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# SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

## Spartan staff help make a brighter Christmas



DAVID BLOW

Kids open presents at the Help Us Help Them party at VAC in 2019.

By Pearl Bellomo  
*Castleton Spartan*

Since 2016, the Castleton Spartan has raised thousands of dollars to brighten the Christmas' of local children and families in need.

"It's easy to get wrapped up in our own lives and stressing about our Christmas, but it's important to give back to our community in any way we can," said former editor, Lily Doton, about the Help Us Help Them fundraiser, which this year aims to raise \$1,200.

What was established in Communications professor David Blow's Media Ethics class, soon was adopted by the Spartan to give back to kids and families through

the Vermont Achievement Center.

To date, the fundraiser will have raised nearly \$12,000 dollars and provided for over 50 families.

Members of the staff and advisor, David Blow, personally shop for, wrap, and deliver the gifts to kids and their families in-person at the Vermont Achievement Center.

Another former editor, Sophia-Buckey Clement, describes the kids' reactions as "over the moon" and describes their "grabbing gifts out of kid's hands because they were so excited."

Despite enjoying every part of the experience, Buckey-Clement said her favorite part was the delivery – by far.

"What I also like about this

effort is that it's a bonding experience for the Spartan students," said Blow, adding how they go shopping at the Target in Queensbury, then go to lunch afterwards, his treat.

Sports editor Justin Gitto recounts how he and fellow reporter shopped for baby onesies and found some with Queen and other rock bands on them, and Buckey-Clement said one of her favorite things to shop for were Squishmellows.

However, it's not just toys on the wish list. It's also clothes, winter jackets, hats, mittens, and leftover money for cupcakes and juice boxes to bring to the party.

Blow says his absolute favorite

year was its very first, when they got to pay for half of one mother's electric bill, when her heating was about to be turned off.

Through a single phone call from a local food pantry, he was informed of her situation, and the staff happened to have money left over from the \$1,500 dollars raised.

Together they went to the mother's house while she and her two kids were out a walk, placed the presents under the tree, and her electric bill was paid off to keep the lights and heat on.

"It just lined up perfectly," said Blow. "It was a magical Christmas."

Raising money for these kids

not only provides what they need, but saves their families money to spend on other necessities.

The Spartan staff encourages whoever is able to give, to help us achieve our \$1,200 goal.

"I would encourage people, even if it's just a few bucks, that can go towards giving these kids and their families a good holiday. A lot of the time this time of year we're writing our own lists, but it's even more rewarding to be giving gifts," said Doton.

Donations can be made at <https://givebutter.com/y4MGTD> or cash/check delivered to a Spartan staff member.

## Christmas magic illuminates Castleton

By Maddie Lindgren  
*Castleton Spartan*

The spirit of Christmas came to life in a family fun display of celebrations that got adults and kids ready for the holiday season.

On Saturday, Dec. 3, downtown Castleton was transformed into an illuminated display of lights, laughing, and joyful celebration as everyone joined together for an amazing event.

The morning began with crafty Christmas-themed activities, such as creating snowmen and snowflakes. Children and adults from Castleton and the surrounding communities got together to decorate and make various crafts that would soon be given as presents to parents, friends, or relatives.

Following that, locally owned small businesses were exhibiting their items with the community at the Christmas Market. Pop-up tents were placed right in front of the Texaco and front of Third Place Pizzeria right downtown. There was just about every kind of small gift/souvenir you could think of, ranging from crochet chickens to dream catchers to delicious Christmas-themed cookies.

"I've been making cookies for a long time now, they helped me pay off my student loans," says Castleton alum Marie Park, CEO of Marie's Cookie Kitchen, "unfortunately I was to graduate in 2020 but never got a graduation because of COVID. Making and selling these cookies has helped me in so many ways, student loans and now paying off my braces."

The market was filled with holiday cheer and community support. Purchasing distinctive pres-

ents allowed customers to support small business owners and craftspeople.

Harley Adams and Deborah Lee from a local farm even brought their prized goats for a little show and tell.

"This is Lily and her twin Luna and that's Rowan and her sister Irwin," Harley Adams explains, "these guys do not have any ears, but that's not our doing, we don't cut them off, it's genetic, they were born that way."

The goats ranged from brown, light brown, white, and a mix of brown and white. You could even feed the goats for 25 cents, which was a huge hit with many children.

"This is my first time feeding a goat!" and "Do they bite?," were some common exclamations from kids.

The nighttime commenced with the heartwarming Lighting of the Tree of Remembrance, a festive ceremony honoring cherished memories of the town. Bright, colorful Christmas lights lit up the towering tree and cast a warm glow over the gathered crowd.

People of all ages were holding on to their loved ones and shining their flashlights in the singing of This Little Light of Mine, right before the countdown of the tree lighting.

Wendy Patterson, Castleton Alum and member of the Castleton Womens Club was the leader of the ceremony and the lighting, giving kind words and joyful remarks about the start of the Christmas Season.

See 'Christmas' on page 6



PEARL BELLOMO AND MADDIE LINDGREN

Castleton came alive Saturday with a day full of Christmas events including a parade, fireworks, a Christmas market and animals.

## VTSU students hold State House press conference

By Pearl Bellomo  
*Castleton Spartan*

On Nov. 13, Vermont State University students and faculty hosted a press conference at the State House in Montpelier to push back on administrative cuts.

"Listen to us as we plead for these decisions made through Optimization 2.0 and Administrative Optimization to be rescinded," said Castleton Executive Vice President of Student Government Association Adsel Sparrow, during the press conference. "Without these staff and faculty members, we will fail, and our university will fall."

In attendance at the State House were student representatives from Castleton, Lyndon, Johnson, and Randolph campuses, each providing their own statements in response to the cuts.

"The goal of this merger was to create a stronger infrastructure within our college system. Yet we are running on skeleton crews on each campus," added Castleton President of Wellness Taylor Cohen. "We have lost so many individuals that support and help students, that now the quality of

student life is suffering."

Cohen highlighted the dismissal of Operations Coordinator for Marketing and Communications Leo Richardson, saying that the news was "devastating" not just for Cohen, but "the entirety of the clubs he worked with and all of the students he worked intimately with."

But she emphasized the need for each of the cut positions at Castleton, naming Matthew Patry, Renee Boupre-White, Bridget Olson, Jake Rick, Rita Geno, Svea Howard, and Joann Larson.

Castleton SGA Treasurer Zack Durr explained how in the Administrative Optimization report, staff cuts were justified by citing comparable institutions having a 14:1 student-staff ratio, while VTSU has an 11:1 ratio.

However, Durr said this comparison did not consider administrative structure.

When analyzing the compared institutions of Eastern Connecticut State University, Western Connecticut State University, Plymouth State University, Framingham University, and Worcester State University, he found that they had an average of four vice

presidents and four assistant or associate vice presidents.

Compare that to VTSU's four vice presidents and 14 assistant vice presidents, he said.

"This proves that we have optimized administration in the wrong places," said Durr. "We eliminated student facing positions yet left our enlarged administrative structure essentially untouched."

Lyndon President of the Ten Percent Committee Annie Walker discussed the effects Optimization 2.0 and Administrative Optimization have had on student morale.

"At Lyndon, we are simply tired. Tired of having to constantly fight our administrative on decisions that greatly impact our university," said Walker. "We are not opposed to change; we are opposed to having no say in those changes."

Walker mentioned the dismissal of Associate Dean of Students, Jonathan Davis, saying his role is crucial to the Ten Percent Committee, which funds projects to bolster student morale. "Without our associate dean, I fear that we will not survive much longer, and we will be closer to closing our campus each day," she

said.

This stance was shared by Randolph SGA Vice President John Porter, who said the ridding of their associate dean greatly damages their ability to communicate with administration.

Earlier, before the press conference, there was an open comment session at the Board of Trustees meeting, hosted over Zoom. Nearly 50 students gathered in the Castleton SGA office, and there were another estimated 125 participants on Zoom, not including the board.

"It's so ironic, since the students, faculty, and staff have responded to change, but the board remains the same," said Castleton political science professor Rich Clark.

He described the board as "isolated" from all five campuses and urges members to "come to the campuses to see how your decisions affect us."

Castleton Administrative Assistant Pam Alexander gave the analogy of a car dealership and how people stop coming if you cut service, salespeople, and the grounds.

"Suddenly they realize their personnel that made the business



PEARL BELLOMO

VTSU student representatives address 2.0 to the press.

what it is, is no longer there," said Alexander.

Others pointed out that cuts were "disorganized," describing it as a "coin toss" who would lose their job.

Later that evening, the at-the-time Interim President Nolan Atkins responded to the open comment in a school-wide statement.

Atkins acknowledged the dif-

faculty of achieving fiscal sustainability, however, says he is excited that it now seems attainable.

He urges community members to express themselves in a manner consistent with the VTSU values of "respect, integrity, student success, and DEISJ."

See 'VTSU' on page 6



## Tough semester fosters glass half-full thoughts

This has been a tough semester. One of the toughest in my 20 years here and for a variety of reasons.

There were merger pains and uncertainty leading up to “Optimization 2.0,” and we are now having to say goodbye to a lot of good staff and faculty members, perhaps highlighted by Rita Geno in the president’s office, who has been a fixture at Castleton for parts of five decades.

So much institutional knowledge going away. I remember former Castleton University President Dave Wolk basically saying how Rita was his lifeblood and caretaker.

She’ll be missed. As will guys like Interim Dean of Students Matt Patry, who was always so helpful to The Spartan newspaper and its staff and great to our students.

Perhaps related to 2.0 has been what I’ve seen as a lack of motivation among some students – more so than usual, which has frustrated me. You always get some of that every semester, but it seems a little more widespread.

I’m enduring more students being tardy to classes or not showing at all, late assignments – or again – not handing them in at all.

Are they frustrated with 2.0? Is it a COVID hangover?

Is the very uplifting presidential election looming in less than a year?

Is it fear for their future in rapidly changing world?

The wars that are raging?

Are professors not “bringing it” like we should be to motivate them?

I feel like I’m trying hard, but am I?

So that stuff is on my mind as we wrap up the fall 2023 semester and head into the holiday break.

But like I always try to do when I’m glass-half-empty thinking, I look for positives.

And honestly, there are a ton of those too.

Pearl Bellomo has masterfully taken over leadership of The Spartan newspaper and guided it to six solid issues with help from many including editors Camille Jackson and Maddie Lindgren. Sports has

been solid under Justin Gitto and our website was redesigned under the leadership of Jess Emery.

I also got to thinking about our student from Palestine, Mahmoud Alyazji, whose family back home is living in constant fear. Our 2.0 problems are weighing, but nothing like what he and his family are dealing with.

And I just got done reading a bunch of student work – from scripts in Media Writing to Select Board stories in Intro to Journalism – and a lot of them were great and inspiring. I was blown away by one this morning by a student who three days after it was due, was basically asking me how to do it.

Despite being annoyed at the timing (see late submissions above) I helped him understand the script-writing program – and was rewarded with arguably the best submission in class.

So, when I vent about students seemingly being less enthused and more willing to slack, it’s not all students and many are still striving and inspiring and we as professors need to foster more of that.

Also on the positive side, my daughter Kirsti will be home for Christmas from her home in Spain for the first time since 2018. So psyched!

And next week, for the eighth consecutive year, students and I will be buying dozens of gifts for area children in need and throwing a party for 10 of them at Vermont Achievement Center to warm up our insides and feel good about helping others less fortunate. We’re close to our \$1,200 fundraising goal and it’s almost time to shop again.

I hate shopping. But I don’t mind shopping for them.

So following finals and the VAC Christmas party, I’m going to recharge, enjoy family and friends during the holidays, tinker with some courses for spring and come back fired up to welcome and inspire the next batch of students.

Communications Professor David Blow



JOE VYVIAL

## ‘Polar Express’ is the worst Christmas movie ever

Many people get depressed and anxious around the holidays.

There’s this unequivocal expectation to have the best time of your life.

The perfect tree, the perfect family, the perfect shades of crimson and evergreen around every corner.

However, my depression and anxiety around the holiday’s stems from a different source.

“The Polar Express.”

The 2004 film follows a young boy as he “embarked on journey of self-discovery that shows him that the wonder of life never fades for those who believe.”

I hate to be the one to say it, but this synopsis provided by Letter-

boxd is a crock of shit.

Really, the movie is about a little kid who—God forbid, doesn’t believe in Santa Clause—is ripped from his family in the middle of the night to board this incredibly suspicious train.

Our main character, referred to as Hero Boy, meets a sweet little girl, referred to as Hero Girl.

Because apparently none of the children have names.

And then... chaos ensues.

We are introduced to The Hobo who, allegedly, understands the true meaning of Christmas.

He’s a mysterious character whose purpose is to test Hero Boy’s skepticism of Santa Clause.

He’s also a ghost that appears

to be eternally tied to the Polar Express.

So not only does the poor kid have to wrestle with the fact that Santa is real, but he also has to come to terms with that fact that so are ghosts.

And if ghosts are real then what other supernatural elements is this child going to encounter through his lifetime.

I mean, talk about traumatizing.

And he’s completely alone!

Because he’s been kidnapped by a neurotic train conductor, played by Tom Hanks.

Which brings me to my next point; Tom Hanks is the voice actor for like every character in this

godforsaken film.

He’s the Conductor, Santa Clause, the narrator, Hero Boy’s dad, and the Ebenezer Scrooge Puppet.

And that man just makes me incredibly uneasy, and I can’t really explain why.

He’s in some of the saddest movies of all time like “Forrest Gump,” “Cast Away,” “Saving Private Ryan,” and “Toy Story.”

And you expect me to believe that he signed on to this movie to spread happiness among children?

There’s just no way.

Now, let’s get into this Ebenezer Scrooge character.

Horrifying, by the way. Ebenezer Scrooge gaslights

Hero Boy into making him doubt that the Polar Express is real.

At one point, Hero Boy asks if it’s all a dream.

My question is, why are we giving an 8- to 10-year-old kid an existential crisis.

It’s just wrong.

Then after they all almost die because of the train track situation, they finally reach the north pole.

Hero boy hears a bell ring, which I guess you can only hear the bell if you truly believe in Santa Claus, but the only reason he believes is because he’s standing nose to nose with the guy.

Because he was kidnapped.

And forced on this dangerous journey.

Hello! Stranger Danger! Why would we encouraging kids to watch this!?

Of course, he never tells his parents that this happened so we’re also encouraging deceit.

The true meaning of Christmas you’d think is about friends and family and being together to celebrate and spread joy and love.

But no, it’s about a fat guy and some broken bells.

- Jess Emery

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castletonspartan.com



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## Pet series features Carlo and BeeBee

I think we can all agree that pets play a very vital role in people’s lives, which is one reason why I created the Pet Series for this newspaper.

I wanted to highlight amazing people and the unique connection they have with their loyal animal companions. In today’s article, I was fortunate enough to have some amazing stories from a faculty member and a student at Vermont State University at Castleton.

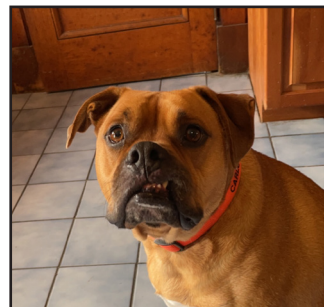
Doe Dahm is an amazing writing specialist at the Academic Support Center and helps students greatly with their writing aspirations and assignments. If you have ever been to Dahm’s office, you can instantly recognize that she is an animal advocate.

She has many posters of associations she honorably supports, and she often speaks very highly of these associations. I asked her if she could be kind enough to give some more information on her extraordinary pet cat Beebee. I asked her a series of questions about Beebee, including general information on this amazing cat.

“I have Beebee, a torbie cat. Torbies are tabbies with some tortoiseshell markings and orange notes. I’m not sure of her precise age as she was a stray before someone brought her to the humane society, but she’s somewhere between 7 and 10 years old. You’d never know it, though; she still has regular bouts of the Zoomies.”

As for where the unique name came from?

“While Beebee’s name suits her, I didn’t name her. My mom



Carlo



Beebee

adopted her from Rutland County Humane Society in November 2018 and bestowed that name on her. She’d once known a woman called Beebee, and she really liked the name. However, although my mom adopted her, Beebee had other plans and quickly decided that I was her person. So now I pay the vet bills and get most of the cuddles.”

Dahm then went on to explain some of her favorite things about Beebee.

“Where do I begin? She’s very loving; in fact, she has to be involved in everything I do whether it’s grading papers or working on my own writing. She spends much of the night sleeping on my shins. If I’m upstairs and she’s downstairs, she’ll pause at the bottom of the staircase and then cry with excitement before racing up to meet me.”

Dahm also gave insight into how Beebee positively impacts her life.

“It’s flattering that just being with me fills her with such joy. She loves to play, and she’s also very elegant and graceful. I never

get tired of seeing her wrap her tail around herself. She has a bit of old Hollywood poise, which I envy.”

Dahm also shined a light on how the holidays are important for Beebee and her human family.

“I’m excited to spend the holidays with Beebee, and it won’t surprise anyone that Beebee has her own stocking or that she gets presents from her aunts and grandparents. Given her energy level, she is surprisingly good with the Christmas tree,” she said.

Asked if she had any interesting stories to tell about her feline friend around the holidays, she was quick with a response.

“I think the funniest story about Beebee and the holidays is her first Christmas with us. Two of my siblings were over with their spouses, we had a lovely time, and only one photo exists from that celebration: a black-and-white photo my brother took of Beebee. This shows you everything about our priorities!”

I also got a learn quite a bit of information this week about Leo Schnipper’s dog, Carlo.

Schnipper is an avid outdoorsman and a very good skier. He is

also an animal advocate, a great communicator, and I greatly enjoy working alongside him in some of my classes. Together, Schnipper and I have done a lot of fieldwork for Wildlife and Forestry Conservation.

According to him, his dog was already named Carlo when his family adopted him around six years ago.

“Carlo has a super laid-back demeanor and is very well-behaved,” he said.

Like Dahm, Schnipper also has an interesting story about his companion around the holidays.

“On Thanksgiving, he ran away from my dad in the middle of the woods, and we couldn’t find him, then he turned up on our porch later that day,” he said.

I can’t even explain how much I enjoyed reviewing these individuals and learning more about their pets. Each person has a story to tell, and hopefully, a story that includes an animal. These two awesome individuals represent how animals (especially pets) impact our daily lives. To Schnipper and Dahm: thank you very much for giving me the privilege of learning more about your awesome relationship with your pets.

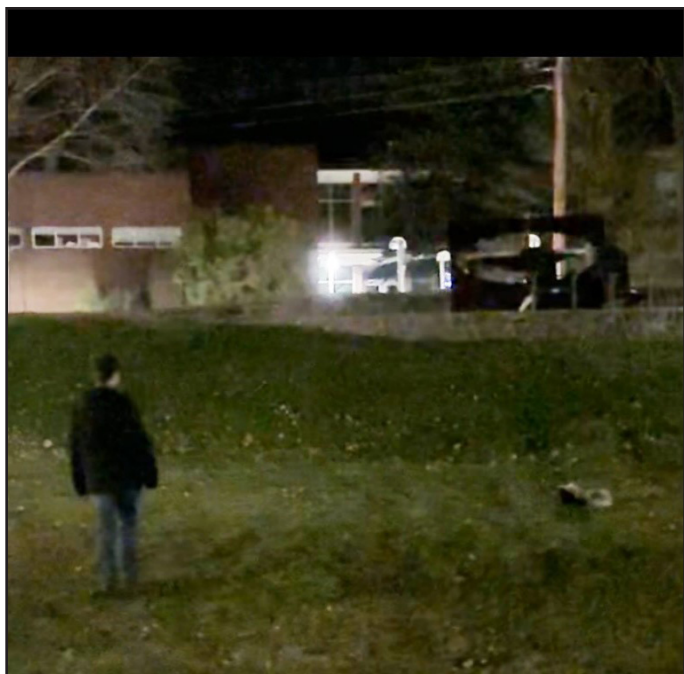
If you have a pet you’d like to talk about and have them featured in The Spartan, contact Gavin Bradley at g1b00802@vermont-state.edu

\*The Spartan is the official student newspaper of VTSU Castleton. It functions to inform, educate and entertain readers accurately and responsibly.

The University, its administration, faculty, student body and staff are not responsible for the content of the newspaper.



# Skunks are a new addition to Castleton campus



COURTESY WYATT JACKSON

A student cautiously approaches a skunk.

By Wyatt Jackson  
Castleton Spartan

Over the past couple weeks, skunks have taken over the Castleton campus.

Some students say they have seen up to three different skunks circulating throughout the campus and assume they are a family with one fully grown skunk and two much smaller ones.

Students around campus have mixed emotions about how they feel about sharing campus with them.

Sophomore Camilia Willsey has an interesting take on her opinion about skunks.

“Skunks are kind of annoying but they’re so cute. They’re fluffy and have a fluffy tail and they kind of just waddle around. They’re a perfect size for a pet and I’ve considered having it as a pet,” Willsey said.

Although Willsey has a soft side for skunks, she understands the risk of potentially being in their presence. Seeing them on campus still makes her pause, and head the other way.

“It’s inconvenient because these skunks are not afraid of people. These skunks will walk in the same path as you, not move, or they’ll be really close to the doors as if they’re not afraid of humans,” she said.

Sophomore DeVaughn Miller expressed similar concerns, stating that the skunks on campus aren’t easily startled. That can be both good and bad, he says, but it can leave you feeling uneasy because you’re not sure of their next move.

“I feel like seeing them is cool because it’s nature, but the fact that they live here and you have a fear of being sprayed is kind of worrisome. I don’t know whether the campus can or will do anything, but at night they can pop up out of nowhere and you sometimes have

no idea where they are,” Miller said.

Skunks aren’t aggressive animals by nature but it’s critical for people not to scare or startle them when you’re in their presence. Students understand they need to be mindful around campus because in the end, these are simply living creatures going about their business.

Although it’s important to let them do that, they do affect student movement around campus especially at night. Now that they’ve become a routine sighting, students are always on the lookout.

“The skunks both do and don’t affect my movement because I’m not watching my every move, but if I see a skunk, I will become a little more cautious,” Miller said.

“I feel fine during the daytime, but if I’m walking around campus at night, I’m a little worried and just on the lookout,” Ford said.

Students also have ideas of what should or can be done with

these skunks if it becomes an issue. Sophomore Maysa Ford has an interesting take as to whether these skunks are here because of another problem.

“I’m not sure why the skunks are choosing to live on campus, but if it’s because there’s garbage around, then yes they should do something about it,” Ford said.

Miller hasn’t heard of any issues with the skunks attacking or spraying anybody, but he feels the school must do something if anything like that were to happen.

“If there was a case where students were getting attacked or sprayed then yes, they should do something but for now just leave them alone,” Miller said.

Willsey believes the skunks should be captured as rescue animals and taken to a facility where you put them on display. Kind of like a sanctuary for rescued animals in Vermont.

# Beginning a sad farewell

By Justin Gitto  
Castleton Spartan

Within the depths of the English department is a professor loved by many, and equally disliked by others.

On the surface she seems very stern, and even mean, but behind that front, Professor Flo Keyes is as loveable as a teacher can get.

“She’s wicked funny, and I feel like people can’t get past the strictness because they don’t realize how funny she is,” said Jess Emery, a student working with Professor Keyes for an independent study. “She makes these comments that are hilarious, and I don’t know if people can’t tell she’s kidding, but they won’t laugh and she’s like a comedian.”

The reason for students not liking her is clear as day: she makes her students actually read the books she assigns.

“I have high standards and I’m a tough grader... If you came in expecting an easy A, or if you came in planning to pass the class without doing any work then you’re going to be disappointed,” Keyes said. “My method of teaching puts a lot of the work on them, and they don’t wanna work that hard.”

Class Time with Keyes consists of a lot of discussion about the books that she assigns. It’s simple – if students pay attention to the readings, they can answer her questions just fine, and they can start their own discussions in class based on her questions.

“I read the books, hopefully the students read the books, and then somewhere between us we have a

conversation about what the books mean,” Keyes said.

She went on to say that sometimes a question only prompts a short answer, if they even go anywhere at all.

“When it really works well, I ask a question, which generates a response from somebody on one side of the room, and a different response from the other side of the room, and maybe someone responds to one of them and then we have this cool thing called a discussion,” Keyes explained. “Somewhere in that discussion, we come up with not just one interpretation, but several possible interpretations for what the book means.”

Sometimes these discussions get heated to the point of yelling at each other, like when a Touchstones class argued over the actions of a character.

“It was great,” Keyes said.

In order to have these discussions, the students have to put in a level of work that they often don’t feel like applying.

“You can’t get away with slacking. You have to do the readings, you have to try, but it’s a very rewarding feeling when you do good on a test or a paper,” Emery said. “She’s a very fair professor.”

Emery’s first experience with Professor Keyes was during COVID times, when Keyes would wear a signature face-mask that resembled the face of a cat.

Speaking of cats, Keyes has many of them.

“When we were on Zoom, her cats would come in and walk across her laptop,” Emery said.

Keyes has five cats of her own, and “assorted numbers of fos-

ter cats,” that all have their own distinctive personalities, ranging from the one who hunts mice, to the one who demands pats as an entry fee into the house, and the one who only hangs around Keyes.

“She was just super interesting. I had never met anyone like her,” Emery said.

To add to how interesting Keyes is, you have to look at some of the things she does outside of school.

“I found out she has her pilot’s license, which is like – what?” Emery said in awe.

“When I was a little kid I used to dream about jumping out of trees and putting my arms out and flying. It didn’t work real well when I jumped off the roof of the shed,” Keyes said. “I didn’t break anything but I didn’t fly either.”

In her late 20s, one of her friends gave her a gift certificate for a flight at a local airport just so she would shut up about flying.

“I loved it, and I came down and told the guy I wanted to learn to fly, and he was like ‘have you ever flown before?’ and I said ‘no, that was it, can I have a book?’ and I started learning to fly,” Keyes said.

“She’s very well traveled... I’ll be in class with her and she’ll just drop these random tid-bits of information about her life,” Emery said. “I’m convinced she’s done and seen everything in the world.”

Keyes always makes sure she dresses up for Halloween every year, one element of her personality that Professor Andrew Alexander, head of the English department will miss dearly.

“No one can forget Flo’s Halloween costumes. Her grim reaper costume was phenomenal, and the



JUSTIN GITTO

English professor Flo Keyes is pictured in her office.

zebra was also quite excellent,” Alexander said.

“I just have chosen not to grow up,” Keyes said. “I started doing it in college, and it was fun.”

Keyes recalled the first year, when she dressed up as a vampire, and a poetry teacher “turned around, looked at me, and said ‘great idea.’” However, another

teacher scoffed at it and claimed it was “childish.”

See ‘Farewell’ on page 6



COURTESY FLO KEYES

Keyes is pictured in an iconic “Green Knight” Halloween costume



COURTESY FLO KEYES

Photo from Keyes’ first year at Castleton standing with art professor Jonathan Scott.

# When is it okay to decorate for Christmas?

By Rosa Kehoe  
Castleton Spartan

It’s that time of year again, where everyone is bantering about when you are allowed to decorate for Christmas. The time where all the stores have Christmas decorations out right as Halloween hits, giving Thanksgiving no time.

As Thanksgiving rolls around, some people start to decorate for Christmas. Others have already decorated and started their Christmas traditions – before Thanksgiving has even passed.

Others wait until after Thanksgiving and some don’t start until much later.

Everyone has different opinions and different Christmas traditions, and here are some of Vermont University students’ opinions on when it’s appropriate to decorate.

Emily Coates believes that “there is never a not right time to

start decorating.”

“I will start decorating as soon as Halloween is over,” she said, adding that she “thinks Thanksgiving is a good time to start coming together as a family and be integrated together.”

Christmas is very near and dear to her heart, and she said she watches Christmas movies all year round.

“You should start watching Christmas movies as soon as November first,” she said enthusiastically.

Some people, like Sally Zuk, believe that watching Christmas movies has to wait until Dec. 1, “unless it is a holiday or a tradition.”

“It has to be an event, you can’t just casually watch them,” she said.

Zuk also went on to say that she takes her decorations down “about a week after Christmas.”

Some, like Jason Guerino, say you should keep Thanksgiving and Christmas totally separate. He believes that we should celebrate Thanksgiving before doing anything with Christmas.

He said you can decorate “ideally by December first, but by the very earliest after Thanksgiving.”

Alan Baird is another who believes that you should only decorate after Thanksgiving. He also feels the same about watching Christmas movies, that they can’t be watched “until after Thanksgiving, unless its National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation.”

And there are also some who believe you should decorate later even. Angelina Gotshall believes you should decorate in the middle of December closer to Christmas.

She says that they take down their Christmas tree “A day or two after” and use it for firewood.”



ROSA KEHOE

Rosa Kehoe places an ornament on her Christmas tree.



## Maddie on the street

By Maddie Lindgren  
Castleton Spartan



## What's on your Christmas wishlist?



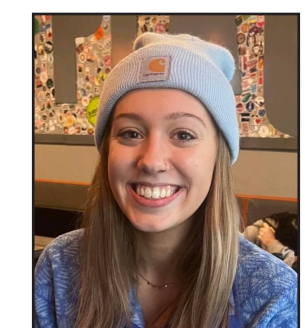
Jade Weinberg  
Junior

"For Christmas I want new skis."



Grace Matthews  
Junior

"I want new brakes for my car."



Liv Merrill  
Senior

"I technically already got it as a gift but the Killington Beast Pass."



Jack Boyle  
Junior

"I want a new snowboard."

# Sexploration Fair makes sex topics easier to discuss

By Rosa Kehoe  
Castleton Spartan

It was Wednesday night, the yearly SEXploration Fair was underway.

The PAC (Peer Advocates For Change) Club had been spending a lot of time setting up for this event. Members of the club sat waiting for people to come into the room to see all the hard work they had put in.

Smiles erupted from all their faces as people started to stroll in, and lots would follow. As students came in, they were welcomed and given a slip of paper that had 10 spaces. They had to go to 10 separate tables and get a sticker from each table after learning about a topic there.

Once they got 10 stickers, they could put their slip with their name and phone number in a little prize baggy.

There were six different prizes to win ranging from coloring books to blankets. As they walked into the 1787 Room, they were greeted by a table of genital chocolates, and free notepads. An-

other table offered a fun stress ball condom-making table. Volunteers helped attendees make stress balls out of condoms and Orbeez.

Organizers said they tried putting more fun tables right in the front as people walked in so people would feel a lot more comfortable. They said they know it can be awkward and uncomfortable to talk about and be around sexual stuff, so they tried to make it more fun and engaging.

Amy Miller, who advises the PAC Club and also runs the SEXploration Fair, said they throw this event because our system "lacks a cohesive sex education program, as a society nationwide."

"Even though it is state legislated in Vermont, sex education is the only state legislated requirement for k-12. Every school must have it, it's not comprehensive, it is often heteronormative, meaning male female. Doesn't get into LGBTQ at all, and often does not talk about pleasure. It is something that is put under a unit as biology meaning, male and female anatomy parts, and reproductive organs and it doesn't get into consent. We



ROSA KEHOE

A student hosts a table at the Sexploration Fair.

need advocates for change, we are all about consent, we are not opposed to sexual activity. We are opposed to criminal sexual activity," Miller said.

All of the tables had great information on them, and they were not all about what is safe to use or stressing consent checklists. There were also a bunch of papers about sexual abuse and what to do if it does happen. They also had Bianca Zanella from the NewStory Center in Rutland there. She is the

core advocate for the NewStory Center, which supports survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

She said the center has a 24-hour crisis hotline, and that it was "really nice to see folks today at the SEXploration Fair. Just to make sure everyone knows that we are here as a resource and again rescue people so that they are not alone."

Shrishty Chhetri who is taking an internship under Miller, did a lot with setting up the fair and



International students Camille Jackson and Petra Veljkovic attended their first American Thanksgiving in New Jersey over break.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAMILLE JACKSON

# Family, friends and tons of food

## International students enjoy first American Thanksgiving

By Camille Jackson  
Castleton Spartan

Contrary to the questioning of a surprising number of Americans, the Thanksgiving tradition is isolated to North America.

Its purpose has seemed to morph over decades; to some the holiday being a meager door stop between Halloween and Christmas.

The trek from Vermont to Connecticut, from Connecticut to New York, from New York to New Jersey, and back again was punctuated by a meal so substantive it lingered days later. The American Thanksgiving tradition is rather simple; a celebration of food, family, friends and life manifested in the elegant turkey.

Being invited to celebrate the holiday with a quintessential American family was an opportunity to authentically peak inside the window of Americanism and away from the stereotypes of Hollywood. The suburban New Jersey townhouse 10 minutes from Times Square overlooked an unimpeded view of the New York City skyline.

With the innocent intention of

spectating the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, my best mate, Petra Veljkovic, and I sat in a curiously empty section of Bryant Park for half an hour during the mid-morning. Indeed, the expectation of standing like packed sardines and evading deafening Thanksgiving cheers must have been a Hollywood myth!

However, Hollywood persisted after asking a nearby police officer when the parade will begin, to be told it ended 45 minutes prior.

Walking the streets of NYC never fails to entertain. On a corner in Times Square, Petra and I stood paralyzed as a crazed woman dressed as Santa pointed, screamed, fell to the ground, accused, and yelled at interviewers preaching Christianity. Just another day in NYC, we supposed. Our eyes were fixated on the situation, protected by the cover of a pretzel food stand.

As the morning dragged on, we made our way to Port Authority, aiming to catch the bus to neighboring New Jersey. Bells, whistles, car horns, and voices occupied our ears. As we waited for the pedestrian light to turn green, a familiar Santa-dressed woman

wandered by, conversing with a red-shirted man holding Christian pamphlets.

Just another day in NYC, we reminded ourselves.

A short bus ride later, we stepped off into New Jersey.

New York City stood stoically and silently from the New Jersey side of the Hudson River. The dominance of the New York City skyline finally had some context.

It was jaw-dropping.

Passing a small Tiger Mart, we made our way to the house of a friend I had the pleasure of meeting during a summer internship. Amelia had an infectious energy and contagiously positive attitude; a personality that perfectly matched the overtones of Thanksgiving.

Her family and friends were characters from a Holiday movie, each full of tales, life, and personality whose stories occupied our ears the duration of the evening.

As international students, Petra and I were largely oblivious to the traditions of the holiday, and after intensely questioning Amelia for answers, we were none the wiser. Three trays of cheeses, fruits, jams, crackers, and olives left our

stomachs with little surplus room; though the accompanying sangria seemed to create more space.

We transferred from the cozy living room and appetizers to the exquisitely decorated dining table lined with fine China framed by wine glasses. A white cloth ran down the center of the table, holding an arrangement of flowers dangerously close to taper candles. Petra and I were seated toward the middle of the table, a position of great influence in the conversational flow of the evening.

When the last slurp of soup was swallowed, Amelia's family et al made their way to the buffet-style main course. Turkey, mashed potatoes, grilled pumpkin topped with sugar, yams cooked with marshmallows, a mushroom gravy, and wild rice formed our impression of a Thanksgiving meal.

The Thanksgiving tradition was made transparent with the arrangement of foods, laughter, family, full stomachs and intensely interesting conversations.

A walk along the Hudson River gazing at the city helped our stomachs digest before returning for dessert. As our group of 'kids' (the title given to the children of

spoke about its purpose.

"Educate students about safe sex. What happens is that young students today turn to pornography because they do not get the confidence from sex education from school or colleges. That is why they do that, and consuming a lot of pornography content basically affects your mental health, it affects your relationship, your sex life, and a lot. Just to fill in that gap and educate people that is why this event happened," she said.

A lot of students who went, like Violet Tetrault, said they loved it, and found it very helpful and informative.

"It makes it fun to go to, brings people together to kind of talk about a touchy subject," she said.

Other students agreed that the tactics they used helped make the experience more comfortable.

"They definitely used some tactics that made it less intimidating and more fun," said Alexa Whelan.

# Life took non-trad student in different directions

By Aurora Champine  
Castleton Spartan

Life isn't linear; it can often take you places you never expected to be and meet people you never expected to meet.

At least that's what Suzanne Fontaine's experience has been like ever since moving to Vermont; one chance encounter after another shaping her life and guiding her purpose.

"I have the most boring life," she'll say humorously.

Fontaine, a Vermont State University Global Studies major, business owner, and mother of two, opened the coffee shop Bonnet & Main in Manchester, Vermont in 2019 following a long career of culinary passion.

The comfy cafe sits behind the Northshire Bookstore, a quintes-

sential New England tourist destination brimming with charm.

Ever since leaving Florida for a job in Stratton, just a town over from Manchester, she's enriched her life and the community, from serving on the board of the farmer's market to serving as a justice of the peace.

After a life-changing meeting with an inspiring customer, and despite being up most days before 4 a.m. to bake for the cafe, in 2022 Fontaine decided to add student into her schedule.

"[Not having a college degree] felt like it didn't matter until it started mattering to me," Fontaine says, reflecting on the choice to finish her degree.

She says most semesters were spent learning in the cafe, taking an hour or two out of her day with her laptop to attend classes online and then staying up late into the

evening to finish homework.

Yet a higher education wasn't always on her radar.

When asked about the importance of a college degree today, she says that of course it can be valuable if you know what to do with it.

Otherwise, she cautioned, it can be an overwhelming experience for someone so young, as well as a hefty investment in both time and money.

As a teenager, Fontaine had no idea what she wanted to do with her life when others her age were thinking about choosing college majors. Even now, as an adult, she saw the same dilemma happen in her own house.

"My son knew exactly what he wanted to do, so he found a college to do it," She recalled. "But my daughter was completely different. She said she hated school

and didn't know what to do, and I was like 'Then don't go.'

I know that may be mortifying for other parents to hear that, but I was like, 'You'll only be spending a bunch of money on something you don't want to do.'

Fontaine's own journey back into academics started after she had her kids and began accumulating some credits by taking classes through Community College of Vermont.

But between growing businesses and raising a family, time was always tight to keep it all in balance.

"There's just only so much you can do in a day," she said.

It was only after her kids were out of the house that the time felt right for her to finally start thinking about her own future.

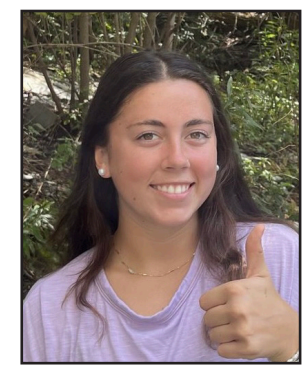
After a semester of taking full-time classes and managing the cof-

fee shop, Fontaine expresses relief looking back on the hard work she's accomplished to get her to this point.

Now she only has her internship in Dublin to pursue a career in climate justice to look forward to as her college career comes to close.

When asked what advice she could impart for people thinking about or newly attending school, Fontaine refers adamantly to the same advice she gave her own daughter.

"It's okay to not know what you want to do. Maybe start with some prerequisites or trying something out that's interesting. But you never know when your path might change, so it's okay to not know and hold off on paying for college until you're ready."



Rylee Pepin  
Junior

"I want new running shoes and a new watch."



# Drawing George Clooney in reverse charcoal

Joe Vyvial  
Castleton Spartan

This is a portrait of George Clooney.

It was made with white charcoal on a black paper. It was kind of an experiment because I've never drawn on a black paper before. Everything works the other way around from the usual drawings.

Usually, you draw all the dark parts, and leave the highlights, or do those after with an eraser or something.

Here, you have to draw those first and leave the dark parts.

It's kind of hard for your brain to process it, because the brain is used to work certain way, which doesn't work for this.

For example, when you draw an eye, the pupil, on a normal paper with a black pencil, you do the

outline first and then fill out the inside.

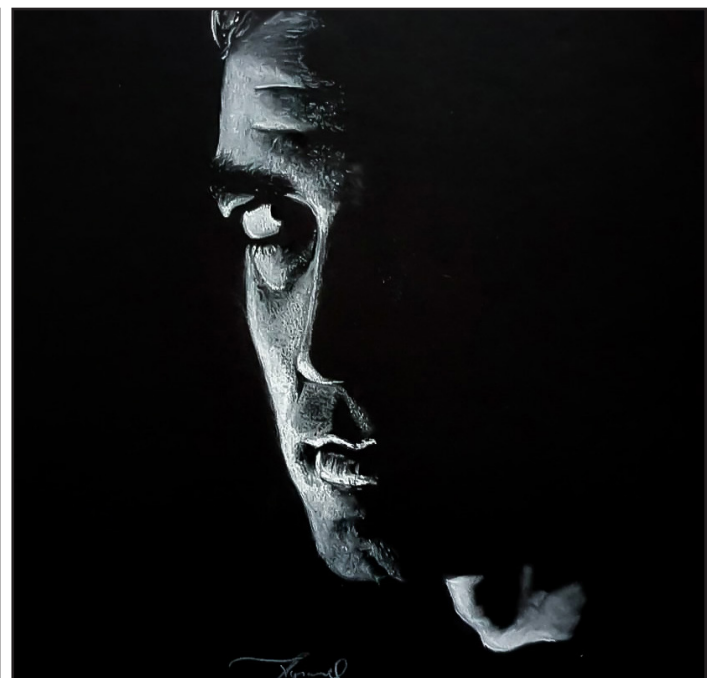
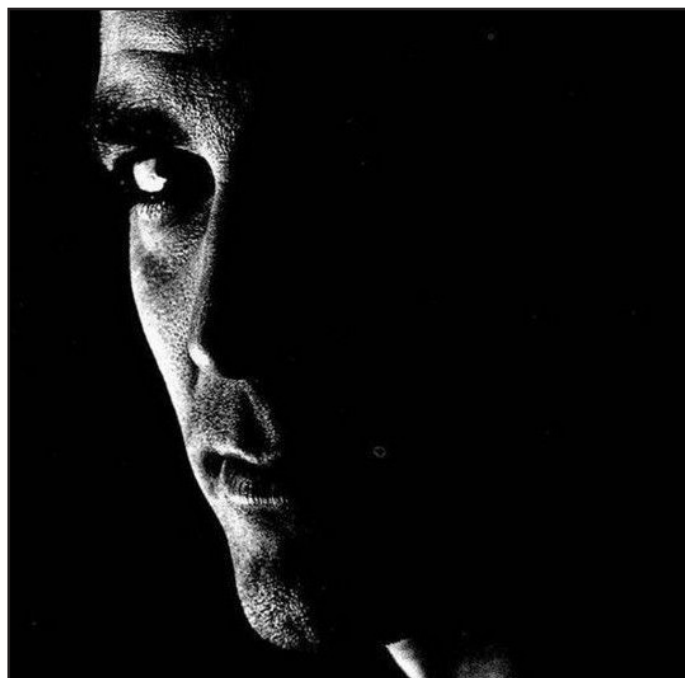
With this drawing, you do the outline as well, but you have to fill out the outside, so the outline has to be bigger, otherwise the pupil would look smaller.

I tried this technique maybe three or four more times. It's fun and great practice as well.

I actually drew this based on a photo that already looks like it. It is black and white with one side of the face covered.

Drawing this, based on a normal, colorful photo, would be another level, which I'm looking forward to conquering.

More of my drawings are on my TikTok and Instagram @pepan\_art.



JOE VYVIAL

Artist Joe Vyvial draws a realistic portrait of George Clooney using white charcoal on black paper. Shown above are his reference (left) and drawing (right).

# Genesis hosts the “Essex Experience”

By Jess Emery  
Castleton Spartan

A few guys got together in 2022 for a show and have been on a steady rise ever since.

It all started with a group of guys in April of 2022.

Will Buck, Adam Osha, Hunter Smith, tyler serrani (he uses lowercase letter for his name) and Obi the Voicegod had the idea that they should put on a show for all their friends.

The crew wanted to bring something different to the social scene of then Castleton University, considering the lackluster of social activities.

“We threw some pallets together, screwed some plywood on the top, and Tyler provided some equipment, and we threw a show and three to five-hundred people showed up,” said Osha, member of the Pleasant Boys, describing how Genesis started.

They began the change of the Castleton music scene.

Although the turnout was not anticipated by some.

“The first show that we ever threw, I found the PA speakers in my garage, and I didn't know how to use a mixer and we didn't know what we were doing, and it looked like it was going to rain...” said Serrani, one the artists and production manager of Genesis.

Their most recent show was at the Essex Experience in Essex Junction, Vermont.

The new venue hosted the Genesis fam that has grown exponentially since the first show.

The venue itself was an old movie theater lit up with LEDs and projectors displaying psychedelic imagery as artists got ready to perform.

The familiar faces of serrani, Buck, Osha and Obi were accompanied by artists like Charlie Mayne, Xistential, Flywlr, Swaveoh, and Mendica, Hakim XOXO, Trills Interlude and Young Topia.

The diverse crowd ranged from teenagers to couples in their 70s, but everyone was in high anticipation for the music to come.

Trills Interlude and Hakim XOXO opened the night.

“I freestyle everything. But that took time. I ain't going to flex that that shit came overnight. It took time for real. I ain't going to lie,” Hakim XOXO said.

As more artists performed, the crowd became more and more hyped.

“It's just raw. I used to write at first too, but then I stepped into that mindset. Life is in the moment. There might not be a

tomorrow and you can't be stuck in yesterday. It's just life.” Trills Interlude said.

The community aspect is evident in the Genesis family, a perfect setup for the crowd and performers to be together and relish in the music in the moment.

Throughout the performances DJ Matt Fisher, also known as Mendica, was behind the DJ table.

“Fish, Mendica, The DJ, is the heart of the whole thing,” said Pleasant Boy Buck, co-founder of Genesis, and the group's media guy.

Towards the middle of the set, the highly anticipated Pleasant Boys began their performance.

They performed a new song titled “Chicken Sandwich,” which the crowd raved about as well fan favorites like “BRISK OUTSIDE,” which the group released a video of last January directed by Caraway, the videographer for all Genesis events.

The Pleasant Boys' stage presence is captivating, and the crowd was engaged and involved throughout.

“Senior year [of high school], I thought I could become a rapper. I was not making good music. But I was having so much fun. Like me and my friends were all just trying to come up with music and just make raps together. Obviously rapping about shit we don't do,” Osha said.

Buck and Osha met senior year of high school and started making music together in college. It wasn't until their fifth year of college that they started putting it out.

After The Pleasant Boys, Obi the Voicegod was up.

He had a variety of music that the crowd loved, and his music sparked much more dancing in the crowd.

From the side of the stage, Caraway, the videographer is capturing it all.

“It was cool we got a videographer there and he made a sick recap of it and made it look really cool on social media and got everyone hype about it and we decided to do it again two weeks later and we had an even bigger turnout,” Osha said, referring to Caraway at the very first Genesis.

“I just want to make them look the best I can because of the respect and relationship I have with all of them as artists and people. I'm just so proud of them all individually. I'm excited to see the feedback we get. Just making sure that I'm making something that will make people want to go to the next show,” Caraway said.

See ‘Genesis’ on page 6



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JESS EMERY AND WILL BUCK

Genesis, a concert event series started in Spring 2022, has since reimaged the Vermont music scene. The latest show, the “Essex Experience,” attracted hundreds of fans to their venue in Essex, Vt.

# Book of the Fortnight

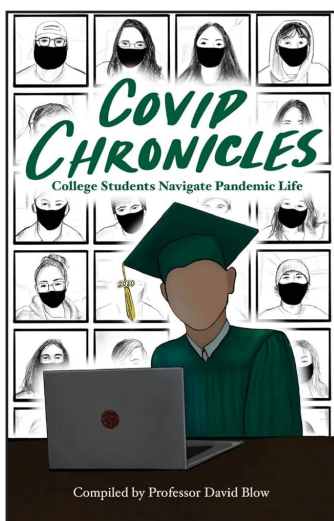
By Camille Jackson  
Castleton Spartan

“Covid Chronicles,” recommended by Camille Jackson

As COVID-19 struck the world, human and university life effectively shut down, leaving the vulnerable and developing minds of university students to face the realm of isolation.

Faculty advisor to the Spartan Newspaper, David Blow, compiled entries and reflections from his Media Writing Class to immortalize the student experience of COVID-19.

Covid Chronicles is a quick, easy, and eye-opening read into the unique challenges faced by students and the diversity of experiences gained throughout the lockdown period of the pandemic.

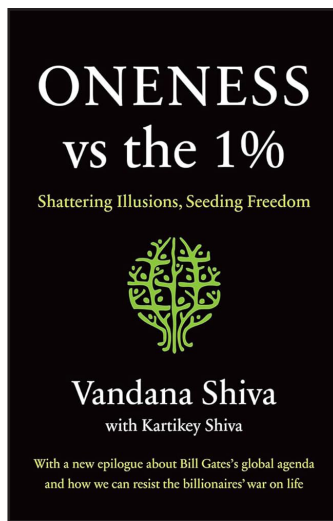


“Oneness vs the 1%,” recommended by Camille Jackson

Eco-feminist and global activist Shiva presents an eye-opening account of issues plaguing the international community. Critiquing the power and agency of the ultra-wealthy forms the basis for an exploration into how a profit orientation has culminated into a separation from the human and natural world.

Optimistically, Shiva investigates methods to reverse this paradigm and reestablish an interconnected community that promotes the health of all life forms.

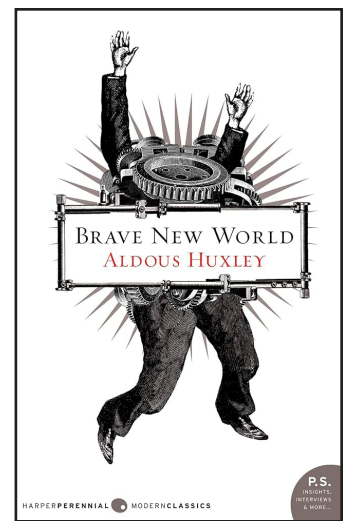
This beautifully written and easily read book is a must-read if you are interested in an alternative conception of society, economics, and politics that recognizes the interconnectedness of life.



“Brave New World,” recommended by Aksel Stroem-Handsen

The classic dystopian novel captured the mind of Stroem-Hansen, who explained “Brave New World is a must-read because of its brilliant reflections on human society and the driving forces in human behavior.”

The book's exploration into the potential repercussions of advanced technology towards the human condition constitutes a major theme, though Stroem-Hansen reassures, “although big topics are brought up by Huxley, the book remains a fun, relatable, and entertaining story”





# Farewell:

*Continued from page 3*

"I started doing it here because it was fun and different, and then people started to expect it, and then people started to ask 'what are you going to be next year?' and then people who aren't even in my classes would come around on Halloween to see what I dressed up as," she explained.

As much as Keyes likes to have fun, she's also very serious about her job, which is what students often fail to see past.

"Flo is a no-nonsense, say-what-I-mean-and-mean-what-I-say kind of person. You know where you stand with Flo," Alex-

ander said. "I've always appreciated that forthrightness, and I have especially appreciated the insights that come with it," he added.

Teaching is a serious job, and it's also a very demanding job, and Keyes even did the math to calculate how much time a teacher works.

"People say 'oh they only work 12 hours a week,' which is hilarious... between grading and prep it's about a 60-hour-per-week job," Keyes said. "They say 'oh you get time off at the end,' yes I know we get summers off, but if you average it out it comes out about 40 hours a week, and summers are recouping from pushing that hard the previous semester,

and then you have to start prepping for the next semester."

Because of this and other reasons, Keyes has announced that she's beginning the retirement process after the spring semester of 2024. She'll move to part-time teaching for the following year before officially retiring.

"Goofing off will be nice, gardening will be nice, but I don't know that I'm ready to stop working," she said. "It's not that I've reached a point where I'd like to do some of that other stuff, I don't like the changes they've made in the college, I don't like the merger, and mostly I don't like the assumption that the best teaching has to be online," she added.

Keyes thinks that online teaching only works effectively if it's done by a teacher who commits themselves to that form of teaching.

"Teaching online is not good pedagogy, especially when it's teaching online because somebody else thinks you should do it, and not because you've committed yourself to that as a style of teaching," Keyes explained. "I don't like teaching that way, I don't wanna have to teach that way. I'm getting out before I have to teach that way."

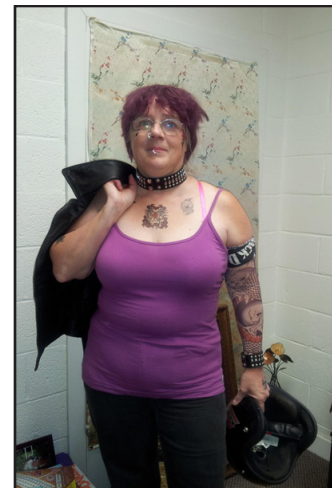
When Keyes leaves it's going to be an "enormous" hit for the English department according to Alexander.

"Flo's range of expertise is

exceptional. [There are] so many classes we can't offer anymore, ranging from Medieval Lit to Children's Lit to Dante to American Drama to Creative Writing," Alexander said.

Keyes' retirement is also a major hit to the students.

"She's been my favorite professor since freshman year. I've learned the most from her, and I feel the most rewarded by her classes and her teaching style," Emery said. "I feel sad for the students who couldn't get past her scariness, and didn't get to know her as a professor."



FLO KEYES

Flo Keyes as 'biker chick' on Halloween.

# Genesis:



COURTESY WILL BUCK

The Pleasant Boys perform at the 'Essex Experience.'

*Continued from page 5*

Then it was Serrani who approached the stage for his set, although it was not the first time the audience had seen him that night.

Between each performance, he would come out to announce each performer.

The crowd sang along with his songs that had a more hyper pop feel with CU grad Hunter Smith, who is referred to as the head of Genesis, on bass, and Logan Tolman on guitar.

"Just be you and don't pay mind to everybody else whose telling you that you're not going to be able to do something with it because it doesn't matter how young, how old, how new you are to music. Just make it, own it, and always be you," he said as advice for people looking to get into the

music business.

Charlie Mayne was next up on the set list. The West Coast musician spent a good amount of time interacting with the crowd before he started his performance.

Mayne opened the floodgates to a lot of opportunities for Genesis in Burlington.

"I put them on out here because I saw that they were doing shit in Castleton. So out here I'm the person that puts everyone in shows, and gets people signed. Those are like my baby brothers, and they are fucking talented," he said. "They already had their thing going on. It was just like connecting with the next town. So, they're running shit in Castleton and I'm running shit in Burlington and it's like okay boom, push it together and now we're running Vermont."

The guys have curated a network of people between Castleton

and Burlington which had created many opportunities for them and other artists.

"And then we all became friends and made this huge network of artists and started posting our stuff online and connecting with other artists from Vermont, not just in Castleton, and making Genesis more of a network," Osha said. "We primarily throw shows, but it's a network of people and friends and artists all trying to build together and support each other."

None of them imagined it would have grown to what it has. Performing in bigger and better venues each show.

For the future of Genesis, creative ideas are constantly flowing between all of them. So, although the future of Genesis might not be perfectly mapped out, it's clear that we should expect more music.

"I don't know what the future looks like for Genesis. It could turn into a festival, a multimedia company, but in and of itself, Genesis is a movement. Genesis is a cultivation of art in Vermont, and we want to just continue to fuel the scene, making the most out of what we have here," Serrani said. "I mean I don't think any of us actually want to not be in Vermont like we have a home here that is absolutely insane, and I love everything that we do, and I love the culture in Vermont and just like trying to cultivate that this scene that we have going already is just what Genesis is all about. It's just showing what Vermont has through music and art."

# Christmas:



PEARL BELLOMO

A Castleton fire truck in the Christmas parade.

*Continued from page 1*

"Thank you all for coming and thank you for being a part of our community. I truly can't express enough how happy I am that so many people came out for such a big celebration. We truly appreciate everyone," Patterson said, leaving everyone feeling sentimental and warm.

"This is the best time of the year and I love celebrating with everyone and coming together as a community, we also got so many donations for the Tree of Remembrance this year, I'm grateful to all," Patterson said.

The tree lighting took place just before the main event, The Christmas Parade. Hundreds of people lined both sides of the street, anxiously awaiting the various types of floats to come down.

Families' faces were beaming at the site of multi-colored trucks, tractors, floats, inflatable characters, and of course Santa Claus.

"I can't believe it's him! Shouldn't he be getting ready for

Christmas?" Little girls exclaimed when he passed by. Santa was on a huge lit-up float with children of all ages hanging off the sides waving and passing out candy to the people on the street. Behind him was a huge inflatable reindeer that waved through the air. We even got a visit from the Grinch who appeared behind the float.

As the floats, trucks, and tractors drove down Main Street and turned down South Street, fireworks painted the sky to symbolize the night was coming to an end. Festive colors of red and green sparks were displayed in the air. Huge, loud booms could be heard from miles and miles away.

Students were on their yards and children were on their parent's shoulders, as they watched the colorful sky. The Christmas spirit persisted and was present in everyone as the final fireworks echoed, which served as a symbol of family and community during Castleton's holiday season.

# Halloween door decoration winners



Staff in Woodruff Hall decorated doors and hallways for Halloween and offered up prizes for the best work.



DAVID BLOW

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or call (802) 236-5668



SCAN TO APPLY

# VTSU:



Adsel Sparrow

*Continued from page 1*

"If we continue to communicate and interact in a confrontational, divisive, combative manner, it will create poor admissions outcomes, frustration on our campuses, and impact the wellbeing of our current and future students," he said.

But those who participated in the press conference and comment period at the trustees meeting argue that students and faculty did conduct themselves in this way. Although many responses conveyed emotion, and some pointed to certain positions as responsible,

most responses advocated for student needs, as voiced by the students themselves.

For those who would like to respectfully share their thoughts about Optimization 2.0 and Administrative Optimization, Castleton Student Government Association advises them to sign up for public comment at SGA meetings, Monday nights at 8 p.m., and to write Vermont legislators.

VINTAGE - CONSIGNMENT - THRIFT

# CAMILLE'S

-EXPERIENCED CLOTHING-

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[CAMILLES\\_VT](https://www.instagram.com/camilles_vt)



# Growing pains early in the season

By Wyatt Jackson  
Castleton Spartan

Coming into the season, the Castleton men's basketball team felt confident about the future of the program. Both coaches and players felt that'd be taking a big step forward this season compared to last season.

But they're off a rocky start at 2-4 heading into conference play.

Coach Paul Culp feels like the team's ceiling can be pretty high, but their floor can be pretty low. He said it's all about finding that middle ground and being more consistent as the season progresses.

"I'm not satisfied with where we are right now. Hopefully we can get some stuff accomplished in the next couple of practices. My message is not very complicated: everybody's 0-0 and Saturday Dec. 2 is the first day of league play and I think we've proven we can be good but we've got to be more consistent," Culp said in an interview last week.

Culp has seen some positives early on, but it's the areas they lack as a team that is causing him to feel unsatisfied.

"On the positive side, when we're connected and moving the ball, I think we're creating good scoring options. I think our inability to stop the ball in transition and then our turnovers are probably the two things we need to be better at," Culp said.

The turnovers have put a dent into the team's ability to stay in games because a lot of those turnovers are turning into layups or dunks at the other end.

Culp is trying to address these issues by possibly changing some strategies to help players get in

better positions. But he also thinks because they haven't won much in the past, that it's affecting the confidence level of some players.

"We as a program right now are pushing this boulder up a hill, and we've got a lot of kids that just aren't playing with confidence. Some of that is the result of not winning in the past, some of the kids are new and that's a result of them just getting their feet wet and learning. So, I think there's a combination of things and unfortunately for them I'm not the most patient human being and so it can be tough. But I think the turnovers come from two reasons: you can be sloppy and talented or some of these turnovers we as staff have to do a better job of helping them," Culp said.

Both Leonard Brice and Joe Russell share the same concern when it comes to his teammates playing with more confidence.

"I feel the team needs to improve on being competitors, being confident in our game plans, being confident when we take the court to play, trusting our abilities, and for the most part trusting in one another no matter who's playing. We shouldn't feel like just some of us are capable of doing something because we all can do it together," Brice said.

Russell agrees. "The team needs to improve upon not getting down after a bad play, bad half, or even a bad game. With there being so many games throughout the season, one bad game doesn't define our team. Although we're a young team, we need to improve upon not focusing on the past and learning for the future," Russell said.

Although Russell feels the team loses some belief depending upon situation, he also believes



CASTLETON ATHLETICS

Joe Russell prepares to drive to the hoop.

this team has shown the ability to be resilient.

"The most impressive thing from the team this season has been the ability to bounce back from rough games. Throughout the six games we've played this season, back-to-back losses have been rare and even if we don't win the game, the team usually responds well after a loss. I've been impressed with this because we're considered a young team playing three or four freshman major minutes," Russell said.

Heading into conference play, both coaches and players have mixed emotions about how things will pan out. Everybody understands what the team is capable of, but it's up to everybody to figure things out and get back on the right track.

"Heading into conference play, we have to stop turning the ball over and I think we need to play with a purpose. Remove all the X and Os, if I'm watching a team play, I'm really only looking for two things. Are they connected and what I mean by connected is, are they playing with a purpose that benefits the team and are they confident? Right now, I feel like we're not doing either one of those. And until we figure those things out the strategy and stuff isn't going to matter. Each individual needs to figure out what their purpose is towards the team," Culp said.

Russell, the team's leading scorer, sees himself as a leader and said being a graduate student has allowed him to learn the ins and outs of what it takes to get through a season.



CASTLETON ATHLETICS

Will Radcliff sets up the offense against Anna Maria.

"I bring leadership to the table that makes the team better. We're playing a lot of younger guys who have never played collegiate basketball before, so I take much pride in helping them and trying to lead them through tough situations within the game. As a veteran and the oldest player on the team, I obviously try to help the team with my play on the court, but my leadership benefits each individual just as much," Russell said.

With Russell pouring knowledge into the younger players on the team, he also wants to spread more belief going into conference play. Not only belief in the team but for players to have more belief in their own ability.

"I think that we've played quality teams thus far, which will only help us get ready for conference opponents. Regardless of the out-

come, I feel confident that each individual on the team will go out every game and do their best to positively impact the game. Although we're young, players are gaining valuable experience with every minute played," Russell said.

As the season progresses Culp believes junior Connor McKearin from Proctor, Vermont is a player to keep an eye on.

"Connor McKearin was the best player on the court for both teams in the loss against Colby-Sawyer. Since we've got back from Thanksgiving break, he's dominated practice and been the best guard on the court every day at practice as well. That's been a great thing for us because we've certainly been looking for someone to step up and play more minutes," Culp said.

# Seeing the slopes at the World Cup

By Camille Jackson  
Castleton Spartan

Housed 45 minutes from Vermont State University at Castleton, Killington Mountain peaks over the rolling hills of the Green Mountains. The resort, famed for its diverse terrain and challenging runs, has also annually lauded the best female technical skiers to race down the steep face of Superstar each November since 2016.

The weekend of the Nov. 25-26 witnessed intense competition and winter bliss as the Audi FIS World Cup made its annual return to North America.

"I remember the moment when I was on the start gate and the clock started to count. I was very nervous and cold; my legs were shaking as I was looking at the first gate. Then I looked up and saw a magnificent view of Swedish lake in between the mountain ranges. That view calmed me down and I remembered why I was there. To ski," recounts Petra Veljkovic, a senior member of the Castleton Alpine Ski Team.

Veljkovic represented Serbia in the 2019 Ski World Championships in Are, Sweden. Her experience certainly echos the intensity and thrill of competing at the highest level of competition.

The Killington World Cup is comprised of two races, a giant slalom and slalom. The races fall within the technical category of events, as the quicker turns and small radius forces athletes to be as precise – but fast – as possible.

"I loved it! The weather was perfect, and the overall atmosphere was amazing. Killington did a great job by creating not only an amazing race but also an amazing show! I also liked the extra activities that the resort was offering, such as concerts and brand stands," said Filipo Collini, a junior on the Castleton Alpine Ski Team.

Castleton Alpine Ski Team head coach Christopher Eder has been volunteering at the Killington World Cup since its inception in 2016 and he said "to prepare for a race like this it takes months of planning and preparation."

"I started volunteering on-snow the Sunday before [the race], so I typically end up working eight consecutive days," he said.

While preparation for the Cup constitutes a significant commitment, it also provides the opportunity to reconnect with the tightly knit ski racing community, he said.

"It is so cool to see so many Castleton Alpine Ski Team alumni volunteering and playing a part. Many of our alumni are still involved with ski racing in one way or another. Most of the ski academies in Vermont have Castleton ski team alumni coaching there. Okemo mountain school alone has five or six of our alumni coaching for them and they were all at Killington volunteering at the World Cup races," he said.

Certainly, the international ski world congregates at these events, allowing old friends and competition to reunite. Collini watched an old friend from his ski team in Italy compete in the Cup in addition to others.

"I know another Italian skier that was competing there. Her name is Beatrice Sola and we were on the same regional team," Collini said. The theme of supporting past teammates was a central for Veljkovic also.



CHRISTOPHER EDER

Evan Toman (left) and Jackson Frazier (right) enjoying their time on Killington watching the World Cup.

tion to others.

"I knew all of the Balkan competitors. I trained and raced with most of them, especially the younger ones," she said.

The Killington World Cup saw Switzerland's Lara Gut-Bahrami clock the fast time in the Giant Slalom while USA's Mikaela Shiffrin won day two's slalom.

"Over the years, the women on the World Cup have said that the races at Killington are their favorite because of the crowd, as it is the highest attended World Cup race on the circuit," Eder said.

Located 45 minutes away from VTSU-Castleton, the Cup provides an unmatched opportunity to

watch the world's best skiers.

"Seeing the World Cup live cannot ever compare to a TV screen. You can feel the energy of the athletes pushing down the slope. It is fascinating to see such experts in person," Veljkovic said.

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# Lady Spartans planning for big second half

By Stone Stelzl  
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton women's hockey team has kicked off its 2023-2024 campaign with an up and down start. The Spartans have a 4-5-1 record (update before time of print) but have been in every game they have lost.

The women have also pushed teams like #5 Middlebury and #13 Norwich to close games but couldn't quite get the job done.

"I think the season started off on the right foot. We have a super young team and we really focused on building our chemistry during the first half of the season. When we get back from break, I think a huge component for us to find success is building off the chemistry that we have already built and start creating more opportunities in the O-zone," said junior Emery Bonner.

The team this season has 15 underclassmen, with six of them being first-years. The team also added a junior transfer as well as a senior transfer to the squad.

"We've started to build chemistry with each other, and things



PHOTO FROM CASTLETON SPORTS

The women's team sits on the bench getting ready for puck drop.

are starting to click really well. It's obvious as a group, we all have a strong drive to win and I think that's what's going to carry us into the next half of the season," said

sophomore Rachel Meneil.

Coming up on the Spartans schedule is the Bagley Invitational tournament which will be held at Spartan Area. The women open

the tournament against Rivier University in the first round of the tournament and depending on the outcome could end up playing SUNY Potsdam or Colby College

in the second game. This tournament then leads the women into their Winter break and then they resume games Jan. 2 against Amherst college.

"We have a strong schedule when we get back from Christmas break so it's important that we keep the ball rolling and have no bad days," said Bonner.

When the team returns from break, they jump right back into action with a three-game week starting with an out of conference game at Amherst College followed by two conference games at Elmira and William Smith.

"Finding a way to play a full 60 minutes rather than taking shifts off has been our biggest issue. We're having problems with the mental side of things during games. So just coming together as a team and being confident enough to know that we can keep up with the better teams in our conference if we choose to is going to play a big role," said senior Victoria Bakopanos.

Although the team is young and there can be some growing pains, many of the first-year players have found success on the ice – especially Taylor Adams, who has been named the NEHC Rookie of the Week two times this season.



# Magro continues to ball out, has career night

By Stone Stelzl  
Castleton Spartan

Sprinting up and down the court, moving the ball, crossing people up and driving to the hoop.

This has been the story for Castleton women's basketball stand-out Elise Magro all season. The Spartans are currently sitting with a 4-4 record despite the team being a bit handcuffed due to the limited number of players they have.

Magro has led the team this season as a graduate student who is averaging a career high 21 points per game. On Nov. 14 against Norwich, Magro set a new career high when she posted a 32-point night to lead the Spartans to victory 66-61.

Through adversity of having only eight healthy players out of their nine on roster at the moment, the team has found a way to suc-

ceed with big minutes by their starters. The team has five players averaging over 27 minutes a game over the course of this season.

"I think the season has started out decent. It's been hard as we only have eight healthy girls since one is hurt and won't be back for a while. Even with that though, our team has conditioned to work hard and run with teams that have 12-18 players," said sophomore Emily Adams.

In addition to low numbers, the team also has first-year head coach Kathleen Payne, who the team has seemingly rallied around through adversity and learning a new coach's style. Payne was also joined by first year assistant coach, Jasmin Tirado. Longtime coach Tim Barrett recently took a job as athletic director at VTSU Castleton.

"The adjustment was pretty



CASTLETON ATHLETICS

Castleton's Elise Magro pops a shot.

smooth honestly. We gained two coaches who are consistent about making our team better and want to be competitive in our league,

which is awesome," said sophomore Kathryn Moore.

Adams agrees.

"I think the team is adjusting good with the new coaches. It was hard at first since we obviously didn't know their style of coaching, but we soon realized they are our biggest supporters. They constantly push us to work hard and become the best player we can on top of gaining our confidence in our abilities," Adams said.

Moving forward, the Spartans look to close out the first semester of play against Western Connecticut hoping to move to (updated record). When the Spartans return from break, they open up against RPI, which the Spartans narrowly beat last season.

"I think coming back from break, we have to keep the same intensity we have had so far and pick each other up going into play-

offs in February," Moore said.

"I think to be successful moving forward into next semester, we need to continue to trust the process which is working hard in practice and pushing each other and trusting the game plan we have going into each game," (said) Magro said.

Although the team has been off to an up and down start, players say they look to continue their success through the adversity they have faced by attacking it head on and embracing it.

"A big key that we work on is conditioning, since most teams have at least 15 while we are running with eight. Another thing is communication. As long as we keep talking through everything, working together, and staying positive I think we can have a really good season," Adams said.

# Taking the nation by storm

By Justin Gitto  
Castleton Spartan

The VTSU Castleton wrestling team has continued to wreak havoc on their competition after winning their third tournament of the season.

The Spartans – ranked eighth in the nation – have yet to be beaten after they pushed past number 11 Coast Guard by one point. That's the closest any program has gotten to defeating them this season.

"We are excited that we have represented ourselves and VTSU Castleton on the National Level," said head coach Scott Legacy.

"However, we all feel that we can get better, and there is work to do every day to improve. The ceiling is very high for this program," Legacy added.

Gavin Bradley, James Rodriguez, and Nathaniel Camiscioli – all ranked in the top 10 nationally for their respective weight classes – were champions of the event in addition to Nicholas Roeger, Sampson Wilkins and Darby McLaughlin.

To add to the three tournament wins, the team is also 4-0 in duals, after winning all three matches at the Journeymen DIII Showcase.

"The start is expected. Members of the team have worked very hard year-round to get to the level we are at. Our entire coaching staff works hard with the athletes, and we are in tune with each other as a coaching staff, as well as the athletes being in tune with each other and the coaching staff," Legacy

said. "There has been total buy-in by every team member, coach and support staff to get to the level of success we are experiencing."

During the 4-0 stretch of duals, Desmond McLaughlin tore up the mat, earning New England Wrestling Association Wrestler of the Week honors.

"Desi was fortunate enough to wrestle behind Cooper Fleming last year who was a regional champion. He saw how Cooper worked hard every day and has emulated that work ethic over the last year and really stepped his wrestling game up," Legacy said.

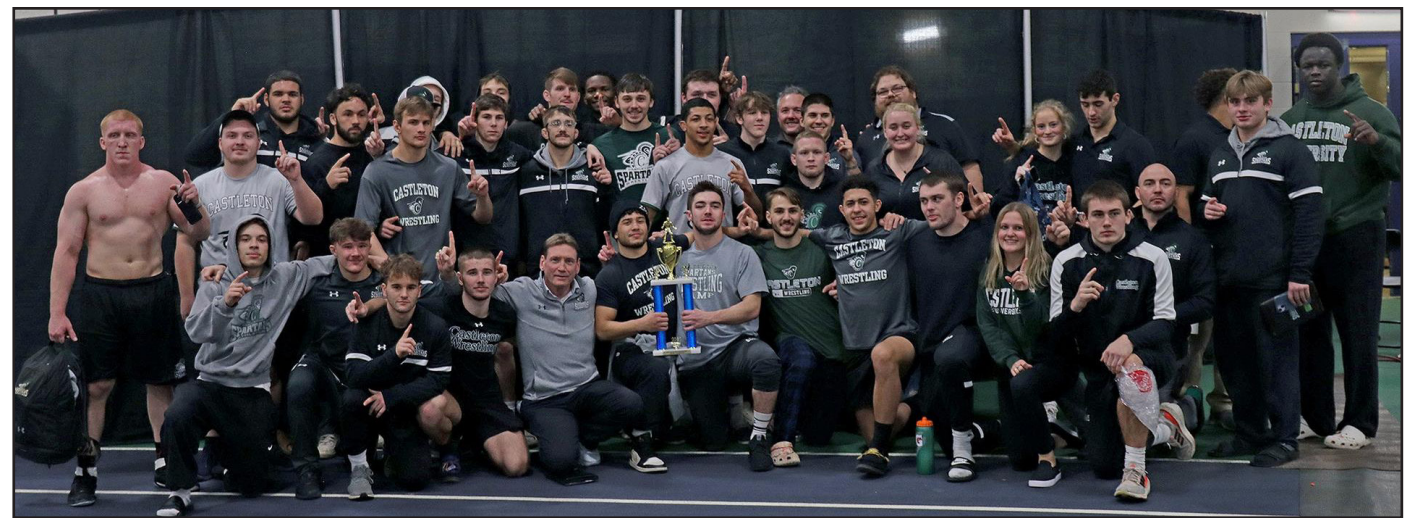
McLaughlin earned the award after going 4-0 individually, including a win against the fourth-ranked wrestler in the nation. This was his second victory over a top-5 nationally ranked wrestler.

"He enjoys the higher level of competition and thrives in that atmosphere. The tougher opponent the tougher Desi becomes. His breakout has really helped the team when it comes to national recognition," Legacy said.

With how the season has unfolded, like Legacy said, the ceiling is very high for this team.

"Our motto is to take it one period, one match and one event at a time. The work ethic this entire team brings to the table every day has been infectious. Iron really does sharpen iron and we have that going on up and down our lineup,"

The Spartans host a pair of duals this weekend – American International College on Friday, Dec. 8; and Southern Maine on Sunday, Dec. 10.



CASTLETON ATHLETICS

Desmond McLaughlin, top, pins an opponent at the Journeymen DIII Showcase. The wrestling team poses after winning their third tournament of the season, bottom.

# A Special Olympics tune-up



AVERY BOUCHARD

"VTSU Castleton held a Special Olympics Recreation Pick-Up Basketball Event, with the goal of rebuilding Special Olympics on the Castleton campus. The Student Athlete Advisory Council and their President Zack Durr, have been very supportive of these events. It is a coordinated effort between athletics, SAAC, and the College STEPS Program to make these events happen. We cannot do any of this without the electric atmosphere that only Spartan Nation can bring. There will be a third game sometime in March to culminate the year."

- Jamie Blake; Head Women's Lacrosse Coach and event co-organizer.

# Men's ice hockey pays homage to Moran with annual tournament

By Jacob Gonzalez  
Castleton Spartan

Castleton Men's Hockey team has won two of their last three games including tallying their lone conference win against New England College. Although they currently are in sixth place in the NEHC, the team is looking to rebound and make a statement to honor the man that started Castleton Men's Hockey team.

Over Thanksgiving weekend, the third annual Terry Moran tournament was held at Spartan Arena. This tradition only got its name recently to honor the man that pioneered Castleton hockey and his importance to hockey in the Rutland area.

Head coach Kyle Richards knows how important this tournament is having played for the Spartans from 2010-2014. At that time, Moran was an assistant coach for the team.

"It's hard to put in words the impact he's had for our (Castleton's) program and the Rutland community. Every day were not only playing for Castleton. We're playing for Terry, and I hope team understands that," Richards said.

Senior captain Justin Stairs is grateful for his contribution to both men's and women's hockey.

"The change in culture Terry has brought into both teams has allowed us to continue to play the sport we love. Terry is Castleton Hockey," Stairs said.

The Spartans started off facing MCLA in a battle that was close throughout. Sophomore Anthony Persi scored early in the first period to take an early 1-0 lead. Castleton's defense held strong fending off multiple power play opportunities during the final period. Junior

goalie Simon Brenter was lockdown, picking up his first career shutout with 22 saves in the win.

"His play gave us confidence knowing that even though we weren't at our best, he was holding down the fort in the net," Persi said.

In the championship game, however, Rivier University would dominate all phases of the game to beat Castleton 7-1. Sophomore Zach Wittaker would score late in the third to put the Spartans on the board, but only after five players for Rivier struck the back of the net. The Spartans were stunned to say the least.

Richards took full responsibility for the team not being ready to go this weekend and was disappointed about his lack of preparation. He said he knows his squad was capable of winning that tournament.

"It's hard to win in college hockey so it was good to get a chance to play in a championship in mid-November. It is what it is now and it's time to look forward to our next game," Richards said.

The squad wants to use this as a learning tool and realize how important this was for the team moving forward.

"We went through some adversity, but there is confidence within the room. We know what we are capable of, achieving our goals in the next few months," Persi said.

Stairs agrees that the team could've played a lot better and that they need to re-focus themselves.

"Going into break, we are looking to finish strong with our last four games and elevate our play back to the level we know we can compete at," he said.