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Castleton, Vermont

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SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

The grief after losing Honoree

Former dean's husband speaks out about his loss, and community

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

Six months ago, former Castleton University Dean Honoree Fleming was fatally shot on the D&H Rail Trail in Castleton, Vt., and the killer has yet to be identified.

Despite several tips, a witness sketch of the suspect, and a \$25,000 reward from a resident and the town for information leading to arrest and conviction, it's now a "cold case," according to the town's police chief.

"If you know anything about Honoree, you will know that she was a beloved woman on campus. She just had a towering intelligence. She was compassionate, she was self-effacing, she was devoted to our family," said Fleming's husband and Castleton resident Ron Powers.

In the months since her death, Powers said he has experienced significant depression and health decline.

"I never knew there were levels of depression this deep," he said. "After she was killed, I was practically inert for four or five weeks. When I started to move again, I realized that I had aged about 10 years. No balance, short term memory loss, general deterioration of my muscles. That was when I became almost a different person," he said.

He recalled Oct. 5., their 43rd anniversary, when it had hap-



Honoree Fleming with her son Dean, left, and her husband Ron Powers, right.

pened. "Honoree and I walked that trail maybe a thousand times, and on October 5, which was our anniversary day, and I forgot. Late in the afternoon she said 'I'm going for a walk.' That was the last I saw of her."

Powers believes that the event was "incredibly random," and that

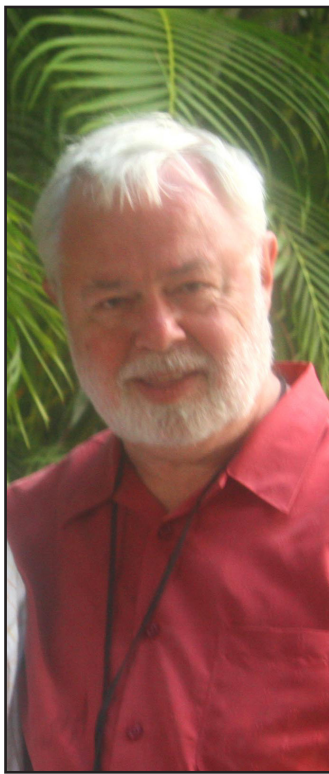
the killer was in a psychotic state.

"It's like this disease has stalked me my entire life," he said, referring to sons Dean and Kevin's battle with schizophrenia, until Kevin took his own life. Personal hardship has prompted Powers' dedication to raising serious mental illness (SMI) awareness.

He deep-dives into the topic in

his 2017 bestselling book "No One Cares About Crazy People," which is being made into a documentary film directed by Gail Freedman.

He says that SMI only affects a small percent of the population but has a "widening cone" to the victim, family, friends, social services, law enforcement, and more, making it an issue nationwide.



COURTESY OF GAIL FREEDMAN

"I'm not trying to be Mr. Compassion here, but Honoree is dead. But I do hope they find him, so he won't harm anybody else," he said.

Powers said Castleton was vital to him in the aftermath of the event; with people picking up checks at Birdseye, sending sympathy cards and emails, even help-

ing him up when he's fallen down on the sidewalk.

He also talked about the brave act of a man cradling Honoree just moments after she was shot.

"It was a man, I still don't know who he was, but he came along not long after the shooting happened. He saw Honoree lying there and cradled her while someone else was calling for emergency. I'm eternally grateful to this man because I think it was an incredible act of compassion and courage," he said.

Powers describes Castleton as "a bunch of guardian angels" and gives his sincerest thanks.

Police Chief Peter Mantello discussed the stagnated case at the Castleton Select Board meeting on March 25, calling it a "cold case" with few leads.

"It's been frustrating. A lot of people ask, and I don't know what to tell them, except there is still somebody assigned to it still. They've exhausted tips from the reward, and not that many came in. We have to make a decision how long we want to keep that reward out," he said.

In the same meeting, Brown's Auto Salvage general manager Matt Brown was approved by the board to the Rail Trail Council, a group formed through the Vermont Agency for Transportation. He also announced tentative place to dedicate the portion of the Rail Trail to Fleming with a plaque or memorial of some type.

Traci Molloy's powerful art back on campus

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

In a powerful gathering at Casella Theater, Vermont State University Castleton hosted a panel on April 16, led by Traci Molloy, the artist behind the evocative "Against my Will" art projects.

"Art is its language. You can see it and feel it. When you're a baby, you learn through the language of the arts before we can even speak it," Molloy said to the audience.

Molloy's work, which lines the campus walkways with shadowed headshots of anonymous VTSU Castleton sexual assault survivors, set the stage for a candid discussion on the prevalence and response to sexual assault.

The atmosphere was heavy with both sorrow and determination as attendees listened to Molloy's introduction.

She set the scene with a quick activity to show the crazy statistics of sexual assault. Molloy made all the women in the audience stand and count off by fours. She then made everyone but the groups of ones sit down.

"One out of every four women will experience some sort of sexual assault in their lifetime," Molloy said.

She then did the same for men, saying statistics show one out of every seven men will experience sexual assault. As her words settled in, the faces in the audience reflected a mixture of empathy, disbelief, and resolve.

The panel was composed of students, professors and specialists. It included art professor Oliver Schemm, sociology professor Linda Olson, two current students, an alumnus and a sexual assault specialist, who stood as a collective voice for the silenced survivors.

However, the discussion quickly turned somber as the panelists addressed the inadequacies in the university's response to sexual assault cases.

"The school has done a very poor job of handling things. You had to go through five or six clicks from the home page to report a



AVERY BOUCHARD

Banners with anonymous VTSU sexual assault survivors line the campus walkways.

sexual assault," said a student panelist named Izzy, who didn't share her last name. "We met with the head of Public Safety and we were dismissed, they did not care. The individual professors are supportive, but the higher-ups are not."

Keith Molinari, the head of Public Safety at VTSU Castleton, was asked if he wanted to react to Izzy's comment from the panel. He responded via email that he appreciated the Spartan's effort to seek a comment from him, but he chose not to.

Olson also commented at the panel on her thoughts of the university's actions towards sexual violence cases.

"I think we're going backward. It's going to harm survivors on this campus. There's a culture of silence. I was living in it for decades. The university is not listening to those who are survivors and who know a lot about this topic. We need to hear from students on what's important to support survivors," Olson said.

Izzy went on to talk about,

how now with the merging into Vermont State University, sexual assault cases are easier to fall through the cracks.

The panelists were painting a grim picture of systemic failures. Their words were not merely criticisms; they were pleas for change, a demand for institutions to do better by survivors.

One of the current students on the panel, bravely vocalized her discomfort with the event's mandatory attendance for some, expressing that survivors should not be subjected to an audience of disinterested students. Her sentiment resonated with many, which sparked a wave of introspection among the attendees.

"Making this a Soundings event takes away comfort. It doesn't mean anything to me if I see football players show up because their coach told them to go," Izzy said.

Molloy responded with understanding, but also offered a different viewpoint on the situation.

"There are people here that



MADDIE LINDGREN

Tracy Molloy's "Against my Will" panel engages with the audience.

wouldn't usually come, but we need to reel people in. We have to have shifts occur," she said.

Throughout the rest of the panel, the shadows of anonymity cast by Molloy's art project served as a reminder of the countless untold stories of survival and resilience. Each face, though obscured, carried the weight of trauma and the courage to stand in solidarity with fellow survivors.

As the panel drew to a close, there was a sense of urgency in the air—a call to action to dismantle the structures that are around sexual violence and to create a campus culture that prioritizes safety, support, and justice.

The echoes of the panel discussion lingered long after the last person had left Casella Theater, serving as a stark reminder that the fight against sexual assault is far from over.

But amidst the frustration, there is always a glimmer of hope—a belief that by shining a light on the shadows of silence, real change can be ignited, and survivors can find the healing and justice they deserve.

SGA election results

Student Government Association Officers

- President: Thomas Kehoe
- Executive Vice President: Zack Durr
- Secretary of Academics: Nathan Pare
- Secretary of Administration: Thomas Harris
- Secretary of Campus Activities: Aurelia Leerkes
- Secretary of Community Relations: Vidur Katyal
- Secretary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Ashlesha Mainali
- Secretary of Sustainability: Sammie Brayton
- Secretary of Wellness: Kayla Livingston
- Treasurer: Cale Santee
- Deputy Secretary of Campus Activities: Alex Kehoe
- Deputy Secretary of Community Relations: Kathryn Osburn
- Clerk: Sharon Asolmia Aganah
- Senator: Jason Musal
- Senator: Emily Macias
- Delegate: Erin Forkin
- Delegate: Carter Mackey
- Delegate: McKenna Castor
- Delegate: Wayne Alexander
- Chair of Advertising: Kayley Thibodeau

Senior Class Officers:

- President: Zack Durr
- Vice President: Thomas Harris
- Treasurer: Thomas Kehoe
- Secretary: Ashlesha Mainali

Are these unwelcomed signs?

Jesus, show me a sign, but not that one. I like to know where I am going in life. Both physically and mentally. And when I am feeling lost, I look around hoping that a sign will pop up.

I say this because I was driving back to campus the other day and I saw a sign, and let me tell you it was ugly. Maybe, if you are not oblivious, you saw them as well.

All over campus we have gained new informational signs pointing to various places on campus telling visitors and those who are directionally impaired how to get to places.

I am not sure who designed them, and I, quite frankly, am concerned. They lack any emotion to them. Stark white with black text is great for getting your point across, but it just reminds me of the generic “beer” cans.

And for those too young to have seen these cans, they were just white cans with beer printed on them.

No brand names, no ingredients.

Just “beer.”

And it tasted like swill.

Imagine if someone took a Natural Ice, warmed it up to about 80 degrees, then threw them in a paint shaker. Flat, skunky and overall just not pleasant.

That’s how I feel about the signs. Like someone went through the motions of making them, but did not put heart into it. Is this what our branding is going to look like? No character? Are we going to be an NPC of the college community? An AI version of what a college or university looks like?

Maybe this is the sign that I am looking for. Maybe this sign is showing me the exit and it is time to move on. I understand that things change. And as much as I fear change (especially nickels – they know what they did) it is time I embrace it and move on with my life.

Signs do not always appear the way that you want them to. But they are there to guide you to the next part of your journey. That’s the great thing about getting a sign. It is up to interpretation. One’s bleak and stark sign is another’s sign that is filled with hope and wonder.

As I start my post-Castleton journey, I will see a lot of signs that could guide me. Some that I will ignore, and others that will change my life.

I just pray that I will know the difference between the two.

Clearly, I am fine with receiving signs.

I just want them to be clear and aesthetically pleasing.

- Will Smith



JOE VYVIAL

Early college, Communications will keep me here

High school was never really my thing.

I come from a very small school with fewer than 60 kids in my graduating class of 2024. A lot of decisions went through my mind going into my senior year.

I was surrounded by the same people, annoyed with the same staff, and unimpressed with the lack of options.

That’s when I discovered early college, which was definitely one of the best decisions of my life.

Finally, I was in a place where I felt surrounded by the maturity I had been longing for, and I was given the chance to work toward my future at the same time. This

opportunity has been life-changing in so many ways, opening doors I never thought possible.

In my first semester being enrolled in early college at VTSU Castleton, I took multiple marketing courses because I had always thought that that was what I wanted to major in.

However, after disliking many of those courses, I realized a marketing major probably wasn’t for me.

When signing up for spring classes the next semester, I decided to opt for some courses that were mainly writing-focused, as I had always known I didn’t only love to write, but I was pretty good

at it too.

Enrolling at VTSU Castleton as an early college student, who is automatically an undeclared major, allowed me to get my trial-and-error major over with.

As someone always determined to continue the college experience at an out-of-state school, I am pleasantly surprised to announce that I have decided to stay at Castleton for the Fall semester of 2024.

Discovering my passion in journalism and the Communications department was a turning point for me. I am thrilled to continue at VTSU Castleton as a journalism and Communications

major, knowing that I would have been on the wrong path if not for this amazing experience.

I recommend that every senior struggling with their high school experience and unsure of what they want for their future, to participate in the early college program.

I have been exposed to so many amazing people, making connections with them that I already know will be nothing but supportive lights in my life.

- Gabby Blanchard



Gabby Blanchard

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online at
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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.

Solar eclipse impacted our animal neighbors too

Chances are you have heard about or even had the opportunity to observe the total eclipse that happened on April 8 this year.

I enjoyed watching the rare event from the safety of my eclipse glasses. It was incredible to see the entire sun become covered over by the moon and the Earth slowly disappear into a world of darkness.

The eclipse did not disappoint humans on Earth, as many individuals reported becoming quickly sleepy. Humans were not the only ones to be impacted by this rare event; animals across the globe were recorded acting extremely unusual during the eclipse as well.

The animals recorded included a wide diversity of pets, wildlife, and even livestock. In the Green Mountain State, a variety of livestock was recorded preparing for their night regiment once the eclipse started.

Chickens were reported running to the coops to stay together in their huddles. Cattle were also recorded walking into their pastures ready to rest up from the surprisingly quick day.

Other animals like pigs and sheep were also observed displaying the same type of behavior. Many people around the area stated that once the eclipse hit, many birds suddenly went quiet.

Though, for wildlife, the observations were very hard to record because there are so many different species, and the time to record is quite short.

When it came to pets many people did not notice too much of a difference in their animal companion’s behavior. Before the eclipse took place, some re-



The eclipse was memorable for humans across the region, but it also impacted the animals, sending some into hiding and silencing birds.

searchers suggested shutting off the lights during the total eclipse period to make the pet feel more relaxed.

Some pets like cats or dogs reacted with confusion and stress across the state and country. Some may have been so stressed that they started panting or pacing. However, experts from USA Today suggest that a lot of people’s

pets’ reactions resulted from the owner’s reactions to this extraordinary event, not the event itself.

I think it is extremely special that such phenomena can affect both humans and animals in unique ways. In my opinion, this experience shows us how amazing animal behavior is. In addition, how similar it is to human behavior.

This is just another connection between you and the world of animals that you share Earth with. We may be different physiologically, but we do share a lot of the same psychological behaviors with our animal neighbors!

- Gavin Bradley

My place within a man's world

By Courtney Spaulding
Castleton Spartan

I had just parked to put gas in my Audi. As I was pumping, this guy on the other side of the pump, under his breath said, "Who lets a woman drive a car like that?"

Another time, I had just pulled in to my father's auto shop and this guy pulls up, goes up to my brother and asks him "how much for the Audi?"

"That's not my car, that's my sister's," my brother replied. The guy looked surprised.

My whole life I have grown up around cars and worked on cars. So naturally, I grew up watching the Fast and Furious movies. My family has a auto shop right next to my house, so everyone would hang out there. For me, working on cars is an escape from reality, and I learn something new every time I pop a hood.

A couple years ago, I had a Mitsubishi Eclipse. I couldn't tell you how many times I took all the interior out and put it back, just because I was bored.

I had to rewire three radios into that car and one time put all new speakers in the doors.

Right now, I have a 2001 Audi TT Quattro with a 5-speed manual transmission.

I love driving stick. This car is small, so I do occasionally hit my head as I'm getting in or out. But I love the car.

Currently, I am taking out all the plastic interior panels to paint them from blue to black. There is just something about how when you make all the mods yourself, you feel very accomplished, even if it was a small one.

Attending car shows is one of the best ways to make friends. You will have people who have the same interests as you, and they can help you too.

There's this one car show where I feel accepted the most. It is called Eurobilt and is at the Rutland fairgrounds every August. It's more than just about showcasing cars; it's a community of welcoming and helpful individuals who make newcomers feel right at home. This show creates lasting friendships beyond just a love for four wheels—it's about building connections that revolve around a shared fascination with automotive craftsmanship.

Last year, this one guy had the same color car as mine and he noticed that in some spots the paint was peeling on my car. Later in the show he hands me a paper that had the color code for the paint.

Growing up in this male dominated hobby, it is challenging to keep up with all the knowledge and terminology of the car community. That's why having women in this community to look up to is so important.

Britney Force is the second female to win the Top Fuel Championship in 2017 and the first in 35 years. She also won the 2022 Top Fuel Championship.

Courtney Force was the first female to win the O'Reilly Auto Parts Winter Nationals, and she qualified in first place for that race.

I personally look up to Britney Force and Courtney Force the most because of the way they have paved for woman in racing.

Conversations with DJ Mo'rad



WEQX radio personality Jeff Mo'rad was interviewed via Zoom by the Intro to Media and Communication class.

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Jeff Mo'rad, a 17-year program director and on-air Host of WEQX's Jam N Toast, recently visited with a group of students

from a Communications class at Vermont State University Castleton.

Mo'rad, who told student he basically lives for radio and new music, joined a group of Intro to Media and Communications stu-

dents via Zoom from his Manchester office in an old Victorian house. And he explained that his job is more than playing music.

Listening to over 300 live bands each year, Mo'rad and the WEQX radio show staff are always seeking new bands to create long-term relationships with help build their career.

Mo'rad views music as a sentimental, emotional attachment.

"I love music because it can bring you anywhere at any time, and brings people together," Mo'rad said.

He was asked by a student to tell his favorite part of what he does.

"That's a hard question, because it's really everything put together. There's just something so satisfying about the full circle of a band's success," he said.

Mo'rad describes the full circle as the "we made it moment," when everyone in the crowd is singing lyrics word for word to one of the band's songs. He explained how this is what motivates him to continue to do what he does in finding bands, exposing them to his listeners and then having them play locally.

Mimi Brown is the owner of the almost 40-year-old WEQX radio station, whose now-deceased husband built it from scratch.

Although the band-searching, career-making and music-playing opportunities are great, Mo'rad said one of the best perks of the job are the specialized birthday meals made by Mimi Brown. Every time a member in the radio station has a birthday, Brown will make them whatever meal their heart desires.

Mo'rad's favorite is her Pizza Casserole.

"Oh yeah, and she makes a pretty mean fried chicken," Mo'rad said.

Mo'rad was asked for his "aha" moment from all the years of working in the WEQX radio station. He said that it had to be the time he met Diana Ross.

"I was working overnight in Denver, and got the opportunity to hang out backstage with Ross the whole night," Mo'rad said.

However, it doesn't stop there. The story gets better.

"The dangerous snowstorm that had come our way that night, led to Ross inviting all the crew members to stay at her hotel room until the storm passed over," he said.

Mo'rad also shared how an intended pop-in-and-out concert turned out to be the best of his life.

David Burns' American Utopia was playing on Mo'rads way home from a long day. He and his wife decided they would stay for a song or two, but soon decided to stay as the former Talking Heads leader wowed them in what he called the greatest concert he had ever seen.

Mo'rad also explained the concern about the declining interest in radio these days and tried hard to convince students radio is a viable, fun career.

"We welcome interns with open arms," Mo'rad said with a big smile.

But despite his love for radio, he told students he too was stuck at one point.

After Mo'rad found himself working at a job in Colorado that involved all talk and no music, he realized that he made a mistake and needed to stick with what he truly dreamed of.

"Follow your dreams and you will end up in the right place, even if it doesn't seem like it at the moment," Mo'rad said in an inspirational end his chat.

More than pizza for Elliot

By Malachi Smalls
Castleton Spartan

In Huden Dining Hall, there are multiple options to choose from. There's a main course each day, grilled food, sub line, salad and fruit bar – and last but not least – the Italian cuisine corner.

From pizza to pasta, bread sticks to garlic knots, there are a lot of different items to choose from.

During lunch at Huden, there are pizzas made with different bases and toppings, a mix and match of new things to try.

And the man behind it all is Elliot Avery.

On a recent day with his groovy '90s music bumping in the background of his station, Avery was putting masterpiece pizzas together. With great vibes and energy, he said he makes all his pizzas with a hint of "love."

Avery is the only African American male on staff at Huden. He grew up in North Carolina, where he said he had to deal with racism and segregation at an early age. He said he was tired of fighting, so he decided it was time to leave the south. Having dealt with a lot of unpleasant encounters, he built a mentality of rolling with the punches and taking unfortunate situations to the chin.

And, he said, he's built his life off respect.

"That's just how I was raised. I would have friends of other races and my mother would tell me to bring them in with me if there was food and drinks," he said with a smile.

But chatting with him, you can tell that all he's been through still bothers him.

"I don't care if you're black, white, tall, or fat I don't care. Everything I do is for y'all, the students," he said.

Avery moved to Vermont at age 22 where he met his wife and shortly after had two kids. His kids



MALACHI SMALLS

Elliot Avery interacts with a student at Huden Dining Hall.

offer him perspective for dealing with college students at Castleton.

"Castleton is a good school; I wouldn't mind my kids going here," he said.

He also said he's "all about the students" and open to any new ideas they bring to him for his Italian cuisine corner.

In Huden, he is already a student favorite. Multiple Students have said that he makes the best food and pizza.

Castleton student Brendon Driskel is still waiting for a second chance at Elliot's chicken alfredo pizza.

"He made an alfredo-based pizza, and it was amazing. I went back to tell him to make it again. I'm still waiting for my next slice," Driskel said.

Julian Chiemingo-Rivera, another student, also praised Avery's

work.

"The only time I eat pizza is when Elliot is there. He makes it with heart, and he has a great vibe all the time," he said.

But the pizza is just a fraction of why students are so fond of Avery.

"You can tell he puts a lot of effort and passion into what he does, and you can see he sees it as something bigger than just food," said student Chris Lewis, when asked about Elliot's cooking.

Avery said he doesn't use any extra or different ingredients in his food, but there's something else.

"I put love in my food," he said.

It's bigger than just pizza to him.



MALACHI SMALLS

Elliot Avery cuts into his latest creation at Huden.

Rutland County Pride: an organization for all

By Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

I recently had the opportunity to speak with the Executive Director of Rutland County Pride, William Fourney-Mills.

The interview was extremely eye-opening as well as remarkably inspiring. Fourney-Mills discussed the organization in great detail, highlighting many aspects that not many are aware of.

Fourney-Mills, an LGBTQ2+ advocate, began by explaining how Rutland County Pride came to be.

"It started as a pipe dream," he said. "The amount of support we received was absolutely incredible!"

The organization officially opened the office in 2023, where its popularity has only grown. Fourney-Mills offered many details about the organization and what it does for the Rutland community.

"We offer so many different programs at RC Pride. We help people recover from addiction, we provide food and wellness programs and events, such as food drives and festivals."

But Rutland County Pride goes beyond just a safe space for the LGBTQ2+ community. It helps spread awareness and provides support for the entire Rutland community, bringing people together in the process.

As someone who has struggled with addiction, I was pleasantly surprised to learn about the recovery groups, especially. According to Fourney-Mills, in contrast to traditional AA programs, RC Pride offers a non-secular approach to addiction recovery. They believe in recovery without the need for religious intervention, offering, in my opinion, a more modern, open-minded perspective on recovery from addiction.

Meanwhile, if you are ever looking for a productive way to kill some time and support your community, there are so many different opportunities to take advantage of that are organized by RC Pride.

The official website, RCPride.org, offers a list of all the fun and inviting activities and events taking place as part of the organization's initiative. They welcome any and all supporters to get involved and volunteer.

The list includes, but is not limited to, mocktail classes, monthly queer film series events, and recovery groups. It is well worth a look at the website, as it offers a lot of information about upcoming events and how you can participate.

As one Rutland County community member said on the site, "Rutland County Pride has helped create a feeling of welcoming and acceptance to all."

Fourney-Mills definitely paints a colorful, inspiring, and informative description of the organization. Throughout the interview, he seemed dedicated and driven to providing a safe, welcoming environment for the LGBTQ2+ community, as well as being seemingly compassionate toward helping the Rutland community as a whole.

"There was such a big margin of LGBTQ2+ people in Rutland. They were so welcoming," he said about starting the organization in the small city. He then went on to explain how young people, especially, are very accepting and inviting.

"Young people now, ya know, are much more into doing what makes them happy, accepting

themselves and self-care," he said.

Towards the conclusion of the interview, Fourney-Mills also offered statistics and even more information about Rutland County Pride and the LGBTQ2+ community. He explained that the organization is hosting All Recovery meetings for any and all people seeking addiction recovery. They are in partnership with Turning Point Center of Rutland, with certified Peer Recovery Specialists as the facilitators.

He said addiction is a more likely problem among the LGBTQ2+ community. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the Recovery Research Institute, gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals are 18% more likely to have alcohol use disorder and 20% more likely to have substance use disorder.

He also shared information about the local LGBTQ2+ population, like how Vermont has the seventh highest population percentage of LGBTQ2+ folks in the nation. The most recent BRFS report from the Vermont Department of Health estimates that 6% of Rutland County's population identifies as LGBTQ+."



COURTESY OF RUTLAND CITY PRIDE

Rutland County Pride Festival drew over 4,000 people last summer and another is planned for June 22.

Rutland County Pride is passionate and adamant about spreading the word to as many people as possible, and provides so much

important information to help inform and enlighten not only the Rutland community, but every community.

Maddie on the street

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



What did you do over spring break?



Dillon Palloto
Junior

"I had to stay here over break for baseball, but we had a lot of games so it was fun."



Annin Daley
Sophomore

"Over break I got to go home and play with my dog! I also had to study a lot for a couple nursing exams."



Antonio Mannino
Senior

"I was taking the certification test to be an AT. I get the results next week, hoping I pass!"



Beau McDonough
Freshman

"Over the break I went for a lot of walks with my dad Kevin McDonough and I turned one!"



Jade Weinberg
Junior

"Over the break I got to spend time with my family and I worked a lot which is great!"

Question and answer with grad student Marty Kelly

Vermont State University Castleton Graduate Student Marty Kelly III's voice is well known at student activities events, from calling out numbers at Super Bingo to helping students with various SGA tasks. He took some time to answer questions about life, leadership, and what makes him tick.

Q. You've been a race car driver and an announcer for that world and more... In your childhood, who inspired you to get into that? What drove that passion home for you? Is there anyone, or multiple people, you can attest that revved up what you want to do in this lifetime? And as a person named Marty, how do you feel about time traveling in a DeLorean? Do you think we have the capacity to create something like a Flux Capacitor?

A. Well for me, it was always my dad. He drove race cars from 1986-1999 and then sporadically in the mid 2000's. I just thought that was awesome. We went to the races all the time and went into the pits after to look at the cars and

talk to the drivers. We picked winners from our seats, we had a lot of fun. I used to sit in one of his old cars in the backyard and imagine myself winning and losing and wrecking and all that stuff. He's the man, he's helped me a ton.

I hope we can travel back in time, someday. I don't think that will ever happen, but you never know. I saw a guy who looked like Christopher Lloyd in Rutland just the other day, actually.

Q. Is there anyone in particular in your world now that truly motivates and inspires you to be the best version of you, and why? Be specific.

A. I've got some great friends, a great girlfriend, my wonderful parents and my older sister. And I've got the students and staff and faculty here and the other members of this community. I have some great advisors above me in Student Life here. Everybody helps me and drives me. I am a really lucky guy.

Q. What brought you to Castle-



Marty Kelly III

ton all those years ago? What attracted you to this place? What about the home of the Green Mountain Spartans keeps you locked into being here?

A. I was 20 years old, at Hudson Valley Community College, about to earn my associate's in automotive management. I just felt kinda empty, like there had to be something more to my education or that part of my life. I turned to the journalism and broadcasting work I was already doing in racing as a hobby and thought I should focus on that. I've always loved the village of Castleton. I have family in this area, so I spent

a fair amount of time around here as a kid. As someone who hardly applied myself in high school or even my first three years of college with the automotive stuff, I finally became an academic here. I became a more social guy and appreciated all the different kinds of people I met. I made so many great friends. I think the world of this place, honestly. I never have had a bad day at Castleton.

Q. As a Communications major, what words of wisdom could you offer for getting through those classes?

A. Keep an open mind. It's a great degree to go into a huge array of fields. Build your portfolio and know your strengths and weaknesses. Work in those bounds of the things you do well already and work on the rest when you can.

Q. What would you like the student body to know about you? Do you have any odd pearls of knowledge for those that might be reading this?

A. I've enjoyed working with the student body here so much, and I am so, so grateful for how they have responded to and received me. One "pearl" I always go back to is, be positive, smile, shake hands, make eye contact. Make as many connections as you can. It's tough, I know. Just do your best with it. Eye contact, smiles and handshakes have done a lot for me.

Q. While I know what you do for a job here at VTSU, could you fill in the readers about your role/position, and what you can do for them?

A. As the GA for Student Activities, I support and advise the Student Government Association. I work closely with the Campus Activities Board, and I can help you access requested and approved funds for official, recognized clubs, from a \$50 Amazon purchase to booking a club trip that might cost a few thousand dollars.

Fireside is gluten-free heaven

By Carly Centeno
Castleton Spartan

Fireside Café is a beloved place on campus by (many) students who enjoy the break from Huden every once and a while.

But students with gluten sensitivity or allergies rely on Fireside even more due to the many options available, including different bread options.

"Fireside has way better options for gluten-free bread than Huden does. It offers way more than Huden for gluten-free students in general," Castleton student Karsen Dunican said.

Students say Huden is a hard place to trust for completely gluten-free items. Even though it does have a small nook for gluten-free products, there is never much to pick from. Huden mainly offers sandwich bread, wrap bread, gluten-free waffles and granola bars in the gluten-free corner.

Fireside, on the other hand, has gluten-free meals from frozen dinners to right off the stove.

"My staff takes gluten-free needs seriously," Manager Jim Stuart said.

Fireside makes sure that students who require gluten-free meals have a place where they know they can go. From gluten-free bagels for bacon, egg, and cheeses, to gluten-free wraps, the variety is just better, students say. It even offers gluten-free chicken tenders, gluten-free brownies, and an assortment of gluten-free snacks.

It even has vegan items now. "I trust that at Fireside there is less cross-contamination than Huden. I rely on Fireside, especially in season, since they have more options for me to eat and it's important as an athlete for me to be eating enough food," Castleton Hockey player Ellie Schliebs said.

Unfortunately, Fireside isn't as unlim-

ited as Huden with the meal point system. With the normal meal plan, you get 125 Fireside points, which easily is gone within a month for many of these students who rely on their gluten-free meals. Students do have the option to change their meal plan to get more points, but that limits how many times they can go to the main dining hall.

"I personally find Fireside better than Huden in the gluten-free aspect because you can't order specific things from Huden like you can at Fireside. If they don't have a gluten-free option for a meal they decide to put out, then does that mean that you don't get to eat there for the day? Overall, both options are not the best because the size of the gluten-free things compared to gluten products is significantly smaller, which sucks," Castleton student Erin Forkin said.

Students say Fireside isn't without problems though, with gluten-free meals running out at times and small portion sizes. And with the small number of points most students get from the plan, it makes it difficult to keep going to Fireside all year — especially if you don't have money when you run out of points.

Even though many students are grateful for Fireside and its options for their allergies, many wish they would simply have access to mainly Fireside meals rather than getting disappointed at Huden when meals aren't completely gluten-free.

But some students said they also feel Huden is improving.

"I feel like Fireside has a lot of good options for gluten-free people. They are careful of cross-contamination, are very understanding, and patient. I prefer Fireside but I also think that Huden has been making a better effort for catering people with celiac too," said student Jack Taylor.



Scott Watrous holding up some of the gluten free bread options they offer at Fireside.

Learn self-defense with the jiu jitsu club

By Rosa Kehoe
Castleton Spartan

Are you looking to get more confidence, to even learn some self-defense? On top of that, to join a community and have fun? If so, the Jiu Jitsu club is just for you. The club is looking for more members and would love for you to join.

"I felt like there was a need for a good combat sports club here. Jiu Jitsu is something that everyone can train in, it means a lot to me personally, and I kind of just wanted to share that with other people," said President Ben Honsinger.

He said that they are always recruiting and open to anyone willing to learn. Beyond teaching the skill, their team and coaches offer community and connection.

Honsinger is a blue belt himself and has been doing Jiu Jitsu for about a year and a half.

"It gave me discipline, it gave me something to focus on," he said, adding how cool it is to see his progress overtime.

Not only did it help Honsinger become more disciplined, but it made him a lot of like-minded friends.

"It's also the community aspect too, I have made a lot of friends training, and have met a lot of really cool people and I do not think I would have met them if I did not train," he said.

Luca Mele, a senior at Castleton University, shares this passion for Jiu Jitsu.

"To anyone that might be interested in partaking in a new physical activity, martial arts, or

self-defense, Jiu Jitsu is the way to go. "It is really chill, we all enjoy doing it, it's very unlikely you will get injured, we all know how to control ourselves and how to teach people how to control themselves. It's a great way to get into physical activity and have fun, make new friends and be part of a community," said Mele.

The club provides an outlet for Mele's lifelong passion for the sport. He has been grappling since he was a young child, as his brother used to grab and would show him some tricks. He has been consistent with it for the past three years, but as he has not been able to stay at one specific gym he is just a white belt, even though his skill level is above that.

He also talked about how being a college student and being able to be in the club is a great asset to his life.

"As a college student I lack funds to pay for a gym membership and previously I was paying for my own membership at a gym, and this club gave me an opportunity to be able to save my money and still partake in an activity I love to do," he said.

Jiu Jitsu is a great place where people can work on themselves, as Mele explains. "It allows me to be physically active, which is good and healthy for me. I always feel very rewarded after a good jiu jitsu session, and you know overall it gives me something to work towards, work on myself and overall, it's just a really fun activity" he said.

Secretary Jeff Watkins finds the club to be very rewarding in many ways when it comes to working on one-self.



LUCE MELE

Ben Honsinger and his coach from the new jiu jitsu club battling it out in an intense match on the mat.

"One of my big goals is to become a person that fights in MMA, so any chance I can grab to be able to get another step closer to that goal, I am immediately gonna grab at it with no hesitation. So, when I heard there was a jiu jitsu club I figured I should join as fast as possible. I love it, it has made me extremely happy, I have been believing in myself ever since I started," he said.

Watkins then talks about how everyone can do Jiu Jitsu, that it

can be scary but is worth it.

"At first it is going to be a little hard, you are going to be confused. But as you get into it you start to grow a little more confident and start to get less afraid of things you think may hurt, but in reality they don't...Anybody can do it, I suggest everyone try it out," said Watkins.

They meet at 6pm on Wednesday in the campus center to discuss the club, then Tuesday and Thursday they go to the Rutland

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu gym from 5:30 to 6:30. After the class ends at 6:30 they usually stay an extra hour to go over rolls, and some more self-defense moves. Everyone carools, so on Tuesday and Thursdays pick up for the class is wherever you need to be picked up to get brought to the gym.

Drake is a legend, and I got to see the last tour show

By Carly Ceteno
Castleton Spartan

After five years of many albums but no tour, Drake finally went on tour starting in Chicago on July 2, 2023.

And I had the chance to be at the very last show of this tour in Newark, New Jersey at the Prudential Center. Drake, Lil Wayne, and Lil Durk were all in one show packed in what normally is a hockey stadium, turned to a mock football field with a giant statue of Drake at the front.

The seats filled up fast and before you knew it, D.J. Prince was blasting music getting the crowd pumped up for the show.

Lil Durk was the opening act for this show, even though for the majority of the tour it was J. Cole. The theme of the night was “big-

ger than the Super Bowl,” with the pit section looking like a football field and having each star do a walk in from the crowd. Lil Durk came into his song “AHHH HA” as fans went crazy being so close to him.

The best part of his portion was his song “All My Life,” where he had a choir of children lip-syncing a part of the song where children are singing in the chorus.

A fake ESPN Broadcast was performed before Drake came on by Ben Da Donn, which then was followed by a real marching band and cheerleaders playing Drake’s song “Trophies.” The crowd went crazy.

Then appears ‘Younger Drake’ on the big screen with the current Drake in a locker room as his song “Virginia Beach” played in the background. The music stops and then it’s just Drake on the screen

when all of the sudden he pushes the wall and it falls down to reveal him on a small stage on the left side of the main stage.

He walks through the crowd while asking, “New Jersey, are you ready?”

He starts his set with his older songs to get the crowd excited, even taking a moment to give out money to people in the pit. Throughout his entire performance, different props are being flown around the Center including a UFO, a giant bra, Travis Scott’s head, and himself in a cage.

When Drake took a break, Lil Wayne appeared. Even though it can be impossible to understand what he is saying, his entire set was like a time jump. Hearing “Young Mulla Baby” in person was personally my favorite part of his entire set, besides him thanking the crowd after every song he

performed.

Drake came back out and they performed some older songs they had from when Drake first was gaining popularity.

After Lil Wayne exits, Drake goes into his encore. Since it was the last night, fans were begging for more because who knew when Drake will tour again. His encore lasted five songs, which included his most popular song “You Broke My Heart,” which had everyone in the room cursing out their ex.

He ended the song by heading back to the stage he first appeared on getting sprayed with champagne by his friends. He ended the party-filled night with the song “Legend,” which was the perfect ending to wrap up his entire tour because he is and always will be a legend in the industry.



CARLY CETENO

Drake performs the last show of the tour in New Jersey.

Taking over the lights and sound

Stefan Billups brings energy and expertise to the Fine Arts Center production staff



COURTESY STEFAN BILLUPS

New technological production Manager Stefan Billups poses for a picture.

By Carissa Challinor
Spartan contributor

VTSU Castleton campus’ technological production manager’s office is located in the scene shop in the Fine Arts Center, where a new technological production manager has occupied the space since the start of this spring semester.

When walking into the scene shop, Stefan Billups was wearing gloves while lifting up wood with Steven Gross. He told Gross he would be right back after the interview and entered his office.

Billups pushed away a cart with 15 microphones on top and a list of actors who are using the equipment. Giant speakers lay on top of his table against the wall. His computer displays a document with a checklist on what projections still need completion for “She Kills Monsters,” the main-stage play. A mini fridge with a cappuccino machine flanks the chairs as Billups offered this reporter sparkling water and soda.

“OMG! He’s perfect! He is such a kind person,” said Marisa Valent-Altland, FAC director and Soundings manager. “He is personable as well, which is huge because he has to work with so many different departments and so many different students.”

Excitement has been buzzing around the FAC, specifically from the theater department, because of Billups and his experience, which has positively impacted those who work with the technological production manager.

“He has definitely been an asset

to us. He knows what he is doing for sure, which is usually rare in this field. He really cares about us,” said Hannah Bowie, a sophomore sound board operator. “And last semester we only had Rome, who was a student here, so it was different to have someone with actual experience from the real world.”

“He is passionate about theater, so he is making a lot of changes to our department. He is trying to make it more advanced,” said Vidur Katyal, a junior theater major.

“We are very lucky to have him and I hope he stays forever.”

-Marisa Valent-Altland

Some of the advances that Billups intends to make start by being more involved with the theater department and what goes on in the FAC.

“My role already is to oversee lights, sound, video, and all the technical aspects of productions here in Casella and of course in other parts of the campus as well.”

Billups said. “But my primary role is here at Casella to make sure all shows and performances go off without a hitch.”

Gross has been impressed with Billups.

“[Stefan] just started this semester, but he sort of dove right into it and has been a very active member of the production team. He provides very valuable input and the work he is doing is fantastic,” said Gross, chair of the department of music, theater, and technology.

Gross said Billups is willing to help anyone, and if he doesn’t know something, he is willing to ask anyone for help.

He called Billups very “passionate,” and it is because “he cares about the students.”

As Billups continues his journey here at VTSU Castleton campus, he plans to make additional changes within the FAC by upgrading the technology in the theater so it can be up to date with the rest of the world.

He has already made small steps toward this goal by upgrading the sound quality from moving the sound booth into Casella.

“We are very lucky to have him and I hope he stays forever,” Valent-Altland said. “Also, he makes a really good latte.”

Burlington rapper making a name in VT, wants to play Castleton

By Tyler Serrani
Spartan contributor

Vermont is in the middle of an artistic renaissance. With Burlington’s major hip hop group 99 Neighbors parting ways, it seems many artists are looking forward to their 2024 campaigns.

Rivan Calderin, known simply as Rivan, tore through the back end of 2023 releasing four songs and amassing over 11,000 monthly listeners on Spotify alone.

“Learn to be good at a number of things,” Rivan said during a phone interview earlier this month when asked how to get noticed.

Becoming knowledgeable in many fields has contributed great-

ly to the success of the Vermont native.

When asked about how he’s differentiated himself from other artists, he stated, “I stand out.”

From throwing his own DIY shows in Burlington, to booking artists all across the Northeast, Calderin definitely knows how to diversify his skills in the industry.

Not to mention he is an extremely underrated graphic artist as well.

One piece of advice the creative mentioned for anyone aspiring to make art was, “Put your ego aside and promote.”

Recently, Rivan has had a major uptick in content creation and promotion for his work. This has

certainly brought more attraction to his social media platforms, where his handle is @rivanrules.

The young vocalist isn’t only creating content for himself though. He, along with six other astounding musicians, form the band Juicebox. Although the band started in 2018, Calderin didn’t officially become a member until much more recently.

And while Burlington-based Calderin has performed at a number of venues from all across the state, he seeks to continue to broaden his reach and VTSU Castleton students know who he is.

“I saw him perform in Burlington,” said Sean Dinan, a current first-year student at VTSU Castle-

ton. “‘Like Woah’ was a really great song to see performed live.”

It seems there’s a theme among Castleton students.

“‘Like Woah’ reminded me of ‘Brockhampton,’” said Gretel Seaman, a VTSU sophomore.

A veteran to the stage, Calderin also performs in New York City, including a recent March 27 show at the Heaven Can Wait music venue in Manhattan.

If you don’t want to travel to see him, though, you may be in luck.

“I’d love to come perform in Castleton,” he said as the interview was beginning to wrap up. “The campus is so remote and community based.”



COURTESY RIVAN CALDERIN

Rapper Rivan performs a tune.

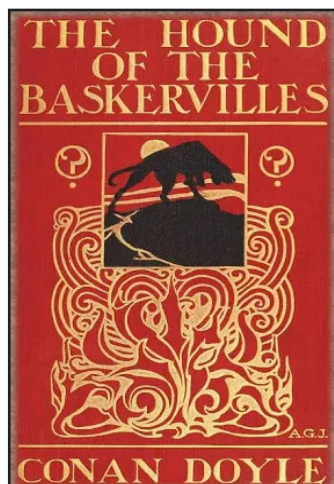
Book of the Fortnight

By Camille Jackson
Castleton Spartan

“The Hounds of Baskervilles” by Arthur Conan Doyle

The infamous detective Sherlock Holmes promises tales of adventure, surprise, and genius. Recommended by VTSU-Castleton senior Charlie Cisneros, this Sherlock Holmes novel is an “easy read, so you’re not lost but you don’t know what’s going to happen next.”

This third iteration of Doyle’s crime novels allows readers to immerse themselves into early 20th century England as Doyle “writes in a way that you can picture the characters.” In tandem with well-rounded characters, the story is well-written such that “you’re interested in what’s going to happen next.”

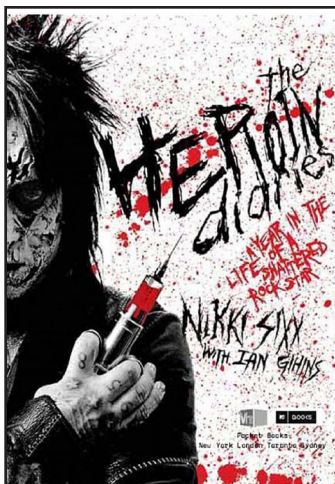


The Heroin Diaries – A year in the life of a Shattered Rock Star by Nikki Sixx and Ian Gittins

VTSU-Castleton Professor of Communications David Blow points to Heroin Diaries as an autobiographical must read (or listen, for audiobook fans). Blow writes, “I love autobiographies of rock stars and have been devouring audiobooks lately on my commute. But this one was pretty shocking.”

In a sentence, the book “details the depth of addiction that Motley Crüe leader Nikki Sixx fell into – in his own words – from the pages of this diaries often written while huddled up and high in his closet. Given his castaway-kid childhood with no dad and a mom more interested in replacing him, it’s perhaps not surprising.”

“I was eagerly awaiting the next chapter, even though we all know he survived and is clean with a top syndicated radio show these days.”



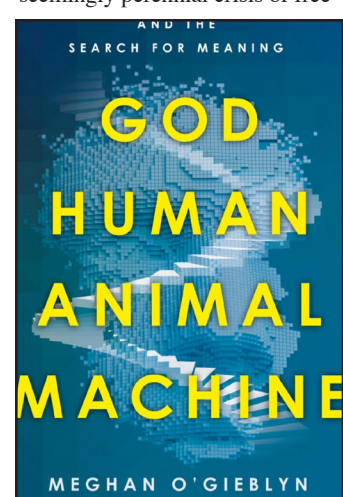
“God, Human, Animal, Machine: Technology, Metaphor, and the Search for Meaning by Meghan O’Gieblyn

Philosophy professor Brendan Lalor urges a read of this book as it “contributes insightfully to urgently needed understanding of what we are becoming in our times.” O’Gieblyn “draws on diverse domains to articulate where the machinations of cultural tectonics have – under pressure from religion, technology, and other forces – brought us; what it means for meaning for creatures like ourselves; and what possibilities lie ahead.”

Lalor noted O’Gieblyn’s exploration of “the shift towards magical AI-fetishism and Bostrom/Musk-style technological transhumanism by reference in part to the Calvinism underlying contemporary American Evangelicalism.”

In Lalor’s words, “her analyses seriously challenge human

exceptionalism, grapple with a seemingly perennial crisis of free



will for for religion and science, and might even, with effort, yield insight into immediately-future students may come to feel Chat-GDP as a “legitimate” extension of their “own” powers.”

A slice of life

VTSU Castleton's student-run podcast to illustrate the impact of Third Place Pizzeria

By Justin Gitto
Castleton Spartan

In 2017 a Castleton graduate saw how important it was for the community to have a place for the people to hang out and decided to put the lessons of a sociology professor to use.

Now, students in Dr. Michael Talbott's podcasting and audio storytelling class at VTSU Castleton are producing a three-episode podcast — 'A Slice of Life' — profiling Third Place, the restaurant and pub

just off campus that dominates the town of Castleton, Vermont.

"I go there all the time," said co-executive producer Stone Stelzl. "It's a great place to gather with my teammates and have some good food and some drinks outside of our usual spots."

According to the producers, the aim of this podcast is to share the story and idea behind Third Place's origin, its adversities and conflicts, how it became a staple to a small town, while also providing a glimpse into the experience of a

college pub that to its customers is more than just any old pub.

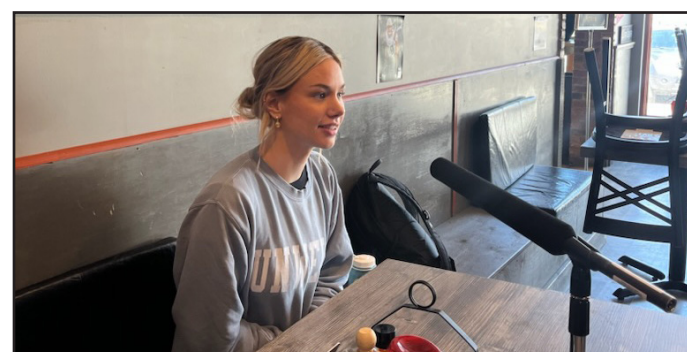
The podcast will also inform listeners to what the concept of a "third place" is — a place for people to convene outside of home and work. From its opening in 2017, it quickly blew up into a campus phenomenon for anyone looking for a fun time on the weekend, or a chance to chill out after a long weekday.

"Everyone needs one of these places in their life whether they know it or not, and with this pod-

cast we hope people will find a third place of their own," said fellow Executive Producer Will Smith.

Listeners will hear from staff, customers, the owner himself — Andrew Breting, and professor Phil Lamy who taught him the concept upon which the restaurant was founded.

Episodes will be released on a weekly basis premiering May 1, with following episodes releasing on May 8 and May 15.



MADDIE LINDGREN

Codi Bacon talks on the "A Slice of Life" podcast.



VTSU Castleton campus captured in all four seasons through Akane's camera.



AKANE MINAMINO

I came to Castleton for the nature

A Japanese student speaks of why she came to VTSU Castleton

By Akane Minamino
Castleton Spartan

Akane Minamino is an international student from Japan who writes about her experiences attending school a world away from home.

What do you think brought me here Castleton? I have a lot of reasons why I came here, but one of them is that Castleton is a rural area.

Why was living in a countryside has been appealing to me? I was interested in leading a life in a rural area just because I lived in a suburban area in Japan and had

never lived in a countryside.

I thought, "What is a life in a rural area like?" I mean, I wanted to try living in an environment that is completely different from my hometown.

Transportation and nature here are especially different from my hometown, which also made me curious about living here in Castleton.

There should be some areas where people use their car as a main transportation even in Japan. Also, which transportation mainly used is different from person to person and from area to area in Japan, but in my hometown, personally, I use a bike, buses, and

trains to go anywhere. And in many cases, I do not have any difficulty moving around, even if I cannot drive a car. However, from my perspective, I think that people here in Castleton mainly use a car to go everywhere.

There are more than 80 buses from the bus stop near my house in Japan to a downtown on weekdays, but here in Castleton, there are only five buses from the university to Rutland from Monday to Friday.

Also, in my hometown, 200 trains run from the station near my home weekdays, and it takes me about only 30 to 40 minutes by train to go to a very urban area,

(which has) a place similar to Times Square in New York City.

On the other hand, here, if my understanding is correct, only one train is available per day if you would like to go to a big city, New York City, and it takes about five or six hours to get there.

As you can see, there is a huge difference between transportation here and that in my hometown.

Regarding nature, I had an interest in living in a region that has rich nature. My first impression about Castleton when I checked an aerial photo on Google Maps before I come here was "Green...!"

I was surprised at the large area of green in Castleton when I

looked at the map and was looking forward to leading a life in rich nature. Also, I was really excited about spending my life here surrounded by lots of snow, because I had never lived in a snowy region.

Since I came here, I have been so amazed at how beautiful the nature is. When it is warm, the green of the mountains and lawns are so vivid and beautiful. I like taking a walk while looking at the green on a sunny day.

In fall, the color of the leaves on trees turns to red and yellow, which is so attractive. In winter, the scenery of snow is breathtaking. In addition, I like the lakes here although I did not know that

there are lakes here when I was in Japan.

I saw Lake Bomoseen and Lake Champlain, both of which are so fascinating. Also, coming to Castleton let me see a frozen lake in winter for the first time in my life.

I have been enjoying the differences between my hometown and Castleton; especially, I have been enjoying the nature here than I expected.

I am so glad I decided to study in Castleton. I would like to visit here again in the future.

What music does for our souls

For an Intro to Media and Communication assignment, students were asked to write about the impact of specific songs or music in general has had on their lives. Below are excerpts from their work.

A song that has a lot of meaning to me is "Burn it to the Ground" by Nickelback. Nickelback is one of my mom's favorite groups and she would always listen to this song whenever we would do stuff around the house and we would have so much fun together and it made it so special to me. Every time I hear the song I think about spending time with my mom.
— Tanner Gintof

In all honesty, I listen to way too much music to necessarily have a "favorite" song as most of my screen time on my phone is listening to music and looking up songs that I like. I more or less have certain genres of music I really like based on certain things growing up. Like I have a big love for Spanish music because I have two cousins from Puerto Rico who my father raised like they were my sisters due to my aunt having to clean herself up. My mom is also married to a Puerto Rican man and all his family does is listen to

Spanish music back then and the upbeat tempo and the way used their words always resonated very well with me even though I could not understand most of what they were saying.

I am also a really big fan of R&B as it just reminds me of the times in my childhood on Sundays when it would basically be family cleanup day and my father, or my other aunt, would play some R&B music to get us all up and moving and cleaning to the beat.
— Isiah Hughes

It is hard to imagine a world without music. Music, to me, seems like a natural part of being, like breathing. When we are not listening to music, we are playing it in our minds as we live out our daily lives. I have heard people say they cannot even work without music playing. So why is this? I believe it has a lot to do with expression.

Most people have music moods. I'm sure you have heard someone say, "I listen to whatever suits my mood at the time," or some version of that. I believe that is because we express ourselves through what we listen to and what we create, and it also serves as an outlet that allows for people to connect and communicate. Music has a way

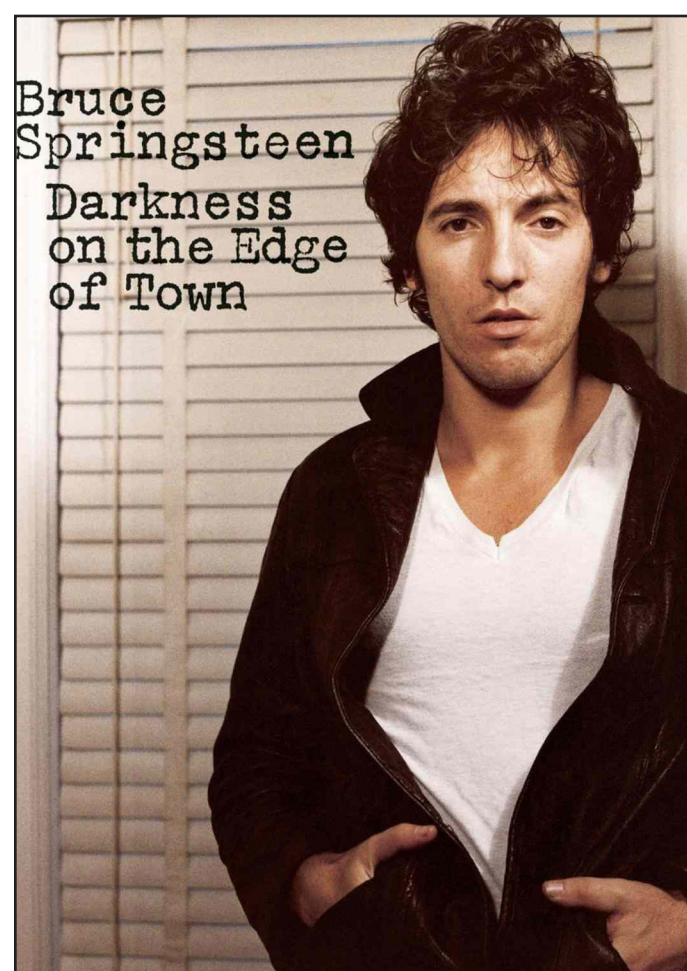
of touching us and making us feel.
— Amanda Johnson

My most profound memory in music while growing up would have to be The Doors song "Riders on the Storm." My mother used to play this song on a burned CD along with a variety of other '70s hits as well. It would bring me joy every time I heard the unique intro of rainstorm and melody. Nowadays, I find my playlist has this and other songs my parents would play for me when I was a toddler.
— Christin Keeling

I came across my most listened-to songs for the month and the song "She's Royal" by Tarrus Riley showed up and I knew that was the song I had to write about. This song used to be played around me all the time at family gatherings, cookouts and birthday parties. I recall dancing with my aunts and grandma to this song and being embarrassed when they would pull me out of my comfort zone. It's a slow song about finding love and treating the woman of your dreams like a queen and I think that is a good message to preach to anyone. It doesn't matter what age they are. It also helps that this is a reggae song. Reggae music has always held a special place in my heart

because my family is Jamaican, and no other genre of music makes me feel more at peace than hearing a good, old-style reggae tune.
— Devaughn Miller

A song that is meaningful to me is "Darkness on the Edge of Town" by Bruce Springsteen. From kindergarten to 8th grade, I rode to school with my dad. He was an English teacher at the school I went to, and every day the two of us would pile into his 2010 Honda and drive the 40-plus minutes to Evanston and back. On rare occasions, my dad would let me choose the radio station, but usually he would have E-Street Radio the whole way to and from school. Whenever I hear "Darkness on the Edge of Town," or frankly any Bruce Springsteen song, I am taken back to that old Honda and the memories that we made together, five days a week for nine years. Listening to that song, I can smell the cloth seats, diet coke, and can picture my view out the front window of the car. Listening to the song with my eyes closed brings back so many emotions, and I'm so glad that my dad shared it with me.
— Annika Nelson



Women's lacrosse making progress despite adversity

By Annika Nelson
Spartan Contributor

On Saturday, the Spartans women's lacrosse team headed down to Danbury, Connecticut to take on Western Connecticut State University.

Earlier in the week, they played a tough game against Keene State. "There was excitement going into the second half and disappointment at the outcome of the second half," said sophomore midfielder Megan Ward. "Overall we've just been focusing on making sure that we give our best effort every game and also trying to mix in a little fun with it."

The Spartans are focusing on what they can control during a difficult season, and the team was excited going into their game against Western Connecticut.

"Practice has been good this week, we took some time to watch film and really dissect our strengths and weaknesses on both sides of the ball to prepare for upcoming games," said coach Bella Ferraro.

The team recently lost one of their strongest players, senior

captain Kimberly McCarthy to an injury.

"The adjustment has been tough as Kim played everywhere," said Ferraro.

Fifth-year player Tien Connor made her first appearance between the pipes for the Spartans on Saturday in Danbury. Connors usually plays attack or midfield, but due to the team's recent struggles, she started the game in net.

"With low numbers, it has been a challenge to make adjustments, but we have managed to make some creative shifts in our defensive and offensive systems in order to save energy, adapt to each others' strengths and weaknesses, and overall work together," said Ferraro.

The Spartans fell to Western Connecticut by a score of 20-6, with goals from Phoebe Loomis, Gianna Geraci, and a pair from Megan Ward, and Renny Cota.

Even with the unfortunate result, though, there were positive moments of light. During a 10-minute span in the 4th quarter, Loomis, Cota, and Ward each were able to score unanswered goals.

The team now sits at 2-12 on the year.



Gianna Geraci (left) going into scoop the ball. Colleen Sheridan (right) makes a pass.

EVERETT COLLECTION

Caitlin Clark carries women's hoops on her back

By Emma Ezzo
Spartan Contributor

On March 30, 2024, basketball fans crowded the streets outside of MVP Arena in Albany, New York, eagerly waiting to watch the Iowa Hawkeyes take on the Colorado Buffaloes in the Sweet 16 round of the NCAA Women's March Madness tournament.

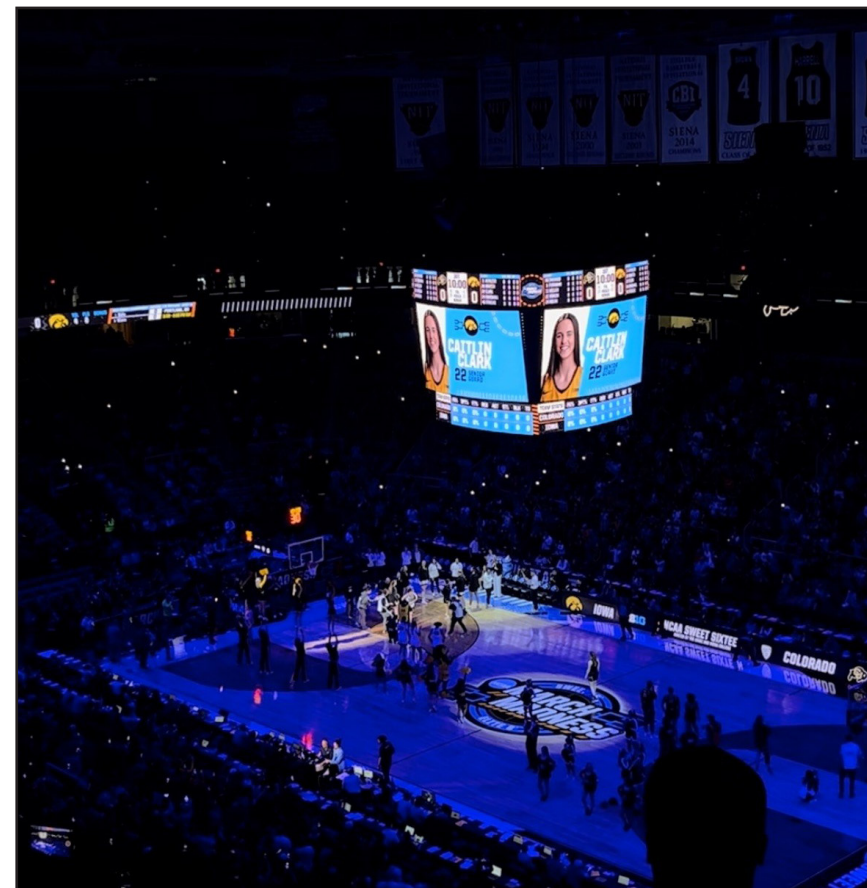
Soon enough, the sold out, 15,000-seat stadium was filled top to bottom with people in black and gold basketball jerseys and kids with the number "22" painted on their faces.

The number 22 is the one Iowa star Caitlin Clark has worn for the entirety of her collegiate basketball career. Known for her impressive shooting range and offensive dominance, Clark has consistently delivered outstanding performances that have left both fans and opponents in awe of her skills.

This season alone, she broke the record for the most 30-point games by any men's or women's Division I player, achieved the most three-pointers in a single season by any men's or women's Division I player, and became the all-time leading scorer in NCAA history with nearly 4,000 points.

She's one of the best that the sport has ever seen, which has quickly led her to become a face for women's basketball. By showcasing her talent and exciting style of play, Clark has played a significant role in increasing the visibility and popularity of the women's game.

Now more than ever before, people all over the world are tuning in to watch. The Iowa versus Colorado game in Albany drew



MVP Arena in Albany, New York during the March Madness tournament, as well as Caitlin Clark pregame introduction.

EMMA EZZO

6.9 million TV viewers, making it the best Sweet 16 audience ever recorded in women's college basketball. A few weeks later, the March Madness championship game featuring Iowa and South Carolina was watched by a record-breaking 19 million viewers.

This year, Caitlin Clark has carried herself, and the game, with elegance, class, and pride. It goes without saying that the impact she

has had on the sport extends far beyond the number of points she's scored and records she's broken.

When the buzzer went off in MVP Arena after Iowa's 89-68 victory against Colorado, a game where Clark led her team with a staggering 29 points and 15 assists, a multitude of excited young girls who were watching from the stands raced to the side of the stadium where Iowa would exit the

court into their locker room.

After celebrating the win with her teammates, Caitlin Clark approached the wide-eyed crowd with a wave and a friendly smile. Popping the cap off of a permanent marker, she signed every t-shirt, basketball shoe, and headband that came her way. She posed for pictures with kids who were proudly wearing her number "22" on their shirts, and she advised them to

work hard and follow their dreams.

It's truly a special thing to witness the positive influence that Caitlin Clark has on the younger generation of aspiring women's basketball players. To them, she is more than a role model – she's a symbol of possibility. While this season has been one that will go down in history, it marks only the beginning of what is to come for the future of women's basketball.

After a hard-fought championship game wrapping up the 2024 NCAA Women's March Madness tournament, the Iowa Hawkeyes lost to the South Carolina Gamecocks by 12 points.

Clark, days later, was the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft. After graduating college, she will begin her professional basketball career with the Indiana Fever.

MLB early season winners and losers

By Justin Gitto
Castleton Spartan

The 2024 MLB season is off to a hot start and in just a few weeks, a lot of superstars and powerhouse teams have separated themselves from the pack.

Don't get me wrong, it's way too early to be making predictions, but I'm doing it anyway.

The offseason saw a lot of big names change teams, and there was a lot of focus on those players in these first few weeks.

Guys like Juan Soto and Shohei Ohtani are sporting new threads and quickly making a huge impact as the Yankees and Dodgers respectively have gotten off to crazy starts.

Another conversation at this point in the season has been the Houston Astros. Even with Ronel Blanco's no-hitter less than a week

in, they sit at 7-15 at the time this is being written, and they simply just don't look good.

Houston usually gets off to a slow start and then finds their groove, but they've already been swept three times and they look sloppy. But let's be real, they'll probably be contenders in another couple weeks.

The Atlanta Braves, who had the best regular season record last year, look to do that again and they currently hold the best record in the league at 13-5 without even getting much contribution from reigning MVP Ronald Acuña. With Acuña coming off a record-breaking year, I'm looking for him to break into a crazy hot-streak very soon.

Right behind them are the Milwaukee Brewers at 13-6 and the LA Dodgers at 12-11. I'm shocked that the Brewers have held up like this despite the loss of Corbin

Burnes, but it looks like former MVP Christian Yelich found his swing again after the past few sub-par years.

On the other side, the Cleveland Guardians lead the AL at 15-6, followed by the Yankees at 14-7, and the defending champion Texas Rangers lead the west at 11-10.

Although the Yankees are without Gerrit Cole for a couple months, the addition of Juan Soto's bat has sparked a ton of energy to their lineup. The series against Cleveland was so much fun to watch, and the way things have been looking there's a good chance they'll be seeing each other in the playoffs.

Speaking of the Yankees, I'm really looking forward to watching the AL East division race. So far, every team has a winning record and the games between them have been really exciting to watch.

Not to mention that division has produced contenders year in and year out.

As great as some of these teams have been, there are always teams at the bottom of the list, and this year there are two really, really, REALLY bad teams.

First there's the Miami Marlins, who started the season by losing their first nine games in a row, and are currently 5-16.

Somehow worse than them are the Chicago White Sox, who are 3-16, and are ranked dead last in runs scored, batting average, on-base percentage and home runs.

They are horrible. I usually can't stand when people make MVP predictions this early into the season because stats are so skewed. Tons of people get off to hot starts every year and then drop off. Obviously, people aren't going to maintain a .400 average for the whole year, and just

because someone homered in each of their first four games doesn't mean they're gonna break Bonds' record.

That being said, I'm gonna make some way-too-early awards predictions.

As much as I hate to say it, I think so far Jose Altuve is the front-runner for AL MVP. He has the best batting average in the whole league, he's popped a handful of homers, and he's proven to be the kind of guy who can sustain this kind of performance over the course of the season. The only thing that can kill him is the low number of RBI's.

Enter Juan Soto. He's been in the MVP conversation year-in and year-out, and this might be the year he does it. So far, he's near the top of the league in batting average and RBI's with a handful of homers, and again he's proven to be the kind of a guy who can con-

sistently hit.

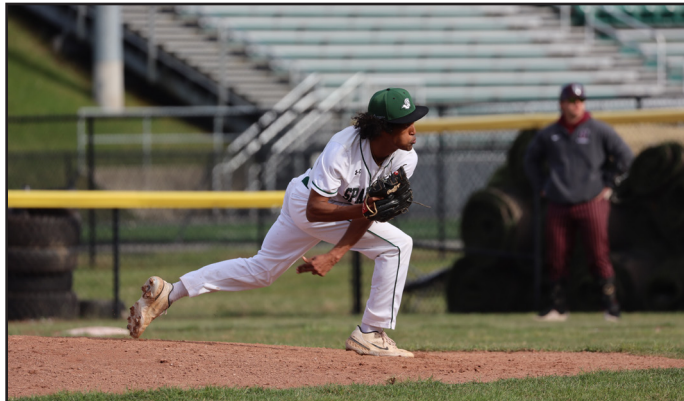
What sells me on him is his move to the Yankees. As a lefty he could put one over that short-porch in right without even muscling it, so I'm expecting big home run totals out of him.

The NL is a lot more contested, but my pick is gonna have to be Mookie Betts for the same logic – he's got the batting average and home runs, and he's proven to be the type of guy who can sustain this level of play over the whole season.

For AL and NL Cy Young I'm going with Reid Detmers and Freddy Peralta respectively. They're near the top of the league in strikeouts with ERA's under 2, and they have both yet to tally a loss.

However, I wouldn't be surprised if Detmers' lack of offensive support hurts him and someone like Corbin Burnes takes it.

Baseball in action at home vs. Union



Nick Udell (left) following through on his pitch, Jackson Cardozo (middle) in midst of his swing, Kannon Bush (right) taking the mound.

EVERETT COLLECTION

Softball trying to get their swing back

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

In a season quite like a roller-coaster ride with its up and downs, the Castleton softball team started off hot but have since cooled off in the second half of the season dealing with the unpredictable Vermont spring weather.

Down the stretch of the season, the Spartans have had a tough span of games that have gone the opposite of their hot start of the season. Over the last nine games, the team has dropped seven, with four of them being within two runs.

“So far this season, we’ve had many ups and downs. I believe we have what it takes to be successful going into these last few weeks of the season. Our confidence has been very low as of late, which has cost us a few games. I think we need to hit reset and go into these last few weeks with confidence and play the game we all know too well,” said senior Brianna Belisle.

Currently the team sits seventh

in the LEC with a 2-6 conference record with wins over Keene State and Eastern Connecticut. The Spartans are on the outside looking in for a playoff position but have six more conference games in order to make that push into a playoff spot.

“We’ve stuck together so far. We just need to believe in ourselves and never give up and all will fall into place. We really need to focus on staying up and energetic. In the game of softball, success is stemmed from energy. We have what it takes to win, we just have to go out there and prove it,” Belisle said.

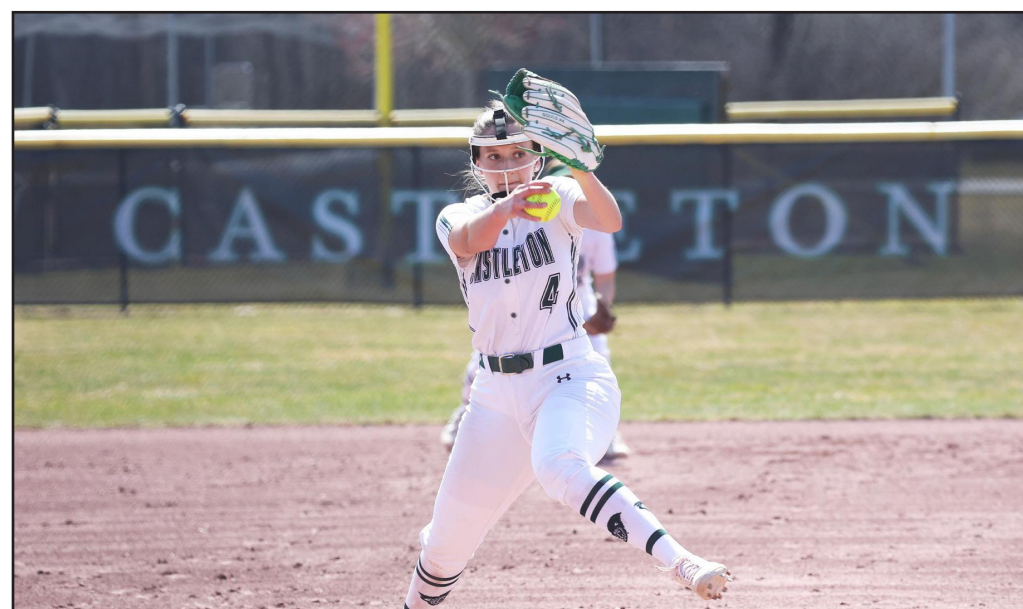
In the final six games, the team faces Western Connecticut, Plymouth State, and Rhode Island College. Plymouth is the only team behind Castleton in the standings of those three matchups, which can come in handy for the team down this stretch of crucial games.

“In my opinion, I think in order to be successful in this final stretch is to definitely be confident in both yourself and the team. Going down the stretch, we have

been maintaining a positive attitude towards our players,” said sophomore Jordan Hill. “I think we need to emphasize our playing during the game more often to find more success, we need to be loud in order to be locked into the whole game, we also need to lean on each other and help guide ourselves throughout this final stretch.”

Throughout the season, although the team has had its ups and downs, the team has been hitting for a team average of .248 with a team OPS of .651. On the pitching side, the team has an average ERA of 3.48, led by the likes of Madison Gould and Alexis Rogers who both have a 3.05 ERA with both Katie Gallagher and Trista DeLong not far behind them in that department.

“Our goal is to be in the top six of the conference to get into the LEC tournament, so each conference game from here until the end is like a playoff game for us. We need to clean up a few things on the defensive side and keep things simple. Our



CASTLETON SPORTS

#4 Madison Gould throws a pitch in a recent game.

pitching has been pretty solid all season, and if we can get our bats and gloves synced up, we have a chance to finish well and make a run to the tourney,” said head

coach Eric Ramey.

The Spartans start off their final stretch Saturday April 27 against Western Connecticut in a double header that can have large

implications as West Conn sits just above Castleton in the LEC standings.

Skiers take on Costa Rica

By Camille Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton men’s Alpine Ski Team finished their season on an incredible high; dominating the winter sport across the east coast and nationally.

Following such success called for a drastic shift in climate, activity and geography. Indeed, a surf adventure to Costa Rica was determined appropriate for two vacation groups amounting to 12 members of the men’s team.

And spring break provided the ideal timeline to organize the trip, allowing the weather to slowly tan their skin before returning to their sun-deprived companions in Vermont.

But it wasn’t a flawless excursion.

“The trip was stressful and very long,” explained senior Lorenzo Mencaccini, who returned to New England with 16 extra stitches along his heel.

Both groups experienced the inconveniences of travel, exaggerated by international statuses. The larger of the two groups aimed to anticipate the hurdles of travel in the planning.

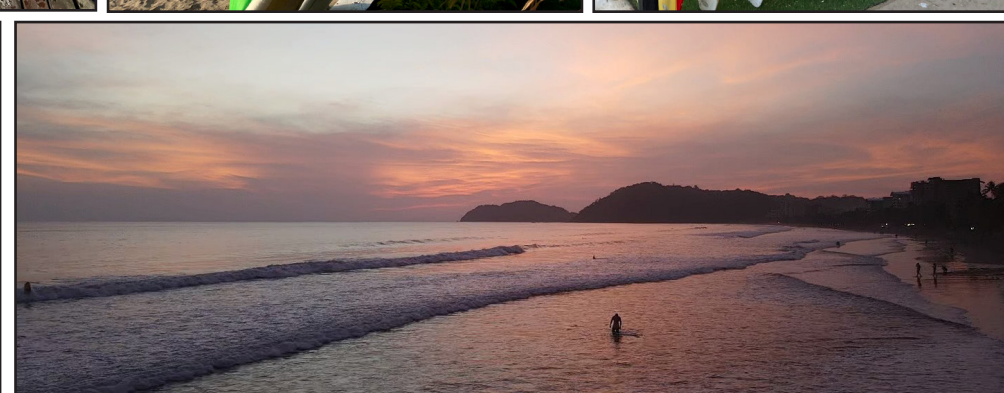
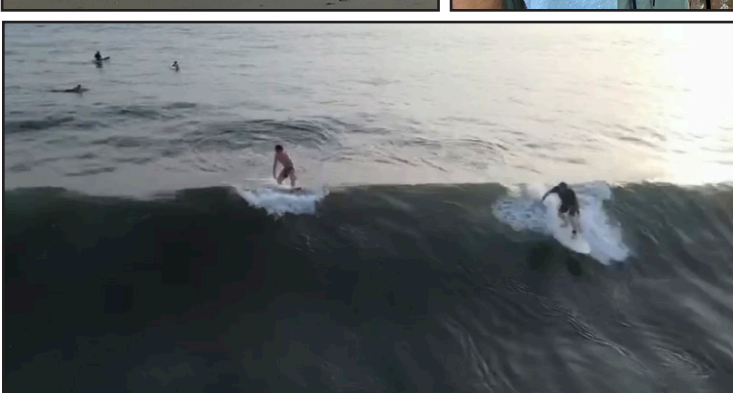
“Organizing the trip was definitely a challenge. Good thing we started so early because then we had a meeting every two to three weeks,” Juan Alba Praska said.

But upon arrival, the woes of travelling were overridden by the expanse of beaches, colors of sunsets, and mystic quality of exotic fauna and flora.

The two groups diverged regarding their approach to the animals inhabiting the country; while the smaller of the two groups encountered “parrots, tapirs, monkeys and iguanas” Mencaccini, in the larger group, noted “I must say that we limited ourselves to staying within the cities so as to not run into unpleasant surprises.”

In contrast, the remaining group made a concentrated effort to seek out the peculiarities of Costa Rica in a guided rainforest tour, though Aksel Stroem-Hansen pointed out that they “ended up finding no one.”

“We only saw a big rat and two birds but in our backyard of one Airbnb there were a couple of parrots,” he said.



JUAN ALBA PRASKA AND AKSEL STROEM-HANSEN

The men’s alpine ski team hit up Costa Rica over spring break to take in new scenery and learn a thing or two about surfing.

The lack of involuntary wildlife confrontation may have allowed the group to relax into the vacation.

“We didn’t see any snakes, which Louis (Rives) was worried about,” Alba Praska said.

Although, a possible crocodile sighting during a surf session was enough for Stroem-Hansen, Alba Praska and another Norwegian companion to “spook us to get screaming, and get out of the water!” he said.

In terms of surfing, the ski team demonstrated the transferability of skills as they immersed themselves into the tranquility of waves. Mencaccini said surfing was “extremely fun, while I could.”

“The freedom of being in the middle of the ocean and surfing

the waves is something indescribable,” he said

Mencaccini’s “while I could” clause harkens to the dangers of surfing, tying into Stroem-Hansen’s comment of Jaco’s larger waves,

“I was pretty overwhelmed. It was a big struggle and the waves really, you really had to give them a lot of respect. A couple times I got wiped out and like sucked into the tumble-dryer and the wave just takes control of you and you don’t really know what’s up or down until you see some froth and swim to the surface,” he said.

A similar scenario caused a brief medical emergency as Eliot Perretta’s board slammed into Mencaccini, the fin slicing his heel and leaving him with 16 stitches

and an end to his Costa Rica surf career.

“You know when you are an athlete, you always want to do something new and instead you are stuck with an injury, it hurts. But we had a lot of fun in every way and got to admire a part of the world unknown to us,” said Mencaccini optimistically.

Nonetheless, both groups recounted a fabulous holiday, pointing to the final sunset as a worthy memory.

“The last night we were out surfing in the sunset and all the boys were at the scene and we could just see people laying around waiting for waves, enjoying the sunset,” Stroem-Hansen said.

Mencaccini also mentioned the prominent sunsets, noting they

were “something magnificent. The sky was colored bright red and it is something I will carry in my heart for a long time.”

Returning to Castleton proved challenging for both groups. Indeed, the international status of each vacationer is a tell-tale sign of extensive foreign entry lines, as Mencaccini recounted.

“We managed to catch the second flight on the last available call. This was due to the big line at 5:30 a.m. at the checkpoints for foreign people. It made us lose a good two hours,” he said.

Alba Praska recalled the return trip for his group included rental car drop-offs at 10 a.m., several hours waiting at the airport, a one-hour flight, a one-hour layover, another four-hour flight, arrival in

New York City at 2 a.m., a five-hour bus wait, three-hour bus ride and the final car ride to Castleton from Albany.

Upon returning to campus and into the lull of classes and assignments, Stroem-Hansen uses his experience to encourage large-group holidays. He said despite inevitable tensions and minor conflicts, a rhythm can be found.

“I recommend to anyone going on a big trip just to emphasize that it’s okay to have differences and just embrace it. Really, there’s no need to force people to do stuff that they don’t want to do, and say okay, we are on vacation let’s do what we want to do the most.”

Men’s lacrosse looking for playoff berth

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

In the early half of the season the Castleton men’s lacrosse team had started off on a rough note, going 1-9 in the first 10 games. However, in recent days, the team has entered a final stretch of games that can determine its playoff fate.

The Spartans in their last four Little East Conference games are 2-2 with wins against Salem State and University of Southern Maine, both below them in the LEC standings. In the two losses over that time, the team fell to Keene State and Plymouth State, who sit at number one and three in the LEC standings, respectively.

Over the course of the four-game stretch, Castleton has turned to goaltender Chase Strychaluk, who was named LEC Rookie of the Week as well as LEC Goaltender of the Week in the four-game stretch.



#13 David Traux stands on defense (left); #7 Carter Frankenhoff charges with the ball .

“I think right now we need to play consistently because there are stretches in games that are good, but if we are falling asleep for a few moments, then the game can get out of hand,” Strychaluk said.

Throughout the four-game

stretch, the team has averaged just below 10 goals a game putting up 37 goals. The team has been led by the trio of Carter Frankenhoff, Cam Frankenhoff and Hunter Sarro, who have contributed to 66 of the teams 117 goals on the season.



AVERY BOUCHARD

“I feel like we have the tools to compete on an everyday basis, which in the past years, we have struggled with. But in this final portion of the season, we need to put it together for a full game and not just parts of games,” Sarro

said. “We can keep up with the top teams when we are on top of our game, and everything is firing on all cylinders if we do it for a full 60 minutes.”

Under first year head coach Ed Stephenson, the team has taken a

different approach to building a new culture for the lacrosse program.

“My main focus has been on establishing a mature athletic culture; putting we before me, more process focus versus outcome focus, and being intense versus emotional. We’ve made some progress, but we still have a ways to go,” Stephenson said.

While the team has had its struggles in the win department, the Spartans have already surpassed the prior seasons conference wins and nearly have passed the total goals scored on the season with two games left in regular season play.

Castleton closes out the regular season on the road against Eastern Connecticut State University on Friday April 26 before playoffs. The team will be battling to maintain its sixth seed spot in the final week of the season to have a playoff berth.