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Castleton, Vermont

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CASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

The Spartan leaves NYC with win

Newspaper takes first place in the division III category at College Media Association Conference

Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Eight students and one advisor from Vermont State University Castleton recently traveled to New York City to attend the College Media Association Convention – and they returned home victorious, clinching the Apple Award for Division Three Best Newspaper.

Professor Dave Blow has been taking the Spartan staff to NYC for the annual convention for the past 16 years.

After a four-hour car ride full of a mix of '70s music and half-awake students, the Castleton University van landed at the Marriott Marquis Hotel smack in the middle of Times Square.

Their journey wasn't without its share of unexpected turns, however.

After stepping off the alphabetically sorted glass door elevators, not recommended for a fear of heights, the group discovered the hotel had mistakenly booked three of their four rooms for earlier in the week.

Undeterred, Blow was able to trade the one room for a suite and seven (six) students shared the space (a suite) equipped with two rooms, two queen beds, an extra mattress, a couch, and a makeshift ottoman bed, measuring five-foot long and two-and-a-half feet wide.

Blow was forced to stay at another nearby hotel, where he got a second room for another student.

"It was interesting, but it made it very fun and funny. It made it so that we all got to hang out more than we probably would. It was a bonding experience with everyone, and we all had a good time," reporter Stone Stelzl said about the rooming situation.

Throughout the convention, held from March 14 through March 16, the Castleton students actively participated in various sessions on various media topics.

"I attended a conference that talked about team building exercises. The presenter talked about different things to do to help a team get to know each other if there's an outsider in the group," editor Pearl Bellomo said. "It made me feel



PHOTOS FROM AVERY BOUCHARD, JOE VYVIAL

Members of the Castleton Spartan student newspaper staff attended the annual College Media Association Conference in New York City from March 14-16. They toured various parts of the city, attended educational sessions and had a group dinner.

more confident for next semester when we hopefully have some new faces, we can integrate them into the group and make them feel comfortable more quickly."

Other sessions ranged from "How to Slay as a Student Teacher" to "Your Sports Page Sucks." Each session was led by professionals in their field, teaching students how to improve their work.

"The convention was very interesting. Most of the sessions I attended were very inspirational, eye-opening, and encouraging,"

artist and page designer Joe Vyvial.

Sports editor Justin Gitto attended sessions to help him think of good content and amp the sports page.

"Stone and I went to one called 'More than Just a Gamer.' It was about getting hard news in sports, like uncovering and investigating into sports administration stuff," Gitto said. "I thought it was cool because, during my time as a sports editor so far, I've been trying to get us to do more than just

boring stuff in sports and add in more profiles and kind of stretch out in the sports department."

There was even an AP Style game show for a session, where you unleash everything you know about the AP writing style. Stelzl participated with hopes of winning it all but fell just short.

"I should've won. It's not a big deal but I could have won some money," Stelzl said.

When the sessions concluded for the day, the students made Times Square their playground.

Whether it was running around trying to find the best 99-cent pizza, walking the streets at 5 a.m. or taking photos amidst the tall skyscrapers and beaming billboards, there was always something to do.

"Besides the convention, I went to see some great art in the MoMA and The MET museums, a college basketball game in the Madison Square Garden, ate some good food, explored Central Park, and more," Vyvial said.

Toward the end of their experience, they had the opportunity to

receive feedback on a recent paper through a newspaper critique from a professor from Ohio.

In the end, the critique was largely positive, aside from tips for improvement on consistent "photo credits and cutlines."

"All she had to hate on us for was the cutlines and photo credits. The fact that she was grilling us about that shows that we didn't have much that needed to be critiqued. Then to see we won the best newspaper was even better," Gitto said.

In the end, they picked up the annual Apple Award for Division III "Best Newspaper," beating out schools from across the country. The Spartan had come up short in years passed with second or third place finishes, but this year the story flipped.

"We've never won first place before, so this was special," Blow said.

Before bidding farewell to the bustling metropolis, the Castleton team attended a keynote speech centered on the future of artificial intelligence by professor and AI consultant Sree Sreenivasan, providing them with valuable insights into the evolving idea of media and technology.

It was a hard leave for the journalists, but with their suitcases and overpriced hotel coffee clutched in hand, they waved goodbye to the city with a newly formed bond.

"I think Pearl, Gonzo and I would agree on this because we've been on it before, but on the New York City trip we spend more time together than we normally would in Castleton and we have a blast together," Gitto said.

The CMA Convention proved to be an enriching experience for the Castleton Spartans, which was just what Blow said he wanted.

"I see this trip as a perk for the students who work hard to put out a good newspaper. It's a chance for them to learn, to see the city. I enjoy exposing them to some place other than Castleton. For me, it's also a chance to bond with the group on a more personal level. It's nice to let the guard down a little bit and just be humans," Blow said.

NAACP Fashion Show turns heads on the runway

Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

The 1787 Room was alive with colorful lights and loud cheering on Saturday, March 30, as models strutted their stuff across the runway.

But these weren't just any models, they were students and recent graduates from Vermont State University at Castleton who left the crowds stunned at the third annual NAACP Fashion Show.

"It was amazing. I had a lot of fun," commented junior Jacqueline Nash, who adored model Steldie Mabiala's pink dress in the "To Travel the World" section.

The show was split into five categories displaying models' "fit choices including "Day in the Life," "For a Day in Spring," "To Travel the World," "For the Oscars," and "My Fashionable Future," followed by slicing a commemorative cake for the graduating chapter members.

Model and NAACP member Neema Modeste said the event "was a great showcasing of the school's diversity" and that she was thrilled to see such a big turnout. She shared that Vice President Liliana Farrell had actually made the tropical accessory she wore in her travel abroad outfit.

When models weren't walking the runway, musicians Perri Chaidika and Obi the Voicegod livened the audience with performances of two original songs. Five attendees even proved their "model status" by delivering their best walk to the beat of a track.



PEARL BELLOMO

NAACP hosted their third annual Fashion Show on March 30, featuring Castleton's most fashionable students in a variety of fun themes.

Proud winner of the challenge, Aimee Yonkeu, said she practices her runway walk "just for fun" but playfully remarked that the win was "definitely expected." She said she loved seeing the multicultural portion of the show.

Many raved about Steldie Mabiala's outfit choices, including freshman Rosa Kehoe, whose favorite was her high-fashion, floor

length silver dress with matching hood.

Junior Emily Offo said she adored her red mini dress in the Oscar's section and her stylized nursing scrubs to signify her future career.

"India is beautiful, as is Shristy," said Farell following model Shristy Chhetri Darji's appearance in her blush-pink, two-piece Indi-

an-inspired gown with floral and sequin detail.

The crowd went wild for Daniel Wright's tuxedo and accompanying dog Buddy, wearing his very own "shirt and tie" collar.

"It's a great opportunity to expand beyond just Castleton. We have a lot of people outside the area who attend," said Assistant Secretary Maddie Besaw. "It's a

chance to get our name out there and for people to have some fun."

"This year was overwhelming with joy," said President Morgan. "I counted, we only had three open seats in the entire room."

Morgan was incredibly proud of each of the models, describing it as "the easiest going show ever" and says how meaningful this

event was to her as a graduating senior.

Since herself and many others are graduating in May, the NAACP is urgently seeking new members. Meetings take place every Tuesday from 6:15 to 7:45 in the Campus Center's formal lounge for anyone interested in joining!

Time for U.S. to educate and work together

We all know how news in mainstream media tends to be biased in how it is delivered to the public. But, are enough of us aware of just how much information is lost on the citizens, especially in rural areas.

Many people tend to live in their own bubbles and ignore the rest of the world around them, which leads to a very narrow, and arguably, misinformed view of national and international issues.

This is because mainstream media has so much power over what we see and hear, it even affects our politics and our economic balance.

Let us first direct our attention to the media fear mongering.

For example, illegal immigration is always a fiercely debated issue, especially around election time. It is often hyped in right wing news sources, such as Fox News, as a deadly “invasion” of “murderers and rapists.” Although it is true there are record numbers of immigrants seeking asylum in the U.S, resolutions were turned down by Republicans in favor of exploiting the issue for political gain, using scare tactics to convince Americans that immigrants are a much bigger threat than they really are. No one said it better than journalist, comedian, and political correspondent John Stewart:

“...There were three hundred thousand crossings in December alone. That’s an all time high and that is not sustainable. But, Republicans turned down the chance to pass a strong border bill...supported by the Border Patrol Union... because of how confident they are that fear mongering will be an effective election year strategy. It’s all about branding”

So, you may be asking yourself, “What does corporate greed have to do with politics and the economy?”

Well, consider recycling, for example. Many do our part to recycle plastic, with the promise that we are helping to protect our environment. But the sad truth is that recycling plastic is a ploy developed by the plastic industry to avoid facing real environmental issues regarding plastic pollution.

It turns out that big oil companies bank off promoting this idea. While we waste time putting plastic into recycle bins, which, by the way, are made of “harmful” plastic, “the fossil fuel industry makes \$400 billion a year producing plastic” according to Plastic Recycling is a Lie on Earthday.org.

So, while some politicians and activists are shifting focus to renewable energy, the fossil fuel industry stresses that increased profits will come from plastic production to its shareholders, which also happens to include many politicians. This is where political and corporate greed go hand in hand.

On the topic of political and corporate greed, inflation is something greatly discussed lately in mainstream media. But we are only given so many reasons, such as imbalances in supply and demand and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

And while these are legitimate reasons for inflation, they are only a percentage of the inflation situation. The other percentage no one ever discusses is the rising profit portion. We only hear about the rising wages and prices, but never the profits.

Why is this?

Well, because Capitalism may be to blame for the severe imbalance of corporate profit to rising prices and wages. According to, once again, John Stewart on The Problem with John Stewart, inflation appears to be at its worst right around the same time people start demanding wage increases.

Once this happens, corporations tend to jack up prices in response. However, it has apparently gotten worse. While the Federal Government consistently provides bailouts for big businesses in economic crises, there is usually no adequate supplemental relief for working class citizens.

This means that while profits of big corporations are at an all time high, businesses are still raising prices disproportionately to make more money. Now this may seem criminal, but capitalism, baby. It favors big business. After all, corporations are people too.

Now, this may all be very overwhelming and difficult to take in for some. But the good news is that there are plenty of people out there, such as media literate and responsible journalists and activists who work hand in hand with many of our well-meaning politicians to try to find reasonable and effective resolutions to these issues.

We, the people, just need to educate ourselves and each other, open our eyes to reality, and start working together, not against each other.

I believe it is possible to create a society and an economy that works for everyone. It does not have to be perfect, just sustainable, for all of us.

- Amanda Johnson

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JOE VYVIAL

Your life depends on it

I’m never growing up.

I’m now a poser in a punk rock sense. When, or if, I go to a show, I stand in the back by the bathrooms. I leave the pit to the younger, more virile people.

My back hurts too much for that shit.

Honestly, I never trusted anyone over 30. When I see old people, I get an extraordinarily self-defensive and problematic attitude, thinking they are out of touch with reality and what is happening in society.

Then I look in the mirror.

I am in my 40s and so out of touch with society.

I used to be socially conscious and have a full head of hair. I say this because we will witness an election for the next nine months where the candidates are the oldest in our history.



Will Smith

It makes me want to scream. How did we get to this place? How are these two geriatrics going to usher the United States into the future when they cannot even remember what they had for breakfast?

Why is no one stopping this?

Look, both candidates suck, and I could list all of the reasons

for that, but I am not going to. What I will do is state, you! Young people! Do something! Don’t let our country fall into the hands of people who have had their AARP cards for longer than you have been alive.

I mean, there is something that I can say: you aren’t going to like it, but look at third party candidates.

But Will! This is the most important election of our lives! IF WE VOTE THIRD PARTY, THE OTHER SIDE WILL WIN! Yadda, yadda, yadda.

This is the same crap that has been said since I was first eligible to vote. If you ask someone older than me (shudder), I’m sure they will probably say they have heard the same thing. Hell, I’m sure a good majority of them have said it.

Expanding the pool of ideas that we currently have is the only

way to attract more voices and fresh ideas to our collective brains.

Also, get off your ass and get involved.

If you sit there and complain about the things that bother you and do nothing about it, you are the problem. Start volunteering and explore new and different ideas. Also, get involved in your local issues.

Finally, listen to each other.

Look, you can disagree with people. But listen to what they are trying to say. See what the actual problem is and try to fix it.

But what do I know about any of this? I’m just another old duffer shouting about things that are beyond his control.

- Will Smith

These worms aren’t good for your soil

As you read this article, there might be a destructive species of worm crawling silently underneath your feet.

The Green Mountain state’s soil is being severely threatened by a species of worm that sounds like it should be in a children’s cartoon.

The reason why they are called Jumping Worms is because they have a tendency to go all-out when they are being captured or handled. Jumping Worms are no joke and they pose a serious threat to landscapes and forests in Vermont.

This week I had the absolute honor to sit down with one of the state’s (and in my opinion country’s) most respected ecologists, Dr. Kristen Ross of Vermont State University at Castleton.

Ross is the head of the Wildlife and Forestry Conservation major here on campus, and she does a very good job at spreading environmental education awareness for the state of Vermont and beyond.

We both agreed that Jumping Worms are a pressing issue for soil and ecological health, and we both believe that it is very important that you know what is going on in the state when it comes to these animals.

“These worms are also extremely bad for your garden as well as forests and will totally destroy the structure of your soil. Turning the soil into a material like coffee grounds,” Ross said. These worms are masters at

draining the soil of its precious materials, and ultimately making the soil useless for plants to get any nutrients out of it.

Jumping Worms are after the same nutrients in the soil that many other life forms are after, including plants. Some of these materials include Organic Matter, Nitrogen, Potassium, and Phosphorus. These animals make the soil loose and infertile, and this impacts the environment all the way up the ecological chain.

The Jumping Worm (*Amyntas agrestis*) is a non-native species of worm in Vermont. They are similar to many species of earthworm and were brought to this continent by settlers.

In fact, according to the Atlantic, many experts believe that they first arrived in the United States in California in the 1860s. Others have been in the Southeast for more than a century. Since then, they have obviously moved across the country, and are entering new areas frequently.

Ross’ specific concerns for this species relate to a variety of topics like: How are these worms changing competition for resources with other decomposers? How do these worms’ impact other organisms in the soil? Where are these worms, and what do the populations look like exactly? How are these worms changing soil health and soil efficiency?

Ross explains that many people do not know that these animals are highly movable, and often reside

on the surface of the soil.

Therefore, when people move soil around that soil probably contains Jumping Worms or Jumping Worm eggs. This is the very reason why these animals have been able to spread so rapidly across the country.

Ross also explained that Jumping Worms do not just reside in soil.

“The same goes for wood chips, and people should be aware that any type of planting material could and probably has Jumping Worm eggs or the worms themselves in it.”

Ross has had some negative experiences with Jumping Worms, but fortunately she came up with a system to help combat these pesky worms.

“If you think you might have Jumping Worms or Jumping Worm eggs in your soil or compost, I suggest removing your compost or wood chips and placing the material in black trash bags.”

Ross also gave insight into how you should set up your trash bags.

“Make sure that they are seal tight, making sure most of the air is out if you can. Also, try to have the bags flatter and more spread out so the sun will go through the entire substance and kill any worms or worm eggs that are in it. Try your best to lay your flat bags outside in the sun.”

Ross explained that temperature is very important for killing these worms.

“They need to stay at 131 Fahrenheit for at least 3 consecutive days to kill the worms and eggs. The weather in Vermont is often not consistent, so I would leave it out longer than three days, maybe a week.”

Ross also suggests taking the temperature of your trash bags often.

“It would be best to try to take the temperature of the substance in the bag and try to get an accurate temperature reading in the center of the substance.”

You can usually see the eggs of these worms, and to find them before they hatch is very crucial.

This article also includes a picture of a Jumping Worm, and I hope you start to be on the lookout for these worms. You are going to start seeing more activity from wildlife as the snow melts, especially from worms and amphibians because these situations are going to make a perfect muddy habitat.

I hope you gained a great depth of knowledge from this article, and I also hope you can come back to this information if you ever need it.

Please remember this information, and if you are going to move planting substances around the Green Mountain state, please make sure you are checking and heating the materials for these worms.

- Gavin Bradley

VTSU admissions rise following merger

By Sam Crawford
Castleton Contributor

If you've ventured along Seminary Street any time recently, you've undoubtedly seen the signs reading "Admissions Event" accompanied by large, pointing arrows. When followed, these arrows direct you to Wright House, one of the smallest official buildings on Castleton's campus, yet also one of the busiest.

As Vermont State University approaches the end of its first full year of operation, those who work in Wright House in admissions find themselves excited not only for these events, but also for the future of VTSU.

"We have seen a 14% increase in student applications, and an increase of 23% in admitted students across all campuses," says Maurice Ouimet, the vice president of Admissions and Enrollment Services for VTSU. He also said that this trend of growth is one that should continue after this year as other benefits of the merger begin to draw more and more students to the state.

But what are these benefits exactly? Well, one has to do with the name itself.

"It gives us instant credibility," Ouimet said, and this was something that was also mentioned by others in the office. According to Amanda Ley, one of the counselors that works directly with prospective students, the level of interest at college fairs around the country has been going up.

"They're reporting so many new inquiries," she said excitedly of the VTSU representatives who are currently on the road attending these fairs. This increasingly wide reach of the school that has been provided by the VTSU name is becoming more and more apparent closer to home, especially to the student guides who give the tours of the campus. One such guide, junior Jake Barth, has only given a few tours so far this semester and he can tell that there's "a lot more publicity now with the new model." Recently Barth said he's shown families from Texas and Florida around the campus, and says other guides have had families that have just as far.

Those coming from out of state also haven't expressed as much concern with the merger as prospective in-state families have, he said.

"For many of them, the universities in their home states have already gone through this," Ley added.

Because of this, everyone mentioned that there have been fewer questions overall from the families regarding the VTSU merger this year than last, as those who come to visit were already interested in what the school has to offer.

To achieve all of this success though, the admissions team has had to put in an immense amount of work. Even before the merger was made official, counselors and recruiters were already promoting the changes to those interested, making sure that those who expressed interest in Castleton and VTSU were well aware of what was happening.

On top of recruiting, the merger has also turned the admissions building into a sort of communications hub, with counselors and student workers connecting people and families to other departments and campuses.

"A lot of time was given to learning new things and trying to support all types of incoming communications," said Patrick Rogers, the associate director of Admissions. Rogers, who spoke with pride when asked about his team, also acknowledged the fact that there are still some things that can be improved upon, but that those are things that will be sorted out with time as they continue to fine tune their new system.

The transition to VTSU was one of the largest changes in the histories of all of the schools involved. Yet this transition, by all accounts, was one that was needed.

"This is the trend. Schools like ours either come together and adapt, or they close down," Ouimet said.



Breakfast location on St. Patrick's Day morning, left, and Jess Emery enjoying her first Guinness, right.

Letters From London: Bulletin from Belfast

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

I spent Saint Patrick's Day in Belfast, Ireland.

A good friend of mine, Reilly Tennis, a VTSU student, is studying in Northern Ireland at Ulster University in a town called Coleraine.

Sya Barnes, another VTSU student and good friend, is studying at Essex University in Colchester, England, so we decided to meet Reilly in Belfast for the Irish holiday.

Because we are incapable of doing anything in a particularly enjoyable and easy way, Barnes and I didn't sleep at all Friday night and headed to the airport at 2:30 a.m. on Saturday morning and landed in Belfast at around 9 a.m.

The original itinerary went as follows:

1. Coffee
2. Titanic Museum
3. Meet up with Reilly and her friend Mia Marr.
4. Go to the Zoo (Sya insisted on this one)
5. Pick up Mia's friend Mal-lory.

However, when running on an hour of sleep, things don't always work out the way you plan.

After the hour-long bus ride into the city center, I decided the perfect pick-me-up would be to spend about 45 minutes in a souvenir shop because my planned Saint Patrick's Day outfit was just not going to cut it.

We rummaged around in that souvenir shop for what felt like eons and finally made our way out. We each got a tee shirt and a couple little knickknacks.

After some much-needed coffee and a quick bite, we met Reilly and Mia at an indoor market.

A man tried to sell us a broken camera for 100 pounds and insisted that it was the best price (although he didn't know if it

worked). We could've been there for three minutes or three hours, I could not tell you.

Much to Sya's dismay, we decided the zoo was out of the picture for the day's events.

We met a few more of Reilly's

After a few hours of rest, we went to an outdoor food court situation for some dinner. The 12 of us ate and drank and got to know one and other.

We were from all different corners of the United States and each knew only one or two people

It was around 11 a.m. and we had to hurry up and get to breakfast.

We planned to drink all day. And you can't drink all day if you don't start in the morning.

We found a breakfast spot called Maggie's and it was warm

We could hear Irish music coming from all over.

We didn't forget about the drinks, when the waitress delivered Mia's coffee she said, "there's a wee bit of milk and about 3 shots in there so you should be good."

One woman approached Reilly with her son who was probably 2 years old and told us that she wanted a photo of her son in the "holy land."

Naturally, we thought that meant she wanted us to take a photo of her and her son —

but no. She handed off her baby to Reilly and snapped a pic of them, thanked us, and made her way to the parade.

We stared at each other in bewilderment before we broke out into laughter.

After we got a few pub recs from the waitress, we made our way to the parade.

The parade was cool, and learned a lot.

What was particularly evident was the lack of knowledge I have of Irish history.

I didn't know what a single float or costume was about.

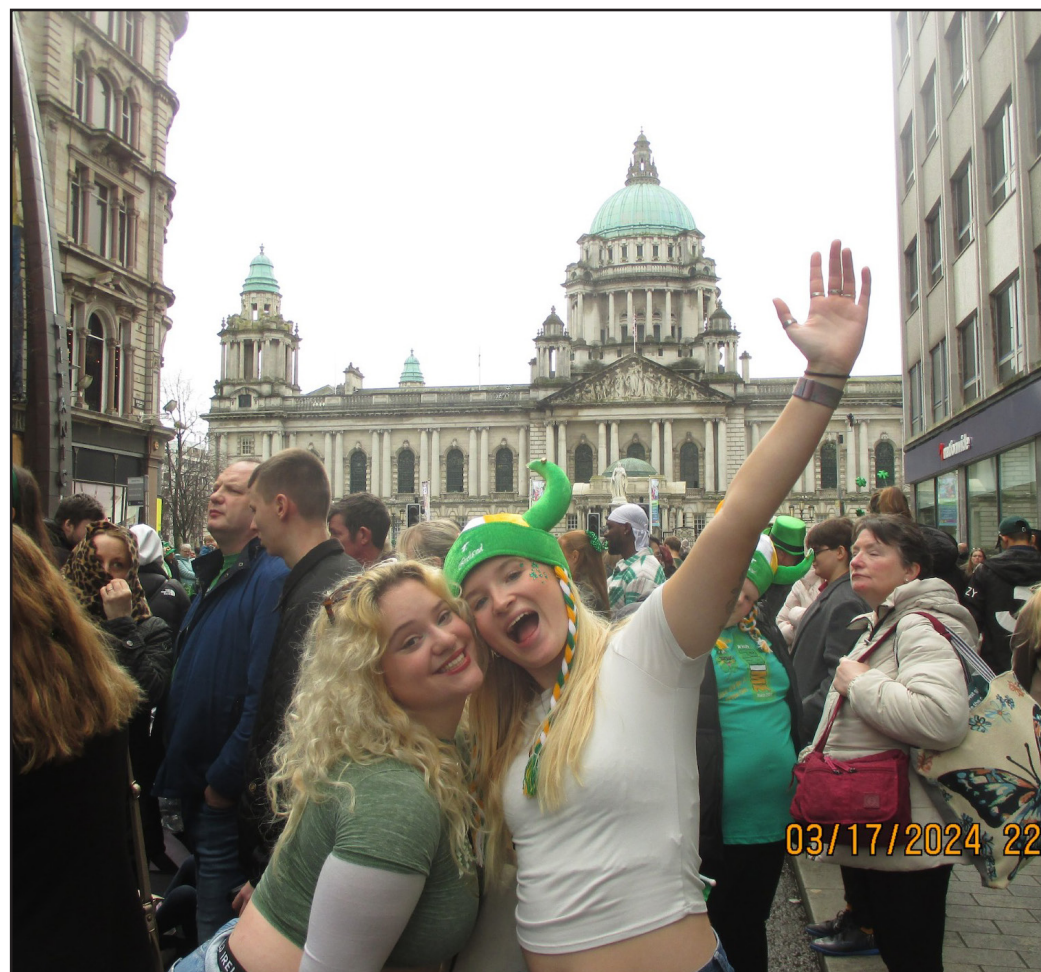
The first pub we wandered into was hidden down a narrow alleyway and we found it by following the sounds of the fiddle.

The music and drinks were good and the band loved our energy.

We danced and danced and clapped along to tunes we didn't know. Every few songs, Irish step dancers would come out and give a performance which was even more impressive considering the cramped space.

They played songs like "Rattlin' Bog" by Carlyle Fraser, "This Is the Life" by Amy Macdonald, and "Take Me Home, Country Road" by John Denver.

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Jess Emery and Reilly Tennis in front of City Hall during a parade.

friends at the market and their friends of friends.

Between all of us, it was a group of about 12 people.

We made the trek to the hotel and Reilly and I checked in and then smuggled Sya, Mia, and Mal-lory into the room.

but we all managed to make it for 48 hours in Belfast.

The next day, Saint Patrick's Day, we were woken up by the sound of bagpipes playing outside our hotel.

I could not imagine a more fitting sound to wake up to.

enough to sit outside so we put together a couple of small round tables.

The Irish breakfast was good and the people watching was even better.

Everyone in green walking up and down the streets, beer in hand.

Trying new things is important in life

By Akane Minamino
Castleton Spartan

Akane Minamino is an international student at VTSU Castleton from Japan who details what it's like to study abroad so far from home.

Trying new things is important. This is one of my beliefs. That belief is one of the reasons why I decided to study abroad.

Trying new things leads you to doing something you have never tried before, seeing what you have never seen before, and learning what you have never known. "Learning what you have never known" means a situation that; for example, you think that "I did not know that such a delicious dish is available on the earth!" when you try eating what you have never eaten.

In addition, thinking that "I did not know that this issue can be dealt with from different perspectives!" when you hear an opinion of someone who is from a different background.

Personally, from my experience, one of my friends recommended that I should watch a Korean TV drama when I was in high school. I did not have an interest in the TV show at all when she gave me that suggestion and had never tried it.

However, once I began watching the TV program, I started en-

joying it because it was so interesting to me. Now, watching Korean TV drama is one of the most enjoyable things for me and is playing an important role in my life.

Also, her suggestion that I should watch the drama made me interested in learning Korean. This friend definitely broadened my horizons and guided me to a new world.

My statement, "Learning what you have never known" may make your life more fulfilled. That is why I always like trying something new to learn what I have never known. Studying abroad is one of the new things I am trying.

To be specific, I came here because I have wanted to see new things and meet people who have different backgrounds and ways of thinking from mine. Interacting with them will broaden my horizons and gives me a variety of perspectives and knowledge, which I also think is fun and interesting.

One of the international students I met here, Amina Mishkat, taught me an important thing. When I saw myself as a person inferior to others and I lost confidence, she said "The more you feel yourself inferior, there's more room for improvement. It's a good sign as you want to improve," she said.

She also told me "Nobody is perfect. There are some points where I am better than you but there are ones where you are better than me. It's all because we lived in different environments and



Akane Minamino, right, and fellow international student Amina Mishkat, left.

faced different situations. No one is more perfect than another, we all are equal."

Her way of thinking was totally new to me at that time and helped

me to overcome the difficult time. I cannot thank her enough.

The other reason why I decided to study abroad is that I have wanted to become an independent per-

son through facing difficulties in an unfamiliar living environment and dealing with them.

See 'Trials' on page 6

Safe Ride is back but needs riders

By Julian Chiemengo-Rivera
Spartan contributor

Safe Ride is back in action but may be having an identity problem.

Vermont State University Castleton has been transforming its student safety protocols by reintroducing Safe Ride, a ride service provided to ensure students have a safe ride home from parties on the weekends.

"I believe our current operations prioritize safety and efficiency, aiming to ensure both passengers and staff have a positive experience," Safe Ride driver Caesar Williams said.

Williams talked about how the safety of the students is important and that Safe Ride confidently provides this.

"It's been a work in progress for two years and this year we were finally able to bring it back,"

Student Government Association President Perry Ragouzis said.

Safe Ride has been around for a long time, however, was discontinued temporarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We are looking to start back up after break," said Kayon Morgan, NAACP President and SGA delegate working on Safe Ride.

The SGA has been striving to improve the once popular service for three years now.

"We are in the process of rebuilding," said Ragouzis. "Something we are trying to workshop. Fit into a new era of Castleton history... fitting into our new student body."

Ragouzis has been a part of the rebuilding process and continues to find ways to provide student support services. Finding a way for Safe Ride to fit into the culture again is Ragouzis' goal.

"The weekend before graduation, the Safe Ride driver was the president of the university," Ra-

gouzis said of former President Dave Wolk. "That used to be a really fun component of our campus history and campus culture."

The tradition was integrated within the student community in the past. The students and faculty found a connection between party and school culture. There, however, has been a disconnection from the student body in recent years.

"Safe Ride is experiencing low usage rates, so it's crucial to address the issue," Williams said. "From my perspective, it seems that one of the main reasons for low usage could be a lack of awareness about Safe Ride and its services."

Safe Ride has had trouble reaching out to most students in recent years.

"I've never even heard of Safe Ride before," said Charlie McMahon, a VTSU Castleton sophomore, supporting Williams' assertion.

Many students across the uni-

versity also said they have never heard of the Safe Ride program before.

"Every time we are up and running, we will send emails the night of or morning of," said Morgan in response.

Email is the main type of communication between the program and students. However, students' emails are overwhelmed throughout the day leading to this announcement perhaps being buried within the accumulation.

"I wanted to do a project where we got a message board," Morgan said. "I'm going to put it in front of Huden."

This message board can bring a larger awareness to the program and potentially increase the use of Safe Ride, she said.

"Other possible factors could be misconceptions or concerns about the safety or reliability of the service that need to be addressed," said Williams.

Some students are skeptical of

the program, but SGA leaders say they shouldn't be.

"We don't even have a procedure for Safe Rides to report students. It's all anonymous," said Ragouzis.

Safe Ride is a completely anonymous service provided by the SGA and driven by other students. However, students cannot use this service to leave campus, they may only return to campus through Safe Ride.

And students should not have concerns about the drivers because all are required to pass their fleet license test. The SGA office sifts through applicants and not only chooses drivers who meet the requirements but bases it on their personality too.

VTSU students can access this service Friday and Saturday's 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. The Safe Ride phone number is 802-712-4214 to access this service.

Q&A with SGA Pres. Perry Ragouzis

By Setty Provencher
Castleton Spartan

Vermont State University Castleton Student Perry Ragouzis is well-known on the Castleton campus and in the state, for his various leadership roles including Student Government Association president and student representative on the VTSU Board of Trustees. He took time recently to answer questions about leadership and life.

Q. What is a prime motivator of yours behind the work you are doing? For those who might not know, what exactly do you do?

A. I am currently working on a variety of different projects, which means that there are a variety of motivators helping me continue through my work. This being said, I am really motivated primarily by this community around us and the opportunities that I have to make lives better. I am currently serving in and around Castleton in a few different positions and roles, including the Board of Trustees Student Trustee for the VSCS, president of the Castleton SGA, resident assistant in Haskell Hall, treasurer of the Senior Class, and assistant manager of the Casella Theater Box Office.

Q. What's the SGA got brewin' at the moment? Is there a message or words of wisdom you'd like to send to everyone on campus, to current or future Spartans?

A. The SGA is always working on a wide variety of projects. Currently, we are taking part in sponsoring the "One-Day University Event," planning Castleton's annual end-of-year dance, as well as a variety of other delegate projects and campus advocacy work. I would like any students or members of the Castleton community who are interested in what a guy like me thinks, I would encourage them to get involved in civic opportunities and work to become a larger part of this community should you have the chance.

Q. What does Leadership mean to you? What does it look like? How can everyone foster positive growth here at VTSU-Castleton, and abroad?

A. Leadership, to me, means responsibility. To be a leader is really to simply accept responsibility both for the execution of a project, idea, or group, as well as taking responsibility for whenever something goes wrong. I think that we can all foster positive growth by engaging in leadership opportunities in and around our campus. Everyone can be a leader!

Q. What's your favorite food to eat at Huden? What's your go to order at Fireside? What's your favorite spot to go to when out n' about?

A. I really appreciate the chicken and waffle combo at Huden, extremely excellent! At Fireside I tend to order a grilled cheese, love it with some tomato soup. When I'm going out to eat, I love to go to Masala Corner.

Q. Lastly, what do you like to do for fun? Hobbies? Non-academic interests that make you tick? What are you passionate about that doesn't involve school? It would be amazing if you were a Pro Fly-Fishing Tie Master, or something like that.

A. I really love just working in and around campus through the student government and through our various outlets. Unfortunately, this means that I don't really have time for off-campus hobbies, but I find that through my leadership work, I have as much fun as I could ever have with any other hobby.



Coffee Cottage isn't closing

Despite rumors and decreased offerings, Cottage to remain open

By Seanna Brennan
Spartan contributor

When Coffee Cottage suddenly closed its doors two weeks ago, students were left wondering once again if the cafe would reopen at all this time.

With only two employees and no other staff to pick up the slack, the coffee shop must completely shut down - as it did the week of March 18 - when either is gone. An increasingly familiar sight to students has become the "Coffee Cottage Closed Today" sign on the outside of the door.

"I never know if they're going to be open or not until I get to the front door, which makes it difficult to want to go at all," junior Hailey Martinovich said.

Unreliable hours have become a deterring factor for students. What once was a popular study and snack spot has become more of a ghost town, the hustle and bustle of customers coming in and out of the cafe long gone.

Martinovich used to frequent Coffee Cottage every Wednesday with her roommates for breakfast, but that tradition stopped after the cafe was closed in 2022, when Coffee Cottage was shut down for weeks on end without announcing

a plan for reopening.

With fewer students coming in through the doors, it has been much harder for Coffee Cottage employees Bobbi Field and Kelly Lowell to make a profit.

"I think I've gone maybe once or twice this year," said sophomore Michael O'Connor, "and I used to go regularly, I even had a punch card."

The reason the cafe was closed last semester was to downsize their retail and menu options. Items that did not sell or make enough money such as chips, candy bars, and other retail snacks are no longer being offered, Field said.

The milk crates in front of the register that were once filled with options are gone. The retail options left for students are slim, with a few canned energy drinks in the cooler.

They miss the large and lively crowds, but they still have their regulars, said Lowell, there are lots of loyal customers who love the sandwiches.

Field and Lowell said that the downsizing had to happen for Coffee Cottage to remain in good business.

Despite the recent menu cuts, the cafe still offers staples like iced and hot coffee, breakfast and lunch sandwiches, and the popular



VTSU Castleton junior Hailey Martinovich enjoys an ice coffee in the Coffee Cottage after ordering from workers Bobbi Field and Kelly Lowell, top.

smoothies.

"We were closed temporarily so that we can stay open permanently," Field said.

The cafe is set to be back to

normal hours for the rest of the semester, and despite the current rumors circulating of its permanent closure, the plan is to keep the doors open for as long as possible.

"We made sure to keep fan favorites, like the Castleton sandwich," said Field. "We want to keep students coming in to see us."

Water main break causes flooding in Woodruff Hall

By Jeremy LaPlante
Spartan contributor

A water main broke near Coffee Cottage and Woodruff Hall on Feb. 28 that flooded the basement of Woodruff Hall.

According to Keith Molinari, director of Public Safety for the Castleton campus, the broken main was first noticed around 7 a.m. and disaster relief(s)workers were called in to take over after the attempts were made using sandbags to limit damages.

"We needed to contact Castleton PD," Molinari said.

He described how it took time to stop the water because it was connected to the town water which

could not be shut off by campus workers.

Workers in offices affected by the floods were offered the chance to work from home until new temporary offices were set up for the return of students the following Monday.

From the safe offices of the second floor of Woodruff, Meredith Fletcher, Special Projects coordinator, took charge of planning the temporary office restructuring.

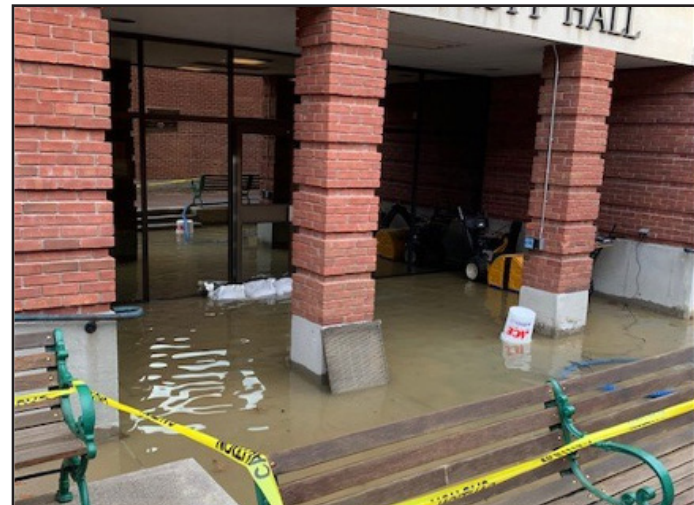
"Our goal was to keep everyone close to each other," Fletcher said. She mentioned how important it was to plan a restructuring that would keep the morale high in challenging times.

"We still wanted to be accessible for students," said Joann Aus-

tin, consultant for Financial and Registration Services whose office was one of those affected during the flood.

Austin mentioned the importance of keeping easy access for students when relocating offices, but also to keep that sort of sense of family well known on Castleton Campus.

Molinari confirmed that everything should be back to normal as soon as the disaster relief team makes the space safe again for the staff to work in. No specific date had been set as of last week but he said work should not linger for too long.



Water pours into Woodruff Hall from a broken water line.

Exploring Castleton's International Film Festival

By Madelyn Noni
Spartan contributor

The quiet hum of Castleton students and community members filled the first floor of Stafford in early March. The chatter of anticipation for the film ahead subsides as people choose their seats in Herrick Auditorium, prepared for the detailed cinematography they were about to watch.

This year's International Film Festival took over Herrick for a four-night run during a two-week span.

With creative direction from Professor Sam Davis-Boyd and logistical planning from Marisa Valent-Altland, this year's movies consisted of "Flee," "Gunfighter Paradise," "Portrait of a Lady on Fire," and "Return to Seoul."

Captivating a wide range of narratives and styles, this year's films originated from Denmark, France, Norway, Sweden, the United States, Cambodia, Germany, Belgium and Qatar.

The Film Festival's first showing, "Flee," highlighted the animated story of a man under an alias name sharing his past of fleeing his home country of Afghanistan to Denmark.

"As far as I know, we haven't shown any animated documentary films in the festival... It's just such a beautiful film. It's a heart-breaking film, but it was a beautiful film," Davis-Boyd said.

"Gunfighter Paradise" is the story of a hunter returning home to North Carolina. After his mother's passing, he returns to the family home and his mind begins to disintegrate.

"It was amazing. I really, really enjoyed it. It was funny, weird, and abstract. I spent a lot of time thinking about it after it was over, which is something I really enjoy; when art makes you think like that," Valent-Altland said.

At the screening of "Gunfighter Paradise," director Jethro Waters made a visit to Herrick Auditorium.

"One of our deans connected him and I. He was fantastic. I thought it was really exciting to have a filmmaker in attendance at the International Film Festival. It was really fun," Davis-Boyd said.

Set in 18th-century France, "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" told the story of Marianne, who is commissioned to do a wedding portrait of Héloïse without her knowing.

"I went into the movie not knowing what it was going to be about, but I walked out of it really enjoying the cinematography," said sophomore Chance Jaquin.

"Return to Seoul," wrapped up the film festival's two-week stretch. It was about a mid-20s woman returning to Korea, the country she was born in before being adopted by a French couple. She begins to track down her biological parents as her trip takes a shocking turn.

In collaboration with the communications department, the Film Festival also serves as a Soundings event where students can attend more than one to earn Soundings credit.

This requires behind-the-scenes direction from Soundings Director Valent-Altland. She is in charge of the logistical work for the festival including booking the space, setting up the event, and advertising.

"I think the film festival is great because you get to hit arts and culture in the same events. They've got four different opportunities to see these films so it's something that's easier for students to get to because there are multiple opportunities," Valent-Altland said.

Soundings students also like the festival as a Soundings option.

"I think it's a good idea for films to be a part of Soundings because everyone enjoys watching movies, and some people don't enjoy music or theater. Having variety in Soundings events makes it a lot more enjoyable" said Castleton student Devon Kibbey.

Davis-Boyd's excitement and professional commitments, "I was very interested in it and I wish I would read more," explained Meyer. Gaining motivation following the 2023/24 football season, Meyer recommends this book to football fans hoping to peak into the window behind the scenes of the popular sport.

"I love doing the film festival... I think there's something so special about sitting in a room with other people watching a film... I live for moments of reactions," she said.

Making prints was fun new art adventure

By Joe Vyvial
Castleton Spartan

When I was done with my project, "linoleum block print edition," for my printmaking class, I decided to do one more, because I had some spare time, and I really enjoyed the process.

This time, I tried a little different approach. Instead of coming up with an idea or sketch that I would then carve and print, I made this one based on a photo – a photo of a dog.

I did some editing on it, using Photoshop, to make it easier for me to carve it later. I also split the photo into a range of five colors only. Then, I went on to the actual carving and printing.

The carving is the most time-consuming part. It's very enjoyable though, especially when you are getting towards the end. And then, when you do your proof print

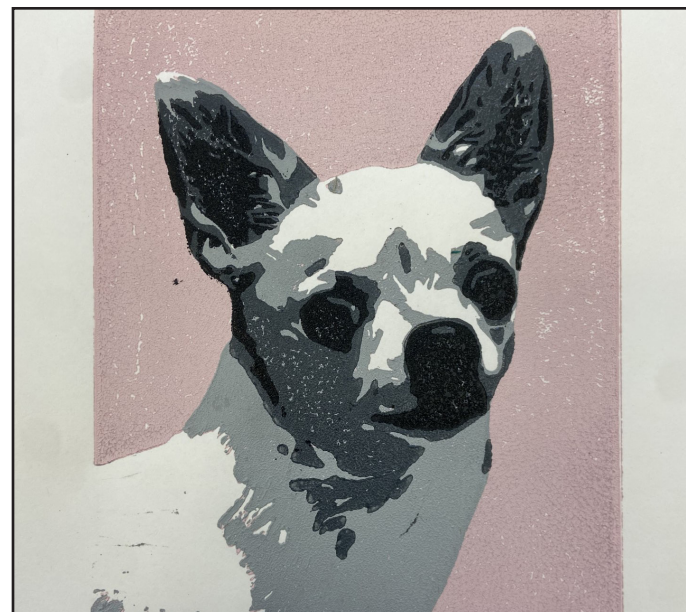
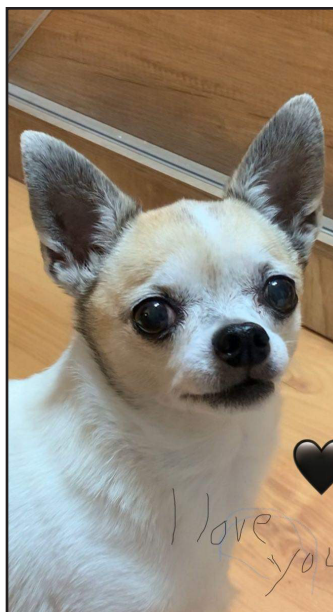
and see it all came out the way you anticipated, it is very satisfying to see.

And when you are able to do multiple clean prints, it gets even more satisfying to see them all spread out next to each other.

I ended up doing an edition of six prints. And overall, I'm very happy with how they came out, but there is always a room for improvement.

It could be cleaner and more precise. At the same time, those imperfections, the misplacement of layers, texture etc. are what makes it a print. You can see the actual work behind it.

Prints like these are great for presents. You can share your original work with multiple people. That is what I really like about them. I'm looking forward to doing more.



CURTESY OF JOE VYVIAL

Joe Vyvial replicates a dog photo using a mixture of printmaking techniques and Photoshop.

'She Kills Monsters' slays

By Camille Jackson
Castleton Spartan

Casella was draped in rainbow lights Friday, March 22 as the audience silently filtered in gulp down the carefully prepared stage. To the far-left stood a dresser with clothes frothing out the drawers; mimicking the pigsty state of many teenage bedrooms. The main stage was bordered by looming, cream-colored walls that incorporated varying, blocked levels, giving depth and interest to the incoming story.

As the lights dimmed, a powerful, narrating voice began, "In a time before Facebook..." taking the audience back to 1995. VTSU Castleton's Fine and Performing Art's She Kills Monsters was a departure from renditions of 1950's-style performances, seen in Silent Sky and the It Girl. The contemporary feel of the play certainly drew in audience members and the fantasy-esque feel was immediately present as the story's narrator stepped on the stage dressed as a wizard.

"I think it was a very nice change to go from normal, typical leaning events to a more fun event for people's enjoyment," commented Senior Christopher Kerven.

The overarching narrative of the play focused on the relationship between two estranged sisters, physically and emotionally. After a tragedy strikes the family, the sisters embark on a journey to redefine their relationship as they discover new dimensions of each other's life.

Central to the play was the nature of the journey; through the game Dungeons and Dragons (D&D). While certainly, many audience members were aware of the game, those who were not were quickly introduced to the details and connotations of the game through the dynamic relationship between Agnes, the older sister and protagonist, and Chucky, a friend of Tilly (Agne's sister) and "Dungeon Master."

Through Tilly's "Homespun" manual of a D&D game, Agnes discovers the intricacies of Tilly's social, romantic, and emotional life. Underpinning the story were



MARTIN VAN BUREN

On March 21, 22, and 24, the spring play "She Kills Monsters" wowed audiences with its D&D-centered plot.

the challenges faced by those living outside the social status quo, manifested in Tilly's character, and reflected in her "nerd" social status and sexual identity.

As the play developed, the audience was introduced to characters in a comedic manner, relieving the tension between the purpose of the journey and the setting of D&D. These comedic undertones persisted, incorporating contemporary issues that allowed the audience to be drawn into the context of the play.

"Are you good evil...?" asked the character Lilith.

"I'm a democrat" responded Agnes, earning a laugh from the crowd.

"Some parts were quite funny, I chuckled," recounted Senior Christian Meyer.

The play certainly showed off the talent of VTSU Castleton as intricate masks, costumes, and

props allowed the audience to fully immerse within the imagination of D&D.

While the play was punctuated with carefully choreographed fight scenes, the crux and purpose of the D&D game was revealed as an escape from the confines of reality. The ability to transform reality into a world of heroes, heroines, villains, and monsters through imagination removes limitations. Indeed, while physically paralyzed from the waist, the character Kelly was able to move freely within the unrestricted expanse of imagination as a Fae character, Kaliopé.

As the curtains drew to a close, the audience was left with the resounding message that life is but a series of stories created through experience. In this sense, life continues through storytelling, as Agnes uncovered through her expedition to connect with her sister.

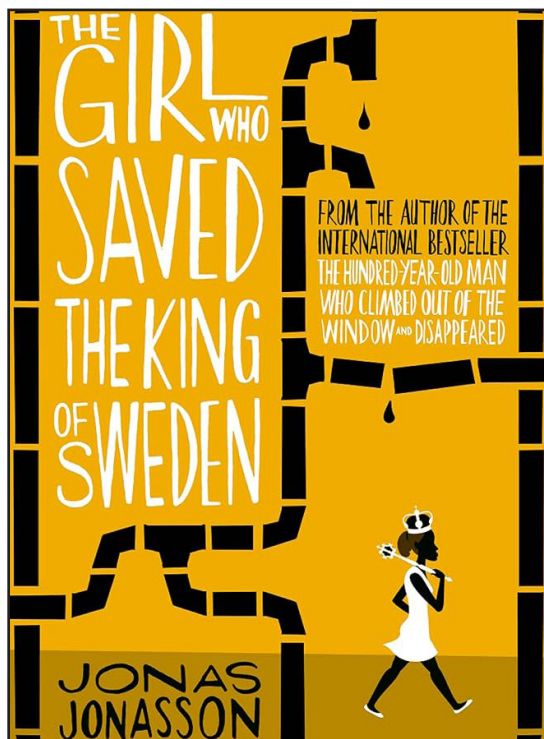
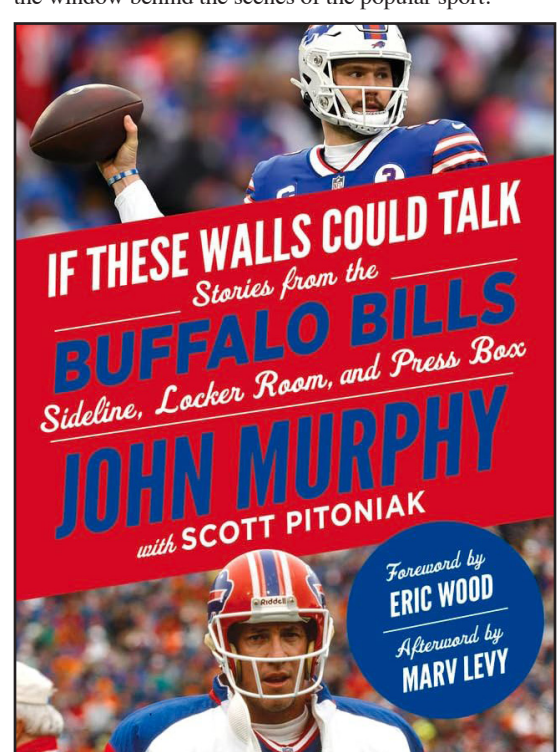


Book of the Fortnight

By Camille Jackson
Castleton Spartan

"If These Walls Could Talk" Staunch Buffalo Bills fan, Christian Meyer puts forth this book for football fans, "I read it because I wanted to hear more about what goes on in the locker room, what the payers talk about, kind of like a behind the scenes type of deal."

While struggling to finish the book amidst schoolwork and professional commitments, "I was very interested in it and I wish I would read more," explained Meyer. Gaining motivation following the 2023/24 football season, Meyer recommends this book to football fans hoping to peak into the window behind the scenes of the popular sport.



"The Girl who Saved the King of Sweden" "Fast, refreshing, highly unlikely, and very funny," recalled Martyn Jackson. This fictitious novel is loosely based on the six missiles built in South Africa during the 1980s, focusing on the seventh that was largely forgotten.

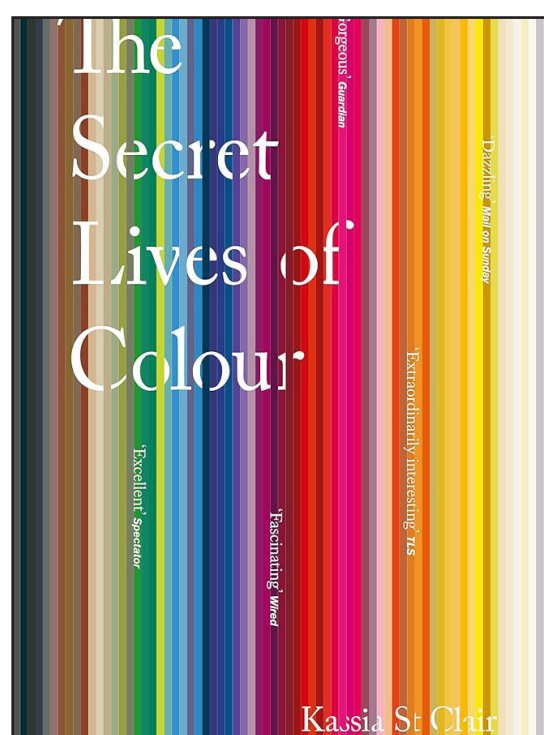
"How he compresses love, luck, and maths into a book of the oddest characters and makes one laugh out funny is amazing."

While the premise of the book is certainly serious, the ability to garner laughs from the reader is an impressive feat and points to this book as a must-read for those who enjoyed Jonasson's first book, "The 100 Year Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared."

"The Secret Lives of Color" Recommended by Spartan editor Pearl Bellomo, she describes this non-fiction as a "perfect introduction to anyone interested in art history." St. Clair summarizes a variety of colors with interesting backstories, either with how it was created or used during a particular time.

"For nerds like me who zone out at paint swatches in Home Depot, you'll love it." Bellomo also talked about the visual appeal of the book, which depicts the colors themselves on the edge of the pages, making the book just as pleasant to look at as it is to read.

"St. Clair also happens to be a journalist and editor-which makes me want to see more of her work."



SGA members attend retreat on Lake George

Adam Shard
Castleton Spartan

The Student Government Association of VTSU Castleton recently held its annual retreat to the Sagamore Hotel on Lake George.

During the three-day retreat, students from the Congress, Court, and Campus Activities Board could bond, go to the local restaurants and an arcade and sit in on their peers' presentations.

"I learned about being more open to people and maintaining a professional manner," said general CAB member Phillip Malazarte, when asked about the benefits of the retreat.

Others from Congress, CAB, and Court also shared what they learned on the retreat.

"I learned some important stuff about keeping commitment from Matt Patry, and more about leadership styles from Thomas Kehoe, and more about appreciating others in general," said Zack Durr, the treasurer for SGA.

Pearl Bellomo, a delegate, talked about one of the presentations that stuck out to her.

"Matt Patry had a great presentation about teamwork and delegating work to others for their improvement as a leader rather than taking all of the work for themselves," she said.

One of the many presentations during the retreat was one about the upcoming SGA elections and how it will be run this year due to the merger. There is a new constitution in the works and many of the folks on SGA didn't know that much about it. Luckily, one of the presentations brought it up and discussed it in a more down-to-earth but professional way.

"I learned more about the structure of the new VTSU SGA constitution," said Kehoe after the ending of the presentation on the new constitution.

There weren't just presentations, and workshops, however. There was also time for bonding and connecting with other branch-

es of the student government.

While interviewing some of the members of SGA, many brought up again and again that they all had a blast hanging out with their fellow SGA members and growing a stronger bond with their friends.

"The best part of the retreat was hanging out with all the SGA members and having a blast," said Thomas Kehoe, the vice president of CAB.

One of the last questions asked to the SGA members was what would you want the general VTSU Castleton community to know about the retreat, and how would you promote it if someone was skeptical about going on it if they were from Congress, court, or CAB?

"What I want the people to know is, yes it's fun, but we do go through a lot of training. As for people who are skeptical of going, there's a lot of work but there are fun aspects of it too," Malazarte said.



COURTESY ADAM SHARD

Members of the VTSU Castleton Student Government Association pose for a picture at the Sagamore Resort on Lake George in March. The group was there for a working retreat.

Trials: Letters:

Continued from page 3

Akane study abroad piece: I understood that living in a foreign country would be challenging. I should have been prepared to face some difficult situations. However, it has been so much harder than I expected, and sometimes I was depressed.

Trying something new does not always make me feel excited.

I have gone through many hardships since I came here. I still feel uneasy and get nervous almost every day; especially, before going to a class. I sometimes still think "What if I cannot catch what the other person says in the class?" and "What if I cannot make myself understood in English well?"

Also, in the past, I thought "I want to feel more comfortable without feeling uneasy every day" and "I wish I could flee to Japan."

Sometimes, I lose confidence and self-esteem and I am frustrated with myself. One day, I totally forgot that I came here to become independent while experiencing tough situations. I was just mad at myself for feeling dark emotions and I accused myself of being anxious.

However, I remembered that I felt uneasy because I had jumped into new environment and tried new things, which was natural. In other words, I realized that the anxiety that I was feeling was proof that I am trying new things. If I was not feeling anxiety, that would mean that I was trying nothing. Also, I was frustrated because I always had worries, but I did not have to be angry at myself. Rather, I came to think that I may be proud of myself since I am following my belief that trying new things is important.

The experience of accomplishing something while having worries will provide confidence with you, and you will feel a sense of accomplishment.

Every tiny thing that I easily did back in my country, including talking to someone and going somewhere by train, became a little challenging after I came here. For example, in Japan, I was on a train alone without any anxieties. However, when I visited New York City for the first time and took a train, I thought "What if I encounter a weird person on the train?"

"What if I catch a wrong train?" and "Can I really reach the destination by myself?"

Although I had those worries, arriving at the destination by myself gave me confidence. I felt a sense of accomplishment.

By trying something new, I am choosing a path that requires me to have more courage and have worries, but these help me grow as a person. That is why I hope that a lot of people try new things. If you are a person who is trying something new and facing some difficulties, you do not have to be disappointed at yourself.

Rather you should be proud of yourself.

Moreover, after going out of your comfort zone and overcoming the worries, you will gain confidence and be able to mature and to expand your world.



St. Patrick's Day in Ireland provided a mix of music, dancing and drinking for VTSU Castleton student Jess Emery and friends.

Continued from page 3

There were moments at that first pub where me and one of the 12 girls that I had met a mere 12 hours ago would grab ahold of each other and laugh knowing how lucky we were to find ourselves in this tiny back-alley pub listening to beautiful music on a beautiful day in a beautiful country.

The band wrapped up and it was time to make our way to the next pub.

The next place was called The Dirty Onion.

The outdoor venue was packed and one of the first songs we heard as we arrived was "Stick Season" by Noah Kahan, a famous Vermont raised artist, and one of the lyrics is "and I love Vermont but it's the season of the sticks."

We felt elated hearing everyone sing about our little state in a country where I would argue that most couldn't point it out on a map.

We danced more and more and sang songs like "Valerie" by Amy Winehouse, and "I Will Wait" by Mumford and Sons.

We met strangers from around the globe who were also there for the holiday along with locals who expressed their excitement for us and reassured us that Belfast was the perfect place to be.

Again, I was overwhelmed with the understanding that I will never be this young in a place like this with people and music like that.

A piece of my heart (along with two-thirds of my spilled Guinness) forever lies in The Dirty Onion.

After some much-needed dinner, we landed at the last pub of the night.

Sya and I knew we had to leave for the airport at 2:30 a.m. and it was about 9:30 by the time we got to the last pub.

There was no live band, but we met more amazing people, including several that also had the brilliant idea of buying their shirts from the children's section of the souvenir shop.

With our travel day looming over our heads, Sya and I decided to head back to the hotel early to hopefully catch a couple hours of rest before we had to take for the airport.

It was only about 11 p.m., but we had been drinking for a solid 12 hours.

It was time to go.

The next day was hellish to the say the least.

By some miracle, we found the only bus leaving for the airport at such an insane hour and piled in with a bunch of other drunken 20-something year old's.

Our flight was delayed (of course) but Sya and I were quite entertained by the two drunk old men sitting across from us. They would giggle and share a look and we'd hear the glass bottles rattling in their bag.

They would then each look at us knowingly because we were clearly in the same boat.

Delusional and exhausted, Sya and I were cracking up about everything.

Those days in Belfast I will remember forever, where we basked in our youth and sang along to the fiddle.

VTSU Castleton in pictures



AVERY BOUCHARD, COURTESY OF SAM DAVIS-BOYD

Seminary Street got buried in snow on March 23, three days after the first day of spring, top. Jane Kierstein teaches a cooking lesson during One Day University on March 24, left. Students hosted a Trans Day of Visibility March on its recognized day, March 31, right.

The P.E. class leaving students emotional

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Professor Andy Weinberg teaches the Adaptive Physical Education class at Vermont State University Castleton in ways that change lives forever.

Every Thursday from 11 a.m. to noon, the Glenbrook Gym is filled with the smiles of Castleton students and kids from various local schools.

Weinberg agreed to teach the adapted P.E. class 14 years ago, but he said he knew he needed to do something different about how to teach interacting with kids who have special needs.

"I can tell students about how to interact with kids who have disabilities, but they need the chance to learn physically," Weinberg said.

This semester, the course is filled with 18 Castleton students and 18 kids with various learning and physical challenges. Not only does this class give VTSU students a chance to understand how to teach different learning styles, but it also gives these wonderful young kids the experience of getting out of their school for an hour to interact with a larger population than they do on a day-to-day basis.

Phill Kenne, father of Noah Mallette, a participant in the program, said Noah has been a part of the learning program for four years.

"This is the only thing that Noah looks forward to every week and he loves the college students," he said. "If Noah got to choose, he would come five days a week all year round."

The connections made through this program are ones Noah will never forget, Kenne said. He spoke of a bond Noah had made with a previous student, Amir AlKassir, from the class of three years ago.

Noah saw AlKassir as his best friend and to this day still talks about him while looking at pictures of the two of them from the class, Keene said.

During the recent class in the gym, Noah and one of the VTSU students from the class ran over to Keene to show him the new handshake they just devised. This automatically brought a smile to Keene's face.

"I can't express how well this course has helped Noah," Kenne said.

He went on to explain the excitement that lights up Noah's face whenever he walks into the gym, and he is instantly greeted by all the students who shout his name while running up to say hello.

Very few groups around the area do activities like this, allowing special needs students to maintain independence while interacting with the college students, Kenne said.

Laughter and squeals filled the gym during the parachute and scooters class, organized by Castleton students Blake Riche and Alex Carney. As all students took turns rushing under the dome shaped fabric to grab a sports ball, smiles were everywhere.

Max Fair, a junior at VTSU Castleton who is currently taking the class, shared its impact on him.

"I didn't know if P.E. was really what I wanted to do, but I forgot that this was a big part of being a teacher in this field, and having the

ability to include everyone brings me so much happiness," Fair said.

Fair was asked about his favorite part of the course. He then explained that the moment happened literally two minutes before being asked. You could see the passion and pride fill his eyes while describing the way he felt after finally getting Tae-Shaun (one of the participants) to fully say Fair's name and recognize who he was.

VTSU student Alex Carney shared a story that will stay with her forever.

Carney said she met a student from the class named Kaleb, who was shy initially. While back at his grade school, the week after Carney's and Kaleb's first interaction, however, he asked for "Alex from

Castleton" for the rest of the week.

Kaleb insisted on taking a picture with Carney the next Thursday before he left. The joy that it brought to Carney was indescribable, she said.

Even just sitting in the gym for 15 minutes, you can see the happiness this course brings to both sides of those involved. With the chicken dance soundtrack in the background and college students surrounding her and cheering her on, participant Emma showed off her incredible dance moves. This interaction was massive for Emma who initially had some pretty shy interactions.

At the end of class, the whole group gathers in a circle to recap the hour of activity. Weinberg con-

gratulated everyone and reassured them about next Thursday's class before everyone said their goodbye before departing.

Before walking out, one little girl was overheard talking to her mentor and proudly explaining everything she did in today's class, all while projecting the biggest smile.

It's moments like this that motivate Weinberg to continue teaching this class.

"As a professor, being able to break down stereotypes and give everyone an opportunity to participate it's an amazing experience," he said.



A fun activity the students and participants played in Andy Weinberg's adaptive P.E. class, left; Noah Mallette, right, shows off a cool handshake he came up with, right.

Women's lacrosse dominates in 'Morgan's Message'



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Castleton women's lacrosse held their annual "Morgan's message" game with pre-game festivities to raise awareness for mental health.

By Carly Centeno
Castleton Spartan

On Saturday, March 30, Castleton women's lacrosse team hosted a memorial game for the cause Morgan's Message.

Morgan's message is an organization fueled by sharing stories and resources to strengthen student-athlete mental health.

Students can become ambassadors for Morgan's Message and help plan events such as memorial games, team community service efforts, and creating Morgan's Message t-shirts for their team.

Gretel Seaman and Annie Duprey are the current ambassadors for the women's lacrosse team. Seaman is a regular ambassador and Duprey is currently an at-large ambassador.

"Being an ambassador has been a great opportunity for both this campus and me," Seaman said.

They focus on making sure fellow athletes know they have somewhere to go with resources if they are struggling, which can be often ignored in the sports community.

Morgan's message was started due to the tragic death of former Duke athlete Morgan Rodgers

from Virginia, who passed due to suicide July 11, 2019. Her parents started this foundation to spread her story and give the chance for fellow student-athletes to share their experiences with mental health.

"Morgan's Message provides resources, awareness, and lessons regarding mental health. As an ambassador, I get to take part in this through leadership," Seaman said.

Before the game, the announcer gave a small speech about the organization while also having a moment of silence for all the student-athletes who lost their fight against mental health. The girls all wore Morgan message shirts to show their support and advocate that it is ok to need help.

"I'm an at-large ambassador, which is like a step up from regular. I don't do too much different, I'm just involved more in Zooms with guest speakers, and I know a bunch of girls who go on to work for Morgan's Message after school," Duprey said.

They have 4,939 ambassadors on 1,661 high school and collegiate campuses spreading awareness. They are in 45 states in the United States as well as Canada, England, and Germany.

The parents of Morgan Rodgers, who began this organization, have made it their mission to help student-athletes realize it is ok to not be ok.

"It's mostly about bringing awareness and showing people it's ok to talk about it and mental health is a lot worse than many people think it is," Duprey said.

The memorial games are mainly to show support for the organization and spread the word. Outside of the gates, they had more ambassadors from other sports teams on campus to help answer questions students and parents may have about the organization and what you can do to help spread awareness.

"I have the chance to make an impact at Castleton by hosting meetings, dedication games and overall supporting the students who may be struggling," Seaman said.

The effort was perhaps inspiring for the team, because it went on to post its first win of the season following the ceremony beating Rhode Island College 14-6.

The team was led by Gianna Geraci's four goals and goalie Liv Cormier got her first win.

Men's and women's lacrosse in action



AVERY BOUCHARD AND COURTNEY SPAULDING

Spartan photographers catching some photos of both mens and womens lacrosse

Softball hitting it's stride to start the season



Alexis Rogers winds up for a pitch, left; Brianna Belisle takes a hack at the ball, right.



CASTLETON SPORTS

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

In the sunny state of South Carolina, the Castleton softball team kicked off its season with a hot start going 5-3 during its trip to the south.

"We were able to get off to a good start on our spring trip, and that gives us a gauge of where we are early," said head coach Eric Ramey.

The Spartans kicked off their season rattling off five wins in their first six games during their trip down the coast. First, the team posted an impressive 8-2 win against Stevenson then followed it up with a 4-3 win against Notre Dame, Maryland.

Castleton followed it up the next day dropping one game to Thiel, but then came out on top against Mount Aloysius 4-2. In the final two days of the trip the team got two more wins against SUNY Delhi and University of Mount Saint Vincent before dropping their last two games to Minnesota Morris and SUNY Poly.

"So far, we've had great success in competing in all games until the end. We don't give up throughout the whole game no matter who our opponent. Going forward, we need to focus on recovery for our bodies outside of softball, but during games we need to focus on execution of key plays as well as tactically understanding our opponents," said junior Jess Heinrichs.

For the remainder of the season, the Spartans have 16 of their last 26 games against Little East Conference opponents. A majority of the games will be at Spartan Field, however, that is if the weather allows for it after the team had what was supposed to be their home opener canceled due to weather.

"Moving forward, hopefully the weather will cooperate for us so we can find some consistency in our game schedule. As the weather warms up, hopefully our bats will as well. Keys for us are to pitch well and keep things simple defensively and get some timely hits, but most importantly we need to stay healthy," Ramey said.

Castleton has yet to hit a home-run this season but has batted in 42 runs on 72 hits as a team while averaging a .237 batting average on the way to a 6-6 record.

The Spartans last match up was against #19 ranked RPI in a double header where the team lost 5-0 and 3-0.

"Thursday's games (against R.P.I) were great for us as a team, playing ranked teams always gives us a reason to play as one unit and use each other. Holding a team that is nationally ranked to 3 runs both games was huge for us and allowed our pitchers to see success in the circle. To find this success the rest of the season we need to trust each other and continue to hold each other accountable throughout the season," said senior Madison Hanna.

Wrestling season breaks records

By Justin Gitto
Castleton Spartan

Another season of Castleton wrestling is in the books, and this year's team definitely made it one for the record books.

The team won every single tournament it entered in the regular season, they placed third in the region — bringing six wrestlers to nationals — and capped off the season by ranking 12th in the nation — a program record.

"Wow, what a season. So many firsts for this team... We have a lot to be proud about," said head coach Scott Legacy.

The 12th place finish is a testament to the team's hard work, but they are far from finished.

"Placing 12th feels like we accomplished a lot. We were proud to hear our name in the Lacrosse Center — Vermont State University Castleton," Legacy said. "We also fell a bit short. Three wins in the blood round puts us in the top-five team conversation. Something we felt we could have done," Legacy added.

Senior Sampson Wilkins shares his coach's sentiment.

"Castleton wrestling has been climbing the ranks and is still not satisfied! It's truly amazing to see the hard work my brothers and I put in day in and day out pay off," Wilkins said.

Wilkins had a very special experience at the nationals when he cemented himself as an All-American, but it's a feat that he isn't satisfied with.

"I'm not gonna lie, it's absolutely an honor and all but like I said, this team is still hungry, and I believe many of us are just

scratching the surface of what we're capable of," Wilkins said.

Wilkins earned his way into nationals last year too, but fell just short of All-American status.

This year he made it his goal to make it farther.

"Sampson was on a mission the day after the NCAA last year. He came up just a match short of being an All-American. He trained all summer and locked in. I know

he sacrificed in his personal life to get to the level he was at," Legacy said.

As a senior, Wilkins has been grappling with the possibility of taking a fifth year to keep wrestling.

"It's been a bit of a process considering using my fifth year. I had to evaluate my goals and how doing so could help me accomplish them. In the end I plan to return

for one more run and embrace one more year to represent Castleton as a Spartan," Wilkins said.

Sophomore Gavin Bradley was also named an All-American, making the duo just the second and third Spartans to earn the title after James Rodriguez did it both of the last two years.

"Gavin lives the sport. He eats, sleeps and drinks the sport 24/7," Legacy said. We were actually a

bit relieved and happy at the same time he accomplished part of his goal. His persistence and hard work paid off," Legacy added.

Bradley shares Wilkins' thoughts regarding the All-American status.

"It just feels like another thing to me. I just want to honor God and my support group," Bradley said. "Anytime that I am wrestling, I enjoy life even more. It feels great

to be a part of my team, and I really appreciate my teammates and coaches," Bradley added.

To move up the national rankings, you have to put in effort even once the season's over, and that's exactly what the Spartans are up to now.

"Over 50 percent of the team has gotten back into their routine and are training for next year," Legacy said.



Sampson Wilkins sizes up his opponent, left; Gavin Bradley wrestles an opponent to the mat, right.



@CASTLETON_WRESTLING

Baseball team looking to turn things around

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

In a season that started down south, the Castleton baseball team has consistently struggled this season sitting with a 2-17 record at just about the halfway point of the season.

However, only four of those games have been Little East Conference match ups.

As the Spartans head into the second half of the season they found themselves in a much different position as they were just a season ago. Last season at this point, Castleton sat at 7-10 but with a much different schedule of match ups.

"We are making progress and have had and will continue to play a very demanding schedule. It has been challenging for sure this season as we have been so close to winning in so many games. We have a great group of young men, and we continue to believe in each other," said head coach Ted Shipley. "Our goals and plans are for us to continue to improve daily so that we are playing our best individually and collectively when we enter the conference tournament."

Four of the Spartans losses this season have been decided by one run and if those games had gone the other way, they would be sitting eerily similar to last season.

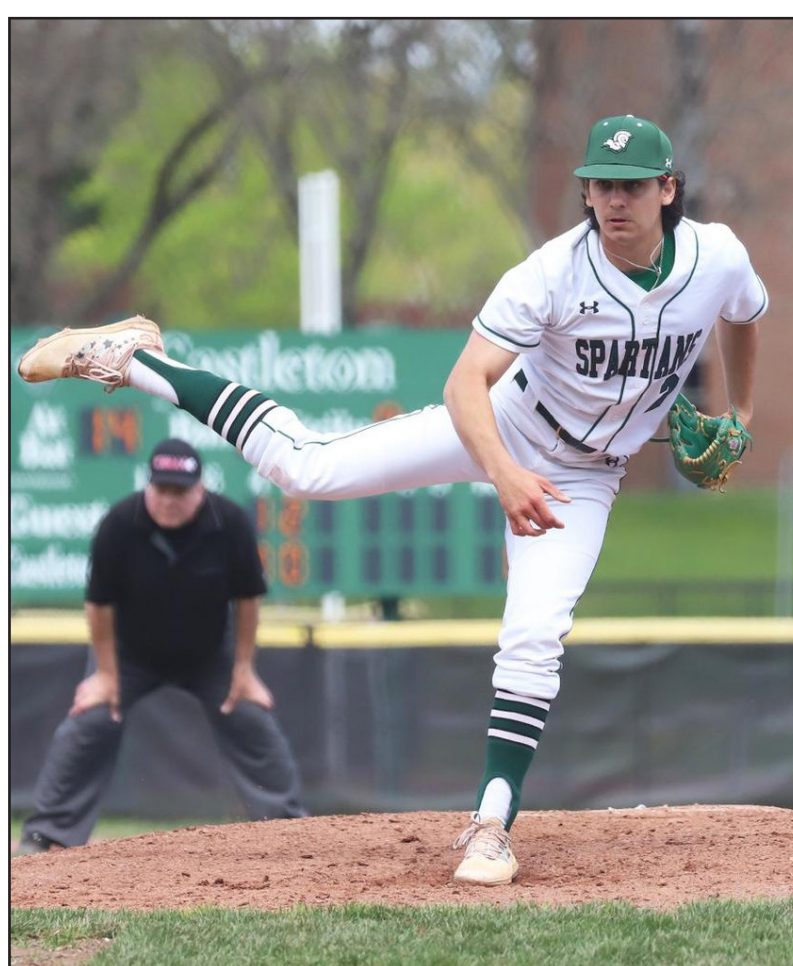
"Moving forward, the team needs to put everything together in every game. Some games our pitching and defense are firing but our hitters are struggling, while other games our hitters and pitchers are playing well but we are struggling on defense," said junior Dylan Hedler. "I believe the bond the team has is so much better than years past. We are becoming one unit and supporting each other more and more each game and becoming a family."

Looking ahead, the team has roughly two weeks before they begin to get into the bulk of the conference play as the last 11 games of the season are all LEC games.

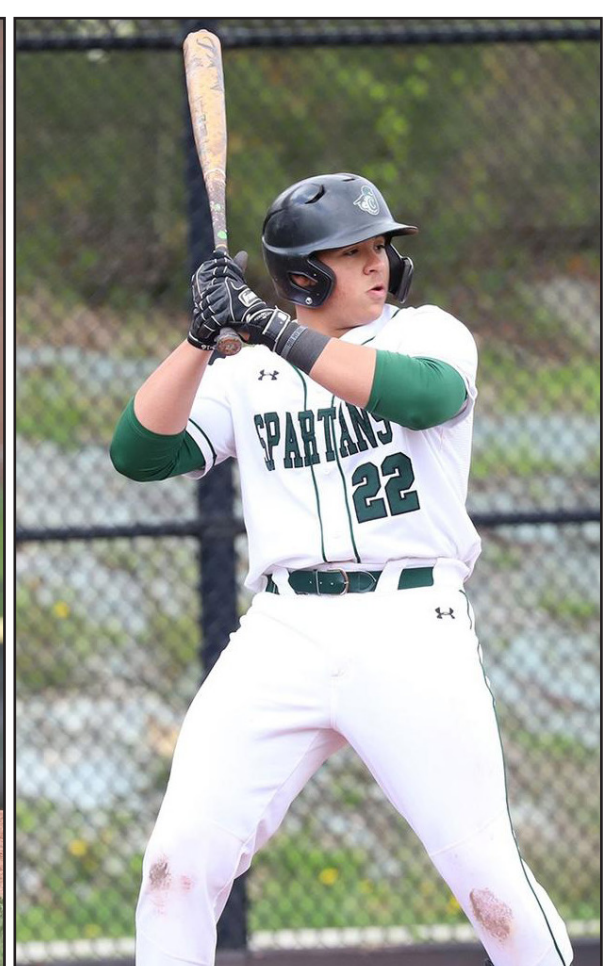
"Before getting into conference play, we just need to get better defensively as a team and do the small things right. Not help the other team and make it easy for them. Also, build our confidence as a team," said junior Brandon Ramirez.

In the latest game, the Spartans faced off against University Massachusetts Boston in a LEC double header March 30 in which they fell 10-8 in the first game and 12-0 in the second game to move to 2-17.

Over the course of the season, although the win column has not been filled up, individual players have hit milestones such as Hunter Perkins collecting his 100th career hit.



Joseph Voli throws a pitch in a recent game, left; Brandon Ramirez stands in the box, right.



CASTLETON SPORTS