as designated in the student email policy must approve the email.”

The second document contains the Email Policy for the Student Email List. The new policy is supposed to reduce our reliance on email.

Since the merger has taken place, many responsibilities have been shifted, including those for Area Coordinator Anastasia Neuberger, who is one of the few who now has the ability to send out mass emails.

“After the assistant director of student activities left, James Wolf,

they needed someone to be an advisor to SGA and CAB, so I was asked to be that person. So I go to all their meetings, program shop for them, stuff like that,” Neuberger said.

“They allowed me to have the ability to send out mass emails so I could send out different Student Government forms, emails, club emails, things like that.”

Neuberger often gets requests to send out emails for events like school plays and the Sparty Says newsletter, and said it can be a bit much as one of the few who can send them these days.

“Yes, sometimes it can be. But I would say that I don’t mind helping students who need help and I know that they are doing something good for the community and students and faculty,” she said.

Clubs and organizations are also being greatly affected because the presidents are not able to send out mass emails.

Kayon Morgan, president of the Castleton branch of the NAACP, talked about how it has affected her position. For the NAACP, email is a primary tool for communicating to the public and getting people involved.

“We consistently see that minority organizations don’t have a history of surviving a long time in the Castleton community because of the lack of membership. And, so with that what we’ve seen is that membership has declined extremely because students are, one, not reading a lot of emails that are coming from the one person, and two, it’s so hard to reach students and let them know what’s happening,” Morgan said.

“Like if they’re not on our specific email list, it’s so hard to get them to come to a meeting, let

them know about events that are happening. It’s definitely taken a toll on us and seriously, as president, I’m seriously concerned that if this doesn’t change soon that not only the NAACP but a lot of clubs and organizations that are pivotal to student life, to the unification of students, well wither because they can’t maintain membership,” she continues.

Morgan said this is the latest of a lot of frustrations that have come along with this new development of the merger.

“I think my biggest frustration is that we’ve worked so hard to gain such a presence in the Castleton community. We’ve worked so hard to gather an audience and just maintain the connections and just serve as a communication point for whenever something serious or non-serious is happening on campus,” she said.

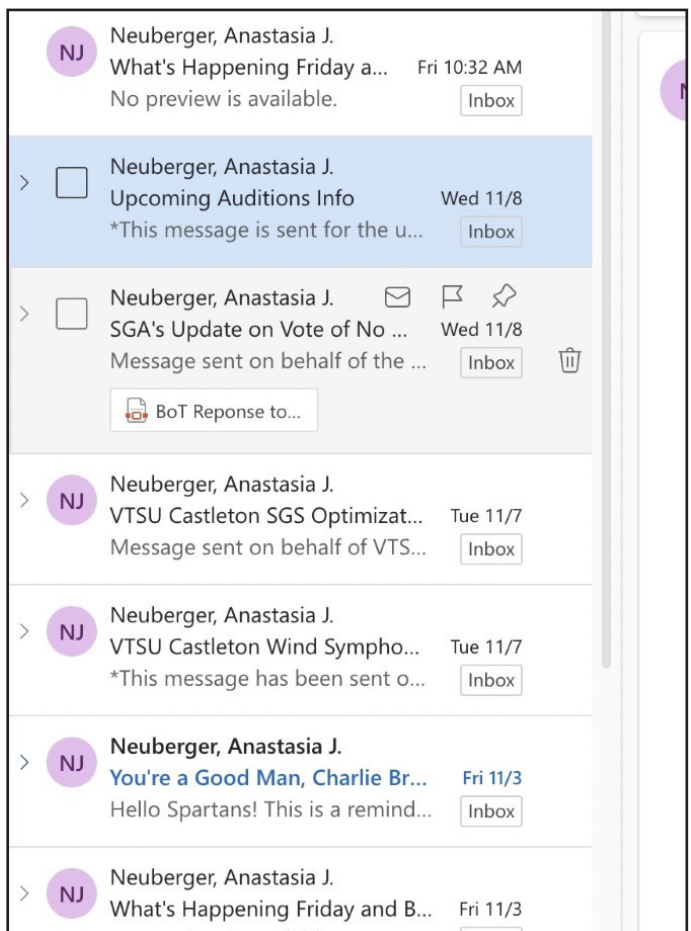
“The university benefits 100 percent from having the NAACP charter here. Yet it seems like they don’t really care about the survival of the chapter and that’s frustrating,” she added.

Morgan discusses how the student body is facing a huge disconnection between the people holding the information and how they’re getting it out to students.

“It’s just creating a disconnect. I call it censorship, that’s what I call it,” Morgan said.

“It’s a ploy to censor students in certain clubs, censor organizations, limit their ability to reach and talk about what happening.”

“It seems to me that our university really wants to continue making decisions that will impact our community and then they want to silence us. They kind of want to say, ‘this is what we did, and you can’t say anything about it’ and



DAVID BLOW

Screenshot of inbox showing Neuberger’s emails.

emails were one of the main ways that we let people know what’s happening.”

The clubs and organizations are really being affected by the lack of communication. Students find that it is creating a divide between all of us.

“I just strongly urge administration to just really consider the long term and detrimental impacts that this is having on student success,

student engagement, and it’s going to have on student retention,” Morgan said. “At the end of the day, students talk to students, and current college students talk to high school students that are going to come in and it’s just unfortunate. And for all the students, I just want to say stay strong and try to support each other because it’s hard.”

Maddie on the street

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



Whats your
quirky
Thanksgiving
tradition?



Devon Riggio
Sophomore

"My Thanksgiving tradtion is saying the pledge of allegiance before we eat instead of grace like they did in National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation."



Jake Halverson
Senior

"On Thanksgiving we save a pie for after the football game and whoever loses the bet on the game gets pried."



Emma Patrissi
Sophomore

"On Thanksgiving morning my family and I watch our high school's rivarly football game, it's the best."



Holly Cudmore
Senior

"On Thanksgiving morning I always go hunting with my dad and brothers."

Help Us, Help Them

The Castleton is again raising money for children in need this Christmas. To contribute, go to <https://givebutter.com/y4MGTD>



CURTSEY OF KATE MOLIS

Castleton Elementary first graders come into Physics for Elementary Teachers to do science activites on Nov. 3.

First-graders learn about physics

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

On Friday, Nov. 3, Castleton Elementary first graders swarmed the Physics for Elementary Teachers class in collaboration with Vermont State University Castleton education majors for interactive science activities.

"Can you see sound waves?" posed freshman Mikey Rabi, presenting about sound waves using cup phones, slinkies, and different levels of water in a glass.

"I can see one right by head!" exclaimed a first-grade boy.

"It's his hair," cleverly responded another girl.

The 15 students in professor Tim Thibedeau's physics class had one week to come up with their own original ideas of how to present sound and light waves to the group of 35 children. Upon presentation time, children filtered through the stations in small groups, for a few minutes each.

For instance, the student puppet activity, hosted by Grace Gardner and Skylar Larabee, was a hit for first grader, Levi.

Or Karsen Dunican's activity of hitting a tuning fork to see how it interacts with the water, was named their favorite by James and TJ.

Other activities included drawing pictures of how a paint brush is

visually distorted when put in water, using crafted harmonicas, and playing the game Red Light Green Light using a flashlight and colored gels.

Kate Molis, grade one teacher at Castleton Elementary, said one of her main focuses has been "to engage with the community more," and that events like these are a great way to do it.

"The kids are so engaged," said Molis, "and they get to go to places they don't usually go to."

Looking around the room, evidently the children were fascinated by every one of the activities. It got them up and moving, whether in the hallway to talk through cup-phones, or shaking plastic eggs filled with different materials, like pasta or rice, to hear the sound it makes.

"Are you ready?" asked one boy. "Let's make some music!" he exclaimed, showcasing his best dance moves.

Students of the class were similarly excited for the event. For Rabi, it was a lot of fun, especially with it being his first time teaching in a classroom. For others, like senior Alyssa Ferris, "it gives [her] a glimpse of what life will be like next year."

Since 2017, Thibedeau has incorporated elementary school collaboration into his class, naming Rutland Intermediate, Barstow Memorial School, and Castleton

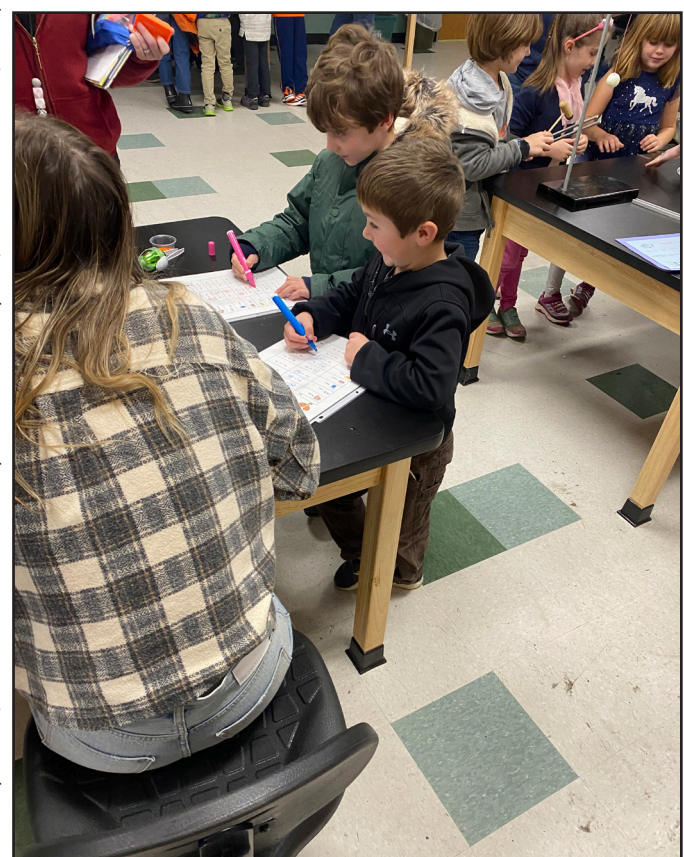
Elementary. Each year they try to have two to three visiting groups of students.

"These events are important for lots of reasons," said Thibedeau. "First, our future teachers need to learn how to teach science. This course, through these visits, gives prospective educators the opportunity to plan, deliver, and reflect on real science teacher early in their studies."

He believes a key strength of the Education program is how they prioritize the teaching of all disciplines, beyond standard math and literacy.

"But I think it is the elementary students who get the most out of the visit," he continued. "Schools and teachers are doing their best with what they have, but they don't have everything. We have a well-stocked lab, and we can provide many activities local schools can't."

He says that there is "nothing more inspiring" than seeing the kids participate, even asking their teachers afterwards to do more experiments or science fairs at school. "I truly hope we can do more of this in the future. We will continue to offer Physics for Elementary Teachers on a yearly basis, and I plan to welcome students into our classroom each time."



CURTSEY OF KATE MOLIS

First grade students participate in various physics activities with VTSU Castleton students.

Seeking your favorite pet stories

By Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Researchers have always been very curious about how pets positively impact humans' mental health. Through countless years of collecting data, extreme advancements in technology, and analyzing the crucial relationship between humans and pets we can now see that humans rely on pets significantly.

I would almost guarantee that anyone reading this has a pet or has had a pet in the past.

If you have not ever had a pet, I highly encourage you to look at future possibilities for you to become a pet parent! It truly is a feeling like no other, to have an animal in your life is something that can be unique and extremely beneficial overall.

I know personally that some of my best memories were when I was with any animal, especially pets. It is remarkable that we humans cannot verbally communicate with most pets, however, we can feel more connected with them than some of our family members.

We love them, yet we have no affirmative idea of what they are thinking or feeling. The only thing we have is data from research, and our best educated guesses on what they are feeling and thinking.

In addition, we know of the extreme benefits that we humans attain from our animal companions.

One of these includes the extreme benefit of learning responsibility. A trait that many companies look for when hiring a candidate is responsibility; the foundation for future success.

Having this trait instilled in you is priceless because people can invest in you. But how do pets help us build our responsibility?

When you are taking care of an animal you must do some things that many people would not want to do. These include chores like picking up after your pet, cleaning your pet's enclosure or cage, and taking your pet to the Veterinary office.

These requirements build a level of responsibility that can help many individuals in the future. Good pet owners know that these obligations are required for maintaining a healthy relationship with their pets.

A healthy pet is vital for a healthy relationship. Another way animals tremendously help us humans is by lowering our stress and anxiety levels.

This can be seen from Mental Health America as they state "Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI) research is now exploring the benefits of pets and human-animal interaction for mental health has uncovered new benefits for stress, depression, post-traumatic stress and for managing mental health"

Pets can also play a vital role in



Columnist Gavin Bradely talks about the significance of pets and seeks stories from Castleton students.

their human's life by giving them a sense of purpose. When animals are in our care, they need us humans to properly look after them for survival.

This in return can make us feel needed and loved. Feeling these emotions can make our overall mood significantly better.

In addition, it can even help boost our self-esteem. Humans live together with each other and animals, we always have been (and if we are here) we always

will be.

Sometimes it is hard to remember that we humans are only as healthy as our environment around us. We may be the most dominant creatures that we know of, however, we are still on a planet with animals that affect us in monumental ways.

To understand the relationship between man and the rest of the animal kingdom is vital. It is extremely vital not just for other animals, but for us as well.

After all, who is to say we are in their world, or they are in our world?

I am going to start a pet series in this newspaper. I am looking for any interesting stories or comments about any pet you may have with you, or you may have back at home. Please feel free to reach out, I would love to hear about the amazing connection between you and your pet!

A handful of Hollywood celebrity caricatures

By Joe Vyvial
Castleton Spartan

I had this idea in my head for a while. I thought it would be cool to capture some of my favorite actors as caricatures on my large paper. Most of them are my actual favorite actors.

But some of them, for example Hugh Laurie, Nicholas Cage or Robert Pattinson, would not make my top 30 list.

But their faces are so easy to do and look so good as a caricature that I had to do them.

On the other hand, there are actors I wish I had drawn, but I couldn't figure out or find a caricature that would fit in the style of the whole drawing.

For example, Christian Bale, Christopher Waltz or Al Pacino.

I found most of the caricatures on the internet and I liked them so much that I had to use them.

Some of them are originals though. The Johnny Depp one, Brad Pitt, Jim Carrey, I think.

Honestly, I hardly remember which are mine and which not.

I drew this approximately three years ago. I don't remember how long it took me to finish it. I think each caricature took me around 20 to 30 minutes maybe. On the whole project though I spent couple of weeks.

More progress photos and videos are on my Instagram @pepan_art



JOE VYVIAL

What is Castleton listening to?

By Jason Lipscomb
Castleton Spartan

If you're a student at Castleton, it's likely you've heard your fair share of country and rap music blaring from balconies or open windows. It's no secret that a large population of students take a liking to these two genres, but that isn't the only kind of music that's listened to at this school.

Senior music student Matt Moore listens to a variety of different artists and genres. When asked about a recent favorite to listen to, he said he's been loving The Beatles.

But his all-time favorite, if he had to pick one, is Mac Miller.

"I can just listen to him in any mood. It's great," Moore said.

It was hard for him to decide what music to talk about when asked, because Moore said enjoys a lot of different kinds of music, from jazz, to reggae and psychedelic rock.

Another senior at Castleton, Connor Davis, said his current favorite rap artist has to be the New York native A Boogie Wit da Hoodie.

But Davis also loves country music.

"There's too many country ones to just pick," Davis said, when asked what his favorite country artist was.

"Probably Morgan Wallen though," he said, after being encouraged to pick just one.

Answers varied from students when asked about their favorite bands and songs these days, but one student really stood out.

Jamison Baker, sophomore music student, said he really likes C418, the creator of the soundtrack for the popular game "Minecraft."

Castleton is a relatively diverse campus, with quite a diverse taste in music.

One person will be listening to Rod Wave in their Air Pods, while the person walking by them listens to Metallica. Everyone's different, and all music is art. What's considered "good" really is all up to personal preference.

By Camille Jackson
Castleton Spartan

"Och Sen Så är Jag Död," recommended by Christopher Kerven

Translating into "And then I am Dead," Kerven's recommendation ties into his Swedish background.

Written by Peter Johansson, this novel "takes place in the suburbs of Stockholm, Sweden." This Swedish book follows "the young criminal gang and how the 'regular' Swedish person gets caught up in this" while revealing "the horrifying truth about today's society."

While not yet available in English, for future reads, this book keeps readers enthralled as Kerven explains, "It's a thriller-romance that brings constant excitement and is a real page-turner."

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

After stepping into the enchanting world of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," one finds themselves transported back to the timeless charm of Charles M. Schulz's beloved Peanuts comic strip.

This wholesome play, a musical adaptation of Schulz's iconic characters, brings the world of Charlie Brown and his friends to life on the stage with a blend of humor, nostalgia, and emotion.

The content of the play lies not only in its portrayal of Schulz's characters but also in its exploration of the creative process behind the Peanuts comic strip.

When the play first opens up, we see an unknown character on the left side of the stage, yet to be identified.

As the play goes on, we can then depict the character as Charles M. Schulz, writing the comics as they play out on stage.

The narrative intertwines the real-life struggles and adventures of the comic's creator with the antics of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy, Linus, Schroeder, and Sally.

This dual perspective provides the audience with a deeper understanding of the characters' origins and how the comics got their stories, making the experience greater for the audience.

Each actor embodied their Peanuts counterpart with an authentic-

ity that captured the essence of the beloved characters.

"They each played the part so well. It was evident they each put a spin on their characters that made it more inviting to watch," said Lauren Fötter after seeing a late-night viewing of the play.

Just by watching the characters interact on stage, you could tell the chemistry among the cast members was strong and brought the iconic friendships of Charlie Brown and his gang to life.

The musical was able to strike a balance between deep thought and playful fun. Audiences of all ages can relate to Charlie Brown's challenges and fears, which can create reflection and times of laughter.

Everyone in the crowd was

captivated by the fun musical pieces, which included beloved songs like "Happiness" and "My New Philosophy," adding an extra element of fun to the show.

"The songs kept us engaged and went along perfectly with the storyline. Each character sang their song with enthusiasm making it enjoyable to watch and listen to," said junior Rylee Pepin.

The production team also skillfully recreated the iconic settings of the Peanuts universe. Everywhere from Lucy's psychiatric booth to Schroeder's piano, the set and design transport the audience into Schulz's imagination.

There was also a sense of simplicity to the set that allowed the characters and their stories to take

center stage.

The play successfully captured the magic of the Peanuts universe while offering a glimpse into the creative mind behind these characters.

"I never have time usually to attend the musicals but I'm happy that I was able to go to this musical and see something new," said junior Jack Boyle.

Whether you're a lifelong fan of Charlie Brown or a newcomer, this production is a journey into the world of innocence, friendship, and the enduring spirit of Charlie Brown.



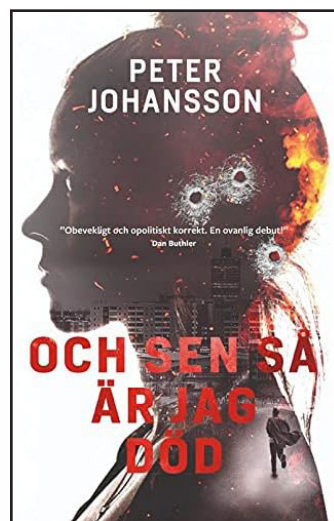
The VTSU Fine Arts Department hosted their fall musical, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" from Nov. 2 through Nov. 5.



MARTIN VANBUREN III

Book of the Fortnight

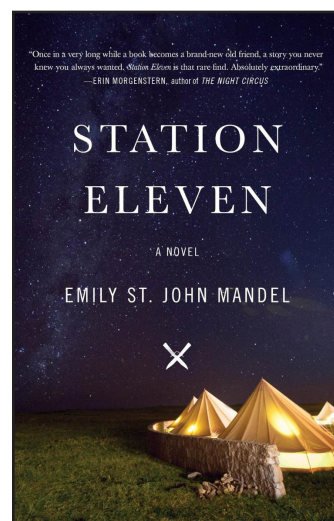
"Station Eleven," recommended by Adsel Sparrow



Authored by Emily St. John Mandel in 2014, the book "gained immense popularity during the COVID pandemic due to the book's primary setting: a world 20 years post a deadly pandemic that killed 99% of the human population" explained Sparrow.

Certainly, relevant to the lives of many today, "Station Eleven" "travels between the days pre-pandemic and post-pandemic, following a series of characters as their lives intersect through an actor and an unfinished comic series."

"It is not your typical apocalyptic book - it touches something much rawer and human inside the reader. I read this in July and have not been able to stop thinking about it since," said Sparrow.



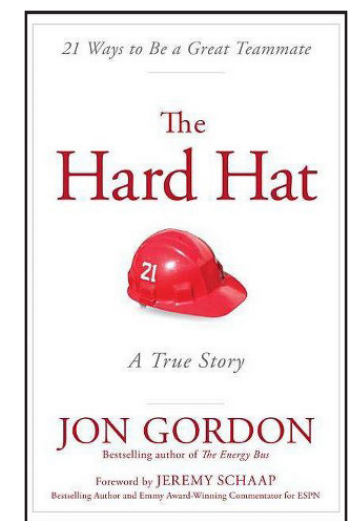
"The Hard Hat," recommended by Christopher Eder

Recounting the devastating tale of a young Cornell lacrosse captain who lost his life while playing, this book by Jon Gordon teaches readers unforgettable lessons in sport and beyond.

"It's short but good," explained Eder, who encourages people to take in the lessons outlined in the book "21 ways to be a great teammate."

It was originally recommended to Eder by VTSU Castleton baseball coach Ted Shipley, Eder extends this recommendation to all who may enjoy the story and lessons.

Last week in issue four's Book of the Fortnight, "The Year of the Hare" was recommended. This book is appropriate for mature audiences, as opposed to 'all ages.'



Devastated:

Continued from page 1

“Had I the chance to visit the Gaza Strip right now, I wouldn’t recognize any of the streets. Yesterday, they bombed near to my house on Al-Shefa Street. Looking at the photos, I couldn’t tell which street is this. The street that I’ve been living in for the past 22 years! I couldn’t. There are no more playgrounds for the children to play, no more mosques or churches for the people to pray. My beloved university has been demolished to the ground. I now can’t complete my education, nor can thousands of students. Our family business has

stopped and will stop for years. Every place that carried memories for us was bombed. The streets’ smell is full of blood and rubble. We would never see anything normal again, never. Instead of seeing the beauty of places, we would see them loaded with layers of catastrophic memories. It will haunt us forever, even in the most peaceful places. My city, once a place full of memories, is now demolished to the ground, and every day new buildings are being wiped out. Although that being said, Gaza was home, and it is still home, the home that I love and will always love,” he said.



CURTESY DOVUD AKOBIROV
VTSU Castleton student Mahmoud Alyazji, from Gaza, speaks about losing friends and fearing for family.

Academic Support hosts raffle

Academic Support, located on the ground floor of Babcock Hall, as long provided students a comforting study environment. Equipped with tutors across a range of subjects and manned by the assuring presence of Michelle Stanley at the front desk, Academic Support has been a central resource for all members of the university community.

The “Drop In and Win” raffle defines Academic Support’s most recent initiative to draw students towards the array of resources offered daily.

To commemorate the final stretch of the fall 2023 semester, Academic Support will hold a weekly raffle. According to Doe Dahm, Writing and Humanities development coordinator at Academic Support, “every time a

student uses our drop-in tutoring services, they will receive a raffle ticket.”

At the end of each week, a winner will be drawn!

“And that lucky student will receive either a \$25 gift card to Fireside or a pizza gift certificate,” Dahm said.

Devised by Director of Academic Support Rachel Mark, the raffle will follow the final three weeks of the Fall semester, from Nov. 13-Dec. 8. The raffle’s contingency on the use of Academic Support’s Drop-In services aims to motivate students to extract the resources available to them. Indeed, the dual strategy of “rewarding good students” and promoting Academic Support focuses on the academic needs of students as the semester comes to a close.

Thankful for dad after cancer battle



COURTESY OF ALI IMPOMENI

Ali poses with her dad, Christopher, at VTSU Castleton.

By Ali Imponemi
Spartan Contributor

December 29, 2021 was a normal day.

I was a senior in high school on Christmas break. I went out with my grandma to get lottery tickets and Starbucks, something we did

regularly.

I went back to her house because my grandpa needed help with setting up Paramount Plus on the TV, and she wanted to show me her father’s penny collection.

Very exciting...

I spent the rest of the day watching YouTube and making

jewelry, my current hobby at the time.

The house was quiet. My sister was in her room and my mom doing the dishes.

Then I heard crying.

I had a typical life growing up. I lived in a nice house, a nice neighborhood, my parents had good jobs, school was fine, and I was happy.

In April 2014, when I just turned 10, my parents sat my sister, Lucia, and I down and told us they were divorcing. It was not shocking as they argued often, but I was still devastated.

That summer we moved out of the house I spent the past seven years making memories in.

They did the co-parenting thing and although it was rocky the first year or so, my relationship with my parents became stronger.

Everything was fine until January 2018, when we were told my dad was diagnosed with Stage IV colon cancer, which had spread to his liver. It was so far along he started chemotherapy at once, meaning my mom had to take over the role of mom and dad. It resulted in my mom moving us upstate to her parents, leaving everything behind.

Toward the end of the year, he got so much stronger although he was still sick. Since then, he has had countless surgeries, chemo rounds, colostomy bags and so on and so on, but he has been able to

take us on trips and play the role of an active father.

November 2021, he is getting surgery at Sloan Kettering in New York City. Surgery to remove the itty-bitty lesion on his liver, one he has had several times prior.

Monday after Thanksgiving he went in, and it went well. He stayed in the hospital for the rest of the week and then released that Friday.

The days he was home, I didn’t really communicate with him as he was resting, but the few times I did he wasn’t recovering the way he did in the past. He ended up back in the hospital with an infection.

We didn’t really know a lot but, but he ended up getting sedated a few days later.

I found that out through a text from his friend. That was not ideal. Luckily, my aunt, who is his health proxy, started to give us daily updates on how he was doing though they were not that eventful.

Until that night.

I heard sobbing from my mother.

I can only count on one hand the number of times I’ve seen my mom cry, and I just knew.

My heart dropped. I felt sick. I ran downstairs not even pausing the episode of Dance Moms I was watching and not even turning off the game I was playing on my phone.

Mom’s face was all red and her

phone was to her ear. Through my panicking I heard her say things on the line like “should we come down?” “Is his girlfriend there?” “Are your parents coming?”

Lucia and I are both in the kitchen now shaking, begging our mom to tell us what happened. She sat us down and told us that dad had stool coming out of his side and when the doctors saw it, they said they couldn’t do anything else for him and called his sister to say goodbye.

That one sentence changed my entire life. I was screaming, pulling my hair, this can’t be real.

Mom kept trying to tell us that he’s been sick for so long and can’t do it any longer. I couldn’t breathe. I saw my little sister hyperventilating, something that still sticks with me this day.

Mom explains how she’s crying as she’s devastated for us and that he doesn’t deserve this. Explaining that even with the divorce eight years prior, that doesn’t mean she’d wish this upon him.

We have never been the religious type of family. In fact, my mom loathed going to Catholic school growing up and despises when her parents try to include her in religion. But we prayed. We prayed for Daddy and Imp (the college nickname he has, what she used to call him until the divorce) that he’ll no longer be struggling here and for him being so brave on this five long battle of cancer that

he was about to lose.

I lost track of time while waiting for my aunt to call back. I do remember it being almost midnight and I was thinking about how I would continue my life without my father? Who would walk me down the aisle? Who would be ‘Papa Imp’? All these thoughts racing through my mind not even knowing if he was still alive.

My mom’s phone rings.

This is it.

Is he gone already?

I clutch Lucia’s hand. We’re still shaking. I felt sick so I ran to the bathroom but when I came out, she said that they were able to get it under control and were going to do a procedure.

He was still sedated for over two months after that. But he was able to somehow fully recover from this infection.

Almost two years later, he’s still fighting, but is doing great. Working full time. Taking my sister and I on vacation. Cooking for us. Things the way they were.

We are still not entirely sure how my dad lived passed that night. We joke about that often. But it goes to show how special he is.

I am so lucky he’s my father.

Honoring Veterans Day



The Castleton Chorale performs the National Anthem for the Veteran’s Day Commemorative Ceremony at Woodruff.



PEARL BELLOMO

Admin. cuts:

Continued from page 1

Ragousiz explained this misconstrued position saying, “the idea was, when the system presented their comparative analysis, that we have had 20% more administrators than those systems of comparative size, and so then they cut 20% of our administrators. They were all student-facing for the most part. The work that others are saying, is that our system should not just be looking at numbers but at the personnel, and why do we have a funnel shape instead of a pyramid shape?”

The 33 voided positions were financially legitimized to achieve fiscal sustainability by 2027, but some question why other avenues aren’t being considered.

“What can we do for revenue? Maybe that’s the discussion rather than what do we do for cuts,” Reilly, the business professor, said.

Reilly further suggested that “when we have to make adjust-

ments to save money or to be more competitive, when you start thinking of people as numbers instead of thinking of people as hearts, you’re going to screw up,” he said.

The importance of money to the ongoing transition was further illuminated following the announcement that the arts would remain at the Castleton campus. Art professor Oliver Schemm, who is also coordinator for the School of Fine and Performing Arts and Director of Castleton Galleries, detailed the influence of money underscoring the decision.

An alumnus of the 1969 class who was heavily involved in the arts endowed substantial funds to the university in his will, Schemm said. Upon learning of the possible consolidation of the arts away from the Castleton Campus, Schemm “contacted him and said this is what’s happening, is there anything you can do?”

“Essentially he used his future donation and endowment as leverage in order to keep the art depart-

ment here,” Schemm said.

Former VTSU President Mike Smith addressed the endowment in the VCSC Board of Trustee meeting on Oct. 30, explaining “we’ve had a potential endowment for the Fine Arts program at Castleton, so we’ll look at keeping the Fine Arts at Castleton because of that potential endowment.”

While the arts at Castleton gripped this lifeline, remaining tension among the faculty and staff was perhaps a consequence of the announced cuts and consolidation of programs.

“It’s only natural that the faculty on those campuses would advocate for self-preservation, and it does inadvertently pit professors against each other,” Talbott said.

Certainly, following the announcement of the cuts, a central goal of the ‘higher-ups’ will be to reestablish trust at all levels of university life, from prospective students to veteran professors. The cuts inflamed and exposed the underlying doctrine of family that

exists within the Castleton campus, as Reilly spoke of.

“We are almost like a family,” and “threats against that family is our reaction. We are reacting because you’re threatening our family,” he said.

While the cuts and various changes stemming from the transition challenge the unique culture of Castleton, Schemm remains optimistic.

“I would say that it’s been bruised, but I think the very fact that we had a rally here supporting music and art to stay on campus, supporting the faculty, I think that’s an indication of where it is, and that’s strong.”

“And no joke, small school with a big heart, I know it sounds corny, but it really is true,” Schemm said.

Talbott agreed.

“Dave Wolk’s legacy, the ‘keep smiling’ stickers you see everywhere,” are an indication of a legacy not easily eroded.



AVERY BOUCHARD

Students rally at Hoff Hall to address state legislators.

Saying goodbye to football is not easy

By Jacob Gonzalez
Castleton Spartan

I never thought this day would come as quick as it did.

The final time being out on a football field.

It's been one hell of a ride but, I'm not sure if I'm ready to let go.

My whole life revolved around football since the second grade and it holds a special place in my heart. My earliest memories as a kid involved playing football in my yard with my neighbors.

Having my stepdad be my coach throughout my youth pushed me to work hard and he taught me how to be a leader. Even when I was home, my dad and I had our own football game we used to play each night and created our own football league. There wasn't a moment where football wasn't being talked about.

During my modified days, I started to grow my knowledge of the game. Coach Wally and Guido allowed me to find happiness in the game by making it fun. I'll always remember playing sharks and minnows for tackling and one-on-one board drills for blocking. The best game had to have been capture the flag, but unfortunately in today's world, you would never be able to play them.

Going into high school, I was ready to contribute to the team in any way possible. As a freshman, I was lucky enough to have role models like Brandon Jourdanais, Dan and Cody Hayner and Andrew Clark to help mold me. Those guys were gritty players who would push themselves beyond limits to make sure the team was successful. No matter how much pain they were going through, they always put their hand back in the dirt to hit you harder than the last play.

Only two games into my freshman year, I was put into a starting spot after Dan Hayner got injured.

From then on, I was the starter. It built so much confidence within me that I was able to compete with the best. At that point, my commitment to the game only became stronger.

I started to track my calories and eat the right amount of food each day. I started to work out more than ever and eventually got a personal trainer to push me even further as an athlete. I took football more seriously than a lot of people I grew up with because I had a goal.

I wanted to play at the next level and there was nothing stopping me from achieving that dream. I gave up a lot during my high school days, skipping out on my friends to pursue my goal. Although I missed

some moments, I don't regret any of it because of where I am today.

I came to Castleton not knowing this would be my home for the next five years. The moment I came onto campus, I fell in love. The voicemail before I was accepted into the program is still on my phone to this day. That phone call changed my life and allowed me an opportunity I had long dreamed of.

I was leaving home for the first time, and I was nervous coming in, but I was confident that I could be dominant.

Boy, was I humbled.

It wasn't fun at all, but it was the growth I needed to realize that I've got some work to do.

Before my next season, COVID happened and we didn't have a season. I stayed home but I still stayed committed to get faster and stronger. 2021 was a building year to perfect my craft as a player. Opportunities were limited, but it was the first time getting out on the field and starting one game.

The following year, the seniors had left and it was my time to take over. Unfortunately, it started off slow for me. I didn't earn the right to be the starter, but I was going to prove that I could, with the opportunities I would soon be given. Before conference play started, I finally was able to start and had a

great year.

All these memories are great, but there's something missing. Winning a championship.

2023 was my final year to be able to achieve my dream. It was the main reason why I decided to come back. Being points away from a championship in the past two years, I needed to do this.

My best friends throughout five years of playing at Castleton that have stuck through it all with me wanted nothing more than that same goal.

But some dreams aren't meant to come true and it's hard to come to terms with it after all the time and commitment put into it. It took me a while to come to peace with this. It's the thoughts of regret that start to fill your mind when you've got nothing to show for it all.

Then, you remember the journey and the lifelong friendships and memories you've created. The highest of highs and lowest of lows. Pushing through adversity when you couldn't imagine doing one more rep. The little things along the way will last a lifetime, which takes all the regret away.

You need to cherish the moments when you can because someday, you won't ever be able to relive them.



COURTESY JACOB GONZALEZ

Senior defensive lineman Jacob Gonzalez celebrates after making a play.

Reigning champs stopped in OT

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

It was close, but the reigning LEC field hockey champs went down in a very unfortunate fashion when the Spartans fell to the undefeated University of Maine Huskies 2-1 in overtime.

In a back-and-forth contest that took place on Nov. 2, the Spartans were looking to push through semifinals to make it to back-to-back LEC finals appearances with hope of being once again crowned LEC champs and make another trip to the NCAA tournament.

"We obviously were hoping for a different outcome, but we are super proud of our team. You know, in any playoff game the energy and competition are that much greater than a regular season game. We are proud of ourselves on and off the field and the effort and teamwork we put into that game. We will continue to work hard during our off-season and come back stronger and more prepared!" said sophomore Genevieve Pitts.

Prior to their match against the Huskies, the Spartans had faced off against the Eastern Connecticut State Warriors in the quarterfinals in a game they dominated and won 5-2. The game at Dave Wolk marked the last game the Spartans would play at home for the year, because going into playoffs, they came in as the fourth seed, which allowed for them to have home field advantage in the quarterfinals having finished conference play with a 3-3 record in conference.

"Having a home playoff game is always great! The atmosphere and excitement goes to the next level with being able to play in front of the students and feeding off their energy," said sophomore Peyton Richardson.

Last season, the Spartans found themselves in a similar situation, only getting one home playoff game in the quarterfinals



PHOTO BY AVERY BOUCHARD

Sophomore Genevieve Pitts going in to lock up an East Conn attacker.

which was the same outcome this year.

"Playoffs, it's anyone's game and you can't expect anything. We knew East Conn was going to show up and that game wasn't going to be given to us. I knew they were going to give us a hefty competition, which is exactly what they did. That game we played really well, and I was happy with it. It was a good way to end the season playing on our field and gave us more momentum and trust within each other moving onto USM," said head field hockey coach Emily Lowell.

The Huskies, who sat at the top of the standings with a 6-0 conference record, would be their test in the semifinals of the LEC and they had a one up on the Spartans in regular season with a 4-1 win on Oct. 21.

While USM had previously beat the Spartans, the Spartans were not phased going onto the Huskies field scoring first in the semi-final contest when Emily Harris put one past the USM goaltender just two minutes into the contest.

"We came out of the gate really strong and scored within the first

quarter," Richardson said.

The contest went down to the wire after the Huskies came out in the third quarter tying the game at 1-1, which remained the score until the end of regulation. Then in overtime, the Huskies netted one past the Spartans goaltender two minutes into extra time.

"Unfortunately, we came home with a loss to USM, but the game was back and forth and could have gone either way. We played strong defense all game, just couldn't get the ball in the back of the net to get us ahead again. Overall, I thought we grew a lot as a team and we

are all ready to get back to work," Richardson said.

Although the season came to an end, the field hockey program has enjoyed the success of the past two seasons and sees it as a building block for the future of the program.

"No one expected a team like we had to win a championship last year, but we did, and we did it because of the hard work and connection we had. I think that hasn't changed. That is still the same mentality and still the same talent we had. It was a switch from our opponents on what they were

going to bring to the table against us," Lowell said.

On top of the success of the team this season, six players received All-Conference Awards. Emily Harris and Jess Smithson received First Team All LEC; Amelia Wilson, Frouke Adraens and Peyton Richardson took home Second Team All LEC, and Madison Gile received the 12th player award. Emily Harris also received Offensive Player of the Year for the second straight season.

"Athletes should definitely vacation because your sport can become your whole life and control your mental state," Peters said. "Getting away helps level yourself while calming down to find a mental peace within," Peters added.

"I definitely think it's important because when people become too consumed with their sport, it becomes their entire personality and sometimes you lose sight of your own goals and purpose in life," Rideout said. "I think getting burnt out is a real issue in sports today especially when you look at how much time athletes devote time to their sport. Your body is meant to rest, that's how it was designed so I think it's important to go on vacations," Rideout added.

Brice understands the plus side of vacationing, but he also understands the risky side.

Saving sanity as a student athlete



COURTESY LEONARD BRICE

Spartan basketball player Leonard Brice likes alone time with TV to destress from being an athlete.

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartans

There are many benefits of being a collegiate student-athlete. You develop character traits like teamwork, perseverance, responsibility, and the physical benefits of staying healthy.

But college student-athletes also feel stress to perform well on the field, and the added stress of maintaining a good academic standard, along with a healthy social life. This can cause student-athletes to become overwhelmed and lose sight of the things that matter outside their lives as student-athletes.

Student-athletes at Castleton participate in different activities when they have time away from their sport. Junior basketball player Leonard Brice relies on calmness as his most important form of activity outside of basketball.

"I really just enjoy relaxing by myself while watching TV, whether it be YouTube or regular TV, I enjoy chilling," Brice said. "There's a lot of fun options I can try but I genuinely enjoy being alone watching TV or listening to

music."

Sophomore softball player Samara Rideout values the importance of spending time with family and friends. Whatever activity she decides to participate in, it's important to her for family and friends to be present at that moment as well.

"Honestly, I just like hanging out with my family and friends. I enjoy being around the people that I care about, so I don't have many activities I do, I just wanna be around people I love. I don't really care what I'm doing," Rideout said.

Doing things that you enjoy with or without others is important, but learning how to manage that outside life while playing a sport is a skill as well.

"If I wanna get that down time where I'm alone chilling, I usually have a set plan I follow throughout the day," Brice said. "If I'm getting out of practice in the morning and I know there's schoolwork I need to finish, I'll use that time after practice to call my family while I'm eating and then I'll do my work so I'll have the rest of the day to myself," Brice added.

Rideout agrees about the need to step away from the sport.

"I learned that if I become too consumed with my sport it becomes my identity and that's what I don't want, so that's when I know I need to take a break," Rideout said. "Knowing when to take that break is tricky too but it's whenever I feel like I've done enough, like if my entire day has been spent doing a certain activity then yeah maybe I should move on from it."

Junior football player Joshua Peters believes in creating a routine to help manage life on and off the field.

"Once everything is taken care of with my sport, I just make sure whatever it is I have to do, it gets taken care of which usually becomes my routine," Peters said. "Whether it's lifting weights and working out, I must have an idea of what needs to get done throughout the day."

Vacationing is another way to recharge and take a break from a sport, but vacationing is unique for athletes.

Brice understands the plus side of vacationing, but he also understands the risky side.

Creating a legion of Spartan wrestlers



@CASTLETON_WRESTLING

James Rodriguez (left) and wrestling head coach Scott Legacy (right) at an award ceremony last spring.

By Justin Gitto
Castleton Spartan

If you're a student or faculty member at VTSU Castleton who has seen the inside of the Athletic Complex, chances are you've probably witnessed someone going through a part of the recruiting process for Castleton's Wrestling team.

"There's more [recruits] this year than ever before," said wrestling head coach Scott Legacy. "We had maybe 75 last year, and this year it's increased."

To get numbers like this, it takes a strong team effort, scouting talent far and wide. Legacy added that the coaching staff spends a lot of time at events that are "of national caliber."

"One of our coaches just went to the New England Showcase. I go down to the national tourna-

ment in Virginia Beach during the Spring. We get invited to a lot of top notch showcases," he said.

Getting invited to these events doesn't happen very easily. Legacy attributes this to their national recognition.

The team started the season ranked 11th in the nation, and recently took the top spot at the Ithaca Invitational, which featured four other nationally-ranked colleges.

"When you do that kinda stuff in the wrestling world, people are following that, so I think our name has become extremely recognizable," he said.

The result is a team of athletes from all over the country.

"We have athletes from all over the New England area, but also New Jersey, New York, we have athletes from Florida, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Nevada, so we're kinda spread out," Legacy said.

"I don't believe that just because we're nestled in Vermont that that's a roadblock. You have to find what your niche is, and find the kids that fit that."

With that, Legacy takes a lot of time with recruits, explaining what VTSU Castleton is all about.

"We don't have the availability of downtown bars, so we don't have that typical type of college life. If you don't want to interact with a professor, you probably shouldn't come here. The product we put out there is exactly what we are," he said.

On the other side of the coin, Legacy also acknowledges the importance of academics.

"We tell them they're gonna be a student athlete, they're here to be a student first, an athlete second, and your social life, within reason, is after that," he said. "If that doesn't fit your priority list, then we're not a good place for you."

Legacy takes it an extra step further, implementing academics into the potential athlete's tour of campus. He says he makes each student meet with a professor in a department they're interested in.

"Nothing against admissions, but we do our tours with our athletes, and we're able to see how they interact with the professors. We make sure they have a lunch or a meal with our athletes, and we gauge that interaction," he said.

It's hard to argue with the process when it pays off. If the coaches don't think a recruit is going to be a good fit, they don't pursue them. In the end, they're looking to build the best team they can.

"We shoot for the stars... we don't settle," he said. "It takes 99 no's to get that one yes."

Delsignore hits 1,000 assists

By Jacob Gonzalez
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton women's volleyball team wrapped up its season with a split doubleheader showdown in Glenbrook Gym.

The Spartans would lose to LEC opponent Southern Maine 3-0 in the first match but rallied back to defeat Fisher College 3-1 in the second.

But leading up to this doubleheader, senior setter Maddie Delsignore had a milestone on her mind: 1,000 career assists.

Before the season, she set a goal to break the school assist record after accumulating 437 assists in her 2022 campaign. Delsignore had already broken the record the week previous against UMASS Boston in just two years of starting. She passed Alex Madsen's record of 942 assists, which was set back in 2016.

The other goal for the season was to become a leader in the locker room to set the standard for her team.

"As a senior captain, I wanted to be a good role model displaying strong work ethic and commitment to improvement," Delsignore said.

Head coach Jessica Trudeau praised her presence on and off the court for her team.

"Maddie is a very driven and focused person and is well-respected by her teammates," Trudeau said.

Trudeau knew that Delsignore was on the verge of breaking 1,000 career assists and telling her about it only motivated her more. Her energy shifted the team focus motivating them to help her reach her assist record.

Senior right side hitter Caitlin Mahoney wanted to help her best friend reach this milestone.

"Maddie is more than a teammate to me and has been a best friend over the past two years,"



CASTLETON ATHLETICS

#4 Maddie Delsignore sets a ball up for one of her many assists on her way to breaking the program record.

she said.

Mahoney and Delsignore's connection runs deep as they both have gone through tough times together. Mahoney appreciates her sticking through it all and helping her obtain this goal was something she was going to do without question.

"I know that if there was another record that any other teammate could break, she would work just as hard to help her teammates," she said, adding that the team has a "we over me" mentality Del-

signore implemented into the team culture.

The setter was filled with a lot of different emotions before her match, feeling excited with lots of anticipation and nerves in the locker room. Soaking in the moment, she also wanted to give her best performance for her team as they've helped her so much along the way.

She talked about looking back to her high school days when coaches doubted her abilities due to her height. She said It made her

feel proud to have this opportunity to play college volleyball and to achieve her goal.

On the day of the 1000th set, the Spartans arrived at Glenbrook Gym ready to take on Southern Maine. As the game commenced, they kept it competitive against a dominant Huskies squad.

Trudeau knew her young team had a lot of pressure. The assists were being tracked at the desk and the anticipation kept building on the court. She was hoping her team could keep competing despite the

goal and had rallies to take an early advantage.

The Spartans forced a timeout during a set and an announcement was made: Delsignore had achieved her goal.

The crowd began to erupt celebrating her big moment with "Mad-die" chants.

"I looked back at the bench and saw my teammates jumping up and down. Looking up into the stands and seeing my family and friends was something I'll never forget," Delsignore explains.

She now soaks in the moment and appreciates the journey she had gone through to get to this point. She was able to reach this milestone with her high school coach, Stephanie Gengel, in the audience.

Most importantly, she was able to celebrate with her team with a dance party after the game. She credits the team for her success working hard to etch her name into the record books.

An ice hockey journey to Castleton

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Some VTSU Castleton students commute to school, or live on campus despite their homes being only an hour or so away.

They pack cars and drive here as freshmen to start their college lives.

But for many hockey players, getting here might involve boarding planes or driving hours — and only after a recruiting process.

Between the men's and women's hockey teams, this season there are a total of 13 freshmen with seven on the men's team and six on the women's. And each player comes with their own story of how the came to be at Castleton, from across the west coast of British Columbia, Canada to as far away as Norway and plenty of places in between.

And why they come here varies, though hockey is a common thread.

"The reason why I came to Castleton was mainly to follow my hockey career. I also wanted to be a part of a program that starves to win which in this case, is a no brainer," said freshman Mateo Turrin.

Turrin, a Montreal, Quebec native played junior hockey three years after going to Holderness Prep School. He played two-and-a-half years of juniors in the British Columbia Hockey League (BCHL) and half of a year in the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League (SJHL).

Turrin is only a three-hour



Castleton ice hockey #44 Matteo Turrin slams a Suny Canton player into the boards (left); #15 Josef Vyvial celebrates a goal (right).

drive north across the border from home, which in comparison to others, is not very far. But he has traveled across the whole of Canada coast to coast for hockey before landing in Vermont.

"The major difference I've noticed between junior hockey and college hockey is to have better time management and be proactive about things such as constant schedule planning," Turrin said.

Coming from the other coast of Canada from Kimberley, British Columbia, is Cam Reid. The Kimberley born defenseman played two years of his four-year junior hockey career for his hometown Kimberley Dynamiters of the Kootenay International Junior Hockey League (KIJHL) and the other two years with the Cranbrook Bucks of the BCHL where he scored the team's first goal as



KATIE STAGER

a franchise.

"I decided to come to Castleton because I believed the benefits it provided my academics and athletics, could greatly impact my life after school. College hockey requires a lot smarter time management, as projects and assignment fill up most of your days. I like the culture both the classroom and my hockey team provide, making the transition from Kimberley to

Castleton easy," he said.

From countries away in the Czech Republic, Josef Vyvial came to Castleton after being in the states for a year before coming to Vermont. Playing his junior hockey in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania allowed him to experience the States.

"Playing college in the U.S. was always my dream. I got a call from Kyle, and I had a good feel-

ing about it. I talked to a bunch of other schools too and Castleton just was the best option. Smaller college, in the country kind of. That's what I wanted it to be," Vyvial said.

On the women's side, from a world away in Norway is Nora Pollestad, who played for the Stavanger Oilers, which was her hometown team. She came to Castleton this year with a very different path than most of her other teammates because she is from over 3,000 miles away.

"I choose Castleton because I want to experience the American college life and I liked the coach here," she said.

Eva Hofmeister had a much different experience. She is a New England native and went to school at Vermont Academy before coming to Castleton. Vermont Academy, which is only about an hour east, is a boarding school where she played hockey at while attending school.

"When I was choosing a school, I didn't want to be in a big school. I also wanted a hockey team that was close and always had each other's back. I also wanted to be on a team that even if I didn't get playing time, I would still be happy and enjoy my time there. When I walked onto the Castleton campus I instantly fell in love and when I went to the rink and met the team I felt so included and knew that I would have a forever home here. It reminded me of the boarding school I was attending. It's been a great experience so far and I can't wait for the further years to come," said Hofmeister.