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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, February 21, 2025

The world is waiting

Why traveling during your college years is essential

Aspen Wood
Spartan Contributor

Self-discovery is a major part of the human experience. Arguably, the vast majority of these revelations happen in your 20s. It is a period of growth, building relationships, and exploring identity.

Throughout history, young adults have sought this fulfillment through seeing the world. While academics lay the foundation for knowledge, travel provides an education that no classroom can replicate.

VTSU Castleton student Emma Ezzo is back on campus from her most recent travels to South Africa, where she spent her time engaging with wildlife and immersing herself in Nelson Mandela’s experience on Robben Island. Ezzo exudes warmth and a keen sense of adventure as she speaks.

“I always knew I wanted to see the world ... So, I just did it,” she said.

Ezzo has certainly taken advantage of opportunities for unique ventures. She emphasized her value for experience over materialism. One of the rings adorning her fingers holds memories from Florence, Italy – a rare souvenir purchase. She stresses that a key part of budgeting while traveling is to prioritize funding toward “hostels and accommodation and then build around that.”

While trinkets and postcards may be lost or forgotten, experiences that build character stand the test of time.

Clearly, Ezzo’s well-rounded demeanor can partially be credited to her travels, or more specifically, the people she has met. Ezzo met an impactful woman named Rosalie while on a kayaking adventure in South America. She was an art teacher specializing in individuals with disabilities.

“I really admired her calmness...I saw how she held herself and I really learned from that,” said Ezzo.

Meeting new people is a big motivation for Ezzo’s adventures. In more recent travel, someone she crossed paths



COURTESY EMMA EZZO

Emma Ezzo posing with elephants during her travels to Robben Island, South Africa.

with shared their admiration for Ezzo’s own sense of calm.

“It felt like a full circle moment,” she said.

Jessica Emery is a fellow student who spent a semester in London and traversed through Europe. It was during her time there that Emery made strong connections.

“It was life changing. There’s not a day that goes by where I don’t think about the time I was away and the friends that I made,” she said.

Emery’s creativity shines through her, and her essence is elevated when talking about her passions and friends.

“They really shifted my perspective on a lot of things,”

Emery said.

She credits obtaining a broader viewpoint of beauty that give her a newfound sense of confidence. Her time spent in art museums, cafés and beaches allowed for reflection and perspective.

“I’m someone who really values art, but things are also so much more than what they

look like,” said Emery, referring to her value of inward beauty. “The lack of judgment was eye-opening.”

Emery felt welcomed throughout her travels, especially in Amsterdam and the coast of France. It was on these trips that she was joined by fellow student VTSU Castleton student Reilly Tennis, who

spent a semester abroad in Northern Ireland.

“I never would’ve imagined I’d have seven-plus countries visited under my belt at only 21 years old,” Tennis said.

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Castleton hit by car thefts

Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

A recent increase in car break-ins and car thefts has left Castleton University students and locals alarmed.

Several vehicles in Castleton and nearby towns have been rifled through, tampered with and even stolen in recent weeks.

Castleton Police say while most of the stolen cars have been recovered, at least one is still missing, and the suspects have yet to be identified.

A worrisome pattern seems to be occurring. The offenders appear to target unlocked vehicles in search of valuables or car keys left inside.

However, oddly enough, not many things have been taken.

Police Chief Peter Mantello says some stolen cars have been taken for joyrides and then abandoned in surrounding parking lots. Others have been searched, but remarkably few items have been stolen.

Stone Stelzl, a Castleton senior, was one of the many

whose car was targeted.

“Nothing was stolen from my car, not even the change in my center console, but everything was all over the place on my front seat,” he said. “They could’ve stolen some stuff, but nothing of huge value.”

While Stelzl was lucky to have lost nothing, the circumstances of the incident make him wonder why this is happening in a small college town.

“I think they are just looking for keys in cars to steal the cars from the looks of it, considering nothing was taken from my car,” he said. “I think it’s pretty messed up, though. Especially in a small college town where this is happening. I’m just thankful nothing was taken from my car, but others might not have had the same luck.”

CJ Childs, another Castleton student, has had an even more painful experience.

His car was flat-out stolen. “My car was stolen roughly a week and a half ago. When I woke up to find it missing, I was pretty mad, to say the least,” he said. “I contacted the police, and it still has not been

found, which is weird because my car is the only one that hasn’t been recovered since the break-ins started happening.”

Childs stated that his roommates’ cars had been rifled through, but the thieves stole nothing—even when there were expensive items and valuables that could’ve been taken.

“All of my roommates’ cars that were unlocked were searched through, but oddly enough, nothing was stolen, even though there was a wallet and a \$100 watch in one of their cars.”

Mantello verified that at least nine cars were taken in three weeks, but the problem is not confined to Castleton.

“What these people are doing is they would go through cars, checking handles, and if there were keys inside, they’d take the car, drive it to another town, and swap it for another one.”

Mantello noted that all stolen vehicles except Childs had been recovered. Police believe there are numerous suspects, including at least two juveniles. Authorities are waiting for DNA test results from



MADDIE LINDGREN

Castleton Police are looking for leads about a rash of car thefts in town.

evidence found in some of the stolen cars that were not there before. Mantello emphasized that obtaining usable DNA from a car is difficult unless the offender leaves something behind, such as a cigarette or

coffee cup.

The unpredictability of what was taken, and not taken, has many victims and students confused. Some students’ vehicles glove compartments and armrests were searched

and items were taken like cash and some technology, but others had valuable stuff left unharmed despite their exposure.

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Be conscious of your consumption

I've been reflecting on the media we consume and the role the "algorithm" plays in shaping it. With AI curating content based on our interactions—what we scroll through, like, and watch—do we truly control what we consume anymore?

Bias and personal taste have always influenced media consumption; people naturally gravitate toward content that aligns with their existing preferences. You're more likely to enjoy a film if it's similar to something you already love.

But for those of us who are passionate about culture and learning, isn't there something uniquely thrilling about discovering something entirely new—something unexpected that immediately resonates and becomes a favorite? A form of falling in love.

There is this idea floating around on the internet about how we've curated our social media feeds. This brings to the front the idea that we are active participants in the process, though I feel that this takes an understanding of the way the platform tracks you. Algorithms are designed to optimize engagement, which often means keeping us in familiar loops, reinforcing preferences rather than challenging them. This is the tension between curation and control.

Challenging the ways we think is what brings nuance and understanding to our perspectives. This constant loop of curated media for you by the app kills curiosity. You no longer must curate your own consumption. You are being fed a bowl of fruit and they know you like strawberries and bananas. What if you want pineapple tomorrow? If you no longer make your own bowl, you lose that choice.

I often have wondered what life was like before the internet. As a Gen Z born in the first year of the 21st Century, I have had access to social media since the 6th grade. What did people do with that all that empty time? They couldn't just scroll it away!

Nowadays it feels like nobody is left with their thoughts. Instead, we fill every moment with something else. Doing Laundry? Toss a show on. Doing dishes? Listen to some music. Sitting on the couch watching tv? Scroll Instagram. Walking to your car from class? Scroll Instagram again. Never be alone with yourself, you might realize something.

I imagine I would have been much more creative with my time if I didn't have 24-hour access to every piece of information ever accumulated by man. And it's an oxymoron in and of itself because the possibilities are endless with the internet to be creative with your time.

But, it seems to paralyze us, not knowing where to look so we look where we are told to. Too many choices, make my choices for me.

Reading was originally how we consumed information. Now we don't read more than a caption. I have been thinking of Orwell lately because I believe his "1984" is incredibly apropos currently. I re-read "Fahrenheit 451" for a class last year and it sent shivers down my spine at how accurate it was. There is a vast amount of information in literature, but more than that is the way reading forms but not only informs your opinions. In reading you are an active participant.

Recently, I read an article about the decline of literary engagement among men, particularly in fiction. In 2024, nearly 80% of bestsellers are written by women, and 70% of fiction readers are women. Publishers are reportedly less interested in books by white male authors simply because they aren't selling. The article suggested this shift might be contributing to a broader cultural and intellectual decline among young men.

Now we're getting information and content that prioritizes ideology over critical thought. Reading won't even allow you the ideology without critical thought. So, instead of reading Orwell, Fitzgerald, or Hunter S. Thompson—writers who shaped generations—they're consuming business biographies about Musk and self-help manuals about how to make friends.

While there's space for all kinds of literature, the loss of fiction, history, and philosophical engagement could explain the growing lack of individuality, depth, and nuance in public discourse. Maybe it's time to step away from the algorithm and return to the kinds of stories that force us to think. It is a cultural shift you can see everywhere.

It's not that we've lost control entirely, but the effort to break out of the loop has become more intentional. The default setting is passive consumption, and breaking free requires curiosity and sometimes even resistance. But especially curiosity. Cultivate it. It will change your life. What is in those pages? Where did this idea come from? Where did this get sampled from? The tension between curation and control.

Be conscious of your consumption, and explore the various mediums through which we consume media. Explore art more. Read fiction, get a political reference from a song, fall in love through a movie.

- Jackson Edwards



JOE VYVIAL

What is a fascist anyway?

Recently, I've noticed an increasing number of discussions about fascism in the media, and I realize that writing about it myself only adds to that conversation. However, who's to say the term itself is inherently negative?

It can suggest something harmful, but that interpretation is entirely subjective based on one's own perspective. A fascist might label an opposing party with the same term because, at the end of the day, they are essentially the same.

A leader may manipulate the masses to incite radical change, but the people attempting to overthrow that corrupt entity could also be labeled with the same term. It is a slippery slope, and people often find themselves caught at the bottom of a rockslide, trying to fight radical change, with their own radical change.

Like any word, fascism has multiple meanings. It has been shaped and manipulated over the years, but why? The term fascism originates from Italy. Fascismo derives from fascio, which means a bundle of sticks. A bundle of sticks is much harder to break than a single stick standing alone.

Fascism promises a new,

united nation in control of its destiny, bound by blood. National greatness is the heart that sustains fascism. It seeks to cultivate a new culture and nation capable of achieving greatness.

Doesn't that sound appealing?

A proud country unafraid to evolve its ideals?

Once again, it's subjective. However, Donald J. Trump has been shouting out these ideas from the rooftops. He seeks radical change. He is enlisting wealthy, influential people to dismantle our government to begin anew, and he will shift the blame onto them once the pressure mounts.

There has been a tidal wave of uncertainty in America, and if you look toward the horizon, you might catch a faint glimpse of hope shooting out from a lighthouse. That lighthouse symbolizes the courage and strength of the people speaking out against the MAGA team's unjust actions.

On Feb. 11, a news conference was held at the White House. "President" Elon Musk and his sidekick Trump addressed the press. Let me rephrase that: Elon spoke to the press while Trump sat idly by.



GABRIEL STICKNEY

Elon stood awkwardly to the left of the Oval Office desk, sweating profusely, while Trump sat in his chair, trying to look good for the cameras.

Elon Musk alleged, without evidence, that certain officials at the now-dismantled International Development office were taking "kickbacks." He stated that "quite a few people" within the bureaucracy had somehow "managed to accumulate tens of millions of dollars in net worth while in those positions," yet he did not clarify the basis for these claims.

Later in the conference, he noted that some Social Security recipients were as old as 150. Common sense says otherwise. Common sense would also say that Elon Musk has accumu-

lated billions of dollars in net worth while destroying our government in the process.

"We are actually trying to be as transparent as possible," he said, referring to the posts made by his team on his own social media platform, X. "So, all of our actions are maximally transparent." "I don't know of a case where an organization has been more transparent than the DOGE organization."

Elon Musk discussed "transparency" in his actions, while Trump avoided eye contact with Musk's son X, who regularly disrupted the conference. However, that statement is only true because we can see it right through him. His actions are opaque. He is "transparent." His words are purely Picasso. He throws whatever he can at a wall to see if it will stick. America's pasta may be al dente, but one day the wall the pasta is strung upon will collapse.

When it does, the people of our country will be more willing to call Donald J. Trump and his lackeys fascists and stop future leaders from abusing our fragile system.

- Gabriel Stickney

Human being? Or human doing?

People change. We will always change, whether we resist or ignore. This can be hard for those who cling to the past—you no longer identify with. People will call you angry when you're calm because you used to be hard to sit with.

Or they'll call you impatient, even though you've learned to wait. Growing means moving away from people of the past.

They say the straightest path is the quickest, but have you ever gone into a house without looking in any of the rooms? Aren't you curious? Isn't it interesting?

Moving around and experimenting is so important because then you find out about the world.

Growing up is realizing no one really knows what they're doing. Adults never held some sort of secret knowledge of how to exist. Everyone is just making it up as they go along.

Even though people are

making it up, they like to tell you they've learned something. But maybe the trick is to stop learning and start sitting. People are so confused, so afraid, so messy. We sometimes forget to just sit with it.

Society hates the contempt of stillness. It means you've accepted a world you can make better. So, we make goals, but right before we've achieved them, we move the goalposts further, pushing ourselves further and further from that contempt, so we don't even see ourselves growing. The problem is that growth without contempt is a fool's victory.

People like to give you life advice as they watch you grow up, but I come from a belief that advice is a better reflection of the person giving it than the one taking it. I believe you can only truly give advice to your past self, but we can't do that, so we tell the next best person, finding similarities or clinging to our averageness to the people who listen.

There will always be people who feel like they stick to the edges of the bowl, onlooking an unlivable normalcy in a crossroads of pleasing others or doing their own thing. And terrified either way. Here's my two cents: I believe people should be weird. People should do weird things and find themselves in weird scenarios. We should find some sort of solace in our differences. Because being different isn't wrong; it makes us interesting. To understand someone, but not be them at all is completely fascinating.

But, how can we understand someone who tells us all the wrong things? How can we listen, but still learn for ourselves? People will tell you to go to college, get a job that makes you a lot of money, or to learn certain life skills. This can be helpful. But all I hear is that as we grow up, we have to

become someone. We have to achieve. That even though we keep shedding skin and regenerating this body, we should ignore the soul we've always been. We're expected to. We're needed for. We're opinionless about. What they don't tell you is that this creature that has been buried deep within your chest will outlive all that. It has a much older hunger: passion.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" they ask you.

I have learned that the answer has nothing to do with earning medals in the Olympics or becoming a firefighter. No. I want to be strong. I want to be curious. I want to remember. Sometimes we surprise ourselves and we're the core we never thought we'd be.

- Holly Lamson

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Can we be decent on Yik Yak, please?

I first found out about the app Yik Yak when I was in high school. It never stuck around and ended up just fading away.

I was surprised to see the app resurface this past fall and was shocked by some of the things written there.

For those who may not know or fully understand what Yik Yak is, it is a mobile app where you can post anonymously. Posts can only be seen within a 5-mile radius from the original post. After being posted, your "herd," the viewers within that radius, can upvote or downvote and comment.

A typical day on Yik Yak usually consists of students asking what is being served in Huden, asking fellow students who live in the residence halls to be quiet, or when and where a party is being thrown.

Nothing out of the ordinary.

A couple of weeks ago, someone in the Castleton area posted on Yik Yak that Max the Cat was hit by a car – when he wasn't.

This post caused panic on campus for students and especially for Max's owner.

This behavior is disgusting, unnecessary and extremely harmful.

I know nobody would want to find out any news like that from an anonymous post on an app, so why post that?

Yik Yak does not do much about posts like these either.

According to their 'community gaurdrails', they write, "Yik Yak is where communities are free to be authentic, equal and empowered to connect with people nearby," and continue to say that users are responsible for the consequences that their posts may

cause.

Their 'gaurdrails' also say, "If you see a yak that doesn't vibe with the Community Guardrails, please immediately downvote and report it. Yaks that reach -5 total vote points are removed from Yik Yak... Through the upvote/downvote system, we rely on our community to help make Yik Yak a constructive venue for free and productive speech."

This system gives users most of the control over what stays on the app's feed.

This means that if the community doesn't see a problem with a post, it can stay on there for days.

Some of my friends have gone so far as to delete the app to get away from the negativity.

But Yik Yak isn't always bad.

There are always reminders

about school events, deadlines for Soundings, and even messages of support.

I have also seen posts about people expressing how depressed they are or how the pressure of school is getting to them. The comments will fill offering support or resources they can look to.

This is nice to see because it isn't easy asking for help, and anonymity may make it more comfortable.

As this app grows on campus, I hope those who use it think about how their post could affect someone. I'm not asking a lot, just be a decent human being.

- Carly Centeno

Old Village School is alive with pickleball

Ethan Haggerty
Spartan Contributor

The second you walk in the doors of the Castleton Recreation Center, you will be embraced by contagious laughter, the cracking sounds of pickleball rackets colliding with the ball, and some competitive and playful hooting and hollering that comes with competition.

Bob and Mary McIntyre created the pickleball program three years ago. Bob highlighted the strong sense of community building, and the ability for people to get exercise in a more exhilarating way.

“It’s not just community members,” said McIntyre, revealing there are some out-of-town competitors. “There are probably four or eight of us that go out after playing.”

They often support local businesses like the Castleton Deli and Birdseye diner, he said.

“I played all three sports in high school,” said Rob Mur-

phy wearing a knee brace, sweating from the intense past games. Despite being much older than the high school days, he said he never lost the edge that competition brings, which is shown in his vocal and entertaining tone during games.

Murphy now delivers propane for the Fyles Brothers, located in Orwell, Vermont, but was a firefighter for the Navy in the past. He related the immense comradery in the Navy to the tight sense of community in the rec center.

Other players agree.

“I find the community the best,” said Marj Kyhil, a part-time employee at VTSU-Castleton Wellness Center who also discussed the comradery pickleball at the Castleton Recreation Center provides.

“It’s fun, and very respectful of what your needs are,” Kyhil stated with a grin forming on her face, hinting towards the diverse age range and experience level the Castleton Recre-

ation boasts.

The courts see a range of 30- to mid-70-year-olds, while also sprinkling in a couple 20-year-olds that will sometimes show up, he said. Multiple players mentioned how during the summer, people from other states will come and play due to their homes on the lake.

Despite the games being very respectful amongst teammates, there is much playful bickering. They specifically call out Kyhil because of her “Marj Shot.” This shot is a lob shot that goes over the heads of the opponents, making it almost impossible to return. The members say, “you got Marj’d,” he said.

“The nice part is how the scheduling accommodates the working people,” part-time orthopedic Cherly Morris emphasized. “Some people work during the week which makes playing harder for them. Having time slots during the day, and then some at night help with scheduling.”

It is widely known at the rec center that if you miss a sign-up window, you simply do not play that day.

“Twelve players per section, and about 40 people signed up to play,” Bob McIntyre said.

Castleton Recreation utilizes the Playtime Schedule app for the participants to sign-up. Players said that it is very easy to sign-up, and if you had requested to play and can’t make it yourself, you simply take anyone off, and someone else has the opportunity to join.

The recreation center is not limited to pickleball, however. Drama club, horticulture club and a brand-new tai chi program are just some of the programs offered now. Yoga classes are also in the works.

“We need the rec center,” Bob McIntyre stated.

Having this in the town brings people together and allows community members to have something to look forward to.

If you are looking for a



ETHAN HAGGERTY

An intense game of pickleball taking place inside the Recreational Center.

strong sense of community, the Castleton Recreation is full of it.

“College kids are encouraged to check this out,” McIntyre adds.

It doesn’t matter if you have no experience playing or a ton, you are welcomed at the Castleton Recreation anytime, he said.

Rebecca Makara: a new face in Res-Life

Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

Rebecca Makara, originally from Poughkeepsie, New York, is the Residence Life hall director at Castleton Univer-

sity. She earned her associate degree from SUNY Dutchess Community College and completed both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at SUNY Plattsburgh. Before joining Castleton in July, she worked

as a residence life coordinator at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, where she discovered her passion for student engagement and mentorship. Outside of work, Rebecca enjoys exploring local shops, baking her

famous brownies and spending time with her beloved cats, Leo and Eloise. Known for her authenticity and student-centered approach, she encourages students to embrace who they are and follow their own

paths with confidence.

Q. Though you’re not a student at Castleton, how does the campus culture here compare to that of your alma mater, SUNY Plattsburgh?

A. So, I would say this is more a small-town community feel. Students who I haven’t met know me and they say, like “Hi Rebecca!” And I’m like, how do you know me? It’s definitely more close-knit, I would say too. Not as hectic. Maybe a little slower pace.. Everyone just knows everyone, and you’re able to create more like stronger relationships with students and with faculty staff members too.

Q. People who know you well know that your cats are a big source of joy. How did you come up with their names and what are their personalities like?

A. I’ll start with Leo. I got Leo when he was 3 weeks old. He and his siblings were abandoned by their mom. He was a birthday present, I think for like my 12th birthday or my 13th, don’t exactly remember. But his full legal name is Leonardo DiCatio. That’s his full legal name, and I use it only when he’s in trouble. He’s got a big personality. He always brings me joy and is really goofy. I know when I go home today, he’s gonna be so mad and lay on the floor, sprawled out saying “feed me.” But he’s got a big heart. He is such a snuggly cat. And, like me, sometimes when he knows when I’m having a bad day, he’ll sit on the couch and sit on my lap and start purring and snuggling with me. He has just been a joy to have and just to be a constant presence in my life where if I have my bad days, I know he’s always gonna be right there for me and just supporting me through it.

And then Eloise, she’s just turned 10 months. She’s a purebred ragdoll. I was going through like a giant list of names with my mom for like five months. Like at one point, we had 30 names on the list. Then, as we started narrowing it down, we started looking behind the meaning of what these names mean. Eloise means, famous warrior, it’s a German name ... healthy, whole, wide. Also, it can be very independent, strong. I would say those are the big ones that drew me to her name. Even now, when she’s developed her little personality, she’s very miss-independent, cute, and very sassy. She loves her scratches on her back. She loves to play. She’ll do her zoomies around the apartment, and it’s really cute where she’s got that big, beautiful personality that people love. And then she’s also known to be carried around her backpack.

Q. When you’re not in the office, what does a typical day off look like for you?

A. I would say it depends, but I really love to go explore Rutland and do a lot of shopping, going to like TJ MAXX. Walmart, shoe store. I love going antiquing and going to like different thrift stores. I’ve also been exploring Brandon more and doing some shopping up there. I’m always occasionally in Saratoga going to the mall and doing those things. I may also be even doing homework on my day off. I am actually starting to go back to school part-time through CCV again. I’m hoping to get an eventual associate’s in Business. So, I’m doing homework on the side, on top of working here full time. I do love to attempt to cook, but I also love to bake. I’m very well known for my brownies. I also just love to sit on the couch and just do crafting. I really love to put together puzzles.

See ‘Rebecca’ on page 6



COURTESY OF REBECCA MAKARA

Rebecca Makara shown in Ireland, top, at her desk inside the Residence Life office, bottom left, and her cats Leo and Eloise, bottom right.

Super Bowl advertisements stole the show

Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Every year millions of people excitedly turn on their televisions to watch the Super Bowl. They put on their favorite team’s jersey and passionately yell at the TV. People get together to drink beer, eat wings and other classic Super Bowl dishes like pretzels and cheese, deviled eggs, and buffalo chicken dip.

Food and football. The epitome of America.

Although it’s not just the football people are excited for. The commercials are known for stepping up their game big time for the Super Bowl. It’s a chance for companies to sway millions into looking into what they’re selling. They want to make an impression.

Some were hilarious, some were weird, some were emotional, some were offensive.

But they were not forgettable.

A diva in a Wig Called Glen Powell.

In a Ram Trucks commercial starring Glen Powell, he portrays a Goldilocks character. The action-packed commercial shows him driving three Ram trucks and facing different obstacles.

Later it cuts to Powell telling the story to his kids and they question where the three bears are since this clearly isn’t the typical Goldilocks story. He states that this is his story and the end the commercial says, “Drive your own story.”

The commercial was funny and entertaining and definitely memorable. Glen Powell looks good as a blonde.

Hims and Hers and Hypocrisy

The Hims and Hers commercial sparked a lot of controversy. The commercial starts with facts about obesity in America with Childish Gambino’s “This is America” playing in the background.

The commercial goes on to explain the dangers of weight loss medication and how these medications are “built to keep us sick and stuck.”

But not their weight loss medication.

No, Hers and Hims weight loss medication is different.

Right, okay.

The commercial is very hypocritical to bash Big Pharma (Big pharma is used to describe large pharmaceutical companies that are a bad influence) when they themselves are Big Pharma.

The first half of the commercial seemed promising but



Caitlin Clark in Nike’s Super Bowl ad.

by the end, I was filled with disappointment that Hims and Hers highlighted exactly how they are just like every other company pushing harmful weight loss drugs.

Breasts Pushing Boundaries

The breast cancer awareness ad was so clever and impactful. I really appreciated the commercials that were pushing boundaries to make a statement. The commercial displayed women’s bodies, focusing on boobs. There were cheerleaders, mothers nursing, runway models, and clips of push-up bra commercials.

For something that society has been so focused on, they are paying attention to the wrong thing.

If our attention is constantly on a woman’s chest, than we should at least be aware of the health risks women face.

I also thought it was really powerful how they used sex appeal and making it obvious that a woman’s chest is the first

place the eye will go.

I appreciated the commercials that made loud statements like this.

Ok, Fine, Get me a Beer

All of the beer commercials really struck me in a similar way so I’m grouping them together. After I finished the commercials, I thought “yeah I’m proud to be an American I guess.”

Which is really sneaky of them and shows how effective of a commercial they can

make.

One of the beer commercials that stuck with me is Michelob Ultra starring Katherine O’Hara and Willem Dafoe. This is a duo that I didn’t know I needed to see but I love how competitive they are and found it a joy to watch.

The Bud Light commercial was also very fun. I like being reminded of sun and family and friends. Exactly what people want to think of when cracking open a cold one.

I thought all of the beer commercials really played to their audience.

Nike Supporting Women - I Could Cry.

You know, I watched this commercial and got chills.

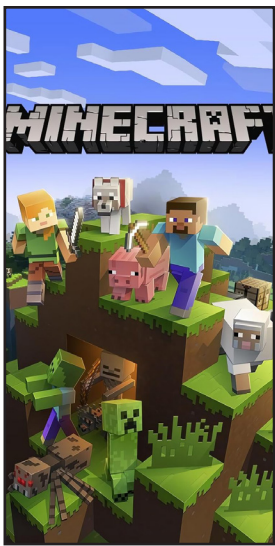
The commercial is filmed in black and white and states different things that women are not allowed to do by societal standards.

Like, “You can’t be emotional. So be emotional.”

Then it shows all of these women yawning because it’s getting so old.

I thought this was really empowering and makes me want to invest in Nike since I know where they stand with their values.

The commercial did exactly what was intended and for good reason.



First Minecraft Club at VTSU

By Jack Aicher
Castleton Spartan

The newly founded Castleton Minecraft Club is quickly gaining traction among the campus community.

Despite nearly 20 sign-ups at the recent campus Club Fair, the club is actively working to overcome challenges.

“It’s a work in progress,” said Lindsey Sherman, president of the Minecraft Club. “We’re trying to get other peoples’ perspectives on what they want to see in our servers.”

The club aims to establish a server compatible with Bedrock and Java editions of Minecraft to ensure accessibility to a broad range of members.

However, this has proven to be a challenge for the club’s organizers as financial and technical considerations have hindered their decision-making.

The club has sent out a survey to gauge student preferences, though they are still determining the best approach.

“We have to pay for a server to play on, so it’s hard to make a decision,” said Robin Chamberlain, Treasurer of the Minecraft Club. “It would be great if everyone could play on one server, but that’s probably not going to be the case.”

Despite these challenges, the club has continued to make progress. The club fair secured them 19 sign-ups, a promising start for being in its early stages.

“We filled the whole sign-up list and even went onto the back, which is super exciting,” said Chamberlain.

Currently, the club has yet to meet but is planning to operate primarily online. Given that Minecraft requires a capable computer setup, in-person meetings would be difficult to organize.

Instead, club leaders are considering utilizing an online eSports platform to arrange their meetings.

The club also hopes to offer various in-game activities, such as challenges or creative projects.

A long-term goal is to create a server that connects students across all Vermont State University campuses, said Chamberlain.

Promotional strategies are currently underway. Club members are planning on posting flyers and possibly organizing an Instagram page to spread the word and attract new members.

As the club continues to grow, club leaders acknowledge the difficulties of organizing a student-run group. From technicalities to financial decisions, the launch of the Castleton Minecraft Club has been a new experience for its members.

“Once everything gets started, I think it’ll get easier as we go,” said Sherman.

With the club’s current progress, members are optimistic about its future and involvement with the Castleton student community.

“We just hope that it grows,” said Chamberlain. “We are pretty sure that it will.”

Traps doing more harm than good?

By Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

When it comes to protecting wildlife and domesticated animals, the solution to the problem of disease infested rodents is not always a cut and dry one.

Rodenticides are a common solution to the common rodent problem, but some fear that these traps might do more harm than good.

Many of us around the VTSU Castleton campus may not be aware that rodenticides were installed around the entire campus to control rodents like rats and mice, but some are a bit weary of the traps, fearing they may be harmful to small, non-threatening wildlife or household pets, like Max the campus cat for instance.

There are many different types of rodenticides, and some are more toxic than others when it comes to pets and smaller wildlife, according to The National Pesticide Information Center.

“The rodenticides that pose the greatest secondary poisoning risks for wild mammals, dogs and cats include chlorophacinone, diphacinone, brodifacoum,”

the NPIC site reads.

However, District Manager of Vermont Pest Control Ian Gordon addressed the concerns about the rodenticides used on campus.

“Yes, they are all over campus...In terms of harm to wildlife, it’s a yes or no question,” Gordon said.

Gordon has been conducting work for VTSU Castleton for quite some time, although he said the traps were distributed across the entire campus about three months ago.

“I’ve been doing work with the campus for about 15 years or more,” Gordon reported.

He claimed that the rodenticides are “focused on rodents” and do not provide a lethal dose of toxicity to animals that are larger, such as most non-rodent wildlife and pets.

“The amount of toxicity is not enough to kill them,” Gordon said.

VTSU professor and program coordinator for Wildlife and Forest Conservation, Kristen Ross gave some pros and cons to rodent traps.

“Yes, traps can pose a threat to wildlife, but having rats or other disease carrying animals in close quarters with humans

can also pose a threat,” she said.

She also pointed out that the risk depends on the trap and the animal target.

“In terms of roaming pets, yes, any poison accessible to animals left free to roam is a threat,” she said. “In some styles of traps, a dog or cat wouldn’t be able to access the poison if the trap is designed for a target animal like a rat.”

However, the secondary poisoning could be more cause for concern depending on the trap and toxicity.

“The dog or cat roaming free might eat a poisoned animal and get sick themselves. That is the risk the pet owner takes by allowing their animal to roam free,” Ross said. “The biggest threat to wildlife, particularly birds, are outdoor cats. Outdoor cats kill over 2 billion birds a year in the U.S. alone.”

Ross addressed the larger threat to wildlife: humans.

“Usually traps are band-aid approaches to a problem that is human-driven. Unless individuals, businesses, and institutions learn to contain their trash better, there will always be temptations for animals both



AMANDA JOHNSON
Traps are set outside buildings on campus that catch critters and poison them.

wild and domestic,” she said.

While rodenticides may provide a shorter term solution, the real problem is the most difficult to address and correct. Human behavior, ultimately, is the most dangerous threat to our wildlife and even pets.

“The ultimate best solu-

tions for wildlife are to, one, keep our waste material, especially food, disposed of and contained properly,” Ross said. “And two, don’t let our pets roam free. However, these are human behaviors that need to change, which is the most difficult challenge.”

CAB Bucks, get your CAB Bucks!

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

The VTSU Castleton Campus Activities Board has unveiled a new “CAB Bucks” rewards plan to get more students to attend events.

“Rewards are so popular right now, everyone and their brother has rewards. It’s the new thing,” said graduate assistant for student activities, Marty Kelly III.

Attending events like comedy shows and music performances can earn students up to 30 CAB Bucks to tack onto their grand total for the annual CAB auction, which this year is going to be held on May 2 at 8 p.m. in the 1787 Room.

In the past, students would all receive the same amount of fake money when attending the auction. However, this led to some issues that unfortunately resulted in a rock paper scissors battle since the majority of people would save their allowance for the bigger prizes at the end.

CAB clerk Megan Mureddu and Kelly knew that they needed to come up with a new way to auction off prizes, and thought, why not try to get event attendance up at the same time?

“What is some intensive way to get students to come?” Mureddu said.

After some brainstorming with her mom, who has previously worked in a recreation department, and a couple trial and errors, the idea of CAB Bucks was born.

It was first brought up last spring semester by Mureddu and then approved by all CAB members to act on it for this semester.

“Megan presented the idea to me and said it was something she was really excited about possibly doing in the future and I agreed that it was a fabulous idea,” said Secretary of Campus Activities Aurelia Leerkes.

There are three different denominations of CAB Bucks students can receive, depending on what event they attend. All performances are worth 30 CAB Bucks and the more popular events, such as bingo and Stuff Your Own, are worth five CAB Bucks. All other events held by the CAB program are worth 15 CAB Bucks.

After looking at the CAB expenses over the semester, members say they expect to have at least double the budget for this year’s auction and will feature amazing prizes like iPads, AirPods and video game consoles.

During every event, Mureddu sits and makes a spreadsheet to track who went to what event to keep an idea of who has how many CAB Bucks, as well as to see if the new system is working in the right ways.

The excel sheet also allows for a backup way to track how many bucks each individual student has in case they lose them, and also allows for a scam-proof system.

In just three weeks of the CAB Bucks program running, the events have had more students attending than in the past.



GABBY BLANCHARD
Megan Mureddu fans out a stack of CAB bucks that students can get for attending CAB events.

“I think the amount of people we got in these first three weeks were more than we got all of last semester,” Mureddu said.

The CAB Bucks are getting more students engaged and allowing them to realize the opportunity they have to see something new.

“It is SO good to hear that students are saying, ‘oh yeah I have to come to this event so

I can get my CAB Bucks!’” Leerkes said.

The future for the business card style CAB Bucks, which are designed and printed by Mureddu, seems bright.

If responses to the program continue to thrive, they could be used for other purposes such as a possible collaboration with Fireside, Mureddu said.

The CAB program welcomes feedback and even en-

courages it so they can pick up improvements along the way of their new journey.

“These events are a great opportunity for people to get involved and have a great time, and our events are not for a certain demographic. Everybody can come and everyone can have a good time. It’s all about what you make out of it,” Mureddu said.

Castleton connections at Boys and Girls Club



HENRY ROBERTSON
Two members of the Boys and Girls Club, Elianna and Araya, smile and hug.

By Henry Robertson
Spartan Contributor

On any given weekday, you can hear laughter and see smiles through the heavily decorated front windows of the Boys and Girls Club at 75 Merchants Row in Rutland.

And when you step into the building you will be greeted by a friendly and safe environment. You’ll see around 30

kids who are learning and developing life skills with smiles on their faces.

And alongside the youth in the club you’ll see the committed staff who are devoting their time and energy back into their community.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America offers its services at 5,400 sites across the United States, 13 of which are housed in Rutland County.

“We offer after school care to somewhere around 275 kids daily,” said Malik Hines, director of Operations for the Boys & Girls Club of Rutland County and Castleton graduate. “We’re serving around 250 kids snack and 150 to 160 kids dinner every day.”

Nicole Rice, executive director and another Castleton graduate, has been working with the organization for three

years.

“We employ somewhere between 15-20 Castleton students each year,” Rice said.

The Boys and Girls Club (BGCA) of Rutland County employs many individuals who are committed to serving the youth of the area, and many of these employees are former or current students at Castleton.

“Our growth over the course of the last year and a half would absolutely not have been possible without Castleton students,” Rice said.

The BGCA’s mission statement is to enable all young people, especially those who need them most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

“The idea that parents can work and know that their kids are in a safe space, where they are gaining new skills and having social and emotional opportunities to develop outside of the school day is incredibly important,” Rice said.

Iris Hudson, who serves as the director of Finance, has been working with the club for five years and started when she was a student at Castleton.

“It’s very easy to build a community within the Boys and Girls Club because a lot of our staff have a connection through Castleton,” Hudson said.

Hines also spoke about the connection to Castleton.

“It’s all about the people you meet and the relationships you build that allow you to get to the places you want to be,” Hines said. “And Castleton has allowed me to meet a bunch of

people within the community who I still work with to this day.”

Both Hudson and Hines regularly connect with former professors from Castleton to further the reach of the organization and ensure it’s meeting the youths’ needs.

“We’re even more of a family than what people might think because we have these ties to Castleton,” Hines said.

When asked the question what makes club fun, Araya Allen, 8, offered a quick response.

“The staff,” she said.

This is a common feeling among many club members, says Hines.

“Some of the members are not only coming back because of their friends and the programming, but because of the connections they’ve made with the staff,” Hines said.

Wyatt Jackson Jr, a current member of the VTSU Castleton master’s program, has been working at the BGCA for over a year.

Not only have these Castleton students and graduates contributed greatly to the community of the greater Rutland area, they say they have been positively impacted by the connections they’ve made.

“What the kids have done for me, and also what the entire program has done for myself, has given me not only a sense of community but a sense of belonging,” Jackson said.



ISIAH HUGHES
VTSU Castleton student Vincent Padilla’s butterfly tattoo is in honor of a bond with his grandmother.

Tattoo of the week:

Butterfly connection

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

For VTSU Castleton student Lou Padilla, tattoo art means more than just body embellishments. They serve as stories etched into skin.

His most recent addition, which appears on his right shin, is a Blue Morpho butterfly and it holds great emotional value because it represents his grandmother and their shared butterfly fascination.

“My grandma taught me to love butterflies,” Padilla shared. “She had this beautiful wildflower garden that would always attract butterflies. It was like magic.”

Padilla spent his childhood exploring butterfly sanctuaries by his grandmother’s side as they watched these delicate creatures in their natural environment. Butterflies became his favorite animal because they symbolized both natural beauty and the strong connections he experienced with his grandmother.

“Butterflies always stood out to me,” Padilla said. “The color wasn’t all; these creatures would suddenly emerge shining as they appeared in the sunlight.”

His grandmother’s garden featured an old oak tree that displayed metal butterflies. The butterflies’ permanent place in his grandmother’s domain have remained with him.

When it came time to

choose a tattoo, the decision was easy.

“The Blue Morpho represents love,” Padilla explained. “I wanted this because now we aren’t together as often as we used to be.”

He recalled the sanctuary visits, and the oak tree decorated with metal butterflies in his grandmother’s garden when he chose the tattoo.

Although Padilla’s grandmother isn’t a huge fan of tattoos, he got her approval for this one.

“She actually loves it,” Padilla said. “She told me she appreciates what it represents. That meant everything to me.”

The artwork was detailed and designed by Lapiz, “@slavesofink” from Bronx, New York. It was designed to precisely replicate the butterfly’s iridescent blue colors for a delicate appearance. This body art goes beyond a physical adornment to become an iconic representation of memory and bond beyond temporal boundaries.

The butterflies, he explained, represent more than insects because they symbolize his grandmother’s spirit which remains nearby.

“I believe each time I observe these creatures in nature, my grandmother would be giving me her hello,” he said smiling. “This idea brings beautiful meaning into life, don’t you agree with me?”

Arts & Entertainment

Grammy Awards leaves some happy, others (like the writer) not so much

By Carly Centeno
Castleton Spartan

The 67th Annual Grammy Awards took place on Feb. 2, with Trevor Noah hosting for the fifth year. The event left many viewers with a mix of emotions; some feeling excited, sad, and even confused.

From Beyonce’s win for Album of the Year to Kendrick Lamar’s song “Not Like Us” winning Record of the Year, the audience was taken through a roller-coaster of emotions.

For a while, The Grammys have been a hotbed for conspiracy theories and filled with controversial wins, snubs, and allegations of industry politics.

Beyonce’s win for Best Album of the Year and Best Country Album of the Year struck a lot of people with confusion and shock. There were many other artists who fans thought would have been a better choice for the Album of the Year, like Billie Eilish or Charli XCX.

Fans were very proud of Billie Eilish’s newest album, making it one of her best. So inevitably, they were extremely disappointed seeing Billie close to tears after Beyonce had just won.

Charli XCX had an incredibly popular album, titled “Brat,” which took the world, and especially social media by storm. You may have heard the term “Brat” or “Brat Summer” in reference to Charli’s album on social media.

“Brat” was an era in music that everyone enjoyed, and many believed should’ve secured the spot.

Both of Eilish and Charli’s albums are extremely popular, but Beyonce’s album, not so much. In fact, many people have only heard one of the songs off the album due to it going viral on TikTok.

“Billie worked so hard on her most recent album; you could tell how personally she took this loss. She is so proud of this album, there’s no way Beyonce should’ve won, there’s only one song on her entire album that people only know the chorus too,” student Audrey Steinman said.

Kendrick Lamar swept his nominations at the Grammys and left with five wins for his



Kendrick Lamar was a big winner at this years Grammy Awards, Others, including Beyonce, also took home Grammys that left some on the VTSU Castleton campus scratching their heads.

song “Not like Us.” He won both Record and Song of the Year, making history for being the most-awarded song at the Grammys.

Lamar was also the second rap artist to ever win in these categories after Childish Gambino in 2019. Lamar’s song “Not Like Us” started off as just a diss track to come at the rapper Drake, after arguing about who is part of “Big Three.” This song went crazy viral all-over social media because of how catchy it is and how much it exposes Drake. Even though Drake has sued Kendrick for the song, Lamar still made it a part of his 2025 Super Bowl Halftime show, which happened to be one of the most viewed halftime shows in history.

“Kendrick doesn’t mess around. It was great to see him

get the recognition he deserves, and I bet Drake is crying like a baby seeing his diss track win five awards at the Grammys,” Gretel Seamen said.

Doechii had a very exciting night at the Grammys as well. Winning Best Rap Album and being the third woman to ever receive the award. Her acceptance speech had many in tears and excited to see what more is to come. Her performance at the Grammys was like no other and had many music legends out of their seats, dancing. They left praising her and her performance.

Chappell Roan won Best New Artist and dedicated her speech to demeaning record labels. She expressed her thoughts on how the music industry should be paying a living wage for new and upcoming artists and gave an amazing

performance of her song “Pink Pony Club.” It was a magical moment for both her and those who have watched her grow as an artist and performer.

“Chappell Roan was guaranteed a win for this award. She is so amazing and after watching her grow, it was obvious she was the next up-and-coming pop star. From opening for Olivia Rodrigo to having 110,000 people in the audience for her GovBall performance,” Olivia Whiting said.

The Grammys were an eventful night for artists and their fans. Even though people disagreed about the outcome of many different awards, it was still a great night for many.

The FAC’s silver throne

By Joe Vyvial
Castleton Spartan

Becoming a famous artist and making money doing art wasn’t on the radar when James Hampton rented a carriage house for his special project.

In 1950, a 41-year-old the General Services Administration janitor decided to prepare for Christ’s return to earth.

Over the next 14 years, Hampton built a complex work of religious art called the “Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations’ Millennium General Assembly.” The piece is based on biblical prophecies and several religious visions that Hampton had experienced.

He worked with various scavenged materials from his neighborhood including jelly jars, old furniture, light bulbs and hand-crafted elements from cardboard and plastic.

Most of it was then wrapped in aluminum and gold foil, and put together with glue, pins and tape. He kept it to himself the whole time as well. The piece was discovered after his death,

by his garage owner, who went to check why his rent had not been paid.

VTSU Castleton art professor Oliver Schemm’s Professional Studio Art class took Hampton’s work as an inspiration for their project early this semester. They collected and used objects from the Fine Arts Center and the Wooldridge house and wrapped them all up in tin foil.

“We’ve used eight, maybe ten rolls of tin foil,” Schemm said.

Matthew Stoddard, one of the students in the class, described the effort further.

“We tried to use two of each things, to have symmetry,” he said.

The class have spent around three hours to create what Schemm called this “shiny, ridiculous, uncanny thing.”

“People like shiny things,” another student, Abigail Murphy added.

Another student chimed in, “we’re all crows in a way.”

Graphic design professor Bill DeForest, is going to be doing a collaborative drawing



Art Professor Oliver Schemm’s Professional Studio Art Class paid hionmage to artist James Hampton with a sculpture of objects covered in tin foil.

project for his Intro to Drawing class.

The purpose of this project,

Schemm said, was to show students that you can make art from nothing. You don’t need

any expensive equipment or technology, as long as you have an interesting idea, and

you stay committed to it.

Standout Spaces blog: Room features skiing, soft light and sprinkles

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

Hey! I’m Emily, the author of the blog Standout Spaces where we’ll dive into the unique ways students turn their dorms into their own personalized havens. From the peaceful minimalism of one student’s calm oasis, to another’s loud and artistic vibe of a space, no two rooms are the same and I’m here to show you that! Many students have tips on how to make their space usable by reshaping and remodeling, so let’s explore!

“I don’t think I am the right person to interview for this,” Katie said uncomfortably.

But, I think that this is untrue.

In Morril 302 in room A, Katie Stager, a senior at VTSU Castleton, has one of the coziest and comfiest dorm rooms I have ever been in. But with Stager, what you see is what you get.

As soon as you enter her room, the first thing

you’ll notice is not an inch of her walls are not covered.

And it’s evident, she loves to ski.

“My life is skiing. It just makes sense that my room shows that,” she said.

One of the walls in her room is covered with photos, but only photos of skiing. Her family is shown on the lift up the mountain, a few of her friends are shown after a wipeout with their skis planted in the snow around them, and a very special picture shows her and boyfriend toasting their ski trip with fireball shooters at the top of the mountain.

Another wall in her room is veiled with a beautiful tapestry showing two people skiing over the Appalachian Mountains.

To Katie, skiing is everything.

“Oh yeah, I have my skis in the corner,” she says motioning to the corner of her room.

Katie’s room smells like vanilla and fresh laundry. She has multiple soft lit yellow lamps



EMILY ELY
A glimpse inside Katie Stager’s room.

around her room with warm colored string lights lining the ceiling.

“I’m scared of the big light. If you turn it on, you’re kicked out,” she said with a laugh.

Her room is full of snacks too. Pretzels, chips, multiple cereals, and surprisingly, a huge container of rainbow sprinkles.

“You just never know when they’ll come in handy,” Katie said when questioned about her sprinkles.

Katie also has some of the coolest decor I’ve seen. Alongside all the photos of her skiing memories, she has many posters dedicated to music artist Harry Styles. There’s a board with a quote from her favorite song reading “We’ll be alright.” She has a whole shelf dedicated to fake plants, some true fake plants and some created out of Legos.

When asked about this shelf, Stager replied bluntly, “I just like plants. I told you I’m not a good person to interview.”

Though I learned that may be true, after Katie’s room spoke more to me than she did, this has been one of my favorite rooms to cover on Standout Spaces and I am excited to get into her stash of sprinkles.

Travels:

Continued from page 1

Her main motivation was to gain a stronger sense of independence. In reflection, she has succeeded.

“Although it seemed so scary, I met so many new people, grew as a person, gained independence, and learned so many new things about myself. I also realized that I’m not a huge Guinness fan,” she said.

One reason individuals do not take the leap to see the world is rooted in our brains: the fear of failure. Learning to accept that things can and will go wrong is not easy to accept but is an essential lesson that can be applied to all aspects of life.

“It’s totally okay when things don’t go to plan; it’s part of the learning experience,”

Ezzo said.

Tennis agreed.

“It wasn’t perfect all the time, but it’s an experience I would never trade for anything,” she said.

Another VTSU student is about to embark on his own venture to New Zealand. Tristan Thomas, a Wildlife and Forest Conservation major, has his intentions set on the region due to its biodiversity and abundance of endangered species.

“I think it’s crucial to see the world. I’ve always wanted to,” Thomas said.

There are a couple of traits in common with all the individuals interviewed. For one, they all described their experiences of planning their travel as spontaneous and, “on a whim.”

For Ezzo, her college plans completely changed in three hours; leaving behind a plan to play soccer at Plattsburgh with her sister to pursue National Outdoor Leadership School in Patagonia. The mental block of traveling on your own is only resolved by taking a leap.

“Now, as a college student, is the perfect time, and there’s never going to be another time in your life where you have built-in breaks,” she said.

If you are seeking self-discovery and adventure, what is stopping you? The world is waiting.

“You’re very unlikely to regret it in the long run. Part of life is taking risks,” Thomas said.



COURTESY REILLY TENNIS AND JESS EMERY

VTSU Castleton students Jess Emery and Reilly Tennis recently studied abroad in Europe.

Car thefts:

Continued from page 1

Another student, Trey Lavigne, had a new truck battery taken but was pleased that his more expensive items remained untouched.

“They could’ve stolen my snowboard and other winter gear, which is not cheap, but they didn’t,” he said.

Lavigne assumes that for economic reasons the crimes are occurring.

“I believe people are breaking in since, during this season, they may be out of a job and need a way to make money,” he said. “Many jobs are seasonal and occur in spring or summer, such as landscaping, paving, etc.”

Students like Rylee Pepin are worried that the break-ins take place so close to their houses.

“It was pretty frightening. Not even that my car was broken into, because nothing was taken, but that they were in our driveway, so close to our house.”

Frustration is growing among students and community members as these break-ins occur more frequently. Childs, whose car is still missing, has taken it upon himself to look for it in surrounding towns.

“I have been keeping a lookout,” he said. “I find myself checking behind houses and other buildings when I’m driving through Rutland and Fair Haven to see if I can find my car.”

Mantello emphasized that prevention is key.

“People think their cars are being broken into, but really, most of these cases involve unlocked vehicles,” he said. “If there’s something valuable in plain sight, then they might break in, but a lot of these cars have been unlocked.”

Mantello recommended taking simple security precautions to prevent becoming victims.

“The biggest thing is prevention—lock your car doors, don’t leave valuables inside, and be situationally aware,” he said. “If you see someone creeping around, and I hate to use the word ‘creeping,’ but everyone does, report it. We can check them out, and see if they belong in the area.”

Authorities warn that thefts may increase as spring and summer approach. As the weather gets warmer and more people start to go out at night, this could become an issue.

Mantello also advised students and homeowners to consider installing security cameras, saying that even small, portable cameras that use Wi-Fi can be effective.

For the time being, Castleton students and locals are on high alert, hoping for answers—and that the thefts will stop.

Rebecca:

Continued from page 3

Sudoku. Even watching TV. I’m really big into watching sports. I love watching hockey, especially the New York Rangers.

Q. Do you have any memorable experiences or interactions with a student that stand out?

A. One day I spoke with this one student and we talked a lot about where his academic journey was going and did he have a social circle in his major? How were his classes going? What was his reason for being there? Where does he see himself going? It turns out his major wasn’t for him. He wanted to do something completely else. He was so scared of changing his major, because it was so late into his college career and I said, it’s not too late for someone like me. I personally decided with my major that I really didn’t want to pursue that career in my final semester, my senior year of college. And I used that experience to empower, it’s not too late. This is all you can do and connect him with appropriate resources. He eventually changed majors and he’s doing a lot better. He’s found a better community. There’s other paths out there. You just have to be empowered enough to have the courage to take that path.

Q. I saw that you previously worked as a residence life coordinator at Allegheny

College. How has that experience influenced your transition to the same role at Castleton?

A. I worked in an even smaller department than I do here, but that really prepared me and launched my whole career. It was my first introduction to what it means to work in higher education, specifically residence life. I had no clue what I was doing when I started. However, when I first started, I had a colleague. Her name is Annie. I’ll shout her out. She was amazing at helping me transition into my role and helping me figure out who I am as a higher education professional and who I am as a residence life coordinator, and who I wanna be. She was amazing in my transition and really supported me throughout. It really taught me a lot about time management, organization, and how I wanna be as a supervisor and how I wanna lead my staff and be a role model for my students. It really taught me a lot about how to engage with students and what style works for me. It just set me on the right path.

Q. If you could switch roles with anyone at Castleton for a day, who would it be and why?

A. I would honestly switch places with Q at Huden. Every day I walk into Huden for breakfast or lunch, she is always greeting me with the best warm welcome. If I want a hug, she’ll give me a hug. She always has a smile on her face and is really supportive of our work here as residence

life professionals, but also supportive of making sure the students are well cared for. And standing on her own and making sure that she has the backs of her fellow staff members. And that’s who I envision myself to be right now. Like she’s the best person, she’s awesome, we love Q.

Q. Do you have any hidden talents?

A. Professional cat whisperer.

Q. What’s your favorite off-campus spot to visit in Castleton?

A. Shout out Third Place pizzeria. Every Wednesday you’ll see me there with my trivia team, The League of Extraordinary Guessers. Shout to Sean Williams and James Wolfe. Our team is always middle of the pack or a little bit above. We have fun and we each have our own strong suits. I fill the role of sports knowledge and just general knowledge, awesome.

Q. What’s the best piece of advice you’ve ever received?

A. I consider myself to be a very introverted person and that’s how I really connect with students. I really try to work with them on their level and not be so extroverted and excited, but just kind of just be me and own it. It allows me to work with students and establish that connection with them, especially if they’re going through rough times, and they just need someone to talk



COURTESY REBECCA MAKARA

Rebecca Makara poses by the ocean in Ireland.

to. That’s just owning part of my life. I’m a crazy cat lady, and I will own that in this paper in this interview. Own it. And that’s authentic and pure and that’s who I am. I’m unfiltered. I own it. My advice for students is to be who they are and own it. Don’t be afraid of what other people say. Stick true to who you are, no matter what.

Q. What’s your go-to favorite meal from Huden?

A. I’m gonna say a vanilla chocolate twist, cone or bowl. But with different kinds of toppings. That’s my go to dessert. Go to meal would probably be taco Tuesday. I love me some tacos.

Vt. study looks at bird flu impact on dairy

Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Avian Influenza (H5N1 Bird Flu) is an influenza-based disease causing major outbreaks and dramatic effects on U.S. agriculture. According to the Financial Times, The H5N1 outbreak is having extreme effects on the U.S. agriculture industry, particularly in the poultry and dairy farming industries.

Since 2022, the virus itself has led to the controlled killing of millions of birds, causing huge disruptions in egg and poultry meat supplies. The virus has also directly affected dairy cattle.

In April 2024, a human case of H5N1 infection was reported in Texas, linked to exposure to infected dairy cows. Though this incident is scary, it ultimately highlights the potential for cross-species transmission and the importance of monitoring dairy herds.

According to WPTZ Plattsburgh- Burlington, in a concerted effort to combat the spread of avian influenza, the Green Mountain state has joined a national milk testing strategy aimed at monitoring and controlling the virus’s impact on dairy herds.

The initiative is part of a broader national response to the H5N1 strain. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), The National Milk Testing Strategy was created in 2024 and is designed to detect the presence of Avian Influenza in dairy herds across the nation. The program runs off collecting and analyzing milk samples from dairy farms to identify potential infections early, enabling swift containment measures.

As of January 2025, 28

states, including Vermont, have enrolled in the program, representing nearly 65% of the nation’s milk production.

The Green Mountain state’s involvement in this initiative underscores the state’s commitment to safeguarding its dairy industry.

According to the Vermont General Assembly, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM) has been conducting monthly testing of cow milk from dairy farm bulk tanks. Additionally, all lactating dairy cows moving across state lines are tested to prevent the spread of the virus.

According to the CDC, though the primary concern has been the impact on agriculture, public health officials have also been vigilant. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported sporadic human cases



COURTESY GAVIN BRADLEY

Milk from Vermont cows will now be tested for bird flu.

of H5N1, primarily among individuals with direct exposure to infected animals.

The CDC maintains that the public health risk remains low, emphasizing the importance of biosecurity measures on farms to prevent human infections. There is still a lot of knowledge that we do not know about in the world around us. Some of it can be stressful to take in, especially when you’re focusing on a viral disease like Bird Influenza.

However, in these beyond-stressful situations, it is vital to know what you do have control over and what you do not. It is extremely important that Vermont has joined the National Milk Testing Strategy to protect farms and livestock in the Green Mountain state.

‘Balling on a budget’ saving on food edition

Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Balling on a Budget is a blog about saving money as a college student. The subject this week is everyone’s favorite: food!

Let’s talk about my favorite thing to spend money on: food. I am so guilty of spending way too much money on food, whether it’s ordering from Third Place for the second time that week or getting sucked into the Halloween-shaped pasta that’s \$6 at Hannaford.

I think of college as being in a competitive reality TV show. Still, instead of competing for a million bucks, you’re fighting to survive on Ramen noodles and, if lucky, a free pizza slice from the many events on campus. Luckily, there are some hacks to keep you fed

without blowing your budget.

Here’s how to master eating like a college pro and save precious dollars. You don’t need to break the bank when it comes to food. Whether you’re living on or off campus, I will provide the best ways to “steal a meal” and how I mastered eating for cheap.

Can’t live without caffeine!

If you have a coffee addiction (and who doesn’t?), purchasing a daily latte from Dunkin’ Donuts or Starbucks will deplete your savings. Hack the system! Invest in an inexpensive coffee maker and a reusable cup, and you’ll be your own barista. Coffee makers are now on sale at Walmart for \$10, which I consider to be a steal. If you want to be bougie, add some flavored syrup from the grocery store, and you’ll have a Starbucks-quality drink for less than a dollar.

Embrace the Power of PB&J

Don’t sleep on the classic peanut butter and jelly sandwich. If you say that peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are for kids, you’re lying to yourself. This combo is cheap, easy, and hits the spot every single time. Plus, it’s practically gourmet compared to



RYLEE PEPIN

Maddie Lindgren mixing up some hummus.

some of the meat they serve at Huden. And, peanut butter is an excellent source of many nutrients that our body needs. Pro tip: Huden has to-go containers of jelly and peanut butter. I’ll leave that there.

Become a Free Food Ninja

The golden rule of college life: NEVER pass up free food. Is there a club event that

includes pizza? A dorm party with extra chips? Mac and cheese cook-offs? You should be there like a food-seeking rocket. This is a great way to involve yourself in campus life and make a few friends. Who knows, you might even become involved in something interesting (or at least leave with a full stomach).

Embrace your dining hall as well. Huden can be scary—we all know that—but its food. This way, you don’t need to spend unnecessary money on ordering out when you could get chicken nuggets and fries at Huden. They also have to-go containers that you can purchase for a small price. Fill that thing up to the brim!

Know where to shop

If you’re not doing your food shopping at Aldi, what are you doing? Aldi has ev-

everything you could ever dream of for half the price. The other day, I went to compare the prices of cartons of eggs at Hannaford and Aldi. Aldi eggs were going for \$3.15, and Hannaford eggs were going for \$6.10. No way am I spending that on eggs. Aldi is affordable and fun. Don’t go on a Sunday, though; it’s a zoo. Cooking will always be cheaper than ordering out every night or making the occasional trip to Dollar General to get a frozen pizza. Go grocery shopping and make something yummy!

With these tips at your disposal, you’ll be dining like a boss in no time. Remember, it’s not about living off Ramen forever; it’s about upping your game and stretching your money as far as it will go. Happy dining, and may free food always be in your favor!

Spartans split against the Huskies



CASTLETONSPORTS
Zach Trepmpner celebrating scoring a goal with other Spartans.

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

After Castleton’s buy week, they were sent on the road to Gorham, to play University of Maine. With a long bus ride behind them, the Spartans were ready to take on the Huskies. Tired from the journey but fueled by determination, they stepped off the bus, focused and eager to prove themselves on the ice.

Castleton took control early, with Jackson Kobelka opening the scoring with help from Balint Mesterhazy and Stone Stelzl, giving the Spartans a 1-0 lead after the first period. In the second period, Aiden Robson and Emmett McHardy teamed up to assist Chance Heaphy, who capitalized on the chance to extend Castleton’s led to 2-0 midway through the frame.

The standout performance came from Josh Ward, who was sensational in net for Castleton. The junior goalie from Ottawa, Ontario, faced 33 shots

and stopped every one of them, earning his first career shutout in the victory. Ward said, “It feels really good to finally get a shoutout under my belt. Sort of feels like a reward that’s been a long time coming for not just myself but the whole team. I’m hoping we can end the season on a good note next weekend against Elmira.” The Spartans’ dominance continued as Andrew Stefura set up Emmett McHardy on a power play, allowing McHardy to net his seventh goal of the season and give Castleton a commanding 3-0 lead.

Entering the third period with all the momentum, Mesterhazy provided his second assist of the game to Kobelka, who bagged his second goal of the game to push the lead to 4-0 and record his first career multi-goal game. The Spartans wrapped up their offensive assault with first-years Colby Speth and Trevor Castino assisting senior Zach Trepmpner, who scored his fifth goal of the

season and the 15th of his career, to seal the 5-0 victory.

With a dominant performance on both ends of the ice, Castleton claimed the win in game one of their series against the Huskies.

The second game went a bit differently for Castleton. Zach Trepmpner set the tone early for the Spartans, assisting Trevor Castino for his third goal of the season to give Castleton a 1-0 lead.

However, Southern Maine answered back with just over a minute remaining in the first period, leveling the score at 1-1. In net for Castleton, Josh Ward continued his strong play following a career performance in game one.

Ward recorded 26 saves in the second game, keeping the Spartans in contention throughout the match. The Huskies grabbed their first lead of the night early in the second period, scoring five minutes in to take a 2-1 advantage. Trepmpner responded with his second as-

sist of the evening, setting up Anthony Persi for his first goal of the season to tie the game at 2-2.

Speaking to Persi about this he stated, “It definitely felt good to be able to help chip in on the scoreboard and help the guys out in any way I can. Felt a bit of relief to finally get the first one of the year.” Southern Maine took control once again, scoring twice more in the second period to build a 4-2 lead heading into the final frame.

The Spartans came out firing in the third period, out shooting the Huskies 16-5 as they relentlessly sought a way back into the game.

Despite their efforts, the Huskies found the back of the net one more time on the empty net to secure a 5-2 victory and split the series with the Spartans. Castleton returns next weekend to play at Elmira College, this will be their last two games of the season.

Stene adds onto her Spartan legacy

By Jack Aicher
Spartan Contributor

Emilie Stene has made Castleton history this ski season, shattering school records and building powerful bonds with teammates and coaches, claiming her spot as one of the most inspiring skiers on the team.

But beyond her unquestionable talent on the slopes is her passion, her humility, and her ability to inspire others.

Now more than halfway through the season, Stene has set a podium record with a time of 2:23.89 while also breaking the Castleton win streak record with 21 wins. Her impact has extended further than just school records—her presence on the team is undoubtedly uplifting and she has proven to be an exceptional teammate.

For Stene, breaking records wasn’t part of the plan.

“I didn’t even know the records existed until last year,” she said.

It wasn’t until returning home for a following race that Stene realized she had made the record books.

“After I won, my coach said that last week I broke the podium record and this week I broke the winning streak record,” said Stene. “It’s cool, but I wouldn’t have thought about it when I started.”

Despite her personal achievements, Stene has always focused on the success of the team.

“We have way harder competition this year,” she said. “I was thinking that this year we were just going to do our jobs and win as a team. I didn’t really expect to break any records.”

This season, Stene has battled a back problem that limits her training, yet she has remained a consistent force of the mountain.

“I can’t ski too many days in a row. When we have a race

Saturday and Sunday, I can’t practice Mondays at school,” she said. “I do go to the gym and free ski on my own, and when I can, I will go with the team.”

Balancing, academics, work, and the commitment to student athletics has been another challenge.

“I have two jobs here on campus and I am also double majoring with a double minor, so I don’t really have a lot of time to be 100% focused on skiing,” she said.

Stene’s ability to perform under pressure comes from her unique approach to racing. While most skiers inspect and practice the course prior to racing, she embraces another practice.

“I don’t inspect the course,” she said. “It’s a bit weird and I get a lot of comments about it but, it’s what works for me. Instead of getting in my head, I just go for it.”

Looking forward into the season, Stene’s focus remains on the success of the team.

“I will do all I can to win a couple more medals, but most important is helping the team win,” she said. “In previous years, I have won at regionals, I have won at nationals, so for me the next step is making sure the team wins.”

“We don’t have any seniors; the juniors are the oldest. I want to help the younger skiers understand how to be part of the team and to not feel alone,” said Stene.

Her leadership and commitment to the team is what truly sets her apart.

“Emilie is a true leader and other athletes on the team look up to her,” said Christopher Eder, head Alpine Ski coach at Castleton. “She rises to the occasion when it is most important.”

Eder wasn’t surprised by Stene’s performance this season. He explained how she has evolved over her seasons



CASTLETONSPORTS
Emilie Stene on her way to setting records on her run down West Mountain in Queensbury, New York.

at Castleton and how she has focused on being a supportive teammate.

“I knew Emilie would post strong results this season. She is the defending USCSA Giant Slalom National Champion. In fact, today (2/15/25) she captured her second USCSA Eastern Regional Giant Slalom title,” said Eder. “Emilie has adapted well to the team aspect of college racing and has consistently put the team’s goals ahead of her own.”

Emilie’s leadership and positive influence has reflected on that of her teammates and has shown her support for her team throughout her career.

“She is just so humble,” said Castleton alpine racer Ella Hall. “I can’t put into words how amazing she is as a person and teammate.”

Hall explained Stene’s ability to support and communicate with her teammates. She told about her impact on team morale, her uplifting demeanor, and the reciprocal effect it has had on the team.

“One of the group goals was just always being there for each other,” said Hall. “We will always have her back—I think she knows that deep down we will all love her no matter what.”

When asked to describe

Stene in a word, Hall chose “passionate.”

“On the slopes, she’s passionate about skiing—her enthusiasm, her positivity—and off the slopes she’s passionate about who she’s around; especially her teammates,” she said.

Having grown up in Norway, Stene originally planned to quit skiing and enter the military, until she had the opportunity to ski and study in the U.S.

“In Europe, college and sports don’t combine. Being here has given me a lot of opportunities,” she said.

Throughout her journey, Stene has shown her appreciation for her biggest supporter:

her dad.

“He has driven me every weekend for hours and hours,” said Stene. “Until I was 18, he was at every race. Now with a six-hour time different it doesn’t always work out, but he’s still watching every race live. I owe him a lot.”

Looking ahead, Stene and her team are devoted to finishing out a strong season.

“The season is not over yet and I believe she has more to give before it is all over. She, and the rest of the women, have a goal of getting on the team podium and ultimately winning at the USCSA National Championships,” said Eder.

Butler is built to be a Spartan

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

After a year of uncertainty while taking care of his grandma who was pushing him to go back to school and play basketball, Troy Butler found himself on the Castleton campus looking for his chance to do what his grandma wanted for him and get back on the court.

“I began the hunt on looking for opportunities and I stumbled upon Castleton after seeing some information online and having my old juco coach reach out to Culpo. He gave the word, and Culpo had me up for a visit and I was sold on the opportunity,” Butler said.

“We actually never saw Troy play in person, we went off of tape and SUNY Adirondack’s coach’s recommendation. That combination was enough for us to recruit him here. From the tape, we could see that he was physically gifted and had a gear that nobody else in our program possessed,” said head coach Paul Culpo.

The sophomore guard joined the Spartans during the second half of the year and has fit in like a glove on the court. Butler has started all 13 games

he’s played in while averaging 15.2 points per game with a 30% field goal percentage.

“We were excited for our second half due to making two great additions to the team and Troy was one of them,” said assistant coach Joe Russell.

Despite coming in halfway through the season, and it’s never easy to bring in a player midseason, Culpo feels as through the transition with Butler coming in was much smoother due to him being at the practices in the fall.

Since joining the Spartans, Butler has been the leading scorer, but Culpo says it hasn’t come without adjustments. “Troy is so physically gifted; probably has as much physical ability as any player I have ever coached. The challenge has been getting him to harness that talent. He is learning to play the game in a manner that benefits the team over his individual talent, something he really hasn’t had to do in the past,” he said.

“For example, in our win versus Eastern Connecticut, Troy only shot the ball nine times, yet his impact on us winning that game was by far the biggest impact he has had on any game this season, and he

has taken upwards to 20+ shots in many other games. So, for him he is learning to harness and use his gifts in a way that is still new to him. It’s a work in progress,” Culpo said.

Leading up to Butler becoming a Spartan, in August prior to coming to Castleton, his grandmother who had pushed him to get back on the court had passed away.

“I continue to play with her living through me,” Butler said.

Even with her passing, she left Troy with a gift from pushing him to get back on the court and becoming a Spartan.

“The best part about being a Spartan is the connection basketball was able to bring me with my teammates. I have built what I believe is a lifetime brotherhood and the joy of playing basketball and sharing the court with a great group of guys goes a long way,” Butler said.

Butler and the Spartans look to build off their 77-64 victory over Eastern Connecticut going into the final game of the season against University of Southern Maine at Glenbrook Gym on Saturday Feb. 22.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TROY BUTLER

Field Hockey attacks the off-season

By Caitlin Connolly
Spartan Contributor

An out-of-season athlete is not practicing every day or partaking in games, but they still have an immense amount of work to put in that people probably don't realize. This can include indoor practices and lifting sessions and bonding exercises during their off season. The VTSU Castleton field hockey team, for example, is utilizing its off-season as a step forward toward the upcoming fall season. Field hockey coaches meticulously plan their off-season to prepare the team for the fall. Not only do the girls lift two to three times a week, but they also have boot camps every Friday. Once the weather gets warmer, they will imminently start stick work outside. Currently, one unique strategy the women are also implementing into the off-season regime is the book club. They are reading the book titled "Row the Boat" by P.J. Fleck and Jon

Gordan. First-year player Ava LaRoss reflected on the book. "This book is about a football coach turning around his team dynamic in order to bring a losing team to a team of champions. Overall, this book is mostly about changing your mindset. This is something that we've been implementing into our practices because it helps encourage us and drives us to be better. We don't have practice, we get to practice. We don't have to wake up and run, we get to wake up and run," she said. Field Hockey coach Emily Douglas further emphasized the importance of book clubs. "Book club helps with our internal drive. Rather than our negative thoughts, we need to focus on the positive," she said. Along with book club and lifts, the women have a 7 a.m. boot camp every Friday. For about an hour, they focus on conditioning and stamina. Junior Peyton Richardson talked about the importance of the boot camps.

"At our boot camps, we do a lot of running and sprinting. But, the main focus is to push one another. Whenever we want to give up, we have to keep pushing and encouraging each other. We're pushing our limits. We can always do one more rep," she said. Douglas purposely uses these strategies to make her team better on and off the field. "When we're out of season, we have the opportunity to focus on our team culture. We need to connect with one another, so that our bond is strong come next season. And when new players join, they can branch off of that," Douglas said. Douglas said book club and off-season practices better her team, but also each player individually. "Spring season helps with individual growth. We can work on hitting progressions, stick skills, and speed. Whereas in the fall we're more focused on the team strategy. In the Spring, we can focus on ourselves."



COURTESY CAITLIN CONNOLLY
The field hockey team poses during a break from an offseason workout in the shaoe gym.

Continuing the domination

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton Spartans wrestling has been a staple in Castleton sports over the past couple years. Head coach Scott Legacy is in his ninth year with the program and continues to sustain high level success, posting a team record of 22-3 this season. Legacy has fostered a culture within the team that's become infectious and Legacy believes their culture has been the driving force for the team's recent success. "Our starters have been tremendous leaders, but we have bench guys who have bought in as well," Legacy said. "We all work hard on the mat while making sure we do the right things off the mat as well. Our guys love to chase competition, so we try to wrestle the best teams in the country putting ourselves in situations where we don't fear losing," Legacy added. But being a Castleton wrestler is more than just how impactful you can be on the mat. It's more than an athlete's overall skillset as a wrestler. Legacy's goal is to mold these student-athletes into phenomenal young men who develop a mindset that is devoted to all things in life. "Our program encourages our athletes to buy into the small-town college lifestyle where there isn't much of a downtown atmosphere, which is different from most colleges," Legacy said. "We ask our guys to be committed to wrestling 365 days a year, but we also take pride in keeping academics first as well as being good people in the community. It's important for us to break barriers together, become good leaders, and establish unity within the team." This fresh perspective of



CASTLETONSPORTS
Graduate Student Haven Tatarek goes for the take down against a Williams wrestler.

becoming a respected student-athlete has given wrestlers the confidence to achieve high levels of success throughout their career. Graduate student James Rodriguez is an example. Rodriguez has registered a phenomenal collegiate career and is regarded as one of the most humble athletes on campus. "What has motivated me is being able to finish what I started and being able to improve in every aspect both on or off the mat," Rodriguez said. "Showing my family and teammates that anything is possible if you commit to the process while staying consistent to learning and improving yourself. My ultimate goal is to know that I did everything I possibly could

to help improve myself in every aspect and gain the tools I need to become successful in life outside of wrestling." Rodriguez's respected career has given him the ability to be an impactful leader on the team as he sits with a 27-4 individual record. Rodriguez believes in order for the team to reach max potential, they must hold each other accountable and push each other on and off the mat. He believes it's imperative for the team to have fun without letting doubt or fear take over. It's the mental part of things and having a positive mindset that'll have us where we want to be. Although the team's starters are recording great seasons,

some even marking in the national rankings, Legacy has been particularly pleased with the non-starters on the team. Legacy believes they've been the hidden key to a lot of the success this season. "The people I'd like to recognize are the non-starters because they push the starters every day in practice," Legacy said. "You're only as good as the guy in front of you and the guy behind you and because our guys are so engaged it has given the team a training mindset where each kid believes they can achieve and reach high goals no matter who they are. These guys know where they are because we all do mindset scenarios with each

other. It encourages them to feed off one another while embracing the journey and whatever comes with it." Graduate assistant Ryan Foutz has worked closely with non-starters this season and he's been impressed with their development as wrestlers and his development as a first-time wrestling coach. "Being able to watch guys improve has been my favorite part about coaching this season. I've been with the non-starters more so seeing those guys go from not placing at tournaments to now doing good things at tournaments has been great," Foutz said. "Seeing the intensity in a room of all the guys doing what they

need to do has been fun as we are working hard to improve." As a first-time coach, Foutz said he's learned how to connect with the guys on the team, how to manage events, how to operate a college practice. Foutz, being a former wrestler, understands each athlete is here for a common goal but how you coach them is different. "The most important thing I've learned here is keeping the culture going for everyone, so it's been important for me to learn how to handle each guy because everyone's different," Foutz said. "It's my job to guide them in the right direction while still understanding the individual I'm coaching." Foutz does his best to develop positive relationships with the guys while maintaining a healthy player-coach bond. "Most of my conversations with the guys are about business because part of my job is to talk about what makes them better as wrestlers," Foutz said. "Not everything is completely professional. Outside of the room, I try to joke around and have fun, but balancing the authority part is important to me and I believe the guys understand and respect that." Foutz is aspiring to become a head coach of a college wrestling program. He believes to achieve that is by working his way up in the coaching ranks. As the team pushes into the home stretch of the season, Legacy and the team are looking to finish strong. They've put an emphasis on their conditioning, doing more live wrestling, but also keeping it loose by getting into fun practices. Legacy believes this process will allow them to find their strengths and weaknesses and ultimately mold each wrestler into what it takes to win.

Spartans punch their ticket to playoffs



CASTLETONSPORTS
Alex Johnson in warm ups ahead of her two goal game on Pink the Rink night.

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The Spartans women's hockey team is headed to the playoffs! Within the team, expectations were high for the season. This being their lowest playoff seeding in the last three years, 7th place in the conference, was not their hope. But, they have a ticket to the dance. The time is now to get up and perform. They will be facing off with Elmira on Saturday on the road. They clinched their playoff spot with two wins over New England College on Feb. 7-8 at home. The first of their 4-2 wins started with a dominant first period where the Saprtans carried the play decisively despite going down 1-0 in the last minute of the period. They broke through in the second period with three unanswered. Rachel McNeil started the girls off with a big tying goal assisted by Rainey Lay, and Moa Carlsson. Senior forward Codi Bacon followed up with a goal to take the lead just two minutes later.

Senior defenceman Emery Bonner tallied a third on the powerplay halfway through the second. The women continued to dominate the game but gave up a second goal late in the second period. Moa Carlsson scored a third period insurance marker to put the game away. The Spartan's second game of the weekend with NEC went similarly, The Spartans took an early lead with a goal from Moa Carlsson, assisted by Alex Johnson, just over five minutes into the first period. Annika Nelson extended the lead before the first intermission. Despite a strong effort from the Pilgrims, Castleton maintained their advantage, improving to a 7-8-1 record in New England Hockey Conference play. This past weekend, the team hosted Elmira College for two significant matchups. The first game on Friday, Feb. 14, was particularly special as it marked the 16th annual "Pink the Rink" event, dedicated to raising funds for the Breast Care Program at Rutland Regional Medical Center's Foley Cancer Center. Over the years, this event has garnered immense sup-

port, with the team contributing more than \$100,000 to the cause. The final score of this one was a slightly disappointing 6-2 loss in front of the home crowd. The following day, Saturday, Feb. 15, the teams faced off again at Spartan Arena. Again, a special occasion as it was senior night for the Spartans. Led by Captain Emery Bonner, Alex Johnson, Victoria Bakopanos, and Codi Bacon make up the senior class. When asked to speak on what this game and day means to her, Bacon had this say. "Being able to celebrate the end of our hockey careers was really special for us, especially having our families around to accompany us. Being a part of this team is one of the greatest experiences I have had in college and I wouldn't have it any other way," she said. For these seniors, unfortunately this game will be the last of theirs played in Spartan Arena, "Spartan Arena has been a home for us as hockey players during our time here, and a place for our community to gather. Not just as student-

athletes and a team, but the fans and supporters that create such a wonderful atmosphere as well as as much a part of that. It has been a privilege to play in this rink and in front of these people. I will miss that privilege a lot," said Victoria Bakopanos about her last game in the Spartan Arena. The game was somewhat disastrous itself and resulted in a 9-0 loss. Let's hope the girls were sandbagging Elmira in anticipation of their playoff meeting next weekend. Not the game most would like to end their college careers on at home. However, when speaking to Assistant Captain Meg Aiken she shared optimism. "We know we can be better than that. We have stayed in it with teams better than them all year long. I would really love it if we could extend the seniors careers here as spartans one game at a time. They've done so much for me, I'd like if we did something for them," Aiken said.