

How Karl Marx made me a Capitalist

Karl Marx once wrote, “The less you are and the less you express your life, the more you have and the greater is your alienated life.”

Basically, my man was saying, “Congrats on all your stuff, but your soul is on back-order.” He went on to describe how, under capitalism, the less you go to the theater, engage in art, or cultivate yourself intellectually, the more you accumulate wealth, but at what cost?

Today, that quote hits harder than a 7 a.m. Monday morning wake up call for a lecture in Leavenworth. Late-stage capitalism has hollowed out the depth of human experience, swapping curiosity for consumption, engagement for efficiency, and individuality for algorithmic predictability. Am I being dramatic?

Our economic system, once an engine of opportunity, has become a self-perpetuating machine that rewards the few at the expense of the many. It’s no longer just about wealth inequality – it’s about how capitalism has curated our reality itself. The system doesn’t just control what you buy; it controls how you think, what you see, and what you value.

And it’s working, because we seemingly forget what the human experience once was. It’s like The Truman Show, except Truman is in his pajamas, endlessly scrolling TikTok.

Social media algorithms, 24-hour news cycles, and corporate monopolies all function as part of a larger mechanism designed to keep the population passive and overwhelmed with information. The world is burning; economically, politically, and literally in some places.

Despite that, the only thing that trends is the latest celebrity scandal and hot girls dancing on a boat.

People are scrolling, but they aren’t searching.

Capitalism has always depended on keeping people distracted, but the efficiency with which it does so now is unparalleled. The only thing it asks of you is complacency – oh, and \$9.99 a month for the premium version.

And it’s not just about politics. The culture of efficiency has stripped people of curiosity itself. We live in a world where convenience is king.

Why go out and experience life when an app can bring it to your doorstep? Why seek out new perspectives when the algorithm already knows what you like? Kurt Vonnegut had a lovely story about buying one envelope at a time instead of a whole box like his wife suggested. He did it not because it was practical, but because it forced him to interact with the world. He left his house to have conversations, to observe, to experience. He engaged with his community, and it gave him a chance for adventure every time he sent

a letter.

Beauty in the mundane.

But in a society optimized for speed, taking the long road is no longer even an option. I mean, who has the time? There’s a new season of your favorite show dropping at midnight and the pretty blonde you follow posted a dump in Dubai.

I recently had a conversation with a friend who proposed a rather optimistic take on AI and capitalism. His theory was that as automation drives down production costs, corporations would eventually sell products so cheaply that we’d all waltz into a utopia, paying pennies for life’s necessities, thus justifying that capitalism drove growth to the point of utopia. The idea being, once companies don’t have to pay pesky things like labor costs, they’d shower us with generosity.

I’m oversimplifying here, and allowing my scepticism to sway the tone, but alas. It’s a beautiful thought, like picturing Jeff Bezos running a non-profit daycare. The idea relies on the assumption that corporations would prioritize public good over profits. Given the track record, expecting that kind of benevolence feels like waiting for a wolf to go vegan.

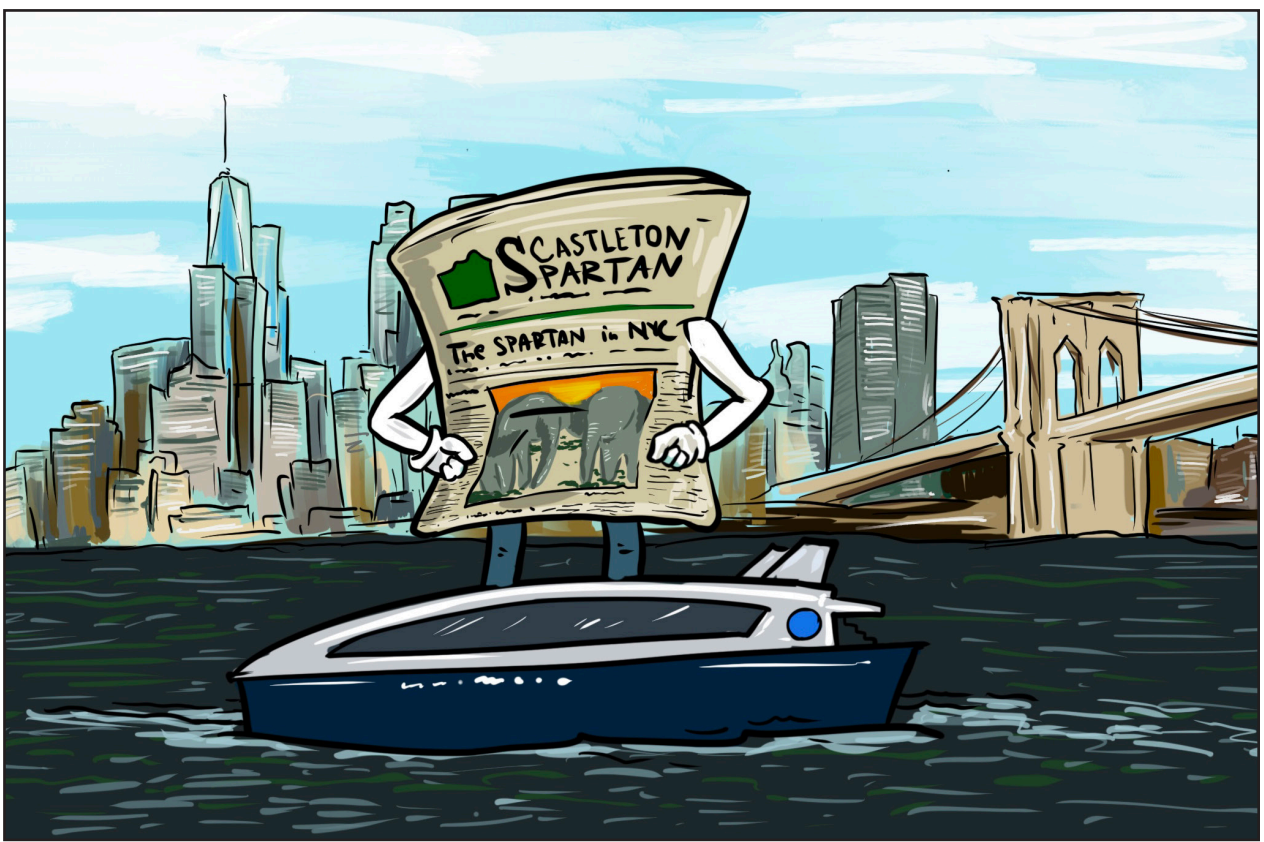
If anything, history shows us that the more efficient capitalism becomes, the more it tightens its grip on profits and the less it shares with the masses. Sure, production might get cheaper, but that doesn’t mean life will.

But fulfillment doesn’t come from consumption – it comes from curiosity. And that is exactly what this system has worked so hard to suppress. But Christ, if I say I’m a socialist it’s like I just said death to America.

Breaking out of this cycle isn’t easy. It’s a personal battle against attention span, dopamine addiction, and the constant pull of passive consumption. It takes time and intentionality. Read more fiction. Seek out art outside of your algorithm. Take the long way home, not because it’s practical, but because it reminds you that you are not a machine. The goal isn’t to escape capitalism overnight – that’s a fantasy. The goal is to reclaim your ability to choose, to resist the default setting. Marx was right: the less you go to the theater, the less you engage with the world, the more capitalism wins. The only question now is whether we let it.

My last note I will leave you with is a quote from Mark Fisher, “It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”

- Jackson Edwards



JOE VYVIAL

Guest Essay:

Poli Sci professor discusses democracy and education

*“Don’t it always seem to go
That you don’t know what
you got ‘til it’s gone?”*

--Joni Mitchell, Big Yellow Taxi

MAGA Republicans have blamed the collapse of our institutions on so-called “elites” who control the arts and sciences and who look down on the average American. In this view, experts are supporting the institutions that oppress Americans through regulations, social engineering, and policing thought and language. Education itself has become a target.

Wealthy capitalists, along with much of the capitalist workforce, become the victims in this scenario where the elite are the “woke” (people who recognize a history of social injustice), the educated (people who believe that science is the best method for understanding social and natural phenomena) and the deep state (dedicated civil servants with expertise in a wide array of fields).

In addition to the attack on the educated, there has been a concerted attack on facts, the shared understanding of our current reality.

The Trump administration has told the world that Ukraine, which was invaded by an aggressively belligerent Russia, started the war, and Vladimir Putin who has had his political opponents murdered or jailed is a good leader. The President has said that the insurrection of January 6, 2021—the violence of which we watched in real time as law enforcement officers were attacked and beaten—was a day of patriotic and peaceful protest. Mr. Trump maintains that the 2020 election was stolen from him despite countless



Rich Clark

evidence that Biden won fairly, and he claims that he won the 2024 presidential election in a landslide despite it being the closest election in terms of popular vote since the 2000 contest between Bush and Gore. Among hundreds of other dubious claims, President Trump has asserted that the wildfires that devastated California and the mid-air collision of a passenger plane and an Army helicopter were the result of DEI policies.

It is not coincidental that our democracy is in peril at the same time that what Kellyanne Conway called “alternative facts” are more prevalent in public discourse than at any other time in modern American history. [“Alternative facts” exacerbated the COVID pandemic resulting in more deaths, and led to the January 6th insurrection.]

America’s founders were far from perfect individuals, but they largely shared a foundation in the Enlightenment that believed that science and reason would bring about good public policy and that the purpose of government was to protect individuals’ rights while pursuing the general public good—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Republic that the founders built was an unfinished product, meant to grow and change with the needs of the people—thus Article V of

the Constitution providing the means to alter the supreme law. But Article V created a process that required broad support for amendments; the Constitution could not be changed on a whim or in response to momentary passions.

Our founders built a system that is meant to move slowly; democracy is not efficient by design. An old proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, to together.” Democracy is built to go far, not fast. Elon Musk’s belief in “move fast and break things” is not a formula for a democracy; it’s a formula for chaos that in the short term may boost the market value of a tech company but won’t build a long-term, stable institution. The purposes of government and the purposes of tech companies are far too different to apply the same organizational ethos.

For many Americans, democracy has failed to bring about the conditions that they seek, and for other Americans, we are still striving to make democracy real. Some would have us go back to an earlier point in history for some imagined American greatness, and others would have us move forward into the unknown in search of that “more perfect union.” America is in a perpetual state of becoming, and for many the societal changes that are inherent in having no clear destiny is unsettling. The political tension in America pivots on whether to abandon our systems of democracy or to embrace democracy more fully.

While I still believe that what Americans share in common far exceeds what divides us, it is critical that we return to a shared foundation for debate, based on empirical facts

and an understanding that the scientific method is more often than not the best means for understanding our reality. Just as a modern economy needs an educated workforce, democracy needs an educated citizenry. While education is certainly no measure of an individual’s moral worth, those without the critical thinking skills that are developed through higher education are more susceptible to lies and conspiracy theories and less amenable to reasoned arguments.

Neither liberals nor conservatives, neither Republicans nor Democrats, neither the MAGA movement nor the resistance, have a lock on reason and truth. But the surest path to reason and truth is through education, and we cannot afford to become a less-educated society if we want to retain our democracy.

To be clear, democracy is in peril today. To employ the title of Astra Taylor’s book for my purposes: Democracy May Not Exist, but We’ll Miss It When It’s Gone. While we may not have a perfect democracy, the path to a “more perfect union” aspired to in our Constitution is in jeopardy. I still believe, like Churchill, that democracy is the worst form of government, except for every other form.

There is no silver bullet to solve the problems America faces, but education is the closest thing we have. That’s why successful authoritarians always attack and then control the system of education; it’s the greatest challenge to their power. And it’s the greatest weapon for democracy.

--Rich Clark, Professor of Political Science at VTSU-Castleton

My journey from Africa to VTSU

It was around 4:30 to 5 p.m. when I was at a local spot with my friends, playing and showing off a new skirt my dad had bought for me. I was 12 or 13 at the time, carefree and laughing, until my aunt started calling my name in a panic.

“Faida! Faida!”

I knew something was wrong when I saw her face, flushed and red as though she had been crying.

She screamed at me, “WHAT KIND OF DAUGHTER ARE YOU?”

Confused and nervous, I asked what she meant, but before I could understand, someone else yelled that my dad was dying.

My heart dropped, and a wave of panic hit me.

For some reason, my first thought was that my mom had died. I ran in a daze until I found myself at the hospital. My dad was lying there, looking strangely taller than usual. I refused to go in, unable to see him that way.

It wasn’t until my mom called to reassure me that he wasn’t dead that I felt a flicker of relief, but I still cried, overwhelmed by fear and confusion.

Months later, in July 2018, a woman came to our door, asking where my mom was.

I told her she was at work, and the woman seemed

shocked. She then told me that my mom had lost her husband in Congo.

He had been poisoned days before and went to a hospital in Congo, a couple hours away from their Burundi home, for treatment. But they were unable to treat him.

I froze in disbelief.

“I broke down, not knowing how to process the loss of the only friend I had ever known.”
- Faida Shukuru

I had just spoken to my dad days earlier, and he had seemed fine. I ran to my mom’s working place, but she wasn’t there.

When I finally found her, she was crying, and at that moment, I instantly knew what had happened.

My dad had died, and it felt like the ground beneath me had disappeared.

When I arrived at my aunt’s house, still in denial, she showed me a picture of my dad in a casket.

My world shattered.

I broke down, not knowing

how to process the loss of the only friend I had ever known. I couldn’t believe it—I didn’t want to believe it. Even though we tried to attend the funeral, delays meant we missed it. I felt like I was living in a nightmare, desperately hoping I would wake up.

By the time we arrived in Congo, I still clung to the hope that it wasn’t true. But when I saw my dad’s picture hanging on a mango tree, surrounded by mourners, my heart sank.

I broke down in tears, feeling like my entire world had fallen apart. My dad was gone, and I didn’t know how to cope. He had been my only friend, the one person who truly cared for me.

I felt lost, numb, and empty. My ul broke down, not knowing how to process the loss of the only friend I had ever known. ncle tried to comfort me, repeating that it was okay, that my dad might be gone, but he was there for me.

Yet, I couldn’t hear him. After the funeral, everything changed. My mom, now a single mother of seven, was left to raise us without help. Moving to the U.S. seemed like the fresh start we needed, but the challenges of adjusting were overwhelming.

Learning a new language and meeting new people was difficult, yet at the same time,

it wasn’t as bad as I had feared. The first couple of weeks here, I felt homesick. I wanted to go back because this place felt very strange. I didn’t know how to feel. I was excited, but also uncertain.

One time, my mom sent me to a store to get something for her. At first, I refused because I don’t speak the language.

“How am I supposed to ask the cashier?” I thought.

My mom responded, “How are you supposed to learn the language if you don’t talk to people?”

She had a point, so I went to the store. Just as I feared, an employee asked if I needed help. I was nervous and said, “No English.” However, the employee was really nice and didn’t mind. I don’t remember what else she said to me, but somehow she managed to help me.

Asked about the move five years ago, my mother said, “I’m glad we came. I don’t know how I could’ve done it back home because I did not have any support.”

Looking back, I’m glad we moved here too. Because of this opportunity, I am now in university—something I don’t think I could have accomplished if I had stayed back home.

- Faida Shukuru

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Shamrocks & sunshine

By Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

The first signs of spring have started to appear on campus, giving students the reassurance that warmer weather is underway. The most significant event has been the reappearance of Castleton's beloved "campus cat," Max. The news made its way to the social media platform YikYak, with one user commenting, "The world is healing."

Although said with humorous intent, it's obvious Max's presence has been much anticipated.

St. Patrick's Day decor can also be found around campus this time of year. In years past, campus has erupted in green and partying to celebrate the holiday. However, it seems the turnout of any functions this year will be much more reserved compared to past celebrations.

The majority of students asked said they have little to no plans surrounding St. Patty's. But some are looking forward to it.

"I've really never celebrated or gone to any of the darts because it's always been during tech week for me. It'll be fun to actually see what's going on, if anything," said Emerson Jolliffe, an active member of Castleton's theater department.

Many students reminisce on the St. Patrick's Day traditions from childhood. A common experience students share is the tradition of a leprechaun "breaking into" classrooms while students are away. Students recall chairs being tipped over, glitter and gold coins left astray, and even making traps in an effort to catch a leprechaun.

While some were entertained by the playful chaos, others were left somewhat unsettled.

"When the classroom got trashed, I would cry," said Emily Ely.

In fact, Ely recalls she had to be picked up from school. She has optimistic anticipation for the holiday this year and is looking forward to celebrating. Fellow student Ebbie Borgia had a positive experience with the tradition.

"I loved it. I thought it was magical," she said.

St. Patrick's Day originates from honoring the patron saint of Ireland. Borgia, along with her peers, are traveling to the emerald isle at the end of this semester. They held a bake sale to help fund their travels earlier this week.

Tim Keeler is another student participating in the Ireland trip. He's looking forward to sightseeing the most.

See St. Patty's on page 6

Success in the big city

Castleton Spartan wins second place for "Best Newspaper" at the NYC College Media Association

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

The annual College Media Association conference trip to New York City was filled with many highs, some lows (only for playing the game purposes) and lots of buffaloes for the group of nine Spartan newspaper students and Communications professor Dave Blow.

Their journey began at 5:45 a.m. on a Thursday morning, followed by a four-and-a-half-hour ride into the Big Apple.

On night one of the trip, while sitting around a table at the "Perfect Pint" Irish pub, Web Editor and student Jessica Emery suggested the high-low-buffalo game and shared details of day, along with a fun random story – A.K.A. a buffalo.

Others then followed with their highs, lows and buffaloes from the day too. By the end of the three-day trip, the group had more buffalos than they could count.

And it was another strong year for the Spartan as it won second place in the 2025 "Best Newspaper" Apple Awards category for Division III.

This marked the seventh national award for the Spartan since 2017. For four out of the nine students, it was their first time attending the C.M.A. conference.

"I haven't even been to New York City before, so it was honestly just a really good opportunity and I made a lot of career connections, as well as friendships that left me fulfilled and happy," Copy Editor Emily Ely said.

Sportswriter Lauren Fotter was also a first-time attendee of the trip, and even though she does not plan to go into journalism, she gained a lot of new information from a variety of people that she can use in her future career.

Jackson Edwards, who writes opinion pieces and sports stories, said he liked the ability to network at the conference.

"I was really impressed by the engagement from all the students, including our own. It wasn't just sitting down and listening to someone smart, it was intelligent students engaging with people who work in a field that they are inspired to be in, and it was just inspiring on all counts," he said.

A highlight of the trip for some was getting the opportunity to speak in front of a large group of people on two different occasions.

The first came when Blow and students Gabby Blanchard and Maddie Lindgren spoke during a panel touting their efforts producing community journalism through the Center for Community News.

"I loved seeing how interested the audience seemed to be while they asked us questions after we were asked up," Blow said. "I was just very proud to stand in front of a



Nine Castleton Spartan newspaper staff members attended the College Media Association conference that included, participating in scholarly sessions, unforgettable views and forever memories.

room with students and tout what we are doing, because I am very proud of what we are doing. And then Em asking a question at the keynote was really neat as well. I didn't know she was going to do it then all a sudden, I see her with a microphone in her hand."

Ely said she really enjoyed getting the opportunity to ask the speaker, Sree Sreenivasan, a question in front of the big crowd during the "What AI will really mean for media jobs" keynote session.

"I could tell he was very knowledgeable about the subject, and I appreciated how honest he was," Ely said.

The conference offers a

large variety of sessions throughout the three days of the trip, allowing students to make connections and learn more about media.

"I made a great connection with a journalist, Emily Bloch, who has written for Teen Vogue and Cosmopolitan, so I reached out," Emery said.

Emery shared how Blow had texted her separately after he had met Bloch himself, and explained how he was telling the Philadelphia Inquirer journalist about the work Emery has done. Bloch was very impressed, and it led to her responding to Emery with future plans to chat.

"It's so inspiring to see

people accomplishing what I want to do because Castleton doesn't see a lot of pop culture stories so it is really cool meeting other people who can show me that there is something out there for me," Emery said.

Previous managing editor of the Spartan, Peal Bellomo, said that her favorite presentation was from Mark Simon, the host of the Journalism Salute podcast. He played excerpts from some of his favorite episodes and lessons learned from those journalists. She thought the concept was really cool and unique and plans on listening to the podcast herself.

Sports editor Stone Stelzl also found inspiration during

the conference.

"It is really cool to hear people in the field of journalism talk about something I am passionate about and give tips I can use towards my career in the future," he said.

The Spartans left many impressions in New York this year, including from Ely who, as a way to receive more professional connections, made personal business cards to hand out to speakers at the event.

See N.Y.C on page 6

The untold truths about student cars



JOE VYVIAL

By Bruce T. Waite
Spartan Contributor

Workers at Hurlburt's Auto in Castleton have seen a lot over their 20-plus years working on student vehicles.

From brakes literally falling off the car when they remove tires to so much trash and clothes piled up they practi-

cally had to dig it out to do anything inside, Bub Hurlburt and Trevor Hurlburt aren't surprised by much.

Asked if they have ever had any interesting finds inside the vehicles, Trevor said without hesitation and with a grin, "Besides condoms, underwear, liquor, and pot?"

He followed his comment closely with a hearty laugh.

Mechanics and local auto parts store officials say a lack of routine maintenance leads to many more issues with student cars down the road that sometimes leaves them on the side of the road. Letting these vehicles sit while on campus does not help, and is one of the worst things to do, the mechanics said.

Alex Lasante, a seven-year

parts employee who has been at O'Reilly's in Castleton for about seven months, mentioned a few things that students always replace or buy.

"Most issues are from sitting for a month at a time over there," Lasante said, later mentioning that batteries and bulbs are the most common replacement parts for students.

Not everything mechanics and auto parts sales officials deal with is routine, and the longer you're in the business, the more out-of-the-ordinary things you tend to encounter, they say.

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"I had to put a heater core in a Jeep...he had a slight drug problem. A bundle of heroin fell out with a bunch of cups..." Trevor Hurlburt said of a Jeep Liberty – which the student then said was his mother's.

And some cars apparently resemble dorm rooms or bedrooms.

"We've had cars come in for dash work, and there's so much garbage on the floor you can't even get under it without cleaning it. Without throwing it all out all over the shop floor," Trevor said.

Lasante said he had seen the same.

"Some cars come in, and we have to find what they need for parts or check dash lights, and you can only see the driver's seat. There's so much garbage sometimes," he said.

AR-Automotive, directly across from Hurlbert's, has had similar experiences. Randy Dydo and Aaron Cassidy run the shop and shared similar stories concerning student vehicles.

Cassidy mentioned that the smell of "pot" seemed to be a theme among many student vehicles, and he wasn't a fan of working on them when they reeked of it.

See Cars on page 6

Tattoo of the week

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

Tattoos are not just body ink for Tylik Epps, a VTSU Castleton student and leader of the wrestling team.

For Epps, the tattoo on his bicep is a tribute to the greatest woman in his life: his mother. In late August of 2020, right before the beginning of his freshman year of college, Epps got a tattoo of an elephant, an animal known to be strong and protective of their family.

“My mom always had a thing for elephants,” Epps said. “She even claims it’s her spirit animal.”

Appreciation is not the only motivation for the tattoo, Epps said. Elephants carry their calves in the womb for an astonishing 22 whole months, a whole 13 months longer than a human.

This also links back to Epps’ mother because he feels as

though the process his mother and elephants go through carrying and protecting their offspring in the womb is very important, inspiring this tattoo.

“This tattoo is to show how powerful she is, like an elephant,” Epps said.

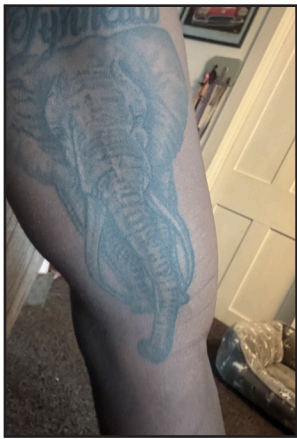
The design of the tattoo is meant to depict the elephant’s strength, and for Epps, it is a way for him to remember the love and strength that his mother has in his life.

Diving a little deeper into the meaning of the tattoo, Epps also explained how it also acts as motivation for him.

As one of the captains of the wrestling team, Epps channels his elephant’s spirit to help him find inner strength to overcome any challenge put in front of him.

He feels the tattoo also helps give him energy and motivation during his workouts, practices, team lifts, and overall, through his daily life.

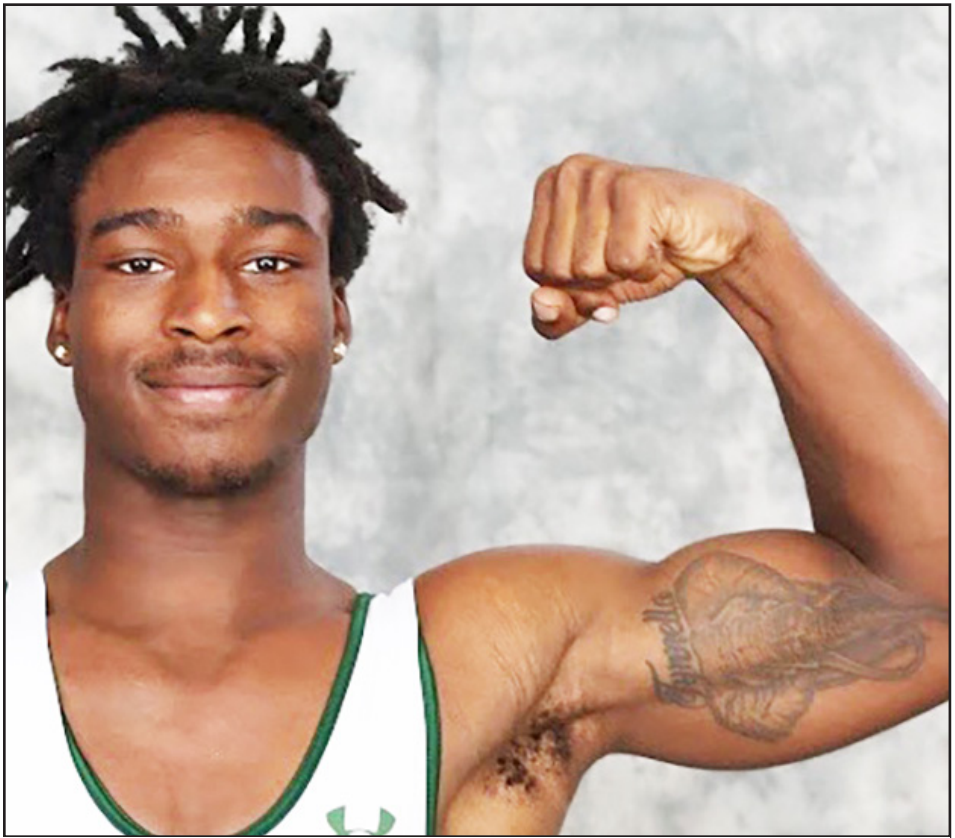
“I look at it sometimes, and



COURTESY TYLIK EPPS
A close up photo of Epps elephant tattoo on his bicep.

it just reminds me of how much I love her and how she always has my back,” Epps said.

This is more than just an elephant tattoo for Epps; it is a symbol and a representation of the love he has for his mother and the unbreakable bond that they share.



COURTESY LUCAS DALFONSO
Tylik Epps proudly displays his elephant tattoo, a tribute to his mom, in VTSU Castleton’s wrestling team’s media day photo shoot.

Student tattoo artist: Rainey Skye

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

Imagine if you were drunk at a college party on a random Saturday night, and the party was packed to the brim, so you went to try and find refuge. You fight your way up a flight of stairs filled with drunk college students who seem to only know how to be in the way.

You finally make it up and turn left down the hallway so you can sneak into a random room hoping for a little peace while you try to recover. But no, instead you find a room that is just as packed as downstairs, and in the center of it all, is a woman giving people tattoos while being hyped up by a group of drunks.

Well, for some students at VTSU Castleton, this is a reality. VTSU student and women’s ice hockey player Rainey Skye turned Exit 5, a place once known for parties, into a place where you can get incredibly drunk and tattooed.

Skye was once the canvas as she has an astonishing 17 tattoos. Some of her favorites being the red smoke screen with two crosses on her right forearm, a red butterfly on her back, and “Love Yours” which is the name of one of J. Cole’s albums.

But she wasn’t the one getting them for much longer, as she turned her love for tattoos into a fun hobby of giving tattoos to anyone who would let her use them as the canvas.

“One day the hockey boys just told me to come over and bring my gun,” Skye said. “You know how the parties go, just random people show up and I will just be in one of the guy’s rooms and random people would just come in and out getting tattoos.”

VTSU student and men’s ice hockey player Josh Ward is a resident at Exit 5 and is not the biggest fan of tattoos but liked the idea.

“I thought it was a good opportunity for a young tattoo artist to get some experience and for the guys to get some tattoos,” Ward said.

One of Ward’s favorite memories of Skye giving tattoos was when she had given another VTSU student and member of the men’s hockey team, Jackson Edwards, a tattoo of the name of their house “Exit 5.”

“He got the tattoo as a memory of Rainey doing tattoos at our house and all the fun stories we have,” Ward explained.

“We were all supposed to get the tattoo but none of the guys did,” said Edwards.

One of Skye’s craziest stories was how one time in the spring semester of 2024, Rob Guerin a VTSU Castleton alum and former football player, had her come over to his house on Mechanic St. to put a “Jits” tattoo on him and 4 other guys.

“After I finished one of the guy’s tattoos, I told him to go get up and look at it and he just kept sitting there for a little bit,” Skye said.

Skye proceeded to warn him to not get up if he was feeling lightheaded, but he said “Nah, I’m good, I’m good.”

Skye explained he got up and walked to the kitchen to see his tattoo. “All of the sudden we heard a loud thump in the kitchen and the guys found him passed out on the floor.” Skye said.

Skye started tattooing for fun and does not charge anybody even though some people feel compelled to do so this is due to licensing issues.

She does not want to pursue that path and rather keep it as a fun hobby that can enjoy with her friends and continue to perfect her craft. Please check this week’s weather forecast because it seems like we will have some Rainey Skye’s this week.



COURTESY RAINEY SKYE
Rainey Skye shows one of her favorite tattoos red smoke with two crosses traveling up her right forearm, top, friends getting matching thigh tattoos, bottom left, and Edwards “Exit 5” tattoo.

Chatting with the bluegrass boys



COURTESY PHOTO
Band members Sam Merwin, Micah Stevenson, Zenon Stevenson, and Mark Stevenson, perform a tune.

By Dean Dugan
Spartan Contributor

The Blue Cat Bistro was loud on a recent Friday with the sounds of The Bird Mountain String Band as they tuned and tested their instruments.

The waitresses scurried around through the dark room to drop off the food to the patient patrons who were there to watch the bluegrass band play.

The Bird Mountain String Band is a small bluegrass band composed of family members Zenon Stevenson on banjo, Micah Stevenson on guitar, Adam Stevenson on guitar and family friend Sam Merwin on the bass.

Merwin, when asked, describes bluegrass as “mountain jazz.”

The youngest band member, Micah Stevenson, said, “It [bluegrass] is made of simple, progressive, tight sounds.” He looked around, speaking over the crowd noise and band’s tuning sounds to ask his brother if he had a better way to describe it.

Adam Stevenson is the father of Micah and Zenon and one of the band’s guitar players.

“I’d tell them it’s string music with no drums ... It’s Appalachian Mountain music,

and it’s very cohesive,” he said while taking a few sips of his beer.

Donald Willie is another bluegrass player who was at the Blue Cat Bistro on that Friday to watch the band play. When asked if he had come to see the band, he mistakenly took this reporter for a waiter and said another waiter had already taken his order. After a quick explanation, he started talking about bluegrass.

“Bluegrass was the beginning of the country music,” Willie said through a chuckle.

Willie has played with the Blue Mountain String Band at local jams. He joined the bluegrass community a few years ago when he was gifted a guitar for Christmas.

Since then, he has been an active part of the community.

Zenon, an Early College student at VTSU Castleton, described the bluegrass community as “tightknit.”

Merwin took it a step further.

“Everyone has their group activities; this just happens to be ours,” he said.

The players said the bluegrass community is open and has many fundamental songs everyone knows. Zenon says that sometimes you play with people you’ve never met before.

Willie agreed and said that makes it fun.

“Sometimes, as I walk through and hear a song I like, I see if I can hop in,” Willie said.

He said most of the time, people are okay with that.

Zenon and Micah had grown up listening to bluegrass in the Stevenson house, but during COVID, they had become “obsessed” with it. That obsession led to the formation of the band.

Adam feels a strong connection to bluegrass for a few reasons. He played in a bluegrass band in college, has always listened to it, and he lives on a farm. He feels that the songs often touched on and reflected his life on the farm.

Zenon says he makes time to practice for around two hours daily, even with his school schedule.

“I feed off of people who are better,” Zenon said.

In addition to playing the Bluecat Bistro, the band plays at the Poultney Pub bluegrass jams every Tuesday from 7-10 pm. Zenon states that they’ve never played a “real big gig.”

Bluegrass has played a massive part in the lives of the band members, and Willie’s too.

“This music, these guys, changed my life,” Willie said.

Connecting with him through songs

By Ari Cartwright
Castleton Spartan

My siblings and I had an eventful childhood to say the least and through tough times, we navigated our emotions through music making together.

Music has always been my outlet. Writing songs, especially with my sibling truly takes me to a different world. I personally have a really hard time verbally communicating my emotions, but it comes so easily to me through writing.

I can't always rely on other people to talk to when I'm having a hard time, but I can always pick up my guitar.

My siblings and I share very similar values, yet they differ in many ways. Songwriting together is one of our strongest connections we hold and has been since we were little. It is

the one thing that has remained constant throughout our childhood and early adulthood, even after undergoing so many changes in our lives.

My brother Sawyer and I are identical twins.

I realize that could cause some confusion, so I'd like to prerequisite this by telling you he is a trans man (and I am very proud of him).

I thought that making music with him through his transition would be tricky, but it's been nothing but a beautiful experience. And Sawyer is enjoying it too.

"I'd say the biggest challenge as a trans man is relearning how to sing in a lower register. I've always had an alto voice, so I wouldn't say it's particularly hard. As my voice changes, I might find more challenges, but as of right now, I am still pretty happy with how my voice is evolving."

At a very young age, Sawyer and I realized we were musically inclined. I spent hours with drums sticks I got from a game for the Wii banging on my Lisa Frank jewelry box making beats.

One time, when we were about 10 years old, one of our favorite pizza places hosted an open mic night. I was too nervous to perform, but surely enough, Sawyer walked his tiny self up to the stage and sang "Ho Hey" by The Lumineers.

He was so proud of himself.

When talking to Sawyer about old silly memories like that, he reminisced.

"I remember mom posting a video of Ari, singing their first original song "Stars in the Sky" when they were about 6 or 7 years old. I remember thinking it was so cool that I even got a little jealous. After that, we started having competitions to



COURTESY ARI CARTWRIGHT

Ari Cartwright plays the guitar and sings with her twin brother Sawyer.

see who could write the better song.

Since then, we have made so many songs together.

To be clear, he always makes the "better song."

Music is medicine.

Even if I'm not feeling up to making anything of my own, I can always listen to the masterpieces of other creators. It's not just playing music that makes us happy. Listening to music is just as healing and I hope to

make music that can help other people get through anything they may endure.

And I hope that my brother and I can share our experience to both educate and bring others happiness to others.

Suprises and snubs at the Oscars

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

On Sunday night, March 2, those interested pop culture and movies popped their popcorn, poured their glasses of wine and geared up to watch the 2025 Oscars.

For those who maybe aren't so in tune with movies and pop culture, here's the gist.

There were a few memorable films nominated for Best Picture including "Anora," "The Brutalist," "A Complete Unknown," "Conclave," "Dune: Part Two," "Emelia Pérez," "I'm Still Here," "Nickel Boys," "The Substance" and "Wicked."

These films pretty much took the cake for the rest of the category nominations as well.

Timothée Chalamet, the star of "A Complete Unknown," the highly anticipated Bob Dylan biopic, was nominated for Best Actor.

"My most anticipated category was best actor. I was rooting for Timothée Chalamet, and I thought it was so cool how he campaigned by being the musical guest on SNL and singing Dylan songs," said VTSU Castleton student Genna Hurley

Chalamet spent around five years working on this film. It is also widely known that he went without using a cell phone for some months to be able to unplug and allow himself to be more in tune with his character.

A lot of people, including Hurley, thought he deserved to win because of his dedication.

However, Adrien Brody won for his performance in "The Brutalist."

The Brutalist follows an architect who is a refugee, making his way to the United States.

"I thought Adrien Brody was definitely a strong contender, but I thought the AI situation might have made a difference," Hurley continued.

There was some controversy around Brody's performance because it is known that the performance was enhanced



Oscar winners shown posing with their trophies, from left to right: Adrien Brody, Mickey Madison, Zoe Saldana, and Kieran Culkin.



using Artificial Intelligence. AI was used to improve their pronunciation of Hungarian dialogue.

Hurley wasn't the only one disappointed that Timothée Chalamet didn't win.

"I was really looking forward for best actor because of Timothée. I really thought he had that one in the bag. I was so bummed he didn't win it," said fellow VTSU Castleton student Madelyn Nonni.

For Best Picture, another highly anticipated category, "Anora" won.

Anora follows a young stripper who marries the son

of a wealthy Russian oligarch and the film explores the nuanced portrayal of the sex work industry.

But many people thought "Wicked" was definitely going to win.

"I personally think Wicked should have won best picture because it was much more popular and well liked than Anora," VTSU Castleton student Camille Pontius said.

Although Hurley agrees that "Wicked" was good, she has a different understanding of why it didn't win Best Picture.

"I haven't seen "Anora" yet, but I did see "Wicked" and I

thought it was pretty good. I am not too surprised that "Wicked" didn't win best picture because it was originally a musical, but I was surprised that it was "Anora" that won," she said.

"I am glad that "Wicked" won the awards that it did and would have liked to see Cynthia Erivo win best actress," Hurley continued.

"Wicked" has received a lot of praise throughout award season, but some were upset that the only awards they took home for the Oscars was for Best Costume Design and Best Production Design.

"I think "Anora" is so good, but I really liked "Wicked." I thought there was no way anyone else would win Best Picture. "Wicked" was definitely snubbed the whole show," Nonni said.

Some Castleton students were shocked as actors and actresses unexpectedly won.

"I was pleasantly surprised that Kieran Culkin won best supporting actor for "A Real Pain, I think he's such a fun person and a good actor but didn't know if he would win because that movie wasn't as big as some of the other films actors were nominated for,"

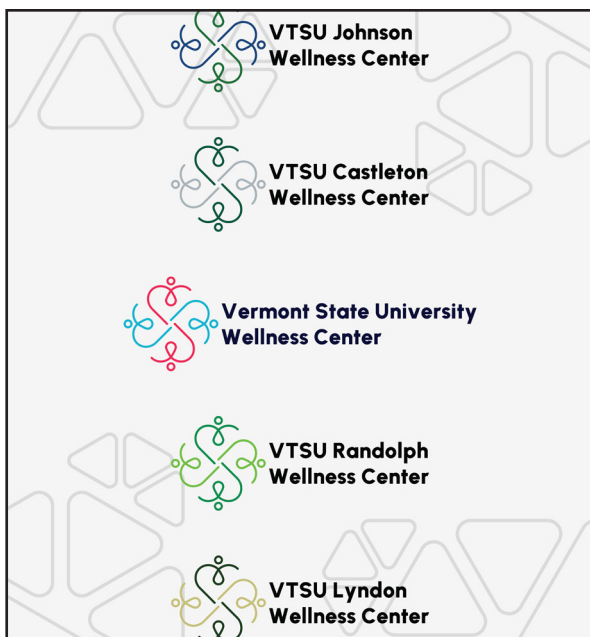
Hurley said.

"A Real Pain" is comedy following a cousin duo that meets up in Poland to honor their grandmother.

Zoe Saldana won Best Supporting Actress for her performance in "Emelia Pérez."

The film is about a Mexican lawyer who helps a high-profile drug cartel transition into a woman.

"I was not expecting Zoe Saldana to win best supporting actress. I think Ariana should have won because I believe her performance was much more impactful than Zoe's," Nonni said.



Graphic design student Dominic Trevisani shows his design process of creating a new logo for The Wellness Center; aiming to unite all four VTSU campuses.

New Wellness branding unites VTSU campuses

By Dominic Trevisani
Spartan Contributor

Last semester, the VTSU Wellness Center came to my Branding and Packaging class, asking for a new logo and identity. I took this as an opportunity to find a way to do what the VTSU merger failed to do: unify the campuses while re-

taining their own unique identities.

While I knew I had to stay within the VTSU branding guide, I took the opportunity to take the colors from each of the old colleges and bring them back in a new way. I wanted to include some way of representing four individual things coming together, the motif of a heart and people, both being

crucial themes across wellness, and loosely connecting that to nature with a plant-like shape, as that seemed to be a common theme in my research to signify growth.

Something I felt that was missing from the VTSU branding was the meaning of the four main colleges coming together. You could make the argument that there are three main moun-

tains in the VTSU logo, which could represent NVU, VTC, and Castleton, but I feel like that doesn't capture the true spirit behind the college.

To me, it seems like there was a complete dismissal of the previous colleges' brandings moving into VTSU, seemingly wanting to leave its predecessors' legacy behind. This is something I feel strongly

about, and I took this opportunity to amend that the best I could.

I feel like I wasn't just able to capture the mission behind the Wellness Center with this, but was also able to bring back much needed identity to this school. The reason that this project resonated with me was because I felt VTSU's branding missed the mark and isn't

true to its roots, and this gave me a means to right that wrong.

While the Wellness Center is just a small part of VTSU as a whole, I'm happy I was able to leave my mark on this school, and by doing so, was able to bring some much-needed unity to it as well.

DEI:



David Bergh

Continued from page 1

“In a recent document, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights confirmed that non-discriminatory diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and educational, cultural, or historical observances are not in and of themselves illegal, and to our knowledge, everything we have done and plan to do at VTSU is legal and constitutional.”

Yoon also noted that our future responses will depend on any future developments. But he remains hopeful and positive.

“I think it is also important to note that if the law changes, our response to those changes will depend on those specific changes,” he said.

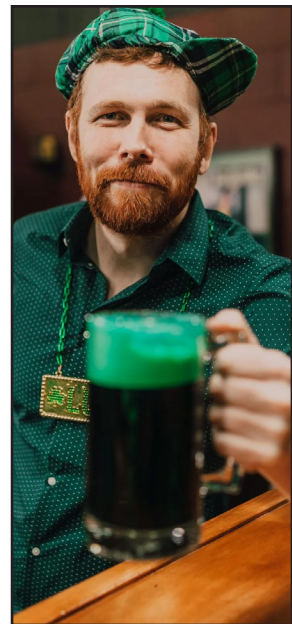
“I am grateful for President Bergh’s leadership on these issues. His calm, measured, and rational approach to this rapidly evolving situation continues to be a bright spot for me.”

Bergh gave further information about what exactly is prohibited according to the administration.

“What is prohibited are activities or policies that discriminate against specific groups or individuals, under the auspices of DEI work or otherwise,” he explained. “Our offerings, programming, and organizations are open to all and do not discriminate.”

Bergh addressed the concerns regarding the dismemberment of DEI offices in other institutions as well, claiming that VTSU did not succumb to the fear tactics.

“You may have seen that some institutions chose to preemptively shutter and disband DEI offices or elements of its work. We did not,” he claimed in defiance. “We remain committed to celebrating the inclusivity of perspectives and backgrounds that make up our University community.”



St. Patty:

continued from page 3

“There’s an island called Spike Island, and it’s actually supposedly haunted,” said Keeler.

As the days grow longer and the ground thaws, farmers and gardeners are preparing for the upcoming growing season. The Castleton Greenhouse and Garden Club is back in action too. Some students looking to learn more about the club joined the first meeting in the greenhouse on March 11, at 3 p.m. The annual plant fundraiser will be announced this month.

The final stretch of the semester is upon us and campus is blooming with new life. Spring serves as a reminder of both endings and new beginnings. Whether it’s a final semester or just another step in the journey, spring is the time to embrace growth. Finally, take some time to soak in the sunshine between classes.

Science:



EMILY ELY

Students and faculty march down South Street protesting cuts to science.

Continued from page 1

“I saw that this rally was happening nationwide, and I felt it was important to take part,” Droege said. “Science underpins our modern society, from health and wellness to environmental sustainability. It’s scary to see the government deny climate science and defund crucial research. This is an onslaught, and we need to stand up,” Droege stressed.

She pointed to federal layoffs at agencies like the

National Park Service and NOAA, which affect everything from weather forecasting to environmental conservation. She urged students to recognize their power in shaping policy, reminding them that change happens when people raise their voices and demand action.

Students, many of whom hope to build careers in science, also expressed deep concerns about how these cuts are already affecting them personally. Shterna Gorodn, a VTSU

Castleton student, shared her personal experience.

“An internship I applied to for sustainability emailed me a week ago saying that because of the NSF freeze, they weren’t sure they could hire anyone,” Gorodn said. “This isn’t just affecting top scientists, it’s crushing students before they even have a chance to start their careers.”

The crowd went silent as her words began to sink in.

Freshman Andy Cole pointed to broader political motiva-

NYC:

continued from page 3

“The speaker at the Community Journalism session, Richard Watts, gave some of us a job opportunity after the impression we made,” said Spartan Managing Editor Maddie Lindgren.

Even though the trip is intended to be focused on the conference, of course there is room for a little fun and exploring too.

“Although Jackson and I had a rough first day being sick and all, being able to be out with everybody on Friday was 10 times better and made the trip so worth it,” Stelzl said.

On the second day of the trip, six of the students went to Brooklyn for the afternoon, which ended up being one the biggest highlights for them overall.

“Brooklyn was amazing, and I have never been before,” Lindgren said.

“Me either and then I went twice by accident,” page designer and editorial cartoonist Joe Vyvial added. “I took the subway to West Village and forgot to take the exit, then I saw myself on top of the Manhattan bridge.”

With perfect weather the whole trip, Vyvial experienced many highs including a sandwich at the famed Katz’s Delicatessen. But above all, “The View” restaurant and bar at the top of the Marriott Marquis and the Brooklyn trip took first place on his list.

The View slowly spins to offer an incredible view of the

city but had been unavailable for the last five years for renovations.

“The rooftop bar was such a unique experience,” Bellomo added.

There was also a karaoke experience in Greenwich with great voices – and not so great ones too – which Edwards said was perhaps his favorite part of the trip.

Fötter “ate” as the students say, with the song “Popular” from the Wicked soundtrack. As the lyrics started blasting through the speakers of the bar, all eyes were on her by the first “popular” in the song.

“I loved that every time we went out or did anything, the goal was to have conversations with each other no matter what, and I am glad there was not much separation,” Emery said.

Overall, the trip was a great bonding experience for all and eye-opening to say the least. It saddens the team to hear that next year will be the last year that the conference is held in New York, leaving uncertainty for future trips from the Spartans.

But for now, Blow is just savoring another successful venture to the city with students, his 17th.

“I always love getting to know the students on a different level during this trip,” Blow said, “And it’s neat for me to be able to open eyes about what New York is. It’s just so vast and has so much to offer.”



Friday, September 20, 2024

Purrfection

The interesting tale of how Max the beloved Castleton cat went viral

By Maddie Lindgren

Castleton Spartan

If your answer is always no to the question: Have you ever met someone famous? Quickly change that answer to a yes if you’ve ever stepped foot on Castleton’s campus at Vermont State University.

Max, our beloved campus cat of Vermont State University Castleton, has become a worldwide sensation after being awarded an honorary doctorate in “Liter-ature” last spring. When the class of 2024 graduated, Max received the prestigious title, solidifying his place as not just a campus legend – but a global one.

News outlets worldwide wanted a piece of Max’s story, including USA Today, CNN, Vermont Public, The Washington Post and even the Hindustan Times in India.

For years, Max has been a fixture at Castleton, especially near Leavenworth Hall, where students often find him lounging or strolling the grounds as if he’s the true head of the campus. His cool, unbothered demeanor and welcoming presence have made him a cherished companion for students and faculty for years.

Jess Duncan, the director of Career Development and Innovation across all Vermont State University campuses, was one of the creative directors behind this brilliant idea.

“It’s a cool career development story. Julie Lepo was our career development Title Three intern, and she hosted an event



Doctor Max Dow poses for the television camera at his favorite spot on the VTSU Castleton campus.

“I was shocked. I didn’t think it would go that big. I thought maybe media around Vermont would pick it up and they’d think it was cute, but I never thought it would go that big,” he said.

Little did VTSU know, that one photo would be the start of something worldwide. Max’s journey to stardom has captivated audiences beyond our small Vermont campus, sparking widespread media coverage and making him an international feline sensation. CNN even picked up the story and commented on how famous Max is getting across the globe.

“The furry graduate even has his own school email and directory page. Ashley Dow and her daughter, Kaitlyn Tanner, a student at Vermont State, monitor Max’s email and have responded to messages from as far as Germany and England,” he said.

Ashley Dow is Max’s mother/manager and has been star-struck during this whole adventure.

“This is all crazy. I did an interview on TV in Sydney, Australia, Today Show, oh my goodness, that was the most interesting one,” Dow said.

Dow has been contacted by the biggest names in the media. Their story has even been used to fight Emotional Support Animal laws on a campus.

“There was a group that contacted us from Ohio. She was trying to get emotional support animals approved on

The Fall 24 first issue of Castleton Spartan featuring Max the cat, won second place for Best Newspaper in division III.

The German Outlaw: Mathias Kneißl

By Holly Lamson

Castleton Spartan

Perishables Blog

Perishables is a blog dedicated to humanizing the experiences and food of the criminals on death row. Those on death row have a limited shelf life before they perish, similar to a perishable food item.



Mathias Kneißl

spent his free time cattle raiding, poaching, and armed robbing. He robbed so much, he gained the nickname “Robber,” though this was an affectionate term by some thinking of him as a “Legendary Hero.”

First imprisoned at age 16 for cattle raiding, Kneißl was familiar with the law. Familiar with the law his parents were as well, of whom bought a secluded mill, a secret meeting place for local criminals. Kneißl’s

father was arrested and died in police custody for “plundering the pilgrimage shrine of Herrgottsruh.” His mother was imprisoned for poaching.

Are criminals born or made? Was the oldest spoon in the drawer always your favorite? Was the holster on your pant loop made for your revolver or just placed there? Are we destined to be this determined? All we know is that his parents were criminals and so was he.

Cars:

continued from page 3

“And the clothes, it’s almost like all the students live out of those cars,” Dydo said with a chuckle followed by a full laugh.

Dydo also brought up the lack of maintenance on student vehicles.

“It’s always brakes, and when they come in for them half the time, they don’t even know when they have bad tires, then they wonder why

it’s shaking on the highway. They just drive it until it falls apart,” he said.

“We’ve had students come in 10,000 miles over an oil change,” Dydo said.

All these parts workers and mechanics suggest consistent maintenance is the key and said they are completely willing to work with students with tight budgets in some cases. Lesante said he had seen the same.

“Some cars come in, and

we have to find what they need for parts or check dash lights, and you can only see the driver’s seat. There’s so much garbage sometimes,” he said.

AR-Automotive, directly across from Hurlbert’s, has had similar experiences. Randy Dydo and Aaron Cassidy run the shop and shared similar stories concerning student vehicles.

Cassidy mentioned that the smell of “pot” seemed to be a theme among many student

tions behind the attacks on science and education.

“Our vice president said that to take control of the country, they need to attack universities,” Cole said. “This is a deliberate and outward attack on academia, research, and informed decision-making. The way they stay in power is by keeping the masses uninformed.”

Nate Forgan, another VTSU Castleton student, stressed the importance of maintaining a science-based democracy, arguing that a well-informed public leads to more effective policy decisions and a better quality of life.

The protest wasn’t just about raising awareness in the Castleton community, it was a call to action. Speakers urged attendees to continue advocating for science by voting, calling representatives, and pushing for policy changes.

Charlotte Gerstein, a reference and instruction librarian at VTSU Castleton, spoke passionately about the need for public advocacy.

“Our tax dollars should benefit us, not be funneled into tax cuts for billionaires,” Gerstein said. “People took science funding for granted, but now we see what we’re losing. It’s outrageous, and we need to make our voices heard,” she said firmly.

She pointed out that many federal employees losing their

jobs are veterans, further underscoring the unfairness of these cuts.

Droege also echoed the importance of collective action.

“Students have power,” she said. “Speak up. Write letters. Make phone calls. Vote. Change starts with us.”

As the march continued up Alumni Drive, the crowd’s energy remained strong. Signs waved, voices rose, and the message was clear, science is not a partisan issue, and its defunding is a direct threat to public well-being.

Brendon Lalor, a professor and program coordinator at VTSU Castleton, called the situation a “national emergency,” warning that ignoring these attacks on science would have severe consequences.

“If people don’t pay attention now, the damage may be unrecoverable,” Lalor said. “This is like a wrecking ball knocking over everything that matters. We have to fight back,” he said while shaking his head with concern.

As the rally ended, the participants remained committed to their cause. The fight for science funding, they emphasized, is far from over.

“This isn’t just about scientists,” Vermilyea reminded the crowd. “It’s about all of us. Science solves problems, and we need to fight for it.”

Spartans find a new home in the NJAC

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

College football success is often measured by wins, championships and national recognition. But some programs experience tough seasons and setbacks with the mentality to rise from those challenges becoming stronger and more resilient.

The Castleton Spartans are a team currently facing some struggles but offer a unique story of hope and optimism moving forward.

The Castleton Spartans competed for the first time in the MASCAC last season finishing 3-7 overall with a 2-7 record in conference play. Castleton officials recently announced they'd found a new home in the NJAC later in the 2024 season. Joining the New Jersey Athletic Conference turned some heads because of its prestigious reputation of being one of the top conferences in Division III football.

Outsiders have speculated whether this was the best decision, but the program itself believes this is the best move for the future. Athletic Director Tim Barrett is eager to see the direction Castleton football has to offer in the near future.

"I'm excited. I think the football program is going into a new era. Higgs has found a new home in NJAC. The new conference is highly competitive but there's something to be said about playing high competition week in and week out," Barrett said. "I'm excited



VTSU Castleton #14 Tyler Buxton and #9 Kevin McDonough celebrate after a defensive stop last season.

to see what new doors open up from a recruiting perspective. I know the coaches have spent more time in the New York-New Jersey area for recruiting, which gives the school more exposure."

This upcoming season will be a challenge for the Spartans, but it'll lay the groundwork of what the program can expect moving forward. It's all about cultivating a culture where perseverance, discipline, and a team-first attitude matters the most.

Every practice, every game, and every opportunity is a step forward providing valuable experience and opportunities for young players and seasoned

veterans.

"Going into the NJAC is going to be a challenge. We're going into a conference with teams that have competed at the national level, but this will be a good way to measure against the region's best teams," Barrett said.

Head Coach Tyler Higley is eager to create more competition within the team this season. Higley believes competition is something the program has been missing because it creates a huge advantage.

"Creating more competition is going to be big for us this season. That's why we want to bring in a big freshman class and have more competition in

the spring semester," Higley said. "We're looking for more team engagement and team chemistry while competing within position groups as we go into next season."

The team's biggest hurdle right now is building sustained momentum as the spring season approaches. Being located in Vermont hurts the team because weather is always a factor. It's harder to get outside, forcing them to tailor their workouts around the weather. But Higley believes how the players attack the summer will ultimately separate themselves from the pack.

"Every top program across the country works hard in the

summer. For us it's got to come from the leadership of the team of getting together during the summer and developing as a team," Higley said. "The leaders have to step up when the coaches aren't around and be that voice. We've lacked summer cohesiveness in the past, but I feel that's where the good teams separate."

Senior captain Charlie McMahon is motivated to keep team morale at a high despite recent struggles.

"I'm a pretty vocal guy, so I think bringing the energy day in and day out will keep the guys engaged because I know this group wants to win and we want to feel successful here

but we're running out of time," McMahon said. "Coming off some bad years we've been working hard this spring looking to improve while sticking to our core values as a team."

In the world of college football, it's not always about how quickly you win, but how you learn, adapt, and grow in the face of adversity. And for this program, Higley feels the future is bright.

"I don't think you can look at wins and losses because you must evolve as a team from not being good at just five or six different things but all the facets of the game," Higley said. "There's no quick fix in football. It's about creating competition and having an array of different arsenals to sustain balance throughout the team. Having a good balance within the game of football is what makes the good teams good."

Outside of the white lines, Higley wants to continue the program's dominance of being one of the best academic performing teams within the conference. Higley believes it'll be a useful tool in the program's long-term vision of establishing themselves as a program and building better young men.

"I would like to be a nationally recognized program, leading the conference in all academic players," Higley said. "We're looking to help players build resumes for themselves to promote the alumni doing good things. The more you can drive the overall look of the program is when you start to see the program improve."

Wrestling makes a statement at regionals

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Bright lights are pointed at center of the gym with fans screaming "pin him, pin him," as the Castleton Spartans wrestling team closed out their trip to NCAA Regionals on March 2.

The Spartans found themselves very successful at regionals setting program records after placing third place as a team while also having a record eight wrestlers qualify for the National Championship that takes place on March 14-15 in Providence, Rhode Island.

Of the eight to qualify for the National Championship, James Rodriguez, Nathaniel Camiscioli, Sampson Wilkins, and Gavin Bradley are returning. Evan Day, Elijah Cyr, Connor Gregory and Haven Tatarek all make their National Championship debut during the program record year.

"Competing at the national tournament is a treat really. There's nothing like it. It's an honor to compete among the top teams in the nation, and to showcase that little old Castleton is home to some of the hardest working wrestlers there is. The growing number of qualifiers speaks to our team's culture. Having qualified eight this year, as a 9th year program, it's practically unheard of. We've truly made our mark as a top NCAA program," Wilkins said.

Similar to Wilkins, head coach Scott Legacy attributes the team's success to the cul-



The Spartan wrestlers and coaches gathered around after receiving their third place trophy at the regional tournament in Middletown, Connecticut at Wesleyan University.

ture the Spartan wrestlers have built over the years.

"We have an extremely hard-working culture where every wrestler is important. Whether they are a starter who wrestled in the regionals or non-starter who participated in the Futures championship," Legacy said. "Our team realizes as individuals they are part of something bigger than

themselves! Being bought in and living the lifestyle is important. We chase the toughest competition we can,"

Going into the National Tournament, the Spartans are split 50/50 with experience on the National stage, but the returning members and tournaments priors have been a large help in preparing the newcomers to the tournament Legacy

believes.

"I believe that putting ourselves in pressure tournament on the national level, such as the North Central Invitational and being invited to the National Duals (because we are a top 24 team the nation). Pressure situations like wrestling in the Uni Dome in Iowa has giving those athletes their own since of confidence. Between

the experience of the wrestlers who have been and their own experience, we do not believe they will have the deer in the headlights look," he said.

Wilkins echoed Legacy's thoughts as he is heading to the National Championship for the third straight year at 184 pounds.

"As a third time qualifier, I know to take it one match

at a time and to be where my feet are. It can be easy to get wrapped up in the whole thing and where you might land in the bracket," Wilkins said. "Coach has done a great job preparing us for any adversity we may face. You really just got to have fun out there and trust your ability and training and the outcome will make itself."

Skiing into the National Championships

By Jack Aicher
Castleton Spartan

After a dominant season and standout performances at Regionals, Castleton's ski team is preparing for the USCSA National Championship, aiming to secure a spot on the podium.

Despite losing some athletes to injuries, the team remains determined, in part because many of the sidelined teammates are still on track for nationals. While some of the team's members remain out, others are pushing through the pain and are confident about what's ahead.

"Injuries have been a challenge for both teams," said Christopher Eder, head alpine ski coach at Castleton.

According to Eder, Filippo Collini suffered a torn ACL and leg fracture, rendering him unable to compete for the season.

"Emilie Stene, who is defending giant slalom national champion, is skiing through injuries right now," said Eder. "She's in the athlete training room every single day."

Other athletes, including Aksel Stroem-Hansen, Alice Pomi, and Ines Robres Peireto also suffered injuries this season, though remain committed to helping their teams succeed.

Despite setbacks, the men's team is staying committed to defending its back-to-back national title. Although facing roster changes, the team continues proving its strength.

"We're two-time defending champions, so we'd really like to retain that crown," Nathaniel Hazen said. "Nationals is an interesting race, especially out west where snow conditions can be soft and inconsistent; so, for me it means skiing smart on the first run and putting myself in a good position to move up on the second run."

The women's team is also showing confidence and excitement to be competing against others from around the country.

"It feels really good," Stene said. "Not many teams have the chance to go to nationals, and the fact that we are going and know that we do have a chance to succeed is an even greater feeling."

More than individual tal-

ent, the team's camaraderie has been one of the key factors to its success.

"My favorite moment (this season) was the second run at regionals when we knew that we won, and everyone was just hugging and the vibes were amazing," said Grace Porcaro. "Everyone was so proud of each other."

The teams have been working to be in their best condition for the upcoming championship, using all the time to their advantage. The coaches have athletes working on different mountains to maintain variety and keep their minds sharp.

"We're primarily training at Killington and spending some time up at Middlebury at the Snowbowl. We've also gone over to West Mountain," said Eder. "You don't want to train on the same trails because you're not racing on the same trails."

The athletes and coaches ensure that the courses are actively changing to help improve in troublesome areas.

"I think a lot of people think we show up and everything's set for us," said Eder. "It's quite a process. The athletes help set

and it works out nicely because they're the ones that are skiing the course.

"I usually have an idea of what I want to set as far as the course, but I will ask the athletes for their opinion."

Outside of practice, the teams are making sure to stay rested and on their game.

"Some people have been skiing a lot, practicing the course. Some have been in the gym a lot more, and others are taking a little time to relax," Stene said. "We are making sure everyone is going in with a positive feeling."

While putting in the work, both teams are preparing to ski their hardest, with their sights on the national championship podium.

"We want to win as a team," said Stene. "The way to carry a good team dynamic into next year is to do it as a team."

"The goal is to win," said Eder. "It's not a failure if we don't win but we will try to make Castleton proud."

Editor's note. The Spartan goes went to press before the championships were held from March 11-15. Look for results in next issue.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER EDER
The Spartan ski team after their dominant performance at Regionals.

Winter sports recap; Spartans growing pains

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

As the snow melts and we all look forward to fun in the sun this spring, let's reflect on our winter athletes' seasons of 2024-25. This season was marked by intense competition, moments of brilliance, and challenges that tested the mettle of our Spartan athletes.

For the first time in many years, the Castleton men's hockey team found themselves on the outside looking in as the playoffs commenced. Their season culminated in a nail-biting overtime loss to Elmira College, a game that epitomized the highs and lows of their journey this year.

The Spartans battled fiercely, showcasing their resilience and determination, but ultimately fell just short in the extra period.

This unexpected early exit serves as a poignant reminder of the unpredictability of sports and the thin margins that often separate victory from defeat.

The women's hockey team earned a spot in the playoffs, facing off against Elmira College in the first round. The matchup was intense, with both teams displaying exceptional skill and tenacity. Despite their unwavering effort and a closely contested game, the Spartans were edged out by a single goal, bringing their postseason run to an abrupt end.

The narrow loss highlighted the team's competitive spirit and the progress they've made throughout the season, setting a foundation for future success.

The Castleton men's basketball team faced a challenging season, concluding with an overall record of 4-20 and a conference record of 3-13.

Despite the tough outcomes,

the team exhibited moments of promise and individual brilliance. Notably, their two home victories provided glimpses of their potential and the hard work invested by both players and coaching staff.

While the season's results fell short of expectations, the experiences gained serve as valuable lessons for the young roster, fueling their drive for improvement in the coming years.

The women's basketball team finished the season with an overall record of 7-18 and a conference tally of 3-13. They demonstrated resilience, particularly on their home court, achieving a balanced 6-6 record.

However, struggles on the road, where they managed only one win against eleven losses, underscored the challenges they faced this season.

Despite these hurdles, the

team's commitment to growth and development remained unwavering, with several close games reflecting their competitive spirit and potential for future success.

While this winter season presented its share of challenges for Castleton University's athletic teams, it also offered invaluable experiences and lessons. The resilience displayed by our athletes, both in moments of triumph and adversity, lays a solid foundation for the future.

As the Spartans regroup and prepare for the next season, the collective focus will be on translating these experiences into growth, aiming to return stronger and more competitive.

The Winter athletes will take some time to enjoy the off season, get back in the gym and bounce back next season in big ways.



CASTLETONSPORTS
Taylor Adams about to shot and score against Worcester State this past season.

Curling club takes on nationals in Michigan

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The Vermont State University Castleton Curling Club team recently competed at the 2025 USA Curling College National Championships, held from March 6-9 in Midland, Michigan. Sixteen teams from universities across the United States earned their spots through regional championships or by accumulating points in various competitive events.

Founded in 2019, the team is led by head coach Dean Mooney, who has been a vital part of their success since its inception. Mooney also serves as president of the Rutland Rocks Curling Club.

He is assisted by Michael Carona, a former player and recent graduate, who now helps with the team's strategy and development. Libby Correia, the team's Skip and club president, leads the team on the ice alongside her teammates: Remy Maynard (Vice), Kailey Abbott-Bishop (Second), and Emily Macias (Lead).

Each member of the team plays a unique role in ensuring smooth game play. As Vice, Maynard works closely with Correia, calling many of the shots and helping strategize during the game. The Vice is also responsible for sweeping the stones as they approach their target.

Abbott-Bishop, the Second, plays a crucial role in both strategy and execution. Positioned between the Lead and the Vice, she delivers the second set of stones and plays a key part in setting up the Skip's shots.

Abbott-Bishop's precision and timing help ensure that the stones land exactly where needed for the team to stay in control of the game.

Macias, as Lead, sets the tone for the team by delivering the first stones each end. She aims to place the stones strategically, whether it's drawing into the house or setting up guards to protect future shots.

After delivering her stones, Macias joins the team in



The Spartan Curling team gathered together for a photo during the national tournament in Michigan.

sweeping to ensure the stones travel accurately and with the right speed.

The team arrived in Midland full of energy and anticipation, placed in Pool C alongside teams from the University of Minnesota, Bowdoin College, and the University of Denver. Castleton started strong, sitting second in the pool after Day 1, and remained optimistic about their potential to move on to the quarterfinals.

"Only 16 teams across the country make it to nationals, and only five of those get there by placing well in their regional championships. Since Castleton came in second at our regional championships, they earned their spot at nationals," said Lacy Skinner, Curling Club advisor.

However, their journey be-

gan with a tough match against the University of Minnesota, where Vermont lost 3-9.

Libby Correia reflected on this match.

"Truthfully, it was not our best weekend. Our first game was against the University of Minnesota, and although it went well overall, their shots were more consistent, which resulted in their win," she said.

Despite the setback, the team bounced back in dramatic fashion, securing a 10-7 win over the University of Denver, showcasing their resilience and mental toughness.

"This was another rough game for us, but we were able to set up the game in such a way that we took the win," she said.

In the following round, Castleton faced Bowdoin College

and was narrowly defeated 3-6, leaving them in a tight position. In the quarterfinals, the team met the United States Naval Academy and fought hard but fell short, losing 8-6.

Correia described the emotional final moments.

"It was a very close game, and both teams played amazingly. It came down to the last rock in the last end, and the only shot we had was nearly impossible. It was a very emotional loss for Castleton as it was our last game of the season—and my last game of my collegiate career," she said.

Though their tournament run ended early, the team's ability to bounce back after each defeat was a testament to their determination. Their victory against Denver demonstrated their true potential, and



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIBBY CORREIA

the team's attitude remained positive throughout the competition.

While they did not take home the championship this year, the team gained invaluable experience from competing at nationals. The tournament gave the team insight into the level of competition they will face in the future and highlighted areas for growth.

Looking ahead to next year, the team is already planning for their return to the College Curling Nationals, which will be held in Schenectady, New York. They are also hosting Learn to Curl sessions at their local rink once they secure ice time.

Correia encourages anyone to try the sport.

"While it seems like a strange sport, I can confidently

say that it is the most tight-knit and supportive community I've ever been a part of. The friendships I've made over the past few years are lifelong, and I am so thankful for the experience Castleton has provided with this team," she said.

The team also expressed their gratitude for the people who supported them throughout the season.

"A special thank you to Chris Chapdelaine, our head of club sports, and Lacy Skinner, our club advisor, for all their support and help this season," Correia said.

With their hearts set on an even stronger future, the team is determined to return to nationals next year, stronger and more prepared than ever.

Springing into action for the new season



CASTLETONSPORTS

Jack Boyle, top left, after cranking a home run last season. Phoebe Loomis, top right, making a move toward the net against Rivier. Hunter Sarro, bottom left, ripping the ball towards the net. On the bottom right the Spartans meeting at the circle last season as they prepare for their first game of the season.