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Sorry, We're Booked

STORY, PHOTO AND GRAPHICS: JULIA LORELLI

During the summer of 2021, Mercy students could be found searching for a new book at the library or reading leisurely at the pool. Whether it was a childhood favorite or something brand new, nearly everyone here at Mercy found something of enjoyment to read.

Senior Ashley Manning went back to her childhood favorite *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. She says she enjoys reading this book because she finds it funny and wanted to reread it for old times' sake. Her favorite character is Rodrick because she appreciates the way that he and Greg act like actual brothers. Ashley also isn't a fan of Rodrick's little brother, Greg, the main character, because "he's self-centered and only cares about popularity." The novel is written by Jeff Kinney, author, cartoonist, game designer and one of Time Magazine's most 100 influential people in 2009. *Rodrick Rules* shows Greg's point of view as he tries to become popular, impress girls and keep what happened last summer a secret.

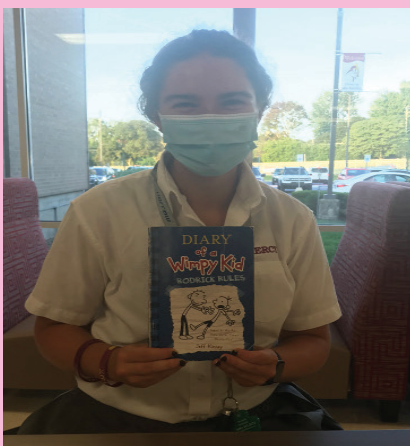
Junior Tina Hutter reread a book many of us were introduced to in middle school (and if you

weren't, I'm sorry for your loss). *The Outsiders* is an amazing book. It was written by S.E. Hilton when she was 18 years old. Fun fact: her publisher made her put her first name as "S.E." because it was assumed that many people wouldn't read her novel if they knew the author was a woman. Hutter says that *The Outsiders* is "an easy read" and "something about it just clicked" with her when she first read it. She enjoys rereading *The Outsiders* because of the different characters that give the book an interesting plot. *The Outsiders* is about a conflicted 14 year old boy named PonyBoy Curtis, who struggles to see right from wrong in a society where it's clear as day to see who grew up on the wrong side of the tracks.

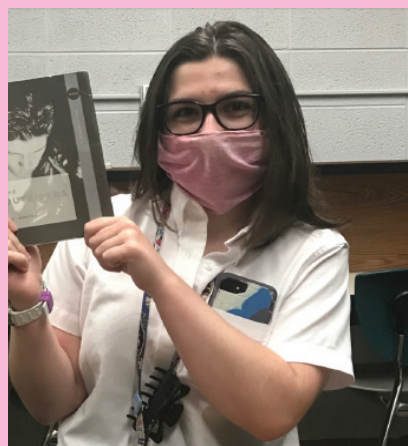
Sophomore Carson Keckes read a new mystery novel entitled *Letters to the Lost*. With good reviews online and by friends, *Letters to the Lost* is an attractive read to anyone who enjoys mystery, romance or both. Keckes says her favorite character is "Juliet because her character is very devoted which gives any reader a connection with her." She also thought that the author "did a great job of humanizing her." Her

favorite line from the book is, "one day isn't your whole life, it's just one day." That's a pretty deep quote for a mystery novel. The author, Juliet Young, is a *New York Times* bestselling author. *Letters to the Lost* is about a boy and a girl who meet and fall in love through letters, but they have no idea who they're writing to; it might even be their worst enemy.

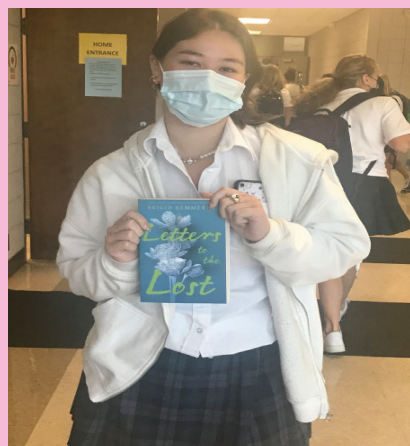
Freshman Olivia Lorelli picked up the novel corresponding to the movie *It*. She has a new-found love of horror movies and thought that she would like to read the books. Spoiler alert: she did. She wants to keep reading the books that correspond to horror movies. Her favorite character is Reggie because he's funny. She says he's funny because of his jokes and they way he tells them. *It* is Stephen King's 22nd book and 17th novel. It follows the experiences of seven children as they are terrorized by an evil shapeshifter that only comes out of hibernation every 27 years to feed on children and exploit their worst fears.



Ashley Manning with *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*.



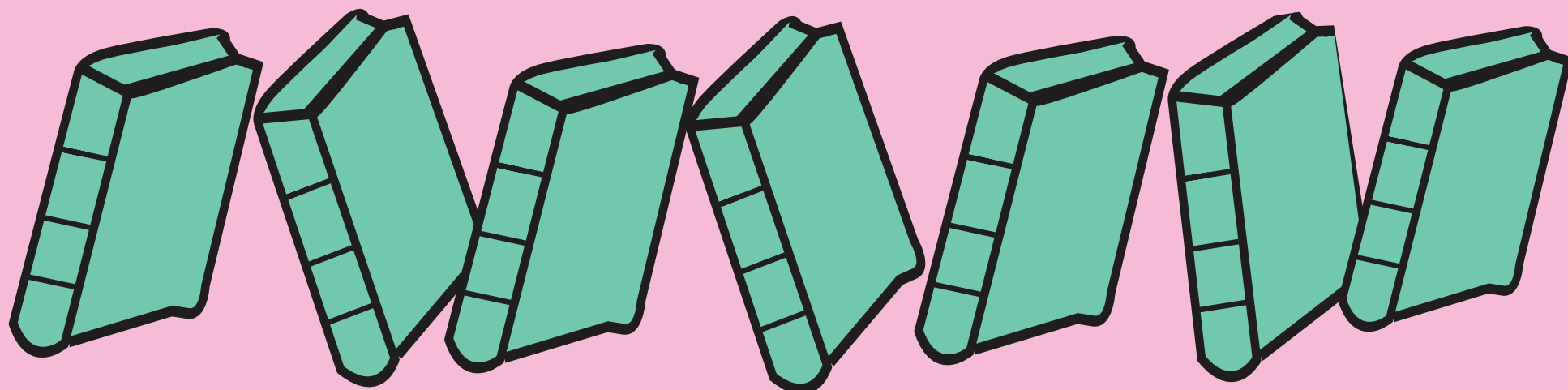
Tina Hutter with *The Outsiders*.



Carson Keckes with *Letters to the Lost*.



Olivia Lorelli with *It*.



iMessages on iPads?

STORY AND GRAPHICS: ALYSSA TISCH

Communication with others is vital during school, but for Mercy students, that communication won't be on iMessage. When the Class of 2023 started their freshmen year, they were the first group to have restrictions on their iPads. Unlike the current seniors, juniors were unable to have the App Store and could only download pre-approved apps off of Self Service. All

grades following the current juniors have these restrictions as well. However, when the pandemic hit, some of the restrictions were lifted. Students were able to download the iMessage app to help them stay in contact with their peers. But, now that school is no longer virtual, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen no longer have access to the iMessage app. This restriction has generated very mixed reviews.

What do the teachers think?

After talking to several teachers, it is clear that most teachers are for the new restriction on iMessages. Math teacher, Mrs. Vicky Kowalski pointed out that while some students were capable of staying on task without the restriction on texts, there were several students who needed this restriction.

Social studies teacher Mr. Mike Barnes said he had a student who would be on iMessages for up to 15 minutes a day in his class. To combat this, he began deducting points.

"I put in place a participation grade where everyone who walked into class on day one, they had like 25 points, or maybe it was 30,

whatever the number was," Barnes said. "For every minute that a student was on their iMessage app for over one minute, I would take a point off."

This method worked wonders. The same student who was on iMessages for 15 minutes a day in his class spent virtually no time on iMessages after it was implemented. Her grade also went up drastically, going from a C to an A-.

With the students' loss of texting abilities, many teachers are hoping for this same result: students being less distracted in class and improving their grades in the process.

What does the Technology Department/Administration think?

This decision was not easy for Mercy administration, as the choice had been in the works for quite some time. They were even looking into switching to Chrome books, according to Associate Principal Ms. Colleen McMaster. Administration ended up keeping the iPads but decided that they needed to put some limits on them.

"We specifically took out iMessage because we knew there were comments and things being shared that we had no way of monitoring," McMaster said. She said the administration team understood

there were some benefits to iMessages, but overall, the app was hard to monitor and a distraction to students in class.

While this decision took a while to make, it was quite simple to put the restriction into place.

"It's a couple clicks of the mouse and then ok," Mr. Tom James, a member of the technology staff, said.

"Perhaps as the technology evolves we may have the ability to turn it on and off at certain times of the day," James said.

What do the students think?

Students feel quite strongly that they want iMessage back on their iPads. Although iMessage was removed because it hinders productivity, students stated they are able to socialize as well as complete schoolwork better when they have iMessages. Many students send important links and information about assignments back and forth between their iPad and their phone. iMessages also helps students communicate more effectively for group assignments.

"It makes it easier to keep track of who I am talking to," senior Chloe Fanning said. "I can be texting friends about non-school things while planning a project without it becoming confusing."

Junior Megan Brissette agreed that iMessages made it easier to collaborate with classmates.

"I don't feel any less distracted since I wouldn't use it during class

time, and nothing has really changed in that sense," Brissette said.

Using phones for social lives and iPads for schoolwork is a strategy that multiple students partake in. However, some students may be taking advantage of their iPads to socialize during classes regardless of the restriction on iMessages.

"Many students are finding ways around the restrictions and putting more effort into having these discussions," junior Natalie Murphy said.

She claims students waste more class time trying to find a way around the restrictions than they would by simply sending a text message.

While neither way may be ideal, this raises the question of whether or not keeping iMessages may actually lessen class time wasted.

Meet the Staff

STORY, PHOTO AND GRAPHICS: MAURA SULLIVAN

With a new school year comes new experiences, new curriculum, and most importantly, new faces. This year Mercy welcomes 18 new teachers and staff to its community: Patricia Attaway '94 (Nurse), Mary Kate Becker (Campus Ministry), Ann Burnham '98 (Science), Lexi Cavanaugh (Visual Arts), Jo Ferrari (Admissions Office), Beth Garcia (Religious Studies), Erin Groves (Social Studies), Steven Kosmas (Science), Rachel Light (Building Substitute/ Project Support), Brandon Malinowski (Athletic Director), Kelly Muscat (Science), Denise Russo (Science), Lucia Step (English), Kelly Thiesen (Math), Renee Peña (World Language), Mary Vallone '98 (Principal's Office), Tosha Willis (Counseling Office) and Tamara Wisniewski (English). Let's get to know a few of Mercy's newcomers.

A Michigan native, Ms. Erin Groves grew up in Ann Arbor where she attended St. Francis of Assisi Middle School. She shadowed Mercy as an eighth grader but was not able to attend. Now, she is a member of the Mercy community.

"I feel super excited because I finally get to be a Mercy Marlin," Groves said. "I feel like I've waited my whole life."

Groves believes that the people inside Mercy make it a unique and great place.

"[The] people were so warm and welcoming," Groves said. "I don't think you see that at other high schools, that enthusiasm to welcome in new members of the school community, but also just that pride to be here."

Prior to becoming a part of the Mercy community, Groves taught middle school at St. Francis Middle School, her alma mater, and high school students at the Frankel Jewish Academy in West Bloomfield.

When she's not in the classroom, Groves enjoys running, swimming, playing the piano and cheering for Michigan football.

Groves mentioned how as a shy kid, she did not always feel like she belonged, and, as a teacher, she seeks to help students who feel the same way. Groves now teaches United States and World History, but she also wants to take part in other aspects of the Mercy community outside of teaching.

"I'd love to get to meet more students and get to experience other elements of life at Mercy," she said. "Because there's the classroom, but also everything that exists outside of that, and to get to know students in that world is important to me."



Ms. Groves



Mrs. Denise Russo grew up in Chicago where she attended an all-girls Catholic high school before going on to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla. to pursue a career in aerospace engineering. After working as an engineer, Russo obtained a degree from the University of Michigan so that she could become a teacher.

"I wanted to do something where I could spend time with my kids" Russo said. "I had a lot of coaching experience and liked working with high school level kids, so that's what I did."

She taught at St. Frances Cabrini High School in Allen Park prior to joining the Mercy community. Russo says she was drawn towards Mercy in her job application process.

"Even though there were many math jobs open, there was just something that drew me to apply to this one," Russo said. "I thought it was suited towards the types of things I like to do and has a lot of opportunities because it's larger."

One aspect of Mercy she finds unique is the independence students have.

"The freedom that you guys have here is something I've never seen before," Russo said. "I don't know if you guys realize how free you have it here. Other places you have to have a pass to just be in the hall."

The adjustment to Mercy has not exactly been easy for Russo, though.

"It's really hard when you don't know anyone in the building," Russo said. "That's my biggest challenge, trying to learn everybody."

Outside of the classroom, Russo spends most of her time with her kids at soccer games, school plays or just on the run. Despite her busy schedule, Russo would like to become involved in the Mercy community as either a chaperone or a moderator.

"I'm excited for people to get to know me and [for me] to get to know my students," Russo said.



Mrs. Russo



Originally from New Hampshire, Mrs. Lucia Step attended Gordon College in Wenham, Mass. for her undergraduate studies and Boston College for her masters degree. Step previously taught at Flex Tech in Brighton and is currently teaching 9th grade English, 10th grade Composition and British Literature and Women's Literature.

"I really enjoy teaching the upper level literature classes where you can really dig into the books and analyze them," Step said. After discovering her passion for English and literature, Step decided she wanted to become a writer, then molded this dream into becoming a teacher.

"It seemed like teaching would help me to stay doing the things that I really enjoy and give back to others," Step said.

Step applied to Mercy after requesting feedback from her sister-in-law, a 2006 Mercy graduate, who had positive comments about her experiences here. Step is already enjoying students' enthusiasm.

"I think the students are willing to jump right into their education and to be open to the things that we are doing in class. I definitely see differences [at Mercy]," Step said. "The students are serious and care about their education, but are also well-rounded."

She is now a moderator for the French Club. Step would like to eventually help with the lacrosse or track teams, as she enjoyed playing lacrosse in college. Outside of the Mercy halls, Step enjoys spending time with her husband and one-year old son. She is an avid runner and a lover of the outdoors.

"I think this was a good choice for me," Step said, "I'm looking forward to getting to know the students a bit better."



Mrs. Step

LABOR SHORTAGE: WORKERS WANTED

STORY, PHOTO AND GRAPHICS: CAITLYN BEGOSA, ASSOCIATE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

After a long, grueling day of school, all freshman Meaghan Payne wanted to do was get food with her carpool. Expecting a quick trip through the fast food line, Payne's expectations were shattered as Taco Bell's drive thru was backed up with more than 10 cars. A small food detour quickly turned into a 20-minute delay for Payne to arrive home.

"Sometimes, I just want to get food like Taco Bell really, really quickly," Payne said. "The line take[s] forever. It takes so long, like an hour, to get a taco, and half of the time, they're out of stuff."

Junior Claire Becker agrees as the worker shortage throws her normal fast food trip off balance.

"The lines are a lot longer, and [restaurants] close a lot earlier than normal," junior Claire Becker said. "This one McDonald's I usually go to closes before 4 p.m. now because they're understaffed."

Throughout the country, businesses and establishments are in desperate need of labor. Stores are littered with "work wanted" signs, waits for restaurants are longer, there is a constant decrease of inventory and lines for fast food circle around the entire buildings.

the employers demand and what the employees want.

From gaining more money for unemployment benefits to the increased skills gap in the workforce, there is no clear source of the worker shortage. According to CNBC, as of June 2021, 9.5 million unemployed Americans are searching for work. Simultaneously, over 9.2 million jobs became available. Employment is accessible, but unemployed citizens do not want to join the workforce for their own specific reasons.

Additionally, Working Mercy students have also been affected by the labor crisis. Those with jobs struggle with different challenges they would not have experienced a year ago due to a lack of workers.

"My job relies on the success and availability of other people," said senior Hannah Peterson, a hostess for French Toast Bistro in Plymouth. "If there aren't enough servers and cooks coming in, business declines, and I can't do my job."

Many workers' hours had to be adjusted to compensate for the low staff at their places of employment

"I found that I was working so many more hours because so many people were unavailable to split up the shifts," said senior Natasha Bouras, a seasonal lifeguard at Detroit Golf Club and Pleasant Ridge pools. "It was much more apparent towards the end of the summer with lots of the guards going back to both high school and college, but they always had trouble scheduling people for the whole day."

Along with changes in employees' hours, businesses also had to change their hours of operation. Because of the labor shortage, many places decreased availability since they did not have enough employees for their original opening times.

"Before, [French Toast Bistro] used to be open from 7:30 a.m. and close at 3 p.m.," Peterson said. "We would open back up from 5 to 9 p.m., but now we're just going every day from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m."

As places with short staff get busier, workers now need to complete more tasks and responsibilities they would not have normally had to do on their own. The labor shortage has taken a toll on student workers' physical and mental wellbeing.

"It made my job so much more difficult," said junior Annabelle Evangelista, who used to work at MI.MOSA in Farmington Hills. "This was

because of the increased workload, but it also increased the stress of my manager and coworkers. Working

LIFEGUARDS WANTED



Senior Natasha Bouras was easily hired as a lifeguard during the worker shortage. The two understaffed pools she worked at were desperate for workers.

RESTAURANT WORKERS WANTED



Senior Hannah Peterson's work has been going through multiple application in search for new employees.

The current worker shortage is unprecedented as many economists and social scientists cannot decipher an explanation for this massive shortage of labor. Some say the pandemic is the root cause while others say there is an inconsistency between what

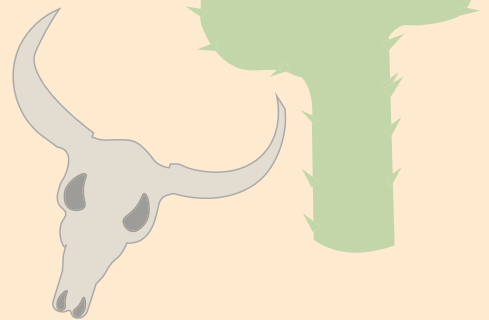
with a bunch of people that are just as stressed as you are is the opposite of manageable."

On the bright side, some Mercy girls say the worker shortage made it easier for them to get hired.

"The hiring process is definitely easier," Evangelista said. "When I went to the interview, the manager didn't even interview me. They hired me on the spot due to how desperate they were for workers."

The labor shortage has affected millions of people across the country. Fewer workers might just be an inconvenience to some, but many employees are stressed with their workloads and want to be treated with compassion as the sudden change of the industry is not their fault.

"Working in kind of a customer service job during the worker shortage has kind of given me that empathy towards other workers I encounter," Bouras said.



CONCERT COMEBACK

STORY AND GRAPHICS: GRACE O'DEA, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

After more than a year-long hiatus, live public concerts are back in full swing. People of all ages can finally return to the glory of spending absurd amounts of money on tickets, take out a loan to buy concert food, get sardine-level-squished in between other people, and wake up the next morning without a voice or any money in their wallet (because don't forget, the ticket doesn't cover parking).

But hey, it's worth it right? Mercy girls who attended concerts this summer would have to say so.

Senior Allison Koehler attended the long-anticipated Hella Mega Tour, which included rock bands Green Day, Weezer and Fall out Boy. The concert took place at Comerica Park this past August.

"I loved the concert," Koehler said. "I think it was a great experience, and I would totally recommend it to anyone."

Koehler is one of the many concert-lovers around the world whose ticket was bought pre-COVID-19. Having received the tickets as a Christmas gift in 2019, she was originally supposed to see the concert on August 19, 2020.

"We were very close to selling our tickets," Koehler said. She and her family were hesitant to attend in the midst of a pandemic, and worried about the fact the concert had already been rescheduled twice.

Thanks to vaccinations and decreasing COVID-19 numbers, Koehler was able to eventually see the concert on its rescheduled date of August 10, 2021.

Many other big names in music such as Elton John, Harry Styles, The Rolling Stones and Justin Bieber had to reschedule concert tours that were originally scheduled for 2020.

While some continue to wait anxiously, anticipating the concerts they bought tickets for more than a year ago, others have already attended concerts that were scheduled recently.

"I bought my tickets like three weeks before the concert," said senior Rhys Coleman, who saw Pitbull in concert on August 20.

As one of the first live concerts to take place in Michigan since the start of the pandemic, ticket prices for the Pitbull concert quickly soared. While some paid only \$30 for general admission, others later paid ticket prices of more than \$100.

Despite high ticket prices for most concerts, not all concert tickets are guaranteed to make a dent in their buyers' wallets. Senior Anna Merucci, who saw Train in concert on August 22 with her mom and two friends, was able to buy her tickets for the concert in Toledo at a very cheap price even a week before the concert.

"I went to see Train at the last minute," Merucci said, "and it ended up being one of my favorite concerts."

After more than a year of watching concerts through Instagram Lives and on TV screens, students enjoyed watching the artists perform in person.

"I had a fun time," said Coleman, who enjoyed Pitbull's opener, Iggy Azalea, better than the main event himself. "She was lowkey better than Pitbull."

Openers are just one of many things that contribute to the concert experience. Another is the sheer energy created by the crowd.

"It was so cool to just jump around with people," Koehler said. "People were jumping so much that even the concrete stands in the far back were shaking."

Attendees of the Hella Mega Tour were clearly eager to see and memorialize the concert that had been postponed nearly a year from its original date.

"This girl in front of me had two phones and was recording on both of them the whole concert," Koehler said.

While soaking in the whole concert experience with two phones may seem a little excessive, in a pandemic world, it certainly is understandable. As events like concerts return, maybe the woman with two phones can serve as a reminder to not take good times for granted and enjoy the moments that once seemed so far away.



Koehler poses live from the Hella Mega Tour in Detroit. Photo by Alison Koehler



Merucci and her two friends pose for a picture before the Train concert in Toledo. Photo by Anna Merucci

Mercy Meet and Greet

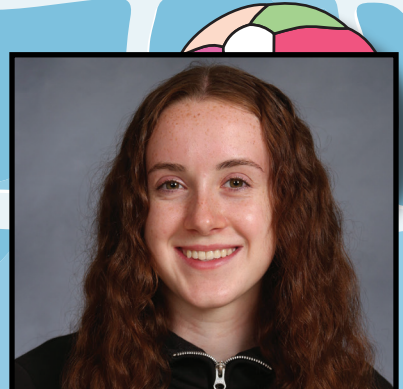
STORY AND GRAPHICS: FATIMA SIDDIQUE

This month's *Mercy Meet & Greet* introduces you to our very own swim and dive team. Seniors Maureen Lynch and team captains Michaela Fitzsimons and Katie Hermann give us the inside scoop on their favorite memories, who the funniest person on the team is and the best swim advice they've received.



Maureen Lynch. Courtesy of HR Imaging

"My favorite memory with my team was probably freshman year Catholic League Finals. We got there that morning and were all excited and ready to race. We even had a dance party on deck to keep the good energy up."



Michaela Fitzsimons. Courtesy of HR Imaging

"Our coaches are probably the funniest; they always have some dad jokes to add during a tough practice to boost our mood."



Katie Hermann. Courtesy of HR Imaging

"The best advice I've ever been given has come from numerous upperclassmen: 'Do it for the team.' I have always found that the team members swim and dive their best when they have the team's benefit in mind."

Looking Back on this Month...



Senior Madelyn Leiter poses with her painted senior parking spot. Photo used with permission by Madelyn Leiter



Junior Shaza Ahmed and Freshman Zaara Ahmed take us back to the 90s as they dress up for spirit week's Decades Day. Photo taken by Fatima Siddique



Incoming Freshwomen pose with their link crew on Freshwomen Welcome Day. Photo used with permission by Trish Brown