

A painting depicting three young Black women in white dresses. One woman in the foreground is embracing another woman who is looking down. A third woman is visible in the background. The style is realistic with soft lighting. In the top left corner, there is a large white letter 'M' with the word 'MERCY' written diagonally across it in a black, stylized font.

MERCY

Black History Month Arts Spotlight on Pages 6-7

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As Mercy Newsprint staff we promise to keep you entertained and informed with accurate and unbiased information. Our goal is to provide timely news while promoting diversity and representing the entirety of the Mercy community. We encourage letters to the editors and any other feedback you may have. You may reach out to us through our email (newsprint@mhsmi.org), our Instagram (@mercy.newsprint), or through any of our staff members.

The 2024 Presidential Election is upon us

STORY AND GRAPHICS: HELENA NAJAR, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It's 2024, which means it is officially an election year. Elections, especially the presidential election, are some of the most significant parts of politics today.

"Elections are important. You have the ability to change the course of where we're going with policy, and there are two different directions the country could go in depending on who wins," AP Government teacher Ms. Cindy Richter said.

The primaries are what lead up to the general election that will take place on November 5. The primaries are extremely important because they determine the course of the rest of the election.

"The primaries give us our candidates, so whoever wins the most delegates [from each party] go on to be the two candidates," Richter said.

After months of campaigning, ads and self-promotion, the presidential candidates will finally see if their work thus far has paid off during the primaries.

The importance of the Iowa Caucus

The Iowa Republican Caucus is what always kicks off the election, and 2024 was no different.

"A lot is determined by [the Iowa Caucus]," Richter said. "If you look at, historically, potential candidates who don't do well in it, it's make it or break for them."

Oftentimes, this singular caucus can determine the future of a candidate's campaign.

"If [a candidate] doesn't get a significant showing, then they might lose funding and they are going to lose backers," Richter said.

And because the Iowa Caucus is the first primary during an election year, many candidates focus a lot of their campaigning toward it. Voters can learn a lot from this caucus so it is important for candidates to do well during it.

"It kicks everything off and shines light on the

candidates from the get go," Richter said.

The Iowa Caucus' results reflected a lot of the predictions political analysts made. Former President Donald Trump came out on top with 56,260 votes and 20 bound delegates. He had over 30,000 more votes than runner-up, Florida governor Ron DeSantis who had 23,420 votes and 9 bound delegates. Former South Carolina governor, Nikki Haley, was behind DeSantis with 21,085 votes and 8 bound delegates.

Out of the major candidates in the Republican race, Vivek Ramaswamy had the most disappointing performance at the Iowa Caucus. Ramaswamy finished fourth and only received 8,449 votes and 3 bound delegates. Following the caucus, on January 15, Ramaswamy dropped out of the presidential election and endorsed Donald Trump.

The Iowa Caucus acts as a baseline for the rest of the election and Ramaswamy's drop out after receiving underwhelming results further proves this.

Results for the Iowa Democratic primary are expected on March 5.

The changes to the 2024 New Hampshire Primaries

The New Hampshire Primary happened shortly after the Iowa Caucus. It was held on January 23, and despite changes to the structure of the primary, it went smoothly and delivered fairly predictable results.

Earlier this year, it was decided by the Democratic National Convention that anyone who runs in the January Democratic primary won't be awarded delegates by them. Because of this, it was decided that President Joe Biden would not appear on the New Hampshire ballot and could only be voted for as a write-in candidate.

President Joe Biden also did not heavily focus on New Hampshire leading to the primary.

"There was something going on with the Democratic

party and therefore Joe Biden's name didn't end up on the ballot," Richter said. "As a write-in candidate, he got more than 64% of the votes."

The Republican side of the New Hampshire primary was also interesting but for different reasons. On the day before the primary, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis dropped out of the 2024 presidential race and endorsed Donald Trump.

"Ron DeSantis dropped out before New Hampshire, so it just came down to Trump and Haley," Richter said.

There were also changes on the voter side of the primary.

"There were independents or left-leaning independents that decided to register for the Republican party so that they could vote in the Republican primary in hopes of getting Haley more votes," Richter said. "I'm sure that has happened before, but this year, it was in the spotlight."

Donald Trump did end up winning the New Hampshire Republican primary with 176,392 votes and 13 bound delegates. Nikki Haley came in second with 140,288 votes and 9 bound delegates.

South Carolina and the remaining primaries

The South Carolina Democratic primary took place on February 3. President Joe Biden won in a landslide with 126,321 votes and 55 bound delegates. These current numbers have almost completely secured him as the Democratic nominee in the general election.

The Nevada Republican and Democratic primaries are coming up next, and following that, South Carolina will hold their Republican primary and Michigan will hold their primaries for both parties.

Iowa Republican Caucus Results

CANDIDATES	VOTES	PERCENTAGE	DELEGATES
DONALD TRUMP	56,260	51.0%	20
RON DESANTIS	23,420	21.2%	9
NIKKI HALEY	21,085	19.1%	8
VIVEK RAMASWAMY	8,449	7.7%	3

New Hampshire Democratic Primary Results

CANDIDATES	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
JOE BIDEN	79,455	63.9%
DEAN PHILLIPS	24,335	19.6%
WRITE-INS	10,266	8.3%
MARIANNE WILLIAMSON	5,006	4.0%

Have Mercy students had too many days off?

STORY AND GRAPHICS: MEGAN SULLIVAN AND MAURA MCSWEENEY, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This year, Mercy sports teams have had a year that exceeded all expectations with three state championship wins. As the school rule, Mercy students have been given three days off on January 12, 19 and 26 leaving no Fridays for the entire month of January. However, just when Mercy students thought they had enough days off, they were proven wrong as the terrible snow, cold and road conditions of the winter season lead to three snow days to be announced. This combined with Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 15 led the average Mercy student to be in school for a combined total of ten days in the entire month of January. However, as teachers were forced to do lessons on Zoom and students fell behind on lessons, the question arose, “Are these days off a good thing?”

Days off hinder student’s learning

By: Megan Sullivan

I was astonished as I looked at Mercy’s January calendar - we had five and a half days off of school. Was I dreaming? Later, in mid-January, with an accidental one-day school week due to weather, I found myself questioning: “Can there be too many days off from school?”

While these breaks afford students some personal time, they can also lead to falling behind in school. Furthermore, unexpected days off can disrupt the previously planned lessons teachers make, forcing them to cram lessons or skip some entirely.

This issue becomes an even larger concern when considering AP classes. All AP classes follow the same curriculum that is tested in May. Also many of the AP classes at Mercy do not have off hours, so making up missed lessons is difficult.

“It’s definitely been hard to work around as an AP teacher and for my regular classes too. At the beginning of the year, I have set test dates,” AP Environmental Science teacher, Christin Schmitt said. “So any time we lose a day either we have to assign stuff for them to do at home or have to cut that material out and hope that you study it on your own.”

Although students are not inside the classrooms, that does not mean there is a reduction in workload. To mitigate issues caused by missing lessons, many teachers assign self-taught lessons or homework in place of in-school learning. Unfortunately, this often results in an overwhelming pile up of work as every teacher assigns lessons and work at the same time. According to Learning Online: A Case Study Exploring Student Perceptions and Experience of a Course in Economic Evaluation, the immediacy of online learning is often a problem for procrastinators who might leave too much learning for last minute.

Another reason why online learning is a poor substitute is the slower pace.

According to the same study, the pace of learning online is slower than in person learning. Slow rates of learning on days online may lead to patchy understanding of concepts, which can impede students’ understanding of later material.

After the 2020 lockdown, Zoom lessons have become a new normal for many teachers and an option to get students in a classroom environment even when outside of school. However, these Zoom classes often result in unmotivated, distracted students in

attendance and, in result, are disliked by many teachers.

“I think that a lot of people just have almost like PTSD from what we had to go through during Covid-19,” Schmitt said.

Lastly, a schedule as chaotic as Mercy’s does not accurately demonstrate what many Mercy student’s futures may hold. With the abundance of days off and changing schedules, my fellow Mercy students and I often struggle to make it to the end of a five day week. With these habits in place, the shift to a college or working environment where random days off are not a common occurrence may be difficult for students to handle.

Days off benefit students and staff

By: Maura McSweeney

Ten days of school. That is how many days of school Mercy students attended throughout the month of January after returning to school on January 9. The days off don’t end in January, though, as in the month of February, there will be two four-day weekends in a row. Some may disagree, but the days off are much needed and can be beneficial to students and other community members as they provide a much needed break among other benefits.

“I really enjoy the days off because I

“I think that when Mercy rewards us with a day off, everyone gets behind you when you go to states because there’s something at stake for everyone and it creates a sense of school spirit,” Mercy Varsity Golf senior Abigail Slankster said. “The days off are also nice for the team because they have a chance to reflect back on their championship.”

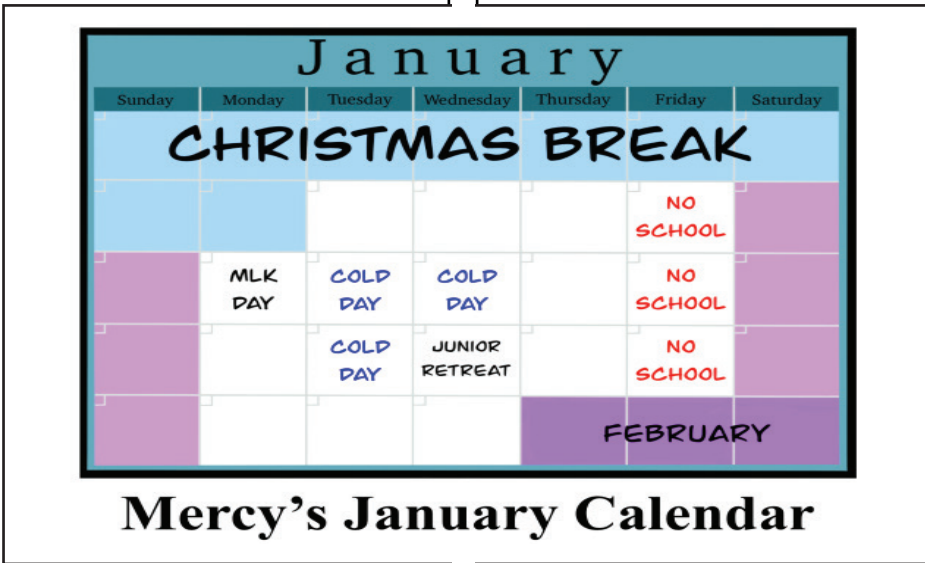
The days off have many overlooked benefits. Schools all around the nation have been looking into adapting a four-day week schedule. No, I’m not proposing Mercy completely rework their school model, I am only suggesting that the possibility of a four-day school week is not an insane idea and is not unfamiliar.

A four-day school week would provide a much needed break that students need in order to make the most of the time actually spent in school. Stress would be lowered and there would be more time to spend on extracurricular activities, which are just as important to a student’s education as the class.

“I like the added days off because I can get extra sleep so I have more energy during the school day,” sophomore Shaila Cranson said. “It also causes less stress because it gives me more time to do my homework and study.”

Not only can it reduce stress, but a four-day week and days off can actually improve students’ attendance on days that they do have school. This can result in better grades and a more productive learning environment.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, “some studies have shown that student attendance improves under a four-day school week. With a longer weekend, students have more time to rest and engage in extracurricular activities, which can lead to better attendance during the week. This, in turn, can lead to improved academic performance.”



can spend time with family and friends snowboarding and I can get caught up on homework,” senior Ava Lorraine said

The days off provided comradery. Mercy students were not just automatically given all of the days off in the month of January. It’s no secret in the Mercy community that Mercy Varsity Golf, Mercy Varsity Swim, and Mercy Varsity Volleyball all won state titles in the fall, bringing glory to Mercy Athletics and earning the Mercy student body three days off of school. Mercy athletes constantly strive for excellence and success at the state level for many reasons including a day off. This reward encourages school participation and support as these athletes head off.

Prestigious award shows in Hollywood

STORY AND GRAPHIC: ANEESA SYED

The Golden Globes

Hollywood: Celebrities, fashion, movies, the latest gossip, and award shows. Speaking of award shows, the Golden Globes took place at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in California on January 7. Celebrities such as Meryl Streep, Oprah, and Emma Stone attended the annual event. Among those were celebrities with jaw dropping outfits, like Taylor Swift, who fans believed had hid easter eggs for a possible Taylor Swift or reputation (Taylor's Version) drop.

Other celebrities like Pedro Pascal attended the event in an Oliver Peoples suit, Selena Gomez in a red Giorgio Armani dress, and Emma Stone in a Louis Vuitton cream and silver gown, as she won the award for actress in a musical or

comedy motion picture.

Similarly, there were a few fan favorites that won much deserved awards, as well as new uprising actors, such as Lily Gladstone, who starred in the western crime drama "Killers of the Flower Moon" along with Leonardo DiCaprio.

"I really loved how Lily Gladstone won Best Actress in a Drama Motion Picture, she deserved it and I admire how she represented her origins while accepting her award," junior McKinley Funchess said.

There were many sweet and memorable moments. Nonetheless, an award show is never just an award show if there aren't controversial moments, like the awkward and unimpressed reaction from Taylor Swift after comedian and host Jo Koy made a joke about her being shown

on screen at NFL games. Swift seemed annoyed after Koy finished, as the camera cut to her sipping on a glass of champagne.

Viewers quickly jumped online and expressed their opinions, commenting things such as: "Why is she acting sensitive? If she chooses to date an NFL player, then this is what comes with it", and much more.

"I think that Jo Koy was wrong for that, it may have been a joke but at the end of the day it was unnecessary," junior Emma O'Donnell said.

Others stood up for her, quoting the singer: "A man can react, a woman can only overreact". This is just a pop culture moment to remember at the 2024 Golden Globes- who knows what's in store for the next one?

JANUARY 20,
1944

1ST GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS HELD AT THE 20TH CENTURY FOX STUDIOS

JANUARY 23,
2024

2024 OSCAR NOMINATIONS ANNOUNCED+LILY GLADSTONE MAKING HISTORY AS THE FIRST INDIGENOUS ACTRESS TO BE NOMINATED FOR AN OSCAR

MAY 16, 1929

1st Academy Awards held at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel + first female win (Janet Gaynor)

JANUARY 7,
2024

LILY GLADSTONE IS THE FIRST INDIGENOUS ACTRESS TO WIN A GOLDEN GLOBE FOR BEST ACTRESS IN A DRAMA MOTION PICTURE

MARCH 10,
2024

2024 OSCARS WILL TAKE PLACE AT DOLBY THEATRE

The Oscars

The Oscars – one of the most prestigious and highly anticipated film award ceremonies – dates all the way back to 1929, when the first Academy Awards presentation was held at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. Since then, there have been a series of unexpected and exciting moments. The recent nomination of "Killers of the Flower Moon" actress Lily Gladstone could pave the way to historic win as the first ever Native American actress to be nominated for Best Actress. Gladstone's performance has millions of fans across the globe rooting for her future success.

Nonetheless, these prestigious award shows wouldn't exist if it weren't for old Hollywood. Thanks to the decades of Hollywood evolution, many award shows now exist for both film and music: the Oscars, Golden Globes, Emmy's, Grammy's, VMAs, and so many more.

"I think that Hollywood has definitely been modernized over time," senior Sophia Wilker said.

It all stemmed from the 1920's, when people were able to watch films in color for the very first

time, or when they visited Dolby Theater, and the popularity of Audrey Hepburn. Old Hollywood brought new music, movies and the latest fashion. Mentioned earlier, the first award show took place on May 16, 1929. It was a private dinner function at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, where roughly 270 people attended. Among them were Hollywood stars like Janet Gaynor, who won Best Actress. Now, in 2024, Lily Gladstone is nominated for that same award, 95 years later. Being nominated for an Oscar in 1929 was grand, as Hollywood was starting to become a more prominent factor in America. Being nominated for one now is even bigger due to the inclusion and diversity that is being represented.

However, as the recent 2024 Oscar nominations came out, they provided a lot of disappointment from fans and also from cast and crew of 2023's best movies. Ryan Gosling, who played Ken in "Barbie", received a nomination for Best Supporting Actor, while Margot Robbie, who played Barbie, did not receive a nomination for Best Actress. Fans were also outraged because Greta Gerwig, the director of the film, did not

receive a nomination for Best Directing.

"Honestly, I think that it was wrong how Margot Robbie didn't even get nominated for playing Barbie in the Barbie movie," freshman Campbell Shore said.

Both women are prominent figures in today's world. Robbie as one of the best actors of her generation and Gerwig as a female director with the highest grossing film directed by a woman.

However, because neither received any nominations, people believed this just proved the movie's point: you could work endlessly and still be ignored as a woman. Until then, everyone anticipates a change to future award nominations to include a wider variety of talented women like Robbie and Gerwig. Regardless, "Barbie" hit home for many girls and women, and is to be passed down generations to come. With the 2024 Oscars only a month away, we anxiously await who will take home the most prestigious award of the year.

Artistic Expression From the Black Point of View

STORY AND GRAPHICS: MICAH ROGERS AND DARIA SMITH

For most people, February marks the shortest month of the year, but for the African American community, February begins the celebration of thousands of years of history that have gone unnoticed. Black History Month not only gives African Americans the opportunity to express themselves, but also allows them to educate others on pieces of history they may not have known about or learned about in the past. This year, the theme for Black History Month is African

Americans and the Arts. This includes artistic expression from drawing, to poetry, to theater, and so much more. Throughout the month, individuals will work to bring light to young or underground black artists who may not have the opportunities that others do to get their work out there. Normally there are 28 days of celebration of black culture, but fortunately 2024 is a leap year allowing for an extra day of celebration.

Visual Arts

“Majority of the time in school when we learn about black history, we learn about the same people and the same things,” senior Alexis Rounds said. “But Black History Month gives the opportunity to highlight new people and new things that many people may not have known about.”

There are so many ways an individual can view artistic expression. For Mercy senior Ryan Toussaint, her idea of artistic expression is through visual art. What started and ended as an aspiration in the 2nd grade, turned into more of a passion once high school rolled around. Her artistic horizon was opened due to the many different art class options provided at Mercy. One of her biggest inspirations for getting back into the field of visual arts was New York City artist Kehinde Wiley, whose work can be found at the Detroit Institute of Art.

“Much of his art uses past historical references,”

senior Ryann Toussaint said. “He incorporates more diversity into his work, putting black people in the spotlight.”

Because Ryan does a lot of painting, she is heavily influenced by his techniques and use of colors throughout his paintings. There are a lot of pieces of art that Ryan can take credit for, mostly inspired by her hobbies and things she enjoys, but one of the most impactful pieces of art she has created is one from about a year ago called “The Art of the Disappearing Effect”. In the piece, she was able to incorporate her love for dance and her love for art in order to create one of her largest pieces at the time.

“The art community a lot of the time lacks diversity,” Toussaint said. “Therefore by learning from black art individuals can become more educated on the stories behind the art and spread more light on black artists in the future.”

Poetry

Another form of artistic expression is through poetry. Senior Grace Franklin at Cass Technical High School, was introduced to poetry after reading work from two of the most famous and classic black poets, Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou. She has always had a love for writing and because she is a musician as well, the ability to combine her love for both to make something beautiful is a skill that not many people have.

“I’m a musician at heart, and I’ve always felt music, at least with words, is just poetry with melody,” Franklin said. “So writing poetry is an extension of my love for music.”

In Franklin’s eyes, everyone can take something away from poetry in general, but especially, poetry written by black poets. Whether it is the stories within the art or the way in which the artist chooses to express the art, it gives the African American community the opportunity to preserve the art from the past and create new art in the future. One of Franklin’s favorite poems

that she has written is called “Waiting.” She gave herself the challenge of writing it in a short amount of time and ultimately learned that not everything has to be done over and over again until it is “perfect”.

“I’m very much a perfectionist when it comes to my art to where I put way too much time into perfecting and making sure that it’s perfect,” Franklin said. “But with this one, I challenged myself to put ten minutes into it and leave it alone.”

Grace’s passion for both writing and music are talents she will cherish and take with her into the future.



Music

Not only are visual arts and poetry a vital part of artistic expression, but so is singing. After joining her local church choir at Shrine Basilica of the Little Flower, it sparked an interest in singing for senior Anika Lopes, but it wasn’t until the Detroit Opera House visited her elementary school for a performance, in which they announced they were hosting auditions for a children’s chorus, that turned her spark into a full blown passion for music and singing.

One of the most impactful pieces of music Lopes has had the opportunity to sing is “When Storms Arise” by Adolphus Hailstork. This choral piece is from “The 3 Dunbar hymns,” which are three poems written by Paul Dunbar, based on the life of Crispus Attuck, who is widely known as the first African American to give his life up fighting for independence.

“Truly knowing and understanding the rich history behind “The 3 Dunbar hymns” has made the piece so meaningful for me to sing,” Lopes said. Anika is majoring in vocal performances and opera in order to continue her passion for music in college.

Theater

Theater is another vital way for an individual to express themselves artistically. Senior Alexis Rounds started theater in the 3rd grade, where her first part was Tweedledumb in Shrek Jr., which ultimately led to her being a lead in the musical Matilda her junior year, playing as Miss Trunchbull.

“I wanted to do theater because I thought the idea of being able to play a different person for a little bit would be interesting,” Rounds said. “I also think being able to impact an audience with your performance, whether it’s making people laugh, making people emotional, or making people’s day better is a really cool thing to do, and I wanted to be a part of that.”

Some of her inspirations when it comes to black actresses in theater are Cynthia Erivo, Heather Headley and Audrey McDonald. Rounds appreciates their ability to incorporate their blackness into their work, while also showcasing their talents in different genres in which black women are not often seen. By doing so, they inspire her to not allow others to categorize her in the box that oftentimes black women find themselves being put in. Getting the opportunity to play Miss Trunchbull in Matilda gave Rounds a lot of confidence and was the

most impactful performance she has been a part of. “Before, I did not really know if I had enough confidence or if I was talented enough to perform as a lead,” Rounds said. “But having that role and being able to play a character that was so animated and so unlike myself, it boosted my confidence as a performer and unlocked talents that I never knew I had before.” Black History Month means a lot to the African American community. It allows for problems from the past to be brought back to light in order to begin to learn from them and continue to bring change in the future. Although February is the national month of celebration for the African American community, there are so many ways individuals can continue the conversation once February has ended. Whether it is something as small as talking to your African American friends in order to become more educated on topics that you may not have known about, or spreading light to black artists who may be underground but extremely talented. These actions can continue to empower and change the conversation for the black community, in hopes there can continue to be changes made that lead to a more equal and inclusive world in the future.

Competitive clubs: HOSA and Quiz Bowl

STORY AND GRAPHICS: ZAARA AHMED

COMPETITIVE CLUBS

An overview to popular high school competitive clubs

HOSA

HOSA focuses on students who see a future in healthcare and actively promotes career opportunities in the health industry. Join HOSA if you want to be actively involved in all things health sciences.



QUIZ BOWL

Quiz bowl is centered around quiz-based competitions that test competitors on a wide range of topics, spanning from history all the way to pop culture. Join Quiz Bowl if you want to be a part of a rewarding and engaging club.



BPA

Business Professionals of America (BPA) targets students who see a future career in business. BPA exposes students to social conscience and community. Join BPA if you want experience in business occupations.



MOCK TRIAL

Mock trial is fixed on imitation trials where students are able to act as if they are in a real trial. Mock Trial assists students in developing their public speaking and critical thinking skills. Join Mock Trial if you want to experience a fun and immersive simulated trial.



Clubs are an integral part of both academic and social aspects of school life. Competitive clubs, specifically, offer numerous benefits for any student that is willing to participate.

A competitive club is when a team of students come together to compete at a regional, state, or sometimes even national level to win recognition for their respective field of knowledge. Teamwork, dedication, discipline and communication are all respectable attributes that come along with competitive clubs. Here at Mercy, there are a variety of competitive clubs to choose from, two of the most prominent being HOSA and Quiz Bowl.

Health Occupations Students of America, or HOSA, is one of the largest competitive clubs in America. Dating back all the way to 1975, HOSA was formed in New Jersey by six charter states. It wasn't until the HOSA Constitutional Convention in November of 1976 that HOSA was officially recognized as an organization.

Now, there are around 200,000 members of HOSA on a national scale. HOSA is an international student organization endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education and the Health

Science Technology Education Division of ACTE. HOSA's main mission is to promote career opportunities in the healthcare industry, targeting students who see a future in healthcare.

"HOSA is just a really fun experience; you are able to join the club with your friends where you can compete in lots of different team events," freshman HOSA member Harshitha Arvapalli said.

At Mercy, there are nearly 50 students that are part of the HOSA team, a number of which have successfully competed in competitions. Meetings are held multiple times each semester where there are hands-on activities as well as guest speakers, which makes the club engaging and immersive for all.

"HOSA is definitely something that can help you with your academic skills and overall it's just a really good club for anyone who's thinking about going into the healthcare field," Arvapalli said.

Alongside HOSA, Quiz Bowl is a competitive club where two teams compete head-to-head to answer questions from various areas of knowledge, such as literature, history or science. A number of questions are also drawn from fine arts,

mythology, religion and more, creating a universal competition. Quiz Bowl is an intellectually challenging competition, making it a fun mental exercise for participants.

"I feel really in my element when I'm competing in Quiz Bowl—it has become something that I just really love to do. I get to show off what I know in a fun and entertaining way," sophomore Quiz Bowl member Alyssa Chavez said.

Quiz Bowl was created during World War II as a quizzing game for soldiers. Don Reid produced what was then known as College Bowl for the radio in 1953, featuring teams of college students that would compete in the game. As time progressed, its format was modified multiple times to create the different quiz bowl formats offered today.

Mercy Quiz Bowl features students from all grade levels that compete on a national scale. On December 2, 2023, Mercy Quiz Bowl competed in their first national tournament of the year.

"Competing in a national tournament was extremely fun. It was quite intense at times but I feel like that just adds to the excitement. I feel like anyone who is into trivia will really benefit from Quiz Bowl," Chavez said.



HOSA members pose at a Regional Competition. This event took place in December 2023 where many students placed as finalists. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Lisa Wilson.



Quiz Bowl members wait to compete at a National Competition. This event took place in December 2023. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Lauren Marquard.

MVDT prepares to compete in 2024 Nationals

STORY AND PHOTOS: TESS O'DONNELL

The Mercy Varsity Dance team works all year to compete on the big stage—the national stage. UDA Dance Nationals takes place in Orlando, Florida, and they are the focal point of the high school dance season. The early morning practices, countless hours of choreography and days of “cleaning up” dances all lead to perfected routines that will be performed on the biggest stage in high school competitive dance.

The team’s season begins with tryouts in March and finishes with Nationals the following February, creating an almost year-long season. Nationals is not the only thing dancers on MVDT prepare for throughout the year; they also dance at pep rallies, basketball and football games and showcases, along with more local competitions. However, Nationals is by far the most important event on their calendar. It is the light at the end of the tunnel for many members of the team, a shining goal to work for in hopes of winning it all. It represents all the hard work and preparation paying off, and the team earning important and exciting recognition.

The team is led by head coach Brittany Wenson, former MSU cheerleader and Detroit Lions cheerleader, and assistant coach Elise Armstrong. Devon Sells choreographs the team’s hip hop routine and Alexa Miller choreographs the team’s jazz routine.

MVDT is composed of dancers that range from freshman to seniors.

The team’s season begins at UDA camp in the summer, where the varsity team attends a four-day camp at Suburban Showplace. They are split into different groups where they learn dances and participate in activities. On the last day of camp, they perform their dances to be assessed by UDA staff. The goal of the assessment is to earn all blue ribbons to qualify for UDA Nationals, which take place in the following February.

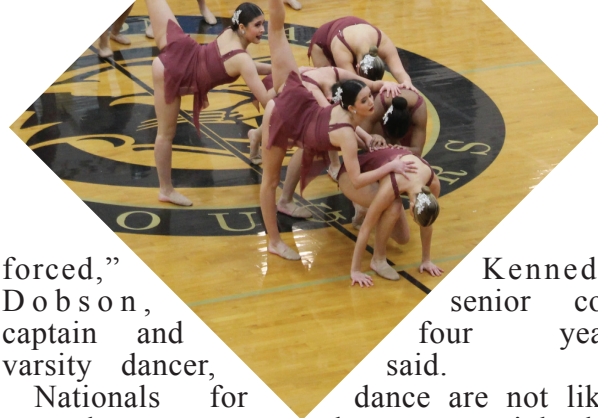
MVDT continues to practice every Tuesday and Thursday morning before school throughout the year leading up to Nationals. Routines are practiced and cleaned to perfection during early morning practices as well as early morning practices on the weekends, in order to perform for other teams, parents, fans, and judges.

Going through an intense 11-month season is bound to cement any team together, and MVDT is no exception. The girls enjoy spending time together and creating an environment where they succeed as a team. Bonding is as important as the hours of practice, so that by the time Nationals come they are truly prepared and unified.

“We do lots of team bonding activities, like before games we go out to dinner as a team, we have a Christmas party as a team,

we watch college dance Nationals together, and we’re just really close overall,” Lauren Ahmet, junior and three year varsity dancer, said.

“I like the team bond fact that we can have without to be



forced,” Kennedy Dobson, senior co-captain and four year varsity dancer, said.

Nationals for dance are not like normal tournaments that many might be familiar with at the state championship level. To begin, Nationals bring in teams from all over the country.

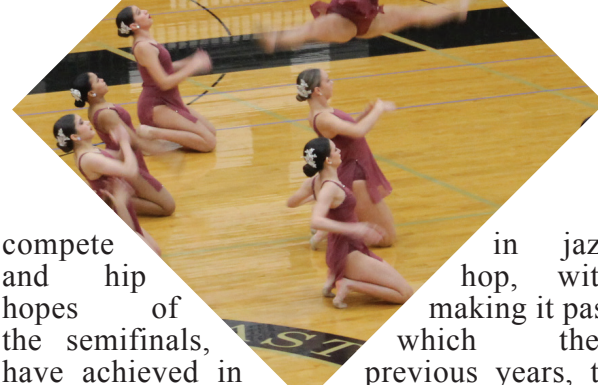
MVDT will compete against



ranging from Hawaii to Connecticut when they arrive in Orlando. The number of girls on the team will determine the category they compete in; MDVT competes in the medium division.

Teams have the chance to participate in pom, jazz, and hip hop.

MVDT will fly to Florida to



compete in jazz and hip hop, with hopes of making it past the semifinals, which they have achieved in previous years, to the finals in both categories.

“We work so hard and our chemistry is going to carry our team. We have so much

passion for the sport that we’re going make it to finals,” Megan Windham, senior co-captain and four year varsity dancer, said.

Nationals isn’t only a great opportunity for MVDT to showcase and compete with their best dances against other schools around the country, it is also a great opportunity for team bonding. The girls spend almost the entire trip together, and the chemistry and connection within the team proves that.

“We all share rooms with each other, there’s four of us in a room so everyone’s in close proximity. Just waking up and keeping each other on schedule is always fun and flying together and exploring the (Disney) parks together is a very fun experience. And of course going on stage and competing,” Ahmet said.

“It’s an emotional trip and we get emotionally bonded,” Jaylen Pecora, junior and three year varsity dancer, said.

Nationals is the finale of the long season and, for many dancers, it is also the high point of the 11 month period.

“My favorite part of the season is definitely Nationals because it’s seeing all of our hard work come together and it’s a big moment where we all get to reveal our dances to basically the entire nation and it’s a great moment for us, when we succeed,” Pecora said.

Nationals give MVDT a chance to end their season on a high note and to prove to each other that hard work really does pay off. It also gives the seniors a chance to leave their own legacy with the teammates they spent the year dancing with.

“I love the dance team, I’m going to miss everyone so much, and I can’t wait to see what they do in the future,” Dobson said.

“I’m proud of everyone on the team, I love everyone so much! Go Marlins!” Windham said.

For seniors on the team, like Dobson and Windham, it is also their last time competing with each other and the rest of their teammates. This knowledge drives them to strive for nothing but the best outcome for their last time on the National stage.

“I’m more hungry, I really want this, I’m gonna put my all onto the floor. Every single count, every single step, because I want it so bad. I can’t leave on a bad note,” Windham said.

For being one of the hardest working teams at Mercy, little is known about the everyday grind MVDT experiences to get to the bright lights and big stage in February. Each member of the team sacrifices early mornings and weekends for training, knowing that the long hours and sore knees will result in the effortless, perfected routines their fans, and the judges, expect.

Stanley cups cause serious health effects

STORY AND GRAPHICS: LENA LAJOY, DESIGN EDITOR

People of all generations rush to purchase the newest water bottle obsession: the Stanley Cup. For years, there has always been a water bottle of some sort trending, whether that be a HydroFlask, Owala or any other water bottle that works well for you. However, the Stanley cup has become a topic of discussion not only for its ability to hold the same ice for days. After people became ill after using the water bottle due to mold, discussions about health and maintenance were on the forefront of Stanley Cup users' minds.

"I think it's pretty crazy that people are getting sick from their Stanley's and honestly upsetting," senior Maddie Raetz said.

The first issue regarding health problems with the Stanley cup revolved around potential lead used to make the product. Since lead is not a strong conductor of electricity, it is sometimes used in different cooking utensils. This is a problem because the lead can then leach off into your food or beverage resulting in you consuming the metal. Exposure to lead can have serious side effects on people of all ages, but especially children since lead stunts brain development.

"Lead is a heavy metal that stops and hinders development that you can't get back," AP Psychology teacher Ms. Colleen McMaster said.

Therefore, when an at-home test was conducted to ensure Stanley cups were lead-free failed, concerns rose. Families immediately worried about whether their child's abilities could be hindered, and fear over the cups' safety took over the minds of many. Thankfully, Stanley cup spoke up about the incident and soothed everyone's fears regarding potential lead in the cups.

"Hearing that they said the cups are safe did soothe my fears because lead is a serious thing that can be very dangerous," Raetz said.

Another health risk brought up regarding the Stanley cup was the prevalence of mold underneath the lid. When the Stanley cup was first trending,

people would go about cleaning it as they would with every other water bottle they own. However, people were unaware that the strip across the lid

was meant to be removed and cleaned. This led to mold forming and causing some unfortunate individuals to become sick.

"Exposure to mold can cause allergy-like symptoms," AP Environmental teacher Mrs. Christin Schmitt said. "Think of things like watery or itchy eyes, itchy throat, sneezing and coughing."

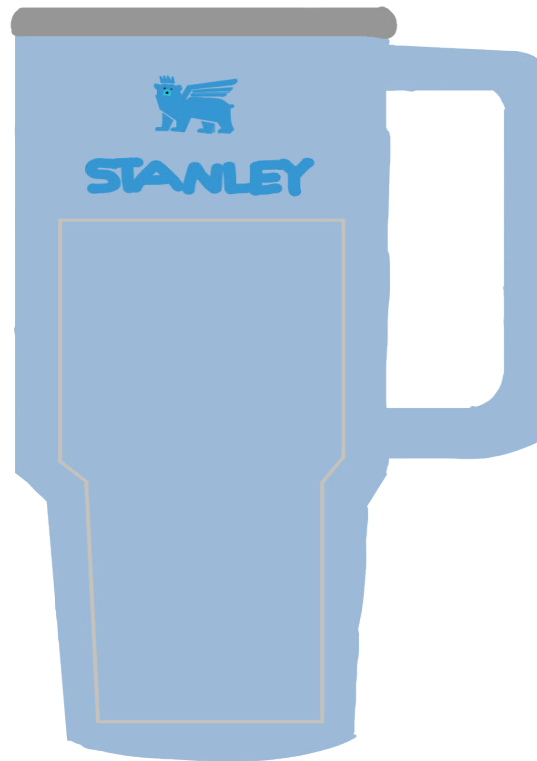
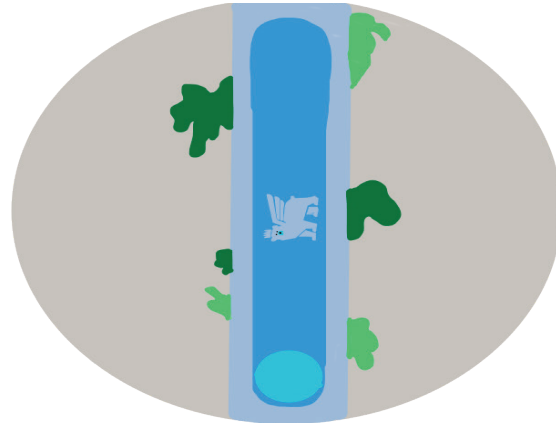
This mold issue was not the company's fault however. The problem was created due to people not looking into how to properly care for the water bottle. Therefore, when cleaning the Stanley cup, users must make sure the different pieces of the lid are removed and deeply cleansed in order to avoid sickness. If an individual were to realize they were not properly cleaning their Stanley cup and were afraid of becoming sick, possible side effects include: runny nose, trouble breathing, exhaustion, headaches and red eyes.

"I think they could have provided more instructions because who would even think to take the lid apart to clean it?" Raetz said.

People, especially young adults and teenagers, want to fit in. Therefore, when different material goods are trending on social media or in school environments, people jump at the chance to buy the product. However, when individuals rush to have trending products, they sometimes fail to research if the product is truly safe or right for them.

"I honestly didn't know I had to clean it so much until I saw a TikTok about it," Raetz said.

In the end, the Stanley cup itself was proved safe from harm, however, depending on how well you maintain the cup your safety could be impaired. Therefore, it is necessary that one researches exactly how to clean the cup before buying to ensure their own safety. While it is fun to join trends, physical health should always come first. The next time a water bottle is bound to trend, do some research before purchasing in order to ensure your overall health.



\$750
in revenue
in 2023

"I have 9
Stanleys but
me and my
mom share
-Raetz

Since
1913
110 years

Will it be a new year, new you?

STORY AND GRAPHICS: REESE KIZY

A good student has good habits, right? What better way to improve yourself than by starting off the new year with goals set. Some Mercy students have set these resolutions for 2024, but what do they really entail?

In a study by Ohio State's Fisher School of Business, "Twenty-three percent of people quit their resolution by the end of the first week, and 43% quit by the end of January." Many young people in particular are weary to set resolutions because of their notoriously high abandonment rates. Goals have to be attainable in order to be reached, so it is likely that so many goals get abandoned because they are not realistic.

It is more important for young people to set goals for themselves than it is for adults. Our brains begin to form in the womb, but they continue to develop during adolescence, or teenage years. If teens begin forming good habits and have the determination to stay true to them, the brain becomes trained to follow the new practice. These good habits can often take form in a New Year's resolution.

It is best to look back at the past year before trying to decide on what to improve on for the upcoming year. Some questions to ask yourself may be:

What did I struggle with last year?

How could I improve my productivity?

What academic goals can I set in order to stay on track with my plans for the next couple years?

What can I do to save my energy for things really important to me?

Senior Sofi Galea makes New Year's resolutions in hopes of staying more organized and productive.

"For this year, my New Year's resolutions are to start wearing my retainer, to keep my room clean, and to have a more positive attitude," Galea said.

These goals can be very relevant to teens. They are all on a different level of commitment and attainability, but they represent small things that can make a big difference. For example, wearing your retainer can make a difference in your teeth and therefore your appearance, while having a more positive attitude can make a difference on your outlook on almost everything.

"It has been a habit ever since I was a kid to set three New Year's resolutions," Galea said. "I don't always stick to all of them, but setting goals at the beginning of the year makes me realize that I have a long time to get better at the things I choose."

"I think most people my age should work on time-management because it is an important skill we should have as students, and especially for me, since I am going to college soon," Galea said.

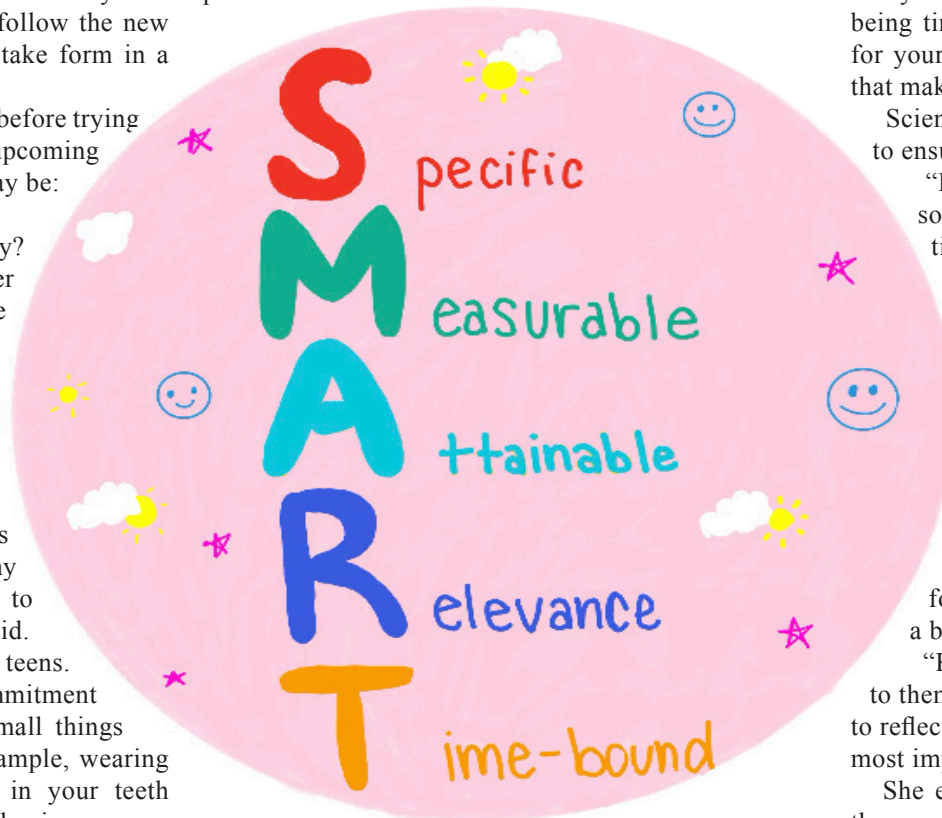
Beginning the new year with good time management can ensure a habit for the rest of the year. Especially in these first few months, when most may not have finals or other stressing things, working on time management can be very effective.

"Making New Year's resolutions is a way to motivate yourself and keep yourself on track. Sometimes by

sticking to my New Year's resolutions, I notice that it makes me a better person because I am forcing myself to do things that I should be doing, but that I don't always actually do," Galea said.

Although it is common for most people to only set one New Year's resolution, it may not be important for you to only focus on one area of improvement. Setting multiple goals can be beneficial as long as it does not overwhelm, or set expectations too high.

Using the acronym S.M.A.R.T to set any goal can ensure that it is within reach. Being specific with your goals means tracking and being responsible with the amount of time or resources used to achieve the objective. Do not just set the expectation of "I want to read more." Instead say, "I want to read for a decent amount of time each night instead of going on my phone."



Similar to being specific, being measurable can mean setting a number of things corresponding to the goal. For example, instead of focusing on your goal by saying "I want to drink more water," say, "I want to drink 60-100 ounces of water per day." This way, at the beginning of the year, and at the start of each day, you will pace yourself and your consumption of water, and plan to drink evenly throughout the day, eventually looking forward to reaching the total set number of ounces.

'A' stands for attainable. You want your goals to be challenging, but not impossible. Make your goals based on your lifestyle. If your everyday life is already packed with after-school activities, and lots of schoolwork, for example, don't try and fit an extra hour in your day dedicated to something you weren't doing before. Also, if you set your goal for something that does not make you happy, and that you dread doing, set ways for the

goal to appeal to you more so that it is more likely to be achieved.

Next is relevance. Choose a goal that is relevant to what you want to accomplish in the upcoming year. If you choose a goal that you know you can stick to, that is good because it forms a habit, but chances are you will still be longing to improve on something more important to long-term goals. Setting these more important objectives from the start of the year gives a long twelve months for you to decide how best to tackle the goal in something that becomes a success.

Finally, your New Year's resolution should be time-bound. It is helpful to state what time of day you want the goal to be achieved. This way, you have thought about when it best fits into your schedule, and you will not procrastinate as easily. In addition, being time-bound means that you have a timeframe for your goals and that they are organized in a way that makes sense with the amount of time you have.

Science teacher Mrs. Lisa Wilson sets goals often to ensure she is consistent throughout the year.

"Every year— sometimes at my birthday, sometimes at New Year's, sometimes at special times of the year, but especially at the start of each school year— I will make a decision to do something different," Wilson said.

"This year I picked that I would not rush, especially in the mornings," Wilson said. "Rushing in the morning gives me a lot of anxiety, which then sets my day up to be anxious."

This is a good point in proving that if you start your day out with less stress and aggression, you can be calmer and more focused throughout the day, leading you to gain a better attitude about achieving your goals.

"Knowing students in the capacity I'm exposed to them, I would say mostly taking time for yourself to reflect on what's working for you and what's not, is most important," Wilson said.

She expands on this idea that students are not all the same, so there is no one universal goal that can help each student improve. Looking deeper at your own habits and deciding for yourself the best course of action on how to address problems, is the key.

"Finding one small thing you could do differently, even by moving the needle just a little bit, can make a big change over time," Wilson said.

"Goal-setting is important because it gives us the opportunity to reflect on what we want to change. By writing these down or even saying them out loud, we can make a big difference. Studies show when we write things down, and especially if they are goals, they are more likely to change," Wilson said.

New Year's resolutions can come in many different shapes and sizes, but they should all have in common the ability to improve yourself. Changing small things about yourself can affect your outlook on the world as a whole and your ability to have an open mind. Think about your year and all that you want to accomplish!

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