



## NEWS

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Wrestler Gavin Bradley may be small, but he's a beast on the mat.

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Castleton, Vermont

Friday, February 9, 2024

# SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

## Welcoming us back

### Convocation features music and messages of hope from several speakers

Pearl Bellomo  
*Castleton Spartan*

Jan. 30 marked the second Convocation as a unified Vermont State University.

With opening words from Cathy Kozlik, dean of the School of Business and Professional Studies, followed by remarks from new VTSU President David Bergh, among others, Convocation signified the start of the Spring 2024 semester.

Kozlik began by recognizing the prior year's failure to include the NAACP in the celebration of Martin Luther King Jr., saying, "We heard and recognize our omission, and we apologize for the hurt felt by these significant members of the Castleton family."

She went on to discuss the tremendous change undergone in the past six months, comparing the merging of VTSU's legacy institutions to that of a "blended family."

"Like children thrust together into a new house, we don't want to share our room; we don't want to give up our place at the dinner table; those darn half sisters and brothers are taking over our closets and maybe even taking too long in the bathroom. But thankfully, we are now finding ways to embrace our new extended family," said Kozlik.

Following the introduction of new international students were speeches from respected members of the community and performances from the University Chorale.

Castleton Faculty Assembly Representative Andre Fleche said, despite "adjusting to new roles, modalities, and ways of business... the 'Castleton Way' has not disappeared, but it is our obligation to keep it that way."

He encouraged new students to get involved however they can and said he is happy to field any concerns students may have.

The University Chorale went on to express feelings of resilience and jubilation through their renditions of "Oye," "Lift Every Voice and Sing," "We Shall Overcome," and the "Alma Mater."

Student Government Association President Perry Ragouzis spoke about the campus' ability to band together and "elevate" through recent trials.

"This characteristic, this potential, is something I am confident that we need now more than ever,"

said Ragouzis, naming a few of these instances of perseverance.

"I have watched as this community has come together and work to address food insecurity. I have watched as our students choose to make their voices heard in respectful, tasteful ways on issues that matter. I have watched as our campus invites difficult conversations about race, sexuality, and nationality. I have seen what it means to love for more than just oneself... I have felt what it means to be a Spartan," he said.

President of the National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Kayon Morgan spoke highly of the organization's advancement since its start at Castleton four years ago.

"When we first started, we were a team of three, and that is why as president, my main goal was to further and increase student leadership in the organization," she said, adding that their chapter is "the most diverse executive board at Castleton...[not] only by the way we look, but our values, our backgrounds, our ideas, our cultures, and our identities."

"I have seen what it means to love for more than just oneself... I have felt what it means to be a Spartan."

-Perry Ragouzis

Morgan provided background on the NAACP's significance as the "oldest and boldest civil rights organization in the U.S., and in the world."

Established on Feb. 12, 1909, Abraham Lincoln's birthday, to address lynchings in the U.S., the



NAACP has introduced near 200 anti-lynching bills and none of them passed until the Emmett Till Anti Lynching Act in Feb. 2022.

They have fought to end segregation in public and private schools, discriminatory poll taxes and literacy tests, anti-interracial marriage laws, and more, Morgan pointed out. Two feats of their influence were the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

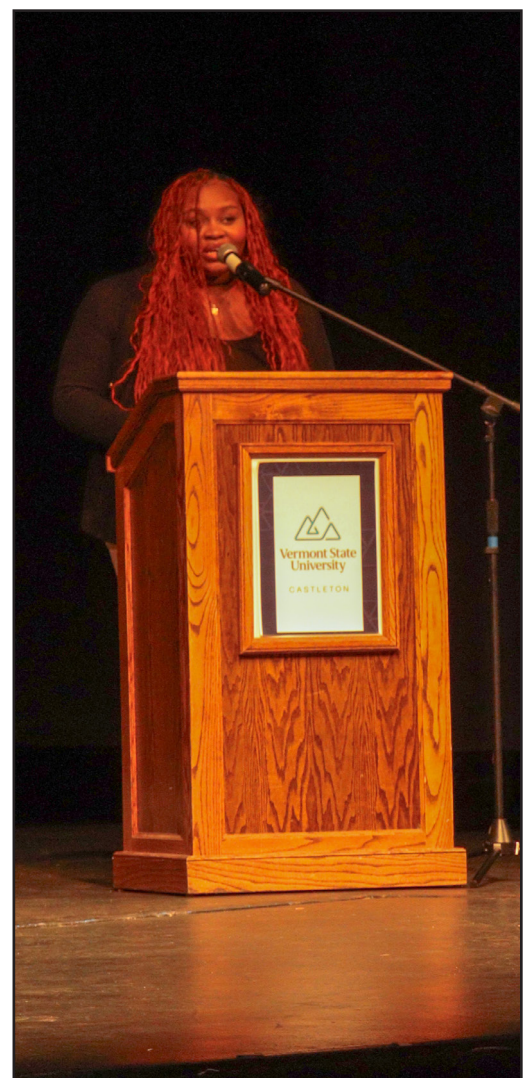
"But just as the emancipation proclamation did not immediately bring freedom, the political gains do not mean that injustice has been vanquished," said Morgan. "Therefore, I am honored to be part of this organization, honored to serve as president and vice president of the New England Compliance Youth and College Division in the capacity I do, and even more honored to be a part of the fight to end racial inequality."

Newly elected President David Bergh concluded Convocation with his remarks.

Commenting on the boatload of changes made last semester, Bergh said he would like to "bring an opportunity for us all to catch our breath."

He is excited about the high levels of student involvement, living in a post-Covid world, and the 86 percent of 2022-2023 first-years that returned this year.

"Let's try to make this place a model of what society and the nation should be like," said Bergh.



Perry Ragouzis and Kayon Morgan are pictured speaking at convocation.

PEARL BELLOMO

## Q&A with Interim President David Bergh



VTSU Interim President David Bergh

Camille Jackson  
*Castleton Spartan*

Vermont State University Interim President David Bergh sat down with Spartan Copy Editor Camille Jackson to talk about goals, his past and the future of VTSU.

**Q.** What does your history within the Vermont State College Systems and executive role at Cazenovia College bring to this position?

**A.** I think my prior experience in Vermont brings an appreciation for the transformative power of this university, this collection of campuses, on the lives of students; but also, how important they are to the communities and regions they are in.

**Q.** Did you always want to go into education? Your B.A. in Political Science and MPA (master's in public administration) suggest a different career path.

**A.** No, I didn't always want to go into education, in fact, when I did my master's in public administration, I thought it was just as likely that I would work in government or in a non-profit. One of

the appeals, to me, of that degree was that it was broad enough to be transferable to go into different directions. Now, my first job at then Johnson State College was working at Student Activities and advising student government, which stemmed from my own experience as an undergrad when I was a political science major and was very involved in student government as a student. So, it just kind of built from there, but in some ways, it was a combination of having the right background and credentials and skillset, but also the happenstance of falling into the right profession.

**Q.** Since beginning this role in late 2023, what has surprised you the most?

**A.** I think how much support there is for VTSU throughout the state. You know everywhere I go people are really, genuinely rooting for us, wanting this to be successful, acknowledging all the challenges that there have been and will be, but feeling it's very important for this to work. And I guess it shouldn't have been surprising, but I've just been surprised that even people who are expressing concerns are doing so in this constructive way where they want

things to be better.

**Q.** While you are formally an interim president, do you have any goals for your time here at VTSU?

**A.** I keep saying that my immediate goal in the weeks and months ahead is for people to kind of take a deep breath and refocus on what they're here to do, and that's for students and for our faculty and staff alike because there's been so much change so fast, that that can be disorienting almost. So, I think what I'd like to do in my time in this position over the course of the 18 months is to have the university in a much more solid place, comfortable with its campus identities and with a plan for the future. And not, in so much reaction and response mode.

**Q.** Vermont State Colleges have experienced periods of instability over the past few years, how do you plan on addressing this now that it is VTSU while balancing the needs of each distinct campus?

**A.** Well, I think that one thing that's important to me is that each distinct campus finds ways to remain distinctive, right, to have their own identity and culture. And so, to have what's greatest or what's best about that campus, but

also be able to take advantage of being part of a larger university, so just seeing the benefits in that. I think that the best way to do that is to make sure there's broad input moving forward at the campus levels in terms of the best way to realize that mix. To make sure that what makes each campus special, that we find a way to retain that as part of our larger planning efforts.

**Q.** What do you find to be the most pressing issue within tertiary education today?

**A.** One, is there's a demographic challenge in terms of simply fewer traditionally aged students, right. Bigger than that, there's just a whole cultural question around questioning the value and benefit of education and how it can help prepare you for your life, right. And I firmly believe that a liberal arts-based education is the best preparation for life. I mean none of us - using my case as an example, right, I wouldn't have predicted I would be doing this work 20 years ago or 30 years ago. Most people now go through several phases of their life, different careers, their interests will change.

See 'President' on page 6



# Swift, Super Bowl and the latest conspiracy theory

Another day, another NFL conspiracy theory is being thrown around social media, and this one's a doozy.

I'm sure the whole world knows that Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce are dating, and since the Kansas City Chiefs punched their way into the Super Bowl, it solidified that we're gonna have a Taylor Swift Super Bowl.

For the record, I'm not a Taylor Swift fan AT ALL.

It's also important to note that for the past year or so, rumors and theories have been flying left and right about the NFL being scripted and pre-determined.

First it was a former running back who claimed the league was "scripted" on a podcast, then everyone flooded social media with jokes about past NFL games, but then people looked into the colors of the Super Bowl logo, and suddenly people weren't laughing anymore.

It started to look like there might be some form of scripting going on as refs continued to make horrendous calls that tended to favor certain teams, and people pointed out how some players' performances on the field created 'character arcs' for them.

I, for one, can kinda see how the NFL can be in some way scripted.

But now, all of a sudden right-wingers are roping national politics into the NFL and I'm gonna have to tap out on this one.

This really all stems from Travis Kelce endorsing the Covid vaccine, and Aaron Rodgers dubbing him "Mr. Pfizer." Now that Kelce is dating one of the biggest names in pop culture history, right-wingers are jumping all over this, and calling Taylor Swift "the poster child" for the democrats.

I'm kind of divided on this honestly. On one hand I'm very biased because I hate the Chiefs, and I hate what this relationship is doing to football, but I think it's kind of wild to assume the league is rigged to promote a presidential candidate.

At the same time though, it's hard to ignore that Taylor Swift is arguably the biggest story going into the Super Bowl and she's not even a part of the game. She has a massive following that has all stormed the NFL, and she has a ton of influence over a mass of people.

Plus, just at the start of the season she starts dating one of football's biggest names who happens to endorse the Covid vaccine.

The pieces line up perfectly for a right-winger to jump to a wild conclusion such as this, but in all honesty I think it's all getting blown out of proportion.

Don't get me wrong, I'm rooting for Taylor Swift and the Chiefs to lose the Super Bowl, but I don't think that this is a political stunt puppeteered by the democrats. Maybe Kelce and Swift have their own little plans to make things political, but I highly doubt that it's backed by political officials.

I think the right-wing is grasping at straws and connecting dots that they're creating themselves, and making football more political than it needs to be. I'm rooting against the Chiefs because that's what's best for football, not because of political ties.

- Justin Gitto



JOE VVIAL

# Fears are real in the fast-food industry

A middle-aged man comes into a local fast-food restaurant for dinner with his girlfriend only for him to wind up on the bathroom floor unconscious.

On another day, a customer threatened the manager after she asked him to leave because he was making other customers uncomfortable. He responded saying he was connected to her boss, and he could get her fired.

And another day, police got called on a biker who would not leave our drive-thru window after hours.

I started my job in the fast-food realm at age 17, and never would I have guessed that in just the eight months of working there that I would be exposed to as many dangers as I have.

There have been many things that have happened while working at the Rutland restaurant I'm choosing not to name, however there is one night in particular that sticks with me most.

A man and woman came in recently one night and ordered a single serving pizza to share. When done, the woman heads outside to

wait for her significant other while he goes to the bathroom.

A while later, one of my co-workers over the headset mentioned how the man had been in the bathroom for at least 25 minutes.

My manager and I went the bathroom to take a look at the situation and after seeing the man, nonresponsive, hunched over the toilet allowing for his face to appear underneath the stall, we decided it was best to contact the ambulance.

Once his girlfriend saw all us



Gabby Blanchard

employees outside of the bathroom door through the outside window, she came in to reassure us that "they ate too much so he's just sick from all the food."

Now, I don't know about you, but my 5'1, 110lbs little body can devour way more than a single-serving pizza before I am sick.

Finally, the man walks out of the bathroom returning to his girlfriend and exited the building while repeatedly saying he was fine he had just eaten too much.

However, we all knew there was something more going on

than just an upset worker, and the bloody toilet paper found on the ground of the stall after the man had left proved it all.

As a minor working in the fast food world, my biggest tip would be to always have a back-up plan. You never know what is going to happen even in places you would least expect it.

- Gabby Blanchard

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## Letter to the editor:

# Reader takes issue with column critical of 'The Polar Express'

Spartan Editor:

As a former Castleton resident, I was sent a copy of your newspaper because of the student statehouse press conference. In perusing the rest of the paper, I was brought up short by the blatant "errors" in the movie review. The sender of the paper encouraged me to write expressing my views.

I am writing to take issue with the "review" of "The Polar Express" in your Dec 7, 2023 paper. People are entitled to their opinion. Jess Emory doesn't like the movie; fine. That does not entitle a reviewer/reporter to "misrepresent" or grossly exaggerate. I also object to the headline's use of the current trend to state one's opinion as fact. I, and many others, do not consider this movie as even close to the worst ever.

To say the boy is "ripped from his family" is an outright "misrepresentation". He sees a huge train in his yard, goes out to investigate, is invited to join in the trip and chooses to go along. "Ripped from his family" congers up visions of a screaming, crying child forcibly and violently taken away from screaming, crying parents and siblings. Similarly, "... kidnapped. And forced on this ... journey" are, to put it mildly, gross exaggerations. While a technical

case could be made for kidnapped since a child is enticed away by a strange adult, the child went voluntarily, no force involved, and was returned happy and unharmed with no demands made of his parents.

Though the names Hero Boy and Hero Girl have been used by others to represent the main two children in this story, the reviewer's use of them comes across as sarcastic. The statement that "... none of the children have names" is another exaggeration. Those 2 children do remain nameless, but others are referred to by name. As an aside, in an apparent lapse of negativity, the little girl is described as "sweet".

I'm not sure what the reviewer's problem with Tom Hanks is. To consider "Forest Gump" a sad movie indicates a "glass half empty" view of life. Through all the trials Gump endures and masters Hanks skillfully portrays a constantly upbeat attitude. The warm funny bits are far from sad. If one looks at Hanks character in "Big" plus his choosing to play Mr Rogers in "It's a Wonderful Day in the Neighborhood" and Geppetto in "Pinocchio" then, yes, it is possible to "... believe that he signed on to this movie to spread happiness among children."

While the review focuses on

possible negative situations and wording, i.e. Stranger Danger, existential crisis, neurotic train conductor, dangerous journey, it completely ignores positives. No mention is made of the leadership of the "Hero Girl", or the friendship extended to the loner, Billy, or the helpful efforts of the main boy character. Such qualities and lessons learned are emphasized at the end of the film. I love the music and find the basic story charming. Does the reviewer have no imagination, no appreciation for the elements of a good children's story? - which, by the way, include facing and resolving danger and/or conflict. Consider the very popular "Frozen."

I must agree, however, with the reviewer's opinion of the hobo ghost and the scary puppet. Neither are in the book and I find them unwelcome and confusing additions that contribute nothing good to the storyline. I also agree that children may find the movie disturbing, not so much for the scary events that all get resolved to the good but for the overall look of the animation. Faces are angular, many with spooky or stern expressions. There is no soft and fuzzy and only the girl ever really has a pleasing smile. Though based on a children's book perhaps it shouldn't be considered a children's movie.

Ignoring that Christmas is actually supposed to be about the birth of Christ, Jess's final criticism of this movie is that it's not about the true meaning of Christmas; not about friends and family and being together to celebrate and spread joy and love. If that's what you want I suggest you try the old classics like "It's a Wonderful Life", "The Miracle on 34th Street.", "The Bishop's Wife" or "It Happened on 5th Avenue". They certainly aren't in "Home Alone" or "A Christmas Story".

Worst Christmas movie ever? Lots to choose from but not "The Polar Express". Right up there near the top on MY worst list would be "Elf." Can't stand the overplaying of the main character and I'm not a fan of Will Ferrell's kind of humor...and talk about scary (or Jess's word "traumatizing") for kids! But that's just MY OPINION and I'd never consider distorting the facts in describing it to someone as I feel this reviewer has done in the article. Perhaps Jess has a "broken bell." I, however, still hear mine.

Susan Partch, Crossville, TN

\*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.



# A skunky message: just leave them be



SETTY PROVENCHER

A skunk eats spilled yogurt on a Castleton sidewalk.

By Setty Provencher  
Castleton Spartan

Hey y'all. The skunks you've seen around the VTSU-Castleton campus are just going after easy pickins in their natural setting, because folks throw food everywhere.

They are superior scavengers, non-aggressive, quite amiable creatures that do not go out of their way to attack, nor do they want to spray you.

That is a last resort effort of theirs left when being cornered, trapped, or caught by surprise, which leaves them depleted, exhausted and vulnerable.

When outside, you are walking through their home. Please be alert

and move away from them. Do not approach. They're simply just looking for something to eat.

They're all denned up right now, but as soon as spring rolls around, they'll be back for all those food scraps left around. So, the other message is please don't litter.

All food items should be composted properly in the dining hall. If everyone on campus could put in a considerable effort to not throw cups of ice cream or scatter fruit, banana peels, and other waste, the furry little stinkers would move on to another spot.

Just earlier today I saw a piece of watermelon on the walkway between the Campus Center and Haskell Hall, which is exactly what they will go for.

"Skunks are mild-tempered, mostly nocturnal, and will defend themselves only when cornered or attacked. Even when other animals or people are in close proximity, skunks will ignore the intruders unless they are disturbed," according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In the pictures accompanying this, you'll see me holding a baby Skunk in Brattleboro, adorable as can be. I did so because I have worked as a volunteer transporter with Green Mountain Animal Defenders, transporting orphaned or injured rescued animals to rehabbers all over Vermont.

In another photo, you can see an older Skunk eating yogurt in a cage, and I got to hang out with it for five or six hours next to the

Vergennes Falls before dropping it off in Benson.

The Skunk seen on the sidewalk at VTSU-Castleton is licking up ice cream that was splattered one evening last year.

I deplore you, please don't pick them up, or go near them, and just leave them be. I only handled them because I had to, and it's ALWAYS with gloves. Rehabbers don't put animals on "display." They will help recuperate them in hopes to return them to the outside world, and anyone in the rehab world that I know would be against removing them from their naturally occurring homes, unless they absolutely had to.

We must learn to live in symbiosis.

# Letters from London

## Two weeks in and getting adjusted to life and new friends in England

By Jess Emery  
Castleton Spartan

I've been in London two weeks as I finish this and let me tell you a few things: the apple juice is good, Australians use the word "cunt" as often as Americans use the word "cool," the toilets are square shaped rather than cylindrical, and it takes at least an hour to get everywhere, although that may be more of a city thing than a London thing.

My biggest culture shock however has probably been when there is a loud bang in a public setting, sounding similarly to a gunshot – and only the Americans jump.

I was also under the impression that as an American, I would be deeply despised by everyone. Thankfully that has not been the case.

Except for my Australian friends, they hate us.

A few British men have also been impressed by my American accent, which I found quite odd.

The other night, when a guy discovered I was American, he immediately asked what kind of deli sandwiches I like. I said turkey, obviously, and then he immediately followed up with a question of whether or not I like my turkey sandwiches hot or cold.

Which obviously I like them cold. Personally, a hot turkey sandwich sounds rancid.

I can't not talk about the drinking culture because it is so vastly different from everything I've experienced in America.

Since the drinking age is 18, my friends and I will go out on a Tuesday and often see people in their school uniforms at the club. We also have a bar on campus and when we had the campus tour, I remember seeing many people at the bar at 11a.m.

When we're out, me and my girlfriends, the men very aggressively hit on us but my safety doesn't feel threatened, which is good.

I guess. The other day, two of my girlfriends and I went to an antique shop in Central London on Cecil Court.

The shopkeeper's name was David and when he found out my friend was from Minnesota he said, "well someone's got

to be." After discussing our likes of Shakespeare, he proceeded to recite a whole soliloquy from one of his plays.

However, when we asked him if he ever did theatre he said, "oh no, I was never that pretentious."

I immediately liked him. My Australian friend calls us the "confused cunts," which I find endearing, honestly.

Except for the other night when we were on our way home from the bar and he shouted, "don't let any of the blondes do the navigating."

Contrary to that statement, I've been doing a fair amount of the navigating when it comes to my friends and I going out in the city.

The app Citymapper has become my new best friend.

We went into Central and saw Big Ben and the London Eye and all the amazing sights and I felt like I was in Peter Pan.

But I cannot, in good conscious, talk about my study abroad experience without talking about the things I'm struggling with.

My identity, for one. I appear to be having some identity issues, and I also appear to be the only one experiencing these issues, which is comforting.

I've always been confident and secure in my personality and friendships.

I find I'm able to make friends quite easily because of my charismatic charm.

But since I've been in London, I've been feeling pretty insecure in my friendships and maintaining them, which isn't something I've ever had to previously deal with.

I'm assuming as I get adjusted, those fears and insecurities with start to dwindle.

I keep reminding myself that I have only been here for two weeks and I'm still getting adjusted and that will take time and I need to give myself time.

Jess Emery is a VTSU-Castleton English major and Communications minor studying in London at the University of Roehampton for the semester and will be sending periodic dispatches back about her experiences.



VTSU Castleton student Jess Emery is studying abroad at the University of Roehampton this semester, and will be sending dispatches back through the Spartan to tell about her journey.

# Honeybees are vital and need our protection

By Gavin Bradley  
Castleton Spartan

It is very hard to visit the Green Mountain State and not hear about fresh honey products, or the insects that create the liquid gold.

The state of Vermont designated the Honeybee as its official state insect in 1978.

Due to the overall popularity of this insect, and its incredibly important role in the U.S. agricultural industry, 20 states have recognized the honeybee as an official state symbol. If we go way back in the fossil record, specifically 40 million years ago, we can see the first honeybees appear.

And they have remained physically and socially unchanged for 30 million years! Honeybees are

thought to have originated in Africa and then brought to the new world with the very first English and Spanish colonists.

Not surprisingly, they quickly escaped to the wild and eventually started to populate what today is the entire western hemisphere. Humans' love for honey has not changed since then, and it is one of the many benefits of our relationships with honeybees.

Just in 2019, the United States produced a whopping 157 million pounds of honey. The USDA also gives insight into how popular beekeeping is in America. "Honeybee colonies for operations with five or more colonies in the United States in 2021 totaled 2.92 million colonies, up 2 percent from January 1, 2020," according to the USDA website.

We can also see how popular beekeeping is in the state of Vermont based on statistics on the state website.

"The Vermont beekeeping industry has grown steadily over the last decade. There are now approximately 900 beekeepers owning about 14,000 hives in Vermont. These beekeepers have 1,200 locations where they keep their bees throughout the state. While most are hobby beekeepers with just a few hives kept at home, there are several commercial operations with upwards of 3,500 hives and dozens of locations each, mostly on farms, primarily on the western side of the state, along the Champlain Valley," it reads.

Even though beekeeping is very popular both in the Green Mountain state and in the United

States, other species of bees in the wild aren't as welcomed. If we look at other bee species and hives in the wild, we can see that these amazing pollinators face some very serious threats. Most of these threats are human-made, and the solution to these threats can be very complex.

TreeHugger.com gives insight into one of these threats facing bees today when they cover habitat loss.

"With the advent of Big Ag, large commercial farms have destroyed crop diversity and bees' natural habitats. Land in the Midwest and Northeast that was once prairie or grassland has been converted into monoculture farms that only produce one crop. Commercial farms' lack of crop diversity means there is less food and vari-



COURTESY NIKI MCGRATH

Honeybees work in the hive of a local beekeeper.

ety for bees to munch on.

See "Bees" on page 6

# Christmas break welcomed by some, but many were eager to return

By Rosa Kehoe  
Castleton Spartan

Christmas break was tough for VTSU-Castleton freshman Malorie Tarbell. Don't get her wrong, she likes breaks, but she hates being away from her college friends.

"I sat around mostly, but I also couched," she said. "I was happy to come back, it just mostly is a lot of work." Tarbell is the assistant coach for Mill River Union High School track and cross country team while going to school.

She talked about "being alone a lot" and how that wasn't much fun. And she's not alone. Several other students talked about how the break wasn't great for them....

A transfer student Samantha

Brayton found it hard to leave all her friends back at Johnson. Over break, she was able to go back and spend a lot of time with them, which was great.

One of her biggest issues over break was getting COVID-19.

"We had a whole Christmas planned out, and then everyone besides me, my mom, and my dad, got COVID. We had to cancel everything, and then my brother was stranded in Nebraska with covid" she said. Brayton was also able to do a lot of her hobbies over break. "I went on a bunch of hikes, I cooked a bunch of food. I made some bread, some pretzels, I cooked all of my Christmas dinner," she said.

While some students did not have a great break, others did, but

it wasn't always all roses for them either.

Daniel Lee Wright III, an early college student, says he had a pretty good break. It wasn't all fun though. Wright III had to go to California.

"My great-grandma is dying, so my dad wanted to go see her. I saw a lot of my family through my dad's side" he said. He was happy to be able to see family, he had not been able to see in a while.

Even though he did have that going on he was able to make his break fun. He liked to break a lot as he got to "hang out with my best friend". As his friend will be leaving soon, it was good that they were able to spend all that time together.

Samantha Bailey was another

student who had a great break, but not without something unpleasant happening. Bailey unfortunately did stab her tendon in her thumb which ended up with having to get hand surgery. This ended up making break a little challenging, but she liked being able to stay home over break. Bailey liked that she was able to spend more time at home and hang out with her boyfriend.

Coming back to school from break was hard for most students, as most students found it boring.

Bailey is one of them. Coming back to school one-handed was hard enough, she also was "tired, school is kind of draining, school is like the same day over and over, so I was not looking forward to it. But I was excited about my new

classes," she said.

Liana Wu also found that coming back to school was hard. "It was horrible because over summer break I had such a productive break. And then when I got to school I was ready to get to work. Then this break it was so boring and when I got back to school I wanted to continue my break."

Wu found it easier for herself to be more productive in school when she was able to be productive over break. But this break there just was not much to do.

Brayton being a transfer student was excited, but also nervous to be starting a new semester at a new place. Another hard thing was starting at a new school, and not being with her friends. But she is loving it on this campus and has

found a lot of new friends. But she is struggling with that "There is no hot water or heat in my dorm"

More than Brayton are loving being back on campus, and it is going well for them.

Wright III an early college student, says that this semester is going very smoothly for him. Getting his schedule together for the semester was easygoing.

Tarbell is also excited to be back, able to hang out with all of her friends that she had missed.

Unfortunately, she does not have as much time to work on her drawing and latch hooking as she did over break. But she is glad to be back and be around so many loving people.



## Maddie on the street

By Maddie Lindgren  
Castleton Spartan



**What's your favorite thing about break and what are you looking forward to this semester?**



Jack Boyle  
Junior

**"I am looking forward to our baseball season starting this spring"**



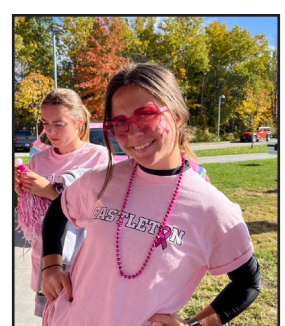
Rylee Peppin  
Junior

**"Over break, I went to Colorado to visit my sister which was fun, but I'm looking forward to getting back into a routine this semester."**



Josh Ward  
Sophomore

**"I had a good time playing hockey over break and looking forward to the rest of the season."**



Britney Moore  
Senior

**"I am looking forward to having a good last semester."**



Cedrick Theodore  
Sophomore

**"I am looking forward to the rest of our hockey season."**

# Old man yelling at clouds

By Will Smith  
Castleton Spartan

First and foremost, I am a non-traditional student. I am 43 years old, and my back hurts constantly.

When I get up in the morning, the only snap, crackle, and pop I hear is from my joints moving after an unrestful night's sleep.

I am about as eloquent as a drunken monkey banging on a typewriter, hoping for its chance to write a sonnet by Shakespeare.

I drink too much coffee. Not because I like the taste but because I am addicted to caffeine. I guess the first thing is to admit that you have a problem. Not that I will change this problem, but it feels good to expose it to air.

My hearing is awful. This comes from years of loud rock and roll music. I use it for my benefit when someone I dislike is trying to talk to me, and I can ignore them since I can say that I didn't hear them.

The downside is that I ignore

people I do like since I cannot hear them.

And as a public service announcement: Please, for the love of everything holy- speak up when you are talking in class. It is mind-blowingly frustrating to say "huh?" when I try to hear what is coming from your mouth.

I hate traffic, especially when people speed by me when I am already breaking the law by exceeding the speed limit.

It's even worse when the weather is inclement. Seriously, I know that everyone has their reasons, but it is careless. I got things to do. I do not want to slow down because you decided your next stop was in a ditch on the side of Route 4.

Not that I am going to stop. I'll putter by tooting my horn and a hardy one-finger salute as I roll by.

Finally, you can acknowledge me when I look you in the eyes and wave.

Even if you do not know me, there's a common curiosity that should be understood. Although

I look like someone who will ask you for spare change or a cigarette, I will not.

At least not on campus.

If I see you around downtown Rutland, all bets are off.

This is the biggest frustration that I have walking around campus. I notice you looking at me like I am some rejected script idea for the Ghost of Christmas Future. Please understand that I am the model of your current poor life choices, but I am not a leper; I am just middle-aged.

Some people even call me pleasant to talk to.

Although I disagree with this, it's nice to hear it every once in a while.

Thank you for reading this, and I hope you will continue to read my column. That way, Professor Blow will continue to let me rant on the inane thoughts that float around my head. Seriously, it's like a lazy river tube ride of bad ideas.



Will Smith

# They provide support

By Rosa Kehoe  
Castleton Spartan

Running around happy that his owner is awake, the rabbit excitedly leaps and twists in his cage, which brings a big morning smile to the face of his owner – this reporter.

Soon, the rabbit, Patches, is doing circles waiting for his veggies to be prepped and washed for his great morning feast. There will be blueberries in his puzzle feeder and cabbage in his ceramic blue bowl. His regular pellets that have been put into his purple bowl do nothing to distract him from the excitement for his veggies.

This reporter then slides Patches to the side of the cage and places his veggies in the bowl. In seconds, I can hear the little crunching sounds Patches makes as he eats, and it calms me.

It may seem like a small moment to some, but Patches is an emotional support animal, and there are many students on campus who also have them, like Violet Tetrault.

Tetrault recently got her paperwork done and is bringing her male cat, Venom, to live with her on campus.

"He helped me when I was having panic attacks, kind of being on my chest, or in my arms. Kind of regulates my heartbeat as I kind of match with him," she said.

But Tetrault said getting him here "was rather hard."

"I had to go through multiple people, multiple documents. They have been kind of vague about the situation, and not very obvious," she said of school officials.

She said she wishes that there were more bold and easy accessible instructions on how students can acquire their ESA.

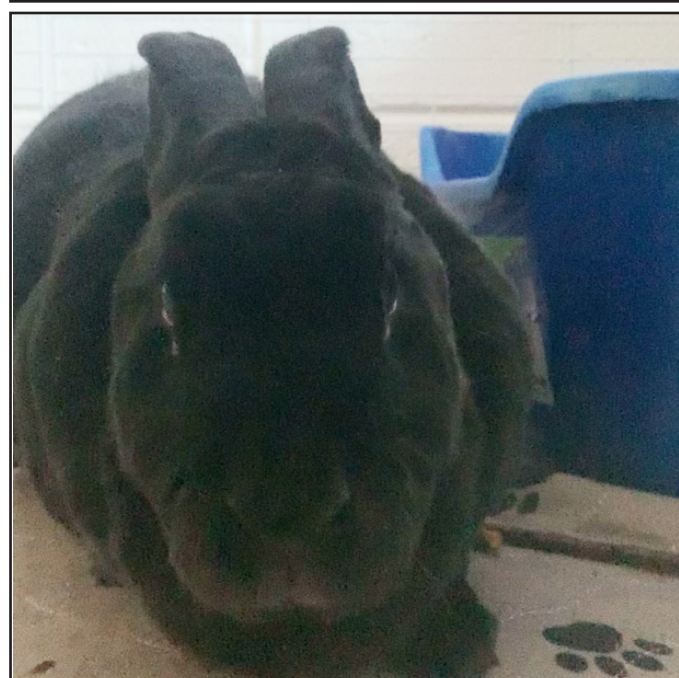
Mackenzie Sturgill is another student with ESAs on campus.

She has three Himalayan Dumbo rats.

They are very social animals and thrive with friendship from the same species. Their names are Fizzgig, Mokey and Ludo, and are all very sweet rats. Sturgill has had them for around eight months, and she said they help her in countless ways, but primarily just being a calming influence on her.

But having ESAs on campus can cause some anxiety too, Sturgill said. She talked about worrying what might happen if something like a fire were to happen in a dorm and how a purple sticker on her door needs to be there to let rescuers know there are animals in the room.

"If the purple dot you are given for your ESA isn't on your door, in some sort of emergency your room will not be checked for your



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ROSA KEHOE

**Emotional Support Animals take all forms at Vermont State University Castleton. There are Himalayan Dumbo Rats owned by Mackenzie Sturgill, (top) Venom the cat owned by Violet Tetrault, bottom right, and Rosa Kehoe's rabbit named Patches.**

animal," she said.

Gerry Volpe, the VTSU director of Disability Services, has been working on the Castleton campus for the Disability services since 2018. He spoke about the importance of emotional support animals to students.

"While assisting students with requesting an Emotional Support Animal is a fairly small percentage of my job, it can be an important aspect of students being able to access living on campus and to the whole experience of being a residential university student," he said.

"In general, what I love most about my job is being able to help students to access all aspects of

our university. The ability to have an Emotional Support Animal as an accommodation can be an important part of that for some residential students."

But when it comes to getting ESAs on campus and having them on campus, Volpe admits it can be hard.

"While we do not have a large number of problems with ESA's, some issues do come up. The most common issue that arises is that some students do not fully understand the unique challenges of caring for an animal while living on a college campus. Sometimes these challenges can cause stress on the student, the animal, or the community," he said. "Often these

challenges can be worked through but sometimes the student decides that they or their Emotional Support Animal might be better off with it living at home. The biggest challenge for me personally is that not all students who request an Emotional Support Animal qualify for one as an accommodation and in those situations, I have no choice but to communicate that to them. This can be hard but thankfully it is getting less frequent as healthcare providers better understand when and how an Emotional Support Animal should be part of treatment and as VTSU develops better resources to share with students and health care providers to guide them."

That said, Volpe added that he realizes how vital these animals are for students.

"Emotional Support Animals can be an important part of a person's treatment plan that is developed with their mental health care provider. While I am not an expert, there appears to be a good deal of scientific evidence supporting a variety of therapeutic benefits. Anecdotally, I can say that I have worked with several students who do not believe they would have been able to live on campus without their Emotional Support Animal," he said.

# Could joining Student Court be right for you?

By Erin Forkin  
Castleton Spartan

Across campus, there are a wide variety of clubs and organizations; anyone can join to become more involved with their campus community.

If you are interested in the inner-workings of the university's sanctioned student government, the Student Court might be the right fit for you!

This past fall, I decided to join the school's Student Court and it truly has been such a great experience. Our fearless leader and Chief Justice is Christina Beatty. Due to her position, she attends the

weekly SGA meetings to report any new topics or announcements to the SGA delegates and officers.

She is currently a senior Psychology major, and she truly enjoys her position and what it means to be on the student court.

"The SGA Student Court is an essential here at Castleton. Not only do the students come together to discuss important policies such as the code of conduct, the constitution, and the bylaws, they are also able to participate in further establishing such rulings at the court trials. Being in this role makes sure every court Justice get closer to the Castleton community and understands the inner workings of a higher education institu-

tion. It continues to be an honor that I get to have great court justices that really are involved and interested in making this university a better place."

Our current dedicated and passionate court justices are Brytny Moore, Matthew Casey, Davin McIver, Colin Kemper, Carter Pelzel, Cale Santee, Anthony Jones, Emerson Joliffe, Grace Labella, Sydney Singh, and I.

Since being on, I've been appointed the Deputy Justice and it's been such an honor!

When you join Student Court, you will speak with Christina and SGA President Perry Ragouzis to ensure you're ready for your position and so they can learn about

you before you're officially appointed by the SGA Congress.

Unfortunately, many students are unaware of the opportunities you have when you participate in Student Court and have misconceptions of our duties. Student Court is critical for maintaining the accountability and respect of students on campus.

When we address the issues brought to us with the students, it strengthens the relationship between the court and individual. Participation in court can also build up other important skills that are beneficial out of the courtroom like problem solving and critical thinking.

Since this is a branch of SGA,

the Student Court attends semesterly retreats with the other SGA branches. The Student Court also is responsible for counting votes in student government elections and helping out with the organization of it all. We also hold mock trials occasionally to ensure that every member knows what to do when we have a real case.

Something else wonderful about the Student Court is the ability to educate your peers on the importance of student-led government on university campuses. Hopefully at this point of the article, you're ready to start your student government journey!



# The new 'Mean Girls' was not so fetch

By Carly Centeno  
Castleton Spartan

The New "Mean Girls" musical movie was released in theaters Jan. 8 and fans of the Broadway musical and original film don't seem to be too thrilled with the way it came out.

The film has been completely trashed on all social media platforms like TikTok and Twitter with many fans being very displeased with the casting and the movie overall.

Not many people even knew it was going to be a musical due to poor advertising.

The film was supposed to be a movie version of the popular Broadway musical, but many theater fans say it was not at all what they were expecting.

"As someone who watched the musical in full length, the movie really should've just been a professional filming of the Broadway show," said VTSU-Castleton student Erin Forkin.

Fans also say the movie fell flat with some of the songs, especially the song, "Revenge Party." The musical is a lot more expressive and better at acting while singing in general compared to some of the people in the film.

The movie overall was a lot more modernized than the original, adding references to current pop culture. Although it was a smart idea because of the audience they were marketing to, it was a bit overdone in some scenes.

While keeping references from the original "Mean Girls" film, many believe it didn't capture the best parts of the original movie.

"I liked and disliked the modernization aspects of it. Some made sense and some just seemed to be too much," said VTSU-Castleton student Olivia Whitney.

Angourie Rice was the actress to play Cady Heron in the film and is the one to getting the most backlash on social media. People don't believe she was a good fit for the role, especially as a musical. Many believe her singing abilities weren't up to par.

"I thought it was well done, the portrayal of Cady's part was in my opinion not as good as the musical," Whiting said.

Fans believe that the actress didn't give the same energy as the many different performers who played Cady on Broadway.

But the actress who is being touted as carrying the film, Renee Rapp, has received nothing but love ever since its release. She is the original actress from the Broadway musical, so this choice pleased many fans. And she did not disappoint in her amazing songs and truly was a perfect Regina George.

"I'll be honest, I went for Renee Rapp and she's the only reason I stayed," Emily Otto said.

Rapp stole people's hearts and scared the hell out of us playing Regina. Without her, the film would be doing way worse than it is now.

Around the same time this movie came, out another hyped-up movie, "Anyone but You," was released starring Sydney Sweeney and Glen Powell.

It stole the spotlight from "Mean Girls." Many people saw "Anyone but You" before "Mean Girls," mainly because of all the praise it was getting.

The timing of their release dates was not good for "Mean Girls" film due to how popular the other cast is in the other film and the way "Anyone but You" was advertised everywhere.

Overall, with the social media bashing and being overshadowed, the "Mean Girls" movie will not be one of the top 2024 films.

Honestly, it would have been better as a filming of the Broadway show rather than the entire production they put on. It didn't fully capture what everyone was hoping for and left many confused with the casting choices and film style choices.

It in all was just a disappointment for many fans and there is no stopping the bashing of this film on TikTok.

# Celebrity trial inspires portrait sketch

By Joe Vyvial  
Castleton Spartan

It was April 2022 and my TikTok and Instagram got flooded with videos from the Johnny Depp-Amber Heard trial.

I've always liked Johnny Depp, and I wanted to be "in the picture" a bit.

I wanted to know what is going on.

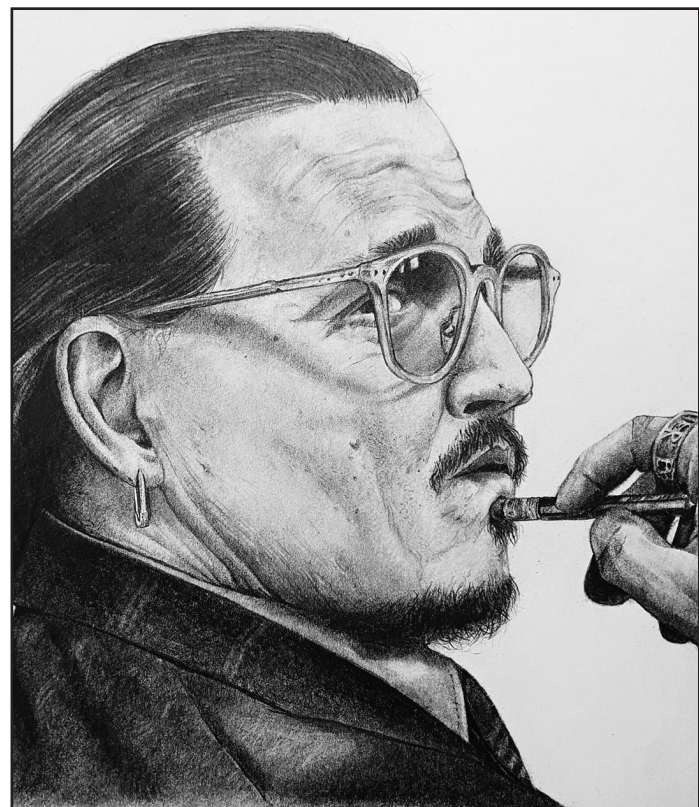
So, I watched the trial. I was also planning to draw something after a long time and I thought, why not Johnny?

So, I decided to use a more recent photo of him from that court. This portrait was a big leap for me. Compared to the ones I had drawn before, this one was much more elaborate and I spent significantly more time on it.

It was also the first drawing that I decided to document in the form of short TikToks or Instagram reels.

The drawing is done in graphite on a piece of 11.7x16.5-inch paper.

More photos and videos from the process are on my TikTok/Instagram page: pepanart.



Joe Vyvial draws a portrait of Johnny Depp after having watched his trial against Amber Heard.

# Artist Q&A: Charlotte Morrison

By Pearl Bellomo  
Castleton Spartan

Charlotte Morrison is a senior with majors in English, Art and Graphic Design. She sat down recently to chat about her love of art.

**Q.** How long have you been doing art, and what mediums do you gravitate towards?

**A.** Before I got to Castleton, I was mainly drawing based. That was my focus. But as time went on, I was exposed to more mediums through intro courses like printmaking, sculpture, and painting. It wasn't until open studio that I discovered my outlet where I was able to use different types of mediums all at once, and now I gravitate towards mixed media primarily.

**Q.** What's your favorite piece you've done to date and why?

**A.** In terms of concept, "People Pleaser," because the concept was very powerful for me. It was about a struggle of mind. How sometimes people try to satisfy others, the requests of others and hide themselves, and I feel like that is an expression of myself.

**Q.** What are some decisions you made in "People Pleaser" that show the theme you were after?

**A.** It's a character of mine. I usually use a character to channel a theme, rather than a random figure. His narrative involves him acting on the wishes of others, like he has a mission to fulfill for his family's sake. He has to hide his actual emotions and aspirations and put that on the backburner. I feel some people might relate to that.

The prompt of the project was reflection and refraction. When you open the cabinet, there's a broken mirror. The concept I was going for was when you look at a people pleaser, they reflect what you want to see. The brokenness of the mirror signifies the concept of refraction. The person reflects what others want to see but they fail to reciprocate. It's a one-sided transmission.

**Q.** What piece has taken you the most time, and what made it so intricate?

**A.** I have a piece not on display here, from my Jabberwocky series, in which I explored the characters of Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky. The whole poem has a bunch of made-up words, but you can still interpret what it means based off the general context. I always found that concept interesting. This was based off something I did in English class, where I analyzed the poem for an essay project, and it just became a fascination of mine. The project itself took forever because it's a diorama, so it has multiple pieces, kind of like a puppet show.

**Q.** Are there certain themes or objects you gravitate towards?

**A.** One of my unique art materials, because I'm an English major, are my English drafts from Shakespeare or poems. I'll take those essays and underline certain phrases that I feel apply to the work I've created and paste them around the sides.

**Q.** What artist or artists inspire you?

**A.** I'm not really inspired by artists, per say, but there's a writer that inspires me artistically; Oscar Wilde. He allowed me to see writing as art, and the visual beauty that can come with writing and how it can be approached as an art form. The beauty of words overall.

**Q.** What are you currently working on?

**A.** I have a bunch of things on my plate. For class, I'm working on this project, the prompt I chose was metamorphism. The prompts are geology concepts because [the professor] likes to make us branch out. I chose metamorphism because of the concept of pressure, and I'm creating a piece that deals with the pressure one can put on themselves with high standards and how that can change who you are as a person.

**Q.** What's your favorite step of the artistic process?

**A.** The sketch because there's so potential. It can just go anywhere, and you have this creative breakthrough.

**Q.** For you, what was the key to developing artistically?

**A.** I really didn't discover my artistic voice until I had open studio and was allowed to do whatever I wanted. Having creative freedom allowed me to find out what themes I like and what mediums I gravitate towards. I wouldn't have been able to do any of my pieces [on display in the Christine Price Gallery] without that freedom.



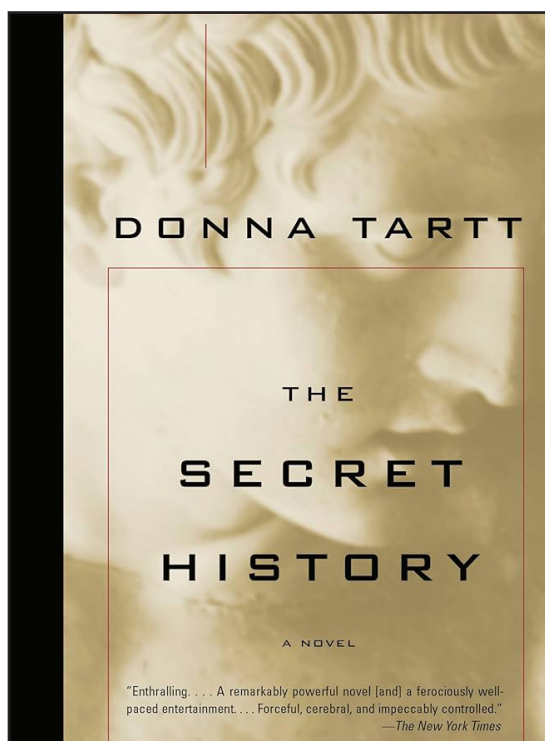
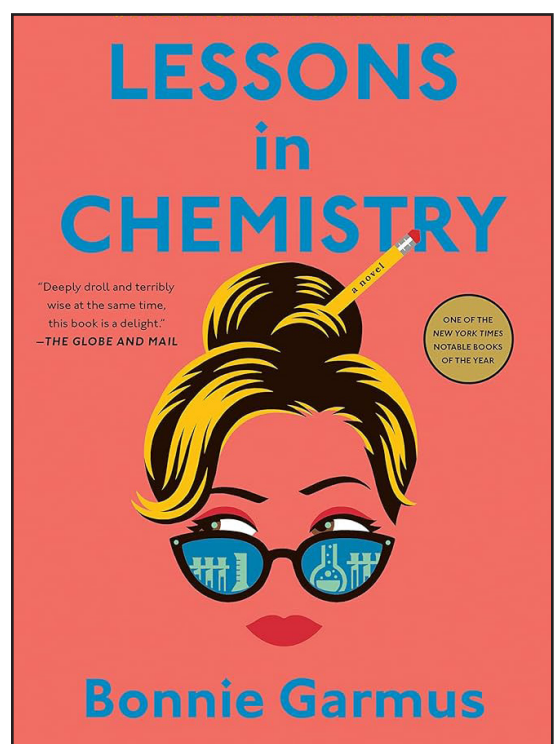
Charlotte Morrison (left) enjoys experimenting with different art mediums, such as "Claws that Catch" (above), inspired by Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," and "People Pleaser" on display in the Fine Arts Center.

# Book of the Fortnight

By Camille Jackson  
Castleton Spartan

Undoubtedly one of my favorite reads in 2023, "Lessons in Chemistry" is a tale of love, science, perseverance, tragedy, and laughter.

As the protagonist weaves her way through a male-dominated world, readers are left inspired and in awe of life's simplicities. Certainly, a must-read for all, scientists or not.



"The Secret History" by Donna Tartt comes highly recommended by VTSU's own president, David Bergh. "A whole genre has grown up around it which is called Dark Academia," the style of fiction entangling mystery, moody themes, and the realm of academics.

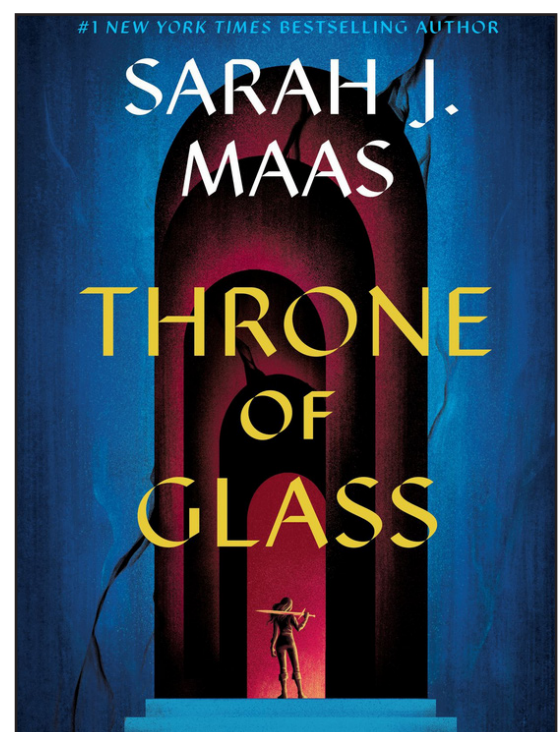
Dark academia novels are generally set within universities or boarding schools, and Secret History is no exception. "It's actually set on a college campus in Vermont," explained Bergh.

While a work of fiction, this novel leads readers through exciting twists and turns and is hailed as "the bible for dark academia."

Sarah J Maas' infamous "Throne of Glass" series is summarized by Kerven as "easy to read if you're new to reading, it's a great fantasy book that really builds with every book in the series."

Indeed, the eight-book series is a commitment, though "every book in the series takes a full new turn even though you already think you know what is going to happen. And then you are wrong anyway," recounted Kerven.

The series, following a morally grey assassin, "keeps you on your toes and is interesting the whole way through."





# President:

Continued from page 1

So, I always say there's a danger in focusing on too much too soon on a specific track. If you develop the broad skills that are inherent in the kind of education we deliver here, you have options in life, to follow your passions, and so I think that one of the greatest challenges right now is speaking to that narrative in a way that the people grasp and resonates with people because they hear a lot about "oh well, I should just train for this because I can get this immediate job" and I think that's a real national conversation that needs to happen.

**Q.** Are there any athletic teams you are particularly excited to spectate?

**A.** I'd like to get to them all! I've heard great things about the wrestling program here at Castleton, of course, so I hope to have the opportunity to see that team in action. I've already seen the women's hockey team last week, because I went to the Pink the Rink event and I'm hoping to see the men's team this weekend. I'm really looking forward to opportunities when the campuses are competing with each other, because it's sort of a two-for-one,

so for example, in a week or two I'm really looking forward to seeing Johnson and Lyndon playing each other in basketball. So, I was a student-athlete in college, I was a runner, I ran cross country and track in college and it was a really important part of my experience so I'm a real supporter of athletics and how they integrate with the larger experience. And as my colleagues confirm, I want to get to every athletic contest I can, which is not always easy with multiple campuses and all the different schedules, but I look forward in the fall to seeing football here. But whether it's field hockey or soccer, you know, or I want to see some of our track and field athletes to compete, that's something I'm excited about as well.

**Q.** What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

**A.** In my spare time, what is that again? (Laughs) I enjoy reading, just for pleasure, being outdoors and active whenever and wherever possible. I'm a sports fan so I enjoy when I have time following just about any sport. One funny thing that I picked up during COVID, and a lot of people started doing during COVID, was that I really got hooked on jigsaw puzzles. And I'm still going with



VTSU President David Bergh is pictured speaking at Convocation.

that, so I always have one going.

**Q.** What TV show was so good you binged it?

**A.** Twin Peaks, which is from like 35 years ago, but you can stream it now so I'm actually watching it again.

**Q.** What is your favorite season in Vermont?

**A.** Probably fall, the colors can't be beat.

**Q.** Tell me a fun fact about yourself that may surprise readers.

**A.** Well, I spent a year of my life living in rural Georgia growing up, which was a very different cultural experience. America's Georgia, which is Southwest Georgia. My parents were volunteers for Habitat for Humanity before that was a very well-known organization,

that was where the headquarters were. So I went to school there in the south, and schools hadn't even been integrated for all that long at that point in the south. So, living in the south at that time, I call it my year of "living abroad."

## Former student from Gaza seeks help for family



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAHMOUD ALYAZJI

Former VTSU student Mahmoud Alyazji's home street in Gaza is shown destroyed after Israeli bombings.

*Editors note: Former VTSU-Castleton student from Gaza Mahmoud Alyazji has lost family members and his home in Gaza. He is currently studying at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington and trying to stay in the country permanently. He recently reached out saying he was starting a GoFundMe for his family. Below is his email to Spartan Advisor David Blow. Spartan editors decided to print his plea for help.*

Dear Professor Dave,

I hope this message finds you well.

Today, I reach out to you with a heavy heart and a plea for help.

As you may know, my family in the Gaza Strip has been profoundly affected by the ongoing war. The war has taken away our home and our family business, and now my family, 16 members, find themselves in a desperate situation — sleeping in a tent in extreme cold, facing starvation, unhygienic conditions, and lack of basic necessities, like water, electricity, and medicine.

I cannot stand idly by while my family endures such hardships, and that's why I've decided to start a GoFundMe campaign to provide them with the support they need to rebuild their lives. I believe in the power of community, and I'm reaching out to you, my colleagues, friends, and the broader U.S. community to ask for your support.

**How You Can Help:**

I invite you to visit our GoFundMe page <https://gofund.me/ea605552> and consider contributing to our cause. Your support, no matter how small, will make a significant impact. Together, we can provide essential relief — shelter, food, clean water, and medical assistance — and give my family the chance to rebuild.

**Spread the Word:**

If you're unable to contribute financially, please consider sharing our GoFundMe link on your social media channels or forwarding this email to friends and family who might be willing to help. Your collective efforts can make a real difference.

Thank you for taking the time to read my message and for considering joining me in this mission. Your kindness and support will not only save my family's presence but will also contribute to a future where hope prevails.

With heartfelt gratitude,  
Mahmoud Alyazji  
<https://gofund.me/ea605552>

## Patry is back after brief dismissal

Maddie Lindgren  
Castleton Spartan

Matthew Patry's journey at Castleton recently took an unexpected turn when he faced termination last semester from his most recent position as the Vermont State University Castleton associate dean of students.

Before that, he was the Dean of Students at Castleton University after being the Director of Student Life for eight years at Castleton.

You could say he has a history here.

In December, Patry emerged from this challenging experience with determination, securing a new and expanded role as Director of Student Activities at Vermont State University. He is now overseeing student activities across five campuses, and his return has been met with widespread praise for his dedication to creating a vibrant and engaging campus life.

Vermont State University decided to cut all the associate dean of students positions from every campus, meaning all of those positions went away. This means Mathew Patry's job was eliminated, he was told on October 26th that his last day would be December 21st.

"It was a very tight timeline. I was getting ready, bringing boxes in to clear my stuff," Patry said.

But three weeks before his end day, he was informed they created this whole new position, Director of Student Activities for the whole VTSU, and many wanted him to apply. He did, and now he's staying.

"With this new job as the Director of Student Activities, I will work with the assistant directors across each campus, so we are all working together for the same mission and same goals," Patry said explaining his new role.

Patry has the responsibility of overseeing assistant directors on each VTSU campus to work on making sure our student governments are running smoothly, that students will get more engaged and involved, growing clubs and organizations, and encouraging co-curricular experiences that benefit students.

"In reality, most people think of student activities as just fun and games, and sure it should be fun. However, it is also a co-curricular experience and that's what I'm trying to push," Patry said.

He believes that clubs and activities can teach you many things that you can't learn in the classroom, and these activities can give you practice and experience.

Patry sees good in this new direction and all the benefits that will come of it.

"Our campus activities board was picked as the best programming board in the nation by the APCA, Association for the Promotion for Campus Activities. We've gotten some accolades for what we're doing here. Now with this job, I will be able to focus on the other campuses getting used to the processes that we use, that are nationally used," Patry said.

He explained that even though all five campuses were a part of the Vermont State College system, all were doing things very differently. Now, the campuses will be doing things much more similarly. Using the same standards and practices was a big priority for Patry.

Another aspect of Patry's impact has been his collaboration with the SGA. The work between Patry and the SGA has resulted in a more inclusive and student-centric approach to planning and executing campus events. Patry also attends all the SGA meetings while standing in for the position of assistant director and works very closely with the SGA, and Campus



Matthew Patry is pictured in his office during his days as director of student activities at Castleton University.

Activities Board on every campus.

Perry Ragouzis, SGA president at Castleton, explains Patry has been a main advocate for student development and student growth.

"Matt has been the focal point for many students in terms of leadership development and student engagement. He has grown our student government to include over 50 students and also made sure we have a robust amount of clubs," Ra-

gouzis said.

Ragouzis goes into detail about how excited he was that Patry was staying.

"I think this is gonna be a very pivotal time for student activities systemwide. Allowing Matt to bring his expertise to the other four campuses will develop their SGAs as well," Ragouzis said.

Many of the members of the SGA are also very relieved Patry and his institutional knowledge is staying. Marty Kelly

III is the Castleton's SGA Graduate Assistant who advises student organizations on campus.

"He's great. He's a big part of why this university has been successful for a long time. Campus activities are a huge part of student life here and the student experience, which is what matters at the end of the day," Kelly said.

## Bees:

Continue from page 3

Bees also lose their habitat when inconsiderate urban development transforms green spaces into roads or cities."

TreeHugger also gives insight into the colony collapse disorder facing bees.

"Colony collapse disorder first observed in 2006, causes bees to mysteriously abandon their hive. Affected colonies have experi-

enced mortality rates as high as 90%. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency report issued in 2013 suggests a complex mix of problems contributing to bee colony declines. Contributors include parasites and disease, genetics, poor nutrition, and pesticide exposure, as well as unsustainable farming practices that don't give bees a pesticide-free buffer zone to forage in. Bee colony collapse is a real concern for our economy,

as it abuts all aspects of American agriculture."

All bees play a very crucial role in pollinating ecosystems all over the world. Without certain species of bees, we wouldn't have nearly the amount of successful crop production we do have in the United States.

The USDA states that in 2022 alone the United States made an amazing \$264.2 billion in crop production sales. Bottom line, we humans as the top ecologi-

cal specimen need to start doing something different in managing our environment.

There is a lot that we have done and can do. For example, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates many programs that assess, protect, and restore pollinators and their habitats.

If you would like to get involved, you can support the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, which is a collaboration of scientists, businesses, and

NGOs dedicated to pollinator conservation and education. This is one of the strongest nonprofit advocates for resident and migratory pollinators in the world.

If you don't feel like getting involved with a non-profit, you can plant a bee-friendly garden right in your own backyard, or even join similar efforts with like-minded peers on the Castleton Campus this spring.

My main point is that there is so much more to pollinators and

agriculture than just one species of bee. Just because that one species of bee happens to produce a yellow sticky substance that many humans find delicious, does not mean we should think any more of them than the other species of bees pollinating our crops. It would be extremely irresponsible for us humans to think this way. We have the power and responsibility to make positive change — so let's simply do it together!



# Dueling Super Bowl 58 predictions

By Malachi Smalls  
Spartan Contributor

The top seeded San Francisco 49ers defeated the Green Bay Packers and the Detroit Lions in comeback fashion to get back to the Super Bowl against the Kansas City Chiefs.

This battle-hardened 49ers team will have another hill to climb facing Pat Mahomes and a fierce Chiefs defense.

Mahomes is coming off of another stellar performance in his illustrious playoff career and will be coming in with some confidence, but I think he will struggle against this decorated 49ers squad.

In 2020 The Chiefs squeaked out a win against the 49ers to claim their first Super Bowl win since the '70s.

This game will be a little different this time around.

With the emergence of Mr. Irrelevant, aka Brock Purdy, and the trade that acquired running back Christian McCaffrey, the 49ers have a newfound identity on offense.

Purdy totaled 4,000 passing yards, 33 touchdowns and 11 interceptions this season, while McCaffrey amassed 2,000 yards and 21 touchdowns on his own.

This 49ers squad has seven all pro players, five first-team and two second-team.

Also, linebacker Fred Warner and Christian McCaffrey were unanimous selections at their positions. The 49ers will need to subdue Mahomes' elite ability to extend plays and use his legs.

Nick Bosa will play a big role in doing this. He had two sacks in

the NFC championship and will need to have the same impact against a Chiefs offensive line which has struggled to block big name players. Also, I can't not include Deebo Samuel in this conversation when talking about X-factors or game changing players.

Samuel is a weapon, Swiss Army Knife may be better term, because he can line up anywhere and make an explosive play. I don't think the Chiefs defense will be able to bottle up the 49ers offense as they can make you pay through the air or on the ground.

As solid as this Chief's defense is, they will need to pick their poison in this game. Therefore, I have the 49ers defeating the chiefs 28-21. Christian McCaffrey will have another MVP performance enroute to his first Super Bowl victory.

By Jackson Burden  
Spartan Contributor

The matchup is set, and the people are ready for this Super Bowl showdown.

Mr. Irrelevant takes on the most hated team and quarterback Patrick Mahomes. The whole world is geared up to watch this epic battle.

The narrative this entire season has been everyone has figured out Mahomes.

The 49ers dominated the defensive side of the ball this season - just as much as the offensive side, only allowing 89 yards rushing a game this season.

Knowing this, the Chiefs will have to be able to run the ball to keep the defense on their toes because of the shaky secondary the

49ers have.

The Chiefs' receivers will also be pivotal in this game with guys like Travis Kelce and rookie Rashawn Rice.

In the playoffs, Mahomes is tough to beat, even without the presence of Tyreek Hill. He must step up in this game and put points on the board.

On the other side of the field stands a loaded 49ers team with All-Pro running back Christian McCaffrey, and through the air, they have Deebo Samuel and George Kittle.

Brock Purdy, the 262nd pick of the 2022 draft, will have to pull some tricks out of his hat to beat Mahomes.

The 49ers dominated the defensive side of the ball this year. My prediction for this game is

that the 49ers will go up early. The Chiefs battle their way back, making plays on defense and letting Patrick Mahomes play backyard football versus this stacked 49er team, claiming his third Super Bowl in four attempts and bringing the trophy back to the Chief Kingdom.

They will again be Super Bowl champions.

Prediction: Chiefs 27-23

# Alpine ski team flying out the gates

By Camille Jackson  
Castleton Spartan

Hailing from four continents across five time zones and coalescing in Castleton, Vermont exists the Castleton Alpine Ski Team.

The fastest non-motorized sport places the athlete in direct competition with a steep, icy mountain face. It's a silent sport, as the mountain drowns out the throat-tearing cries of spectators, coaches, and teammates.

Nov. 1 marked the first snowfall of the 2023-24 season, a gentle, cold reminder of what was to come. The early return to campus for training on Jan. 2 was defined by hours in tuning rooms applying wax, scraping, sharpening, brushing, removing sidewall, skimming the skin off the tops of fingers and deep, clean cuts signaling a sharp ski.

Indeed, the sport extends beyond the slopes to the meticulous maintenance of equipment.

Following a successful 2022-23 season that concluded with the title 2023 USCSA Men's Overall National Champions, 2023 USCSA Men's Slalom National Champions, along with the women's side earning fifth position at nationals, the team eagerly anticipated the slopes.

"Training has been going well. It hasn't been perfect, but I believe we have been making the best of it," explained head coach Chris Eder.

Citing the warmer temperatures that diluted Castleton's 'white Christmas' and rain that tainted early January, ski resorts were forced to recover from the lost snow. Herein lies the intersection between recreational and competitive sports and the political grounding of climate change. Harkening to truncated ski seasons and soft, slow snow is the reality facing alpine skiing.

"We were forced to only train slalom, as giant slalom requires a longer trail, and many mountains were just not ready to accommodate us for giant slalom training. Luckily, our first two races were slalom races, so it all worked out for us," Eder said.

The first two races of the season were held at Proctor Mountain, a slalom FISU race saturated with D1 athletes. The first two weekends of the season are FISU races, indicating that athletes can make and improve their individual FIS point status (unlike college races, which are not sanctioned as FIS races). The competition thus rages internally for each athlete's FIS status and externally for the

team result.

The long weekend was punctuated with T-bar breakdowns, rain-fall, bags of salt, and early alarms. The men's team earned first place in Friday's first race, and fifth on the second race. Individually, senior Lorenzo Mencaccini earned first place in both races, overtaking alumni Paul Rechberger for the Spartans' all time individual wins record. Junior Filippo Collini joined Mencaccini on the podium in third position for the first race, while sophomore Aksel Stroem-

Hansen earned third in the second race of the day.

The women's side, missing a few key skiers, was able to pull off third place in both Friday and Saturday's events with sophomore Emilie Stene securing the top position. As the season begins, these results show a promising start.

"We have seen success early on, but I do not believe our student-athletes have peaked yet," Eder said.

"Ice-face" was the phrase that underscored the second race week-

end held at Whiteface, Mountain in New York. The bitterly cold temperatures reinforced the unfor-giving environment of ski racing as athletes stripped down to a thin race suit and suffocated their feet in too-small boots to face the one-minute giant slalom hill.

In tandem with frost-bitten toes was success on both the men and women's side as both teams earned first place on the first day of competition. Mencaccini topped the podium with Stroem-Hansen in second while Stene and sopho-

more Karleigh Hollister stood at first and second for the women's side.

The second day of races followed in similar suit as men took first place and women second. The men's podium was overrun with Spartans as Collini took first, Mencaccini second, and freshman Raphael Fischer took third.

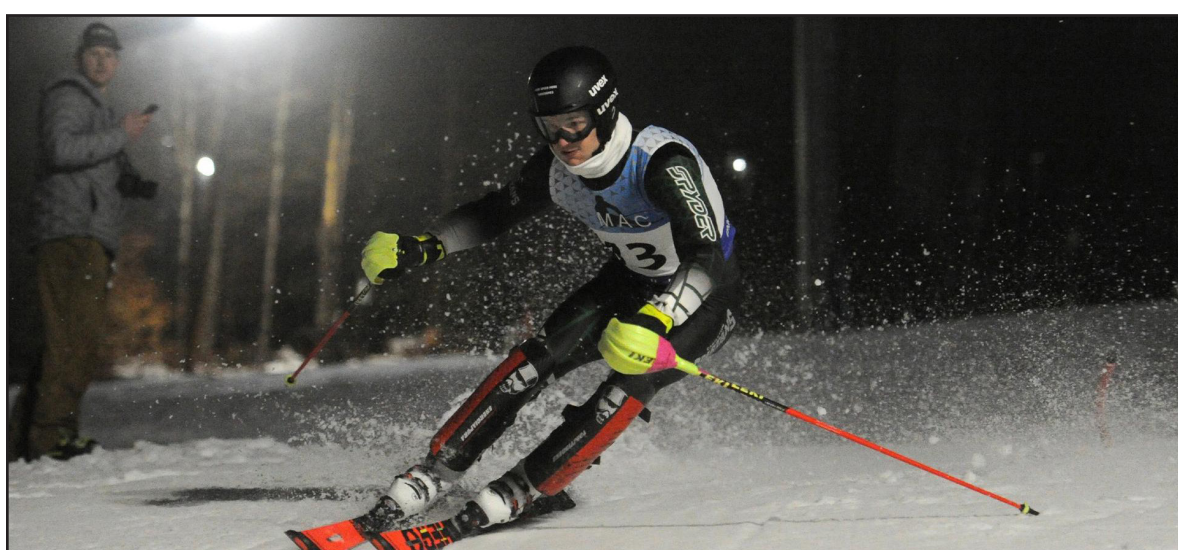
As the team builds off the momentum and success of last season, they look forward to the remainder of the season and the "peak" to come.



Emilie Stene (left) and Lorenzo Mencaccini (right) hit the slopes as ski season gets under way.

CHRISTOPHER EDER

# Winter sports in the final stretch



CASTLETON ATHLETICS

From left to right, top to bottom: Filippo Collini races down the mountain; Haven Tatarek celebrates a win; Romeo Torain lines up a shot; Joe Russel drives to the hoop; Liz Bailey dribbles the ball; Daniel Doherty on high jump; Elijah Cyr grapples an opponent to the mat high jump



# Russell, Lampron both hit 1,000 points



Castleton graduate student Scott Lampron pulls up for a shot (top). Fellow graduate student Joe Russell drives for a layup (bottom).

By Stone Stelzl  
Castleton Spartan

The big story for the Castleton men's basketball team this season has been not only one, but two players cementing themselves in the 1,000 career point club this season.

Both Scott Lampron and Joe Russell became the 26th and 27th members respectively to reach this feat.

"Joe and Scott have had a major impact on this year's team. For one, they are great examples of the hard work needed to be a good college player. Both are in the gym every day working to improve their game. They are vocal in practice and rarely have poor practices," said head coach Paul Culp.

As the team has seen some ups and downs this season, one thing has been consistent throughout the year, which is the play of both Lampron and Russell. Both are graduate students this season and are the forefront of most of the team's success.

Russell is averaging 17.6 points

per game, 5.5 rebounds and 2.7 assists while his partner in crime on the court, Lampron, is averaging 14.8 points per game, and 2.5 rebounds while shooting 40 percent from the three-point line.

"They are very different players in terms of how they score the ball. Scott is a great shooter and has tremendous range, but he can also post up and score inside. Joe is more of a penetrating player that gets to the paint and rim. He can also make jump shots, but he is great at attacking either with the ball or off the ball on back-cuts," Culp said.

The duo not only are a duo on the court, but off the court as well, which helps translate to their on-court dominance.

"Being a teammate with Scott has been great. I transferred to Castleton from a Division 2, scholarship level school and have no doubt that Scott's work ethic is one of the best I've been around. He's constantly in the gym working with our teammates and leads by example. On a more personal note, we've grown to become super close, and I can confidently

say that we'll stay in contact and be brothers for life after the season concludes," said Russell.

Lampron agrees.

"Being teammates with Joe has been amazing. Playing alongside someone that shares the same passion and love for the game as myself is something I don't take for granted. Definitely have gained a relationship that will last a lifetime," he said.

As the season reaches its final stretch, the duo looks to lead the Spartans to make a push to the playoffs. Currently they sit three games back on the sixth seeded University of Massachusetts Boston with five games left.

"The rest of the season entails working every day to get better, as we only have five conference games left and we need to win at least three out of our last five games and hope they (UMass Boston) get cold. If nothing else, I want the group to finish the season strong because we've worked hard enough throughout the season to have it end on a good note," Russell said.

# Never count out the little guy

By Justin Gitto  
Castleton Spartan

VTSU Castleton's wrestling team has continued to lay waste to their competition this season, as they are currently ranked 9th in the Dual Team Rankings, and they moved up six spots in the Tournament Team Rankings, now sitting at number 18.

The Spartans currently have four wrestlers ranked in the top-10 in the nation for their respective weight classes. Of these four, one who has been cruising under the radar, is sophomore Gavin Bradley.

In the latest polls, Bradley moved up to ninth in the 125-pound weight class after he helped the team dominate the recent Alvernia Quad. The team won all three days, with Bradley notching a win to kick start each day.

"Gavin brings a certain energy to the team when he steps on the mat," said head coach Scott Legacy. "He believes in himself and has no fear. He doesn't think he is going to beat his opponent, he knows it," Legacy added.

Bradley attributes all of his success to his coaches.

"My coaches are always there for me and help me become the very best version of myself. I will always do what my coaches tell me to do, and I will give everything to them," Bradley said.

Legacy couldn't say enough about the amount of work that Bradley puts in behind the scenes to perform at the level he does.

"Gavin typically starts at 5 am and has a schedule until he goes to bed at night," Legacy said. "His success is a product of how hard he works on and off the mat."

Bradley's training regiment is intense too. Every day, Bradley hits the weight room for a lifting session in addition to two practices each day.

He also has to pay close attention to his diet, making sure he's monitoring his calorie and water intake each day.

On top of all of that, Legacy adds that "he's also very routine in study hours for his academics," which is very important to Legacy.

When all is said and done, he gives himself one day off a week,

"which is typically on Sunday," Legacy said. "His work ethic will translate into the type of person he will be when he leaves Castleton," he added.

Bradley boasts a team best 8-0 record in duals, in addition to a 29-3 overall record.

Bradley also can't understate the importance of faith in his life, and that "knowing and reminding yourself that God is above all is crucial," he said.

One thing that grinds Bradley's gears is that being in a less-than-common 125-pound weight class, there runs a risk of an opposing school not having someone for Bradley to compete against.

"It is always frustrating when you are not wrestling. Wrestling is a huge part of my life," Bradley said.

But at the end of the day, "if the other team does not have anyone to send out it is what it is," he added.

This was the case in their recent senior night against Utica, where the team won in a 52-6 landslide without Bradley even having a match.

Wrestling in the 125-pound weight class. One can easily overlook or count out Bradley due to his size. When asked about this, he said he doesn't pay attention to what other people say to try and bring him down.

"Respectfully, I don't think or care about what other people think," he said. "People underestimated David before he killed Goliath. I am sure people laughed and mocked Noah when he and his family were building the ark. People mocked and underestimated the greatest person to ever live, Jesus Christ. So no, I don't care what people think about me, I just want to do my best through the eyes of my coaches and god."

"We believe our best wrestling is ahead of us," Legacy said. "We feel very good heading down the stretch, and we are ready to have a lot of fun heading into the regionals and the NCAA championships."

You can catch Bradley and the rest of the team at Glenbrook Gymnasium, Friday, Feb. 9 when they take on Plymouth State.



Sophomore Gavin Bradley during a match (top left), claiming a victory (top right), pinning an opponent (bottom).

# Women's hockey gears up for final stretch

By Stone Stelzl  
Castleton Spartan

As the regular season hits its final weeks, the Castleton women's hockey team looks to find a way to make a playoff run similar to previous years.

The Spartans, only two years removed from a conference final appearance, have had a much different experience this season and have faced adversity on the roller coaster ride of a season.

But head coach Tim McAuliffe feels maybe it isn't such a bad thing.

"This regular season has certainly been full of ups and downs, and to be honest is a bit reminiscent of the season we had in 2021-2022, where we faced a lot of challenges and used it to help us find our stride down the stretch and into the playoffs where we made a nice run. Compare that to last year, the wins certainly came easier in the regular season and it's no secret we had an early exit come



Katie Campoli during the recent win over Southern Maine.

playoff time," McAuliffe said.

The team currently sits sixth in conference play with two games left (9-12-2, 7-7-2 NEHC), which

is something the Spartans haven't experienced in quite some time with this being their lowest seeding since the 2016-2017 season.

Each of the past two seasons, the team has finished fourth in the conference, both with extremely different outcomes.

"I'm excited for these last four regular season games and hopeful that as the playoff picture unfolds, we are in the mix and heading into playoffs with some momentum, and not really caring who our opponent is. We know and we've seen that once you make playoffs, in this conference, nobody is safe, doesn't matter if it's the one versus the eight or the four versus the five, all eight teams can win and to me, that's something for us to be excited about," McAuliffe said.

With playoffs on the horizon, the team has needed to face some adversity throughout the season with some injury trouble.

"I think a huge thing for our team right now is getting our bodies ready for playoffs. We are getting to the point of the season where a lot of us are worn down and battling injuries, so I think a major goal for us is to get as healthy as possible before we battle in the playoffs," said junior captain Emery Bonner.

In a crucial weekend the Spartans came out with two wins

against University of Southern Maine and Salem St. besting USM 2-1 and Salem 3-0.

The Spartans look to build off this past Friday and Saturday wins against University of Southern Maine and Salem St. when going into this coming weekend against William Smith and Elmira to continue with their momentum into playoffs.

As the last weekend comes around, the women are in a position to play William Smith who they faced off against last season in the first round in which they lost.

"I think at this point we know everything we need to do in order to win, it's just a matter of sticking together and working as a team. Our energy both in practice and games has been great lately so we definitely need to bring that positivity into our last couple games. Our work ethic is what sets us apart so if we can continue to keep that up, we will definitely find success," said sophomore Rachel McNeil.