



NEWS

Castleton alum shares past struggles to current happiness.

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Timotheé Chalamet channels Bob Dylan in new movie, "A Complete Unknown."

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Men's hockey recognizes their seniors leaving this season.

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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, February 7, 2025

Destined to perform

Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Ever since she was young, Cydney Taylor Krone knew she was destined to perform. Whether that was singing, dancing, or acting, the stage felt familiar. However, her path to achievement was not without its fair share of challenges.

"I've always, ever since I was very, very little, been kind of fascinated with characters," Cydeny Said.

She experienced bullying throughout her school days, which made her doubt herself, as well as voices telling her she wasn't good enough. But Cydney refused to allow others to define her, she was determined to prove them wrong.

"People thought I was weird. Just, like, really treated me pretty badly. And I had, like, one friend," Cydney said.

Before landing the lead role as Elle Woods in California, she glided across the Castleton University stage. It was here that she began to genuinely discover her voice.

Her first production at Castleton was Guys and Dolls, which was intimidating for anyone let alone a freshman. She wasn't just playing one of the leads; she also had to share the stage with 40 alumni who had never rehearsed with the cast before. It was a high-pressure situation, but Cydney rose to the challenge.

"She handled it just beautifully," recalled Harry McEnerny, the previous director of Castleton's theatre program. "This showed me the kind of professionalism that Cydney has—even as a freshman."

That professionalism stretched beyond rehearsals. Unlike some students who practiced during sessions, Cydney spent devoted time in the dance studio developing her



Cydney Taylor Krone in her element on the stage at Castleton, bottom right, and New York City, top, and as Elle Woods in her current production of 'Legally Blonde' in California.

Her time at Castleton should have been filled with more performances, more songs, and more dances, but when the COVID-19 pandemic struck during her junior year, Big Fish was canceled, which she was the lead. Cydney refused to let her college career finish without one more performance.

In her senior year, she performed an hour-long

performance that included songs, dances, and even a short film. She sang, danced, and acted in front of a socially distanced audience of about 15 people.

"No one else did that," McEnerny said. "She didn't want her career to just stop. She was the only one who went, 'I'm going to perform.'"

Her hard work paid off.



COURTESY OF CYDNEY KRONE

Cydney made her professional debut in March 2022 at Desert TheatreWorks in California, playing Audrey in Little Shop of Horrors. After this performance, it landed her a season contract, with roles in Gentlemen's Guide to Love & Murder, White Christmas, and Escape to Margaritaville.

Then, in January 2024, she earned her dream role as Elle

Woods in Legally Blonde: The Musical. It was a full-circle moment. Cydney, like Elle, had been underestimated. She, like Elle, had been informed that she wasn't enough. But she proved everyone wrong with her determination, self-belief, and persistent work ethic.

"I always identified with Elle Woods," Cydney said. "With persistence, hard work, believing in yourself, and never giving up, a lot can happen."

McEnerny wasn't surprised by her success.

"There are thousands of people who can sing, dance, and act that role," he said. "But why do you cast Cydney? Because she's the kind of person you want to work with—kind, generous, hardworking. That's why she's going to have a career."

Cydney Krone's journey exemplifies resilience. She refused to let the people who doubted her the most, define her. She made her success and didn't wait for someone to hand it to her.

Through the issues she faced with bullying, no one taking her seriously, and turning to bigger and better things, Elle was a character that healed something in Cydney.

"Elle Woods is something that I needed to do for me spiritually, to be able to walk into this kind of new era of my life," Cydeny said. "It was a role that I needed to prove to myself that I could get to the other side of well, and I'm glad I did it for that"

Now, as she steps onto the stage as Elle Woods, she stands not just as a performer, but as proof that with passion and perseverance, dreams do come true.

Now, as Elle Woods takes the stage, she is more than performing; she is proof that with dedication and drive, dreams can be realized.

VTSU Castleton Inspires inclusion and equality at Convocation

Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

An enthusiastic crowd gathered in the Vermont State University Castleton Casella Theater on Jan. 30 as speakers

celebrated inclusion and diversity in recognition of Martin Luther King Day.

The event included guest speaker Al Wakefield, who created the "Declaration of Inclusion," which he hopes will

span beyond Vermont.

The event opened with VTSU Dean Cathy Kozlik recognizing an important historical figure in black history.

She recognized James Wheldon Johnson, a historical

black activist and poet, and his work which helped usher in the "liberty of black Americans." His song "Lift Every Voice" was then performed by the VTSU Castleton Choral.

Kozlik then welcomed newcomers and alumni to the new semester and remembered former VTSU Dean Honoree Fleming, who was killed last year on the nearby Rail Trail.

She praised the Student Government Association and everyone involved in making the last semester so successful. She acknowledged the efforts of faculty, staff and students, including "Professor Dave Blow's 'Help Us Help Them' event" and the collaboration of men's hockey with the "Breaking the Ice on Mental Health" initiative.

Kozlik kept the mood positive as she acknowledged setbacks, like the water pipe break in Woodruff Hall. She thanked the disaster for the new flooring in the hall.

After reflecting, Kozlik encouraged "Let's not forget the celebrations ... Let's all reflect on the great moments."

Kozlik introduced VTSU Professor Andre Fleche, who began by offering his praise and encouragement to students.

He then announced the accomplishments of the past semester such as "federally funded Head Start programs" and the Community Journalism Initiative. He acknowledged the broadcasting of VTSU student film "Error 404: Books Not Found," which was produced with the help of Professor Sam Davis-Boyd.

"Congratulations to all

those involved," said Fleche.

He then concluded with a sincere, positive message.

"Have a great semester," he said.

Fleche introduced VTSU Castleton SGA President Thomas Kehoe to the stage. The crowd erupted into laughter as he joked about how his hair looked. Kehoe gave arguably the most encouraging and uplifting speeches of the night.

He told the audience the "energy and enthusiasm you bring every day helps this University thrive."

"Each of you plays a crucial role," he said.

He gave a special shoutout to seniors, saying, "Once a Spartan, always a Spartan."

Kehoe left an inspired audience with encouraging words of advice.

"Speak up and leave your mark," he said before the crowd cheered on in unison as Kehoe exclaimed, "Go Spartans!"

VTSU Chief Diversity Officer Paul Yoon then gave a brief background and introduction of the event's special guest speaker Al Wakefield.

He introduced Wakefield as the founder of the "Declaration of Inclusion Initiative."

Yoon gave a hopeful and heartfelt remark, claiming he hopes that "we as a community can live up to our country's ideals."

Wakefield entered the stage with his trusty flute, stating that he liked to bring it with him wherever he goes, which incited light-hearted chuckles from the audience.

He introduced himself and

then acknowledged his admiration for VTSU.

"It's good to see a university taking part in what goes on in town," he said.

He explained that "very successful, very nice people graduate from Vermont State University."

Wakefield then led the audience in rehearsing the Vermont "Declaration of Inclusion," which condemns racism and welcomes all people regardless of race, religion, gender identity, age, sexual orientation.

"That is the Declaration that has been signed by 160 towns," he claimed afterward.

Wakefield continued his thoughtful views about Vermont and even added in a joke saying, "Vermont is a great state in terms of age...Vermont is a balding state in terms of age," which garnered giggles from the audience.

He discussed his past endeavors and encounters, which led to the creation of the Declaration of Inclusion. He explained how his experiences in door-to-door Avon sales and marketing gave him the professional tools he needed to engage people in his proposal.

"It was not easy," he remarked.

He explained how the Northern part of the state seemed to be more resilient to passing the declaration, but that Rutland County was the second most responsive to it. He presented a list of towns that have adopted it.

See 'Convocation' on page 6



ROBERT FRANKLIN AND LEO RICHARDSON

Scenes from the VTSU Castleton convocation ceremony on Jan. 30, including a speech by VTSU President David Bergh.

Shocking and aweing America into a lul?

You may have heard recently the expression “shock and awe” from Republican sources or even the Trump administration itself. As in, the Trump administration once sworn in is going to shock and awe the people.

I believe it is being said in a positive tone. What “shock and awe” really means in this context is that there will be an overwhelming amount of information and news and soundbites, along with a great number of “actions” from the president.

All of it, to keep the news cycle quick and flash the next shiny talking point. This is a political strategy that is not unique to Trump, nor new to him. We have been seeing this for nearly 10 years now.

I implore those of us disheartened by Donald J. Trump to try not to allow our pea-size attention spans, completely controlled by TikTok and Instagram to allow for us to move on from the outright disingenuous, dishonest, and disgusting things he says and does on a semi-daily basis.

So, let me update you on what it is President Trump has done since being sworn into office.

All of that big talk from Trump while running for president about tariffs. Like, all of those times he misrepresented what a tariff was and voters believed him in some places.

You know, the tariffs Trump said he was going to put on China. Well, turns out Trump will be putting 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico.

No word on Trumps stance when it comes to his cheap labor, communist, authoritarian friend. Oh, and news flash: the American consumer will still be the one who bares this cost.

The first major event to occur under the Trump presidency was a commercial airline flight heading over the Potomac that had a collision with a blackhawk helicopter belonging to the U.S. military.

Now, this is a rare event to say the least that is deeply tragic and cost many civilian casualties. Our fearless leader responded not by giving a heartfelt speech, condolences to the family affected, updating the public of facts surrounding the case, and supporting those trained to investigate what exactly happened.

Instead, the insecure orange man blamed Joe Biden, Obama, and DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion). And before you say “well, maybe he’s right. What were the two military helicopter pilots race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation?”

They were two straight white guys. To be clear, the president’s response to a tragedy was to get on live television and wildly speculate about an incident he knew nothing about.

And more deplorable, he used it in an attempt to further his political agenda, that being, getting rid of DEI.

The other major news story in the Ameican political climate was Elon Musk at the inauguration.

More specifically, a gesture he made twice. It seemed to be a salute of the German kind from say early 1940’s?

The people defending this have since floated a couple alternative ideas as to what was meant by the gesture. One being that it is actually an ancient roman salute he does, not the German kind. Pretty weak argument after you watch the video.

The other alternative floated is Elon Musk suffers from autism or an adjacent dissability that geniuses possess, one that makes it hard to understand the social cues.

That is a much more stable an argument if you believe Elon is a genius. He is certainly not someone with great social skills. Just watch the clip.

Either way, you and I probably can agree that nobody should be getting on stage in front of thousands of people at the president’s inauguration and gesture twice anything remotely similar to the gestures he made. It shouldnt matter whether or not you respond well to social cues.

Oh, not to mention, Musk using his social media platform X and his celebrity to genuinely endorse a far right political party in Germany. Look it up.

Just to rattle off a couple other notable moves Trump has made since being in office, he has pulled from the WHO (World Health Organization), similarly pulled from The Paris Climate Agreements.

He has rescinded birth place citizenship, is suggesting immigrant concentration camps, has roled back DEI, is actively attempting to roll back many government funded benefits, has halted all Federal aid, and don’t get me started on RFK or Trump’s pick for defense secretary.

The one bright spot is that all of these executive orders Trump is signing will most likely not hold up in court. Some might, some won’t.

But know this, Trump still can’t just do what ever he wants. He his beholden to systems of governance and to the courts, and though he would like to answer to nobody and nothing, he still does.

Please keep it that way. Lastly, don’t take my word for it. Go and research what is happening, take an interest, form your own opinion. Ciao for now.

- Jackson Edwards



JOE VYVIAL

God’s green or Devil’s lettuce?

There are two types of people in this world: people who see cannabis as god’s green and people who see it as the devil’s lettuce.

Formally known as the gateway drug, marijuana long ago got classified as a class 1 drug along with hard drugs like heroin, cocaine and meth.

But that’s the first myth, because according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most people who consume cannabis do not go on to use harder drugs.

The people who do go to do harder drugs tend to already have higher risk of addiction due to a multitude of factors like family history, drug availability, social isolation, depression and having peers that have a substance abuse disorder.

Marijuana instead has actually been shown to help treat alcohol and drug addiction, according to a Medical News Today article titled “What are the health benefits and risks of cannabis” written by Tom Rush, further debunking the myth of marijuana as a gateway to harder drugs.

Myth number two is that marijuana is harmful and has no medical benefits.

Marijuana is said to cause lung cancer, psychosis, dam-



age the respiratory system and other medical problems, but this is simply not true.

It is actually the contrary as cannabis has been shown to help treat depression, cancer, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, and chronic pain, the article states.

Patients have also reported that it has helped relieve them of insomnia, anxiety, spasticity and pain.

The last myth is that you can overdose on cannabis.

“No one has ever died from a cannabis overdose.(.)” said Harvard psychiatry professor Lester Grinspoon in an inter-

view with Life Science Intelligence.

According to “Top 10 Myths about Medical and Recreational Cannabis” by Alivia Taylor, there has never been an adult death that can be attributed to cannabis. But while it is not likely a person can die from consuming too much cannabis, it can lead to some discomfort and temporary side effects.

While there are many benefits to marijuana, there are still some risks to its consumption.

Cannabis can lead to an increased risk of mental health disorders like schizophrenia and can exacerbate existing

symptoms of bipolar disorder.

Smoking cannabis has also been shown to cause respiratory disease as the smoke can cause scarring in the respiratory system and damage blood vessels in the lungs.

Marijuana is also very bad for women who are pregnant or have recently giving birth and are breastfeeding.

According to “Myths and facts about marijuana use” by the Department of Health Services, consuming cannabis while pregnant or breastfeeding can lead to affects in the baby’s brain development.

This can make it so when the child hits school age, he or she will be more likely to have problems with attention, behavior, memory, delayed reading skills and depression.

Cannabis was once demonized due to the myths told in years past, but even though it is harmful in some ways with excessive use, cannabis is now seen as less of gateway drug that will give you cancer and more as a medicine with many different health benefits.

Gods green or devil’s lettuce?

The facts debunk the myths.

- Isiah Hughes

My last first day

On Tuesday, Jan. 21, I had first day jitters for the last time. I packed my bag.

I looked at my schedule a thousand times to make sure I knew where my classes were.

I’d hoped to make good first impressions on new professors.

All for the very last time, as I am a second-semester senior.

It’s weird finally being here. Seventeen years of school to walk across a stage and enter the Real World. Where I’ll get a Real Job and have Real Problems and a Real Life.

That’s how adults always talked about it at least.

I’m relieved I still have a whole semester left since I don’t feel quite prepared for the realness of it all.

Everything feels in its place. This is the first semes-



Jess Emery
ter I’ve ever had a schedule I really like (I have Fridays off! Yay!). I have classes with my favorite professors (shoutout Flo Keyes and Dave Blow for

helping me to the finish line of my education).

I have a really strong group of friends who I spend time with every week. I feel really secure in my major.

Now all that is left is four months and graduation. It really has gone by in such a flash. I look back on the last four years and see how much of grown. I think back on role models I had as a first- and second-year student and I now see myself in that position for my younger friends.

Time is moving fast, but I’m so excited to not be focused on the future.

This is one of the first times I feel still. I’m cherishing my classes, friends, and life here in Castleton and I’m not just thinking about some other time

and place I’d rather be.

The last four years have really changed my life. It’s weird how people talk about looking back on moments that change your life, and I am currently, knowingly, in one of those moments.

A bit daunting, to be honest, because there’s no way this time isn’t going to affect me forever.

Now, that being said, let’s all take a moment to knock on wood that I’m not missing any graduation requirements. It would be super awkward if I said all this just to not graduate in May.

- Jess Emery

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Castleton, Vermont

CASTLETON SPARTAN

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Fresh Perspective: Getting adjusted

The months leading up to my arrival at Vermont State University Castleton were filled with nothing but excitement.

That was, until the days started to go by faster, and move-in day went from three months to go to only three more days left.

When the time came to say goodbye to my family, my room, and my cat, the long six-hour ride was filled with nothing but worry and dismay.

However, once I arrived, after a few awkward ice breakers, I started to get used to being away from home.

I learned to love it.

I play field hockey here. Although preseason was rough, having the support and camaraderie of my teammates made it all worth it. We even ended up making it to the Champion-



Caitlin Connelly
ships.

Even though we lost in the end, not one moment from my first season was undermined. Playing this sport connected me with some of the best girls I have ever met.

In addition, I was fond of my classes. In particular, I actually really enjoyed my statistics class. I’ve always hated math and it has never been my strong suit. However, my statistics class here ended up

being my favorite class last semester. Another class that I thought was really intriguing was Cinema Studies. We learned the process behind making movies, as well as editing our favorite films.

I liked the small environment, and the one-on-one connections with professors because of the class sizes.

Sometimes I dislike how small our campus is, but for the most part it’s pretty nice. Everyone knows pretty much everyone, and most classes are only a five-minute walk away.

Skiing and snowboarding is a really big thing here. I live with some girls on the ski team. I had never gone skiing before, but my friends taught me. While it was really hard at first, and frustrating, I grew to love it. I’m not very good, but it’s a lot of fun.

There were times where school felt hard. Being away from home for so long was tough. Especially when I could not go home for fall break because of field hockey, but my twin brother and friends could.

Overall, though, I have an enjoyable outlook toward Castleton. Sometimes there are a few rough patches, but I move past them.

And even when I miss home, the minute I return, I want to come back. I really like my experience on the field hockey team here. I suggest playing a sport here at Castleton, for it gives you a group of people to connect with and build great friendships with.

- Caitlin Connelly

New semester brings new beginnings and frigid temps



Kallie Haynes, top left, walks to her first class of second semester. English professor Candy Fox lectures during the first week of class.

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Plumes of warm breath streamed from the mouths of both students and faculty as they trudged up and down the sidewalks of campus the first week back to classes with temperatures consistently well-below freezing.

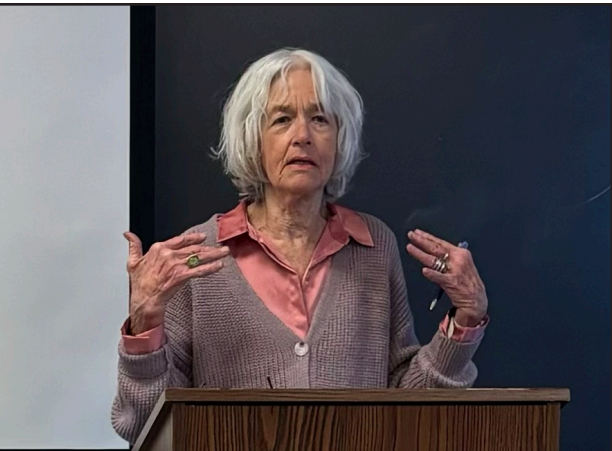
The first week back from winter break is always a bittersweet mix of reconnecting with friends, new classes and

schedules, dry hands and fresh beginnings.

But the beginning of 2025 is looking to be off to a great start for VTSU Castleton students and staff.

“I’d give it a solid 8.9 out of 10,” VTSU student Daniel Wright said.

The great start to the semester for Wright was helped by the fact that his only class for Tuesdays got canceled during the first week and the flexibility in his schedule is great for perfecting his gym routine.



GABBY BLANCHARD

“I am most excited about establishing a solid gym schedule and seeing friends,” Wright said.

VTSU English professor Candy Fox said she is thrilled to be back at campus and intrigued to get to know all the students, which is always her favorite part.

“It’s been fabulous!” she said. “Energy is good, students are great, everyone is paying attention. They’re motivated. Bright shiny faces. I’m just very excited.”

Sophomore Brookelyn Kimball is off to a smooth start as well since she has familiar professors and is already at home with the campus.

However, Kimball is most excited for the new opportunities this semester is already bringing her.

“I just applied to be a peer mentor,” she said. “I am very excited to see where that goes!”

Kimball explains how she is not too overwhelmed with changes in her schedule and is

just ready to get past the first week of syllabus review and fired up to dive head-first into the semester.

On the other hand, for some, getting used to a new schedule and routine can be one of the hardest parts of a new semester.

“I’m definitely nervous about adjusting to my new schedule. I’m not really good with change, and having different professors and different class times is a bit overwhelming for me,” said VTSU student, Clarabel Redondo.

Like Redondo, Wright also explains that he is having some nervous feelings. He anxiously shared how Wednesday’s for him are packed with back-to-back classes, then booking it to the gym, and sometimes followed up by work at the Rutland rock climbing gym.

For others, the first week back has been a little different as break may have been a little shorter.

VTSU student and women’s hockey player Annika Nelson has been back on campus with the hockey team since December 28.

“It was just a weird switch from finally playing hockey

every day to having to go to classes, but after the first couple of days, I was back into the groove,” Nelson said.

She said that the thing making her the most nervous for the second semester are her online classes, since she has never taken one before and is scared about missing work. Although, so far so good for Nelson and staying on top of work.

Similar to Nelson, Fox is also faced with online classes and is navigating a routine for her first Connections 3 online class. Overall, though, she said she is excited about the new course.

Good vibes and high intentions for the first week back at VTSU Castleton is what keeps our campus thriving and the staff filled with joy.

“Watching students grow while getting to know each other is an amazing process to be a part of, and so inspiring. That’s why I love to teach!” Fox said with a glow of passion in her eyes.

Genny’s Journey

VTSU Castleton grad talks about past struggles that led to current happiness

By Andrew Martel
Spartan Contributor

Genevieve Holder transitioned from a strict, tiny Christian school in Germany to a chaotic, rowdy American school. As she navigated her unique upbringing, the 2023 VTSU Castleton graduate discovered that the desire to fit in can lead to a suffocating fear of judgment and struggle for acceptance.

However, underneath all anxiety and fear lies a strong woman who doesn’t let her insecurities determine her future.

Holder, who goes by Genny, was born in Texas and then three years later moved to Wiesbaden, Germany. After her mother attempted homeschooling, she attended a private Christian K-12 school that had exactly 18 students, making her one of only two in her class. However, when she came back to the States, everything changed.

She realized two things: kids are really rowdy and misbehaved, and that she was ahead of her class to the point of being bored and unable to pay attention in class.

“I came here at the end of second grade, and they moved me to third grade,” she said. “I didn’t get along with my teacher because I was so far ahead academically, and I’m not saying that to brag I was just so bored, like I already know how to write cursive!”

This made it very hard for her to adjust to her new school environment. It’s safe to say she had a complicated upbringing, and her schooling years were tough for her.

Things got worse when she developed a severe case of Emetophobia, an extreme fear of vomiting. It all started in the lunchroom at her school when she was in elementary school.

“One day I had a stomach bug and I went into the lunchroom and I ate lunch like normal and I ended up throwing up in front of the entire school,” she said. “The whole school ate lunch all at the same time and I I threw up like a huge puddle all over the floor in front of the entire school.”

After this embarrassing moment, she became afraid to

eat in front of anyone, which kicked off her eating disorder. She would have frequent panic attacks when simply going to a restaurant in fear of possibly throwing up in front of people again.

It escalated to the point that her mother, Julie Eagan, was contacted by Holder’s principal about her refusing to eat lunch every day.

“The principal called us and said, ‘Genny won’t eat and she needs to eat’ and they said someone’s going to have to come in and she was going have to be evaluated by a doctor,” Eagan said. “Me and my husband figured this would pass and she would get hungry eventually and that she’s fine. We had a hard time thinking there was anything wrong with her because no parent wants to think there’s something wrong with our child. We always hope for the best for our children.”

This constant fear plagued Holder for many years of her life and while not as severe, it still affects her.

“In high school, I was struggling with two main things: my eating disorder, and my sh*tty relationships,” she said. “I won’t give his name, but my first boyfriend was with me for a year and a half and in that time, being the same height I am now, I dropped down to 108 pounds and that was definitely not good. I had just got to a point where I didn’t wanna eat at all because I was so afraid of throwing up,” she said. “I would rather run a marathon, write an essay, be a tax accountant, anything other than throwing up. That’s how deathly afraid I was of it. I still do, to this day, but not as bad.”

Her relationships didn’t help her in this difficult time. One was extremely controlling, another had mental issues of his own. She was cheated on, and one leaked revealing photos of her to social media simply because she didn’t answer his phone call.

However, one past relationship she highlights the most is the one with her ex-husband, with whom she had her now 5-year-old son, Aeron.

“We ended up getting married that summer because his



grandmother was very close to passing because she had Alzheimer’s. It was really important for her to be there when he got married because she really wanted to see all her grandkids be married,” Holder said. “So, I said f**k it let’s just do it, let’s get married.”

But she grew unhappy in this relationship over time, and it became obvious to her mother and other family members.

“I was always worried, but didn’t want to get into her business and push her away. It didn’t help that her ex-husband was very controlling and all of us saw it. She wanted to get married, and it was a spur of the moment thing. Her grandmother wanted them to do it, and they were just like why the F not,” Eagan said.

After her ex-husband cheated on her, she was separated from him, but not officially divorced when she would meet Sam Holder.

“So, I met this cowboy in Oklahoma, and on the outside of Christianity, I romanticized that life of wanting to be a wife that goes to church. I want to be a mom that raises her children in the church, like those women have everything they want and that’s probably not true for everyone, but I wanted that so bad and when I met Sam, it seemed like that was the family that he came from,”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GENNY HOLDER AND ANDREW MARTEL

Genny Holder hiking with her husband Sam and her son Aeron, top. Holders posing at graduation.

she said

Sam Holder is a rugged comedian and has been a light for Holder in recent years as she discovers herself and where her life is going. Sam met Genny for the first time in person on April 15, 2020 after previously communicating through social media apps.

“So, I was driving up, and I saw her get on Exit 18, and so we were on the phone while I was driving and I was like, ‘hey are you driving in front

of me?’ and she says ‘yeah I think so.’ So it became this awkward thing where we were both awkwardly anticipating meeting each other,” Sam said. “I hugged her, gave her a kiss, and I was like, hey, do you wanna see me rope this sign, because obviously I brought my rope with me because there were so many cows up here to be herding.”

She eventually attended Castleton University where she majored in psychology and

graduated in 2023.

One night she was in the costume department of the Fine Arts Center when a student named Brandon Burnmeister approached her about an acting opportunity. There are two versions of this project she is asked to star in: a play production, and a short film, both of which are crafted from the same script.

See Genny on page 6

Standout Spaces: Unlikely birth of a Castleton friendship



EMILY ELY

Zoe Ukasik and Desiree Mandez in their dorm.

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!

The way Zoe Ukasik and Desiree Mendez became roommates is a funny story. And in fact, they didn’t start off as roommates.

Mendez had been paired

with a different roommate during the summer. But due to a mix-up involving a gender-neutral name, her roommate turned out to be a male football player, not the female student she had anticipated.

Once the mixup became clear to Mendez, the football playing roommate asked her, “so do you still wanna be roommates or naw?”

She chose “naw” and that’s when Ukasik took the open position.

When you walk into Ukasik’s and Mendez’s dorm room, you’re met with a whimsical wonderland that reflects both of their quirky tastes. It felt like walking into a concrete jungle of lush greenery and a small art gallery of vibrant posters.

The walls are plastered with collections of art; retro band posters, and a few funny

pictures of friends and family. But, their pride and joy, however, is their windowsill. It’s lined with an explosion of succulents that are different shades of green and multiple shapes and sizes draping over the sill.

When asked what they like best about their room, both of them note the two-toned baby blue and cream walls, the high ceilings, the perfect view of the sunset each night, and how they are able to watch “the sports channel” whenever they want.

Hoff Hall, and their room specifically, overlooks all of the sport fields. Just from their window, in non-winter months of course, they are able to watch soccer, football, baseball and softball seemingly at any time, any day of the week.

There is always something going on directly next to them,

which is almost always entertaining. Because of this, they don’t mind the whistles and scoreboard buzzer that much.

When asked if they had any tips or ways they were able to maximize their dorm space, Mendez shared how she was able to push her drawers under her bed with the perfect amount of space to put her shoes on top.

Ukasik loved the idea saying, “No, honestly when I moved in and you had that shit done, I was like ‘holy shit, she’s got it together.’”

These roommates are a perfect pair and their room compliments both of them perfectly.

Maddie on the street

By Madeleine Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



Question:
What's the funniest lie you've ever told?



Zach Papapetros Senior
"Sometimes when people ask me what college I go to, I say UVM. No one knows what Castleton is."



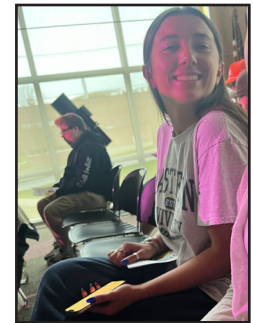
Josh Ward Junior
"One time in NYC I met a guy at a bar from Australia and convinced him I was from France because I can speak french. He believed it the whole time until I started speaking English at the end of the night."



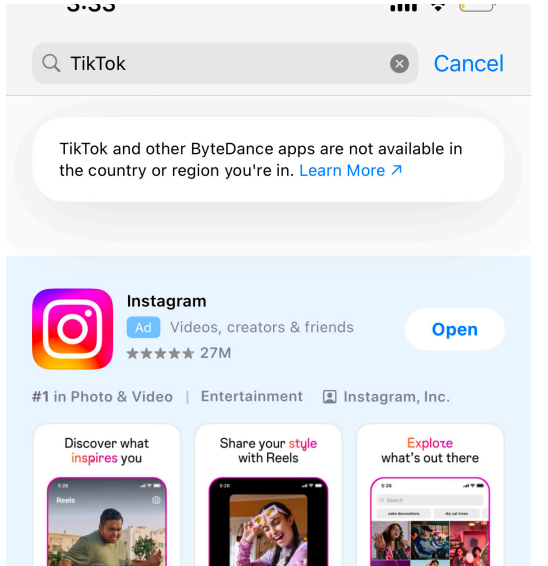
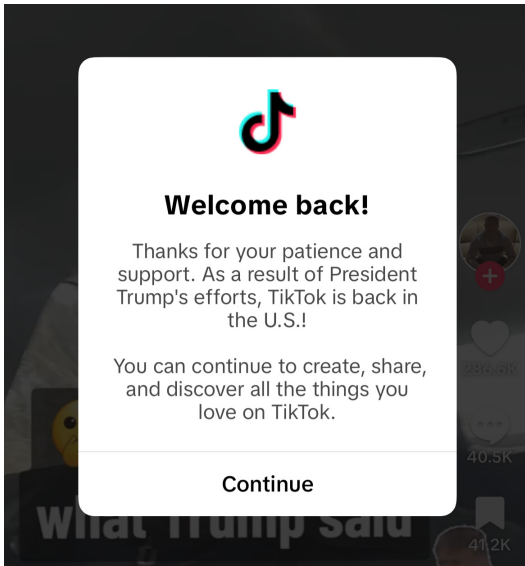
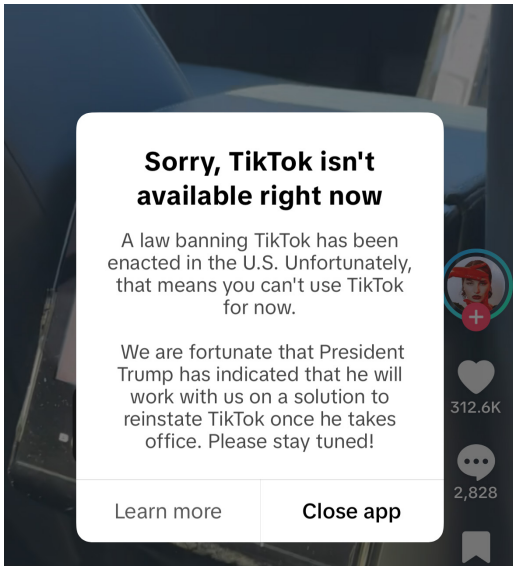
Aiden Robinson Sophomore
"I told a lie that I stole the Mona Lisa from an art museum."



Allie Galante Sophomore
"When I was younger I would tell people that I've been to all these crazy trips out of the country but I've actually never been out of the country."



Emma Patrissi Junior
"I have two. Today I told my roommate there was a raccoon under my bed, then I told her yesterday that someone in my class thought I was Kim Kardashian."



COURTESY JESS EMERY

This screenshot, above left, popped up when you entered TikTok on Jan. 18. Another notification, above middle, from when TikTok returned on Jan. 19. TikTok is no longer available for purchase in the app store, above right.

The ban and revival of TikTok

By Jess Emery
CastletonSpartan

On Jan. 18, the app TikTok went dark.

Users who opened the app got a message saying "A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now."

Then message then stated, "We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office."

Before the app was banned, many users were speculating the reasons why?

"I felt that it was a blatant and obvious attempt at censorship. The government clearly feels threatened by the fact that we are able to access so much information through so many sources and people," said VTSU Castleton student Erin Forkin.

Fellow student Caitlin Connolly viewed the banning in a different light. She was less concerned about the information she'd be missing out on because none of us would have access to the app.

"I was fine with that because nobody else would have it so it wouldn't be like I'm missing out on anything on TikTok,"

she said.

The app was banned earlier than anyone expected. Users were shocked and disappointed when they realized they couldn't get back in the app.

"I freaked out when it first got banned because it was two hours early and my TikTok was lagging so I exited out of it and refreshed it and all of sudden it just stopped working," student Carly Centeno said.

Although the ban was upsetting, Forkin had hopes it would lead to less screen time.

"I kept it on my phone because I was curious, but I felt relieved that I wouldn't be on my phone as much and less likely to doom scroll for too long," Forkin said.

To the surprise of many, the app was only banned for about 12 hours. When people returned to the app, they received another notification similar to the one before the ban.

It read, "Thanks for your patience and support. As a result of President Trump's efforts, TikTok is back in the U.S.! You can continue to create, share, and discover all the things you love on TikTok."

Some found the messages confusing or a little misleading.

"That honestly shocked me since I knew Trump was against TikTok, but all of a sudden,

his views changed. MAGA's were even speaking out about how our generation should be 'grateful' that he's trying, but last time TikTok was on the chopping block they were supportive of a ban," Forkin said.

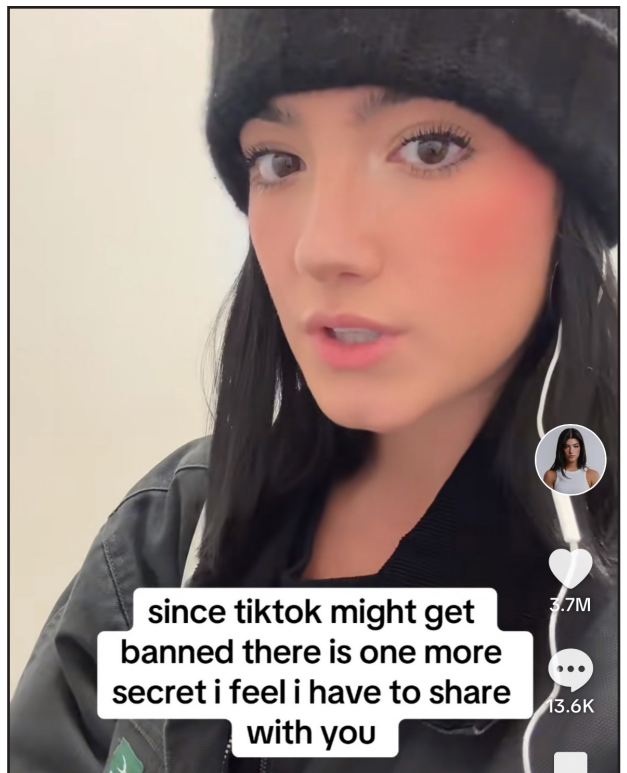
"It immediately started processing with me that it's a publicity stunt to try and make people think he's not so bad. Or, I felt they were going to give it back and it would be different and super censored. When I saw the "thank you Trump" when it was back, I honestly was super frustrated. Some people are uneducated or ignorant enough to think that he has good intentions with this. It's all for control and money really," she said.

For Connolly, she deleted the app assuming the ban would be permanent and since then the app has been deleted off the app store. When searched in the app store, a message appears stating that the app is "not available in your country or region."

So, it seems the app is banned for some and not others.

Even those who do have the app back and running say it seems different.

"I do believe the CEO of TikTok did something that made the app somewhat differ-



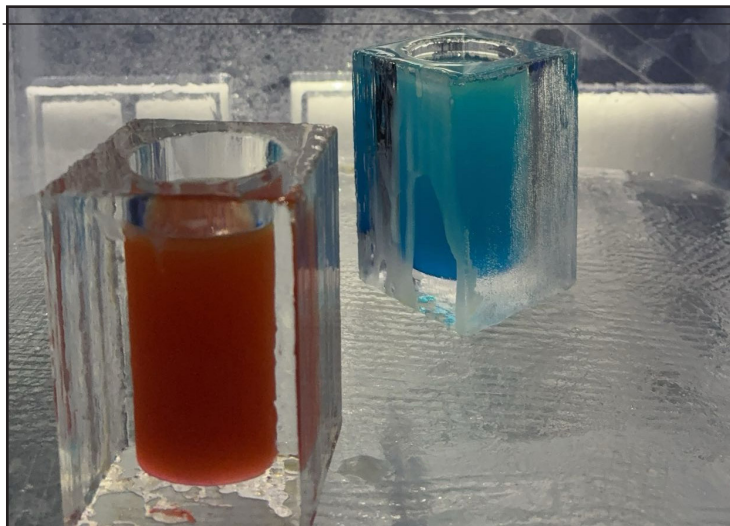
Famous TikTokers revealed their secrets prior to the TikTok ban, thinking the app would be gone.

ent, like my For You page was not the same anymore and I am very nervous that they sold the app to META, which would ruin TikTok," Centeno said.

Forkin has also noticed something different about her For You page.

"I've seen less videos that relate to politics, and some are topics or things I've never seen on my for you page before," she said.

TikTok is back for some but not all, and even though it's available it's not the same as



COURTESY CARLY CENTENEO

Colorful drinks, above left, were poured at bar made completely out of ice in Sweden. Shops and restaurants line the streets in Old Town, bottom left. Carly Centeno and her boyfriend Walter Lundstrom celebrated a snowy New Year's Eve, right.

A holiday well spent in Sweden

By Carly Centaneo
Castleton Spartan

Over winter break, I spent two weeks in Sweden with my boyfriend, fellow VTSU Castleton student Walter Lundström, and his family. I had a lot of experiences, but my favorites were getting to try new foods, going into Stockholm and spending time with his family.

My first day there was exhausting since I flew out at 5:30 p.m. and landed at 7 a.m. in Sweden. The jetlag was the worst that first day.

But after acclimating, I got to try the traditional Swedish Christmas meal, which was interesting and nothing like an American Christmas dinner. You get two separate plates, one for the cold food and one for the warm. Some of the food I had to try included pickled herring, radish with salt on it, cheese pie, and this other type of fish.

The first week I spent shop-

ping, spending all the money I could on clothes, shoes, candy and accessories. I truly believe everything is better clothes-wise in Europe, so I had no choice but to spend a ton of money on new clothes.

In my opinion, H&M and Zara are way better in Sweden than in America and have way better options to choose from. I also had to buy a new outfit to celebrate the New Year, because I had no idea how dressed up they get until my boyfriend told me what he was wearing, and I did not want to look like a messy American.

It was extremely weird not watching the New Year's Eve show that goes on in New York City, and my first time ever not seeing the ball drop at midnight. In Sweden, I was six hours ahead, so I was basically in the future when it hit midnight back home.

It was interesting hanging out with his friends. Two couldn't speak any English and I am not good with Swedish

yet, so that made from some interesting times.

At midnight they were all so excited to show me the fireworks that normally go off, but because it was snowing so much, we barely saw them, which gave me a chance to brag that Americans do fireworks shows way better.

In my second week, we spent a lot of time in Stockholm, going to different museums and basically just being a tourist with my personal tour guide. We went to Skansen, which is the zoo, to see some of the winter animals like reindeer and moose. One cool thing about the zoo is that all around are these old, historical buildings that were moved there from all over the Nordics. We also went to the Army Museum, which was interesting since my perceptions of Sweden was that it is a very peaceful country, but they were not always so peaceful from what I learned.

We also visited an ice bar.

I think it was a bit overhyped, and the Ice Hotel, which is in the North of Sweden, is probably way cooler than the bar, which is made to promote the Ice Hotel. We also went to the Avicii Museum, which was super cool getting to hear the music process and also getting to hear unreleased music by Swedish pop culture icon Tim "Avicii" Bergling.

Pinchos, which is a restaurant, was another very fun experience with my boyfriend's family. You order everything through an app and your meals are very small, which is good in case you don't like it. Not tipping waiters, however, was so weird to me because of our tipping culture in America.

The food overall was really good there were some dishes his parents made me that I questioned. Since his dad is from the North of Sweden, I just had to try some traditional dishes from the North. One dish called Palt, was a potato dumpling with pork belly in

the middle – and not my favorite meal.

I did get to try reindeer stew, which was not as bad as I thought it would be. I would eat it again.

Overall, my second trip to Sweden may have been freezing but was so much fun. Everything there is so nicely organized and clean. In my opinion, everything is just better than it is here. I loved getting to spend time with his parents and listen to them talk about their home and what fun things happened during the holiday season.

I am sad I missed the Christmas Market that is hosted in the Old Town in Stockholm, but I did get to go to the Old Town and see what everything looked like in the snow. My favorite moment was driving around hunting for the Northern lights, which I did get a sneak peek at, but it wasn't the best viewing of them. I can't wait to go back and spend more time trying new foods and spending all my money on clothes.

Its all consuming

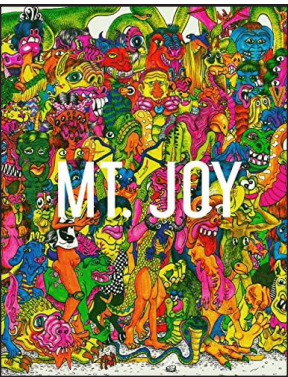
By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Hi! I'm Jess. I want to start consciously consuming media. And I want to help you do the same! I'm so sick of mindlessly scrolling on my phone, refusing to have a say on what I see and how it affects me. From now on I will be very purposeful with the books, films, articles, music, art, photography and podcasts I consume.

Turn it up LOUDER:
I've been listening to a lot of Mt. Joy these past couple of weeks.

Not to get all into it, but I was raised Catholic and of course I recognize the difference between the patriarchal control of the church and people's individual relationships with spirituality and the higher power. I like music that touches on religion in a less preachy and judgmental way and Mt. Joy does this.

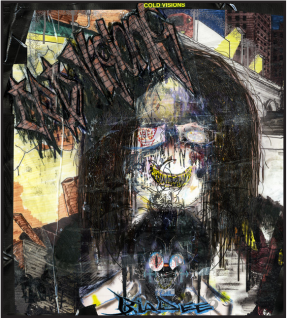
They reference God in a way that's hopeful instead of from a place of fear. I like the songs "Bathroom Light," which is track 10 off the 2022 album "Orange Blood," and "Sheep" which is track 5, and "Astrovan," which is track 8 off of their debut album "Mt. Joy."



Mt. Joy's album: Blood Orange

In a completely different direction, I've also been listening to a lot of Bladee. He's a Swedish rapper that I've been into for a couple years, but I really got into his stuff when I was in London.

His album "Cold Visions" came out in April of this year, and I remember while most of my friends were freakin' out about Taylor Swift's 30-track album, I was freaking out about Bladee's 30-track album. I'm really into track 26 "FLEXING AND FINESSING." The caps is so aggressive but that's literally the title I can't help it.



Bladee's album: Flexig and Finessing

Surfing the Web (Cowabunga or whatever):
Okay you guys need to check out the website Drive and Listen.

Basically, there are all these major cities you can choose from and once you click a city the screen is a p.o.v. of a car driving in whatever city you choose. You can also choose the local radio station for whatever that city is. It's very nice for background. I use it when I'm reading or writing and just want some relaxed background visuals.

I found this website in 2020 during COVID when I wanted to be anywhere but home so it was a bit of an escape. Now it's far less bleak and I just use it in the background of other activities.

I read an article published in Psyche titled "How to Get Hooked on Opera." From the website it says, "Psyche is a digital magazine from Aeon Media that illuminates the human condition through psychology, philosophy and the arts."

I thought it was an interesting "how to" and wanted to check it out. It discusses the history of opera and the traditional storytelling which I thought was interesting.

It's much different than theater that we might be familiar with. It's also not really about understanding what is being said but the emotion the songs evoke, and the visual stories being told.

It's also incredibly impressive and I know I'd start crying immediately. This website has such interesting stories about humanity and science and arts and they are all really easy to digest.

'A Complete Unknown' is worth a watch

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

I'm a huge Bob Dylan fan, but I'll admit, when I first heard about "A Complete Unknown," a Bob Dylan biopic starring Timothée Chalamet, I wasn't sure why we needed another movie about Dylan.

His story is practically a myth at this point, so what could a film about his early years add to the conversation? But as the end credits rolled, I found myself thinking, "gosh, we did need this movie."

Though I rolled my eyes when I heard that teen heart throb, Timothée Chalamet, would be portraying Dylan, I was impressed by how much the actor brought to the role. Chalamet nails young, scrappy Bob Dylan. His frizzy hair, signature slouch, and the gravelly rasp in his voice, are almost identical.

Chalamet channels the restlessness, poetic swagger and ambition Dylan possessed when he was a young artist.

The movie begins showing the New York City folk scene of the early '60s, capturing a world of smoke-filled clubs, passionate musicians and young angst. Dylan, a nobody



Timothée Chalamet channels Bob Dylan in the official movie poster for 'A Complete Unknown.'

at the time, meets Pete Seeger (Edward Norton), and through his connections to Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy) be-

gins his rise to stardom.

The film is heavily focused around Dylan's romantic and personal relationships, espe-

cially tension from the love triangle between Sylvie Russo (Elle Fanning) and Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro).

The way Dylan's personal life seems to constantly clash with his public persona is deafening. He's shown as one who can touch millions with his words but struggles to connect and commit to the people closest to him.

"A Complete Unknown" dives into Dylan's internal conflicts, especially around the moment he made the monumental decision to leave folk behind and go electric at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. You can feel the weight of his decision, both artistically and personally.

He wasn't just challenging folk traditions; he was challenging the expectations of those who had helped him get there. It's this tension between wanting to be true to his art and dealing with the fallout from those closest to him that makes the film grounded.

But let's talk about the music, because "A Complete Unknown" is practically a concert film in its own right.

Though Chalamet may not sound exactly like Dylan (let's be honest, no one could), his voice had the right mix of raw

edge and smoothness. You'll be a fan of the music in this film even if you're not that familiar with Dylan's work.

The performances are front and center, with over 40 songs scattered throughout the two-hour runtime.

If you're a Dylan fan, you're in for a treat.

The sequences where Chalamet and other musicians like Johnny Cash (Boyd Holbrook) and Joan Baez perform are electric. But, at times, the sheer volume of music can weigh down the narrative. It starts to feel a bit like a double album of Dylan's greatest hits stitched together with some plot. I believe it would've been better to trim some of those musical moments out to let Dylan's story breathe.

"A Complete Unknown" is more than a love letter to Dylan's music. It's about understanding the artist behind the music, his struggles, his contradictions and his inspiring pursuit of creative freedom. Though the film might drag on in certain places, it's well worth the watch, especially if you're a fan of Chalamet, Dylan, or both.

A colorful memory of childhood

By Abigale Murphy
Spartan Contributor

In my Painting 101 class, I was instructed to paint a scene (from memory) that somehow relates to a memory of childhood.

Then, I covered certain areas of the painting with masking tape to preserve it. Then, we had to paint another full layer over the top of the masking tape.

I then was instructed to paint a second layer inspired by my contemporary life from direct observation. After I removed the tape, I made the two paintings more cohesive with each other.

For my first layer, I chose to paint a memory of me using a scarf to swing down the stairs and jump into my family's laundry. I decided to use bright vibrant colors, specifically my favorite colors at that age.

I am someone who is very committed to a style or aesthetic. Even as a kid, I would surround myself with my favorite colors. I decided to make the walls and stairs pink so it would feel more like a child's imagination.

I wanted to include all of my siblings' safety items (blankets and teddy bears) on the stairs because they were always the last to be thrown

down for laundry.

The clothes pile is filled with my favorite articles of clothing as a kid.

I spend a lot of time at my desk, so I thought it would be most fitting to represent my contemporary life and paint from observation.

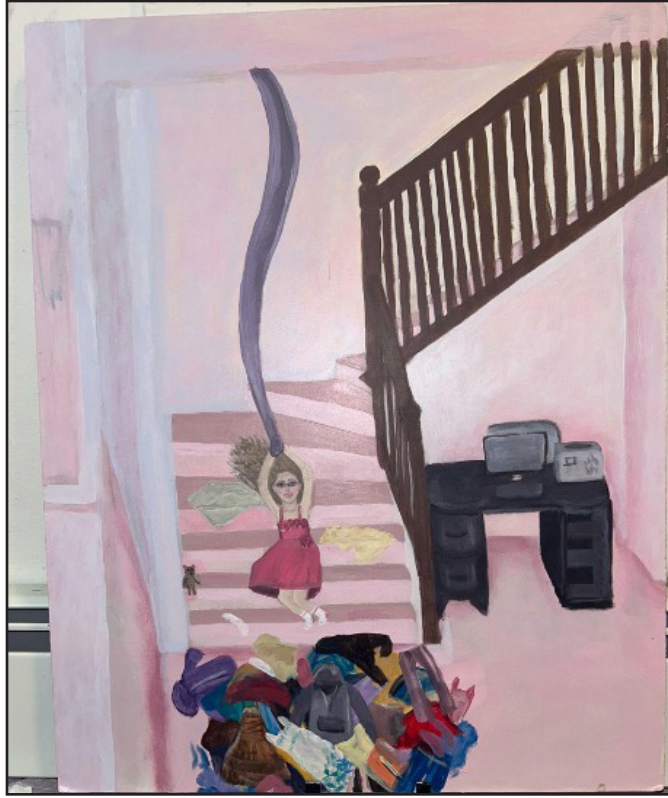
The change in color and tone between the two layers makes the painting feel like it is symbolizing remembrance in oneself.

The second layer is aesthetically pleasing to the eye, with a very mundane tone. I imagine soft vinyl playing in the background when looking at it.

The first layer is much louder than the second layer. The wall gets darker as you move away from the light which also makes it look like my childhood self is emitting the light.

The first layer represents one's past forgotten self, a girl whose style held no bounds, all she knew was she liked the color pink and would make everything pink if she could. Even after someone grows up and loses that childhood wonder that allowed swinging on a scarf to feel like flying, she still crashes through with bright colors and unrealistic imagery.

She still crashes through whenever I'm playing a game, and I pick pink for my avatar.



Viva Las Castleton: a CAB casino night



EMILY ELY

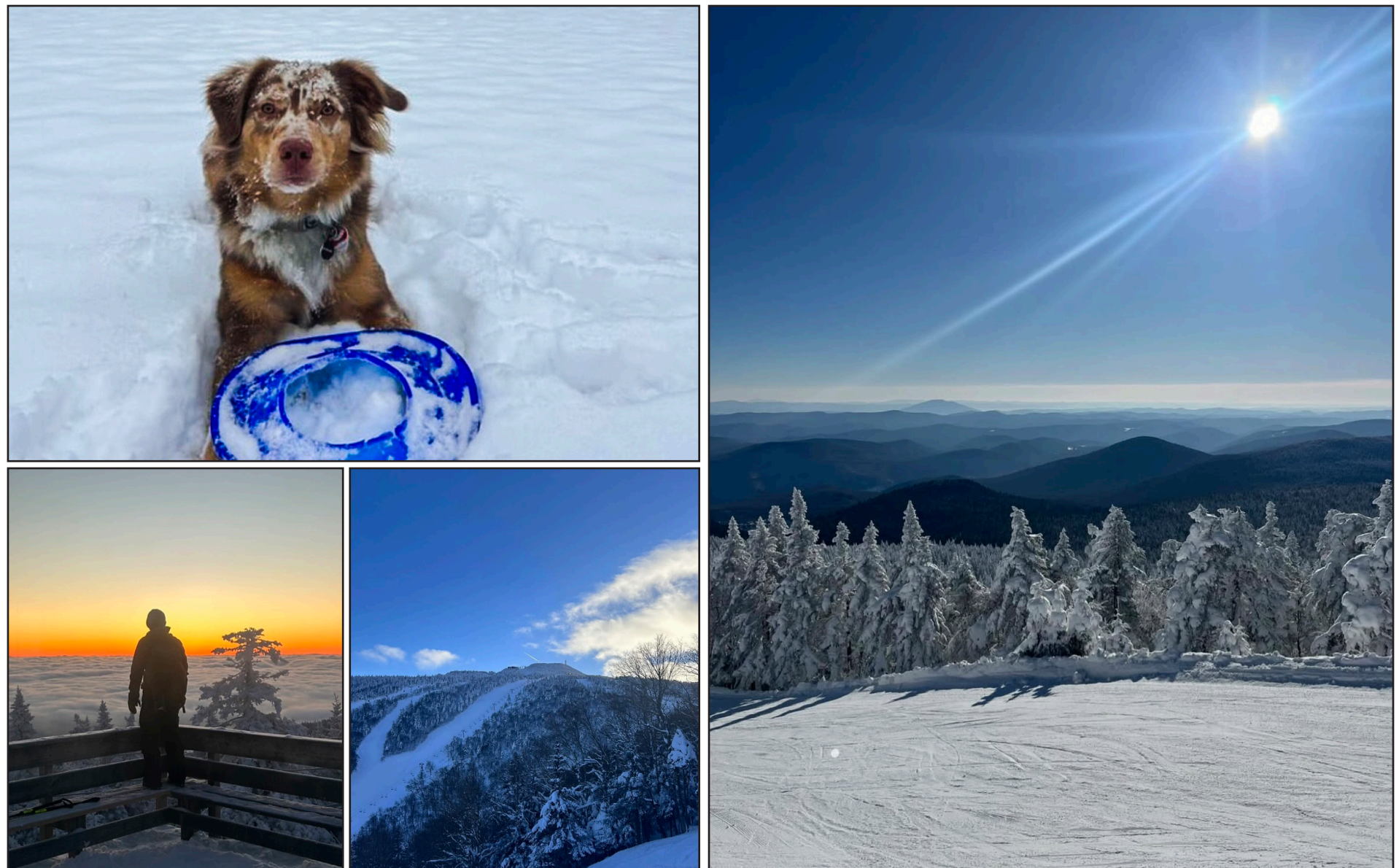
Philip Malazarte pictured dealing cards to Blackjack players, carefully discussing their strategy.



EMILY ELY

Blackjack dealer, Meghan Mureddu, collects her winnings after taking the hand of Blackjack, as players gather around for more action at Casino Night, an event organized by The Campus Activities Board.

Winter photography contest finalists



COURTESY

The winner of the 2025 Spartan winter photo competition, far right, was from Killington submitted by Kailyn August. Honorable mention submissions include Rylee Pippen, top left, Cole Dezan bottom left and Toby Ritzkowski, bottom middle.

Man was dog’s best friend

Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Animal advocates seem to be around every corner during this generation, and recently there has been an awesome example of one in the Green Mountain State.

On Jan. 10, in the small town of Berlin, Vermont, Chris MacRitchie, his wife, and his son were going through a drive-thru at a nearby Dunkin’ Donuts when MacRitchie and his wife noticed something irregular floating in the tributary of the Winooski River.

As the three gazed once more upon the icy waters, they realized what they were looking at: an animal in crisis.

A dog was left helpless, fighting against the frigid current, and time was quickly running out for the four-legged companion. Without hesitation, the family leapt out of their warm and comfortable car, urgently rushing to the bank of the tributary.

They knew immediately that something had to be done, so MacRitchie walked towards the edge of the ice.

A video was taken of the brave feat, where MacRitchie’s wife said “Just go”, and just as soon those words were said, the ice broke from underneath MacRitchie’s feet.

MacRitchie then calmly waded through the icy, waist-high water toward the struggling dog. He remarkably grabbed the dog by the collar

and began guiding her across the stream. When MacRitchie reached the riverbank, he picked her up, lifting her onto the snowy bank.

The video goes on to capture MacRitchie’s family swaddling the dog in a warm jacket before the screen cuts to black and the video ends.

In the end, the dog (named Arizona) turns out okay, and her owner was notified.

When the Boston Herald interviewed MacRitchie and asked why he acted upon the situation, MacRitchie stated, “It was like one of those moments everyone probably has in their life, like you’re going to make a decision.”

MacRitchie went on to add that he felt obligated to fetch the dog out of the river be-

cause, “I felt I was obligated to at least try to fetch this dog out of the river, as I have two dogs myself, and I would hope someone would do that for them if they were in that spot.”

According to the Boston Herald, Chris MacRitchie and his family quickly contacted Arizona’s owner, Morgan Cerasoli. Cerasoli was relieved to hear that Chris not only found Arizona but saved her from the freezing waters (especially given the fact that Arizona had been missing since the previous Thursday).

The Boston Herald interviewed Morgan, later asking her what her response was to the incredible news. All she could explain was, “I started crying, and I told him, oh, my God, I love you, I love you, I



COURTESY GAVIN BRADLEY

Chris MacRitchie with Arizona, seconds after he pulled her out of the water.

love you.”

Personally, seeing a story like this truly raises my spirits. It makes me realize that there are a lot of good people out there who will do almost any-

thing to help a creature in need.

I’m grateful for all the animal advocates out there who not only do amazing things for other people, but for other species.

Genny:



COURTESY GENNY HOLDER

Genny Holder and her best friend Rebecca Jones.

Continued from page 3

“I was partnered up with Andrew Martell and we went over to basically find actors and actresses for our film. We managed to find Emerson Joliff and Genny. And we met her down in the costume department of Castleton. We kinda talked basically and she said yes and she also got to do some of the costume stuff for our project so it was pretty pretty fun,” Burmeister said.

She killed it in both versions of the project and she was then the easy option when looking for actresses in future film projects. Since then, Burmeister and Holder have become good friends attending many social gatherings, parties, as well as Sam’s comedy specials at local bars.

In the summer and fall months, she works as an employee at the Great Escape. Based on the season, she gets

to dress up as fictional characters and perform shows for children and she loves her job.

Just this past Halloween she was in a show called “Caged,” where she had makeup on that made her look like a failed science experiment. The show was remarkable, and the dances were impressive.

Another great friend of Holder is Rebecca Jones. Ever since they were paired together in cheer tryouts they have been inseparable and have become like sisters.

“We cheered together through high school and then we were close. We were always together during cheerleading and football games, and we would dorm with each other every year for cheer camp. So, I graduated high school, and we didn’t talk for a couple of years and after COVID, she messaged me and we got together to do a craft fair and then ever since we’ve been

close,” Jones said.

“Yeah, we’re at the point now where if she just shows up at my house I don’t think anything of it. We’re both really similar and we’re both really gift giving people and we’re always picking up little things for each other and we connect on a level that’s deeper than a normal friendship,” Holder said.

Holder has been through a lot in her life and she has risen above every challenge thrown her way. She has even been considering whether to go to law school or go back and get her masters. Whatever she decides to do she’s going to take it head on and do great things as her life goes on.

“You’re not gonna find yourself sitting on the couch at home. Just go out and do things, start making decisions. Yourself will find you eventually,” Holder said.

Convocation:

Continued from page 1

Wakefield then said “adoption is important,” but then explained the importance of implementation.

He discussed his plans to follow up with the towns that have adopted the Declaration and see how far it has taken them.

“We think this has implications beyond Vermont,” Wakefield said. “States are struggling to be competitive.”

Wakefield discussed how although the moral part of the situation is important, it is also a matter of needing more than just the white people in communities to make things work.

“Folks have got to come from someplace,” he explained.

He encouraged the audience saying “You can exemplify the spirit of inclusion.”

Wakefield concluded, giving praise and encouragement to the campus and community.

VTSU President David Bergh took the stage after a heart-felt rendition of “True Light” was performed by the Chorale in remembrance of Dr. Tony Leach.

Bergh expressed pride he acknowledged that he saw all but one campus on the list of inclusion and noted that there is room for improvement.

He praised Yoon’s efforts and explained that we must “prioritize connection and conversation...even with those you don’t agree with...especially with those you don’t agree with.”



ROBERT FRANKLIN AND LEO RICHARDSON

The Castleton Collegiate Chorale performed at Convocation and DEI leader Paul Yoon spoke.

Playoff push time for women’s basketball

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Over the course of the Spartans women’s basketball season, the team has set itself up to make a strong push for a playoff spot in the final weeks of the season.

Currently sitting at a 7-12 overall record with a 4-7 conference record, the Spartans have been solid at home but have found trouble on the road throughout the season. Of the five remaining games of the regular season, the Spartans are at home twice, which seems like an advantage for the team currently.

“The second half of the season we’ve been seeing things fall more into place.

We’ve gotten a couple conference wins. Now we’re just doing what we can to make playoffs and try and keep our season going as long as we can,” said junior captain, Maggie McKearin.

The Spartans, while tied with Keene State, are on the outside of the playoffs because of the tie breaker between the two teams. In the five upcoming games, the Spartans have already played each opponent once and have fared well against two of them. Plymouth State and UMass Boston were both key wins.

If the Spartans take the second game against UMass Boston on Feb. 19, it could put the team in a prime position to have a playoff birth after just nearly missing out on the

playoffs a season ago.

The team is currently led by Stasia Epler, averaging just over 14 points a game while Emily Dingmon and Emily Adams are right behind her with both averaging 12.7 and 12.6 points per game respectively. Dingmon is also managing to grab 10 boards a game to average a double-double on the season currently while having a 32 percent field goal shooting.

While the team relies heavily on their trio of scorers for offense, it is a much different look offensively than the team has seen in years prior. The team looks more to attack the paint this year than previous years where it was a more balanced drive and kick out for the three-ball offense.



CASTLETONSPORTS
Stasia Epler shooting a mid range jumper against UMass Boston.

Women’s hockey finds their stride

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The Spartans women’s hockey team has been back in action plenty since the break. There is lots to catch you up on with the girls. On Jan. 3 the women began their hot streak in their Badgley Invitational with a commanding 7-1 victory over Keene State. The Spartans’ powerplay units were particularly effective, matching a school record scoring five powerplay goals in a single game. Standout performances included three-point contributions from Ellie Schliebener, Alex Johnson, and Codi Bacon, while goaltender Victoria Bakopanos secured the win with 24 saves.

Following this dominant performance, the Spartans faced a formidable opponent in No. 14 Colby College during the tournament’s championship game. Despite a valiant effort, Castleton fell 5-0. Bakopanos delivered an impressive performance with 55 saves, marking her third game of the season with over 50 saves. Both she and Johnson were named to the All-Tournament team, with Johnson having contributed two goals and an assist in the tournament. Colby has now won the tournament back-to-back years and will need to be dethroned.

The team then returned to conference play, facing Norwich University twice on the road. The Spartans were unable to overcome a strong Norwich team, resulting in 4-0 and 2-0 losses, respectively. That made it three straight games without a goal.

The following weekend, Castleton traveled to Newport,

Rhode Island, to take on Salve Regina University. The game concluded with a 4-1 loss for the Spartans. Ellie Schliebener broke the scoring draught with the team’s lone goal, assisted by Mikayla Brightman and Moa Carlsson. First-year goaltender Gianna McCusker made a notable contribution with a career-high 31 saves. Still struggling for offense, however, it was not enough.

The Spartans rebounded the following day, securing a 2-0 victory over Salve Regina. This was a big win, after a long struggle to find offense and limit the opponents chances.

Geneva, New York, was the next stop to play another conference opponent, William Smith. Both games were low-scoring defensive battles that went to overtime. On Saturday, the Spartans led 1-0 for almost the whole 60 minutes and were scored on with just seconds left on the clock, then beaten in overtime. The following night was 0-0 the entire 60 minutes, and again unfortunately were scored on in the final minutes.

The Spartans then faced off against Keene State for the second time this year and again handled them. Mikayla Brightman, Brooke Noble, and Ellie Schliebener had the three goals for Castleton to ensure a win.

And lastly, this past weekend the girls faced off with Salem State twice and came out with six points. The first game was a 3-1 victory in which Salem scored first despite being massively out shot. Finally, Carlsson broke through, followed by Meg Aiken, and then Carlsson again with the insurance marker. The following match was a similar dominant performance



CASTLETONSPORTS
On top, junior standout Moa Carlsson racing to a loose puck in the corner, on the bottom the team is celebrating the game winning goal against Salem State.

that was a little closer than it needed to be. Again, Aiken scored, Carlsson had another pair of goals, and Alex Johnson had the fourth to put the game

away. The Castleton Spartans hold an overall record of 9-11-1, with a conference record of 5-8-1. The team continues to

demonstrate determination and skill as they navigate the challenges of the season. Next time we check in, they will be entering the playoffs,

so support the girls in their playoff push upcoming.

Spartans ski into medal finishes at West Mountain



CHRISTOPHER EDER

The Spartan ski team continued its dominance on the slopes at West Mountain on Feb. 8 and 9. The men’s side took third on Friday and second on Saturday as the women took first on Friday and third on Saturday. This marks the second time this season both teams medaled on both days. On Saturday, it would mark the women’s lowest finish of the season and only the second time they hadn’t placed first for a day this season.

Men’s basketball trying to find their footing



CASTLETONSPORTS

Troy Butler drives toward the hoop through two defenders.

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Through a season that has had its ups and downs the Castleton men’s basketball team continues to look to build off each other to try and find success.

“The second half of the season has brought some challenges, but as a program, we feel good in the direction we’re headed. We’ve changed our play style to a more upbeat, faster style of play where everyone sees the floor and gives it all they have for about 1-2 minutes at a time. We’ve seen some success and hope to keep building on that,” said assistant coach Joe Russell.

The Spartans struggled in the first half of the season finding consistent scoring however, with the new addition of Troy Butler on the court the

team has seemed to find its offensive spark.

“I was out of basketball for 2 years and I give thanks to coach Culpo who gave me a opportunity to come back and do what I love. We have caught a couple wins in the midst of adjusting to a new system that all the guys are completely new to,” Butler said.

Butler has been a key contributor averaging 16 points a game while shooting over 30 percent from the field. Butlers’ emergence alongside Will Radcliff and Ben Seller has been the tail of the tape of the Spartans offence during the second half stretch of the season.

“The new system gives us a chance to have fun while playing and trust each other to have the backs of your teammates while on the court because of the relentless

mindset Coach Culpo, Gibbons, and Russell instilled into us. It’s a honor to share the court with the talented core we have and we’re very confident in pushing through this last stretch of the second half to secure a playoff spot,” Butler said.

The Spartans look at an uphill battle the rest of the season currently sitting on the outside looking in at a playoff spot. With five conference games remaining the Spartans are two games back of the sixth-place spot in the standings which is the cut off for playoffs.

The Spartans look to get on the right track towards playoff on the road at UMass Dartmouth on Saturday February 8.

Seniors soak it all in at Spartan Arena

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

This January, the Vermont Men’s Hockey team faced a critical turning point, knowing they were eager to turn things around.

With three new teams and six games played in the new year, they unfortunately came up short in each one. While one game ended in a tie, they ultimately lost in a heartbreaking shootout.

With playoffs right around the corner we don’t know if the Spartans grasped onto a spot or not, but we are eager to see if they can finish the season off strong.

Friday Jan. 31, The Vermont State University men’s hockey team earned a crucial 3-1 victory over New England College on Friday evening, continuing their push in the New England Hockey Conference.

The win, which took place during the “Breaking the Ice on Mental Health” event, propelled the Spartans to a 2-12-1 record in the conference, while the Pilgrims slipped to 5-7-1.

Castleton got off to a strong start as Aiden Robson delivered a precision shot from the blue line, firing top corner after receiving a perfect pass from Zach Papapetros.

The goal, Aiden Robson’s third of the season, gave the Spartans an early 1-0 lead. In net, freshman Charles Watson was stellar for Castleton, particularly in the second period where he stopped 15 shots.

The Yarmouth, Maine native finished with 34 saves on the night, earning his first collegiate victory in impressive fashion.

The Spartans doubled their lead in the second when Andrew Stefura won a battle behind the NEC net, finding Jackson Edwards, who quickly fed a pass to Josef Vyvial for a one-timer that beat Pilgrims’ goalie.

The score stood at 2-0 heading into the final period. NEC came out strong in the third, capitalizing on an early powerplay, cutting the

Castleton led to 2-1 and giving the Pilgrims life.

However, the Spartans’ defense, anchored by Cedrick Theodore and Cam Reid, stood tall, snuffing out every NEC offensive surge.

As time wound down, the Pilgrims had a final opportunity with a powerplay chance at 1:47 left in the game, but Castleton’s penalty kill was up to the task. Trevor Castino made a key interception and sprinted the length of the ice to bury an empty-net goal, securing the win for the Spartans.

The victory marks a significant step forward for Castleton as they continue to battle through the rest of the season to try and end strong.

They were looking for another win against the team the next day to keep the momentum going especially on senior night.

After a hard-fought 3-1 win against New England College on Friday, January 31, the Spartans were looking to build on the momentum heading into Senior Night the following day.

However New England College bounced back on Saturday with a commanding 6-2 victory, spoiling Castleton’s chance at a weekend sweep.

NEC came out of the gate with high intensity, taking control early. Putting them ahead 1-0.

NEC continued their offensive onslaught, netting three more goals to build a commanding 4-0 lead by the end of the first period.

The Pilgrims didn’t waste time adding to their lead in the second, as Gunnar Sibley found the back of the net just 45 seconds into the period to make it 5-0.

Castleton made a goaltender change in the second period, bringing in senior Simon Brenter, who provided a steady presence between the net.

Brenter finished with 21 saves, keeping the Spartans’ comeback hopes alive.

Meanwhile, Zach Trempner was strong on the faceoff dot, winning 13 of 16 draws for the Spartans.

The Spartans refused to be discouraged by the deficit and



CASTLETONSPORTS

The senior Spartans after their senior night post game activities with family and friends.

began to rally in the second period.

Logan Dapprich and Cam Reid teamed up to assist Balint Mesterhazy, who scored his first goal of the season to put Castleton on the board. Early in the third, the Spartans kept the pressure on.

Josef Vyvial set up Andrew Stefura for a goal that brought Castleton within two. With that tally, Stefura became just the sixth player in program history to score 40 goals.

However, despite the momentum shift, NEC answered back with a powerplay goal with just under seven minutes remaining to seal the 6-2 victory and split the weekend series with the Spartans.

Castleton will look to regroup and rebound as they play University of Maine next weekend.

As the Spartans continue to battle through the season’s final stretch, Senior Day brought a

moment of reflection.

We caught up with several seniors from the Castleton hockey program to hear how the past few years have shaped them, both on and off the ice.

Captain Justin Stairs shared, “The last five years have given me some great memories and great friends. I think we were able to leave the program better than we found it, and they’re in good hands moving forward with the group they have.”

Zach Papapetros echoed the sentiment, saying, “The program has meant a ton to me because of the friends I made and the memories we created together.”

Zach Trempner added, “It’s been an incredible honor to wear the Spartan jersey for the past four seasons. I’ll always cherish the memories made and the teammates I had the privilege to share the ice with.”

For Stone Stelzl, the experience was about more than just hockey: “It has been great; it means a lot to each of us. We all came from different spots but became brothers throughout our time here and made lots of memories on and off the ice that we will remember forever.”

Jackson Kobelka reflected on the opportunity the program provided, saying, “It has meant everything to me. It has given me the opportunity to continue playing the game I love while also getting an education.”

Romeo Torain, a four-year player, described his experience as “an honor and a privilege” and shared, “To be able to wear the Spartan uniform every day was something I’ll never take for granted.”

Bryce Irwin, though his time didn’t end as he had envisioned, expressed gratitude for his journey, saying, “The past four years gave me the opportunity to create friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. I will always be grateful for my teammates,

coaches, and fans who treated me like family through my years at Castleton.”

Goaltender Simon Brenter said “The hockey program means a lot to me, I especially value all the friendships and memories I made over the four years.”

Finally, Stu added, “It has been an honor to play for Castleton over the past four seasons. I’ve been blessed to have an incredible group of teammates who have become lifelong friends, and I’d like to thank all my coaches, teammates, and fans who have supported me throughout the years.”

As these seniors take their final strides in the Spartan uniform, their words reflect the deep bond they’ve formed not only with each other but with the program, and the lasting impact it has had on them both on and off the ice.

Scary Super Bowl Sunday matchup

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The 2025 Super Bowl will be full of compelling storylines both on and off the field. Whether it’s the Chiefs quest to become the first NFL team to ever win three consecutive championships, Saquon’s revenge season after being let go from the Giants, complaints about officiating, or Tom Brady being in the booth as the game’s announcer.

Regardless, America’s most decorated game will provide the excitement and engagement we as an audience will be looking for.

The Chiefs quest for a three-peat not only cements the Chiefs organization into the history books with a win, it also adds legacy stock to both players and coaches.

Patrick Mahomes would have the second most Super Bowl wins. Mahomes would also become the first quarterback to have four SuperBowl wins before the age of 30.

Travis Kelce would also add to his illustrious career as

a fabulous playoff performer. Kelce is the all-time receptions leader in the playoffs and trails only Jerry Rice in both receiving yards and receiving touchdowns in the playoffs. Kelce would further push his case for being the greatest tight end of all time.

Head coach Andy Reid has big stakes on the line in this year’s Super Bowl too. Reid would become one of only three coaches in NFL history to win four or more Super Bowls. Not to mention that Reid is only four wins behind Belichick for the most playoff wins in NFL history.

Saquon Barkley has been unbelievable this season after being let go from the misery in New York. Barkley went over 2,000 yards rushing in the regular season and has continued his brilliance in the postseason. Barkley this postseason has gone over 100 yards rushing twice and over 200 yards in the Eagles most recent game.

Barkley will look to complete his revenge tour with a win on Super Bowl Sunday and record one of the greatest running back seasons this

league has ever seen.

Because of the Chiefs dominance over the past couple seasons, it’s become harder and harder to watch a game without having to hear about the officiating. Other than Chief fans, most of the NFL fans believe the Chiefs get favorable calls. And because this narrative has continued to grow, it’ll likely be the hot topic of conversation during this year’s Super Bowl.

Although we’re used to hearing Tom Brady’s name on Super Bowl Sunday, this time it’ll be from the broadcasting booth. No player appeared in more Super Bowl games than Brady. We all know Brady doesn’t shy away from high-leverage moments, but it’ll be intriguing to see how he handles the pressure of calling the biggest game of the year.

This year’s Super Bowl is heating up to be a highly touted game with the two best teams playing. The Kansas City Chiefs have the ultimate quarterback-coach combo while the Philadelphia Eagles have arguably the most complete roster in the NFL.

This clash is shaping up to

