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Castleton, Vermont

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CASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Hammond's contract not renewed in Theater Dept.

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

Assistant professor of Theater Hannah Hammond has been terminated from her position at Vermont State University. "I knew that there was a possibility with the optimization that they could not renew my contract because it's a year-to-year contract," said Hammond, who received an email revealing the news over Thanksgiving break. "That said, I teach a large portion of the major because I teach all the acting and directing, and I direct the shows."

Despite Administrative Optimization indicating the future non-renewal of temporary contracts, Hammond had hoped her position would remain, especially because of the students. "It really sucks for students, because they're the ones really affected by this. I know I can find another job, but students' only option is to transfer [because of an insufficient program]," Hammond said. "My first thought when Hannah spoke these words was that it wasn't true," said sophomore film major and theater minor, Carissa Challinor. "It was all some big joke because we had fought for the arts in the beginning of the year, so it would be funny for something to go wrong for the arts again?"

"Why do the arts, specifically the theater program, always have to be targeted?" she posed. Students reacted in tears and frustration when Hammond shared the news. Despite her connection with students, it also meant uncertainty about the department's future. Challinor described her as a professor who "knows our strengths and weaknesses" and someone who "has allowed for those in the theater department to shine bright." Should Hammond's position end after this semester, one or more adjunct professors would be hired to fill the required classes. However, it's unclear who would direct the mainstage productions.

Steven Gross, chair of Music, Theater, Dance, and Technology, was informed that productions would likely run through a club system. An outside director would be hired for the shows, still paid for by the Theater Department. He has met with Dean of Arts and Education David Kupferman and Provost Nolan Atkins to advocate for Hammond to stay. "Kupferman fully supports our request to keep Hannah," said Gross. "I've received no concessions from the provost. He has a hard line in the sand about simply not renewing any temporary contracts."



Hannah Hammond

see "Hammond" on page 6

VTSU students represent Zambia in Model UN

By Camille Jackson
Castleton Spartan

"Zambia is present and voting," Vermont State University students said during each committee session as country roll call was taken. The Harvard National Model United Nations, hosted by Marriot, saw the inaugural VTSU team leave quite an impression during the four-day long conference. The Feb. 15-18 event was marked with late-night committee sessions, intense debate, international cooperation and cultural immersion as university teams took on the national interests and priorities of their represented nation to the model United Nations floor.



SETTY PROVENCHER

Students at a Model United Nations conference in Massachusetts represent different countries.

Model UN features a series of events that mimic the organization and premise of the United Nations. Held frequently and throughout the country, Model UN provides students the opportunity to taste global diplomacy and experience the cooperation, toleration and collaboration necessary for global governance to thrive. Gathering students from varying majors, countries, and backgrounds allows committee sessions to hear a diversity of opinions and is reflected in multifaceted negotiations that eventually lead to resolution. The VTSU Team was a conglomerate of Castleton, Randolph and Johnson students, who, after only meeting via Zoom, were formally introduced at a MacDonal's carpark in White River Junction as they made their way to Boston. "The biggest change was the involvement of club members from three out of our five Vermont State University campuses. If you were to have asked me during the thick of the merger if I thought cross-campus clubs were a good

idea, I would've said no. Today I confidently say the Model UN team will never be the same and we are better than ever! The involvement from other campuses allowed for a diverse team of some of the smartest and most hard-working students the university has to offer," explained Model UN Club President and Johnson student Kaitlyn Stone. The VTSU students had departed the quiet serenity of Vermont as the expanse of the Marriot hotel's open floor lobby welcomed them to Boston. The space shrunk as it crowded with young business professionals, already networking

before the opening ceremony. "Someone was standing on a chair, some were talking over each other. There were some egos flaring momentarily. It got pretty loud at several moments within the unmoderated bloc caucuses, and I was just there to witness and learn," recalled Castleton freshmen Setty Provencher, who sat on the World Health Organization Committee discussing artificial intelligence and its medical applications. "Once there, I was struck by the level of prestige, the feeling of connectivity and that feel-

ing of whoa, I actually made it to this, because, well, it's Harvard," Provencher said. The conference consisted largely of lengthy committee sessions punctuated with social events including trivia, an international bazaar, delegate socials and a career and opportunities festival. The committee sessions provided a forum for speeches and negotiations among and between countries, mediated by experiences chairs. As first-year attendees, The VTSU students' first hurdle to overcome was the complex jargon and acronyms constituting half of

all sentences. The unique challenge of Model UN is to accurately voice and advocate a perspective largely removed from delegates' home countries. Each committee was required to submit a position paper in late January that presents the national interests of their represented country. The allocation of countries to university teams was based on team size. With a smaller group, the VTSU students were asked to represent Zambia. "As the delegate of Zambia, I made it a mission to find like-minded countries whose first step

of action would be to educate the young and vulnerable. Similarly, creating and electing local women into local leadership roles was a vital step for enduring the constant continuation of education programs within rural areas," explained Stone, who sat on the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee. "I tried to put aside my own personal opinions and beliefs and really just fight for what I would believe Zambia would argue and would stand for and give its demographics and its culture and just the history of the country," noted Vice-President of the VTSU Model UN Club and Johnson senior Maria Mesquita. Recognizing a diversity of cultures and interpretations was a central component of the conference, with over 30 countries represented. "Meeting people from different countries and being in an environment where different languages are spoken, I love that," recounted Mesquita. Within the International Security and Disarmament Committee, delegates Anima Mishkat and Camille Jackson joined a coalition of countries concentrated in the global south and passed a resolution to address ethnic conflict. The conclusion of Model UN saw the VTSU team enjoying a pit-stop in Manchester on the return to Vermont. While slightly skeptical about the ongoings of the United Nations, the conference demonstrated to Stone its potential. "Fast forward to now, I would argue that the UN is a vital steppingstone in the process of ensuring human rights globally, however, that is just one of the many actions accelerated by the UN," Stone said.

Castleton businesses love the students



GABBY BLANCHARD

Birdseye Diner server Dianna Amerio in action.

By Gabby Blanchard
Spartan contributor

Believe it or not, many businesses in the Castleton Community enjoy having VTSU Castleton students around. On a recent afternoon, several businesses were visited, and workers were asked if they prefer Castleton when the students are here or when they're away on break. Perhaps surprisingly, some readers, workers, and residents at each place said they prefer to have the students in the community. Birdseye Diner was first, where Diana Amerio greeted this reporter. The bubbly waitress chatted about students as the yummy smell of burgers and fries from the kitchen filled the room. Amerio has been working at the diner for three years, meaning she has experienced three summers without students around. She said she has some col-

lege student co-workers, some of whom work all year long. She said that the weekends while classes are in session tend to be busier, as she often gets many great kids from the wrestling team here and there for dinner. In addition, she said the students being in session also brings in business due to visitors, games and recruits. But Amerio said there is a downside to having students around. "Sometimes, when the campus is in session, and students are working, it causes my hours to get cut," she said with a smile. However, in the next breath, she reiterated that she prefers to have them around. Amelia Harrison is a junior from VTSU who works at the Castleton Pizza Place & Deli. She said most of her co-workers are also students at the campus. Due to the many students working there, she said locals view having students around as a good

thing. When asked if not having the students around affects business, Harrison said that much of their business does come from us students. But there's a downside to that, too. "As you know, college students are not great tippers," she said. Val Brown, from the Village Store, said she loves getting the chance to work with students. Brown said how fun it is to work with kids from the campus, and she enjoys hearing about their classes and how they are doing in school. She said she realizes how important school is for students and always wants them to put school before work. "Therefore, we's always happy to cover a shift or two. "I always tell them that school comes before work, and I, along with others, will always cover a shift if needed," she said. At the Jiffy Mart gas station-

Dunkin Donuts business, cashier Thom Casey said that they have one student employee, but other than that, they only get a few. He said the students on campus bring a lot of business, especially for gas sales. When asked for a funny college student story, Casey shared how some students from out of state come in and ask to buy a lighter but don't realize that the law in Vermont says you have to be 21, leaving them at a loss. Dunkin Donuts manager Thachary Tate said Dunkin currently employs six workers who are enrolled at Castleton. Like the other businesses, he said Dunkin benefits from the games that the campus hosts. More than 50 students filled their store one day after a game, he said. "When the campus is on break, our sales are cut in half," he said.

Was Haley's Vermont win a message to Trump?

As most of us now know, former Republican South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley won over Vermont voters, beating Donald Trump 50.2% to 45.9% in the Super Tuesday primary.

Vermont was Haley's only primary win besides the District of Columbia, before she dropped out of the race.

So, what is the reason for this surprising turnout among Vermont voters?

According to a recent VT Digger article by Paul Heintz, Independents and Democrats likely made her victory possible.

As there were more ballots cast in the Republican primary in the state of Vermont than any other year since 2000, it seems many voters were hopeful for a new face to represent the United States. Many voters feel that both Joe Biden and Donald Trump are just too old. Both the president and the GOP nominee have sparked conversation about just how competent either is at this point. As a result, even Independents and Democrats alike, at least in the state of Vermont, were pulling for Haley.

"The secret to Haley's success in the Green Mountains appears to have been people like Marley Beers," Heintz wrote in the piece.

Beers is an Independent from Winooski, Vermont "who typically votes for Democrats and expects to back President Joe Biden in November," the article read. On Tuesday, Beers voted for Haley after requesting a ballot for the Republican primary.

"I don't really want Trump to have a very easy path in getting the Republican nomination," Beers was quoted saying in the article.

In another example, Representative Ashley Bartley, a Republican of Fairfax and co-chair and leading organizer of Nikki Haley's campaign in Vermont, said in the piece that the crossover votes in the Republican primary were "huge, huge, huge, huge."

Even Vermont's Republican Governor, Phil Scott, agrees with this sentiment.

"Without the independents in particular coming in and grabbing a Republican ballot, it wouldn't have happened," Scott was quoted as saying. "I don't know how many Democrats, but I'm sure there were some — more of an anti-Trump vote."

But, if Democrats and Independents are concerned about

a Trump re-election, why not just vote Democrat? It seems, to me, to make more sense to vote for Joe Biden in the first place. It seems that voting for Haley over Trump as a Democrat is only encouraging a Republican vote.

Our current situation seems like a bit more of an issue with the Republican party as a whole. Now, this may be stepping on some toes here, but our issues with Trump go much further than that. The Trump administration and right-wing mainstream media news played an immense role in the near dismantling of American Democracy.

It is not just Donald Trump we should be wary of, but also radical conservatism. Unless we see some extreme changes from the Republican party, we can expect continued MAGA propaganda and nonsensical "news" stories portraying Democrats and Independents as the "bad guys."

But another, equally plausible reason for not voting Democrat could be discontent with our option.

"This election was not especially exciting on the Democratic side," said Vermont's Democratic party Executive Director, Jim Dandeneau.

Dandeneau gave a "vibes-based assessment" that most Vermonters who cast Republican ballots for Haley are Democrats. While Democrats and Independent voters will likely pull for Biden during the election, it is clear the Democrats were hoping for a better turnout of nominees.

However, if people like Marley Beers are going to vote Biden over Trump in the end, why waste the vote on Nicki Haley? If we're left with two clear winners, it seems logical to pick from the side we're on.

Dandeneau said it appears many voters in Vermont, "would crawl over broken glass to make sure Donald Trump does not get elected president again."

And if the "vibes" are correct, and most of Haley's ballots came from Democrats and Independents trying to stop Trump, then this coming election will be a nail biter for sure. The only thing we can do now is keep our optimism up and stay informed — and vote!

- Amanda Johnson



JOE VYVIAL

Heed my warning: Be careful with alcohol

Fellow students, as an older student speaking from experience, I have made my fair share of questionable decisions. At 33 years of age and a junior in college, I have made choices that have held me back and caused some delays in my journey to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

For over 10 years, I continuously made the choice to consume alcohol, which resulted in severe alcoholism.

At first, I had everything going for me.

I took a couple years off after high school to enjoy myself for a bit before I made the jump to college. I attended community college and graduated with a liberal arts associate's degree in Multimedia Communications and Graphic Design.

It seemed like I could not fail.

But, after several dead-end jobs and life struggles with boyfriends and living situations, I started to feel a bit 'stuck' for lack of a better word. I was feeling increasingly anxious and frustrated by my situation, so I turned to something to



Amanda Johnson take the edge off.

I started drinking. At first, it was just occasionally, as it usually is in these cases.

But, as I started to grow increasingly fond of the feeling of 'letting go,' I started to drink a little more, and more, until it became glaringly obvious that I had a problem.

My social life, my relationships with family and friends, they suffered tremendously, and I had trou-

ble even making a job work out for any length of time.

I finally let my family step in and help as they had tried so many times before to a stubborn, unflinching addict.

I started going to A.A, kept a good job with great benefits, and I finally went back to school, seeking my bachelor's degree.

I have never felt more proud than I do now.

The point I am trying to make is that you are here, continuing your education for a reason. Take it from someone who has experienced it. I have seen too many dreams and ambitions destroyed by drugs and alcohol not to tell my story.

You are young, and you have yet to experience so much of what life has to offer. The urge to party it up with friends usually includes drugs and alcohol, and is tempting and hard to resist.

However, it does have a devastating downfall if done in excess and irresponsibly.

So please heed my warning. I was one of the lucky ones. Not everyone bounces back from ad-

diction. Do not let hard partying interfere with you and your education, your road to success. Use this time wisely.

By all means, enjoy that occasional drink with your friend on the weekend, but enjoy it responsibly. Know your limit and try not to drink too much. Put your studies first and look out for one another. I would like to conclude with a quote from Chapter Two in the 'big book,' "Alcoholics Anonymous," titled 'There is a Solution.'

"...an illness involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer, all are sorry for him and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worthwhile in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents—anyone can increase the list."

- Amanda Johnson

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*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.

Vt. is dealing with neighborly issues over loose livestock

A unique problem is presenting itself in the Vermont Statehouse. This problem is so immense it is causing locals to become very agitated and stressed with their neighbors.

But let's be honest, if you had a 1,000-pound animal making divots in your yard you probably wouldn't be too happy either!

That's the issue, livestock getting out of enclosures and damaging property.

Some are taking the issue to their state representatives with hopes of making changes. They claim that their neighbor's livestock continues to affect their property, even though they negotiate with their neighbors.

Timothy Lueders-Dumont, who serves as a lawyer for the Vermont Department of State's Attor-

neys and Sheriffs, claims there are already laws in the books dealing with loose livestock.

However, Dumont also states they urgently need to be brought up to date. In a WCAX segment, Dumont explains that this is vital "so that there's penalties involved for the individual because a \$10 fine is not going to be a deterrent in 2024."

In addition to Dumont, Ted Brady of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, also agrees that the current laws on the books are dated and create an issue when they do hear about these types of incidents.

On WCAX Brady stated "A lot of towns contact us and say how do we handle livestock and domestic animals running afoul?"

The WCAX segment also quot-

ed Sen. Bobby Starr, D-Essex-Orleans counties. Starr is chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and said he hopes that the issues between community members can be resolved outside the statehouse.

"I don't think it's going to need a bill," he said, though he added that it may be time to look at old agriculture laws and bring them into the 21st century that we are living in. "We have to go through those outdated laws and at least get them up to where they are meaningful."

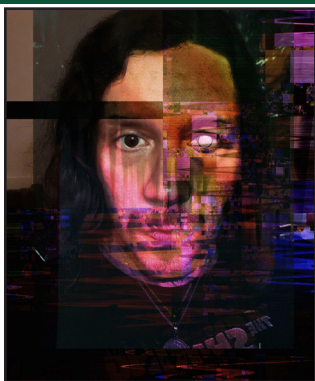
Hopefully, these issues can be resolved in the future, and both parties can be satisfied and come to terms. Coming from experience dealing with large animals, I understand how hard it can be to manage their enclosures.

However, I do completely un-

derstand the other neighbor's point of view. Like any other pet owner, we are ultimately responsible for the actions of our pets or livestock. We must do our best to keep them enclosed in their respective areas, however, mistakes are bound to happen.

This is where communication and understanding between both individuals are crucial for a brighter tomorrow. As humans, we are bound to make mistakes, however, it is even more crucial that we have the humility to admit when we are wrong. Large animals are very hard to manage, but sometimes people can be even more stubborn than any other animal!

- Gavin Bradley



MATTHEW STODDARD

The above artwork is entitled "Shadow work." The artist said "Shadow work is a type of psychotherapy that focuses on the parts of the psyche that people often keep hidden, such as trauma and resentment, some people may refer to this as the shadow self." Stoddard chose this piece to accompany his poem below entitled "Chronesthesia."

My poem entitled Chronesthesia

Matthew Stoddard
Spartan contributor

I am more than this,
More than the sum of my fears,
A thousand strings pull me,
Hands of puppeteers unseen,
The propaganda of invisible masters,
Culminating in a large body of molecules,
Our voices like ripples in this ocean,
A primal scream to provide release,
Lips move without a voice,
Struggle against the waves,
Energy passing through water,
This movement through orbital paths,
Swirl in chaos electromagnetic,
Touch of pure white aura
Healing frequency, electrical being,
Neutralize the negative anomaly,
They cannot stop our words,
As if our hearts are not strength,
As if our minds cannot touch,
Shared experience through truth,
Rays of light permeate the darkness,
Lift your eyes to the bright heat,
Technology to keep your head down,
but souls will illuminate and enlighten,
You cannot see me,
But I am there with you,
Spirit is not myth,
This energy can travel,
If we can lift each other,
Why would we not,
If you cannot take my hand,
Please take my words,
To dance without music,
A spiritual embrace,
Unaffected by time,
Past and future collide,
This gift through evolution,
Timeless and magnificent,
Some kind of magic.
Will bring me to you....



A woman is pictured in a scene from "The Bridge" documentary climbing over the rail on the Golden Gate Bridge. The woman was saved by a passerby before she jumped.

Opinion:

The ethics of "The Bridge"

Emily Ely
Spartan contributor

The goal of professor David Blow's Media Ethics course is to have greater understanding of the various ethical dilemmas that media workers deal with on a daily basis and the implications of their decisions.

One assignment in this class was to watch a documentary titled "The Bridge," produced by Eric Steel, and react to what was seen. After this was done, the class had a chance to talk to Steel over Zoom and discuss the documentary.

As the documentary begins, a scene is painted. It's a beautiful day at the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge. People underneath are boating in the water, families are taking photos together, birds are chirping, and the sun is shining.

As the scene progresses, seemingly out of nowhere the camera pans over to a man looking over the bridge. If you blinked, you might have missed what happened next. The man instantly climbs directly over the bridge's railing, stumbles off the ledge, and plummets 250 feet down into the water. This was the first of six live-footage suicides Steel captured in "The Bridge" from start to finish.

Steel recorded The Golden Gate Bridge for an entire year, Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, from sunrise to sunset. Steel and his crew witnessed and recorded 23 out of the 24 suicides that occurred during that period.

After watching the documentary, I felt distressed. During the first suicide, I instinctively covered my eyes and subconsciously held my breath without thinking twice about it. But, as the documentary progressed and as more suicides were shown, I troublesomely grew more desensitized watching these individuals jump to their death. As bad as it sounds, as I witnessed more and more of them commit suicide, they started seeming like a characters on screen.

When I brought this idea up in class, many students agreed with it.

Desensitization is becoming more of a problem especially in the media these days.

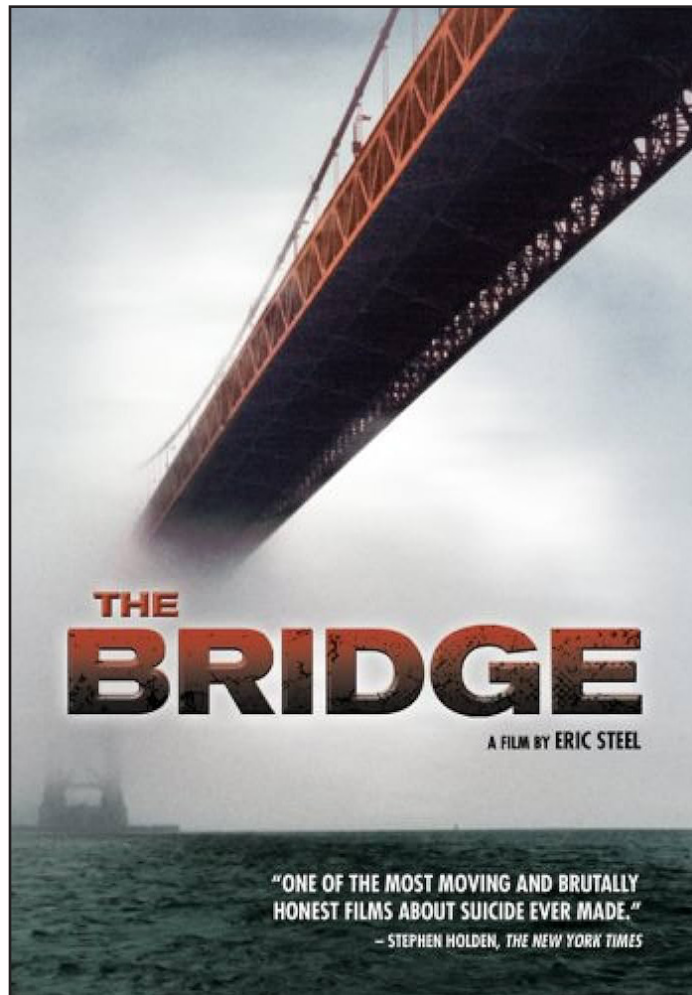
This begs to ask the question, is Steel doing his viewers a service by shedding light onto the issue of suicide? Or are the viewers of the documentary becoming more desensitized, so the impact that was intended isn't lasting.

Steel made it apparent that he and his crew wouldn't just let people jump off the bridge. He noted that he and his crew saved six people while filming "The Bridge" by calling authorities if they felt a person was going to jump. There was footage in the documentary of one woman who was a frequent visitor of the bridge and Steel said he and



ERIC STEEL

Eric Steel, the creator of the controversial documentary "The Bridge," spoke via Zoom to a Media Ethics class.



his team "interrupted her three or four times in the course of a year. And, she's still alive today."

Steel said that he and his crew are "all human beings first and filmmakers second" and that every time they saw someone give indicators that they were thinking about jumping like "taking off their shoes, or watch" they would

call. Steel said that he and his crew were trained to have the bridge police, the highway patrol on speed dial."

Though this is reassuring to some, it is still a bit troubling for me to hear and I wonder how true that statement actually is. The reason for this is because of one man in the documentary named Gene.

Gene received the most "screen time" in this documentary. He was one of the recurring "characters" who viewers saw throughout the entire documentary. Unlike the other victims whose deaths were recorded from start to finish in one scene, Gene's story was first introduced in the beginning of the documentary and then ended before the end. Gene's death appeared to be the most theatrical compared to the other victims. He stood on top of the bridge railing with his arms out like a bird and fell backward, almost appearing like he was soaring into the water. The other victims slid over the railing and jumped.

In the interview with Steel, he notes that he had 90 mins of footage of Gene on the bridge. And in the documentary, before Gene gets up on the railing, there are several minutes of him pacing back and forth over the bridge. We see zoomed-in shots of Gene leaning on his arms over the railing. We see him looking down at the water a number of times, and we see him running his hands through his hair several times in a clearly anxious manner. To record someone for 90

minutes and clearly see the signs of Gene's distress that were presented in the documentary, and not call anyone seems unethical to me. You can't help but think that whoever recorded Gene might have been content with the final shot of him flying off the bridge.

It was a great opportunity to talk to Steel about his thoughts regarding the documentary. But, some of his answers did seem disingenuous and somewhat robotic while talking to my Media Ethics class. He appeared almost bored when discussing the suicide documentary which left some members of the class with a bad taste in their mouth. It is important to note Steel probably went through media training to coach him how to handle backlash on the documentary, and because this documentary aired 20 years ago, he has had to repeat the same story to a great number of people.

All in all, I don't think that this documentary was necessary. Steel says that suicide is a taboo topic, but in gen-z he believes its "less taboo." Do we want suicide to become less taboo? There needs to be an awareness regarding this darkness that many struggle with, but recording living humans jumping to their death appears voyeuristic and unnecessary in my opinion.

There are ways to educate and to bring awareness to this topic without taking advantage of someone who's in a vulnerable state.

Hammond:

Atkins addressed his position in an emailed response.

"This position was hired as one-year terminal for the past couple years pending the outcome of the program consolidation work," he said. "If you look at the number of programs and related activities in this area and associated expense to run them relative to enrollments, adjustments are needed to help ensure fiscal sustainability."

VTSU's \$22 million deficit has been the driving force of program and administrative cuts outlined in

the Optimization 2.0 and Administrative Optimization plans. However, faculty, staff, students, and alum argue that cuts to the Fine Arts Center are going overboard.

"Eliminating a full-time professor position on the only campus that has the theater degree program does not serve our students, current or future. It is setting us up for failure, especially when we are losing such an incredibly talented and dedicated individual," said FAC Director and Soundings Manager Marisa Valent-Altland.

She said now that Theater at Johnson is being eliminated and the program is condensing to Castleton, it's vital to maintain the department's strengths. Short-lived professors would make it "difficult for students to relearn [their] comfort zone of experimentation," she said.

As well, it is less effective to teach students one way in the classroom, and an entirely different way during their productions, theater students said.

"Without the same person be-

ing our director and professor, there won't be the same personal connection...it would be hard for theater students to progress in their studies and improve in areas they want to improve in," added Challinor.

"[Hannah] is a professional who cares for every individual she teaches. [Adjunct professors] will never give us that personal training or connection that Hannah did," she said.

"It would take four to five adjuncts to replace her."

In addition to student, faculty, and staff opposition, alumni are potentially backing up their stance.

"The biggest hope we have right now is the office of alumni relations have contacts with large donors who are willing to donate the funds necessary for Hannah's salary. But that would only be a temporary solution," Gross said.

Former English professor Jennifer Bagley and her husband, Fred, have generously donated time and money to Castleton.

Bagley recently wrote VTSU

President David Bergh to advocate for Hammond's renewal of contract.

"To lose a person who has such an important impact on this very successful program at Castleton, to replace her with a collection of part time instructors who by definition can only teach a few credits per semester, and would have a difficult time offering a coordinated curriculum for the theater students, is a mistake," she said.

Men's lacrosse team off to a shaky start to season



CASTLETON ATHLETICS

Castleton #7 Carter Frankenhoff lines up a shot.

By Stone Stelz
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton men's lacrosse team is looking to have a bounce back season this year under the new reigns of head coach Ed Stephenson.

After a season that had its fair share of ups and downs last year, the Spartans ended with a 4-13 record and missed out of playoff action.

However, this season the team looks to make strides in the right direction and has started the season 1-1 with a handful of more games to play before they kick off conference play March 19.

"I have only been with the team for three weeks now after coming over from hockey and I feel as though the entire team has bought in to what coach Stephenson has been preaching. Coming off a few tough years, this team is hungry for success, and I think a change of leadership has been what we needed to light a spark under us and make the changes we need,"

said senior Hunter Sarro.

The team kicked off the season against SUNY Delhi where they fell 16-6. But the Spartans bounced back three days later against New England College taking the victory 12-10 on the road.

The team followed that up against Utica University in which they lost 8-6 which is an improvement from their previous meeting with Utica last season where they fell 10-5.

As the Spartans continue to try and find the success on the field, Stephenson has had a plan since the beginning with the team for what he wants the team to be built on.

"I want them (the team) to learn how to play selflessly with discipline and toughness. My mission is to develop a team culture based on these core values," Stephenson said.

Sophomore Carter Frankenhoff echoed what Stephenson said about getting the team to build a proper culture.

"Coming in at the start of the

fall, there was a lot more structure and having a new coach allowed our team to adjust by changing the culture of the team," Frankenhoff said.

As the team prepares to improve on the field under the new head coach, it also has much more experience at the college level having only five first-year players out of the 26 on the team.

"I think we have a great group of guys this year with a strong group of leaders as well as a group of young guys hungry to make change. I think we will find success this year by playing with more trust in each other and playing the game at a faster pace," Sarro said.

Moving forward the team faces off against Massachusetts Maritime for their first Little East Conference matchup of the season on what day?

"Finding success this season is going to be getting better as a team and focusing more on the process than the results," Frankenhoff said.

Wrestling ramps up for nationals

By Justin Gitto
Castleton Spartan

As the hard-fought wrestling season is near its end, the VTSU Castleton wrestling team is sending six stars to compete in the NCAA National Championships.

James Rodriguez, Gavin Bradley, Sampson Wilkins, Nate Camiscioli, Nick Roeger, and Darby McLaughlin will all represent the school.

Rodriguez, a senior and two-time All-American, is making his third straight trip to nationals.

"He leads by example and has been the road map for our guys on the team to see that they do belong on the national scene," said head coach Scott Legacy.

Despite not having "the greatest of draws" in his nationals runs, "he has proven that the draw doesn't matter to be able to fulfill your dreams," Legacy added. "James is good at keeping the mindset of keeping your feet in the moment and wrestling one match at a time."

In the case of Bradley and Wilkins, this will be the second national appearance in a row.

"Experience at this level is huge. All of our team members have been exposed to the bright lights, however having this little extra experience can go a long way to your national success," Legacy said. "They have high expectations of themselves," he added.

Bradley said he's ready for the opportunity Nationals presents.

"I am preparing by really just staying in the moment and working on all the adjustments my coaches are instructing me to make," Bradley said. "I learned a lot from last year, and I am very excited to go back."

Bradley, a sophomore, is making his second Nationals appearance in just his second year in the program, a feat that isn't lost on Legacy.

"Gavin's ceiling has no limits. That's because he's never satisf-



fied. He is always trying to find ways to get better every minute of every day," Legacy said. "He strives to be the best at everything he does, with no shortcuts."

Bradley is modest about hearing the praise.

"Like always, I attribute everything to my coaches and support group, and I wouldn't be anything without them. I also attribute everything to my drill partners and awesome teammates," Bradley said. "Also, as always, I give everything to my God and my savior Jesus Christ. Ultimately, I work for them and do everything that I can to honor them and their message in this world."

When Wilkins was asked about nationals, he only had two words come to mind: "ecstatic," and "confident."

"The biggest plus about this being my second trip is I know I belong here," he added.

He also attributed this confidence to the team being "prepared unlike any other team in the country for this moment."

"Staying in routine is very big at this time of the year. We are maintaining their conditioning,

which is already at its peak," Legacy said. "They have been grinding daily since October," Legacy added.

Camiscioli, Roeger and McLaughlin will all be making their first appearances on the national scene, and they also see the value of prior experience at the national level.

"I have learned so much from all my teammates," McLaughlin said. "Having teammates that have had this experience before is a great feeling."

Despite this being their first trip to nationals, Legacy isn't worried about them at all.

"Nate, Nick and Darby are all familiar with the highest levels of competition. They all come from top high school programs that competed on the national level," Legacy said. "For this tournament, qualifying has fulfilled half of their dream. The other half is becoming a national champion or getting on the podium as an earned NCAA All-American."

As much as Legacy is trying to keep them in top shape, he also knows it's important to prioritize health and wellbeing.

"We are being extra careful to

not put them in situations that will get them injured. These guys have to train year-round to get to this point, so their bodies are nixed up. Nobody is 100 percent at this time of the year," Legacy said.

A huge part of this is focusing on not tiring out their legs, which means making the switch from sprinting and long-distance running to biking.

Even though the coaches are making sure they are staying healthy, they're still putting in all the work that it takes to be a national champion.

"If you don't get outworked day in and day out, you won't get outworked when it's showtime," Wilkins said.

At the end of the day, these six wrestlers aren't just representing themselves — they're representing their team.

"It took every member of our team to get Gavin, James, Nate, Nick, Sampson and Darby to the National Tournament. They could not have done this without their entire team," Legacy emphasized.

The wrestlers will travel to La Crosse, Wisconsin, to compete on March 15 and 16.



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From left to right, top to bottom: Gavin Bradley wrestles an opponent to the mat; James Rodriguez matches up with his opponent; Sampson Wilkins gets pumped up.

Castleton baseball struggles down south

By Carly Centeno
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton baseball team this past break went down south for their season opening games, and had a rough start.

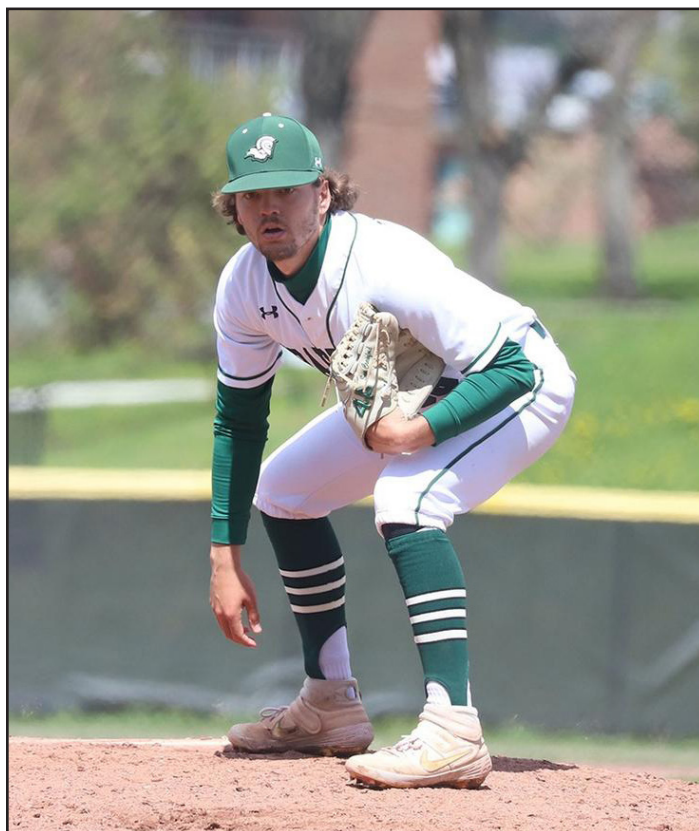
The Spartans played a total of eight games in several different states and won only one. Going into the season 1-8 is rough, but the trip gave the team a chance to see what they must improve on and other ways to make them stronger.

"The travel was fun and it definitely brought the team closer together. Yes, the games didn't go as well as we wanted them too, but it allowed us to figure out what we need to work on the most and how to fix it," sophomore Mikey Raby said.

In their first game against Huntingdon College, they lost 12-3, which players said was not the best start for the team.

They then played against Seawance, Mount St. Joseph University, Millsaps College, LeTourneau University, and Louisiana Christian University and struggled to score in all of them.

They closed out their trip with a win against a tough Texas Lutheran University team, winning 5-3. The team played strong and players left confident that they had made some sort of improvements



Sam Crawford, who got the lone win in the trip south, gets ready to throw a pitch. Hunter Perkins gets ready to hit (right).

while on the trip. "The travel down south was a bit stressful, but overall it was amazing to be able to play at some great facilities. The games were

good and the record obviously doesn't show how much we grew during our trip," said Sophomore Kevin Hewlett.

Players said the trip was ben-



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eficial to the team no matter what the record shows. They were given the chance to bond and become a closer-knit team, especially giving new players a chance to get to

know everyone a bit more.

"As much as the trip was long, it was a lot of fun and I believe the team came out the other end better. Being able to get on baseball

fields and play games were great. The competition was very strong and it toughened us for the rest of the season. The team is still pretty young, so as the team continues to grow through the season, we will keep getting better," said Dylan Hedler.

Players said the competition was rough due to the opportunities these teams get for preseason when Castleton deals with winter. The schools down south don't have those types of issues typically to worry about. Many may say we had a disadvantage against many of these due to the type of facilities they have versus ours.

"Most of the teams we played already had ten or so games under their belt, while it was our first time on the field. I think the team is coming together nicely as we start to find our roles where we belong," Hewlett said.

Although games didn't always go as planned, players said the team is ready to get into the season as a strong, competitive, aggressive team. This trip was just another chance for them to get to improve and get used to playing with new players.

"Coming into this season, we all realize that everyone is counting us out and we believe we have the potential to prove everyone wrong," Hewlett said.

Shortage of players for womens lacrosse

By Carly Centeno
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton women's lacrosse team is on the lookout for new players to help improve the team. The team is competing under new head coach, Bella Ferraro, and is hoping for a strong season, yet the lack of players has caused a few bumps.

The team is currently competing with 13 players – down from 17 last year.

"I am very excited to dive right into the season. The team is really dialed and ready to grow. That has been one of the biggest topics of conversation with us in the short time I've been here, being vulnerable towards growth," said Ferraro.

With games starting up, players have prepared themselves over the short preseason and managed to gather two walk-ons for this season.

"It was pretty scary to walk on at first honestly. I didn't know anyone, and it was my first sport, but after hanging out with some of the girls, I felt very included and loved," sophomore goalie Liv

Cormier said.

"It's been fun, everyone is super fun and nice, coaches and players both. Everyone is willing to help me learn and always seems to be positive. It's a fun time and I'm glad I did it," said fellow walk-on Katie Stager said.

The team does not have a recruitment system in place, so they rely mainly on walk-ons for needed players. Players are working hard to make every new player, even if they have never played before, feel welcome and put extra work into helping their new teammates understand the game.

"We're trying our best to recruit but it's been very difficult. We unfortunately have a reputation that has built over the years, and we are trying to change that. We are a different team than we were the past couple years, and we want Castleton to know that. We've only been able to recruit one girl, but our goal is to recruit three or more," said sophomore Gretel Seaman.

With the new coaching, things have been starting to look up for the team. The women have been working extra hard on the recruit-

ing process to find potential incoming freshmen from their hometowns and many other places.

Many players didn't know much about the sport or the technicalities behind it, yet they still were allowed to strive on the team.

"I walked on to women's lacrosse last year with no prior experience. The girls were all super helpful and friendly last year and taught me a lot of what I know now. When our old coach left, it was hard to hear as I was just figuring out the sport and starting to enjoy it more, but now with Coach Ferraro, she's made our team come closer together and is teaching us new plays and new tactics, which I think is going to help our team in the long run," senior Kailyn August said.

Ferraro has built up a brand-new environment where everyone can succeed. Many players are extremely pleased with the way she has taken over, even though she has only been here for a short amount of time.

"With Coach Ferraro leading our team, I can already see a lot of improvement in our team as well

as myself. I think the season has been way different than last but, definitely for the better," August said.

"Our season has been a struggle from the start. Our Awesome GA Cassie had to step up and take the role as our coach for the last few weeks. Due to a lack of players and a lack of coach, we had a hard time with our team dynamic. Since Coach Ferraro started, we've improved a lot. Our dynamic is much better. Intensity at practice has increased. Communication and motivation have been good," Seaman said.

The women are ready to head into the season and are prepared for the challenges they are going to face ahead. They continue to hope for more women to become interested and want to play, but for now, they will continue with the team they have.

"The squad has been working hard and we are ready to establish a strong, competitive presence in the LEC this year," Ferraro said.

The Spartans currently sit 0-2 after falling to Russell Sage 12-6 on March 9.



PHOTO FROM CASTLETON SPORTS
Tien Conner with the ball against Russell Sage.



PHOTOS PROVIDED FROM CHRISTOPHER EDER

Lorenzo Mencaccini (top left) and Aksel Stroem-Hanson (top right) skiing down Whiteface Mountain during their Nationals runs and both receiving their All-American honors. Mencaccini (middle), Stroem-Hansen (right).

We are the champions

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

After a slushy finish atop Whiteface Mountain in the Adirondacks, the Castleton Alpine Ski Team saw two members walk up to stand in the first-place spot on the podium receiving the title of national champions.

Both Emilie Stene and Lorenzo Mencaccini became the fourth and fifth national champions that the Spartans have produced in program history.

"It has always been my goal since I was a freshman and several times I came close to winning a title but never the win. It is very satisfying and makes clear to under-

stand that our group has worked well both on the slopes and in the gym," Mencaccini said.

The race that gave Mencaccini the label of national champ consisted of one run due to the condition of the course being considered unsafe by officials.

However, even with the conditions being rough, all five Spartan skiers placed in the top-25 in their one heat.

Mencaccini lead the way with a 1:07.86 and had a substantial lead for his victory finishing 1.58 seconds ahead of second place. Raphael Fischer crossed the line five spots behind the national champ with a time of 1:11.21 and Filippo Collini was right behind him for the seventh spot. After those three,

Aksel Stroem-Hanson placed 17th and Elliot Perretta finished in the 21 spot.

"I have to say that I'm really pleased with everyone's attitude in interpreting the race, which then led to the team's first victory at the giant nationals, it's a great satisfaction," Mencaccini said.

Mencaccini also came out on top in the slalom to make him a champ in both events. His teammate Aksel Stroem-Hanson followed in right behind him taking the second-place spot giving the Spartans a one-two finish and grabbing the team crown for Castleton.

On the women's side, Stene became the second woman to become national champion in pro-

gram history. She came in with a time of 2:15.85 in her second run allowing her to take the crown after being slightly behind by a half-second in her first run.

"To be a national champion doesn't feel any different than before I was, to be honest. I'll say it's more like great motivation for me and my teammates to continue the work we did this season. I think some of the factors that made me successful this season are a positive head space and being patient. Throughout the whole season and even before I got to this college, I have put in a lot of work and been patient with the result," Stene said.

On top of Stene finishing as a national champion, the team also had a podium finish in the slalom

race from Petra Veljkovic, who finished with a time of 1:46.24 which landed her second place. Behind her was Ginevra Trevisan, who placed fourth after finishing with a time of 1:47.19.

"Going in, we knew Lorenzo and Emilie both have the talent to win. In skiing, anything can happen, so a lot of things had to go right for both of them to take it home. It's always good to see good things happen to good people. Although skiing is an individual sport it was awesome to see everyone work together as a team to bring home the hardware. I couldn't be prouder of Lorenzo, Emilie, and the team as a whole," said junior Kevin McDonough.

This concluded the Spartans ski

season in which they will graduate two women and four men next year. Included in those graduating is newly crowned national champ Mencaccini and podium finisher Veljkovic.

"I am so proud of our student-athletes and the success they have earned this week at the USCSA National Championships. Their hard work throughout the season has really paid off. To have so many of our student-athletes rise to the occasion is awesome. Words can't explain how proud I am to be the coach of these student-athletes," said head coach Christopher Eder.

All-Star games are pathetic now

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

All-Star games are a joke nowadays.

Simple as that.

I remember growing up when the All-Star games in the four major sports were the coolest thing ever, but now they are all about the show and the money.

I used to get excited for the games and skills competitions, but now it's just a week break of games that actually matter and it seems like the players could give a shit about the games.

One that hits home for me is the

NHL All-Star game. As a hockey player and fan all my life, watching the game and skills competition was awesome as a kid because you got to see the best players that season go head-to-head in a showcase of their skills and watch them play with players from different teams.

Now it's all about making the game an experience and involving anyone who could draw attention to the game. Like, it's cool that they get people like Justin Bieber and Tate McRae to show up, but they are just there to bring in fans and it takes away from what the All-Star game really is.

I miss the days watching and

hearing guys like Rick DiPietro talking to the broadcaster mid-game while making a crazy glove save and batting the puck back into play.

Now it looks like guys are just there for the vacation and look absolutely uninterested in the game.

And don't get me started on the NFL Pro Bowl.

The Pro Bowl used to be so cool. One memory I vividly have is Sean Taylor absolutely decapitating someone in the game and players actually gave a shit to play in it and try to make it a fun game to watch.

Now it's a damn flag football game.

If I wanted to watch flag football I'd go outside and get some buddies to play two hand touch because it would be the same thing intensity wise. The NFL needs to bring back the old Pro Bowl where it was an actual football game not football that we all used to play in elementary school.

The NBA All Star weekend has always been kind of a letdown in my eyes besides the dunk contest, but now it's just getting out of hand. Mac McClung is the only reason the dunk contest was relatively entertaining again this year. Like give me Zion, LeBron, and some guys that can dunk the ball like menaces, then I would be

hyped to watch it again.

And don't even get me started on the actual game. 200 points scored by one team in an All-Star game is a damn joke. Talk about not playing any defense, it was embarrassing to watch because players just don't try on defense and just pull up to shoot from anywhere or they have a free lane to dunk. It's so boring to watch.

The only sport that had some relevance for the All-Star game was the MLB, but they took that away too, so now the only thing to get excited for is the Home Run Derby. The MLB used to do it right, with the winning team getting home field advantage in

the World Series. It actually gave the players something to play for and some motivation, unlike other sports where guys show up to the All-Star break guzzle some beers and go out with zero care for the actual games.

At the end of the day, All-Star games just aren't the same as they were when I was growing up and it is all about the show and not about showcasing the highest level of competition in the league for that season. The big four sports need to figure it out and make these games meaningful, so the players actually care. And make it a true battle of the best.